

# **TIMING THE TUNE: THE ROLE OF REHEARSAL DURATION IN ACHIEVING QUALITY THEATRE PERFORMANCES IN THE KISII UNIVERSITY MUSIC FESTIVAL 2025**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the relationship between rehearsal duration and performance quality across different music genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025. Guided by Deliberate Practice Theory (Ericsson, 1993), the study explores how structured and purposeful use of rehearsal time contributes to musical excellence. Specifically, it seeks to determine how much rehearsal time is sufficient to produce quality performances, whether some genres require more rehearsal time than others, and how performers and directors perceive the adequacy of rehearsal time. A qualitative research approach will be employed, using purposive sampling to select directors and performers actively involved in festival preparations and snowball sampling to identify additional key informants with relevant experience. Data will be collected through interviews, questionnaires, and performance assessments, and analyzed thematically and statistically to establish patterns linking rehearsal duration to performance outcomes. The findings are expected to provide insights into effective rehearsal time management across diverse musical genres, thereby enhancing performance planning and quality in university music festivals.

**Keywords:** rehearsal; performance; festival; music

## **1. Introduction**

The pursuit of quality in musical performance has long preoccupied scholars, educators, and practitioners across the world. Globally, research in performance psychology and music pedagogy underscores the centrality of rehearsal and practice in achieving excellence. Palmer (1997) highlights that music performance is a complex cognitive-motor activity requiring precise temporal coordination, interpretative planning, and expressive control, skills honed through structured rehearsal. Similarly, Drake and Palmer (2000) observe that the acquisition of musical skill involves a dynamic relationship between planning and temporal control, where the amount and organization of rehearsal significantly affect timing accuracy and expressive fluency. These studies collectively emphasize that

performance quality is not merely a function of talent but of sustained, deliberate practice.

Building upon this, Williamon and Valentine (2000) empirically demonstrate that both the quantity and quality of practice are reliable predictors of performance success. They contend that musicians who engage in focused, goal-oriented rehearsals develop greater technical precision and expressive maturity compared to those who merely increase practice hours without structure. This perspective aligns with Klickstein (2009), who in *The Musician's Way*, proposes that effective rehearsal integrates technical mastery, interpretive depth, and psychological readiness, each cultivated through systematic time management. Gordon (2005) further reinforces this notion, describing musical mastery as an art of disciplined repetition combined with reflective listening and performance analysis.

Recent pedagogical studies continue to refine these insights. Hill (2023), writing in *The Choral Journal*, emphasizes improving the rehearsal experience by balancing efficiency with engagement, ensuring that rehearsal duration enhances, rather than exhausts, performers. Similarly, Silvey (2014), in *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, advocates evidence-based rehearsal strategies that maximize learning outcomes within limited time frames, suggesting that effective rehearsal management is as crucial as total rehearsal hours.

In Africa, discussions on performance practice have often extended beyond technical skill to encompass cultural continuity, communal participation, and contextual meaning. Drewal (1991), in her survey of African performance research, argues that African musical performance is process-oriented, valuing rehearsal as a space for negotiation, improvisation, and collective creativity rather than mere repetition. Nketia (1974) similarly asserts that African music performance is deeply rooted in social function and participatory engagement, where rehearsal embodies a continuum between preparation and performance. These perspectives foreground the need to interpret rehearsal not only as a technical activity but also as a cultural and pedagogical process.

In contemporary African musical education, studies increasingly explore how formal training intersects with indigenous practices. Nelson (2023) observes that structured rehearsal and formal instrumental training significantly improve stage

confidence and performance precision among African musicians. Adongo (2020) adds that pedagogical strategies emphasizing stylistic awareness and contextual understanding of African choral music deepen musical comprehension, thereby enhancing performance outcomes. This resonates with Kinyua (2019), who found that pre-performance analysis and research directly influence the expressive quality of vocal performances, highlighting rehearsal time as a determinant of interpretative depth.

Within Kenya, rehearsal culture has been shaped by the traditions of the Kenya Music Festival and evolving university-based ensembles. Achieng' Andang'o (2019) underscores the role of choral and instrumental ensembles such as those in the Kenya Music Festival and Nairobi Orchestra in "Africanising" the music classroom, linking rehearsal practices to broader educational and cultural objectives. Maina (2012), through the case of *Kayamba Africa*, demonstrates how contemporary Kenyan ensembles rework traditional music through innovative rehearsal and arrangement practices that merge discipline with creative experimentation. These studies reveal that rehearsal duration and quality in Kenyan performance spaces are both aesthetic and educational concerns, balancing institutional demands, artistic vision, and limited resources.

Against this background, the Kisii University Music Festival 2025 provides a timely context for examining how rehearsal duration influences performance quality within a university setting that integrates academic training, cultural expression, and competitive artistry. Understanding *how much rehearsal time is enough*, and how performers and directors perceive sufficiency, can illuminate broader pedagogical and managerial insights for improving music performance outcomes in Kenyan higher education.

In most music festivals or stage competitions, different genres such as choral, traditional, contemporary, instrumental dance, taarab, street dance, karaoke, and a capella receive unequal rehearsal time. Yet performance quality often depends on how effectively time is used. The study seeks to determine the optimal rehearsal duration for various genres that ensures quality stage presentation.

## 2. Literature Review

Rehearsal is a closing exercise or a complete and through exercise (Yulianti & Soemaryatmi 2022). Globally, studies such as Williamon and Valentine (2000) have examined how the quantity and quality of musical practice predict performance outcomes, revealing that extended rehearsal time alone does not guarantee excellence. Their research emphasized that structured, reflective, and goal-oriented practice leads to higher performance quality than mere repetition. However, their study focused on Western classical musicians, overlooking contextual and genre-based variations in rehearsal demands. This creates a gap in understanding how different music genres and cultural contexts influence perceptions of adequate rehearsal time. The present study addresses this gap by investigating how rehearsal duration affects performance quality across diverse genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Culbert (1974) explored how allocating part of rehearsal time to developing students' ability to describe and discuss music influences performance quality and musical achievement. The study found that integrating reflective and analytical activities within rehearsals improved students' overall musical understanding and performance outcomes. However, the research was limited to high school band settings and focused mainly on educational skill development rather than on optimal rehearsal duration. This leaves a gap in understanding how time allocation across different rehearsal activities affects performance quality in varied musical contexts. This study extends this inquiry by examining how total rehearsal duration impacts stage performance quality across multiple genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Hill (2023) examined strategies for improving the rehearsal experience, emphasizing the importance of planning, engagement, and effective time management in achieving quality choral performances. The study highlighted that well-structured rehearsals enhance both performer satisfaction and musical precision, linking rehearsal organization to overall performance success. However, Hill's focus was primarily on choral groups, overlooking other musical genres with differing rehearsal dynamics and time demands. This creates a gap in understanding how rehearsal duration and structure vary across diverse

performance styles. This study builds on Hill's insights by comparing rehearsal time requirements across genres at the Kisii University Music Festival 2025 to determine how timing influences performance quality.

Reid (2002) explored the process of preparing for musical performance, emphasizing the psychological and physical aspects of rehearsal that contribute to stage readiness. The study underscored that effective preparation involves not just time spent practicing but also mental focus, confidence building, and strategic rehearsal planning. However, Reid's discussion remained largely theoretical and individual-centered, with limited attention to collective rehearsal practices or genre-based differences. This leaves a gap in understanding how varying rehearsal durations influence group performance outcomes in diverse musical contexts. This study expands on Reid's insights by examining how rehearsal time allocation affects performance quality across multiple genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Shali (2019) investigated rehearsal methods that integrate performance and learning, emphasizing that combining practice with reflective learning enhances musical interpretation and technical proficiency. The study found that rehearsals designed as both educational and performance preparation spaces improve musicians' adaptability and artistic expression. However, Shali's research focused on pedagogical rehearsal models without examining how total rehearsal time influences performance outcomes. This creates a gap in understanding the quantitative aspect of rehearsal in relation to musical quality across genres. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing how rehearsal duration affects performance quality in different musical genres at the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Dordzro (2017) examined how the rehearsal strategies employed by Ghanaian basic school band directors influence students' musical performance. The study revealed that effective planning, repetition, and feedback during rehearsals significantly enhance learners' technical accuracy and confidence on stage. However, Dordzro's research concentrated on pedagogical techniques rather than the duration or timing of rehearsals, leaving the temporal dimension of practice underexplored. This presents a gap in understanding how the amount of rehearsal

time contributes to performance quality across different musical forms. This study builds on Dordzro's findings by investigating how rehearsal duration affects the quality of performances in various genres at the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Krampe and Ericsson (1996) explored how deliberate practice contributes to maintaining elite performance among young and older pianists. Their study demonstrated that consistent, focused, and goal-oriented rehearsal, rather than the sheer amount of time spent, was key to sustaining high performance standards. However, the research centered on individual pianists in controlled environments, overlooking collaborative and genre-based variations in rehearsal needs. This creates a gap in understanding how rehearsal duration and structure function in group or festival performance settings. The present study extends Krampe and Ericsson's findings by examining how rehearsal time allocation influences performance quality across diverse musical genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Kotchenruther (1998) conducted a descriptive study on the rehearsal priorities of middle school string teachers, focusing on how educators allocate rehearsal time to various musical elements such as tone, rhythm, and ensemble balance. The study found that teachers prioritized technical accuracy and ensemble coordination over interpretive or expressive aspects of performance. However, it was limited to school-based string ensembles and did not explore how total rehearsal duration affects overall performance quality. This leaves a gap in understanding how time allocation and rehearsal priorities differ across diverse music genres and performance contexts. This study builds on Kotchenruther's insights by investigating how rehearsal duration influences performance quality among different genres at the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Chan (2020) examined leadership strategies employed by conductors during rehearsals in training orchestra settings, emphasizing how effective direction, communication, and time management enhance ensemble performance. The study highlighted that conductor leadership plays a crucial role in optimizing rehearsal efficiency and achieving musical cohesion. However, Chan's work focused primarily on orchestral contexts, leaving out other musical genres with distinct

rehearsal structures and time demands. This creates a gap in understanding how rehearsal duration interacts with leadership and performance quality across varied musical forms. The present study extends Chan's insights by analyzing how rehearsal time allocation influences performance outcomes across multiple genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Zhukov (2009) investigated effective practising from a research perspective, emphasizing that structured, goal-oriented, and reflective rehearsal leads to better musical performance outcomes. The study found that quality practice habits, such as focused repetition, self-assessment, and feedback were more influential than the sheer length of practice time. However, Zhukov's research largely concentrated on individual musicians, overlooking group dynamics and genre-based variations in rehearsal needs. This creates a gap in understanding how rehearsal duration and context influence collective performance quality. The present study addresses this gap by examining how rehearsal time affects performance outcomes across diverse musical genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Drewal (1991) analyzed the state of research on performance in Africa, emphasizing that African performances are deeply rooted in communal participation, contextual meaning, and cyclical rehearsal processes. The study highlighted that African performance traditions value collective preparation and experiential learning over rigid rehearsal structures. However, Drewal's work was largely theoretical and did not quantify how rehearsal duration affects performance quality across modern or institutional performance settings. This creates a gap in linking traditional African performance practices with structured academic music festivals. The present study builds on Drewal's insights by examining how rehearsal time allocation influences performance quality across different genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Adongo (2020) explored pedagogical strategies for enhancing musicians' understanding of styles and conceptual knowledge in contemporary African choral music. The study emphasized that effective rehearsal methods combining stylistic awareness and contextual interpretation improve both musical understanding and performance quality. However, Adongo's research focused primarily on pedagogical and stylistic training rather than on the relationship between rehearsal

duration and performance outcomes. This leaves a gap in understanding how the amount of rehearsal time affects performance quality within diverse musical settings. The present study extends Adongo's insights by investigating how rehearsal duration influences stage performance quality across multiple genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Addaquay (2025) conducted a technical analysis of singing styles in traditional Sub-Saharan African music, highlighting how vocal techniques, rhythm, and tonal variation express cultural identity and collective artistry. The study emphasized the depth of stylistic diversity and the role of traditional performance practices in shaping authentic musical expression. However, Addaquay's work focused mainly on stylistic and technical aspects rather than on rehearsal processes or time management in performance preparation. This creates a gap in understanding how rehearsal duration contributes to achieving stylistic accuracy and performance quality in such contexts. The present study builds on Addaquay's insights by examining how rehearsal time influences performance quality across different musical genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Nelson (2023) examined the relationship between formal musical training and effective stage performance, revealing that structured instruction enhances technical mastery, confidence, and interpretive skill. The study emphasized that disciplined preparation and consistent practice are essential for achieving high-quality performance outcomes. However, Nelson's research focused on formal training processes rather than the duration and structure of rehearsals leading to performance. This leaves a gap in understanding how rehearsal time specifically contributes to performance quality across different musical genres. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing how rehearsal duration affects the quality of stage performances in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Kimtai (2022) investigated the influence of instrumental proficiency on aural acuity among secondary school music students in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study established that students with higher instrumental skills demonstrated stronger listening accuracy and overall performance competence. However, Kimtai's research concentrated on skill proficiency and auditory development, without examining how rehearsal duration affects these performance outcomes.

This creates a gap in understanding the temporal aspect of musical preparation in relation to performance quality. The present study extends Kimtai's findings by exploring how rehearsal time allocation influences stage performance quality across diverse genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Nyandieka (2024) examined the competency of music production graduates from Kenyan tertiary institutions in producing local music, focusing on the perspectives of graduates, producers, and musicians. The study revealed that practical exposure, contextual understanding, and adequate training time are key determinants of production quality and creative output. However, Nyandieka's research emphasized production skills and industry readiness rather than the influence of rehearsal duration on performance outcomes. This creates a gap in understanding how time allocation during rehearsal impacts performance quality in live musical settings. The present study builds on Nyandieka's insights by investigating how rehearsal duration affects the quality of musical performances across various genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Okeyo and Shitandi (2020) investigated the relationship between the use of the Kodály approach in teaching music and the performance of primary teacher trainees in music examinations in Nandi County, Kenya. The study found that the Kodály method, which emphasizes repetition, active participation, and aural development, significantly improved learners' musical understanding and examination performance. However, the research focused primarily on instructional methodology rather than on rehearsal duration or time management in performance preparation. This creates a gap in understanding how rehearsal time influences practical performance outcomes beyond classroom learning. The present study addresses this gap by examining how rehearsal duration impacts stage performance quality across multiple genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Wambugu (2012) analyzed the place of Kenyan art music within the high school general music curriculum, arguing for the inclusion of folk song-based choral compositions to promote cultural identity and musical creativity. The study highlighted that integrating indigenous musical elements enhances students' engagement and interpretive depth during performance. However, Wambugu's work focused on curriculum design and cultural expression rather than on the role

of rehearsal duration in achieving performance quality. This leaves a gap in understanding how time allocated for rehearsing such culturally grounded pieces affects stage outcomes. The present study builds on Wambugu's insights by exploring how rehearsal duration influences performance quality across diverse musical genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored in Deliberate Practice Theory (Ericsson, 1993), which posits that expert performance results from structured, focused, and goal-oriented practice rather than the mere accumulation of rehearsal hours. The theory emphasizes that quality practice, which is characterized by concentration, feedback, repetition, and gradual refinement, is the main determinant of performance excellence. In applying this theory, the study examines how rehearsal time and its organization affect musical performance quality within the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

Deliberate Practice Theory supports the idea that optimal performance quality is achieved not necessarily through prolonged rehearsal, but through efficient use of time. This objective draws from the theory's focus on identifying the threshold of sufficient practice, the point at which additional rehearsal no longer produces proportional improvements. In investigating how much time is needed to achieve quality performance in each genre, the study applies Ericsson's principle of time-efficiency in deliberate engagement, recognizing that different performance contexts may demand varying levels of intensity and focus. Deliberate Practice Theory also recognizes that task complexity and domain specificity influence the amount and nature of practice required to achieve excellence. In the context of music, genres differ in their technical, expressive, and collaborative demands; for instance, choral music may require more ensemble coordination than solo pop performances. This objective explores how genre-specific performance complexity affects the rehearsal time needed to reach similar levels of quality, aligning with Ericsson's assertion that expertise is domain-dependent and that each musical form may have a distinct learning and practice curve. Deliberate Practice Theory places emphasis on the performer's

metacognitive awareness, which is the ability to assess one's readiness and identify areas needing improvement. This objective is grounded in understanding how performers and directors interpret and evaluate rehearsal adequacy, which directly relates to the theory's focus on self-assessment and feedback as essential elements of deliberate practice. By examining perceptions of sufficiency, the study connects psychological readiness and performance confidence to the underlying principles of structured and mindful rehearsal time management.

Deliberate Practice Theory provides a robust framework for analyzing how rehearsal time, quality, and perception interact to influence musical performance outcomes. It justifies the investigation of not only *how much time* is spent rehearsing but also *how effectively* that time is utilized across different genres and performance groups in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025.

#### **4. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative design to examine how rehearsal duration influences the quality of musical performance across genres in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025. This design was selected because it allows for a nuanced exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of both directors and performers within their natural performance settings. The design further enabled the researcher to identify relationships between rehearsal time, management practices, and performance quality without manipulating the existing rehearsal structures. Data were gathered from multiple sources to ensure triangulation and to capture the complex interaction between time, leadership, and artistic output as framed by Deliberate Practice Theory (Ericsson, 1993).

The study was conducted at Kisii University, the host of the 2025 Music Festival. The site was ideal because it brought together a wide range of musical genres, including choral, traditional, gospel, pop, and instrumental performances. The setting also provided a diverse pool of participants: students, directors, adjudicators, and accompanists, whose interactions reflected the dynamic rehearsal culture within a university festival context. Conducting the study within this event offered authentic insights into real-time rehearsal routines, performance preparation, and the temporal challenges faced by both trainers and performers.

The target population comprised all music performers and directors participating in the Kisii University Music Festival 2025. This included choral groups, instrumental ensembles, traditional and gospel performers, and soloists. Adjudicators and accompanists were also considered as secondary informants to provide external evaluations of performance quality and rehearsal effectiveness. The population was chosen because it represented a cross-section of genres and offered an opportunity to compare how rehearsal time and management differed across musical forms.

The study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select participants who were most knowledgeable and directly involved in rehearsal and performance processes. Purposive sampling was used to identify directors, adjudicators, and lead performers with demonstrable experience in preparing ensembles for performance. These individuals were chosen for their ability to provide informed insights on rehearsal duration, structure, and quality. Snowball sampling complemented this approach by relying on referrals from initial participants to identify other qualified respondents who could offer rich, relevant data.

Through these methods, the sample comprised approximately 30 participants: ten directors, fifteen performers drawn from diverse genres, and five adjudicators. The sample size was considered adequate for achieving data saturation while maintaining depth in qualitative analysis.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, observation checklists, and performance analysis forms. Conducted with directors, performers, and adjudicators to gather perceptions on rehearsal duration, man management, and perceived sufficiency of practice time. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility to probe deeper into unique rehearsal experiences and leadership styles. Direct observations of selected rehearsals provided firsthand evidence of rehearsal patterns, time allocation, and interaction between directors and performers. The researcher documented time usage, feedback methods, participation dynamics, and visible indicators of performance readiness. Adjudicators' comments and performance scores were analyzed to identify patterns linking rehearsal duration and quality outcomes. This tool offered a quantitative complement to the

qualitative findings, helping validate perceived relationships through observed performance results.

Collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach, guided by the objectives of the study. Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded to identify recurring themes such as rehearsal adequacy, time efficiency, leadership strategies, and genre-based rehearsal variation. Quantitative data from performance evaluations were summarized descriptively to illustrate patterns of correlation between rehearsal time and performance quality.

To ensure credibility, the researcher employed triangulation through multiple data sources such as interviews, observations, and performance evaluations. Member checking was conducted by sharing interpreted data with select participants to confirm accuracy. Peer debriefing with fellow researchers ensured analytical objectivity, while thick description provided contextual depth, enhancing the transferability of findings. Reflexivity was maintained throughout to minimize researcher bias during observation and interpretation.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Kisii University Ethics Review Committee and a research permit from NARCOSTI before fieldwork commenced. Informed consent was sought from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation. Pseudonyms were used in reporting data to protect participant identity.

## **5. Discussion**

Across the Kisii University Music Festival, rehearsal duration emerged as a decisive factor influencing the quality and confidence of stage performance. Ensembles that invested sufficient time, typically ranging between eight and twelve hours per day, displayed greater musical precision, balance, and interpretive maturity than those with shorter rehearsal schedules. Skla, a member of the Luo folk song winning group, asserted this during an oral interview. Yet, prolonged sessions beyond fourteen hours often led to visible fatigue, diminished focus, and mechanical delivery. According to Paloma from Shiners group, “We often trained for a lot of hours in some items which caused boredom and fatigue, and some developed a negative attitude towards genres that took a lot of time and energy in

training, such as Street dance and Luhya folk dance (Paloma, personal communication, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2025). The pattern suggests that musical excellence does not depend merely on the accumulation of practice hours but on the strategic structuring of rehearsal activities, echoing Ericsson's (1993) Deliberate Practice Theory, which posits that purposeful, feedback-driven engagement yields more significant results than repetitive effort alone. Directors frequently observed that time spent refining difficult passages, intonation, or ensemble coordination produced more noticeable improvement than general run-throughs of the full repertoire.



Figur 1. Festival performance 1 (Photo: Nyangoga, 2025)

Genre distinctions further shaped the relationship between rehearsal time and performance quality. Choral verses, street dance, Luhya and Gusii folk dances, and instrumental ensembles demanded the most extensive rehearsal commitments due to their complex textures and synchronization demands, often rehearsing for ten to fourteen hours weekly to achieve a cohesive tonal blend and precision. Kalenjin folk songs and sacred folk songs, in contrast, benefited from cultural familiarity and collective memory, reaching high performance standards with seven to ten hours of focused practice. Cliff, the director, affirmed that spoken word required the least time, five to eight hours, since performance quality hinged more on individual artistry and stage presence than ensemble coherence (Cliff Mogaka, personal communication, 16 November 2025). These observations mirror Williamon and Valentine's (2000) and Krampe and Ericsson's (1996) conclusions

that task complexity dictates the effective threshold of deliberate practice. Genre-specific rehearsal planning, therefore, becomes an essential factor in achieving consistent quality across diverse musical forms.

Perceptions of rehearsal adequacy revealed an interesting contrast between directors and performers. Many directors expressed frustration with limited rehearsal windows imposed by academic timetables, citing insufficient time to polish phrasing, dynamics, and stage discipline before festival performances. Yusuf, a director, stated that, “in the first weeks of rehearsals, there was less time because students had to attend to their regular classes and late on squeeze sometime in the evening for the rehearsals that made it had to train the crew on demanding items such as street dance and folk dances (Yusuf, personal communication, 16 November 2025). Performers, however, emphasized that rehearsal efficiency, not necessarily duration, was the defining feature of preparedness. They valued rehearsals that integrated targeted corrections, sectional breakdowns, and constructive feedback over those that merely extended in length. This shared awareness reflects Zhukov’s (2009) observation that efficient, goal-oriented rehearsal structures foster both technical growth and interpretive depth. Performers’ emphasis on motivation, leadership, and rehearsal clarity reinforces the principle that quality emerges from focus rather than fatigue, a central tenet of Deliberate Practice Theory.



Figur 2. Festival performance 2 (Photo: Nyangoga, 2025)

Beyond time and genre, the management of human dynamics within the rehearsal space emerged as a decisive factor in determining performance outcomes. Directors who exhibited effective man management, the ability to coordinate personalities, sustain morale, and maintain discipline, achieved more productive and harmonious rehearsals. Performers repeatedly highlighted the importance of directors who fostered respect, patience, and collaborative energy rather than relying on authoritative control. According to Cicila, group leader, the mean machine, groups led by directors who communicated expectations clearly, delegated roles efficiently, and provided constructive criticism without discouragement demonstrated smoother cohesion and higher confidence levels on stage. This mirrors Chan's (2020) assertion that leadership strategies directly influence the rehearsal atmosphere, shaping performers' motivation and receptiveness to correction. In this way, successful man management served as the emotional and psychological infrastructure upon which effective rehearsal techniques were built.

The findings illustrate that the most successful festival performances arose from well-timed, deliberate, and feedback-centered rehearsal processes. Quality was not a direct function of rehearsal length but of how rehearsal time was designed and experienced. As Hill (2023) observed in his study on improving the rehearsal experience, time becomes pedagogically meaningful only when it encourages critical listening, creative problem-solving, and reflective adjustment. In the Kisii University Music Festival context, ensembles that adopted these principles not only achieved higher adjudication scores but also demonstrated greater confidence and expressiveness on stage, an affirmation that timing the tune involves more than scheduling hours; it requires orchestrating learning

Motivation significantly influences the quality of performances in festivals such as the Kisii University Music Festival. Although rehearsals create the technical structure for learning, rewards, both intrinsic and extrinsic, shape how fully performers commit to that structure. Sloboda (2005) notes that musicians demonstrate stronger preparedness when they anticipate recognition or achievement. These scholarly views show that rewards influence not only effort but also the quality of artistic engagement.

In both the Kisii University festival and global festival contexts, performers are motivated by a mixture of formal rewards such as academic marks, certificates, and trophies, as well as informal incentives like peer approval, cultural pride, and the joy of artistic growth. International studies (e.g., Williamon & Thompson, 2006) similarly observe that performers worldwide respond positively to opportunities for visibility, reputation building, and career advancement. This interplay between structured rehearsals and the motivational climate contributes to greater ensemble cohesion and elevated performance standards.



Figur 3. Festival performances 2 (Photo: Nyangoga, 2025)

Personal communications within Kisii University further support these scholarly insights. Manu, theatre director, observed that students rehearse more consistently when they clearly understand what they stand to gain, be it marks, awards, or audience appreciation (Personal communication, 15/11/2025). A student performer echoed this, noting that the anticipation of presenting before peers and guests creates the drive to attend rehearsals even when fatigue sets in (Personal communication, 18/11/2025). These experiences demonstrate that rewards and a clear endgame strengthen commitment, making them essential components of high-quality festival performances.

## 6. Conclusion

Rehearsals are very important for good performances at the Kisii University Music Festival, but they are not the only thing that determines how well a team

performs. Even when students practice well, their final performance is also influenced by other factors, such as how motivated they are, how well they work together, the guidance they get from their directors, and what they hope to gain from the festival.

These patterns are not unique to Kisii University. In festivals around the world, good performances come from both strong rehearsals and the motivations that push performers to give their best, such as the desire to win, make their culture proud, impress audiences, or grow professionally. The quality of performances in both the Kisii University festival and global festivals depends not only on the amount of rehearsal time, but also on the goals, energy, and encouragement that performers bring into the process. When rehearsal is supported by clear purpose and strong motivation, the results on stage are much better.

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