

# Repertoire Selection in Music Education

## *What is Good Music?*

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Selecting repertoire in our classroom can be a challenging and time-consuming task. At every level in a given musical journey, the selection process is the same. In the root of repertoire selection, educators must always examine their teaching philosophy. What is your purpose? For me, it's simple; to help students realize their potential and bring out their best. This, of course, is only the beginning. The real question is: how can I do this through the music I select and how will my repertoire selection benefit my students?

Repertoire selection should not be motivated by a singular objective, such as musical growth. Selecting repertoire for musical growth is a wonderful start, but it's just the beginning. Unfortunately, many directors are also selecting repertoire because of a vision for high ratings and trophies. "My band would sound great on that piece..." If you already know they would sound great, it's very possible that they will also not learn anything from the music-making process. What is your curriculum?

"If what's best for learners is our primary concern, equity of opportunities will be created at the highest levels, not the lowest." -George Couros

### **Transferring Concepts and Prompting the Imagination**

What are concepts? As music educators, we find imaginative ways to teach musical concepts, such as rhythm, phrasing, key centers, and much more. Music that has substance helps us explore these concepts. Musical selection with the sole purpose of teaching musical concepts can be very dangerous as well. Music must prompt imagination, creativity, and connection (individual transfers).

Personally, I believe that music must have elements of motion. Many speak of forward motion, but I challenge teachers to find repertoire that moves in all directions. Where is the music taking you? What kind of energy does the repertoire portray? Weight? Will the director and students become better musicians? I find it difficult to find substance in repertoire that does not evoke a sense of cause/effect, contour/shape, and anticipation/resolution.

### **Music Explores Tradition and Culture**

Music represents the soul. Music selection for the pure purpose of checking a list is not wise. Music with substance explores community and reflects the values of inclusion, diversity, and equity. Music MUST represent our community. Our community is world-wide. Music also instigates world exploration and travel. What can we learn from our neighbors through music?

I think of musical repertoire as a mirror. Music is a way for a student to see themselves and their neighbors in a different light. Music also allows our students to find common ground and similarities between each other. It allows and teaches us that our culture is reflected through what we do in our daily lives. Music reflects our soul and our community. It is up to us to communicate this reflection to the world. We must express humanity through sound.

### **Inspiring Life-Long Advocates for Music Education**

Does the music we select have the possibility to enrich our students' lives? Does our music have the depth to inspire? Inspiration can lead to a lifelong relationship with music education and performance. If a student's life is enhanced through music under your baton, it's very likely they will want to experience the same electricity for the rest of their lives. Not only is this educational concept critical for the individual, it will help future generations of students. If you're a realist, you will question the concept of finding inspiration through music. A realist will understand that not all students are keen to your musical selections. Educators must change the narrative. I'm not selecting music for your toes to tap, but for your hearts and minds to grow and thrive. Tell a story!

Educators prepare students for the real world. Music education teaches students to value community, creativity, diversity, and helps students realize that striving for and achieving planned goals will benefit their lives in whatever career paths they embark on. An educator's joy comes through student success and accomplishment.

### **Setting the Standard**

Excellence begins with focused attention to the smallest details. Music must have direction and substance. What story is the music telling and how will we explore and express this story? Repertoire selection correlates directly with humanism. Good repertoire teaches you to *listen*. Good repertoire *unifies*. Good repertoire teaches you to *communicate*. Great repertoire is *sincere and thought-provoking*.

What does an educator do to motivate? The most effective and long-lasting method for motivation and inspiration comes through creation. Good repertoire takes time to create, internalize, and express.