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Wind Ensemble Curriculum Catalog and Applications in the Classroom

Abigail Brown

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Introduction

As a future band director, it is important that I provide my students with music from the band repertoire that will develop their musical abilities and increase their knowledge of music. Upon being hired by a school district, band directors gain access to the school's music library, which was compiled by past directors. It can be difficult to sort through a new music library and find educationally stimulating music for the students in an efficient manner. For this reason, I have listened to in their entirety and created a catalog of 250 well-known and high quality pieces of band literature based on four criterions: difficulty, genre, period, and elements of music.

The first criterion I catalogued was level of difficulty. The capabilities of high school bands differ greatly; some are capable of playing college-level music while others perform simple pieces. For this reason, the first organizer in the database is to group the pieces by difficulty, so that the director can quickly locate repertoire options that are appropriate for their ensemble. Each piece in the band repertoire is given a grade of difficulty from 1-7 with 1 being the easiest pieces and 7 being professional level pieces.

The second criterion I used was the genre of the piece. The genre is the musical style and structure of a given piece.

The third criterion used to catalog was the period of the piece. The periods used will be: Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and 20th/21st Century. Although the modern band is a convention of the 20th Century, many pieces were written in the style or are transcriptions of works created in the earlier time periods.

Medieval: 800-1400 AD

Renaissance: 1400-1600 AD

Baroque: 1600-1750 AD

Classical: 1750-1830 AD

Romantic: 1830-1914 AD

20th/21st Century : 1914-present

The fourth and defining criterion of this catalog will be to assess every piece in the database for musical value. Students learn from high quality music that teaches them one or more elements of music. I will be assessing music to determine which element(s) each particular piece could best teach students, and color-coding my database according to these elements. The seven elements of music I will be using are based upon those outlined by the book, *Teaching Musicianship in the High School Band* by Joseph A. Labuta. These elements are: melody, harmony, texture, meter, rhythm, timbre, and form. Using these elements of music, I will create a holistic curriculum for my students so that by their completion of four years in high school band, they will have a comprehensive understanding of music.

Descriptions of seven elements of music:

Melody: a meaningful pattern of notes

Harmony: structure of simultaneous pitches into chords

Texture: the manner in which multiple musical lines are treated by a composer

Meter: the grouping of beats in recurring patterns determined by accents

Rhythm: the duration of pitches in time

Timbre: the distinct tone quality of each individual instrument

Form: standard patterns of musical phrases

In Ohio, the Ohio Music Education Association classifies ensembles by the difficulty of music they perform using letters AA, A, B, C. By an approximate measure, AA ensembles are expected to perform grade 5-6 music, A 4-5, B 3-4, and C 2-3. In order to put my research into practice, I created a sample concert program for each OMEA class that would be a realistic program reflecting what students would perform at an OMEA contest event.

Because one of my major goals for this project was to research ways in which to create a curriculum, I also included a four-year plan in the Class B group to display how an educator would teach all of the elements of music and give students exposure to most genres and time periods of repertoire during the duration of a high school band student career.

Completing this project has given me a deeper grasp on the music I will be using throughout my career. Although the challenges of programming meaningful and varying repertoire are great, by using this database I have created, I have a solid starting point for programming long-term when I teach my own ensemble. I will continue to add to this database as I teach, and use the information I have collected to make the best decisions for my student's musical education. For me, this database is an invaluable organizational resource that will save me time when I program for a year of music at a time. An unexpected result of this project was the idea to save my concert information in this format as I teach over time. By tracking the genres, styles, and elements of music I use long-term, I can keep track of successful teaching patterns. This project brings together the worlds music and education in a way that will be useful for years to come.