



Choir Virtual Learning

Women's Choir/Choosing Literature

May 14, 2020



Lesson: May 14, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will be introduced to programming music for performances.

Bell Work:

Think about the music that you perform each year and answer the following questions.

- Do you ever wonder why your director picked those pieces?
- Do you ever feel like you would want to offer some suggestions about what you would like to sing?
- How do you think your director makes those decisions?

In this lesson, we will discuss the elements that contribute to musical choices for a school year.





Getting Started!

Initially you may be wondering why you are being exposed to this lesson. It's probably safe to say that very few who view this lesson will become a music teacher or have to program a concert. Even though you may not plan to be a music teacher, you are a singer in an ensemble, and knowing how and why your director is choosing the music will help you understand the pieces more, as well as allow you to support your director in the programming process.

Choosing music is one of the most difficult and important jobs for the director. Some directors enjoy choosing music, while others agonize over each choice as they work to get the right pieces for each concert.

Let's Start At the Beginning

The beginning of the school year is a critical time to assess the singer's abilities. What are their strengths and what can they improve upon? What are their attitudes towards singing? Your director is assessing each individual voice and placing them where they sound best in the ensemble. The capabilities of the ensemble will grow as the year progresses, but there are several things to consider at the beginning of a school year. The main objective is to choose literature that:

- Is well within the choir's capabilities.
- Builds on their strengths but also challenges them to improve on weaker elements.
- Is something they can learn quickly and experience success early.

It's important to build confidence and trust at the beginning of the year!

Learning Targets

Once you have begun the choral journey, your director has ideas in mind about how you can improve. Learning targets are set for each concert and music is chosen that will help you reach those targets. These targets will become increasingly more difficult over the course of the year, and that is usually reflected in the music. Why are MSHSAA contests the second semester? We know ensembles will be doing their best singing towards the end of the year and we work from the very beginning with the end in mind. Ask yourself what you think the learning targets are in the pieces you are singing. How do those targets change and progress as the year moves forward?



Time of Year/Themed Concerts

Your director must take several things into consideration outside of the ensemble's ability and learning targets. One of those elements is the time of year the music will be performed. Music performed in the Fall will be much different than music performed in the Winter. Many times directors may choose to adopt a theme or a motive for music chosen. Themes might include:

- Holidays such as Veteran's Day or Christmas
- Seasons- Fall, Winter, or Spring
- Personal themes such as life, love, singing, making music etc.
- Concerts centered around large choral works
- Pop music/musical theater concerts

Contrasting Styles

It's important when choosing music to make sure it all doesn't sound the same. We all have a tendency to like a certain type of music, but it is important to explore other styles, cultures and languages in order to get a full understanding of music from around the world. In choosing music for contest, the requirement is that the music chosen contrasts in style. Here are some examples of how music is contrasting.

- Languages
- Cultures
- Tempo
- A cappella vs. accompanied
- The use of different instruments
- Time periods of when the music was composed
- Styles/Genres of music



Entertainment Value

Music classes are one of the few classes where you will be performing what you learn in class for an audience in public. When your social studies teacher is teaching you about WWII, he/she does not have to take into account that you will be giving a performance of that information to the public. Directors must take into account that the music not only has to be engaging for you to learn and perform, but it will also need to be something an audience will enjoy as well. It is important to remember that you cannot please everyone. As a singer, you will not always enjoy every piece of music in your folder, but you will enjoy something you sing. The audience must be viewed similarly in that they may not enjoy every piece on the concert, but there should be something they do enjoy. A good phrase to consider is, "Something for everybody." Keeping that in mind when choosing literature is helpful.

Think About It!

Think about the information you've learned so far. Recount some facts regarding each one of these bullet points.

- Ensemble Capabilities
- Learning Targets
- Time of year/Themed Concerts
- Contrasting Styles
- Entertainment Value



Have you ever thought about any of these elements before?

Do you have a greater understanding of the process your director uses to choose literature for your group?

You Are the Director!



It's your turn to wave the baton! Think about your women's choir class at your school. You are now their director and it's your turn to plan a concert for them. Use the information you've learned in this lesson to choose 5 pieces of music to perform and send your director a program listing those songs. Make sure to keep in mind that it's not just music you like or you think sounds good, it's music that your choir can do successfully, contrasts in style, will challenge your group to learn new concepts and be engaging for your group and your audience. Have fun and best of luck!

You can go to <https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/school-choir-music.jsp> to search for choral music. Some also have listening and music viewing options as well.

Thank you!

