Choosing Band Literature for Success: A Structural Approach to Literature Selection

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Abstract

The music performed in school ensembles takes on a special pedagogical significance, and selecting appropriate literature is an essential aspect of music education. Despite such importance, novice music teachers often struggle with choosing literature for their ensembles (Briskey, 2006; Conway, 2003; Peterson, 2005; Schmidt & Canser, 2006), particularly with the added complexities of festivals and concerts (Conway, 2003; Peterson, 2005). Reames (2001) highlighted two general approaches to evaluating music for inclusion in the curriculum: technical and aesthetic.

Technical considerations focus on pedagogical benefits and performance challenges and may include selecting music that provides opportunities for growth or that is an appropriate difficulty level for the students. Aesthetic considerations, in contrast, addresses aspects of the music that appeal to listeners. Craftsmanship, ingenuity in musical development, and originality all are aesthetic aspects of music that may contribute to literature selection (Dean, 2011; Grant, 1993; Towner, 2011). Both technical and aesthetic considerations are essential to successful literature selection, and this article addresses a few essential factors common to literature selection.

This article synthesizes research and pedagogy related to both technical and aesthetic approaches and provides a structural approach to selecting band literature. Specific musical examples are included to provide contextualization.

Keywords*: repertoire selection, teacher planning, curriculum, selecting music*

Introduction

The joy associated with music-making and musical experience inspired many young musicians to become music educators, and performing music keeps many students engaged and motivated. Therefore, the music we perform takes on a special significance, and selecting appropriate literature is an essential aspect of music education (Apfelsdtadt, 2000; Dean, 2011; Reames, 2001; Sheldon, 2000). The selection of music literature is symbiotic with teaching and learning, as the literature we select determines the musical concepts addressed in the classroom. Student needs, culture, and musical enjoyment also influence literature selection. Furthermore, repertoire selection engages students in music (Greco, 1997), communicates value and direction to an ensemble (Apfelsdtadt, 2000), and widens the musical experiences of students (Goetze, 2000).

Despite such importance, novice music teachers often struggle with choosing literature for their ensembles (Briskey, 2006; Conway, 2003; Hopkins, 2013; Peterson, 2005; Schmidt & Canser, 2006), particularly with the added complexities of festivals and concerts (Conway, 2003; Peterson, 2005). Factors that enhance the challenges of repertoire selection include a lack of quality resources (Dean, 2011) or the absence of a structured approach to literature selection (Forbes, 2001). In order to select literature fitting what Apfelstadt (2000) described as (a) high quality, (b) teachable, and (c) appropriate, band directors may wish to develop an understanding of literature selection and an approach that leads to student success.

Reames (2001) highlighted two general approaches to evaluating music for inclusion in the curriculum: technical and aesthetic. Technical considerations focus on pedagogical benefits and performance challenges. Some examples include selecting music that provides opportunities for growth, or that is an appropriate level for the students. Aesthetic considerations, in contrast, address aspects of the music that appeal to listeners. Craftsmanship, ingenuity in musical development, and originality are all aesthetic aspects of music that may contribute to literature

selection (Dean, 2011; Grant, 1993; Towner, 2011). Both technical and aesthetic considerations are essential to successful literature selection, and this article addresses a few main topics that contribute to successfully choosing repertoire for band.

Technical Concerns

When selecting literature for an ensemble, directors may wish to begin thinking about technical considerations at the most obvious source: the students (Hopkins, 2013). This means identifying both strengths and weaknesses in the ensemble as a whole and in individual performers (Grant, 1993; Woike, 1990). For example, players in a young band may have a strong sense of rhythm, but lack the listening skills to balance or blend well. With individuals, a student may have excellent notation reading skills, but have limitations with range. Using varying methods such as fundamental drills, rehearsal recordings, and conversations with mentors, directors may be able to determine strengths and weaknesses regarding specific instrument technique concerns and overall ensemble concepts.

Once band directors have evaluated student musicianship, they might set goals for ensemble development, taking into consideration performance units. Ensemble directors might begin by verifying district or campus curricular expectations before selecting music (Peterson, 2005). Furthermore, each performance opportunity will have unique requirements to consider when planning instruction. Finally, the performance dates, combined with outside calendar considerations, will determine how much instructional time is available for teaching musical concepts through the selected literature (Grant, 1993; Peterson, 2005).

In addition to looking for broad musical concepts, band directors may also examine the music for both generic and specific difficulties. Examining difficulty may help to gather a holistic sense of the piece (Freer, 2009; Hopkins, 2013). During consideration of potential repertoire, directors may wish to begin with fundamentals such as notes and rhythms, before moving on to more advanced concerns like balance or intonation (Menghini, 1999). Furthermore,

carefully examining the score for unexpected sources of frustration, such as changes in technical difficulty in the inner voices, unusual split parts, or scoring driven balance concerns, may facilitate directors in evaluating literature difficulty (Bauer, 1996; Menghini, 1999).

Ideally, students should experience a diet of divergent difficulty levels with music rooted in the optimal balance between difficulty and accessibility, a key aspect of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Keay, 2018; Kirchner, Bloom, & Skutnick-Henley, 2008). Flow is a term for optimal experience when "people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4) and has been regularly documented in the arts, sports, and some occupations (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Sinnamon, Moran, & O'Connell, 2012), with musicians often experiencing flow (Jaros, 2008; Sinnamon et al., 2012). Of the nine antecedents to flow, finding a balance between perceived task challenge and perceived personal skills may hold the most importance in repertoire selection. (Hopkins, 2013; Jaros, 2008; Keay, 2018; Kraus, 2003).

One of the principal methods humans use to seek flow is to adjust either the perceived challenge of a task or the perceived strength of the skills needed to complete a task (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Researchers identified four quadrants of pairings between perceptions of challenge and personal skills; (a) low challenge/low skill, which leads to apathy; (b) high challenge/low skill, which leads to anxiety; (c) low challenge/high skill, which leads to boredom; and (d) high challenge and high skill, which leads to flow (Fong, Zaleski, & Leach, 2015; Jaros, 2008; Kirchner et al., 2008; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Researchers have found that balancing perceptions of challenge and skill was significantly related to experiencing flow (Bakker, 2005; Fong et al., 2015; Fullagar, Knight, & Sovern, 2013). Furthermore, Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) noted the relationship between challenge/skill balance to other antecedents necessary to experience flow, and therefore they considered such balance to be critical.

Specific to music, Fullagar et al. (2013) found that challenge/skill balance accounted for 47% of the variance in performance anxiety and that as musicians perceived gains in skills, this balance became even more important in experiencing flow. Furthermore, the wider the gap between perceived challenges and skills, the greater the likelihood of experiencing performance anxiety (Fullagar et al., 2013). Keay (2018) suggested that striving to find an equilibrium between perceptions of challenges and skills might allow music educators to avoid overwhelming or boring students. In the flow model both challenges and skills are perceptual, and therefore subjective (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Fong et al., 20015; Kraus, 2003; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) and the difficulty of defining challenges and skills may inhibit the development of classroom environments conducive to flow (Fong et al., 2015; Kraus, 2003). As such, an intentional approach to addressing teacher activities heavily influenced by challenge/skill balance, such as repertoire selection, may facilitate teacher decision making.

Researchers concur that the learning context influences flow experiences among students (Clementson, 2019; Fullagar et al., 2013; Jaros, 2008; Keay, 2018; Kraus, 2003; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Also, researchers indicate that the mixed perceptions of skills inherent to any musical ensemble may be a barrier to flow (Clementson, 2019; Kraus, 2003). Kraus (2003) found that members of a college wind ensemble experienced flow states related to the challenge/skill balance differently, as graduate students quickly entered the boredom quadrant (low challenge/high skill) while some undergraduates struggled to accurately perform their parts (high challenge/low skill). Clementson (2019) examined flow in a middle school band setting and found that differentiation by the band director alleviated flow inhibition created by varying skill perceptions. Furthermore, students were more likely to experience flow when rehearsing concert music (Clementson, 2019; Krause, 2003), earlier in their musical careers (Sinnamon et

al., 2012), as they become more comfortable with a piece of music (Jaros, 2008; Keay, 2018), and before they become bored with the rehearsed music (Jaros, 2008).

Similarly, in Vygotsky's (1962; 1930-1934/1978) sociocultural approach to learning, it is essential that instruction lead students beyond where they would be capable of learning independently. One of the core concepts suggested by Vygotsky is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the range from the maximum level of independent performance and the maximum performance with the aid of an adult or more competent peer (Schunk, 2008; Vygotsky, 1962; 1930-1934/1978). To this end, the ZPD is primarily connected to student growth (Vygotsky, 1930-1934/1978) and represents areas of learning or skills the learner has yet to master at a level to execute independently.

In order to effectively lead students into the ZPD, Vygotsky (1962) suggested that instructors should identify students' base level of understanding of content, the maximum level of understanding students can navigate independently, and the maximum students can understand with the aid of a competent helper. Quality instruction, therefore, is that which continually drives students beyond their individual mastery with the help of learned guides. Other scholars have extended this idea into the term scaffolding, or the intentional structuring of the environment by a qualified other that facilitates students' focus and efforts on tasks that would be impossible without assistance (Schunk, 2008).

Therefore, student growth may occur during the continual rebalancing of the difficulty found in selected literature and student musical skills (Hopkins, 2013; Keay, 2018; Kirchner et al., 2008). Below is an illustration of both flow and the ZPD (Fig. 1).
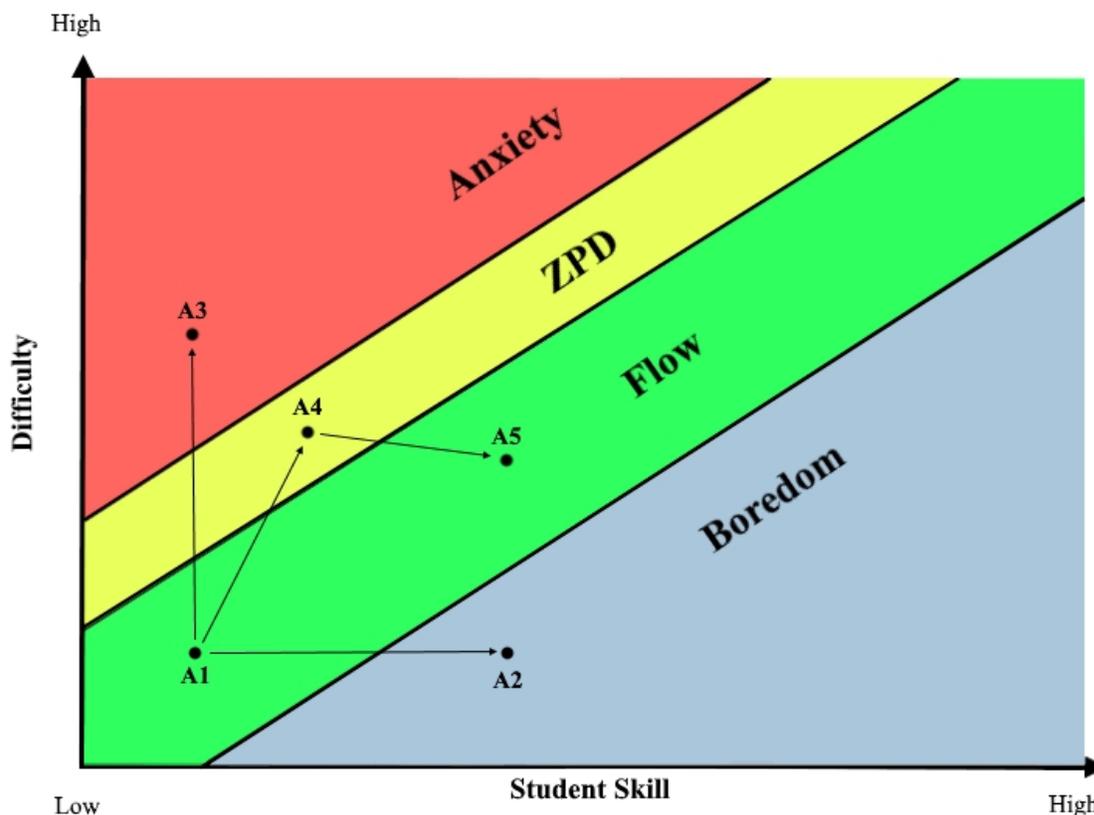
Figure 1. Flow and the zone of proximal development as depicted by student skill and task difficulty.

Beginning students often have low-level musical skills and may initially perform music that has a low difficulty level, represented by A1. If the difficulty remains unchanged as skills improve, students may experience boredom (A2). In contrast, attempting to perform music with difficulty far outpacing student skill development may lead to anxiety and frustration (A3). For future growth, band directors can balance difficulty level with skills so that students spend some time in the zone of proximal development (A4) to increase various musical skills before returning to an optimal balance of difficulty and skills (A5) (Hopkins, 2013; Keay, 2018; Kirchner et al., 2008).

Therefore, presenting students with music of multiple difficulty levels may provide the opportunity for growth, as instruction touches upon Vygotsky's ZPD for students before returning to flow for reinforcement (Hopkins, 2013). In contrast, music educators may wish to be aware of the deleterious effects on musicianship and engagement over-programming may present. Knowing the musical skills of students may influence the efficacy of the selection process and allow teachers to select music that balances effective use of ZPD and flow (Hopkins, 2013; Keay, 2018; Kirchner et al., 2008)

Factors of Instrumentation

Each instrument family has specific idiosyncrasies to consider when deciding on the appropriateness of music literature, and directors often intentionally choose literature that further develops these mechanical aspects of performance while taking care to balance out the demands of each selection. Furthermore, flex arrangements with variable scoring exist for many school level pieces, and in some cases, ensemble directors may obtain permission to rewrite parts from the copyright holders.

Brass

Endurance may be an overlooked aspect of brass performance among non-brass ensemble directors, and it is important to avoid stretching brass players beyond what their lips can handle. When fatigue sets in, brass players not only lose accuracy and tone production but also develop bad habits to try to force notes to happen (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009a; Steinmetz et al., 2014; Whitener, 2016). Selecting a multi-movement work or aligning pieces across a program may require an accurate understanding of endurance. For example, *Sparks* (Balmages, 2007) is a deceptively long piece for a young band that features brass more heavily towards the end.

Additionally, performance range is a serious concern, particularly among fledgling brass players. Playing in different ranges involves different demands of the facial muscles required for forming an embouchure (Woldendorp, Boschma, Boonstra, Arendzen, & Reneman, 2016).

Ideally, it is better to avoid going far beyond where students can play with a centered tone, and music educators may wish to take care when stretching and developing students' range (Whitener, 2016). As an example, forced tones from melody line trumpets may distract from the overall quality of the performance. Straining for high notes may lead to bad habits among brass performers (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009a; Steinmetz et al., 2014; Whitener, 2016) and Steinmetz et al. (2014) found a stronger relationship between the frequency of embouchure disorders and performance in higher ranges. For example, the second movement of *Three Ayres from Gloucester* (Stuart, 1969) contains horn parts with Fs and Gs at the top of the staff several times in the first 16 measures that may stretch young players beyond the appropriate difficulty for success and future growth.

Figure 2. Three Ayres from Gloucester (Stuart, 1969), F. Horn part, measures 70–77.

Furthermore, range concerns are not limited to only the high brass. In Steinmetz et al. (2014), 40% of participants played trombone or tuba and were included in findings regarding range. Many marches by Karl King feature euphonium/baritone parts that demand a more expanded range from students than they may have previously encountered. Similarly, some tuba parts may require notes above or below the comfortable range of inexperienced musicians.

The technical challenges centered on flexibility and accuracy share a symbiotic relationship among the brass family (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009a). As many of the accuracy concerns rely on accurate partials, examining potential program selections for frequent or dramatic leaps may inform the decision-making process. When combined with passages requiring extensive fingering, accuracy may become even more challenging.

Woodwinds

Technical challenges readily come to mind when thinking about difficult passages for woodwinds. Each woodwind instrument will have combinations of notes that involve awkward fingerings. However; fast passages that stray from common diatonic tone centers are worth discussing further. Clarinet fingerings from A4 to B4 are perhaps the prototypical example, and a considerable amount of literature exists concerning the topic of crossing the "break" on clarinet (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009b; Tavarez, 2005; Westphal, 1998; Woolery, 2011). *España Cañi* (Marquina & Longfield, 1998) offers an excellent example in measure 12, where the 2nd and 3rd clarinets have a fast passage that transitions between A4 and B4 (Figure 3) while the 1st clarinet, flute, and oboe part are an octave higher, which requires considerably less complicated fingerings. This passage will challenge young clarinetists to achieve note accuracy and vertical alignment.

Figure 3. España Cañi (Marquina & Longfield, 1998) measures 10–14.

According to Almeida, Chow, Smith & Wolfe (2009), technical passages that require changing more than two fingers result in slower and more inconsistent movement among the fingers. Each additional finger added increases the possibility for finger mistiming, and eventually wrong notes. The combinations of key signatures and transpositions may exacerbate fingering problems (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009b). For instance, alto/bari saxes will spend much of their early years working with keys, such as concert Bb and F, that require the use of naturals and

sharps. Once the music moves to keys that involve reading flats, for example, concert Db, some students may struggle at first. *Colonel Bogey* (Alford & Glover, 2000) is in concert Db and generously mixes concert G natural and concert Gb throughout the alto sax 1 part. Working through this challenge, particularly through mastering alternative fingerings, may help growing players to improve their reading skills (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009b; Koster, 2010; Westphal, 1998).

As with brass instruments, the range may be a concern with woodwinds. While it may be less likely that woodwinds will initially develop bad embouchure habits due to incremental increases in range, there are several tone and intonation concerns in the extreme registers (Garofalo, 1996; Whyte, 2016). Low notes on saxophone and high notes for flute and clarinet are common offenders, as they may be challenging to control (Garofalo, 1996). Additionally, altissimo notes may have different tuning tendencies due in part to the necessary differences in sound production (Ely & Van Deuren, 2009b). The compositional nature of a piece may ignore considerations such as range, which can prove problematic. Many pieces for inexperienced bands, such as *West Highlands Sojourn* (Sheldon, 1993), have flutes and trumpets written in octaves across ranges where the natural tuning tendencies of each instrument conflict.

Percussion

Percussionists manage the most diverse selection of equipment in a band program, and it is vital that directors either own or have ready access to the instruments any given musical selection requires (Menghini, 1999). In many cases, directors may overlook percussion instruments when initially examining the score. To combat such concerns, numerous publishers provide an instrument list at the beginning of the conductor's scores for fast perusal to ascertain if percussion parts may require instruments that are absent from the band hall. *Abracadabra* (Ticheli, 2005) features a vibraslap solo early in the work and would be impossible to perform authentically without having access to a vibraslap.

Similarly, knowing the requirement for the number of percussionists needed to cover the parts may help to avoid missing sounds/parts and unneeded stress among the students. Composers may combine multiple percussion instruments into a single part, and a score that misleadingly lists four percussion parts may require six to seven students to play the concurrently sounding instruments. Conversely, some composers may combine their percussion parts into one line so that one student can cover both parts. Understanding these technical requirements such as the number of players, and physical equipment changes such as switching instruments, locations in the ensemble setup, or sticks/mallets changes, will lead to greater success.

Hillbrick (1999) found that some percussion methods courses fail to address all relevant percussion instruments and that some directors expressed feeling unprepared to teach instruments when they lack experience. For instance, Austin (2006) found that approximately half of the participant schools included instruction on drum set or ethnic percussion as part of their methods course, and Hillbrick (1999) found that only 24.4% of directors surveyed received drumset instruction in percussion methods. Like many of the other concerns, this does not preclude performing the work; however, directors may wish to familiarize themselves with the performance practice of uncommon instruments. Without proper instruction, students may experience frustration outside of the optimal flow/ZPD balance (Hopkins, 2013).

Finally, knowing the engagement level of percussionists during each individual piece may allow for overall program selections that engage students equitably. Selecting one march and three lyrical pieces might leave a large percussion section with an abundance of free time, which presents both educational and behavioral concerns. Instead, directors may choose to select programs that contain music that will simultaneously provide musical growth opportunities and engagement for all students.

Aesthetic Concerns

In contrast to technical concerns, aesthetic concerns may be less definitive. Therefore, when considering aesthetics for literature selection, ensemble directors may wish to begin with the three core audiences of any school music performance: the students, the parents/community, and themselves. Both past and future aesthetic experiences inform literature selection, and no student enters the band hall completely devoid of musical exposure (Radocy & Boyle, 2003). Whether it be through their favorite recording artist, soundtrack, YouTube, or other source, students are continuously exposed to music from an early age and have musical attitudes, expectations, and preferences through experience. Such background exposure can affect students' music preferences (Fung, 1996). These preferences, in turn, may influence initial aesthetic experiences. Researchers noted that familiarity affects preference (Fung, 1996; Greco, 1997), and Thomas (2016) suggested using either familiar music or music with familiar elements to engage and motivate students. Band directors may wish to develop an understanding of the students' musical experiences to develop connections between prior musical experiences and those found in the music classroom.

Additionally, music selection may connect to the development of aesthetic experiences once students are in the classroom setting. Keeping track of general considerations, such as tonal centers, overall styles, form, and craftsmanship (dynamic contrast, orchestration, etc.) across the entire concert program, may help to offer students various musical experiences. Such varied experiences, in turn, may provide the opportunity for students with differing musical preferences to enjoy music that contains familiar elements while also expanding students' musical diets to include material that may be different or new. Band directors may wish to develop a flexible method, such as a dedicated white/poster board with essential musical information about their selections, for building concert programs that facilitate holistic examination of musical characteristics.

Knowing the students as both individuals and musicians can provide a meaningful foundation for aesthetic music selection. European standards of aesthetic worth and beauty dominate music education in the USA (Bond, 2017; Johnson, 2004). However; schools are increasingly diverse, and research indicates that knowing the cultures and music that students engage with outside of class can enhance meaningful musical experiences for students (Bond & Russell, 2019; Palkki, 2015; Shaw, 2016). Culturally responsive education (CRE) involves multiple perspectives, knowing students/parents, understanding the multiple contexts at work in students' lives, and affirming these varying realities to connect personal identity to new learning (Bond, 2017; Kelly-McHale, 2019; McKoy, MacLeod, Walter, & Nolker, 2017). For this paper, contexts are collections of elements, such as time, space, place, and experience that shape students' and teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and opinions. Bond (2017) described CRE as focusing on recognizing students' socio/cultural capital and engaging the use of said capital in the contexts of teaching and learning.

While music is clearly a part of culture (McKoy et al., 2017), and engaging culture is a key aspect of CRE (Bond, 2017), culturally relevant repertoire selection is less commonly addressed in music teacher education programs than other core components of CRE (Bond & Russell, 2019). The teacher may communicate opinions, such as beliefs about cultural worth, through repertoire selection (Kelly-McHale, 2019). Furthermore, Bond (2017) suggested that integrating repertoire from multiple cultures may lead to greater student engagement and enrollment. Palkki (2015) found a strong desire to perform music relevant to their cultural contexts amongst the participants and Greco (1997) found that when students selected literature that was relevant to their own musical experiences, they practiced more and stayed in the band longer. Additionally, including music from the various cultural backgrounds of both the classroom and the country may increase student exposure to, and understanding of, young people, unlike themselves (Shaw, 2016).

To this end, directors may wish to cultivate an understanding of students' current levels of musical exposure and contextualization (e.g., what music students listen to and identify with – both personally and culturally). Music educators may regularly discuss music unrelated to the classroom experience with their students as one way of developing rapport and personal knowledge. Additionally, McKoy et al. (2017) found a noticeable disconnect between teacher backgrounds and student backgrounds that may present biases in repertoire selection. Kelly-McHale (2019) further expounded upon the idea of biases by suggesting that training and experience may also increase the disconnect between teachers and students. Such biases may require intentional effort to bridge the cultural contexts of teachers and students.

Once music educators develop a baseline of understanding regarding their students as people and musicians, they may select literature that celebrates cultural contexts, increases exposure to varying musical forms/styles, and allows for continued musical development. Shaw (2016) found that students appreciated opportunities to study music from their personal contexts, but also believed that literature selection was a valuable tool to incorporate other contexts into the classroom setting. The variety of performances during a school year provides ample opportunities for teachers to include the diverse musical selections necessary to apply CRE to choosing literature.

Similarly, parents, administrators, and community members who attend school ensemble performances often evaluate performances based on aesthetic criteria. Selecting music that engages multiple listeners through disparate musical characteristics may improve their listening experience. Directors might take into consideration listener expectations regarding music. For instance, knowing the cultural backgrounds of audiences may inform literature selection. Liu, Simpkins, and Lin (2018) found that positive parent perceptions of the inclusion of cultural content and the presence of cultural respect positively predicted measures of parent engagement with the examined activities. One participant in Shaw (2016) commented on how the selected

music resonated with her stepdad, and in turn, further resonated with her own identity. In communities with large Latino/Latina populations, the inclusion of culturally relevant music, such as direct examples like mariachi or inspired literature like *La Fiesta Mexicana* (Reed, 1954), may engage audiences more effectively (Schmidt & Smith, 2017).

Moreover, directors may use literature selection as an educational device for the audience. Participants in Shaw (2016) suggested that the literature their choir rehearsed and performed could educate about cultures other than one's own, and through learning about other cultures, people reflect and examine their own. Such exposure may also translate to general audience members, thus providing greater exposure to more varied cultural contexts. By carefully selecting repertoire that highlights cultural contrast, music teachers may expand the horizons and musical knowledge of parents, administrators, and community members. To revisit the previous example of *La Fiesta Mexicana*, Reed (1954) created the work after a period of extensive study and composition in Mexico, and the majority of the melodies and themes found in the piece are from folk music transcribed or collected in 1948. By performing the music and presenting the authenticity of the melodies, as well as how Reed transformed them for wind band, a music educator might educate the audience and broaden their cultural understanding of music.

Furthermore, it is important to celebrate the diversity of not just the students and communities directly impacted by a concert, but those around the world. In addition to selecting music of assorted styles, selecting music from a diverse body of composers from varying genders, ethnicities, nationalities, and cultures may provide both educational experiences and opportunities for personal connections among all stakeholders. Therefore, directors may help to broaden musical horizons through literature selection.

Finally, personal aesthetic considerations may also influence music selection. Effective conductors spend countless hours studying the music selected for performance before, and

during, a concert cycle. Additionally, conductors traditionally lead their ensembles in musical decision making and developing uniform approaches to selected literature. During such exposure to the music, having literature that moves and speaks to directors may also be valuable and lead to similar improvement in engagement and motivation, as discussed by Thomas (2016). Therefore, band directors may wish to include their own musical preferences as an active part of literature selection. However, balancing personal aesthetic opinions with the needs of other stakeholders remains paramount in order to avoid excessive bias (McKoy et al., 2017).

Structured Approach and Resources

Using a structured approach may facilitate effective literature selection, as both technical and aesthetic concerns are inherently subjective and context-specific. When examining literature, directors may approach technical and aesthetic concerns simultaneously, each with their own specific factors for consideration. Along the technical path, directors may separately identify both the current musical skills and knowledge base of ensemble members as well as the technical demands of the piece under evaluation. Looking at each topic separately may allow for more accurate examination, particularly of student skills.

Furthermore, maintaining consistent formative and summative assessments has been noted as related to student learning (Denis, 2018) and is necessary for an accurate understanding of student skills/knowledge over the year. Once directors identify both student and compositional factors, they can compare them using instrument-specific knowledge, such as the examples mentioned earlier, to determine the challenge/skill balance of the work in their specific contexts. In the case of a band, the context includes things like the other pieces selected for the concert, the number of rehearsal days until the performance, nature of the performance itself (e.g., festival vs. parade), and student responsibility, among others. Lastly, the director may make a technical evaluation of the overall pedagogical appropriateness of the piece.

When evaluating aesthetic concerns, directors may wish to consider the three audiences of students, parents/community, and themselves. Each of these audiences brings their own concepts of identity, musical exposure, and expectations to band performances. Furthermore, such ideas are not isolated from one another. For example, parents who enjoy classical music may expose their children to art music regularly, and this active inclusion may influence the incorporation of the classical musician into students' self-concepts more quickly than students who lack such exposure. For instance, Palkki (2015) found that parent musicing affected student decisions to join the choir.

Similarly, directors may have unrealistic expectations regarding student musical experiences before enrolling in the band, and this may, in turn, shape value judgments regarding literature selection. As directors work towards an understanding of their students, the community, and themselves regarding things like context or identity, they may, in turn, be able to make more accurate appraisals regarding audience perceptions of individual compositions, eventually synthesizing these perceptions into an understanding of their program. Such understanding, in turn, may lead to an aesthetic evaluation for determining the appropriateness of the piece. Finally, directors compare the technical and aesthetic evaluations to determine if the composition is fitting for the ensemble. Figure 3 shows this approach in flow chart form.
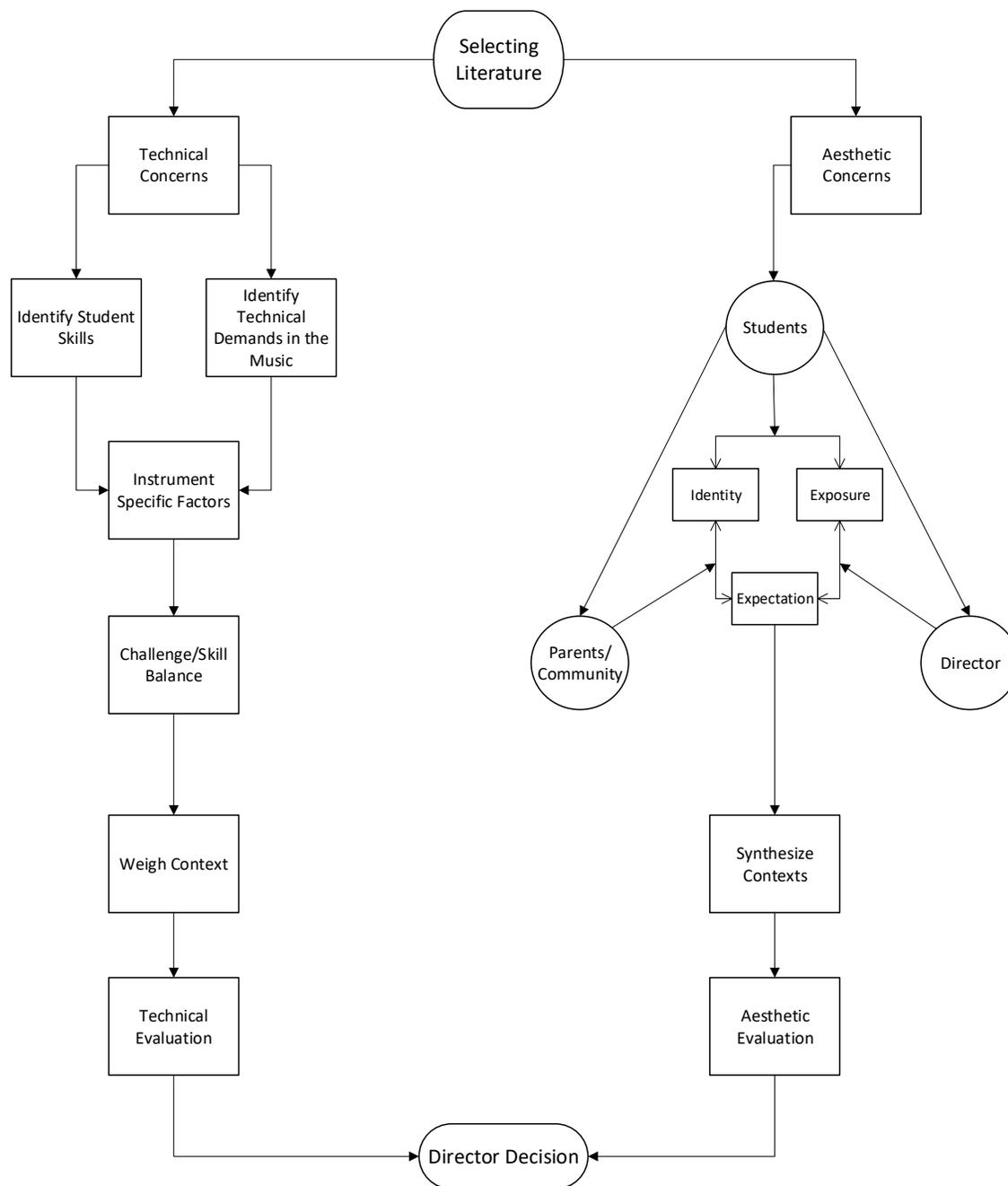
Figure 3. A structured approach to literature selection.

To strive for this balance between the aesthetic needs and experiences of students, parents, administrators, and community members, music educators may want to familiarize themselves with music from many different styles, formats, cultures, and sources. There are several avenues to continue to explore music literature, including audio recordings, books, live concerts, and internet resources. Additionally, many university ensembles regularly produce

high-quality recordings of both established repertoire and new compositions. Publisher recordings, while useful, are often limited to the most recent products and may not present a wide enough range of repertoire for directors (Bauer, 1996).

Conclusion

The phrase "You are what you eat," cliché as it may be, still retains some truth; in music, we are what we perform. The curriculum that students study and the aesthetic experiences they have all begin with the music they prepare. To this end, carefully selecting literature that is technically appropriate and aesthetically meaningful is one of the core responsibilities of music educators.

Technical considerations are easier to codify, and inexperienced music educators may seek to develop a knowledge base from which they can evaluate music for appropriate content and difficulty. In contrast, aesthetic considerations are more ambiguous and require a combination of knowledge regarding both music and stakeholder experiences/expectations, which may take time and effort to develop. Students deserve experiences in the classroom that are technically accessible and musically rewarding. Ultimately, technical and aesthetic considerations overlap, as individual music educators develop a holistic approach to literature selection.

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