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## **We are What We Play: Developing a Programming Philosophy**

American Band College  
of Central Washington University  
July 2, 2025  
1:30–2:20 p.m.

### **Abstract**

As conductors and teachers, our values are directly related to the pieces of music we ask our students and ensemble members to play. The purpose of this session is to offer creative, educational, and practical strategies in selecting programs. Topics include: student and director goals, four and one-year plans, soloists and chamber music, working with limited resources, repertoire beyond promotional materials, representation and expectations within communities, parents, and state contests, and tips on creating a point of view. The session is relevant to all areas of ensemble teaching and performance: choral, orchestral, jazz, band; however, the scope is focused on wind band ensemble concert programming.

### **Foreword: Repertoire as Curriculum**

“Repertoire selection has a major impact on what students will and will not learn, and it should help their musical understanding and appreciation... While it may be an overstatement to say that repertoire is the curriculum, we can all agree that a well-planned repertoire creates the framework for an excellent music curriculum that fosters the musical growth of our students.”

— H. Robert Reynolds  
“Repertoire *Is* the Curriculum,” *Music Educators Journal*, July 2000

### **Guiding Principles**

- Concert programming decisions reflect our values; the repertoire we choose for our ensembles strongly influence the aesthetic concepts that ensemble members—especially students—carry throughout their lives.
- Knowledge of vast amounts of repertoire from a wide variety of composers enables more intentional programming decisions.
- Exposing audiences, players, and communities to underrepresented composers helps advance our repertoire, medium, and relevance to the world.
- Establishing a clear programming philosophy empowers us to design concerts and seasons based on a compelling artistic vision, rather than reacting solely to pressures and expectations that may be external to the music.

## I. Examining and Refining Personal Values

*What past decisions and current instincts reveal about musical values and programming biases*

*Examine your honest reactions*

- Identify qualities in music that move and inspire you (as the conductor-teacher)
- Identify qualities in music that move and inspire people you trust and admire
- Identify qualities in pieces you like to hear (as an audience member)
- Identify qualities in pieces you like to teach and conduct
- Evaluate the correlation between what you believe in and what you choose for your ensemble to study and perform
- Evaluate time spent on studying and listening to unfamiliar or new repertory
- Evaluate diversity of composers, styles, techniques, genres, and themes represented in your programs
- Consider pragmatic constraints that emerge while thinking of repertory ideas
- Evaluate ingredients and nutrients missing from your musical diet (and your students' musical diet)

### **Programming Habits Inventory**

## II. Learning and Finding Repertoire

*What is learned from experiences as a performer, student, conductor, and audience member*

*Collect and study programs performed by exemplary ensembles*

- Professional, community, college/university, and school concerts
- Webcasts
- Conferences and conventions
- All-state, district, honor, and festival ensembles (current and past)
- Contests and competitions

*Consult lists, books, articles, and respected colleagues*

- Repertory lists from mentors, colleagues, and friends
- State/prescribed music lists (from a variety of states)
- Online databases from organizations and programs
- Teaching Music Through Performance in Band and Orchestra series
- Ostling, Gilbert, and Towner studies
- CBDNA Report
- Daniels' Orchestra Music Online
- Living composers are often self-published – check websites
- Books (ex: Composers on Composing for Band series)
- Composition contests and prizes
  - Pulitzer Prize in Music
  - ABA/Ostwald Award
  - ACCBDA James. E Croft Grant for Young and Emerging Wind Band Composers
  - ASCAP/CBDNA Frederick Fennell Prize

- CBDNA Young Band Composition Contest
- Frank Ticheli Composition Contest
- H. Robert Reynolds Wind Ensemble Composition Competition
- NBA/Merrill Jones Composition Contest
- NBA/William D. Revelli Composition Contest
- NBA Young Composer/Mentor Project
- Sudler Prize
- Walter Beeler Memorial Composition Prize
- Online resources
  - [www.windrep.org](http://www.windrep.org)
  - Murphy Music Press LLC
  - Alex Shapiro (composer) resource
  - Jodie Blackshaw (composer) resource
  - [www.composerdiversity.com](http://www.composerdiversity.com)
  - [www.timreynish.com](http://www.timreynish.com)
  - [composersforum.org/bandquest](http://composersforum.org/bandquest)
  - [www.cbdna.org](http://www.cbdna.org)

### **III. Developing a Programming Philosophy**

*Deciding which repertory best serves you, your students (as they develop both technically and artistically), and the audience*

*How to expand knowledge of quality repertory and creative approaches to programming*

#### *Repertory Taste*

- Standards or “war horses” that stand the test of time—evaluate why
- Contemporary pieces that you believe are seminal—evaluate why
- Create a personal “Top 50” list of the best composers of all time
- Create a personal “Top 50” list of the best pieces of all time for your medium
- Create a personal “Top 50” list of the best pieces for your level(s) of ensemble(s)
- Create a list of compositions by significant composers that are attainable by developing ensembles in your medium
- Explore composers with whom you are unfamiliar, especially those who are under-represented

#### *Defining repertoire with integrity*

(Adapted from “What Is Quality in Music?” by James Neilson, G. Leblanc Corp.)

- Intellectual and/or emotional connection to players and audience
- Formal construction and idiomatic craftsmanship
- Originality
- Creativity
- Expressive potential
- Rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic vitality and interest
- Timelessness

### *Aesthetic experience of program*

- Relationship building on stage and with audience
- Fixed ensemble or varied ensembles within
- Shape and architecture of the comprehensive program
- Flow from piece to piece
- Emotional journey for students and audience
- Theme or thread for pieces on the program
- Flavors or variety of music
- Aims to enlighten, expose, engage, and/or entertain the audience

### *Approaches to designing a concert*

- Project piece as main course
- Chronological order from oldest to newest
- Smaller forces to larger forces
- Increasing harmonic, rhythmic, and/or dynamic complexity (observe key and tonal centers and avoid too much of the same)
- Classical symphony form
- Potluck or kaleidoscope
- Title or theme (musical or extra-musical)

### *Some common categories*

- Fanfare
- Overture
- Opener/Closer
- Slow/Expressive
- Suite
- Symphony
- Tone Poem
- Theme and Variations
- Esoteric/Evocative
- Percussive
- Multicultural/International
- March
- Dance
- Aria
- Concerto
- Chamber

### *Reverse-engineer programs to study programming values*

- Why did the conductor assemble these pieces and in this order?
- What artistic message does the conductor and/or ensemble intend to express?
- What pedagogical considerations might be at play?
- Which piece on the program might they have chosen first?
- What other factors or parameters might they have had to consider?

## IV. Practical Considerations

*Pedagogical issues and realities to account for before starting to program music*

### *Instrumentation and ensemble*

- Large-ensemble configurations and chamber-music configurations
  - Fixed seating and part assignments
  - Rotated seating and part assignments
  - One per part or doublings — or a combination
  - Brass, woodwind, string, and percussion ensembles
  - *Harmoniemusik* octet
  - Brass quintet, woodwind quintet, string quartet, or other small ensembles
  - Soloists/concerti
    - Outstanding students
    - Colleagues from other schools
    - Private teachers
    - Military band and professional orchestra players
    - Famous performers
- Incomplete and unbalanced instrumentation
  - Pieces that can be performed by ensembles with incomplete instrumentation
  - Consideration of strong, developing, and missing sections
  - Suitable instrumental exchanges (e.g., muted trumpet for oboe)
  - What is appropriate given realities or limitations

### *Pedagogy*

- Music selection that addresses and enhances:
  - Individual technique, tone production, and intonation
  - Creation of beauty
  - Interpretation and creativity
  - Listening abilities
  - Collaboration
  - Diversity of genres, musical styles, and tonal languages
- Technical difficulties and considerations
  - Challenging students appropriately
  - What skills will *not* be taught because of time spent on technical challenges?
  - Project pieces
- Balance between goals for the band and goals for individual student learning
  - Pieces that encourage students to play expressively from the very first rehearsal
  - Pieces that demonstrate ensemble and individual strengths and make the band sound good
  - Pieces that improve individual weaknesses
  - Application of skills between pieces (rhythm, tone quality, intonation, blend, listening)
- Student engagement and enjoyment
  - Are students inspired to learn fundamental concepts and musical aesthetics?

 **Ensemble Skills Worksheet**

### *Concert Season and calendar*

- Total number of performances over the course of the season or school year
- Total minutes of music programmed for each concert
- Number of rehearsals (and minutes of rehearsal) available to prepare each concert
- Location of performances in the academic calendar (holidays, breaks, competitions, standardized tests)
- Rehearsal cycle
  - Which performance cycle allows the most rehearsals (or the most uninterrupted time) for teaching and learning the most difficult repertory?
  - If the most important part of the year (e.g., contest, festival, assessment) doesn't have the greatest number of rehearsals, can the calendar be adjusted accordingly?
- Performance venue
  - Logistical issues that prevent performance of certain pieces
  - Acoustic properties that make certain pieces sound better or worse
  - Physical layout that presents opportunities for interesting programming choices
- Needs or opportunities specific to the school or community
  - Holiday, patriotic, or pops concerts
  - Collaborative performances with choir, orchestra, and/or theater
  - Cross-curricular programs with academic classes
  - Guest narrators or concert announcers
  - Shared or side-by-side concerts with similar ensembles, professional ensembles, or younger musicians
  - Outreach performances
  - Prism/collage concert

## **V. Short and Long-Term Frameworks**

*One- and four-year plans to help focus programming decisions*

### *One- and four-year plans*

- Four years (or less) for students to experience repertory, styles, and composers
- Repertory performed over the previous four years
- Works or composers from top 50 lists
- Music to prepare the ensemble for future project pieces
- Opportunities to perform works in progress ("informance") or repeat pieces

 **One-Year Programming Worksheet**

 **Four-Year Programming Worksheet**

## **VI. Other Considerations**

*Serving the varied needs and desires of students, families, audiences, administration, professional organizations, and beyond*

*Relationships, connections, relevance, and community*

- Artistic value for students, conductor-teachers, and audiences
  - Is the repertory worth the practice and commitment from both student and teacher?
  - Does the repertory engage, enlighten, and/or entertain the audience?
  - Are we, as the conductor-teachers, helping inform our audiences of the process of creation and quality of experiences?
  - Do we advocate for what we believe in as artist-teachers?
- Expectations within professional communities
  - Do we select repertoire from state lists?
  - If a piece is not listed on a state list, investigate why; if you believe in a piece of music, advocate for its inclusion.
  - Do we select appropriate levels of music for our students to achieve success?
  - Do we explain the virtues and goals for attending state/regional/national contests or festivals to our administration and students?
- Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations
  - Are we balancing needs of pedagogy, state assessment and standards, contests and administrative and parental expectations with artistic exposure and creativity?
  - Are we considering connecting with our audiences and communities?
- Social consciousness
  - Are we including under-represented composers, artists, members of our ensemble, community members, and topics?
  - Consider selecting a living composer and inviting them to the concert or request an interview with students via web chat/Zoom.

## **Provocative Articles and Blogs**

- Stephen Budiansky: [The Bad Music Annals](#)
- David Butcher: [Concert Programming Is an Art in Itself](#)
- Gerald Klickstein: [The Five Cs of Concert Planning and Production](#)
- Nebal Maysaud: [It's Time to Let Classical Music Die](#)
- Andrew Sorensen: [The Concert Programmer](#)
- Pure Gold: [The Fleischmann-Lipman-Morris Debate of 1987–89](#)

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## Appendices

- Programming Habits Inventory
- Ensemble Skills Worksheet
- One-Year Programming Worksheet
- Four-Year Programming Worksheet
- Emily Threinen Top 50 Works for Winds
- Travis J. Cross Selected Cornerstones of the Wind Repertory



## Programming Habits Inventory

	On every concert	On most concerts	Annually	Bi-Annually	Never
I program orchestral transcriptions...					
I program choral transcriptions...					
I program keyboard transcriptions...					
I program marches...					
I program chamber music...					
I program concertos or works with soloists...					
I program works with chorus...					
I program Medieval and Renaissance music...					
I program Classical and Romantic music...					
I program Impressionistic music...					
I program atonal music...					
I program aleatoric music...					
I program multicultural music...					
I program jazz-influenced music...					
I program pop and/or rock arrangements...					
I program film and theater music...					
I program world premieres...					
I program music composed within the last 10 years...					
I program music by female and/or minority composers...					
I program standards of the repertory...					
I program multi-movement works...					
I program student compositions...					
I program music I have conducted before...					
I program music I have played before...					
I program music I have heard before...					
I build programs chronologically...					
I build programs around an extra-musical theme...					
I build programs around a musical theme...					
I title my programs with descriptive names...					

Ensemble Skills Worksheet

Instrument Type	Number of Players	Private Lessons (Y/N)	Tone (1-5)	Intonation (1-5)	Technique (1-5)	Articulation Diversity (1-5)	Musicality (1-5)	Range (ANY/ H/L)	Stamina (1-5)	Soloist (Y/N)	Leadership (1-5)	Auxiliary Abilities
Flute/Piccolo												
Oboe/English Horn												
Bassoon/Contra												
Clarinet/E-flat Clarinet												
Bass Clarinet/Contra												
Saxophone (SATBB)												
Horn												
Trumpet/Piccolo/Flugel												
Trombone/Bass												
Euphonium/Bartone												
Tuba												
Violin												
Viola												
Cello												
String Bass												
Percussion												
Piano												

General Strengths:

Areas for Improvement:

Ensemble Goals for the Year:

	Concert 1		Concert 2		Concert 3		Concert 4		Concert 5	
Date										
Number of Rehearsals										
Hours or Minutes of Rehearsal										
Duration of Program										
Theme and/or Descriptive Name										
Standard/Multi-movement										
Openers/Closers										
Slow/Expressive										
Marches										
Solo/Feature/Chamber										
Notes Other Considerations										

Four-Year Programming Worksheet

	Year 1 (      –      )	Year 2 (      –      )	Year 3 (      –      )	Year 4 (      –      )
Anticipated Strengths				
Anticipated Weaknesses				
Possible Major Works				
Possible Preparatory Works				
Possible Smaller Works				
Possible Soloists				
Composer Anniversaries				
Special Occasions/Travel Plans				
Notes				
Other Considerations				

# TOP 50 WORKS FOR WINDS

## Emily Threinen

Director of Bands and Associate Professor of Music  
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities | School of Music | College of Liberal Arts

*Updated Spring 2025*

Adams, John	Grand Pianola Music (1982)	31'
Bassett, Leslie	Sounds, Shapes, and Symbols (1978)	12'
Beethoven, Ludwig van	Octet (Parthia), Op. 103 (1793)	21'
Benson, Warren	Symphony No. 2 "Lost Songs" (1982)	27'
Berg, Alban	Kammerkonzert für Klavier und geige mit 13 Blasern (1925)	30'
Berlioz, Hector	Grande symphonie funebre et triomphale, Op. 15 (1840)	32'
Bolcom, William	First Symphony for Band (2008)	16'
Botti, Susan	Cosmosis (2005)	22'
Bruckner, Anton	Mass No. 2 in E Minor (1866, 1876, rev. 1882)	48'
Bryant, Steven	Ecstatic Waters (2008)	22'
Colgrass, Michael	Winds of Nagual (1985)	25'
Copland, Aaron	Emblems (1964)	11'
Corigliano, John	Symphony No. 3 "Circus Maximus" (2004)	35'
Dahl, Ingolf	Sinfonietta (1961)	20'
Daugherty, Michael	Niagara Falls (1997)	10'
Day, Kevin	Concerto for Wind Ensemble (2021)	23'
Dvořák, Antonín	Serenade in D Minor, Op. 44 (1878)	24'
Fairouz, Mohammed	Symphony No. 4 "In the Shadow of No Towers" (2012)	35'
Gounod, Charles	Petite Symphonie (1885)	20'
Grainger, Percy	Lincolnshire Posy (1937)	15'
Goubaïdouline, Sofia	Hour of the Soul: Poem for Mezzo Soprano and Large Wind Orchestra (1974/1988)	25'
Hailstork, Adolphus	American Guernica (1982/2008/2021)	7'
Hindemith, Paul	Symphony in B-flat (1951)	17'
Holst, Gustav	Hammersmith Prelude and Scherzo (1930)	14'
Hovhaness, Alan	Symphony No. 20 "Three Journeys to a Holy Mountain" (1969)	21'
Husa, Karel	Music for Prague (1968)	22'
Li, Shuying	Kung Fu (2021)	19'

Lindberg, Magnus	Gran Duo (2000)	20'
Mahler, Gustav	Um Mitternacht (1905)	10'
Maslanka, David	A Child's Garden of Dreams (1981)	32'
Messiaen, Olivier	Oiseaux exotiques (1956, rev. 1985)	15'
Milhaud, Darius	La création du monde, Op. 81 (1923)	17'
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	Serenade No. 10 in B-flat Major, K. 361 (370a) "Gran Partita" (1781)	48'
Pann, Carter	Symphony for Winds "My Brother's Brain" (2011)	28'
Persichetti, Vincent	Symphony No. 6 for Band (1956)	16'
Santos, Erik	The Seer (2019)	24'
Schmitt, Florent	Dionysiaques, Op. 62 (1913)	11'
Schuman, William	New England Triptych (1956)	18'
Schoenberg, Arnold	Theme and Variations, Op. 43a (1943)	12'
Schuller, Gunther	Symphony No. 3 "In Praise of Winds" (1981)	25'
Schwantner, Joseph	...and the mountains rising nowhere (1977)	12'
Simon, Carlos	AMEN! (2017)	13'
Stokes, Eric	Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking (1998)	35'
Stravinsky, Igor	Symphonies of Wind Instruments (1920, rev. 1947)	9'
Strauss, Richard	Sonatine No. 2 in E-flat "Symphony for Winds: The Happy Workshop" (1945)	37'
Stucky, Steven	Fanfares and Arias (1994)	13'
Thomas, Omar	Come Sunday (2018)	11'
Toch, Ernst	Spiel, Op. 39 (1926)	9'
Varese, Edgard	Integrales (1925)	12'
Weill, Kurt	Kleine Dreigroschenmusik (1929)	21'

# SELECTED CORNERSTONES OF THE WIND REPERTORY

Travis J. Cross

Wind Ensemble Conductor and Professor of Music

The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music

*Updated June 2025*

## Renaissance-Baroque

Gabrieli, Giovanni	Sonata pian' e forte (1597)	4'30"
Gabrieli, Giovanni	Canzon septimi toni No. 2 (1597)	3'
Handel, George Frideric	Water Music (1717)	15'
Handel, George Frideric	Musick for the Royal Fireworks (1749)	16'

## Classical-Romantic

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	Serenade No. 10 in B-flat Major, K. 361 (370a) "Gran Partita" (1781)	48'
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	Serenade No. 11 in E-flat Major, K. 375 (1784)	24'
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	Serenade No. 12 in C Minor, K. 388 (384a) (1782)	25'
Beethoven, Ludwig van	Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 103 (1793)	21'
Mendelssohn, Felix	Notturmo (1824)	10'
Dvořák, Antonín	Serenade in D Minor, Op. 44 (1878)	24'
Strauss, Richard	Serenade in E-flat, Op. 7 (1881)	10'
Strauss, Richard	Suite in B-flat, Op. 4 (1884)	25'
Gounod, Charles	Petite symphonie (1885)	20'
Berlioz, Hector	Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale (1840)	32'
Wagner, Richard	Trauermusik (1844)	7'
Wagner, Richard	Huldigungsmarsch (1864)	6'
Saint-Saëns, Camille	Orient et Occident, Op. 25 (1869)	9'

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chamber/Orchestral Winds

Schoenberg, Arnold	Pierrot Lunaire (1912)	35'
Stravinsky, Igor	L'histoire du soldat (1918)	60'
Stravinsky, Igor	Symphonies of Wind Instruments (1920, rev. 1947)	9'
Milhaud, Darius	La création du monde (1923)	17'
Stravinsky, Igor	Octet (1923, rev. 1952)	15'
Varèse, Edgard	Octandre (1923)	7'
Walton, William	Façade (1923)	21'
Gershwin, George	Rhapsody in Blue (1924)	18'
Stravinsky, Igor	Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments (1924, rev. 1950)	20'
Hindemith, Paul	Konzertmusik für Blasorchester, Op. 41 (1926)	15'
Toch, Ernst	Spiel, Op. 39 (1926)	9'
Weill, Kurt	Kleine Dreigroschenmusik (1929)	21'
Stravinsky, Igor	Symphony of Psalms (1930)	21'
Copland, Aaron	Appalachian Spring (1944)	25'
Bernstein, Leonard	Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs (1949)	8'
Messiaen, Olivier	Oiseaux exotiques (1956, rev. 1985)	15'
Kurka, Robert	The Good Soldier Schweik Suite (1958)	19'
Rodrigo, Joaquín	Adagio para orquesta de instrumentos de viento (1966)	10'
Schwantner, Joseph	Sparrows (1979)	17'
Gulda, Friedrich	Cello Concerto (1980)	28'
Adams, John	Grand Pianola Music (1982)	31'

## Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Military Band

Holst, Gustav	First Suite in E-flat (1909)	11'
Holst, Gustav	Second Suite in F (1911)	12'
Schmitt, Florent	Dionysiaques, Op. 62 (1913)	11'
Vaughan Williams, Ralph	English Folk Song Suite (1923)	11'
Vaughan Williams, Ralph	Toccata Marziale (1924)	4'30"
Holst, Gustav	Hammersmith Prelude and Scherzo (1930)	14'
Grainger, Percy Aldridge	Lincolnshire Posy (1937)	15'

## Mid-Century “American”

Respighi, Ottorino	Huntingtower Ballad (1932)	7'30"
Schoenberg, Arnold	Theme and Variations, Op. 43a (1943)	12'
Hindemith, Paul	Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber (1944) (trans. Wilson)	21'
Reed, H. Owen	La Fiesta Mexicana (1949)	23'
Dahl, Ingolf	Saxophone Concerto (1949, rev. 1960)	21'
Schuman, William	George Washington Bridge (1950)	9'
Hindemith, Paul	Symphony in B-flat (1951)	17'
Gould, Morton	Symphony No. 4 “West Point” (1952)	20'
Persichetti, Vincent	Symphony No. 6 for Band, Op. 69 (1956)	16'
Dahl, Ingolf	Sinfonietta (1961)	20'
Benson, Warren	The Leaves Are Falling (1963)	11'
Copland, Aaron	Emblems (1964)	11'
Tull, Fisher	Sketches on a Tudor Psalm (1971)	12'

## The Last 60 Years

Husa, Karel	Music for Prague (1968)	22'
Gubaidulina, Sofia	Hour of the Soul (1974)	25'
Schwanter, Joseph	...and the mountains rising nowhere (1977)	12'
Maslanka, David	A Child’s Garden of Dreams (1981)	32'
Colgrass, Michael	Winds of Nagual (1985)	25'
Wilson, Dana	Piece of Mind (1987)	21'
Ito, Yasuhide	Gloriosa (1990)	20'
Mahr, Timothy	Endurance (1992)	10'
Maslanka, David	Symphony No. 4 (1994)	29'
Colgrass, Michael	Urban Requiem (1995)	28'
Sparke, Philip	Dance Movements (1995)	20'
Welcher, Dan	Zion (1996)	10'
Ticheli, Frank	Blue Shades (1997)	10'
Grantham, Donald	Southern Harmony (1998)	13'
Daugherty, Michael	Bells for Stokowski (2002)	14'
Corigliano, John	Symphony No. 3 “Circus Maximus” (2004)	35'
Bryant, Steven	Ecstatic Waters (2008)	22'
Ticheli, Frank	Angels in the Architecture (2008)	15'
Puckett, Joel	The Shadow of Sirius (2009)	21'
Daugherty, Michael	Labyrinth of Love (2013)	40'
Mackey, John	Wine-Dark Sea: Symphony for Band (2014)	30'
Mackey, John	Songs from the End of the World (2015)	21'
Thomas, Omar	Of Our New Day Begun (2015)	11'
Cuong, Viet	Re(new)al (2019, rev. 2021)	15'
Tian, Zhou	Sinfonia (2022)	20'