



Behind The Music: Concert Programming For Artistry
Dr. Gregory X. Whitmore - Presenter
Director of Bands - Mt. San Antonio College (CA)
Music Director: Pacific Sym. Youth Wind Ensemble
California All State Music Education Conference
Double Tree Hotel - Fresno Convention Center
Salon C - February 15th, 2019 - 11:30 AM



Opening Thought: “Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself.”

- John Dewey.

Philosophical Goal: To approach our concert programming with “new ears”, and a primacy towards artistry as the principled center of our work.

Suggestion: The literature programmed for our concerts is not “picked”, but “curated”.

Hans Ulrich Obrist’s Notions Of Curating:

“Caretaking of Objects” - analogous to the literature (or the “works”) of our art.

The “Actions” Of Curating A Concert For Our Ensembles Involves:

1. Filtering.
2. Enabling.
3. Synthesizing.
4. Framing.
5. Remembering.

“Proliferation of Ideas” - Analogous To The Proliferation of Works For Winds: This Requires “Guiding” (At The Study Table, Rehearsal, and the Concert).

A Question For Your Consideration:

If The Students In Your Band Program Were Asked To Characterize Your Values/Beliefs For Their Music Education [“Lives”: Dewey], Based *SOLELY* On Your Concert Programming For The Last Concert Season/Academic Year – How Do You Think They Would Answer?

Two Questions To Consider In Guiding Your Programming:

1. Where Do I “Start” When I Begin My Programming?
2. What Am I Trying To Say Through My Programming?

The Artistic & Educational Beneficiaries Of Your Programming.

1. Your Artistic Collaborators – Your Students: Their Artistic & Educational Experience/ Journey Through Absorbing, Learning, and Performing Your Programming.
2. Your Community (i.e. School/Educational Community, City/Town, Concert Patrons and Larger Artistic Community): Their Artistic Experience Absorbing & Interacting With Your Programming.

Data From The Profession: Instrumental Music Educators Programming Practices Survey.

Survey Design: 13 Questions To Investigate Programming Practices and Influences.
Survey Design Was Collaboratively Tested.

Survey Was Administered To Band Directors Facebook Group: 430 Responses.

Survey Opened With Personal & Professional Identity Questions:

- 29.3% of respondents indicated that they have taught for more than 20 years.
- 22.8% of respondents indicated they have taught between 1 and 5 years.
- 59.4% of respondents were male/39.6% respondents were female.
- 38.6% of respondents teach middle school/35.8% respondents teach high school.
- 25.6% of respondents teach both middle school & high school.

***Survey Results Can Be Found: gwhitmore.com
(Located On The Research & Presentations Link)***

The Silent Influencers Of Our Programming:

These Influencers Can Be Programming & Artistry Restrictive.

1. “Breaking News” Works/New Releases & Contemporary Trends.
2. Outside Arbiters Of Ensemble Proficiency:
 - a. Acronym-ed Festivals/Contests & Their Participation Requirements (That Often Have Little To Do With Artistry).
 - b. The Potential Concerns & Opinions Of Festival/Contest Adjudicators.
 - c. The Primacy Towards Ensemble Ability/Proficiency.
 - d. The Strictures of Tradition.
3. Director-Centeredness:
 1. The Binary Preference of “Liking or Disliking” A Particular Work.
 2. The Potential Concerns of Colleagues (i.e. Reputation).
 3. Keeping Up With The Joneses.
 4. Downward Pressures From Administration.

Suggestion: Balance our programming for the heart and soul *first*.

“I have never been in charge of a school band program, but over the past 40-plus years I have seen hundreds of programs close-up as guest composer. While I do understand the need to teach specific aspects of music, I strongly advise against the use of so-called “educational” music. The core to the development of a band is the committed interest of its players, and that interest is captured by real music. And what is real music? It is music that you personally love, that excites and interests you.

The biggest inhibiting factor in the selection of music is fear: **my band can't**. I have seen it time and time again: the biggest inhibitor of the ability of a band to play is the conductor's fear of failure – **my band can't**. Look first to the music that you love, then begin to plot how you can get there. A conductor once said to me, “I'm thinking about doing *In Memoriam*, but I don't have the trumpets.” I looked at his trumpet section and said, “Who are those people sitting there?” The next concert he did *In Memoriam*. It wasn't perfect, but the trumpet players, and the band, and the conductor(!) had a huge, exhilarating, life-changing experience.”

-David Maslanka

Suggestion: Get inspired by, and remember our connections to the greats in our profession.

1. Consider your connections to the titans in our profession. Your work in programming for a concert season is also undertaken by the great conductors of the world's great orchestras, choirs, and concert bands. We should come to the literature planning process with the same enthusiastic effort, creativity, and artistic energy as those at the vanguard of our art.

2. Join the mailing lists for the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Collegiate Bands/Orchestras, etc. Use the concert season brochures as inspiration for your own programming. For instance, if the Los Angeles Philharmonic is featuring a series of concerts based around the work of a singular composer, perhaps in your own program you can do the same thing for all of the ensembles in your charge.

Suggestion: Take the time to learn and listen to new works by new composers, and get off “the list.”

1. **What Don't You Know?:** Commit The Time To The Investigation & Study Of New Composers & New Works That May Invigorate Your Programming.
2. **Kick The, “List Addiction”:** Not Every Concert Needs To Be Informed By The State Lists.
3. **Consider:** The Immense Power You Have At Your Disposal For The Artistic Fate Of Your Students & Cultural Beneficiaries. Central Question: “Why am I forsaking all other pieces of wind/orchestral/choral literature to perform this work?”
4. **Not So, “Fast – Slow – Fast”:** Resist the Urge To Follow Programmatic Formulas.

Suggestion: Take the time to plan your concert season for the **entire** academic year.

Planning For An Entire Concert Season Allows The Following:

1. The Ability To Program In Such A Way As To Draw Connections Between Concerts & Pieces. (“The Programmatic Arc”)
2. The Opportunity To Create An Artistic & Pedagogical Trajectory For Your Ensembles.
 - a. Where Are The Programmatic “Highs” Of The Season? How Will We Get There?
3. The Opportunity To Broaden Your Concerts:
 - a. Collaborations Within & Outside The School Setting.
 - b. Opportunities To Pair The Music Making With Innovative Ideas For Deeper Artistic Experience For Both Musician And Audience.
 - c. Opportunities To Program For Major Events/Anniversaries/Dates Of Historical Significance.
4. The Opportunity To Plan For Logistical & Personnel Needs As Warranted By Each Work Programmed.
5. The Opportunity For Broadened and Expanded Score Study.

Maestro Carl St. Clair On Programming For A Concert Season

Architecture:

"I think, for me, a lot of it is architecture of the season. There's architecture of the season, so you go like this... where you have this ... Goal oriented work. Hindemith Symphony whatever it is, or Maslanka 4th Symphony. There are all kinds of architectures. You could start like this, and go like this. I think in designs ... Then with each program, there are the same kind of ... You wanna have, do I wanna start big? Kinda go down, and then rise toward the end, or do I want to start soft and build. The most important part is right here. About the 66% moment. What's going on at that place, that's a time that you might need a novelty piece, a concerto, something to keep the interest going in the audience and also in the orchestra. With regular programming, for young people, I think about programming for the heart. For the mind. For the fingers."

Rehearsals:

"You gotta have something for the soul as well. Because this is affecting your rehearsals. But when you program for a concert, you gotta think about, how is that going to affect the life of all those rehearsals? Because the concert's gonna be an hour, but the life, that you're going to live with your ensemble which is where you make your relationships with them, and where they make their relationship with music is hours long. So, if you make a program that can't be sustained in those three weeks of rehearsals you're always swimming upstream. And also you need pieces of varying levels of difficulty so you don't always talk about technical things."

Guiding:

"...programming decisions, sometimes you give an ensemble what they want, and an audience too what they love, and sometimes you have to give them what they need. Which is not always either what they love or what they wanted.... You have to prepare them. Even when I started here, we started our Mahler cycle over a period of years. I started with number one with a Mozart piano soloist. Then we did number three or four, and then we did five and then solo. We did number six in the sixth year. I told the audiences because that's just the sixth symphony, no soloists, no bells now whistles, just this tragic symphony. I talked to the audience, and said, I've been leading you to this point for the last five years. You might remember we did this, we started that, that had a chorus, this had a soloist, that had this, that had a ... You know. I said but I've been guiding you to this point so that we are able to understand the depth of Gustav Mahler and this tragic symphony, but that started five years ago. So you're prepared for this, and I've been leading you to this point without telling you."

Closing Thought:

"The classroom is a microcosm of the world: it is the chance we have to practice whatever ideals we cherish. The kind of situation one creates is the acid test of what it is one really stands for."

- Weimer, 2013, P. 33

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Dr. Gregory X. Whitmore - Conductor

Dr. Gregory Xavier Whitmore is Director of Bands at Mt. San Antonio College (Walnut, CA). Dr. Whitmore is also Music Director of the Pacific Symphony Orchestra Youth Wind Ensemble (Irvine, CA). These appointments follow a career as Conductor of the College of the Desert Symphony Band (Palm Desert, CA), and Director of Bands at Cathedral City High School (Cathedral City, CA). Dr.

Whitmore, a native of Ypsilanti, Michigan, received his Bachelor's Degree in Instrumental Music Education from The University of Michigan School of Music, Theater and Dance in Ann Arbor, Michigan. While a student at The University of Michigan, Dr. Whitmore performed in the University of Michigan Bands; and Dr. Whitmore led the University of Michigan Marching Band as "Michigan's Man Up Front" - Drum Major - from 1999 to 2001. Dr. Whitmore received his Master's Degree in Music with an emphasis in Wind Conducting from California State University Fullerton studying under Dr. Mitchell Fennell. Dr. Whitmore holds a Masters Degree, and a Doctorate in Music and Music Education from Columbia University (Teachers College) in the city of New York.

Dr. Whitmore has conducted ensembles in such notable concert venues as The Musikverein (Vienna), The Wiener Konzerthaus (Vienna), The MuTh (Vienna), Renee and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall (Costa Mesa), Symphony Hall (Chicago), The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Carnegie Hall (New York City), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), Meng Hall (Fullerton, California), Holy Trinity Church (Stratford, England), St. John's Smith Square (London), Chateau Vaux le Vicomte (Paris), and Heidelberg Castle (Germany). Under Dr. Whitmore's direction, the Cathedral City High School Symphony Band was selected to perform as the showcase ensemble during the 2008 California Band Directors Association Annual Convention.

Dr. Whitmore belongs to several professional organizations that include College Band Directors National Association, Phoenix Honorary Leadership Society, Kappa Kappa Psi Honorary Band Fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi Fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity, Pi Kappa Lambda Honor Society, The National Association For Music Education, Southern California School Band And Orchestra Association, and California Music Educators Association.

Second Place Winner of the 2017 American Prize in Conducting (Community Bands Division), Dr. Whitmore is a recognized member of Academic Key's *Who's Who In Community Colleges Education*, as well as four editions of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*. Dr. Whitmore has been included in the 2005/2006 Edition of the National Honor Roll's *Outstanding American Teachers*. Mr. Whitmore is a Golden Apple Educator Award Recipient, and Orion Award Recipient for Excellence in Education. Dr. Whitmore was selected to represent the State of California by School Band and Orchestra Magazine in the 2008 edition of "50 Band Directors Who Make A Difference".

