

# THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF CREATIVE PROGRAMMING

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## Challenges/limitations:

- Ensemble/ensembles
- Performance venue/venues
- Schedule/opportunity
- Resources (literature, instrumentation, etc.)
- Time (?)
- Ideas (??)
- ???
- ???
- ???

## Opportunities

- Engage musicians and audiences in a new way
- Develop an audience base that will come back
- The chance to 'flex' our creative muscle ("but I'm not creative..." meh)
- Uniquely engage collaborators from within/outside of your community
  - Visual artists
  - Instrumentalists
  - Professional singers/cultural ensembles
  - Story-tellers
  - Poets
  - Actors
  - Dancers
  - ???
- Intergenerational/Ecumenical collaborations
- *Engage* musicians and audiences in a *new* way

## Factors to consider

- WHO (is performing? is the audience?)
- WHAT (is the purpose of the performance?)
- WHERE (acoustics? Space for movement? Instrumentation? Purpose?)
- WHEN (season? Special event? Liturgical calendar?)
- HOW (much time to prepare? Much budget? Many resources?)

## When do we start programming?

- Hopefully, ideas emerge during the repertoire selection process...
- Choosing repertoire should be 'messy' and 'fluid'
  - Choose more than you need and see how everyone responds to it
  - Marrying yourself to one piece from the start can be a *huge* tactical error

## Questions to ask as we start?

- What are the 'foundation' pieces for the program?
  - Level of difficulty/length?
  - What style period/affect do they represent?
  - What do they 'say?' What are the big 'ideas?'
  - Are there natural partner pieces (ways in or out?)

## Programming Objectives (from *Directing the Choral Music Program* by Kenneth Phillips)

- Teaching Comprehensively
- Performing a Variety of Styles
- Developing the Singing Voice
- Entertaining the Audience (I prefer *engaging* the Audience)

## CHURCH MUSICIANS: Philip Brunelle "Rule of Three"

- 1/3 of repertoire should be 'new'
- 1/3 of repertoire should be 'familiar' (last 2-3 years)
- 1/3 of repertoire should be 'bedrock' (beloved and well-known)

## PROGRAM TYPES

- Festival/Conference
- Historical (early to contemporary)
- "All-Skate" (the stuff I want to conduct any old way that I please)
- Music of a specific composer ([Stephen Paulus Tribute by Conspirare](#))
- Country, Region, City ([A Scandinavian Christmas](#), [A Minnesota Christmas](#), [French Revolutions](#))
- Major Work(s) ([Mozart Requiem](#))
- Thematic...

## THEMATIC PROGRAMMING: an IDEA or IDEAS bring everything together

- Do we choose the repertoire or the theme *first*...?
- Worship Season
  - Advent cantata ("People, Look East"), Christmas, Holy Week, Easter
- Liturgical Structures
  - [Vespers/Evensong](#), Compline, etc. [HYMN FESTIVALS!](#)
- Season(s) of the Year
  - "Celebrate the Seasons," Fall, Winter/Solstice, Spring
- Pops/Broadway/Revue
  - Washington High School "Valentine Variety Show," Eastview High School "Bravo"
- Graduation/End of Year
- National Event/Holiday
  - Memorial Day, [MLK](#), Independence Day, Earth Day, Election(?)
- Mosaic / Collage ([CHJ](#))
  - Needs to be scripted
  - Applause only in specific places
  - Key relationships are critical
    - *Unless you have a collaborative musician who can transition for you...*
  - Multi-media helps a great deal (readings, images, solos, instruments)
  - Should consider use of the space and spatial relations
    - *How will the musicians move and use different parts of the space?*
  - *Must* tell some kind of story (conflict is key!)
    - *We want to decide what emotions we want the listener to experience...*

## The BIG SIX types of CONFLICT in Literature

- Man vs. Man, Man vs. Nature, Man vs. Society, Man vs. Self, Man vs. Technology, Man vs. God

## What Makes a Successful Program?

- Shape: arc, slope, ocean waves... (Barbara Harlow)
  - Pacing for the whole as well as the parts
- Plan it like a meal (*italics* are optional)
  - Italian style: appetivo, antipasto, primo, secundo, *insalata, formaggi e frutta, dolce, caffè, digestivo*
  - American: appetizer, *salad*, main course, dessert, coffee
- Strong Opener (does it engage singer & audience? Build singer confidence?)
- Strong Closer (and maybe an after-dinner mint?)
  - Strong ≠ LOUD
- Sturdy Centerpiece (larger or more extended work)
- Ownership by/engagement of all forces (conductor, students, and audience)
- Variety *and* synthesis
- NOT TOO LONG (55 minutes of actual music can translate into 1:40 with movement of forces, applause, talking, intermission)
- ???

## Ways to Achieve Variety?

- Tempo
- Key or Tonal Center
- Instrumentation/Voicing
- Difficulty Level
- Sets (I., II., III., etc.)
- Readings
- Use of Space and/or movement
- Language
- Texture
- ???

## Other Considerations?

- New works/commissions/'strange' compositions: where should they go?
- Sacred vs. Secular (choice and flow of repertoire)
  - even though the Supreme Court says sacred music is OK, one should have justification for sacred works. Some administrators want no more than 50% of any given program to be sacred.
- Who performs when? Typically, multi-ensemble concerts move in order of ability
- Intermission/Halftime (when and when not to?)
- What kinds of conversations/interdisciplinary opportunities/critical thinking will the repertoire and program create for your community of musicians?

## General model for a traditional choral set

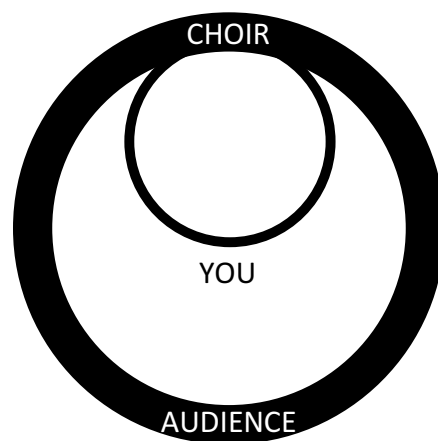
- Opener: fast tempo, rhythmic, general/joyous text or thematically appropriate
- One or two pieces that are more savory: longer and contrasting textures
- Centerpiece: challenging, longer, ends with increased energy
- Choice: something really 'meaningful' or really light
- Closer: crowd-pleaser, upbeat, brings everybody to their feet

## Advice: use a "Lifeline" and "Phone a Friend"

- Find friends and colleagues to talk through your programs
- Every piece needs a reason—if you cannot justify it, should you do it...?

## Finding the Repertoire:

- Concert Programs
- Conference Presentations and Reading Sessions
- [ACDA Repertoire and Standards lists](#)
- [UIL Prescribed Music List](#)
- [TMEA All-State lists \(and other All-State lists\)](#)
- Colleagues
- [NAXOS!!!](#)
- [The University of YouTube](#) & [Publisher Websites](#)
- School/Personal Choral Library
- ???



TITLE	Comp/Arr.	Style Period	Idea/emotion	Diff (1-5)	Length	Key(s)	Lang.	Instr.	Tempo/Texture/Feel

1. Start with your 'foundation' piece ideas (one or two)
2. List several thematic ideas that could come from there: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are some 'go-to' pieces that could lead in/lead out of the 'foundation' pieces that contrast? Start assembling groups of 2 and 3.
4. Opener? Closer?
5. What remains? (Style period, tempo, texture, instrumentation)
6. Can your 'clumps' fit together?

OPENING		CENTERPIECE		CLOSING	