

Abstract

Selecting repertoire for junior high/middle school concert bands is a critical responsibility for directors, yet research on this developmental level remains limited. This study surveyed band directors to identify essential repertoire and the criteria they prioritize in the selection process. Using the *Concert Band Repertoire Evaluative Criteria (CBREC)* as a framework, participants rated the importance of these criterion and recommended works embodying these qualities. The survey, conducted via invitations on social media and online platforms, yielded responses that produced a repertoire list of 31 essential pieces appropriate for bands performing at grade levels 1–3. Over 237 individual works were nominated by the 50 participants, underscoring the semi-fluid nature of repertoire at this level. This study offers additional insights and resources for directors seeking to build a well-rounded, pedagogically sound repertoire that fosters musical growth and engagement among students and their audiences.

Keywords: Repertoire, Criteria, Young Band

Perspectives on essential repertoire for junior high and middle school concert bands

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Overview on repertoire evaluation, selection, and lists

The selection of repertoire for the school concert band is an important task for any director at any developmental level. Numerous research studies have focused on the evaluation and selection of repertoire for the school concert band. (Gaines, 1998; Greig, 2003; Hash, 2005; Ostling, 1978; Stevenson, 2004; Towner, 2011; Williamson, 2008). A number of respected conductors and educators have written on this subject as well (Cooper 2004; Dvorak, Grechesky, & Ciepluch, 1993; Feldman and Contzius, 2011; Gage, 2000; Jagow, 2007; Menghini, 1999; Miles, 1996; Miles, 1998; Williamson, 2008). The majority of this research and writing have produced criteria and perspective for the selection of concert band repertoire. Some of these research projects and articles have produced repertoire lists for high school concert band and wind ensemble programming purposes, but very few have focused on the repertoire for the junior high/middle school concert band.

One of the few exceptions was a study conducted by Hash (2005). He examined the repertoire performed at contests by schools in urban, suburban, and rural schools. After analyzing the concert programs, he reported that 81 concert bands from 72 schools performed a total of 243 compositions. Although the goals of his study did not include producing a repertoire list, the data provided an interesting snapshot of programming at the junior high/middle school band level for adjudication/assessment/contest (pp. 7-11). Given the high volume of works produced each year for bands at this developmental level, it is important to understand what aspects directors value as they evaluate pieces, which pieces might embody that aspect, and if those pieces could be considered essential repertoire for junior high/middle school bands.

Purpose and Description of the Survey

The purpose of the present survey was to gather data and perspectives from directors at the junior high/middle school level on essential repertoire for their ensemble. This level included students participating in band in grades 6 through 8 performing repertoire with a difficulty level assigned by the publishers from Grades 1 through Grade 3. In addition to discovering what aspects directors value in the evaluation process of repertoire, a secondary goal of the survey was to generate a list of pieces appropriate for study by a junior high or middle school band.

Participation was voluntary and the data generated from the survey was reported in aggregate form to preserve anonymity. Participant directors were recruited via an open invitation posted to several different social medial platforms and online communities. The survey was open for three weeks and information was collected through a Google Form. Data was coded and analyzed with appropriate statistical tests. Results of the data provided descriptive statistics and qualitative perspective for the benefit of directors charged with evaluating and selecting repertoire for junior high/middle school bands. It further produced a list of over 30 essential works for junior high/middle school directors to consider.

Participants were asked to provide basic demographic information. Within the survey, participants were presented with a definition for each of eight aspects of the *CBREC (Concert Band Repertoire Evaluative Criteria)* (Weller, 2014). Participants first asked to rate the importance of the criterion during the evaluation and selection process, and then name a piece and composer they believed strongly embodied the criterion at a grade level between 1 and 3. They were then asked if they had programmed the work multiple times, and if they believed the piece was an essential work at grade level. Participants were invited to contribute to an open-ended question about another criterion they utilized that was not accounted for within the eight aspects of the *CBREC*.

Results of the Survey

Some highlights from the demographic information provided by participants (N=50):

- The majority of participants were from the United States (20 different states) and 2 provinces from Canada were also represented. The top three states represented by participants were Florida (11), Pennsylvania (7), and Texas (6).
- Participants averaged 18.6 years in teaching. On average, this participant group had been in their current junior high/middle school band teaching position or 15.5 years.
- The participant group was comprised of 30 teachers who identified as male (60%), 19 teachers who identified as female (38%), and one teacher chose not to identify. The majority of participants in this survey self-identified their ethnicity as White (86%), followed by Black American (4%), Asian-American (4%), Hispanic (2%). Several participants preferred not to identify their ethnicity (4%).

Importance of the individual criterion

Pedagogical Usefulness and *Melodic Craftsmanship* were the highest rated criteria by the 50 participant directors. *Melodic Craftsmanship* also had the lowest standard deviation, suggesting a higher stability among the ratings by this director group. *Harmonic Language* had the second lowest standard deviation, but was rated seventh among the eight criterion.

Overall importance of Criterion to Directors in the Evaluation Process

Criterion	Importance to Directors	SD
Pedagogical Usefulness	4.40	0.914
Melodic Craftsmanship	4.34	0.781
Rhythmic Vitality & Tempo	4.15	0.875
Timbre & Orchestration	4.07	0.846
Longevity	4.04	1.106
Emotional Impact	4.04	0.908
Harmonic Language	3.90	0.805
Formal Structure	3.61	1.022

Participant directors were then asked to name a single piece for JH/MS Band with a graded level of difficulty of 1-3 that they believed was a strong example of each criterion. A complete definition of each aspect of the CBREC has been provided below, followed by works that were named more than one time by the participants.

Melodic Craftsmanship (MC) takes into account the expert craftsmanship and clearly conceived ideas in the melodic material. This includes presence of countermelodies, and melodic material that is genuine, original, and able to hold interest without being repetitious. Among pieces named as having strong *Melodic Craftsmanship* multiple times included “Softly Speaks the Night” (3) by Carol Britton Chambers, “Celtic Air and Dance” (2) by Michael Sweeney, and “Jungle Dance” and “Moscow 1941” both by Brian Balmages.

Harmonic Language (HL) takes into account if the composition utilizes an imaginative harmonic language suitable to the style of the piece. The harmonic language demonstrates balance, direction, and sensitivity in its progressions. Among pieces named as having strong *Harmonic Language* multiple times included “Air for Band”(2) by Frank Erickson and “Rippling Watercolors” (2) by Brian Balmages.

Rhythmic Vitality and Tempo (RVT) takes into account if the composition displays rhythmic vitality and variety throughout. The use of tempo and meter reflects sensitivity to the interactions of rhythm with other musical elements. Among pieces named as having strong *Rhythmic Vitality and Tempo* multiple times included “The Great Locomotive Chase” (3) by Robert W. Smith and “Arabian Dances” (3) by Roland Barrett.

Timbre and Orchestration (TO) takes into account if the composition displays balance, contrast, and variety among the elements of timbre and texture. The piece displays traditional orchestration techniques while incorporating contemporary methods appropriate to the level of difficulty. The composers makes effective and efficient use of instrument groups while scoring within the composition. Only “Appalachian Morning” (2) by Robert Sheldon was named as having strong *Timbre and Orchestration* multiple times.

Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast (FSB) takes into account if the composition reveals a well-conceived formal structure that is consistent and utilizes balance and contrast of other musical elements. The composition demonstrates growth throughout the various sections, so it avoids moving into trivial, useless, or incompatible musical ideas. Among pieces named as having strong *Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast* multiple times included “Byzantine Dances” (2) by Carol Britton Chambers, “Portrait of a Clown” (2) by Frank Ticheli, and “The Tempest” (2) by Robert W. Smith.

Pedagogical Usefulness (PU) takes into the account if the composition encourages the development of musical skills of both the individual and the ensemble within the restrictions associated at the graded difficulty level that it is assigned. The composition takes into account historical, theoretical, cultural, and technical aspects of music that can be studied and explored. Among pieces named as having strong *Pedagogical Usefulness* multiple times included “Moscow, 1941” (3) by Brian Balmages, “Irish Jig for Young Feet” (3) by Travis J. Weller, and “Starfire Fanfare” (2) by Randall Strandridge.

Emotional Impact and Sensitivity (EIS) takes into account if the composition demonstrates an emotional impact that is recognizable, genuine, inspirational, and imaginative. Within the composition, the interactions of the musical elements present is sincere and sensitive. Among pieces named as having strong *Emotional Impact and Sensitivity* included “Fragile” (3) by Randall Standridge, “Air for Band” (2) by Frank Erickson, and “Colliding Visions” (2) by Brian Balmages.

Longevity and Promise for Repeated Use (LP) considers if the composition displays promise to earn repeated study and performance in the future in part due to its pedagogical usefulness and aesthetic sensitivity. The composition creates a unique musical experience through the interaction and growth of the various musical elements present. Among pieces named as having strong *Longevity* included “Starsplitter Fanfare” (2) by Brian Balmages, and “The Great Locomotive Chase” (2) and “The Tempest” (2) both by Robert W. Smith.

Participants shared the names of 237 different pieces with a graded level of difficulty of 1-3 appropriate for use with a Junior High or Middle School Band. While a discussion of the relative grade level/difficulty level of the pieces does not fall under the purpose of this survey, it should be noted that a number of contextual factors including scheduling, starting age, and available instructional time (both in lessons and rehearsal) would influence a directors ability to choose a piece from this list to share and study with their ensemble. The table below shows the top pieces named at least three times (31 in total), the composer, the number of mentions by participants directors, and the aspect of the CBREC they found valuable within the piece.

Title	Composer	Mentions	CBREC aspects identified w/in the piece
Moscow 1941*	Balmages	9	MC, TO, FS, PU, EI, L
Air for Band*	Erickson	8	MC, HL, TO, PU, EI, L
The Great Locomotive Chase*	Smith, R.	7	RV, TO, L
Make Our Gardens Grow*	Bernstein/arr. Krienas	7	MC, HL, TO, FS, PU, EI
Arabian Dances*	Barrett	6	MC, RV, TO, FS
Colliding Visions*	Balmages	6	MC, HL, TO, EI, L
Fragile	Standridge	6	MC, HL, FS, EI
The Tempest*	Smith, R.	6	TO, FS,EI, L
A Song for Friends*	Daehn	5	MC, HL, TO, EI
Portrait of a Clown*	Ticheli	5	RV, FS, PU, L
Tears of Arizona*	Balmages	5	TO, FS, PU, EI
Byzantine Dances*	Chambers	4	MC,HL, FS
Celtic Air and Dance*	Sweeney	4	MC, L
Irish Jig for Young Feet	Weller	4	MC, PU
Rippling Watercolors*	Balmages	4	MC, HL, EI
Softly Speaks the Night*	Chambers	4	MC, EI
After the Rain	Neufield	3	MC, HL, L
Appalachian Morning*	Sheldon	3	TO, L
Bazaar*	Standridge	3	RV, L
Friends of Freedom	Loest	3	MC, FS, PU
Joy*	Ticheli	3	MC, TO, FS

Jungle Dance*	Balmages	3	MC, RV
Kentucky 1800*	Grundman	3	MC, FS, PU
Kvetchers	Estes	3	MC, FS, PU
The Red Balloon*	McGinty	3	MC, HL, L
Song for Friends*	Daehn	3	MC, HL, EI
Starfire Fanfare	Standridge	3	TO, PU
Three Ayres from Gloucester*	Stuart	3	MC, FS, L
Tripwire*	Hall	3	MC, FS, L
With Quiet Courage*	Daehn	3	HL, EI
Yorkshire Ballad*	Barnes	3	HL, PU, L

* - Piece appears on multiple state lists (i.e., adjudication/assessment/contest)

Participants were also asked if they had programmed the work more than one time. The chart below details the percentage of works that received repeat programming based upon the *CBREC* criterion under which they were named. Pieces that directors rated as having strong aspects of *Longevity*, *Melodic Craftsmanship*, and *Pedagogical Usefulness* were the top three types of works to receive repeated programming.

Percentage of works receiving repeated programming based upon *CBREC* category

Criterion	Repeated programming
Longevity and Promise for Repeated Use	80.4%
Melodic Craftsmanship	76.0%
Pedagogical Usefulness	75.6%
Harmonic Language	66.7%
Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast	65.9%
Timbre & Orchestration	62.2%
Rhythmic Vitality & Tempo	58.3%
Emotional Impact and Sensitivity	55.3%

Finally, directors were asked to rate their level of agreement with the work they named being considered an Essential Work for JH/MS Bands. Pieces named as having strong aspects of *Melodic Craftsmanship*, *Longevity*, *Emotional Impact and Sensitivity*, and *Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast* were the highest rated. It should also be noted these four aspects had the lowest standard deviations among the eight aspects of the *CBREC*. Although works identified as having *Pedagogical Usefulness* were the third highest piece type to receive repeated programming, there was conviction among participant directors that the piece they named should be an essential piece (5th overall, 2nd highest standard deviation indicating more variability).

Director Rating of Pieces as Essential Works

Criterion	Essential Work	SD
Melodic Craftsmanship	4.62	0.602
Longevity and Promise for Repeated Use	4.54	0.689
Emotional Impact and Sensitivity	4.45	0.717
Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast	4.41	0.657
Pedagogical Usefulness	4.36	0.917
Rhythmic Vitality & Tempo	4.34	0.731
Timbre & Orchestration	4.09	0.848
Harmonic Language	4.02	0.931

A correlational analysis of the importance of the eight aspects of the *CBREC* to directors with the director ratings of the piece they named as being an essential work was conducted. Three of the correlations were found to be significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level, and one correlation was found to be significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level. The aspect of *Longevity and Promise for Repeated Use* was found to have a moderate positive correlation with director ratings of pieces as an essential work. The aspects of *Emotional Impact and Sensitivity* and *Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast* were found to have low positive correlation with director ratings of pieces as an essential work. While *Melodic Craftsmanship* aspect had a significant relationship with the director ratings, the strength of the correlation is relatively negligible.

Analysis of Pieces Demonstrating CBREC Aspect being considered an Essential Work

Criterion	Correlation
Longevity and Promise for Repeated Use	0.506**
Pedagogical Usefulness	0.646
Timbre & Orchestration	0.348
Emotional Impact and Sensitivity	0.304**
Harmonic Language	0.322
Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast	0.260**
Melodic Craftsmanship	0.196*
Rhythmic Vitality & Tempo	0.189

* - Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level

** - Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level

A chi-square test of independence to analyze the relationship between the piece named by directors as having a strong aspect of the *CBREC* and the piece receiving repeated programming was conducted. Although statistically significant relationships between the rating of the piece

containing the CBREC aspect and the piece receiving repeated programming were significant at $\alpha = 0.01$ level, the strength of the relationship was very weak and considered negligible.

A inter-item correlational analysis of the ratings provided by the participating directors regarding the value they placed on the aspects CBREC was conducted (The aspects of the CBREC are listed by the abbreviations outlined earlier to preserve space in the table).

	MC	HL	RVT	TO	FSB	PU	EIS	LPRU
MC	1.000							
HL	0.404**	1.000						
RVT	0.211	0.268	1.000					
TO	0.066	0.319	0.133	1.000				
FSB	0.120	-0.002	0.289	0.379*	1.000			
PU	0.160	0.146	0.217	0.052	0.201	1.000		
EIS	0.441**	0.306	0.025	0.307	0.150	-0.187	1.000	
LP	0.302*	0.133	0.309	0.241	0.248	0.064	0.179	1.000

* - Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level

** - Statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level

There was a positive moderate correlation between the value of *Melodic Craftsmanship* with *Harmonic Language* and *Emotional Impact and Sensitivity* significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level. There was a weak positive correlation between the value of *Melodic Craftsmanship* and *Longevity* significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level. There was a weak positive correlation between *Timbre and Orchestration* and *Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast* significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

Open-ended Responses on Repertoire Selection:

Participant directors contributed to a single open-ended question about another criterion they utilized that they did not believe was not accounted for within the eight aspects of the *CBREC*. Twenty-three directors provided responses to this question (46% of participants). While some of the aspects below can reasonably be teased out within the aspects of the *CBREC*, the thoughtful responses from this group of participant directors provide another lens to focus the discussion on the selection of repertoire for junior high and middle school bands.

1. **Age and Ability Appropriateness:** Directors prioritize music that is suitable for the students' skill level and aligns with their developmental stage. Pieces need to be accessible yet challenging enough to promote growth. *This dimension might be included under Pedagogical Usefulness (PU).*
2. **Audience and Student Appeal:** Both student enjoyment and audience engagement are important to this group of directors. Directors want pieces that students will find enjoyable to play, as well as music that will be well-received by audiences – at times selecting music with an element of fun or humor to help make formal music feel more

accessible. Some directors prioritize selecting repertoire that students are enthusiastic about working on, which impacts the success of the performance.

3. **Culture and History:** Several directors focused on selecting music that reflects diverse cultural backgrounds in both the composer and source material of the music. Directors also valued pieces with historical significance or those that offer educational opportunities beyond music, such as connections to history or science.
4. **Instrumentation, Flexibility, and Engagement:** Some directors in this group consider the practical needs of their bands, especially for schools with limited instrumentation or smaller band sizes. They look for pieces that can be played by bands with only one or two students per part and that allow different sections to contribute meaningful material. This includes thoughtful percussion writing that includes a variety of instruments. *This dimension might be included under Timbre and Orchestration (TO).*

Limitations

While the sample size was adequate for the purposes of the study, it should not be assumed that the results of this study could be generalized to the general population of middle school band directors. In regard to overall participation, it would have been beneficial to be able to identify other sub-groups based upon background variables (e.g., regional location, gender, years of teaching experience). For example, the participation by an additional number of female band directors would have permitted a comparison of perceptions between male and female directors at the junior high/middle school school level regarding repertoire evaluation and selection would have added a valuable perspective to instrumental music education.

Given the expanded duties and responsibilities for some junior high/middle school directors, it is possible that return rate was compounded by the amount time required to complete the survey. Technology made it possible to reach directors in many different regions of North America, and the survey took about 12 minutes to complete. However, it is certainly reasonable to expect that some directors in the survey population would consider this survey too extensive in which to invest their school and personal time.

Although steps were taken to ensure anonymity of the participants, there may have potential participants reluctant to share their perspective on repertoire selection in a national study. Other potential participants may have felt their repertoire choices were not appropriate for an academic study such as this. It is important to remember that contextual aspects influence all areas of education, and music courses and ensembles are not exempt. The only word of encouragement to be offered here is that music educators should make music first choices that put their students in the best possible position to grow and succeed in the classroom and rehearsal hall. Sharing those perspectives in a study such as this might help to better frame the discussion about repertoire for junior high/middle school bands.

It was beyond the scope of the current study to discover what resources directors utilize when selecting music for their ensemble. The questions were posed in a way that required them to call directly upon their personal experiences and choices with their own ensembles.

Discussion and Implications

Within this group of participant directors, *Melodic Craftsmanship*, *Rhythmic Vitality and Tempo*, and *Pedagogical Usefulness* were the three highest rated aspects of the CBREC in the evaluation and selection of repertoire for junior high/middle school bands. A previous study on repertoire (Weller, 2014) also found *Melodic Craftsmanship* and *Pedagogical Usefulness* as important to directors in the evaluation and selection of repertoire. It is possible that *Rhythmic Vitality and Tempo* are valuable to directors at this level to continue building upon both conceptual and technical skills related to decoding and performing rhythms accurately in different meters and tempi.

The survey also produced a list of 31 Essential Works for Junior High/Middle School Band (all pieces on the list were mentioned three or more times). The various pieces range between a graded level of 1 and 3, and are appropriate for junior high/middle school bands. The list of pieces reflects a moderate range of aspects from the *CBREC*. Several composers, including Robert W. Smith, Brian Balmages, Randall Standridge, Carol Chambers, Frank Ticheli, and Larry Daehn had multiple works listed by this participant group. Additional research on each piece revealed that 25 of these pieces also appear on multiple state lists for purposes of assessment/adjudication/contest.

Similar to observations made by Hash in his study of contest repertoire (2005, p.11), very few transcriptions and arrangements of historical masterworks were suggested on this list (8 pieces in total representing 3.4%). While it is possible that groups are still studying and playing such works throughout the year (e.g., “Air and Alleluia” by Mozart/arr. Kinyon, “Night on Bald Mountain” by Moussorgsky/arr. Sweeney), they were not frequently suggested as essential repertoire by this group of directors. Hash also suggested that standards for music education may challenge directors to present their students with quality cultural and historical repertoire to their students (p. 11). This finding was also seen in Stevenson’s examination of twenty-five selective music lists (2003). Stevenson’s research discovered that of the 228 titles in Grade 2, the vast majority (80%) were original works and the remaining works were classified as arrangements (20%).

Pieces rated highly for **Longevity and Promise for Repeated Use** (80.4%), **Melodic Craftsmanship** (76.0%), and **Pedagogical Usefulness** (75.6%) were most likely to be programmed repeatedly. Pieces with these components tended to influence this group of participant directors’ perception of essential works. Some of the works making it to this list of Essential Works for Junior High/Middle School bands have not received multiple programming. In fairness, several of these fine works (e.g., “Jungle Dance” “Fragile”, “Byzantine Dances”, “Kvetchers”, “Tripwire” and “After the Rain”) are relatively new additions to the repertoire, and the opportunity to program the work for a different group of students a second time had not presented itself.

The most frequently mentioned pieces in the present survey were “Moscow, 1941” by Brian Balmages, “Air for Band” by Frank Erickson, and “The Great Locomotive Chase” by Robert W. Smith. In Hash’s study (2005), the most frequently programmed compositions included “Ceremony, Chant, and Ritual” by Shaffer, “Big Four March” by K. L. King/arranged by Swearingen, and “A Childhood Hymn” by David Holsinger. In the current study, none of these pieces were suggested as an essential repertoire choice by the participant directors, although both Shaffer and Swearingen had other pieces be suggested by the participant directors. McGinty, Sheldon, Erickson, Swearingen, Smith, Balmages, Ticheli, Daehn, and Grundman all had pieces identified in the current study. These same composers were among the most recommended composers at the Grade 2 level in Brewer’s multi-level examination of repertoire lists (2018).

“Air for Band” by Erickson, “Kentucky 1800” by Grundman, and “With Quiet Courage” by Daehn were all found on concert programs in Hash’s study. With these pieces being suggested by participant directors as essential repertoire in this study, it provides some strength to the estimation of *Longevity* these pieces hold for junior high/middle school bands. With the current political climate at the time of writing, it remains to be seen if “Moscow, 1941” will retain staying power in programming choices given the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Composer Brian Balmages composed a companion/sequel work entitled “Kyiv, 2022” in response to the conflict. Robert W. Smith’s unexpected passing in the fall of 2023 resulted in an increase in programming of his works by directors at all levels. “The Great Locomotive Chase” is one such work that may have been fresh in the mind of directors, but it is certainly arguable the work has enjoyed staying power at this level of music.

Pieces considered to have strong aspects of *Melodic Craftsmanship*, *Longevity*, *Emotional Impact and Sensitivity*, and *Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast* were the highest rated *CBREC* items by this director group. Participant directors who valued *Melodic Craftsmanship* also seemed to value the aspects of *Harmonic Language*, *Emotional Impact and Sensitivity*, and to a lesser extent *Longevity*. Given the manner in which strong melodies that move people’s emotions and are valued over time, this not necessarily surprising. While some directors seemed to value *Timbre and Orchestration* and *Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast*, this could be related to providing students exposure to certain piece forms (e.g., overtures, fanfares, lyric works) that are accessible based upon the instrumentation they have available in their group. Although some of the correlations between various aspects of the *CBREC* and the value participant directors place on them were significant, the overall strength of those relationships suggest that there are additional factors that influenced the programming choices of these participant directors. There is not sufficient strength in those relationships to singularly point to their influence on the evaluation and selection of essential repertoire.

Some of those other factors that might influence repertoire selection within this group of directors could be found within the open-ended responses. Within this survey, participant directors prioritized age-appropriate, culturally diverse, engaging, and accessible pieces that balance technical challenge and emotional appeal, cater to their band's unique instrumentation, and foster a meaningful connection with both students and audiences. Additional contextual factors that could be influencing this group of directors include the band program curriculum, and even a rotation of works prescribed by such a curriculum to meet annual goals.

Based upon the data in this survey, junior high and middle school band directors are encouraged to consider the following recommendations in repertoire selection and programming:

1. Examine *Melodic Craftsmanship, Rhythmic Vitality, and Pedagogical Usefulness* during the evaluation period. Select works that feature strong melodic lines, as these are both memorable and help students develop expressive performance skills. Include pieces with diverse rhythmic challenges to build students' ability to perform rhythms accurately in varied meters and tempi. Choose repertoire with clear pedagogical value to reinforce musical concepts, technical skills, and ensemble development.

2. Always deliberate the potential *Longevity of the piece and Emotional connection that it offers students.* During the evaluation process, consider pieces with potential for repeated programming, as these often exhibit lasting educational and artistic value. Choose some works that can evoke an authentic and sincere emotional response and connect with students and audiences, fostering a deeper appreciation for music.

3. Incorporate cultural and stylistic diversity to your programming choices. Incorporate diverse forms (e.g., overtures, fanfares, and lyric works) to expose students to a variety of musical styles and structures. Choose repertoire that reflects cultural diversity in the subject matter and composer to broaden students' musical perspectives. This idea aligns with the participant directors' emphasis on inclusivity and engagement. Include works that have varied timbres and orchestration techniques to maximize the available instrumentation and expose students to different soundscapes. One such resource that may be of value to band directors is the page developed by composer Jodie Blackshaw. Jodie has included a page on her own website (<https://www.colourfullmusic.com/>) that includes programming ideas for many different levels of ensembles crafted by her and a number of colleagues.

4. Maintain the ability to adapt to unique contextual factors. Consider factors such as your **curriculum**, annual performance goals, and ensemble personnel when selecting repertoire. If possible, create a rotation of a few pieces of repertoire to strategically and systematically expose students to a wide range of skills and concepts over time.

5. Utilize a criteria list that aligns with personal philosophy and supports program goals for students and ensembles. While the *CBREC* is one such criteria list, directors might find a personalized list of different criteria more helpful based upon their context. While the aspects *Melodic Craftsmanship, Longevity, and Pedagogical Usefulness* were viewed as important in this study, remember that other *CBREC* aspects like *Rhythmic Vitality and Tempo, Formal Structure and Balance/Contrast, Harmonic Language, Timbre and Orchestration, and Emotional Impact and Sensitivity* also contribute to a well-rounded program. The *CBREC* is simply serving as a guide to ensure selected pieces meet multiple educational and artistic goals.

Finally, directors are encouraged to explore the 31 Essential Works for Junior High/Middle School Bands that this survey produced. Although it is not an exhaustive list, these works have been identified for their balance of *CBREC* aspects and their appropriateness for junior high/middle school ensembles by a group of directors who have meaningful experience and perspective. While some of these pieces are very new to the repertoire, others are long standing

repertoire that have enjoyed repeated programming. The list of composers on this study also reflect individuals who write with care and attention for the development of young musicians. By integrating these recommendations, directors can select repertoire that not only addresses technical and pedagogical needs but also inspires and connects with students and audiences.

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