The repertoire selection practices of Georgia public school elementary choral directors.

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CANTERBURY-THESIS.pdf (2.753Mb)

Date
2012-08

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Metadata
Abstract

“Perhaps the single most important factor in determining positive choral experiences for children is repertoire selection” (Broeker, 1998, p. 46). A survey of the extant literature on repertoire selection practices reveals a wealth of information regarding suggested criteria for selecting proper choral literature for the elementary chorus. However, it appears that there has been little research conducted or data collected regarding the actual repertoire selection practices of elementary choral directors. The purpose of this study was to examine the repertoire selection practices of Georgia public school elementary choral directors and to investigate any possible relationship among previous studies regarding the repertoire selection practices of elementary choral directors and secondary choral directors.

Participants consisted of elementary choral directors (N = 117) who teach in the public school system in Georgia and were members of the elementary division of the Georgia Music Educators Association. An online survey was designed, tested and revised, and participants were invited to participate in the study via e-mail addresses available on GMEA’s members-only website called Opus (http://opus.gmea.org/Default.aspx). The survey was divided into five sections—(1) introductory information, (2) chorus information, (3) choral music selection survey, (4) reasons for selecting choral music, and (5) music educator information.

Results indicated that the majority of elementary choral directors held after-school rehearsals once a week for 45 minutes to an hour. The directors believed that the amount of rehearsal time with their ensemble had a high effect on selecting repertoire. Directors selected elementary choral classics, holiday, and multi-cultural/folksong genres with the greatest frequency. Music from the 20th and 21st centuries was selected with a greater frequency than earlier time periods. Directors preferred to utilize unison optional 2-part, unison, and 2-part with their young singers. English was the preferred utilized language for their ensembles. Elementary choral directors preferred to use accompaniment CDs over piano accompaniments. When selecting music, directors utilized online music warehouses and conferences/workshops with the greatest frequency. It would appear that directors were primarily concerned regarding budgetary confinements. Many directors utilized music magazines as a source for locating literature such as Music K-8 and Music Express due to their budget-friendly attributes. Directors utilized peer recommendation, personal experience with music, workshops/clinics, internet sources, and choral reading sessions with the greatest frequency as sources for selecting repertoire. Vocal ability and maturity of the chorus, student appeal of the work, programmability, and the potential for aesthetic experience were the most important factors in selecting repertoire for young voices. While it would appear that the majority of the directors in the survey desired to select quality literature for their ensembles, the organization of elementary choirs as a whole may be endangered due to lack of support, perceived importance, and budgetary concerns. It is also the hope of this researcher that publishing companies will create quality budget-friendly literature which can be utilized for young voices. Further research in the repertoire selection practices of elementary choral directors is warranted and should be investigated.
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