

Selecting Music With Students

In Large Ensembles



Why pick music together?

1. Increased Motivation

- a. Autonomy Support
- b. Buy-in
- c. Relevance

2. Shared Understanding

- a. Challenges
- b. Fundamentals
- c. Group Dynamics
- d. Compromise


3. Sense of Respect



Music Discovery Guide

What are some things
you should discuss
before you start looking
for pieces to play?

MUSIC DISCOVERY GUIDE- BAND / ORCHESTRA / CHOIR

 Musical Wonders

Music Selection Guide

Purpose of the Piece:
List any goals/needs related to the selection of this piece of music.
Examples include learning goals, performance needs, and student engagement.

Where to look for music:
List any sources that you can use to find musical arrangements
Examples include local music library, publisher websites, student/colleague suggestions, favorite composers

Instrumentation / Voice Fit:
What kind of ensemble is this?
Examples: Full Orchestra / String Orchestra, Band / Jazz Band, SATB Choir / TTB Choir

Strengths we might want to highlight? Ex: Strong sections, soloists, advanced techniques

Challenges we might want need to address? Ex: Missing instrumentation, developing skills

Difficulty Level & Timeline:
When are we performing this piece and how many rehearsal do we have

What difficulty should we be looking at?
Examples: beginner, intermediate, advanced or publisher grade systems (Grade 2, Grade 5 etc)

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Purpose of the piece:

- **Learning Goals**
 - Skills
 - Level
 - Exposure
- **Performance Needs**
 - Concert Theme
 - Performance Conditions
 - Audience expectations
 - Adjudication concerns
- **Engagement**
 - Will this be engaging, valuable and/or fun.



Where to look for music?

Music Publishers / Retailers



Internet Search



State Music Lists

2025-2026 Prescribed Music List

Subselection of Unscored Editions for Selection in the PML. Any unscoring edition for a selection appearing in the Prescribed Music List may be substituted. US Music editions published in or before 1950 are preferred and are exempt from the copyright exception in the PML. The director of the performing organization or school shall be responsible for the substitution of an unscoring edition for a scoring edition. The substitution must be for an unscoring edition that is in the public domain or is otherwise exempt from copyright. If a substitution is performed and is accompanied by a published performance agreement or consent to perform an unscoring edition, the substitution is exempt from the copyright exception in the PML.

Note: The PML applies only to the entire PML (PML pages). Use the dropdowns or search to restrict the selection to a smaller subset before reporting. Please do not change your own profile or data.

Code	Key	Composer	Arranger	Editor	Publisher (Editorial)	Grade	Specification
1901-1010	Band	Bach, J.S.	Bach	Clark	Belwin, Inc.	1	
1901-1010	Band	Allegretto from Sorabach No. 7	Beehoven	Cook	Curwen Music	1	
1901-1010	Band	Turkish and Siciliano	Shubert		Walden Music Music	1	
1901-1010	Band	La Vite	Bort	Fenice	Deane Publications	1	
1901-1010	Band	Dance Pastime	Green		Rowley, Co.	1	
1901-1010	Band	Canadian Sketches	Corwin		Curwen Music	1	
1901-1010	Band	Hot Appleton	Corwin		Curwen Music, Inc.	1	
1901-1010	Band	Wingspan Castle	Smith		Deane Publications	1	

Music Library



Directly From Composers



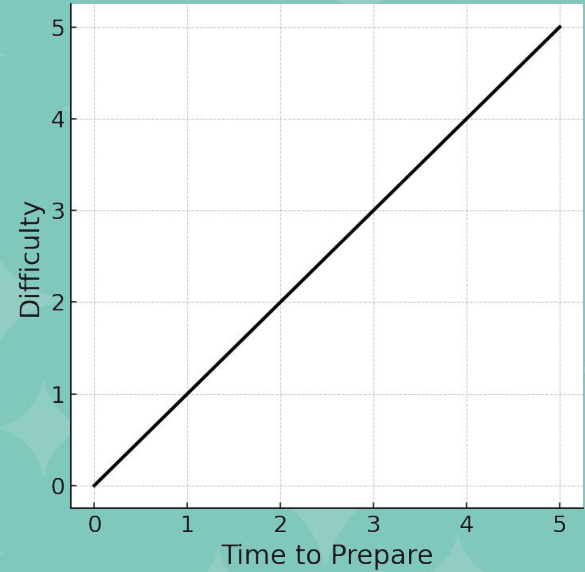
Instrumentation / Fit

- **What type of ensemble is this?**
 - String Orchestra Vs. Full Orchestra
 - Concert Band, Jazz Band, Marching Band, Wind Ensemble
 - Choir, Show choir, SATB vs. TTB etc.
- **Ensemble Strengths**
 - Potential Soloist
 - More experienced sections
 - Advanced Fundamentals
- **Ensemble Challenges**
 - Missing Instrumentation
 - Areas of Improvement



Difficulty Level / Timeline

- **Difficulty \neq Quality**
 - Harder music is not inherently better
 - Playing more music that is easier has benefits
- **Difficulty = Fit**
 - Regardless of publisher rating, fit decides how difficult a piece will be for a particular ensemble at large
- **Difficulty = Timeline**
 - More difficulty requires more preparation time
 - Less difficulty means more time for other music or priorities



How to use this information

1. Look for music in recommended locations
2. Listen to a recording of the music
3. Look at the score to confirm fit
4. If possible, sight read the arrangement to verify fit

Make notes and decide if this piece makes sense for your situation and the members of the ensemble.




Literature Evaluation Guide

You can also use our music literature evaluation guide to gather thoughts about specific selections.



MusicalWonders.org

LITERATURE EVALUATION- BAND / ORCHESTRA / CHOIR 

Literature Evaluation Guide

Name of Musical Selection: _____

Composer / Arranger: _____ Publisher: _____

Skills and Fundamentals:

What key(s) are in the song: _____ Musical Styles: _____

Dynamic Markings: _____ Musical Terms: _____

Time Signatures: _____ Song Length: _____

Draw any notable rhythm figures and musical symbols:

Ensemble Fit:

Strengths highlighted: _____

Challenges to Address: _____

Fundamentals that need to be reinforced: _____

Does this feel right for the amount of preparation time? Too Easy, Perfect, Too Hard

Other Considerations:

Will the students and community enjoy this piece: _____

Does this expose students to new voices or ideas? _____

Any special performance considerations: Equipment to purchase, rights to secure, etc. _____

Anything else you want to note: _____

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