Programming with Purpose

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NCMEA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
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Programming principles

• Who is the ensemble?
• Voicing
• Notational literacy
• Vocal needs
• Content expectations/restrictions
Programming principles

- Variety
- Major/minor/other mode
- Key centers
- Tempi
- Historical periods
- Styles
- Composer/arranger/poet representation
Programming principles

- Length
- Transitions
- “Flow”
What else might we consider?

• Who are your students?
• Cultural background
• Gender
• Developmental experience
• Need for expression
What else might we consider?

• Who is your community?
• Cultural representation
• Musical tastes
• Local experiences and resources

• What’s happening in the world?
There is always a story, and someone in the audience may need to hear it. The music was never chosen to boast about how awesome the choir sounds, but it was chosen to express meaning and understanding of whatever the story was about. I truly believe that conductors choose repertoire that has made a difference in their life, and sequence it in concert to make a difference in another person’s life.
“I think that if we as performers are not telling a story by the music we are performing, then what is the point in performing the set of pieces at all?”
My conductor chooses pieces that are wide in variety of sound. There are some slow, some fast, some spicy, some romantic. They also choose different varieties of composers, such as living composers and female composers. They approach the process by choosing a theme based off of only a few songs, and they continue to choose more based on the decided theme.
Our concert *Please Stay: Your Story is Not Over* was extremely meaningful to every person who was singing in it and every audience member. The programming played a huge role because we covered the really difficult topic of suicide. My conductor took their singers and audiences on an emotional journey from the stages of sadness and anger to the stages of understanding and peace.
Programming as storytelling
Its Motion Keeps
Caroline Shaw

Flare
Dale Trumbore

Joy
Jocelyn Hagen

The Dawn Is Not Distant
Christine Donkin

No Time
arr. Susan Brumfield
Programming as *storytelling*

- Can you tell a story that unites your set?
- Can you describe how each piece leads into the next, or how each piece follows on the previous?
- How much of the “story” do you tell the audience, as opposed to simply letting it be a framing device?
Programming as *storytelling*

“This program is a study in contrasts: bright light and rich dark, earliest morning and deepest night, the vast reach of the cosmos and the immediacy of soil beneath our feet. How do we pattern the light of our days? How do we welcome the enclosing dark? Where does the cycle ultimately lead us, if it does?”
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Programming as connection
Programming as connection

• Connection to community
• Connection to current events
• Connection across curriculum
• Connection to social issues
Programming as connection

• Journey and Refuge: We Can Mend the Sky
  • Blacksburg Refugee Partnership
• Women Warriors
  • Women’s History Month/#Metoo
• I Can See the Light: A Concert where Science and Music Collide
  • Climate change collaboration with Biology department
• Please Stay
  • Storytelling, awareness, and prevention
Programming as connection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Francisco Feliciano (1941-2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Cuckoo</td>
<td>Radford Singers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lacrimoso sonio</td>
<td>Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)</td>
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<td>Truth</td>
<td>Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arise My Love</td>
<td>Joan Szymko (b. 1957)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If Ye Love Me</td>
<td>Thomas Tallis (1505 – 1585)</td>
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<td>His Eye Is On The Sparrow</td>
<td>arr. Shane Warby (b. 1976)</td>
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<td>Death</td>
<td>arr. Ethan Sperry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wanting Memories</td>
<td>Ysaye Barnwell (b. 1946)</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a Balm in Gilead</td>
<td>arr. William Dawson (1899 – 1990)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please Stay</td>
<td>Radford Singers</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Love You/What A Wonderful World</td>
<td>arr. Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Storm is Passing Over</td>
<td>arr. Barbara Baker</td>
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I had a very interesting discussion with a prospective student today that has had my brain turning ever since. The student asked me what type of music we sang in our choral program. And she went on to clarify why she asked. She said that in her current high school program (which will remain unnamed and is states away from where I teach) all of the music they are singing is centered around social justice issues or is in response to very serious issues such as depression, suicide, gun violence, abuse, etc... This particular student said that they are not enjoying singing anymore because it is so emotionally draining just to go to class and have these experiences every day. She said the music is beautiful but it's so overwhelming that they no longer enjoy it. It was a very interesting perspective and one that I found very thought-provoking.
Thank you!

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