

All-State: The Fun Part of Teaching Orchestra: Selecting Music

presented by James Hainlen; reported by Janet Anderson and Clare Chopp

Jim Hainlen is now retired from the Stillwater school district where he ran an extremely successful orchestra program for many years. He also has been a conductor in various youth orchestra programs and he shared some wonderful insights with us during this session.

Jim talked about always trying to make orchestra fun and how he always tried to be excited. When you are not excited the students can tell and then they are not excited. He talked about selecting music and *not* leaving it to chance. Some of his qualifications were to be interesting to him, interesting to play, high quality, challenging, will make students grow, and sometimes is tied to the curriculum. He wanted to be sure that it was not just to fill a concert need.

He walked through some of the process of putting together music for the student and the orchestra and to keep curriculum and music separate. He was very clear on his own rehearsing procedures of Monday and Wednesday being curriculum-teaching days, Tuesdays being an orchestra repertoire day, Thursday being a full orchestra day, and

Friday being a theme lecture.

Jim says that the best way to build a library is to call people and get their ideas. Also listen to every CD of new music available and read every journal and catalogue of new and old music. Sending for perusal scores is an overlooked way to deal with publishers. Getting to know someone at the publishing companies is a must. Also, collecting and sharing concert programs with colleagues is a great way to expand your repertoire.

He has made some basic assumptions about selecting music for orchestra.

1. Your music is not your curriculum.
2. Base your selections on the strengths and weaknesses of your orchestra. Some years you may have better sections than others.
3. You should plan your selections 2-3 years in advance. No last minute planning.
4. Base your selections on your technique goals. Jim has everyone shifting at the end of sixth grade and picks a concert

piece accordingly.

5. Never violate copyright laws. Jim advocates respect for composers, arrangers and publishers and says the penalties are too high.
6. Jim had pieces commissioned for his orchestra. Conductors need to think outside the box and find money for great projects such as this.

Jim also talked a little about what he did and what his expectations were for each grade level. He claims that setting standards high is good, just not so high that panic attacks set in. If you are getting concert material ready at the last minute, you're in trouble he claims. Pick music, be reasonable, and do things that work. Even consider repeating pieces and allowing them to mature.

This article was compiled from reports submitted by Janet Anderson (Sauk Rapids) and Clare Chopp (Duluth).