

NEW SOUNDS & NEW VOICES

Using Flexible Repertoire to Expand Your Ensemble's
Musicality

.....
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Randolph-Macon College

THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME!

...IT'S BEEN A MINUTE!

- Yorktown High School, 2008-2011
- Century High School, Sykesville, Maryland, 2011–2013
- M.M., Instrumental Conducting, University of Illinois, 2013-2015
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SESSION OVERVIEW

- WHAT IS FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?
- WHY UTILIZE FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?
- ADDING VALUE THROUGH FLEXIBLE MUSICIANSHIP
- *LATER: READING SESSION*

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WHY FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

THE CHALLENGE:

- *Instrumentation & Ability vs. Intellect*

THE PROCESS:

- *Lots of transcribing, searching... but not anymore!*

THE RESULT:

- *Engaging with repertoire in new & creative ways*

AUDIENCE SURVEY:

GENERAL/CHORAL/BAND/ORCHESTRA?

WHO HAS FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE IN THEIR LIBRARIES?

WHO HAS PERFORMED FLEX REP?

WHO IS CONSIDERING PROGRAMMING FLEX REP?

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WHAT IS FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

GENERAL DEFINITION:

- Limited number of parts
- Customizable
- Less difficult?

WHY UTILIZE FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

- It's not just for emergencies anymore!
- *Flexible repertoire is not just a potential solution to the problem of instrumentation, it can add value to your program, at any level*

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WHAT IS FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

TYPES OF FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE:

- “Limited Flex”
- “Full Flex”
- “Scalable”/Existing
- Open instrumentation

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“LIMITED FLEX”

- 3-5+ lines
- Instruments or voices strictly assigned to lines/voice parts
- High voices on soprano, voices on bass, etc.
- Sometimes have assigned (optional?) percussion parts

“LIMITED FLEX”

PROS:

- Fewer director decisions
- More “authentic” instrumentation & performance
- Authentic percussion parts
- Perform existing repertoire not previously attainable

CONS:

- Not as scalable or customizable as other flex options

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“LIMITED FLEX”

EXAMPLES:

- String quartet/string orchestra repertoire
- Jennifer Jolley, *Lichtweg/Lightway*, arr. Kaitlyn Bove
- Allison Loggins-Hull, *The Loop*
- Percy Grainger's *Chosen Gems for Winds* series (100+ years old!)

“FULL FLEX”

- 3-5+ lines
- Instruments or voices not assigned to certain lines
- Performers may have access to everything
- Potentially one transposition per sheet, in full score (SATB)
- Potentially all parts available so director can distribute accordingly

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“FULL FLEX”

PROS:

- Anyone can theoretically perform any part
- Students may have complete access
- You can make orchestration changes as needed

CONS:

- More choice (often for directors)
- Full access might mean simpler parts

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“FULL FLEX”

EXAMPLES:

- Choral repertoire
- One Size Fits All Band Books (OSFABB.com)
- *Tradition of Excellence* Chamber Music
- Aaron Cole – *36 Chorales for Band*
- Thomas Tallis, *Third Mode Melody*, “*Why Fum’th In Sight?*,” arr. Steve Danyew

THOMAS TALLIS (1505-1585)



Third Mode Melody, "Why Fum'th In Sight?"

arr. Steve Danyew

"Full Flex"

Arrangement Key: Em
C Treble Instruments

Third Mode Melody

Thomas Tallis
arr. Steve Danyew

Adagio $\text{♩} = 50-54$

Soprano *mp*

Alto *mp*

Tenor *mp*

Bass *mp*

9

S *f* *opt. repeat of opening chorale*

A *f*

T *f*

B *f*

17

23

S *mf*

A *mf*

T *mf*

B *mf*

“SCALABLE/ EXISTING” REPERTOIRE

- Instruments/voices pre-assigned
- Doubled or cued parts
- Essentially, existing repertoire that does not have too many individual/soloistic parts
- Can be authentically performed by various sizes of groups without detracting from the performance

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“SCALABLE/ EXISTING” REPERTOIRE

PROS:

- You probably already have some potentials in your library
- Less transcription work

CONS:

- Not as customizable as other options

“SCALABLE/ EXISTING” REPERTOIRE

EXAMPLES:

- Lots of Band repertoire
- String quartet/orchestra repertoire
- Gustav Holst, *St. Paul's Suite*
- Gustav Holst, *First Suite in E flat, Op. 28, No. 1 (H. 105)*
- W. A. Mozart, *Serenade No. 12 in C Minor, K. 388, “Nachtmusik,”* (which he transcribed as *String Quintet, K. 406*)

GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934)



First Suite in E-flat, Op. 28, No. 1 (H.105)

“Existing Flex”

A page of a musical score for Gustav Holst's "First Suite in E-flat, Op. 28, No. 1". The score is for a large orchestra and includes parts for: C Fl. & Pic., D# Fl. & Pic., Obs., E♭ Cl., Solo-1 B♭ Cl., 2 B♭ Cl., 3 B♭ Cl., B♭ Alto Cl., B♭ Bass Cl., 1-2 Bsns., B♭ Alto Sax., B♭ Ten. Sax., B♭ Bar. Sax., B♭ Bass Sax., 1 B♭ Cor., 2 B♭ Cor., B♭ Tpts., Fl. Hn., 1-2 B♭ Hrn., 3-4 B♭ Hrn., 1-2 Trbn., 3 Trbn., B♭p., Basses, Drs., and Timp. The score is marked with "cresc." and "stacc." and features a section labeled "A" with a "solo" marking. The page number "3" is visible in the top right corner. The score is color-coded with yellow, red, and blue highlights.

OPEN INSTRUMENTATION

- No specific instrumentation
- Often written via a minimalist, aleatoric, improvisational, or otherwise modern compositional technique

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OPEN INSTRUMENTATION

PROS:

- Anyone can play anything!
- (Usually) no transcription necessary!
- Musicians need to listen and make individual musical choices

CONS:

- Lots of freedom = too many choices?
- May cause discomfort as musicians are forced to make creative choices
 - *Wait, should this be listed under "Pros"?*

OPEN INSTRUMENTATION

EXAMPLES:

- Steve Reich, *In C*
- Jodie Blackshaw, *13 Moons*
- Julius Eastman, *Stay On It*
- John Cage, *4'33"*
- Samuel Vriezen, *Ensemble*

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SAMUEL VRIEZEN (b. 1973)



Ensemble

“Open
Instrumentation”

Ensemble

for any 4 or more instruments
(indeterminate duration)

Samuel Vriezen, 2008

At least 4 instruments. No more instruments than would permit every performer to hear every other performer clearly.

Three movements. In each movement a group of 4 pitches: I – C D F G; II – C# D# E F#; III – D Eb E F, positioned within the span of one fifth. (The piece may be transposed freely to other pitches and to every octave, as long as every pitch can be played by every instrument.)

Each movement starts and ends in silence. At any moment between those two silences 1, 2 or 3 of the pitches are heard. The second silence may only start when each of the 4 pitches has been heard by itself at least once, and when each instrument has played each pitch at least once (in mvt. I), twice (in mvt. II) or three times (in mvt. III).

Play single tones (no figures). Play such that everyone can be heard. Maximum dynamics is *mf* in mvt. I, *p* in mvt. II, *pp* in mvt. III.

IT'S TIME TO FLEX!



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WHEN AND WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE

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WHY FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

THE CHALLENGE:

- *Instrumentation & Ability vs. Intellect*

THE PROCESS:

- *Lots of transcribing, searching... but not anymore!*

THE RESULT:

- *Engaging with repertoire in new & creative ways*

WHY FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

- New compositional voices/styles for your students
- Creates opportunities for new intra- & inter-ensemble collaborations!
- Allows for doublings, mix & match, personal recording of multiple parts
(easyvirtualchoir.com)
- If it's good music, your students deserve to experience it, in whatever form.

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PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Instrumentation/orchestration (on/off? “choirs?”)
- Color changes
- Balance & dynamics

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FLEXIBLE CHOIRS

- You already have the tools!
- Consider new voicings of existing repertoire
- Incorporate instrumentalists as creative doublings (as appropriate)

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FLEXIBLE ORCHESTRAS

- Already great at this!
- String quartets as string orchestra works
- Incorporate winds & percussion as new voices & creative doublings (as appropriate)
- Many new works & arrangements!

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FLEXIBLE BANDS

- Embrace chamber groups!
- Incorporate strings & singers as new voices & creative doublings (as appropriate)
- Advanced students?
- *Transcribe & arrange*
- *Fun with transposition!*

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HOW TO FLEX ARTISTICALLY

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HOW TO FLEX ARTISTICALLY

- Simpler music? Easier to achieve higher-level musical concepts.
- Emphasis moves from “What’s on the page?” to “How can we add musical value?”
- Flexible repertoire creates opportunities to make musical decisions that enhance the existing music



VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

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VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

HOW DO WE AS CONDUCTORS ADD VALUE TO THE
MUSIC?

HOW MIGHT OUR STUDENTS?

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VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

Baseball Player Value:

- VORP → WAR
- (fWAR/bWAR/WARP)

*Shohei
Ohtani*



- How can we encourage our musicians to create a Value-Added Musical Performance?
- (*VAMP? I'll see myself out.*)

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VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

- By starting simply, you can scaffold complex concepts.
- “Easier” notes/rhythms/harmonies allow for more of your musicians’ bandwidth to be spent elsewhere.

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CLARA WIECK SCHUMANN



(1819-1896)

Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär

“Full Flex”

Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär'

Oh, If I Were A Bird

Canon for Flex Ensemble

1840/2021

Clara Wieck Schumann

(1819-1896)

tr. Brian Coffill

1 2 3

C Treble Instruments

1 2 3

B \flat Treble Instruments

1 2 3

F Treble Instruments

1 2 3

E \flat Treble Instruments

1 2 3

C Alto Instruments

1 2 3

C Bass Instruments

1 2 3

C Contrabass Instruments

Wenn ich ein Vög-lein wär' und auch zwei Flüg-el hätt', flög ich zu dir, zu dir.
Oh, if I were a bird, and had two wings to fly, I'd fly to you, to you.

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VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

- Give your students opportunities to make independent musical choices!
- Repetition? Do something different!

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VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

- Tone Color/Voice Combinations
- *Allows for creative, non-traditional experimentation*
- Let your students lead – encourage student creativity & musical leadership
- Encourage failure... it's only rehearsal!

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VALUE-ADDED MUSICIANSHIP

EXERCISES & REPERTOIRE LIKE THIS PROMOTE:

- Active listening
- Balance
- Blend
- Intonation & tone-matching
- Collaboration
- Inquisitive playing
- Independent musical decisions
- Musical leadership

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HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE

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CREATE YOUR OWN FLEX REP

- How many independent parts?
- How easy to transfer/alter?
- Sibelius/Finale skills
- New clefs! Simple transpositions!
- Winds: Bass clef to Eb, etc.
- Strings: Alto clef
- Range/key considerations

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IS THIS THE “GOLDEN AGE” OF FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE?

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THE GOLDEN AGE OF FLEX REP

- Flex for VBODA Assessment
- New commissions & consortiums
- Composer/partner transcriptions
- Contemporary composers want to write flex now, at all ability levels
- Public Domain sources: IMSLP, ChoralWiki

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THE GOLDEN AGE OF FLEX COMPOSERS

- Katahji Copley
- Viet Cuong
- Steve Danyew
- Kevin Day
- Michael Gandolfi
- Joanne Harris (DC!)
- Jennifer Jolley
- Olivia Kieffer
- Allison Loggins-Hull
- Cate Nishimura
- Nicole Piunno
- Giovanni Santos
- Omar Thomas
- Roger Zare

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WHERE TO FIND FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE

- ...And We Were Heard
- Publishers/Distributors
- Murphy Music
- Bravo Music (Japan)
- JW Pepper
- Classics Revisited

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FLEXIBLE REPERTOIRE RESOURCES

- Living Composers
- IMSLP
- ChoralWiki
- Always confirm the copyright status!

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THIS CAN TAKE A BIT OF WORK...

...but I can attest to the fact that it can work with any ensemble, at any level!

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