

A Survey of the History and Legality of Sacred Music
in American Public Schools

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS
May 2017

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Table of Contents

Page 3- Abstract

Page 4 - Introduction

Page 5 - Chapter I: The Beginnings of Sacred Music in America

Page 9 - Chapter II: Music Education in the 20th Century and Beyond

Page 14 - Chapter III: Legal Rulings Concerning Sacred Repertoire

Page 20 - Chapter IV: Music Educator Interviews

Page 23 - Chapter V: Data Analysis

Page 31- Conclusion

Page 32 - Appendix of Respondents

Abstract

Sacred music has long been a staple of American public school music repertoire, even since the beginnings of school music in the nation. This text provides information for music educators to use as a defense of their use of sacred music for educational purposes. Also, this text gives examples of legal conflicts brought about by improper use of religious material within the public school arena. Additionally, this text provides detailed procedure and data analysis of a survey designed to evaluate the atmosphere surrounding sacred music repertoire choices in the American music classrooms of 2017.

Introduction

“Education can never be a static thing. It represents the thought of people who are continually caught in the whirl of a changing civilization. The school must yield to the pressures of the people - the taxpayers - who do not always know what is best for the school, but sometimes have pretty good ideas.”

– Joseph A. Leeder (1958)

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) cites in their 2014 *Music Standards (Ensemble)* that selecting ensemble repertoire should be based on “an understanding of theoretical and structural characteristics of the music, the technical skill of the ensemble, and the purpose or context of the performance” (NAfME 2016). Within the last decade, this process of choosing repertoire has become increasingly more difficult in regards to sacred music in America, because the Supreme Court has more heavily defended the importance of separation of church and state. Music teachers have faced legal consequences for their choices about what types of music they believe would meet this NAfME guideline.

Music educators must be able to provide a defense for why the sacred repertoire is important in order to be found faultless in matters of this kind. An appropriate defense should include: knowledge of sacred music’s role in musical

history, an understanding of how it was brought into American schools, and how to best choose and teach sacred repertoire in a way that will be acceptable to all potential parties.

Conflict can arise when a music educator chooses sacred repertoire for reasons outside of education. For example, conflict is possible when a teacher uses the medium of music to promote his or her own religious organization or belief system. In this case, the purpose of the repertoire choice is not to educate, but to evangelize.

Occasionally, this conflict has led to legislative and judicial action. Court cases regarding the performance of sacred or religious material in public school systems highlight the conflicts that present-day music educators can face regarding their repertoire choices, classroom environment, and professional demeanor. This thesis gives information that can be used for a historical significance defense of sacred music repertoire if conflict were to arise within the public school environment. Also, it details previous court cases relating to the topic of sacred material use in public schools.

The influence of this topic on the lives and educational practices of present-day music educators is presented in this thesis with the procedure, results, and analysis of a survey done on sacred music use.

Chapter I: The Beginnings of Sacred Music in America

The history of singing in American schools is very closely tied to sacred music. After the Protestant Reformation in Europe in 1517, church leaders placed a stronger focus on the aspect of singing in religious services. Martin Luther stated “singing good music makes a man more reasonable and well-mannered” (Mark 6). This type of thinking followed the Pilgrims to Massachusetts in 1620, and later the Puritans in 1630. Both groups of people left England in pursuit of religious freedom and a right to worship how they saw fit. This religious freedom was a new catalyst for sacred music composition.

The first English book printed in America was a Puritan book of metrical psalter, or sung Psalms. This *Whole Book of Psalmes Faithfully Translated Into English Metre*, also called the *Bay Psalm Book*, was published in 1640. These texts were sung to Anglican tunes that were published previously in the fifteenth century, specifically *Booke of Psalmes in Four Parts* by Thomas Ravenscroft (1621) and the *Whole Book of Psalms in Three Parts* by John Playford (1677) (Marini 2011). Thirty ministers called the Committee of Thirty compiled the *Bay Psalm Book*. Their goal was to correct some of the inaccurate Hebrew translations used in previous Psalm books. The *Bay Psalm Book* was massively popular after its production, and went through seventy editions within the first thirty years of its existence (Mark 10). The Reformed theology in this time required that only

Biblical text be sung in churches, thus the popularity of Psalm Books in colonial America.

The first few generations of worshippers in New England saw a vast decline in the quality of their church music. Church music during this time was in a very crude state, being taught and conducted by a church leader “lining out” the tune and the words of the Psalms (Birge 9).

“Precentors,” normally deacons or lay leaders within the church, by 1670 were given this distinct task of leading the singing of the Psalms. Only a small number of tunes were readily available from previously published Psalter books. However, there was no process in place for unification of tone. Even the Precentors, who were being looked to for providing the leadership in the lining-out method, often times were not educated about the correctness of tune (Mark 13).

Reverend Thomas Walter of Roxbury called the sound produced during this time “a horrid medley of confused and disorderly voices...left to the mercy of every unskilled throat” (Clark 1924). The idea of public school music came from an early attempt to improve this type of church music in colonial New England, through the development of singing-schools (Marini 2011).

Singing schools became popular around the time the “Regular Way” of singing in church was gaining ground. The Regular Way of singing involved singing by note, as opposed to following a Precentor in the lining-out method. A manual for this new type of singing called *The Grounds and Rules of Music Explained or An Introduction to the Art of Singing by Note*, which was published in

Boston in 1791 and written by the aforementioned Reverend Thomas Walter from Roxbury, Massachusetts. Walter suggested that note literacy would solve the issue of uncertainty surrounding tune correctness (Mark 2008). In 1721, Reverend Thomas Walter published the first American book of printed music with bar lines. With this new access, singing-schools and singing classes began to increase in number all over colonial America (Birge 11).

Some congregations were opposed to the change from lining-out to the new Regular Way of singing. There was resistance from those who had no musical literacy skills since this Regular Way required reading of musical notation. However, singing-schools eventually became a means of community entertainment, which was more difficult to resist (Mark 19). Although the roots of these singing-schools remained religious, musical study of famous composers of the time was common (Birge 11). One newspaper article from the 1850s advertised:

Music in classes as it was taught in ancient times by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, and as it is taught in modern times by Mason, Webb, Hastings, Bradbury and Zeuner. (Earle 1891)

This interest in classical music began the diversion from strictly sacred music production to a more secular music education.

Near the end of the seventeenth century, a new method of church music had developed: "rule and art." In this method, the better singers in the congregation sat together. This started the idea of a church choir (Birge 10).

Until the introduction of music classes in public schools, these singing-schools were the only method of musical instruction available to the public. Evening classes were developed as a means of supplementing the existing public education. Public schools were inclined to accept music as part of their curriculums because of the existing popularity of singing in the 1830s (Mark 20). Lowell Mason, known as the father of music education, was responsible for the transition of music from singing-schools into public school classrooms (Pemberton 1992).

One of Mason's greatest advancements in public music education came with his creation of the musical convention. The first music education convention was held at the Boston Academy of Music in 1836, which attracted hundreds of music teachers from the surrounding areas. From that point forward, conventions have been an invaluable resource for music educators continuing into present day (Birge 23). By 1838, Lowell Mason was successful in ushering vocal music into the Boston public school curriculum (Pemberton 1992).

Chapter II: Music Education in the 20th Century and Beyond

Lowell Mason's lasting impact on music education in America can be seen throughout the century after his life, the 20th century. Mason's development of the music education conference aided the national movement to encourage a focus on educator qualifications and standards. This focus on the educator led to the formation of the National Education Association in 1857, which was soon followed by the Department of Music Education in 1884. At NEA conferences in the late 1800s, discussion about the psychological aspects of learning took place. The "child-study movement" grew out of these discussions (Spurgeon and Gerber 2013).

The "child-study movement," led by G. Stanley Hall, examined how educational reform could reflect psychological findings. Edward Birge, author of *History of Public School Music*, said the following about music education's part in this new movement:

The child-study movement was largely responsible for making clear the present aim of school-music, which is that every child shall appreciate and take pleasure in music, not in a vague and indefinite future, but here and now. (Birge, 89)

G. Stanley Hall spoke on the status of music education at the time, at the 1896 NEA meeting in Denver, Colorado, saying,

In music there is a chance for a very radical change. Some of our music teachers are in a very bad way. The quality of music is miserable, and not the plan and methods by which it is hypertrophied beyond all sense and

petty differences magnified. (Hall 1896)

The early 1900s brought many changes for American life. Large migrations to west of the Mississippi River, political climates, and industrialization caused an increase of national economic growth. This economic growth developed a foothold for the interest in public education. Public school enrollment rose significantly.

Partly as a result of the Child Study Movement, national interest in education had been on the rise since the late 1800s. The first few years of the 1900s built off of this existing interest, and music education flourished. Choruses were formed in more public high schools, teacher education in Normal Schools began to include music courses, and “music supervisors” came onto the scene (Birge 83-84).

Prior to the early 1900s, the existing classroom teacher taught music in the majority of public schools. With the exception of a few high school chorus teachers in urban areas, “Music supervisors” are the first instance of a specified music-teaching role within public schools.

The first national music curriculum guidelines came after much deliberation within the Music Teachers National Association and the Department of Music Education of the National Education Association. Between the years of 1903 and 1904, fifteen committee meetings and five sessions of the entire conference produced the first national proposal for an official, musical course of study.

The next step in solidifying the need for preparatory and secondary school music was the push for colleges to include music in their admission exams. In 1905, the Eastern Educational Music Conference and the New England Educational League were the first groups to take on this next benchmark for music education in public schools. These groups met with a committee of college professors and produced a proposal for the College Entrance Examination Board for New England and Middle States.

This proposal, to allow high school music to count towards college entrance credit, was accepted unanimously on April 21, 1906. The acceptance of the proposal provided a new incentive for high schools to provide sufficient musical education for their students.

The Music Supervisors National Conference was founded in 1907 to adjust for the increase of need and availability of Music Supervisors in general education classrooms to provide students with adequate musical knowledge. However, this credit incentive also spurred a movement for applied music lessons taken by students outside of school to be counted for high school course credit. Allowing students to take private lessons for credit kept schools from being forced into hiring a teacher specifically for music. This practice of outside lessons took root in several states during the years between 1906 and 1930 (Platt 2009).

During these years, music education flourished more than ever. Partnership between high schools and colleges became necessary as more and more colleges began allowing music to count towards admission credit. National

music conferences grew in record numbers. Music supervisors and musicians who were offering private lessons for high school credit had a common goal.

The Great Depression effectively ended this musically fruitful period. Private lessons became a luxury for most Americans, drastically reducing the number of high school students who used outside lessons for school credit. Among the struggles the Great Depression, and later, World War II, the practice of awarding credit for private music lessons became a thing of the past. Only a few states accepted private music lessons as substitutions for high school music credit (Platt 2009).

After World War II ended, Americans spent several years in financial and societal recovery. Advocates for public music education during the next years, like Bennett Reimer, Robert Shaw, Fred Waring, and Harvey Whistler, along with the National Music Educator conferences, were largely responsible for the continuation of growth in the field (Leeder 1965). The late 1950s to the early 1970s saw decades of a gradual expansion of using music to express the traditions of different cultures (Reimer 1970).

Bennett Reimer, an influential music educator in the 1950s, asserted that music should be a discipline unto itself and not only hold value in its relation to other subjects. The aesthetic-value approach in music teaching expanded between the 1950s and 1960s. As one music teacher of this time period said, American music teachers “conformed to whatever seemed to stand for the total philosophy of the schools” (Woodford 2015). Reimer’s book, *“A philosophy of Music Education,”* was massively influential after its publication in 1970.

Too much focus on the aesthetic value of music education, however, lead to the era in which the line between religion and education got blurry. Reimer stated that music's uniqueness came, in part, from its ability to achieve "spiritual transcendence."

Too much focus on the "spiritual" nature of music can quickly become too personalized for it to be applicable in a classroom, as pointed out decades earlier by John Dewey in the first edition of his book *"Art as Experience."* Dewey claimed that music must not be taught "outside of the connection of concrete experience" (Dewey 1934).

A study of the *Music Educator's Journal* between 1967-1992 showed that the increase in focus for this time period was on a multicultural music classroom. Articles published during these years detail methods for music teachers to include music from different cultures, as well as how to discuss educationally the aesthetic value of music as it relates to all belief systems (Volk 1993). One music educator from the present day (Respondent Nine) said this about the importance of a cultural balance in sacred repertoire,

Spirituals and gospel are a vitally important part of American history and culture, and it is impossible/dishonest to separate them from their religious themes. Most of the "famous dead white guy" choral music is sacred because choral music was far more likely than instrumental works to be sponsored by religious organizations rather than by private patrons. In order to sing/teach FDWG music, one must sing/teach sacred music. In terms of folk/world music: One of the major uses for congregational singing is for worship. If one wants to teach/sing music from cultures other than our own (North East US), one must be willing to sing sacred music of those cultures.

The increased national interest in sacred music from different cultures during

the late 1960s to early 1990s created greater possibility and understanding for an educational environment that included the use of sacred music.

Chapter III: Legal Rulings Concerning Sacred Repertoire

Sacred music was instrumental in the development of vocal music in public schools. As a result, a historical significance defense can be used if the continuation of sacred music in a choral repertoire causes conflict of any kind. Another important method for a legal defense of sacred music in a public school repertoire, should such a defense be required, is an open dialogue. Music educators can establish an open dialogue between themselves, administration, and students. Religious material of any kind in public schools has been a point of contention since the 1960s.

Following a court case in 1971, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger addressed the method by which a music educator could determine the constitutionality of a suggested repertoire. Chief Justice Burger developed three questions that should be asked prior to choosing sacred music for a school-sanctioned program:

- 1) What is the purpose of this activity? Is it secular in nature, that is, studying music of a particular composer's style or historical period?
- 2) What is the primary effect of the activity? Is it the celebration of religion? Does the activity either enhance or inhibit religion? Does it invite confusion of thought or family objections?
- 3) Does the activity include excessive entanglement with a religion or religious group, or between the schools and religious organizations?

Financial support can, in certain cases, be considered entanglement.

(Music Educators Journal 1992).

The choosing of sacred music for a public school choral group does not require the music educator himself/herself to be religiously neutral. However, any planned choral program must meet the “neutral” criterion. Historical, musical, and cultural significance must exist in order for sacred music to be taught without a religious bias. Abraham Schwadron states it this way in the 1970 summer edition of the *Journal of Research in Music Education*:

If it is possible to study Communism without indoctrination or to examine the ills of contemporary society without promoting the seeds of revolution, then it must also be possible to study sacred music (with performance related activities) without parochialistic attitudes and sectarian points of view.

The result of not following these guidelines while choosing a sacred choral repertoire can be disastrous for a music educator or for an entire choral program. For example, in the case of *Doe v. Aldine Independent School District* (1982), a federal court declared that the Aldine School District in Texas had violated the constitution by performing a sung prayer at school events. In 2009, parents in Florida sued their school district in *S.D. et al v. St Johns County School District* (2009). In this case, students had been required to sing a song titled “In God We Still Trust” at a school-wide assembly.

Students were given the option to opt out of the performance, but the court still ruled in favor of the parents. The performance of this religious song at

their public school assembly was declared unconstitutional.

Along with Chief Justice Burger's questions-to-ask guidelines, music educators must also be considerate of the existing tri-part *Lemon* test for choosing sacred repertoire. The *Lemon* test is the result of a Supreme Court ruling in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) in which the Establishment Clause of the Constitution is debated. The Establishment Clause of the Constitution creates the legal justification for banning certain religious activity within public schools. The *Lemon* test, stemming from the Establishment Clause, uses the following three parts to determine the legality of a sacred musical work proposed to be used in a public school setting:

- (a) The statute must have a secular purpose,
 - (b) Its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and
 - (c) It must not foster excessive government entanglement with religion
- (Cranmore and Fossey 35).

The holiday season in America is the main time in which these issues are brought to light for a music educator. This season has grown to encompass the entire month of December. Christmas has been a nationally acknowledged holiday in America since before the Civil War. American music educators, therefore, must be able to make intelligent decisions about how to approach the season regarding their classrooms. Jean Caffey Lyles, editor of *Christian Century Magazine* says "carols and other religious songs have no place in schools if they

are sung for a religious rather than educational purpose.” This statement echoes the legislative decisions about sacred choral music use in other parts of the school year.

In 1989, a group of sixteen different groups banded together in the interest of addressing sacred music in schools. This coalition of groups such as the American Academy of Religion and the National Education Association issued a proposal that encouraged schools to approach the holidays in an academically geared way, avoiding the promotion of one religious belief over another. A segment of that proposal reads as follows:

There must be respect for people with strong religious beliefs and, at the same time, respect for those of other beliefs or no beliefs at all. A delicate balance needs to be struck in December and throughout the year... Teachers must be alert to the distinction between teaching about religious holidays, which is permissible, and celebrating religious holidays, which is not (Mendez 1994).

Suggestions for Music Educators

Music educators deal specifically with the issue of holiday musical programs being seen as an act of religious worship if their repertoire is too saturated with sacred texts. A balance between sacred and secular music within the program is key. Also, some religious holiday texts could easily be taught in their original language instead of English – removing some of the overtly religious presence of the performance. “Silent Night,” for example, could be sung in the original German. This would provide another layer of complexity for the

choral students while maintaining a balance of obviously sacred text within the program.

Along with the *Lemon* test and the use of the questions developed by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, there is one final method a music educator may use in pursuit of having a legally defensible sacred music repertoire. This method is called the Endorsement Test. This test covers reasons behind a music educator choosing a sacred piece for his or her public school chorus. According to the Endorsement Test principle, public schools cannot be liable for appearing to encourage, or endorse, any religion. The actions of a public school, and therefore the actions of a public school chorus, cannot “convey a message of endorsement or disapproval of religion, even if the intent was not explicitly to do so” (Drummond 2014).

This test came from a court ruling in the case of *Lynch v. Donnelly (1984)*. This case was not actually about sacred music, or public schools originally. The subject matter that was brought before the court as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution was a Nativity scene that was put on display in front of a city hall in Rhode Island. However, the ruling can easily be applied within a public school context.

Along with the legal aspects of choosing sacred music for a public school chorus, the community expectations must also be taken into account. Tim Drummond in an 2014 issue of the *Music Educators Journal* suggests to “have a general idea of the religious background and cultural norms surrounding your upcoming performance.” Christmas- themed holiday concerts, especially, are an

expectation of many American school districts. This should be taken into consideration, but should not overrule the legal suggestions that have been previously discussed (Drummond 2014).

Sacred music has been an integral part of public vocal education since colonial times. A music educator is legally able to choose sacred music for his or her public school choir if he or she maintains the ability to provide a legal defense for those particular selections. Sacred music within a public school repertoire must have a secular, educational purpose, must not endorse any religion, and must not disclaim any religion. Holiday concerts are very often expected by communities, but can be a source of legal trouble if the concert is mishandled. Holiday concerts must also be defensibly educational, and there must be a marked difference between religious study and religious worship within the program choices. Consequences will not be required if legal action is brought against an educator or a school district, if time has been placed in preparing the repertoire with a secular mindset.

As the subject of religion in the public sphere becomes more tumultuous, music educators must be more prepared to defend their repertoire choices. Music education should always be for the benefit of the students and the community, even through the medium of sacred music.

Chapter IV: Music Educator Interviews

In order to gain a more specific body of knowledge regarding sacred music use in public school music programs, I created a survey using Survey Monkey™. After receiving Institutional I Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Mississippi, I distributed this survey via email. I chose the email recipients from regional websites of the American Choral Director's Association (ACDA). I chose mostly (75%) from educators who were listed as their region's president, vice president, resource correspondent, or other type of committee member.

Music educators who are elected to office within their regional chapters of the ACDA are generally well-respected, experienced educators. I also chose respondents so that my survey pool consisted of a majority of educators who had 10+ years of teaching experience (71.4%). These percentages and resources ensure that the answers received reflected a wealth of educator experience. I gathered at least one response from each ACDA region. If the individual state had a working ACDA website, I chose from the officers listed on those sites. However, if the state did not have a site, I chose from the district site officers instead. The ACDA regions and their corresponding states are as following:

Central Division – Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio

Eastern Division – Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland/DC, Massachusetts,
New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island,
Vermont

North Central Division – Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South
Dakota, Wisconsin

Northwestern Division - Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington,
Wyoming

Southern Division – Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana,
North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee

Southwestern Division- Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico,
Oklahoma, Texas

Western Division – Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah

The survey was fifteen questions long, and required very little time for participants to complete, approximately five minutes. Thirty-five music educators completed the survey, over the course of two weeks. The educators surveyed have combined teaching experience from the following states:

Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia.

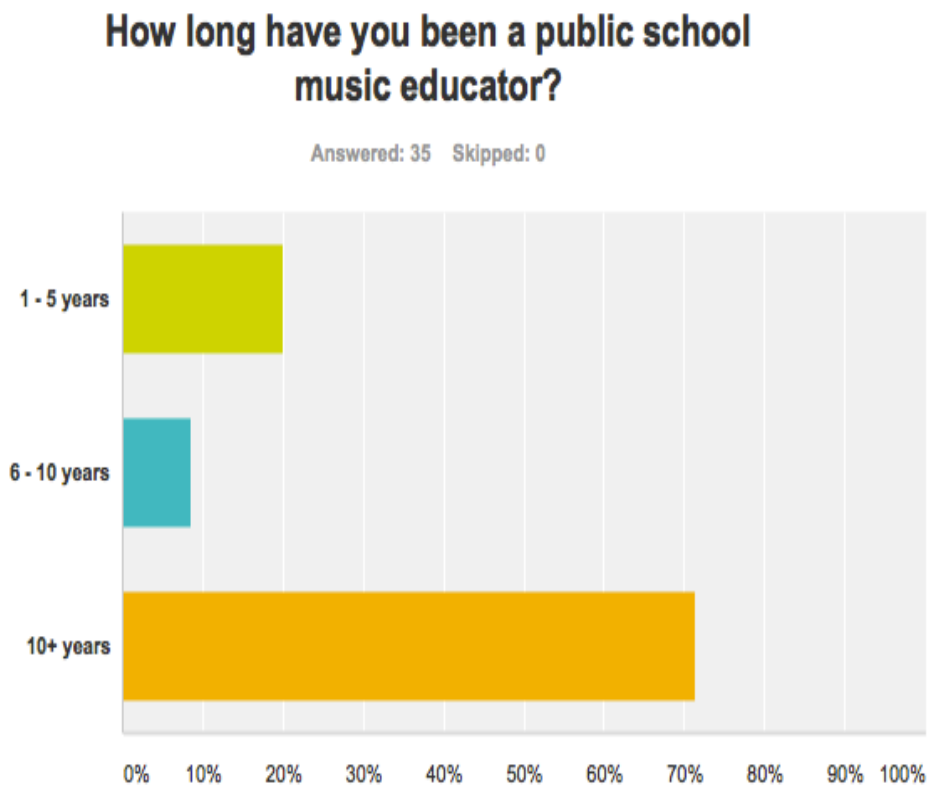
The style of survey allowed for participants to remain anonymous in order to protect them from any backlash from their school district or

community. These survey questions were designed to identify four different factors: location and length of participant's teaching career, existence or nonexistence of conflict surrounding sacred music repertoire and why, participant's methodology for choosing sacred repertoire, and any personal input regarding the use of sacred music in a public school music program.

Out of the 35 participants who completed the survey, I have included ten completed examples within the appendix of this paper. These survey results highlight the full spectrum of answers received, and allow reference points for the following data analysis section.

Chapter V: Data Analysis

The majority of respondents to the Sacred Music survey had been music educators for ten years or more (Graph 1). These educators have a wealth of knowledge about programming music, and several had taught in more than one state during their career. This range of experience allows for answers that are more likely to reflect the general opinions of music educators.

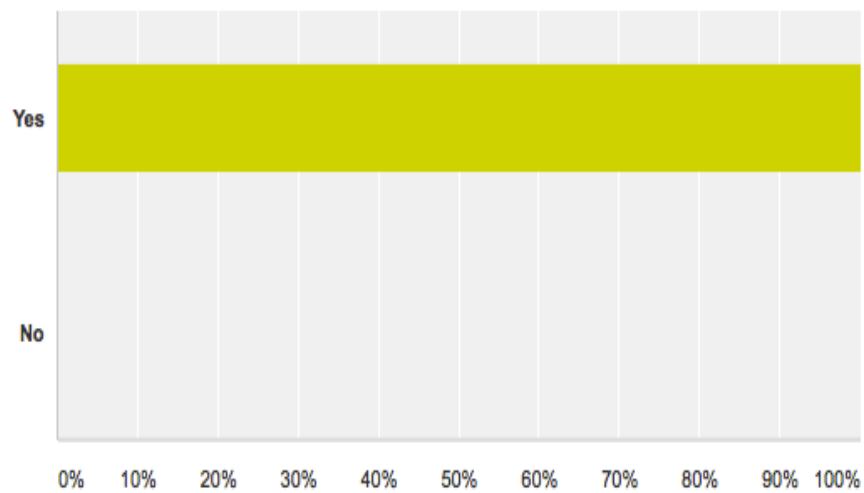


Every respondent who took this survey stated that his/her music program included a winter or holiday concert (Graph 2). This result was not

surprising. School years are divided into semesters or nine-week sections. The few weeks right before a school’s “holiday” break is prime time for school assemblies, activities, and musical programs.

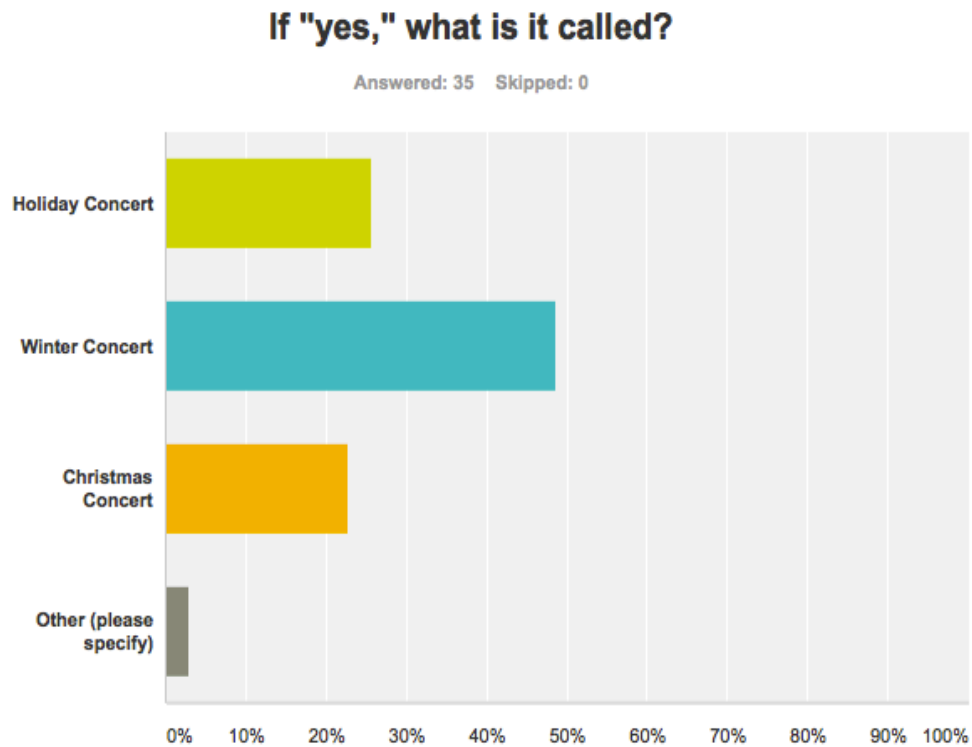
Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



The following question, “If yes, what is it called?” (Graph 3), addressed what that concert was primarily called. The majority of respondents, 48.57%, called their program a “winter concert.” The “winter concert” title, as opposed to a “Christmas” or “holiday” concert, removes any reference to religion or religious

practice.

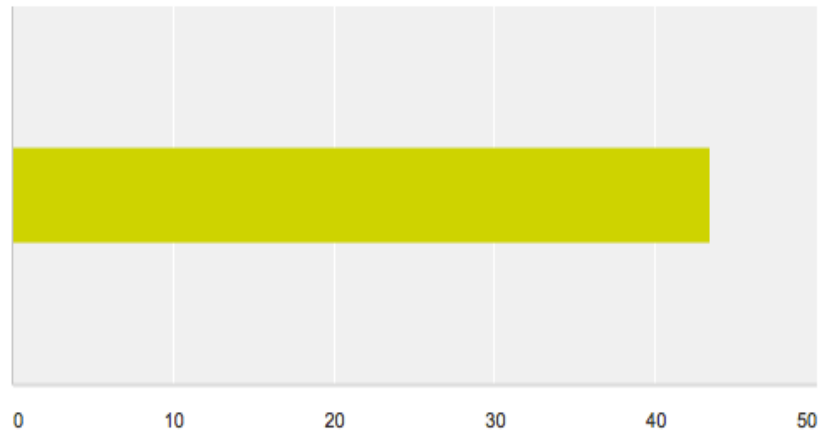


Graph Four shows the average percentage of sacred music that respondents programmed over the 2016-2017 school year was 43%. Nearly half of the previous year's repertoires chosen by these educators fell into the genre of

sacred music.

What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

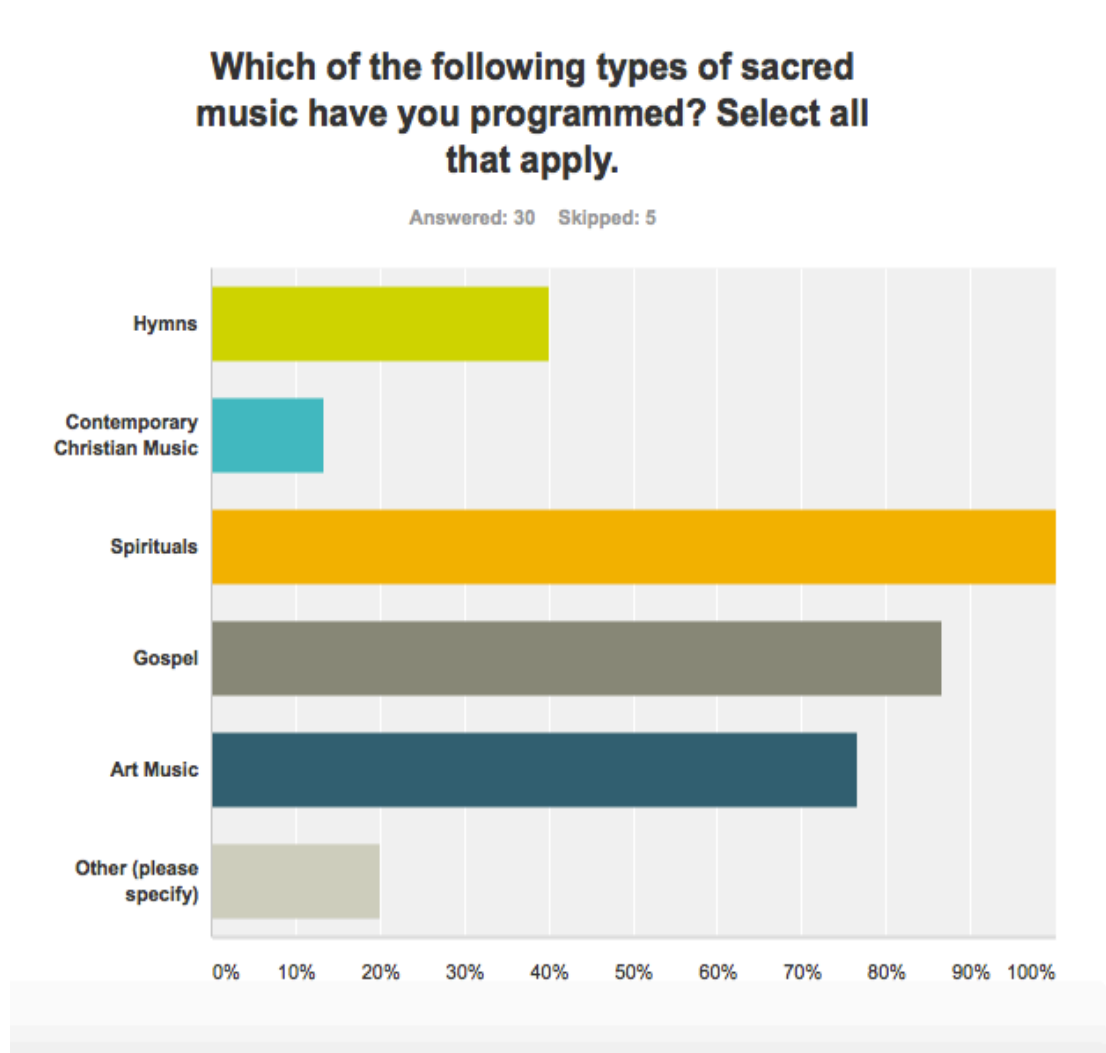
Answered: 32 Skipped: 3



Comparatively, the following question addressed the percentage of sacred music in all years of the educator’s career. This average number was slightly higher at 46%.

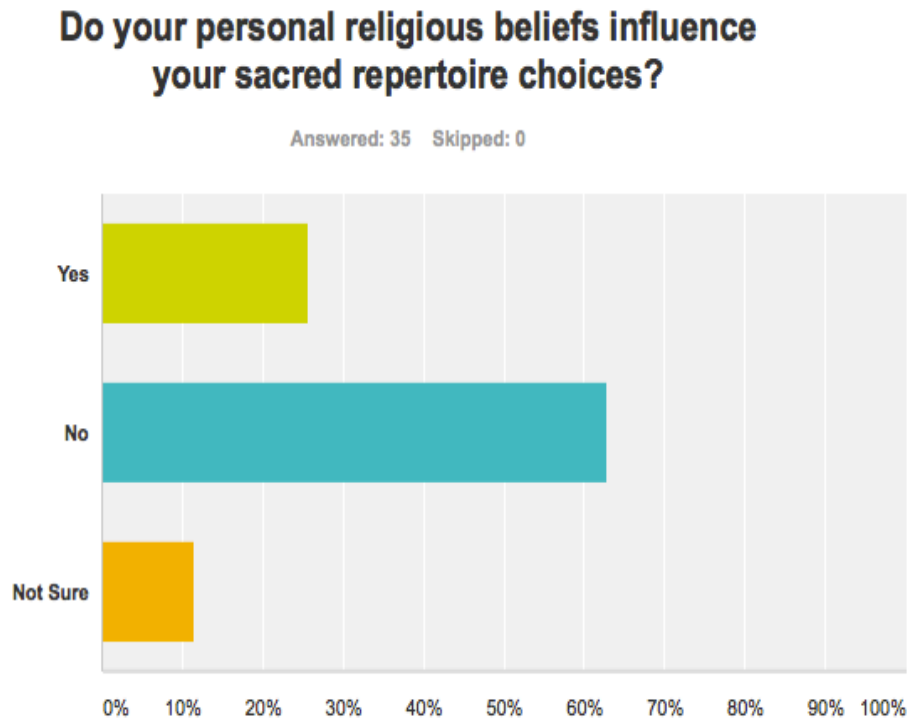
Graph Five shows that 100% of respondents who answered the question “Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply” stated that they had programmed Spirituals. The second highest percentage was a similar genre, Gospel. Art music was the third highest

programmed genre among respondents at 76.67%.



Regarding conflict about sacred music repertoire choices, I found that the comment-style questions were the most successful as a medium for expression of educator opinion. Question fifteen; “Is there anything else you would like to add?” gave the clearest window into the true feelings of these educators on the subject of sacred music choice. Several respondents (including respondents 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10) gave more personalized answers to Question Fifteen.

Graph Six shows that 62.86% of respondents answered that their personal beliefs do not influence their sacred repertoire choices. The other respondents either answered “yes” or “not sure.”



Conclusion:

Sacred music has always been a substantial part of American public school music programs. Early American “singing schools” were created to improve sacred music singing, but the impact of these schools was much more far-reaching than just to the local church. The development and improvement of music educator conferences spurred a national shift towards understanding the importance of all music, not just music of a sacred genre, in public schools.

However, the connection of sacred music to public school music has caused a bit of conflict in the last few decades. Guidelines about religious material in school have been put in place as a result of Supreme Court decisions. A music educator choosing his or her repertoire should closely follow these guidelines when choosing sacred music, in order to remain above the law and at a high standard of teaching.

Music educators across the nation in 2017 have a wide variety of experiences. Conflict surrounding sacred repertoire is not the “norm,” but every music educator should be aware of the potential conflicts that can arise, even in the best of situations. Community expectation, administrative guidance, and personal judgment are all important in these educators’ decision about repertoire. Among the educators surveyed, most seem confident in their processes of choosing repertoire and their ability to provide a quality music education using all genres of music, including sacred music.

Appendix

Respondent 1

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 6 - 10 years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Mississippi

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Winter Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- No

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

Based on the community being heavily invested in religion, it was acceptable for my groups to perform as gospel song here or there. I would not do more than 1 or 2 per concert because I wanted to make sure to educate students and parents on different genres of music.

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?
Respondent skipped this question

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 50%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

The style and benefits for exploiting my students' strengths all while challenging them factored into my selection choices

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Spirituals
- Gospel
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- No

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?

Sacred music was some of the first examples of choral music so many practice the importance of continuing those selections. However, knowing your personnel, such as students, administrators, and community will provide you the knowledge about how much should be performed per concert. I believe it will always be accepted in the choral realm: festivals; church; etc...

Respondent 2

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 10+ years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Oklahoma

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Winter Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- Yes

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Lost a stellar tenor after his mother became a Jehovah's Witness. (I got him back this year though, because he isn't living with mom any more...)

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

Respondent skipped this question

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 46%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 47%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

I choose music because it's good for my singers' growth and development. I have a Fine Arts Director to remind me of my adherence to the law.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Spirituals
- Gospel
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- Not Sure

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?
Respondent skipped this question

Respondent 3

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 10+ years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- New York

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Winter Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- Yes

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Many years ago, I had some parents questioning the use of Britten's Ceremony of Carols as repertoire. The conflict was amicably resolved. I have never had to change a piece on a program.

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

We have a district-wide policy that protects us regarding sacred music. The High School has tremendous latitude in programming.

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 40%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 40%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

Is it a worthy work? Does it have musical challenges that will help the students to grow as musicians and as singers? Is it respectful of the cultures it represents?

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Contemporary Christian Music
- Spirituals
- Gospel
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- Not Sure

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?
Respondent skipped this question.

Respondent Four

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 10+ years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Arizona
- Nevada
- Oregon

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Winter Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- Yes

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Complaints from families have been extremely rare. My administrators have backed me consistently in the appropriate use of sacred music in the public school setting.

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

Respondent skipped this question

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 50%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 50%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

Aesthetic value, appropriate vehicle for teaching vocal/choral technique, representation of musical style of different periods.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Hymns
- Spirituals
- Gospel

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- No

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?

I am not religious, which helps me to maintain objectivity, but I have never stated anything about my religious views, or lack thereof, to my students.

Respondent Five

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 10+ years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- California

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- College

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Holiday Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- Yes

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

When teaching high school some of the Jewish parents were offended that we sang holiday music. However, other parents found it refreshing and delightful.

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

Respondent skipped this question

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 50%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 30%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

Text, harmonic connection between songs and styles

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Hymns
- Spirituals
- Gospel
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- No

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?
Respondent skipped this question

Respondent Six

AGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 6 - 10 years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Ohio

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- K-6

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Holiday Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- No

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

We select music based on the musical elements being taught and give an "informance" style concert where the audience sees and hears demonstrations of pitch/rhythm elements within each song. This helps people see that the CONCEPT comes first. We also try not to use anything too focused on worship, but use the words "God", "Lord", and refer to the birth of the baby Jesus, etc. We also include Hanukkah songs, winter songs/poems, and sometimes things that are nothing to do with any of those things. It is well rounded, and people

appreciate that. I have had parents tell me they can really see the TEACHING that happens and they appreciate that.

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 15%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 15%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

I choose music based on what they will learn from it, and also keeping a well rounded exposure overall. They should hear and perform music by classical sacred composers, but also sing folk songs, theater songs, spirituals, etc.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

Respondent skipped this question

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- No

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?

Respondent Seven

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 10+ years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Florida
- West Virginia

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Christmas Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- No

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

Respondent skipped this question

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 40%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 50%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

I look at what concepts I am trying to ensure that I cover and that I do a representation of various secular and sacred music.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Hymns
- Spirituals
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- No

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?
Respondent skipped this question

Respondent Eight

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 1 - 5 years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- North Dakota

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- Middle School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Winter Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- Yes

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

I had an atheist family (VERY rare in our community) who became increasingly upset with religious music being performed at our programs. At the middle school I prefer to do a large variety of repertoire, including music from many different cultures. That was my saving grace as they weren't able to pinpoint me for trying to focus on one culture/religion over another. Our high school director, however, programs religious music much more heavily, including a full-blown narrated Christmas concert at our Catholic Church. This is widely acceptable and anticipated in our community. The family in question refused to

let their daughter participate in choir once she reached high school, which was disappointing knowing the motivation and talent that young woman had for singing. I continue to use the same balance in sacred/secular music when programming and lately have had more issues with the hyper-religious being sensitive to lyrics pertaining to religious practices out of context (Florida Georgia Line, H.O.L.Y) or anything remotely dark (My Songs Know what You Did In The Dark, Fallout Boy).

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.
Respondent skipped this question

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 20

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 25

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

Teaching middle school, accessibility is most important. Is the song arranged well and is it accessible to middle school kids? Certain harmonies work better than others for this age. Then I consider text and it's quality.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Spirituals
- Gospel
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- Yes

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?

I am non-religious and that does play into the balance and variety I try to keep between performing sacred/secular music. I believe that sacred music is historically significant and often well written and that is why I program it. I do explain to my students with the first sacred song of each year how they can

change the context to be applicable to themselves and how the music is not chosen to necessarily reflect my beliefs or their own. I explain that the historical significance and quality are the reasons I choose religious music for performance, it has nothing to do with religious beliefs. I wish more teachers would have this conversation with their students, if nothing else to show respect for diversity of our student body.

Respondent Nine

PAGE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 10+ years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- New Jersey

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Winter Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- Yes

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

There was a complaint about use of a "Jewish song" in light of district policy against using holiday music at their intended holidays, which is often seen as targeting Christmas music. The general argument was, "We can't use Christmas music, so why can we include 'Jewish music?'" The song in question was "Al Shlosha," the text of which as it appears in the piece is secular, and was in a program that included classical sacred music and spirituals. We kept the piece.

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

Respondent skipped this question

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 50%

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 55%

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

Must be musically and historically significant. Must be by a reputable composer. Must teach musical/historical/compositional concepts that cannot be taught in other ways.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Spirituals
- Gospel
- Art Music

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- Not Sure

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?

Spirituals and gospel are a vitally important part of American history and culture, and it is impossible/dishonest to separate them from their religious themes. Most of the "famous dead white guy" choral music is sacred because choral music was far more likely than instrumental works to be sponsored by religious organizations rather than by private patrons. In order to sing/teach FDWG music, one must sing/teach sacred music. In terms of folk/world music: One of the major uses for congregational singing is for worship. If one wants to teach/sing music from cultures other than our own (North East US), one must be willing to sing sacred music of those cultures.

Respondent Ten

GE 1: Basic Information

Q1: How long have you been a public school music educator?

- 6 - 10 years

Q2: In what state(s) did you or do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Colorado
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- Mississippi

Q3: Which age group of students were you/are you teaching, primarily?

- High School

Q4: Does your music program have a winter/holiday concert?

- Yes

Q5: If "yes," what is it called?

- Christmas Concert

Q6: If "no," please briefly explain the cause of that decision.

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 2: Detailed Information

Q7: Have you ever faced any conflict with administration, community, or students, regarding sacred music use in your music program?

- No

Q8: If "yes," please briefly explain.

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: If "no," please explain the decisions that may have helped to avoid conflict.

From the beginning I have called it the Christmas Program. I include 40% light, funny, happy songs. The rest of the concert is sacred, but I always include well-known songs. The ones most of us want to hear every year, I just choose new & interesting arrangements of them,

Q10: What percentage of your repertoire this year (2016-2017) is sacred music?

- 65

Q11: What estimated percentage of your repertoire, overall, is sacred music?

- 65

Q12: What is your personal process for choosing sacred repertoire in your program?

I seek good choral literature that conveys meaning. I talk to my students about the lyrics & why it is important to build character in their lives as well as encourage & uplift the audience.

Q13: Which of the following types of sacred music have you programmed? Select all that apply.

- Hymns
- Spirituals
- Gospel

Q14: Do your personal religious beliefs influence your sacred repertoire choices?

- Yes

Q15: Is there anything else on this subject that you would like to add?

Respondent skipped this question

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