

York Community High School Band Chamber Music Program Overview

Structure

A. Rehearsal Schedule

1. year long rehearsal schedule
2. rehearse 2-3 times/week
 - a) one/two large group rehearsal time per week is devoted to chamber ensembles
 - b) additional rehearsals take place during lunch labs or before school

B. Performance Schedule

1. all groups are encouraged to perform in the community at least 2 times
 - a) our groups have performed at assisted living facilities, hospitals, coffee shops, parks, Rotary events, homeless shelters and for elderly shut-ins
2. culminating end of the year concerts feature three consecutive evenings of brass, woodwind and percussion ensembles
 - a. students are asked to introduce themselves, describe the pieces of music and reflect on musical performances in the community

C. Literature

1. GigBooks

- a) each ensemble member assembles a three ring binder of music that holds several pieces of music to be used to facilitate a 20 - 40 min. concert

1. fairly simple literature - facilitate quick preparation
2. diverse literature that includes a variety of musical styles

2. Formal Concert Literature

- a) 2 - 3 pieces of challenging levels of music for each ensemble - requiring several weeks/months of preparation
- b) students will research the background information on each of these works and be able to present a brief synopsis at the end of the year concert as they introduce the piece that will be performed

The Results

A. Artistic Ability and Musical Knowledge

1. Elevated levels of expression and nuance

- a) students move from passive to active knowledge of music
 - (1) intonation concerns are more evident in small ensemble playing, forcing students to listen more carefully and be accountable to understand the unique tuning characteristics of their instrument
 - (2) differences in articulation, note stylization and phrasing are more evident in chamber playing and require higher levels of attention
 - (3) an understanding of each players role as melody or accompaniment are often more evident in chamber playing, offering the opportunity for students to moderate their own voices to highlight and/or support the melodic line
 - (4) although "gigs" in the community are often low pressure playing scenarios, they do require students to employ higher levels of

listening and communication that are often well beyond the levels used in the practice room

2. Students develop a greater awareness of their own intuitive musical voice
 - a) most of the rehearsals are student directed - allowing the freedom for each student to contribute ideas and fuse their own imagination and creativity into the preparation of the music
 - b) chamber ensemble playing facilitates instant feedback, providing an opportunity for students to see how reacting to a particular urge to change something in their own playing will affect the sound of the ensemble
 - c) as students gain confidence in their own ability to synthesize and react to the music that is happening in the moment, they begin to better understand the importance of seeing themselves as a collaborator with the other players of the ensemble and the composer/arranger
3. Students develop goal setting skills
 - a) the interdependence that is necessary to perform chamber ensemble music and an active performance schedule both help to encourage students to be prepared for each rehearsal
 - b) it also builds in an expectation that each player will leave the rehearsal with new goals for their individual practice and the next rehearsal

B. Building of Community

1. Chamber Ensemble preparation and performances help students develop a shared sense of purpose and commitment to each other
2. Students are encouraged to see themselves as part of the whole, while fostering a climate of positive interdependence
 - a) they better understand their role as a leader or follower
3. Friendships are enhanced when students have the opportunity to regularly meet with each other in small groups and work toward common goals
4. And perhaps most importantly, frequent public performances in chamber ensembles enables students to see how the beauty of music can affect others in profoundly wonderful ways

III. A Vision for the Future

A. Building opportunities for adult chamber ensembles in our community

1. to illustrate to our students that chamber ensembles can and should occur beyond the school experience
 - a) York has helped to organize two adult chamber ensembles that are meeting at a local music store to rehearse on a regular basis
 - b) these groups will also perform in several of the same venues that have been established for the high school ensembles

B. Encouraging the middle school programs to begin engaging students in similar types of programs

1. Gig sharing opportunities for high school and middle school students
2. Mentoring from older students and ensembles

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Chamber Music Blog <http://sharingchambermusic.blogspot.com/>