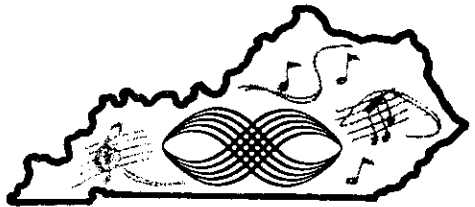


**A
Guide
To
Performances
of
School Music
Groups in
Secondary School
Programs**



A
Publication
of the
Kentucky Music
Educators Association

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is help boards of education, superintendents, principals, curriculum supervisors, teachers and leaders in local communities who make decisions which affect the quality of the musical education of Kentucky's children. The first part, **Rationale**, defines the role of performance in music education programs and provides guidelines to assist educators in determining the nature of performances in a school music program. The second part, **Current Problems**, delineates a current concern regarding appearances by bands in Kentucky's high schools and suggests guidelines for arriving at reasonable expectations for performances by such groups.

RATIONALE

Musical performance, e.g., playing, singing, plus reading, writing and composing music, is an integral part of the music education program. Through performance, students gain experience in "projecting musical meaning and such experience is essential for the development of a deep responsiveness to music and of musical understanding." (Leonard and House, p. 284)

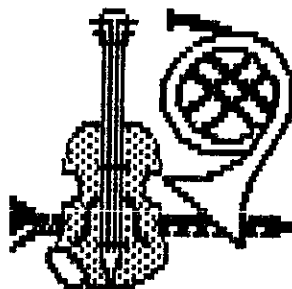
Music educators view performance as a necessary and valuable means to an end because carefully selected performances (that is, performances that take into account an appropriate sequence of learning and that provide students a wide variety of quality experiences) serve as one of the most productive avenues for reaching desired objectives. Teachers should provide a sequentially organized selection of performance experiences that meet the needs of the students, after carefully analyzing each student's background and experience.

An important consideration in the selection of performance experiences is to understand the particular school and local community, both the values that the school espouses and the intrinsic characteristics that the community displays. Concerned parties must also understand that although appropriate experiences will vary from school to school and from community to community, basic objectives should remain consistent. A major concern in choosing experiences should always be a student's progress and growth. On the other hand, **experiences that are considered as mere ends in themselves, that do not consider student growth, that are not organized sequentially, and that are peripheral to acquisition of real musical meaning are considered exploitation and, therefore, should be discouraged — if not condemned.** Not to be neglected in considering school music performances is the value that listeners derive from performances, aesthetically and emotionally.

The following are guidelines for determining the nature and type of performances:

1. Performances should be the outgrowth of student learning and should be scheduled in accordance with a sequential plan.

2. Performances should include a variety of music from a wide range of style periods.
3. Students should be able to choose from several experiences, including vocal, instrumental, and compositional. Large ensembles such as band, choir, and orchestra, provide experiences for many students, while smaller chamber ensembles, contemporary groups, and solo experiences (including keyboard and guitar) provide individual experiences.
4. Music teachers are best qualified to determine the nature and number of performances. While many aspects of community life influence the selection of experiences, teachers and administrators should make certain that no attitude, group, or belief overtly influences the selection of experiences nor stifles the perception of music as a legitimate art form.



CURRENT PROBLEMS

Student musical organizations in American schools have achieved success unparalleled anywhere in the world. The quality and quantity of performances by school bands, choirs, orchestras, as well as that of jazz bands, show choirs, musical theater groups, chamber ensembles, and soloists are impressive. With such success, visibility and popularity have become part of an emerging dilemma. Successful concerts, events and field performances have led to school and community following and support; in turn, such exposure has led to increased expectations, and very often, demands. In addition to performances directly related to music education programs, student organizations perform as support groups at athletic events, assemblies, theater productions, parent meetings, community club meetings, conferences, conventions, civic celebrations and many more activities.

Excessive demands for performances by school music groups often lead to exploitation of both students and teachers. The unfortunate consequences of music student exploitation may be observed by noting the sparsity of participants from upper-grade levels in the makeup of many high school music groups. **Rote repeti-**

tion and lack of variety often lead to student boredom and "burnout" rather than to a continually mounting excitement about music. Moreover, the time required for a single activity decreases the possibility that students can explore other opportunities offered by the school system.

Music teachers may be as seriously affected by exploitation as their students. For example, witness the significant number of excellent teachers who have left the profession because of the constant pressure of performance. Teachers often lose interest in planning sequential learning experiences — which lead to increased student growth — because their schedules leave little time or energy for these important activities. **Thus, rote learning, uninspired teaching, and narrow approaches to the profession replace meaningful teaching and learning that could and should occur.**

Increased demands for more performances from students, teachers, school administrators, parent groups, and community organizations **often obscure the basic reasons for the existence of the performing groups.** A concrete example of this problem may be observed at this time in many schools in Kentucky and deserves the immediate attention of those responsible for developing educational policy in the Commonwealth.

In a recent survey the Kentucky Music Educators Association mailed questionnaires to 167 educators seeking information regarding performances by their high school bands. For the seventy who responded (41.9%), the average number of performances per year and the range in number of performances in each category listed were as follows:

**PERFORMANCES BY HIGH SCHOOL BANDS:
TYPE, AVERAGE NUMBER, RANGE**

Type Performances	Avg.	
	No.	Range
Parades	3	1-8
Concerts	4	2-10
Solo/Ensemble Festivals	1	0-2
Concert Band Festivals	1	0-2
Marching Competitions	7	0-10
Other	2	0-4
Football Games	7	0-11
Boys Basketball Games	12	5-22
Girls Basketball Games	5	0-14
Total Performances	42	

Of the average forty-two performances per year by Kentucky high school bands, 42.8% were related to musical studies, while 57.2% were related to support of athletic events. The provision of pep bands for both girl's and boy's basketball games occupied band members' time on school nights (Monday through Thursday) in amounts that ranged from eight school nights to thirty school nights (including post season). The amount of time required from these students each night ranged

from a low of one-and-one-half hours to a high of five hours. The majority reported from two-to-three hours per night.

Music educators are concerned that over half of the performances by Kentucky high school bands in 1983-84 were for athletic events. Music prepared and performed for the athletic events is, by its very nature, primarily popular and of questionable intrinsic value. Moreover, these performances, not unlike ritual, demand much repetition of songs, chants and musical ditties. **Although such performances are generally enjoyable, music educators question the extent of student involvement with such materials at the expense of attention to more sophisticated music.** Further, the amount of time spent by students rehearsing for and performing at athletic events may be considered to be of questionable value upon examination of other uses of student time.

Very often, band directors, principals, superintendents, and other decision-makers are placed in a difficult position: They are concerned about the exploitation of student and teachers on one hand; on the other hand they are concerned that they maintain a good public image in the surrounding community.

The following guidelines should help administrators and teachers develop a music performance schedule at athletic events; these guidelines have been developed to maintain a continuum of musical growth and experiences for students without discouraging or alienating support from the larger community outside the school.

1. Administrators and teachers should limit the number of performances at athletic events. While administrators should encourage the marching band to perform at home football games, we do not encourage students to travel to football games away from home. During the regular season basketball pep bands should not perform more than one time per week. In times of overlapping schedules, the number of performances should not exceed this limit.
2. Performances should not be scheduled without adequate time for preparation. The primary responsibility for preparation lies with the music teacher. It is the teacher's judgement that should carry the most weight when deciding whether the band is adequately prepared.
3. Activities that are important to the musical education of students should take priority over athletic events in case of conflict. Teachers and school administrators should make decisions well in advance of the events so as to prevent scheduling difficulties.
4. Each school should develop written policies that relate to acceptable conditions for musical performances. Each plan should consider exposure to extreme temperatures, rain and unsafe performance arenas. Such policies would affect, for example, athletic events, parades and other performances that take place out of doors.
5. Students should not be expected to perform at athletic events when schools are not in session, e.g., for holidays, inclement weather, and such like. This is a

sensitive issue that demands careful consideration by all concerned parties in school systems across Kentucky.

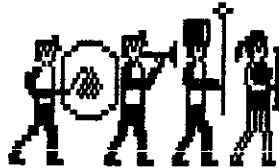
6. School administrators and teachers should give careful consideration to the factors outlined below before expecting bands to perform at post-season tournaments.
 - a. Post-season football games usually occur in November when the weather is not conducive to outdoor performance. Further, continued performance at athletic events beyond the regular season reduces the time available for attention to concert band music, solo literature and other facets of the music education program. Pep band performances for basketball often begin during this same period, requiring dual expectations from the same group of student musicians.
 - b. Post-season basketball tournaments create a problem of serious exploitation of student musicians. Involvement is demanded of the student musician for lengthy periods of time, often during weekday evenings. Further, such participation often requires extended travel that decreases student learning efficiency the next school day. Again, there is conflict as these athletic performances occur at a time when the attention of the music program should be concentrated on preparation for solo and ensemble festivals, district and state concert band festivals, spring concerts and clinics by professional musicians designed to enhance the musical growth of the student. Post-season tournaments often place the goals of the program of music education in jeopardy.

Teachers and administrators should employ similar systematic decision-making procedures when considering performances by high school bands as a part of the music education program. The following general guidelines should assist concerned parties in determining reasonable expectations.

1. Marching band festivals and competitions are healthy vehicles to achieve excellence and to ascertain an evaluative base to compare with accomplishments of others. Schools with bands that perform at football games should limit competitive appearances to five annually. Schools that have no football program may consider additional appearances.
2. Teachers and administrators should consider parade appearances in terms of historical obligations to do community service and should schedule all appearances well in advance to permit teachers and students adequate time to prepare for the event.
3. Concert bands should schedule no fewer than two major community concerts per year. These concerts should serve as the culmination of daily classroom work. Moreover, concert bands should participate in events sponsored by the Kentucky Music Educators Association, including concert band and solo/ensemble festivals during the Spring. The construc-

tive criticism received from professional adjudicators and the opportunity to hear the performances of other groups at these events are consistent with valid music education objectives.

4. Music educators and administrators should consider carefully appearances of high school bands at football bowl games, national festivals and other activities. Such appearances can have unique educational value. It is suggested that the following concerns be addressed when deciding to participate in such events.
 - a. Appearances should not drain community resources.
 - b. Appearances should bring about musical accomplishment on the part of the students.
 - c. Appearances should not necessitate preparation during illogical times of the year. For example, preparation for a parade in the month of March may require outdoor rehearsals during February.
 - d. Appearances should allow time for students to experience the cultural offerings of the location visited, i.e., landmarks, museums, and scenic attractions.
 - e. Appearance at and participation of students in fund-raising activities should not interfere with study time nor seriously detract from the overall educational program of the students.



SUMMARY

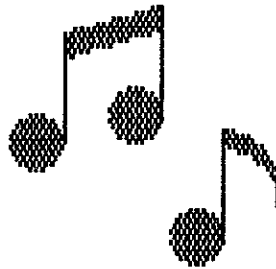
The Kentucky Music Educators Association has developed this paper out of concern for the musical education of students. It is intended to be helpful to students, teachers, administrators, boards of education, and parents as they make decisions about performances by school music groups.

The gift of music is accessible to all. It is, and has been through recorded history, a major form of human expression. **MUSIC is BASIC. The inclusion of music in the heart of a school curriculum is a responsibility, not a choice.**

The music program consists of logical, meaningful, and appropriate experiences as well as the maintenance of vision and perspective in the choice of these experiences. The making of proper choices is the task of all parties who are responsible for the musical education of students in the Commonwealth.

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