

HOW DOES REPERTOIRE IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH

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Overview

It is difficult to underestimate the impact of repertoire on apprentice musicians. The music we study and hear walking through the halls from the Crane practice rooms is the vehicle musicians use to learn and apply their musicianship skills.

Musicians are also known to be susceptible to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. If our repertoire is the way we express ourselves creatively, is there a way to do so with less risk to our mental health?

Depending on the repertoire choices and collaboration between teacher and student, research suggests that it is possible to select repertoire that can enhance students' mental health and overall well-being. Doing so will help tomorrow's music educators and professional musicians to be better listeners, collaborators, teachers, and humans.

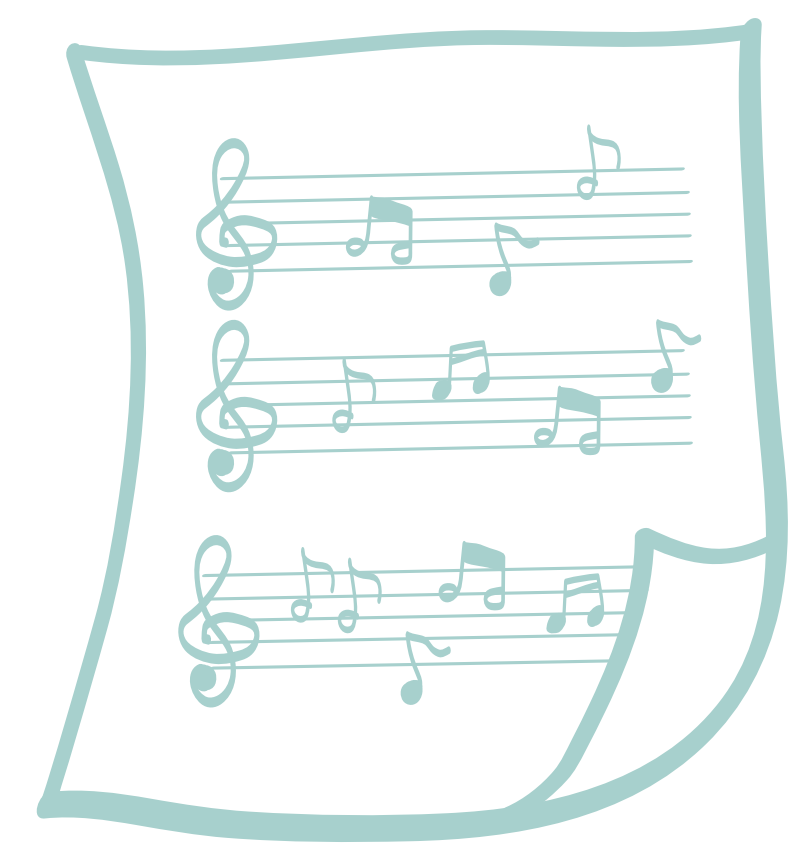


Research

To conduct research, I sent a Google form questionnaire asking Crane students to respond to questions about how much a composer or personal choice has an impact on how willing a student is to practice. I received 64 results encompassing different degree programs, instruments, and years. I also read a multitude of articles written on how to select repertoire for an ensemble, how to select repertoire as a teacher for a student, as well as how motivation and repertoire choices are connected.

The results of the questionnaire show that students are more willing to practice the repertoire that they chose, with the majority of students saying it is the first thing that they practice.

A study of Crane School of Music students showed that the majority of students had a large say in selecting repertoire (but not a complete say). Most likely a student in music school has chosen to be there due to some sort of intrinsic motivation. They are going to practice and they have a deep desire to get better at their instrument. They also expect a level of extrinsic motivation, knowing that going to school means that they will have to complete some sort of test, grade, jury, etc (performance-based exams). Only 25% of students in that same Crane student study said that they had complete say over repertoire genres.



Conclusions

When students are playing music that they are interested in, it leads to intrinsic motivation, motivation driven by internal rewards. When repertoire choices are built around student choice and interest, it helps to cultivate a desire for higher learning and mastery (which can lead to extrinsic motivation). When students feel motivated and interested in music, it is positively contributing to their mental health and overall state of well-being.

The process of selecting repertoire is much more complicated than simply picking music the student is interested in. Students, however, are at the forefront of learning and should be the focus of selecting repertoire. When music that interests the student has a "teachable quality", it holds the attention of the student, making it easier for them to dedicate time and energy to it in the practice room. This idea of music to fulfill an "emotional need", is incredibly important.

Repertoire choices can also help to validate the student and their experiences of cultural and emotional events. Culturally responsive music can also help incite social change, allowing students to create a better world for themselves and others (including their mental health). Using repertoire to incite social justice and social change helps students to feel seen emotionally, and creates powerful memories for students, helping them to continue in music programs as well as help boost their mental health.