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**HIGH SCHOOL BAND MEMBERS CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING  
PERFORMED MUSIC: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY**

A Thesis in

Music Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project was to discover the specific criteria used by high school band members to evaluate compositions they have rehearsed or performed. Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that members of the target population had specific evaluative criteria that they applied to these compositions but no research has yet identified those criteria.

The study was designed using a collective case study methodology based on the qualitative research tradition of grounded theory. The site was a high school band program in the eastern United States that met specific criteria for producing students with significant knowledge of music, as demonstrated by their performance ability. The student informants (N=4) were chosen using the typical case sampling method. Subjects were in the 11th grade, had at least three years of formal participation in school music ensembles, and demonstrated a typical level of musicianship for that program.

I collected data through interviews with the subjects, their parents, and their high school band director. Interviews were conducted using interview guides and I analyzed the data using three coding methods. Additional data was gathered through email exchanges and observations of the subjects. Answers to the following research questions were sought: (a) What specific criteria do students use, (b) what are the broad categories of criteria, and (c) what influenced the students' development and selection of criteria?

Analysis of the data indicated that students evaluated compositions using criteria arranged in four categories: (a) the variety of musical components, (b) the technical challenge of the composition, (c) the complexity of the work, and (d) the students' personal connection with the composition.

Possible sources of criteria, based on a comparison of the students' stated criteria and statements made by their parents and teachers, are offered. Additional findings and suggested directions for future research are also provided.

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Pro Domine et Familia

## CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE

### Introduction

Professional music educators have long stressed the quality of the performance as the most important goal of public school music. Recent opinion-based articles, however, have advocated that students must receive a broader musical education which should include the ability to think critically about music (Greer, 1993; Patchin, 1996; Pogonowski, 1989; Reahm, 1986; Sibbald, 1993; Woodford, 1996). One of the key components of critical thinking in music is that students must be able to identify and describe personal criteria for evaluating music (Patchin, 1996; Reahm, 1986; Sibbald, 1993; Woodford, 1996).

In 1994, the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), as part of the Consortium on National Arts Education Association, completed “The National Standards for Arts Education” (Blakeslee, 1994). The writers of the National Standards believed that students should be able to think critically about music. As one of the benchmarks established for all high school students, they stated in Standard 7 that students should be able to evaluate music and music performances (Blakeslee, 1994). Proficiency for this standard is defined as follows.

Students evolve specific criteria for making informed, critical evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations and apply the criteria in their personal participation in music. (p. 62).

Although the MENC standard indicates that students should evolve specific criteria for making evaluations about music, most researchers have instead focused on

students' preferences. Graffius (1989), Gregory (1994), and Rentz (1994) found that students who participated in high school performance ensembles preferred classical music recordings. Students' preferences for recorded music appear to be influenced by their music teacher's expressed preferences for classical music (Alpert, 1982; Greer, Dorow, Wachhaus, & White, 1973). Other researchers have established that students prefer music with faster tempos (LeBlanc, 1981; LeBlanc & Cote, 1983; Wapnick, 1980), and expressive dynamics (Burnsed, 1998; Burnsed & Sochinski, 1995). In the studies cited above, the researchers asked students to indicate which compositions they preferred rather than to make an evaluation of the compositions' musical quality. In addition, the researchers investigated preference based on recorded music rather than considering music that the students were currently rehearsing or performing. As a result, published preference studies do not address two key issues in the understanding students' criteria for evaluating music: (a) The students must have been using some criteria to establish their preferences, but the nature of the criteria is unknown; and (b) the criteria may be different when applied to the music that they have personally performed.

Previous research has established that it is possible to quantify the criteria used by accomplished adult musicians to evaluate the quality of music (Fiese, 1991; Gilbert, 1994; Ostling, 1978; Woike, 1991), and that these criteria are based on an evaluation of musical attributes. Fiese (1990), however, found that less experienced musicians are more likely to use nonmusical cues to evaluate music, suggesting that it might be possible that typical music students use different criteria than accomplished adult musicians.

Unfortunately, there are few studies that have focused on student criteria. Teachout (1993) found that band students use musical factors when evaluating band

music they are currently performing. This suggests that students' musical preferences might be based on judgments of quality. Tutt (2000) found a positive correlation between band students' rankings of recently performed literature and students' predictions of director rankings of the same literature, suggesting that band directors might have influenced their students' opinion. However, it remains unclear whether the students ranked the music according to their preferences or according to specific evaluative criteria.

Music educators have long argued for the importance of quality literature in band programs because they believe that students are positively influenced by the music that they perform (Colwell & Goolsby, 1992; Cundiff & Dykema, 1923; Doran, 1956; Gehrkins, 1934; Grant, 1994; Kuhn, 1962; Meyer, 1973; Miles, 1996; Hoffer, 2001; Mursell, 1943; Reimer, 1989, Rosene, 1981). In addition, the writers of the National Standards have suggested specific teaching strategies that performing ensemble directors may use to teach their students to develop specific criteria to evaluate the quality of compositions (Small, A. & Bowers, J., 1997; Straub, D., Bergonzi, L. & Witt, A., 1996; Swiggum, R, 1998). It has not been established, however, to what extent students are influenced and if the suggested strategies are effective. Furthermore, the authors only provide a few sample criteria the students could use, and suggest that the students should use their personal criteria. In order to formulate successful strategies for helping students develop specific criteria for evaluating compositions, it is important to identify the criteria they are currently using.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this research project was to discover the specific criteria used by high school performing ensemble members to evaluate compositions they are currently rehearsing or performing.

## **Research Questions**

**Primary.** What criteria do high school band members use to evaluate compositions?

### **Supporting.**

1. What specific criteria do students use?
2. What are the broad categories of criteria?
3. What influenced the students' development and selection of criteria?

## **Definitions**

For the purposes of this investigation, it was important to differentiate between students' preferences, measured by researchers such as LeBlanc (1981, 1983), and their actual evaluation of musical quality according to personal criteria. Although this difference may be seen as a semantic issue, a discrepancy exists in the application of these two actions. This distinction is based not only in common usage but also in how researchers have investigated each area.

To prefer, according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1983), is "to like better or best" whereas to evaluate is "to determine the significance, worth, or condition through careful appraisal and study". A criterion, is "a standard on which a judgment or decision may be based". Therefore, a preference becomes an evaluation when specific criteria are applied.

For example, if Roy stated that he “liked” *Hands Across the Sea* better than *Block M*, he would be stating a preference. If he said that *Hands Across the Sea* is a “good” piece of music because it makes excellent use of the march form, he would be making an evaluation based on the use of “march form” as a criteria for “goodness”. If he was able to list reasons for why he preferred a certain work then he has developed criteria for evaluating music.

Previous researchers studying music preferences have also made this important distinction. Their conclusions indicated the difference in the musical attributes of the pieces or genre selected, but the differences were not defined as the subjects’ criteria for evaluating music. In this way, this project differed from preference research in that I sought to identify the specific criteria that students said they used to evaluate music. I expected that some of the criteria might be similar to those cited by previous researchers who have studied preference, but I also hoped to provide more in-depth clarification.

Preferences have been separated from evaluations in the data analysis based on the informants’ ability to describe why they preferred a certain piece, or their ability to make a judgment based on criteria. These distinctions were based on the informants’ own words as analyzed by the researcher.

### **Limitations**

I only examined the criteria employed by the specific students in this study. Furthermore, the results are not intended to represent every criterion that the students used but rather every criterion that they were able to verbalize. Also, even though the criteria expressed by the students are meant to be applicable only to them, I employed typical case sampling to suggest the criteria a “typical student” might use to evaluate

music.

The contribution of the band director as a possible influence on the development of the student's evaluative criteria was studied, but his overall effectiveness as a music educator was not addressed as it was superfluous to the purposes of this study. Therefore, I did not attempt to compare his opinions of musical works to the opinions of his students or to assess his students' opinion of him. This limitation applied to the parents as well.

### **Overview**

The background, purpose and research questions of this study are contained in Chapter 1. Literature related to this study is reviewed in Chapter 2. The methodology for selecting the case and gathering and analyzing data is found in Chapter 3. The case is described in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the students' criteria. The influences on the students' criteria are discussed in Chapter 6. Conclusions and suggestions for future research are discussed in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 2: RELATED LITERATURE

### Overview

The purpose of this research was to discover the specific criteria used by high school band members to evaluate compositions they were rehearsing or performing during the study. Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that students already had specific criteria that they applied in formal or informal ways. However, only limited research regarding criteria used for determining musical quality exists, and the specific criteria that high school students use have not been addressed.

In the following sections, I will discuss scholarly literature regarding (a) music preference, (b) selection of music according to criteria of artistic merit, (c) repertoire selection practices among pre-service and in-service band conductors, (d) professional music critics' opinions about selecting music, and (e) public school students' critical thinking in music. In each section, I will review the relevant literature and discuss its importance to the primary research question. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the related literature and its relevance to this project.

### Preference

**Rationale.** Many researchers have investigated various groups' preferences for particular types of music and the possible reasons for that preference. These authors investigated the relationship between musical preferences and (a) performance-based instruction, (b) stated teacher and peer preferences, (c) musical elements of the composition, (d) subject attributes, and (e) attributes of the performer. This literature review will only consider the first three categories as the literature pertaining to performer attributes examined nonmusical criteria only.

The research investigating the relationship between musical preference and performance-based instruction as well as teacher or peer approval may provide insight into where students' criteria originate and develop. The relationship between preferences in music and specific musical elements is important because it may provide some background information concerning what musical criteria students use in their evaluations.

**Performance-based instruction.** Sheehan (1982) examined the effectiveness of performance-based instruction and teacher-directed didactic instruction in changing students' preferences for gamelan music. The subjects (N=52) were students from two sixth grade classes who were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups. The first group received instruction in gamelan music through demonstrations and active participation using a classroom gamelan. The second group received instruction in a more traditional format that consisted primarily of teacher lectures, audio-visual presentations, and written reviews. One of Sheehan's major findings was that students in the performance-based instruction group verbally expressed a higher preference for gamelan music than students who received more traditional instruction. This result suggests that performance-based instruction can change students' musical preferences and possibly the criteria they use to evaluate music.

In 1985, Sheehan investigated the effect of performance-based instruction on students' musical preference and whether changes in preference were transferred to compositions in the same genre that were not part of the instructional process. Twenty-six sixth graders were given a listening pretest designed to evaluate students' preferences for ethnic music, popular music, and western art music. The subjects were then taught

traditional African, Asian Indian, Japanese, and Hispanic songs. After being taught the selected songs, the subjects were given a listening posttest that included taught and untaught selections from the pretest. Students' preferences increased for the taught selections of ethnic music, but their increased preferences did not transfer to untaught selections. It should be noted that it is possible that instruction in new genres did not transfer to untaught selections because the students only learned one composition rather than learning about the selected musical culture through one composition.

In 1986, Dombroske investigated high school band students' preferences for selected musical compositions and then attempted to influence their preference concerning two compositions for which they initially indicated little or no liking. First, the researcher administered a Music Preference Inventory (MPI) to 127 high school band students in three different concert bands. Each student listened to 10 examples of full band music and was then assigned to one of three groups: (a) no further contact with the music, (b) repeated listening to two of the musical examples, and (c) rehearsals and performances of the same two works. The students were then given the MPI a second time. The students pretest and post-test MPI scores were compared using a Wilcoxin matched-pairs signed-ranks test.

Analysis of the data indicated that the performance condition and repeated listening resulted in a statistically significant increase in students' preference for a particular work. Students in the rehearsal and performance treatment group demonstrated a larger change in preference than those students in the repeated listening group. This finding suggests that rehearsing and performing a particular piece of music can increase

the likelihood that students will come to prefer that music when making listening selections.

Morgan (1992) examined the director's behavior and students' perceptions in a highly respected high school choir. Data were gathered through direct observation, written field notes, and audiotapes of 50 rehearsals. In addition, Morgan completed numerous ethnographic interviews with the director and choir members. All data were coded and analyzed to emphasize the important aspects of the ensemble experience. One of Morgan's major findings was that this choir director had a profound effect on the musical values of the choir members. This result suggests that the performing ensemble experience as well as the conductor greatly influence how students think about and value music.

In 1999, Siebenaler investigated how familiarity with a particular song can increase students' preferences for that song. The subjects (N=160) were students in nine intact third, fourth, and fifth-grade classes. Each class listened to ten songs from the Music Educators National Conference published list of songs, *Get America Singing . . . Again!* (MENC, 1996), and rated the songs based on their preferences. Over the next 10 classes, the students rehearsed each song (one per class) for 10 minutes. After rehearsing each song, the students again rated their preference for each song. Siebenaler found that almost every song had a higher preference rating after the 10-minute rehearsal than before, suggesting that experience with a piece of music may increase students' preferences for that music.

**Stated teacher and peer preferences.** Hughes (1980) examined the effect of adult and peer modeling and approval on students' music listening preferences. The

subjects (N=40) were 12<sup>th</sup> grade music students who were randomly selected and assigned to one of the following types of music instruction: (a) peer modeling and approval, (b) adult modeling and approval, (c) repeated listening, and (d) no-contact. In each instruction group, subjects were exposed to classical and popular music selections by one of following treatments: (a) adult leader modeling selection and approval of classical music, (b) peer leader modeling selection and approval of classical music, (c) repeated listening to classical music with no modeling, or (d) no instruction in music. At the conclusion of the treatment period, subjects were allowed to make their own music listening choices. Hughes' analysis of the data produced the statistically significant finding that subjects who experienced adult or peer modeling and approval selected classical music more often than subjects in the other treatment groups. A post-hoc analysis of the data, however, indicated that differences between all groups was statistically significant, but small. Hughes concluded that demonstrated approval of music is not an effective method for affecting students' preference for a particular type of music.

In 1982, Alpert investigated the effect of music teacher, peer, and disc jockey approval of country, classical, and rock music on elementary students' preference for that same music. The subjects (N=82) for the study were four intact fifth-grade classes. Each class listened to 30-second excerpts of music in each of the stylistic categories and then individually rated their preferences for each excerpt. Over the next three weeks, three classes listened to an audiotape on which they heard approval for each of the styles from a music teacher, disc jockey, or peer, with one class not listening to a specialized approval tape. At the conclusion of the treatment period, the subjects listened to the

excerpts again and indicated their preference for each excerpt. An analysis of the data indicated that adult or disc jockey approval increased students' preferences for music in each of the three style categories.

Furman and Duke (1988) examined how group influences can alter an individual's stated musical preference. Seventy music majors and 88 non-music majors participated in this study. Subjects in the experimental group were placed with peers who were secretly part of the research team. The subjects listened to two paired versions of popular and classical music excerpts in which one of the versions had its frequency and/or tempo altered. After listening to each pairing, subjects verbally indicated their preference for one of the two versions. In the experimental group, the subjects were not allowed to state their preference until after their peers all stated the same preference according to a predetermined list of responses given to them by the researcher. Analysis of the data indicated that peer influence had little effect on preference except in the case of non-music majors. These subjects' preferences for classical music were significantly altered by peer preferences.

**Musical elements of the composition.** Wapnick (1980) investigated the pitch, tempo, and timbre preferences of undergraduate music students. The subjects (N=96) were randomly assigned to one of four groups where the subjects were allowed to modify excerpts of unfamiliar solo piano music by altering only the pitch, tempo, timbre, or all three aspects simultaneously. Analysis of the data indicated that subjects preferred a faster tempo, but no other statistically significant differences were found.

In 1981, LeBlanc examined the effects of style, tempo, and performing medium on children's music preference. One hundred seven fifth-grade students listened to 24

examples of rock/pop, country, older jazz, newer jazz, and art music. Each example was between 26 and 48 seconds long, and the examples incorporated fast and slow vocal and instrumental excerpts. After listening to each example, students completed a written preference measure designed by the researcher. Analysis of the data indicated that, across pooled styles, the subjects preferred faster tempos and instrumental music.

LeBlanc and Cote (1983) subsequently undertook a simplified replication of the earlier study outlined above. In this study, the subjects (N=354) were fifth and sixth grade students. They were asked to listen to 36 examples of traditional jazz that used slow, moderate and fast tempos in both vocal and instrumental performing media. After each example, the students completed the same preference measure from LeBlanc's 1981 study. Analysis of the data indicated the same result as before: Subjects preferred faster tempos and instrumental music.

In 1995, Burnsed and Sochinski examined the effects of expressive dynamic variation on adolescents' preferences for 10 folk songs. The subjects (N=45) were students at a summer music camp. They took a computerized preference test that included two versions of 10 folk songs. One version had expressive dynamics; the other version had no changes in dynamics. Analysis of the data indicated that the subjects preferred the more expressive versions of the folk songs.

In 1998, Burnsed replicated the earlier study by Burnsed and Sochinski (1995). The subjects (N=315) were elementary students and the music teacher administered the music preference test. As in the earlier study, a significant proportion of the students preferred the more expressive versions of the folk songs.

Osborn (1999) investigated tempo preferences of secondary school students. Four hundred twenty-two band students in grades 6-12 served as subjects for this study. The subjects were administered a researcher-developed listening test that was designed to measure tempo preferences. Osborn found that students preferred faster tempos to slower ones and that males tended to prefer faster tempos than females.

### **Criteria of Artistic Merit**

The research reviewed in this section was undertaken to identify criteria for evaluating wind band music and to determine what music met that criteria. The authors identified criteria and investigated the success with which they could be applied to both advanced wind band literature and literature playable by high school ensembles. Based on this research, it is evident that evaluative criteria can be articulated for wind band music, and that they can be applied to literature performed by high school ensembles.

Ostling (1978) sought to identify the wind band compositions that were the “most worthy of study and performance” (p. 12). In order to identify those compositions, he first attempted to develop a list of criteria based on established standards. However, he was frustrated in this regard. Ostling concluded that “little literature exists which deals directly with problems of identifying specific criteria for determining quality in music” (p. 210). As a result, he created his own set of criteria derived from three sources: (a) Leonard Meyer’s book *Music, the Arts and Ideas*; (b) texts on theory and orchestration by Howard Murphy, Paul Cooper, Bernard Rogers, and Jan LaRue; and (c) personal discussions with several eminent conductors (p. 23).

Ostling arrived at the following criteria for evaluating wind music (1978, p. 24-29).

1. The composition has a form - not “a form” but form - and reflects a proper balance between repetition and contrast.
2. The composition reflects shape and design, and creates the impression of conscious choice and judicious arrangement on the part of the composer.
3. The composition reflects craftsmanship in orchestration, demonstrating a proper balance between transparent and tutti scoring, and also [sic] between solo and group colors.
4. The composition is sufficiently unpredictable to preclude an immediate grasp of its musical meaning.
5. The route through which the composition travels in initiating its musical tendencies and probable musical goals is not completely direct and obvious.
6. The composition is consistent in its quality throughout its length in its various sections.
7. The composition is consistent in its style, reflecting a complete grasp of technical details, clearly conceived ideas, and avoids lapses into trivial, futile, or unsuitable passages.
8. The composition reflects ingenuity in its development, given the stylistic context in which it exists.
9. The composition is genuine in idiom, and is not pretentious.
10. The composition reflects a musical validity which transcends factors of historical importance, or factors of pedagogical usefulness.

The raters in Ostling's study were the most noted collegiate wind band conductors of the time. The conductors in his study indicated that his criteria were very useful in determining artistic merit. Clearly, evaluative criteria can be applied to wind band music.

In 1994, Gilbert completed a literal replication of Ostling's study. Gilbert asked another group of prestigious collegiate wind band conductors to evaluate pieces using Ostling's criteria. The raters evaluated 1,261 works and selected 191 as meeting the selected criteria. The participants in Gilbert's study indicated that Ostling's criteria were still very useful in determining artistic merit. This successful replication confirmed that meaningful evaluative criteria could be established for wind band compositions.

Rhea (1999) applied the criteria established by Ostling (1978) and Gilbert (1992) to music that was performed by Texas high school concert bands. Rhea selected 20 outstanding music educators from Texas and asked them to rate Grade III, IV and V level music from the *1995-1998 Prescribed Music List of the Texas University Interscholastic League*. Rhea's data analysis revealed that 181 of the 372 compositions rated met the prescribed artistic merit criteria. This result also supports the contention that criteria of artistic merit can be applicable to wind band music playable by high school students.

Thomas (1998) asked 28 evaluators to use Ostling's criteria to evaluate compositions suitable for high school bands. The evaluators, distributed geographically throughout the country, were recommended by the state chairs of the National Band Association. The raters used a slightly altered list of criteria to rate 1,379 compositions labeled Grade III-IV. Analysis of the data indicated that 182 compositions were judged to meet both the established criteria for artistic merit and the technical difficulty of Grade

III-IV. These findings strongly suggest that criteria for artistic merit can be applied to a broad range of music playable by many high school musicians.

### **Repertoire Selection Practices**

The task of repertoire selection is the most important challenge of music educators dealing with performance ensembles. The reasons a conductor selects a particular piece for performance reveal the essence of that person's beliefs regarding the purpose and value of music. The studies in this section provide descriptions of the criteria that pre-service, in-service, and collegiate conductors use when evaluating music for performance. For each researcher, the selection of high quality repertoire was important, indicating pervasive professional opinion regarding this topic. Unfortunately, few of the studies provide specific lists of the criteria the subjects used to evaluate the music.

Fiese (1990) investigated how nonmusical information on selected wind band scores affected judgments of musical quality by undergraduate conducting students. To answer the research questions, 45 undergraduate conducting students were given four wind band scores which had been rated by an expert panel comprised of faculty composers and conductors. The subjects were divided into three groups and asked to rate the four scores. The first group had scores with correct nonmusical information, the second group had scores with incorrect nonmusical information, and the third group had scores with no nonmusical information. Analysis of the data suggested that the subjects used nonmusical cues more than musical ones when evaluating the musical quality of wind band scores. The researcher concluded that subjects' musical preferences may be affected by how the music "looks" on the page in addition to musical factors.

In 1991, Fiese investigated the level of agreement among collegiate wind band conductors regarding the musical quality of three unfamiliar wind band scores, and the criteria they used to evaluate the compositions. The subjects (N=33) were asked to study and rank three unfamiliar scores and to list the criteria they used. Fiese analyzed the rankings to determine a level of agreement and separated the listed criteria into categories. Analysis of the data revealed that, although there was almost no agreement among the conductors on the relative musical worth of the scores, there was significant agreement regarding the criteria used. Fiese divided these criteria into nine categories:

(a) structural unity and coherence of musical elements within a musical form; (b) logical development of musical ideas; (c) use of contrast and variety in rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre, and dynamics; (d) activity and complexity; (e) effective use of instruments; (f) creativity; (g) predictability; (h) evokes interest; and (i) suitability for the band medium (p. 244).

It is interesting to note that Fiese's nine categories are almost identical to the criteria previously identified by Ostling (1978), but that there was no agreement among the conductors on how those criteria applied to the pieces selected for the study.

Woike (1991) investigated the criteria that college conductors use to select repertoire, what repertoire they have selected in the past, and whether the repertoire selected was consistent with their stated selection criteria. Woike also hoped to provide a list of core collegiate wind band repertoire. The subjects (N=38) were selected randomly from the membership list of the College Band Directors' National Association and

represented a stratified proportional sample by geographic region. Each subject was asked to complete a researcher-designed survey. Woike discovered that (a) repertoire and repertoire selection criteria among the subjects were very diverse, (b) the musical value of the repertoire was important but no criteria were given for determining value, and (c) 72 of the 100 most programmed pieces were not categorized by the subjects as being the most significant wind band compositions.

In 1993, Fiese investigated how public secondary school band directors evaluated unfamiliar wind band scores. The subjects for this study (N=84) were secondary school band directors from Texas. Fiese asked the subjects to examine and evaluate three unpublished wind band scores using researcher provided criteria. The subjects then ranked the scores and the given criteria based on their evaluations. Fiese did not find general agreement of the rank order of the pieces or the selected criteria. Fiese discovered, however, that subjects who ranked the scores in the same order also had significant agreement in regards to the importance of the selected criteria. The criteria used to evaluate the scores were the same criteria established by Fiese in 1991.

Grant (1994) examined the relative importance of selection criteria when choosing band literature. Grant received 210 responses from his request for Missouri band directors to complete a researcher-designed survey about band literature selection. An analysis of the data revealed that the one of the most important criteria for repertoire selection was the musical quality or aesthetic value of the composition. Grant did not identify what specific components or traits determined the musical quality or aesthetic value of a band composition.

Berry (1995) sought to establish criteria for selecting and composing appropriate choral literature for middle school mixed choirs. To answer the research questions, Berry reviewed the literature to identify suggested criteria, constructed a survey that reflected the criteria, distributed the survey to exemplary middle school choral directors, and analyzed the results. Based on the survey responses, Berry identified five categories of criteria: (a) vocal and technical limitations, (b) appropriate voicings, (c) musical appeal, (d) textual suitability, and (e) music of worth. Berry adopted additional criteria for voicings and textual suitability based on published research in each area but determined that criteria for music of worth was highly subjective and should only be judged in relation to the other criteria pertaining to suitability.

McMullian (1998) sought to analyze the repertoire selection procedures used by band conductors in the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. McMullian sent a researcher-designed survey on musical selection practices to selected band directors at CCCU colleges. The top five rated criteria for selecting music in rank order were (a) musical quality, (b) educational needs of the students, (c) artistic needs of the students, (d) the students' technical abilities, and (e) the students' musical sensitivities. McMullian did not provide a definition of musical quality and none of the extra responses by the subjects addressed specific criteria for judging musical quality.

Forbes (1999) sought to provide a basis for improving the repertoire selection practices of current high school choral directors and instruction in repertoire selection for undergraduate choral education majors. To answer the research questions, Forbes surveyed two groups of choral directors from five states. The first group (N=45) consisted of outstanding high school choral directors as determined by university choral

faculty in each state. The second group (N=59) was selected from the remaining population. From an analysis of the data, Forbes concluded that choral directors from both groups considered the following categories of musical elements when determining the quality of a composition: “melodic material, harmonic material, rhythmic material, style, form, texture, voice leading, text, accompaniment, repetition, and predictability” (p. 129). Forbes provided some qualitative descriptions of directors’ statements concerning how they evaluated each element but a list of evaluative criteria was not compiled.

### **Music Critics’ Opinions**

Richardson (1989) sought to define “the components of musical thinking as evidenced by the statements and writing of the connoisseur/critic” (p. 10). To answer this question, Richardson used John Dewey’s definition of thinking as outlined in *How We Think* to survey the works of music critics Francis Sparshott, Theodore M. Greene, D. W. Gotshalk, Virgil Thomson, and M. D. Calvocoressi. Richardson concluded “the line of questioning pursued by the music critic in the formulation of criticism appears to follow a common pattern” (p. 69). This line of questioning is represented by three questions: “(1) How should it have gone, (2) how might it have gone, and (3) how is it going?” (p. 69). According to Richardson’s conclusions, the music critics surveyed did not articulate specific criteria for evaluating the musical quality of compositions, but focused on the complete effect of the music performance experience.

### **Public School Students’ Thinking about Music**

A limited number of researchers have examined high school students’ thinking about music, and none of them specifically identified what criteria students use to evaluate musical compositions. The authors of the research in this section, however, have

discovered that high school students can think critically about music and that performance ensemble experience has an impact on their musical thinking.

Deturk (1988) examined the relationship between the number of years in performing music class and the development of critical thinking skills about music. The subjects (N=279) were members of the complete junior class in three Midwestern high schools. Subjects were asked to: (a) complete a survey designed to categorize their experience in music, (b) listen to two disparate musical examples, and (c) write an essay comparing the two examples. Three expert judges rated each essay according to established criteria for determining critical thinking. The results of the judges' ratings were subjected to a Chi-square Test of Association. The test proved to be statistically significant for the rejection of the null hypothesis that there was no association between the number of years spent in a performing ensemble and the amount of critical thinking exhibited about music. Therefore, Deturk concluded that students who participated in performing ensembles developed more critical thinking skills about music than those students who did not participate in performing ensembles.

Brooks (1995) investigated secondary students' aesthetic responses to wind band music. Based on previous research, Brooks identified four variables as characteristics of an aesthetic response: (a) attention to the stimulus, (b) familiarity, (c) intellectual response, and (d) emotional response. To answer the research questions, Brooks randomly assigned 60 junior high and 60 high school band students to one of two listening conditions. Subjects in the focused listening condition were asked to indicate their preference by operating a Continuous Response Digital Interface dial while listening to each excerpt. Subjects in the unfocused listening condition simply listened to each

excerpt. Each subject heard a familiar and unfamiliar wind band piece and then completed a researcher-designed questionnaire to measure the subjects' musical preference, perception of musical elements, behavioral intent, and intellectual and emotional responses. Analysis of the data indicated that subjects were able to respond to music both intellectually and emotionally, but that aesthetic responses were not aided by familiarity or focused attention on the music.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this research project was to discover the specific criteria used by high school performing ensemble members to evaluate compositions they are currently rehearsing or performing. From the reviewed literature, we can conclude that specific criteria for evaluating the musical quality of wind music can be identified and applied to music playable by high school bands. Also based on previous research, it is hypothesized that high school band students are able to think critically about music and use specific criteria to evaluate music. However, no published research studies have identified the specific criteria that students use.

The review of the research does raise some important questions that may be of significance when analyzing the data of the present study: (a) Will students indicate that tempo or instrumentation are important factors when evaluating music, (b) do students have similar criteria to each other for evaluating music, (c) is there any agreement among students regarding the musical worth of the pieces they are currently rehearsing, (d) will the students indicate that they tend to adopt the musical values of their parents, teachers, or peers? As I seek to identify the specific criteria used by the students in this study, it

will be important to remember the findings of these studies and the possible criteria suggested by those findings.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Overview

Standard 7 of the National Standards in Music states that all students should learn to evaluate music and music performances. Previous research, most notably the dissertation of Acton Ostling (1978), has established criteria for judging the artistic merit of selected music. Ostling's criteria were based upon the writings or presentations of music authorities including Bennett Reimer, Paul Hindemith, Ernst Toch, Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. It is clear that major authorities in American music use similar criteria for judging musical compositions. Recent research by Teachout (1993), Tutt (in press, 2000), and others has indicated that school performing ensemble members use criteria when evaluating compositions used in rehearsals and/or performances, but there is no indication regarding the specific criteria that students use. This research sought to answer three questions: (a) What specific criteria do students use, (b) are there any broad categories of criteria, and (c) what influenced the students' development and selection of criteria?

### Research Design

Merriam (1998) defines a case study as any unit that has definitive boundaries. Creswell (1998), Marshall & Rossman (1999), Patton (1990), and Stake (1995) confirm this concept of a case study. I designed this research using an instrumental collective case study design as outlined by Stake (1995). Normally, a case study is focused on one individual or case but in a collective case study, multiple informants are considered to be a single case that is used to answer the research questions.

In this project, the case was defined as four student informants, along with their parents and band director, who were selected from a single high school band program in the eastern United States. In my previous research (Tutt, in press), I found that choral students tended to focus on the text rather than the musical setting of the text. By limiting the study to band students, I hoped that the informants' responses would be centered on musical criteria. Four students were selected in order to provide multiple points of view.

### **Case Selection**

Merriam (1998) makes it clear that one of the most difficult steps in qualitative research is to select subjects using justifiable reasons. In this study, the high school band program and the specific informants were chosen using a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). The goal of purposeful sampling is to attain a sample for qualitative inquiry from which the researcher can gain the most information about the issues that are at the center of the research study.

**High school band program identification.** The goal was to examine the criteria used by some typical high school band members when evaluating music. Therefore, the first step was to identify a high school band program in which there was a high probability that the students used criteria to evaluate music. Although performance level is not necessarily an indicator of ability to evaluate music, David Elliott (1995) makes a strong case for equating performance level with musicianship or knowledge of music. Therefore, the high school band program was chosen by first establishing a list of programs which have gained recognition for producing highly skilled performers. Criteria for determining the level of performing ability included the band program's:

1. recognition at music festivals for superior performances;

2. number of performances at state, regional and national music conferences;
3. number of graduates accepted to post-secondary institutions to study music;  
and
4. recognition by a panel of instrumental music experts as a superior program.

Once these programs were identified, the following additional criteria were used:

1. recognition by state, regional or national musical authorities for the excellence of the total music program;
2. recognition by a panel of music education experts as an overall superior music program; and
3. verification from the ensemble instructor that she/he believed students have criteria for evaluating music

Based on these additional criteria, one high school band program in the eastern United States was identified.

**Informant identification.** Subjects (N=4) were chosen using the purposeful sampling technique known as typical case sampling. The intent of typical case sampling is to identify the typical subject in order to identify what is typical about the case in the area being researched rather than to make assertions about the general population (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1998). In this study, I hoped to identify what criteria the typical student in this band program used to evaluate music. The instrumental ensemble faculty at the high school assisted in selecting students who:

1. were sophomores or juniors;
2. had participated in organized band or orchestra since at least seventh grade, but not before fourth grade; and

3. were neither in the top or bottom ten percent musically in their ensemble. Once these students were identified, the music faculty was then asked to recommend specific students they believed demonstrated adequate verbal skills when discussing music.

The four students, their parents, and their high school band director were contacted individually to determine their willingness to participate in the study. This documentation may be found in Appendices A, B, and C. Pseudonyms were subsequently created for each informant in order to maintain anonymity.

### **Data Collection**

**Techniques.** Data were collected from informants during a three-month period.

The following data collection techniques were used:

1. three individual interviews with each student, occurring in a practice room at the high school;
2. one interview with the band director, occurring in his office;
3. individual interviews with three students' parents;
4. field notes of observations of four Wind Ensemble rehearsals and two Concert Band rehearsals;
5. between five and nine email exchanges with each student, each of which was initiated by specific questions,
6. two rankings completed by the students in which they ranked the compositions in their band folders from "best" to "worst"; and
7. a written list created by each student outlining general criteria used to evaluate hypothetical band compositions.

Live interviews were conducted using general interview guides (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1998). These interview guides had specific purposes and contained outlines of the material to be covered, but the exact wording of the questions was not determined in advance. This technique allowed me to cover the same issues with each informant but also provided the opportunity to delve into different areas depending on the students' responses.

The initial interview guide was developed in consultation with a panel of experts and pilot tested with high school music students (Tutt, in press). After revisions were made, I again pilot tested the interview guide questions with three high school music students in the presence of an accomplished qualitative researcher. The remaining two interview guides were developed based on the students' responses to the first interview as well as information they included in the subsequent email exchanges. Interview guides, with their specific purposes, may be found in Appendix D.

The questions for the email exchanges were designed using literature on values clarification (Hall, 1973; Howe & Howe, 1975; Kirschenbaum, 1977; Smith, 1977), which was then adapted for the purposes of this project. Additional questions were constructed as needed to provide the students an opportunity to clarify and/or expand upon their answers in previous interviews and email exchanges. The questions for the email exchanges may be found in Appendix E.

I made four site visits in order to observe rehearsals of the Wind Ensemble and Concert Band, to gather a general impression regarding the rehearsal environment, and to observe the informants' behavior both in and out of rehearsal. Information gleaned from these observations was kept in a personal field journal.

In Week 5 and Week 8, the students were asked to rank order the music they were preparing for performance (with the music in hand), from the best piece to the worst, based on their own definition of what they thought was “good” music. This was done to provide a context for discussion regarding specific criteria. During the fifth week, I also asked the students to create a list of general criteria they would use to determine the value of a hypothetical band composition. This information was used as a basis for subsequent discussion as well as to provide triangulation for the data collected in the interviews.

These data collection techniques yielded (a) three hours of taped interviews with each student, (b) 90 minutes of taped interview with the band director, (c) 90 minutes of taped interviews with parents, (d) 20 pages of field notes, and (e) 36 emails from students.

**Procedures.** Data were gathered from January 2002 to March 2002 using the techniques outlined above. The data collection procedure, outlined for each week, appears below.

1. I visited the site and conducted an initial interview with each of the students.  
The students had just begun rehearsing as an ensemble. They were rehearsing music to be performed at a concert occurring at the end of Week Two.
2. I sent the first email questions to the students. Also, I transcribed the first interviews and began the process of reviewing and analyzing the transcripts.
3. A second set of email questions were sent. In addition, I visited the site to observe rehearsals and the informants. The students had performed a concert and were beginning to rehearse new music for the next concert.
4. I visited the site to observe rehearsals and informants.

5. I visited the site and conducted a “mid-point” interview with each student. As part of this interview, the students were asked to rank the music they were preparing for their next performance. Later in that week, I sent another set of email questions to the students in which I requested that they create a list of generalized evaluative criteria.
6. I again visited the site to observe rehearsals and informants. I also interviewed the band director and one parent of each of the students.
7. There was no contact with any of the informants this week. I transcribed data and completed an initial analysis so that I could verify my information with the student informants during the final interview.
8. I made a final visit to observe informants. I also conducted an exit interview with each of the student informants and asked them to rank the music they had performed during the study. I sent the final email question to them after the final interview.

**Study influence.** One of my primary concerns was that participation in the research would somehow influence what the informants thought about music. To address this concern, I avoided stating my own opinions or answering any question about music posed by the students. In addition, I asked the students during the final interview and email exchange to reflect on whether their participation affected their musical opinions.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the data using the coding method outlined by Creswell (1998) Patton (1990), Merriam (1999) and Stake (1995). Specifically, I engaged in open coding, axial

coding, and selective coding, all of which are typical of the grounded theory tradition (Creswell, 1998).

In the open coding process, I read the transcripts and email responses many times throughout the data collection process. As I moved back and forth between gathering data and analyzing data, I began to see patterns that emerged from the informants. I noted the patterns and labeled them according to the words that the students used. For example, if a student said that “good rhythm” was an important criterion for ranking a piece as the best piece, I would label that statement “rhythm”. In this way, I made an initial analysis of the students’ criteria. It also informed my data gathering process because I could alter future questions and design follow-up questions to gain further insight regarding each informant.

Once I had made an initial analysis of the data through open coding, I continued to look for ways in which the criteria could be grouped into categories (axial coding). For example, statements about needing a variety of rhythms or dynamics in a piece were grouped into a larger category that I labeled “variety”. Although rhythm and dynamics became subsets of the larger category, the larger criterion best exemplified the students’ evaluative criteria.

I completed the data analysis process by engaging in selective coding. I arranged the categories identified in axial coding with appropriate descriptions, and suggested a theory about what criteria students use to evaluate music they perform in band. This information appears in Chapter 5.

**Technical Information**

All of the interviews were recorded onto 90 minute, high fidelity normal bias audiocassettes using a Sony TCS-580V Stereo Cassette Recorder. I personally transcribed all of the interviews using a Panasonic RR-830 Standard Cassette Transcriber. The subsequent coding was accomplished using the software program *QSR NVivo*© (QSR International Pty. Ltd., 2000). The transcriber and software program were purchased using funds from Sarah Beels-Dunikoski Memorial Endowment for Graduate Studies in Music Education and on loan from The Pennsylvania State University.

## CHAPTER 4: THE CASE

### Introduction

This study was designed using an instrumental collective case study as outlined by Stake (1995). The case was defined as the four student informants, along with their parents and band director. The high school band program and the specific informants were chosen using a purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). The following sections describe the school, the informants, and the music they performed.

### School

The school district chosen for this study is located in rural Eastern United States. The district covers over 300 square miles and serves over 10,000 students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The district includes six elementary schools, two intermediate schools, and one high school. The high school campus is set on a small plateau within the mountains which gives the impression that the school is set closer to the sky than the surrounding area. When arriving at the high school campus, one passes by the football stadium and arrives at a small parking lot. A large sign above the end zone lists the championships won by the marching band. A seemingly small entrance betrays what is a very large high school containing grades nine through twelve. The school population reflects the general demographics of the district: large and diverse. The school is beyond recommended capacity for educational purposes, and as a result, the hallways are packed between classes. The overcrowding has resulted in the construction of a new high school which will be finished for the upcoming school year.

The high school is composed of older and newer sections. The newer section has been built using a great many more windows than the older section which gives a much

greater feeling of light and air. The music suite is contained within this new section, and can be reached by passing down a long, bright hallway. After proceeding through a set of broken double doors, a series of windowless rooms are revealed including the choir and keyboard rooms, practice rooms, the band director's office, and the band rehearsal room.

### **Band Program**

The band program of the school district begins in the fifth grade and extends to senior high school where students may be involved in the Concert Band, Wind Ensemble, two jazz ensembles, jazz quartet, saxophone quartet, percussion ensemble, and numerous chamber ensembles. The school is on a block schedule of 90 minutes per class, with the Wind Ensemble meeting every day for 90 minutes and the Concert Band meeting every day for 45 minutes. All students in the Wind Ensemble are also in the Concert Band, totaling at least 135 minutes of rehearsal each day. All of the additional ensembles rehearse after school, including the marching band, which rehearses 150 minutes five days a week and all day on Saturday, from September to November.

Within the past seven years, eight district instrumental ensembles have been chosen to perform at the state music education convention, and the marching band has received numerous awards including five division championships and a nomination for the Sudler Silver Shield Award. The Concert Band and jazz ensembles have received Superior ratings and been named Festival Honor Group at national music festivals. More than a dozen graduates have been accepted to post-secondary institutions to study music and numerous collegiate and secondary school band directors formally and informally recognize the program as an outstanding example of overall musical excellence.

The importance of the marching band in this program is immediately obvious as one walks into the band area. The hallways and practice rooms are filled with marching percussion instruments, making the hallways barely passable. The back wall of the band room is lined with over a hundred marching band trophies while division championship banners hang from the ceiling across the back of the room. Upon closer inspection, I found that one of the walls was covered with several layers of printed electronic messages relating to the marching bands' unprecedented and somewhat contested fifth straight championship. All of the messages were from individuals (tournament judges, parents, students, teachers and spectators) outside the band program. When I questioned the band director about the origin of the messages and what the students thought, he told me that the students were forbidden to comment to anyone outside the band program on the success of the marching band, other than to say "thank you". I asked him how often this directive was followed, and he indicated that a few freshmen might make this mistake each year, but "only once". The students' adherence to this policy is an indication of the director's influence on the students' beliefs and behaviors.

### **Director**

The band director, Mr. K, is of average height, in his mid to late 30's with brown hair and brown eyes. His office is much like the hallways and practice rooms except that it is filled with various papers and stacks of music. When I first arrived, he said, "Hey, I cleaned up for you!" I laughed, and he replied that it looked "much worse yesterday" (field notes, 1/25).

Mr. K began his music studies at a major university in the northeast but, due to personal reasons, transferred to a smaller institution where he completed a Bachelor in

Music Education and a Master of Music. He has been in his current position for 11 years. Prior to that, he was the band and choir director at a smaller school for 3 years. He directs every instrumental ensemble at the high school and is the Music Department Head for the entire school district. He is very active as a professional trumpet player and has compiled an impressive résumé, playing with both pop and jazz artists. He is also very active as an arranger and drill writer for marching units of all types and owns a company that specialized in those areas. He is married and has a 3 year-old son.

The intensity that Mr. K's active professional life requires is immediately apparent when he is dealing with students both in and out of rehearsal. Throughout the data collection process, I noted several traits: (a) He has an excellent ear for hearing mistakes, (b) he tended to rehearse the mechanics of the music, and (c) he could be harsh with the students (field notes, 1/25, 2/8, 2/28, & 3/14). This last observation was corroborated independently by several of the students' parents who commented that they were surprised that he was allowed to say some of the things that he said. The students seem to take it in stride even when he referred to them or their performance as "insulting" or "crap" (field notes, 1/25, 2/8, 2/28, 3/14). His demeanor softens outside of rehearsal, but he can still be harsh when answering students' everyday questions such as "What time is the concert?" He commonly responds by calling them "stupid" (field notes, 3/14). However, he does smile almost all the time and, when I observed the students in much less formal settings, (the post-concert stop at a fast food restaurant), they were quite comfortable with him and seemed to show genuine affection (field notes, 3/14).

Mr. K takes the performance of his ensembles quite seriously, and has a complex set of rules that the students must follow prior to each performance. They seem to adhere

quite readily to these rules to the point that the upperclassmen gleefully enforce them on the underclassmen (field notes, 3/14). This anecdote demonstrates that Mr. K is a very intense and dedicated man, who is a significant influence on the students' beliefs. It is very clear that he has convinced his students that intensity and dedication are worth the rewards they bring.

### **Students and Parents**

**Sean.** Sean is 17 years old, Caucasian, and in his junior year. He is of average height but has an athletic build that probably comes from his avid interest in roller-blading. He wears oval-shaped glasses and has short, spiked hair that is dark brown at the roots and blonde on top. He dresses like a typical teenager: baggy pants, unremarkable shirt. Sometimes, however, he wears a shirt with red and yellow flames on it, because he feels it matches his hair.

He plays the tuba in the marching band, Concert Band and Wind Ensemble, and had a one-year stint playing in the Jazz Band where he played the bass trombone part on tuba. He never discussed his other classes in depth although he appears to take his schoolwork seriously. Throughout the school year, he attended several different popular music concerts which lasted late into the night, one of which occurred the night before one of the interviews for this study. He got to school just in time for the interview, cup of coffee in hand, and said "Ahhhhh, I made it."

Initially, Sean seemed somewhat reserved. I learned that this was his approach to just about everything. He was quiet at first but, once he understood a situation, his striking insightfulness and wit became very apparent. Most of the time, he tended to stare at the table or off into the air when answering questions, which was his approach to being

thoughtful. He does not take himself too seriously. He was quite aware when he gave seemingly conflicting answers and would comment on that while poking fun at himself. After a few weeks, he was very interested in the study, and thanked me for helping him to think “more deeply about music” (email, 2/18).

Sean has an older sister who is a classroom music teacher at the elementary level. He admires her a great deal and thinks she is a wonderful musician with a beautiful, “operatic” voice. Sean’s mother is a hospital nurse. He described her as a busy woman who spends a great deal of time on the computer. She preferred to correspond only by email, so I never spoke to her in person. She always responded very promptly with good detail, and seemed genuinely interested in the study. Family is obviously very important to her, particularly her role as a grandmother, as her email included the term “dynamitegranny”. Sean only mentioned his father once, saying he was “unavailable” (interview 1, 1/25).

**Mary.** Mary is a bubbly, brown-eyed brunette. She is 17 years old, Caucasian, and average height. She is a very avid soccer player and was a member of the school’s team until she needed to have knee surgery, which temporarily ended her participation. She dresses casually most of the time, usually wearing clothing that reflects her interest in sports.

Mary plays the trumpet in the marching band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, and Wind Ensemble. She takes her classes fairly seriously and is always sure to get to her classes on time and be well prepared. She is a very energetic person and started talking the very moment we met. She has very animated facial expressions that went right along with her personality. In the beginning, she was stumped by more in-depth questions and

would sit in silence. After a few weeks, she became accustomed to the questions and had little difficulty providing in-depth, thoughtful answers. Usually, she answered my questions without any pause as if she knew the question before I asked it. A stream of words would come flowing out of her as soon as I ended my sentence.

Mary has an older brother in the band program. He is obviously a leader and she looks up to him. He made a point of introducing himself to me and asking me questions about the study. Mary's mother is exactly like Mary. She is an elementary school teacher and is as energetic and athletic as her daughter. My interview with her lasted over an hour because she was so interested in the study and her children that she would use my questions as the starting point for very long and sometimes unrelated answers. Eventually, she ended up asking me questions that were not about the study but about music in general, as well as my family and my plans for the future. This is an energetic, talkative, and close-knit family.

**Kara.** Kara is also a junior and Caucasian. She is a short, bookish looking girl with long brown hair and large round glasses. Neither her dress or manners are distinctive in any way, and my first impression was that she was a rather unremarkable girl. That initial viewpoint would turn out to be quite incorrect.

Kara is a very academically advanced student who is enrolled in mostly advanced placement classes. Kara takes her coursework very seriously, but knew which classes could be ignored and would sometimes schedule interviews with me during her "most useless" (interview 2, 2/20) class. She has limited interests in sports as she spends most of her time either studying or practicing. Kara is one of the better clarinet players at the

school and plays clarinet in marching band, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble and tenor saxophone in Jazz Band.

Kara was very quiet and reserved at first. Her answers were very short and she seemed very eager to give me the answer she thought I was seeking, because she constantly wanted to know what I thought of her answers. She was also shy in answering questions, especially when I pushed her to be more specific. This did not last very long. Once she became accustomed to the process, she gave in-depth answers easily and confidently with little regard for how she thought I might react. She became so comfortable with me and the questions I would ask that she would parody the process. For example, when she gave an answer that she realized would elicit a follow-up question, she would ask the follow-up question in my tone of voice and phrasing before I could ask it myself. Her band director even commented that she had developed the ability to ask him questions as if I were asking them. She is very observant and insightful, with a good sense of humor.

Unfortunately, I was never able to speak with either of her parents because they were very uncomfortable “talking to a researcher” (her mother’s words). After Kara’s parents told her that they would not talk to me, she was quite upset with them. She attempted to change their minds but was unsuccessful. This was unfortunate, as it would have been interesting to get her parents’ perspective.

**Roy.** Roy is a freckled-faced red head who is of average height: slightly heavier and less athletic than Sean. Like the other students, he is a 17-year-old junior and Caucasian. He speaks very quietly, which made him very difficult to record onto a tape machine, but he also has a huge smile and a nervous laugh that goes with it.

Roy did not seem particularly interested in his academic classes. He also tried to schedule his interviews during his least favorite class, and was quite successful in getting both his academic teacher and Mr. K to agree to this. He plays the euphonium in the marching band, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble.

Roy is an uncomplicated individual. He was always respectful, but his responses were usually quite simple and direct. When I would ask him a follow-up question intended to get a more in-depth response from him, he would usually look at me as if he thought he already answered me. He would then smile and laugh and give another answer which might have been only slightly more reflective. While he seemed comfortable with my questioning, I was never successful in getting him to provide very in-depth answers.

I spoke to Roy's mother by phone. She is a very nice woman who is very supportive of her son's interest and activities in music. She spoke very highly of Roy's music teachers and believed that they were largely responsible for Roy's work ethic and success. Although she is a little more talkative than Roy, she was decidedly more reserved than the other parents with whom I spoke.

### **Music Ranking**

Table 1 (below) is a list of all the music that the students had in their band folders during the study. They gave a public performance of all of these pieces at least once during the data collection process.

Table 1

*Music in folders*

Title of composition	Composer/Arranger
<i>Barber of Seville Overture</i>	Rossini/ arr. Lake
<i>Concerto for Horn, No. 1, Movement I</i>	Strauss/arr. Anderson
<i>Concerto for Trumpet, Movement III</i>	Haydn/arr. Duthoit
<i>English Folk Song Suite</i>	Ralph Vaughan Williams
<i>Esprit de Corps</i>	Robert Jager
<i>A Gala Fanfare from Five Festive Fanfares</i>	Philip Sparke
<i>Havendance</i>	David Holsinger
<i>John Williams: Four Symphonic Themes</i>	Paul Lavender
<i>The Light Eternal</i>	James Swearingen
<i>Music for a Festival</i>	Philip Sparke
<i>Navigation Inn</i>	Philip Sparke
<i>Root Beer Rag</i>	Joel/arr. Sweeny
<i>Tuba Tiger Rag</i>	arr. David Marshall
<i>The Walking Frog</i>	Carl King

In order to encourage the students to discuss their specific criteria for evaluating compositions, they were twice asked to rank order these pieces of music (with the music in hand), from the best piece to the worst, based on their own definition of what they thought was “good” music. This occurred halfway through the data-gathering period (2/20), and again once additional compositions had been introduced and performed (3/14). The students’ rankings are listed in Table 2. There were nine pieces in their folders for the first ranking, and 14 in their folders for the second. Blank spaces in the February 20 column indicate music that was not in the students’ folder at the time.

Table 2

*Students' ranking of music*

Title of composition	Sean		Mary		Kara		Roy	
	2/20	3/14	2/20	3/14	2/20	3/14	2/20	3/14
<i>Barber of Seville Overture</i>	3	8	8	10	1	1	8	13
<i>Concerto for Horn, No. 1, Movement I</i>	8	10	6	7	8	5	7	12
<i>Concerto for Trumpet, Movement III</i>	9	6	1	1	9	3	9	1
<i>English Folk Song Suite</i>	2	5	4	3	4	7	3	9
<i>Esprit de Corps</i>	5	4	2	2	3	8	4	8
<i>A Gala Fanfare from Five Festive Fanfares</i>		9		8	5	6		2
<i>Havendance</i>	6	13	7	6		12	5	10
<i>John Williams: Four Symphonic Themes</i>		2		9		9		4
<i>The Light Eternal</i>	7	14	9	14	6	10	6	14
<i>Music for a Festival</i>	1	3	3	5	2	2	2	1
<i>Navigation Inn</i>		1		4		4		3
<i>Root Beer Rag</i>		12		13		14		7
<i>Tuba Tiger Rag</i>		7		12		11		5
<i>The Walking Frog</i>	4	11	5	11	7	13	1	6

The rankings varied from student to student and from piece to piece. In Kara's case, the *Barber of Seville Overture* and *Music for a Festival* did not change at all, while both concertos were ranked considerably higher in the second ranking. Similar results can be found for each student. The students' actual rankings were not a focal point of this study, but rather served as a catalyst for discussing criteria for evaluating musical quality.

## CHAPTER 5: THE CRITERIA

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the specific criteria that students use to evaluate compositions for wind band. Specifically, I sought to answer the following questions: (a) What specific criteria do students use, (b) what are the broad categories of criteria, and (c) what influenced the students' development and selection of criteria?

As a result of the three types of coding, I determined that the student informants in this study evaluated band music according to four broad categories: (a) variety, (b) technical challenge, (c) complexity, and (d) a personal connection to the music. Examples of specific criteria identified through analysis of the students' statements along with my reasons for reaching that conclusion are provided in each discussion section.

As a method of triangulation, the students were asked to provide hypothetical lists of generalized criteria. These lists of criteria were compared to the categories of criteria identified through coding.

### Variety

The students spoke frequently about the need for a piece of music to contain a variety of musical ideas in order for them to evaluate it as good. Usually, the students indicated that variety was achieved through rhythmic and dynamic changes but, in multiple instances, they indicated that it was important to vary a broader range of musical attributes. Mary made the following statement when we were discussing what she thought was the best piece of music currently in their folder.

I think *Esprit de Corps* is the best piece of music in our folder because it has everything. It has dynamic contrast, it has impact moments, it has

complicated rhythms, and it has movement in the harmony and melody.

It's just a real catchy piece of music that does not repeat itself exactly.

(email 2, 2/5)

In this example, Mary used some specific musical terms. The students' statements were not always so clear, and they frequently expressed their variety criteria as impressions or moods as in this statement by Roy:

... *Symphonic Overture*, it has fast parts and exciting parts and it has the slow dramatic, noble types of things. It just has a whole bunch of different parts ... the less repetitious the song, the better ... (interview 1, 1/25)

I asked Roy to clarify his view on repetitious songs, by asking "A piece that has a lot of repetition is usually not very good?" to which he replied "Absolutely not" (interview 1, 1/25). For Roy, overuse of any musical element was bad, and that included his attitude about why concertos for one instrument were bad:

"I hate the trumpet concerto and the horn concerto. The solo part is interesting, but the band parts are boring, so it is only interesting for one person, and that makes it a bad piece of music" (interview 2, 2/20).

When I asked him if this would be true if it were a solo for his instrument (euphonium), he responded: "Well, it might be more fun, but it would still be bad" (interview 2, 2/20). For Roy and the other students, variety was important for every part in the ensemble.

Sean was the most eloquent about the need for music to be varied in order to be good. In our very first meeting when we were discussing musical preferences, he had a difficult time selecting a favorite piece of music or even favorite genre of music. When I asked him to what type of music he preferred to listen, he said that he listened to "a lot of

different stuff” (interview 1, 1/25). Eventually, he settled on country music as his favorite but, when I suggested that we sit in this room for the rest of day and listen to all of his favorite country tunes, Sean responded: “I would get bored. I have to be diverse. I would get bored listening to the same thing over and over again. Same thing with music I play” (interview 1, 1/25). Clearly, he had strong feelings that music needs to be varied in order to be good.

The need for variety appeared many times in all of our discussions, as we considered Sean’s specific criteria for evaluating music. At the initial interview, Sean discussed the need for music to sound varied to the listener. He argued that the listener’s reaction to the variety (or lack thereof) is one of the most important aspects of why music is good.

If it keeps people’s interest, if it is something that somebody likes and it keeps them on their toes and, like, you know what I mean? You can listen to something and everything is the same, it is like “God, everything is the same,” but if it is keeping people listening and keeping them on their toes and saying “hmm what is next”, I would consider it good. (interview 1, 1/25)

I asked Sean to clarify how the needs of the general listener related to his own criteria for evaluating music. He responded with an example of how he reacted to a piece the band was rehearsing while he happened to be sitting and listening as an audience member.

We played it, well actually I was not playing it, I was hearing the group sight-reading while I listened to it. It was not my style but it kept me

listening to it. Like it kept me, like “Okay, what is going to happen next?” and that is what I think makes good music. Anything that keeps you on your toes and thinking that is a good part, but that is not and I don’t really like that, but it is something interesting. Do you know what I mean?

(interview 1, 1/25)

He continually indicated that good music contained “something interesting” or that it maintained the listeners or players’ interest. I pressed him to be more specific. He struggled with this for a while, but he eventually started to give a definition for what was interesting. At first, he outlined the idea that melody should not only appear in one part, but that the “cool parts” should be passed around as well.

... not all one instrument has the melodies, I hate that, with some pieces when all one instrument simply has all the cool parts, and in these, one minute the trumpets are playing something cool, and then the next minute I am. You understand what I mean? (interview 2, 2/20)

I asked him then if the melody was the only cool part, to which he responded “no”. He then went on to explain how his particular part (tuba) could be cool, even though it did not contain the melody and was performing its traditional role as the bass line for the ensemble.

...and then the next minute you be playing a cool run which kept it interesting. I like that. I don’t like to just be playing whole notes or just playing quarter notes. Like, I understand that as a tuba you have to be playing the whole notes and the quarter notes, but then you have to have

those cool parts in between, that is what I liked about it. That is what makes it a good piece. (interview 2, 2/20)

I questioned his perception of repeating rhythms; specifically, how he viewed them as a player who had to perform them frequently. He responded by comparing two pieces that were currently in his folder.

Playing it [*A Festival Overture*], most definitely, like here it just, it is incredibly boring. However, in this piece [*Canticle of the Creatures*], one minute I have quarter notes, the next minute I have a run. It is not the same over and over again. (interview 2, 2/20)

In each of the preceding cases, Sean talked about how he perceived music personally – either as a player or as a listener. In one of the email questions, I asked the students to list the specific criteria that they believed all music must contain in order for it to be considered good. Sean listed four attributes, all of which he said were of equal importance:

1. Not just all fast running parts. You need to give the listener or player something really intense, then something to let them breathe a minute and be like "Oh that is pretty" then hit them with a cool part again, can't be boring.
2. Varying lyrical lines, not giving one instrument all the melodies or cool parts.
3. Not necessarily complicated rhythms, but moving enough to make it interesting. Hard music can be fun but you can take an easy song and still be good.

4. Contrasts throughout the piece in dynamics and speed. (email 3, 2/13)

Although Sean listed several different musical components, his main emphasis was on the variety of each component. A piece could have lyrical lines but, unless those lines appeared in many different instruments, Sean would not consider it to be a good piece of music. The other students did not specify the large number of musical elements used by Sean, as some statements indicated that rhythm and dynamics were the first and sometimes only things that they thought to be important concerning variety in music.

**Rhythm.** All of the students talked about the importance of rhythmic variety as an evaluative criterion. Mary said: “I think the variety of rhythm is a big thing because if it always has the same rhythm it is just not very interesting ... that would be a basic criteria for evaluating a piece of music” (interview 1, 1/25). I questioned her regarding what she meant regarding the variety of rhythms, including whether it was the actual rhythms or how they moved between instruments. Her response was that it was “the actual rhythms” and that she just did not like music that was all “quarter notes and half notes” (interview 1, 1/25).

Kara expressed similar sentiments regarding the importance of rhythm. One of her earliest statements regarding musical quality was that a piece of music “has to have really good rhythm” in order for it to be considered a good piece of music (interview 1, 1/25). When I asked her to describe a “really good rhythm” she had some difficulty answering but then gave the following response: “I cannot stand playing a really slow song that has whole note after whole note - it is terrible” (interview 1, 1/25).

One of the pieces that Kara played in a previous concert was *Prelude and Fugue in g minor* by J.S. Bach and arranged for band by Moehlman. Since this piece contained

simple rhythms in the prelude section and more complex rhythms in the fugue section, I decided to use this piece to investigate her feelings about rhythm further. She indicated that the fugue “was a much better” piece of music because of the rhythm.

Tutt    Okay, what about the rhythm in the fugue part of Prelude and Fugue makes it a better piece of music?

Kara    It makes it more interesting, the way you have all the different notes.

Tutt    What if it were on one note, would that make it an interesting rhythm?

Kara    Not as interesting, but you would have to like accent the beat and try to convey the music as much as possible. (interview 1, 1/25)

From this statement, Kara seemed to indicate that varying pitches were as important as rhythmic variety, so I asked her if she could identify specific rhythms that she thought were good. She responded by pointing to passages of syncopation in the printed music for her part and said: “Syncopation is good, like once in a while, you have like quarter note quarter note, and then on the off beat, and it is like hey I did that right, that makes it good ...!” (interview 1, 1/25). This criterion was also reflected in *Havendance* by David Holsinger which, in direct contrast, she believed was the worst piece of music in her folder. She did feel that the music had some redeeming qualities, however, mostly due to the “mixed meter and syncopation” that “were somewhat of a challenge to play” (email 3, 3/1).

Kara always talked about how the rhythm affected her own individual part (clarinet). I questioned her as to the importance of the rhythm in other parts.

Tutt What about the rhythms in other parts; how important is that to how good the music is?

Kara It would depend on if I was playing that part.

Tutt Okay. So, if you were playing bass clarinet on Prelude and Fugue you would think the music is not as good?

Kara Yeah, it would be bad. (interview 1, 1/25)

For Kara, it was most important that the rhythms in her own part were varied.

Mary, Roy and Sean shared this criterion. Each rated *The Light Eternal* as one of the worst pieces of music in their folder as evidenced by the following statements.

Tutt Why is *The Light Eternal* the worst piece of music in your folder?

Mary It is so boring.

Tutt What makes it boring?

Mary The rhythms are so easy, there are hardly any changes. (interview 2, 2/20)

Roy expressed similar sentiments about *The Light Eternal* although he had a slightly different view because he felt several measures in the beginning had some redeeming rhythmic value.

Roy *The Light Eternal* is not a good piece because the rhythms are boring, except for a couple of measures at the beginning.

Tutt What makes those measures interesting? Is it the changing meters?

Roy That and all of sudden the 8th notes out of nowhere. (interview 2, 2/20)

Sean believed that repetitious rhythms, particularly those that were easy to play, made a composition boring and therefore not very good. When we were discussing *Prelude and Fugue in g minor*, he was quite convinced that the “Prelude” was not a particularly good piece of music, and stated, “... a majority of the song is just whole notes. So, if you were to play it as written, it would probably get boring halfway through and before you got to the interesting part you would fall asleep” (interview 1, 1/25). He did not come out and make a very clear statement about variety of rhythm being a criterion for evaluating music, but it was clear that the continuous whole notes made the piece very uninteresting.

It should be highlighted here that the students were primarily focused on the rhythmic variety in their own parts. Later in this chapter, I will discuss the importance of the students’ own part in their evaluative criteria as well as their opinions regarding how difficulty and/or complexity contributes to musical quality.

**Dynamics.** In addition to specific statements equating good music with rhythmic variety, all of the students also indicated that good music needed a variety of dynamics. Each indicated that a range of dynamics was a key part of a good piece of music.

Mary stated: “Dynamics make a piece good. If it has a lot of change in it, like you go from really really loud to really really soft, then really really loud. Changes in dynamics are very important” (interview 1, 1/25). Sean believed that music needed “...contrasts throughout the piece in dynamics ...” (interview 1, 1/25). Roy agreed when stating one of the musical attributes that made a good piece of music: “The soft building parts to really loud climaxes” (interview 1, 1/25).

This criterion was exemplified in Mary’s comparison of two separate pieces in her folder. She clearly identified *The Walking Frog* as a much better piece of music than *The*

*Light Eternal*. In this passage, she was explaining why she believed that the dynamics in *The Light Eternal* held no surprises for the listener but that *The Walking Frog* provided some definite surprises, a larger range and thus more variety.

*The Walking Frog* has more . . . I think . . . bigger dynamic contrasts than *The Light Eternal*. *The Light Eternal* is more predictable, like, oh you know you are going to crescendo through this and go to that, like people just know that, but with *The Walking Frog*, there are sforzando notes that like catch your attention. (interview 2, 2/20)

For the most part, the students discussed dynamics that were indicated in the score. Sean, however, recognized that the musicians could create dynamic variety through their own performance. That, in turn, could also make a piece either good or bad.

Sean . . .when you have crescendos and decrescendos, it makes it a good piece of music. Even if the composer writes piano, you can listen to what other people are playing and adjust your dynamics and what not in there.

Tutt So, in this case, *Prelude and Fugue in g minor*, if it was not played with any differences dynamically, you think it would be a bad piece.

Sean Right, which would be an example of an okay piece, being made worse or better by the performance. (interview 1, 1/25)

**Conclusion.** The category of evaluative criteria mentioned most frequently by students was variety of musical elements. Kara, Mary and Roy's statements were concentrated in the areas of dynamics and rhythm although a few statements, particularly

Sean's, indicated that they gave some thought to elements beyond dynamics and rhythm. In the case of rhythm, students indicated that the rhythmic difficulty of their own part, in addition to the variety of rhythms present, was also an important criterion. The discussion of the importance of the physical and mental challenges of each individual's part will be discussed in the next section.

### **Challenge**

**Individual.** Mary, when speaking about *The Light Eternal*, summarized what all the students expressed most strongly: A piece of music had to be challenging in order for it to be good.

*The Light Eternal*, on the other hand, is not a good piece of music. You know how I feel about this piece. It's so SIMPLISTIC and BORING. There are hardly any complicated rhythms, and it repeats the melody over and over until the end of the song. ... The rhythms are so easy, and we played in like ninth grade and - it just well look at it - it is so EASY.

(interview 2, 2/20)

When Mary and I discussed her basic criteria for evaluating music she made this statement:

To me, I guess, if it is harder, I think it is more challenging and I like a challenge, so I think it is better ... if a piece of music is not challenging, it is not a good piece of music. (interview 1, 1/25)

Mary believed that if she was not being challenged, the piece of music was bad.

This criterion is evident in her statement about *The Light Eternal*. Mary's mother also

emphasized the importance of the music's difficulty to Mary stating that, when discussing music with her children, they talked about "what was hard" (interview, 2/28).

For the most part, Mary defined challenge as the technical demands of her part (trumpet). At one point, she remarked that the pieces she was currently rehearsing were much better pieces of music than previous pieces. When I asked why they were better, she responded: "They were more advanced. They were more technical. They had a lot more notes than the previous ones, and the parts were a lot harder to play" (interview 1, 1/25). Mary did not believe, however, that challenging music could only be defined as technically challenging music. In several of our interviews, she indicated that she disliked sight-reading because it "required her to think". This led me to ask her the following question.

Tutt ... if you have a part that is technically challenging, but you can read it, and you have another part which is technically easy, but you have to think about it, which is the better piece of music?

Mary The second one, the one I have to think about more. (interview, 2/20)

Technically and mentally challenging music both fell under the umbrella of challenging music to Mary, but her distinction was important in that she recognized that music could be challenging in different ways. Her fellow informants did not share this trait.

Kara agreed that challenging music is good music, but her definition of challenge was music that was only technically demanding. At the very beginning of our interviews, Kara stated that good music was "something that is challenging" (interview 1, 1/25). She was quite sure that challenging music was "technically demanding, and not mentally

demanding” (interview 1, 1/25). When I asked for an example, she said; “like instead of playing the same notes over and over again, if it like goes up and down the scale” (email 2, 2/4). She applied this criterion to her comparison of a band transcription of *Barber of Seville* and *The Walking Frog* in saying that *The Walking Frog* only required “mental ability”, whereas *The Barber of Seville* required “a lot more technical ability, ... or finger flapping” (interview 2, 2/20).

When I asked Kara to rank order selected pieces of music, she always characterized the best piece of music as the one that was the hardest or most technically demanding. At our first interview, Kara stated that “*A Festival Overture* is the best piece of music” in the folder “because it is more of a challenge to play” (interview 1, 1/25), and when she stated that “*La Gazza Ladra* was the best piece of music” she had ever performed, she said that it was because “you just looked at it and it was like, wow, that is really hard to play!” (interview 1, 1/25). When I observed a rehearsal of *La Gazza Ladra*, Kara was very excited about performing the piece, and verbally noted how “fun” it was to play (field notes, 2/28). This criterion was also evident when she compared two pieces of music: “*The Barber of Seville* is a better piece of music than *Harry Potter* because it is more challenging. It is a lot harder for me personally to play because it requires more finger flapping” (interview 2, 2/20).

Kara went on to indicate that, even if a piece was fun to play but was not challenging, it was a bad piece of music. In the following exchange, we were discussing why she thought a particular band arrangement of Beatles’ songs was not very good.

Tutt    Have you ever played a piece of music that was fun to play, but  
           you thought it was not a good piece of music?

Kara Yeah! Last year we played a piece by the Beatles - an arrangement of different pieces.

Tutt So it was fun to play, but you did not think it was a good piece?

Kara Right. It was fun, but not very good.

Tutt What was not good about it?

Kara There were not that many notes on the page. It was easy to play and not very challenging. (interview 1, 1/25)

Sean and Roy shared Kara's belief that challenging music was good music and music that did not present a challenge was not as good. In our final dialogue, Roy stated that *Esprit de Corps* was a better piece of music than *The Light Eternal* because "*Esprit de Corps* is the most challenging and interesting" piece of music and "*The Light Eternal* is dull and boring, not challenging" (email 4, 4/1). He expressed a similar evaluation about *Gala Fanfare* because "it was challenging" (interview 3, 3/14). Sean's belief was that if a part was "boring, like comprised of whole notes, I do not think it is a good piece of music" (interview 2, 2/20).

Like Kara, Roy defined the criterion "challenging" primarily by determining how difficult it was for him to play. When discussing the two pieces that he thought were the best pieces of music he had ever performed, he said they were the best because of how challenging they were. When I asked him what made them so challenging, he made the following statement:

I think that the main technical difficulty is all of the runs in *Symphonic Overture*, in *Overture to Colas Breugnon*; there is a fast and difficult

melody, runs, double tonguing, etc. I think it was more difficult to play, and more interesting to listen to. (email 2, 2/10)

I noticed several occasions during rehearsal when Roy would point to sections of the music containing many notes, and remark to the student sitting next to him that this music was “fun” (field notes, 2/8, 2/28).

Just because the music contained many fast notes, however, was not a guarantee that it was good. Roy indicated that “fast” music had to fall within a certain range. If it was too repetitive or too hard, it was not a good piece.

Tutt So, you said about how challenging it is for you. What if the music is fast, but is not difficult to play?

Roy It kind of gets boring, especially if it is repetitious.

Tutt So if you had the same pattern over and over again, even if the pattern was hard to play, it would be not be good?

Roy If it was too repetitive, it would not be that challenging.

Tutt Is the piece of music better if it is hard for you to play?

Roy If it is like challenging, if it is like impossible then it is not really a good piece.

Tutt So, if a piece is too hard, it is not a good piece of music, even if you are not playing it?

Roy Right. (interview 2, 2/20)

Roy acknowledged that music that was “slower” might be good but, even in this case, his criteria were based on technical challenge.

Tutt What about the beginning of *Prelude and Fugue in g minor*? Is that good music?

Roy I don't like it because it is really slow, but I think it would be a good piece of music.

Tutt And why would it be good?

Roy Well, because it was difficult to keep in tune at least. (interview 1, 1/25)

Roy also believed that music could be mentally challenging, at least in regard to rhythm. In the following exchange, I asked Roy about the criterion of “complicated rhythms” for evaluating the quality of a composition. I was attempting to discern whether or not his beliefs were based on the entire ensemble or his individual part.

Tutt You said earlier: complicated rhythms. Does that mean your rhythms are complicated, or rhythms for the whole band are complicated in that the way they fit together?

Roy It could be either, like especially if it is mine, if it is challenging, if it is hard rhythms, then I would think something like that is good. But, if it like does fit together, like maybe they are simpler rhythms, but they kind of fit together in a complicated way that I might have to think about playing. (interview 2, 2/20)

All of the preceding statements exemplify the students' general belief that an important criterion for evaluating music is that it must present a challenge to the individual player. Mary did indicate, to some extent, that a piece of music was “better” if the entire ensemble was challenged.

**Ensemble.** I questioned Mary about the importance of the entire group being challenged because she consistently listed the *Concerto for Trumpet*, as the best piece of music because it “was challenging for her” (interview 1, 1/25) as a trumpet player. (The first trumpet section, including Mary, played the solo).

Tutt So good, for you, depends on how challenging your part is?

Mary As well as the other parts too, I mean, I don't want everyone else to have nothing.

Tutt So, if everyone else is playing whole notes and the trumpets have a lot of notes, then that is not a very good piece?

Mary Right. I want to everyone to have exciting parts, so everyone is excited about it. It is a better piece of music if it is more technical for the whole band.

Tutt So, would you say your criteria have changed from our first meeting?

Mary I would not say that they have changed, but that this process has also made me realize that a piece of music can be good even if it doesn't have a good trumpet part. I still think the trumpet concerto is best for me because it is for the trumpet! [She is laughing very hard.] (interview 3, 3/14)

**Conclusion.** Mary was the only student to allude to the importance of the challenge for the entire ensemble. She did, however, place a premium on the importance of being challenged by her own individual part. This was consistent with the other students. It is clear from the students' statements that they evaluated the music based on how they were technically or mentally challenged as individuals.

The criteria of challenge and variety are concrete evaluations of a composition's content. In the following sections, I will discuss the students' criteria that were more abstract and often intellectual and emotional in nature.

### **Complexity**

**Complexity.** The majority of the students' statements addressed the first two criteria of variety and challenge. However, Kara and Mary also remarked about the complexity of the music. Their view of complexity related mostly to how challenging the work was for them personally. On a few occasions, however, they did seem to think that good music tended to be more complex in some way but they had difficulty expressing that concept. The following dialogue with Kara expresses the best example of this.

Kara There is different underlying melodies at the same time.

Tutt So the clarinets have one melody and the trumpets have another melody?

Kara Yeah. It makes it more interesting and if you are just doing it yourself and listening to your own part but then you sit out in the audience and you really listening to the other parts, you hear things that you never heard before. That makes it a better piece of music.

(interview 1, 1/25)

Kara expressed a similar sentiment when I asked her what made the entire piece "good" as opposed to what made her part "good".

Tutt What about good as a whole, the whole piece, the whole collective work?

Kara It has to have lots of interesting parts. Like there can't just be... I like things with interlocking melodies, you know what I mean? Like there are different things going on... it has to be kind of complicated, not just hard. (interview 1, 1/25)

In both examples, Kara's statement suggests that she believes polyphonic music is better than homophonic or monophonic music, although she does not use those exact words. Mary, who also had difficulty stating exactly what she meant when she said something was complex, shared this criterion.

Mary made statements indicating that the complexity of the music was indeed an evaluative criterion for her. In the following passage, she responded to my question as to why a particular piece was so interesting.

Mary It just features different sections at different times, like sometimes, I play the trumpet so we would play the melody and then it would go to the trombones. It is just back and forth and it is really neat the way everything fits together...

Tutt What do you mean by the way they fit together?

Mary Like, the way they mesh together if one is like moving and the other one is like moving too, or if one has like whole notes, and the other one is moving...

Tutt So a piece of music is good if it has parts that move differently?

Mary Yeah. If both of them having moving parts, they overlap then it sounds really, really nice, like - what did we play last year that was like that? I don't remember but there was a lot of moving parts,

both melody and harmony had moving parts and it just meshed together really well. Like in *Navigation Inn*, there is one line of 8th notes that went from section to section to section and it is just occurred a lot throughout the one movement of that song... That is part of what makes this piece of music good! (interview 1, 1/25)

Kara also used complexity as a criterion when she compared two pieces of music. Although she was not able to describe why she thought one piece was more complex than another, she was quite sure that was the case and that influenced her evaluation of which piece was better. In the following interview excerpt, Kara remarked on why she thought *The Sixties* was not as good a piece of music as *Prelude and Fugue in g minor*, even though she thought *The Sixties* was more fun to play.

Kara This is one that I like to play, but, it's not really, I don't consider it that type of quality of piece.

Tutt Ok. Great. Let's talk about that. Why is that not a high quality piece, why is *The Sixties* not good quality?

Kara I don't think there is a lot of involvement, as much with the melody, basically, like...it's not as interesting.

Tutt What do you mean by that? What is not interesting?

Kara Like, this would be something that wouldn't take that long to figure out. Do you know what I mean?

Tutt Ok. So it is not as complicated.

Kara Right. The Bach is more complicated or sophisticated, than *The Sixties*.

Tutt So, what makes it more complicated?

Kara ... (long silence) ... That is hard to explain ... well look at these little lines here (pointing to a passage in the fugue section of *Prelude and Fugue in g minor*), with all of the accidentals and moving 8th notes... well, it just *sounds* more complicated...  
(interview 1, 1/25)

Kara also commented on *The Walking Frog* and gave her primary reason as to why that piece was so much worse than any other piece in her folder.

Kara I kind of think it is dumb, in a way, the music sounds a little juvenile. Even though it is kind of difficult, the style of the music is not as sophisticated as these others [*Music for a Festival* and *Barber of Seville*].

Tutt Okay. So for you, *The Walking Frog* sounds less complicated.

Kara Right! (interview 2, 2/20)

Kara and Mary were not able to describe specifically why one composition sounded more complicated than another, but they were certain there were differences. Even in the case of *Prelude and Fugue in g minor* which Kara labeled as technically challenging in one interview and not as challenging in another, she believed that the piece had a certain construction to which she alternately referred to as “complex” or “sophisticated”.

It can be interpreted that both Kara and Mary valued music that was well-crafted. Both subjects believed that, if the music is well-crafted and sounds interesting, it is better than other music even if the other is, at some level, more “fun” to play.

**Completeness.** In the opinions of one informant, the criterion of completeness did not relate directly to complexity. Complex works did not necessarily provide a sense of completeness. In Kara's opinion, the music needed to "make sense" and complexity sometimes inhibited that sense. In the following excerpt, we discussed the importance of a good beginning and ending. The key for her was that she believed each must fit with the piece, and that different pieces called for different beginnings and endings. In this way, she established that compositions that fit together are better pieces of music than those compositions that do not.

Tutt A good beginning and end, what does that mean?

Kara I was going to say a strong beginning, but sometimes that is not always the case, like in a slower song. But if it is a fast song, it is good if it has a strong beginning.

Tutt So does that mean that the ending must be strong?

Kara No, because that may not be appropriate.

Tutt Okay, so the end of the piece sounds finished, it just didn't end, but it sounds finished. It makes sense with the rest of the piece. Is the nature of the beginning for each piece different? Is there a standard beginning which can be good for all pieces, or should each piece be different?

Kara It needs to be different for different pieces, but that is kind of hard to explain.

Tutt What should a beginning do?

Kara It should get the audience's attention. Whether it is them listening in for soloists, or it makes them jump up with a whole bunch of really loud notes. (interview 2, 2/20)

Kara was the only student to remark on the importance of music "making sense". She was not able to name a circumstance where she thought that the music was complex but made no sense at all, but she did state that some of the "lesser" pieces of music were more "simple" and their beginning and endings seemed "ordinary – like they could go with any piece of music" (interview 3, 3/14). Kara, like the other informants, perhaps had yet to encounter a piece of music that was beyond her immediate grasp.

**Conclusion.** The criterion of complexity seems somewhat nebulous since one student's perceptions of complexity could be substantially different from another. Only Mary and Kara talked at any length about the complexity of the piece. Roy did mention, at one point, that a composition seemed "more complex" than another but was completely unable to elaborate (interview 2, 2/20). Complexity for both Mary and Kara seemed to revolve around the musical concept of polyphony. Each made statements that suggested that the more individual parts a piece of music had, the better the piece.

### **Personal Connection**

**Introduction.** The final category of criteria spans a wide range of statements by students. All of them, at one time or another, indicated that their personal connection to the music influenced their evaluation of that piece. They were much more likely to think a piece of music was good if they had some personal connection to the work.

Some of these comments were about the music being "fun" to play. When I pursued why these pieces were fun, they provided explanations that almost always used

specific musical attributes that appeared in previous sections. I have divided their remaining comments into three categories: (a) Comments regarding the “emotional” content of the work; (b) the idea that a piece should have a tune which people can sing; and (c) their comments regarding *Maple Hill*, a piece that was written specifically for their band.

**Emotion.** “Nothing happens in this piece. Not only is it boring, but it just does not go anywhere at all. The piece has no meaning, no feeling” (interview 3, 3/14).

That statement was made by Sean in reference to *The Light Eternal*, and demonstrates the importance students placed upon each composition representing an emotion or something personal to the informant.

Comments about emotion were made by all of the students and their statements fell into two areas: (a) the specific emotions a good piece of music should contain, and (b) the opportunity to put emotion into a work. Kara exemplifies the first category in this statement: “Good music is more upbeat too...I like it to be happy!” (interview 1, 1/25). For Kara, a criterion for evaluating music was the degree to which a particular piece of music made her happy. She thought that songs from Disney movies were very good because “they were all happy tunes” (interview 1, 1/25), and she described the best pieces of music she had personally performed as “fun, fast, and upbeat” (interview 2, 2/20). Mary shared this criterion in that she thought good music was “exciting”, and not “dull or boring” (interview 1, 1/25).

By comparison, Roy thought that music should have different types of emotions. He made several different comments regarding the importance of emotion in music. When I asked him why *Symphonic Overture* was one of the best pieces of music he had

ever performed he replied that "...it just has like fast parts and exciting parts and it has the slow dramatic, noble types of things." (interview 1, 1/25). He also indicated that all good music must have "...slow dramatic building, building, building to a climax ... it needs to have different moods, like *Music for a Festival*" (interview 2, 2/20).

In both cases, Roy used emotional terms to describe important attributes of the compositions. Like Mary and Kara, he was not seeking to describe specific musical attributes, but rather the effect that the music had upon him as a performer.

Roy and Kara also placed importance on being able to provide one's own interpretation of the music. They believed that music that allowed the performers to put "emotion" into it was better than music which did not provide that chance, as evidenced by this exchange with Roy.

Roy I think a good piece of music is good because it allows me to put interpretation into the music.

Tutt So a piece of music that does not allow any interpretation, is not good?

Roy It is not AS good as a piece that does allow me to put my own interpretation into it. (interview, 2/8)

Kara expressed a similar thought when she remarked how important it would be to be able to put emotion into a composition if you did not have the melody.

It depends on, like, if we are playing the melody, then long notes go along with the piece, so if you could really put some emotion into that and really play it out, it would make it a better piece. (interview 1, 1/25)

When these students had an emotional reaction to a band composition, whether it was

originating from the work or their own interpretation of the work, they were more likely to consider it a good piece of music.

**“Singable” melody.** The only student to make some clear statements about melody was Kara. However, the first thing on her list of criteria for evaluating music was a “good melody” (interview 1, 1/25). To her melody was “really important” and, for a melody to be good, one had to be able to sing it.

Tutt What is an example of a melody that you think is good? In fact, choose one from this repertoire list.

Kara *Barber of Seville*.

Tutt Okay, why does the *Barber of Seville* have a good melody? What makes the melody good?

Kara It is something that when you hear it, it stays in your memory. Like is something you know how it goes after hearing it one time.

Tutt It is catchy, or tuneful?

Kara Yeah. That is what makes a melody good. It is good if you can sing it. (interview 1, 1/25)

She also discussed this criterion when comparing her evaluation of rap music with Disney movie soundtracks, her favorite listening genre. One of the hallmarks of that music is that is composed almost entirely of very tuneful melodies, and she indicated that she thought it was good for that reason (interview 1, 1/25). In contrast to that, she believed that “rap music is bad music because it does not have ... melody” (interview 1, 1/25). As a result, she found it very difficult to assign any value to rap music because she did not discern a melody that she could sing.

### **Maple Hill.**

...it's also high up not for such an obvious reason, but it has some sentimental value too. If someone wrote such an amazing song specifically for a group you took part of... wouldn't you think it is a great piece??

(Sean, email 2, 2/10)

Sean's statement summarizes the sentiment expressed by all of the students: that *Maple Hill* was very important to them personally and, as a result, they all believed that it was one of the best band pieces they had ever performed. A former music teacher in the district wrote the piece and used fragments of music from the marching, jazz, and Concert Band repertoire that the students had performed over the past few years. As a result, the piece had deep meaning for the students because, as Kara stated, "it brings back a lot of memories" (email 2, 2/11). The piece itself contains both "variety and fast sixteenth notes" (Sean, email 2, 2/10; Roy, email 2, 2/12) but the technical challenge of the work was not what was important. Rather, the students believed that this work was good because of their own personal attachment to the music. This was music written "for them" (Kara, email, 2/11; Mary, email, 2/10; Sean, email, 2/10). They took great pride in this composition because they believed that the piece represented all that was "great about their band" (Kara, email 2, 2/11; Mary, email 2, 2/10; Roy, interview 2, 2/20; Sean, email 2, 2/10).

**Conclusion.** It was apparent from the interviews and email exchanges with all of the students that an important criterion for the students' evaluation of a composition was their personal connection to the music. These connections were not based on specific compositional techniques, but rooted in the student's individual relationship with the

music. For some students, this meant that the piece expressed, or allowed them to express, emotion. For Kara, it was important to be able to “sing the melody”. All of the students had a connection to *Maple Hill* which was written specifically for their band, and all evaluated it as “one of the best”. Although it is difficult to quantify this criterion, it is an important aspect to remember when helping students develop their own personal criteria for evaluating music.

### **General Evaluative Criteria**

The student statements reported thus far in this chapter concern specific musical compositions. It became apparent as the data collection process continued, however, that the students might be able to provide a list of generalized criteria for evaluating music. I therefore asked the students to create such a list during the fifth week of data collection. These responses were not grounded in actual musical examples and therefore should only be viewed as their evaluative criteria for a hypothetical “good” band piece. It is interesting to note that a majority of the general criteria listed are consistent with the specific criteria identified previously. The students’ lists are in tables 3 through 6 along with the categorization of each criterion. Criteria that did not clearly fit one of the previously identified categories are included.

Table 3

*Sean's criteria list*

No.	Musical Attribute	Category
1	Not just all fast running parts.. you need to give the listener or player something really intense, then something to let them breath a minute and be like "oh that's pretty" then hit them with a cool part again, can't be boring	Variety
2	Varying lyrical lines, not giving one instrument all the melodies or cool parts.	Variety
3	Not necessarily complicated rhythms, but moving enough to make it interesting. Hard music can be fun but you can take an easy song and still be good	Challenge
4	Contrasts through out the piece in dynamics and speed	Variety

Table 4

*Mary's criteria list*

No.	Musical Attribute	Category
1	Complicated rhythms/syncopation	Challenge
2	Movement in the melody and harmony	
3	Variety of dynamics	Variety
4	Tempo changes	Variety
5	Key changes	Variety
6	Time signature changes	Variety
7	Grand Pause / Fermata	

Table 5

*Kara's criteria list*

No.	Musical Attribute	Category
1	A variety of notes with a good melody	Variety
2	Challenging rhythms	Challenge
3	Varied tempo, dynamics and articulations	Variety
4	Moments of suspense/anticipation	Personal Connection
5	A good beginning and ending	Completeness
6	Changes in key and meter	Variety

Table 6

*Roy's criteria list*

No.	Musical Attribute	Category
1	A large range (Both high and low notes)	Variety/ Challenge
2	Fast notes	Challenge
3	Suspense/anticipation/climax	Personal connection
4	Tempo (diversity/challenging)	Variety, Challenge
5	Phrasing	
6	Emotion/interpretation	Personal connection

**Conclusion**

The students' criteria to determine musical quality fell into four categories: (a) variety, (b) technical challenge, (c) complexity, and (d) a personal connection to the music. The students' list of hypothetical criteria to determine "good" band repertoire appear to fall mostly within those categories.

The two predominant categories of criteria were "challenge" and "variety". The students' hypothetical lists clearly support those two categories while providing fewer

criteria that fall into the “personal connection” and “complexity/completeness” category. The next chapter will focus on the possible influences in the development of the students’ criteria.

## CHAPTER 6: THE INFLUENCES

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the specific criteria that students use to evaluate wind band compositions that they have performed. Specifically, I sought to answer the following questions: (a) What specific criteria do students use, (b) what are the broad categories of criteria, and (c) what influenced the students' development and selection of criteria?

The students did not identify specific actions or statements that directly influenced their development and selection of criteria. However, I was able to discern sources of influence by comparing statements that the students, parents and teachers made about themselves and each other, and then comparing these statements to the categories of criteria listed in Chapter Five. I have grouped the findings into three spheres of influence: (a) parents, (b) peers, and (c) music teacher.

### Parents

I found surprisingly few examples of parental influence acknowledged by either parent or student. Kara and Roy said that they rarely, if ever, discussed music with their parents. Kara's parents declined to participate but Mr. K, who has met Kara's parents on several occasions, stated that "the apple had fallen very far from the tree" in Kara's case, (interview, 2/28) indicating that she was very different from them. Roy's mother reported that she felt she "had little effect on Roy's interest in music" (phone interview, 2/28) which was consistent with her son's perspective.

Mary's mother provided the most detail regarding music and how she thought her opinions affected her children. Mary's mother stated that she liked "a lot of different

kinds of music” (interview, 2/28). When I asked her if she had a favorite type of music she replied: “I like Easy Listening and Jazz. But Jazz that is kind of easy to follow. I don’t like Jazz that is discordant” (interview, 2/28). When questioned regarding how she defined good music, she replied:

Music I think is good is something that I can follow easily. Like when I listen to different jazz pieces, if it does not sound melodious, to me that I am more like, inside, it gives you an uneasy feeling. I like to listen to music where I get a nice easy feeling and I can get into the music and things like that. (interview, 2/28)

When I asked her to name the best piece she had heard Mary perform, she unequivocally stated that it was *Esprit de Corps* and gave the following reason:

There were parts of that I recognized. When the kids play stuff that I know how it goes, I like to see how well they can do with that. So, I like that. So, even when I go to their jazz concerts, they did *Birdland*, and I thoroughly enjoy something where I know how the piece goes to see how well they are doing. (interview, 2/28)

Clearly, Mary’s mother believes that good music must be easily recognizable and this gives her a personal connection to the music. She shares this criterion with her daughter but, in contrast with Mary, she does not think that good music should make her uncomfortable. She was quite aware that Mary did not share her opinion.

Like the one that Smith (*Maple Hill*) wrote, because that is the kid’s favorite one because it has all the different parts in it that they have played. But I do not like it because it has a lot of emotions running

through that one, because it gets tense in parts. It is not my favorite one, but the kids like it because of who wrote it and the emotions in it.

(interview, 2/28)

Mary's mother reported that she "talks to her children about music all of the time" (interview, 2/28). Her conversations, however, revolve around more "general discussions about what they like, and not about specific criteria for evaluating a piece" (interview, 2/28).

It was apparent that Mary and her mother shared some criteria and not others, but what specific actions or statements influenced her daughter was unclear. Sean's mother, however, was able to give a much better indication of her family's influence on her son.

Sean indicated that variety was probably the most important criterion for evaluating a piece of music. In fact, he was insistent that he preferred to listen to a wide range of music. The source of Sean's need for variety became evident when his mother offered this description of his musical experiences leading up to high school:

Since my kids were small, we always exposed them to music and the importance of music in their lives; not only in records and tapes but in music instruction was well. There were always a variety of instruments in our home. When they were small, I often would play my guitar and we would sing. I would play the banjo as a different option; we got a piano and I had a violin. The oldest studied piano, violin and at 10 started voice lessons which ended up her major in college! Sean's brother took up percussion so we had a drum set. When Sean was old enough, he started

trombone and moved to the tuba. We often joked we could have been The Partridge Family. (email, 2/20)

Obviously, Sean's criterion of "variety" is based in his early experiences with music in his family. Sean also believed that music with which he had a personal connection was good music, and his mother expressed a similar criterion:

A good piece of music is one that inspires you. It paints a picture in your mind or soothes you. It may bring back memories of happier times or memories you want to forget. It is true of all music. (email, 2/20)

Music and music-making seem to be extremely important in this family, and his parents as well as his older brothers and sisters played and performed together from the time of Sean's childhood. It appears that, in Sean's case, his criteria for evaluating music were directly influenced by the variety of music in his background.

### **Peers**

Previous research on student preferences in music had indicated that students were influenced by the stated opinion of their peers (Alpert, 1982, Furman & Duke, 1988). In this study, analysis of the data revealed that Mary and Sean were influenced by their peers, but Roy and Kara were not. Mary and Sean indicated that peers who instructed them on what to listen for in music had influenced their musical values.

Mary's peer influence was her older brother, Alex. She related the following story about Alex's music instruction:

Like if, my brother, like if we play something in band, and we get in the car and I say "Oh, I didn't like that" and he will say "Well, I liked it" and he will explain something to me that I never noticed before, then I start to

like it more because there is something hidden that I did not see before...Then my whole perspective on music would change because it makes me realize that I do not know everything about music and then what I thought was good music would change. (interview 2, 2/20)

Sean described a similar relationship with an upperclassman that sat next to him in band during Sean's sophomore year.

I did not know what to look for until Adam taught me that I was not doing that right. Like he would tell me that I was not playing these dynamics, or I wasn't doing something right, so you need to pay attention to that. And now, because I know that I need to pay attention to that, I am hearing what makes a piece of music good or not. (interview 2, 2/20)

Both students believed that their criteria for evaluating a good piece of music changed as a result of this informal instruction by peers. They both acknowledged, however, that it was quite unusual for their peers to influence their opinions of music.

Further analysis did not reveal any more specific instances where the students' criteria were definitely influenced by their peers. Mary's statement best exemplifies their experiences:

Some of them might be the same, and some of them might be different. Like my trumpet friends, I think if you brought them in here some of them would probably say some of the same favorites, but if you brought some of my chorus friends, they would say more of the pop. My friends outside of music would have TOTALLY different tastes. (interview 1, 1/25)

Each of the student informants indicated that they shared more in common with their friends in music ensembles than those outside, but that they still did not always agree with them. Again, here is an example from Mary:

Occasionally, we will get a piece that the girl to my left, she goes to like Regionals and everything, will say: “Ah, this sucks” but the girl on my right will say: “Oh, I like this one”, and then I will have to decide!

(interview 1, 1/25)

All of the students made similar comments suggesting that they agreed with their friends sometimes and sometimes they did not. Roy stated: “I don’t tend to like the same things my friends like” (interview 2, 2/20), and Kara believed she had little in common with her friends, saying: “I like Disney music. Who do you know likes Disney music?” (interview 1, 1/25). In all cases, the students did not perceive their peers as primary sources of influence. It is important to note, however, that Sean and Mary did receive influential if limited instruction from peers that shaped their criteria.

### **Music Teacher**

As I began this research, I wondered whether Mr. K would be the most significant influence on the students’ criteria for evaluating music. When considering the personal criteria used by Mr. K to evaluate music along with the student and parent informants’ comments regarding his influence, it became apparent that the students were indeed influenced greatly by Mr. K. The evidence of this influence will be discussed as follows: (a) exposure, (b) challenge, (c) variety, and (d) personal connection.

**Exposure.** In my interview with Mr. K, I asked him if he intentionally taught the students criteria for evaluating music or if the students developed criteria through

exposure. His response was consistent with what I observed in rehearsal. It appeared that larger concepts were learned by experience rather than by direct instruction.

I put a lot of it up to the exposure because you know in like six concerts, whatever it is with the Concert Band. We do 40 pieces on a concert a year; it is probably not that high. I used to keep lists of how many pieces we have played during the year and it was well over 110, depending on the year. So, from playing that vast amount of stuff, kids pick up pretty quickly what is very good, what is pretty good, what is too hard for what we can play. What is too simplistic... (interview, 2/28)

Mary confirmed that she learned a great deal from exposure to a large quantity of band compositions.

... Mr. K introduced me to like a whole different world of music because I did not know some of the songs we have played existed, and that some of the rhythms existed, and like I don't know. (interview 2, 2/20)

Within the philosophy that one teaches evaluation criteria by exposure, Mr. K believed strongly in exposing his students to pieces which required technical challenge.

**Challenge.** “When it comes to choosing music for Wind Ensemble, choosing music that is challenging to the students is most important” (Mr. K, field notes, 2/28).

This statement summarizes Mr. K's most crucial evaluative criteria. For him, hard music is better music because it will challenge the students technically. The best piece in the band folder, in his opinion, was *Music for a Festival* by Philip Sparke. “It challenged everyone in the band” (field notes, 3/14). This emphasis on challenging the students was reflected in his statement when I asked him to define a “good piece of music.”

I view everything through the kid viewfinder. So, I evaluate music based on what is good for them. You say good music, but well, uh, I usually pick stuff based on what section is the weakest. For example, the year I had 32 clarinets and they were all bad, I got *Molly on the Shore*. You are talking about good music, obviously *Molly on the Shore* is a good piece of music, but it was good because it got the clarinets going, and I have to push them and this was the best thing to do it. The judgment of musical value is that, if there is nothing there for the kids, then it is not worth it. (interview, 2/28)

His remarks were supported by observations made by both students and parents. Kara greatly valued music that was challenging. When I asked why, she replied that she valued hard music because “she played it”. She then looked at me as if that should be obvious and I should not be asking the question (interview, 2/20). Mary agreed with Kara:

It was a lot more complicated once I got to eleventh grade. Even in tenth grade, he handed out all this music, and it was like “oh crap, I can’t play this”, and in ninth grade it would be like all right I know how to play this.

It is the same thing over and over again. (interview 2, 2/20)

Mary’s mother agreed with her daughter by stating: “...if Mr. K was thinking between two pieces of music, they would choose the harder piece because a good piece of music is based on how much of a challenge it is” (interview, 2/28).

Sean’s mother understood that Mr. K evaluated the quality of music based on the “technicality required of the students, and thus the opportunities for the kids to learn”

(email, 2/20). Roy's mother concurred, stating that "Mr. K explained different pieces that they chose to have done, they explain how technically difficult the piece is and they choose it to push the students and that was the main accomplishment". She also believed that Mr. K "had pushed her son to perform harder music and that Roy felt proud of his accomplishments". As a result, "Roy was much more interested in performing music that challenged him" (phone interview, 2/28).

Mr. K values challenging music, his students value challenging music, and their parents recognize this about his teaching style. The exact nature of his direct influence is difficult to determine, however. It could be that the students who do not share this value drop out of the program. Regardless, Mr. K's influence was succinctly described by Mary's mother.

I think by him expecting a lot out of kids, they develop that same kind of work ethic. The kids get on each other...if you are a screwup...get with the program. I think that comes down from Mr. K if you are a screwup, you are screwing everybody else up and you don't belong here. I know he is pretty abrupt, and he has really toned down since he has had a kid, and I appreciate that because some of the things I was hearing come out of his mouth at different practices... I can't believe he does not get into trouble for the things he is saying, but look what he has accomplished with those kids. The ends did not justify the means for me, but the kids have a great work ethic when it comes to music, and they are playing challenging pieces, and they are getting it right. (interview, 2/28)

On my second visit to observe rehearsals, I heard Mr. K make this comment that summarized his interaction with the students regarding challenging repertoire. The Wind Ensemble was rehearsing *Navigation Inn* and there was some complaining among the students about the difficulty of the piece. At that point, Mr. K stated: “This piece makes up for all the times you complained that you did not have enough notes, back when you were in seventh grade” (field notes, 1/31).

The students have come to value hard music; a trait that their teacher shares and encourages at every opportunity.

**Variety.** The students shared an additional criterion for evaluating music with Mr. K. When discussing his general approach to choosing repertoire and how it differed from his colleagues, he simply stated: “I get bored playing the same stuff over and over and they don’t seem to” (interview, 2/28). Variety as a criterion was evident during my interview with him when he began describing one of his favorite jazz charts and ended up discussing McDonalds’ food.

Mr. K *Belly Roll*, which is just a big giant modal thing really. But the way it is orchestrated is just the coolest thing and you know, it sounds like a couple of different other jazz tunes and uh, that is a keeper automatically because it has independence in your voices. The low instruments have one thing going on, the trombones have a different thing going on that fits with the trumpets, but is not the same. I can’t stand stuff that is all the same.

Tutt Kind of like going to McDonald’s – the food is always the same.

Mr. K That is a good way to put it. McDonald's it is slapped on a burger, put in a carton and looks like every other meal. You go to a French restaurant, every dish looks different, you go to McDonald's every dish looks the same. Certainly not the appearance, but what they hear in a piece, they right away go "I remember hearing that kind of music in eighth grade" and with that kind of sound, like there is a grade One, Two, Three kind of sound. Grade Three starts to sound a little different, grade Four they write a little different. You get to grade Five everything is different with the way it is orchestrated and the way your instruments are exposed. You get to Six and all bets are off so you really hear things are different because you will have one or two people playing at a time, and you will have everybody, and you will have seven independent parts going on at the same time that all make sense together.

Tutt So, where do you think the students get their taste in music? Do you talk to them about the need for variety?

Mr. K So where does it come from? Well, I don't know, but I think it is from playing lots of different stuff. They experience a lot of different music, and they come to value the different sounds. (2/28)

Neither the students nor their parents provided any examples of Mr. K's direct influence in the development of the variety criterion. It is important to note, however, that the students shared Mr. K's belief that a good piece of music contains variety.

**Personal connection.** Mr. K believed that, for a piece of music to be good, “you had to make a personal connection to the work somehow ... you have to make some kind of musical, intellectual or emotional connection” (interview, 2/28). I asked him to describe this connection in greater detail and he responded with the following narrative.

My favorite band piece is *Lonely Beach* by James Barnes. The first year that we did it, it was really challenging because the band had never done anything like that. It opened their eyes and their ears and the emotional level, because getting emotions out of teenagers is pretty tough sometimes. It opened up all of those kids to a whole level of what you could do with music and how you could affect people. Uh, because that is the first time that we had people crying in the audience and the kids on stage saw it. You know, kids will talk about how they got goosebumps and whatever, and you get stuff like that. BUT, this kind of emotion was a whole different thing...people still talk about that piece. If they heard it, they were talking about it. You have parents who heard it eight years ago and they will still talk about their favorite piece was that piece and how it affected them and how moving the thing was. There a little bit of technical things in there, there are aleatoric things which are great because the kids have not done any of those so it is always good to introduce those things that way. There is that whole emotion thing, the whole story that goes with it, and getting the kids trying to portray that it is very complex. When you listen to the demo recording, it is only mildly impressive, but when you do

it live and put the right kind of emotion into it, it is unbelievable what you can get out of it. (interview, 2/28)

From his description of his favorite band work, it appears that Mr. K, like his students, believes that having a personal connection to the music is an important criterion for evaluating a musical composition. In contrast to his students, however, Mr. K also had a strong emotional connection to *The Light Eternal*:

*The Light Eternal* is great piece because ... First of all, he had a story that he wanted to tell with the four chaplain thing and the way he tells it is great and it has a great emotional connect. You have hymn playing, sort of choral playing, you have a fugue in there, you have your regular band Swearingen, *Majestia* kind of band playing in there which is great, because we are doing this concert with the ninth graders so it cannot be something too difficult technically. Uh, it changes meters and modes and moods all the way through... it is just a great piece. (interview, 2/28)

Mr. K thought *The Light Eternal* was a great piece of music that had emotional meaning and he thought it was one of the better pieces of music on the program. According to the students' rankings (Table 3), Kara ranked it 10 out of 14 and everyone else ranked it last. Roy remarked that "he had no idea what Mr. K saw in that piece" and had "no idea why he selected that piece for the concert" (interview 3, 3/14). When I asked the students if Mr. K had ever discussed the piece with them or told them the story on which the music was based, they remarked that he never discussed it with them and they did not know the story until they read the program (Kara, Mary, Roy & Sean, interview 3, 3/14).

The juxtaposition of these two opinions is very interesting. First, it is important to remember that “personal connection” is highly subjective and, in this case, dependent largely upon nonmusical factors. The “story of the piece” heightened Mr. K’s evaluation considerably, but three students, who were not aware of the program, determined it to be the worst piece of music in their folders. It may be that, in this case, the students were either confusing preference with evaluation or limiting their evaluations to musical factors only.

Second, Mr. K’s quote highlights the great variety he finds in the work while the students found the same piece to be “boring” (Kara, interview 2, 2/20; Mary interview 2, 2/20; Roy interview 3, 3/14; Sean, interview 2, 2/20). None of the students remarked on the variety found by Mr. K. As variety was cited by all of the students as a criterion, perhaps their strong preference against this particular composition inhibited their objectivity when evaluating it.

**Conclusion.** Previous research (Alpert, 1982; Hughes, 1980) suggested that the students would be influenced by their role models. Surprisingly, only Mary recognized Mr. K as a direct influence. During our first interview, Mary made the following statement:

If Mr. K comes out and says that this is a good piece of music, I am going to take his word for it because he has so much more experience. If a person with a lot more experience than I have says that this is a good piece of music, there is something that they have learned over time that I have not yet that makes this piece good. (interview 1, 1/25)

In the final interview, however, she contradicted herself when she reflected on the

importance of Mr. K's statements about music.

Not really. I have to play it first, and then I will decide. Like some songs that he was passing out before we decided the concert order: We would sight-read them, and he would say that this was a good piece, give us a little prompt, and then pass out and we would play it. (interview 3, 3/14)

All of the students said that Mr. K had made statements about musical quality, but they were unable to recall any specific circumstances. Even at the conclusion of the investigation, the students were not able to determine what his opinions were of music, and believed he had never indicated his judgments in any way.

## **CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

Professional music educators have long stressed the quality of the performance as the most important goal of public school music. Recent opinion-based articles, however, have advocated that students must receive a broader musical education which should include the ability to think critically about music (Patchin, 1996; Woodford, 1996). It was my contention as I began this research that students may already think critically about music, but no research had been undertaken to determine the nature of their thoughts. This research examined how four high school band students evaluated music and what influenced the selection and development of their evaluative criteria. In this chapter, the research will be summarized, the results be reviewed, additional findings will be discussed, and implications for future research will be suggested.

### **Summary of the Research**

The research was designed as an instrumental collective case study as outlined by Stake (1995). The site was a high school band program in the eastern United States that met specific criteria for producing students with significant knowledge of music, as demonstrated by their performance ability. The band program (a) produced quality performances, (b) received recognition for total music education excellence by respected music educators, and (c) contained students that the director believed had criteria for evaluating music.

Four subjects from this program were chosen using the typical case sampling method. They were high school juniors, had at least five years of formal participation in school music ensembles, and demonstrated a typical level of musicianship for that

program. Once possible informants were identified, the band director recommended specific students he believed demonstrated adequate verbal skills when discussing music. The students' parents and band director also served as informants to gain additional perspectives on the students' criteria.

Data were collected during an eight-week period through individual interviews, email exchanges, and observations at the site. I also completed an individual interview with the band director and parents. Interviews were conducted using interview guides which were used as an outline when interviewing the informant. This outline also allowed me the freedom to investigate different areas depending on the informants' responses. Email exchanges were designed using a similar method and were initiated by specific questions I created. Information gleaned from observations was kept in a personal field journal.

Data were analyzed using open, axial and selective coding methods. As data were collected, the students' criteria were analyzed (open coding). Once the initial analysis was completed, the students' criteria were grouped into categories (axial coding). In the final step, I arranged the categories to answer the research questions (selective coding).

## **Results**

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to identify the specific criteria that students use to evaluate compositions for wind band that they have performed.

**1. What specific criteria do students use?** The specific criteria verbalized by all of the students were:

- technical challenge of their own part
- rhythmic variety
- dynamic variety

The following criteria were expressed by one or two students:

- technical challenge of all parts
- general emotional content
- individual meaning (Maple Hill)
- complexity of the piece
- completeness of the piece
- melody line
- harmonic variety
- movement in harmony/melody
- suspense/anticipation
- grand pause/fermata and phrasing.

All of the students regarded the technical challenge of their individual part and rhythmic variety as important criteria for evaluating musical quality. Only one or two students indicated support for each of the remaining criteria.

**2. What are the broad categories of criteria?** Using the three types of coding, four broad categories of criteria were identified as follows:

- Variety (rhythmic, dynamic, and harmonic).
- Challenge (technical difficulty of individual and ensemble parts).
- Complexity and completeness.
- Personal connection to the music (general emotion, melody, individual meaning).

It should be noted that the specific criteria of movement in harmony/melody, suspense/anticipation, grand pause/fermata and phrasing appeared only in the students' generalized lists of criteria but were not supported by their statements. Therefore, they were not included in the categories identified through axial coding.

### **3. What influenced the students' development and selection of criteria? I**

discovered that the students' criteria were influenced by their music teacher, parents, and peers. The music teacher appeared to be the largest influence on all of the students. This influence was indirect, and neither the students nor the teacher acknowledged it.

Only Mary and Sean appeared to be influenced by their parents, as they were the only students who discussed and participated in music with their families. Also, Mary and Sean were the only students citing peer influence, reporting that respected musical peers had taught them what to listen for in music.

### **Student participants**

#### **Sean**

Sean was a tuba player and a member of marching band, Concert Band, and Wind Ensemble. He had spiked brown hair with yellow highlights and had an avid interest in roller blading. Initially, Sean seemed somewhat reserved but, as the study progressed, he became an engaging person who was interested and even enthusiastic about the research.

I really enjoyed talking with Sean. He was comfortable with himself as a person and enjoyed talking about his own opinions. He would often say that music had to be interesting but had difficulty describing what made it interesting, and this proved to be challenging for me. We spent a considerable amount of time talking about different pieces of music and trying to figure out what made one more interesting than another.

Once he started to realize that there were specific musical attributes that made the music interesting to him, it became fun to interview him. He would even take on a pseudo-teacher role when he would begin a statement with “You see, it works like this...” and then I would receive instruction from him.

Sean demonstrated the most progress of any of the informants in his ability to think and talk about music. He believed that the study had not affected his criteria, but that I had encouraged him to think about why he valued some pieces and not others.

I never thought about why a piece of music is good or bad. I just listened to it and said that is good or bad. Now that I am talking to you, I actually reason why I think that is good or why I think it is bad...like before I could tell if I liked something or not and I subconsciously decided ..., it is like when I told you when you increased your skill level you work for more things and were able to appreciate more? I did that subconsciously. I looked for those things and appreciated them subconsciously without knowing I was doing it. I just knew about them so I automatically went to them. Now that I am talking to you, I realize that, oh, that is what I am looking for and that is what I am hearing. Do you know what I mean?

(interview 3, 3/14)

His interest also made him curious about his peers, as I overheard him question Roy about why Roy ranked his pieces in a certain way (field notes, 3/14). It was fun talking with Sean, and it was rewarding to see him grow from a student whose typical response was to say “It has to be interesting” (interview, 1/24) to a young man who not only thought about evaluative criteria but thought about why he valued them.

## Mary

Mary was a trumpet player who was a member of Concert Band, Jazz Band, marching band, and Wind Ensemble. She had brown eyes and brown hair. An avid soccer player, she was currently unable to participate on the school team because of an injury. She was very talkative, perky and happy. It was enjoyable just being around her because she was so animated all of the time.

It was easy to talk to Mary and she was very interested and enthusiastic in describing what she thought about music. Although she was always verbal, she did not think very deeply about music at first. She had trouble answering my questions that sought to examine her criteria more deeply, and would sometimes sit in silence and then reply “umm.... I don’t know.” By the final interview, however, she was able to describe her thoughts quite easily. She was even able to reflect on how the study had affected her thinking:

I think that this process has definitely changed how I THINK about music. It hasn't really changed how I FEEL about music, nor has it changed what I like/dislike about music. But I think about music in a whole new perspective. I am now able to understand the difference between a good piece of music and just a piece of music, which was a big challenge at first when you presented it to me in the beginning of your study. This process has also made me realize that a piece of music can be good even if it doesn't have a good trumpet part. (email 4, 3/20)

Mary’s basic criteria had not changed but she now applied them to a broader range of instruments. In addition, she began to view some pieces as being good regardless

of whether she liked them. I am not sure if Mary will continue her progress towards self-reflection, but I hope that she will.

### **Kara**

Kara was a clarinet player in the concert and marching bands and she played tenor saxophone in Jazz Band. She had brown eyes, long brown hair, and wore large round glasses. She was very intelligent and grew to be quite insightful about the research project. Her insight, however, was largely limited to my questioning technique, which she could imitate perfectly, rather than the criteria she used to evaluate music.

At the first interview, Kara revealed that her musical tastes were quite simple when she stated that her favorite musical genre was “Disney movie soundtracks”. Although she showed glimpses of more profound thought, specifically when she addressed the need for music to sound more complete, I often felt that her comments were not consistent with her overall intelligence. She was involved in advanced academic classes and received excellent grades, but I was frustrated by her obvious desire to tell me what she thought I wanted to hear rather than what she actually thought.

Kara did not feel that the process had changed her criteria at all but, like Sean and Mary, she learned to think a little more deeply about music.

While I still know if I like a piece of music or not right away, I now think why. Rather than just listening to a piece, I look for those different attributes from my list...Although I may not like a certain song, I know that it can still be a ‘good piece of music’. (email 4, 3/24)

I am sure that Kara found the research process enjoyable and was glad that someone was taking a genuine interest in her. Based on what I know of her, I think it is

quite possible that she will try to torture her band director by repeatedly asking him why he thinks one piece is better than another.

### **Roy**

Roy was a euphonium player in Concert Band, marching band, and Wind Ensemble. He had red hair, a freckled face, glasses, a big smile, and a nervous laugh. Roy was “just an average guy.” He was definitely soft-spoken but always seemed happy to talk to me. He gave simple and direct answers to my questions but was never able to give more in-depth responses when I wanted to follow up on something he said. Usually, he just looked at me as if to say, “I already answered that.”

I found my work with Roy to be both challenging and frustrating. I constantly attempted to change my interviewing strategies to elicit more information from this well-meaning young man, but I was ultimately unsuccessful. Sadly, I reached the conclusion that Roy could only think about music at its most superficial levels. He has spent so much time in ensembles yet he seemed to know so little about music.

Roy did not believe that he had changed much throughout the study, although he did “think about music more” (interview 3, 3/14). If Roy considers this process in the future, he will probably wonder what it all meant. At the risk of putting words in his mouth, I can plainly hear him saying: “You either you like pieces or you don’t and, if you like them, they must be good.” I hope that this research can assist music educators to make changes that will help students like Roy to think more deeply.

## Discussion

The results of this research indicate that high school band students have established criteria for evaluating music, that those criteria can be categorized, and that the criteria are influenced by their music teacher and, to a lesser extent, their parents and peers. It also seems evident that high school students can, with some assistance, separate their preferences from their evaluations. As a result of the research process and the subsequent results, however, several new questions emerged.

This section is devoted to a short discussion of each of these questions. First, are the results of this research consistent with the findings of previous researchers who have studied larger samples of varying populations using quantitative methods? Second, this research differed from previous research in that students were evaluating music they were rehearsing and performing. Does the quality of the actual performance influence students' evaluations of the music?

Third I will discuss the issue of indirect instructional strategies for teaching students to evaluate music in context of the apparent disagreement between Mr. K and his students over *The Light Eternal*. Do indirect instructional strategies appear to be effective means for teaching students to evaluate music? Fourth, I found that students sometimes struggled with their ability to express themselves. Do limited musical vocabulary and analysis skills inhibit students' ability to develop and verbalize their evaluations?

The strength of the students' positive evaluations of technically challenging music was puzzling. Could it be that their self-concept or self-esteem influenced their evaluative criteria? Finally, it appeared that the students' evaluations were directly influenced by their personal relationship with the music as performers. What is the nature of the

students' personal musical philosophy, and how is that reflected by their criteria for evaluating music?

### **Previous Research**

**Preference.** Previous researchers (LeBlanc, 1981; LeBlanc and Cote, 1983; Osborn, 1999; Wapnick, 1980) found that tempo and instrumentation were important factors in students' music preferences. The students in this study did not indicate that either tempo or instrumentation were important factors when evaluating music. Perhaps this is due to the quantitative nature of the preference research which focused on discrete and measurable variables rather than more global ideas such as "variety", "challenge", or "personal connection".

In addition, most of the preference research has focused on listeners' preferences for recorded music rather than music the subjects have performed. It is not surprising that performers and listeners may have different opinions. It was certainly the case with these students as they placed a great deal of value on the individual technical challenge of playing the work.

**Criteria.** The students' categories of "variety" and "complexity and completeness", are similar to both the criteria for determining artistic merit identified by Ostling in 1978. Two of Ostling's ten criteria state that the pieces must contain "balance between repetition and contrast" (Ostling, 1978, Pg. 24) and "between transparent and tutti scoring, and also [sic] between solo and group colors" (Ostling, 1978, Pg. 25). In both cases, the criteria indicate that a composition must contain variety. Most of the students' examples addressed rhythm and dynamic changes, but it is clear that they believed that varied music was better than music that was less varied.

Kara and Mary indicated that music that was complex was better music than music that was not. Ostling's (1978) criteria also included the need for the music to be "sufficiently unpredictable" (pg. 25), "not completely direct and obvious" (pg. 27), and "reflect ingenuity in its development" (pg. 27). In addition, Kara expressed the criterion of completeness, stating that music that "made sense" was better music. Specifically, she thought that music must have beginnings and endings that fit with the rest of the music. This criterion is similar to two other criteria identified those expressed by Ostling (1978, pg. 24-25): those that address form, design, and conscious choice by the composer.

It is important to remember that the students had not received formal training in the development and selection of evaluative criteria. In spite of this, it appears that the students value music, in part, because of discernable attributes similar to those used by researchers determining the serious artistic merit of wind band music.

**Influence.** Previous researchers found that students tended to adopt the musical values of their parents, teachers, or peers (Alpert, 1982; Furman & Duke, 1998; Hughes, 1980). The results of this study support these previous findings.

Mr. K was an extremely intense teacher with high standards of performance and discipline. His reputation for these traits within the school district was well known, as demonstrated by quotes from Mary's mother, "I think by him [Mr. K] expecting a lot out of kids, they develop that same kind of work ethic," (interview, 2/28) and Roy's mother, "Mr. K explained how technically difficult the pieces are and they choose it to push the students and that was the main accomplishment" (interview, 2/28). He was seen as extraordinarily successful due to the bands' many championships and invited

performances, and parents and teachers venerated him. Although he appeared abrupt and harsh with the students, calling their playing “insulting” or “crap”, this behavior was excused somewhat by Mary’s mother as a “means to the end”, and the students believed he cared about them.

There is no doubt that this powerful teacher had a powerful influence on the students under his direction. While I was not able to identify a specific incident of influence, I did find evidence of informal instruction or experiences that helped to shape the students’ criteria. Even though it would be inappropriate to generalize this effect to include all music teachers, this finding is consistent with the findings by previous researchers investigating role model influence.

### **Performance Quality**

Based on my previous experiences, I wondered whether the quality of the performance would affect the students’ evaluation of particular compositions. I was surprised to discover that none of the students found this to be influential in their evaluations. The students were aware that how well they performed a work might impact their evaluation of that work, but they did not believe that a good performance helped a bad piece of music become better. I asked Sean why he changed *Esprit de Corps* in his ranking of the pieces, and his reply highlighted the importance of a good performance.

When you sight-read a piece you do not always put all of the interpretations into it as you would after you have played it for a while. I think now that our band has put all of the interpretations into it and like played it better, and played it with more knowledge of the piece, it just

sounds a lot better and I realized what a good piece it was. (interview 3, 3/14)

Mary expressed a similar influence when she was explaining why the *Walking Frog* fell below the *Horn Concerto, No. 1* in her rankings.

Mary I guess practicing both the horn concerto and the Walking Frog made me realize that the horn concerto is more mature, if that makes any sense. It is more technical...it is just better!

Tutt So what you are saying is that, by rehearsing the horn concerto, you think it is a better piece of music?

Mary Yes. (interview 3, 3/14)

I asked the students directly if the performance made a particular composition a good piece or not. Sean's response was typical of all the students.

I don't know. I have heard Mr. K say a lot of times... and I still cannot notice this... but I have heard Mr. K say he has gone to a concert and heard somebody play something, and he says how disappointed he is because he knows it could be a good piece of music and they are just playing it so crappy. I can't do that. If I hear something - if it sounds good - I would consider it a good piece of music but if it doesn't, I can't tell what it should sound like. I can't do that yet, but I assume you might be able to. So I think the better you play it, the more you are able to evaluate it. (interview 3, 3/14)

The students did not emphasize the performance issue but were quite clear: If they did not perform the piece well at some point, they were unlikely to think it was a good piece. A good performance, however, only helped them to evaluate the piece more accurately.

### **Instructional Strategies**

It is important for teachers to know that their students will develop criteria similar to theirs with little or no instruction. The students will begin to value the same traits the teacher appears to value simply by participating in that teacher's ensemble.

All of Mr. K's influence was indirect. These methods of assisting the students to develop evaluative criteria were obviously influential as his use of exposure to varied and challenging music resulted in the students valuing the same kinds of music. The dichotomy between his positive evaluation of *The Light Eternal* and their negative evaluation of the same piece, however, calls into question the use of indirect methods exclusively.

In spite of their experience performing *The Light Eternal*, the students failed to perceive the variety within this piece and were instead influenced more by their preference. Mr. K never spoke directly to them about this piece: He never told the story behind the work, how the composer portrayed that story, or pointed out the great deal of variety in the work. It is very possible that, had Mr. K approached this piece with the students in a more direct way, the students' evaluations would have been different. It is also possible that direct instruction is needed in order to override preference for the more abstract concept of evaluation. All of the students struggled with the concept of good versus like and all believed that it was "the most difficult question" (Mary, email 5, 3/20; Kara, interview 3, 3/14; Roy, interview 3, 3/14; Sean, interview 3, 3/14).

It is important to note that the most direct influence came through mentoring by more accomplished musicians. Mary and Sean both cited examples of instruction by more accomplished musicians that helped them to deepen and sharpen their musical listening skills. Although the instruction was from peers, those peers were functioning as teachers who were assisting less experienced band members reevaluate their criteria for evaluating music.

This mentoring approach could also be used by music teachers as an instructional strategy. It was interesting to discover that all of the students indicated that their participation in this research project had helped them to think more deeply about music and the data strongly support the students' assertions. The students' ability to describe their criteria for evaluating music increased throughout the study and the students and the researcher attributed the change in their abilities largely to participation in this project. It is probable that a music teacher choosing to engage students in conversations about musical value would find that student ability to identify and develop criteria would increase as a result.

When developing these strategies, music teachers should keep in mind the importance of the students' musical experiences at home. Mary and Sean seemed to have richer musical experiences at home than Roy and Kara, and appeared to be more influenced as a result. This would suggest that the students' musical experiences outside of school, particularly in the home, could be a significant influence on the students' criteria for evaluating music.

### **Musical Vocabulary**

The students' criteria identified in this study were limited in comparison with those identified by scholars, musicians and philosophers. They could be summarized in four general categories, and their individual examples were usually not as deep or insightful as one might expect from someone who has studied music for over seven years.

For example, Mary indicated that harmonic variety or "movement in harmony" were important criteria for evaluating music. However, neither student was able to provide a more complete description or give specific examples of either criterion. Most music educators would consider harmony to be an important criterion for evaluating the musical quality of a composition. It is unfortunate that she was unable to describe this important characteristic of music and how the harmonic composition of a work is a factor in her evaluation of that work.

Roy especially had problems verbalizing his thoughts about what specific aspects make a good piece of music. His inability to communicate was largely due to his lack of ability to listen and analyze music. As Roy is such a typical high school student, it is important for teachers to discover ways to bring all students like Roy to a fuller understanding of music or give them the vocabulary to discuss the music they already understand.

This research was undertaken in part to discover information related to National Standard 7. Proficiency for this standard states that:

Students evolve specific criteria for making informed, critical evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations and apply the criteria in their personal participation in music. (Blakeslee, 1994, p. 62)

The participants in this study had not had any training designed to help them identify and develop criteria for evaluating music. They certainly developed criteria by being exposed to music, but these were limited to those aspects of music they could perceive easily and/or discuss readily.

Before proficiency for Standard 7 can be reached, perhaps students must be instructed regarding National Standard 6. Proficiency for this standard states that students:

Demonstrate extensive knowledge of the technical vocabulary of music...[and] identify and explain compositional devices and techniques used to provide unity and variety and tension and release in a musical work and give examples of other works that make similar uses of these devices and techniques. (Blakeslee, 1994, p. 61)

The more skill that students can attain at describing music, the more they will be able to identify and develop criteria for evaluating music. Students can and must learn these skills within the ensemble rehearsal, and music teachers must develop strategies to help them.

### **Influence of Student Ego**

Although the technical challenge of a composition may not be considered to be a criterion of quality by scholars and serious musicians, it was an extremely important criterion for all of the student informants. In fact, the students were blinded by the technical challenge of the work. If it was easy to play, it was bad music. None of the students placed value on a piece of music that did not contain significant technical challenges.

For example, one of Kara's criteria for evaluating musical compositions was its difficulty. In her mind, the harder it was to play her part, the better. When I asked her "why", she said: "because I PLAYED it." She stopped speaking at that point and looked at me as if to say that reason should be self-evident (interview 1, 1/25). It appeared that Kara's musical self-concept and self-esteem were related directly to her ability to play difficult material. Therefore, for her to feel good about herself, she came to view difficult music (that she could play) as music that was good for her.

Mary's mother provided another example of this possible internal influence when she spoke about Mr. K and the rehearsal environment he created (see quote in Chapter 6, pg. 85). She alluded many times to the development of the high student work ethic and the pride they took in their accomplishments.

Although musical self-concept, pride, and work ethic are nonmusical outcomes of music instruction, they may very well provide the greatest influence on adolescent students' evaluations of compositions.

### **Philosophical Orientation**

The nonmusical influences suggested above as well as the students' perceptions regarding the active music-making process seem to indicate that their personal musical philosophy, whether they have specifically defined it or not, may be similar to the Praxial philosophical orientation as defined by David Elliott. Elliott (1995) describes good music, in part, as an action that the music maker takes. As part of that action, it is important for the music maker to be challenged as a performer in order for a musical experience to occur. It is also acceptable, in the Praxial philosophy, for students to evaluate a musical experience based on what the music means to them. The informants

indicated that the technical challenge and the personal connection they had to the work were both criteria used to evaluate the quality of music.

Neither of these two criteria would be considered acceptable criteria for determining artistic merit (Ostling, 1978). This finding confirms, however, that students' criteria encompass a broader range than suggested by the National Standards (Blakeslee, 1994) and suggests that researchers should attend more to what students are thinking in order to help them select and develop their own criteria.

### **Implications for Further Research**

This research was designed to identify the criteria used by high school band members to evaluate music that they had personally performed. Based on the results, it appears that students do have specific criteria which fall into broader categories, and the students' criteria are influenced by parents, peers and teachers. However, many new questions arose during the course of the study which could be addressed in subsequent investigations. This section provides suggestions for future research in the following ways: (a) an expanded replication of this research, (b) a quantitative approach with a large and diverse sample, (c) a longitudinal study of several students, (d) an investigation of instructional techniques to help students develop criteria, and (e) an inquiry concerning high school music students' philosophical orientations towards music.

#### **Expanded Qualitative Research**

This research should be conducted with a larger sample of students from different programs and focus solely on the students' criteria. This would present the opportunity to compare findings among different samples of students. A larger number of subjects would also hopefully provide a broader range of criteria.

It would not be practical to replicate this particular study with an entire ensemble because of the unwieldy amount of data that would result. The interview questions below were the most effective in generating students' responses about criteria and could be used as a shorter, more concise data gathering instrument for a larger sample

1. If you were to evaluate music in your folder critically, how would you rank the pieces? The student should complete this portion with the folder of music in hand. So what is the best piece of band music and the worst?

2. Why did you choose that particular order of pieces? Why did you put the top composition first and the bottom composition last?
3. Would you have answered that question the same way last year? In junior high?
4. Do you think your friends have the same opinions? What about your parents?
5. How do you think your music teachers would rank these pieces? The same as you or different? Do you think they are right?
6. Has Mr. K evaluated this music? How do you know?
7. Create a hypothetical piece of band music. What attributes would it contain? What percentage of the piece would contain each attribute? Would they be equal, the same, or different?

### **Survey Research**

A very large sample of students could also be surveyed using the criteria list developed in this study as a basis. Using this method, researchers may be able to identify a set of criteria that would include most criteria used by all high school students to evaluate music. By placing these criteria in a survey format such as a semantic differential or Likert-type scale, future researchers could not only establish the criteria for large numbers of students but could also identify locations where students' criteria are more developed than others. These differences could be investigated in order to improve music teachers' instructional techniques.

### **Longitudinal Research**

In order to gain a deep understanding of how students develop criteria, a small number of students could be selected and followed from entrance to an instrumental

music program in grade school until they graduate from high school. A large range of influences on the students' criteria could be examined, from their family's activities to the instruction of their music teachers. Such a study would allow the music education profession to view how formal instruction as well as informal music experiences affects children's musical values.

### **Curricular Research**

Future research must also investigate instructional techniques that will help students listen to, analyze and describe music which will ultimately help them identify and develop criteria. Initially, researchers could focus on the techniques used in this project and examine which were most effective in helping students identify and develop criteria. The questions suggested for the expanded qualitative research were found to be most effective and would be strongly recommended as a starting point for investigating effective instructional strategies.

Many music scholars promoting discipline based music education or comprehensive musicianship have already written articles regarding students' ability to listen to, analyze and describe music, but music teachers have ignored much of that writing because it suggests that rehearsal must cease in order for learning to occur. However, both Mary and Sean received mentoring that influenced their criteria for evaluating music which could be incorporated into music directors' regular rehearsal techniques. For both May and Sean, the mentor directed their listening towards musical attributes that they had previously ignored. Ensemble directors could make students more responsible for fixing musical errors simply by directing their listening towards appropriate musical content. As a result, the students would become better performers

and develop their ability to listen to, analyze and describe music because those skills would be part of their everyday ensemble experience. Future research should investigate how directed listening techniques are successful in preparing students for performance while teaching them about music at the same time.

### **Philosophical Research**

Music educators need a deeper understanding of students' philosophical orientations towards music. A great many studies have been conducted regarding why students participate in performing ensembles but few, if any, have examined how this affects students' beliefs about music: (a) Why does music exist, (b) why does humankind do music, and (c) what is music? Certainly, educating our students about past and current music philosophies is an important part of this process, but it is equally important to discover what the students think presently. This information would help to develop instruction that would assist them in talking about music. They may know and perceive much more than we currently suspect and, by gaining a deeper understanding, we would be better able to aid them in their education.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, I would like to extend a warm and heartfelt thank you to Sean, Mary, Kara, Roy, and Mr. K. All five of them are wonderful people who graciously gave of their time and energy at a busy time in their lives. This research would not have been possible without them, and is much richer because of the kind of people they are. We are all indebted to teachers and students like them who are curious and eager to improve our current practice. I wish them all the best.

**APPENDIX A**  
**SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM: STUDENT**

**Research Title:** High School Performing Ensemble Members' Criteria for Evaluating Performed Compositions: Four Case Studies

**Person in charge:** Kevin Tutt 814-863-5723  
 207 Music Building I kjt108@psu.edu  
 Pennsylvania State University  
 University Park PA 16802

Dear “Subjects name inserted here”,

I am a doctoral student in music education at Penn State and a former high school music teacher and band director. Mr. K recommended you as a student that might enjoy talking about the music that you perform in your high school band.

I am writing to ask you to participate in a project to better understand how students make judgments about the music that they practice every day in band. At the conclusion of this research, I hope to offer suggestions as to how band directors may better communicate with their students.

If you agree, and your parent or guardian agrees for you to be involved, I will interview you twice about your opinions about music and ask you to write a brief journal each week about your experiences that week in band. I will also ask to interview your parent/guardian and music teacher(s) as well. All interviews, journals, and correspondences will remain confidential. I will use results from interviews to suggest methods of instruction that would be most effective for high school music students.

Your participation will take about four hours (one hour for each interview, and about two hours total for all of the journals). We will complete the interviews during the school day in the music suite of the Maple Hill High School. You will send the journals to me through email or regular postal mail, at no charge to you. This study poses **no** risks to your physical or mental health beyond those encountered in the normal course of everyday life.

At any time, you may ask questions about the research project, which I will be happy to answer. Your participation in this project will be completely confidential. The interviews will be audio taped. I will keep the tapes in a locked file cabinet and will destroy them within one year after the interview. I will be the only person who will listen to the audiotapes, and your name will never be connected with any part of the interview. If any of the results of this research project are published, no personally identifying information will be printed.

Your participation is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time, or elect not to answer any question during the interview.

**If you agree to participate in this study, return both signed forms to your band director. I will return one form with my signature at the first interview.**

**SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM: STUDENT**

for

High School Performing Ensemble Members' Criteria for Evaluating Performed Compositions: Four Case Studies

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name), agree to participate in the scientific investigation of high school performing ensemble members' criteria for evaluating performed compositions, as an authorized part of the education and research program of the Pennsylvania State University.

I understand the information given to me, and I have received answers to any questions I may have had about the research procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. To the best of my knowledge and belief, I have no physical or mental illness or difficulties that would increase the risk to me of participation in this study.

I understand that I will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and that I may elect to withdraw from this study at any time by notifying Kevin Tutt.

I understand that I may keep a signed copy of the consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RESEARCHER COMPLETES SECTION BELOW**

I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed, and that I have answered any questions from the participant as fully as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Tutt

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX B**  
**PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Research Title:** High School Performing Ensemble Members' Criteria for Evaluating Performed Compositions: Four Case Studies

**Person in charge:** Kevin Tutt 814-863-5723  
207 Music Building I kjt108@psu.edu  
Pennsylvania State University  
University Park PA 16802

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

I am a graduate student in music education at Penn State and a former high school music teacher and band director. Mr. K recommended your child as a student that might enjoy talking about the music that he or she performs in their high school band.

I am writing to request your permission for your child to be involved in a research project. The study in which your child would be participating in is part of project to better understand how students make judgments about the music that they work on every day in band. By proceeding with this research, I hope to offer suggestions as to how band directors may better communicate with their students.

If you agree for your child to be involved in this research, and your child agrees as well, I will interview your child twice about their opinions about music and ask him or her to write a brief journal each week about his or her experiences in music. All interviews, journals, and correspondences will remain confidential. I will use results from the interview to suggest methods of instruction that would be most effective for high school music students.

Your child's participation will take about four hours (one hour for each interview, and about two hours total for all of the journals). We will complete the interviews during the school day in the music suite of the Maple Hill High School. Your child will send the journals to me through email or regular postal mail, at no charge to you or your child. This study poses **no** risks to your child's physical or mental health beyond those encountered in the normal course of everyday life.

At any time, you or your child may ask questions about the research project, which I will be happy to answer. Your child's participation in this project will be completely confidential. The interview will be audio taped. I will keep the tape in a locked file cabinet and I will destroy it within one year after the interview. I will be the only person who will listen to the audiotapes, and your child's name will never be connected with any part of the interview. If any of the results of this research project are published, no personally identifying information will be printed.

Your child's participation is voluntary and your child may stop his or her participation at any time, or elect not to answer any question during the interview.

**If you agree to have your child participate in this study, return both signed forms to your child's band director. I will return one form with my signature at the first interview.**

**PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

for

High School Performing Ensemble Members' Criteria for Evaluating Performed Compositions:  
Four Case Studies

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (your name), agree to allow my minor child, \_\_\_\_\_ (your child's name), participate in the scientific investigation of high school performing ensemble members' criteria for evaluating performed compositions, as an authorized part of the education and research program of the Pennsylvania State University.

I understand the information given to me, and I have received answers to any questions I may have had about the research procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. To the best of my knowledge and belief, my child has no physical or mental illness or difficulties that would increase the risk to my child of participation in this study.

I understand that my child will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

I understand that my child's participation in this research is voluntary, and that I may elect to withdraw my child, or my child may elect to withdraw from this study at any time by notifying Kevin Tutt.

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RESEARCHER COMPLETES SECTION BELOW**

I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed, and that I have answered any questions from the participant as fully as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Tutt

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX C****SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM: ADULT**

**Research Title:** High School Performing Ensemble Members' Criteria for Evaluating Performed Compositions: Four Case Studies

**Person in charge:** Kevin Tutt 814-863-5723  
207 Music Building I kjt108@psu.edu  
Pennsylvania State University  
University Park PA 16802

Dear “Subjects name inserted here”,

I am a doctoral student in music education at Penn State and a former high school music teacher and band director. I am involved with a research project with “insert student’s name here” and the music that he or she performs in his or her high school band.

I am writing to ask you to participate in a project to better understand how students make judgments about the music that they practice every day in band. At the conclusion of this research, I hope to offer suggestions as to how band directors may better communicate with their students.

If you agree to be involved in this research project, I will interview you about your opinions about music and what you believe “student’s name here” opinions are about music. All interviews will remain confidential. I will use results from the interview to suggest methods of instruction that would be most effective for high school music students.

Your participation will take about one hour. We will complete the interview at a time and location at your convenience. This study poses **no** risks to your physical or mental health beyond those encountered in the normal course of everyday life.

At any time, you may ask questions about the research project, which I will be happy to answer. Your participation in this project will be completely confidential. The interview will be audio taped. I will keep the tape in a locked file cabinet and will destroy it within one year after the interview. I will be the only person who will listen to the audiotape, and your name will never be connected with any part of the interview. If any of the results of this research project are published, no personally identifying information will be printed.

Your participation is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time, or elect not to answer any question during the interview.

**If you agree to participate in this study, return both signed forms to the researcher. I will sign one form and return it to you.**

**SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM: ADULT**

for

High School Performing Ensemble Members' Criteria for Evaluating Performed Compositions: Four Case Studies

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name), agree to participate in the scientific investigation of high school performing ensemble members' criteria for evaluating performed compositions, as an authorized part of the education and research program of the Pennsylvania State University.

I understand the information given to me, and I have received answers to any questions I may have had about the research procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described. To the best of my knowledge and belief, I have no physical or mental illness or difficulties that would increase the risk to me of participation in this study.

I understand that I will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and that I may elect to withdraw from this study at any time by notifying Kevin Tutt.

I understand that I may keep a signed copy of the consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RESEARCHER COMPLETES SECTION BELOW**

I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed, and that I have answered any questions from the participant as fully as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Tutt

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

### Interview 1: Initial Interview

#### Purpose

1. Have student feel comfortable with me and me with student.
2. Listen to their preferences and also guide them towards critical evaluation.
3. Develop a “baseline” assessment of the students’ evaluative criteria.
4. Develop an idea of how specific students’ tend to be when answering questions.
5. Encourage students to think about what is their favorite music and why.

#### Questions

1. (Introductory statement about purpose of project). The first couple of questions will be about what you like or dislike. After that, we will get into discussing what is good music and bad music, and not whether you like it or not. One more thing, we are talking about music, and not about text. Feel free to think about this, change your mind, etc. . .
2. What are your favorite one to three pieces of music ever? Not just choir or band.
3. Is this the music you listen to outside of school?
4. What is the piece of music you hated the most? Not just choir or band.
5. Do you think you could like a piece of music and it is not “good” music? Have you ever disliked a piece of music that you thought was “good”?
6. What is a good piece of music? (We are talking good, not favorite).
7. What is the best piece of band music you have every performed? (Preferably, good not preference)

8. If you were to choose the music for the next concert what would it be? Why those choices?

### **Follow up questions**

1. Are your best friends musicians?
2. What music do they listen to?
3. Are your parents musicians?
4. What music do they listen to?
5. Do you think you have the same musical tastes as your friends and parents?

### **Closing questions**

1. If I were to ask the person sitting to your left or right in band, would they answer these questions the same way?
2. Do you think you could list your criteria for evaluating music?

## **Interview 2: Mid-point Interview**

### **Purposes**

1. Attempt to have students refine their basic criteria into more specific items.
2. Apply those criteria to band music.
3. Collect data regarding the students' perception of their friends, parents and teachers musical values.
4. Provide students with the opportunity to give direct feedback about how effective they think this research is in order to improve future email dialogues, interview guides or complete research studies.

### **Questions**

1. If you were to evaluate music in your folder critically, how would you rank the pieces? The student completed this portion with the folder of music in hand. So what is the best piece of band music and the worst? (Simon, Howe & Kirschenbaum, 1972).
2. Why did you choose that particular order of pieces? Why did you put the top composition first and the bottom composition last?
3. Would you have answered that question the same way last year? In junior high?
4. Do you think your friends have the same opinions? What about your parents?
5. How do you think your music teachers would rank these pieces? The same as you or different? Do you think they are right?
6. Has Mr. K evaluated this music? How do you know?
7. Follow up on any information thus far.
8. What should I ask, what should we talk about?

### **Interview 3: Exit Interview**

#### **Purposes**

1. Check to see if students' opinion of pieces has changed at all.
2. Allow students to reflect on researcher's understandings, as they currently stand.
3. Allow students to alter findings, if appropriate.
4. Clarify data that is currently unclear.
5. Return once more to like versus good, is there really a difference?

#### **Questions**

1. Rank order all works and compare with their original ranking

- a. How does the performance affect that?
- b. Is there really a difference between like and good, or fun?
2. What do you think Mr. K thinks? Does this matter to you?
3. Would you put different music on your CD? Why?
4. The Light Eternal, is it still a bad or boring piece?
  - a. Did Mr. K tell you the story and did this matter to you?
5. Check list. Could you really eliminate one of these?
6. Show students analysis of data. Ask them to state how accurate they think this is, and what changes, if any, they think should be made.
7. Do you think that this process has changed what you think about music, how you think about music, or neither?

### **Parent and Teacher Interviews**

#### **Purpose**

1. Understand the musical values of the adults that were most likely to have influenced the students' musical values.
2. Gain more insight on the students' own statements.

#### **Questions**

1. What kind of music do you listen to?
2. How do you define a good piece of music? Is that true for the type of music in question one only, or does it apply to music as a whole?
3. What do you think was the best piece of music on your daughter's/son's/student's last concert? Why?

4. Do you ever talk about what makes a good piece of music with your son/daughter/student?
5. How do you think (other) music teachers define good music? Do you think they are right?

## APPENDIX E

### Email Exchange 1 - Week 2 Email Exchange Questions

#### Purpose

1. Provide a different circumstance for them to establish their favorite music.
2. Clarify issues that were raised in the first interview.

#### Question

1. Create a CD. You may choose up to 10 tracks. You will never hear any other music again. You could get cutoff at any moment, so you have to give the titles in the order of what you would want most to what you want least. (This question was based on a concept outlined in Howe & Howe, 1975).

#### Follow-up Questions

After each student sent their list, I designed two additional questions. I asked them to reflect on their list of songs on the CD by comparing the band pieces in the list, trying to distinguish between like and good, and to compare the first and last piece, trying to distinguish between like and good.

### Email Exchange 2 - Week 3 Email Questions

#### Purposes

1. Clarify responses to first interview and attempt to have students refine their basic criteria into more specific items.
2. Allow them to reflect on concert and its success.
3. Begin gathering information regarding the parents' opinions of band music.
4. Provide a context for comparing the students' evaluation of musical quality and quality of the performance of that music.

**Questions**

1. How did the concert go?
2. How well did you play? How well did the band play?
3. What did your parents think? What was their favorite piece on the concert?

**Email Exchange 3 - Week 5 Email Questions****Purpose**

Up to this point, the students had spent time detailing their evaluation of specific pieces of music that they have selected. I wanted the discussion to be more hypothetical, that is, “What is a perfect piece of music?” In this case, I wanted to try and get the students to decide what attributes they value more than others, or to force them into a situation where they can’t choose and acknowledge that, for them, all ideas are equally important. To fulfill this purpose, I asked questions below, which were based upon a task outlined by Simon, Howe & Kirschenbaum (1972).

**Questions**

1. Create a hypothetical piece of band music. What attributes would it contain?
2. What percentage of the piece would contain each attribute? Would they be equal, the same, or different?

### **Email Exchange 4 - Week 8 Email Questions**

#### **Purpose**

To follow up on the students final statements and get their feedback about the influence of the study.

#### **Question**

Do you think that this process has changed WHAT you think about music, or has it changed HOW you think about music? Allow me to expand on that. Through this process, do you think that what you like/dislike about music has changed, OR do you think that your ability to describe what you think has changed, OR something else?

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## VITA

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