

## Repertoire Project

### HS Band

#### 1. Ralph Vaughan-Williams: English Folk Song Suite

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9a0ym35R6I>

Ralph Vaughan-Williams's "English Folk Song Suite" is a classic piece for wind ensemble. The piece is a little on the difficult side, but is still achievable by a good high school band. The instrumentation is fairly traditional, with a full section of clarinets. So, I would have to consider the instruments that I have access to at the school and if I had enough clarinet players. After choosing this piece, I had a good idea of the skill level of the band, and the direction I wanted to go with the concert. After choosing this piece, I realized that I wanted to choose folk songs as the overall concert theme. The piece works well as an opener, because of the marches and upbeat themes. Also, it can be perceived as a very long and repetitive piece by a typical audience of parents, so it would be good to get out of the way first.

I like this piece because it incorporates many folk songs, and it features many variations of beautiful melodies. I also like how Vaughan-Williams uses a variety of instrumentation and features different sections and timbres of the band. It does have some challenging parts, interesting harmonies and countermelodies, and quick changes of style. I also like how Vaughan-Williams introduces a contrast to, and discussion of, Holst. Both of these composers are very influential in the band world, and closely related historically. They were good friends, and I even found this picture of them taking a walk together. There is also the historical significance of Vaughan-Williams's other famous pieces that were not necessarily written for wind ensemble. In fact, his most famous pieces are his orchestral works (e.g. "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis" and "The Lark Ascending"). I also enjoy talking about how to pronounce his first name.



## 2. Percy Grainger: Irish Tune from County Derry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWsXMLnsfE4>

After the last piece, I wanted to go to a much slower-paced piece to put in the middle of the concert. I remember when I first heard this piece in high school, it was performed by another high school band. I was not too impressed at first, but after going back and listening to the piece, it has become a go-to favorite piece for me. It is a really beautiful melody, and it features many different sections (except for the percussion section, which has one suspended cymbal roll in the entire piece). The lyrics and melody have been arranged in many different styles, from Johnny Cash to Jacob Collier. These variations lead to a conversation on different song forms, and learning how to mark out different sections within the piece. Grainger is also a very influential band composer, and this could open up a good conversation about his influence by folk tunes in his writing. However, while Grainger made many contributions to the band world, he is a very controversial character.

This piece has very traditional instrumentation, and if we had the instrumentation for the Vaughan-Williams piece, then we would be able to perform this piece. The level is very similar to the Vaughan-Williams, and maybe a little easier. There are a couple of parts in the piece that may be difficult to learn and rehearse, such as the flute soli in the middle of the piece. In general, the piece can be deceptively difficult, and would require good rehearsal preparation in order to ensure each section is being attended to and no one is getting bored.

I wanted to try to find another piece based on a folk song from a non-European country. However, I couldn't think of or find anything from the internet that fit the description. Hopefully, with more time, I would be able to find pieces that specifically matched folk tunes from the different cultures within the classroom.

### 3. John Barnes Chance: Variations on a Korean Folk Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-AEzxrWBA>

John Barnes Chance's "Variations on a Korean Folk Song" is another cornerstone piece based on a very recognizable folk song. The instrumentation is also as expected, except there are a lot more involved percussion parts. I would be happy to include this as a way to appeal to the percussionists, especially after the Grainger. The level is very similar to the Vaughan-Williams piece, and it has similar challenges. One challenge that is particular to this piece is the fast notes and alignment of different parts. I think the piece works well as a finale, and it would end the concert on a non-European folk song. The song is written by a white composer, and it brings up the question of cultural appropriation. Chance first heard the folk song when serving in the army in Korea in the late 1950s, and the piece is not written as a way of trying to act as an authentic Korean piece. After listening to the original folk song, the piece does stay very true to the melody.

The use of the pentatonic scale as the foreground for different harmonic backgrounds also leads to discussion of different styles. This variation in composition is a big reason that I like the piece. I also think that it is just very beautiful and has a very satisfying ending. I think it would be a good finale for the concert.

As mentioned before, I wonder if I should have had more diverse folk songs, or at least more diverse composers. However, as mentioned in class, there are a lot of implications and barriers for always finding good diverse composers for wind ensemble. Overall, I still believe the concert has good pieces that will let the students feel integrated into concert band culture as a whole.

## HS Jazz Band

### 1. Count Basie: Rare Butterfly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zl4PWbtTxhw>

With the jazz ensemble, I did not find a theme as clear cut as the other concert. I thought about how we never really had themes in high school, and after programming the last concert I realized how themes can sometimes be very limiting in repertoire choice. Count Basie's "Rare Butterfly" is one of my favorite jazz pieces, and it is one of his less well known pieces. The instrumentation can be difficult, because it requires woodwind doubling in the beginning and end of the piece. So, it would most likely fit a high school jazz ensemble. The piece is on a more difficult side, but the chord structure is pretty simple. While the sheet music can look difficult, after hearing a recording of the piece, I think the band would understand the song a lot better. I wanted to begin the program with a simple swing tune, and Count Basie is my favorite jazz musician to listen to. The song is very lowkey, and it has chill vibes while not being slow or too dramatic.

We have talked about the historical implications of jazz in almost every music education class this quarter, and I think the best way to bring it up is by programming black composers and having a discussion about the composer's background, rather than just inserting the conversation to mark off a check box. Basie was a paradigm of black excellence, and excelled in many ways from a young age. He was also a strong contributor to the style of swing music, and he has many famous and recognizable tunes. Programming "Rare Butterfly" would open the door to lesser known pieces by Basie, and could open a discussion of his overall contribution and compositional styles.

## 2. Glenn Miller: Moonlight Serenade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjq1aTLjrOE>

I wanted to stick with a traditional and classic piece as the slow middle song. So, Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade" was one of the first pieces that came to mind. Glenn Miller was a prominent and loved jazz band leader of the early 20th century, especially during World War II. This piece was one of the band's defining songs, and the style encapsulates the musical feeling of the era. Miller was very involved with the army musicians, and unfortunately disappeared in a plane across the English channel.

The piece has many different arrangements and transcriptions on J.W. Pepper and is an easier piece than "Rare Butterfly." With a solid trombone section, the song could serve as a break from constantly working on the same hard pieces throughout the school year. There are challenges in the piece, especially differentiating the different swing styles of early 20th century jazz and later swing music. The piece uses different mutes and timbres of the ensemble, and is really a feel good piece for the band.

The song also opens up discussion for the historical context of jazz in America. While it originated as a black art form, it eventually was adopted as an overall American artform, championed by American musicians of various ethnic backgrounds.

Miller's piece is a classic tune for any jazz band, and it reached national fame even before receiving a title for the song. His recording was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1991.

### 3. Gordon Goodwin: Absolutidicrous

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPkGLyhqkyk>

After putting two 20th century swing pieces in the program, I knew that I had to end the concert with something different and upbeat. Gordon Goodwin is one of my go to jazz composers who are still living today, and his pieces are always very fun to include in jazz band programs. He is one of the main composers that are consistently writing good charts for school jazz ensembles. Gordon Goodwin is not only a prominent composer, but he also continues to perform with his Big Phat Band, featuring many prominent jazz artists such as Wayne Burgeron and Eric Marienthal. The group continues to perform at various tours and festivals. The pieces are either more difficult or just different than the usual, and it often pushes students to rise up to the challenges of the piece.

According to the publisher, this is a grade 4 piece. This song has a lot of different challenges when it comes to rehearsing the piece. First, the individual parts require practice and attention, and then it becomes a whole other problem trying to align the parts rhythmically. The rhythm section needs to be locked in with each other, and even though the parts are hard, they are repetitive. So, after getting the various patterns down, the rhythm section can focus more on being in time. After that, the winds will need to practice being precise and having uniform articulations with one another. Also, the whole band will need to be intentional with not rushing or dragging the tempo. Unlike the other tunes, the piece has a dedicated solo section for anyone to try a solo.

I think the piece fits as a strong closer for the concert, and the piece would definitely leave the audience with a positive feeling in the concert hall.

