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Philosophy of Choral Music Education

The great philosopher, Plato, once said: “Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything.” These may seem like extraordinary feats, but I personally know each to be true. Music is a powerful tool, that every student deserves the opportunity to explore. I have been singing for as long as I could speak, and that helped define who I was growing up, especially since I had the opportunity to participate in a children’s choir at my elementary school, and to continue singing in choirs throughout my middle school, high school, and collegiate experiences. Without exposure to music at such an early age, I likely would not have found what I love to do today and hope to continue to do for the rest of my life. All students should be given that opportunity, even if music is not their passion, or they do not have the strongest innate talent, there is still so much one can learn from an education in music.

In the music classroom, students are able to engage with the material on a variety of levels which increases the development of their emotional, aural, kinesthetic, and spatial awareness. Music teaches patience, through the long hours of practice taken to master a piece of repertoire. It teaches students to become better listeners, as they have to listen across the choir to keep time and blend with the sound their cohorts are producing. Being part of a choir also teaches students the important skills required to be part of a team. They learn to work together

with others to produce something beautiful, that they all can be proud of. Music transcends words and brings people together in a way that nothing else can. It is often referred to as the universal language because it expresses that which cannot be put into words and can be used to convey feelings and other deeper meanings. Throughout history and across cultures people have used music to tell stories and by learning about this music students can understand what these people thought, and felt and understand their culture on a deeper level.

There are many intrinsic values associated with the practice of music, one of which being that it serves as a safe way for students to express their creativity in a structured environment. It gives students a unique outlet of expression which can be invaluable to them in their middle and high school years at the peak of adolescence when they are struggling to figure out who they are and what they want to do with their lives. Music classes become a safe place for students to go where they are able to express themselves and get away from the stress of their daily lives. This is especially important for those with rough home lives, or those who are struggling to fit in at their school. To them, music is an escape and may be the only thing they look forward to throughout the day.

That being said the choir classroom is not only an outlet for expression but is a place in which students can learn to express their emotions in a positive way. Through music, students can practice empathy and grow in their emotional intelligence. By singing songs of war, love, struggle, triumph, or hope students are able to relate to those experiences and put themselves into another perspective, similar to how they would when reading a story in a literature class. Above all else, humans crave connection and people connect with each other through music. The experience of making music brings people together. In the choir room, students are able to

become part of a community and a team where each member is contributing to something greater than themselves.

In addition to these benefits, there are also many extrinsic motivators to drive participation in the choral program. While many students may join a choir and be driven to improve their skills for reasons such as awards or prestige associated with a program, and the opportunity to participate in honors choruses, go on trips, and perform for the community, these are not the most important drivers to participate in a music program. Overall, participation in choir can help students to be more well-rounded individuals with improved spatial, kinesthetic, aural, and self-awareness. American psychologist Howard Gardner even proposed that musical ability is one of the 8 intelligences in his Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Durwin & Reese-Weber, 414). In fact, many of the highly regarded theories of intelligence include an area of creativity which engagement with music can help to develop.

With all these benefits, it is clear to see why students need to be exposed to music. Through music, students learn to be patient, to be creative, to listen and to trust each other. They gain the ability to see through others' perspective and tell their story, while also learning to express their own. I want my classroom to be a space in which students feel free to explore the depths of their creativity and explore and engage with the material on a deeper level. I know the power of music, and all it has given me, and I want to share that with others and help them to find their passion as well.

Citations

Durwin, Cheryl C., and Marla Reese-Weber. *Ed Psych Modules*. Rev. ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018.