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Title: COMPARISON OF PRINTED CONCERT PROGRAMS AT
ACDA, ASTA, AND MIDWEST CLINIC NATIONAL CONFERENCES

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Abstract
*** Short-Form Manuscript ***

This short-form manuscript reports a content analysis of all ensemble concert programs distributed at the 2015 national conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, the American String Teachers Association, and the Midwest Clinic. The purpose was to address perceptions that print and design expectations for the concert programs were elaborate and, therefore, beyond the means of schools and organizations with limited financial resources. Programs were analyzed for characteristics such as overall dimensions, number of pages, use of color and photography, letters of administrative or political support, and design intensity. Analysis revealed substantial differences between the aggregate concert programs by conference, as well as between the individual programs distributed at the conferences. These differences indicate that conductors and sponsoring organizations have the flexibility to design and distribute conference concert programs that align with each ensemble's philosophical, aesthetic, and budgetary considerations.

Implications

- Printed concert programs vary substantially in both content and design. Conductor-teachers whose ensembles are selected for performance at professional conferences must first follow the parameters for concert programs set by the conference organizers.
- Some conference appearances come with an expectation that each ensemble will present its own printed concert program to all in attendance. Analysis indicates that conductor-teachers have wide discretion in the design and content of these programs.
- Conductor-teachers should consider the purpose of their printed program at the earliest stage of development. Purposes include conveying information about the repertoire and the ensemble; programs may also serve documentary and advocacy purposes.

Keywords

ACDA
ASTA
Concert Programs
Midwest Clinic

Comparison of Printed Concert Programs
at ACDA, ASTA, and Midwest Clinic National Conferences

*** *Short-Form Manuscript* ***

Some of the tangible and most memorable elements of our in-service professional development conferences are the printed concert program booklets distributed to attendees at the beginning of each ensemble's performance. These programs typically contain information about the repertoire to be performed, the ensemble and conductor, and the sponsoring organization. The physical properties of the programs are meticulously designed, often at great expense, to convey a nonverbal narrative of the ensemble and its programming. This narrative is often expressed through photographs, imagery, use of color, the dimensions of the program, and the paper stock on which it printed.

I have been part of several conversations where colleagues discussed the physical concert program as a potential barrier to application for performance at state, divisional, and national conferences. Each of these teacher-conductors represented ensembles at schools and colleges with limited budgets. One recurring theme was that expectations for physical concert programs had grown to exceed the budgetary possibilities of many academic institutions. From those discussions, I decided to compare the concert programs distributed at the national conferences of the three major ensemble performance areas: choir, band, and orchestra.

The physical concert programs reviewed for this project were gathered from the three major 2015 performance ensemble conferences: American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference (Salt Lake City, UT), American String Teachers Association (ASTA) National Conference & Orchestra Festival (Salt Lake City, UT), and the Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference (Chicago, IL). All concert programs were collected

and categorized, and those from ensembles at academic institutions based in the United States were included in the analysis reported here. Academic institutions were defined as public and private schools (preK-12), colleges, and universities. Concert programs included those distributed at the solo ensemble concert sessions and excluded, for ACDA, the themed events (jazz night, festival choir events) and honor ensemble concerts.

School-based ensembles appearing at the ACDA ($n = 14$) and Midwest Clinic ($n = 34$) events each distributed individual programs for their concerts. In contrast, the 15 school-based orchestras performing at the ASTA Orchestra Festival were included in a single program listing only the ensemble, school and conductor names, and the repertoire to be performed. The 16-page ASTA concert program was printed in black and white with photos only of the event organizers and invited clinicians.

The individually designed and distributed ACDA and Midwest Clinic concert programs are detailed in the sections and tables below. Nearly all tabular data is descriptive and objective. The column labeled “Photos” includes “c” for color photographs and “bw” for black and white photographs. The column marked “Design Intensity” refers to the visual impact of the document, considering such elements as color, layout, artwork, graphics, proximity, etc. (Bell, 2001; Bornstein & Tinkle, 1998; Neuendorf, 2002). Intensity is indicated by three descriptors: low, medium, and high. See Figure 1 for sample pages from ACDA programs.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

ACDA Concert Programs

The ACDA ensemble programs included those for two middle schools (one treble, one mixed), five high schools (two treble, three mixed), and seven colleges or universities (one

treble, two bass, four mixed). The two middle school programs represented the stark differences in this analysis. One was a full-color, 20-page document with color photos on every page, printed on heavy, glossy card stock that measured 11” high x 8.5” wide (h x w). The second was a double-sided 8.5x11 sheet of yellow paper folded in three panels measuring 8.5” high x 3.5 wide. This was also the only concert program reviewed from either ACDA or the Midwest Clinic that did not contain the conductor’s biographical statement or photo, though it did include the biographies of the accompanist and a guest instrumentalist.

Table 1 contains many details about the programs and their contents. Three programs mixed glossy, flat, and semi-transparent paper stocks. All programs contained the names of choir members. One high school program included a page of comments from choristers about “why I sing,” while another high school program included several pages of color photos of choir members in other school situations (sports, homecoming, clubs, etc.). Several college programs contained pages listing the choir’s recordings and ordering information.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Midwest Clinic Concert Programs

The Midwest Clinic ensemble programs were from 10 middle or junior high schools (one percussion, two jazz band, four concert band, three orchestra), 19 high schools (three chamber, one percussion, three jazz band, four concert band, eight orchestra), and five colleges or universities (one percussion, two jazz band, two concert band). All programs listed the names of student performers and biographies of the conductors. Table 2 details these programs.

Unique features included one middle school jazz band with advertisements from sponsors and three program brochures that included photos and bios of each student performer. One program included individual photos of the district’s school board members; another included a

page of social media information; still another presented a full-page schedule of educational experiences the ensemble members would have while at the Midwest Clinic. One program contained several pages of student crayon drawings related to music. The program marked as “high +” for “Design Intensity” was for a performance of the Las Vegas Academy of the Arts Jazz Band; the program featured background images on every page, multiple colors, artwork, asymmetric and non-repetitive page designs, and a foldout component that contained the set list. This was easily the most complex program brochure reviewed for this project.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Comparisons

In contrast to the ACDA programs, the typical Midwest Clinic program was larger in physical dimension, heavier in weight, contained more pages, and exhibited a higher intensity of visual/graphic design. One stark difference was in the pictorial content of the programs. The number of photographs in Midwest Clinic programs ranged from 7 to 105, with an average of 29 per program. In comparison, the number of photographs in ACDA programs ranged from 0 to 47, with an average of 13 per program.

Many school band programs have large, active parent booster organizations that provide financial resources for the band’s travel and, as this analysis suggests, program printing (Mulcahy, 2017; Speer, 2014). Parent organizations were prominently acknowledged in each of the preK-12 Midwest Clinic programs and were mentioned in only two of the parallel ACDA programs. It is likely that the financial contribution of these booster organizations is greater for typical school band programs than for choir programs. Further research might seek to confirm

any such disparity and identify pathways toward parallel funding levels relative to the expenses of the ensembles.

For both sets of ACDA and Midwest programs, either students or the adult leaders tended to be the focus of the program content; the two were rarely treated with parity. Nearly all programs that presented photographs of student performers in full groups, as opposed to in sections or with individual photos, contained multiple pages describing conductors and other school/ensemble leaders. The reverse was true. Nearly all programs that presented photographs of students individually or in sections, not simply a full-ensemble group photo, devoted minimal page space to the conductors and other leaders. One possible explanation for ACDA is that it is an organization of and for choral directors, but that rationale does not apply to the Midwest organizational purpose, which is expressly focused on ensemble performances (“What is the Midwest Clinic?,” n.d.).

Another point of comparison between the ACDA and Midwest Clinic programs was the extent to which the documents served as advocacy materials for various audiences beyond the conference hall. All ACDA and many Midwest Clinic programs from preK-12 schools contained congratulatory letters from administrators or other officials. The difference was in quantity: these ACDA programs tended to present a single letter, whereas the parallel Midwest Clinic programs often presented six or seven letters with photographs of their authors—frequently including the state governor and U.S. senators and representatives. In addition, most Midwest Clinic programs contained detailed lists of the ensemble’s prior contest ratings, awards and invitations, whereas any such accounts in ACDA programs were related, less overtly, in a paragraph description of the choral ensemble.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this project was to describe and compare the physical characteristics of ensemble concert programs at national conventions. Based on this analysis, the printed ACDA ensemble programs are relatively modest in comparison to parallel programs distributed by ensembles at the Midwest Clinic. The differences might be attributed to variances in funding levels and the intent of the documents to serve as tools for advocacy and publicity.

The primary difference, however, seems to be in the underlying philosophical purposes of the concert programs. ASTA eschews printed programs from individual ensembles altogether, allowing the focus to be on the musical performances and alleviating the expense of program brochure production for participating schools. The Midwest Clinic programs are uniformly extensive, elaborate, and expensive; there is an unmistakable purpose of presenting the most impressive possible document. The ACDA programs fall somewhere between those of ASTA and the Midwest Clinic with greater variety in content, design, and production values.

This analysis indicates that teacher-conductors of ensembles performing at professional conferences have the discretion to present concert brochures that reflect the purpose of the ensemble, the financial resources of their home academic institution, and the aesthetic relationship between the musical performance and the printed programs. The variety of the materials analyzed for this project suggests that only one design element is a constant: the listing of repertoire and composers. All other design/content characteristics are discretionary and may be purposed beyond the musical performance toward the commemorative, political, and advocacy goals of the ensemble and its printed concert programs.

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FIGURE 1

Design Intensity Examples

TABLE 1

ACDA Programs

Level	Type	Color	Pages	Size H x W	# of Photos	Design Intensity	Paper Stock	Admin Letters	Texts	Performer Photos	Program Notes
Middle	Treble	Full	20	11/8.5	18 c	Medium	Glossy	✓	✓	Sections	✓
Middle	Mixed	—	1	8.5/3.5	4 bw	Low	Copy	✓	—	—	—
High	Treble	Cover	20	8.5/7	1 c 6 bw	Low	Mixed	✓	✓	Group	✓
High	Treble	Full	24	8.5/11	7 c	High	Mixed	✓	✓	Sections	✓
High	Mixed	Full	12	8/8	47 c	Medium	Glossy	✓	✓	Group	—
High	Mixed	Cover	12	11/8.5	4 bw	Medium	Mixed	✓	✓	Group	—
High	Mixed	Partial	12	11/8.5	13 c 5 bw	Low	Glossy	✓	Partial	Group	Partial
College	Treble	Full	16	8.5/5.5	3 c 16 bw	Medium	Glossy	—	✓	Group	Partial
College	Bass	Full	16	11/7.5	7 c 1 bw	High	Glossy	✓	✓	Group	—
College	Bass	Full	8	11/8.5	6 c	Low	Glossy	—	Partial	Group	—
College	Mixed	Full	20	11/8	35 c	High	Glossy	✓	✓	Group	✓
College	Mixed	Full	16	10/8	11 c	High	Glossy	—	✓	—	✓
College	Mixed	Cover	8	8.5/5.5	—	Low	Flat	—	✓	—	—
College	Mixed	Full	4	11/5.6	3 c	Medium	Glossy	—	Partial	Group	—

TABLE 2

Midwest Clinic Programs

Level	Type	Color	Pages	Size H x W	# of Photos	Design Intensity	Paper Stock	Admin Letters	Performer Photos	Program Notes
Middle	Percussion	Cover	12	11/8.5	11 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
Middle	Jazz	Full	12	10/9	7 c 5 bw	Medium	Glossy	–	Sections	–
Middle	Jazz	Full	24	11/8.5	52 c	High	Glossy Card	✓	Individual	Partial
Middle	Concert	Full	22	11/8.5	29 c	High	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
Middle	Concert	Full	24	11/8.5	20 c	High	Glossy Card	✓	Sections	✓
Middle	Concert	Full	20	11/8.5	105 c	High	Glossy	✓	Individual	✓
Middle	Concert	Full	20	11/8.5	41 c	High	Glossy Card	✓	Sections	✓
Middle	Orchestra	Partial	16	11/8.5	16c 6 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Sections	✓
Middle	Orchestra	Limited	20	8.5/11	8 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
Middle	Orchestra	Partial	20	11/8.5	36 c 9 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Sections	✓
High	Chamber	Full	14	11/8.5	28 c	Medium	Glossy	–	Sections	✓
High	Chamber	Full	20	8.5/11	12 c 4 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Sections	✓
High	Chamber	Full	24	11/8.5	38 c 9 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Individual	✓
High	Percussion	Full	16	11/8.5	11 c 2 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
High	Jazz	Full	18	7/10	37 c	High+	Card	✓	Sections	✓
High	Jazz	Full	20	11/8.5	48 c	High	Glossy	✓	Individual	–
High	Jazz	Partial	20	11/8.5	7 c 10 bw	Medium	Mixed	✓	Group	✓
High	Concert	Full	20	11/8.5	39 c	Medium	Glossy	✓	Individual	✓
High	Concert	Full	24	11/8.5	23 c	Medium	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
High	Concert	Most	24	8.5/11	29 c 10 bw	High	Glossy	✓	Individual	✓
High	Concert	Full	40	11/8.5	74 c	Medium	Card	✓	Individual	✓
High	Orchestra	Partial	20	11/8.5	13 c 18 bw	Medium	Mixed	✓	Sections	✓
High	Orchestra	Cover	20	11/8.5	14 bw	Low	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
High	Orchestra	Limited	24	11/8.5	1 c 21 bw	Medium	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
High	Orchestra	Full	28	11/8.5	22 c 6 bw	High	Card	✓	Group	✓
High	Orchestra	Full	20	11/8.5	22 c	Medium	Glossy	✓	Sections	✓
High	Orchestra	Full	30	11/8.5	21 c	Medium	Glossy	✓	Sections	✓
High	Orchestra	Full	16	8.5/11	23 c	High	Glossy	✓	Sections	✓
High	Orchestra	Full	24	7/9	26 c	High	Card	✓	Group	✓
College	Percussion	Full	12	8.5/11	13 c	Low	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
College	Jazz	Full	20	8.5/11	5 c 2 bw	Low	Glossy	✓	–	–
College	Jazz	Full	6	10/7.5	14 c	Medium	Card	✓	Group	–
College	Concert	Partial	20	8.5/5.5	33 bw	Low	Glossy	✓	Group	✓
College	Concert	Full	20	8.5/11	17 c 12 bw	High	Glossy	✓	Group	✓