Music Teachers' Role in Preparing Students for Live Symphonic Experiences

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of varying the extent of music teacher involvement and training with concert-related instructional materials on student achievement and interest in music following live symphonic experiences. Three hundred and ninety-two middle school students were randomly assigned to one of six music teachers for the purposes of receiving pre-concert instruction. These six music teachers were randomly assigned to one of three different levels of involvement and training relative to the development and use of pre-concert instructional materials. Steps were taken to minimize teacher differences confounding with teacher involvement and training.

There were no significant differences in music achievement or interest scores among middle school subjects based on the extent of their music teacher's involvement and training with pre-concert instructional materials. Based on this study, there are no benefits, specifically in terms of student achievement or interest, in music teachers having a high degree of involvement or training with concert-related instructional materials. Future researchers may wish to examine possible affective benefits when music teachers are involved in the design of and training with concert-related instructional materials.

Live concerts for children and adolescents are a common and accepted part of music education throughout the world. Concerts by major orchestras, opera companies, professional and civic musical groups, and collegiate ensembles for school-age audiences are often regarded as effective means of teaching music appreciation (Suthers, 1993), musical concepts (Hintch, 1996), and appropriate concert behavior (Pucciani, 1983).

Instructional materials for pre- and/or post-concert instruction are frequently an integral part of programs of live concerts (see for example Higa, 1985; Suthers, 1993). Shehan (1986) notes that such concert-related instruction typically includes a "preview" of the concert through directed listening, verbal commentary, songs, classroom instrumental performance, movement, and dramatic presentations. She found that pre- and post-concert instruction results in higher scores (on a researcher-designed music achievement test) than concert experiences without concert-related instruction.

These (concert-related) instructional materials are often designed by education departments of symphony orchestras or program directors of arts organizations (Hart, 1973). Shehan (1986) encourages arts organizations to design classroom music experiences that prepare for and reinforce concert experiences, and she specifically advocates that such prepared lesson plan materials be designed for immediate use of teachers. According to Shehan, such "teacher proof" materials are preferred over bibliographies or list of recordings which demand additional preparation by the already overextended teacher. Dorman (1980), on the other hand, states that teacher involvement in the actual design of concert-related instructional materials may be critical to student learning. Although, the efficacy of concert-related instructional materials has been explored by researchers (e.g., Sigurdson, 1971; Kyme, 1971; Shehan, 1986), the relative importance of the music teacher's involvement in designing such materials appears to be unresolved; and moreover, the (effect of the)

degree of training for the music teacher in the use of concert-related instructional materials has not been explored.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the effect of varying the extent of music teacher involvement and training with concert-related instructional materials in relation to student achievement and interest in music following live symphonic experiences. Specifically, this study attempts to answer two questions:

1. Does music teacher's involvement and training with pre-concert instructional materials influence music achievement among middle school subjects as a result of a live in-school concert?

2. Does music teacher's involvement and training with pre-concert instructional materials influence music interest scores among middle school subjects as a result of a live in-school concert?

Several authors have examined a variety of aspects of live concerts for children and young adults. Over 50 years ago, Morgan (1947) emphasized the importance of live concerts in the musical development of youth. Hill and Thompson (1967) devoted 1200 pages to analyzing the organization, presentation, as well as problems and successes of live symphonic performances for school-age audiences. Others (e.g., Jacob, 1996; Mahlmann, 1997; Hintch, 1996; Kaplan, 1966; Mueller, 1956) have discussed the benefits of live performance in terms of (1) the advantages over recorded music; (2) the school's role in developing cultural understandings; (3) the teaching of appropriate audience behavior; and (4) increasing audience base for art music.

The question is often asked whether these live performances achieve these desired goals. Using upper elementary school subjects, Sigurdson (1971) compared a treatment group ($n = 130$), which experienced a single live symphonic concert, with a non-concert-attending control group ($n = 98$). Based on multiple regression form of covariance analysis, the treatment group scored significantly higher ($p < .01$) than control subjects on a test of instrument identification when all three subtests (pitch, loudness, and tempo) were considered in combination. In another study utilizing experimental-control groups involving 300 primary-grade children, Kyme (1971) reported that school concerts, based on a "Young Audience Program," significantly affect learning in areas of pitch, rhythm, and timbre. Thus, given Sigurdson's and Kyme's findings that concerts appear to be of value in improving listening skills and knowledge of and interest in music, determining the appropriate degree of involvement and training on the part of music teachers in maximizing the benefits of concert experiences is worthwhile.

Method

A major symphony orchestra performed a 40-minute concert for the entire 1200 student body of a middle school located in a large city in the southwestern United States. With six music teachers, this particular middle school is designated by the school district as a "performing arts academy" and offers a broad range of music curricula, including band, orchestra, choir, guitar, harp, handbells, and general music. The school provided support for the development and design of pre-concert instructional materials.

For the purposes of this study, the school's music teachers were randomly assigned to one of three levels of involvement and training relative to the development and use of pre-concert instructional materials. These levels were designated as follows:

Level 1
High degree of involvement in design of pre-concert instructional materials.
High level of training.

Level 2
No involvement in design of pre-concert instructional materials.
Received some training in use of pre-concert instructional materials.

Level 3
No involvement in design of pre-concert instructional materials.
No training in use of pre-concert instructional materials.

The two music teachers who were randomly assigned to the first level of involvement and training were totally responsible for the development of the pre-concert instructional materials and received assistance in curricular design from music education and education faculty at an area university. The two music teachers who were assigned to the second level of involvement and training had no involvement in the design of the instructional materials, but did receive approximately one hour of training in the use of materials by Level 1 teachers. The two music teachers placed in the third level, had neither involvement nor training in presenting the pre-concert instructional materials.

Three hundred and ninety-two middle school students (ages approximately 12 - 14 years old) were randomly assigned to one of six music teachers (see Table 1) for the purposes of receiving three 50- minute classes of pre-concert instruction. This instruction emphasized identification of musical styles and textures of the compositions to be performed at the concert as well as other selections representative of the major periods of music history. Held one week prior to the school concert, these pre-concert lessons took place during the early morning elective period in which all subjects were enrolled. Students were given a class assignment and were excused from their usual class to meet with their assigned teacher in the orchestra room. For the data analysis, only those subjects who attended all three training sessions and took both posttest measures, administered two days following the school concert, were included.

Table 1
Number of Students Randomly Assigned to Groups (N=392)

			6th	7th	8th
Level 1	Teacher A	(n = 66)	28	28	10
	Teacher B	(n = 66)	34	26	6
Level 2	Teacher C	(n = 67)	34	22	11
	Teacher D	(n = 64)	27	28	9
Level 3	Teacher E	(n = 62)	26	25	11
	Teacher F	(n = 67)	36	27	4
		N =392	185	156	51

Since the purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant difference in middle school subjects' (musical) achievement and interest based on music teachers' degree of involvement in the development of concert-related instructional materials and their training in presenting these materials, steps were taken to minimize teacher differences (e.g., teacher qualifications, teacher competencies) confounding with teacher involvement and training. First, all six teachers had approximately the same number of years ($\overline{X}$ = 8) of

teaching experience. In terms of being equally competent, all six had similar teacher evaluation ratings by their school principal and music supervisor. Finally, all six teachers were observed by the same school administrator during their presentation of the concert-related instructional materials to ensure equivalency in terms of enthusiasm, teaching competence, and lesson content. Thus, since student differences were controlled for through randomization, and teacher differences were controlled for through randomization and the establishment of a high degree of equality (in terms of experience and teaching ability), any differences in student achievement and interest could, it is assumed, be accounted for based on differences in the independent variables: teacher involvement and training with concert-related instructional materials.

Instrumentation

The *How I Feel About Music* (HIFAM) (Froseth, 1973) interest inventory and the *Music Achievement Test* (MAT) (Colwell, 1968) (Test 4, Part 1) were used to assess the dependent variables. *How I Feel About Music* contains 44 items and provides a "general measure of student interest in musical activities" (Froseth, 1974, p. 15). Test 4 of the MAT battery is designed for students at the fifth grade level and above. The "composers" and the "texture" sub-test (of Test 4), each containing 20 items, were deemed the most important portions of the MAT for use in assessing the instructional goals of the concert-related instructional materials as well as the concert experience. The reliabilities of all sections of Test 4 are above accepted minimums. Evidence for criterion-related validity of Test 4 is established on the basis that "students with piano or instrumental experience tend to score higher than those with less or no experience" (Hodges, 1980, p. 327).

Results

The first stage of the analysis of data was the computation of various summary statistics. Table 2 shows the mean score of the subjects (by teacher and grade level) on post-concert music achievement scores as measured by the MAT and post-concert music interest scores as measured by the HIFAM.

Table 2

Means on the Dependent Variables by Teacher and Grade Level for Middle School Subjects (N = 392)

Teacher	n	MAT	HIFAM
A	66	17.2	21.4
B	66	17.4	22.7
C	67	17.7	21.5
D	64	18.6	23.4
E	62	18.6	22.5
F	67	16.2	22.2
Grade			
6^{th}	185	17.0	22.1
7^{th}	156	18.3	22.3
8^{th}	51	17.7	22.8

MAT = *Music Achievement Test* (Test 4, Part 1)
HIFAM = *How I Feel About Music*
Teachers A & B = high degree of involvement and training
Teachers C & D = no involvement, some training
Teachers E & F = no involvement, no training

Two analysis of variance procedures were implemented to investigate the impact of varying the extent of music teacher involvement and training with concert-related instructional materials. Both procedures used teacher nested in involvement as independent variables while for one the dependent variable was music achievement scores and for the other the dependent variable was the music interest scores. For the analysis, only the subjects who attended all three pre-concert classes and took both posttest measures were used. ANOVA results, $F(5,386) = .75$, $p > .53$, revealed no significant differences in music achievement scores among middle school subjects based on the extent of their music teacher's involvement and training with pre-concert instructional materials (see Table 3). Moreover, the ANOVA results, $F(5,386) = .47$, $p > .71$, also showed no significant difference in music interest scores for the subjects (see Table 4). Since these omnibus tests did not produce significant results, no *post hoc* tests were performed.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance of Music Achievement Scores by Teacher Nested in Involvement (N =392)

Source	*df*	*MS*	*F*
Invol	2	9.79	.29
Teach (Invol)	3	25.49	.75
Error	386	34.13	

*p< .05

Table 4
Analysis of Variance of Music Interest Scores by Teacher Nested in Involvement (N=392)

Source	*df*	*MS*	*F*
Invol	2	2.19	.04
Teach (Invol)	3	23.13	.47
Error	386	49.71	

*p< .05

Conclusions

Apparently, there is general consensus among music teachers and researchers that concert experiences for school-age children fulfill the school's role in developing cultural understanding and providing opportunities for teaching appropriate audience behaviors (Suthers, 1993; Hintch, 1996; Higa, 1985). Moreover, researchers (e.g., Shehan, 1986) demonstrate that concert-related instructional materials are generally effective in increasing achievement and interest levels for students attending such concerts. There is, however, disagreement on whether it is important (in terms of student achievement) for music teachers to (1) be involved in the preparation of concert-related instructional materials, and (2) receive training on the use of such materials. For example, as discussed, Shehan feels that pre-prepared concert-related instructional materials are best suited for the busy music teacher, while Dorman (1980) believes music teachers should have a high degree of involvement in the actual design of concert-related instructional materials if such materials are to be successful.

This study is significant because it attempts to resolve this issue in terms of student music achievement and interest. That is, the intent of this study is to determine the effect of varying the extent of music teacher involvement and training with concert-related instructional materials on student achievement and interest in music following live symphonic concert experiences.

Based on the results of this study, there are no benefits, specifically in terms of student achievement and interest, in music teachers having a high degree of involvement in the development of concert-related instructional materials. Moreover, based on this study, training on the use of such materials does not differentially impact student achievement or interest levels. This study, therefore, supports the current trend in which education departments of symphony orchestras or program directors of arts organizations (e.g. Young Audiences; Artists-in-Education) prepare concert-related instructional material to be placed

in the hands of the music teacher without these teacher's involvement in the actual design or training with such materials.

Although teacher involvement in the design of concert-related instructional material does not, based on this study, improve student learning, such teacher involvement may result in other advantages such as positively impacting teacher attitude or enthusiasm for the use of these materials. Future researchers may wish to examine these possible affective benefits when music teachers are involved in the design of and training with concert-related instructional materials. Finally, it should be noted that this study was conducted at a "performing arts academy," and the overall music education environment at this middle school was enriching and represented high teaching and learning standards. Possibly the results would be different with subjects from differing school settings.

Acknowledgment

Aspects of this study were funded through the generous support of a Faculty Research Grant (FRG/99-00/I-14) from Hong Kong Baptist University.

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Dr. Manny Brand is Professor and Head of the Department of Music and Fine Arts at the Hong Kong Baptist University. His undergraduate degree in music education is from Florida State University, and he holds an M.M. and PhD from the University of Miami.

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