

Statement of Purpose

Music is a performing art. One of the most efficient and effective ways to learn about music is to experience it through performance. A vast body of musical repertoire is written for groups of musicians to perform together (*ensemble*). This musical literature, composed for choral and instrumental groups, must be studied through performance for significant learning to occur.

The *Ensemble Performance* courses provide the opportunity for students to perform in a group context, i.e., choir, band, and orchestra. These are not auditioned ensembles but are open to any student with a basic musical background and a desire to make music in an ensemble setting. The *Ensemble Performance* courses are part of the core of a music program, an integral component in learning about music by making music.

Group performance

As a laboratory experience, ensemble participation allows for a wedding of theoretical aspects and practice in music education. Certain concepts and skills can be experienced and identified only in the ensemble setting; the learning opportunity does not exist elsewhere in the music program. This group experience allows students to develop an aural model of good ensemble sound. As well, the ensemble experience accommodates and develops learning style preferences and strengths, e.g., visual, aural, and kinesthetic.

The group experience is central to music education, and the *Ensemble Performance* courses provide the opportunity for aesthetic experiences through this group experience. Students develop confident, individual playing and singing skills within the context of a performing group while becoming aware of what is required for effective ensemble performance. They learn about and respond to gesture and other forms of nonverbal communication from the conductor, and are exposed to the techniques and intricacies of other instruments. All ensemble members learn about the principles and production of sound in music.

Group performance is a complex human endeavour. *Ensemble Performance* provides an opportunity for students to realize the importance of the individual's contribution to the group effort. As well, students comprehend how the group performance contributes to the development of their individual skills and musicianship. Participation in an ensemble develops the concentration and self-discipline necessary for performance. In an ensemble setting, students understand the musical significance and function of individual voices parts and instruments in the ensemble.

Individual skills

Through the ensemble experience, students have the opportunity to develop individually within the group setting. They are able to develop musicianship skills, acquire an understanding of musical concepts, obtain knowledge about music, encounter different styles of music, and develop

musical independence. They develop the ability for individual expression in a group context as well as individual responsibility and commitment to group performance. The ensemble experience is the application of the individual performance skills to the ensemble.

Synthesis of knowledge

Ensemble Performance provides the opportunity for students to be exposed to the unlimited wealth of ensemble repertoire, music that is unique and different from solo repertoire. Through their involvement in the performance of this repertoire, students become aware of and understand the special nature of ensemble music. They experience the elements of music in another dimension, realizing that certain aspects of texture, timbre, form, and harmony are distinctive to ensemble literature. As students are exposed to the historical and theoretical aspects of ensemble music, they develop conceptual understandings of the performance issues specific to this medium.

Through participation in *Ensemble Performance*, students have the opportunity to develop self-esteem, to become aware of and participate in the socialization process, and to develop self-awareness and a sense of self-identify within this cultural context. The long-term values of *Ensemble Performance* are that, in addition to the understandings and skills it develops, it has the potential for and contributes to generating composers, audiences, consumers of music, and, generally, more culturally- and socially-aware members of society.