Unit 06: Analyzing and Critiquing Music and Musical Performance

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **ongoing**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Through the process of analyzing and critiquing music and musical performance, students develop the ability to listen with a critical ear, reflect thoughtfully, and make informed artistic judgments. Students will engage in self-reflection and collaborative feedback throughout the rehearsal and performance process, examining how musical choices, preparation, and execution contribute to an effective performance. Students will develop the awareness, independence, and critical thinking skills necessary to continue refining their craft as musicians and apply these skills beyond the choral or musical experience.

Revised: July 2026

Standards

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law

In accordance with New Jersey's Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including:

economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance.

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-

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1.3C.12adv.Cr3a	Evaluate and refine varied draft musical works based on appropriate criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes and contexts.
1.3C.12adv.Cr3b	Share varied, personally developed musical works (individually or as an ensemble) that address identified purposes and contexts.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4a	Develop and apply criteria to select varied programs to study and perform based on an understanding of theoretical and structural characteristics and expressive challenges in the music, the technical skill of the individual or ensemble, and the purpose and context of the performance.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4b	Examine, evaluate, and critique, using music reading skills (where appropriate), how the structure and context impact and inform prepared and improvised performances.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4c	Demonstrate how understanding the style, genre and context of a varied repertoire of music informs prepared and improvised performances as well as performers' technical skills to connect with the audience.
1.3C.12adv.Pr6a	Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of the technical demands and expressive qualities of the music through prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire representing diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods in multiple types of ensembles.
1.3C.12adv.Pr6b	Demonstrate an ability to connect, engage and respond to audiences through prepared and improvised performances.
1.3C.12adv.Re	Responding
1.3C.12adv.Re7a	Use research and personally developed criteria to justify choices made when selecting music, citing knowledge of the music and individual and ensemble purpose and context.
1.3C.12adv.Re7b	Demonstrate and justify how the analysis of structures, contexts and performance decisions inform the response to music.
1.3C.12adv.Re8a	Justify interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works by comparing and synthesizing varied researched sources, including reference to other art forms.
1.3C.12adv.Re9	Applying criteria to evaluate products.
1.3C.12adv.Re9a	Develop and justify evaluations of music, programs of music, and performances based on criteria, personal decision-making, research, and understanding of contexts.
1.3B.12adv.Cn	Connecting
1.3B.12adv.Cn10a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills related to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.
1.3B.12adv.Cn11	Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.
1.3B.12adv.Cn11a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills related to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.
CRP.K-12.CRP1	Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.
CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.

CRP.K-12.CRP2	Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4	Communicate clearly and effectively and with reason.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP5.1	Career-ready individuals understand the interrelated nature of their actions and regularly make decisions that positively impact and/or mitigate negative impact on other people, organization, and the environment. They are aware of and utilize new technologies, understandings, procedures, materials, and regulations affecting the nature of their work as it relates to the impact on the social condition, the environment and the profitability of the organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP6	Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
CRP.K-12.CRP6.1	Career-ready individuals regularly think of ideas that solve problems in new and different ways, and they contribute those ideas in a useful and productive manner to improve their organization. They can consider unconventional ideas and suggestions as solutions to issues, tasks or problems, and they discern which ideas and suggestions will add greatest value. They seek new methods, practices, and ideas from a variety of sources and seek to apply those ideas to their own workplace. They take action on their ideas and understand how to bring innovation to an organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP8	Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
CRP.K-12.CRP8.1	Career-ready individuals readily recognize problems in the workplace, understand the nature of the problem, and devise effective plans to solve the problem. They are aware of problems when they occur and take action quickly to address the problem; they thoughtfully investigate the root cause of the problem prior to introducing solutions. They carefully consider the options to solve the problem. Once a solution is agreed upon, they follow through to ensure the problem is solved, whether through their own actions or the actions of others.
CRP.K-12.CRP9	Model integrity, ethical leadership and effective management.
CRP.K-12.CRP9.1	Career-ready individuals consistently act in ways that align personal and community-held ideals and principles while employing strategies to positively influence others in the workplace. They have a clear understanding of integrity and act on this understanding in every decision. They use a variety of means to positively impact the directions and actions of a team or organization, and they apply insights into human behavior to change others' action, attitudes and/or beliefs. They recognize the near-term and long-term effects that management's actions and attitudes can have on productivity, morals and organizational culture.
CRP.K-12.CRP10	Plan education and career paths aligned to personal goals.
CRP.K-12.CRP10.1	Career-ready individuals take personal ownership of their own education and career goals, and they regularly act on a plan to attain these goals. They understand their own career interests, preferences, goals, and requirements. They have perspective regarding the pathways available to them and the time, effort, experience and other requirements to pursue each, including a path of entrepreneurship. They recognize the value of each step in the education and experiential process, and they recognize that nearly all career paths

	require ongoing education and experience. They seek counselors, mentors, and other experts to assist in the planning and execution of career and personal goals.
CRP.K-12.CRP12	Work productively in teams while using cultural global competence.
CRP.K-12.CRP12.1	Career-ready individuals positively contribute to every team, whether formal or informal. They apply an awareness of cultural difference to avoid barriers to productive and positive interaction. They find ways to increase the engagement and contribution of all team members. They plan and facilitate effective team meetings.

Essential Questions

- How and why does evaluation of musical performances make us better musicians?
- In what ways do the cultural, historical, and societal contexts of a musical piece shape our interpretation and critique of its performance?
- What makes a piece of music beautiful?
- Why is it valuable to listen to, analyze, and describe music and music performances?

Enduring Understandings

- Applying specific criteria when evaluating music allows students to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for both musical works and performances.
- Awareness is essential to careful listening.
- Critical listening means that one's emotional response is ignored so the musical elements can be judged with an objective ear.
- Each thoughtful opinion of music is valid.
- Listening to and evaluating performances of other musical ensembles promotes the continual development of musicianship.
- Professional musicians are constantly assessing their own practicing and performing.
- Reflection and self-assessment are essential to determining areas in need of improvement.
- The ability to self-assess benefits people in all fields of study.
- The evaluation of pieces and works from the other arts involves the same process of examining the essential elements.

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- Accepted performance practices in choral and vocal music, in relation to setting, occasion, and musical genre.
- Awareness is essential to careful listening.
- Each piece of music is unique in its characteristics, time period, culture, and the intent of its composer
- Each thoughtful and evidenced opinion of music is valid.
- How to form and use an appropriate criteria for evaluation of quality music.
- How to identify and analyze the cultural, historical, and societal contexts of a musical piece, and how those factors influence performance decisions.
- How to listen to and describe music objectively and critically.

- How to use musical vocabulary in the evaluation of musical performances, including their own.
- Listening to and evaluating performances of other ensembles and performers promotes the continual development of musicianship.
- Self-assessment and critical listening is essential for determining areas in need of improvement.
- The differences in the sound of various musical tones/colors (e.g. bright/dark, back/forward, light/heavy)
- Using a specific criteria for the evaluation of music deepens one's understanding of and appreciation for musical works and performances.
- Why they prefer some types of music over others.

Learning Plan

- Preview the essential questions and connect to learning throughout the course.
- Students and teacher discuss, describe and evaluate recordings of professional performances and their own performances.
- Students are trained to acknowledge their mistakes by raising their hand in the midst of the rehearsal. This allows the class to save time by addressing fewer student mistakes. This promotes a level of conscientization, since the student knows the mistake has been made and they accept the responsibility and the power to fix the problem. The teacher does not need to address it unless the mistake is made repeatedly.
- Students bring and share works of art from other fields, including painting, sculpture, crafts, photography, poetry, etc., and make connections to music. How are art pieces the same and different from music? How do we discuss them in similar ways? What elements are commonalities across disciplines?
- Students discuss the various criteria used to evaluate musical performances and create their own rubric for listening. The teacher guides the creation of the rubric to make certain it includes essential musical elements, such as pitch, intonation, rhythm, pulse, dynamics, articulations, diction, etc. Students shape the rubric as a class and apply it to their own personal listening.
- Students discuss the ways that thoughtful reflection and critique improve their individual and collective musical skills, and how the ability to reflect and self-evaluate will benefit them in any field they pursue in the future.
- Students explore what it means to be aware in listening and how awareness affects performance. This is done using recordings and several of the choir's first performances. Students not only discuss the musical elements they hear, but how present and aware they were in the midst of performing.
- Students reflect on a rehearsal, or a portion of the rehearsal, and are asked to evaluate the work completed and formulate the next step in the process of learning the piece of music. Individual students offer feedback to their section and to the teacher and guide the approach for the next rehearsal.
- Students write thoughtful musical critiques and evaluations using the established criteria and/or rubric as well as a rich vocabulary of musical terminology.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Performing Arts students demonstrate differentiated proficiency according to their ability to answer the essential questions through formative and summative assessments. Evidence of progression may be demonstrated in divergent ways through the Artistic Processes of Creating, Performing/ Presenting/ Producing, Connecting, and Responding.

- Accurately analyze and describe performances using rich musical vocabulary, both written and orally.
- Assess a rehearsal and provide constructive feedback for improvement, both to individuals and to the choir as a whole.
- Connect the other artistic fields to music, finding commonalities in the way works of art are discussed, evaluated, and critiqued.
- Determine their own criteria for music evaluation and create their own rubric.
- Evaluate a piece's progress within the choral rehearsal and assess what aspects need attention in the context of the entire choir or the choir section.
- Evaluate one's own progress in the choral rehearsal and general musical growth, identifying areas in need of further study or attention.
- Evaluate their own performances and musical interpretations through listening to recordings and self-assessing with evidence supported responses.
- Explore and reflect on the essential questions through discussions and journaling.
- Identify specific elements that create a quality piece of music and/or an accurate, appropriate, and pleasing performance.

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, supplemental, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

- A variety of advanced high school choral repertoire, including but not limited to recommendation lists from the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), and the NYSSMA Manual.
- A variety of recordings of choral and vocal repertoire, performed by professional, collegiate, and high school individuals and ensembles.

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations: Performing Arts Accommodations & Modifications

Course-specific modifications include:

- Allow students to choose from several journal, essay, or discussion prompts and allow for multiple methods of response.
- Allow students to create their own personal system of evaluation and critique, allowing some to be more complex and all-encompassing than others. This could allow for a student to focus on fewer musical elements but with more depth.
- Provide ample space for all students to participate and respond during class discussions.