

Following up on an earlier study, an audiotape of the tunes of 25 standard songs, assumed to be known by everyone who has finished 6th grade, was played for 135 undergraduate instrumental music education students and 79 undergraduate vocal/choral music education students. There was no significant difference in the ability of either group to identify the songs. The means for both groups indicated that neither had developed a strong repertoire of standard songs outside the college classroom. Several songs that music educators have stated are very important for children to learn could not be identified by even half the students in either group. It is recommended that professors preparing music education students for their future careers consider adding activities to music education courses that build a strong song repertoire.

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A Comparison of the Basic Song Repertoire of Vocal/Choral and Instrumental Music Education Majors

The importance of developing a general repertoire of easily sung songs among the population has long been an issue for music educators in general, as well as for MENC—The National Association for Music Education. The goals represented by the *Get America Singing ... Again!* publication (MENC, 1996) are simply the latest in a long line of organizational attempts to encourage the development of a reper-

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toire of commonly known, easily sung songs (Hair, 1997).

In an earlier investigation (Prickett & Bridges, 1998), we examined music education/therapy majors' knowledge of a general repertoire of songs compared to that of elementary education majors. Experienced music education professors selected 25 songs that they assumed would be known by anyone who had been educated in the public schools of the United States. All songs appear frequently in standard music texts and compilations; holiday and nursery songs were excluded. We emphasized that we were not attempting to establish a canon of songs that were superior to others, but were simply trying to assess whether college students' repertoires measured up to the assumptions of professional music educators. Subjects completed a simple "name the tune" task. Although a statistically significant difference was found between the music majors' scores and those of the elementary education majors (who were beginning a basic skills in music course), we concluded that the average level of knowledge for the music students nevertheless was unacceptably low and recommended curricular adjustments to address building a better repertoire.

Subsequent discussions with college professors from universities across the country brought to light a common assumption: the students who enter a vocal/choral music education track bring a song repertoire with them when they come to college, but the students who enter an instrumental music education track generally have much less experience in singing and, therefore, have poorer repertoires. If this assumption is correct, it follows logically that if curricular adjustments need to be made to compensate for a poor repertoire, the vocal/choral students could be exempted. Having the data at hand and wondering if this assumption is valid, we posed the following research question: Is the basic song repertoire of vocal/choral music education majors significantly better than that of instrumental music education majors?

METHOD

Subjects

The responses of 214 music education majors had been collected for an earlier study (Prickett & Bridges, 1998). References to "a previous study" or "our earlier study" throughout the rest of this article refer to this work. The music therapy students' scores, which had made up part of the data base for that study, were excluded. Of the 214 music majors, 135 were in an instrumental music education curriculum, and 79 were in vocal/choral courses. All indicated that their elementary education had taken place in the United States.

Selection of Songs

The stimulus tape was described in our earlier study. It consisted of 25 songs that (1) could be justified by experience and other research as being basic to music education repertoire, (2) would be assumed by a professor to be known by music students, and therefore would not be taught or reviewed in an education course, (3) are not Christmas or preschool songs, and (4) appear in standard collections of songs. The list of songs, in the order presented, appears in Prickett and Bridges (1998).

Presentation

The stimulus audio cassette tape contained each of the 25 songs, played one time on an electronic keyboard. The tape informed listeners that we were interested in knowing which folk songs they knew. Each session took 22 minutes.

RESULTS

There was no significant difference between the performance of the vocal choral music education majors ($M = 15.2$, $SD = 4.07$) and that of the instrumental music education majors ($M = 15.8$, $SD = 3.35$), $t(212) = 1.05$, $p = .30$. The lowest score for vocal/choral majors was 5 ($n = 1$), and the highest was 21 ($n = 2$). Instrumentalists' scores ranged from a low of 4 ($n = 1$) to a high of 21 ($n = 5$). The songs which were not correctly identified by at least 50% of each group appear in Table 1. "Red River Valley," "Down in the Valley," "Tinga Layo," and "Shalom Chaverim" received surprisingly low scores, despite their appearance in numerous standard song compilations.

We used the same rationale for considering an answer correct or a viable alternative as in our previous study. Answers that contained material from the first line of the song or alternative titles found in widely disseminated song collections were accepted. Less specific identifications such as "the New Year's song" for "Auld Lang Syne" or "America" for "America the Beautiful" were not marked as correct. Twenty songs (80% of the list) were correctly identified by at least 50% of the vocal/choral students; eighteen songs (72% of the list) were named by at least 50% of the instrumental majors. However, the means indicate that vocal/choral students could, on average, identify only 61% of songs presumed to be known by all, whereas the instrumental majors, on average, could identify 63% of them.

DISCUSSION

We posed the research question: Is the basic song repertoire of

Table 1
Songs Not Identified by at Least Half of Each Group

	Song	Percent Identifying Correctly
Vocal/choral majors ($n = 79$):		
	"Red River Valley"	26.7
	"Down in the Valley"	21.7
	"Shalom Chaverim"	3.3
	"Tinga Layo"	1.7
Instrumental majors ($n = 135$):		
	"Polly Wolly Doodle"	45.9
	"Oh Shenandoah"	26.7
	"Red River Valley"	20.7
	"Shalom Chaverim"	5.9
	"Down in the Valley"	4.4
	"Tinga Layo"	0.0

vocal/choral music education majors significantly better than that of instrumental music education majors? Based on the data collected from programs all around the country, the answer to our question is a rather definitive "no." One of the reasons that we do research is to test our hypotheses (or dearly cherished biases) to see if they are valid. Many college professors who deal with music education majors may find the results of this study a bit surprising, as did we. In light of these results, the case can be made that instrumental music education majors have just as large a song repertoire as do vocal/choral students.

On the other hand, one may interpret these data as saying that all music education majors appear to have weak repertoires, no matter what their performance background, when compared with a repertoire list representative of experienced practitioners' expectations and basal materials' contents. If this task represented a sample of the song recognition of the undergraduate population, college professors who are trying to prepare future teachers to be able to encourage community singing of a commonly held song repertoire will need to take this lack of knowledge into consideration when designing courses. Activities to build this repertoire (indeed, beyond the level of tune recognition to that of being able to sing the tune and words) would appear to merit inclusion in college course work.

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