

Repertoire & Standards

Literature suggestions and thoughts
from your WCDA Repertoire & Standards Chairpersons

—James Kinchen, Jr., R&S State Chair



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So often from this space we focus on the repertoire part of our R&S mission. The importance of our literature cannot be overstated. I made the point in a past commentary that, just as we “are what we eat,” our choirs are what they sing. In other words, a poor diet usually results in poor health. I am just so grateful to our wonderful R&S chairs, who take turns in this space sharing exciting and qualitative repertoire suggestions with you in each issue of *Soundings*.

But let us not forget the standards component of our charge. WCDA and ACDA, our parent organization, advocate excellence in all aspects of the choral art. Our wonderfully diverse choral community, with all of its sundry approaches to the art, is united in one cause. We aim to make each choral experience the best it can be, and in so doing, honor the art and human beings whose lives choral singing touches. We are deeply committed to bringing the joy of excellent music-making and the rewards of lifelong choral singing to the entire human community.

WCDA encourages the following standards:

- Choosing compositions that are qualitative, appropriate, and stylistically and culturally diverse;
- Promoting in our choral ensembles an intelligent, healthy, artful use of the voice that will both serve the needs of the immediate choral experience and allow our vocal musicians to enjoy the benefits of lifelong singing;
- Making the choral rehearsal an engaging and fulfilling moment of learning, musical growth, good vocalism, community, and aesthetic pleasure;
- Striving for the best performances possible, performances that are engaging, enjoyable, educational, and entertaining;
- Committing whenever possible to sharing the musical experiences of our particular choral setting with other performing ensembles, arts and educational organizations, and the larger community; and
- Committing to our own continued professional growth in all the many ways that such growth can and should happen.

While on the subject of standards, please permit a word about “Singing in Wisconsin.” The SIW concept is such a neat one, I think. SIW is a festival that strives to be accessible to all choral students, regardless of experience or expertise. It is not a select honors choir. At the same time, SIW attaches the highest importance to the selection of literature that represents the highest quality, yet permits students to succeed in having an affirming rehearsal experience and giving an impressive performance on the day of the festival.

What this means for directors who bring their students to SIW, is that preparation is just *so* important! In the press of things—starting off the new year, preparing for the fall musical, getting rehearsals for the December madrigal dinner off and running, the numerous “other” activities that too often pull our own students, always the brightest and best and, hence, most sought after, away from the choral rehearsal, etc.—it can be tempting to feel that if our own students are a bit under-prepared on a song or two, the others will be prepared enough to pull them along on the day of the festival. *Well, guess what happens when enough kids come to the festival that way?*

But, of course, all of us are masters of preparation. Our work testifies to our consistent success in having our choirs ready for performance. Let us please be encouraged to take the time necessary to make *our* students the very best prepared students in the whole SIW festival. *And, guess what happens when enough kids show up prepared in that way?*

We have chosen excellent conductors who will make this fall’s festival a peak experience for all participating students. The spark that these kids bring back to their own respective choral settings will boost these programs. And some of them will come to know for the first time what an incredibly cool thing choral singing is! Because *you* cared so deeply in your preparation of students, you will have set them up for success.

Lives will be changed —thanks to you!

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“HIGH FIVES”

MULTICULTURAL & ETHNIC REPERTOIRE
submitted by Christopher Peterson

When I start looking for literature in the multicultural and ethnic genre, there are two main criteria that I use. First, I want the selections to be *interesting* for both the performers and audience members alike. If a piece has rich musical and artistic elements, I know the learning process will be worthwhile and fun. The audience will enjoy hearing the culmination of our study and rehearsing. Secondly, I look for *well-edited publications* that give insight into the background of the piece, text pronunciation, and cultural and performance considerations.

1. *Evenin’ Time* (Jamaican Folk Song), arr. Tucker ALLIANCE #AMP 0308, SATB, PIANO/CONGA

Edited by Jing Ling-Tam, this secular syncopated arrangement is fun and rhythmic. An excellent IPA pronunciation guide is included, and the text is written in quasi-dialect to help singers enunciate the English words appropriately. The conga drum provides an ostinato to underline the Caribbean feel. Background and performance notes are provided and lend good insight to the song culture and musical feel of the piece. Ranges are moderate with the soprano only up to e2 and the bass down to G. Tenors will have to keep much of their part in light voice or falsetto as the tessitura is about c1 to e1, with an occasional g1. This three-minute selection is suitable for most high school choirs.

2. *Manchai Puito* (Two Little Doves) Argentine Folk Song, arr. Escalada, KJOS #ED 8758, SATB

This delightful four-minute arrangement, mostly in minor tonality, is part of the Kjos *Successful Sight Singing* series (Milestone 3). The text describes lost love as told through the conversation of two doves. The editor dedicates six pages of information to the range, arranger, history of Argentine choral music, text, pronunciation, music making, introducing the song to the audience, articulation, and rehearsal tips for the conductor. The slow triple meter is punctuated with dynamic contrasts and a faster common-time B section. Sopranos are asked to sing g2, but never for very long, and basses rarely sing below Bb, making this piece accessible to high school as well as advanced middle school choirs with beginning tenors and basses.

3. *This Train* (Traditional American Spiritual), arr. Nina Gilbert, SANTA BARBARA #SBMP 178 TTBB WITH TROMBONE

The text of *This Train* has been set many times by composers over the years, but few have captured the essence and sounds of real trains. Nina Gilbert sets the trombone both in whistle-like fashion and also melodically throughout the piece. The G-major, steady-duple feel is established from measure one, and the “train” doesn’t slow until all four verses have been sung. In the final four measures the word “this” is used in a slowing *diminuendo*, with the “s” sustained and the trombone blowing air without tone. At less than two minutes in duration, this mostly diatonic arrangement is well within the grasp of beginning or advanced high school men.

4. *Ma luai, luai* (I Went Up to the Meadow) Carol from Transylvania, Tudor Jarda, ed. Gabriel Dumitrescu, MUSICA ROMANICA #XRCM 0011, SATB

This is another fabulously edited octavo. Five pages of background, translation and performance notes are included. The most difficult element of this work is the substantial Romanian text, but the IPA pronunciation guide is very helpful. The tonality is based around a D-Dorian hexachordal scale, and the meter (marked 8/8) moves in a 2+3+3 isorhythmic pattern throughout. All ranges are moderate and there is only one short *divisi* in the alto part. A good high school or advanced middle school choir that is ready to tackle the Romanian would enjoy the work very much. It is a great piece for teaching rhythm while singing in a very beautiful and less frequently performed language.

5. *Mayim, Mayim* (Water, Water), Song from Israel, E. Amiran, arr. Valerie Shields, EARTHSONGS #(541) 758-5760, 2-PART TREBLE, FLUTE, VIOLIN & PIANO

It’s easy to overlook a 2-part piece or only consider it for treble choirs. However, this strophic, simple piece would make a great addition to any program with its driving tempo and D-minor tonality. Men or women, baritones or changing voices, could conceivably sing one or both lines. There is only one verse of Hebrew text (Isaiah 12:3), which translates: “You will draw water with joy from the wells of redemption.” Contrast can be created on each repetition in the following ways: verse 1,

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Repertoire & Standards

"Music training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul."

—Plato, "Republic"

melody, violin and piano; verse 2, melody, descant, violin and piano; verse 3, flute, violin and piano; verse 4, tutti. Two flutes or two violins can also play the instrumental parts, and cello or bass can double the bass line of the piano. Folkdance choreography is available from the publisher as well.

MUSIC & WORSHIP REPERTOIRE:

"BLIZZARD" ANTHEMS— GO FOR BAROQUE!"

submitted by Nancy L. Allen

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Attention all church choir directors! Have you ever had the misfortune of scheduling a major work for a Sunday service only to find out later that most of your key section leaders will be out of town? You quickly realize that you need a new anthem, one that is easy to learn, yet musically satisfying. The following are arrangements that just might meet your needs. I have used each of these selections with my church choir. The choir and congregation responded favorably to each work. I hope something on this list will help you on those cold blizzard Sundays when numbers are low. You can't miss if you "Go For Baroque!"

1. *Sing A New Song*, Schütz, arr. C. Jennings. CPP BELWIN, INC. #SCHCH 07601, SATB, FLUTE & STRING BASS

This anthem is an early Baroque work that exemplifies the relationship between the bass and treble voices. Choral parts are contrasted with lovely instrumental interludes. This easy 4-part arrangement has a middle section featuring a duet between the flute and soprano voices. It is written in a harmonic minor with a 3/4 time signature. It should be performed in a joyful, lilting tempo. "Sing a New Song" is especially good for teaching four measure phrasing and terraced dynamics. The text calls us to "Raise our voices to praise and honor God in song."

2. *Sing to the Lord*, Vivaldi, arr. Hopson.

HOPE PUBLISHING #AA1694, SATB, KEYBOARD

This work has a 4/4 time signature and typifies the energetic and driving rhythms of the Baroque era. The accompanist will enjoy the fun finger work. It features a great use of imitation between the treble and bass voices. Only a few sections contain 4-part harmony. The piece is set in F major with the positive text proclaiming, "Sing and be joyful, the Lord is a mighty God!"

3. *O Lord, My God, You Are My Refuge*, J.S. Bach, arr. Hopson. SOMERSET PRESS #MV 1239

2-PART MIXED, KEYBOARD

This arrangement is set to "Bist Du bei mir," a work attributed to Johann Sebastian Bach. Its melody is beautiful and well known. The text of this Hopson arrangement is paraphrased from Psalm 7:1-3, 5 and 20. The treble and bass voice parts have soli sections contrasted by lovely polyphonic duet sections. This work is great for teaching line, phrasing, hearing intervals and tuning chromatic pitches. Just a reminder: double dot all dotted eighth notes to adhere to Baroque performance practices.

4. *Glory to God! Alleluia!*, Handel, arr. Liebergen. C. FISCHER #CM8766, SATB, KEYBOARD/FLUTES

This selection is more homophonic in nature. There is four-part harmony throughout and the harmonic movement is predictable. The melody is in the soprano voice and the voice leading is smooth with no extremes in the tessituras. The instrumental interludes provide nice changes in tone color. Singers will be able to work on text inflection, consonants, observing rests and singing with terraced dynamics. A jubilant, festive work!

5. *Come, Ye Sons of Art*, Purcell, ed. John B. Haberlen. KJOS #Ed. 5977, SATB, ORGAN & 2 OBOES OR TRUMPETS

This work features a small instrumental ensemble and alto solo. The ornamentation is written for the soloist. The melody stays in the alto voice in the four-part sections. Tenor and soprano tessituras tend to be in the higher range. Repetitions in this work make use of the "echo effect." Repeated patterns should be sung softer the second time. I like this anthem for how its wonderful rhythmic energy matches the text, "Tune your voice and instruments play, to celebrate this most sacred day!"

TWO-YEAR COLLEGE REPERTOIRE

submitted by James Aagaard

Given that the choice of a theme was up to me, I elected to go with "fun." Size, balance, and quality of a two-year college choir can vary, not only from year to year, but also semester to semester. The following titles would be best suited for those times when numbers are small, ability is big, and your accompanist is AWOL. If you have a chamber or madrigal ensemble and you want something besides the standard Renaissance fare, look these over. All of these are (or work best as) a *cappella*. There is at least some contrapuntalism in each to challenge the individualism of your singers, who will often be challenged with pitch as well. ALL are guaranteed to get a giggle from your audience.

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"HIGH FIVES"

1. *En Ego Campana* (I Am a Bell), Jacob Handl (Gallus), ed. by Phillip Crabtree. ROGER DEAN #HCA-102, SATB

A Latin Madrigal from Gallus' *Harmoniarum Moralium*; I wish a few more had been published to make a "set." The men continually come back to repetitions on the word "clango," while the women are singing repeated "tintinabulos." These repetitions leave a lot of room for creative dynamics that my students really have fun with; take the editor's suggestions with a grain of salt. This sings best in Latin; an English translation is provided inside the front cover.

2. *Old Horatius Had a Farm*, Z. Randall Stroope. Mark Foster #MF 3013, SATB (w/Sop divisi)

Stroope may be better known for his sacred pieces, so this one might surprise you. It's a modal setting of *Old MacDonald* to a Latin text. The tune probably won't be recognized by most on the first hearing; but they'll get it when you reach the first "ee-i-ee-i-o" and will listen pretty intently after that. The only real problem with this piece is the title. I list it in programs simply as "Horatius" and let the audience have fun figuring it out. (If you want to do an "animal" theme, this could cap off a set of Renaissance pieces like *El Grillo*, *A Little White Hen*, or *Counterpoint of the Animals*.)

3. *It Was a Lover and His Lass*, R. J. S. Stevens. BROUDE BROTHERS #MRE 7, SSATB

This is from a series edited by Percy M. Young called "The Madrigal in the Romantic Era." Stevens is a little more "Classical" oriented than "Romantic" and, in fact, the piece almost comes off as Renaissance anyway. The *vivace* tempo is the

key to this piece. The text (by Shakespeare) is very well laid out and set for speed. The faster you go the better the "hey ding-a dings" spin out.

4. *A Set of Five*, Jean Berger. KJOS, SATB
 1. "A Full Edition" #8625
 2. "Blue Sky" #8626 (1 bass divisi)
 3. "As a Rule, Man's a Fool" #8627 (1 bass divisi)
 4. "The Roses of Yester-Year" #8628
 5. "This World It Is a Pleasant Place" #8629

One or two of these titles are fairly commonly known, but collectively they really do make an effective set. There isn't much to tie them together (the texts are from various and somewhat obscure sources throughout time) except Berger's own individual style, which is very tongue-in-cheek in the quick pieces, but somewhat poignant in the slower ones. The keys are laid out in such a way that a choir can fairly easily move from one to the next without much pause or need for a pitch pipe.

5. *Die Beredsamkeit* (Eloquence), F. J. Haydn, ed. Geoffrey M. Mason. WALTON #7006, SATB, PIANO OPTIONAL

Haydn wrote a number of light-hearted partsongs, with which many of you are probably familiar, but maybe a reminder of their existence is still appropriate. This one is my favorite...today. The piano pretty much just doubles the voices throughout; its use should only be necessary for a young group not used to quick modulations. Both German and English words are provided. For something like this I almost always use the English. I would suggest that the word "mute" might sing better than "dumb" as found in this particular edition. ♦

An Arts Advocacy Resolution

Whereas the human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself through the study and performance of the aesthetic arts; and *whereas* serious cutbacks in funding and support have steadily eroded arts institutions and their programs throughout the country;

be it resolved that all citizens of the United States actively voice their affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government, to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations.

The American Choral Directors Association, approved February, 1994

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