



One's philosophy is not best expressed in words. It is expressed in the choices one makes... and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Stuck in the Middle—Finding Multicultural Repertoire for Middle School Choirs

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(Used with permission of Northwest Division's online newsletter; www.nwacda.org, March 2014)

Recently, I have been contacted by several middle level choir directors, all of whom wanted to know if there were lists of multicultural works appropriate for their ensembles. If you have taught at the middle school level, you know that there are no absolutes when it comes to literature. Songs that were sure-fire winners three or four years ago may not work this year because none of the basses can sing below a D3 (D below middle C) or nearly every girl in your choir is truly a soprano, and the alto part is written too low.

As frustrating as this situation can be, trying to reuse music that at one time was a prime candidate for teaching musical concepts is even more frustrating when you purchase a new work for your choir in July and then discover that it will not work for the ensemble when classes begin. Most of our choral budgets, as you know, are limited. Where do we find literature that is age-appropriate, represents a variety of cultures, and teaches musical skills and concepts? Here are several ideas worth pursuing:

- Talk to colleagues you trust. Mentoring comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. Sometimes we need a person we respect to suggest that we try a particular work. This

is helpful; however, many of us teachers are regionally insulated. We only hear music our colleagues perform with their choirs. We miss out on what may be happening outside our region.

- Do your homework. Between publisher websites and YouTube, you will find a vast amount of literature available in mp3 or video formats. Use these resources in class to help students develop critical thinking skills and expand their vocabulary when they offer comments. A possible downside? You may find yourself spending four or five hours on YouTube researching music, all to no avail because you will not have found the right literature for your ensembles.
- Investigate www.ChoralNet.org. ACDA has been the driving force in creating a web presence that is interactive, broad-based, and that also supports the needs of choral directors at all levels—everything from programming ideas, vocal pedagogy, and middle school singers' challenges to types of fabrics to avoid when purchasing formal wear for your women. On ChoralNet.org, you can ask questions and receive input from choral experts on a huge array of topics. For example, if you would like to perform a piece in Latvian, you can find a person to help you with a good translation or a pronunciation guide. Be patient. Begin asking your questions on ChoralNet.org early on. You'll hear from colleagues from around the world!

Below is a list for those who are interested in finding middle-level multicultural literature. You'll find many different voicings and music from various cultures. Information on each work includes the title, voicing, accompaniment, composer/arranger, publisher, and the culture out of which the music sprang.

The music below is appropriate for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade choirs of varying ability levels. I have either played through each work, performed it with a middle-level choir, or have had a trusted colleague who has used it.

The Drover's Dream (Australia)

TB, piano, opt. guitar

arr: Vijay Singh

National Music Publishers

Rothsay-O (Scottish folk song)

SSA, guitar (or piano), treble recorder, hand drum
arr: Ken Berg
Hal Leonard

Bonse Aba (Zambian)

SATB, unaccompanied, drum
arr: Andrew Fischer
AMP

Bonse Aba

2-part, 3-part, SSA, with piano (and optional drum)
arr: Victor Johnson
Heritage Music Press

Songs of Africa for Upper Voices - Set 1

(Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana)
SA (includes lead voice) unaccompanied and percussion
arr: Fred Onowwerosuoke
Oxford University Press

Dormi, Dormi, O Bel Bambin (Italian Carol)

SSAA, unaccompanied (a little more challenging because of four parts, but lines are easy)
arr: Robert DeCormier
Lawson-Gould

Yo Le Canto Todo El Dia (Venezuelan-style Spanish)

2-pt or SSA, piano
David Brunner
Boosey & Hawkes

Winds of Peace (Ruach, Ruach) (Traditional Hebrew round)

4-pt treble, piano and flute
arr: Nancy Grundahl
Colla Voce

Tuuti, Tuuti Tummaistani (Finnish)

2-pt, piano
arr: Charles Collins
Boosey & Hawkes

Three Yoruba Native Songs (Nigeria)

Unison with percussion
arr: Henry Leck and Prince Julius Adeniyi
Colla Voce

Three Dominican Folk Songs (Spanish)

Unison with piano
arr: Francisco Nunez
Boosey & Hawkes

Song of the Sea (the Song of Moses, Miriam & the Israelites)
(Yiddish)

SAB, oboe and piano
arr: Valerie Shields
Mark Foster

Dodi Li (Israeli Folk Song)

2-pt treble and piano
arr: Doreen Rao
Boosey & Hawkes

Cielito Lindo (Mexican)

SSA or TTB, piano; opt. 3 trumpets, 3 guitars, bass
arr: Barbara Harlow
Santa Barbara Music Publishing

Ahe Lau Makani (Hawaiian)

2-pt, piano
Lili'uokalani, Likelike, & Kapoli, arr: Jerry Deput
Shawnee Press

O Mary, Don't You Weep (Traditional Spiritual)

SSA or TTB, piano
arr: Rollo Dilworth
Hal Leonard

Hiney Ma Tov (Hebrew)

Available in 3-pt mixed, SSA, TTB; with opt. solo and violin
arr: Lon Beery
Shawnee Press

Al Tambor (Panamanian)

2-pt or 3-pt mixed, piano and opt. percussion
arr: Victor C. Johnson
Heritage Music Press

Two Brazilian Folk Songs (Brazilian Portuguese)

3-part mixed, keyboard and optional 2 flutes, percussion
arr: Lon Beery & Elisa Dekaney
Carl Fischer

J'entend le Moulin (French Canadian folk song)

2-pt, piano

arr: Ruth Dwyer & Martin Ellis

Colla Voce

Al Shlosha D'Varim (Hebrew)

2-pt. treble, piano

Allan E. Naplan

Boosey & Hawkes

Lamma Badaa Yatathanna (Andalusia/Spain Arabic)

2-pt, piano with opt. violin, cello, and dumbek

arr: Joy Ondra Hirokawa

Hal Leonard

Hala Lala Layya (Lebanese folk song)

3-pt. mixed or 2-pt., piano, percussion, and optional melody instrument

arr: Audrey Snyder

Hal Leonard

Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning (Traditional Spiritual)

2-pt, piano

arr: Glenda Franklin

BriLee Music

Remember Your Story (Yapi Kapi) (Lakota Sioux)

TBB, piano and opt. soprano recorder and percussion

arr: Vicki Tucker Courtney

Carl Fischer

Salaam Aleikum (African)

Unison, TB, TT, TTB, unaccompanied, opt. keyboard and percussion

arr: Laura Farnell

Carl Fischer

Arirang (Korean)

3-pt mixed, TB or SA, piano and optional flute

arr: Jonathan Lim and Sonja Poorman

Alfred

City Called Heaven (Spiritual)

SATB (singable parts for middle level) or SSA, piano

arr: Josephine Poelenitz

Colla Voce

Minoi, Minoi (Samoan)

SATB and SSAA (a bit challenging for middle school but attainable), unaccompanied

arr: Christopher Marshall

Alliance Music Publications

Voicing requirements for middle level singers are challenging. I have attempted to include as many voicings as possible. Titles of the various works reflect a few of the many cultures from around the world.

Use this list as a starting point. Those of you who teach middle-level ensembles may recognize arrangers or publishers you have used in the past. With the internet, you can investigate music from particular arrangers or publishers. Many of the works above have recordings available on the publisher's website or on YouTube.

Have a great school year!

