

SELECTING, ADAPTING AND WRITING MUSIC FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Know your singers & their voices.
- Emphasize basic vocal technique.
- Teach music literacy.
- Plan a well-balanced program.
- Determine the most appropriate ensemble grouping...

SELECTING MUSIC

TREBLE VOICES

- ✓ Interesting, singable melody
- ✓ Smooth voice leading
- ✓ Well-crafted harmonies (limited use of parallel 3rds, “fill-in” harmonies and quick unprepared transition from unison to harmony.
- ✓ Interesting countermelodies
- ✓ Simple melody/more challenging rhythm OR simple rhythm/more challenging melody
- ✓ Musical consistency within the arrangement
- ✓ Divide trebles evenly
- ✓ Melody passes among parts

TENOR BASS VOICES

- ✓ Can include unchanged, changing and changed voices
- ✓ Requires careful monitoring
- ✓ Nurture head & falsetto voice
- ✓ Develop capacity to sing in parts
- ✓ Even more important to scrutinize the vocal lines: more limited range, avoid leaps except “typical” baritone lines, less melismatic, unison singing (almost impossible)

MIXED VOICES

- ✓ Continue to develop head voice in treble and unchanged voices
- ✓ Nurture head & falsetto voice through daily practice
- ✓ Develop the ability to consistently sing in parts
- ✓ Determine the most appropriate voicing for your choir:
3-Part Mixed - “compromise range”
SAB – wide baritone range
SATB – often works with careful selection of music
- ✓ Other considerations:
Well-crafted
Appropriate ranges
Smooth voice leading
Interesting vocal lines

Prominent melody/distinctive vocal part for tenor bass
Treble parts could have more complexity, occasional divisi/descant
Certain level of sophistication of intellectual challenge:
Poetic texts
Languages other than English
Diverse cultures
Folk songs
Romantic love, if in 3rd person or general in content
Pop music often more successful if Broadway-type selection, such as “Seasons of Love” or
“This Is Me.”
Should have musical depth and require **some effort** to learn

ALSO...

- ✓ Avoid music that is unnecessarily difficult to merit the amount of rehearsal time needed to learn it.
- ✓ Middle school choirs, even good ones, will never sound like a high school choir.
- ✓ Music that moves beyond the preferred tessitura, difficulty level or texture, will be prone to flaws in intonation, tone quality and style.
- ✓ Directors are encouraged to take a strongly structured approach to the rehearsal plan.
- ✓ Be prepared to fact multiple distractions.
- ✓ Keep a good sense of humor.
- ✓ DON'T GET TIRED!

SINNER MAN – arr. Roger Emerson
3-Part Mixed/Hal Leonard 40319010

SEND DOWN THE RAIN – Joyce Eilers
3-Part Mixed/Hal Leonard 40219030

SHOSHONE LOVE SONG (The Heart's Friend) – Roger Emerson
3-Part Mixed/Hal Leonard 40326199

BOATMEN STOMP – Michael A. Gray/arr. Emily Crocker
SATB/G. Schirmer 50498759

SHADY GROVE – arr. Robert Hugh
SAB/Hal Leonard 00117664

THE DREAM KEEPER – Rollo Dilworth
SATB/Hal Leonard 8749868

GLORIA FESTIVA – Emily Crocker
3-Part Mixed/Hal Leonard 8551015

CAN YOU HEAR – Jim Papoulis
SAB/Boosey & Hawkes 48005164

MOCKINGBIRD – arr. Roger Emerson

3-Part Mixed/Hal Leonard 00211517

WHY WE SING – Greg Gilpin

SATB/Shawnee Press 35025875

ADAPTING MUSIC

Transpose
Double parts
Pencil in alternate pitches
Pivot between parts
Eliminate parts
Make cuts
Write alternate harmonies

WRITING MUSIC

Original words and music – avoid making it too personal
Public domain music – be sure, find multiple sources
Copyrighted music – check rights and obtain permission first
Take in all considerations for selecting music (see previous)
Make your setting interesting, but not too weird or quirky.
Write an interesting accompaniment.
Sing all parts yourself to see if they are interesting and have good voice leading.
Try it out with friends and get feedback.
Try it out with your choir and get feedback.
Don't be afraid to revise, or put it in the drawer and forget it.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

What will a traditional publisher do for you?
Study catalogs of traditional publishers and identify those that align with your composing focus.
Try to make a connection with a series editor or publisher's representative.
Be prepared to wait.
Be flexible and open to editor's suggestions.
Be collegial.
Be willing to promote your works and others in the publisher's catalog.
What happens when my piece goes out of print?

SELF PUBLISHING

NOTEFLIGHT

<https://www.noteflight.com/marketplace-selling-and-purchasing>

SMP PRESS including Arrange Me

<https://smppress.sheetmusicplus.com/>

JW PEPPER MY SCORE

https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/my_score/ms-index.jsp

MUSICSPOKE

<https://musicspoke.com>