

Confident Music Selection: A Focus on the Forgotten Layers (April 9, 2022) A Few Ideas and Resources

Repertoire selection should include asking good questions, such as:

- How does this song meet my singers' musical needs?
- How does this song meet the needs of the program?
- How does this song fit in to the season and long-term programming/curriculum?
- Why are we singing *this* piece (e.g., why X arrangement and not Y arrangement)?
- What assets (knowledge, perspective, skill sets) am I bringing to the table to teach this piece?
- What is missing that I will need to research in order to do justice to the music, the culture from which it came, and the educational needs of my singers and the audience?

What should I look for?

- Song history, including provenance
- Performance practice guidance – where to perform, how to set up the performance, what vocal style to use, what accompaniment to use
- Text pronunciations and translations

Where can I go for additional information (i.e., beyond Wikipedia)?

- ACDA's *Choral Journal* – search the index here: <https://acda.org/publications/choral-journal>
- *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*, published by earthsongs
 - Vol. I: Sacred Latin Texts
 - Vol. II: German Texts
 - Vol. III: French & Italian Texts
 - Vol. IV: Hebrew Texts (includes a CD)
- Composers, lyricists – many living artists have web sites and are responsive to inquiries
- Publishers – some publishers are more reliably invested in providing information about the music they publish (e.g., earthsongs, Boosey & Hawkes)
- Recordings & videos, including YouTube
- University libraries – ask a librarian if you don't know where to start or need a refresher on using search tools/indices
- Culture-bearers:
 - Embassies and cultural institutions
 - Performers/performing groups associated with specific repertoire (e.g., Heritage Signature Chorale for African-American spirituals)

Why go to all this trouble?

- You are more deeply investing your singers and your audience in the music.
- You are demonstrating vulnerability and lifelong learning to your singers/students.
- You are doing the right thing, and the right thing is rarely the easiest thing.

Repertoire I will be referencing today

- “La Paloma Se Fue,” arr. by Alejandro Jimenez (earthsongs, 1988)
 - Example of publisher information
- “Make Them Hear You,” from *Ragtime*, by Stephen Flaherty & Lynn Ahrens (WB Music Corp., 1996)
 - Example of language issue
- “A Navaho Prayer,” by Cary John Franklin (Boosey & Hawkes, 2005)
 - Example of publisher information
- “Ndikhokhele Bawo,” arr. by Michael Ryan (Heritage Music Press, 2019)
 - Example of publisher information
- “No Mirrors in My Nana’s House,” from *Crossings*, by Ysaye M. Barnwell (Barnwell’s Notes Publishing, 1991)
 - Example of a piece that uplifts a person/group of people, notably a person/group of people that the example group is not connected to / a part of
- “Praise the Lord,” collected by Elaine Hanson, arr. by Ralph Johnson (earthsongs, 1994)
 - Example of publisher information
- “Reflection,” from *Mulan*, arr. by Mac Huff (Walt Disney Music Co., 1998)
 - Example of language issue
- “Wankantanhan Hotan’Inpe,” by Linthicum-Blackhorse (Hal Leonard, 2019)
 - Example of composer information (www.linthicumblackhorse.com)
- “Yedid Nefesh,” by Andrew Bleckner (Boosey & Hawkes, 2007)
 - Example of publisher information

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