

Repertoire, Repertoire, Repertoire!

Repertoire: Isn't that always that word that comes to mind when summer begins? We finally finish our busy year and immediately we begin the search for the upcoming year's repertoire. Where do you begin? When I ask music education students for feedback at Southeastern they always say they wish there was a class on how to choose repertoire. Is there one way to choose repertoire? What is your system? Of course everyone has their own method and they are ALL the right method!

Here is my method:

It truly is a bit like the dating process: an initial meeting followed by more frequent dates and then all of a sudden you find yourself in a long term relationship.

Step 1: The First Date

Where to look:

Personal File. I order single copies of music as I hear new pieces or read about them in the choral journal. Each summer I go through my single copy file and pull out old and new favorites: Make a stack!

Listen. I look up names of my favorite ensembles and start listening to clips of their cds on itunes and youtube. If there is something I love, I order it.

For Example: Bella Voce, Elektra Women's Chorale, Vox Femina Los Angeles, Vox Caelestis San Francisco Girls Choir, Peninsula Women's Choir, There are SO many more!

Look. Visit all the websites with resources for repertoire: ACDA, Choralnet, MENC, All State Repertoire Lists. Listen. Order.

inquire. I call friends and colleagues to ask about their top 10 new and old favorites for various choir voicings, listen to them, and order as needed.

Once I gather all of this music together, we go on our first date. I play and sing through each piece. If I don't LOVE it, the piece is tossed out of the pile and back into the file cabinet.

Step 2: The Courtship

Every few days I return to my stack of music and I learn a bit more about each piece. I try to narrow down the repertoire. Which pieces do I love the most and what do I love about them? Is there a pattern, can I make a theme out of certain selections?

Step 3: Monogamy!

After a month or more of dating with the repertoire, I have usually narrowed down the selections. If I can't love each of the pieces for over a month, I definitely won't love them for 6-8 weeks or an ENTIRE semester.

Of course once in a while I do end up in a semester and find a piece I can't love for the long term. In that case, the relationship needs to be ended. It could be for a number of reasons such as the voicing not working for your group, a particularly difficult part that is just giving you a constant headache, or perhaps it is too easy or difficult for your ensemble. Don't be afraid to just end the relationship and look for something new.

With that being said, here are 10 classic and favorite pieces for women's choir. I believe you can build an entire program around any of these pieces.

Johannes Brahms *Vier Gesänge*, SSA, harp and 2 horns, 15'

Benjamin Britten *Missa Brevis*, SSA with organ, Boosey and Hawkes, 11'

Claude Debussy *Salut Printemps*, SA with piano, 5'

Edward Elgar *The Snow* 6'

Ola Gjeilo *Tundra*, SSAA with string quartet or piano, 4'

Srul Irving Glick *Psalm Trilogy*, SA with piano or strings, 11'30"

Gustav Holst *Hymns from the Rig Veda*, SSA and harp or piano, 14'

Felix Mendelssohn *Veni Domine*, SSA with organ, 3'45"

Giovanni Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*, SA with strings or piano, 38'

Gwyneth Walker *Songs for Women's Voices* #4 "Love Is a Rain of Diamonds" 2'45" and #6 "I Will Be Earth" 3'

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