

SELECTING HIGH QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE CHORAL LITERATURE FOR A  
CHORAL ENSEMBLE

by

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## **Abstract**

This report is for the beginning choral music educator or music education student who seeks guidance when selecting repertoire for their advanced elementary or beginning middle school choir. I attended the 2011 Kansas Choral Directors Association conference. Conferences such as these are great resources for the novice choral educator and even the veteran teacher. Choral reading sessions are excellent ways to find new and quality repertoire, because the directors that select the music spend a good amount of time researching and selecting songs. In determining what factors directors use to choose repertoire for their choirs, a survey was developed and administered to forty Kansas music educators at one of the reading sessions which asked the following three questions: 1) What is the likelihood that you would use this song in a concert or program? The next two are questions in which I asked (these two were based on a 'disagree or agree' scale): 'This song has good educational value for the students' and 'I can teach many elements of music within this song.' Evidence is shown from other master educators of various levels that choosing appropriate, worthy, and challenging repertoire is crucial to the success of the choral program.

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## Introduction

In one's profession, the learning does not cease. In music education, there is always that extra step one can take in order to build knowledge and gain experience. In July of 2011, I attended the Kansas Choral Directors Association (KCDA) conference in Topeka, Kansas, which was a three-day event. I gained an immense amount of knowledge, strategies, and activities that will aid me in becoming a more effective music educator. Charles Heffernan, Professor Emeritus at University of Massachusetts – Amherst suggests that one should, “At least once a year attend a workshop, reading session, or choral music conference” (1982).

One of the main features of the KCDA conference is the variety of choral reading sessions presented. Expert music educators are asked to compile packets of music that represent various styles of choral repertoire, often songs that are new in publication. There were nine reading sessions in all including: collegiate choral music, high school, middle school (later years), beginning middle school, elementary, treble voices, sacred text, and women's chorus. Attendees of the conference receive a packet of music that is theirs to keep. The reading sessions serve as one of many ways to learn new songs and to get ideas for choosing repertoire for future concerts.

Just as it is crucial for a construction team to use appropriate, effective, and high quality materials for building a good and solid house, it is crucial for any choral music educator to do the same when selecting choral repertoire. There are several things that contribute to the success of one's choral program but the literature the director chooses impacts many. As you begin to select music for your chorus, be sure to ask, “Is this music worth learning?” Also ask, [whether or not it has] intrinsic value that will provide students with a worthwhile musical experience” (Swears, 1985). It is crucial that we select quality literature that challenges students to rewarding and attainable goals of performance (Baker, 2010). Baker suggests, “Realistic goals should be congruent with repertoire so that an artistic performance may be executed with success” (2010).

The selection of repertoire is the single most important task that music educators face before entering the classroom or rehearsal room (Apfelstadt, 2000). When choral directors design their programs or concerts, the music selected cannot be lifeless for it would not do the

choral program any justice. Hillary Apfelstadt (2000) goes on to say that lofty goals are not met through second-rate repertoire and that students are not challenged by vapid musical selections. While the audience may enjoy being entertained on occasion, we know that they and our students deserve more than mere entertainment. Given curricular goals and standards, we as teachers must select the means through which those goals are met. Even when the selection process is narrowed down – as in general music, where we may have a textbook series provided by the school district, where the state contest list can determine at least some of our choices – it is ultimately our responsibility to select music through which we teach musical elements, help students develop understandings or concepts, and enable them to grow in sensitivity (Apfelstadt, 2000).

To the success of any program, it is vital when crafting the program for the entire school year that a healthy balance between entertainment and education be kept in mind. The educational implications of the music selected must be considered as well (Hylton, 1995). Billy Baker, assistant professor of music education at New Jersey City University, discusses the benefits in balancing entertainment and education. We should carefully consider the task of balancing various musical and non-musical elements during the repertoire search/selection process (Baker, 2010). Maintaining educational and entertainment balance in our repertoire choices is an important responsibility of choir directors (2010). Baker says, “Students’ musical tastes can be an integral component of the repertoire selection process. Selecting music to satisfy student preferences may result in weekly entertainment desires being met, but it may also undermine the broader and more comprehensive choral program” (2010). If we continue to justify our programs solely on the basis of entertainment value or on the ratings we receive . . . , we will surely always be viewed as extra-curricular (Demorest & Taylor, 1990). Baker suggests, “If we take advantage of the opportunity to help our students understand the craft of composition through quality literature, we may be able to convince them there is much more to our art than merely its entertainment value.”

On the other hand, we should be careful not to discard the benefits of providing an entertaining experience for our students and audience members alike. A program that is strictly based upon choral “masterworks” may appeal to a select few in the field of academe, but the reality is that a majority of our students and audience members would like to have more variety in a performance (Baker, 2010). Baker concludes by saying, “Regardless of how we may prefer

one aspect to another, it is crucial that we balance education with entertainment in selecting repertoire for our choirs. There is nothing wrong with a spring pops concert that features popular music, if during the remainder of the year the choirs have worked on a balance of musical styles from the major historical eras (Phillips, 2004). Although Baker tailors his thoughts to that of a high school choral educator, an elementary or middle school educator can benefit from these suggestions.

Kenneth Phillips (2004) asks, “Why should a choral director choose music to perform that also had a solid base of knowledge?” He answers with, “It may be the best way to guarantee music’s place in the curriculum” (2004). Phillips suggests that when a choral teacher can say that grades in choir represent academic achievement, it places music on par with other academic subjects (2004). It is very clear that the aforementioned educators feel strongly that selecting appropriate, high quality, and challenging repertoire is crucial to the success of one’s choral program. Phillips (2004) says, “The music chosen for students must be matched to their singing skill – programming that is beyond their technique will lead to damaged voices and frustration.” He continues by expressing that the music needs to present some technical challenge for musical growth (2004). Find music that both challenges the students musically and is interesting to teach (Abrahams, 2005). Furthermore, Heffernan also comments, “literature that is too easy or too difficult creates an atmosphere in which little growth takes place – If the music is too easy, even if the choir reads it fluently, the ensemble will feel unchallenged and bored” (1982). All music chosen for study should have educational benefit, increase knowledge, skills, or both – In addition the music should be of lasting value – of excellent quality no matter what genre or style (Phillips, 2004). Choosing appropriate music for a school choir can be a daunting task (Poliniak, 2009). Susan Poliniak states, “So much needs to be taken into account – the dictates of the curriculum, your pedagogical goals, the cultural and religious context of your students and the community. Juggling all of these needs and influences is crucial to creating a successful, lively performance program, not to mention a worthwhile, enjoyable, and educationally rewarding choir experience for your students” (2009). One must focus on what they wish to teach, and think about how the music that is selected will aid the director in reaching those goals and having a successful choral program. Choosing to sing literature written specifically for adolescents is the most important decision choral directors make when working with singers of this age

(Collins, 1999). Collins states, "...I sincerely believe that choice of literature is the secret to success in teaching choral music ..." (1999).

I wanted to come up with a way in which to gather the opinions of choral educators, so I designed a survey (I will discuss this further in chapter 3) to administer at the KCDA conference in Topeka, Kansas. In addition to the three questions on the survey previously mentioned, I asked what grade level for which they taught and for their years of experience in teaching. The majority of the educators attending the convention have fifteen or more years of experience in the choral education scene. "I always tell my students they can rely on the wisdom of their elders on lists of repertoire that they amass as students ..." (Apfelstadt, 2008). It was this advice that guided me to create a survey where I could gather the opinions of veteran educators based a choral reading session. Reading sessions at organizational conferences are another place to find new literature. Such sessions often include recommendations of 'old chestnuts' by the clinicians and recommendations of newer works that have been used and found worthy for performance (Phillips, 2004). The following are two questions in which I asked (these two were based on a 'disagree or agree' scale): 'This song has good educational value for the students' and 'I can teach many elements of music within this song.' These questions enabled me to gain insight into what music educators deemed worthy of using in their programs. While it may be an overstatement to say that repertoire is the curriculum [for choral ensembles] we can all agree that a well-planned repertoire creates the framework for an excellent music curriculum that fosters the musical growth of our students (Reynolds, 2000).

Twenty-seven out of the forty educators who were surveyed were middle school choral directors. Four of the surveyed educators only taught at the elementary level and nine taught both elementary and middle school students. Six of them had one to five years of experience, five had at least six to ten years of experience, only two educators had been teaching between eleven and fifteen years, and twenty-seven had been in the profession for more than fifteen years. It is interesting that the majority of the teachers in the reading session were veteran educators; it makes me wonder why more beginning educators are not a part of such a well-established organization. Results from this survey of experienced educators will allow beginning educators to have an idea and a basis to what educational, meaningful, and high quality literature looks like. They could then research other songs by arrangers or composers of works that received high scores. The opinions of the music educators who participated in the survey differed due to



several different factors. Swears suggests that, “While it is true that every chorus will differ in ability and that careful selection of music should be based on the particular needs of your group, you will discover certain pieces that always seem worth teaching” (1985). It is our responsibility to consider musical content, age-appropriateness, edition accuracy, accompaniment/instrumental forces, and acoustical environment when selecting and purchasing music for our choirs (Baker, 2010). Each music educator who partook of the survey had these factors and more to consider regarding his own teaching situation. After compiling the results from the survey, all but seven of the forty participants agreed or strongly agreed that each song in the reading session had good educational value to the student and that they could teach many elements of music. Since the development of the National Music Standards for Music Education in 1994 (developed by MENC, which today is known as the National Association for Music Education), music educators have had a clear-cut set of standards, and these standards should be accounted for in the selection of repertoire. If the standards give us a conceptual framework, the repertoire we select is the means to teach those concepts (Apfelstadt, 2000).

It seems that in general there is a connection between the music educator’s opinions of the repertoire and the importance in general of selecting appropriate, worthy, and challenging repertoire in order to ensure a successful choral music program. If they [beginning music educators] understand the principles of music selection (finding repertoire of good quality, that is expressive and well-crafted; worthy of teaching; and suitable for the ensemble), they have only to take the time to find the right song (Apfelstadt, 2008).

## Choosing Choral Music

Choosing choral repertoire can be an arduous task and can be time consuming for the conductor. The selection of the music to be rehearsed and performed by a choral ensemble profoundly influences the quality of the music education experiences provided to the signers (Hylton, 1995). When introducing a new song to your students, it is important that they take an interest in and be appreciative of the music. What is taught in choir must appeal to students for the choir program to succeed (Demorest, 2001). The choral music educator who knows how to select repertoire that is appropriate for an ensemble has set the stage for successful rehearsals and performances (Hylton, 1995). One must consider several factors when creating programs and concerts. The music that is selected depends on the size, age, and ability of the choir. Billy Baker (2010) says, “The emotional maturity and musical competence of each ensemble should be considered in selecting age-appropriate and aesthetically rewarding literature.” We should also have a vested interest in whatever music we teach in order to convince our students it is acceptable for their performance and worthy of their efforts (Baker, 2010). The music selected must elicit an aesthetic response and must be challenging, inspiring, and stimulating for both the director and the choir. Hillary Apfelstadt states, “Over the years, I have come to rely on three principle criteria for choosing repertoire: Select music of good quality, select music that is teachable and select music that is appropriate to the context” (Apfelstadt, 2000). In selecting repertoire, one might also consider the aesthetic elements of music, is the melody pleasing and enjoyable to the director? Well-written music finds the balance of tension and release, structural symmetry and asymmetry, and anticipation and surprise that makes listening and performing it a worth-while experience (Apfelstadt, 2000). The composer should have good knowledge of the voice and should be able to write comfortably for the singer. The range and tessitura need to be appropriately written for the singer’s development. Directors must know the “comfort zone” (tessitura) for the age level with which they are working and depart from it only when the music is not too demanding or taxing on the voice (Phillips, 2004). With very few exceptions, the text of any choral piece is the most important aspect of it. The text usually provided the aesthetic inspiration for the composer and should be studied carefully (Hylton, 1995). The text in the repertoire that is selected should have some sort of meaning for the choir and the listener, that way it is more enjoyable for all. An excellent text makes students consider things and open up worlds they would not have known otherwise (Poliniak, 2009). A fascinating aspect of the

relationship between language and music is the pivotal role of rhetoric, the study of the principles of oratory and the use of language to influence audiences' thoughts and emotions (Hines, 2001). Additionally, Brinson comments, "because text plays such an important part in the choral art, you must look carefully at the words of a composition as well as the composer's setting of them as you select repertoire" (1996). Expressivity is important as well, in that it should be written in a way that will challenge the singers to truly 'make music' when they sing the song. Hilary Apfelstadt says, "Expressivity means that the music expresses in its form and content something of depth, something that draws human beings to its artistic qualities (2000). When it comes to the element of harmony, there needs to be good voice leading and there is a need for it to be vocally inspiring. "Good voice leading is a matter of common sense with a view toward making a single vocal line as singable as possible" (Ostrander & Wilson, 1986). Voice leading refers to the horizontal organization of each vocal line as it moves from one pitch to the next (Hylton, 1995). Hylton goes on to suggest that a 'singable' yet interesting vocal line is a thing of beauty, and to find several of them successfully combined in a choral piece is a good indication the music is worthwhile (1995). The accompaniment of a song needs to be taken in to consideration as well. It should help support the voices without being intruding or distracting. Kenneth Phillips (2004) provides a checklist of guidelines from *The Choral Conductor's Handbook* by Ehret with the final question being, 'does the accompaniment enhance rather than detract?' The accompaniment also needs to be interesting and written appropriately for your accompanist. Sometimes the repertoire selected may be the only thing motivating the students. So, it is important to select music that is significant and music that piques their interest and perhaps songs that are connected to some historical context or other academic subjects. An important aspect that a director might consider is that he wants to create a memorable and enjoyable experience in choir. Most choral educators all have similar opinions and thoughts when it comes to choosing repertoire – they all take consideration in the same factors. I am convinced though, that choosing repertoire that is appropriate and worthy contributes to the success of one's choral program. Collins (1999) suggests the following for choosing repertoire: difficulty level, sociological and cultural appeal, educational value, and aesthetic value. Collins said, "...choice of literature may be the most significant contributor to the finished product of any choral organization" (1999).

In my teaching situation, I direct a fourth and fifth grade choir that is comprised of students who volunteer to be a part of it. It is volunteer-based as to welcome anyone who is interested in singing and learning more about the choral experience. Each year that I teach, I try to add more performance opportunities throughout the year so that they can get the maximum experience. Most of the songs that I have programmed came from choral reading sessions at music conventions. Angela Broeker offers the following criteria specifically for a children's choir: Songs should have text of the highest quality and use languages that are accessible to young singers. Both the unison pieces and the duets should employ vocal ranges that are conducive to head-voice singing. The songs should employ repeated motives, phrases, or large sections, thereby aiding learning and memorization. The accompaniment textures should give gentle support to the vocal lines without overpowering them. Repertoire selected should provide students opportunities for learning musical skills and concepts as well as historical and social contexts (2009). Furthermore, Broeker says, "We search for individual octavos that are aesthetically and pedagogically appropriate for our groups while striving to find lesser-known pieces that bring a sense of fresh and unique programming to our singers and audiences (2009). The aforementioned guidelines and criteria for selecting repertoire will contribute to the success of any choral music program. One needs to use these to their advantage, but to keep in mind that no choral programs are alike.

## The Project

Before attending the KCDA conference, I prepared a survey for the attendees of the beginning middle school choral reading session. I wanted to delve into the minds other music educators and get an insight to their opinions of the music. Permission was granted by the president of the Kansas Choral Directors Association to administer the survey at the reading session. Arrangements were made with the session presenter to distribute the survey to the attendees. There were forty people who took the survey that asked three specific questions for each song that was in the reading session. The first one was what is the likelihood that you would use this song in a concert? The second and third questions used a different type of scale – it asked whether or not they agreed or disagreed or remained undecided on if they thought the song had educational value and if there were several music content standards that could be addressed with the song. By asking these specific questions I intended to gather enough sufficient data to which I could have a basis of choosing worthy and appropriate literature. First and foremost, students need to be better singers and more intelligent musicians as a result of working on the repertoire chosen for their music education (Brinson, 1996). Twenty-seven directed middle school choirs, four were elementary general music educators, and nine directed both elementary and middle school choirs. Most of the educators there were willing to take the survey, however some of them left some of the questions blank due to the fact that they were not in the room when a particular song was presented.

There were eleven songs in the reading session, including a mix of Soprano/Alto, Soprano/Alto/Tenor/optional Bass, Tenor/Bass, Soprano/Soprano/Alto, Soprano/Alto/Tenor/Bass, two part Treble, and unison. Some of the teacher's answers may differ quite a bit from others, for several reasons, one being the amount of students enrolled in a choir class, another being a lack of a certain voice part, and another being student interest. There were six songs out of eleven that received twenty or more votes for either likely or highly likely to use the song on a concert or program. Those songs were, Shenandoah arranged by Laura Farnell (23 votes), "Cricket" by Neil Ginsberg (20 votes), "Hey! Ho! Fiddle-Eye-O!" arranged by Earlene Rentz (24 votes), "Standin' on the Corner" arranged by Roger Emerson (23 votes), "Gloria" by Mark Patterson (25 votes), and "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" arranged by Greg Gilpin (20 votes). The tables below will show the entire results of the survey taken by Kansas Music Educators.

## My Selections

Out of the eleven songs, I selected four that are of high quality that will be programmed for my choir of fourth and fifth grade students. Three of them were among the top selections of the other educators: “Music, Like a Radiant Light” by Mark Patterson, “Hey! Ho! Fiddle-Eye-O!” arranged by Rentz, “Cricket” by Ginsberg, and “Shenandoah” arranged by Farnell. These four pieces are all very unique and can stand on their own. They could all be part of one concert or if you were to do themed concerts, “Hey! Ho! Fiddle-Eye-O!” would be great for humorous folk songs, “Cricket” would be an excellent choice for concert on bugs or nature, “Shenandoah” could be used for songs of water, or perhaps an evening of Folk songs, and finally “Music, Like a Radiant Light” would be a great selection if doing a concert on the power of music. Each of these pieces is at a moderate difficulty level. The number of students in the program at State Street Elementary fluctuates year to year with some students never having had previous choral experience. On some of the songs, there is a third part, so depending on the progress in rehearsals; some editing may need to be done.

I feel that each one offers a challenge for the students, but it will take 100% of their effort to successfully perform the piece. “Music, Like a Radiant Light” was composed by Mark Patterson. Mr. Patterson has over 100 choral works in print and teaches middle school choir in Texas. The opening lyrics of the song grab your attention with a clever rhyme scheme.

“Music, like a radiant light, streams through the silence of the night;  
ringing forth with splendor bright; singing, shining, bringing joy to life.”

In this first section of the song it is music being compared to a glowing and magnificent guide that conveys happiness to your life. I was drawn to the positive subject matter that presented opportunities for discussion and study. The song is set in the key of Eb major, and it is in 6/8 time. The accompaniment is very beautifully written and fits quite well with the vocal line. This particular song is unison, with an optional second part towards the end of the song. Mr. Patterson knows the voice quite well for this age, and sets a very appropriate range, only going from middle C up to an Eb (octave plus a minor third). The accompaniment’s use of tone cluster chords paints a ‘dreamy’ canvas. The beginning harmonic structure simply goes from Eb to Ab

6/9 then back to Eb to Ab add9. The form of the song seems to follow a basic A B A form. The melody is driven by mostly moving eighth notes.

It is recommended to address the content standards that go along with any song to your students and to list them in the program at a concert so that parents are aware of the goals and objectives we as teachers plan for our students. In ‘Music, Like a Radiant Light,’ Standard one: Singing alone and with others a varied repertoire of music, standard five: Reading and notating music, and standard six: Listening, describing, and analyzing music, could all be used in the teaching and rehearsing of this song. For teaching them to sing in 6/8 meter, I might invite them to sing a song such as “Charlie Over the Ocean” and have them observe the similarities of the two songs’ meter.

The next song is an American Folk Song arranged by Earlene Rentz, called “Hey! Ho! Fiddle-Eye-O! (The Old Man in the Wood)” Dr. Rentz was born in 1956 in Georgia where she taught elementary, middle school, and high school music. She has also taught music education courses at many prestigious universities including California State University, Long Beach, The University of Texas at Austin, and Baylor University. She has over 300 sacred and secular choral pieces in print, and she also conducts and serves as a clinician for several regional and state honor choirs. This is a three-part song with the first soprano’s range of Bb below middle C up to F, the second soprano’s range is Bb below middle C up to E, and the alto’s range is just an octave from Bb below middle C up to Bb. It is an American Folk Song that tells the story of a man and his wife arguing about who was a more efficient worker. They agree that if the wife can get more work done, then the husband will have to do the wife’s work. The song is set in Eb Major, and it is also in 6/8 meter and only changes meters once to 3/8 in measure 80. It begins with a simple four measure introduction, and the opening line is,

There was an old man who lived in the wood, as you shall plainly see,  
who said he could do more work in a day than his wife could do in three.  
Well, you shall see! The old woman said, but then you must allow, that  
you will do my work for a day, while I go follow the plow.

The accompaniment mostly outlines Eb Major, Ab major, and Bb major chords, with occasional passing tones. The form of the song is basically set in verse – refrain. Later in the song, it

modulates to the key of F Major in measure 58 to 59. There is a coda at the end of the piece that uses a hint of imitation, where each voice builds on the next with the title of the song – this leads up to a playful and ending. There are several elements of music and concepts that can be taught in this song such as the repeat sign, dynamics, and adjusting to a key change. Just like the first song, standards to be addressed are one, five, and six. When addressing standard six, one might consider listening to a live recording of the song, or perhaps record your own choir performing, and then have them describe what they hear by responding with a movement, self-reflecting in a journal, or discussing it in groups.

The third selection is “Shenandoah” arranged by Laura Farnell. It is a two-part American Folk Song for treble voices. It is in 4/4 meter and it is set in the key of D Major. This song contains many elements of music that are conducive to students; it is great for teaching solfege and sight-singing, phrase length, and it has an intriguing history. When sight-singing is presented as an important and attainable skill that is central to choral musicianship, it becomes an exciting and challenging part of the rehearsal (Demorest, 2001). Laura Farnell provides information about the meaning of “Shenandoah.” It is a Native American word that means “daughter of the stars.” The meaning of the text in other arrangements has been interpreted in ways such as a sailor longing for the Shenandoah River and Valley and in a way where a Missouri river trader falls in love with the daughter of Native American Chief Shenandoah and courts her for seven years. According to Mrs. Farnell’s program notes, no one is exactly sure when the song was written. Audiences may appreciate the use of this recognizable and familiar folk melody. The texture of the song is very interesting, and captures your attention. It begins with both parts singing in unison, and then in measure 19, there is some animated homophony, and then even elements of imitation between the two voices in measures 26 to 28. At measure 34 to 40, there is figuration in part one (soprano) while part two (altos) take the melody. Figuration is a non-continuous, fragmentary added line that provides rhythmic and melodic punctuation to the melody (Ostrander & Wilson p. 46). This arrangement includes a C instrument solo, such as an oboe, flute, or violin. The accompaniment is very right hand heavy, with the moving eighth notes driving the harmonic rhythm representing the flow of the river. Measures 25 and 40 might cause some rehearsal issues, because the harmonic structure slows down and the voices layer over each other. While it provides for uniqueness in the tonality,



fourth and fifth grade singers will need extra help getting those transitions. Farnell's arrangement has some very rich harmonies and a variety of texture throughout the piece.

The final song selected is called "Cricket", and it is number three in a song set called, Three Bug Songs. The text is a poem by Mary Ann Hoberman; and was set to music by Neil Ginsberg.

A cricket's ear is in its leg, a cricket's chirp is in its wing.

A cricket's wing can sing a song.

A cricket's leg can hear it sing.

Imagine if your leg could hear.

Imagine if your ear could walk.

Imagine if your mouth could swing.

Imagine if your arm could talk.

Would everything feel upside down and inside out and wrongside through?

Imagine how the world would seem if you became a cricket, too.

The song is in 4/4 meter and in the key of G Major. The accompaniment is very witty and fun and truly portrays a crickets chirping, jumping, and swinging. The piece is written for soprano and alto, very appropriate for elementary choir because each part takes a turn singing. In measures 21 to 25, the altos have some moments of figuration, and at measures 32 to 39, there are some moments of syncopation, and at the end of the piece the texture is note-against-note in measure 41 moving in parallel thirds.

## Conclusion

“There seems to be a notion, a myth actually, among the general public, that teachers work nine-month jobs and that our summers are ‘free’ or ‘off.’ We know that is not the case: either we are in school working on continuing education credits or graduate degrees, or taking workshops to improve our skills” (Apfelstadt, 2008). It takes an ample amount of time and preparation in selecting repertoire and to program a concert. It is a great challenge and principal responsibility for any conductor to create interesting and educational programs for choir and audience (Albinder, 2009). As music educators, our primary purpose is to help individual students receive a music education through experiences and information – In order to achieve this lofty goal, we must strive to select the finest repertoire, for only through immersion in music of lasting quality can we engage in aesthetic experiences of breadth and depth (Reynolds, 2000). It should be appealing to the singers to bring out the natural beauty of the voice (Leck, 2009). Having conducted the survey among choral educators in Kansas, I developed a more comprehensive outlook of what worthy and high quality repertoire is. I had the opportunity to informally interview one choral director. The question asked was, what do you believe to be the key to a successful choral program? She replied, “I believe a successful choral program begins with a teacher who chooses meaningful music, knows as much as possible about that music and is able to make the students feel his or her love and enthusiasm for the music so together they can bring it to life.” Based on the opinions of experienced educators, one can have a foundation on which to build a choral library. Choral directors know their students best, or at least they should – they should know the ability, ranges of singers, and the overall character of each student. Knowing these, the director will have a considerable advantage when selecting repertoire. Colwell and Wing say, “Students come to school with differences stemming from heredity, pre-school experiences, parental interest and encouragement, prior formal instruction, and a host of learning factors that are only partially understood; and, you, the teacher must consider these in finding appropriate musical tasks and assessments for all students” (2004). Choral repertoire essentially becomes the curriculum for an ensemble, however we as music educators must find teachable moments within the music and text so that the choir is not just singing words on a page, but rather they are truly singing from their hearts, creating an enjoyable musical moment, and learning to appreciate the art of singing.

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## Appendix A - Findings

### Survey Results for ‘What Child Is This?’

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	7	6	6	12	7
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	1	5	24	8
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	4	24	10

## Survey Results for ‘Cantate Hodie’

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	4	9	11	9	2
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	3	7	22	3
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	5	20	7

## Survey Results for 'Gloria'

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	5	6	3	16	9
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	1	4	27	7
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	1	5	25	8

## Survey Results for ‘Cricket’

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	1	6	11	14	6
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	9	22	7
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	5	28	5



## Survey Results for ‘Shenandoah’

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	1	4	11	17	6
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	5	24	10
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	3	24	12

### Survey Results for ‘Music, Like a Radiant Light’

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	5	11	13	9	1
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	3	10	25	1
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	3	6	26	3

### Survey Results for 'Every Time I Feel the Spirit'

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	6	4	10	15	5
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	3	1	10	22	4
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	3	1	5	27	4

### Survey Results for 'Standin' on the Corner'

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	3	10	3	12	11
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	0	11	25	2
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	0	12	20	6

### Survey Results for 'Things that Never Die'

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	3	7	11	11	8
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	9	19	12
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	9	19	12

### Survey Results for 'Hey! Ho! Fiddle-Eye-O!'

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	2	6	7	18	6
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	1	9	25	4
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0	0	8	26	5

### Survey Results for 'Courage'

Question	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly Likely
<b>What is the likelihood you would use this song in a concert or program?</b>	6	11	5	11	5
<b>This song has good educational value for the student.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	1	8	23	5
<b>I can teach many elements of music within this song.</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	1	7	25	4