In the Director's Shoes

Shenandoah Conservatory Choir

Spring 2020 virtual project

This project will ask you to consider the choral arts from the perspective of programming, preparation and execution. The longer we are unable to meet in person, the more involved the project will become. For now, we will focus on aspects of programming.

You will be divided into 6 teams with 5 members each. Team assignments will be made just prior to tomorrow's meeting. Over the next three meeting periods, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Choose a theme for your program. This can be something specific, like "Music from the Royal College" (as our March program could have been called) or something more broad like "Music for springtime" or "Music for a time of isolation (!)" or "Music for loved ones far and near." You could also choose a religious theme like "Music for the Virgin Mary" or "Music for the life to come." Or you could choose secular themes like "Music from the tavern" or "Music and Passion."

2. Choose a hypothetical ensemble for your program. Choose among SSAA, TTBB, or SATB and small (16-30 singers) or large (30-80 singers)

3. Choose 5 pieces of music for your program. This should be the part of the project that takes the most time. You can organize yourselves as you wish. One suggestion is that each person finds 3-4 possible candidates and presents them to the group. Then, the group decides which 5 pieces make the most sense - thematically, musically, emotionally, etc.

4. Of the 5 pieces, at least one must be in a foreign language; at least one must come from an era other than the 20th or 21st centuries; at least one must be a piece that was previously unknown to all members of the group; at least one must be simple enough rhythmically (steady tempo, regular rhythms) that future virtual recording is possible. The same piece can apply to any of these categories.

5. The pieces can be for a cappella choir or for choir with piano accompaniment.

6. Each piece should be 3-5 minutes in length for a total of 15-20 minutes. A minute or two under or over is OK.

7. Once the pieces are chosen, choose a program order that considers an emotional arc, a variety of tempos and moods, and, if possible, key relationships.

8. Create a word document for your program listing the titles, composers, composers' dates, editor or arranger (if any), publisher information (if on a free site such as cpdl, just put "cpdl"), cost per copy (if any), link to a recording, and link to a score (if

available). Follow each listing with a short program note (3-4 sentences) that describes the piece, and/or talk a bit about the composer and/or how the piece fits into your theme.

9. Follow your program information with texts and translations for each piece. If in English, just provide the English. If in a foreign language, provide the foreign language and the translation.

Valuable resources:

[www.cpdl.org (Links to an external site.)](www.cpdl.org) - a vast collection of public domain choral music. Using the "multi-category sheet music search" will help narrow down your search. Most foreign language pieces include English translations. Many pieces include a brief note.
[www.imslp.org (Links to an external site.)](www.imslp.org) - another vast collection of public domain music in all genres. This may not be as useful as cpdl but is worth snooping around.
[www.jwpepper.com (Links to an external site.)](www.jwpepper.com) - one of the largest music distributors in the U.S. Most of the music on their site has perusal scores as well as audio and video recordings. This is a great place to look for contemporary scores.
[www.sheetmusicplus.com (Links to an external site.)](www.sheetmusicplus.com) - another large music distributor. This site also has perusal scores and recordings.
[www.choralnet.org (Links to an external site.)](www.choralnet.org) - has many blog entries for subjects like "choral music about stars," etc...

State, regional and national repertoire lists - entering "choral repertoire lists" will bring up numerous sites. These are mostly just "lists" without much information about the pieces, but you might find a set of pieces that interests you and leads you to further exploration.

A simple Google search - Just start typing "choral music about..." and it will self-populate numerous subjects.

A YouTube search - pick a choir that you like, Voces8, The Sixteen, Chanticleer, The Kings Singers, The Crossing, Conspirare, Australian Voices, Choral Chameleon, one of the European "radio" choirs, St. Olaf, Concordia, Westminster Choir College, etc... and just start listening to music. Or do the same with a composer that you like. I can't tell you how much repertoire I have discovered this way!

The assignment is due on Thursday 3/26 at 6pm.

The follow up to this assignment will be for each group to create a virtual performance of one of their pieces. The best way to do this is still being explored.

-Matt Oltman