



The GREAT CHORAL TREASURE HUNT XII

Slowly, Gently Raising the Bar for Better Choral Music (for Twelve Years!)

2014 Edition: *Be Bold!* Margaret Jenks and Randal Swiggum
Friday, October 31, 2014 • 10:00 am • Monona Terrace



I. HOW DO I KNOW IT'S GOOD?

- a. **Ayo visto lo mappamundi** (I have seen the world map). Song from Naples, 15th c.
This transcription came from the Waverly Consort recording. The whole album *1492* is amazing.
- b. **Handel: O Lord, Whose Mercies Numberless**: David's aria from *Saul* (1789)
- c. **Other art songs and arias to check out**: nearly every Treasure Hunt packet from the last 12 years has included some amazing solo pieces which work beautifully for choir (and they love them). A few we have used recently: *Gia' il sole dal Gange* and *Danza, danza, fanciulla gentile* from the 24 Italian Songs. Other Handel arias too! These pretty much all work great for unison choir, and kids feel very grown up singing them. Don't bother with flashy new multi-voiced arrangements of them—they're all weaker than the original unison version.

Any great work of art... revives and readapts time and space, and the measure of its success is the extent to which it makes you an inhabitant of that world - the extent to which it invites you in and lets you breathe its strange, special air.
Leonard Bernstein

II. EARLY MUSIC & IMAGINATION

- a. **Una sañosa porfia** (A furious conflict). Another Waverly Consort wonder, but this *romance* has been recorded by many early music groups. Hauntingly beautiful, and profound in its tragedy.
- b. **To check out**: other laments from Juan del Encina about the Fall of Grenada in 1492. Especially *Triste España* and *Levanta, Pascual*.

The Very Best Music Happens to Be Free!

1. cpdl.org (search by voicing!) 2. imslp.org (especially PD published pieces) 3. Wmea.com (Great Choral Treasure Hunts!)

III. WE ARE THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

- a. **Fog Elna Khel** Traditional Syrian/Iraqi Song, arr. Salim Bali; ©2009 earthsongs SATB

*There above, I have an intimate friend.
Is it his cheek that shone? Or is it the moon up above?
By God, I do not want him; his love troubles me.*

*By God, o water course, give my regards to them.
It's so hard being apart; I do long for my loved ones.
By God, I do not want him; his love troubles me.*

*Your cheek shone, my love, and lit over Baghdad.
God took his time creating you, and was indeed generous.
By God, I am taken by him; I don't know what to do with myself.*

In 1976, the Aleppo Armenian Apostolic Church choir commissioned Salim Bali to arrange a number of Arab pieces. At the time, Arab music arranged for choirs was uncommon. However, the Armenian diaspora choirs in Syria frequently perform arranged Arab songs in their repertoire, which are performed out of gratitude for the Arab countries which protected their people during the 1915 massacres. The melody of *Fog Elna Khel* is in the *hijaz* mode and has the following opening tetrachord: semitone, augmented second (m3), semitone. Although *Fog Elna Khel* belongs to the Iraqi folklore, it is probably more commonly performed in Syria than in Iraq. It is a fixture in the repertoire of traditional Syrian singers.

Syria and Iraq have common borders and historical connections that pre-date existing political boundaries. Although the Syrian population is predominately Sunni Muslim, as distinct from Iraq which has a Shia majority, there are significant Alawita, Shia, Christian, and Druze minorities in Syria. Damascus, Syria's capital and largest city, has long been one of the Arab world's centers for artistic innovation, especially in the field of classical Arab music. Aleppo, where Salim Bali makes his home, rivals Damascus as one of the oldest cities in the world. Syria was one of the earliest centers of Christian hymnody in a distinctive chant repertory and a traditional liturgical music continues as well as rich traditions of choral music.

Great art asks questions. It often has a quirk. It invites us in and says "let's talk."
It gives us something new to ponder. It bears repeated hearings. It continually opens dialogue.

IV. MEDIEVAL & RENAISSANCE MONOPHONY

a. Hildegard of Bingen: O Virtus Sapientiae

- b. **To check out:** Bird on a Briar (*Bryd one brere*). This unison song, in 13th c. Middle English has fascinated scholars and singers for centuries. What is it about? What makes its mysterious melody so bittersweet and so rewarding to sing? Listen to the many interpretations on Spotify or YouTube.

V. GREAT POETRY

- a. **Hubert Parry: Jerusalem** With its enigmatic text by William Blake, this powerful melody by Parry has become a second national anthem in Britain. What makes this melody's construction so satisfying to sing? This is a text that will bear close reading (ask the poetry specialist in your school). But the melody also bears close reading. What do the notes "say", apart from the words? Where do the motifs lie in the phrase? How are they used and then re-purposed to sound new? There are several editions of this piece, but it's always sung in unison. That's how it gets its power.

VI. CANONS

- a. **Hashivenu** (Traditional Hebrew prayer) unison
- b. **To check out:** many of the first 10 years of Treasure Hunt packets feature canons of high quality. Check them out. Consider various arranging possibilities: drone accompaniments, soloists, choir in unison, various voicings for the canon, etc.

VII. ALTERNATE VOICINGS

- a. **Praetorius: Anima Mea** (SAB)

VIII. WILLIAM BILLINGS: first American composer genius

- a. **The Bird (SATB)** this gem follows the traditional "fuging tune" format: a homophonic section followed by a little contrapuntal section. Billings did not have formal training, but he did have imagination. Consider doubling the tenor part with sopranos (tenor is considered melody in this style).
- b. **To check out:** many of the first 10 years of Treasure Hunt packets feature great (and accessible) works by Billings. Some of our favorites: *David the King*, *Hopkinton*, *When Jesus Wept*, *Creation*.

IX. PIECES LIKE NO OTHER

- a. **Riflemen of Bennington** (3 part: treble, T, B, piano, piccolo, snare)
- There are not a lot of American Revolutionary songs available to us. This is about Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys. (Look it up.) Is it about a gun? Sometimes a text is not really about what it seems. Finding the affective *heart* of a piece and/or its text often takes a little pondering. Helping make that deeper connection to what the piece is *really* about helps our students connect more deeply.
- If you want to do this piece: shoot an email to Randy for the score and parts: rswiggum@madisonyouthchoirs.org

X. NO OVER-REACHING

- a. **Will the Circle Be Unbroken?** Traditional, arr. Swiggum 3-part, with fiddle/piano, or bluegrass band
- Is the piece true to its aim or is it trying to be something it is not? Sometimes simplicity is what's called for in the working out of the musical material. And sometimes a simple piece of Americana can be truly profound in its impact and historical importance. The five simple words: "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" still remain one of the richest, most evocative and striking lines of American folk poetry ever penned.

CMP WORKSHOPS AHEAD in 2015

- Winter Weekend, January 16-17, Wisconsin Center for Music Education. 2 credits available. Our now "traditional" winter retreat. Join us. It's a blast.
- Summer Workshop (forty years and still going strong!) June 22-26, Viterbo University, La Crosse
- Illinois CMP Workshop: July 7-10 Northern Illinois University
- Iowa CMP Workshop: July 23-26 Drake University, Des Moines
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Thanks for caring about giving your students the best music, and taking the time to find it.