



Men's Choir

Large Choral Works

May 1, 2020



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Objective/Learning Target:

The Student will learn about larger works of music with orchestra.



Warm Up

On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever heard a choral piece with full orchestral accompaniment?
2. Have you been in a group/around a rehearsal of a large choral piece with orchestra?
3. If given the chance, would you want to perform in a large group setting with orchestra?



Rehearsal Techniques

The rehearsal process for these pieces is very different than what you are used to. You need to keep in mind that the conductor is in charge of both choir and orchestra. There are cues for instruments that may not apply to choir and you need to be aware of it. The thing that keeps big groups together is the ability for performers to watch the conductor. Make sure you learn your music well enough to look up!

There are way more performers than there are conductors, so you should police yourself on talking during rehearsal.



Large Work Facts

1. Almost all large works are made for SATB
2. They range from 20 minutes to almost 2 hours in length
3. Normally they are accompanied by orchestra.
4. These works have transcended time stemming from the 1700's to 20th century.
5. There are multiple styles: mass, requiem, oratorio, and cantatas. These are sacred works (about God). There are non-sacred works as well.
6. There normally needs to be a massive choir to get the sound over the orchestra.



Handel's Messiah

George Frideric Handel's Messiah was originally an Easter offering. It was premiered in Dublin on April 13, 1742. He switched from Italian Opera to English due to the changing tastes of the public. Handel composed Messiah somewhere between three and four weeks in August and September 1741. "He would literally write from morning to night," says Sarah Bardwell of the Handel House Museum in London. Mozart paid Handel the supreme compliment of reorchestrating Messiah in 1789. "Handel knows better than any of us what will make an effect," Mozart said. "When he chooses, he strikes like a thunderbolt." Choirs around the world sing this work annually and it has remained one of the most popular large choral/orchestral works of all time.



The Messiah- Hallelujah Chorus

The most often performed movements of the Messiah is it's final movement: The Hallelujah Chorus. When it is performed, it is customary for the audience to stand. This stems from when King George II stood at the beginning of the movement during its premiere. When the king stands, so must everyone else, so it was adopted throughout history. Choirs around the globe still perform it to this day.

<https://youtu.be/IUZEtVbJT5c>

The German Requiem- Johannes Brahms

The German Requiem first premiered in Vienna in 1868. It is often speculated that Brahms gained his inspiration as a source of comfort for his mentor Robert Schumann's death. Another source seems to come from Brahms' mother's death in 1865. Regardless of cause, the piece is meant to serve as a memorial. Brahms used German vernacular instead of the Latin that was a long-standing tradition. Brahms was Lutheran so he used passages from the Martin Luther translation of the Bible. Included is the 4th movement.

How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place-

<https://youtu.be/XwnZ748e3CA>





Gospel Mass- Robert Ray

Gospel Mass is an experimental work that was written for a one-time performance in 1978. After the initial performance, however, the piece caught on and became a seminal work of African-American music. Robert Ray believed strongly that “God controls everything I do”. He was not a classically trained composer and still had the piece done in two weeks. It was also, he agrees, the right time and place. The Black Power movement was pushing cultural pride and identity, Martin Luther King Jr.’s message of inclusion still felt fresh, and white audiences were eager to embrace gospel music.



Gospel Mass Part 1- Kyrie!

The Gospel Mass follows the traditional mass format, which has the pieces in Latin, but the text is sung in English. The difference in this is that it is accompanied by band.

<https://youtu.be/E2HrjQfJH98>



The Abyssinian Mass- Wynton Marsalis

The Abyssinian Mass by Wynton Marsalis was written for the Harlem's Abyssinian Church's bicentennial. It was created for audiences of all faiths and backgrounds. Wynton's idea when creating this was that he could make each movement a different style and blend of the jazz tradition with the choral tradition. It toured across the country as well as became a best-selling record.



The Glory Train: Try to listen for train sounds as it takes off and slows down.

<https://youtu.be/KSvTCGrIj00>

Come Join the Army: This is New Orleans style jazz. It also encapsulates a “second line” which is a tradition at jazz funerals.

<https://youtu.be/g0XqkBK5zsw>



Reflection:

1. Out of these pieces, rank them 1-4 in terms of how interesting they were to you.
2. What are your biggest takeaways about large choral works from this lesson?
3. Have your feelings changed on performing a large choral work?



For additional practice, do some research and find a large work that was not covered in this lesson. Listen to it and discuss what you like about it and what you liked the least.