



Choir Virtual Learning

Women's Choir/Choral Large Works with Orchestra

May 1, 2020



Lesson: May 1, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will be introduced to large choral works with orchestra.

Bell Work:

Most students who sing at the high school level are used to performing pieces that are a cappella, accompanied by the piano or may use some individual instruments such as percussion or string to accompany the choir. Today we will be discussing large choral works with orchestra. Think about the following to begin the lesson.

1. Did you know choral works could be combined with an orchestra?
2. Have you performed in a choir with an orchestra?
3. Would you ever want the opportunity to perform a large work with orchestra?

Choral Masterwork Facts

1. Most choral works with orchestra are for SATB voicing.
2. They tend to last anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour and a half.
3. They are traditionally accompanied by orchestra.
4. Many are works that have been passed down from the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and 20th century eras.
5. They might be masses, requiems, oratorios or cantatas which are all sacred (about God) works. There are some secular works (not about God) that have been written as well.
6. They consist of several different movements, or sections, to make up one big work.
7. Generally the choir must be very large to contend with the sound of the orchestra.

Abyssinian Mass-Wynton Marsalis

Bringing full-throated gospel together with a massive range of jazz styles, *The Abyssinian Mass* is a sweeping blend of big band bravado, impassioned solos, handclaps, tambourine slaps, and some of the mightiest voices you'll hear outside of church.

Commissioned in 2008 to honor the bicentennial of Harlem's famed Abyssinian Baptist Church, *The Abyssinian Mass* has since become a best-selling record and toured packed concert halls and churches around the country.

Created and performed for audiences of all faiths and backgrounds, *The Abyssinian Mass* is a spirited and swinging affirmation of just how good it can feel to be human.

Watch a Clip

Recessional- The Glory Train

Things to listen for:

1. Sounds of train whistles and trains in general.
2. Improvisational solos from different instruments.
3. Awesome sounds and energy from the choir.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSvTCGrIjO0&list=PLqhIRO8y9HIAdy1Lmsj7kf2ZAuwMgVCBd&index=6&t=0s>

Gospel Mass-Robert Ray

Gospel Mass, an experimental work, for a one-time performance, was composed in 1978 by Robert Ray. To his surprise, the piece caught on and became a seminal work of African-American music, performed by choirs and churches all over the world. There's no doubt in Ray's mind that God played a role in the writing of his now famous Mass, which sets the words from the Catholic Mass to the rhythm and harmony of African-American music. "God controls everything I do," said Ray, a composer, conductor and music educator. "It was written in about a two-week period. The hard part for me was not being a formally trained composer. The creativity was a result of divine inspiration. "He was working with me." But 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 I- Kyrie

This mass follows the traditional catholic mass protocol and lists the different sections of the mass in latin, but the text is sung in english. Kyrie translates to “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy. You will hear soloists at the beginning using improvisation as they sing. Then the traditional choir as well as the band accompaniment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2HrjQfJH98>

German Requiem-Johannes Brahms

One inspiration for the genesis of the *German Requiem* may have been the 1856 death of Brahms's mentor Robert Schumann, who had accurately predicted the influence and success of his friend's music. Most of Brahms's efforts on the *Requiem* came after the death of his mother in 1865. He continued to revise and compose until all seven movements were completed in 1868. Over its lengthy gestation, the *Requiem* emerged as a deeply personal musical memorial. Brahms was innovative in his combination of styles and use of vernacular German, so different from the long-standing Latin mass for the dead. Baptized and raised Lutheran, Brahms wrote his own spiritual text based on passages from Martin Luther's translation of the Bible. The composer chose Scripture offering consolation, reassurance and comfort to the living in a strong affirmation of personal hope, love, courage and anticipation of joy. While rooted in words of devotion, the *German Requiem* employs contemplative, universal language to appeal across religious and denominational boundaries, coming from a background of faith rather than a specific church. As for the title, which refers more to the text than to any intended audience, Brahms wrote, "I would gladly give up the 'German' and simply put 'human.'"

Brahms Requiem- Mvmt 4- How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place

Brahms was a German composer and composed this work in German. In order to accomplish the human element, the language is flexible and can be performed in any language to try to make it more meaningful to the listener. We will be listening to the fourth movement.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mQwZuTjFDQ&list=RD9mQwZuTjFDQ&start_radio=1&t=21

The Messiah

George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* was originally an Easter offering. It burst onto the stage of Musick Hall in Dublin on April 13, 1742. The audience swelled to a record 700, as ladies had heeded pleas by management to wear dresses "without Hoops" in order to make "Room for more company." Handel's superstar status was not the only draw; many also came to glimpse the contralto, Susannah Cibber, then embroiled in a scandalous divorce. Handel composed *Messiah* in an astounding interlude, 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. Even Mozart, however, confessed himself to be humble in the face of Handel's genius. He insisted that any alterations to Handel's score should not be interpreted as an effort to improve the music. "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

One of the most performed movements of the Messiah is the Hallelujah Chorus. It is the final movement in the work. It is a tradition to stand while this movement is being performed. It was said that King George II stood up at the beginning of the movement. When the King stands, so does everyone else. This tradition has carried on to this very day. Nobody knows why the King stood. Was he tired of sitting? Was he moved by the music? Were his feet numb? We will never know, but at least we know why we stand!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBZ7AfZR9xs&list=RD9mQwZuTjFDQ&index=3>

Rehearsal Techniques with Orchestra

Rehearsing with the orchestra is more tricky than rehearsing with just the choir in a choral setting. Here are some things to remember.

1. The conductor is in charge of the choir and the orchestra. Make sure you are watching carefully for cues that are for singers vs. cues that are for the orchestra.
2. Know your music. It's important to be able to look up from your music as much as possible so you will stay together with the instrumentalists.
3. Do not talk if you are not singing. It's important to keep the integrity of the rehearsal by being respectful if just the orchestra or other parts of the choir are rehearsing.
4. Have fun! The instruments are cool and so is the collaboration!

Lesson Reflection

1. Which of the pieces did you find most interesting?
2. Would you be interested in performing any of these works?
3. What are 3 things you learned regarding choral large works.

Extra Practice

Find a choral large work we did not discuss today. Listen to a movement or two and discuss why you chose the work and if you would be interested in performing that piece in the future.

THANK
YOU

The image features the words "THANK YOU" in a bold, bubbly, 3D font. The word "THANK" is rendered in a bright pink color with a yellow-to-orange gradient on its sides, while "YOU" is primarily yellow with a pink-to-red gradient on its sides. Both words have thick black outlines and are set against a white background with a subtle grey drop shadow. The text is surrounded by several small, five-pointed stars in yellow and pink, along with black motion lines (two short lines radiating from a point) that give the impression of energy and excitement.