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CHOOSING MUSIC FOR MOVEMENT

I am convinced that choosing music for a choral ensemble is one of the most important, challenging and exciting jobs a director performs all year. The music you select can make or break your group—and affect your students' attitudes towards music.

It's often difficult to know before the school year begins just what kind of singers you're going to end up with unless you've held auditions at the end of the previous school year. Even so, we all know that schedules, and lives, change.

I look ahead for music that has **wonderful emotional and/or rhythmic content, a solid repetitive chorus, and lyrics with action-oriented words or a clever storyline** (good for facial involvement). I enjoy piano parts which are supportive, yet which offer interesting introductions, interludes or extra rhythms.

I look for arrangement without “roadblocks” for the singers. In other words, I want songs with good ranges, easy key changes, clever and easily-learned lyrics which are appropriate for the singers, easy voice leading in all parts, repeated sections with identical harmony, and a “hook” that the audience will remember.

With a group that's just beginning to use movement, you might begin by choreographing an opener, a closer, and a novelty number. Patriotic selections can also be effective; usually simple movement and visual focus are all that are needed—along with an American flag!

If you work with accompaniment tapes, make sure that the interpretation on the tape is one that you can rehearse and/or perform with (i.e., volume level, tempo, and orchestration).

You may wish to select an octavo with an easier level of difficulty than normal for your movement pieces, at least for starters. If your students aren't used to adding physical activity while singing, choosing easier material will help.

Remember, movement is the “**icing on the cake!**” Learn your music (the “cake”) thoroughly and carefully before movement (the “icing”) is added. Be careful not to make the “icing” too heavy or the “cake” may fall apart. But do expect to schedule a few extra musical rehearsals after the movement has been added. Just think how much better the cake is going to look with the icing on top!

SIMPLE MOVES AND IDEAS

In addition to the other movements pictured in this book, here are some specific, simple, upper-torso activities that work!

A. USE OF LEVELS

Try a flat palm out. You may pan across from one side to the other. The singers in the front row should bend their knees a lot, second row slightly, etc. Higher rows should work their arms a bit higher. (EX. 34) This is good for painting a scene or for the word "stop."

(EX. 34)

