

Multi-cultural/Ethnic Choral Literature List

Contributed by Elizabeth Schauer

Hebrew/Jewish

Haida, Chassidic round, arranged by Henry Leck, unison/two-part canon, piano, Colla Voce Music, Inc, 21-20516

“Haida” is a fast-paced canon sung solely on the word “haida,” a nonsense word similar to “la” in American folk music. In the Chassidic tradition the music begins slowly and increases to a frenzied pace. Suggestions for physical movements are included. This piece is appropriate for all ages from elementary singers through adventurous adults.

Dodi Li, Israeli song, arranged by Doreen Rao, two-part treble, piano, Boosey & Hawkes, OCTB6679

Based on a text from Song of Solomon, “Dodi Li” is a lively, sectional work that is adaptable to a variety of choral situations. The two short phrases of the recurring refrain are set for two voices. The three alternating verses are in unison or could be sung by soloists. Young singers could certainly handle the refrain with small groups or soloists taking on the challenging texts of the verses. The piece is suitable for women’s voices as well.

Mah Yafeh Hayom, Simon A. Sargon, two-part choir, piano, Transcontinental Music Publications, 991701-6

Simon Sargon indicates that this piece is for two-part choir and, in fact, it could aptly be performed by any combination of two voices: trebles, male voices or a combination. The buoyant work is divided into three sections. The first two sections contrast text and mode. In the third section the melody of the second section is combined with the percussive nonsense syllables of the first section. Accessible and light-hearted, this is yet another piece appropriate for a variety of ages and choirs.

Tzor Te’udah, William Sharlin, three equal voices (three-part round), piano, Laurendale Associates, CH-1102

A poignant, yet simple round, William Sharlin’s composition is appropriate for concert use and would make an excellent processional. Harlin’s opening notes provide suggestions for several performance options. He includes keyboard accompaniment for the round as well as for a solo voice (which he recommends contrasting with the round in performance). This selection is accessible for children’s through adult ensembles.

Kol Han’shamah T’halel Yah, Bonia Shur, SSATB, organ (adaptable for piano), Transcontinental Music, 984003

This piece is based on a vigorous, sixteen-measure tune (AABC) in e mixolydian. Each of the six repetitions of the tune increases in momentum, textural density and harmonic intensity. The ending arrives with an unexpected harmonic shift. The ranges and musical materials of this piece are quite accessible, making it

appropriate for religiously affiliated or community adult choirs, high school ensembles, and advanced, large middle schools groups.

Eil Yivneh Hagalil, Julius Chajes, SATB, keyboard, Transcontinental Music, 990214

The additive texture of this piece musically depicts the textual idea of building Galilee. A strong, rhythmic work, Eil Yivneh Hagalil functions well as an opener or even a processional. Doubled parts among the choir make this work accessible to smaller choirs (as well as larger ensembles) even though there is occasional divisi. The minimal accompaniment supports the ensemble and helps maintain pitch. This is another work appropriate as an opener or a processional, or paired with a somber, slower work.

Avinu Malkeynu, Max Janowski, SATB and high solo, piano, Transcontinental Music, 986203

Avinu Malkeynu is a solemn and poignant Hebrew prayer sonorously set by Janowski. The cantor (tenor) must have a strong, resonant voice and must be able to sing a high G-flat and A-flat with confidence and power. The accompanying choral parts, however, are moderate and very singable. This slower work programs well with the variety of faster, more assertive pieces that are widely available.

Libavtini Achoti Chala, Gerald Cohen, SATB, solo and piano, Oxford University Press, 94.218

Cohen has created a sinuous, modal setting of Hebrew texts from Song of. A slow, sensuous solo melody characterizes the first and third of three formal sections, with accompanying open fifths and fourths in the chorus (who later join in on the melody). A more active and imitative middle section provides contrast to the slower outer sections. The men's and women's voices diverge briefly in an imitative chase, before rejoining at the close of this section. The work ends with a short recapitulation of the slow, opening solo, now performed by unison chorus with soloist. The biblical love poetry is appropriate for sacred or secular use. The musical materials are of moderate range and difficulty.