

Multi-cultural/Ethnic Choral Literature List

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Latin-American and Spanish Choral Selections

Please note that three of the publishers below each have a wonderful series of music featuring Latin-American music. If you are looking for a wide selection, I urge you to contact them (or check their website) to obtain single copies from these excellent collections. They are:

Boosey & Hawkes - Latin Accents
earthsongs - Música de Latinoamérica
Neil A. Kjos Music Company - Latin American Choral Series

Reviews:

Cuncti simus
Llibre Vermell, ed. Ricardo Soto
Santa Barbara Music Publishing
Unison (optional instrumental accompaniment)
SBMP 306, 1.25

Cuncti simus is a wonderful and easy selection for any level of choir from upper elementary to college and is appropriate for school, community or church use. It is from the Llibre Vermell ("red book"), one of the most important collections of Spanish medieval music. The collection is kept at the Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, a popular destination for medieval pilgrimages. This piece was probably used as a dance by the pilgrims - it is in three and has a vigorous, dance-like character. The music is presented in call and response fashion and the choir has only a short eight-measure refrain which is repeated throughout. The text is Latin, and the two soloists have a considerable amount of unfamiliar text delivered at a fast rate, so some skill and outside preparation would be helpful. The text describes the annunciation of the angel Gabriel to Mary. Directions for use of percussion and pitched instruments are included but a simple improvised accompaniment on hand drum and flute improvised would sufficiently enliven the piece as well.

Huainito
Argentinian Folk Song, arr. Victoria Ebel-Sabo
Shawnee Music
SA with piano (or unison choir and violin obbligato with piano)
YS 414, 1.40

Huainito (Lament) is a poignant folk song that tells a story of betrayal in love through the characters of two little doves. The work comprises two verses, each in AAB form, and the B section draws from the A section for its musical materials, so the doleful, minor tune is quickly learned. In addition, the melody in the top voice and the second, harmonizing part have the same music each time a section is repeated. A brief introduction and coda round out the work. The work is slow and in 6/8 providing a nice contrast to many of the faster-paced, dance-like Latin American pieces that are available. An excellent pronunciation guide and word-by-word translation are included as well as a separate part in case the violin obbligato option is used.

Though this is quite a simple setting, the fine quality of the text, the tune and the arrangement make it suitable for use with upper elementary as well as middle level and high school treble ensembles.

Las Mañanitas
Traditional Mexican Birthday Song, arr. Victoria Ebel-Sabo
Shawnee Music
SSA with piano
YS 604, 1.50

Las Mañanitas is the traditional birthday song in Mexico which is sung as the celebrant awakens. The lively tune (in 3/4) is in two phrase-pairs of eight measures each, and is presented two and a half times in this setting. Again, an instrumental introduction and coda bookend the work. The tune is presented in unison for the entire first appearance. A second and then third voice are added for the second occurrence. The second phrase is again repeated in the voices, this time set to imitate the strumming of a guitar. The parts are accessible, of moderate range, and easily learned. The text recalls the singing of King David, and also celebrates the namesakes of anyone whose Saint's Day it is, in addition to the birthday honoree. Again an excellent translation and pronunciation guide are included. This setting is mostly appropriate for younger treble choirs - elementary and middle level.

Duerme Negrito (Sleep, little black one)
Atahualpa Yupanqui, arr. Emile Solé
earthsongs
SATB and soprano solo
1.70

In this lullaby composed by one of the most popular Latin American composers of the 1960's and 70's, the little black child is given impossible promises and warned of dire consequences, while the sick, hard-working mother is depicted in word and song. The dialect reflects the black spanish slave culture and the textual references can only be understood in terms of the dehumanizing conditions slaves endured for centuries in many parts of the New World (from María Guinand's editorial notes). The form contrasts three different musical/textual sections against the lyric refrain of "Duerme Negrito." In the refrain and first section, the choral voices imitate an accompanying guitar as the soloist soars above them. The second, contrasting section is more rhythmic and insistent, characterizing the words of the mother as she threatens the child who may not go quickly to sleep. The mother describes her hard, unpaid toil in the third, intense section. A return to the refrain with a gentle coda conclude the work. This beautiful and interesting setting is appropriate for concert use for high school, college or community choirs. Rhythmic precision, ensemble awareness and contrasting articulation are required for a convincing, expressive performance of the dramatic work.

Son de Camaguey
Cuban Folk Song, arr. Stephen Hatfield
Boosey & Hawkes
SATB with percussion
OCTB6973, 2.50

In this arrangement, Hatfield has used the refrain of the folksong and created a variety of Afro-Cuban influenced rhythmic and melodic ostinati to accompany it. The short text is in praise of

the beautiful, brave coast and the music of Camaguey (no pronunciation guide is included, but notes on the various connotations of the words in the work are). Traditional Latin syncopation predominates throughout. The parts are rhythmic and move quickly, but the overall feel is a moderate, swaying dance in two. Sufficient skill is required to handle the independent rhythmic/melodic lines and the divisi sections, but the choir that can conquer them and make them sound easy, will enjoy this sensual and sinuous work. Excellent performance notes, expressive and articulation directions in the music, and the included percussion parts will help able choirs to bring a convincing performance. Ranges are mostly moderate, however due to the rhythmic character and the independence of parts, It is appropriate for more advanced high school, college and community choirs.

Muié Rendêra

Brazilian Folk Songs, arr. C.A. Pinto Fonseca
earthsongs

SATB

1.75

Fonseca combines two popular folks tunes from Brazil in his rhythmic setting in the style of a baião, or folk dance. In the first song, a young man asks a lacemaker to teach him to weave and, in exchange, offers to teach her to court. The second is in praise of a Lampião, a Brazilian folk hero/bandit of checkered repute. The form is AABA. In the A sections, both tunes are combined vertically and are accompanied by ostinati in the accompanying voices. The B section is dedicated to the Lampião tune presented in thirds, with accompanying ostinati again. Like Son de Camaguey, there is considerable rhythmic complexity in the vertical layers, but in performance the feel of easy nonchalance should prevail. Percussion use is suggested but no parts are included and the text is in Portuguese with no pronunciation guide. Some expert help from knowledgeable sources would be beneficial. This is an enjoyable selection for advanced high school, college or community ensembles.

Bullerengue

Jose A. Rincón

Third Planet Music

SATB

1.50

This work by Rincon is based on the Colombian rhythm "Bullerengue." The charming text is by poet Jorge Artél. In it, the speaker expresses himself to his beloved using instrumental imagery. The voices again imitate instruments in a typical Latin-American choral treatment. Syncopated rhythms, sections with 3 against 4, as well as linear contrast of duple versus triple lend momentum and interest to this excellent arrangement. Textures including paired voices in duets, homophony, and independent rhythmic/melodic layers add variety as well. The work is laid out essentially in 7 sections of eight measures, each with contrasting, but related musical materials. The tune is passed back and forth between the soprano and tenor, but each vocal part has interesting and gratifying rhythms, melodies and shapes. The text is in a colloquial African dialect of Colombian Spanish. A translation and helpful notes on pronunciation and on the piece are included. High school, college and community ensembles will appreciate the opportunity to perform this delightful work.