

Multi-Cultural Choir Tips and Titles

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I have a couple of tips for finding quality multicultural music. Music should be authentic to its style, unless otherwise stated. Arrangers that set folk songs from other cultures in a western choral music style is reasonable as long as they note that's what they've done. The term "Multicultural" is problematic. It is often taken to mean music from non-white cultures. All folk songs are multicultural, so I prefer to just say folksong.

A good tip for finding quality music: did the publisher/arranger include background information on the song? It should state its history, purpose, and performance suggestions. Background information on the song shows the publisher and or/arranger did their homework. Using tribal origins, for example stating a song is "Zulu" rather of "African," is preferable because styles vary widely between different tribes in the same general area.

Tjak, by S. Hatfield-SATB with flexible parts-published by Boosey and Hawkes-probably the most authentic piece I've ever seen

Chindia-SATB-by Alexandru Pascanu-SATB-published by Santa Barbara-All nonsense syllables, so no major language challenges.

Yih'Yu L'Ratson-by Hoffman-SATB-published by ECS-A modern setting of a traditional Hebrew Sabbatical prayer. Gorgeous.

Nodle Kangbyon, by S. Hornady-SA (It's labeled SA, but there's an SSAA section)-Earthsongs Publishing-A beautiful Korean Folksong

South African Suite, by Henry Leck-SSA or SAB-Henry Leck Choral Series-great songs complete with a background and concert tips.

A Zing-a Za, by Mary Goetze-SSAA-Boosey and Hawkes-Brazilian folk song

Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down-8 part women or 8 part mixed-By Caldwell and Ivory-Devilishly tricky, but fantastic.

Traveller's Prayer, by John Renbourn- ATTB- It has an unusual voicing, but this one's free! Go to http://www.johnrenbourn.net/sheet_pdfs/travellers.pdf and download the PDF. I have seen SATB versions, but I do not know if those versions are done with Mr. Renbourn's permission.

There tends to be a lot of African and European folksongs available for choir. One should note that there are a few types of music that aren't represented in choral repertoire. I keep my eyes peeled for Native American, Aboriginal, Middle Eastern, and Native South American music. Earthsongs has a number of pieces from these areas, but I cannot vouch for their authenticity. That said, my favorite publishers are Earthsongs and Santa Barbara Music Press, though Pavane (a subsidiary of Hal Leonard) is starting to put out quality material.