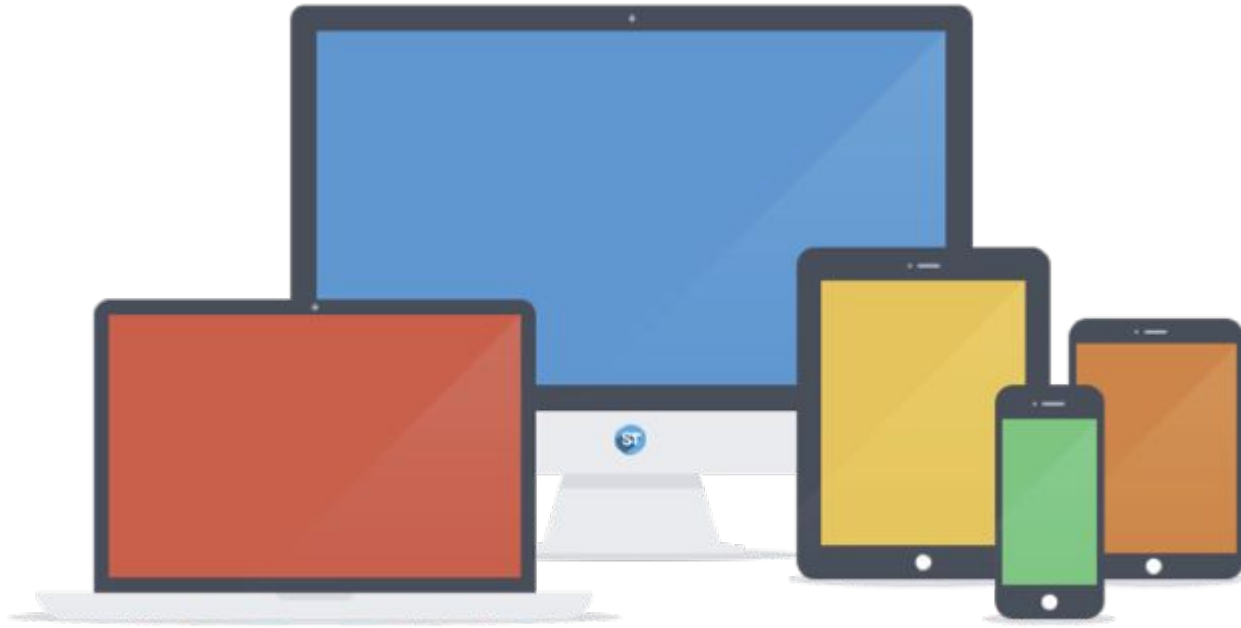




Amplifying Womxn's Voices in the Reimagined Choral Ensemble

Alyssa J. Cossey, DMA



Presentation slides available at:
www.alyssacossey.com



*Do the best you can until
you know better. Then when
you know better, do better.*

MAYA ANGELOU

Repertoire Considerations

- Positionality
 - “The recognition that where you stand in relation to others in society shapes what you can see and understand about the world.” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012)
- Representation - not tokenism
- Research/Score Study
 - Source material
 - Spread of misinformation
- Audience Needs

Recommended Repertoire Accountability Checklist

- Is this the only arrangement/version of this piece?
 - If not, is this the best representation of a particular genre, style, or perspective?
- Is this piece representative of a non-western country/region/culture?
 - If so, what experience and research has this composer/arranger done to make them an expert?
 - If not, could it be replaced by something that is?
- Whose perspective is presented via the text?
 - Is the poetry written by a person who identifies as female, but set by a male-identifying composer?
 - Does your program represent any marginalized perspectives?
- Does this piece contain problematic text?
 - Can it be omitted or altered?



Suggested Repertoire

O Love, Elaine Hagenberg, SATB, TTBB, or SSA



Resources: O Love

- [Elaine Hagenberg Website Resources](#)
- Text
- Composer and poet bios
- Inspiration
- Discussion questions
- Virtual Choir Kit



Andrea Ramsey

- Tell My Father (TTB)
- For My Brother (TTBB)
- As I Have Loved You (TTBB)



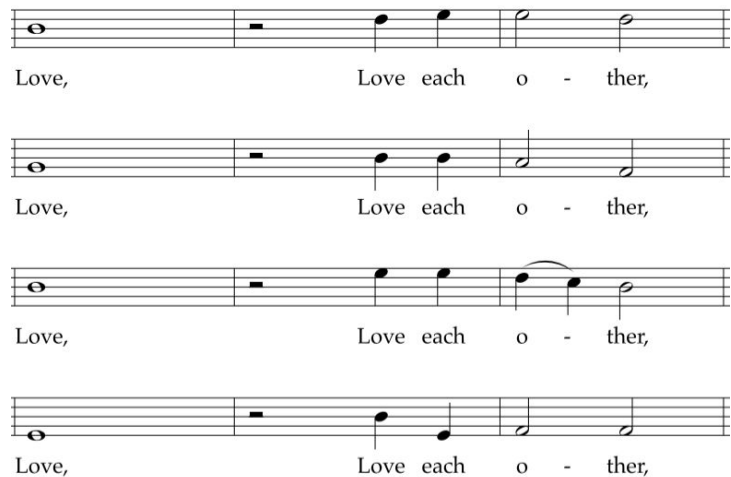
As I Have Loved, Andrea Ramsey, TTBB



- Text selected and adapted from John 12 & Ephesians 4
- “My command is this: Love, Love each other”

Optional Lesson Plans

- Opening compositional devices
- [Andrea's blog post](#)
- Redefine masculinity
- Other questions: what is your favorite part of singing in a TB choir? What would you like to see change?
- Long-term project: Create a mini-program (3 songs)



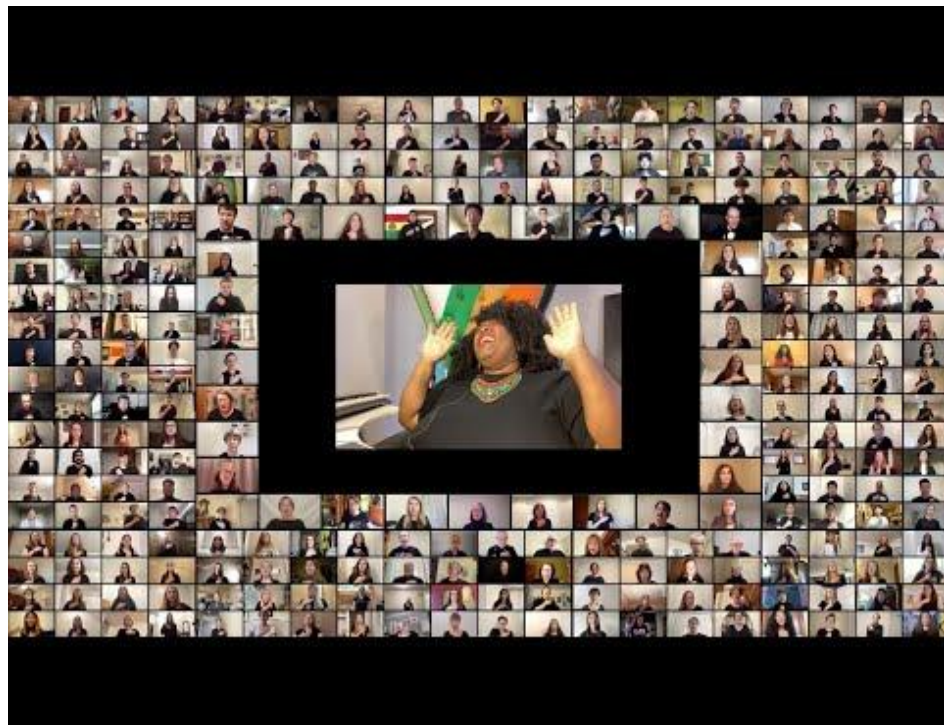
Alysia Lee - Say Her Name, SSA/SATB

“This original song by Alysia Lee was written as a vehicle to bring the powerful Kwanzaa ceremony to the concert stage with a call to action. The #SayHerName movement resists police brutality against Black women. If you say the name, you're prompted to learn the story, and if you know the story, then you have a broader sense of all the ways Black bodies are made vulnerable to police violence.” - Alysia Lee

To purchase print edition or for more info:

<https://bit.ly/2Ijuc9z>

To purchase digital score & audio (includes PDF/MP3 download): <https://bit.ly/3n4xex6>





Addressing Problematic Music

Neighbor's Chorus, Jacques Offenbach, SATB



Was she a very rich man's daughter
Who showed that she was not all you thought her?
When with your songs of love you sought her,
Were you dowsed with water poured down from
above?
Did you beat her, try to choke her till you made her
pout?
Did her father take a poker, did he throw you out?
**Did you beat her and choke her and knock her
all about? Ah!**
Please excuse us, mister, we don't want to bother, we
only want to know
All of us are neighbors, so we're very curious, why do
you look so low?
Give us all the lowdown, did you reach a showdown
with your last lady love?

Comments

“This was wonderful! The first group where I could actually hear what they were saying. Of course the sound was lovely and lively as well, though I feel that this could have been memorized easily.”

“Precise and animated, wonderful work! The tone and swell of this piece is perfect, one of the best recordings!”

“I'm singing this in school, but we're singing it with middle schoolers so we had to change a lot of the lyrics. We changed beat to meet, knock to talk, choke to joke, etc. It's frickin' stupid now.”

“Had to sing this my senior year of high school. It came together nicely but then a couple students complained so we scrapped it. It's too bad. The rest of us had fun with this song”

“why do people flip out about the text, it's just a song”

what i want, music by Stephen Smith, Text by Pat Lowther, SSAA

what i want is to be blessed
what i want is a cloak of air
the light entering my lungs
my love entering my body

what i want is to be blessed
what i want is to be aware
of the blessing descending like the sky
sliding down the spectrum

what i want is to be aware
of the spaces between the stars
to breathe continuously the sources of sky,
a veined sail moving, my love never setting foot to the dark
anvil of earth



Optional Lesson Plans

- Compare & Contrast
- Read and study Pat Lowther's poetry catalogue
- Research Offenbach's comic opera "La Jolie Parfumeuse"
 - Rewrite lyrics (Neighbor's Chorus)
- Read YouTube comments and prepare written responses
- Create a petition or write a letter to JWPepper/Festival List Coordinators - asking to remove this title from their library/list
 - “If it's not in your library give it serious consideration. Basic repertoire at its best!”

This item appears on the following state lists:

GA [GA Choral Mixed Class C](#)
IA [IA HSMA SATB LEVEL 3](#)
IN [ISSMA HIGH SCHOOL MIXED CHORUS GROUP II](#)
IN [ISSMA EVENT 182 - LARGE MIXED VOCAL ENSEMBLE](#)
KS [KS HSAA MIXED VOICES LEVEL 3](#)
MD [Grade 4 Chorus - SATB](#)
NC [Mixed Chorus Senior High Grade 4](#)
NY [830 04 MIXED CHORUS LEVEL 4](#)
VA [Mixed Chorus Grade 4](#)

This item appears on the following festival lists:

[SCVA High School Festival Music List SATB](#)
[SCVA Jr High Festival Music List SATB](#)

Ain't I a Woman, Susan Borwick, SSA



Sojourner Truth

“Ain’t I a Woman” Speech

- Woman's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio on May 29, 1851

Two Versions

- Marius Robinson’s transcription published June 21, 1851 in the “Anti-Slavery Bugle”
- White abolitionist- Frances Gage’s inaccurate version published April 23, 1863 issue of the “New York Independent” (well-known version)
- <https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/>



Marius Robinson's transcription: Published June 21, 1851 in the The Anti-Slavery Bugle

1. May I say a few words? I want to say a few words about this matter.
2. I am a woman's rights.
3. (a) I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man.
4. (b) I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?
5. I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can (c) eat as much too, if (d) I can get it.
6. I am as strong as any man that is now.
7. As for intellect, all I can say is, (e) if women have a pint and man a quart - why can't she have her little pint full?
8. You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we cant take more than our pint'll hold.
9. The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and dont know what to do.
10. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better.
11. You will have your own rights, and they wont be so much trouble.

Frances Gage's innacurate version: 23 April 1863 issue of the New York Independent

1. Well, chillen, whar dar's so much racket dar must be som'ting out o'kilter.
2. I tink dat, 'twixt de niggers of de South and de women at de Norf, all a-talking 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon.
3. But what's all this here talking 'bout?
4. Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have de best place eberywhar.
5. Nobody eber helps me into carriages or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place.
6. -And ar'n't I a woman?
7. Look at me.
8. (a) Look at my arm.
9. (b) I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me.
10. -and ar'n't I a woman?
11. I could work as much as (c) eat as much as a man, (when (d) I could get it,) and bear de lash as well
12. -and ar'n't I a woman?

Optional Lesson Plans

- Discuss issues of intersectionality & appropriation in regards to this, and other choral compositions
 - Compare & contrast Susan Bowick's composition to Frances Gage's version of the speech
 - Answer the question: does intention matter?
 - Analyze Susan Borwick's composition: What would you change? Why? How would using the original text change the piece? Why did she select the text she did? Form? Accompaniment?
 - Create a 8 or 16-bar section using the original text - describe the compositional techniques you would use: meter, style, accompaniment, voicing, form, dynamics, articulation, etc.
- Visit <https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/>
 - Watch sample videos of various women reciting Marius Robinson's version of the speech
 - Create a "campaign speech" for 2020 election
- Search the [Composer Diversity Database](#) and create a mini-concert program featuring works by women of Color



Resources

Additional Recordings: Songs For a Better Tomorrow

- [Refugee](#) - Moira Smiley
- [Wild Embers](#) - Melissa Dunphy
- [Journey Home](#) - Abbie Betinis
- [What Happens When a Woman?](#) - Artemisia
- [Still I Rise](#) - Rosephanye Powell
- [Hope Lingers On](#) - Andrea Ramsey
- [Umoja](#) - Zanaida Robles
- [Take What You Need](#) - Reena Esmail
- [I Hope You're Doing Well](#) - Dale Trumbore

Womxn Composer Websites

- [Artemisia](#)
- [Elizabeth Alexander](#)
- [Ysaye Barnwell](#)
- [Abbie Betinis](#)
- [B.E. Boykin](#)
- [Michael Bussewitz-Quarm](#)
- [Andrea Clearfield](#)
- [Reena Esmail](#)
- [Emma Lou Diemer](#)
- [Melissa Dunphy](#)
- [Jocelyn Hagen](#)
- [Elaine Hagenberg](#)
- [Rosephanye Powell](#)
- [Andrea Ramsey](#)
- [Zanaida Robles](#)
- [Diana V. Saez](#)
- [Kamala Sankaram](#)
- [Caroline Shaw](#)
- [Moiria Smiley](#)
- [Joan Szymko](#)
- [Dale Trumbore](#)
- [Mari Esabel Valverde](#)
- [Gwyneth Walker](#)
- [Chen Yi](#)

Additional Resources

- [Music Theory Examples by Women](#)
- [Boulanger Initiative](#)
- [Composer Diversity Database](#)
- [Beyond Elijah Rock: Non-Idiomatic Choral Music of Black Composers](#)
- [The Choral Commons](#)
- [We Rise: A Movement Songbook](#)
- [Justice Choir Songbook](#)

Playlists/Podcasts

Playlists:

- [Music Theory Examples by Women](#)
- [Black Choral Musicians](#)
- [Choral Collective Playlist](#)
- [A Trans Composers Playlist](#)

Podcasts:

- [Celebrating Women Composers](#)
- [Choral Commons Podcast](#)
- [They Do Exist](#)
- [Girl Conductor](#)
- [Engender](#)



Questions?

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Thank You!

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