

# Choral Collections: A 'Sound' Investment

*Dr. Marian Dolan*

*Choral Conductor*

Collections. A good investment. Whether your choir is in Argentina, Romania, Indonesia or Canada, buying scores is a true investment in today's globally tight economy. Many directors look to choral collections as a smart way to buy a set of scores – as one book – for less money than purchasing individual scores. So here are a few recommendations.

*Let's Get Singing* (ISBN 978-3-7649-2439-3; Gustav Bosse Verlag/Bärenreiter) is a global choral collection of 100+ SATB scores from 35 countries and almost as many languages, edited by 4 German choral music educators. About 50 scores are folksongs, half from Europe and half from other countries including Haïti, Bolivia, Kenya, Congo, Madagascar, Macedonia, Mexico, Samoa, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Tanzania, Jamaica and the Ukraine. The other 50+ scores are equally divided into secular, sacred and Christmas. Many of the original non-German texts also have a singable German translation underlay, but this practice is not consistent throughout the collection. Some scores are original arrangements from the culture of origin ("Haïti Chérie" by Electo Silva; "Três Cantos Nativos" by Marcos Leite; "Pusi Nofo" by Chris Marshall); the editors themselves arranged the other international songs. Most of the works are *a cappella*. A few scores contain chord symbols but unfortunately no explanation for the instrumentation. Most pieces are brief in duration and musically accessible to an ensemble from another culture or language group. The book has a strong paper cover,

is well engraved and reads very clearly, including numbers on all measures. Translations of texts are usually given in both German and English. No performance recording exists, however an audio-CD “with 99 tracks and lyrics of every non-English song” is available. The pronunciation tracks are also freely accessible online (<http://bit.ly/4J6aLV>). These pronunciation tracks, while a nice idea, needed editing. Some are spoken much too rapidly or in rhythms not from the score; others are intoned or quasi-chanted rather than clearly and slowly *spoken* with care to diphthongs and unusual consonants. Puzzling why the English texts are omitted from these audio recordings. Still, this is one of the most ‘global’ single-volume choral collections published today. If you are looking for a comprehensive, accessible, global compilation then this volume may be a good start.

Collections of scores from a specific country or region may be published for use in that area, or, on the other hand, may be published for international choirs wishing to explore that region’s repertoire. For example, from Finland and publisher SULASOL come two collections, one targeted mainly to Finnish choirs and one to international ensembles. SULASOL publishes three volumes of *a cappella* mixed choir scores in a series called *Sekakuorolauluja*, meaning ‘songs for mixed choirs,’ for use mainly by Finnish ensembles. Since all of the information is only in Finnish, there is no need for a pronunciation guide! But given the breadth, depth and accessibility of these scores, one would love to have available an English translation of the information notes along with a copy of SULASOL’s excellent “How to Sing in Finnish” guide. Volume 3, for example, contains 78 works, half of which are by Finnish composers both historic and living including Chydenius, Johansson, Kekkonen, Kortekangas, Kostiainen, Kuula, Makaroff, Mäntyjärvi, Rautavaara, Sibelius. International composers include Bárdos (*Dana-dana*), Čopi (“Pie Jesu”), Erb (“Shenandoah”), Kreek (“Önnis on inimine”), Sisask (“Oremus”) as well as 16th-17thC Latin motets. The engraving is clean

and very readable.

*Is it Spring in Finland?* is SULASOL's new collection of 14 Finnish National Romantic scores edited brilliantly by composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi. Again, all of the scores are a *cappella* in various mixed choir voicings. Jaakko's contextual, cultural and biographical notes (in English) open wide the door to non-Finns in understanding this important and beautiful era of Finnish choral music. He provides very clear pronunciation guides for both Finnish and Swedish texts. Composers include Sibelius (4 scores), Palmgren (3), Kuula (3), Madetoja (3) and Sallinen (1). Since he is also trained as a professional translator, Jaakko provides singable English translations in addition to the score's original Finnish or Swedish texts. My only critique is that the size of the music/text is a bit smaller than in most scores. That aside, if you want to begin exploring Finnish choral music with your singers, this collection is an excellent place to start.

Norwegian conductor Kåre Hanke has collected and edited a stunning anthology, *Norwegian Choral Music 1905-2005* (ISBN 82-7093-532-8; Norsk Musikforlag). This hardcover A4 volume is a conductor's collection of 45 scores for mixed voices that the editor hopes "will seed a curiosity to delve deep into the choral repertoire from an exciting and rich period." Because the individual scores are available, this volume is meant as a reference for a conductor rather than a book for individual singers. A full list of the composers and scores is here (<http://bit.ly/5JI28F>). Part 1 / 1905-1955 includes Grieg, Valen, Sandvold, Solberg and others. Part 2 / 1955-2005 includes Hovland, Nystedt, Kverno, Sommerro, Gjeilo and others. Part 3 / Folksongs includes settings by Sløgedal, Sæverud, Alnæs, Kruse, Egge and Nystedt. All of the scores are a *cappella*, with much divisi writing. Scores are of moderate to challenging difficulty. The conductor with an experienced ensemble will find much choral gold here. Two CD recordings by six top Norwegian choirs are included. Composers' biographies

and other information are in both Norwegian and English. The engraving varies from score to score because these are facsimiles of existing print editions, all of which can be ordered individually for the choir.

Are you interested in exploring the exciting, rhythmic and very diverse Latin American choral repertoire with your mixed voice choir? Then the following collections are excellent, accessible starting points. The renowned choral maestra María Guinand is your guide via *Makumbebé: Latin American Choral Repertoire* (Carus Verlag 2.302), vol 1 of the *Carmina mundi* series. This all-folksong collection includes 12 mixed voice *a cappella* works from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. A full list of scores/composers is available on the Carus website (<http://bit.ly/5J6o3d>). María's experience as editor of Earthsongs' respected Latin American scores is also reflected in the editing of this collection: commentary information, English translations of texts, excellent guidelines for percussion and guitar accompaniments, composers' biographies, and a brief pronunciation guide.

Esteemed Argentinian conductor/composer/musicologist Néstor Zadoff edited *Polyphonies latino-américaines*, two collections of Latin American mixed voice *a cappella* scores for Editions a Cœur Joie. Scores in both volumes are from Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela and Uruguay. Vol 1 contains ten works ranging from transcriptions of the historic 17c "Hanac Pachap" and "Ecce vidimus eum" to the Venezuelan *joropo* "La Puerca" and the choral arrangement of Piazzolla's classic tango "Adios Nonino." Vol 2's nine scores include two 18c sacred motets, Favero's passionate "Te Quiero", Cuban classic "Guantanamera", and the exuberant *candombe* "Ronda Catonga" from Uruguay. Basic information about the scores, as well as translations, appears in both French and Spanish. One only wishes that both the Carus and Cœur Joie collections had cd's or mp3's of authentic performances of this wonderful

repertoire as aural 'road maps' for non-Latino singers and conductors.

In the past few years, Oxford has published a number of choral collections including those compiled and edited by composer-conductor, Bob Chilcott. The *5 Songs for Upper Voices* (ISBN 978-0-19-335920-8) is a set of scores commissioned for various treble/youth choir festivals. Texts are in English, voicing is unison and two parts with piano, and the level is very accessible for more fun check <https://www.bombtechgolf.com/>. Native American Joy Harjo's "Eagle Poem" is used in the reflective "Circles of Motion." Kit Wright's "Red Boots On" gets a funky-jazzy setting from Chilcott, and the reflective "All Things Pass" uses a beautiful 6c text by Lau-Tzu.

Do you work with youth choirs and search high-and-low for SAB scores? Then take a look at Oxford's *SongStream* collections, compiled and edited by Bob Chilcott and Peter Hunt. Each volume's website contains pdf score samples (<http://bit.ly/8Zzqxf> and <http://bit.ly/5nMACu>) of some of the 10 scores, in SAB voicing, usually with piano, with texts that relate well to young people. Vol 1's array of styles includes "Aka-Tonbo" by Kousaku Yamada, an energetic setting of the spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", and the rumba-styled energetic "Shake the Bottle" complete with cowbells, congas and tom-toms. Vol 2, *An American Journey*, includes Canadian composers (Eleanor Daley's "Erosion" and Mark Sirett's arrangement of the traditional Québécois song "Les Raftsmen"), the Mexican lullaby "Señora Santa Ana", Alberto Grau's arrangement of the traditional Venezuelan song "El Gavilán," various U.S. folksongs and Ysaye Barnwell's very emotive score "Wanting Memories" which she wrote for the famed African-American women's ensemble *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. Let's hope Oxford continues this much-needed SAB series with an even broader range of international repertoire.

The *PraiSing* sacred choral collections by Bärenreiter ([www.baerenreiter.com](http://www.baerenreiter.com)) include four volumes to date: Bulgaria,

Israel, Russia and Sweden. Each volume, edited by a native, contains 8 to 12 original sacred works by composers from that country. Again, all scores are for a *cappella* mixed voices and are of moderate accessibility. Some scores have keyboard reductions. There are no pronunciation guides or recordings, and only a very minimal comment about the composer or score is given. Some scores have a singable English translation under the original text.

Do you know of other choral collections that could be highlighted in this column? Then please send me an email with your recommendations. Until then, have a wonderful time exploring music from our global choral family!