

Male Choral Music

By Marian Dolan, Choral Conductor

Men Re-sounding

For those of us who have been fortunate enough to conduct a men's ensemble, finding repertoire recommendations or score reviews of music for men's voices is unfortunately rare. For this ICB article, I am thankful to the esteemed colleagues herein who agreed to contribute their score recommendations. You will also find a list of the male choir repertoire from at the recent American Choral Director's National Conference 2011, including the scores sung by the Men's National Honor Choir (Peter Bagley, conductor). And a few male-choir scores from publishers, contributed by composers, or from my own male-chorus score library. There is also a YouTube playlist (<http://bit.ly/ICBmale>) including quite a few of the scores cited below. Thank you to all of the colleagues who contributed to this article. And as the classic male-choir song by Grieg says, "...care and sorrow now be gone. Brothers in song, sing on! Brothers, sing on, sing on!"

Frank S. Albinder

Music Director, Washington Men's Camerata, Virginia Glee Club at the University of Virginia, and the Woodley Ensemble; formerly with Chanticleer

- **Rosephanye Powell**, arr. William Powell (USA) *The Word Was God* (John 1:1-3; ttbb; 2'15; Fred Bock JG2314) Rosephanye Powell, a professor at Auburn University in Alabama, writes a great deal of original music in gospel/spiritual styles. This anthem is rhythmically

vital, with the various parts continually joining in to create a complex structure and build to a great climax. Audiences and singers love it!

- **Franz Liszt** (Hungary) *Szekszárd Mass*, (mass; ttbb + ttbb soli + organ; 32'; public domain/<http://bit.ly/oFp8S4>) There aren't many major works for male chorus without orchestra, but Liszt composed two: this Mass and a Requiem. The Mass features gorgeous harmonies, interesting interplay between soli and chorus and a supportive organ part. An unexpected treasure from a great composer!
- **Carl Orff** (Germany) *Sunt lacrimae rerum* (1: Lassus, 2: Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, 3: Carl Orff; tttbbb + tb soli; 13'; Schott) Another unknown gem from the composer of a choral chestnut, this set of three pieces has characteristics of its famous *Carmina* cousin, but also features dense harmonies piled high in rich chords that alternate with sections of rhythmic vitality.
- **A. R. Rahman, arr. Ethan Sperry** (India) *Zikr* (Quran; ttbb + t solo + guitar/s + opt. percussion; 2'45; earthsongs music). Academy Award-winning film composer A. R. Rahman wrote this, his only sacred composition, for the soundtrack of a documentary film. Ethan Sperry wrote an arrangement for men's chorus that follows Rahman's original composition pretty closely, but lays out the vocal lines in a way most choruses will find familiar. The piece is exciting and vibrant and guaranteed to bring down the house.

Hans-Joachim Lustig

Conductor of Männerstimmen der Chorknaben Uetersen and Kammerchor "I Vocalisti"

- **Jaakko Mäntyjärvi** (Finland) *Pseudo Yoik NT* (text:

composer; ttttbbbb; 2'15; Fazer) Good fun for singers as well as for listeners – rather fast piece in the style of Finnish Yoik-music

- **Franz Biebl** (Germany) *Ave Maria...Angelus Domini* (sacred; ttbb + solo TBarB; 6'; Wildt) For sure one of the most beautiful and effective pieces of choral music. Can be performed in mixed version as well as for female and for male choir.
- **Mathieu Neumann** (Germany) *Der Feuerreiter* (Ballad by Eduard Mörike; ttbb; 5'; Ferrimontana) A very 'colourful' setting of a mysterious, spooky story by a German romantic composer.
- **Urmas Sisask** (Estonia) *Miserere mei, Deus* (Psalm 51; ttbb; 4'; Warner/Chappell) Effective combination of Bach-like polyphonic and harmonically interesting homophonic sections.

Matti Hyökki

Finland; Conductor emeritus of the YL Male Voice Choir (1980-2010) and the Laulu-Miehet Male Choir

- **Jean Sibelius**, *Hymnus / Hymn / Natus in curas* (Fridolf Gustafsson in Latin; ttbb; 1'40; Breitkopf & Härtel). The text by F. Gustafsson was a tribute to a deceased colleague in recognition of his work for his people. The homophonic texture echoes the cadences of classical Roman poetry. The harmonies are marvellous, and differ from Sibelius' other 'national style' choral pieces.
- **Leevi Madetoja**, *De Profundis*, op. 56 (Psalm 130; Latin; ttbb; 6'40; Laulu-Miehet r.y.). This four-movement psalm is one of the finest items in Finnish chorale literature. The pure, classical part-writing constructs an overall form that simultaneously bears a Hellenic

lucidity and an Oriental mystery. Baritone solo in the second movement. Parts can also be sung separately.

- **Selim Palmgren**, *Darhulas gravsång /Darhula's Burial Song*, (James McPherson; translation in Finnish-Swedish by J. L. Runeberg; ttbb; 3'50; Gehrman's). *The Song of Ossian*, written by Scotsman James Macpherson and passed as the work of an ancient Irish poet, has fascinated readers for over 200 years. In Palmgren's score, the divisi tenors repeat the name of the dead maiden. The composer makes the listener almost believe that the girl will rise from her bier!
- **Einojuhani Rautavaara** (Finland), *Ave Maria* (liturgical; ttbb; 3'24; Warner/Chappel Music Finland Oy). Rautavaara's early four-voice work from the 1950's in his adaptive twelve-tone techniques is outrightly beautiful and not too demanding. Long, peaceful melodic lines are pure prayer. Suitable even for ensembles.

Diane Loomer

Canada; Founding Artistic Director, Chor Leoni

- **Bob Chilcott**, *Five Ways to Kill a Man* (Edwin Brock; English; ttbbb & percussion; 5'30; Oxford U. Press). A piece written brilliantly for men's choir that utilizes completely the sonority and sounds, strengths and expression that are unique to male choirs. Chilcott's composition captures the chilling message of the poem with remarkable craftsmanship.
- **Veljo Tormis** (Estonia), *Incantatio maris aestuosi / Incantation for a Stormy Sea* (the *Kalevala*; Latin; ttbb div; 8'; Fazer). Tormis is able to take ancient Estonian folk traditions and melodies, and incorporate them into fascinating choral works that are a pleasure to sing,

hear and conduct. *Incantation* builds a very realistic portrayal of men caught in a storm at sea, praying for calmer winds and safe harbor for their vessel.

- **Jaroslav Kricka** (Czech Republic), *Zornicka / The Morning Star*, Op. 28 (trad. Czech; ttbb div; 9'; Hudebne Matice). Kricka is one of those rare composers who has a real affinity for the expressive possibilities and sonorities of a male voice choir. The language is difficult (Czech) but the smiles from the listeners, and even more so from the singers, make the struggle very worthwhile.
- **trad. Scottish, Jonathan Quick**, arr., *Loch Lomon* (trad. Scottish; English; ttbb div; 6'; Cypress Choral Music). This is without question, the best arrangement I know of this treasured melody. Quick has managed to capture both the poignancy and affirmatively strong sense of country that's found in this piece. Every singer has a great line to sing in this arrangement.
- **Gunnar Idenstam** (Sweden), *Oh Kristus valgus oled sa / O Christ, holy is He* (trad. Estonian; ttbb + organ; 5'; Gehrman's Musikforlag WC1601286). You'll need a great organist to play this piece for men's choir and organ, based on an Estonian tune, by Gunnar Idenstam, a great Swedish jazz organist. The piece starts with a jazz-like tune set by the organ's bass pedals. Above this emerges a rather dark, chant-like melody, sung first by the basses and then harmonized in parallel chords by the entire choir. The organ and the choir both go on to improvisational sections, finally ending with brilliant flourishes from organ while the choir sets solid chords to support the harmonies.

Jan Schumacher

Germany; conductor, *Camerata Musica Limburg* and *HARMONIE*

Lindenholzhausen male vocal ensembles; vice-chair of Music Commission, European Choral Association – Europa Cantat

- **Franz Schubert** (Austria), *Wein und Liebe* (J. Chr. F. Haug; ttbb; 3'30; Ferrimontana EF 1197). It is a fresh and lively work of music about "wine and love" that attracts very much both singers and audience.
- **Mathieu Neumann** (Germany), *Abendfriede am Rhein* (Max Beyer; ttbb; 4'; Cappella CA-2042). A beautiful late romantic "sound-painting" about an evening at the river Rhein. Neumann is a forgotten master of male choir music and his works are worth discovering!
- **Robert Sund** (Sweden) *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (William Wordsworth; ttbb; 4'; Schott C-53576). This composition (2009) has a light, breezy and sometimes dancing-like sound, that feels almost weightless.
- **Kurt Bikkembergs** (Belgium), *Schlaflied* (Rilke; ttbb; 4'; Schott C-53578). A very sensitive and silent work, which astonishes through its wonderful harmonic colors and through the thrilling power of silence within the composition.

Robert Sund

Sweden: Composer, former conductor of Orphei Drängar, Uppsala, Sweden

- **Hugo Alfvén** (Sweden), *Aftonen / Evening* (Herman Säterberg; Swedish; ttttbbbbb, 4'; Gehrmans / Walton / Ferrimontana). This work by the Swedish master composer Hugo Alfvén is published by 3 different publishers in different languages. It describes a calm evening in the countryside, where you can hear sounds echoing from hilltop to hilltop, as the cattle are called home for the evening.

- **Toivo Kuula** (Finland), *Iltapilviä / Evening clouds* (V.A. Koskenniemi; Finnish; ttbb, 3'; Fazer Musik). A song with a very rich and resonant sound, where Kuula uses all the forces of a good male ensemble: dynamics from pp to fff, tight impressionistic harmonies and a tessitura ranging from the top tenors high Bb-flat to the second basses low Bb.
- **Veljo Tormis** (Estonia), *Kolm mul oli kaunist sõna* (Paul-Eerik Rummo; Estonian; ttbb + flute, 5'; edition49 #06125-10). A warm and delicate setting of a wonderful poem by Rummo. The flute has an important part both as soloist and accompanist to the choir.
- **Camille Saint-Saens** (France), *Saltarelle* (Émile Deschamps; French; ttbb, 5'; Durand). Fun to sing and fun to listen to! The title alludes to a popular Italian dance in a rapid 6/8 rhythm and the text describes a village feast.

Timothy C. Takach

USA; Composer; singer and co-founder of Cantus

- **Leevi Madetoja** (Finland), *De Profundis* (Psalm 130; Latin; ttbb; 5'30' Sulasol). I love how efficient Madetoja is in his composing. There are 4 short movements in this five and a half minute piece, and each one encompasses it's own energy and character without losing efficacy. Contemplative, moving, and gorgeous.
- **Eric William Barnum** (USA), *I Come Singing* (Jacob Auslander; English; ttbb + shaman drum; 3'; Graphite Publishing). This piece uses driving rhythms and ostinati to create an exciting concert opener. It's a piece singers can really sink their teeth into and perform with great passion and energy.

- **Kenneth Jennings** (USA), *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* (Dylan Thomas; English; ttbb; 3'; Kjos Music). A fantastic setting of a very familiar poem. So palpable in the text, the conflict and outrage is captured perfectly in the music. This piece allows each section of the choir to fully engage the melody, and it explores the full range of the changed male voice.

And from the editor's desk...

- **Moses Hogan** (USA), *Plenty Good Room* (trad., African-American; English; ttbb + T; Hal Leonard)
- **Robert Kyr** (USA), *Veni Creator Spiritus* (trad.; Latin; ttbarbarbb; ECS Publishing 6501)
- **Colin Mawby** (UK), *O Emmanuel* (text: trad.; Latin; Edition Music-Contact 209008)
- **Kuldar Sink** (Estonia), *Requiem aeternam* (liturgical; Latin; ttbb; 7'; Antes #00363)
- **Branko Stark** (Croatia), *Molitva / Prayer* (Croatian, Istrian dialect; ttbb; 3'30; www.bestMusic.hr)
- **Muammer Sun** (Turkey), *Köroğlu Yiğitlemesi* (trad. 16c; Turkish; ttbb + B solo; mss from composer, msun@hacettepe.edu.tr)
- **Joan Szymko** (USA), *I Look Long and Long* (Walt Whitman; English; ttb + piano; Virditas VMP013)
- **Gwyneth Walker** (USA), *I've Known Rivers* (four settings of poems by Langston Hughes; English; ttbb + piano; 12'; ECS Publishing 7297-7300) – 1. My Soul Has Grown Deep; 2. Troubled Water; 3. Jump Right In!; 4. In Time of Silver Rain.

ACDA Men's National Honor Choir (Peter Bagley, conductor)

arr. Robert DeCormier, *Rainbow 'Round my Shoulder*; (ttbb; Lawson-Gould, 4813762)

arr. Peter Sozio, *El Yivneh Hagalil / Song of Galilee*; (ttbb; Boston, 105052)

arr. Jason McCoy, *Come Ye Thankful People, Come*; (mss)

arr. Shaw / Parker, *What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor*; (Lawson-Gould)

Arthur Sullivan, *The Long Day Closes*; (CPDL)

Joseph Martin, *The Awakening*; (ttbb; Shawnee, C-286)

ACDA Male Choirs – concert repertoire

Lajos Bárdos, *Dana-Dana*; (ttbb; Editio Musica Budapest, EMB Z20)

Mason Bates, *Observer in the Magellanic Cloud* (mss)

Richard Burchard, *Creator alme siderum*; (mss)

Pavel Chesnokov, *Duh Tvoy blagiy / Let Thy Good Spirit*; (ttbb; Musica Russica, Cn 181mc)

Tom Fettke, *The Majesty and Glory of Your Name*; (Word, 3010122160)

Ippolitov-Ivanov, arr. Chesnokov, *Blagoslovi, dushé moyá Ghóspoda* (ttbb; Musica Russica, Ip004mc)

Hammerstein / Kern, arr. Robinson, *Ol' Man River*; (Hal Leonard, HL 08621461)

Jacob Handl, *Ascendit Deus*; (CPDL)

Jacob Handl, *Confirma hoc, Deus* (Alliance, AMP0396)

Howard Helvey, *O sacrum convivium!* (mss)

arr. Howard Helvey, *Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho* (ttbb, pf)

4hand; Beckenhorst Press, 1875)

Kenyan-traditional, **arr. Kirchner**, *Wana Barak a* (tttbbb; Santa Barbara, SBMP807)

Koren / Hoff, arr. Brad Holmes, *Oh, Sing Jubilee* (ttbb; Morning Star, MSM-50-2611)

Morten Lauridsen, *Sure on This Shining Night* (ttbb, pf; Peer Music, 0124115)

Erika Lloyd, *Cells Planets* (ttbb; Hinshaw HMC2280)

Larry Nickel, *The Storm Is Passing Over*; (ttbb, pf; Cypress, CP1079)

Paul Nelson, *A Lullaby*; (ttbb; Broude, RM 2053)

A. R. Rahman; arr. Sperry, *Wedding Qawwali*; (earthsongs)

Steven Sametz, *Three Mystical Choruses** (tb semi-chorus, ttbb; EC Schirmer, 7711, 7712, 7713)

*The 2011 Raymond W Brock Memorial Commission (premiere)

Peter Schickele, *Jonah's Song*; (ttbb; Elkan-Vogel, 362-03303)

Richard Strauss, "Fröhlich im Maien" from *Drei Männerchöre*; (ttbb; Boosey & Hawkes)

Randall Thompson, *The Last Words of David*; (ttbb, pf; E C Schirmer, 2154)

Eric Whitacre, *Lux Aurumque*; (ttbb; Walton, WJMS1064, HL08501528)

Mack Wilberg arr., *Cindy* (mss)

Chen Yi, *Spring Dreams* (satb; Theodore Presser, #312 – 41745)

mss = unpublished manuscript

CPDL = Choral Public Domain Library

IMSLP = Petrucci Music Library for “public domain” scores –
<http://imslp.org/>

Alliance – <http://www.alliancemusic.com>

Beckenhorst Press – <http://www.beckenhorstpress.com>

Fred Bock – <http://www.fredbock.com/>

Boosey – <http://www.boosey.com>

Breitkopf & Härtel – <http://www.breitkopf.com>

earthsongs – <http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/>

EC Schirmer – <http://www.ecspublishing.com/>

Cappella – www.cappella-musikverlag-gera.de

Cypress Choral Music –
http://web.me.com/larrynickel/Cypress_Choral_Music/Home.html

Editio Musica Budapest – <http://www.emb.hu>

edition49 – <http://www.zzz.ee/edition49/>

Fazer – <http://www.fennicagehrman.fi/sheet.php>

Ferrimontana – <http://www.ferrimontana.net/>

Gehrmans Musikförlag – <http://www.gehrmans.se/>

Graphite – <http://www.graphitepublishing.com/Music/B009.html>

Hal Leonard =- <http://www.halleonard.com>

Laulu-Miehet r.y. – <http://www.laulumiehet.fi/>

Musica Russica – <http://www.musicarussica.com>

Peer Music – <http://www.peermusic.com>

Santa Barbara – <http://www.sbmp.com>

Warner/Chappel Music Finland Oy – <http://www.warnermusic.fi>