Appalachian Folksongs in the Choral Setting: Regional History, Traditional Performance Practice, and Guidelines for Arranging and Performance.

Title: Appalachian Folksongs in the Choral Setting

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The purpose of this study is to provide a conductor's analysis of a specific set of choral arrangements of Appalachian folksongs within a cultural context. The selected works share three common traits: (1) they are folksongs that were collected by Olive Dame Campbell, Cecil Sharp, Maud Karpeles, Robert Winslow Gordon, John Lomax, Alan Lomax, or Jean Thomas; (2) there are multiple field recordings available; and (3) they are in print as of March 2014. The author seeks to facilitate informed performance and arranging of these works and provide a general resource for conductors who have an interest in performing Appalachian folksongs. The study includes a discussion of the Appalachian region and its history. It examines the changing definition of the region's borders over the last century. The historical narrative also examines the relationship between the people and the land, Appalachian stereotypes, and labor and literacy. Seven significant collectors of Appalachian music, whose bodies of work provided the framework for this study, are highlighted. The narrative includes a brief history of collection in the region and the work of Francis James Child as a catalyst for folk collecting in the United States. This chapter documents key experiences in the collectors' lives that led them to Appalachia as well as their significance in advocacy and dissemination of the music from that region. Information on folksongs and their transmission, musical styles in Appalachia, and importance of instruments within the culture are provided. An overview of popular traditional instruments is given, comprised of the fiddle, banjo, dulcimer, guitar, mandolin, Jew's harp and mouth bow. The study identifies traits in performance practice, including singing style, vocal and instrumental timbre and performance traditions for specific types of songs. Ten Appalachian folksongs, which this study centered around, are discussed in reference to field recordings that were accessed by the author at the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. These songs are "Barbara Allen," "Cindy," "The Cuckoo," "Frog Went a-Courting," "John Henry," "Old Joe Clark," "Paper of Pins," "Pretty Polly," "Pretty Saro," and "Sourwood Mountain." This chapter also includes an analysis of the vocal sound and style characteristics found in the sound recordings. Choral arrangements of the ten selected folksongs are examined with respect to findings from the field recordings. This analysis is placed in a rubric created by the author and includes information from the sound recordings as well as the choral arrangement. The key elements analyzed are meter, tempo, melody, text, accompaniment, dialect and ornamentation. The study concludes with a set of guidelines for future arrangers of Appalachian folksongs. The narrative includes a discussion on what background study is necessary prior to arranging music from another culture. Finally, each of the seven elements from the rubric are discussed with regard to what is traditionally found in Appalachian music to inform the practices of arrangers and conductors of choral music.
Advisory Committee: André Thomas, Professor Directing Dissertation; Frank Gunderson, University Representative; Judy Bowers, Committee Member; Kevin Fenton, Committee Member; John Geringer, Committee Member.

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