

Criteria for selection of anthems for the Choral Library

Church Music Institute

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The text provides the starting place for evaluation of any anthem selected for the Choral Library. Language has great power, therefore

Texts should

- be sacred and teach a biblical truth. Many are direct quotations of scripture that refer to biblical events or liturgical practices associated with the scripture.
- be of highest quality in literary expression, theological teaching, and beauty of language.
- provide a measure of transcendence that raises the level of corporate worship or personal devotion to a high degree of understanding and value.
- provide spiritual enrichment, a sense of intellectual growth, and nourishment of thought. Trite, unimaginative, repetitious texts are less successful in raising excellence in worship.
- show a commitment to inclusive language for the people of God and avoid the use of male pronouns for God.
- be diverse so that worship may offer varieties of texts such as laments and praise, historical and modern, stories of people in biblical history, texts of different nationalities, races, and ages that birthed our culture and teach the richness that is in God.
- include those of corporate commitment and personal devotion.

Musical settings of sacred texts should

- enlighten the text
- raise the text to a higher level of understanding and beauty than the text alone can achieve. If this purpose is not accomplished, the text may as well have been read.
- give the text a sensual communication that enters the consciousness and memory bank of the listener.
- demonstrate melodic beauty and inventiveness.
- exhibit developed craftsmanship in compositional skills.
- reveal imagination in setting the text for voices and instruments.

The success of sacred music depends on music's sensitivity to text and the ability of both music and text to contribute positively and effectively to its purpose.

- Failure to do this from either the perception of text or music renders the product less meaningful and inefficient.
- Music has the inexplicable ability to communicate emotions and feelings on a level of personal comprehension so as to raise understanding of heart and soul to a level of wholeness.

Every composer of sacred music has the responsibility of assisting the believer toward God.

- Taking shortcuts by using elements of secular music to manipulate believers to feel sensational results often leads to music of sentimentality (the casual use of emotional, simple, secular style expressive effects) and pretentiousness (reproducing the effect achieved in another person's music).

- Care must be taken in the adoption of recognizable secular musical styles with sacred texts because their secular associations will follow into worship. Those associations may compromise or eliminate the sacred purpose and function of the text.
- Worshipers can be taken away from worship.