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Tell Me There's More to Hear & See- "yahamba"

by Russell Seaton, R & S Chair for Multicultural Music



I'll admit it's a great tune and wonderful way to engage and introduce students to music of another culture. Most of us have taught *Siyahamba* (if not, follow us lemmings), but have you ever felt stuck in a rut when it comes to selecting new and interesting multicultural music? Do you find yourself wondering, "What else is there that my choir can handle?"

It takes time and effort to find music of another culture that is both edifying, educational, and let's face it, doable. But with many composers and publishers that specialize in multicultural music and strive to make available music that may be more obscure in today's world, it is becoming easier to embrace the richness of music from other lands and perform it with great success.

In my sixth year of teaching, I have discovered that students hunger for something new. They jump at the opportunity to learn a new language, a new musical structure, a new story, and a new facet of human existence. And yet, we as educators often steer away from music due to its difficulty level and even perhaps the language itself.

I have done it myself: found a great piece of music, checked out the structure, thought my kids would love it, and put it away. Why? Well, for one, Mongolian is hard to read! And have you ever tried ancient Celtic?

Never fear, there are some great resources out there. I have to admit, I like the research. I love to dive into other cultures and discover how much I don't know about this world, and that along with my students, I can learn so much more through choral music. But for those who shy away from the *Sturm und Drang* of research, I hope that the sites and information below is helpful and shortens your "search-experience." They are merely a stepping-stone, and each site has links that will enhance your ability to find fun and educational multicultural music.

Earthsongs Publications – www.earthsongsmus.com

We all know this publisher. You can usually count on hearing an Earthsongs piece at any concert. Ron Jeffers and others who have developed and strengthened *Earthsongs* into the powerhouse of multicultural publications

that it is have done incredible things in transcribing and notating music from the heart of other cultures. They supply diction tapes/CDs for all languages as well.

Musica Russica – www.musicarussica.com

Russian, Ukrainian, Estonian and more! I had the pleasure of talking with a sales agent at their booth at this year's American Choral Director's National Convention and was enthralled by the amount of music available for all voices. And the best part... not every Russian piece requires a bass to sing a C below the bass clef! I found some great treble music and children's music that is VERY helpful. They also offer tapes/CDs of the songs spoken language at \$15.00. These tapes can be duplicated at no extra charge. It's time I try *Tchaikovsky for Trebles!*

Santa Barbara Music Publishers – www.sbmp.com

Another company we all know, Santa Barbara has become a leader in multicultural music recently. Not only do they carry composers such as Eric Whitacre and David Childs, they are also spreading out to embrace composers raised and educated in cultures with little to no western influence. They have many CDs and sound recordings available for purchase.

Transcontinental Music Publishers – www.etranscon.com

“The World's Leading Publisher of Jewish Music since 1938.” Many of us, myself included, are timid when it comes to presenting Jewish music. It is specialized, and the language may be easy to read, but it is difficult to pronounce correctly. This site offers help to those whom might otherwise turn away from the performance of Jewish music. Diction tapes, huge catalogue, this site has it all.

World Music Press – www.worldmusicpress.com

Where would we be without the WMP? Diversity and a broad range of cultures are offered and you can search by continent or by country.

Laurendale Associates – www.laurendale.com

Interested in Czech music? Laurendale offers a list of possible songs ranging from SA to SATB in its Czech Choral Series. It also features music from other origins.

Emory University –

<http://www.pitts.emory.edu/theoarts/multi/country.html>

This site will get you to almost anywhere you want to go. A great resource for handpicking any culture you are interested in.

Good luck and remember, the resources for accomplishing a piece of music are out there. Talk to your local ESL program (English as a Second Language) and they can help to point you in the right direction, if language has become a thorn in your side.

And let's not forget about our own culture. A teacher of mine once told me that "multicultural music includes music from our own country. We are a melting-pot... let us embrace the cultures that we come face to face with every day."