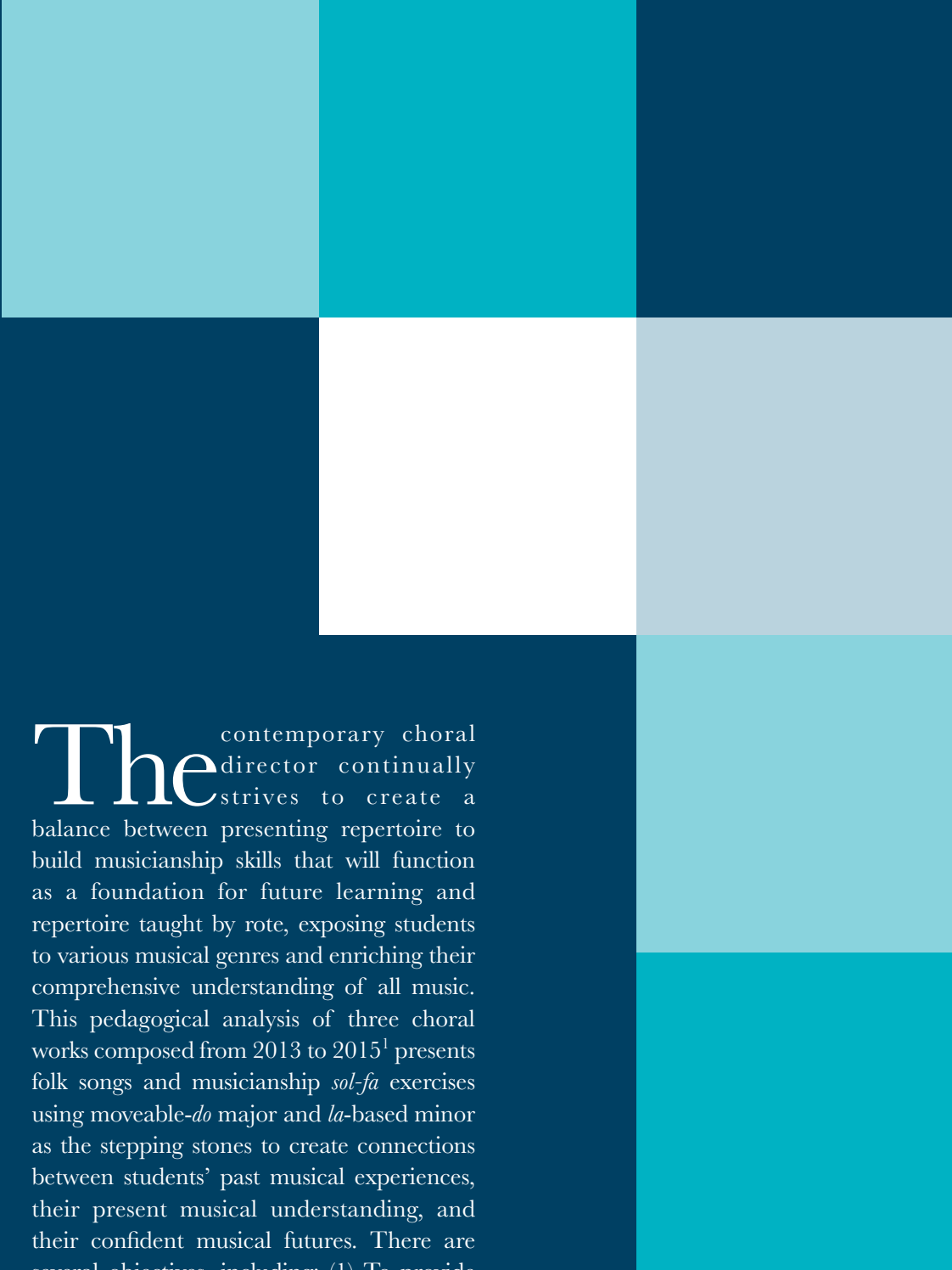


Literacy in the Choral Classroom

A Pedagogical Analysis Celebrating Contemporary Choral Compositions

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The contemporary choral director continually strives to create a balance between presenting repertoire to build musicianship skills that will function as a foundation for future learning and repertoire taught by rote, exposing students to various musical genres and enriching their comprehensive understanding of all music. This pedagogical analysis of three choral works composed from 2013 to 2015¹ presents folk songs and musicianship *sol-fa* exercises using moveable-*do* major and *la*-based minor as the stepping stones to create connections between students' past musical experiences, their present musical understanding, and their confident musical futures. There are several objectives, including: (1) To provide suggestions for educators to efficiently incorporate literacy through performance repertoire; (2) To construct a template for a sequence that may be used with these specific pieces and choral selections in other styles. The sidebar on page 26 contains publisher and composer information for each work.

Pedagogical Sequence

“My first thing is just sitting down and having a first impression of how the work is put together, how it is organized.”²

All directors recognize that score study is necessary in the process of selecting appropriate performance repertoire. With numerous elements to consider, score study promotes analytical and aural musical organization, which results in confidently guided students. Although the pieces from 2013, 2014, and 2015 were composed for different level choirs, this observation process has allowed for consistencies to arise and suggest a pedagogical sequence identifying certain elements for literacy.

It can be overwhelming to consider teaching an entire octavo from a music literacy perspective, with many directors recognizing that extracted elements and sections may be carefully taught by rote. Rote teaching comes in various forms and must be presented mindfully. Teaching musi-

cal content using the piano or as a singing-echo exercise are common procedures, but many directors are cautious regarding overuse of these techniques and instead allow time for students to audiate the music.

Audiation, a term used by Edwin E. Gordon, is the process of listening, understanding, and recalling music that has already been played, or bringing to mind without singing out loud a series of musical patterns that are newly created.³ Audiation is a common technique used in successful choirs and gives students the time to make their own musical decisions without relying on the piano or the more experienced students.⁴ Music educators recognize that literacy in performance repertoire needs to be supported with past and new experiences. “Using the Socratic principle that knowledge cannot come from without, exercises and explanation should be drawn from events of daily life. By presenting such exercises or points of reference, the conductor follows a direct train of thought from familiar daily life to unfamiliar singing circumstances, from shared experience to uncharted adventure.”⁵

Making the determination between teaching certain elements by rote and certain elements to build music literacy is unique to each ensemble and director based on the experiences and repertoire previously studied. Rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic pedagogical sequences are also unique to each director and will most certainly inspire decisions. The pedagogical analysis of the pieces for this paper is not for a specific choir but is based on experiences with my own choirs and consultation with colleagues and observation of choirs at all levels. The sequence is as follows: (1) *My Fairest Child*, 2015; (2) *The Land of Nod*, 2014; (3) *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*, 2013.

Composer and Publisher Information

2013, *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*,
by Sidney Marquez Boquiren,
for the Women’s Choir, grades 9-12.
Premiere directed by Martha Shaw.
SSAA, boquiren@adelphi.edu

2014, *The Land of Nod*, by Paul Hennessee,
for the Children’s Choir, grades 4-5.
Premiere directed by Joan Gregoryk.
SSA, www.paulhennessee.com

2015, *My Fairest Child*, by Franklin Gallo,
for the Youth Choir, grades 6-8.
Premiere directed by Anne Tomlinson.
Hal Leonard,
Henry Leck Creating Artistry Choral Series,
SSA, 00153578

Elements of the Sequence:

Range, Meter, Rhythmic Content, Key, Melodic Elements

The initial analysis of each piece identifies voicing, range, meter, rhythmic elements, key, and melodic elements (Table 1). These pieces are for treble choirs, so the arrangements are for soprano and alto in various combinations. Range is indicated but is not the determining factor of difficulty regarding the sequence. In fact, the range

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for the youth choir piece, *My Fairest Child*, extends both higher and lower than the range in the children's choir piece, *The Land of Nod*, yet *My Fairest Child* is first in the sequence because of other musical elements. That is not to imply that range is unimportant, because it certainly is a significant factor for many ages and levels of choirs. Each director will need to consider the musical ranges and abilities of their students before selecting a piece, but as this sequence focuses on rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic musicianship skills, range has not influenced the order of pieces.

Meter is a factor in the sequence, beginning first in simple meter, 4/4 in *My Fairest Child*. Simple meter is used again in *The Land of Nod*, yet the eighth notes are performed with "swing," as indicated on the score, foreshadowing the compound meter that makes an appearance in the middle section of the piece. Simple meter in 3/4 and 4/4 returns in *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*, at times feeling the 3/4 as one beat per measure, also referencing compound meter.

Rhythmic elements begin with the basics, including eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, dotted-half notes,

whole notes, sixteenth notes, the dotted-eighth/sixteenth, and the dotted-quarter/eighth, for *My Fairest Child*. The simple meter performed with swung eighth notes in *The Land of Nod* allows children to experience the feeling of compound meter while visually recognizing and understanding the simple meter notation. Students will visually experience compound meter notation in the middle section, which is primarily written with the dotted-quarter pulse note. The composer, Paul Hennessee, confirmed this observation and also noted that a more prominent purpose for the rhythmic notation is the theme of the text by Robert Louis Stevenson, which describes a child's dreams. Hennessee felt that swinging the subdivision of the pulse was a more appropriate way to depict the feeling of a dream through music.⁶

Psalm IX. With All My Heart returns to more elementary note values. The basic rhythmic notation provides high school women the opportunity to focus on the melodic contour of their part and the dissonance and resolution of the counterpoint. This is another confirmation that the composers were writing with great care and in consideration of the specific level choir that would be performing

Table 1

| | Voicing/ Range | Meter | Rhythmic Elements | Key | Melodic Elements |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| My Fairest Child | S1 a3-a5 S2 a3-g#5 A g3-e5 | Simple 4/4 | S, E, DE/S, Q, DQ/E, H, DH, W | Major D Major E Major | Leaps within and including the octave |
| The Land of Nod | S1 c4-f5 S2 c4-f5 A bflat3-dflat5 | Simple 4/4 Swung Eighths Compound 6/8 | SM: E, Q, DQ/E, TE, H, DH, W, Ties CM: DQ, DH, Q/E | Major/Minor F Major/F minor D minor | Mode Mixture or Modal Borrowing |
| Psalm IX. With All My Heart | S1 c4-c6 S2 d4-f5 A1 a3-c#5 A2 f3-c5 | Simple 3/4; 4/4; 3/2 Compound 3/4 in one | S, E, TE, Q, DQ, DQ/E, H, DH, W, Ties | Multiple Tonal Centers F, C, A, D-flat Chromaticism | Dissonance Modulation |

the piece.

The tonal centers and keys of these pieces move from diatonic major in *My Fairest Child*; to chromatic major and minor with mode mixture, or modal borrowing, in *The Land of Nod*; and chromatic major with modal Lydian tendencies along with modulation in *Psalm IX. With All My Heart. Psalm IX. With All My Heart* does not function within traditional major or minor keys but does have tonal centers and pitches, allowing for the use of relative *sol-fa*. The tonal sequence in these three pieces helps students experience a variety of sounds, relative *sol-fa*, and letter name syllables, moving toward an understanding of relative and absolute pitch.

There are numerous melodic content elements in all of these pieces, but those identified in the final column of

Table 1 have been selected as the literacy element for this analysis. Other directors may identify different elements appropriate for their own choirs based on the musical experiences of their students. The melodic contour in *My Fairest Child* uses larger skips within the octave, including the octave. Many elementary sequences generally discuss the addition of certain pitches and not intervals created—for example, a sequence that begins with *mrd* may then introduce *s* and then *l* followed by *d'* without discussing the actual intervals involved. However, because the melodic contour in *My Fairest Child* consistently uses larger skips, I have identified the octave as an interval to introduce, with supporting folk songs and *sol-fa* exercises.

The Land of Nod allows for the discussion of modal borrowing, as the melody moves from parallel major to parallel minor throughout. This also allows for comparison of major and minor *sol-fa* systems. *Psalm IX. With All My Heart* moves out of the diatonic system entirely but does maintain tonal centers. Using relative *sol-fa*, students will build confidence in the modulation process and absolute pitch. Other challenging elements in this piece are the chromatic melodic content and the dissonance between parts.

It is important here to note that in order to build confident literacy, directors must present the rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic elements separately, so as not to overwhelm students. Paul F. Roe supports this concept, and Chapter 6 of his *Choral Music Education*, 2nd ed. specifically discusses teaching rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic understanding as separate elements when building sight-reading and musicianship skills.⁷

***My Fairest Child* by Franklin Gallo, 2015**

Figure 1 is the main theme of *My Fairest Child*, which follows a piano and flute introduction. All three parts sing in unison for the main theme, notated here without the instrumental accompaniment. An informal sectional analysis of *My Fairest Child* follows: Section A (measures 1-21) is in D major with the main theme in unison; Section B (measures 22-31) is the secondary theme in two-parts; Section C (measures 32-49) is the main theme in two-parts, using the same text with a melodic variation; Section D (measures 50-69) is in E major, the main theme in three-parts, using a different text with a melodic variation.

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Pedagogical Determinations: Elements to Review

Dotted Notes and Rests

Pedagogical analysis determines that students are already familiar with most of the rhythmic elements but may need to review dotted notes and rests. In addressing the dotted notes, I often present the canon *Viva La Musica* by Michael Praetorius⁸ using two different rhythmic structures in the same meter, 4/4, with different pulses. The first presentation is six measures with a quicker pulse that uses the dotted-quarter/eighth. The second presentation is three measures with a broader pulse using the dotted-eighth/sixteenth (Figure 2). For pulse and rhythmic understanding, it is important that the students physically feel the rhythm while they are singing, either by standing and moving to the pulse or by tapping the pulse on their desks or laps. As James Jordan wrote in his article

in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, “All rhythm is learned kinesthetically. Rhythm that is thought is never learned. Only rhythm that is felt and experienced will be retained and used.”⁹ For this exercise have students step or tap to the quicker pulse first in the six-measure version, then step or tap to the broader pulse in the three-measure version exactly twice as slow so that the pulse changes but the speed of the notes remains the same. This exercise demonstrates the rhythmic similarity the dotted-quarter/eighth motive has to the dotted-eighth/sixteenth motive in relation to the pulse and the surrounding note values.

Viva La Musica is notated in Figure 2 with these two rhythmic structures in D major, the original key of *My Fairest Child*, for aural consistency and to prepare the tonal framework of the repertoire. Although *Viva La Musica* is consciously being used to support understanding of dotted rhythms, it may also be used to support a tonal connection with the repertoire to be studied. Even students

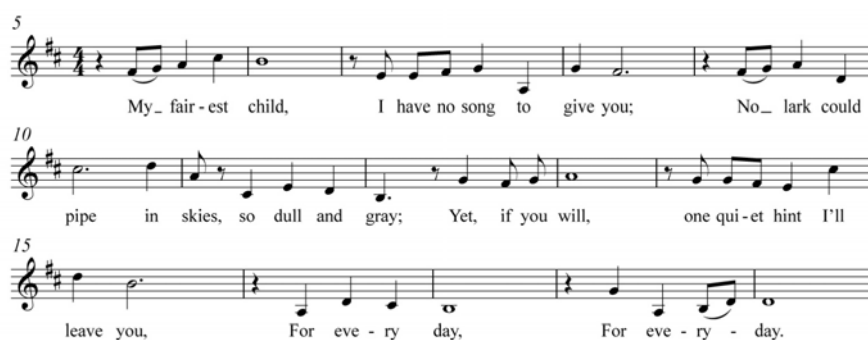


Figure 1. Franklin Gallo, *My Fairest Child*, mm. 5–19.
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Figure 2. Michael Praetorius, *Viva la Musica*

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who have not spent formal time with music in schools or private lessons will intuitively hear the relationships in tonal music because of popular culture. "Without the harmonic surroundings, a choir will not be able to place the scale construction within its appropriate...musical context."¹⁰ This also supports the recommendation that performance repertoire be sung only in the notated key and range unless a director is specifically working on melodic transposition. Maintaining this aural consistency will build a solid foundation of absolute pitch accuracy and recognition.

In *My Fairest Child*, the dotted notes occur primarily in all parts of the secondary theme, in measures 22-31. For performance accuracy, there is also a quarter note/eighth rest/eighth note notation in measure 30 that should be compared to the dotted-quarter/eighth rhythm.

Rests occur on different beats for different purposes throughout *My Fairest Child*, emphasizing the character

of the melodic structure through the lyrics by Charles Kingsley, and should be considered as important as the notes. Instructors who teach the exactness of the melodic rhythm will automatically indicate the rests with accuracy, and students will recognize the importance of sound against silence as it pertains to articulation and musical integrity. The scale and *sol-fa* exercises presented here were learned in my Kodály Certification training and throughout my years as a choral participant during my formal education and after. All exercises use the moveable-*do* system and have many variations, may be sung in any key, and should be adapted to the level and ability of the choir.

A *sol-fa* scale exercise that extends the anacrusis by an eighth note each measure will help with the review of rests, presented here in D major for aural consistency with *My Fairest Child* (Figure 3). Directors are encouraged to have students feel the beat by stepping or tapping the



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pulse of the exercise while singing to be sure they are accurately releasing the quarter notes on the second beat of each measure. This exercise also allows for a discussion on breathing, as measures 5-8 and measures 12-15 should be sung with one breath, from rest to rest.

Pedagogical Determinations:

New Literacy Element

Melodic Leaps Within and Including the Octave

The new element is large intervals including the leap of the octave, which occur throughout the melodic contour of *My Fairest Child* and require preparation for students to inner-hear and sing with confidence. The folk songs *'Liza Jane*¹¹ and *Sarasponda*¹² use the octave leap from *d-d'*. *Coffee*,¹³ a canon by Karl Gottlieb Hering, uses the octave leap from *s-s*. Note that *Coffee* should be sung initially in the original key of F major, identifying the absolute

itches of C-A-F-F-E-E. Once it is memorized, it should be sung in the key of D major, along with *'Liza Jane* and *Sarasponda*, for aural relationships and connections within *My Fairest Child*.

Interval *sol-fa* exercises using *d-d'* or *s-s* as the foundation and range will help students become physically comfortable with singing larger intervals, and recognize aural relationships between the larger intervals within the diatonic scale. Figures 4 and 5 sung in D major present actual melodic intervals performed in *My Fairest Child*. Additionally, these exercises will give students more confidence in recognizing the significance of tonic and dominant function and voice leading. For more advanced students, interval inversion may be discussed and the identification of the intervals may be added into the exercise by singing each interval twice before moving on to the next, saying/singing: *d-d'* perfect octave, *d'-t* minor second, *t-d* major seventh, *d-r* major second, *r-d'* minor seventh, and so on. I like to call this modified exercise



Figure 3. Sol-Fa Scale Exercise
to aid in the performance of rests

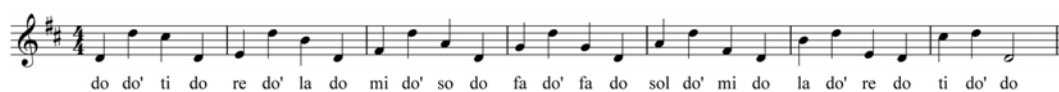


Figure 4. Sol-Fa Interval Exercise (Tonic)
recognizing aural relationships between larger intervals in the diatonic scale



Figure 5. Sol-Fa Interval Exercise (Dominant)
recognizing aural relationships between larger intervals in the diatonic scale

Interval Inversion Boot Camp.

An additional exercise that focuses on the octave and eliminates the larger skip by keeping all the notes of a melodic phrase in the same range—octave-displacement—may also be used. For this exercise, phrases are taken directly from the score and sung with the displaced note in the same range as the other pitches, and then with the actual notated pitch in the melody. Students use their aural understanding of the octave supported by the previously sung folk songs by audiating the octave-displacement while singing the exercise, providing more confidence when singing the notated pitch in the score. Figure 6 illustrates octave-displacement in measures 7-8 of *My Fairest Child*, first with the melodic notation from the score, and second, the exercise students would sing to prepare for the descending and ascending minor seventh *f-s, f* from *g4* to *a3* and back to *g4* (from the perspective of middle *c* as *c4*).

Figure 7 illustrates octave-displacement in measures 14-15, first with the melodic notation from the score, and second, the exercise students would sing to prepare the ascending major sixth *r-t* from *e4* to *c#5*.

Pedagogical Determinations: Rote Teaching Section D, measures 50-69

Section D, measures 50-69 in E major, is the main theme of *My Fairest Child*, in three-parts using a different text with a melodic variation, and has been determined in this analysis as the area that may be taught by rote. The theme is similar to the beginning of the piece, with canonic entrances and a slightly different rhythmic structure between parts. Singing or playing on the piano each individual part while students sing along uses precious rehearsal time and does not always effectively promote musical learning. Rote learning may be the perfect time to promote individual audiation. When audiating, “the body coordinates to phonate the sound imagined, a mental activity (requiring) immense concentration. When...the piano is used to accompany...the singer does not practice (audiation).”¹⁴ Drawing rhythmic and melodic connections between parts and encouraging those students who are not presently singing to audiate their part against the other gives time for individual understanding that will be reinforced when the director works specifically with their section. Rather than having students immediately sing back what has been sung or played, have them audiate one or two times through while maintaining a consistent

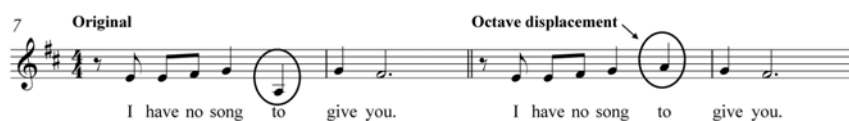


Figure 6. Franklin Gallo, *My Fairest Child*, mm. 7–8.
Octave displacement to teach wider intervals
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Figure 7. Franklin Gallo, *My Fairest Child*, mm. 14–15.
Octave displacement to teach wider intervals
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pulse—perhaps while the director plays a different part on the piano to maintain the tonal center—which will promote individual confidence. Hand Signs indicating pitch in relation to *sol-fa* are useful for multiple teaching strategies,¹⁵ which students may use while audiating the melody, giving the director an immediate indication of melodic understanding. Rote teaching is often necessary when a section of music requires a different approach, and engages students intellectually and aurally on many levels.

The Land of Nod by Paul Hennessee, 2014

Figure 8 is the main theme of *The Land of Nod* which follows a flute and piano introduction. An informal sectional analysis of *The Land of Nod* follows: An instrumental introduction begins the piece; Section A (measures 9-21) uses modal borrowing in F major and F minor with the main theme in unison, three- and four-parts; Section B (measures 22-30) maintains modal borrowing in F major and F minor, presenting the second verse in three- and four-parts; Section C (measures 31-60) is the secondary

theme in three-parts in D minor, compound meter; Section D (measures 61-71) transitions back to F major and F minor and simple meter, with the closing section of the story; Section E (measures 72-79) is a closing theme sung on “ooo” in three-parts.¹⁶

Pedagogical Determinations: Elements to Review Compound Meter

It is determined that students know the simple meter notation but may need a review of compound meter pulse, subdivisions, and notations in comparison with simple meter so they may more easily recognize the connection between the swung eighth notes they sing in simple meter and what is often described as the “swing motive” in compound meter, the quarter-note/eighth-note combination. One folk song that may be used to support this review is *Oh, How Lovely is the Evening*,¹⁷ which uses three different compound meter motives, including the quarter-note/eighth-note combination. Have students stand and move gently to the pulse while singing, which promotes recog-

(/)

S1 From break - fast on through all the day, At home a - mong my friends I stay, But

S2 From break - fast on through all the day, At home a - mong my friends I stay, But

A From break - fast on through all the day, At home a - mong my friends I stay, But

12

S1 ev - er - y night, I go a - broad, A - far in - to the land of Nod.

S2 ev - er - y night, I go a - broad, A - far in - to the land of Nod.

A ev - er - y night, I go a - broad, A - far, A - far in - to the land of Nod.

Figure 8. Paul Hennessee, *The Land of Nod*, mm. 8–18.

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inition of the pulse versus the subdivision of the pulse. Many students describe compound meter as having six beats per measure with the eighth note receiving the pulse. However, when students sway to the pulse while singing *Oh, How Lovely is the Evening*, it is unlikely they will sway to the individual eighth note.¹⁸ Once students are comfortable moving to the pulse while singing, have them gently tap the subdivision of the pulse on their leg. This process clearly separates the dotted-quarter note as the pulse and the eighth note as the subdivision.

If students require more of a review from a notational perspective, a director may use a process that transitions 3/4 into 6/8, with the folk song *Go To Joan Glover*.¹⁹ First tell students that there are two rhythmic motives in *Go To Joan Glover*, each lasting one full measure, and write them on the board, identifying them as Motive 1, the dotted-quarter/eighth/quarter, and Motive 2, three quarter notes. Then have students keep track of when the motives occur while listening to the conductor sing and while they all sing the song in 3/4. As a class, notate the rhythm of the song in 3/4 on the board then convert the

rhythmic notation to 6/8 by connecting each motive with a beam and erasing every other bar line. In 6/8, Motive 1 becomes the dotted-eighth/sixteenth/eighth motive, and Motive 2 becomes three eighth notes (Figure 9).

The dotted-quarter note is added to the list, drawing the connection to the dotted-half in 3/4, and the collection is finished with the quarter note/eighth note motive, which are both used in *Oh, How Lovely is the Evening*. The motives are organized as such: Motive A is the dotted-quarter note, which represents the pulse in compound meter; Motive B is three eighth notes, which represents the subdivision of the pulse and is the definition of compound meter; Motive C is the quarter/eighth, the swing motive; Motive D is the dotted-eighth/sixteenth/eighth, which I identify as the *Joan Glover* motive because there were more of these in the folk song (Figure 10). Sing *Joan Glover* in 6/8, standing and swaying to the pulse, as was done with *Oh, How Lovely is the Evening*. From then on when students review or learn a compound meter song, sight-sing in compound meter, or practice dictation in compound meter, the motives are discussed from this perspective and

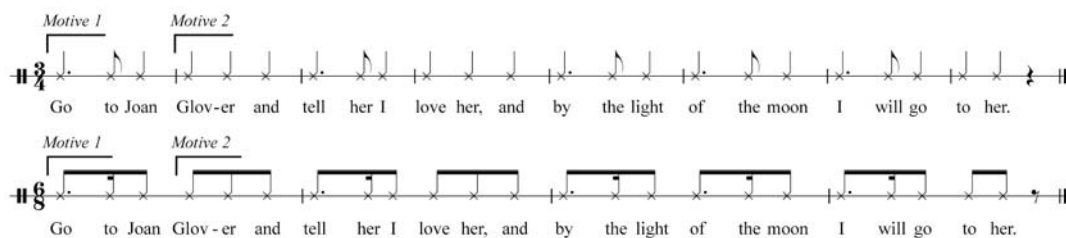
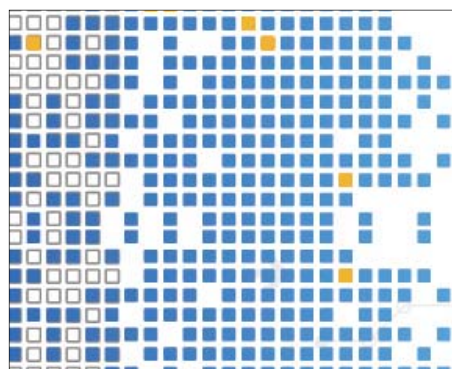


Figure 9. Folk song, *Go to Joan Glover*
Transitioning meters



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they begin to recognize that, with a few variations, these rhythmic motives are the foundation of most compound meter music.

Reinforcing understanding of compound meter continues with scale exercises on *sol-fa*, using each of the compound meter rhythmic motives, either consistently on each beat or with rhythmic variations on each beat (Figure 11). These scales may be presented in F major or F minor, which will support the tonal content in *The Land of Nod*. More advanced students could combine the major and minor modes, singing the ascending form of the scale in major and the descending form in minor, or

the reverse. To continue to promote understanding of pulse versus rhythm, students are still encouraged to step or tap the pulse while singing.

Pedagogical Determinations: New Element Mode Mixture/Modal Borrowing

The new element in *The Land of Nod* is mode mixture, or modal borrowing, which students understand at an early age as the comparison of major and minor, happy and sad, or bright and dark. From a theoretical perspective, modal borrowing involves raising or lowering scale degrees three, six, and seven, which are the pitches making the difference between parallel major and minor key signatures. For example, F major has one flat: B-flat. Modal borrowing would lower scale degree three, adding A-flat; scale degree six, adding D-flat; and scale degree seven, adding E-flat, creating the key signature for F minor. If

the piece began in F minor with all four flats and employed modal borrowing, then scale degrees three, six, and seven would be raised, leaving only the B-flat in the key signature for F major. It is not necessary to raise or lower all three scale degrees in order to have modal borrowing; this process allows for melodic options without the need to modulate to another key.

The melodic content at Section A in *The Land of Nod* is *s-d-r-m-s-l* and is altered slightly when the main theme employs modal borrowing (Figure 12). The piano accompaniment maintains B-flat and uses A-flat, A-natural, D-flat, D-natural, E-flat, and E-natural throughout this section, creating the feeling of a child's dream, which is the subject of the text by Robert Louis Stevenson.

*Bow, Wow, Wow*²⁰ and *Ida Red*²¹ are two familiar folk songs that use the same melodic content at the opening theme of *The Land of Nod*, with the

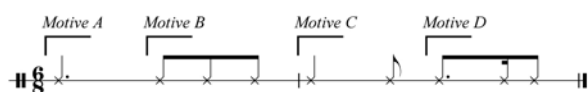


Figure 10. Compound Meter Motives



Figure 11. Sol-Fa Scales in Compound Meter

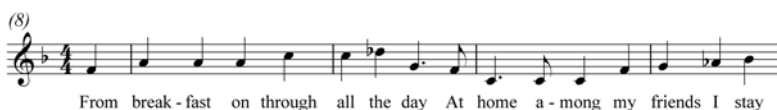


Figure 12. Paul Hennessee, *The Land of Nod*, mm. 8–12.

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exception of the low-*s*: *d-r-m-s-l* (Figures 13 and 14). It is quite interesting to sing these songs in both major and minor, and it allows students to compare the characteristics and quality of the differing sounds with familiar material. These songs are notated in the same meter as *The Land of Nod*, with similar rhythmic content, which promotes and creates multiple connections using the same material.

Comparing major and minor in *The Land of Nod* provides educators with the opportunity to introduce the *la*-based minor system to students, if it has not already been introduced. Have students sing a major scale ascending and descending from *d-d'-d* and then a minor scale ascending and descending beginning on the low-*la* of the original major scale, singing the octave *l-l-l* (Figure 15). This process helps students recognize the purpose behind relative *sol-fa* and opens the door to understanding modes.

“Solfège syllables used within a *la*-based minor system provide an almost immediate intuitive aural logic to even the most inexperienced singers, as long as syllables are always used with the entire harmonic structure being sounded at all time around them.”²²

Once students are comfortable with this process and the *sol-fa* in several ranges, have them sing parallel major and minor scales in the same range using *do* for the major tonic and *la* for the minor tonic, at first playing the harmonic foundation as an accompaniment, making a point to address the scale degrees that sound different. Depending on the level of the students, these scale degrees could be specifically correlated to the absolute pitches altered in the melody of *The Land of Nod*, if the scales are sung in F major and F minor.



Figure 13. Folk song, *Bow, Wow, Wow*
Modal Borrowing

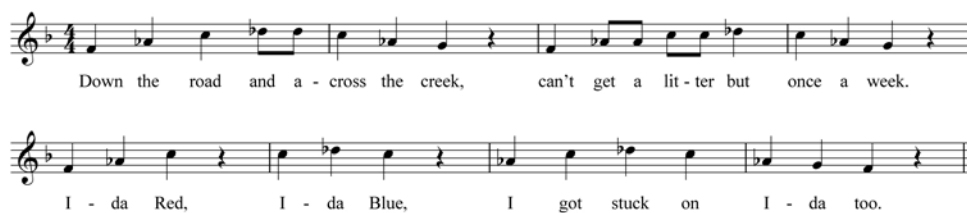


Figure 14. Folk song, *Ida Red*
Modal Borrowing



Figure 15. *Sol-Fa Scale Exercise*
Relative major and minor scales

Pedagogical Determinations: Rote Teaching Measures 15-31 and 50-79

Because of the three-part texture and more frequent use of accidentals, measures 15-31 and 50-79 in *The Land of Nod* may be taught by rote. Directors are again encouraged to use rote instruction time efficiently, draw visual and aural connections to previously learned material, and have students practice their audiation skills, keeping in mind the level of the choir and the abilities of the children. Balance rote instruction with music literacy and sight-reading, and students will more consciously recognize the transferable skills used in each process.

Psalm IX. With All My Heart by Sidney Marquez Boquiren, 2013

Figure 16 shows the vocal introductory section of *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*. The entire piece is performed without accompaniment. An informal sectional analysis follows: The introduction contains a tonal center of F=d with Lydian tendencies; Section A (m. 8-31) is C=d, in 3/4 but performed as one beat per measure; Section B (m. 32-54) returns to F=d and Lydian tendencies; Section C is brief (m. 55-58) with D-flat=d; Section D (m. 59-75) is A=d; Section E (m. 76-93) returns to C=d; Section F (m.

94-109) maintains C=d; Section G (m. 110-115) briefly returns to D-flat=d. The final two measures bring the tonal center back to C=d.

Pedagogical Determinations: Elements to Review Relative *sol-fa* in C=d, F=d, and A=d Chromatic *sol-fa*

Women's choir-age students know the rhythmic notation but may need a review of relative *sol-fa* in C=d, F=d, and A=d, along with chromatic *sol-fa* syllables.²³

Many choral pedagogues recommend using *sol-fa* in the choral rehearsal, from warm-up exercises to performance repertoire, to support sight-reading and music literacy. Christine Bruns states, "It is imperative that the skills practiced during the sight-reading sessions be transferred into the rehearsal of the concert literature, using a pitch system, for example, *sol-fa* syllables."²⁴ Hand signs used in the moveable-*do* system are an efficient way to reinforce melodic understanding. The use of hand signs also allows singers to experience the kinesthetic muscle memory motion that benefits instrumentalists. "The cornet player who pushes down certain fingers and associates certain pitches with those physiological sensations seems to learn to read more surely and accurately through this reinforcement."²⁵

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), and Alto 2 (A2). The music is in 3/4 time and consists of seven measures. The lyrics are: "With all my heart, O Lord, I will prayse Thee!". The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various note values and rests. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words underlined to indicate syllable placement.

Figure 16. Sidney Marquez Boquiren, *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*, mm. 1–7.
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The use of hand signs for vocalists is yet another connection supporting recognition of pitch function within the diatonic or chromatic framework of music.

Regarding chromatic pitches, singing the chromatic scale ascending and descending on *sol-fa* is a good review, but this exercise can become an instinctive activity requiring little intellectual and aural preparation. An alternate exercise is singing the penta-chord from *d-s* ascending and descending, adding one different chromatic pitch each time, for example *d-di-r-m-f-s-f-m-r-rah-d*, *d-r-ri-m-f-s-f-m-mah-r-d*, or *d-r-m-fi-s-sah-m-r-d* (Figure 17). Focusing on one chromatic pitch within a diatonic foundation requires immediate mindful engagement and a higher level of thought, both intellectually and aurally.

Pedagogical Determinations: New Elements

Dissonance and Modulation

A challenging element in *Psalm IX. With All My Heart* is dissonance, which is often avoided in the music classroom. Scales on *sol-fa* in canon could be used, except have students enter in canon at the interval of a second rather than the traditional third, ascending and descending the

scale (Figure 18). Singing the selected canons on *sol-fa* from *Classical Canons* entering on a beat that will create dissonance rather than consonance is another suggestion. Also, exercises using just *rd* or *mrd*, as in Zoltán Kodály's *333 Reading Exercises*, #1-19 and #48-55²⁶ can be helpful, singing on *sol-fa* in canon at one measure, which allows for the dissonance of major seconds to be experienced within an elementary rhythmic structure. The notes and range of *Psalm IX. With All My Heart* are not difficult for students at this level, but it is the combination of the parts that challenges singers, in some cases due to a lack of experience with dissonant sounds.

Modulation in music may be taught in many ways, and for some students hearing the tonic and dominant chords in the new key will suffice. But when the harmonic structure does not conform to standard tonal relationships, alternate strategies arise. Once students have reviewed sight-reading on *sol-fa* in the tonal centers represented in the repertoire, indicate the sections in which each tonal center is represented, and use *sol-fa* to assist in the transitions. Hand signs are an excellent way to demonstrate common tones in tonal centers. Use one hand to indicate the *sol-fa* in the original range, holding the hand in place on the last note. Bring the other hand up to the same



Figure 17. Sol-Fa Chromatic Scale Exercise



Figure 18. Sol-Fa Scale in Canon with Sequence

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level as the first, indicating the new *sol-fa* to be sung on that final pitch, and drop the first hand.²⁷ Continue in the new range with the new *sol-fa* system. Even though *Psalm IX. With All My Heart* does not have a traditional harmonic foundation, it may help students aurally identify with the new tonal center if that pitch—F, C, A, or D-flat—is sounded as a drone or pedal tone throughout the new section.²⁸

Pedagogical Determinations: Rote Teaching

Measures 52-60

Although most tonal centers and modulatory transitions in *Psalm IX. With All My Heart* may be easily understood at the women's choir level, measures 52-60 may more easily be taught by rote. This section includes the transition from F=*d* to D-flat=*d* in measures 52-54, and the transition from D-flat=*d* to A=*d* in measures 58-60.



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The presence of multiple accidentals at the transitions may visually challenge students who need more aural support. However, students may not require rote teaching in measures 55-57 once they are aurally centered in D-flat=*d*. Because of the combination of multiple advanced elements, including dissonance, chromaticism, and modulation, directors will most certainly want to make their own decisions based on score study and the experience of their own choirs.

Conclusion

For efficiency purposes this analysis discusses three commissions from 2013, 2014, and 2015. However, the first two commissions in the series, *To Make a Prairie* by Kenneth Carter²⁹ and *Eldorado* by Russell Nadel,³⁰ fit easily into the sequence. *To Make a Prairie* has a moderate range comfortable for a Children's Choir, from b3 to e5 for most of the piece (from the perspective of middle c as c4), with only the Soprano 1 singing f#5. The meter is simple 3/4 and 4/4, with a basic rhythmic content including eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, dotted-half notes, whole notes, and ties. The key is diatonic, in E major, and the more challenging melodic element is leaps within and including the octave. In this sequence, *To Make a Prairie* prepares *My Fairest Child*, as all of these elements are similar but just slightly less advanced.

Eldorado fits nicely between *The Land of Nod* and *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*, with similar range and voicing to *The Land of Nod*. The meter is entirely compound in 6/8 and 9/8, using a slightly more advanced rhythmic structure. *Eldorado* is a modal piece in Mixolydian and uses modal borrowing within Mixolydian as *The Land of Nod* does within diatonic major and minor. The use of Mixolydian in this piece also supports the recognition of tonal centers other than *do*-major and *la*-minor, preparing the multiple tonal centers in *Psalm IX. With All My Heart*.

Part of my educational philosophy is to lead students to the answer without actually giving them the answer, and I believe that taking the time to analyze performance repertoire supports this process. Analysis allows for literacy connections to grow as the instructor becomes more familiar with the repertoire, consequently passing the knowledge of these connections on to students. The analytical process should not be rushed; sometimes literacy connections are not immediately obvious but become apparent at unpredictable times. Selecting performance repertoire at least one season in advance also allows opportunities for preparatory enrichment in the rehearsal. When students are presented with folk songs and exercises well in advance of the performance repertoire, the skills to be applied become more natural and are sung with more musical confidence.

Because these pieces were composed within the last five years, I was able to correspond with the composers and the directors of the premiere performances, watch the premiere performances live and on DVD, and interview singers who participated in the premiere performances, along with their teachers. I have great respect for composers of all music and encourage choral directors to use not only the traditional pieces in their libraries but to also incorporate new works into their programs, creating literacy connections to contemporary compositional techniques, and supporting our musical colleagues in their compositional endeavors. After all, the music they are composing is for us and for our students to explore. 

NOTES

¹ The Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE) promotes the Ruth Boshkoff Composition Prize, an



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initiative begun in 2011 and sponsored by the Doug and Ruth Boshkoff family to encourage the composition of high-quality octavos for elementary, middle school, and high school choral groups. Each piece is composed for a specific level choir and premiered at the OAKE National Conference. See <http://www.oake.org/contests-and-awards/> for more information.

- ² Eduardo Garcia-Novelli, "An Interview with Robert Sund," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 11 (2007): 31.
- ³ Gordon describes the many facets of audiation in *Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content, and Patterns: A Contemporary Music Learning Theory* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012).
- ⁴ Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, "Choral Pedagogy and Vocal Health," in *Choral Pedagogy*, 2nd ed. (San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, 2006): 122-123.
- ⁵ Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, "The Rehearsal Process," in *Choral Pedagogy*, 2nd ed. (San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, 2006): 10.
- ⁶ Author's conversation with the composer.
- ⁷ Paul F. Roe, "Sight-reading," in *Choral Music Education*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983): 127-158.
- ⁸ Edward Bolkovac and Judith Johnson, *150 Rounds for Singing and Teaching* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1996): 51.
- ⁹ James Jordan, "The Literate Choir," in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, vol. 2, ed., Heather J. Buchanan and Matthew W. Mehaffey (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2007): 54.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ¹¹ Peter Erdei, ed. and Katalin Komlos, *150 American Folk Songs to Sing, Read, and Play* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1974): 45.
- ¹² Robert E. Kersey, *Just Five Plus Two* (New York: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp., 1955): 55.
- ¹³ Edward Bolkovac and Judith Johnson, *150 Rounds for Singing and Teaching* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1996): 9.
- ¹⁴ Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, "Choral Pedagogy and Vocal Health," 120.
- ¹⁵ Mícheál Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Kodály Today: A Cognitive Approach to Elementary Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008): 25, 118, 170, 179-180, 196.
- ¹⁶ When discussing the score with Paul Hennessee, he mentioned that although the score indicates that singers hum the closing theme, when he heard the children in a performance rehearsal for the premiere, he determined

that singing "ooo" was more appropriate.

- ¹⁷ Edward Bolkovac and Judith Johnson, *150 Rounds for Singing and Teaching*, 39.
- ¹⁸ James Jordan, "The Literate Choir," in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir*, vol. 2, ed., Heather J. Buchanan and Matthew W. Mehaffey (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2007): 57. James Jordan describes this process using "My County 'Tis of Thee," stating that although the music is notated in 3/4 time, the body will feel the pulse as one beat per measure.
- ¹⁹ Edward Bolkovac and Judith Johnson, *150 Rounds for Singing and Teaching*, 19.
- ²⁰ Peter Erdei, ed. and Katalin Komlos, *150 American Folk Songs to Sing, Read, and Play*, 18.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ²² James Jordan, "The Literate Choir," 47.
- ²³ *Classical Canons* compiled by Antal Molnár (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1955) contains many brief examples that would provide sight-reading practice and build confidence reading in these keys: In C major: #20 by Michael Praetorius on page 7 and #142 by Luigi Cherubini on page 56; in F major: #27 by Melchior Vulpius on page 9 and #85 by Padre Martini on page 31; and in A major: #28 by Johann Rudolph Ahle on page 9 and #40 by Antonio Caldara on page 14.
- ²⁴ Alan C. McClung, ed., "Master Teachers in Middle-Level Choral Music: Pedagogical Insights and Practices," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 5 (2006): 10.
- ²⁵ Paul F. Roe, "Sight-reading," 129.
- ²⁶ Zoltán Kodály, *333 Reading Exercises* (London: Boosey & Hawkes Co. Ltd., 1941).
- ²⁷ Mícheál Houlahan and Philip Tacka, *Kodály Today*, 214.
- ²⁸ James Jordan, "The Literate Choir," 47-53. Jordan discusses the use of relative *sol-fa* in music with modulations, using the harmonic framework as aural support for singers.
- ²⁹ 2011, *To Make a Prairie*, by Kenneth Carter, for the Children's Choir, grades 4-5. Premiere directed by Jon Noyes. Santa Barbara Music Publishing, SA, 1031
- ³⁰ 2012, *Eldorado*, by Russel Nadel, for the Youth Choir, grades 6-8. Premiere directed by George Stangelberger. Hal Leonard, Henry Leck Creating Artistry Choral Series, SSA, 114530