

Choral Music Through History

From Medieval Music to Hip Hop

A four week flexible unit
OMA-Wheeler Elementary, SS Choir
11/28/17-12/19/17

Objective: Students will familiarize themselves with choral music throughout history and will engage in individual and group assessment of preferences and reasons for preferences.

All students will need:
Paper, pencil, a place to sit where they can see the screen

Teacher will need:
Easy access to computer to flip slides, to click on video thumbnails for video samples. If these do not work, links are provided on each page.

Opening Thoughts

Choir: 3 or more people singing (sometimes one person on each voice part, sometimes hundreds)

Language: A lot (not all) of choir/choral music is in Latin because Latin was the written and spoken language of the Catholic Church for nearly 1500 years, and the church was a good employer for composers. Educated people could read and write in Latin to each other, no matter what language they spoke (English, French, German, Italian...).

Who Sings: For a long time, only men and boys sang. This means that boys had to work as hard as grown men to be the best singers they could be. The Catholic Church would pay singers to sing in church and believed that only men could be employed by the church. Now we have men and women, boys and girls singing in choirs. Choirs are for everyone!

Instruments: Instruments used to be thought of as not being as artistic or beautiful as the human voice. So, a lot of music just didn't include them or if they did-it wasn't written down. This changed about 400 years ago and now we have lots of choir pieces with HUGE orchestras.

Today, professional choir singers start studying as children. Many go to college for 1-3 college degrees after high school to train for singing or to become choral conductors. The average 35 year old professional choir singer already has 25-30 years of choir experience (Mrs. McNiff has 29 years of experience in choirs).

November 28th, 2017

Music in Choir Today

- Eric Whitacre-biggest name in choral music today. Composer, conductor, multi-millionaire.
- Professional Children as Singers
 - Trained to sing, paid professionally, as young as age 8
 - No girls-traditionally only young boys sang but that is starting to change now
- Choirs here in Tucson! Clip from the U of A and the Tucson Girls Chorus Advanced Choir
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- **Remember from last slide: a lot of what you will hear won't be in English-it will be in Latin. As much as 75%-80% of music written for choirs is in Latin, even today!**

Mrs. McNiff's Instructional Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HepEeoZF5oo>

Sample 1: Eric Whitacre Ted Talk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5w25-IEYo8>

Sample 2: Allegri Miserere, Children singing professionally

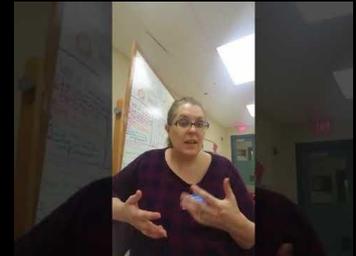
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX1zicNRLmY>

Sample 3: University of Arizona

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyhzlgOAOIo>

Sample 4: Tucson Girls Chorus Advanced Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzZholt-g5Y>



November 29th

Group Discussion and Writing

On Tuesday, you saw four videos:

1. Eric Whitacre and the Virtual Youtube Choir
2. Kings College Cambridge Boys and Men singing Allegri Miserere
3. University of Arizona Choirs preparing to sing in Europe
4. Tucson Girls Chorus Advanced Choir singing on tour in a concert

Create a group for each of the four videos and pick which video you liked the best (if any video has more than 8-9 students who liked it, form a second group for that video).

Elect 1-2 people to look up biographical information for your group:

1. Eric Whitacre
2. Kings College Cambridge Choir
3. University of Arizona Choirs and Bruce Chamberlain
4. Tucson Girls Chorus and Marcela Molina

Create a 3-5 minute presentation with your group discussing why you felt this was the best video and what you liked. Use the last 20 minutes of class for each group to present.

December 4th, 2017

Choir Music-Medieval

- Anything from the years 1180-1450
- Either written for the church or for Royalty because they could afford to pay composers for their work
- Instruments are rare

Samples

- Sumer is Icumen In, a round from the 13th century. This is in English but it's very different from what we speak today.
- Ave Maria Gratia by Josquin is called the "Musical Mona Lisa" because it is so beautiful.

Mrs. McNiff's Instructional Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CtUsNUosHk>

Sample 1: Medieval Music Sumer is Icumen In, ca. 1240-1285

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMCA9nYnLWo>

Sample 2: Renaissance Music, Josquin's Ave Maria (Motet) 16th century

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUNzi900ZJw>

After Listening

- What did you think?
- Did you like the sound?
- What did you think of the voices?
- How is this different from what you listen to?



December 4th, Discussion and Writing

Today you watched two videos:

1. Sumer is Icumen In, Medieval Music, sung by the Hillier Ensemble
2. Ave Maria Gratia Plena, a Renaissance piece composed by Josquin de Prez

First Step:

1. **Get together with a group (ideally three students each)**
2. **Decide as a group which video you preferred and why**

Together with your group, work together writing answers for the following questions

1. What did you hear?
2. Did it sound like music you liked or music you didn't like? Why or why not?
3. What adjectives would your group use to describe the video you selected?
4. What do you imagine life would have been like for the people who lived when this music was written?
5. Who do you imagine sang it first?

December 5th, 2017

Mrs McNiff's Instructional Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZM0euVwKKQ>

Choral Music from the Baroque to the Romantic Periods

- Baroque means “deformed pearl” it was a way to call the music overly fancy and ugly. This music was written from 1685-1750.
- Sample 1: Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah
- Romantic doesn't mean “loving”, it means trying to use sophisticated emotional art like the Romans once did. This music was written from 1825-1900.

Choirs began singing with orchestras in the early 1600s. By the time Handel wrote the Hallelujah Chorus in 1741, they were often expected. By 1800, choirs became much bigger.

In the first sample, watch everyone in the audience stand. Legend says that when King George III heard this music for the first time, his legs were cramping and he stood-so everyone in the room had to do the same!



Sample 1: Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI6dsMeABpU>

Sample 2: Dies Irae from the Verdi Requiem
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHw4GER-MiE>

December 5th, Discussion and Writing

Today you watched two videos:

1. Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah, written in 1741
2. Dies Irae from the Verdi Requiem, written in 1874

First Step:

1. Get together with a group (ideally three students each)
2. Decide as a group which video you preferred and why

Together with your group, work together writing answers for the following questions

1. What did you hear?
2. Did it sound like music you liked or music you didn't like? Why or why not?
3. What adjectives would your group use to describe the video you selected?
4. What did you notice most as being different from yesterday's videos? Do you like the change? Why?

December 11th, 2017

Link to Mrs. McNiff's Instructions Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=24&v=5bnEtCtufck

Musicals

Vaudeville acts were song and dance performances which were performed for lower classes of people. They were considered crude, but provided cheap entertainment. Eventually these developed into the ideas which later became **musicals**, where you sing, act and dance to tell a story (like opera). Musicals often have choruses, so we are looking at two today.

1. Annie is the story of a 10 year old orphan in 1930's New York. Here she is singing with her fellow orphans about life in the orphanage.
2. Hamilton is the story of Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States.



Sample 1: Broadway, Annie (1978 film version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0bOH8ABpco>

Sample 2: Hamilton at the 70th Tonys (Clean Version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5VqyCQV1Tg>

December 11th, Discussion and Writing

Today you watched two videos:

1. "It's a Hard Knock Life" from Annie, 1978 film
2. The 70th Tony Presentation performance from Hamilton

First Step:

1. Get together with a group (ideally three students each)
2. Decide as a group which video you preferred and why

Together with your group, work together writing answers for the following questions

1. What did you hear?
2. Both of these used choruses but had main characters, these choruses study their music just like choirs do. Do you think this would be easier or harder work than what you saw last week?
3. Do you prefer this over the music you heard last week? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the dancing and acting makes the music more interesting? Why or why not?

December 12th, 2017

Mrs McNiff's Instructional Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3uJtciyinc>

What are School Choirs Doing Today?

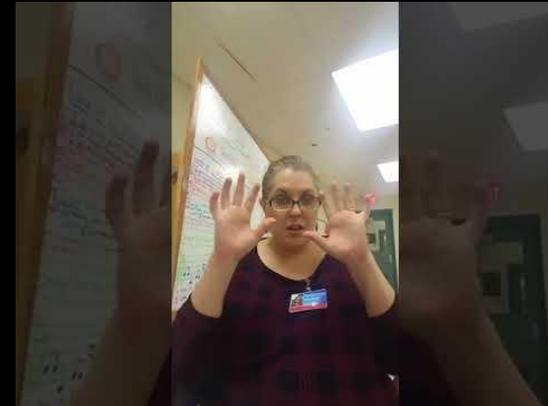
From Gospel, to composers like Eric Whitacre and Mozart, to arrangements of pop songs, students all over the United States are busy in choirs. Each year there are hundreds of festivals, competitions and conventions where students just like you compete and sing after practicing for months. Here are two very different concerts. Sample 1 is a choir singing a pop song in a traditional style, Sample 2 is a Gospel song.

Sample 1: Desert Canyon Middle School, Whip and Nae Nae

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6sPMBRO2d4>

Sample 2: Baltimore Cardinal Sheehan School

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEGEovFX534>



December 12th, Discussion and Writing

Today you watched two videos:

1. “Whip and Nae Nae” by Desert Canyon Middle School Choir
2. “Rise Up” by Baltimore’s Cardinal Sheehan School Choir

First Step:

1. Get together with a group (ideally three students each)
2. Decide as a group which video you preferred and why

Together with your group, work together writing answers for the following questions

1. What did you hear?
2. Both of these were school choirs. What was different in the way they performed?
3. What made you choose the video you liked better?
4. Think about the songs and decide which you’d rather sing as a choir.

December 18th and 19th

Link to Mrs. McNiff's Instructions Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX2i0hSV2qM>

This month, you've seen the following video samples of choirs:

1. Eric Whitacre, Lux Arumque and Sleep (youtube choir)
2. Kings College Cambridge Choir singing Allegri's Miserere (young boys)
3. University of Arizona Choirs (college choir)
4. Tucson Girls Chorus Advanced Choir (teen girls choir)
5. Sumer Is Icumen In, by the Hillier Ensemble (Medieval Music)
6. Ave Maria Gratia by Josquin de Prez (Renaissance Music)
7. Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah (Baroque Music)
8. Dies Irae from the Verdi Requiem (Romantic Music)
9. "It's a Hard Knock Life" from Annie (Musical)
10. Tony Awards performance from Hamilton (Musical)
11. Desert Canyon Middle School Whip and Nae Nae (Public School)
12. Baltimore's Cardinal Sheehan School Choir "Rise Up" (Public School)



Writing and Discussion:

1. Write one paragraph about your favorite and discuss why you liked it best (20 minutes)
2. With Ms. Mason's help, get into groups of other people who agreed with you (5-10 minutes). If you do not have a group, that is ok, be strong and argue for your favorite by yourself.
3. Prepare a strong argument for your favorite either in your group or alone if you are the only one who liked your selection. With Ms. Mason's help, each group should present on their preferred sample (20-40 minutes).

Just for fun

Karl Orff's beautiful work: Carmina Burana is written in Latin and the words are often misheard. There are many versions of what the words might be on youtube. Watch the first video, then enjoy the second. In reality, the words describe the Medieval Wheel of Fortune in which everyone has both good and bad moments in their life.



Sample 1: Karl Orff's Carmina Burana: O Fortuna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXF5K0ogeg4>

Sample 2: O Fortuna Misheard Lyrics Skit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96Uv4NA3K3w>

