

MTVA Freshman Treble Honor Choir
Vincent Oakes, Conductor - voakes@baylorschool.org

Friends:

I can't wait to be with you on January 31! We will have so much fun when we get together to make some incredible music. **PLEASE** be sure you have your music completely learned so that our time together is about making magical musical moments, and not just reviewing parts that should already be familiar to you. I have included some notes below (including some things to mark in your music indicated by the **red print**) that should help us, including some places where solo opportunities exist – if you would like to be considered, come prepared with your part learned (and preferably memorized).

Vic Oakes

Hold Fast Your Dreams - David Brunner (Boosey & Hawkes OCTB7123 / HL48004803)

- Be prepared to confidently sing the long phrases with a smooth, legato approach.
- Observe *no breath* marks where indicated, especially those on pages 1 and 2. We will *stagger* breaths across the choir so that it doesn't seem as though we are all breathing at the same time.
- Page 2 begins with a *poco rit.* (a little bit of slowing down) - so, at the end of page one, write in "**slow down / look up**"
- *No breath* between "apart" and "within" in measure 25
- *Breathe* between "heart" and "for" in measure 26

What If I Never Speed? - John Downland, arr. Russell Robinson (Carl Fischer CM9076)

- Rhythmic accuracy will be especially important in this piece, especially in small sections where one part's rhythm is slightly different than the others (meas. 3, 5, 7, and similar)
- Where phrases end before a quarter rest, put a STRONG consonant on the rest ("T" at the end of "part" in meas. 12)
- Write in "**zah**" over your part in measures 26 and 40, and write in "**mah**" in measures 29 and 43.

Beneath the African Sky – Paul Caldwell & Sean Ivory (CaldwellandIvory.com)

- This is a very poignant piece that will require great depth of musical understanding and maturity. **Please read the introduction on the inside front cover of the piece as you prepare for the performance.**
- Allow all beginnings of phrases beginning on the text "Oh" ("oh, little girl...", etc.) to **crescendo**
- Write in a breath after measure 83 between the words "sing" and "Oh"
- Write in "**OH**" over the word "Who" in your part in measures 24, 26, 28, 101, 103, and 105
- Students will introduce the song using portions of the introductory text (not memorized) – these are attached.

I Sing – Mary Goetze (Boosey & Hawkes / HL48021167)

- We will start a little faster than the stated tempo, probably closer to quarter = 76
- Verse 1 (meas. 3-18) and 2 (meas. 20-35) are essentially the same part-wise - a unison verse followed by SSA refrain
- Verse 3 (meas. 38-53) will be a **SOLO (possibly duet) opportunity** (do not learn the choral parts here)...please come prepared with the S1 part learned to this verse – preference is given to those who memorize!
- Verse 4 (meas. 55-end) is a glorious and joyful ending to this beautiful piece. Don't ever let it drop below **mf**
- Write in a *no breath* from "ways" to "that" in measure 57
- S2 and A – write an arrow going from left to right (➔) above your final half notes in measures 59 and 61.
- S2 and A – take the dot off of the rhythm for the word "life" in measure 73 (sing only for two beats)

Worthy To Be Praised – Byron J. Smith (Lawson-Gould 52654/ Alfred 42798)

- **MEMORIZED + ARTICULATIONS + EXCITEMENT = GREAT FUN!!!**
- Write in the following at the beginning section (meas. 1-8)..."**Tall, majestic, full**"
- In measure 13 and similar, take out the first eight note (the end of "high") out, and ACCENT the "(hi)". This should create actual space between the beginning "high" and the extra emphatic syllable.
- Circle the **[sfz]** in measure 20...this means to sing the note with strong emphasis, then to immediately back off...we will finish this off with a huge crescendo from "believe" to "in"
- **SOLO opportunities**...for those interested, please come prepared with the solos in measure 30-41...be big, bold, and passionate, but also be correct and use healthy vocal technique. You might also ad lib during measures 60-64.
- **Soprano I – learn BOTH the Soprano 1 and SOLO parts in measures 60-63**...we will split these on-site
- To get a general idea about the style of the piece, including interpretations of the solo, view the following clip (NOTE: these are of a different voicing of the piece, and some choirs take liberties with the repeat/coda)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrVUj_nsP4Y

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qfru_B6iGY

Introduction to “Beneath the African Sky”

[Reader #1]

“Beneath the African Sky” exposes the tragedy of genocide through the story of Clemantine Wamariya [**KLEH-men-tine wah-mah-REE-yah**], who escaped from her home two weeks after the genocide in Rwanda began. Only six years old, she was smuggled beneath piles of luggage in the back of a car. The road was littered with bodies. Clemantine remembers the smell of death filling the air during that long drive to her grandparents’ house, a place they believed to be out of the reach of danger.

[Reader #2]

But the insanity followed them. A death squad appeared at the door in the middle of the night. Clemantine was awakened by her grandmother’s screams. She and her sister crawled through a bedroom window and ran into the forest. From there, they watched the house burn. Now alone, the girls wandered through the countryside, eventually finding a church where they sought refuge. Once inside, however, they saw that the church had been the scene of a massacre. The two children hid among the dead bodies to avoid being caught.

[Reader #3]

Years after Rwanda, Clemantine made her way into a sponsorship and immigration program which landed her in the United States. As a high school student in a Chicago suburb, Elie Wiesel’s [**EHL-ee vee-ZEHL**] Holocaust remembrance, *Night*, was required reading. In a subsequent essay, she wrote that the book changed her life. Wiesel was brave enough to tell his story. She had never told hers. Now inspired, she recounted her experiences as a child of genocide and (worse, she says) as a child living without parents in refugee camps.

[Reader #4]

Years later, after sharing her story in several public forums including speeches, public demonstrations, and the Oprah Winfrey Show, Clemantine reflected on life after the genocide. She said: “Children see everything and they do not forget. But when they get out of it, out of the trouble, they SHUT. They try to cover the memories up because they are too painful. So the whole story is lost. But who am I to be quiet? I must tell people what it feels like to be a child and think the world hates you. And my voice is not enough. YOU are a witness, too.”

[Reader #5]

Beneath the African Sky is actually more influenced by Clemantine’s experience living in refugee camps than by the genocide. She recalls this as the most horrific of her experiences, even worse than the genocide itself, saying, “You don’t belong anywhere. What do you do when you do not belong in the world? In Rwanda, I had pretty shoes and a bed. Then the genocide happened and I knew I was going to be killed if caught. In the camp, it was a different death, death by food and death by drink and death by depression. Every time tick, you feel like you are dying. Imagine a kid thinking there is no world out there for you. “I wanted to be the foreign kids who came to the camp to help. I felt so special when they helped. One told me I had a beautiful smile. I never forgot it.”

[Reader #6]

The oboe melody which appears in the song is loosely based on a tune Clemantine sang to herself in the refugee camps. “When I sing that song, I feel like someone heard me. My sister was working and I was all alone. All I had was invisible God. That song was a shield.”