

Music That Fits and Inspires: Finding, Choosing, and Using Music for Choirs

Workshop Summary

Purpose

Good choir music does more than fill time in our meetings. It strengthens worship, builds confidence, and helps singers feel connected to their message. The best repertoire fits your choir's purpose, people, and resources.

1. Understanding Your Choir's Needs

Before you look for music, take a step back and think about WHY and WHAT you're planning for.

- Purpose: Are you preparing for regular meetings, a holiday program, or a special event?
- Calendar: How often does your choir sing, and how much time is available to prepare?
- People: What's your current attendance, balance of voice parts, and skill level?
- Accompaniment: What is your accompanist comfortable playing?
- Setting: Do you have a designated rehearsal space?
- Leadership: Coordinate with your priesthood leaders. Plan together. Communicate on topics such as: lead time needs, budget availability, frequency of performances, alignment to worship topics, special events.

Knowing your context helps you choose music that works with, not against, your reality.

2. Choosing Music That Fits

When you open a score, consider whether the piece truly suits your group.

- Vocal range and difficulty: Are the notes and rhythms comfortable and achievable?
- Divisi and harmony: Can your current numbers support the texture?
- Rehearsal time: How long will it take to prepare confidently?
- Accompaniment: Does it match your pianist's ability? How much lead time is needed?
- Occasion and message: Does the text support the worship topics or season?
- Challenge and growth: Will this stretch your singers in a healthy, joyful way?

A simple piece sung with beauty and confidence is always more meaningful than a difficult one sung with uncertainty.

3. Finding and Managing Repertoire

Use a mix of free and purchased music sources to meet your needs responsibly.

Free Resources:

- Hymnals and existing digital church libraries

- Today's reading packet or previous workshop selections
- Composer websites: Some free, some not. Ex: *Ronald Stabeli*, *Sally DeFord*, *FaithSongMusic.com*, *Daniel Gawthrop*, *ldssacredsongs.com*, *Angie Killian*, *latterdayarrangements.com*, *Suzanne Shippen*, *freeldsheetmusic.org*, *carsonhymns.com*, etc.
- Older church publications or archived materials
- Stake or ward music library (always check copyright permissions)

Purchased Resources:

- Local distributors (e.g., Day Murray Music, Best in Music, Riverton Music, etc.)
- Larger Online retailers (Sheet Music Plus, JW Pepper)
- Traditional music publishers (Oxford, Hinshaw, Walton, GIA, Pavane, Choristers Guild, Beckenhorst Press, MorningStar Music, etc.)
- Faith-based publishers (Jackman Music, Deseret Book, other denominational sources)

Realistic Expectations:

- New works in the hymnal may not have arrangements widely available. This will improve over time.
- Not all arrangements will perfectly fit your unique circumstances. May be easier to think more broadly.
- Conference arrangements are often made available later. Some may not be published widely or may have copyright restrictions.

Stewardship Tips:

- Track what you own and where it's stored
- Label all purchased copies with copyright info
- Share or borrow legally — respect the composer's rights

Good stewardship ensures resources last for the next director.

4. Putting It Into Practice

- Evaluating an Anthem Together: applying these questions to a real score
- Adapting a Hymn for Choirs: simple ways to refresh familiar congregational hymns

“The best anthem for your choir is the one they can sing well, believe in, and share with joy.”