

Artistic Considerations and Performance Practice

Performing music from a culture or community that is not familiar to your chorus or conductor takes extra preparation, research and sensitivity.

Here are recommendations for how you can address identity in your artistic planning:

- ✓ **Seek out and purchase music** composed and arranged by individuals rooted in that culture, or at least those who have studied and understand the culture from which they are writing.
- ✓ **Artistic Directors: plan** your score and rehearsal preparation with the same diligence as you would in understanding the text, craft and form of a western classical music composition. Research the history behind the text. What stories accompany the song? What is the sub-text? Then, educate your chorus and audience.
- ✓ Know the difference between **cultural appropriation** versus **cultural appreciation**. Program not from a place of political correctness, but with an appreciation and deep understanding of the music.
- ✓ When learning music from a culture not familiar to the chorus, **encourage singers to attend an event or visit a neighborhood where that music is performed**. This could be a small-group activity or connected to a sectional rehearsal.
- ✓ Make sure it is **appropriate** to sing a song outside of its original community or sacred context.
- ✓ **Focus on authentic style** including vocal tone, articulation, phrasing, expression, instrumentation, and movement. For example, not every African song is intended to be accompanied by a drum, or to utilize movement or clapping. Is it appropriate to add harmony, or is the song intended for unison singing?
- ✓ **Bring in guest musicians** to assist in teaching authentic performance practice. Skype and Zoom are both excellent resources if you do not have an expert nearby. Compensate these artist experts.
- ✓ **Examine assumptions about choral genres** that tend to be perceived as “white music” (i.e. classical = white).
- ✓ Be intentional about **who is featured on stage**. Hire soloists, instrumentalists and guest artists who can authentically perform the music you are programming.
- ✓ **Don’t assume** that people from non-white communities want to hear this music. Do your homework, then create a performance space that is accessible and welcoming.

