



Exploring Diversity in Religious Repertoire Through Choral Music

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Introduction

- The three biggest Abrahamic religions include Christianity, Islam, and Judaism
- As of 2015, 31.4% of the world practice Christianity, 23.2% practice Islam, and 0.2% practice Judaism
- Most popular choral music taught in schools that represented a religious population represented only those who are Christian or Jewish
- It is forbidden to use texts from the Qu'ran and put it to music while texts from the Bible are often used in choral music
- What aspects of music contribute to diversity in represented religions in choral music and how do we increase diversity in this area of music?

Methods

This project focuses on explanatory research seeking the relationship between choral music and how diverse it is in terms of representing people of different faiths.

I will be conducting archival research and analyzing qualities of diversity through existing lists of choral repertoire. Being from Florida and needing a way to limit the amount of music being analyzed, I am focusing on looking through the Florida Vocal Association (FVA) Music List from 2022. If there ends up being no references to representation for Muslim people on this list, I will then expand my exploration directly on popular choral publication websites like Ruth Elaine Schram, ECS Publishing, Jubilate Music Group, Excelcia Music Publishing, JW Pepper, Hal Leonard, GIA Publications, and Hinshaw Music.

Preliminary Findings

At the moment, only 100 songs out of the 6,499 songs on the FVA list has been examined. Of those 100, only 43 were religious in nature. Elements that lead to diversity in religious repertoire (DiRR) include the specific religion the song is associated with, the source of lyrics (based on poetry, use of religious texts, or originality), the region where the song originates, the form and structure of the song, instrumentation, and the language. No songs on the FVA Music List shared music the represented Muslims leading to the search of music on JW Pepper. A total of five songs were found on there.

Conclusion

Choral music will have DiRR if they have elements of being performed by people of a certain religion, using a variety of religious texts, originating from a religious region in the world, the form and structure of the song, instrumentation, and the language. Despite Judaism being the smaller Abrahamic religion, Islam is greatly underrepresented in existing works of choral repertoire. There should be more music composed that represent Muslim people and could be taught to students.

Future Work

As an ongoing project, I will continue to find other choral pieces and sort them into DiRR categories onto a Google Docs spreadsheet. I also plan on collaborating with Muslim poets and/or composers to compose or arrange new choral pieces to contribute to the creation of more representation for Muslims in choral music.

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Adinu
Based on a poem by Ibn 'Arabi
Sufi melody
arr. Shireen Abu-Khader and André de Quadros

Adinu arr. Shireen Abu-Khader & André de Quadros

May God Bless You
(Der Herr segne euch)
For SA* and Piano
Performance Time: Approx. 3:45
Text from PSALM 121
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685-1750)
Arranged by BARRY LENNEY
(J = ca. 90)

May God Bless You by J.S. Bach arr. Barry Lenney

References

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Full Folder
and Data
Report of all
Analyzed
Songs

