

2015 ACDA of MN Fall Conference
Tried & True:
Music for
Middle School Choirs

Dan LeJeune
Middle School Choral Director
The Blake School
Hopkins, Minnesota

Repertoire

Bonse Aba

Tiritomba

Joshua

Rest Not

She Walks in Beauty

Hope is the Thing with Feathers

The Minstrel Boy

Nine Hundred Miles

Old King Cole

Gypsy Rover

Ma Bella Bimba

Pat Works on the Railway

Bonse Aba

- ✿ *Small range within each part accommodates all voice types*
- ✿ *Builds esprit de corps in minutes through beautiful harmonies that nearly everyone can sing immediately.*
- ✿ *Very fine performance by Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley on YouTube.*

Blake School Choristers

Tiritomba

- ✦ *Strong, easy to learn melody that appeals to all.*
- ✦ *Interesting contrapuntal harmonies that are repetitive yet provide just enough challenge.*
- ✦ *Upbeat, joyous piece that lifts spirits and give all abilities the chance to be successful in multiple ranges.*

Blake Middle School Treble Choir

Joshua

- ✿ *Accommodates both unchanged and changing male voices.*
- ✿ *Simple lower part harmony can be sung in octaves.*
- ✿ *Melody can also be sung in octaves at beginning.*
- ✿ *This energetic melody with a descending M3 gives boys a “hook” and the kind of phrase they want to sing well.*

Rest Not

- ✦ *2 parts are a 3rd-octave apart, accommodating changing and changed voices.*
- ✦ *Lower part can be doubled by treble voices.*
- ✦ *Fantastic energy that builds momentum and provides a contrasting lyrical middle section.*

Blake Middle School Concert Choir Boys

She Walks in Beauty

- ✿ *Classic text*
- ✿ *Simple motives and small ranges.*
- ✿ *d-r-m-r-d phrase builds a sense of legato phrasing*
- ✿ *Girls loved listening to the boys sing this so much, they requested their own "She Walks in Beauty" piece!*

Blake Chorister Boys

Nine Hundred Miles

- ✿ *No other single piece of music has been more beloved by middle schoolers during my 29 years of teaching.*
- ✿ *Small range melody and overlapping harmonies create a mood that appeals to the developing adolescent's emotions*
- ✿ *Quick piece to teach, but students must work to polish. Their eyes light up when they hear these harmonies*

Blake Choristers

Hope is the Thing With Feathers

- ✿ *Has received the most requests by audience members to be heard again and again.*
- ✿ *Supporting harmonies in A, T, B provide contrast to melody sung by the soprano section.*
- ✿ *Mixed meter, small range of harmonic lines, pairing of Soprano/Tenor, Alto/Bass provides rich harmonies.*
- ✿ *Wide dynamic range, a cappella singing develops artistry.*



The Minstrel Boy

- ✿ *Students request to sing this the year after it is performed.*
- ✿ *Great piece for an audition.*
- ✿ *Ranges accommodate typical middle school voicings.*
- ✿ *Students enjoy the contrast between SA and TB sections.*
- ✿ *Full SATB sound maximizes possible projection.*
- ✿ *2004 ACDA-MN Anacrusis Honor Choir Gr. 7-9*

Old King Cole

- ✦ *This piece appealed to the least mature mixed choir I've taught!*
- ✦ *Alternation of melody between voices and the chorale harmony at the end provide challenge.*
- ✦ *Imitation throughout makes it easy to teach.*

Blake Middle School Choristers

Gypsy Rover

- ✿ *This ballad appeals to girls and boys alike, but this version is especially good at building basic skills.*
- ✿ *Melody and harmony parts are nearly equal and each section has the change to sing the melody and harmony.*
- ✿ *Solo opportunity in the middle.*
- ✿ *Ending harmony in thirds requires breath support and tuning.*

Ma Bella Bimba

- ✦ *Playful melody with imitation and major/minor contrasting section.*
- ✦ *Accommodates the early male changing voice.*
- ✦ *Easily add movement while learning to bring lightness to the sound.*
- ✦ *Ending descant for those with greater skill/range*

Blake Middle School Chorus Six A (one section, about 28 students)

Pat Works on the Railway

- ✿ *Three part harmony develops in layers, allowing virtually any voice to sing a part.*
- ✿ *Minor melody and harmony throughout, including ending with 3 part minor triad followed by octaves.*
- ✿ *Easily accommodates soli, small groups on verses.*
- ✿ *Energy builder.*