

SIX GREAT PIECES

(Quality literature of easy to medium difficulty for young male choirs)

O.K., so this is really just a list of 48 great pieces for young men's choirs. When I personally receive a list of more than a dozen pieces I can't actually view, however, I feel a bit overwhelmed. I don't want to buy everything without seeing it first, but I also don't know how to narrow things down. These pieces could have been broken into categories in a variety of ways, of course, and there are numerous categories not represented here. Hopefully the categories and annotations on this list will help you find a handful of pieces to meet the needs of your choir. Feel free to visit www.iowachoral.org where this list will be posted soon, and from there you can e-mail me with any questions or suggestions of other pieces you might have!

Upbeat Contemporary Pieces in English

Most of these make great concert openers and are outstanding pieces to quickly get your men singing out.

<i>Do You Fear the Wind?</i>	Leland Sateren	TTBB a cappella	CPP Belwin	SCHCH 00410	Secular	English	Very masculine, comfortable ranges, short--two pages, a cappella harmonies somewhat difficult
<i>Let All Men Sing</i>	Keith Christopher	TTBB, piano	Hal Leonard	8703182	Secular	English	Highly energetic, extremely repetitive and easy to learn, close harmonies (lots of M2s), but not difficult
<i>Make a Joyful Sound</i>	Jerome K. Ramsfield	TTBB, piano	Shawnee	C 0174	Sacred	English	Stately, text is Psalm 100
<i>O Magnify the Lord</i>	Dale Grotenhuis	TTBB, piano	Kjos	CH-125	Sacred	English	Energetic, driving accompaniment, quite repetitive, mostly easy but a somewhat difficult a cappella section in the middle, first page is a fanfare-ish section that makes young men sound great
<i>Sing for Joy</i>	Allen Pote, arr. Paul Hall	TTBB, piano (opt. flute, brass, bongos)	Hinshaw	HMC-517	Sacred	English	Rhythmic, energetic sections contrast with a more lyrical central section. Lots of unison and two-part, but also some divisi
<i>A Trilogy of Knighthood</i>	Julie Gardner Bray	TTB, piano	Heritage	15/1315H	Secular	English	This is an outstanding piece for a less experienced male ensemble. It is comprised of three short pieces (all three can be sung in under four minutes). The first and third are energetic and driving. The second is a slower ode to the knight's love. All three are extremely easy to learn and make even a novice group sound wonderful. The text is masculine and poetic enough that young men invariably enjoy performing it.

Upbeat Contemporary Pieces in Latin

Young singers are infamous for complaining about the stupidity of singing in foreign languages. Before introducing a foreign language piece, try setting up your students for a more positive experience by explaining that one of the marks of a quality choir is their ability to sing in other languages. Tell them you are impressed with their progress and now believe they are ready for the challenge of such a piece. I find that when my men see it as a challenge or a mark of their accomplishment, they are eager to tackle other languages. Latin is a fantastic place to start, and here are six outstanding pieces that are easily accessible to young men.

<i>Cantate Domino</i>	Nancy Hill Cobb	TB, piano	Santa Barbara	SBMP 282	Sacred	Latin	Upbeat 6/8 piece, parts are easily singable, though they cross at times
<i>Exsultate justi in Domino</i>	Brant Adams	TTBB, piano	Santa Barbara	SBMP 173	Sacred	Latin	This is my personal miracle piece. I can pull this piece out during a weak year, and it will somehow still sound amazing. It seems to elevate the abilities of my men to a new level. Though it is listed as TTBB, it's really mostly TB with some divisi. The Latin is straightforward and repetitive, there are a lot of easy syncopations which drive the music, and there is a lovely cantabile section in the middle that provides a nice contrast to the other more rhythmic sections. My men always eat this piece up, and because they enjoy it, it makes a wonderful and easy teaching tool.
<i>Festival Hosanna</i>	Mary Lynn Lightfoot	TTBB, piano	Heritage	15/1518H	Sacred	Latin/English	I'll admit that I'm not usually a fan of Latin/English hybrid pieces, but this one is actually quite nice. It's in 4/4 with some 6/8 measures and syncopations sprinkled in that keep it interesting. Tenor is need a high G, but otherwise this piece is quite easy and rhythmic.
<i>A Jubilant Gloria</i>	Mary Lynn Lightfoot	TB/TTB, piano	Heritage	15/1834H	Sacred	Latin	Upbeat 6/8 piece, almost exclusively 2-part, lovely legato section in the middle, excellent and easy introduction to Latin

<i>Three Contemporary Latin Settings</i>	Jerry Estes	TTB, piano	Shawnee	C-281	Sacred	Latin	Most of you are familiar with the SAB version of this short, three-movement work, but there is also a very nice TTB arrangement. 1st movement is a medium-tempo Kyrie, 2nd movement is a legato, flowing Adoramus te, and 3rd movement is an energetic Gloria. All movements are under two minutes. If ranges even approach extremes, optional notes are always given.
<i>Toccata of Praise</i>	Joseph M. Martin	TTBB, piano	Shawnee	C-0294	Either	Latin/ English	Very fun rhythmically, some sections in alternating 6/8 and 3/4, other sections in syncopated 4/4, a sacred and a secular text are both provided, quite a bit of 2-part writing, but somewhat difficult due to both notes and rhythm

Pre-20th Century Pieces

While there is a seemingly infinite amount of music more than a century old, it can be difficult to find pieces that are both available and accessible to a less experienced male ensemble. Here are six gems.

<i>The Beggar's Song</i>	Leveridge, arr. Dave and Jean Perry	TBB, piano	Shawnee	C-285	Secular	English	Upbeat, ranges are extremely comfortable, all parts are repetitive and very easy to sing, less experienced men sound great on this
<i>Four German Folk Songs</i>	arr. Dale Grotenhuis	TTBB, piano 4 hands	National	NMP297	Secular	German and English	German is very easy, much English, includes "Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen," "Holla Hi, Holla Ho!," "The Woodlands Sleep," and "The Foot Traveler," last two are a cappella and more difficult, first two are upbeat, accompanied, and quite easy and fun.
<i>Hunters' Chorus</i>	Carl Maria von Weber, ed. Mead	TTBB, piano	G. Schirmer	HL50315740	Secular	German or English	From the opera <i>Der Freischutz</i> , gallops along quickly, notes not difficult, but German quite tricky
<i>Lay of the Imprisoned Huntsman</i>	Franz Schubert, arr. David Stocker	TBB, piano	Thomas House		Secular	English	First half is mainly unison and two-part, really more TTB as middle part has Es, great hunting song
<i>Praise Ye the Lord of Hosts</i>	Camille Saint-Saens, arr. Emerson	TTBB, piano	Hal Leonard	8596738	Sacred	Latin or English	Easy, block chords, lots of repetition, great introduction to easy Latin singing, Bass II part gets quite low, there are other nice arrangements of this piece as well
<i>With Voices Rejoicing</i>	W. A. Mozart	TTBB, piano	E. C. Schirmer		Secular	English	From <i>Marriage of Figaro</i> , requires solid BII low G and TII high G, block chords and easy harmonies, fun, short, and fairly simple for the singers, accompaniment is tricky

Pieces at a Slower Tempo

Much of the music accessible to young men is upbeat, and it can sometimes be difficult to find great pieces of a more lyrical nature (this is not a problem for women's choirs, of course). Here are six excellent slower pieces.

<i>The Awakening</i>	Joseph M. Martin	TTBB, piano	Shawnee	C 0286	Either	English	O.K., so this has a full, exuberant ending, but much of the piece is slow and soft. I know many people think of this as a piece for a more advanced men's group, but I've had a lot of success performing this with younger men. Much of it is two-part, and the four-part sections are either easy and repetitive or consist of strict homophony. Ranges of outer parts are a bit extreme, but if you can manage them, I find that this piece can help a group of young men be exceptionally musical and sound quite good. Plus, my men always seem to love this piece.
<i>For the Fallen</i>	Mike Sammes	TTBB, piano	Pavane	ECS 214	Secular	English	Ode to fallen soldiers, easy four-part block harmonies throughout, BIIs sing low Eb, but otherwise not a difficult piece, can be quite moving given current events
<i>Homeward Bound</i>	Marta Keen, arr. Jay Althouse	TBB, piano	Alfred	20098	Secular	English	Yes, this is the piece you all know in its SAB incarnation, but the TBB version is also nice. The bass part is unfortunately quite low, but in the few places where it goes too low, it could be easily rewritten. Nice solo/duet opportunity at the beginning.
<i>In Flanders Fields</i>	John Jacobson and Roger Emerson	TBB, piano	Hal Leonard	8741443	Secular	English	Many students study this poem in school, phrases are short and easy to sing, ranges are very reasonable, piece can be quite moving if painted as a tribute to fallen soldiers, also in SAB
<i>My Heart's in the Highlands</i>	Sherri Porterfield	TTB, piano	Shawnee	C 0280	Secular	English	A beautiful, lyrical setting of a text everyone knows, ranges are comfortable (T2 part easy for baritones), and three-part harmonies are easy to master

<i>Who Are the Brave</i>	Joseph M. Martin	TTB, piano	Warner Bros.	SV9216	Secular	English	This is a tribute to those who serve and protect others, including soldiers, those who serve the poor, and those who stand up for liberty. I always joke with my students that the introduction sounds like the opening of a documentary. The piece starts out slowly and beautifully and builds to a thrilling climax. While the choir needs to be able to produce quite a bit of volume at the end for a successful performance, parts are not difficult to sing. Singers and audience alike always enjoy this number, and it is quite moving.
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American Music

With one exception, the following pieces are not patriotic, but are instead distinctly American in their roots and their style.

<i>Bound for the Promised Land</i>	arr. Emily Crocker	TBB a cappella	Hal Leonard	8703153	Sacred	English	Very nice arrangement of this sturdy, upbeat, early American hymn, 1st verse is unison, 2nd verse is 2-part, 3rd verse is very easy 3-part, excellent introduction to a cappella even for novice choirs
<i>Coney Island Baby/We All Fall</i>	arr. SPEBSQSA	TTBB a cappella	SPEBSQSA	8601	Secular	English	What is more American than barbershop? If you're looking for an easy barbershop piece to expose you're students to this genre, this is the piece. The piece is fun, the text is amusing, and the harmonies are a blast to sing. My men always love this piece, and it never fails to make the girls scream. Plus, singing barbershop harmonies has a remarkably positive effect on the intonation and aural development of young men.
<i>Down in the Valley</i>	arr. George Mead	TTBB, piano	Galaxy	1.1716.1	Secular	English	This is the standard arrangement off the IHSMA contest list. As long as you have tenor Is with an easy Gb and basses with an easy Ab (an F is required in one bar), the parts are easily accessible to most young men, and this arrangement provides wonderful material for working on lyrical, legato singing.
<i>How Can I Keep from Singing</i>	arr. Scott Farthing	TTB, piano	Santa Barbara	SBMP 408	Secular	English	This is an outstanding arrangement of the traditional Quaker hymn easily accessible to a group of junior high or high school men. It is mostly unison and 2-part with some 3-part and a beautiful accompaniment. There is also a short middle section with a more driving tempo. You can preview this piece at www.sbmp.com
<i>The Morning Trumpet</i>	arr. Michael Richardson	TTBB a cappella	Shawnee	MF1004	Sacred	English	A terrific arrangement of this piece in minor from <i>The Sacred Harp</i> , parts are logical and easy to sing, basses must have a low F and the choir must have some experience singing a cappella
<i>Yankee Doodle Joy</i>	arr. Donald Moore	TB, piano	BriLee	BL379	Secular	English	This is a straight-forward presentation of Cohan's <i>Yankee Doodle Boy</i> and <i>America</i> . It's very high-energy and fun, and ranges are perfect for junior high boys.

Songs from the British Isles and Australia

This is exciting music that sings extremely well in male voices. Consider using a piece from this genre instead of a sailor song at your next concert.

<i>Chickens in the Garden</i>	Stephen Hatfield	TBB a cappella	Boosey & Hawkes	M-051-47529-2	Secular	English	British folk song, upbeat and fun, funny text, words are written to help singers produce a bit of the Yorkshire accent, chorus is repeated, verses are unison, two-part, or solos, a cappella but not difficult
<i>The Drover's Dream</i>	arr. Vijay Singh	TB, piano, opt. guitar	National	NMP370	Secular	English	Traditional Australian song (drovers are Australian cowboys), easy two-part with some whistling, fun and upbeat, text talks about a procession of Australian animals
<i>Fergus an' Molly</i>	Vijay Singh	TTBB, recorder, guitar or piano	Belwin	OCT9605	Secular	English	First of Singh's <i>Celtic Songs</i> , minor, mostly two and three-part, but somewhat difficult due to tricky four-part a cappella section and four-part final chorus, chorus especially is very fun to sing, and guys always enjoy this piece
<i>Finnan Haddie</i>	Vijay Singh	TTBB, recorder, guitar or piano	Belwin	OCT9607	Secular	English	This is the third of Singh's <i>Celtic Songs</i> (be sure to also check out <i>Lament of a Fisher's Wife</i>), and it is the easiest and most fun of the three. The text is humorous (Finnan Haddie is a rather disgusting milk and fish dish). This piece is boisterous, playful, and fun, and parts are easy to sing. Tenor Is need a solid high G, and Bass Is need a low G. This piece is always and audience favorite.

<i>Loch Lomond</i>	arr. Earlene Rentz	TB, piano	BriLee	BL426	Secular	English	A pretty and easily singable arrangement of this standard Scottish folk song
<i>With My Swag All On My Shoulder</i>	arr. Vijay Singh	TB, piano, melodica, opt. guitar	National	NMP-284	Secular	English	Australian song, text is actually about Irishmen going to Australia, easy and fun to sing, melody has a lot of gusto!

Sailor Songs

Yes, it's practically cliché, but nothing beats a group of young men singing a hearty sailor song. These are some of the best for young ensembles.

<i>Cape Cod Girls</i>	arr. Emily Crocker	TTBB, piano	Hal Leonard	8703183	Secular	English	This is a great, upbeat sea chantey with comfortable ranges and a ridiculous text. There is a short a cappella section in the middle that requires a high A, but this can be done in falsetto.
<i>A Capital Ship</i>	arr. Mike Richardson	TTBB a cappella	Mark Foster	MF 1065	Secular	English	Even though this is a cappella, it is not difficult, and students always love to sing it. Bass IIs need to at least be able to attempt a low F. The entire thing is quite repetitive and easy to learn and would serve as a great introduction to a cappella singing.
<i>I'm Bound Away</i>	arr. Donald Moore	TTB, piano	CPP Belwin	SV9313	Secular	English	This is a slow, lyrical sea chantey with easy 3-part harmonies and no extreme ranges.
<i>The Mermaid</i>	arr. Michael Levi	TTBB, piano	CPP Belwin	SV9504	Secular	English	The 4-part harmonies in this piece are remarkably easy, and it would be a great introduction to 4-part singing. The chorus incorporates part of <i>Rule, Britannia</i> , and there are solos for both tenors and a low bass. Singers and audience members always love this number.
<i>On the Deep, Blue Sea</i>	Mary Donnelly, arr. George Strid	TTB, piano	Hal Leonard	8551278	Secular	English	In my opinion, this is the best sailor song that nobody knows, ranges are extremely comfortable, and optional notes are provided so this is easily singable by either a junior high or a high school ensemble. The humorous text warns young men who love their freedom to steer away from pretty young maids (the words are fun but not offensive). My men really enjoyed performing this piece.
<i>Sing Me a Song of a Lad that is Gone</i>	Sherri Porterfield	TTB, piano	CPP Belwin	SV9003	Secular	English	This is a high energy, minor sailor song based on a poem of Robert Louis Stevenson. Accessible to junior high or high school men, it is a terrific piece with some exciting dynamic contrasts.

Popular/Broadway Music

Through my years of working with young men, I've learned that the secret to a successful male music education is to get the girls to legitimately scream for the men at the first concert of the year. Really—I'm serious. If the girls scream for the men and tell them how amazing they were for days after the concert, I can essentially get the men to do anything I want for the remainder of the year. Suddenly they are more receptive and open to anything I have to say, and they are instantly transformed into engaged, moldable, eager students. It is easier to work on sight-singing, work on breathing, learn parts on a new piece, execute dynamics, well, you get the picture. I always make sure the men's final piece on the first concert is a rousing sailor song, a boisterous folk or folk-like song (*Finnan Haddie* is terrific), or a popular or Broadway piece like the following. Add a little easy choreography or a couple of ridiculous props, and the audience will be on their feet. Their reaction will help convince your men that singing is a worthwhile activity that is valued by their parents, their peers, and their community.

<i>Blue Moon</i>	Rodgers & Hart, arr. Jeff Funk	TBB, opt. piano, opt. bass, guitar, drums	Warner Bros.	CHM01084	Secular	English	A very easy and fun three-part arrangement of this old doo-wop classic. Bass IIs need a solid low G.
<i>Come Go with Me</i>	C. E. Quick, arr. Kirby Shaw	TTB a cappella	Hal Leonard	8200540	Secular	English	Voicing is really TTB with solo or TTBB. This is a really great 50s piece that men love to sing. There is a short scat section that is a bit more difficult, but most of the piece is easily executed.
<i>Get Me to the Church on Time</i>	Lerner & Loewe, arr. Teena Chinn	TBB, piano, opt. bass, guitar, drums	Warner Bros.	CHM01080	Secular	English	This is an outstanding piece for young men, and this three-part arrangement is quite straightforward. Add some simple choreography and this makes an outstanding closing number.
<i>Goodnight, Sweetheart, Goodnight</i>	Hudson and Carter, arr. Roger Emerson	TBB, piano	Hal Leonard	8201709	Secular	English	Another great 50s piece with some nice solo opportunities. The arrangement is very accessible—bass IIs must have a low G.
<i>Sixteen Tons</i>	Merle Travis, arr. Kirby Shaw	TBB a cappella	Hal Leonard	8740416	Secular	English	A great piece for young men, and they enjoy it. Though a cappella, repetition makes this a cinch to learn.
<i>There Is Nothin' Like a Dame</i>	Rodgers & Hammerstein, arr. William Stickles	TTBB, piano	Williamson	764-10	Secular	English	You can't go wrong with this piece. Add some sailor hats and minimal choreography and the audience will go crazy. This arrangement is somewhat thickly harmonized.