

**The Proactive Programmer:
Basic Research Kit for Women's Chorus Repertoire**

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Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and bibliographies:

- Sadie, Julie Anne and Rhian Samuel, eds. *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, 1st American ed. New York: London: W.W. Norton, 1994.
Buy it. This has the most current information on the largest number of women composers, with clear and reasonably reliable biographical entries and some title and voicing information. Good citations of secondary literature, especially dissertations, through 1993. Omits many composers.
- Cohen, Aaron I. *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. New York: Books & Music USA, 1987.
Essential, exhaustive, but riddled with mistakes. Has more information than any other single source, and each short entry has citations to his sources, listed in a huge bibliography. If you find a composer anywhere, you'll find her in Cohen--but his listings of compositions do not reliably distinguish choral from vocal music or give voicings, and his listings of pre-19th century composers include pieces which survive only by reputation, not in manuscripts or prints.
- Whittemore, Joan. *Music of the Venetian Ospedali Composers: A Thematic Catalogue*. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995.
The first serious inventory of this enormous repertoire. About 1250 manuscripts listed, with library, author, title, voicing, and musical incipit. About 100 pieces scored for 2-8 SA voices--and that's not even including the "revision" repertoire surviving in SATB score. Once you identify pieces you would like to see, trace them through OCLC (see below) to look for modern editions, locations of microfilms, etc.
Joan's contact info: email: jwhittemore@adrian.edu
- Walker-Hill, Helen. *Music by Black Women Composers: A Bibliography of Available Scores*. CBMR Monographs, no. 5. Chicago: Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College, 1995.
Buy it. This is a wonderful book, practically annotated with library locations of scores, addresses and telephone numbers of individuals and collections, and an index of composers by performing medium. This is a model of what a performer-friendly scholarly bibliography should be.
- Jackson, Barbara Garvey. *Say Can You Deny Me: A Guide to Surviving Music by Women from the 16th through the 18th Centuries*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1994.
This admirable work on early composers contains reality-based information performers can use: besides giving locations of manuscripts, prints, and printed sources, this work provides a listing of modern editions and an index by performing medium. Unfortunately, the list of choral works for women's voices is tiny; the list of works for mixed chorus is small but well worth investigating.

- Block, Adrienne Fried, and Carol Neuls-Bates. *Women in American Music: A Bibliography of Music and Literature*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979.
Has the most detailed information on titles, voicing, and publishers for a very small number of composers in entries 1285-1367, 2486-2599, and 3820-4302, which describe choral music for all voicings. An excellent guide to older biographical dictionaries and periodical literature.
- Hubbard, Monica. Women's Chorus Repertoire List. online through [ChoralNet](http://www.choralnet.org), <http://www.choralnet.org> (see below).
The most comprehensive current list of women's chorus repertoire. Indispensable; but use [OCLC](#) (see below) to confirm and amplify publisher information.
- Locke, Arthur Ware, and Charles K. Fassett. *Selected List of Choruses for Women's Voices*, 3rd ed. Northampton: Smith College, 1964.
Seriously dated but invaluable bibliography showing large repertoire from all periods then in print in octavos, or available in scholarly editions. The merest handful of works by women composers.

For more biographical and historical depth:

- Ammer, Christine. *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music*. Contributions in Women's Studies, no. 14. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980.
Buy it. Its sections on women composers have extended biographical accounts and descriptions of selected lists of works, including works for women's voices, and performances, for a few composers. An excellent overview of American musical culture.
- Green, Mildred Denby. *Black Women Composers: A Genesis*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983.
Good introductory work on five composers: Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, Julia Perry, Evelyn Pittman, and Lena McLin. With biographical information, descriptions of selected works, and photos. Bibliographical information awkwardly arranged, superseded by Walker-Hill's book.
- Baldauf-Berdes, Jane L. *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525-1855*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
The pioneering work on the history of the *ospedali*, their students and performers, and associated composers.

How do I find this music?

To find titles, voicings, and locations of catalogued manuscripts and scores...

- *The National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints; A Cumulative Author List Representing Library of Congress Printed Cards and Titles Reported by Other American Libraries*, 754 vols. London: Mansell, 1968-1981.
This monster work is invaluable, but far from complete. Located in the reference section of your main university library, it is the paper equivalent of an on-line multi-library database. Don't forget to look in the supplementary volumes, always. Author entries only. Useful in that entries for choral music usually give voicings.

- OCLC and RLIN, two online international library catalogues. See below.

Do I have to use the net? (*Only if you want to find lots of good music....*)

- Choralist: A limited bulletin board for choral professionals, where members post announcements of concerts and festivals, request repertoire suggestions, and ask to borrow music or for sources of information. To subscribe, send a message to <listproc@lists.colorado.edu>. Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message type: sub Choralist <your name>.

Looking for successful SSA music for festivals? Have questions about copyright? Want someone to recommend a good book on warmups? Post your request, and the answers you receive will convert you to the pleasures of virtual collegiality. You are no longer alone.
- ChoralNet: <http://www.choralnet.org>

A first stop for many searches. Through its Reference, Research link you can get to: MUSICA, a database containing tens of thousands of choral pieces in print, with a current emphasis on European editions. Searchable in many ways.
- ChoralNet links: http://www.choralnet.org/en_crs.htm

“Bride of ChoralNet”: the links and choralist digests people often overlook. When they say, “But I couldn’t find it on ChoralNet”, this is where they forgot to look. Reference and Repertory links are helpful compendia of old postings, organized by subject.
- OCLC (generally available through your university library’s online catalogue. Ask your librarian).

First Search: Invaluable, current, and far from complete. Choose the Arts & Humanities database. Then choose WorldCat for a listing of about 4 million books and other materials held in participating libraries worldwide. WorldCat lists books, scores, manuscripts, microfilms, and recordings, and lists the libraries where they are held. Using the Advanced Search option allows you to search using several parameters at once; hence searching for “Vivaldi” and “Magnificat” will result in a manageable number of hits, whereas either by itself would not! Entries are exhaustively detailed, giving voicing, source of text, number of pages, and (in the case of recordings) duration. Many will be long out of print. Next step: arrange an interlibrary loan.

For secondary literature, choose the Arts & Humanities database, and then choose RILM, a detailed index of music literature. In contrast to WorldCat, it catalogues journal articles, reviews, and essays in collections.

Once I’ve got a study copy, how do I get permission to make copies for my chorus?

- Music Publishers Association Sales Agency List. Go to ChoralNet, then Internet Choral Connections, then Organizations, then Commercial, then Music Publishers Association, then Sales Agency List.

Summary: Comparative results of a search through media listed above: looking for SSAA works by Nicola Porpora:

- Monica's repertoire list: **2 hits**
- MUSICA: **1 hit**
- OCLC WorldCat: **127 hits**, including **7** modern performing editions, most published by Marks. Telephone call to Hal Leonard (successor/distributor of Marks Co.) to see how many of the Marks Co. pieces are still in print: **1 hit**
- OCLC RLIN gave about **10 hits** on "ospedali" secondary literature, showing Joan Whittemore's dissertation, her thematic catalogue, and a number of journal articles, including two in the *Choral Journal* in 1977 and 1994.

- www.amazon.com The online, commercial, international, virtual bookstore, with over 2.5 million titles. You can look without buying--and you would be surprised at how many hits came up for "women composers". A fine source for finding current publication information, including price, and includes many out-of-print titles, for which they will search. I ordered Joan Whittemore's thematic index through it.

Geographical listings, or, why not work when you travel, too?

- Krummel, Donald William. *Resources of American Music History: A Directory of Source Materials from Colonial Times to World War II*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.
Thanks to this inventory of musical archives, I have examined works by Frances McCollin at the Philadelphia Free Library (I sneaked out of the Northeast ACDA meetings in 1996), the archives of an ethnic German women's choral society in Mayville, Wisconsin (my sister in Milwaukee was probably tired of me, anyway), and the Mabel Daniels archives at Radcliffe.

More background--and just for fun:

- Scott, Anne Firor. *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
The pioneering work: an overview, describing the scope of social history yet to be explored.
- Blais, Madeleine. *In These Girls, Hope Is a Muscle*. Warner Books (paperback), 1996.
Buy it. Even if you hate sports, this account of the championship year of the Amherst, Mass. high school girls' basketball team will inspire you.
- Plantamura, Carol. *Woman Composers*. Santa Barbara: Bellerophon Books, 1986.
A coloring book. I mean it. May be ordered from the publisher, 36 Anacapa St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101.
- *A League of Their Own*. Directed by Penny Marshall. Rent the video before your concert.