

Dear Honors Treble Choir Finalist,

What a thrill it is to be conducting you at the incredible Carnegie Hall. I can tell you there is no other feeling on earth quite like stepping into that room for the first time. The greatest artists of every generation have played there since it opened in 1891. There is probably not a famous musician or group on earth who have not performed there. And now, it's you!

I know you are busy with preparations for the trip. New York City is a wonder itself. What should I wear? How cold is it going to be? What Broadway show will I see? All those important questions. While you are answering those questions, I hope you'll take plenty of time between now and then to perfect your music. Your enjoyment of the experience is directly tied to how well you are prepared at the first rehearsal.

Knowing this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, what we sing is even more important. I have chosen a set of music that I believe you are going to love. Not only is it fabulous music, but each piece has a powerful text as well.

I love every single piece (or I wouldn't have selected it!). There are YouTube videos of all of the pieces. Also, it would be great for you to look up the composers and lyricists. Six of the seven are living composers and some of the most popular and sought-after composers in the world. You will know why as soon as you hear their music. Here is a run-down of your repertoire.

You are the Song Jacob Narverud.

This is an absolutely radiant piece with a spectacular piano accompaniment. The text is perfect to open our concert portion. It is by Robert Bode. From the beauty of nature, to women marching in the streets to the confirmation that YOU are the future. You are the song!

Pueri Hebraeorum Randall Thompson

This is a very fun double choir antiphonal piece. The text is one of joy usually preceding Palm Sunday: "The Hebrew children bearing olive branches, went forth to meet the Lord, crying out, and saying, Hosanna in the highest." I know you'll enjoy the "competition" between two choirs.

Love Is a Rain of Diamonds Gwyneth Walker.

I hope you have had a chance to sing music by Gwyneth Walker. She composes regularly for women's voices. This piece is from her cycle "Songs for Women's Voices." The text is by May Swenson. It absolutely sparkles with the accompaniment and a few nonsense syllables thrown in to make it trip along so beautifully. The chords she uses are simply stunning.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers James Eakin.

Dr. James Eakin is the head of the composition department at Centenary University. He has composed music for a variety of organizations across the U.S. In fact, we will be doing the world premiere of the SSAA version of this piece. His works have had their debuts at Carnegie Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, and the Meyerson Symphony Hall, Dallas. James has taken the Beatitudes and updated them to describe what might make a person Blessed in this day and time. It is an amazing piece.

Rise Up! Jake Runestad.

“Rise Up!” is another colorful piece with a wide range of emotional content. It was adapted from speeches and writings by U.S. suffragette Susan B. Anthony.

Rise up.

There shall never be another season of silence. Deepen your sympathy then convert it to action. Pray every single second of your life, not on your knees but with your work. Think your best thoughts, speak your best words, do your best work. There is so much yet to be done.

Rise up!

Adiemus Karl Jenkins.

Karl Jenkins is another of the finest composers of our day. This was composed as the first movement of a larger work, “Songs of Sanctuary.” He actually made the words up. He sees it as a vocalise where the vowels and consonants are prescribed. It has a tribal sound and we will have choralography throughout the piece (memorize!). It is mesmerizing in its simplicity and beauty.

Your World Joan Szymko.

This amazing piece opens with a powerful statement: “Your world is as big as you make it!” Text by Georgia Douglas Johnson. Once again, the women’s voices soar over spectacular piano writing. Joan and Gwyneth Walker have been on the forefront of composing music for women. It is exciting to be singing their music on this concert.

The end of January will be here before we know it. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours,

Tim

Dr. Timothy Seelig