

# Choral Music of the 21st Century

## The Choral Renaissance

Choral singing was always popular, but the 21st century brought about some new compositions and accolades.

2008 was the first time an a cappella choral piece won a Pulitzer Prize.

(David Lang's *Little Match Girl Passion*)

## The Choral Renaissance

Choral singing was always popular, but the 21st century brought about some new compositions and accolades.

As of 2018, singing in a choir was the single most popular adult activity in the US, with an estimated 32.5 million adults singing in a choir weekly.

## The Choral Renaissance

Choral singing was always popular, but the 21st century brought about some new compositions and accolades.

The majority of US choirs are in churches and schools, but about 12,000 are community and professional groups.

# The Choral Renaissance

Choral singing was always popular, but the 21st century brought about some new compositions and accolades.

Female composers are finally starting to come into focus.

What is the impetus for all this?

Let's back up...

In the 20th century, composers like Stravinsky, Penderecki, Webern, Ligeti, and Schoenberg were exploring atonal and dissonant music, especially for instrumental music.

Webern, *Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen*

Schoenberg, *4 Pieces for chorus and  
ensemble*

Ligeti, *Requiem*



We know this type of choral writing wasn't sustainable.

Why?

# Major choral works of the 20th century

Britten, *War Requiem*

Vaughan Williams, *Dona Nobis Pacem*

Martin, *Double Mass*

Stravinsky, *Symphony of Psalms* and *Mass*

Honegger, *Le Roi David*

Walton, *Belshazzar's Feast*

Elgar, *Dream of Gerontius*

Bernstein, *Chichester Psalms*

On a smaller scale, Octavos (especially unaccompanied) were still being composed on a very tonal level, but composers were experimenting with and incorporating dissonance, moving towards minimalism for the first time.

Taverner, *Song for Athene*

Stanford, Blue Bird

Pärt, Magnificat

But minimalism isn't sustainable either.

Enter our 21st century choral renaissance.  
There is a refocus on large and small choral  
works.

Estonia

Norway

Latvia

United States

“World Music”

Estonian: *Veljo Tormis*

Norwegian: *Ola Gjeilo*

Latvian: *Ēriks Ešenvalds*

# American Composers

David Lang, Caroline Shaw, Z. Randall  
Stroope, John Adams, Jake Runestad,  
Dan Forrest, Craig Hella Johnson,  
André Thomas, Eric Whitacre, Stephen Paulus



## “World Music”

It's meant everything that's not western music and has some kind of hand drum or dance.

Gross. Don't say it. It's pejorative.

# Female Composers of the 20th and 21st centuries

Elizabeth Alexander, Kathleen Allan, Joan Marie Andrews, Violet Archer, Carol Barnett, Kim Baryluk, Joan Beckow, Josephine Benedetti, Diane Benjamin, [Abbie Betinis](#), Susan Borwick, Judy Gardner Bray, Kitty Brazelton, [Susan Brumfield](#), Andrea Clearfield, Emily Crocker, Catherine Dalton, [Eleanor Daley](#), Mabel Wheeler Daniels, Stefania de Kenessey, Pauline Delmonte, Melanie DeMore, Nicole Kieker, [Emma Lou Diemer](#), Lori-Anne Dolloff, Patti Drennan, Dede Duson, Magdalena Ezoë, Laura Farnell, Ellen Fishman-Johnson, Tsippi Fleischer, Jane Frasier, Victoria Merrylees Glaser, Mary Goetze, Joan Gregoryk, Nancy Grundahl, [Jocelyn Hagen](#), [Elaine Hagenberg](#), Linda Haugen, Ruth Watson Henderson, Edie Hill, Mary Howe, Ruth Huber, Marya Khoury, [Susan Labarr](#), Sally Lamb, [Libby Larsen](#), Tania León, Maria Löfberg, Frances McCollin, Cecilia McDowall, Cristi Cary Miller, Jane Ramseyer Miller, Zae Munn, Thea Musgrave, [Alice Parker](#), Sandi Peaslee, Sheena Phillips, Jane Roman Pitt, [Rosephanye Powell](#), Sarah Quartel, Claudia Howard Queen, [Andrea Ramsey](#), [Doreen Rao](#), Elizabeth Raum, Bernice Johnson Reagan, Michelle Roueche, Anna Rubin, Donna Schultz, Judith Shatin, Valerie Shields, Ethel Smyth, Naomi Stephan, [Joan Szymko](#), Hilary Tann, Nancy Telfer, Paula Foley Tillen, Leslie Uyeda, Margaret Vance, Janika Vandervelde, [Kristina Vasiliauskaite](#), Elizabeth Vercoe, [Gwenyth Walker](#), Lana Walter, Natalie Wilson, Judith Weir, Judith Zaimont.

## Ensembles of Note

VOCES8

Cantus

Monteverdi Choir

The Aeolians

The Crossing

Room Full of Teeth

Seraphic Fire

Conspirare

True Concord

Phoenix Chorale

Nordic Choir

St. Olaf Choir

Trinity Wall Street

The Sixteen

## Performances of Note

Tan Dun, *Water Passion*

Caroline Shaw, *Partita for 8 Voices*

Hyowon Woo, *Creo*

Sydney Guillaume, *Kanaval*

Johnson, *Considering Matthew Shepard*

21st century choral music is the first to incorporate every previous style. It's an amalgamation of the last 1,000 years. It's minimalism, neoclassicism, chant, folk, etc. all happening simultaneously.