

The Study and Use of Sacred Choral Music in ISD 196 (Minnesota)

The classroom study and subsequent performance of sacred choral literature has been approved and protected by a series of decisions rendered by the United States Federal Court of Appeals; specifically in the Eighth Circuit case of *Florey vs. Sioux Falls (South Dakota) School District*, 1978; and in the Tenth Circuit case of *Bauchman vs. West High School (Salt Lake City, Utah)* 1995. These rulings guarantee that the performance of sacred music in the public schools does not violate provisions of the Constitution of the United States, or the First Amendment, which provides for the separation of church and state.

In addition, position statements from two professional music education organizations advance the following:

It is the position of the Music Educators National Conference that the study and performance of religious music within an educational context is a vital and appropriate part of a comprehensive music curriculum. The omission of sacred music from the school curriculum would result in an incomplete educational experience.

In selecting sacred choral music for classroom study, "The Study of Music From a Sacred Tradition" approved by the American Choral Directors Association states the following: *Any work of art studied or performed should be selected for its inherent beauty of structure and form...The study of such works of art can enhance one's understanding and appreciation of a cultural product which a particular tradition has fostered. Music should be selected on its own merits as an art form, and as a cultural object for study, which enhance the understanding of the cultural development of a particular movement in human civilization.*

It is the intent of choral music programs in ISD 196 to expose our students to the classroom study and performance of the highest caliber of choral literature, whether it be from a sacred or secular tradition. Subsequently, in no way should this informed study suggest or forward the notion that this program promotes or advances a specific religion or religious doctrine. Rather, it is our position that we study both sacred and secular choral literature for its inherent art and value to society throughout the ages; and through its public performance, understand its place and contribution to the aesthetic arts which continue to inspire and elevate the human spirit in all times and places.

Further, it is the goal of this choral music department to annually program a wide variety of sacred and secular works that provide a proper balance in appropriate proportion to our informed study and performance of choral music.