

February 3, 2016

Dear Singer,

First, let me congratulate you on being selected to be a part of the **Ulster All-County High School Choral Festival**. I am looking forward to meeting you in a few weeks. I am excited about the idea of gathering together to make beautiful music while connecting with old friends and making new ones.

Your teachers are doing an excellent job with you because you have developed the skills that allowed you to participate in this competitive festival. They deserve all of our appreciation and respect. I am thankful for each one of them and grateful for the work they do everyday in their choral classrooms.

I am originally from Brazil but I have lived in the United States for almost 20 years. So, I have truly enjoyed sharing Brazilian music with musicians and students in this country. I hope you are excited (or at least intrigued) to perform *O Meu Maracatu*. The arranger, Dr. Afonso Jr., is a dear friend of mine with whom I grew up in Brazil. I have recorded the pronunciation for you. I think it will help you understand some of the differences between English and the Portuguese languages.

I also recorded the pronunciation for *Te Quiero*, one of my favorite pieces of all times. I am fluent in Spanish as well, so I believe what I recorded for you is mostly accurate. There are, sometimes, minor differences in how Spanish is spoken, so I chose the one I believe is closest to the Argentinean pronunciation. There are opportunities for baritone and alto solos for verses 1 through 4. If you are interested, be ready to audition for one of the four solos.

Homeland should be sung with a full, bold sound. There are so many nuances in dynamics and tempi that you will have to trust me to take you where I believe the piece wants to go. To achieve this, you should practice this piece and know it well. It is the famous melody for Gustav Holst's famous work, *The Planets*. We will need to exaggerate our consonants while keeping our vowels really tall. I can't wait to listen to you performing this piece.

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep is our luscious, slow, gorgeous piece. The poem is so poignant and meaningful. I think this song communicates a very hopeful message. Work on making the most beautiful sounds you possibly can when practicing this song.

Last, but by no means least, the music of one of the greatest composers of all times, Johann Sebastian Bach. *Sicut Locutus est* is from the *Magnificat*, a larger work with several movements. We must strive to pronounce the Latin without the American diphthong and to have the agility and lightness often required when we perform Baroque music. We will also have to be pretty independent, so work hard on understanding how your part fits with the others.

I am so glad we will get to work together in a few weeks. I know it will be a remarkable experience for me as I learn about you and your talents. I hope it will be a meaningful and unforgettable experience for you as well.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elisa Dekaney".

Dr. Elisa Dekaney

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