

# My Very Own

## My Very Own

Susan LaBarr

### Curriculum Guide

*For Choir Teachers, By Choir Teachers*

by: Colleen McNickle & Coty Raven Morris  
<https://www.ecspublishing.com/curriculum>

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# WELCOME!

We are delighted that you have chosen to purchase this curricular resource for your choirs! We have worked hard to provide you with a comprehensive approach to teaching this piece, while leaving space for you to add your own brilliant ideas. From music theory to social issues to science and literature—we believe all of these topics and more not only belong in choir rooms, but also have the potential to lead to more intentional and empowered choral musicians. We encourage you to think outside the box and engage with your repertoire in mindful and meaningful ways!

Whether you follow this guide step-by-step or simply use the information to inform your instruction, we are confident that you will benefit from this resource. Happy singing!

Teachers are permitted to make copies of the quizzes and activities in this book for students' use.  
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# Teaching Objectives

Within every piece of choral music lies myriad teaching objectives. Here are a few teaching objectives for *My Very Own* that we have addressed within this curriculum guide.

- ☐ Students will be able to...  
Navigate intervals of seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths; sing long phrases with musical shape; and sing in five parts independently with a unified sound.
- ☐ Students will be able to...  
Read a choral piece written in compound meter, giving special attention to the relationship between the macro and micro beats.
- ☐ Students will be able to...  
Identify, define, and put into practice vocabulary terms and musical instructions from *My Very Own*.
- ☐ Students will be able to...  
Examine the role of word painting within *My Very Own* and consider the multiple meanings of certain words featured in the piece.
- ☐ Students will be able to...  
Sing block and arpeggiated chords in multiple inversions, connect these chords to the accompaniment, and create their own accompaniment chord progression.
- ☐ Students will be able to...  
Investigate the poetry pairing within *My Very Own* and craft viable choral lyrics utilizing their own poetry pairing.

notes



# Teaching Sequence

Just one way you might consider teaching *My Very Own* to your ensemble:

	Teaching Suggestion	Time	Measures
day 1	Introduce <b>Warm-Up One</b> . Identify intervals in warm-up, then in the piece. Sight read pick-up to m. 55-end. Introduce concept of <i>compound meter</i> . Singers step macro beat and tap micro beat throughout reading.	20 minutes	mm. 55-end
day 2	Introduce <b>Warm-Up Two</b> . Identify source in the piece. Sing pick up to m. 51-54 as written. Review 55-end. Combine mm. 51-end. Focus on phrasing.	10 minutes	mm. 51-end
day 3	Introduce <b>Activity One</b> . Lead sectionals on mm. 5-34. When students are not singing, they work on Activity One.	20-30 minutes	mm. 5-34
day 4	Review <b>Warm-Up Two</b> , mm. 5-34, and 51-end. Focus on text stress; reinforce eighth note anacrusis entrances; refresh phrasing throughout.	5 minutes	5-34, 51-end
day 5	Introduce and complete <b>Activity Two</b> .	20 minutes	N/A
day 6	Sight read <b>Warm-Up Three</b> . Draw connections to piece. Sight read and work mm. 37-50. Focus on part independence and unified vowels. Assign <b>Activity Three</b> as homework.	20 minutes	mm. 37-50
day 7 +	Share student poetry pairings from <b>Activity Three</b> . Continue rehearsing full piece, paying special attention to part independence, legato lines with energized phrases, accurate entrances, and appropriate text stress.	TBD	Full Piece

My Very Own

# My Very Own Warm-Ups

Teach concepts specific to this piece by using these original warm-ups:

## my warmups

### Objective: Interval Navigation

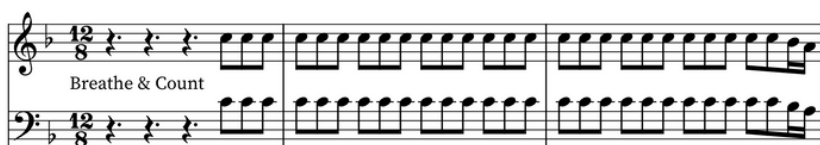
#### warm-up 1



Teach by rote or project for sight-reading. Sing on a neutral syllable, solfege, or words. Raise and/or lower by half steps. Focus on navigating intervals and open, unified vowels.

### Objective: Phrase Shape & Breath

#### warm-up 2



Teach by rote or project for sight-reading. Sing on a neutral syllable, solfege, or count system of your choice. Raise and/or lower by half steps. Audiate the micro beat (eighth note subdivision) and pulse the macro-beat (dotted quarter, dotted half, then whole notes). Make decisions as a group about phrase shape & staggered breathing.

### Objective: Part Independence

#### warm-up 3



Teach by rote or project for sight-reading. Sing on a neutral syllable, solfege, or count system of your choice. Raise and/or lower by half steps. Focus on independence of parts, vowel unification, and placement of the 'v' sound.

# My Very Own Vocabulary

Here are some terms and definitions that are handy when learning this piece:

Term	Definition
Compound Meter	Meter in which the beat divides into three and subdivides into six.
Simple Meter	Meters in which the beat divides into two and subdivides into four.
Dotted Rhythm	The dot adds half of the length of the note before it. Therefore a dotted half note receives 2 beats (half note) + 1 beat (the dot - half of a half note) = 3 beats.
Anacrusis	An unstressed note or group of notes that comes before the first accented note of a phrase. AKA "pick-up"
Tie	Indicated by a curved line connecting two notes of the same pitch. Sing the note for the combined rhythmic value of the notes as if they were one.
Slur	Indicates to sing the notes without separation (legato).
<i>cresc.</i>	Abbreviation for crescendo. A gradual increase in loudness.
<i>dim.</i>	Abbreviation for diminuendo. A gradual decrease in loudness.
<i>rit.</i>	Gradually decrease the tempo.
<i>unis.</i>	Abbreviation for unison. Section or ensemble sings the same thing at the same time. Monophonic.
Your Term:	
Your Term:	

# Word Painting 101



**Word painting** is a compositional technique that reflects the literal meaning of the text. For example, if the lyrics mention “mountains,” the melody rises and is high pitched; likewise “valleys” equals low pitched melodies, etc. What are examples of this in *My Very Own*?

[illegible]

# Word Painting 101



1. Select a poem, biblical text, or prose and analyze the work by identifying words that could suggest particular melodic, rhythmic or tonal devices.
2. Think like a composer! Complete an analysis of your text using the table below.
3. *Bonus! Use your analysis to help you create a composition.*

My Text Name : \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]



# Be the Piano! Chord Building Activity

## Block Chord Building

1

Starting in the keys of G or F, begin spelling out chords in your ensemble using neutral syllables, numbers, or solfege. Altos and Basses sing the root, Tenors sing the fifth, and Sopranos sing the thirds!

## 2 Inversions

Take the individual chords you are building and practice singing the notes in different voice parts. *Which inversion is the strongest? What inversion feels unfinished?*

## Chord Progressions

3

Once the group is familiar with different chords and inversions, practice moving from one chord to another without piano assistance. What voice parts should stay on their notes and who should change?

## 4 Arpeggios

Now that you have your chord progression library, sing each pitch one at a time as an arpeggiated chord. Keep a steady pulse as your group becomes comfortable slowly building their own accompaniment.

## Be the Piano!

5

The accompaniment to this piece contains legato eighth note passages. Take that rhythm and sing your own arpeggiated accompaniment!

## 6 Compose & Improvise!

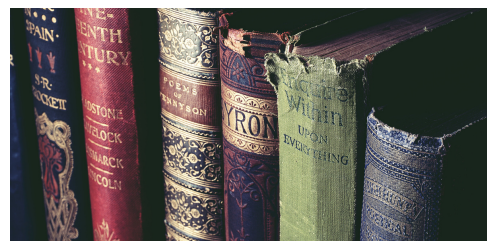
Create your own chord progression and sing your new accompaniment with your ensemble on a neutral syllable. Experiment with different rhythms, chords, and dynamics!



### important note:

No need to rush!  
Enjoy slowly building the chords until you are comfortable picking up tempo!





# POETRY PAIRINGS

## Materials


- *My Very Own* octavo
- Laptop/Tablet with internet access
- Paper, Google Doc, or Word Doc on/in which to craft lyrics
- If possible, access to poetry books in school library.

*To craft the lyrics for this piece, composer Susan LaBarr utilized two texts by two different authors that addressed a similar theme. Your challenge with assignment will be to first examine the poetry pairing within *My Very Own*, then to find two complementary texts that speak to you musically.*

## instructions

1. Examine the two original texts that Susan LaBarr used to craft the text of *My Very Own*. Then answer the following questions:
  - What is the common thread between these two pieces?
  - What makes them complementary?
  - What adaptations did the composer make to the texts in order to prepare the text for this piece?
2. Assume the role of a composer who is just starting to conceptualize a piece. What is a theme that you would want to explore with your composition?
3. Find five texts (poems, quotes, texts from short stories, or the news, etc.) that speak to your chosen theme. In 1–2 sentences, explain how each text plays to your theme.
4. Narrow down your selections to 2–3 source texts, and adapt them so they would be viable for a choral work. Aim for at least one verse and one chorus. Consider adding a second verse and a bridge.
5. When you have completed your text, reflect on the following:
  - Are you pleased with your final product? Why or why not?
  - How does this text address your theme?
  - Who would this text be appropriate for? What sort of choir?
  - What musical characteristics do you imagine your composition would feature?





“  
I will go  
where  
you go.

Susan LaBarr



# About the Composer

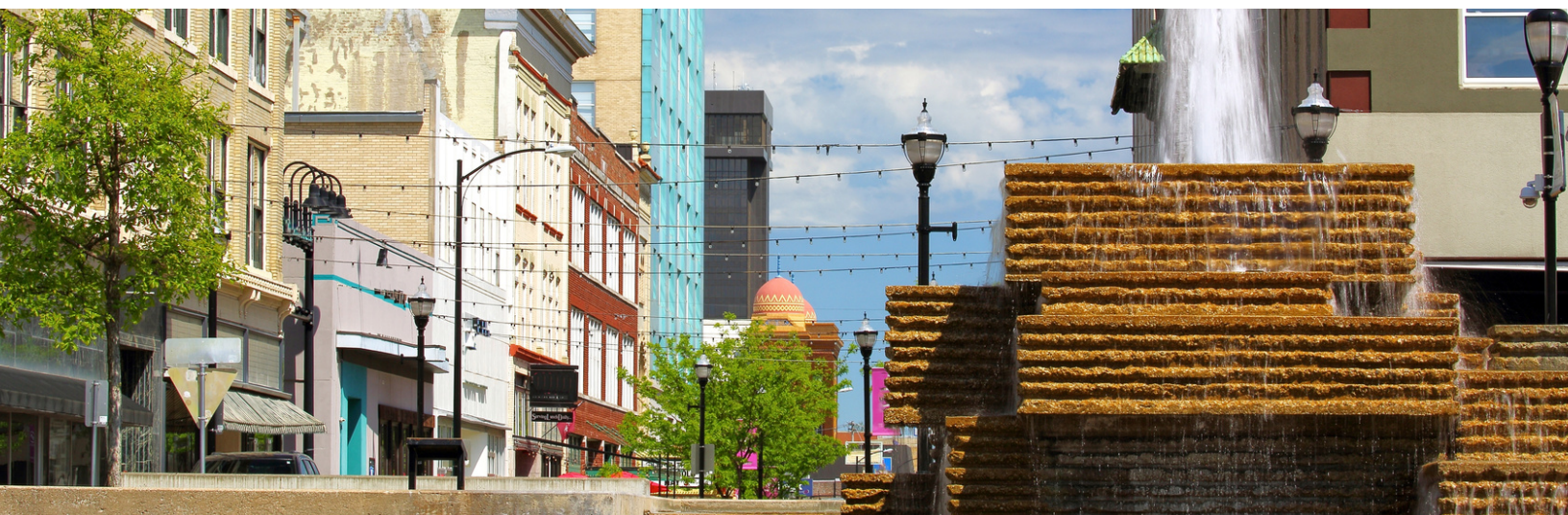
Susan LaBarr is a composer and choral editor living and working in Springfield, Missouri. Her compositions are published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Walton Music, and MorningStar Music. In 2015 and 2016, Susan completed commissions for Seraphic Fire, the National ACDA Women's Choir Consortium, and for the Texas Choral Director's Association's Director's Chorus.

She served as the Missouri Composer Laureate for 2012 and 2013, and has been Composer-In-Residence for the Tennessee Chamber Chorus and the Chattanooga Girls Choir (Tennessee). Her arrangement of *Quem pastores laudavere* appeared on New York Polyphony's 2014 Grammy-nominated album, *Sing Thee Nowell*.

Susan has sung professionally with the Tennessee Chamber Chorus and CORO Vocal Artists. Central to Susan's musical vocabulary is the knowledge she gained from studying with Alice Parker at her home in Hawley, Massachusetts, where she attended the Composer's Workshop and Melody Studies Workshop in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Susan attended Missouri State University in Springfield, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in music and a Master of Music in music theory. Susan, her husband Cameron, and their son Elliott reside in Springfield, Missouri, where Cameron is the Director of Choral Studies at Missouri State University and Susan works as Editor of Walton Music.

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# My Very Own Quiz

Circle the best answer:

*Who composed My Very Own?*

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| A. Clara Schumann | C. Susan Labarr   |
| B. Sarah Quartel  | D. Rollo Dilworth |

*In the piece, love is described as so "beautiful" it is better than...*

- |         |          |
|---------|----------|
| A. wine | C. fruit |
| B. milk | D. water |

*Captured and stolen refer to which of the following in My Very Own:*

- |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. an object being taken | C. taking a picture        |
| B. falling in love       | D. understanding a concept |

*What does "diminuendo" mean?*

- |                     |                                |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| A. gradual increase | C. to speed up                 |
| B. to slow down     | D. gradual decrease in dynamic |

*What well known composer did Susan Labarr study with?*

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| A. Andre Thomas   | C. Alice Parker   |
| B. Florence Price | D. Ysaye Barnwell |



hey there!

## We're Colleen & Coty

**Coty Raven Morris** is currently the Visiting Assistant Professor of Choir, Music Education, and Social Justice at Portland State University. Prior to this, she was the Director of Choirs at Crosby High School in the Houston area and has served as the Outreach Choir Director at the MSU Community Music School and Music Director at Grand Ledge United Methodist Church.

A newly published author and composer, Morris is a sought after clinician and speaker across the country. She has recently served as the Clinician and Headliner for Florida ACDA, Washington MEA, and Minnesota ACDA as well as the Keynote speaker for the city of Lake Oswego's Juneteenth festival.

Coty is the Founder of *Being Human Together*, a budding community rooted in music education striving to normalize difficult topics in our field through conversation and connection. BHT seeks to discuss traditionally taboo topics like mental health, systemic oppression, diversity, and inclusivity.

Music enthusiast, choral educator, and life-long learner, **Dr. Colleen McNickle** is Assistant Professor of Music Education at Arkansas State University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate music education courses and conducts Scarlet Voices and the Singing Statesmen. With a PhD in Music Education and Choral Cognate from Michigan State University, Colleen's scholarly interests include music educator wellness and interdisciplinary choral education. Colleen previously taught middle school and high school choirs, piano, ukulele, and music theory in Illinois.

An active clinician, Colleen has conducted choirs and presented research and practice sessions regionally, nationally, and internationally. Colleen is the founder and author of *Inspired Choir*, a blog for choir leaders, singers, and enthusiasts.



*Our paths first crossed as we pursued graduate degrees as Michigan State University. Through numerous choral literature classes, conducting lessons, and choir rehearsals, we bonded over our appreciation for choral music education with a purpose. Together, we have published an article in Choral Journal, presented at state and national conferences, and supported each other via our weekly Zoom work calls.*

*Now, we have paired up to bring you the resources that we wish we had when we taught elementary, middle school, and high school choral ensembles. We have personally selected each piece of music in this curriculum series and look forward to seeing you bring these curricula to life in your own classrooms!*

*Let us know how it goes by contacting us at the links below!*

let's get social!





# Similar Guides

## O SING

Appreciate those who came before you with Kenney Potter's *O Sing*.

Objectives of this curriculum guide include reading and singing a piece in mixed meter, drawing personal connections to the lyrics and message of *O Sing*, creating a Wall of Heroes as an ensemble, and listening to and evaluating additional choral works with similar themes, crafting student-created choral programs.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

## WHEN THE EARTH STANDS STILL

Explore the relationships that root and shelter us with Don Macdonald's *When the Earth Stands Still*.

Objectives of this curriculum guide include singers making musical decisions regarding lyrics, mood, tempo, expression, learning process, etc., reflect on and make personal the lyrics of *When the Earth Stands Still*, and researching and presenting information about contemporary choral composers.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



## RECONCILE

Examine the role of reconciliation with your choral communities via Kyle Pederson's *Reconcile*.

Objectives of this curriculum guide include arranging a narration to accompany performance, articulating the historical and cultural contexts of Swahili language and sing the language with appropriate vowel shapes, and conceptualizing choral creations.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

