A FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CHOIRS
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JUNE 12 - 21
Minoritenkirche, Vienna
Müllner Kirche, Salzburg

VIENNA/SALZBURG:
JUNE 12 - 21
(FOR ORCHESTRA AND WIND ENSEMBLES):
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JUNE 12 - 21
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Sé do Porto, Porto

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JUNE 19 - 28
The Church of St. Simon and St. Jude, Prague
Basilica Vyšehrad, Prague
Berliner Gedächtniskirche, Berlin

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Greek Orthodox Church of St. Mary’s Birth (1867) Xroussa, Syros

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December 16, 1770 to December 16, 2020 – 250 years
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in Minoritenkirche,
Peter Tiboris conducts the Ninth Symphony
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All initial per-person registration deadlines for all programs: November 15, 2019

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90 Choral Journal Index for Volume Fifty-Nine

Since 1959, the Choral Journal has been the refereed, international journal of the American Choral Directors Association. Each issue features: scholarly articles, anonymously peer-reviewed by the editorial board; refereed articles on pedagogical or scientific issues for the choral conductor; refereed articles with practical advice and ideas for the choral conductor; reviews of books, recorded sound, and choral works by choral experts; and editorials from association leadership. The January issue previews each year’s regional or national conference offerings. Articles from the Choral Journal can be found in the following online databases: JSTOR (Arts & Sciences XI Collection); ProQuest (International Index to Music Periodicals); University Microfilms International; NaPublishing; RILM (Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale); EBSCO music index; and WorldCat. Advertising options are available for members and nonmembers. Cover art by Efrain Guerrero. Interior art by Tammy Brummell. Musical examples by Tunesmith Music <www.Tunesmithmusic.com>. Copyright 2019.
One of the many aspects of children’s singing that make their music glorious is their unique timbre. As I listen to children singing, the indispensable musical characteristic I return to each time is the timbre of the young voice. When my child was young (and even now that she is older), I could give you dozens of social, visual, and associational areas of the beauty of children singing that parents uniquely love and appreciate. However, when limiting my thinking and hearing to pure sound, it is the unique timbre of the child that keeps me returning over and over to hear them sing.

The variety we enjoy in the singing voice results from endless combinations of three different arenas of sound: the vibration frequency of the source, oscillation amplitude, and the overtone sound of the voice itself. When children combine to sing in harmony, we enjoy a timbre we cannot imitate any other way. Then, when all of the other layers of meaning are added—including the associational, communal, and social—the resulting sound and music is truly glorious. Children make glorious music.

I believe ACDA has proven to itself and to our society that children make glorious music—Music Makes Glorious Children.
glorious music, and we have been reminded of this fact throughout our existence as a professional association. Children’s choral music is woven into the very fabric of our Statement of Purpose, and we devote great attention to children’s choral music education and performance. However, I believe there is an area of children’s advocacy we must now turn more attention and resources to, and that is the fact that music makes glorious children. This is an issue and an area of focus that goes beyond musical training and enters into the realm of the building of a strong human being and the making of a stronger society. It is a matter of grasping the fact that we are stewards of a powerful area of character building that resides in the community of a choir and the choral experience, particularly for the youngest among us.

This volume of *Choral Journal* continues to explore our experience with young singers. I would also like to use this moment to shine a light on our biennial ACDA Children’s Choir Conductor Retreat, January 18-19, 2020, in downtown Atlanta, GA, where I will address the topic “Children Make Glorious Music/Music Makes Glorious Children” with a strong eye toward our mission of choral advocacy for this age group.

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**The 12 Purposes of ACDA**

- To foster and promote choral singing, which will provide artistic, cultural, and spiritual experiences for the participants.
- To foster and promote the finest types of choral music to make these experiences possible.
- To foster and encourage rehearsal procedures conducive to attaining the highest possible level of musicianship and artistic performance.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral groups of all types in schools and colleges.
- To foster and promote the development of choral music in the church and synagogue.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral societies in cities and communities.
- To foster and promote the understanding of choral music as an important medium of contemporary artistic expression.
- To foster and promote significant research in the field of choral music.
- To foster and encourage choral composition of superior quality.
- To cooperate with all organizations dedicated to the development of musical culture in America.
- To foster and promote international exchange programs involving performing groups, conductors, and composers.
- To disseminate professional news and information about choral music.

—ACDA Constitution and Bylaws

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S LOG**

**What’s on Tim’s Daytimer?**

- Jun 5-8 Executive Committee and Board Meeting
  Oklahoma City, OK
- Jun 14-16 III Foro Coral Americano
  San Juan, Argentina
- Jun 19-21 Costa Rica International Choral Fest
  San José, Costa Rica
- Jul 9-12 Leonardo da Vinci Choral Festival
  Florence, Italy
- Jul 19-23 Xi’an International Choral Festival
  Xi’an, China
- Jul 27-31 IFCM Lisbon Choral Expo
  Lisbon, Portugal

**What’s on Tim’s Ipad?**

- To Learn with Love
  William and Constance Starr
- Nurtured by Love
  Shinichi Suzuki

**What’s Tim’s Latest App?**

- LoveChoir

**What’s Tim Listening to?**

- Purcell, Henry
  The Sixteen; Harry Christophers

Hear more at <www.acda.org>.
Log in and click on the First Listen icon
From the
PRESIDENT

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

—Albert Schweitzer

It has been an honor to serve as the president of the American Choral Directors Association the past two years. As I write my last column for the Choral Journal, I’m reflecting on all the wonderful aspects of ACDA that have helped me along my journey the past twenty-nine years as a teacher, conductor, musician, and composer. ACDA has helped me grow exponentially in all areas, and I am a better musician, artist, and teacher.

ACDA serves as a great resource for its members. We cannot be experts or even proficient in all styles or genres of music, but with ACDA you can ALWAYS find someone who is an expert to share their expertise with you. It’s simply an email or webpage away. If you need help and don’t know where to turn, please reach out to an ACDA officer. They will help connect you with a wonderful resource person. ACDA is a grassroots organization. We are all volunteers, and we count on our members to be leaders in their state and region. We need YOU. If you would like to be involved, please reach out to your state president and R&R chairs. There is always work to be done.

I have tremendous gratitude for the Executive Committee of ACDA. The collective wisdom of Mary Hopper, Past-President; Lynne Gackle, Vice President; Andre Thomas, President-Elect; Tom Merrill, Treasurer; and David Fryling, President-Elect Designate, is inspirational and provides a shining light on ACDA’s journey. I would be remiss if I did not thank those EC members I served with in the past: Karen Fulmer, Jo Ann Miller, Jo-Michael Scheibe, and Jerry McCoy.

An enormous THANK YOU goes to the National Office Staff. Under the leadership and vision of Tim Sharp, they are able to assist the officers and members, helping to carry out the mission of ACDA. Lastly, I would like to thank each member of ACDA. You are a part of an organization that creates lifelong musical experiences and memories. I thank you for your part in changing the lives of young musicians and making the world a more beautiful place.
This June/July issue of *Choral Journal* is a focus on Children’s & Community Youth Choir. As we all know, the development of chorale music in the life of a young child is vastly important; these children grow up to become the students taught at the high school and collegiate levels, and perhaps even chorale directors themselves. Along with five “focus” topics, this issue contains regular *Choral Journal* content and a special article that will be the first in a series celebrating ACDA’s 60th anniversary year. For those interested in learning more about ACDA’s history, I recommend Marvin Latimer Jr.’s book, *Excellence in Choral Music: A History of the American Choral Directors Association* (Hinshaw Music, 2019).

**From the Guest Editor**

Cheryl Dupont  
National R&R Chair for Children and Youth  
Executive/Artistic Director of New Orleans Children’s Chorus and Crescent City Choral Festival

It has been a privilege for me to serve as guest editor of this focus issue. Our R&R area encompasses a variety of ages and places, since we represent school, community, and church children and youth choirs. I have tried to put together articles that offer useful information for directors working in these situations and maybe some different ways of looking at these topics. Much of what is written about in this issue applies to other R&R areas as well, so I hope this issue will be of wide interest.

As I see it, the role of the National R&R Chair is to shine a spotlight on experts in our field, and to provide sessions and opportunities for growth for our constituency. One of the most important things I have worked on during my tenure is the Children’s Choir Conductors Retreat, which provides many expert presenters, wonderful local performing choirs, and great opportunities for networking. The next retreat will take place over the Saturday and Sunday of the Martin Luther King weekend in Atlanta, GA, in January 2020. Look for detailed information about the retreat on the ACDA website in the fall.

The children and youth community is a vibrant and active one. The work we all do is so important, not in creating “future musicians,” but in empowering young artists for a lifetime of choral singing, beginning now. We train young voices from the beginning of their choral careers, and so we must be well-educated practitioners in every way. Children are able to do amazing things when led by a well-trained artist-teacher who is passionate about our art form. I sincerely hope this focus issue will be illuminating for and useful to our community.
Letters to the EDITOR

Editor,

I want to thank you for Michael Slon’s December 2018 CJ article, “Three Windows into Leonard Bernstein’s Chichester Psalms.” The exploration of Broadway theatre sources, motivic development, and broader sweeps concerning Bernstein’s 1961-1971 “crisis of faith” works are among the explorations I enjoyed most. I have read Ken Burton’s work and enjoyed his segments on Chichester, but I thought this treatment of the work was original and insightful.

I used the scholarship both in a four-day Chichester Psalms conducting master class I led in NYC in January and for a lecture I gave at UNF in Jacksonville. We examined Stravinsky’s Symphony of Psalms, Poulenc’s Gloria, and Bernstein’s Chichester as ideal examples of traversing the compositional relationships between sacred and secular influences in choral music.

Doreen Rao
Professor and Elmer Iseler Chair in Conducting Emeritus
University of Toronto

ACDA NEWS

Dr. D. Brent Ballweg to Join ACDA National Office Staff

D. Brent Ballweg, currently professor of music and director of choral activities at Oklahoma Baptist University, will join the ACDA national office staff in July as associate director and conference liaison.

Ballweg is a life member of ACDA and has served in a range of roles, including Southwestern Region president; R&R Chair for Two-Year College Choirs at the national, regional, and state levels; and member of many conference committees at the national and regional levels. He was president of Oklahoma ACDA and served as the chapter newsletter editor and webmaster. In 2012, Ballweg was named a Director of Distinction by Oklahoma ACDA, and in 2016 he was honored with the Exemplary Teacher in Higher Education Award by the Oklahoma Music Educators Association. Ballweg has served as the artistic director and conductor of the Plano (TX) Civic Chorus, assistant director of the Kansas City Symphony Chorus, and founder and director of the Northeast Arkansas Chorale.
A two-day retreat and symposium for those who teach boys to sing.

Featuring sessions and discussions on topics ranging from the male changing voice, best administrative practices, supporting all boys who love to sing, and the role and value of boychoirs in a changing world.

Special guest clinicians to be announced!

**November 1 - 2, 2019**

**Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts**
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Fort Worth, Texas 76109

**Registration**
Look for registration, hotel and travel information at [ACDA.org](http://ACDA.org)
CONCERT PROGRAMS AS STORYTELLING

Emily Ellsworth

Emily Ellsworth
Anima’s (Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus)
Artistic Director (1996-2018)
emilyellsworth1@gmail.com
It is clear to me as a conductor and audience member that we are living in a more visual society and one with a shorter attention span than in years past. We may bemoan these developments, brought on by our screen-focused lives, increasingly digital communication, and expectation for immediate answers. But the nature of our contemporary culture is unlikely to change in the near future. Each of us may choose to calm our own response to this fast-paced world through meditation, greater self-care, and learning to say “no” more often. However, our students and audiences are products of our culture, for good and ill. Over the last twenty years of creating programs for Anima (Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus) outside of Chicago, I found our programming most successful when we took these cultural characteristics into account, rather than fighting them.

This article offers ways of expanding our programming toolbox. Hopefully, choruses that stand still on risers and sing with great intention and musicality will always have an honored place in our work. Yet by creating thematic flow in our programs and creatively making use of concert spaces and visual elements, we can more fully engage our audiences’ senses, brains, and hearts. With the assumption that we must do everything we can to best serve the composers and poets of our repertoire, our final responsibility is to the audience members who gift us with their time and attention. As Henry David Thoreau so aptly wrote in Walden Pond, “To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.” Conductors think a lot about impacting the quality of students’ days through our teaching and mentoring, and the music we choose. But our concerts can more fully extend this care to our audience members as well.
From Recital to Concert Experience

Student recitals are a familiar idiom, showcasing the individual progress of each performer. A recital often proceeds from least experienced to most experienced student, with applause following every piece. The only intentional flow is that of chronology of age and experience.

Sometimes choral concerts make use of this “recital” approach, particularly when several ensembles are involved. The program might move from youngest to oldest, allowing applause after each octavo, and ending with a combined piece for all ensembles. Furthermore, many community youth and school choral organizations enjoy “built-in” audiences of family members. But what if that weren’t a given, and we had to coax greater audience numbers by way of creative programming, as do professional choruses? What if we sought to give our audiences an experience that went beyond feeling pride for their singers’ participation? The result, in my and many others’ experience, can be a transformative experience for singers, conductor, and audience.

The Art of Storytelling

Creating an experience that goes beyond the recital approach calls on the ancient art of storytelling, both within a piece of music, and in building programs with an emotional arc and seamless flow. Engaged storytelling helps break down the fourth wall separating performers from audience.

What are the elements of great storytelling?

• passion – a fully engaged face, body, and heart

• focus on the listener – looking the audience in the eye and drawing their imaginations into the story’s time, place, and mood

• clarity – the words are clear, the imagination is vivid; no one strains to hear, and there is no feeling of a barrier between stage and listener

• variety – a full range of vocal colors, tempi, dynamics, gesture, visual elements, and use of space

• efficiency – the story has a clear beginning, middle, and end and doesn’t veer off course

• surprise – the skillful storyteller is rarely predictable

What kinds of choral stories are at our disposal? Narrative ones, certainly: a strophic folksong often follows a series of events. Opera choruses and musical theater selections are clearly narrative; simple staging of these kinds of works honors their dramatic context and provides a more authentic experience for performers and audience. Commissioned works that put the focus on a larger theme, be it the descent into Alzheimer’s, the Holocaust, or a universal fable with a timeless moral, involve a broad narrative of relevance in today’s world. Storytelling becomes a central, intentional feature of the concert event. If a conductor is not adept at movement or staging, a stage director in the community or your school can become a cherished collaborator. Students are also wonderful resources for creatively altering the “look” of a concert program to enhance the story being told.

There are plenty of non-narrative choral stories as well, from a choral arrangement of Rachmaninov’s “Vocalise” to Rautavaara’s “Suite” de Lorca using Garcia Lorca’s surrealist poetry with haunting imagery. These, and so many others, are nonetheless emotional stories that can be enhanced by stage formations, visual elements, dance, and lighting. They can also add to a larger, overarching story. While not imperative, visual elements can help transport the audience into the work’s emotional world.

Thematic Flow

Beyond the treatment of individual works, the thoughtful flow of a program from one piece to another and one section to another can significantly impact the audience’s experience. I think there’s a reason why “kaleidoscope” or “collage” concerts are so popular (i.e., concerts that place various ensembles throughout the hall with lighting to focus attention on each group, and applause held until the end). They are incredibly efficient, flowing from piece to piece without applause. The audience is surrounded by music from all sides,
there is no intermission, and applause is held until the conclusion. Audience members still have time to go out for dinner afterwards. It’s no wonder these concerts are so popular! They require lots of advance preparation by the conductors and technical crew, but audiences often express genuine delight and gratitude.

When we add an overriding story or thematic arch to the efficiency of a collage concert, an “experience” happens, with an even greater impact.

One of the greatest challenges in creating an “experience” over a “recital” is showcasing several ensembles on one concert. Logistical concerns can easily overtake administrative ones, hence having each group sing all of its music in one block and all groups coming together at the end. In my tenure with Anima, I was increasingly frustrated by limitations of logistics and determined to find a more interesting sequence to our programs. What follows is an example of an Anima program that was particularly well received.

Portraits

The theme of the concert was human connection, from local to global.

Singers and their family members were asked to submit photos of their immediate families engaged in everyday activities (eating dinner, playing in the backyard, reading together, etc.) and photos of their ancestors. Photos were collected in January and February, well before the May event. The concert space had two large screens on either side of the stage; selected photos from these submissions were put up on the screens at various times, providing a connection to our current families. Four different ensembles were on stage throughout, or off to one side, sometimes sitting right on the stage when not singing but participating in each segment. The program was organized as follows:

I. Our Anima Family: Music in Our Lives (photos of Anima singers in concert on screens – individuals and groups)

An opening set celebrating the joy of song by various ensembles, with applause held until the end of the section)

Sing-a-long transition as the applause died away after section one: “Happy Days are Here Again,” with lyrics on screens (copyright 1929 by Milton Ager, lyrics by Jack Yellen)

II. Family at Home (Anima family photos grouped on screens)

Subheadings of Supper Time (music about food), Naptime (lullabies), and At Play (whimsical, playful pieces) – with each ensemble contributing during one or more of the subsets.

Sing-a-long transition with audience: “If I Only Had a Brain,” from Wizard of Oz with lyrics on screens (copyright 1937, by Harold Arlen, Yip Harburg, 1939 lyrics)

III. Lessons from Our Elders (ancestor photos on screens)

Music from various ensembles with meaningful texts offered from one generation to the next: works by David Brunner, Stephen Sondheim, and others.

Grandparents were invited up to the stage to sing one piece with their grandchildren.

Recognition of Graduating Seniors

IV. The Human Family (photos of global families/children on the screens)

Music from various ensembles celebrating our global connections through world music.

The program was about an hour and forty minutes total with no intermission; applause waited until the end
of each section. The audience felt engaged and included by seeing their own photos up on the screens, by singing along during the transitions on playful repertoire, by watching grandparents and grandchildren sing together, and by focusing on a theme of human inclusion and connection. The audience gave a heartfelt response at the program’s end.

Parks Payton, choral director at Lakeshore Middle School in Grand Haven, Michigan, helped his students create a concert focused on mental health with his after-school honor choir students. He met with students and alumni in July to discuss possible themes. The community had experienced an abnormally high number of student suicides over the past five years, and the kids immediately agreed on mental health as the focus. Payton chose the choral numbers, and students selected solo songs, program sections, and the concert order. They also designed the logo, uniforms, speeches, digital backdrops, and advertising. They wrote their own lyrics for one piece and their own affirmations. They also selected a local counseling service as the recipient of donations. There were community partner displays in the lobby: TCM Counseling, a local mental health facility, and Okay2Say (a student safety program encouraging students to confidentially report tips on potential harm or criminal activities directed at students, employees, or schools). The TCM president spoke on stage. The event raised over $1,400 for the counseling center. The program was as follows:

**You Are Not Alone Program**

Please hold your applause until the end of each section

**LOVE**

(5 selections, choral and solo, by Abbie Betinis, Jonathan Larson, Jason Mraz, Edith Piaf, and Mark A. Miller)

**TMC Counseling Presentation**

**RECOGNITION**

(4 selections by Birdy, Sara Bareilles, Jake Runestad, and Andrea Ramsey)

Intermission

**HOPE**

(6 selections from the Justice Choir Handbook, Coldplay, Paul Jarman, Avicii, Lauren Aquilina, and Jim Papoulis)

**OUR RESOLUTION**

(4 selections from the Justice Choir Handbook, The Greatest Showman, and Dear Evan Hansen)

This after-school group includes students in the choir, band, and orchestra programs. In previous years, the group rehearsed advanced repertoire for district choral festival and were invited to state choral festival for the last twelve years. Approximately 40% of students who auditioned were accepted into the ensemble. For the mental health concert, Payton accepted all sixty students who auditioned. They rehearsed once a week for two hours (3-5 pm) for nine weeks, and also prepared Christmas carols for community caroling throughout December. According to Payton, the final product may not have been of the same musical quality as in previous years, but the gain in student investment, leadership, and community impact was remarkable. (See photo below.)

Brandon Catt, Fine Arts Department chair and co-director of choirs at Glenbard East High School in Lombard, IL, points with pride to their Storybook concert each season, with a theme chosen by the students. Choral students help with programming, concert order,
and are truly involved in all aspects of the process. The theme for the February 2019 concert was Social Justice; five different ensembles contributed throughout, with choral works and solos, duets, and spoken interludes grouped by threes and fours without applause.

**Break the Silence**

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.

The program began with Kim Andre Arnesen’s “Flight Song” and included selections such as Jacob Runestad’s “Please Stay,” “Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)” from Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, Paul Simon’s “The Sound of Silence,” and “MLK” arranged by Bob Chilcott. The final set on the program began with “Weep No More” by David Childs, followed by a student-written spoken interlude called “A Message on Dress Codes,” “Still I Rise” by Rosephanye Powell, and finally, “Stand Up and Make a Change” by Ly Wilder and Greg Jasperse. Following the concert, audience members were invited to make a donation to “Rams in Need,” a fund to financially support Glenbard East students needing help.

Thematic concerts such as these engage the audience in a relevant story; they also set a higher standard for concert etiquette. Included in the above program was the following paragraph:

“The Glenbard East Music Department would like to welcome you to our performance this evening. We take great pride in offering our performances in the most professional manner possible. We ask that you join us in this spirit of professionalism by silencing all electronic devices, applauding at appropriate times, and entering or exiting the auditorium only during moments of applause. Also, if any of our young patrons need a break, feel free to visit the “Kiddie Comfort Zone” located in the Fine Arts Foyer with a live stream of the concert on the monitors. Thank you for joining us tonight and for your support of our student musicians.”

The work of Lynda Hasseler, director of choral activities at Capital University’s Conservatory of Music in Columbus, Ohio, offers a final example of deeply moving storytelling. Hasseler seeks to tell some sort of story with each program the Capital University’s Chapel Choir presents. She writes, “Humans have been expressing life through storytelling since the beginning of time by painting on cave walls, carving stone, or etching stained glass. Research shows stories form the basis of humans’ understanding of the world. I am constantly exploring creative ways to weave narrative into concert programs. By writing a concert story, coaching singers to be storytellers, and presenting the program as a dynamic narrative, concerts can be a ‘once upon a time’ transformative experience for our audiences.”

Hasseler’s Chapel Choir presented the following program for the 2018 Central/North Central Region Conference, withholding applause until the end of the program:

**comfort ye**

“Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.” —Cesar A. Cruz

*Sometimes I feel like a moanin’ dove (excerpt)*

arr. Shaw/Parker
Lawson-Gould

**O Vos Omnes**

Alberto Ginastera
From *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, Theodore Presser

**The Rumor of a Secret King**

John Mackey
Osti Music
They Get It
Ted Hearne
From Privilege
Unsettlement Music

Music of Stillness (excerpt)
Elaine Hagenberg
Oxford University Press

Come Ye Disconsolate
Arr. Michael Engelhardt
premiere
Manuscript
(to be published by Beckenhorst Press)

Longing
Eriks Esmenvalds
premiere
Manuscript
(to be published by Musica Baltica)

All of Us
Craig Hella Johnson
from Considering Matthew Shepherd
Hal Leonard

Program Note:
Comfort ye
—Isaiah 40:1

In a world plagued by war and corruption, terrorism and antagonism, natural disasters and personal battles, the centuries-old words of the prophet Isaiah resound. In the wake of tragic events and political chaos, we struggle to feel secure amid our disillusionment and isolation. We long for comfort.

This concert program seeks to convey a message of comfort that is neither passive nor solitary. Finding comfort often requires moving outside of our “comfort zone,” and setting aside our own needs and privilege to offer comfort to others. The music and text of the program’s first half capture and express the anxiety and chaos of a world devoid of comfort.

And in so doing, we create and build a community of solace that’s available to all.

The memory of this concert still resonates in many of us fortunate enough to have heard it. The program was compellingly expressed, with the widest range of emotion from fury to tenderness. The singers were completely invested in the message, sang with great beauty and whole body engagement, and offered a journey from despair to comfort that could be palpably felt.

These program examples are but a sampling of storytelling programs thoughtfully conceived to feel organic and to give the audience a concert “experience” engaging hearts, minds, and senses.

Working Honor Choir Repertoire into a Themed Program

Required honor choir pieces can present a challenge in creating a thoughtfully organized program. In the same vein, many youth choruses are invited to sing repertoire on other organization’s programs, chosen by another conductor. How do we fit these additional works into an intentional program, rather than presenting a string of pieces in more of a “recital” approach? If the theme is broad enough, and the selections are worked in at various spots rather than all at once, this can be done. An example of a recent Illinois high school honor choir program follows:

Sing Unto God
Paul Fetler
(SATB, Augsburg Publishing)
Uptempo, vibrant, sacred

Adorable Flujo
Paul Basler, text by Gabriel Navar
(SATB, Walton Music)
Flowing accompaniment with piano and French horn; American poet of Latino heritage; Spanish text describing energy coursing through the body and ending with “Amo vivir!” (“I love living!”)
No Time
Susan Brumfield (SSAA, Colla Voce Music)
A compilation of two camp meeting songs; fervent; journeying toward a better place

Walk a Mile
Pepper Choplin, arr. Mark Hayes (TTBB, Alfred Music)
Contemporary jazz setting about empathy and “walking a mile in your neighbor’s shoes”

Sicut Cervus
Palestrina, ed. Robert Boyd (SATB, CPDL)
Sustained Renaissance polyphony; classic of the repertoire; “As a hart longs for the flowing stream, so longs my soul for Thee O God”

Desh
Ethan Sperry (SATB, earthsongs)
Highly rhythmic; vocalization that mimics instrumental timbres; celebration of Asian Indian culture

Since most high school concerts feature more than one ensemble, this repertoire could be divided into thematic sections that allow contributions from other groups. An overriding theme or title could make use of the fragment of text mentioned in the Basler description: Amo vivir! (I love living!). While many styles are represented, there is a connection of joy and connection to others and to God through this list. With that in mind, the program could evolve along these lines, as just one possibility:

Amo Vivir! (Loving life)

I. through FAITH
   (Felter, Palestrina)

II. with COMMUNITY
    (Hayes, Brumfield)

III. as a GLOBAL FAMILY
     (Basler, Desh)

Each of these sections would be filled out by selections from other ensembles at the school.

Of course, these programs take additional time to put together. But the above example provides a broad enough umbrella to allow for great variety of styles, moods, and performance practice for each conductor and ensemble.

Use of Visual Elements in Concert Experiences

• Making use of the entire stage - For the 2011 National ACDA Conference, Anima staged Rautavaara’s “Suite” de Lorca (Walton Music) to underscore the eerie, surrealist texts. The singers clustered in small groups across the stage and on the risers in abstract pictures of isolation, with bodies within each group turned at various angles and using different levels: sitting, kneeling, and standing positions. At the musical peak of the first movement, the singers all stood and faced the audience in “confrontation,” then finally cowered into themselves (arms covering heads) as the poem expressed a fear of encountering death. Rachmaninov’s “Vocalise” (Boosey & Hawkes) has a tender, yearning quality that can be enhanced with a tableau of singers in various still pictures of comfort offered and received. (Again, a stage director can be of great help in mapping out this kind of tableau.) A final example would be each singer angling his/her body 45 degrees, left or right, randomly staggered across the stage. This enhanced an Anima performance of “Steal Away,” arr. Brian Tate (Boosey & Hawkes) by conveying the loneliness of each singer/storyteller and creating a visual suggestion of the slave in the field longing for a better world.

• Lighting - Dr. Donald Nally, founder of The Crossing (professional choir in Philadelphia) and director of choral activities at Northwestern University, brings much creative energy to his programming. One of his programs had his advanced university ensemble standing before the floor-to-ceiling stained glass wall in Alice Millar Chapel at Northwestern. The beauty of stained glass is lost after the sun sets. For the evening concert, Nally had a lighting designer light the glass from the lawn out-
side the building with a single spotlight. The colors of the glass shifted and glowed, from dim to brilliant, underscoring the beauty of the music. It was unexpected and visually riveting.

Sometimes we think we cannot use lighting effects unless we are in a theater space that is made for such things. For a December concert titled Stars, Anima rented two spotlights that could easily be set on the lip of the stage, one on either side. We requested gobos—or metal plates inserted in front of the spotlight—to project star shapes onto the back wall. For the opening section of the concert, titled The Night Sky, the singers sang in semi-darkness while starry shapes transformed the stage (see photo). Within the opening set, we also invited our fabulous pianist, Bill Buhr, to play his own arrangement of Kurt Weill’s “Lost in the Stars” as part of the opening set. This provided a way to feature his artistry and vary the aural palette for the listeners.

• Dance - The addition of even one or two dancers to a choral work that lends itself to physical interpretation can greatly increase its impact. Perhaps there are dance students in your choir who would jump at the chance to choreograph and perform a short work.

Global music is another example that sometimes demands movement (indigenous African and Latino music immediately come to mind). YouTube is a wonderful resource for watching indigenous music performed in its native land, which then can be adapted to your own group. If your choir is touring to a foreign country, a folk dance group from that culture (if you have access to such choices) can be a delightful guest artist for engaging your community in the culture. Perhaps one piece can be performed with both dancers and singers. Additionally, invite the dance company to do a short ten-minute set of their own in native dress to bring wonderful visual excitement to the program. (See photo below. Dzelminiš: Chicago Latvian Folk Dance Group dancing at an Anima spring concert before touring the Baltics.)

• Screens - Large screens are often available in school auditoriums and many churches. These can display photographs or works of art that directly relate to the music being sung. They can also be used for texts: sing-a-longs with the audience or poems that are particularly difficult to understand when sung. Even when choral diction is superb, displaying the texts rather than including them in the program makes for more immediate understanding. No matter how carefully a director puts together program notes, audience members today seem less interested in reading them and appreciate an easier way of connecting.
**A Summary of Suggestions for Creating Concert Experiences**

- Create an overriding theme for your concert with a descriptive title.

- Vary the choral formation of your singers, using the space to best advantage:
  - Fill the stage with your singers, taking them out of straight lines.
  - Sing in an upside down “V” formation with the point in the center of the top riser.
  - “Clump” your singers into small groups throughout the stage, creating small “communities.”
  - Create simple tableau pictures using levels: singers in various positions of sitting, kneeling, and standing, being careful to make sure everyone can be seen.
  - Add some simple staging.
  - Make use of the entire space: balcony, aisles, singers seated at the edge of the stage, etc.

- Collaborate with a dance company or department, or make use of students trained in dance to add a beautiful visual element.

- Fill pauses between sections with music (e.g., a chamber group, your pianist, a sing-a-long, dramatic readings).

- Use some lighting effects; if your concert space has no lighting equipment, consider renting a couple of spotlights.

- Use existing screens or even a blank back wall to project photographs, paintings, or texts.

- Have individual singers read poems pertinent to the theme between works (with coaching so they recite expressively and clearly).

- Think of people you know in your community with whom you’d love to collaborate—especially non-musical collaborators—for something unexpected. Anima produced a December concert years ago called *Magic of the Season*. We invited a professional percussionist who also works as a professional magician as guest artist. We found ways to tastefully include magical illusions into 1) points of transition and 2) certain songs that leant themselves to specific illusions such as the creation of a peaceful “snowfall” on stage.

Creative programming professionalizes our work and helps promote good concert etiquette. Less “dead” space means greater attention. Yes, parents in particular want to applaud for everything their child does on stage. It may take a gracious remark at the beginning of the program about “trying something new tonight” and asking for their cooperation in following the program for when to applaud. But audiences love the sense of flow and journey, and show even more enthusiasm when they have peak moments to do so.

And, finally, a word of caution. These ideas are not meant to be gimmicks—movement for movement’s sake, or special effects just because it’s “hip.” Visual and dramatic elements should always enhance the music’s impact and never distract from it. Concerts should honor our audiences’ investment of time and attention and help them feel glad they came. Hopefully, the audience exits feeling proud of their singer’s participation in something larger than self. Music has always been a vehicle connecting us to big ideas; these program examples simply go the extra mile to make the connection clearer and more intentional.

The possibilities are endless. If it all feels overwhelming, start small. Begin with something unexpected: a solo voice singing offstage or from the balcony in darkness… a splashy combined piece to OPEN (not just close) the program… moments to segue unexpectedly from one piece to another… a stage position for the singers that you’ve never tried before… a title for your concert that shows more intention than “Winter Concert.” Awaken your imagination and those of your singers. You’ll take your work to another level, and your community will appreciate your efforts.
As choral directors, providing the best musical opportunities available to your singers is of the utmost importance. Participation in local, district, regional, state, national, and international honor choirs is an excellent way to provide those opportunities. Working with students to create competitive audition recordings for honor choirs benefits those singers chosen to participate in select honor choirs, but it also benefits those who are not. Before the audition process begins, several questions must be answered:

- Why should your students participate in an honor choir?
- Which honor choirs are the best option for your singers?
- Which of your singers should audition?
- How can you help your singers make the most competitive audition recording possible for submission?

Although the answers may vary, the questions must be addressed by you, the director, and also by school administration, parents, and the singers themselves. You must prepare well in advance to provide information to all involved, as they will need time to prepare both musically and financially.
HONOR CHOIRS
ARE THEY WORTH YOUR TIME AND TROUBLE?

BARBARA S. WALKER

Barbara S. Walker
Founder/Artistic Director
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Why should my singers participate?

Students need an opportunity to work with successful, professional choral educators with whom they are unfamiliar. They need to see new conducting styles. They need to experience different kinds of repertoire that may not necessarily reflect your own style or taste. They need to sing with an entire room full of peers who also love music enough to audition for an honor choir and who will challenge them musically. These experiences are essential for students to grow musically in directions that a single program alone cannot provide. Students who participate in regional, national and international honor choirs have the added benefit of educational travel. Your singers will make new friends and expand their life experiences.

You need these musical experiences too. By watching honor choir conductors at work, you will grow as a teacher. You will learn new ways to inspire, new ways to teach vocal tone, new types of musical styles to bring back to your own students. By attending the conferences associated with the honor choirs, you will also be able to meet new friends and reconnect with colleagues.

Which honor choir event is right for my singers?

Each honor choir event has a different standard of excellence for its singers. Your area may offer local honor choirs, or you may choose state, regional, and national honor choirs, such as those offered through ACDA and other professional music organizations. Start small. Have your students audition for all-city or district honor choirs. When you and your students are ready to advance to regional, divisional or national honor choirs, you’ll know.

What do I say to administrators and parents?

Meet with your administration to assure them that all interested singers will be assessed, and that those who meet a minimum standard for an honor choir will be allowed to audition. Inform your principal or music supervisor about the extra time required of your students throughout the audition, rehearsal, and recording process, in addition to the larger time commitment expected of those accepted into an honor choir. Help them understand the advantage of working with a smaller number of students who are excelling in your program.

When your singers are accepted into an honor choir, remember to promote their success. Contact your local newspaper. If needed, write the article yourself and include a photo. Administrators tend to support projects that make their schools appear more successful. Make sure you submit information for the yearbook, school announcements, the school website, and even the school’s roadside marquee.

Once you have chosen the honor choir and have received administrative approval to proceed, you must choose which singers should be allowed to audition. Meet with your chosen singers and send information to parents to inform them of upcoming audition opportunities. Emphasize the outstanding educational value of the event; explain that honor choirs provide opportunities to sing with other high-achieving students under the direction of well-known conductors—opportunities that cannot be provided locally.

Be sure that parents also understand the time and costs involved both in the audition process and in the event itself, including any participation fees, travel, food, and hotel costs. Discuss the odds of their child being selected; for instance, if your district honor choir usually has 200 singers submit auditions and selects 150 singers, the odds of being chosen are greater than if the group consists of only 80 singers.

There is a big difference between live auditions and recorded auditions. Most ACDA auditions are pre-recorded and submitted electronically, but some honor choirs require live auditions and may include prepared cuts and sight-reading. The level of musical preparation is the same, but each type of audition presents its own challenges.

When should this process begin?

Timelines for each district, regional and national honor choir will differ. For example, the online audition window to submit recorded auditions for the 2019 ACDA National Honor Choirs was September 1–October 3, 2018. (A non-refundable audition fee of $30 per singer was required.) Audition adjudication took place October 1-31, and results were posted online and emailed on November 15, 2018. Honor choir schedules and hotel information were released. Required forms and a $135 registration fee were due December 10, 2018.
packets were then mailed to each singer, and part tracks were made available online. Students were required to learn all music prior to the first rehearsal in Kansas City, Missouri, on February 27, 2019.

**Which of my singers should participate?**

No one wants to set up a student for failure. Auditions can be daunting for some singers, especially if they aren’t musically ready for the audition requirements. Furthermore, it’s important to choose singers who have the work ethic needed to succeed if chosen. The students and parents need to be aware of the level of discipline expected. By limiting auditions to those singers meeting your personal requirements—those who have proven themselves as hard workers and strong leaders in the past—you set your students up to succeed.

If you decide to offer this opportunity to each of your interested singers, regardless of their musical ability, have each of them learn the audition piece independently and create a self-recorded audition for you to evaluate. Auditioning is part of a musician’s life, and your singers likely understand the concept of competition. They probably also have the skills to make recordings using phone apps or computer programs and to share them with you via text or email. This process may also help you know which of your singers are truly interested and are willing to work for the privilege of singing in an honor choir.

Meet with interested singers early in the selection process to explain the upcoming honor choir auditions and let them know your expectations for participation in the process. Rehearsal tracks can usually be found on the website of the organization holding the audition. The singers should be able to work independently on the music and attend any coaching sessions with you outside of regular choir rehearsals.

**After I know who will audition, what’s next?**

Once the singers have committed to the audition, make sure they completely understand the process and know what they will be singing for the audition, including song cuts, scales, and any other required material. For example, audition requirements for ACDA Regional/National Honor Choirs are listed on the website acda.org as follows:

- Ascending and descending scale on “ah”

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**ACDA HONOR CHOIR REQUIREMENTS**

- District Honor Choirs are determined by each district.
- All-State Honor Choirs are determined by each state.
- Regional Honor Choirs are held in even years. The Regional auditions will be held in September 2019 for the Regional Conferences in March 2020.
- National Honor Choirs are held in odd years. The singers in the honor choirs at the National Conference in March 2019 submitted auditions for consideration in September 2018.

**Regional/National Honor Choirs:**

- Children’s Honor Choir is grades 5-9, unchanged treble voices.
- Middle School/Jr. High SATB Honor Choir includes grades 6-9 treble, changed and changing voices.
- High School/Collegiate SSAA Honor Choir includes grades 10-12 and undergraduate collegiate voices.
- High School/Collegiate TTBB Honor Choir includes grades 10-12 and undergraduate collegiate voices.
• Prepared excerpt performed with provided accompaniment

• Sing 60 seconds of a song of your choice that you feel best illuminates your talent. It can be any genre or style and may be accompanied or unaccompanied.

Continue to monitor each student’s progress throughout, from the first day they receive information until the day they actually record the music. Assess their readiness throughout the audition preparation: Are your singers working on the audition piece on their own between rehearsals? If your singer is unable to work independently, will they be able to learn the entire honor choir repertoire without constant individual coaching from you? Will they follow through, or will they drop out prior to the actual honor choir event, taking the place of a more interested singer? If we allow singers to audition for and perhaps participate in an honor choir without properly preparing for it, what is the message we are giving them?

**How do I prepare my singers for an exceptional audition recording? What will the judges be listening for?**

Judges evaluate singers on several components:

• **Scales:** Be aware that the same adjudication process will be applied to the performance of scales as to the other parts of the audition. In most auditions, each segment is equally weighted in scoring, so make sure your students work as hard on preparing the required scales as they do the other parts of the audition. ACDA National Honor Choir auditions require scales sung unaccompanied in specific keys on an “ah” vowel. Be sure...
to include scales in the coaching sessions. Singers may display previously unnoticed intonation or register issues when singing the unaccompanied scales as a soloist.

**Required Selection:** The student must sing the required selection chosen by the honor choir committee with the accompaniment provided on the website. Be sure that no vocal or instrumental “help” is used during the audition recording.

**Aria or Art Song Selection:** For ACDA Regional and National Honor Choirs, singers are required to perform a sixty-second excerpt of their choice. Do not assign the same song to all singers. The song should be chosen to showcase each individual student’s musical and/or vocal strengths. Choose a song your student can master rather than one hoping to stretch your student’s abilities. The singer should be comfortable with the selection so that they can relax and enjoy the performance. Singers who perform music beyond their ability often struggle with breath, accuracy, intonation, phrasing, musical line, and other musical nuances. These solos may also be used in future choir concerts, recitals and school programs, and for college auditions. State solo and ensemble lists are good sources of such material. One collection of art songs and arias often found on college audition lists is the *24 Italian Songs and Arias (of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)* published by G. Schirmer, Inc. This book can be purchased with or without recorded accompaniments.

Just as in any choral competition, judges will be listening for the basics in vocal musicianship: intonation, part accuracy, tone quality, dynamics, breathing, and diction.

**Intonation:** Singing in tune is an important component of the audition. Have your student practice each part of the audition alone. Intonation problems often arise without the buffer of other singers. If the audition allows a choice of syllables or neutral vowels for the scales, have the student perform each way, then choose which sounds best for the audition.

**Part Accuracy:** Pitch and rhythmic accuracy throughout the entire audition should be a given. If your student cannot sing the correct notes and rhythms in the audition piece, perhaps they are not ready for that honor choir. The higher the level of competition (regional/national), the more important accuracy becomes.

**Tone Quality:** Choir directors routinely work on vocal tone, but choral singing is a blend of many vocal tones. You must be certain that the student creating this audition recording has a healthy, clear tone independently of other singers. Some singers, even singers who may be providing outstanding leadership in your choirs, do not enjoy hearing themselves sing alone, preferring the safety of the collective choral sound. However, it is important for students to learn to love the sound of their own unique vocal tone. Although beautiful singing begins with breath control and vowel shape, not all styles of music require the same vocal tone or production. Be aware of tone production when preparing the required audition song and when choosing the sixty-second audition excerpt, making sure that the tone is stylistically correct and that factors of cultural context are included in your preparation. Remember that tone quality is vitally important for the required scales—including appropriately singing through vocal register changes within the octave.

**Dynamics:** Naturally, the singer should adhere to all marked dynamics within the music. However, singers should remember that dynamic changes are not always marked within phrases. A clear musical line with crescendos and decrescendos demonstrates musicianship. Musicianship is always rewarded in auditions. Remind students that not all voices are the same “size.” Judges are aware of this and are looking for singers demonstrating dynamic range within the song selections.

**Breathing:** Phrasing and planned breathing places are also important. Teach students to “plan your breath; work your plan.” The required audition piece is intended to be performed by an entire choir, not an individual singer. The student may need to stagger the breath during certain phrases. The judges know this and will make allowances for staggered breathing that seems planned. Students should learn that it is appropriate to take a needed breath so that the vocal tone never suffers
throughout the phrase. A sense of the text and melodic phrasing should drive all phrasing within the song.

• Diction: Be sure that you know exactly how the text of each song should be pronounced. If no diction track is available on the honor choir’s website, do your homework, then make a recording for your singers to practice with at home. Remind your students to practice crisp beginning and ending consonants from the very first rehearsal. Do not wait until the audition recording session to fix diction problems.

How do I prepare my singers for the actual recording session?

Prior to the scheduled recording sessions, you may wish to practice the audition process with your entire choir, not just the ones who will be participating in an honor choir audition. This takes away the mystery and may encourage other singers to audition for an honor choir in the future. However, remember that auditions are sung alone; your singers must practice singing their scales and audition pieces as soloists.

How do I make sure my singers’ audition recordings are competitive?

Begin by carefully reading the audition requirements. Know your deadlines. Order the audition music well in advance, giving yourself and your students plenty of time to prepare. Before scheduling your first audition recording, be certain that you are completely organized. Having a student disqualified due to an infraction of the rules would be a tragic error.

Technical issues must be addressed: How will you record? Do you have adequate recording equipment? There are many ways to make good recordings today, and many are inexpensive. If you do not have a suitable recording device, either purchase or borrow one. Although you should use the best recording equipment at your disposal, even mobile phones can produce an adequate recording. Reread all instructions for the audition process and follow audition procedures for the honor choir for which you are recording. Rules may change for each honor choir, and certainly may change from year to year.

Save the recordings in an mp3 format. Try to record in a quiet environment. Do not add reverb or other pitch/tonal enhancements. It may be helpful to provide support by conducting during the recording, but each student must be able to sing the entire audition without the teacher’s voice being heard in any way. Carefully adhere to tempo markings and key requirements for scales. In some auditions, numbers, solfège or any neutral vowel are allowed for scales, whereas others do not give a choice but have specific requirements. Audition submissions not following audition procedures and requirements are generally disqualified.

When it is time to schedule your recording sessions, plan for enough time to complete the audition, then add a few minutes for vocal mistakes and technical glitches. Actually sing through the audition yourself and time it; prepare the audition schedule accordingly. Sometimes the required selection is only an excerpt of the piece, and other times the full piece is required. The longer and more difficult the song, the more time your student will need to make an “error free” recording. Because your students will have worked many hours preparing for this audition, be sure to give them adequate time to record their efforts.

Although the judges who will listen to these auditions know these recordings are often made during school hours, it may be to your singers’ advantage to record at a time with no outside distractions, such as school bells and school-wide announcements. Remind your students to get a good night’s sleep, drink plenty of water, and to make vocal care a priority before the recording session. Also remind your singers to warm up properly prior to their audition time, as you have only planned for their performance of the audition material.

How do I choose which recordings to submit?

While you are recording, make notes as to which are the better tracks for each part of the audition. Taking notes during the recording session is imperative in staying organized; otherwise you may need to listen to the entire audition recording again to choose the best tracks. When the recording session is completed, listen to the tracks you identified as the best ones with your singer. If there are two viable options, let them help you choose which of the two tracks to submit. This gives them ownership and provides you with an excellent teaching op-
opportune.

This is also a good time to remind your singers that no audition recording will be perfect, and that the judges are not looking for perfect singers, just the best musicians submitting auditions. Remind your singers that this is a competition, and that neither you nor the singer can know how many extraordinary singers will submit auditions. Provide specific feedback and point out improvements made through the process. Let students know that you are proud of their efforts and recognize that they have gone above and beyond by completing the difficult audition process.

What do I do if a singer is not ready to record, or the recording is not good enough to submit?

This is a hard question, and, ultimately, a personal decision. Generally, students, parents, and teachers will know when singers are not practicing and preparing for the audition. This can be addressed (usually with little or no drama) prior to the recording session. Occasionally, there may be a singer who knows the audition material but has difficulty making the recording. This is a trickier issue. If the singer is not able to make a recording that is even passable, let the parent know and do not submit the audition. Remind the parents of any progress that their child made as they practiced and prepared for the audition. Be honest about which areas needed improvement. Did the singer struggle with intonation? Was it the difficulty level of the required audition piece? Let them know that you will continue to work with their child in these areas in your choirs. Encourage the student to try again in the future.

Sometimes, the student’s expectation is so high that they believe a recording is bad, when in all actuality, it is fine. In this case, discuss the audition with them honestly, pointing out the parts of the audition where you hear their strengths, and suggest they submit anyway. It is unlikely that any of the submissions will be perfect.

NEWLY PUBLISHED!


This comprehensive history of ACDA is dedicated to the luminaries that founded and built it into the artistic statement for choral music that it is today. Beyond the history, you will also see the vision, the leadership, the mission, and the future dreams of the organization. Photos and biographies are included, which make this publication a treasure for all people involved in the choral arts.

Part of the Hinshaw Music Series
Learn more at acda.org
When do I submit my singers’ auditions?

Consider setting a personal deadline of at least four days between your last audition and the audition deadline. You will need time to process and upload the recorded material to the ACDA or host website, and you may need additional time to re-record a singer’s audition. Sometimes singers (and even teachers) get sick on scheduled audition recording days.

Is submitting auditions for my singers to participate in an honor choir worth the time and trouble? Will it really make a difference in an elementary, middle school, or high school choral program?

Absolutely! Your singers will return to your choirs with new enthusiasm, new musical skills, and more leadership potential than you thought possible! It is hard work for both you and your singers but truly an experience of a lifetime for all who participate.

Parent and Student Comments about Honor Choirs:

Ella Otken: (11th grade) ACDA is more than a choir; it is a family of wonderful musicians who help one to grow by learning from each other. Through ACDA Honor Choirs, I have gained musical expertise from amazing clinicians and have formed new friendships that will last a lifetime.

Lauren Price: (11th grade) All-State Choir has given me opportunities that I’m beyond grateful for. I’ve gained lifelong friends and grown closer to the ones in my own choir. The conductors, some of whom were also composers, have been phenomenal and beyond my expectations.

Kellie Price: (11th grade) Honor Choir is something I look forward to every year. It has helped me become a stronger musician and become more confident in who I am as a person today. I get to step out of my “bubble” and experience new things. I learned not just from professional directors but also from other choir members, many of whom I’m still friends with today!

Deanna Luneau: (college) Interacting with different directors from around the world helped me have a better understanding of music and life. In an honor choir, you learn more than just music; you learn about the world, different cultures, hard work, teamwork, patience, trust, dependability, and most importantly, life.

Amanda Luneau (parent): My child loved honor choir. She sang in District and All-State honor choirs, as well as in Australia and New York’s Carnegie Hall. She made friends from around the world and loved working with world-renowned conductors. I believe that she was able to move to upstate New York to attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute because of the independence she gained during her travels with choir.

Michelle Otken (parent): Our decision to have our daughters participate in ACDA Honor Choirs has been very rewarding. Our girls have gained immeasurable musical and performance skills, steadfast friendships with like-minded musicians, and most importantly, an appreciation for music that will last a lifetime.
Sample Parent Information Letter

Dear Parents,

This is a LOT of information about the [list honor choir here] Honor Choir your child is eligible to AUDITION for. Those who have participated in the past have LOVED singing in an honor choir, and I know both our singers and the program as a whole have benefited from the experience. If you do not wish for your child to participate this year, you don’t need to read any further. If you DO want more information about Honor Choirs, please read this CAREFULLY.

WHO CAN AUDITION? [Write any requirements here…such as grade levels for the honor choirs or any other requirements you choose.]

WHAT IS THIS? [This is where you give specifics about honor choirs. Write when and where the honor choir event will be held, including city, rehearsal locations and hotel (if applicable). List audition dates and fees. List participation fees. Explain chaperone information, travel costs, etc. Remind parents that there will be additional rehearsals to prepare for the audition and, if accepted, to prepare for the honor choir event.]

DEADLINE to SIGN UP & PAY AUDITION FEES: [List specific date. Even though it may be listed above, list the deadline date again.]

BEFORE THE AUDITION: [This is where you tell parents what your expectations are for the singers to learn the music. Will they learn it mostly on their own, or in rehearsals with you. Explain to the parents how the students will access the rehearsal tracks – rehearsal CD, posted on the school’s website, etc. Remind parents that if their child is CHOSEN for an honor choir, that they will be learning an additional 5-6 songs. It’s very important for parents to know up front what they are signing up for.]

RECORDING SESSIONS: [This is where you explain when and where the auditions will be recorded. Make sure parents understand that if the singer isn’t prepared for the audition, you will not submit the recording, and that you will only re-schedule an audition if the singer is ill – not if the singer is unprepared for the audition.]

I hope you do choose for your child to participate in the [list honor choir here] Honor Choir. The experience is well worth the time, effort and money this opportunity requires.

Teacher’s Name
Choir/School
UNCOVERING MEANING & IDENTITY THROUGH VOICE CHANGE

CRAIG AND MARIA DENISON

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Voice change in adolescence is a high-profile topic among choral directors and teachers. The challenges it offers encourage numerous articles and presentations and is especially present in online choral forums. But perhaps we can look at voice change through a different lens, one that shows voice change as a great opportunity. We can focus on making voice change a meaningful expression about each singer’s unique identity that extends into their adult lives. In other words, we could look at voice change as a chance to answer an important question that lurks within our young singers as they grow: “Who am I when I sing?”

These unique meanings and identities emerge when the experience of voice change is connected to each singer’s life. These singers enter our lives already with meaningful past experiences, values, and aspirations of singing. When their voice changes, new beliefs about who they are as singers emerge. These beliefs about themselves and the overall meaning of singing are established in adolescence and last a lifetime. While these beliefs are highly personal and long-lasting, they are also dynamic, changing as singers grow through adolescence.1 This is why our work as conductors is so important. We can provide the “yes” to singing that they need, promoting their singing voice as a deep, positive, and meaningful part of their lives.

In light of these emerging beliefs about themselves, how can directors and teachers create environments and enact experiences that create deep, positive meaning for the singers? This article offers three guides for doing so: (1) promote a clear physical understanding of their voice, (2) create an environment that supports healthy psychological and social growth, and (3) provide musical experiences that enliven a vibrant and positive singer identity. These guides point to the central point of this article: the best choirs for young singers act as a support group for voice change.
Meaning through Physical Understanding

In order to establish a positive view of change in the voice, a director should act as guide, providing singers a clear, dynamic knowledge about the changes in their physiology. This approach allows the singers to celebrate changes rather than be confounded by them. The best directors of young choirs ensure that their individual singers practice a particular mindfulness while developing good vocal technique. This mindfulness enables the singers to develop a clear mental picture of the body during singing. We call this picture a body map. This body map allows the singers to understand the size, position, and structure of anatomical parts and the functions that make singing possible.

A body map is more than a picture. It also requires an awareness of the details of movement, observed internally as well as externally. This awareness is called kinesesthesia and provides a lively sensation of the self through feeling throughout the singing body. Directors who encourage body mapping make the singers aware of what healthy singing can look and feel like. This awareness encourages healthy vocal technique as they explore other kinds of singing outside the choir. Teaching mindful vocal technique throughout the young singers’ lives will instill a healthy technique that will become a meaningful part of their singing identity.

An excellent choral program offers a suitably detailed body map for singers before their voice change and then reviews that map as they grow. We may know adolescents who became somewhat clumsy as they grew. These awkward moments can be a great opportunity for choristers to appreciate the change in the size of the various parts of their body map. Rather than confusion, they can feel and appreciate the potential for new strength and power both in themselves and each other.

Three ways of learning, or modes, can provide singers a clear body map and detailed sense of that map in motion: external observation, metaphor, and visual representation. These three modes act in concert, giving our singers a dynamic, accurate understanding of their voice and themselves. The first mode is external observation. Directors often have singers use their own hands to feel the effect of the breath on the ribs and abdomen, helping them to understand externally how the breath moves and feels. They may also have singers feel their jaw with their fingertips, outlining its shape all the way from the chin to the joint near the ears where they can feel that joint release into a shallow cave when they open their mouths. Another means of external observation is by having the choristers view their singing in a mirror, giving them a new way to see how their mapped body moves.

The body map in motion can also be understood by metaphor, our second mode of learning. Wilhelm Ehmann and Frauke Haasemann were two of the earliest conductors to encourage using illustrations from real life to create awareness of the natural actions of the body. Their exercises included active movements such as hanging laundry on a clothesline, and imaginative actions such as turning the head as though the eyes were the beams of a lighthouse. These motions serve as means of establishing a kinesthesia that leads to a healthy, natural sense of balance.

Experience shows us that illustrations from real life can also be beneficial to understanding the breath. These illustrations can be in sequences to activate and then enlarge the sensation of breath without undue excess musculature. When such illustrations are connected in a story, the effects can be especially effective. For example, tell your singers that they are sitting in the back seat of the family car and have gotten soda from their favorite drive-thru restaurant. The adult driving has strictly instructed them not to blow bubbles through the straw into the drink, as it often makes a mess. Ask singers to pretend to blow bubbles in a sneaky way, so they won’t get caught; this action can establish a healthy flow of exhalation. After they do that, they can then take a natural sip from the straw. In doing so, they find an inhalation is similarly directed and easy. Once that sensation is felt by the singers, a visual of breathing can give them a powerful understanding of what they did through a real-life action. In doing so, they create a richer body map for themselves.

While external observation and metaphor are effective in providing knowledge of the vocal mechanism and its movement, they are limited in how much detail they can provide. Details about the spine, the lungs, the neck, and the vocal tract are difficult to access through external observation and metaphor. Fortunately, visual representations, our third mode, are available to create a more meaningful body map. Anatomical figures and videos, from
the simple to the complex, are readily available online. Using these resources as references, a director can enrich the singer’s body map by pointing out what physiological changes occur as their voice changes. Equally important is the reminder that many of the fundamental parts and sensations of singing remain the same. These references can provide explanation, clarity, and detail that external observation and metaphor alone cannot offer.

While external observation and metaphor generally should precede visual representation, some internal understandings of the singing voice are best achieved through visual representation as a starting point. This is especially true when helping singers understand the vocal tract: namely the throat, the tongue, the palette, and the lips. Pictures and videos can be the best way for students to understand the position and function of the anatomical parts of the vocal tract. These visual representations can show students the position of the vocal folds as horizontal and front to back, an easy mental picture. It can show how the tongue moves and where it is attached. These details are valuable, empowering the student by removing the mystery of how the voice works and allowing them to more meaningfully interpret the changes in their voice.

### Changes in the Larynx

What should our young singers know about changes in their larynx? How might body mapping help personalize and strengthen the meaning of the change in voice? Mapping, metaphor, and visual representation offer ways of understanding changes in the larynx without confusing the singer with excessive detail. One change they can understand uses an image of water balloons. Using metaphor, singers can easily see how a bucket of water balloons has more cushion than a line of them (Figure 1). These can demonstrate the change that occurs at the edge of the vocal folds as they shift from a squishy collagen layer to a more uniform, thinner cushion. This idea of cushioning is brought to life when they realize that young children fall down many times but are seldom seriously injured due to the snowsuit-like baffling found throughout their bodies. They can see that if adults fell like children do, they would see many more injuries. Our adolescent singers will likely have stories about falls like these from their own lives, and the discussion can be lively as they describe them. This idea of

An excellent body map also equips the singers to understand the breathiness or crackly sound that is present during their voice change. At an early age, they can see through the simple use of rubber bands and other elastics how length and shape affect sound. This real-life example can help them see how temporary changes in the shape of the vocal folds during voice change explains the breathiness and rough sound they feel and hear. The folds change into what is most easily described as a “rectangular” shape, and when they recognize this shape, they have an explanation for what they feel and hear. They can actually celebrate the cracking and breathiness as a manifestation and validation of their emerging new maturity, reinforcing the sense of competence needed for a positive singing identity.

### Male and Female Models of Voice Change

Of course, as we consider the changes in the body during adolescence, we should recognize that the physical aspect of the change generally diverges into male and female. Male voice change research in the twentieth century was dominated by models and approaches informed by quantitative research, particularly that of John Cooksey, while female voice change was generally neglected. Such an imbalance once made it difficult to identify the similarities and differences that both sexes

![Figure 1](image_url)
experience in voice change or even to assert a common thread.

In 1985, Lynn Gackle identified a female voice classification system that provided an initial foundation for understanding and investigating female voice change. In her later writing, she published a leaner model, which identified changes during female vocal growth as phases rather than stages, recognizing the porous boundaries between growth units. She also noted that these phases occur in females and were less apparent compared to males. Another particularly important addition to her later model of female voice change was the integration of young women’s personal accounts of their voice change. These accounts of the emotional, psychological, and social concerns of the singers provided a clearer understanding of the overall voice change experience.

By integrating her model and these individual narratives of female voice change, Gackle revealed a richer understanding of the realities of female voice change. She found that female voice change is a unique psychological phenomenon affecting what we hear as choral directors. Directors’ awareness of this phenomenon is essential to understanding and empowering their young women singers.

Recently, voice science has given us a better understanding of the commonalities between female and male voice change. This new understanding of voice change acknowledges the softening of boundaries between the stages that Gackle asserted and applies the idea of phases to male voice change. We suggest understanding the male voice change as a mapped two-phase process (Figure 2). In this understanding, we consider early male adolescence as a phase where the housing of the larynx, the cartilage, grows first, often adding a new power and vibrancy as a singer begins the first phase. As the cartilage continues to grow, the vocal folds elongate and thicken. This central phase is characterized by simultaneous and sporadic growth bursts in the larynx, and the effect on singing is easier to hear but quite unpredictable. As the cartilage growth subsides, the vocal folds continue to grow inside this new larger housing. While this phase can still have growth spurts, the overall effect is one of stabilization. As this last phase subsides, the male singer feels their voice is more consistent and they feel more in control of what the voice is doing. This new model of male voice change provides a process that the singer can easily understand. If the change in the larynx is described as the growth of a gelatinous house to a larger wooden house, they can more easily understand and appreciate the changes in their body. And of course, the use of elastics as noted earlier can enliven their appreciation of the changes in the vocal folds. Another strength of this simpler model is that it mirrors the use of phases used by Gackle. While we often focus on the differences between male and female voice change, this model suggests that in the future, we can approach adolescent voice change in a way that benefits singers who may not fall neatly into male and female categories.

**Meaning through a Healthy Environment**

By sharing the body mapped knowledge of the change and the singers’ personal stories of the experience, the choir becomes a support group that can empower its members. To adolescents, the physical changes of puberty are dramatic and encourage a new definition of who they are. Participation in a choir acting as a support group can provide context and knowledge in an environment that normalizes the physical process of change. This shared sense that voice change is normal is an important component of the meaning they derive from voice change and the identity that comes from that meaning.

Although body map, vocal technique, and models of voice change are invaluable tools for both the director and singer, the choir rehearsal is where these tools shape identity. Unless directors carefully consider the rehearsal environment, their singers will not gain the depth of

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**Figure 2**

**Cartilage Growth**

**Fold Lengthening**

**Cartilage Stabilize**

**Maximum Vocal Fold Growth**

**Phase I**

**Phase II**
meaning they need for a lifelong evaluation of singing. Up until adolescence, children develop a sense of who they are in their voices. That is, they have the voices they have always known. This knowledge of self is questioned when the voice they know changes and they realize that ultimately it will no longer exist. In order to create a complete sense of meaning, we need to understand the singers’ psychological and social minds, which influence the meanings they draw from their singing.

Girls tend to be aware of voice changes in their own unique way.14 Research informed by choral classrooms, community ensembles, and conversations with young women recognized a unique awareness as a type of perception. These young women were sensing from within that their voice felt different somehow but did not know what was happening. Though female voice change is not overt, it can be present for years and well before anyone can identify it has begun. When girls are unaware of what is happening, they tend to shut down and stop singing. Often for female singers this awareness of physiological changes in the voice is interpreted as something “wrong.” It is important to note that this sense of “something wrong” is anticipated by the singer before it is heard. As a result, these singers “shut down” before there appears to be a reason to. Since female singers are actively aware of their voice change, directors would likely achieve success in the training of adolescent female singers by enacting programs and activities that build foreknowledge of this change.15 Proactive action creates an environment of trust, building the confidence needed to sing through voice change. This confidence is vital for the female singer in establishing positive meaning and strong singing identity.

The research of Elizabeth Parker and Bridget Sweet have also showed the importance of a support group environment in young women’s singing. Their most recent study “found that intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions, both past and present, fostered emotional responses that influenced female vocalists’ perceptions of their voice.”16 These perceptions, both positive and negative, are the building blocks of a singer’s identity. Noting that rehearsals can also be places where personal voices might be silenced,17 their study found that “a lack of dialogue or shared power in ensemble settings … contributed to a lack of student [development] of vocal identity.”18 Here we can see how choirs that lack a culture of support, partnership, and dialogue can actually limit vocal identity. A limited identity, and the shallow sense of meaning in singing that accompanies that limit, discourages singing later in life. Rather than an environment that silences or discourages the expression of self, Parker (2018) found that adolescent women’s choir members could experience personal growth, confidence, and strengthened identities in their choirs. By expressing feelings, working toward a shared goal, and building community with each other, the young women in her study were able to manage stress. This effect was even stronger the longer they were in the ensemble.

Like the female voice change, the psychological effects of male voice change must be understood. While young men may discern subtle internal changes in their voice, they are not as consistently aware of changes as young women are. Males tend to understand their singing during voice change through trial and error. This may be due in part to the higher tolerance for errors in males overall.19 Regardless, more kinesthetic knowledge gained through active movement and allowing for error lets the boys try out their emerging voices. In other words, they are permitted to experiment and be messy with their singing. The growth that results from these experiences provides a feeling of competence and control that adds an important dimension to the personal meaning of their singing.

Recent male voice change studies have sought to understand the social experiences of boys going through voice change. A social understanding is especially important in the consideration of the tessitura and vocal registration in young male singing. In many ways, upper range extension and upper register singing can enlarge a young man’s sense of competency and autonomy since it provides access to a broader sense of what the voice can do. Unfortunately, high singing is transgressive and risky for both the male child and the male adolescent. Scott Harrison’s study found that “singing in a high voice was considered particularly un-masculine, even when the physiology prevented any alternate sound.”20 Ridicule of ‘high voices in boys’ [unchanged voices] was shown to end singing activity and change the lifelong individual’s relationship to music.21 This is consistent with the common belief that high singing is gendered,22 especially when performed,23 and that gender identity is entwined with voice change in boys.
Meaning through Music Experiences

Choirs that act as a support group for voice change express support through their singing. Two primary tools enable the choir’s singing to express support: repertoire choice and voice part assignment. Both of these elements are closely aligned; once repertoire is decided, part assignment can to be determined, and the directors’ knowledge of each chorister’s voice guides their repertoire selection. A director striving for meaning in adolescents’ choral experiences seeks repertoire that is adaptable, appropriate, and appreciated. These three As can guide the director in multiple singing contexts.

Adapt

Adapting music to adolescent voices is increasingly an accepted and common practice. Adaptation means changing the music to match the singer, not making the singer fit the music. Good practice of adapting music arranges it so that it fits the singer’s voice as it changes throughout the concert season. Many techniques are available for effective adaptation, the most common being octave displacement, which is the changing of octaves in the music to suit the singer’s voice. Octave displacement is often used with changing boys’ voices, but it can be applied equally to girls who need or prefer it. Often, this is a director’s default adaptation that might not be the best option for the singer’s voice or the music’s efficacy. Instead, the director can use part pivot, in which a singer changes voice parts in certain measures before other adaptive techniques. One fine adaptation that is often ignored is simply to change the key. Transposition is easily accomplished with audio and notation technology, and the best directors know how to use this technology to the benefit of their choir. Sometimes it is the only change needed and worth considering before other adaptive techniques.

These adaptive techniques are more meaningful when the director and the singers negotiate their use. This is especially powerful because when the negotiation is present, the identification and expression of range is done by the singer rather than the director. In this way, directors act as collaborative arrangers, providing the flexibility and sense of autonomy that singers need as they grow. By collaborating, the director helps the singer develop a stronger sense of vocal range, vocal development, and their role in the choir. It is much more meaningful for a young singer to determine their own range and how it can fit in the repertoire than to be simply told by the choir director what it is. Also, since voice change is dynamic, the singer is often the one to notice a change in range or quality before the director and may have useful information that will ensure the best choice. Of course, the choir director has important knowledge that should be asserted in these dialogues with the singer. Directors well informed on body map, vocal technique, and ap-
approaches to voice change can spot irregularities, bad habits, and misidentifications that can emerge before and during voice change. However, a rehearsal environment that provides singers musical experiences that they can control builds important, meaningful, and personal identities. Equally valuable is the new collaborative knowledge that results when directors and singers communicate openly throughout their musical experiences together.

**Appropriate**

Collaborative knowledge, negotiation, and care come from an environment of open communication and help the director select music that is appropriate. In addition to the vocal concerns about range, registration, and tessitura, the text of music needs to be considered thoughtfully. Music that is appropriate has a text that fits the singers. Excellent texts can reflect their world and their experiences while providing new experiences that can cross or even eliminate cultural lines. These cultural lines can emerge when personal identity is only provided limited experiences. Text matters, and its importance is becoming increasingly emphasized in our field. Our selection of repertoire should be ever mindful of the singers who are to sing it. This is especially true when the text reinforces meaningless gender stereotypes.

**Appreciate**

Young singers like to sing music that is relevant and part of their lives, music they have put on their playlists and that they appreciate. Often, directors are able to locate published octavos of songs that the singers especially like, while other times they may be able to create an arrangement of that song. On occasion, singers may suggest songs whose texts contain lyrics that are unsuitable for adolescents. Sometimes, alternate words can be found or created, but if that isn’t possible, the director can encourage the singers to identify what qualities in
the music appeal to them and find alternatives that have those qualities.

Part of our responsibility as directors is to enlarge their world by doing music that is new to them. Directors need to ask themselves some essential questions when doing so. Does this piece of music honor their world, and what potential does it have to connect to their lives in a meaningful way? Does it allow for new expressions of who they are or could be? Does it provide them new experiences that spark their imagination, tweak their curiosity, or deepen their internal life? If the answer is no, then time would be better spent on a different piece.

In order to program music that provides new ideas and experiences such as in music outside the singers’ culture or historical music, the director can explain and offer choices of songs or octavos for the singers through a voting process. In doing so, the singers are taking a first step in making the music their own and share in an important activity that builds group identity. This sense of autonomy and working in a group is an important component of building a personal meaning of what singing means and opens them up to exploring music that is different from their present lives. Figuring out how to select music that will be appreciated by people who are different from them is one step to restoring connection.

Good vocal part assignment brings together adaptation, appropriateness, and appreciation. The increase in effective use of the adaptive techniques we are hearing in community and school youth choirs call into question the appropriateness of strict part classifications. This has elicited calls for new paradigms of youth singing where rigid part assignment and strict fidelity to a notated score are reduced so that each singer can sing their own unique voice.29 One such paradigm asserts the importance of rotating the parts of young female singers so that they don’t lock into an identity too early,30 and this approach is supported by research. Young adult women looking back on their voice change experience often wish they had such flexibility,31 and many singers like to be able to sing multiple parts. One participant in a study said, “I guess I really don’t identify with a voice part right now and that does not make me sad.”32 This flexibility of parts can also be valuable for male voices, as heard in the American Boychoir study mentioned earlier.

In the end, the best focus for a director is on each individual’s range rather than voice part. When focused in this way, suitable range becomes an opportunity rather than a limitation. This opportunity is found when the director pays close attention to individual voices, checking them as often as possible for changes range, tessitura, technique, body map, and voice quality. These one-on-one moments are shown to be meaningful and valuable, especially those that encourage open communication between the singer and the director.33

Summary

The importance of a choir experience that builds identity and personal meaning in adolescence cannot be understated. The formation of identity at this age has lifelong effects not only in how adolescents feel about their voice but also in how they feel about themselves and their world. Directors can understand this and cultivate a supportive choir that encourages their singers’ freedom of expression and honors their rich emotional life. Directors can also select music that is adaptable, appropriate, and appreciated—the music that expresses the singers’ inner life and enlarges their world. These directors know how to teach singers mindful body mapping. They understand the psychology of voice change and the social constraints and biases that surround young singing. They allow the building of meaning through the collaborative process of selecting repertoire and assigning voice parts. They provide healthy environments for singing and establish safe spaces for openness, honesty, collaboration, and respect. In short, these directors equip singers to develop a deeper meaning as to who they are, what they can do, and what joys singing can bring. Our cultivation of the choir as a support group for voice change transforms their experience from one of limitation to one of boundless possibility.34

NOTES

3 Antonio Damasio, Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling

4 Ibid.

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8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nvvn-ZVdeqQ


10 Bridget Sweet, “‘Choral Journal’ and the Adolescent Female Changing Voice,” Choral Journal 56, no. 9, 53-64.


13 Gackle, Finding Ophelia’s Voice, Opening Ophelia’s Heart (Dayton, Ohio: Lorenz Corporation, 2010).


17 Patricia O’Toole, “I sing in a choir but I have no voice!” Visions of Research in Music Education 6 (2005), Retrieved from http://www.rider.edu/~vrme/v6n1.

18 Bridget Sweet and Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, “Female Vocal Identity Development: A Phenomenology,” 16.

19 Ibid.


23 Lucy Green, Music and Gender Education (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).


28 Sally Herman, Building a pyramid of musicianship (San Diego, CA: Curtis Music Press, 1988).


30 Bridget Sweet and Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, “Female Vocal Identity Development: A Phenomenology.”

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 11.

33 Ibid., 18.
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The Care and Feeding of Choir Parents

PAMELA BURNS

WHY should we care?

Several years ago, I had the privilege of leading a robust roundtable discussion with other children’s choral conductors on the “care and feeding of choir parents.” Rather quickly, we established that in order for any youth choir program to be truly successful, it is essential that parent care and education be a top priority. There is no doubt that learning and performance is generally optimized with appropriate parental involvement and support, despite the fact that some exceptional students somehow manage to thrive without it. Caring for choir parents is an extension of caring for our singers! Furthermore, educating our parents is an important way to promote choral artistry. Singers and parents alike often become “hooked on choir” and can turn into lifetime benefactors of the arts! Perhaps the most compelling reason to attend to the singers and the parents is that we know that choral music enriches the lives of our singers and their audiences. We get this.
How can we FEED?

We “feed” our parents by educating them. Many parents of children’s choir members don’t really know much about the choral art when their children join a choral program. Some parents may have had some exposure to choir in the past, but there are substantial differences between various choral experiences. For instance, a parent who sang in a high school choir some time ago, or one who currently sings in a church choir, may not have a helpful frame of reference for a choir that is a part of a school music curriculum with standards and skill expectations. A parent who has experience with school choirs might not understand the mission and goals of a community youth choir program. As choral directors, we have much to gain by gently teaching our choir parents. There are times when we all think, “I didn’t sign up for this” when we deal with parents of our singers. Yet, most of us learn over and over again that the time and effort that we invest pays great dividends.

One of the most important concepts to impart to our families is that choir is a team experience! We can start by explaining that, in any musical ensemble, it is important to have the highest possible percentage of performers in attendance in order to make rehearsals worthwhile for the ensemble as a whole. We probably all know parents who have ineffectively tried to apply their past experience with other activities to the choral setting. For example, parents usually have the prerogative for their child to miss a prepaid private piano lesson on occasion, and it doesn’t negatively impact any other students. It’s quite possible that new choir parents won’t understand that this reasoning doesn’t apply to a music ensemble. Families might need to be taught that in the choral setting, an individual’s absence or lack of effort negatively impacts the entire ensemble.

Some choir programs have attendance policies printed in handbooks to guide students and parents. Some programs, such as church choirs, cannot require attendance, so a culture of consistent attendance must be developed through clear and kind communication, along with showing that each student’s attendance is sincerely valued. I have had a positive response when including the following language in the welcome letter for my children’s church choir each season. However, only you can determine the best way to build a culture of consistent attendance in your particular situations.

“Thank you for deciding to share your time and talent! Our choir is an important part of the music ministry at this church. Singing in a choir can be a wonderful team experience! The musical skills and talents of all of the choir members are combined to create little “works of art” that none of us could create on our own. That means that every single member of our choir is very important! Please commit to consistent rehearsal attendance each week. It helps us to plan for team success when we know, as much in advance as possible, when a singer will be absent. We also appreciate a quick text message or email if your child is ill and unable to attend.”

Every team needs a fan club and a coach

We must teach our parents how they can offer support. Learning the rules of a team sport isn’t unlike learning the intricacies of the choral art. The difference is that parents aren’t likely to seek out our “game” on their cell phones or tablets or by watching TV. We must teach them not only the rules of our game but also how to best cheer for our teams. Parents often become fans eventually, simply because they’ve produced talented offspring! It’s our job to lead them in that direction.

Every choir “team” needs one coach, or maybe a coach and an assistant coach! Occasionally there is a parent that wants to be too involved. Sometimes we need to gently but firmly establish the boundary between being a supportive fan and trying to share in the coaching of the team.

Choir is a Skill-Based Activity

Another concept that might be new to some parents is that choir is a skill-based activity. Some parents need help in understanding that rehearsals include building specific vocal performance skills such as intonation, diction, breath management, vocal independence, sight singing, correct singing alignment, body, and facial expression. Perhaps our parents aren’t aware that we are strengthening rehearsal/performance skills and behaviors, such as focus and eye contact, respect and self-control, energy and enthusiasm, positive attitude, and re-
hearsal preparation. Making sure parents understand that soloist selection is a skill-based venture can help to avoid shattered egos and hurt feelings when singers aren’t selected to sing the occasional coveted solo. When we share our criteria for selecting soloists well ahead of auditions, families are less likely to believe that soloists are the conductor’s favorites.

“A potentially effective way to educate the parents of your singers is to encourage them to observe a rehearsal—on your terms, of course. Some programs find it helpful to hold an “open house” during which parents actually experience rehearsal with their students by sitting next to them and participating in rehearsal activities. Others use more of a “demonstration” format. Just imagine how many parents could be astonished as they observe vocal technique and sight-singing exercises, not to mention rehearsal room procedures and skill-based problem solving while rehearsing varied repertoire!

Repertoire Selection

Repertoire selection seems to be a universal mystery to parents and students alike! We can teach them about the things we take into consideration as we select repertoire for the choir. We can explain, for instance, that it is our goal to choose music of various genres, meters, tonalities, etc. Most parents are likely unaware that certain pieces are especially well suited for teaching particular skills. We can be transparent about how particular curriculums guide us to introduce Baroque music or multicultural music or vocal jazz, etc. Find a way to share with your parents the way that choirs invariably end up loving the tough pieces, the pieces that have especially meaningful texts, or the ones that introduce the traditions of another culture resulting in a better understanding of ourselves. Confess to an audience that a particular piece was challenging—even for you, as a conductor—and explain why. Trust that most parents appreciate being enlightened, but that there will always be a parent or two who just can’t understand certain things, such as the rationale for not trying to sing the popular music that they might listen to on their radios or iPod. That is okay.

Teach your parents and your students about vocal health! Consider preparing a hand-out on vocal health and make it part of an assignment for students to teach their families. You might want to try having older choir members teach younger choir members about vocal health; or, you could take a few moments at a concert to have a student talk to your audience about vocal health. Reflect on ways to combine vocal health instruction with team building or leadership goals.

How can we CARE?

Communication, communication, communication! Discovering the best ways to communicate with the parents can be tricky, but it is so, so important! Keep in mind that fruitful communication will probably mean using several different strategies all at the same time. You will want to strongly consider maintaining a website, web page, or blog. You might also want to create or update a printed or online handbook. Periodic newsletters, either digital or printed, can be very useful. Perhaps a mobile phone app would be a practical way to send very brief group text message reminders and last-minute updates such as weather cancellations. Realize that social networking can be a powerful way to reinforce your other methods of communication. Sometimes you need to provide good, old-fashioned hard copies. For instance, if you have students whose parents don’t speak English very well, or lower income families who might not have regular internet access, hard copies might be necessary to keep those families in the loop. Some parents just won’t pay attention unless they see a hard copy.

No matter which ways you choose for your primary communications, using additional methods to send short updates and reminders is important. Different forms of communication will be more productive than others with certain families, but most of us don’t have time to figure out which form works best for individual families. Admittedly, most of us, including our choir parents, are bombarded with all kinds of unwanted information, and few of us can stay on top of things unless we learn to
ignore or filter some of it. These are the reasons that it’s so important to use more than one form of communication, and to send relatively frequent but short reminders as needed. It’s too bad that we have to work so hard to earn attention, but it’s a fact of modern life. When you can’t do it all, consider recruiting someone to help you rather than letting things fall through the cracks. And by all means, if you find crazy success in the area of communication, shout it out to your music colleagues!

If you can manage it, demonstrate that you value each parent as an individual, not just as “Jimmy’s mom” or “Sally’s dad.” This might seem hopelessly unrealistic, and in some situations where there are hundreds of students/parents, it may be too idealistic to take seriously. Each of us needs to find our own way. In my smaller ensembles, I have tried to share quick emails, text messages, phone calls, or even private facebook messages that do not need to take much time, and might turn out to be well worth the effort. These messages can be short and sweet, such as, “How is your mom?”, “Are you feeling better?”, “Congratulations on your new job!”, “So sorry for your loss.”, and “Have a fabulous trip!” We already know that “kids don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care,” and grown-ups aren’t much different! Whenever you have the chance, be sure to compliment your students in front of their parents, both as a group and individually. Many parents feel personally complimented when you compliment their children. In addition, don’t miss an opportunity to tell your audience what awesome choir parents you have!

Be sure to express gratitude for every little thing your parents do for you and your program. Thank the parents in every printed program. Verbally thank the parents at every concert. Thank each committee, board member,
treat-bringer, ride-giver, etc. Especially, thank the people that entrust you with their negative remarks. Model respect to singers and encourage them to express gratitude to their parents. Sometimes, I even refer to my gratitude and respect for my own parents when there is a teachable moment.

There are lots of ways to respect your choir parents, and one of them is to use language that encourages your students to respect them too. This is important for establishing good two-way communication with the parents, but it is also an excellent way to build character in your students. We can show respect by dismissing singers on time, especially when parents are waiting. We can show respect to students and parents when we are able to consider typical schedules when setting dates and times for rehearsals/events. We can ask our students to respect their parents by saying things like:

“I know your parents are super busy, so I just want to remind you about ______.”

Just before Mother’s Day, you could say:

“I know you probably argue with your mom sometimes, but today I’d like you to give her a big hug and tell her how much you appreciate her.” Or, “My dad is visiting me, and it reminds me how lucky I am to have had my parents’ support all these years.” Or, “I know some of you don’t agree with this decision by the parent association/administration/board of directors, but try to remember that they want what’s best for all of us.”

It’s also important to respect your students and parents enough to disagree when it’s important. When you have to disagree with a parent, try to add something such as:

“I want you to know how much I admire your commitment and that I appreciate you even when we disagree.”

A sincere compliment goes a long way!

**How much CARE and FEEDING is enough?**

You may be asking yourself how you will ever adequately communicate with your choir parents, especially the ones who don’t seem to be interested in attending to or heeding your communications. Perhaps you are wondering how you would ever find time to show each parent that they matter. Maybe you want to know how to eliminate unwanted communication from an annoying parent. Unfortunately, no one else can answer these questions for every director in every situation. I have two pieces of advice that can be universally applied, however: 1) Never stop seeking the best solutions, and reach out to other professionals in similar situations to share ideas; and 2) Don’t forget about caring and feeding yourself. ACDA has been invaluable to me in my beloved profession as a choral music educator. We are all in this together, and as Helen Keller once said: “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

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**National Repertoire & Resources Chair Vacancies**

The National Children’s/Community Youth, Ethnic Music, and Men’s/TTBB Repertoire and Resources Chairs are being vacated.

If you are interested in applying for this position please send a resume and short statement of intent (your vision for the future of Children’s/Community Youth, Ethnic Music, or Men’s/TTBB Repertoire and R&R) to:

Amy Blosser, National R&R Chair
<amy.blosser@bexleyschools.org>

Applicant submission deadline date is June 1, 2019.

Electronic submissions only.
Children’s and Youth Community Choirs: Shifting the Paradigm

Deborah Mello
“The growth of the children’s choir movement in this country has been phenomenal, and the results of that growth can be seen as one of the brightest stars on the national and international choral scenes. Bravo to the conductors of children’s choirs for the outstanding work they are doing; they are laying the all-important foundation for the future of choral singing in this country.”

Largely because of the work of Doreen Rao, ACDA’s first National Chair for Repertoire & Standards for Children’s Choirs, children’s community choirs were exploding everywhere in the United States during the 1980s and ’90s. From the first National Children’s Honor Choir in 1983, to the first ACDA-produced videotape (titled “ACDA on Location, Volume 1: The Children’s Choir with Doreen Rao and the Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus”), to having two issues of Choral Journal devoted to children’s choirs (1989 and 1993), children’s choirs became a fast-moving phenomenon. Many composers began writing/arranging for the child voice, and publishers had catalogs full of new and exciting repertoire.
For those who worked with children, it was a time of great opportunity teaching young artists the choral art. Many choirs were established during this time in most major US cities and throughout almost every state. An inspiring network of colleagues sprang up who looked forward to sharing rehearsal techniques and repertoire while collaborating on projects that enhanced the experience for all singers. College and university choral programs expanded methods courses to include teaching children. People began to realize that choral artistry was not only for the trained accomplished musician, but that it began with understanding the choral singing of young artists. As David Elliott stated in 1983: “Learning to sing musically is an endeavor worth doing by all children. Musical performing through choral singing is a fundamental way human beings in all societies, past and present, bring order to consciousness and achieve optimal experience. Musicianship, in turn, is the way to self-growth and enjoyment in the choral context.”

Now in the twenty-first century, children’s choirs are addressing challenges in recruitment, retention, education, and marketing. In speaking with colleagues around the country and looking at my own children’s community choir of nearly three decades, I am hearing similar concerns about the health of children’s choirs. Many children and youth choir directors have identified factors that can be attributed to this phenomenon. Because musicians are creative thinkers, many have forged solutions and have made significant changes to the structure of their choir model, changing their approach in order to reach their intended audience. We must ask: In our consumer-driven world, how can we continue to promote the value of the choral experience?

Factors Affecting Recruitment and Retention of Choristers

Many have identified the following factors as having a negative impact in the decision to join a community youth/children’s choir: 1) a competitive market; 2) expanded sports programs; 3) increased academic demands; 4) commitment to rehearsal and concert schedule by parents/singers; and 5) social media. Most of these factors are prevalent throughout the United States. While some may be more intense in some places, in general they seem to be present across regional boundaries.

1) Competitive Market

Children’s community choirs burst on the scene in the early 1980s with fewer opportunities outside of school available for children. Typically, children might be involved in a scout program or 4-H, an after-school sport, church activities, and fine and performing arts offerings. Today there are many more choices available.

Emily Ellsworth, former artistic director of Anima – Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus, has noticed that children are burning out at younger ages because they are overbooked, citing the example of kindergarteners having a commitment every day of the week. “It is just too much and not healthy for the child.” In northwest New Jersey, a rural community full of farms and ski resorts, there are now four musical theater groups for kids that are competing with each other to cast their shows that run throughout the year.

Because of the many television shows glamorizing singing: The Voice, American Idol, America’s Got Talent and Glee, young singers think they should be singing solos rather than singing in a choral ensemble. Glee has taught them that if they think about a song to sing, instantly there is an arrangement and a back-up band ready to go. Big business has discovered that they can make money by selling out a sports arena to young children and their parents to sing rock songs with a live band as an interactive singing event. While I am not blaming these influences, they certainly have put an emphasis on “solo” and not “community.” Children can have both, if we educate them to realize that singing in a choral ensemble will help them sing solos with age-appropriate technique along with participating in an experience greater than oneself.

In the tri-state area of the Northeast (New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey), a recent activity for high school students involved in their school musical has been to participate in the “Freddy Awards,” a regional theatre award program. Again, the emphasis is on the end result, the prize and glitz. The rehearsals for the award program swings into high gear and block out any other activity for a two-week period in the spring of each year following the performances of the musical. While these are wonderful experiences for the students involved, it
adds to the number of commitments for students and causes even fewer children to audition for local community choirs.

2) Expanded Sports Programs

When balancing music and sports offerings, parents and their children have often faced conflicts. Most children’s and youth choirs try to work around the conflicts as best they can. Seasonal sports have intense practices and games for a period of two to two-and-a-half months. Current trends sees sports programs, specifically travel teams and community sports, that are no longer seasonal. Even if children are playing games during the typical season, they spend the rest of the year perfecting their ability as it relates to that sport. If a chorister plays more than one sport, there is little time left to participate in any other activity. It has always been a delicate balancing act, but with the increase of playing and training commitments throughout the year, choirs are losing out on prospective singers.

3) Increased Academic Demands

We live in the world of No Child Left Behind and Race To The Top. Our children endure increased pressure to excel academically, which leaves little time for other activities. As choral directors, we know that singing is an activity that embraces good mental and physical feelings. To quote Helen Kemp: “Body, Mind, Spirit, Voice. It takes the Whole Person to Sing and Rejoice!” When children are stressed, community choirs are a perfect solution for them. Singing gives them time to refocus and experience community, musical artistry and joy. The act of singing initiates the release of endorphins and oxytocin hormones to give feelings of pleasure and alleviate feelings of anxiety and stress. Our children are being pushed to excel at all costs, to be the best in everything they do. More and more high school students strive to be in the honors section of every subject, which includes an enormous amount of homework and self-induced stress. Guidance and grief counselors in the schools are overwhelmed with the number of students who exhibit mental and physical signs of being overwhelmed.

4) Commitment to Rehearsal/Concert Schedule by Parents/Singers

It has become increasingly difficult for parents to understand the value or see the benefits of belonging to a community choir. Many parents think their children should try everything—dabble, if you will—and never commit to any one activity. Commitment, practice, and work ethic have become devalued in the current climate. Many parents do not understand that having their child attend a weekly rehearsal is not just about learning notes, rhythms, and words. It is paramount for parents to realize the important role each voice plays and how it can hurt the ensemble when voices are missing.

We have all heard, “choir should be fun.” The fun results in singing with great artistry, which involves discipline and a strong work ethic. Singing with other young artists develops strong collegial relationships that will help them to better negotiate relationships as they grow and mature. Jena Dickey, artistic director of Young Voices of Colorado, feels “parents try to protect their children from commitment, which results in choristers missing too many rehearsals and performances.” I refer to it as “the better off syndrome.” Parents will bring their child to rehearsal as long as it doesn’t conflict with another activity that sounds like it might be more interesting. After all, in their thinking, their child is a good singer and will be able to catch up at the next rehearsal.

5) Social Media

There have been many studies conducted on the destructive qualities of social media. Children today are becoming more isolated and detached from social interaction because of the addictive quality of today’s technology. Social media is stunting normal development in many children. The focus is on the singular rather than the collective. Many young singers involve themselves with watching countless YouTube performances posted by individuals and think they can be discovered and become an overnight star. Of course, there are those narratives that encourage them to wish for stardom. Many of the singers who get chosen to appear on the talent television shows arrive already having an agent and a teacher or coach. The television shows focus on their backstory by leaving out some of those details that would not make it sound as if they are being discovered. It is impor-
ant to provide excellent choral models for our singers and to convey the benefits of being part of an artistic community. Our focus needs to be on helping singers to embrace the choral experience rather than on isolating themselves. One is the loneliest number.

Shifting the Paradigm

How can we as choral directors of community children’s and youth choirs make changes to our choral model in order to encourage more participation? There are many ways that arts organizations have found to attract renewed interest. Adult community choirs seem to be enjoying a great resurgence of recruits, thanks in part to studies released about adult health and wellness. Singing improves one’s health and provides a feeling of belonging to something wonderful. Choral singing is a lifetime endeavor.

Choral directors must be proactive to initiate the changes that will make a difference for their choir. It is a healthy sign when an arts organization continues to take an honest look at their model and strives to serve the community in the best possible way. The following suggestions may be ones that you have employed with your own choral organization. It is hoped that you will find one that may help your organization to continue to move forward and thrive.

Support through Collaboration

• Invite local colleagues for coffee to get to know each other and talk about how you can work together for the benefit of both programs.

• Offer professional development for teachers by providing workshops, clinics, collaborations with guest artists, or offering concerts at their school of either your choir or a visiting national or international choir you may be hosting. Satellite choirs could be conducted by local teachers and supporting local teachers through grants to teach an after-school choir in their school. Two excellent examples of collaboration with local colleagues can be found in Music in the Making, a festival sponsored by the Portland Symphonic Girlchoir. Every spring, the Girlchoir invites local school choirs to join them in an all-day festival with a guest conductor. The choirs rehearse the combined pieces with the guest conductor during the day. A culminating performance in the late afternoon highlights each choir singing its own repertoire and finishes with the festival pieces conducted by the guest conductor.5 The Cincinnati Youth Choir (formerly Cincinnati Children’s Choir) has basically changed their format of having Satellite Choirs in Ohio and Kentucky and have gone instead to employing local teachers to teach a twelve-week after-school program with their own students, who then will join the Cincinnati Youth Choir in a concert. Robyn Lana, artistic director of CYC, notes “this change was precipitated on declining auditions to the program. CYC has found another way to collaborate and reach out to the community to attract new singers to their community choir programs.”6

• Communicate with alumni of your program. Many websites for children’s and youth community choirs maintain an alumni page that boast testimonials of what the choir meant to them. Choir alumni are ambassadors for community choirs; invite them to speak with your current singers or at a performance. Several choirs have begun alumni choirs. Singers who stay local or return to the area after college are often looking for a place to sing. With the establishment of an alumni choir, they can return to a program that they enjoyed being a part of.

• Commission a new work with a composer for your community choir or collaborate with some schools to commission as a group. Many composers are offering commissioned works for groups of people to contribute collectively. Chorus America also offers this opportunity as a fundraiser for their organization. Through her commitment to living composers, Doreen Rao commissioned choral works for children’s voices. She is responsible for providing a large body of repertoire composed specifically for young singers. One of the most exciting collaborations brought together the Latvian-born composer Imant Raminsh and three children’s community choirs: Portland Girlchoir, Anima, and Children’s Chorus of Washington in a commission of The Nightengale, an opera for children’s voices. Each choir contributed to the commission and also collaborated with their local symphony and ballet companies to stage the performance.
There were three premieres of the opera, located in each of the commissioning choirs’ locales.7

• Combine arts organizations through collaborative projects. Get together with other children’s and youth community choirs in an exchange or one-day choral festival. Host choirs that are touring. My choirs have enjoyed hosting overnight stays, fun activities, and performing together. We have hosted choirs from other states and international choirs from France, Japan, and South Africa. The experience of coming together to share and sing is an invaluable one. When touring internationally with our choir, we have participated in a sponsored festival where we have met many wonderful choirs.

When we tour on our own, we try to connect with a local choir to have a personal exchange. In addition to hosting and touring, many choirs collaborate with arts organizations other than choirs. Collaborations with instrumental ensembles, orchestras, theater groups, dance companies, and local artists can only enhance everyone’s experience and provides another service to the community. Several arts organizations are finding that collaborating on a more permanent basis has been beneficial to both groups. Bel Canto, a children’s community choir based in a rural area of Northeastern Pennsylvania, was experiencing difficulty in recruiting new singers. The artistic director of Bel Canto, Joy Hirokawa, has forged a new partnership with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. “Moving the choir to Bethlehem meant losing many of the current singers, because of the difficulty of travelling so far. The benefit is that the partnership has brought the choir to a city that embraces choral culture and boasts several colleges/universities as well. It has also opened up opportunities for Bel Canto to sing with the Bach Choir. Changing the paradigm has helped Bel Canto to grow.”8

• Several choirs are reaching a broader audience by hir-
ing well-known celebrities to sing a concert with their choirs. The Jacksonville Children's Choirs performed in concert with Kristin Chenoweth, and they continue to offer these types of concerts annually. Anima—Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus welcomed Jamila Sabares-Klemm in a collaborative concert. Sabares-Klemm portrays the character of Eliza Hamilton in the Chicago production of Hamilton. Finally, when Queen Latifah sang at the Super Bowl at the Meadowlands in New Jersey, she invited the New Jersey Youth Choir to join her on the field and sing with her.

Education & Outreach

Choirs must continue to educate the community about their organization and provide outreach projects that will draw prospective singers. Parents and choristers recommending prospective singers to your program is the strongest form of disseminating information and educating the public about your choral organization. Some parents are natural recruiters, while others need some support in the form of promotional materials and written invitations. In their survey, the Youth Choral Theater of Chicago staff discovered that what they were promoting to the public about the qualities of the choir was different from the parents’ perceptions. The staff would generate messages relating to artistic excellence, outstanding performances in highly regarded venues, artistic innovation, and collaboration with other organizations. While these are excellent descriptions of what we as choral directors deem as desirable reasons to audition for a choir, the parents used descriptors such as: top-notch training (from a teacher your child will love), convenient schedule and locations, and Fun! Fun! Fun! The Youth Choral Theater began constructing messages that reflected parent values rather than staff values.

As not-for-profit organizations, community choirs need to have a strong, creative, and diverse support system reflected on their Board of Directors. Try to involve people in the community who would be an asset to your organization. Draw from various abilities and interests. Most of all, look for people who love children, the choral art, and have strong organizational skills.

Angie Johnson, Young Naperville Singers, talked about telling your story. It is important to know what your choir story is and share it with the parents, singers, and community. Johnson also feels that “one of the strongest ways to educate and reach out to the community is to create a staff who is talented, creative, child-centered, loving, humble, and empathetic who educates through their actions.” They must also know and understand the development of the child and adolescent voice and strive to promote beautiful, healthy singing.

- Performing in and around the community for various civic and social events is a wonderful way for the public to see and hear your choir. At the same time, it allows an opportunity for outreach to a demographic different from the choir’s regular concertgoers.

- Plan concert programs that are dynamic, culturally interesting, and relevant to your community. When there is an anniversary or historical observation in your community, plan a program around the event and perform it in a public forum. Host a Broadway concert that can also serve as a vehicle for any of your singers who would like to sing solos. Involve your choristers who dance and stage it. It definitely will get the public to attend your concert.

- Offer a summer choir camp for choristers and the general public. Summer is a time that parents and students are looking for activities that are rewarding. It gives the participants and their parents a glimpse of what choir would be during the year. Many children’s and youth choirs sponsor summer festivals that bring in choirs from the United States and other countries.

- Plan social activities for your choirs on the premise or out in the community. Bowling, miniature golf, swimming, or going to a movie, amusement park, or a concert gets your choristers out in the community for other people to see. Plan “Bring a Friend” events to encourage new singers to your choir. Marcia Patton notes that “the Casper Children’s Chorale hosts Bring-A-Friend events with games, prizes, singing, eating, and lots of fun.”

- Change the name of your choir to be more inclusive. The Cincinnati Children’s Choir became the Cincinnati Youth Choir in 2018. The choir known for decades as the Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus was renamed Anima.
Several years ago, the ACDA Children’s Repertoire & Standards Committee, under the leadership of Robyn Lana, became the ACDA Children & Community Youth Repertoire & Standards Committee. Currently, it is known as the ACDA Children & Community Youth Repertoire & Resources Committee.

• Establish a lending library of your choir’s repertoire to be available to local school, church, and community choirs.

Promoting Your Choir

In addition to educating your community and providing outreach for prospective singers, we need to utilize all available resources to publicize our choirs. Traditional forms and media resources should be employed. Many choirs do many of these things to project the image of their choir to prospective choristers and their families, to prospective audiences, and the general public.

• Traditional resources include newspaper advertising and feature articles; banners, roadside signs, and billboards; recommendations from voice, choral directors, and music teachers; institutional marketing; mailings and local radio & television advertisements and spots.

• Media resources include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Quora, Facebook Marketing, YouTube, user-friendly websites, online newsletters, and electronic advertising in movie theaters and restaurants.

Identifying the factors that inhibit participation in a community chorus can only help us move forward to create innovative solutions. These factors may affect recruitment for your children’s or youth choir. The good news is that children and youth choirs are still a viable choice for many children and their parents. As choral directors we need to look at our own choral model and decide how to move forward. Children and youth choruses will be challenged to continuously evolve as we strive to serve our communities and help our nation’s young artists to be the best they can be. As creative artists, we must look to the future and think “outside the box” to develop new ways to engage young singers in our children and youth community choirs. After all, these young artists continue to be the future of choral music in the United States and throughout the world.

NOTES

3. Emily Ellsworth, former artistic director of Anima/Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus, January 7, 2019, e-mail message with author.
4. Jena Dickey, founder/artistic director of Young Voices of Colorado, January 8, 2019, e-mail message with author.
5. Deborah Burgess & Roberta Jackson, co-directors of the Portland Symphonic Girlchoir, January 10, 2019, e-mail message with author.
6. Robyn Lana, founder/managing artistic director of Cincinnati Youth Choir (formerly Cincinnati Children’s Choir), January 11, 2019, phone conversation with author.
8. Joy Hirokawa, founder/artistic director of Bel Canto, January 5, 2019, e-mail message with author.
9. Darren Dailey, artistic director of Jacksonville Children’s Chorus, mass promotional e-mail message to author.
10. Anima/Glen Ellyn Children’s Chorus, Charles Sundquist, artistic director, mass e-mail advertisement, January 31, 2019.
13. Angie Johnson, artistic director of Young Naperville Singers, January 9, 2019, e-mail message with author.
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Ensemble rehearsal time is precious for music educators, and much of it is limited. Since the size of the ensemble will impact the quality of personal connection to students, how can music educators meet individual musical needs in large ensembles? This article describes a curriculum pilot of one choir trying to improve learning outcomes and personalize the learning experience using a blended learning (BL) curriculum, which is a combination of online and in-person instruction.

Blended learning has been studied in depth in many content areas but has yet to be explored significantly in music education. According to several meta-analyses, blended learning yields improved learning outcomes when compared with traditional classrooms and fully online courses.¹, ² Some music educators have experimented with technology-enriched environments using iPads or personal devices, learning management systems (LMS) (e.g., Canvas, Moodle, or Blackboard), or social media platforms.³, ⁴, ⁵, ⁶ Blended learning does not necessarily incorporate technology in the classroom space; it utilizes out-of-class time to maximize learning through technological means. And in many settings, BL is simply one way to help organize a more personalized approach to education by administering various curriculums to students with varying needs.

This article explores the experience of one women’s choir from a large private university from the mountain west region of the United States in their first semester of implementing a BL curriculum. In our search for similar approaches to choral education, we have yet to find another similar experiment documented in the literature, so this effort represents a unique design and perspective on updating music curriculum for twenty-first-century learning.

### Literature Review

Models for BL adoption that have been suggested by researchers and higher education practitioners contain enough flexibility to be used in a variety of settings, including music education (Table 1). Some institutions

<table>
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<th>Traditional Class (no online components)</th>
<th>Technology Enriched (no reduction of F2F contact time)</th>
<th>Blended (reduction in F2F contact or direct instruction)</th>
<th>Mostly Online (some supplemental or optional F2F elements)</th>
<th>Fully Online (no F2F elements)</th>
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have suggested that faculty reduce seat time to accommodate students, but these institutions often allow individual instructors to customize implementation in their courses according to their experience and comfort in online teaching.7

In an early exploration of BL, Carol Twigg discussed multiple models of BL in higher education.8 Four of these models include:

1) Supplemental Model (incorporates online elements without reducing class time)

2) Replacement Model (reduces some class time using online elements to deliver some instruction)

3) Emporium Model (eliminates regular class time in favor of student self-pacing through curriculum in an in-person lab-style space)

4) Fully Online Model (utilizes only online medium for class instruction)

The supplemental or replacement models are likely the most appropriate choice for a music ensemble in order to keep in-person rehearsal time intact. In this curriculum pilot, a supplemental model of BL was used. We decided that if things worked well in a supplemental model, eventually a replacement model could be implemented, which would reduce class time and allow for more students to join choir who might not be able to due to personal time constraints.

Research Supporting the Benefits of a Blended Curriculum

The purpose of this section is to discuss the research about benefits of adopting a BL curriculum and the instructional design elements that aid in effective execution. Because research on BL with music groups is sparse, some of the research we draw upon is from other subject areas.

Improved Achievement Outcomes. A 96-study meta-analysis found that BL achievement outcomes exceeded traditional classroom instruction achievement outcomes.9 In another meta-analysis comparing online, face-to-face, and blended classes, researchers found that achievement outcome gains were maximized for online or BL environments when (a) students reflected on their own understanding, and (b) when the instruction was individualized.10

Development of autonomous learning. In a case study of twenty-eight students enrolled in a BL English language course, researchers found that self-reported perceptions of personal autonomy increased from the beginning of the course to the end of the course.11 Some of the course activities that students engaged in were: contributing to online course materials, setting personal practicing goals, and developing skills to monitor and evaluate personal progress.

Increased time-saving and flexibility. Catherine Grant has advocated saving time by using the flipped classroom model in music education courses that can be easily employed within a BL framework.12 A flipped classroom is one in which the lecture portion of the class is delivered online, and classroom meetings are used for interactive discussions, activities, and applications of the knowledge previously learned. Grant also suggests curriculum that music educators could put online: case studies of musical works, performance-based exercises, supplementary information, or musical examples.

Blended learning curriculum allows for flexibility by providing multiple instructional settings that are synchronous and asynchronous in nature. In a comparative case study of architecture student experiences in a Blended Design Studio, researchers found that a combination of classroom instruction and asynchronous distance instruction allowed students greater time flexibility.13

Student satisfaction and enhanced learning. After using the blended learning tool WebCT to deliver many online-based activities, sixty-three undergraduate music education students at University of Sydney felt their learning had been enhanced compared to their previous experience without it.14
**Context of This Curriculum Pilot**

This curriculum pilot was led by two individuals: an instructional design PhD candidate with an undergraduate degree in vocal performance and an extensive choral singing background, and the choir director. The choir director has been conducting this large university women’s choir for over twelve years. It comprised 165 auditioned singers, most of whom were freshman in college. Following IRB approval, ninety-eight singers completed an informed consent form allowing us to use their comments from the post-course survey for analysis and publication.

**Curriculum Design**

All curriculum activities were administered through the university’s LMS, with the exception of group or individual vocal coaching, which was done in person. As this choir experience was a one-credit class at the university, we did not want to make the online work too time consuming. We created weekly sight-singing, listening, and vocal skill assignments requiring roughly 15-30 minutes per assignment, depending on the students’ individual needs and pace going through the content. Each week, the singers submitted a self-reflection of their learning and assigned themselves a score from 0 (“I did not complete assignment”) to 5 (“I gave full effort to this assignment”). The self-reflection prompt each week stated: “Reflect on how well you completed your assignment for this week in about 100 words or less. What went well? What did you learn? Let us know if you have any concerns!”

**Personalized Grouping**

Some singers in the choir were music majors taking choir for credit, while other singers took the course as an elective. These different student motivations resulted in an ensemble that varied widely in vocal and musical abilities. We took advantage of the audition data from the beginning of the semester to design curriculum specific to singers’ needs. Audition data collected included: (a) sight-singing proficiency, (b) tone quality, (c) intonation, (d) resonance, and (e) tonal memory. The choral director and lead author placed singers into one of four groups based on their scores on the audition data (see Table 2 on page 56). Two groups worked on improving sight-singing capabilities, while two other groups worked on improving vocal quality.

**Online Discussions**

Desiring to incorporate student-student interaction online, we used our LMS discussion space for singers to share thoughts about the music they performed at concerts. All 165 students were put into discussion groups of five to seven singers in alphabetical order by last name (to make the discussions manageable). This meant that some singers who never interacted with each other in the ensemble were able to interact in the discussion group. We prompted them before concerts to share their opinions or ideas about the music, and after concerts we asked how they personally felt about the performance. Singers were also asked to respond to each other’s comments to create a dialogue. This created a unique atmosphere for sharing ideas, without using rehearsal time. There were three online discussions during the course of the semester. Group discussions were graded based on participation and were graded by the director, the instructional designer, and a choral assistant.

**Online Instructional Videos**

Some videos were curated from YouTube or made by us to address basic vocal techniques and practices. Especially helpful were videos made by experts, such as Jessica Woolf’s *The Art of Breathing*, which shows the body’s breathing mechanism using 3D animation (singers were granted online access to *The Art of Breathing* with the author’s permission). We also created videos to guide beginners at sight-singing so they would have some scaffolding as they practiced and did assignments by themselves. The videos were embedded in content pages on the LMS.

**Music Recordings**

Using high-quality recordings of other ensembles available on streaming services such as Soundcloud and Spotify, we occasionally asked singers to listen to the tone and blend of other choral groups using these openly available resources. The standard Spotify and Soundcloud licenses permitted us to embed these music
recordings on content pages for students to access easily.

**Personal and Group Coaching**

While some aspects of personalized instruction can be shared via technology means, vocal coaching is best done in person, in real time for maximum benefit. The singers assigned to coaching groups received some form of personalized instruction outside of regular choir rehearsal.

Students in one group were assigned to attend a twelve-minute private coaching five times throughout the semester with the director or an experienced vocal coach. Here, issues of basic vocal function could be monitored and addressed. This was a favorite activity for individuals who never received private lessons or who struggled with issues difficult to self-diagnose in a large choir. The personal coaching was done outside of class in the director’s office. The second group that was engaged in coaching met in small groups of about 4-5 students in a practice area during choir rehearsal for about 10 minutes. Students were monitored on breathing techniques, appropriate phonation, and other vocal basics. Each student was assigned to attend coaching five times during the semester.

**Sight-Singing Activities**

Singers in sight-singing groups used *Creative Sight Singing* by James Bowyer, beginning with mi-sol-la exercises and including more notes in the scale as proficiency grows. Students with advanced sight-singing who did not feel challenged were given Bach chorales and expressed satisfaction at being challenged. The instructional designer made simple videos demonstrating how to start each chapter and demonstrated new sight-singing tips and skills.

**Table 2. Curriculum Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Target Skills Needed</th>
<th>Assigned Curriculum Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>For singers needing elementary sight-singing instruction (scored a 1 on sight-singing abilities).</td>
<td>Units 1-10 (approximately 1 unit per week) of <em>Creative Sight Singing</em> by James Owen Bowyer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>For singers needing intermediary sight-singing instruction (scored a 2 on sight-singing abilities) who are interested in joining a higher-level choir in the future.</td>
<td>Units 3-16 (approximately 2 units per week) of <em>Creative Sight Singing</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Daisy      | For singers needing elementary vocal technique instruction (scored below average on vocal technique skills). | - Videos by the choir director and instructional designer about vocal technique  
- Listening tracks  
- Group coaching with the graduate choral assistants |
| Orchid     | For singers needing intermediary vocal technique instruction who are interested in joining a higher-level choir in the future. | - Videos by the choir director and instructional designer about vocal technique  
- Listening Tracks  
- Personalized coaching with choir director or instructional designer outside of choir |
Readings

While we did not have many readings, we did ask students to read a blog post from Total Choir Resources about riser spacing.\textsuperscript{15} This helped students become aware of their personal responsibility on concerts and dress rehearsals to space themselves evenly.

Director and Student Experiences with BL

Throughout the semester, the instructional designer talked to the choir director about how the instructional strategies were working and what might need to be changed. At the end of the semester, a post-course survey was administered to the singers, and the choir director was interviewed about the experience of implementing the new curriculum. Table 3 contains personal commentary from singers and the choir director about the benefits of the curriculum for them personally and as a whole choir. These are categorized by the specific blended learning benefits previously noted in the literature review.

Table 3. Examples of Blended Learning Benefits in a Choral Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blended Learning Benefit</th>
<th>Examples from Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved Achievement Outcomes</td>
<td>The choir has ‘December sound’ in October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Choir director, informal comment after ACDA performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An improvement in choral achievement, improvement of individual skills</td>
<td>I definitely felt some sight-singing improvement, and I think the sight-singing exercises helped train my brain to recognize intervals and connections between rhythms and notes. I still have a lot to learn, but these exercises definitely helped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- April\textsuperscript{*}, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting to work personally with [the director] and have her tell me specifically what I can do to be a better singer was life changing. I’ve been singing in choirs for about 8 years, and I’d been in private voice lessons for about a year, but it was in my first coaching that [the choir director] told me that I wasn’t [breathing deeply], when all this time I thought I was. Along with my private lessons now, everything I’ve learned this semester has made me a healthier and, thus, better singer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Zoe, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The improvements have been small, but I am absolutely floored by the overall difference and improvement I’ve seen in my ability to sight-read now. I am still by no means even a proficient sight-reader, I would have to admit, but I am so grateful for these exercises that have helped me improve far beyond what I could ever do on my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ella, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on the next two pages
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development of Autonomous Learning</th>
<th>Ability to develop musical skills independent of the director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Report</strong></td>
<td>Instead of just going to class, I was actively working on my own voice, and so was everyone else. I believe this made us stronger as a choir because we were working individually and as a whole. - Avery, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sight-singing exercises and listening tracks were all very helpful because I know what I struggle with, and these tools were able to help me to fix my problems and overcome some of those struggles. - Sophia, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was really nice to have individual accountability outside of class because it kept me thinking about my own improvement instead of getting too comfortable with where I am. - Harper, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased Time-Saving and Flexibility</th>
<th>Ability to use online tools to reduce class time and/or communicate more effectively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Report</strong></td>
<td>My instructions can be very abbreviated, which is fantastic. Instead of a little mini lecture and a little mini pedagogical lesson on breath connection, I can say, “Ladies, prepare the tone”, and they have watched the 10-minute [video]. They know exactly what that means…. So it’s really abbreviated my instruction in class which saves me time which means we’re into the piece sooner, and that is invaluable. - Choir director, personal interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think it’s great that we can do those things online so class time can be more productive. - Harper, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Satisfaction</th>
<th>Student appreciation for and satisfaction with curriculum materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Report</strong></td>
<td>The feedback that I get from the students is all positive. And if it’s negative….it’s not the curriculum itself… It’s the delivery, or the material isn’t hard enough…. and we’re able to quickly remedy that. - Choir Director, personal interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I really liked the online videos, lessons, and coaching times. That was very helpful and was … applicable with what I was working on. - Mia, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everything has been an overall really good and helpful experience! - Sophia, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I LOVED the personal coaching with [the choir director] – she really boosted my confidence and made me sure that I was doing things right! - Erika, post-course survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

This curriculum experiment highlighted some positive, yet unanticipated, results including heightened awareness of musical ability, ownership of music, and increased participation in discussion. Some students commented in their weekly report that they felt a heightened awareness of personal vocal and musical issues. For example, some started noticing their poor posture as a result of the activities. Student comments indicated that they increased their responsibility for learning by working harder to learn solfege and vocal techniques. By the end of the semester, students commented on how excited they were that they did not need to write solfege syllables into their new pieces; they really knew what they were doing and had transformed their rehearsals by improving out-of-class learning. In past years, ten minutes of valuable classroom time was spent discussing the musical text or evaluating concert performance, which meant only a few choir members could share their thoughts. By restructuring the discussion and utilizing small discussion groups, we were able to elicit every student’s feelings about musical text and concert performance without taking any rehearsal time. The thoughts of these individuals were profound and elevated the discussion experience for the other group members.

Limitations

As with all instructional interventions, this experiment was not without its issues. The transition to a BL pedagogy was difficult for some to grasp and required significant amounts of communication. Some students had difficulty understanding why they were put into different groups for the personalized aspect of instruction.
tion (it was based on their audition data), and there was a tendency to compare one individual’s group activities with another’s. The design of the course required months of planning and forethought before launching. Our university librarians helped us obtain licenses for some LMS content, as with *The Art of Breathing*. Licensing issues can be avoided by using openly licensed content or public domain music and content from platforms like YouTube and Spotify.

Some students anecdotally mentioned that they did not enjoy the extra time spent with the curriculum because of the time it took, or they felt they did not need the extra practice. We tried on a case-by-case basis to make sure that students who expressed discontent were either given more challenging materials (such as the sight-singers who were given Bach chorales to sight-sing on their own), or were able to move to another group better suited to their needs. These students reported success and satisfaction with their re-assignment.

**Implications and Conclusion**

In this curriculum pilot, we learned that the BL curriculum in a choral setting did present several benefits of a BL curriculum expected from other settings. Implementation of a similar approach in other collegiate choir environments could provide further insight into the utility of a blended curriculum. We recommend that performing ensembles explore the possibilities of using a BL curriculum for their students. Although we invested long hours outside of class, there was time saved in rehearsal with students. For instance, simple ideas and vocabulary terms were introduced early in the semester without taking class time. We submit that

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**Research Report**

The 2020 ACDA Symposium on Research in Choral Singing is being planned for Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2, 2020, on the campus of Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA.

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any ensemble desiring improved achievement, more learner autonomy, increased time-saving, student satisfaction, and enhanced learning could apply a blended instructional design with similar positive results.

We also believe that further research is needed to understand the benefits and drawbacks of BL in a performing group context. Our specific implementation of this curriculum worked well for us, but further qualitative and quantitative studies in the future can shed light on whether student outcomes are improved in community choir, high school, or elementary age choral ensembles, and whether BL can improve the instructional/artistic experience for music directors.

Emily Pulham is a curriculum designer at Mountainland Technical College in Lehi, UT. Epulham@mtec.edu

NOTES


9 Bernard et al., 88.

10 Evaluation of Evidence-based Practices in Online Learning, 48.


Reflective Practice and the Choral Director
by Emily Mason

For choral directors, the start of a new school year brings excitement and anticipation of the great music that will be made with students. The year includes a full schedule of concerts, festivals, and other performance dates accompanied by a timeline for preparation and rehearsals. Often times, the schedule omits opportunities for the choral director to engage in personal reflection, rejuvenation, and professional development. The role of a choral director is unique and more than just teaching notes and rhythms. Inspiring artistry and musicality through singing requires the director to share a part of themselves on an emotional and soulful level. By doing so, the connection with students becomes stronger, and an atmosphere of trust is built. While a level of vulnerability and openness leads to great musical moments, it can take a toll on the well-being of a director.

This article recognizes the importance of organization and yearly planning of events, and addresses the need for personal reflection as not only a vital part of the schedule for the school year but essential to the success of a director and the choral program. As you take the upcoming summer to rest and reflect on the previous school year, may this article offer suggestions for more intentional reflective practice in the 2019-2020 semesters.

John Dewey presented his idea of experiential learning and reflective practice in 1933. Since then, it has been the focus of scholarly work in a variety of fields, but a singular definition of the term in music has been somewhat vague. Because of the amount of research on the topic, it could be viewed as irrelevant or old as it concerns today’s teaching environments. However, in the book Classroom Discourse and Teacher Development, Steve Walsh poses several strategies to revitalize reflective practice through experiential learning, classroom discourse, and engagement with colleagues. Although Walsh also advocates for more data and variety in the tools to gather evidence of reflective practice, this article expands Walsh’s idea of reflective practice to include aspects of teacher life outside the classroom and tips for engaging in reflective practice throughout the school year.

Reflect

One advantage of engaging in reflective practice is an opportunity to create an honest roadmap of the school year. Take note that the key word in that last sentence is honest. It is imperative that when reflecting on the happenings of the school year, honesty must be at the forefront. Reflections should go beyond the positive and negative occurrences and superficial self-analysis. Devising categories to help focus reflections will provide a more thorough documentation of events, accomplishments, and personal feelings. Keeping notes on a laptop, in a journal or notebook, or creating video or audio files are a few suggestions to record reflections.

Goals, Planning, and Assessment

Focusing on each ensemble is much easier than trying to combine all groups into a few areas or topics. Reflecting on each group allows for a more comprehensive understanding and realization of what students actually learned (skill and concepts), and how they learned said skills and concepts (types of rehearsal activities, repertoire, performance). Goals should be specific to each group and should indicate what level of mastery is appropriate. An example of what might be included can be found in Table 1 on page 64. This is not an exhaustive list but could be used as a means to get started. Each director should tailor it to meet their personal goals for each group.

With clear goals set, it is important to ask whether the goals were met and if the goals were appropriate. This also requires an examination of rehearsal plans and assessment.
### Reflective Practice and the Choral Director

Table 1. Yearly Goals for Ensembles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Mastery</th>
<th>Breathing</th>
<th>Vocal Range</th>
<th>Tone Quality</th>
<th>Part Singing</th>
<th>Sight-Singing</th>
<th>Diction</th>
<th>Rehearsal Activity/Repertoire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Knowledge of the process &amp; ability to sing phrases of at least four measures</td>
<td>Limited but developing</td>
<td>Breathy tone quality but progressing toward a clear tone</td>
<td>Two/Three-part divisi Rounds/Canons</td>
<td>Melody and simple rhythmic patterns</td>
<td>Develop understanding of vowel formation/modification and ending consonants</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Ability to sing longer phrases, demonstrate proper breathing technique consistently</td>
<td>Vocal range expanded in all voices and able to sing music with tessitura in the medium to difficult level</td>
<td>Tone is clear and singer developing ability to sing with different tone colors</td>
<td>Three/Four-part divisi Rounds/Canons</td>
<td>Melody &amp; harmony in chorale structure. Rhythmic patterns are progressively harder</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of vowel formation/modification and ending consonants</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Ability to sing longer phrases, stagger breathe, and have proper breath technique consistently</td>
<td>Vocal range expanded in all voices and able to sing music with tessitura at a difficult level</td>
<td>Clear tone and demonstrates ability to sing with different tone colors</td>
<td>Four-part divisi SATB/SSAATTBB Rounds/Canons</td>
<td>Melody &amp; harmony in chorale structure</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of vowel formation/modification, ending consonants through listening and adapting while singing</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Were rehearsal plans devised in such a way that students were successful?

• Were students assessed and how?

• Did assessment drive instruction or simply aid in assigning grades?

The last question is very important and directly relates to curricular goals and planning. It is also one that should be asked on a regular basis in order to keep student-centered learning at the forefront. Documentation of student progress is also a key component to successful teaching and should be done on a continual basis. Rather than wait until the end of a school year to reflect on learning goals, take time each day—or at minimum, each week—to document. This will allow for more authentic assessments and reflection on student progress, and create a road map of the year with evidence of growth and areas that may need improvement. Through consistent implementation and documentation, the director will see progress in each choral ensemble and in overall teaching effectiveness.5

Personal Preparation and Implementation

Understanding personal strengths or weaknesses in the area of preparation has a significant impact on teacher effectiveness.6 Preparation includes knowledge of skills and concepts appropriate for a given ensemble, understanding of and the ability to employ different teaching pedagogies, a thorough understanding of the repertoire and the ability to model it, as well as writing and memorizing rehearsal plans. While these aspects are developed in teacher preparation programs, they must be continually practiced throughout a teaching career. In addition, the actual delivery of instruction and teacher awareness during instruction is also an important piece in the success of students. Erin Bodnar examined the intention of novice conductors, responses during application, and the awareness of what actually occurred.7 The findings revealed a disconnect between intention and implementation, and an overall lack of awareness that the disconnect occurred. While the study focused on novice conductors, the results serve as a reminder to all conductors to examine their own conducting and rehearsal process.

Analysis of intention versus application through video and audio recordings provides tangible evidence of what transpired during a particular class. Utilizing a recording is not new; however, it may reveal aspects that may have been overlooked in the moment such as pacing, cueing, student feedback, student-to-student interaction, and overall effectiveness.8 Of course, it may not be possible to record on a regular basis, but it is strongly recommended at least two to three times a year.

Student Reflection

Student reflection within the rehearsal process is a common teaching strategy used by many directors. It is a great tool for developing musicianship skills, the ability to analyze, and assess student learning of concepts. This is also an opportunity for students to reflect on how they received instruction and foster meaningful responses. An example of written or oral feedback might include open-ended prompt questions as seen in Table 2. Hilary Apfelstadt supports this type of questioning in that “thought-pro-

### Table 2. Questions to Stimulate Deeper Thinking and Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you like/dislike... the song, how the group sang, interpreted, performed the song? Why?</td>
<td>Did you like the song? How was it sung? How could we improve it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could choose a piece of music for the group to sing, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>If you could choose a piece of music, what would you choose and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could decide how we sing this song, what would you do differently?</td>
<td>How would you change the approach to singing this song?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How else could/would the choir sing, move, perform this song?</td>
<td>How else could we express the emotions of the song?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think the composer used as inspiration?</td>
<td>What inspired the composer to write this piece?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is this piece relevant to you?</td>
<td>How does this piece connect to your life or experiences?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
voking questions” may garner more thorough responses from students, rather than more close-ended ques-
tions that will elicit short answers. Additionally, these questions create an avenue to implement creativity
and improvisatory activities in the rehearsal process. Directors might also consider displaying one prompt
each week on the board or wall and allow students an opportunity to add their thoughts/answers to the
board or wall throughout the week. A student-led discussion of the an-
swers could also be done at the end of each week. Providing this type of
opportunity creates an environment that is truly centered on individual
learning needs, allows students to feel empowered as participants in
their learning process, and ultimately creates a positive learning expe-
rience. This feedback need not be reported to administration and is
actually more beneficial when both students and director know that it
will be kept within the classroom. It can also be done anonymously so
students can be honest without fear of a negative impact on their grade.

Rejuvenation

Reflection on a consistent ba-
sis benefits the director in multiple
ways and aids in planning for the
next year. However, time to renew
and recharge on a personal level is
essential to longevity in the teach-
ing field. For many, time with family
members takes a back seat during
the school year. Reconnection with
those who are important is critical to
health and well-being, and reinforc-
es the much-needed support system
that inspires and encourages our ca-
career path. This includes family and
friends. Planning activities that are
outside of music and teaching are
strongly encouraged. A trip to the
beach, a baseball game, exercise,
reading a great non-music book, or
telling stories by a campfire are a
welcomed relief from typical duties
required during the school year.

Of course, music may enter into
these activities, but consider setting
specific times to rejuvenate and va-
cate your teacher role. A 2012 study
published in Teaching and Teacher Edu-
cation investigated teacher reports of
the workplace that included goals,
satisfaction, coping strategies for
problems or stressors, and overall
well-being. Findings revealed that the
use of coping strategies in work-re-
lated problems had a limited effect
on reports of overall well-being. These results serve as a reminder
that coping strategies may help in
some scenarios, but it is important to
take time away from the classroom
to improve well-being. Whether it is
daily or on school breaks, set an “out
of office” or “unavailable” notice
on email and voicemail for a certain
period of time, or schedule time to
take a walk with a friend. The time
you take to focus on other areas of
life will result in a refreshed mind-set
and a renewed sense of self.

Refill the Musical Tank and Remember

As mentioned in the beginning
of this article, music educators and
directors have a unique role that in-
cludes more than teaching musical
skills and concepts. Making music
is an aesthetic experience, goes be-
yond the page of written notation,
and requires sharing of the soul. It
is for this very reason that a refilling
of the musical tank is necessary. For
some, this phrase can mean revisit-
ing a favorite hobby, taking up a new
hobby, enjoying music while social-
izing with friends, or going to a live
concert. For others, this could mean
refreshing the solo voice with private
lessons, singing in a professional or
community choir, or checking in
with a doctor regarding overall vocal
health. These can be hard to fit in
the day-to-day schedule during the
school year but should be consid-
ered. Fine-tuning the singing mechanism and giving attention to vocal health is also imperative to longevity in choral directing.12

Refilling and recharging the musical tank are important, along with taking time to remember why you chose music as a career. Taking a moment to stop and identify the inspiration for pursuing choral music education can be very cathartic and refreshing. This is where keeping a record of personal reflections is not only useful but necessary for continual growth and may help awaken the inner artist. Improving your own artistry allows for a reconnection to music in a very personal way. Life experiences and musical understanding influence the approach to music and often uncover a new and deeper understanding of repertoire. The process of awakening and restoring the inner artist benefits the director and students by providing a path to share personal growth experiences.

Engage

Colleagues and Mentors

Relationships between colleagues and mentors is integral to the success and development of a director’s career. These relationships should also be a component in reflective practice. Assessment of the positives and negatives is important, but consider areas where you could provide support (or, as many forget to do, ask for support). It is easy to discuss the missed opportunities that others could have given, but often directors forget that they also have a role in the support they receive. In short, being proactive rather than reactive is always best.

One way veteran directors can take an active role in the support process is through mentoring. Interacting with a mentor has been identified by researchers as a significant component in young teachers’ feeling of success.13 In addition, regular

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interactions with peers and mentors along with personality similarities are also acknowledged as significant in the mentoring process. Engaging and participating in the mentoring process benefits everyone involved. Whether a novice or veteran teacher, all should remember that it is imperative to support and nurture one another in the profession. There is no one way to teach, and opportunities to learn from each other through observation and constructive feedback should be embraced.

Profession Development

Continual learning is important to all music educators. Seeking out opportunities for professional development is a must in the teaching profession and should be encouraged both by peers and by administration. By engaging in various development activities, directors grow in their personal learning and discover new ways to make music relevant in the lives of students. Venues for professional development include local, state, and national music conferences; certification in specific teaching pedagogies; summer music camps; workshops sponsored by local school districts, universities, or music education associations; or perhaps an entire course in a closely related subject.

Professional development may also include engagement in professional organizations through leadership roles, creating or revising curriculum, becoming a mentor to new faculty, advocating for music education and the arts through conversations with local and state lawmakers, or sharing teaching tips and strategies by writing an article for a choral music education journal. All of these contribute to the improvement of teachers and serve to advance the profession.

Establish New Goals

This last aspect of reflective practice could be seen as coming full circle. The beginning of this article stressed a reflection on curricular goals. Revisiting the reflections from the previous school year will inform the director in setting goals for the next year. Consider using the same categories that were included in the previous year to allow for consistency and direct comparison. As these goals are set, remember that there should be room for flexibility. Students retain and gain information at different rates, so goals need to allow for revisiting concepts and more time to understand a concept. In addition, setting new goals for consistent personal reflection, rejuvenation, engagement, and overall well-being should be included. Personal goals are just as important as curricular goals and therefore deserve a place in the yearly calendar.

Conclusion

Reflective practice is an integral part of teaching, but it can be difficult
to maintain on a consistent basis. Including time for daily reflection, rejuvenation, and reengagement in the yearly schedule of events can make it easier to implement because it is on the calendar. While the strategies and tips in this article are suggestions, they may provide a renewed understanding of reflective practice, open avenues for creativity in student-centered learning, motivate directors to seek out opportunities for professional growth, and remind directors to include moments that will promote their overall well-being. Reflective practice benefits everyone, and when implemented on a continual basis, results in a healthy choral program and a healthy director.

Emily Mason is assistant professor in choral music education at California State University, Fresno, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses and conducts the Fresno State University Singers. emason@csufresno.edu

NOTES


5 Button, “Music Teachers’ Perceptions of Effective Teaching.”


10 Sickel, “Relationships: Their Power & Importance.”


12 Wilkinson & Rush, Habits of a Successful Choir Director.


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• Jazz, spirituals and gospel - Erick Parris - United States
• The indigenous influence - María Guinand - Venezuela
• Choral rhythms in Panama - Elektra Castillo - Panama
  • Los Andes Carnival - Camilo Matta - Argentina

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The 2019 ACDA National Conference celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of our association in Kansas City, Missouri. Dubbed the “Jubilee Anniversary,” this year’s national conference highlighted the themes of Legacy and Community. These timeless themes held special significance this year as they honored the founding of our association and created countless opportunities for members to recognize the progress and current achievements within our profession. Simultaneously, this conference allowed members to look back and hold in esteem our shared history centered on the ACDA mission: “To inspire excellence in choral music through education, performance, composition, and advocacy.”

This mission continues to be central to a philosophy that embraces new initiatives that help to open the doors of opportunity as wide as possible for the next generation of choral professionals. This year, the International Conductors Exchange Program (ICEP) continues to embrace this philosophy by seizing upon an inspired international collaboration with our colleagues from South Africa. ICEP is a vital and noteworthy ACDA initiative that strengthens the musical and professional bonds that connect us to the international community. Alumni of this initiative are creating second and third generation opportunities for collaboration and meaningful dialogue as they cast an ever-expanding net that allows engagement well beyond the limits of the original exchange.

This spring, ACDA was honored to welcome six ICEP conducting fellows from South Africa as international cultural ambassadors for the choral art. This marks the seventh successful ICEP collaboration with a current total of twelve countries and more than 125 ICEP alumni. During the first phase of the 2019 exchange, each guest from South Africa was in residence in the United States, beginning with attendance at the National Conference in Kansas City.
City. This was immediately followed by an extended residency in various areas of the US representing the seven ACDA regions. Each ICEP residency included opportunities for countless ACDA members and their choral communities to learn from our South African colleagues through lectures, conducting master classes, rehearsal clinics, concert performances, and many wonderful social gatherings. The second phase of the South Africa exchange is set to commence early fall 2019.

Greetings from South Africa

Michael J. Barrett
South Africa Coordinator,
ACDA ICEP 2019
Director of Choral Activities,
University of Pretoria
Senior Lecturer and Conductor,
Tuks Camerata

The Universities of Pretoria, Johannesburg, and the North-West are honored to host the five American Conducting Fellows as part of ICEP in September 2019. Six South African fellows from across the country had the privilege of attending the ACDA National Conference in February and were wonderfully hosted by prominent organizations and institutions throughout the States. Each and every one of these conductors said the experience was “one of a lifetime” and that they have returned with new passion and energy. They all truly believe and support this initiative and are convinced that it indeed helps to build bridges across nations.

In September 2019, we welcome five astute choral conductors from the United States. In collaboration with three South Africa Universities, namely the University of Pretoria (Michael Barrett), University of Johannesburg (Renette Bouwer) and the North-West University (Kobus Venter), these conducting fellows will experience the cultural richness that South Africa has to offer, both musically and socially. The conducting fellows will visit three major cities, starting in Johannesburg (the economic hub), then moving to Pretoria (administrative
Capital of South Africa), and finally ending up in Potchefstroom (a beautiful university town). During their visit, three major choral events are being hosted and our guests are welcome to attend all the events.

An die Muzik
Hosted by arguably four of the top academic and cultural schools in Pretoria, this event is a true spectacle and celebration of music amongst our youth. Annually, Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria (Afrikaans High School for Girls), Afrikaanse Hoër Seunskool (Afrikaans High School for Boys), Pretoria Boys High and Pretoria High School for Girls put on a mass choir event (popularly known as “Four Schools”), which is both unique and truly magnificent. Four choirs, four orchestras, four performances all culminate in a mass of over 600 performers. This is truly the biggest music festival amongst the youth in South Africa.

The University of Pretoria Principals Concert
This is another annual event, this time hosted by the Department of Music at the University. Each year, the University of Pretoria (Tuks) Camerata and the University of Pretoria Symphony Orchestra join forces with the Department of Visual and Fine Arts and the Department of Drama to put on the Annual Principals Concert. In the past, works such as Mendelssohn’s Lobegesang, Bizet’s Carmina Burana, Requiem by Mozart, and most recently the Sunrise Mass by Gjeilo have been programmed for this special occasion.

Kuesta
An integral part of the South African Choral community, this festival brings together South Africa’s (and some of the world’s best) university choirs for an event of artistic excellence. This biannual festival takes place over four days and promises to be a remarkable occasion with world-class performances by five South African University Choirs: the University of Pretoria (Tuks) Camerata, the University of Johannesburg Choir, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Choir, NWU-Puk Choir, and the Stellenbosch University Choir. The 2019 festival will be hosted in Potchefstroom.

As part of our cultural exchange, our conducting fellows will visit the world-famous Ndlovu Youth Choir, conducted by Ralf Schmitt, for an afternoon of traditional song and dance. The University of Johannesburg will organize exchanges and visits to some of the most iconic places in Soweto (including the Regina Mundi Church, Apartheid Museum, Mandela House, and Hector Petersen Museum), and the delegates will also be spoiled by a visit to one of our national parks. Workshops with local choirs and a

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lecture or two is on the cards for our university students. A visit to the Lesedi Cultural Village, an evening with Tuks Camerata, and working with some of our best university choirs is all part of the package and experience. We are truly excited and extend a warm welcome to our American Fellows. We eagerly await your arrival. Welcome to South Africa!

**ICEP Liaisons**

The continued success of this exchange program is due in large part to ACDA members who have heard the call to service and have stepped forward with vigor. These individuals supervised all aspects of the US residency for our Visiting International Conductors (VIC) from South Africa, and our counterparts from South Africa will oversee all logistics of US residencies in our partner countries. Their contributions to ACDA, the International Conductors Exchange Program, and the choral music profession cannot be overstated. This year’s exchange would not be possible without our partners from South Africa.

The ICEP Liaisons for the 2019 International Conductors Exchange Program South Africa are:

**Eastern Region**
Nicolas Dosman

**North Central & Central Region**
Jeremy Jones

**Northwest Region**
Seth McMullen

**Western Region**
Gene Peterson

**Southern Region**
Phillip Stockton

**United States**

** ICEP Liaisons**

**The continued success of this exchange program is due in large part to ACDA members who have heard the call to service and have stepped forward with vigor. These individuals supervised all aspects of the US residency for our Visiting International Conductors (VIC) from South Africa, and our counterparts from South Africa will oversee all logistics of US residencies in our partner countries. Their contributions to ACDA, the International Conductors Exchange Program, and the choral music profession cannot be overstated. This year’s exchange would not be possible without our partners from South Africa. The ICEP Liaisons for the 2019 International Conductors Exchange Program South Africa are:**

NICOLAS DOSMAN

**Eastern Region**

**North Central & Central Region**

**Northwest Region**

**Western Region**

**Southern Region**

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Edwin Mitas
UP Onderstepoort Community Choir

Sabelo Mthembu
Quava Vocal Group

Raine Pienaar
Laerskool Stephanus Roos Choirs & Glenstantia Primary School

Kobus Venter
North-West University PUK-Choir, Molen Körus Chamber Choir, Boulevard Harmonists

Rineke Viljoen
North West Youth Choir

Aimee Mell
McClure Middle School

Amanda Quist
Westminster Choir College

Jeffrey Benson
San Jose State University

Derrick Fox
University of Nebraska Omaha

Kerry Glann
Ball State University

Bethany Jennings
Stuart W. Cramer High School

If you are interested in learning more about the International Conductors Exchange Program or how to become involved with international initiatives through ACDA, please contact T. J. Harper, chair of the ACDA Standing Committee on International Activities at harper.tj@gmail.com. Consider joining our ACDA International Activities group on Facebook or visit the ACDA website and ICEP ChoralNet Community for the latest news and information about upcoming exchanges.

T. J. Harper is chair of the Standing Committee on International Activities, director of the ACDA International Conductors Exchange Program, and associate professor of music at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. harper.tj@gmail.com
Call for Nominations

The Julius Herford Dissertation Prize: Each year the Julius Herford Prize Subcommittee of the Research and Publications Committee accepts nominations for the outstanding doctoral terminal research project in choral music. Projects are eligible if they comprise the principal research component of the degree requirements, whether the institution defines the project as a "dissertation," "document," "thesis," or "treatise," etc.

When a dissertation may be nominated: The prize name’s date (above) indicates the year in which the relevant doctoral degree was conferred. Dissertations must be nominated in the calendar year following the year in which the degree was conferred. The prize is awarded in the calendar year following the year of nomination. Thus, the dissertation of a student with a 2018 degree can be nominated between January 1 and June 1, 2019; the prize will be awarded in 2020 (at the relevant ACDA conference).

The award: The winner will be awarded a $1000 cash prize and a plaque. The committee reserves the right to award two prizes or no prizes in any given year.

Nomination Requirements and Procedure:
1. An institution may submit only one document for that year’s prize. In the event that there are two nominations of equal merit from one school, the letter from the Dean, Director or Chair of the music school (described below) must justify the additional nomination. The submitting faculty member, institution and/or the writer must be currently a member of ACDA in good standing.

2. To nominate a dissertation send, by US mail:
   A) A signed letter from the Dean, Director, or Chair of the music school recommending that the dissertation be considered for the Herford prize. (Letters from the Chair of the Choral area are not acceptable.) The letter must include the following information: the complete name of the student, the year in which that student’s degree was granted, and the full title of the dissertation
   B) An abstract of the dissertation, from which any material identifying the student or institution has been removed.
   C) An unbound copy of the dissertation (it may be double-sided). Excepting the title page, any material that identifies the student or the institution must be excised from the document before it is submitted.
   D) The full name, title and complete contact information for the area faculty member making the submission and the full name, current position(s) and contact information for the dissertation’s author (USPS address, email address and phone number(s)).

3. The dissertation and accompanying materials must be received at the national office (address below) by the date announced below (and in the Choral Journal and on the website). Faxed material will not be accepted.

4. All materials must be submitted together in one envelope.

If one or more of these requirements is not met, the dissertation will be eliminated from consideration.

Nominations for the 2018 Julius Herford Dissertation Prize must be received between Jan 1 and June 1, 2019.

Mail applications to: Sundra Flansburg, ACDA National Office, 545 Couch Drive, Oklahoma City, OK 73102-2207
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President’s Letter

On Tuesday, February 24, 1959, an historic meeting took place in Kansas City, Missouri, in connection with the biennial national convention of the Music Teachers National Association. The meeting: the organizational meeting of the American Choral Directors Association.

During the course of 1958, a Steering Committee was organized by mail. Each member suggested a list of names of choral directors who were considered competent, and sufficiently interested in the profession to support an organization. The Steering Committee early recognized the fact that although every other facet of the music business and profession was represented by an organization, no such representation existed on a national level for choral directors!

As soon as names were suggested by the Steering Committee, descriptive letters were sent, again asking for other names. It was decided that the first, or organizational, meeting would take place in conjunction with the M.T.N.A. convention, this being the best available major vocational convention centrally located.

Of the one hundred thirty directors accepting charter membership, more than seventy attended the organizational meeting. A constitution and by-laws were adopted, officers elected, and after the first business meeting the members participated in four choral reading sessions. The music was pre-selected by a committee of three, and sent at their own expense by the publishers. The music was packaged and distributed without charge by the Jenkins Music Company of Kansas City.

The American Choral Directors Association is now an established organization. A list of the purposes appears elsewhere in this News Letter, as does an application for membership. The next annual convention will be held in Atlantic City in March of 1960, at which time numerous program features will be combined with reading sessions. These will be channeled to the interest of the four categories of membership: college, high school, church, and industry.

Archie Jones
The 2019 ACDA National Conference in Kansas City was, among many other things, a celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the birth of the American Choral Directors Association. In the May 1959 issue of Choral Journal, ACDA president Archie Jones stated that the first organizational meeting of ACDA took place on Tuesday, February 24, 1959, in Kansas City. (Find a copy of his full statement on page 78.)

The February 1979 issue of Choral Journal featured a column titled “ACDA Celebrates 20th Anniversary.” It highlights observations from six choral conductors who witnessed the beginning of ACDA. That column is reprinted in its entirety in the following pages. This reprint will serve as the first in a series focused on ACDA’s history as found within the pages of Choral Journal over the past six decades. The series will continue in each publication through the end of the 2019 calendar year.


ACDA Celebrates 20th Anniversary in 1979—Observations from Six Choral Conductors

Helen Hosmer
Crane School of Music
State University College
Potsdam, N.Y.

In the 48 years of my active professional life, I believe one of the things I am most proud of is the fact that I was a charter member of ACDA. Although not actively engaged in the choral field during the past 13 years of retirement, there is always that feeling of satisfaction and pride and admiration for those now involved when I pick up the Choral Journal.

ACDA is unique. When I think back to the organizational meetings in Kansas City in 1959 when we were working on plans for the formation of this group, I feel a real miracle has taken place. As I recall, there were 14 or 15 of us, and now we are 10,000 strong in a matter of 20 years. Sincere, honest, and dedicated attitudes have brought about this healthy expansion. The original ideals, plus current advancement, and assimilation of the better elements of programs, have been responsible for this growth.

In retrospect, many things are obvious. The whole development is the ever-widening circle that generates additional circles until we have a richly meshed total. Again, so many things are obvious to one who worked actively for five decades, and as a student in the formative period and how as a retiree I have eagerly watched the development of choral music. Briefly, ACDA means the following to me:

A: All encompassing. We serve all ages, all types of choral groups. We utilize the music of all time, from antiquity to the most avant garde.

C: There has developed a Choral Comradeship through ACDA from the smallest center to a remarkable international community.

D: The devoted dedication of the founders and all subsequent officers and members has made ACDA what it is.

A: There is a remarkable acceleration indigenous to our ACDA membership and their progress, goals for the future and daily choral life, which will bring additional contributions.

All of this and much more make ACDA the power and force that is felt in all parts of the choral world. We are rightfully proud of ACDA.

Elwood Keister
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL

In the beginning ACDA was an idea whose time was long overdue. Though a bit tardy, those of us who first nourished it knew the excitement, joy, as well as the responsibility for laying the prop-
er foundations upon which the organization could grow and develop.

The growth and influence of ACDA since that time greatly exceeds the expectations of the few who sat around a table years ago searching for a name, drawing up a charter and wondering just how and where to begin. While recognizing our achievements and resting for a moment on our laurels, we are challenged by the future. Our membership, though impressive, represents only a fraction of our colleagues in choral music; the Choral Journal needs to continue its development and influence as a truly helpful and scholarly publication: our combined voice has yet to be heard in Washington, D.C. These and countless other challenges lie ahead, promising an even greater ACDA for the future.

Russell Mathis
ACDA Vice President
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

What I remember best about the founding of ACDA is that I strongly resisted becoming a member. I am not a “joiner.” Not for me the monthly meeting in the lodge hall, the conventions with funny hats and long parades, or the weekly tail-twistings. As a relatively new teacher turned part-time grad student, 1959 was a year of restricted finances. The only organizations I belonged to were those that were deemed absolutely necessary for professional advancement. So it took some persuasion on the part of Harold Decker to get me interested in this new organization.

As he has been so many times, Harold was right. From the time I joined I have never regretted the decision to become a member. ACDA has proven to be one of the best investments I ever made. Serving the choral art can be done in a number of ways, and for 20 years now ACDA has been showing us those ways.

Harold A. Decker
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

Two decades ago, a small group of men and women met together in Kansas City to organize a professional organization of choral directors. For the first time choral musicians themselves took a serious step to crystallize their objectives and to give themselves a professional standing in their own right.

Their professional goals sought greater knowledge of a vast choral repertoire and the highest standards of performance possible. They aspired to help the choral conductor expand his musical horizons, to improve his conducting and rehearsal techniques, and to encourage not only music in the schools but in the communities, the churches, and the factories as well.

Ten thousand members in this fellowship was far beyond their fondest dreams (in 1966 we strove diligently for 1,200, I remember). In March of 1979 the ACDA national convention, again in Kansas City, will attract many of its membership to hear some of the finest choirs in the world and to observe leaders in the profession demonstrate their techniques. Equally important, this band of choral conductors will meet together to renew friendship and share their own professional knowledge and experience with each other.

The spirit of dedication of ACDA’s leadership and membership is alive and flourishing. What a powerful force for the betterment of our society and the improvement of its quality of life! As F. Melius Christiansen used to say: “Knowledge is power!” Put knowledge and music together with inspiration under a dedicated conductor, and a choir will produce a thing of great beauty that will be cherished and remembered by all who listen. This is the true goal of ACDA.

Warner Imig
University of Colorado
Boulder of Colorado

It is a real pleasure for me to write these few words about some of the “beginnings” of ACDA. On February 24, 1959, a few conductors and acting souls met in a rather clingy, cold meeting room in the Kansas City Auditorium. The call for the meeting spoke of an association to be formed and organized that was somehow related to choral music and music conductors.

I can remember on several occa-
sions during or after a choral festival or choral contest of a conductor talking with other persons like myself about the need for a national choral organization.

Well, finally Harvey Jones, Wayne Hugoboom, myself, and others arranged the approved meeting. History will tell you the rest. But I do quote to you from a speech I made at our January convention in Philadelphia on March 12, 1964. “We who met but a few years ago to organize with a great and special group of 40 or 50 have now grown. Not grown to manhood but at least to great youth. Stunning and magnificent things have grown in this organization. Two years ago a membership of 500, now a figure of about 1,500, and how many in ten years is anyone’s guess. Your leadership has been our inspiration and a prognosis for a future that will be most exciting. The young men and women in our field of endeavor will long remember and continue an organization which will be a leader in choral music in our country. Who can guess or even fortell the progress…that we may later do in the development of choral literature concepts in choral music, advancements in the field, and general promotion of the art that is now a boy with the endowment of ages behind him, but centuries as a great youth and adulthood in front of him.”

If you will remember a quote from Twelve Nights, “Men old enough for a man, or young enough for a boy.” I think this is where we were in 1964, and in 1979 our future is still as exciting.” My best wishes to all of you, and my sincere regards to all of the officers and the people who have made ACDA what it is.

Howard Swan
Occidental College
Los Angeles, CA

What has the ACDA meant for me during twenty years of membership?

One: From its very beginning this organization of choral conductors has insisted upon the highest of professional and amateur standards in music making. “Amateur” comes from the French verb “amare,” to love. And, “Professional”? … “Having great skill or experience in a particular field.” Love for music and skill with its performance; this has been and is a credo for ACDA.

Two: Whenever ACDA members gather, everything is up-beat. One senses that here there is joy, inspiration, gratification, well-being. This mood encompasses each meeting, conference, convention. It bubbles up between the lines in Journal letters, articles, reports. It is the product of a self-satisfying threefold approach to the choral art: to listen—to perform—to teach.

Three: The ACDA has never stopped being a helpful group. Each member assists another. Those who know pass on their skills to colleagues who are learning. There are no patented procedures.

Four: Finally, there is within the ranks of this organization an acceptance of a greatest single challenge: the recognition that through choral music, children, young people, and adults may become fulfilled persons. To this end we sing, we instruct, we conduct, and in the process, we too are blessed.

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Camerata Musica Limburg

“Freude, schöner Götterfunken!” (Joy, fair sparks of the gods) seems to be the cry of the fifth and penultimate GENUIN album by the Camerata Musica Limburg of the complete recording of Schubert’s works for male choir. The title of the program is “Elysium,” which says it all. The release is a pleasurable stroll through heavenly realms: known and unknown, from poems by Schiller, Klopstock and many, many other wonderful poets. The interpretation is on par with the entire collection: an immaculate ensemble sound and an interpretation wonderfully worked out by conductor Jan Schumacher and his masters.

CARESANA
SECULAR CHAMBER CANTATAS

Ensemble Démesure

Born in Venice, Cristofaro Caresana (c.1640–1709) made his career in Naples as a singer, organist, choirmaster and composer. Both sacred and secular vocal works survive but have been very little known beyond libraries. This album affords a rare opportunity to get to know a lively 17th-century musical voice, interpreted by a young early-music group. Ensemble Démesure present eight cantatas, all based on time-honoured Classical themes. Scored for solo voice and continuo, they alternate recitative and aria, though the distinction between the two genres is often blurred.

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A recent report from Dillon Walters, the California State University, Fresno ACDA chapter president, reports their chapter hosted Choral Fest, which had almost 100 local choirs—middle school and high school—in and around central California. They also hosted Sound Off, previously known as Real Men Sing—an event that annually fills the concert hall and inspires young voices to continue with their musicianship.

Their monthly meetings are composed of discussing research from the ACDA journals, reading new literature, discussing pedagogy techniques, practicing conducting, and planning future events. “We are currently planning on having a round table with some newer teachers to help us gain insight before we step out into a new job. A larger goal is to create a conducting master class for students who have passed their conducting proficiency. We are currently having difficulty funding a conductor outside of the university to attend the master classes,” reports Dillon.

As the president, Dillon has been feeling very creative with the chapter. “I am just hoping that we can find a better time to meet, because the hardest thing about this is getting people in one room at a certain time.” The currently elected board members are: Dillon Walters (President), Mathew Scott (Vice President), Nisha Saravia (Secretary), and Jordan Pulido (Treasurer).

Confidently, Dillon also says, “We are small right now, but we are striving to get the ball rolling and create a platform students can utilize, helping them become more successful in their field.”

Send chapter reports and updates to tkopacka@acda.org
JOY DE COURSEY-PORTER

**Ave verum corpus**
- SATB; A,B divisi; a cappella; Latin (traditional)

MARIO GULLO

**March Creek**
- TTBB; divisi to an occasional 8 parts; a cappella; English (Michael J. Nicosia)
- 2’40". Myth and memory and nature are drawn upon in this little gem. The first three verses suggest springtime snapshots in nature, capturing emergent growth; the last two connect these with the human journey. Not easy: considerable linear independence; harmonic twists; req low bass C. Worth the work for those who can! ProjectEncore.org/mario-gullo

Looking for . . .

... focus on the timely plight of refugees around the world, and powerful statement of the value of each individual?

**Here it is: “My Name is Lamiya; Don't Call Me ‘Refugee’”**

by Michael Bussewitz-Quarm

Six minutes long. Mixed voices (with divisi), piano, body percussion.

Built on a rhythmic ostinato to the words “Don’t Call Me ‘Refugee,’” names can be freely added to the score, to make it personal for the group performing it. Hear a complete recording and learn more about it here: ProjectEncore.org/michael-bussewitz-quarm-my-name-is-lamiya
PROJECT : ENCORE™ is an online catalog of post-premiere, new choral music, reviewed and endorsed by an international panel of prominent conductors.

Four times each year, P:E adds newly accepted scores to its catalog. Score submission deadlines are the 15th of January, April, July, and October.

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. . . a Tagore setting for treble voices?

Here it is: “Faith Is the Bird that Feels the Light”
by Elizabeth Alexander

In three minutes, a message of universal faith for SSA (some divisi) unaccompanied voices; S, A soloists.

Relatively easy, rhythmically dynamic with inflections of jazz and blues. Could be a strong closer to a concert! Hear a complete recording and learn more about it here: ProjectEncore.org/elizabeth-alexander-faith-is-the-bird

Spotlights on compositions that are already part of the PROJECT : ENCORE Catalog are occasionally included here, in order to suggest very specific programming potential for the selected piece.

Looking for . . .

. . . a companion piece for Ernest Bloch’s magnificent Sacred Service?

Here it is: The Golem Psalms by Andrea Clearfield

A half-hour piece in seven movements, set for mixed chorus, baritone soloist and large orchestra (comparable to that of Bloch’s Sacred Service).

Beyond the substantial size of the orchestra, the two major works make a compelling concert pairing for their decidedly universalist approach to Jewish liturgy and tradition. The score, recording of the premiere, and additional information about the work can be found at ProjectEncore.org/andrea-clearfield-golem-psalms

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Hardcover, $95.00
Paper, $29.95

This unique work attempts to combine ethnography and biography, a daunting task at which the author succeeds. Denise Glahn has written several other works, including *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (2013), which help to cement her place in assembling this type of study. Glahn is the head of musicology at Florida State University; she has created this book for the “Music in American Life” series at the University of Illinois Press.

Glahn maintains a writing style that is scholarly yet surprisingly readable. This is not a chronological biography but an ethnography or, as this author also prefers, a “biography in process, where the reader constructs the biography from highlighted incidents and influences in Larsen’s life.” This structure makes for a much more compelling read, indeed.

Perhaps like many contemporary composers, there are a variety of incidents and backgrounds in the composer’s life, and those have an impact on what and how she chooses to compose. For Larsen, these influences include, among others, the church and a Catholic upbringing, growing up in a family with four sisters, growing up in the vast nature of Minnesota, and the changes brought about by the emerging cusp of technology and the concert hall.

Speaking from a choral perspective, one is drawn to her work, *O Magnum Mysterium* (2011). “In *O Magnum Mysterium* Larsen reconciles the chant tradition to which she was born with the four-part choral tradition that had so riled her sensibilities in high school. She also harmonizes Western and Eastern sounds when she writes a part for sitar… Its appearance signals Larsen’s refusal to be confined by expected sounds or cultural traditions” (p. 204). Other features include vocal lines that are an outgrowth of sitar, vibraphone and percussion; an alleluia that explores frequently changing meters; and emerging and finally settling four-part choral sound at the end of the seven-minute piece. Again, *O Magnum Mysterium* combines old and new, East and West, and unusual and fluid textures. She includes her own program note at the beginning:

> On the first Christmas night, what must it have been like when the skies exploded with heavenly light and erupted with the sound of angels? It must have been terrifyingly beautiful, furiously ecstatic and powerfully peaceful. Time must have stopped and in this moment suspended in eternity, the angels taught us how to sing. In this setting of the text *O Magnum Mysterium*, The Archangel quietly shepherds us into a twelve-fold Alleluia—heaven and earth singing together at the Birth. (p. 203)

Larsen also has composed “women celebrating works,” especially art songs, thus indicating her comfort with both intimate and larger art forms. They include *ME* (Brenda Ueland), eight songs based on works of a Minnesota writer Brenda Ueland—“[Larsen’s] model of a feminist woman who refused limitations of thought or action was what Larsen needed in 1987” (p. 161).

Glahn also discusses, at length, Larsen’s influence on music composition and technology. A found-
ing member of the Minnesota, later American Composers Forum, Larsen has been on the front edge of music and technology. There are many other aspects of Larsen’s life, multifaceted compositional styles, creativity, personal conviction, and life as a woman and spiritualist presented in Glahn’s engaging writing style. This ethnography is recommended for anyone who wishes to study the fascinating life of Larsen, her compositions, and her presence in American compositional life.

Donald Callen Freed
Omaha, NE

Latin Pronunciations for Singers: A Comprehensive Guide to the Classical, Italian, German, English, French, and Franco-Flemish Pronunciations of Latin
Sri Silva, 2017
111 pp.
$8.65

Sri Silva’s Latin Pronunciations for Singers surveys how Latin and its pronunciation variants spread throughout Europe, with the intent that choral directors would embrace regional Latin pronunciations when performing music from Germany, France, England, or Italy. It is a thoughtfully written, easy-to-read volume.

Silva excellently distills the research of many other Latin historians into this small volume. Readers will enjoy learning about the differences between classical and vulgar Latin, how spellings changed over time, how Tertullian influenced liturgical vocabulary, and how efforts were made over the centuries to standardize Latin pronunciation worldwide. Silva leans heavily on the scholarship of Harold Copeman (Singing in Latin, 1990) and others in his narrative; this is not a weakness, as the book’s strength is in how Silva condenses information from large volumes into a short primer. Singers and conductors unfamiliar with how Latin developed and influenced Romance languages will find this quickly informative.

Silva states the book will help singers perform Latin with the “closest pronunciation possible to that which the composer intended,” yet unfortunately there is little material to support such a strong statement. Beyond a brief reference to Fauré’s Requiem in the preface, he does not mention other composers’ works or what evidence from other compositions’ text underlay might lead conductors to realize the composers’ intended pronunciations. Conductors may particularly wonder whether to choose a pronunciation based on where a composer lived when they completed their work, or where they trained, or, in the case of a very well-traveled cosmopolitan composer, whether one can make any educated assumption at all.

The author provides extensive IPA pronunciation charts that show how
pronunciation changed throughout centuries and in different regions of the same country. Appendices include interesting historical material and thorough bibliographies; however, the discography is oddly selective, and there are no resources formatted for or specifically addressing singers to help them vocally achieve the championed dialects. Nevertheless, Silva’s pages of historical narrative are accessible and illuminating.

Ryan Kelly
West Chester, Pennsylvania

The Anatomy of Tone: Applying Voice Science to Choral Ensemble Pedagogy
James Jordan, Sean McCarther, and Kathy Kessler Price
Chicago: GIA Publications, 2018
210 pages
$29.95 (paperback)

James Jordan, Sean McCarther, and Kathy Kessler Price have co-authored The Anatomy of Tone: Applying Voice Science to Choral Ensemble Pedagogy. From the perspective of one choral conductor and two voice teachers, the topics covered in this book explore anatomy, physiology, and acoustics.

The authors discuss breathing and resonance, formants in the choral rehearsal, choral warm-ups, choral spacing, specific vowels and their internal architectures, accompanying, and good vocalism. In the first six chapters, McCarther and Price provide a thorough explanation of the anatomy and physiology of singing in both solo and choral environments. In discussing the singer’s formant and resonance, Price explains, “Formants 1 and 2 are responsible for the color, distinction, and intelligibility of the vowels. All vowels consist of a mixture of these two formant frequencies” (p. 32).

McCarther and Price then focus on warm-ups and choral spacing. While relating to a free and resonant tone, McCarther says, “Getting singers to relate their singing voice to their supported speaking voice is often a great way to simplify the singing process and help them produce clear, resonant, and easy sounds… The two [speaking and singing voices] are actually one and the same instrument. Humans produce vocal sounds in only one way: air moves through the vocal folds, causing them to vibrate” (p. 63). Not only do the authors reinforce a fundamental understanding of the technical aspects of the voice, they help the reader further understand vocal production to a deeper level.

To create a connection between voice science and choral ensemble pedagogy, James Jordan begins with the breath. “One of the most influential tools in a conductor’s rehearsal ‘arsenal’ is the breath. For singers, breathing directly influences tempo, tone color, shape of phrase, ensemble dynamic, and spiritual content of the tone… For conductors, the breath not only affects the tone quality of the singers; it also affects what the singers perceive musically and all matters of interpretation and human connection” (p. 107). As an example, Jordan shares eight hand motions any conductor can use in rehearsal to better help singers understand the anatomical and physiological connections the body has to the breathing process.

Focusing on the podium, Jordan discusses connecting audiation to conducting gesture, leading to choral ensemble pedagogy. The definition of audiation is generalized as the ability to hear sound [music] without sound being physically present. The importance of a conductor’s ability to hear and listen is fully explored in Chapter 11, where he states, “The process of conducting, in essence, occurs before sound actually takes place in the ensemble. Ensemble sound ideally occurs slightly after the sound is birthed through breath and gestural impulse on the part of the conductor” (p. 121). The result in rehearsal is if the conductor is “reacting” to the sounds produced by the ensemble instead of hearing and conducting the sounds of the piece, the rehearsal will bring a disconnection of the breath to the musical sound.

The Anatomy of Tone: Applying Voice Science to Choral Ensemble Pedagogy will aid any conductor to have a further comprehensive understanding of voice science as it applies to choral rehearsals.

Alan Davis
Temecula, CA
The Choral Journal: An Index to Volume Fifty-Nine

by Scott W. Dorsey

**SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION**

The classification numbers used below correspond to subject headings in all ACDA monographs utilizing bibliographic format, particularly The Choral Journal: An Index to Volumes 1-18 (Monograph No. 3) by Gordon Paine, and The Choral Journal: An Index to Volumes 19-32 (Monograph No. 7) by Scott W. Dorsey. Subject classifications with no entries for this volume year have been omitted from the listing. “REP.” “BIB.” and “DISC.” are abbreviations for repertoire, bibliography, and discography. A comprehensive index with appropriate annotations and cross-references of all Choral Journal articles from 1979 to the present is available to ACDA members online at www.acda.org.

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“Raymond W. Brock Professional Composers Award Winner.” February 2019, page 156.

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“Student Chapter Update.” June-July 2019, page 83.


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