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## ADVOCACY STATEMENT

Whereas the human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself through study and performance in the aesthetic arts; and

Whereas serious cutbacks in funding and support have steadily eroded state institutions and their programs throughout the country;

Be it resolved that all citizens of the United States of America actively voice affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations.

# From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Tim Sharp

## How Do We Sing?

I came of age as a young musician during the “dawning of the age of Aquarius” or, in other words, during the time of the Broadway musical *Hair*. Not long after *Hair* premiered, other new musical influences burst into my life and filled my growing musical appetite in forms such as Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Jesus Christ Superstar*. And although I had grown up in the church and sung psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs since infancy, I had never heard a song of lament that had strong meaning for me until hearing the song “On the Willows from *Godspell*” by Stephen Schwarz. In this song, Schwarz paraphrases the Hebrew scriptures’ Psalm 137 with these words:

*On the willows, there  
We hung up our lyres  
For our captors there required of us songs  
And our tormentors, mirth  
Saying,  
Sing us one of the songs of Zion*

*But how can we sing?  
Sing the Lord’s songs?  
In a foreign land?*

The question “*How do we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?*” (Psalm 137) still haunts me. In the last few weeks, this is the very question we have asked ourselves over and over throughout the choral community and in a variety of ways as we wonder “how,” in a practical way, we are to sing anything in this newly found “strange land” caused by a worldwide pandemic, and “how,” in a spiritual way, can we sing anything in this time of despair and hopelessness.

As I departed each of our Regional Conferences in March, I painfully reminded all of our members gathered at these events that this would likely be the last live music we would hear for a long time. I said those words along with the admonition to breathe it all in and enjoy it, remembering that this is what we are called to do and to lead as a community of professional choral musicians. This experience, I suggested, would make us focus on what is essential about the choral art.

The “how do we sing” question for us in the days that initially followed the outbreak of COVID-19 and resulting quarantine was an academic one: “How can we rehearse our choirs in isolation?” and “How can we perform with our choirs when we are isolated?” To this question, I did what many of you did and went to the phone and Internet to research various possibilities in the realm of rehearsal software and other online distance learning resources.

Others were asking the more emotional version of this question, which is: “How can we find the spirit to sing in times like this?” and “In this strange

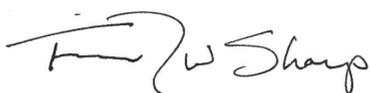
land where we now find ourselves, how can we muster the desire to sing?" As services, meetings, rehearsals, and classes were canceled, and then as concerts and performance tours were canceled, we felt sadness and despair, and it was difficult to imagine singing.

The Greek philosopher Marcus Aurelius writes about how a fire turns everything that is thrown into it into flame. He says that obstacles are actually fuel: "The impediment to action advances action." He continues, "...what stands in the way becomes the way."

In his book *Where Good Ideas Come From* innovation writer Steven Johnson sites the theory of "desirable difficulties" as an optimistic way to work toward innovation. Desirable difficulties are challenges to our thinking or to our work that would normally appear as obstacles to forward progress. These disadvantages force an individual to adapt and be better prepared against future difficulties. Viewing such challenges as "desirable" is an optimistic view, knowing challenges only help to sharpen ideas and bolster the resolve to move ahead.

It is a beautiful way to approach the world—and ultimately, the only one suited for a time such as the one we are in now. To avoid difficulty would mean complete retreat, not only from social interaction, but from life. It would mean hiding in ignorance. Instead, we can embrace the moment we have and strive to welcome challenge. I choose to rejoice in the unexpected and work to turn despair into something new by owning it. I have found that tension is my wake-up call to new levels of learning and experience and growth.

The American Choral Directors Association strives to be your resource for meeting the challenges of this moment and a source of inspiration as you continue to pursue excellence in choral music education, performance, composition, and advocacy.



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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?



- Apr 27-29 ~~CANCELED~~ Advisory Board  
Austin, TX
- May 1 Opera "Firebird Motel"  
San Francisco, CA
- May 5 CMA Foundation  
Teachers Award  
Nashville, TN
- May 9 ~~CANCELED~~ Beethoven "Mass in C"  
Tulsa, OK
- May 11-12 MSVMA  
Grand Rapids, MI

### WHAT'S ON TIM'S IPAD?



*Successful Aging*  
by Daniel Levitin

*Tiny Habits*  
by BJ Fogg

### WHAT'S TIM'S LATEST APP?



Opera Touch

### WHAT'S TIM LISTENING TO?



*Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*  
Paul Mealor  
New England Chamber Choir

*The Passion of Yashua*  
Richard Danielpour  
UCLA Chamber Singers

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