

Headliners

Choral Arts Initiative



Widely recognized as a champion of new music, Choral Arts Initiative has been praised as “gracefully lyrical” (Tim Mangan, Voice of OC), and hailed as one of Orange County’s “Best Choirs” (CBS News, Los Angeles). Winner of the American Prize in Choral Performance, recipient of the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming, and winner of the San Francisco Classical Voice Audience Choice Awards for Best New Music Performance, Choral Arts Initiative continues its commitment to musical innovation. Their passion for new music has led to the commission of twenty-five compositions, the premiere of over one hundred works, and the release of two Billboard-charting albums.



Brandon Elliott enjoys an expansive career as a conductor-educator, musician, arts leader, and consultant. He is the founder and artistic director of Choral Arts Initiative and the Choral and Vocal Studies Director at Saddleback College. He has received the Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal from Chorus America and was recognized by the Recording Academy as a 2022 Grammy Music Educator Award Semifinalist. He currently serves as the ACDA National R&R Co-Chair for Two-Year Colleg-

es. He earned degrees and certificates from California State University, Fullerton, the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Berklee College of Music, and the University of Southern California.

säje



When a jazz ensemble earns a Grammy Award nomination with its very first song, something unusual is in the works. säje is an unprecedented collaboration that brings together four women creators who are all composer/arrangers, vocalists, and entrepreneurs with impressive individual careers. Featuring Los Angeles-based Sara Gazarek and Erin Bentlage and Seattle-situated Johnaye Kendrick and Amanda Taylor, säje (rhymes with beige) is closer in spirit to collective instrumental ensembles than jazz vocal combos. Encompassing finely wrought originals, reimagined jazz standards, and inventive interpretations of contemporary tunes, the group’s eponymous debut album is a striking achievement.

Conducting Masterclasses

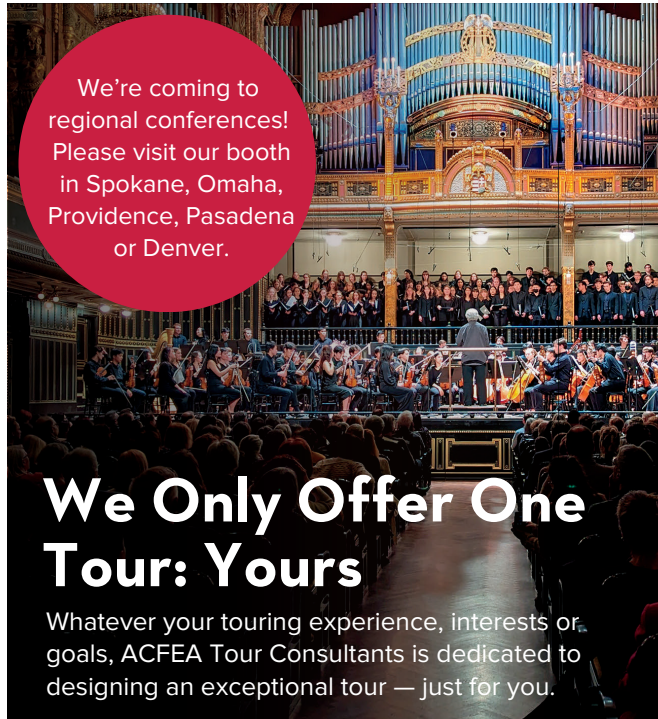


Joseph Huszti, Professor Emeritus, retired from UC Irvine in 2014 after a fifty-four-year teaching career, thirty-seven at UCI. After joining ACDA in 1960 as the 214th member, he continues to be active as a singer and conductor of the Men in Blaque. During his tenure at UC Irvine, twenty-seven international concert tours included prize-winning performances at the International Musical Eistedfod, the Bela Bartok International Choral Competition, the Koorfest and the World Choir Games. Huszti headed the Young Vocalists Program at the Tanglewood Festival from 1972 to 1977. Huszti has held leadership posi-

tions in ACDA in Delaware and Boston and served as Western Region President (1980-82). Huszti was honored by CCDA with the Howard Swan Award in 2020.



Iris S. Levine is nationally recognized for her excellence in choral conducting. She is founder and artistic director of VOX Femina Los Angeles, L.A.'s premier women's chorus. Levine has charted VOX Femina on an impressive journey, building its prominence in the choral community by way of numerous concerts and appearances at ACDA conferences, Chorus America conferences, and more. Under Levine's artistic leadership, VOX Femina Los Angeles has commissioned more than fifty new works for women's voices. Levine is faculty emerita at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where she served as director of choral activities, dean, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs. She has had former leadership roles as ACDA state, regional, and National R&R Chair for Women's Chorus.



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Marcela Molina has been affiliated with the Tucson Girls Chorus since 2006, first serving as artistic director and taking the helm as executive director in 2011. Under Molina's guidance, the Tucson Girls Chorus has grown significantly in programming and community engagement. With her leadership, the TGC has transformed into a vibrant and collaborative organization that creates access to inclusive programming for youth, and provides resources to music educators and support to their classroom year-round. In addition to her work with the TGC, Molina serves as director of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra Chorus. Born in Bogotá, Colombia, Molina holds degrees from Westminster Choir College and the University of Arizona. She was named 2019 Choral Director of the Year by Arizona ACDA.



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Performing Choirs

Biola University
Chorale



Cal Poly University - San Luis Obispo
Cantabile



The Biola University Chorale comprises thirty-seven undergraduate voices from various disciplines on campus. Nationally, the Chorale has enjoyed performances on the *Tonight Show*, at Disney’s D23 Convention, in Carnegie Hall, and with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra. Regularly touring domestically and internationally, the Chorale’s most recent tours include South Korea, Ireland, and Italy. Each spring they join forces with the Biola Symphony Orchestra for the performance of a major choral-orchestral work. The Chorale performed at ACDA Western Region Conferences in 2016 and 2020, and the NCCO’s 7th Biennial National Conference in 2017.

Cal Poly Cantabile was founded in 2018 under the direction of Scott Glysson and is an advanced ensemble specializing in the performance of repertoire for soprano and alto voices. With sixty singers representing nearly every major at Cal Poly, Cantabile is a more than 75 percent non-music major ensemble. Since its creation, Cantabile has commissioned more than four new works by contemporary composers and has a mission of creating, celebrating, and performing music of female composers. Cantabile has been honored with performance invitations to the California MEA Conference in 2021 and Lincoln Center NYC in 2022.



Shawna Stewart is the director of choral studies at Biola University in La Mirada, CA, where she conducts the Biola University Chorale and the Vocal Jazz Ensemble. As associate professor, she teaches courses in conducting and choral methods. Stewart holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music (M.M. Conducting), the University of Southern California (D.M.A. Choral Music), and has served on the faculty at John Brown University and North Dakota State College of Science. She has also held the position of music director at several churches in CA and NY. She is the owner of and teacher at Children’s Music Academy in Whittier, CA.



Scott Glysson is the director of choral activities and vocal studies at Cal Poly University in San Luis Obispo, California. Glysson has been recognized for his achievements in conducting in both the choral and orchestral genres. He has led performances on five continents and over ten countries. In 2013, Glysson was a finalist in the ACDA National Choral Conducting Competition. Glysson was previously director of choral activities at West Liberty University in WV and artistic director of the Tucson Masterworks Chorale. Glysson has presented and published in the fields of music education and musicology. He holds a DMA and MM in choral conducting from the University of Arizona and a BME from George Mason University.

Performing Choirs

California State University-Fullerton University Singers



California State University-Fullerton's University Singers perform all over the world and regularly collaborate with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Pacific Symphony, and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. They performed at the 2013 ACDA National Conference, 2013 NCCO Conference, and 2012 and 2018 ACDA Western Region Conferences. They are heard on Sony Records' "John Williams and Steven Spielberg: The Ultimate Collection" and Yarlung Records' "Nostos: The Homecoming of Music." In July 2024, the University Singers will tour Rwanda and South Africa.



Robert Istad is a Grammy Award-winning conductor and director of choral studies at CSU Fullerton, where he was recognized as CSUF's 2016 Outstanding Professor. He is also artistic director of

Pacific Chorale. His artistic impact can be heard on two recent recordings featuring Pacific Chorale: "Mahler's Eighth Symphony" with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gustavo Dudamel (Deutsche Grammophon, 2021), which was awarded the Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance; and "Ecstasies Above: The Music of Tarik O'Regan" (Yarlung Records, 2020). He serves on the Executive Board of Chorus America and as dean of Chorus America's Conducting Academy.

California State University - Long Beach Jazz & Tonic



Jazz & Tonic is one of two premier vocal jazz ensembles at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University, Long Beach. The group features a diverse educational background, having members who are jazz studies majors, music education majors, composition majors, and other non-music majors. Following in the footsteps of CSULB's flagship vocal jazz ensemble, Pacific Standard Time, Jazz & Tonic has begun to earn acclaim. Most recently, they were recognized as the winner of the *Downbeat Magazine* Student Music Awards undergraduate vocal jazz ensemble division.



Jonny Arenas is an educator, vocalist, and arranger based in Los Angeles and is currently part of the jazz faculty at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University, Long Beach.

There, he majored in jazz studies, was mentored by renowned vocalist and educator Christine Guter, and graduated with both his bachelor's and master's degrees. As a member of the jazz faculty at CSULB, he directs Jazz & Tonic. Since being hired in 2021, he has helped the group earn two *Downbeat Magazine* Student Music Awards, one of which as the sole winner of the undergraduate college division.

Chandler Children's Choir
Ad Astra



In its fifteenth season, the Chandler Children's Choir created an ensemble of top performers ages 16-18 who demonstrated a desire to excel, naming it Ad Astra (to the stars). Many founding members had been singing with CCC since ages 6 or 7. Now high school juniors and seniors, Ad Astra enables singers to launch into future musical opportunities after graduation, either as a hobby or academic pursuit. In 2023 they released an album, *To the Stars: An Ad Astra Christmas*, and were invited as featured performers at the Arizona MEA conference.



Aimee Stewart is the founder and artistic director of the Chandler Children's Choir in Arizona. Since its inception in 2008, CCC has grown from a young choir of twenty-seven singers to a comprehensive choral program with five choirs. She also conducts the Chamber Singers at Chandler-Gilbert Community College, the Tempe Community Messiah, has served as president of AzACDA, and currently serves as Community & Children Youth R&R Chair for WACDA. In 2022 she was awarded AzACDA Choral Director of the Year. Stewart is in a master's program for choral conducting with Jace Saplan at Arizona State University. She enjoys skiing with her husband, Adam, and their four children.

Crystal Children's Choir



Established in 1994 within Northern California, Crystal Children's Choir was founded with the mission to pursue choral music excellence and to serve as a cultural ambassador harmonizing the finest facets of Eastern and Western cultures. Crystal singers from more than 120 schools have graced the stages of numerous globally renowned venues. They have performed at conferences including Kodaly, CMEA, MENC, and ACDA. Over the past three decades, they have established an education platform that serves as a nurturing ground for choral arts and addressed the pressing need for arts funding in California to provide a distinctive musical experience for young singers.



Karl Chang has held the positions of co-founder, president, and conductor of Crystal Children's Choir since 1994. He has led performances and interest sessions at ACDA conferences and is a frequently sought-after guest conductor for youth and collegiate choirs throughout Asia. Chang is the visionary behind a 200 mixed-voice community chorus started at Stanford University in 1981. Over these forty-three years, he has served as the founding director, consistently igniting musical passion within singers from diverse backgrounds. He holds a doctoral degree in education leadership, an MBA, and an M.S. in engineering.

Mater Dei High School
Chamber Singers



Based in Santa Ana, California, the Mater Dei High School Choral and Vocal Program serves a diverse Southern California community. With eleven ensembles and nearly 300 singers participating in athletics, ASB, the arts, campus ministry, and more, the program consistently earns superior ratings at competitions and festivals nationwide. They recently performed solo concerts at Carnegie Hall and renowned venues in Italy. Graduates of the program thrive in artistic careers ranging from the Metropolitan Opera to Broadway.



Jodi Reed, a conductor and pianist, began her musical journey with competitive piano studies at a young age. Introduced to choral music in high school, she has led university, school, church, and community choirs. She was the first female conductor to win multiple first-place awards in Golden State choral competitions. She has conducted her choirs on NPR's *From The Top*, at Carnegie Hall, and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, as well as iconic international venues like La Sagrada Familia and St. Peter's Basilica. She is the director of choral and vocal music at Mater Dei High School and a musical director with Millennial® Choirs & Orchestras.

Ragazzi Boys Chorus, Silicon Valley



Grammy Award-winning Ragazzi Boys Chorus, Silicon Valley, provides outstanding musical education and performance opportunities for boys and young men ages five to eighteen. The largest boys' chorus in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ragazzi serves over 200 choristers in six tiered levels from diverse backgrounds, developing tenacious and confident young musicians who pursue choral arts of the highest caliber together. Ragazzi is a prominent collaborator, providing vocalists for notable organizations, including San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Opera San Jose, and Symphony Silicon Valley.



Kent Jue leads the Grammy Award-winning Ragazzi Boys Chorus, Silicon Valley, as the artistic and executive director. Known for building high-level musician-ship skills through his engaging style and rapport with youth, Jue is in demand as a guest conductor, adjudicator, educator, and mentor. He has conducted Ragazzi with the San Francisco Symphony and prepared vocalists for Opera San Jose, Symphony Silicon Valley, and West Bay Opera. He previously conducted youth choruses at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and performed with the Golden Gate Men's Chorus. He serves as the California Choral Directors Association Children's and Community Youth R&R Chair.

Resounding Achord



Resounding Achord is the founding choir of Resounding Achord Productions (RAP), a nonprofit organization based in San José, California. From their beginnings in 2012, the choir has been faithful to creating a positive, family-friendly member experience, while maintaining a high performance standard. The choir's members are teachers, students, engineers, administrative professionals, scientists, lawyers, caretakers, and retirees. Repertoire is selected from all musical periods and a multitude of world cultures. The organization has awarded over \$60,000 in need-based scholarships to more than 400 students to attend state and regional honor choirs.



Kristina Nakagawa is the founding artistic director of Resounding Achord Productions and has been performing in Silicon Valley since 2001. She is also the executive artistic director of Vivace

Youth Chorus of San José and previously directed choirs at San José State University, UC Irvine, Pinewood School, and St. Francis Episcopal Church. Nakagawa has a degree in vocal performance from UC Irvine, and a master's degree in choral conducting from San José State University. Nakagawa is currently president-elect for the California Choral Directors Association. She and her husband, Ryan, are the proud stage parents of their son, Russell.

Riverside City College Chamber Singers



The Riverside City College Chamber Singers have performed at the ACDA Western Region Conference (2010, 2014, and 2020); at the ACDA National Conference (2011, 2017, and 2021); at the NCCO National Conference (2011 and 2015); and at the CASMEC Conference (2016). The Chamber Singers have competed nationally and internationally, taking first place at the California International Choral Competition (2011), the Eisteddfod Choral Competition in Wales (2009), the Yeosu International Choral Competition in Korea (2013), and at the Choral Competition in Spittal, Austria (2015).



John Byun received his BM in vocal performance from University of California, Irvine, and his master's in choral conducting from California State University, Long Beach. He is the director of choral and vocal activities at Riverside City College, where he directs the Chamber Singers and the Vocal Jazz Ensemble. He has been the guest conductor for several district honor choirs, SCVA Men's Honor Choir, Central California Women's Honor Choir, Texas Honor Choir Region 9, Clark County, NV Honor Choir, and at the NWACDA Region Conference. He has also conducted all-state honor choirs in North Carolina, Tennessee, New Mexico, and Arizona. Byun maintains the John Byun Choral Series with Pavane Publishing.

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Performing Choirs

San Juan Hills High School Chamber Singers



The San Juan Hills High School Chamber Singers is the most advanced audition-only choral ensemble in the choral/vocal arts department at SJHHS. The Chamber Singers have built a reputation of singing challenging works from a variety of historical periods of music and cultures from around the world. In February 2023, the Chamber Singers performed at the California All-State Music Educators Conference in Fresno, California. The choir has performed many functions around the Capistrano Unified School District and is proud to be a part of the SJHHS Stallion Family.



Michael Ushino serves as the director of the choral/vocal arts department and the Vocal Music Conservatory at San Juan Hills High School. He received his MM from the Bob Cole Conservatory at California State University, Long Beach, and also studied at University of California, Irvine. He currently serves as the president-elect of the Southern California Vocal Association and previously served as the High School Honor Choir Vice President. Ushino also serves as the co-artistic director of the Men in Blaque, based in Irvine, California.

Saugus High School Blue Notes



Blue Notes is Saugus High School's top vocal jazz choir. Under the direction of Kaitlin Holt for the past five years, this award-winning ensemble has sung in various jazz festivals and competitions throughout Southern California, including the Fullerton College Jazz Festival (First Place in HS Vocal Jazz/Intermediate, 2022; Third Place in HS Vocal Jazz/Advanced, 2023). Blue Notes singers consistently place in both regional and all-state Vocal Jazz High School Honor Choirs. Saugus High School Blue Notes comprises inspiringly resilient students who are honored to be performing at their first ACDA conference.



Kaitlin Holt is head of the choral program at Saugus High School in Saugus, California, where she directs five award-winning vocal ensembles and teaches the Music Industry Career Technology Pathway courses. She actively performs with various groups in the Los Angeles area, including her all-female acapella quartet "Angeles." Holt holds a BME in choral studies from CSU Long Beach, an associate's degree in jazz studies from Cuesta College, and recently completed the coursework for her master's from CSU Los Angeles. She currently serves as the Southern California Vocal Association Vocal Jazz Festival chair.

The Sterling Ensemble Los Angeles



Sterling Ensemble Los Angeles is a semi-professional choir founded in 2018 by Artistic Director Michelle Jensen. This community of singers specializes in performing historic literature from diverse voices and workshopping new music with local artists. Collaborations include Grammy-winning artists Hila Plitmann, Sangeeta Kaur, Danaë Vlasse, and Ben Bram. While most members studied music in college, teachers, military members, business leaders, and entrepreneurs join with professional musicians two hours a week to make excellent choral music. The ensemble performed at the 2023 ACDA National Conference. Sterling Ensemble is currently in residence at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Pasadena.



Michelle Jensen is a Los Angeles-based choral conductor, clinician, and teacher. In addition to directing Sterling Ensemble, she serves as the director of choral activities at Azusa Pacific University, where she is also the director of graduate choral studies and the conductor of the university's Chamber Singers. Jensen has led choirs to place first in such prestigious international music competitions as Chorwettbewerb Spittal an der Drau and the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. In 2019 she was invited to conduct the Connecticut All-State Mixed Choir.

The Sunday Night Singers



The Sunday Night Singers (SNS), founded by Palmdale High alumni and artistic director Mike McCullough in 2005, is a thirty-two-voice community ensemble in the Antelope Valley, CA. From inception, SNS celebrates and uplifts diverse communities, mirroring an authentic and organic representation of the diversity found in LA County. SNS has won the Mixed Chamber Choir category at World Choir Games and has made appearances at WACDA, CCDA, Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, and Montana International Choral Festival. Collaborations with composers nationwide have yielded three albums, including *Didn't It Rain* by Stacey V. Gibbs.



Michael McCullough assumed the role of director of choral music at Palmdale High School in 1995. He holds a BM in voice and an MM in choral conducting from California State University, Northridge. He continued his professional certification at Chapman University. With a rich thirty-two-year history as part of the Antelope Valley College faculty, McCullough has conducted the AV Master Chorale and College Singers. He has also taught individual voice, music history, and music theory. McCullough is the artistic director of The Sunday Night Singers, which was founded to allow former students to continue their pursuit of choral excellence. Notable recordings encompass works by Joshua Shank and Stacey V. Gibbs.

Performing Choirs

Tesoro High School Vocal Ensemble



The Tesoro HS Vocal Ensemble performed at ACDA Western Region Conferences in 2012 and 2016. They have performed and/or recorded with or opened for A-list performers, including Jason Mraz, Sara Bareilles, Colbie Caillat, Johnny Mathis, Five for Fighting, Quentin Tarantino, Mark Lindsay, Take 6, Eric Whitacre, and Morten Lauridsen. They are multiple winners of the Golden State Choral Competition, and they have performed in Carnegie Hall, the Grand Ole Opry, and Staples Center. Vocal Ensemble has performed several major choral/orchestral works with the Tesoro orchestra.



Keith Hancock is in his twenty-second year teaching at Tesoro HS. He was recently named the Grammy Music Educator Award winner, a top fifty finalist for the Global Teacher Prize, one of the

ten CMA National Teachers of Excellence, and one of the 100 Most Influential People of Orange County. Hancock has frequently collaborated with Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Jason Mraz, arranging, conducting, and recording for his album, *Know*, and performing with him on his tour. Hancock is also a contributor to *Careers Through Music*, a book/video presented by Alfred Music and the Grammy Museum Foundation.

Thurman White Academy Advanced Choir



The Thurman White Academy Advanced Choir has been under the direction of Athena Mertes since 2015. Thurman White Academy is a Performing Arts Magnet Middle School program that accepts students through a random lottery system. This 7th/8th-grade ensemble consistently receives superior ratings at choral festivals and competitions and regularly performs as a guest choir with the Southern Nevada Musical Arts Society. Their virtual choir performance of “Don’t Give Up On Me” was featured at the 2022 Western Region ACDA Conference “Stories of the Pandemic.” In 2019 they received numerous awards at the Worldstrides Choral Festival in San Diego, California.



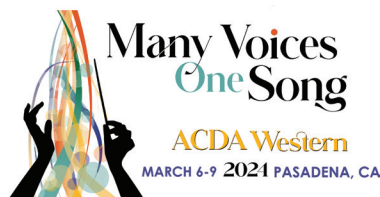
Athena Mertes is the director at the Thurman White Academy of the Performing Arts, where she has approximately 400 students. In 2020 she received the Teacher of the Year Award from Magnet Schools of America. Mertes is the chorus master of the Opera Las Vegas Youth Chorus and is a regular performer of concert and operatic repertoire. She has performed as a guest soloist with the Burbank Philharmonic, Las Vegas Philharmonic, Henderson Symphony, and Opera Las Vegas, among others. This season, she will perform as Marie in *The Daughter of the Regiment* with Vegas City Opera, and the world premiere of a new opera, *Behold the Man*, with Opera Las Vegas.

**University of Arizona
Symphonic Choir**



Symphonic Choir is the premier choral ensemble at the University of Arizona, carrying on a seventy-two-year tradition of joyful excellence. Members hail from throughout the world and represent a variety of majors. The choir regularly engages in musical collaborations in Southern Arizona, including with Tucson Symphony Orchestra, Mariachi Arizona, Reveille Men’s Chorus (a GALA chorus), Tucson Girls Chorus, and Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus. The ensemble also partners with service organizations in the Greater Tucson area to bring awareness and support to vulnerable populations including refugees, asylum seekers, and unhoused people.

Elizabeth Schauer is the conductor of this choir. Her photo and bio are on page 23.



2024 ACDA Western Region Conference

Interest Sessions

**Building a Repertoire of Gestures:
Laban Movement for Choral Conductors**

Receive a crash course in the fundamentals of Laban Movement Theory, a holistic and efficient gestural approach to choral conducting. Learn a variety of gestures, movements, and rehearsal strategies that are sure to enhance your ensemble’s engagement, improve memory retention, develop a stronger conductor/ensemble connection, and provide musicians a deeper understanding of the music that will lead to a more impactful and inclusive performance experience.



Jenny Bent is professor of music, director of choral activities, and associate dean of the school of arts & humanities at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, CA. She is also choral director of the Santa Rosa Symphony and manages Chanticleer’s

summer program, Chanticleer in Sonoma. Bent earned degrees from Boston University (BM and MM Voice Performance, MM Choral Conducting) and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (DMA Choral Conducting and Choral Literature). Recipient of the 2023 CMEA Pearson/Scott Foresman/Silver Burdett Choral Educator Award and the 2019 CMEA Bay Section Outstanding Choral Educator Award, Bent serves as treasurer for the California Choral Directors Association.

**Choirs for Change:
Programming with Purpose**

Choirs can be connectional and welcoming spaces for diverse groups of people who come together through their love of singing. The same sense of belonging and compassion that often exists in choral groups can be extended outward into both local and global communities

Interest Sessions

to create bridges of understanding and positive change. In this session Elizabeth Schauer will discuss creative, moving and impactful programming approaches that can increase awareness, engagement, and even philanthropy in choirs and their audiences. Recent effective concert programs related to homelessness, Syrian and Afghani war refugees, and domestic violence will serve as models for consideration and discussion.

Elizabeth Schauer will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 23.

Creating an Adaptive Choir Program

This session will describe the administrative and pedagogical tools required to start and run an adaptive needs choir at your school or in your community. Participants will learn the profound benefits of universally designed rehearsals for all students, and the particular importance of providing meaningful artistic experiences for students with disabilities. Participants will leave this session equipped with concrete rehearsal strategies and activities to support an adaptive needs program.



Brandi Dignum is the director of education for the Tucson Girls Chorus, where she conducts the Ladybugs and Hummingbirds choirs, along with TGC early childhood and adaptive music classes. She is the artistic director for the TGC Shine Camp and serves on the Teacher Advisory Board for Tucson Girls Chorus. Dignum holds a BME from the University of Arizona and is certified in Orff-Schulwerk levels I-III. She believes that all students deserve an inclusive music experience. She has over twenty-five years of experience teaching preschool music, elementary general music, middle school choir and musical theater, and high school choir. Dignum was recognized as “Teacher of the Year” for the Flowing Wells School District.

Flexible Fach: Gender-Affirming Vocal Pedagogy through Science-Informed Practices

In this interactive session, attendees will be invited to sing and discuss vocal exercises from a new protocol developed by the presenter that focuses on helping transgender and gender-expansive (TGE) singers produce an aural aesthetic that better aligns with their gender identity. Created through an understanding of the gendered associations and vocal characteristics of common fach categories and voice classifications, this protocol synthesizes practices from gender-affirming speech-language pathology (SLP) with source-filter theory and science-informed vocal pedagogy to present a healthy, gender-affirming practice routine for TGE singers who are seeking to masculinize or feminize their voices.

Stevie J. Hirner will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 23.

Many Voices, Many Centers: 6 Steps for Multicentric Choral Programming

When we label our concert programs as “multicultural,” we begin with good intentions; however, celebrating diversity sometimes tokenizes the historically excluded cultures we are attempting to recognize and honor. Using multicentrism, which argues for “the marginalized moving from the margins to the center, and not simply being grafted into the existing order,” this session will outline a culturally conscious six-step process for choral programming: acknowledge privilege, decide what you value, choosing repertoire, do your due diligence, identify who holds the power, and contextualize. Attendees will receive multicentric programming suggestions and ways to respectfully study less-familiar repertoire with your ensembles.



Jennifer Hansen Heder, DMA, is the director of choral activities at Fresno City College. She received her DMA in choral conducting from Michigan State University. Her doctoral research highlights the ways in which choral educators can decenter Eurocentric music in their classrooms. She co-presented the session, “Empowered Leaders Empower Others,” at the 2022 Western Region ACDA Conference. Hansen Heder was previously the director of choirs at Spanish Fork High School in Utah. Her choirs at Spanish Fork were invited to perform at the 2018 ACDA Salt Lake City Conference and the 2019 Utah MEA State Conference. She also holds MM and BM degrees from Brigham Young University in Utah.

Middle School Choral Students: How Do You Motivate Them?

When middle school students are motivated, they are unstoppable. How do you channel their energy so that you can guide them on a musical journey? Explore tips and ideas of various master choral music educators who teach young adolescents. Be ready to sing and move!

Lynn Brinckmeyer will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 122.

Mosaics from the Middle East

There is a wealth of beautiful and significant choral music from the Middle East in both the Arabic and Jewish traditions, yet many choral directors find it intimidating to approach this music. This interactive session will present treble music from both traditions, providing helpful guides in how to successfully approach this music, pronunciation, and stylistic considerations. We will present contemporary settings of traditional musical material, appropriate for various levels of treble ensembles. We will provide opportunities for ex-

perience in singing representative selections, as well as hearing selected pieces performed by VOX Femina Los Angeles.

Iris S. Levine will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 170.



Cari Earnhart serves as the director of choral activities at California State University, Fresno, where she conducts the top choral ensembles and teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting. In demand as a conductor, clinician, and adjudicator, Earnhart has worked with choirs throughout the US and abroad. She served as DCA at the American University of Sharjah in the UAE and as artistic director of Nassim al Saba, an Arabic choral music ensemble. She has been a guest conductor with the Budapesti Vándor Kórus and the Istanbul International Chamber Choir. She served as Maestro of Ensemble Vocale Tempus Floridum and as Maestro Collaboratore of Coro dell'Accademia del Diletto and Coro Polofonico del Caricentro in Florence.

Practice Your Pitch: Advocacy is Everybody's Business

The culture that music creates is magnetic, but how is it perceived outside the rehearsal space? How can we build bridges between our ensembles and the diverse values and expertise found in the larger community? While it's easy to talk about the importance of music among colleagues, translating that conversation to those outside our sphere can be challenging. This session will help you step confidently into public spaces equipped with a new vocabulary to communicate your program's value to attract new supporters. By reframing your “elevator pitch,” you'll be able to build a network that empowers you to thrive.

Alex Gartner will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 74.

Real Talk:

Getting Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable about Race in Choral Music

Considering the current socio-political climate, the rise in violence against AAPI communities, and a re-ignited Black Lives Matter movement, we as choral conductor-teachers are faced with some uncomfortable truths about choral music. We as artist-citizens can, and must, leverage coalitions to dismantle systems of oppression. Utilizing Intercultural Dialogue and Whiteness as Property as frameworks, the presenters will equip attendees with tools and language needed to become comfortable engaging in uncomfortable conversations surrounding race and contemporary choral culture. This uncomfortability may be seen as growing pains for a choral community grappling with difficult and long-overdue conversations about equity, “inclusion,” and access.

Arreon A. Harley-Emerson will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 152.



Joshua Palkki (he/him) is assistant professor of music learning and teaching/choral conducting and associate director of choral activities at Arizona State University and co-author of *Honoring Trans and Gender-Expansive Students in Music Education* (Oxford University Press, 2021). He holds degrees from Michigan State University (PhD), Northern Arizona University (MM), and Ball State University (BS). Palkki has presented at national and international events including the National ACDA Conference, NAFME National Conference, and the Society for Music Teacher Education Symposium and is a sought-after guest conductor and scholar on equity and justice topics. His writing appears in several scholarly choral and music education publications.

Show Me the Rhythm!

This interactive session offers a kinesthetic system for building and assessing rhythmic literacy for all ages. Like hand signs, rhythm gestures are a physical manifestation of pulse, pulse division, and meter. The instructor can visually assess individual comprehension within a group setting. Students are able to self-correct within the context of group practice. Rhythm gestures reinforce precision and make music literacy accessible to all. They work with any counting system, combined with solfege, or in multi-part score reading. Rhythm gestures offer an alternative (kinesthetic) mode of learning while calling upon and strengthening our sense of underlying pulse and rhythmic flow.



Pamela McDermott is director of choral activities at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, where she directs ensembles and teaches conducting, choral methods, show choir techniques, and aural skills. She is also a founding member and associate artistic director of The Piedmont Singers of Central Virginia, a professional vocal octet. McDermott earned her DMA in choral conducting at UNC-Greensboro. Her dissertation offers an analysis of Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* through the lens of semiotics in an examination of the work’s relationship to the requiem genre. She earned a master’s in theory/composition at James Madison University and a BME at East Carolina University. She is past president of Virginia ACDA.

(she/her/ella) Unlocking the Music of Latina Choral Composers

Dive into the music and backgrounds of female-identified composers from across Latin America through singing, moving, and unlocking the rhythms of works that rarely, if ever, have been performed in the States. Composers such as Modesta Bor of Venezuela, Eliza

Schmelkes of Mexico, Diana Sáez of Puerto Rico, and María Olga Piñeros of Colombia are composers whose works our singers need to sing. Conductors will leave with deeper appreciation for and confidence to teach this important repertoire from an informed and joyful place. Resources and scores are appropriate for all levels/voicings.



Corie Brown (she/her) serves as assistant professor of choral music education at San José State University. She leads two choirs, teaches music education courses, and is fueled by the integration of justice and music education. Prior to studies in choral conducting at the University of Colorado Boulder and University of Oregon, Brown taught in Colombia with the Fundación Nacional Batuta and in the midwest United States. She was a guest conductor at the 2023 Festival Coral de Santander in Colombia. She also arranges and serves as artistic director of the Mission Peak Chamber Singers, a joyful community chorus in Fremont, California.



Juan Manuel Hernández-Morales (he/him) is the director of the Youth Choir of La Cuerda Foundation, the Universidad Industrial de Santander University Choir, and teaches choral and instrumental studies at the Universidad Industrial de Santander of Colombia. His works for children’s choirs, youth choirs, and mixed choirs have been performed internationally. He is an active clinician and has held workshops throughout Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, and the United States. Since 2007, Hernández-Morales has been the coordinator and organizer of the Santander Choral Festival and the Santander Children’s and Youth Choir Encounter.

Understanding and Engaging with “Toxic” Masculinity and Male-Presenting Expression in the Post COVID-19 Choral Classroom

From the fallout of COVID-19, a key behavior that school counselors have reported on as a result of the temporary elimination of in-person activities amongst adolescent cis-men is toxic masculinity. Defined as, “manliness’ [that] perpetuates domination and aggression,” toxic masculinity has been reported as an invasive phenomena within the choral craft’s communal ecosystem. In this session, we address what toxic masculinity looks like in our craft and how we can be change agents in facilitating culturally responsive models for cis-men, built on the embodiment of social consciousness, empathy, and community-oriented ideals. We offer strategies relating to repertoire, rehearsals, and performance.



Corbin Cowan is a student at Arizona State University completing a bachelor’s of music in music learning and teaching with a minor in music theatre performance. He is also a part of ASU’s Barrett, the Honors College. Originally from Colorado, he has been singing his whole life and has a strong background in musical theatre and choral ensemble.

Joshua Palkki will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on the previous page.

Jace Kaholokula Saplan will be a clinician for this session. Their photo and bio are on page 32.

Understanding the Unique Voice of the Gospel Musician: Sound, Harmony, and Culture

It can be quite a challenge understanding the perspective of a student who walks into your choral classroom armed with only experience in contemporary gos-

Interest Sessions

pel and little-to-no music reading exposure. Through recorded examples, demonstrations, and the experiences of the clinicians, we will explore the unique voice of the Black gospel musician by seeking to understand the core of the gospel vocal sound, common gospel harmonic devices, and the cultural heartbeat that seeps through this special musical art. Participants will learn about how to better connect with, honor, and educate these students.



Matt Falker is a jazz and gospel pianist, vocalist, arranger, and clinician. Falker distributes his vocal jazz arrangements through his publishing company, Anchor Music Publications (formerly Sound Music Publications founded by Frank DeMiero in 1988), as well as the music of dozens of other vocal jazz arrangers and composers. He is also the executive director of the Vocal Jazz Academy: a nonprofit organization dedicated to training and supporting vocal jazz educators through a series of one-day jazz workshops for teachers and students. As a full-time piano and vocal jazz professor at MiraCosta College, he directs the Downbeat Award-winning Frequency vocal jazz program, and hosts the Oceanside Jazz Festival. Falker directed the Jazz Immersion Choir at the 2023 ACDA National Conference.



Jamond McCoy is an improvisational jazz and gospel influenced vocalist, pianist, composer, arranger, session singer, and accompanist, creating music for various venues and other fellow musicians. He is the baritone for the famous a cappella group m-pact and is also a passionate educator, teaching privately and at various institutions, including California Baptist University, Cerritos College, and Orange County High School of the Arts. He has worked as the assistant director at the Monterey Jazz Summer Camp, the famous A Cappella Academy (Ben Bram and Avi Kaplan form PTX), and loves giving back to the church communities that helped shape him as a musical director.

Unlocking the Power of the Vagus Nerve: The Key to Vocal Freedom

The presentation will explore the mind, body, and voice through neuroscience and pedagogical application. There will be discussion on the function of the vagus nerve, our body's neurological response to fight or flight, and how to recognize students triggered by various neurological reactions. Participants will learn how to align the four systems of the voice using Vocal Toning, a method used to release trauma in the mind, body, and voice. The presentation will take a collaborative approach, including participation from the audience to explore vagal toning exercises that can be used in the classroom to create the optimal learning experience.



Natasha Valdes is a certified trauma-informed voice professional through the Voice Study Center in England with an MM from the Boston Conservatory and a BM from California State University, Long Beach. Valdes became a trauma voice specialist after struggling to find healing solutions for her own issues with psychogenic dysphonia. Valdes is the founder and CEO of Complete Vocal Wellness, a neuro-centric coaching program for voice users to learn functional-based voice training, increase optimal performance, and heal core trauma wounds. Valdes is known for sharing her research on "Rewiring trauma, anxiety, and depression in the Voice" at conferences like CCDA, ACDA, NATS, CASMEC, and BOCO Vocal Symposium.

Yes, You Can Compose and Arrange for Your Own Choir: Why and How Every Educator Should Try Writing for Their Own Ensemble

Composer/conductor Saunder Choi and composer Dale Trumbore lead this interest session for conductors who want to learn how to write and arrange for their

own ensemble. Choi and Trumbore will highlight how you know your choir better than anyone; how writing for your singers can challenge their weaknesses, leading them to become stronger musicians; and how to fill gaps in the repertoire for your singers by creating that music yourself. Conductors will gain hands-on experience arranging an eight-bar melody and will leave this session empowered to continue composing, with resources on what to expect and where to begin.



Dale Trumbore is a Los Angeles-based composer and writer whose compositions have been performed widely in the U.S. and internationally by the Aeolians of Oakwood University, Chicago Symphony’s MusicNOW ensemble, Conspirare and the Miró Quartet, soprano Liv Redpath, Los Angeles Children’s Chorus, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Modesto Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Phoenix Chorale, Tonality, and VocalEssence. The recipient of ACDA’s inaugural Raymond W. Brock Competition for Professional Composers, an ASCAP Morton Gould Award, and a Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Grant, Trumbore has also served as composer in residence for Choral Chameleon.



Saunder Choi, a Filipino composer and choral artist in Los Angeles, has gained international recognition for his works. As a choral artist, he actively performs in ensembles like Pacific Chorale, L.A. Choral Lab, and HEX Vocal Ensemble, as well as singing in film scores of Disney’s *The Lion King*, *Mulan*, *Turning Red*, and *Avatar 2: The Way of the Water*, etc. Choi’s compositions strongly advocate for DEI, focusing on themes such as immigration, racial justice, LGBTQ+ advocacy, climate justice, and his own Filipino-Chinese identity. He is the director of music at the UU Church of Santa Monica and teaches as an artist with the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

You Are the Voice Teacher: Teaching Technique and Authenticity of Vocal Production in Choral Singing

“Blend. Drop your jaw. Straight tone. Darker.” Most have likely heard one of these phrases before, but do they really help inexperienced singers? Choral directors are the primary voice teachers for our singers. Are we teaching them the pedagogy behind their instrument in terms that are clear and concrete? What terminology can we use to provide clarity? This session will provide practical applications of how to teach singers to find and use their authentic voices by sharing suggestions from various vocal pedagogy approaches, including Estill Voice. It is applicable to directors working with high school, college and older community singers.

Amy Johnston Blosser will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 58.

C. Andrew Blosser will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 58.



Western Region Registration Information

- Register at acda.org/region-conferences
- Attendee \$290 Retired \$200 Student \$105
- Registration after 11:59 PM CST February 14, 2024
- Attendee \$320 Retired \$225 Student \$125
- Non-ACDA Member Composer Track \$99
- One-Day Registration \$175 (only available on-site)



Honor Choir Conductors

Children's



Judy Bowers was named professor emerita in the College of Music at the Florida State University upon retirement after more than fifty years of teaching, and subsequently completed four years as Biedenharn Endowed Chair in Music at the University of Louisiana Monroe. Throughout a career dedicated to preparing music teachers, Bowers has taught undergraduate and graduate music education classes and choirs, and has provided honor choirs in Canada, Africa, and numerous US all-state/honor choirs, regional ACDA honor choirs, and a National ACDA Middle School Honor Choir in 2009. In 2014, Bowers was named a Lowell Mason National Music Education Fellow by NAFME, and in 2023, the Florida MEA inducted her into the Florida Music Hall of Fame.

High School SSAA



Julie Yu (she/her) is professor of music and director of choral studies at the Wanda L. Bass School of Music at Oklahoma City University and the artistic director of Canterbury Voices, Oklahoma's premier symphony chorus. She holds a BME from the University of Central Oklahoma, MM from Oklahoma State University, and a DMA from the University of North Texas. She taught at Norman North High School in Oklahoma, San José State University, and Kansas State University. She has given presentations, conducted, and/or her choirs have performed for state and regional conferences of ACDA, NAFME, and the European MEA. She is the past president of the Southwestern ACDA Region and served as an International Conducting Exchange Fellow to Kenya in 2019.

Gospel



Rollo Dilworth is vice dean and professor of choral music education in the department of music education and therapy at Temple University's Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts in Philadelphia, PA. Prior to his position with Boyer College, he taught music education and was the director of choral activities for thirteen years at North Park University in Chicago. Dilworth's contributions extend to conducting the Temple University Singing Owls Campus/Community Chorus, leading the Singing City Choir, and conducting the School District of Philadelphia High School All-City Chorus. He is a prolific composer and arranger, with over 200 published choral works. Much of Dilworth's creative output as a composer and arranger focuses on themes of social justice. He serves on the national boards of Chorus America and the NCCO.

Youth SATB



Emily Ellsworth has conducted all-state choirs and prestigious festivals across thirty US states, as well as honor choirs for ACDA regions. Her global appearances include directing festival choirs in various countries and presenting for national choral directors in Brazil. In academia, Ellsworth contributed to Luther College's choral faculty, conducted the Elmhurst University Concert Choir, and lectured at Northwestern University. Notably, she served as artistic director of Anima-Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus for over two decades. Her choral work garnered numerous accolades, including the 2014 Tribute Award from Chicago A Cappella and 2013 ASCAP award for Adventurous Programming from Chorus America. She holds vocal performance degrees from Macalester College and the University of Southern California.