

CHORAL JOURNAL

JANUARY 2026

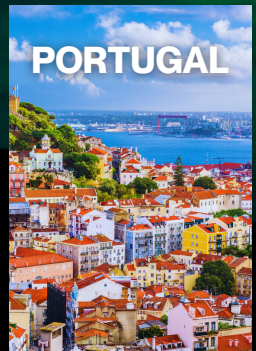


2026 ACDA

REGION CONFERENCE PREVIEW



8 INTERNATIONAL RESIDENCIES 3 INAUGURAL TOURS



Join MidAm International in 2027 for an unforgettable 8-day, 7-night journey through one of the world's great music capitals. Perform in historic venues alongside professional orchestras and share your music with passionate, international audiences.

Contact us today to learn more:

contact@midamerica-music.com | 212.239.0205

www.midamerica-music.com





Annual dues (includes subscription to the *Choral Journal*): Active \$125, Industry \$150, Institutional \$135, Retired \$45, and Student \$15. Library annual subscription rates: U.S. \$75; Canada \$80; International \$170. Single Copy Issues US/Canada: \$9; International: \$20. Circulation: 13,000. Main office: 405-232-8161

The *Choral Journal* (US ISSN 0009-5028) is issued monthly except for April, July, and December by the American Choral Directors Association. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Choral Journal*, PO Box 1705, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73101-1705.

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; EBSCO; Web of Science; 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 2026.

Conference Previews



Eastern Region Conference

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 9 Conference Overview | 16 Insight Choirs |
| 10 Headliners/Opening Night Concert | 18 Performing Choirs |
| 12 Special Events | 24 Interest Sessions |
| 14 Student Conducting Masterclasses | 44 Honor Choir Conductors |



Midwestern Region Conference

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 47 Conference Overview | 50 Performing Choirs |
| 48 Headliners/Opening Night Concert | 58 Interest Sessions |
| 49 Special Events | 68 Honor Choir Conductors |



SING
for a Change

Northwestern Region Conference

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 71 Conference Overview | 78 Performing Choirs |
| 72 Headliners/Opening Night Concert | 85 Interest Sessions |
| 74 Special Events | 94 Spotlight Reading Sessions |
| 75 Encounter Choirs | 95 Honor Choir Conductors |
| 76 Student Conducting Masterclass | |



Southern Region Conference

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 99 Conference Overview | 108 Performing Choirs |
| 100 Headliners/President's Concert | 116 Interest Sessions |
| 104 Special Events | 127 Honor Choir Conductors |
| 107 Student Conducting Masterclasses | |



Southwestern Region Conference

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 129 Conference Overview | 146 Student Conducting Masterclasses |
| 130 Headliners/Opening Night Concert | 149 Performing Choirs |
| 131 Special Events | 160 Interest Sessions |
| 137 New Horizons Immersion Day | 170 Honor Choir Conductors |
| 144 Music & Worship Immersion Day | |



Western Region Conference

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 173 Conference Overview | 179 Performing Choirs |
| 174 Headliners/Opening Night Concert | 186 Interest Sessions |
| 176 Special Events | 194 Honor Choir Conductors |
| 178 Student Conducting Masterclasses | |

STANDING COMMITTEES

ADVOCACY & COLLABORATION

ALEX GARTNER, CHAIR

agartner@pensacolasings.org

COMPOSITION INITIATIVES

KATIE HOUTS, CHAIR

katie.houts@gmail.com

DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

ARREON HARLEY-EMERSON, CHAIR

arreon@equitysings.com

EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

JOHN MCDONALD, CHAIR

JohnMcDonald@wustl.edu

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

JOSHUA HABERMANN, CHAIR

joshhabermann@gmail.com

REPERTOIRE & RESOURCES

GRETCHEN HARRISON, CHAIR

nationalrr@acda.org

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

ELIZABETH CASSIDY PARKER, CHAIR

eparker@temple.edu

From the Region Presidents



Derrick Fox

Lifting Each Other Up: Creating a Culture of Kindness and Respect at Our Regional Conferences

by Derrick Fox,
Midwestern Region President

Endorsed by:

Amanda Hanzlik, Eastern Region President

Jeffery Ames, Southern Region President

Jonathan Owen, Southwestern Region President

Bill Campbell, Northwestern Region President

Julie Dana, Western Region President

As we gather for the upcoming regional conferences, we celebrate not only the incredible artistry and scholarship within our communities, but also the spirit of collaboration that makes these events possible. Every session, concert, and shared moment represents countless volunteer hours from colleagues who have worked with dedication and care to create an inspiring experience for us all.

Our collective success depends on how we show up for one another with gratitude, respect, and generosity. Each participant contributes to the atmosphere we create together. By being thoughtful in our words, kind in our actions, and supportive of one another's efforts, we strengthen the bonds that make our choral community thrive.

Ways to Support and Celebrate Each Other

- **Express gratitude openly:** Thank presenters, conductors, accompanists, and performers for sharing their artistry and expertise.
- **Acknowledge the unseen work:** Take time to recognize the volunteers, coordinators, and staff who make the conference run smoothly.
- **Be punctual and prepared:** Arriving on time honors the time and preparation of those leading sessions and performances.
- **Listen with openness:** Approach each session and concert with curiosity and appreciation rather than comparison or critique.
- **Communicate thoughtfully:** Whether asking questions or sharing feedback, frame your words in a way that is respectful and constructive.

ADVOCACY STATEMENT

The human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself and its place in the world through the study of and participation in choral music. Singing in a choir produces more active and involved citizens. It affects self-worth in youth and adults. It builds connectivity throughout communities. Society benefits from the aesthetic beauty and community of singers created by choral programs within schools, houses of worship, and community organizations through involved citizenry, connectivity throughout communities, and feelings of personal self-worth. The American Choral Directors Association and its membership resolve to ensure the survival of choral programs for this and future generations by:

Actively voicing support for funding at local, state, and national levels of education and government; collaborating with local and national organizations to ensure the distribution of arts funding data and arts-related activism opportunities; advocating for full access to choral singing and inclusion of all singers in a choral program; and ensuring the distribution of advocacy statements and data regarding choral programs.

- **Support colleagues' sessions:** Attend events led by your peers and show your encouragement through your presence and engagement.

- **Celebrate diverse perspectives:** Embrace the wide range of musical traditions, pedagogical approaches, and cultural viewpoints represented.

- **Avoid negative side talk:** If concerns arise, address them privately and respectfully rather than through casual conversation.

- **Amplify others' successes:** Use social media and personal interactions to lift up and highlight the work of others.

- **Offer small gestures of kindness:** Simple acts like holding a door, offering a seat, or sharing a program can brighten someone's day.

- **Honor performance etiquette:** Be attentive, silence devices, and applaud generously to show respect to all performers.

- **Model collegiality:** Remember that we represent our institutions and our choral musicians to one another and to our broader community...our behavior and actions set the tone.

Closing Thought

Let these conferences be a reflection of who we are and who we aspire to be: a community of musicians who lead with grace, gratitude, and respect. The eyes and ears of all choristers, from the elementary level to the collegiate level as well as community to faith-based choirs, are watching and listening to us. Together, we can make our regional conferences not just memorable, but meaningful.

— — — — —

Don't Miss Out: Why Early Registration Truly Matters!

A message from Robyn Hilger,
National Executive Director

Every year, I hear the same hopeful refrain: "I'll register once I know my schedule." Or, "I'll book my travel later—there's plenty of time." And every year, I watch colleagues scramble at the last minute, paying more than they expected and missing out on the most convenient options.

For the first time, our conference is offering airline travel discounts. Like most good deals, these discounted fares work best when you act early. The same principle applies to conference registration. Our Early Bird deadline (January 15 @ 11:59pm CST) is designed to reward those who plan ahead. Registering early isn't just about saving a few dollars—it ensures you receive timely conference updates and gives you one more thing off your plate during an already busy season.

We only release hotel information to those who register. Why? Because it ensures those who are committed to attending the conference have first dibs! You may be able to book with the hotel directly after the block fills, but you certainly will pay a higher price. Staying at the conference hotel makes everything easier: you're steps away from sessions, you have built-in networking opportunities, and you avoid the stress of juggling off-site transportation. The only way to guarantee your place is to register and reserve now.

So consider this your friendly nudge: take advantage of the new airline discounts, secure the Early Bird rate, and grab your spot in the hotel block while rooms are still available. This year's conferences promise to be inspiring, energizing, and well worth the trip—so make the process as smooth (and affordable!) as possible by acting now.

NATIONAL OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

EDITH COPLEY
ecopley@acda.org

VICE PRESIDENT

PEARL SHANGKUAN
pshangkuan@acda.org

PRESIDENT-ELECT

JESSICA NÁPOLES
jnapoles@acda.org

SECRETARY/TREASURER

ROBERT NATTER
rnatter@gettysburg.edu

PAST PRESIDENT

DAVID FRYLING
dfryling@acda.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ROBYN HILGER
executivedirector@acda.org

NATIONAL R&R CHAIR

GRETCHEN HARRISON
nationalrr@acda.org

EASTERN REGION PRESIDENT

AMANDA HANZLIK
amanda.hanzlik@acdaeast.org

MIDWESTERN REGION PRESIDENT

DERRICK FOX
foxderri@msu.edu

NORTHWESTERN REGION PRESIDENT

WILLIAM CAMPBELL
billcampbell@nwacda.org

SOUTHERN REGION PRESIDENT

JEFFERY AMES
jefferyacdasouthern@gmail.com

SOUTHWESTERN REGION PRESIDENT

JONATHAN D. OWEN
Jonathano@swacda.org

WESTERN REGION PRESIDENT

JULIE DANA
jdana@acdawestern.org

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATE REPRESENTATIVE

OLIVER SCOFIELD
KI Concerts
oliver@kiconcerts.com

From the President



Edith Copley

Fifteen years ago, while attending an ACDA Western Region interest session, I sat next to Dr. Charlene Archibeque. Charlene just turned ninety last summer and is an emerita professor from San José State University and an icon in the choral world. Charlene, who at that time had already retired from teaching, took out a little black book

from her purse and began taking copious notes. When I asked about the little book, she said she takes it to every workshop and conference to jot down new techniques, repertoire ideas, books, quotes, etc. Even though her day-to-day classroom teaching was behind her, Charlene was still looking ahead, eager to expand her knowledge. She was and is a continual learner who knew that no matter how much experience you've acquired over the years, you can always learn something new.

I encourage you to be a continual learner and register for one of the upcoming ACDA region conferences. If you attend, I know you will return home with new tools, new colleagues to call upon for help, new repertoire ideas, and a sense of renewed energy and commitment to share the choral art. Very special thanks to our six region presidents and their committees who have worked diligently to plan the 2026 conferences. This issue of the *Choral Journal* highlights an incredible lineup of inspiring headliners, outstanding invited choirs, informative interest sessions, exceptional ensembles of all ages chosen through the audition process, and honor choirs led by nationally recognized guest conductors in all six regional locations.

Performances and interest sessions are the main events at a conference, but one of the reasons I enjoy attending a region conference is quality time to connect. Regionals are smaller than the national event, so it's easier to talk with old friends and make new ones. What truly enhances the conference musical experiences are these conversations with colleagues about their successful ventures, their day-to-day challenges, and repertoire loved by their singers and audiences alike.

Connection is what music is all about, so let's take it a step further and reach out to a choral musician in your area who's not an ACDA member and encourage them to join our organization and attend a regional conference! My first ACDA conference was a life-changing experience, so I hope you'll consider giving a colleague that wonderful experience too.

Edie Copley



Amanda Bumgarner

In this January issue of *Choral Journal*, we flip the calendar page to 2026 and share with you the complete preview of the six 2026 ACDA Region Conferences. There are many exciting events, special performances, and sessions that you will not want to miss! Registration is now open. We do want to remind you that the information in this issue is current as of press

time. Make sure to consult acda.org/region-conferences or your region's website for the most up-to-date information.

As I mentioned in my column in the previous issue, we have several new editorial board members joining our work this year. In addition to those previously named, I want to recognize and thank Gregory Pysh for his service as editor of our book review column. Dennis Malfatti, professor of music and director of choral activities at the University of Evansville, is stepping into this role for his term beginning in 2026. The book review column has been a longtime staple of *Choral Journal*, and we welcome feedback and suggestions for how to best continue this work.

The 2025 *Choral Journal* calendar featured articles on a wide range of topics. I encourage you to go back and check out any issues you may have missed. All past issues of *Choral Journal* are available online at acda.org/choraljournal.

Looking ahead to articles and focus issues for the 2026 calendar year, consider how you may want to contribute research to *Choral Journal*, *Chor-Teach*, and *The International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*. Our membership is broad, but our hope is that everyone can find something of interest within the pages of our various publications. Submissions are open! Find out more information at acda.org under the "Publications" dropdown.

The March/April 2026 issue will feature our annual free Summer Festival and Workshop listing. Email submissions to abumgarner@acda.org by January 15 in the following format:

Event date
Event name
Event location
Description of the event (30 words maximum)
Contact information (e.g., name, phone, email, website)

EDITOR

AMANDA BUMGARNER

ACDA National Office
405-232-8161 (ex. 205)
abumgarner@acda.org

MANAGING EDITOR

RON GRANGER

ACDA National Office
rgranger@acda.org

EDITORIAL BOARD

SEAN MICHAEL BURTON

seanburtonmusic@gmail.com

CARON DALEY

daleyc1@duke.edu

MARQUES L. A. GARRETT

marques.garrett@unt.edu

ZEBULON M. HIGHBEN

zebulon.highben@duke.edu

MICHAEL PORTER

cmporter1750@gmail.com

BRETT SCOTT

cornislb@ucmail.uc.edu

DEBRA SPURGEON

dspurg@olemiss.edu

BRANDON WILLIAMS

bwilliams@mgsa.rutgers.edu

COLUMN EDITORS

MICAH BLAND

mbland1613@gmail.com

MATTHEW HOCH

mrh0032@auburn.edu

ELIZABETH HEARN

ehearn@olemiss.edu

DENNIS MALFATTI

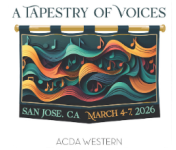
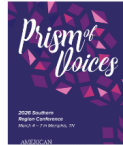
dm155@evansville.edu

JENNIFER RODGERS

rodgersj@iastate.edu

ELIZABETH CASSIDY PARKER

eparker@temple.edu



SPECIAL THANKS

to our generous sponsors

LANYARDS

KI Concerts ★ Perform International

PLATINUM

BAND

GOLD

Creative Arts Collective for Christian Life & Faith

Daily Choirs and Firebird Fine Arts Tours

Hal Leonard • National Concerts • OCP Choral

Orange Community Master Chorale

Perform International • Popplers Music • Witte Performance Tours

SILVER

Alfred Music • Bob Rogers Travel • Classical Movements

Gerber Tours • GoRascal Mortgage, Johna Barrow • Music Folder

LUDUS • Westminster Choir College at Rider University

BRONZE

Arrange Me • Carus Verlag • La Voz Music Publishing

Music Celebrations International • Oxford University Press

Sing A Mile High International Choral Festival for Children and Youth

Special Thanks

to the

Generous Donors

who contributed to Honor Choir funds in support of
emerging young artists as of November 10, 2025.

Amy Boers
Marjorie Camp
Barb Catlin
Dustin Cates
Diana Charles
Edith Copley
Jerrod Davis
Julie Dana
Janice Fleming
Anna Hamre
Cricket Handler
Dinah Helgeson

Charlotte Johnson
Iris Levine
Dean Luethi
Anne Lyman
Lisa Marien
John Edwin Palmer
Molly Peters
Nicholas Sienkiewicz
Aimee Stewart
Susan Swerdlow
Giselle Wyers
John P. Yankee

oCP Choral

The sacred choral music website developed
by choir directors for choir directors



Search thousands of songs suited for
choirs of every size and skill level



BROWSE TITLES
ocpchoral.com

Conference Overview



Amanda Hanzlik

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with great joy that I invite you to ENVISION 2026, the Eastern ACDA Region Conference in Providence, Rhode Island, February 25–28, 2026. ENVISION calls us to create a world where choral

music is embraced and celebrated as an essential expression of humanity. Together, we will imagine a future where choral music is woven into culture and everyday life, reaching beyond the classroom and concert hall. Where every singer, composer, and audience member is valued and where every voice belongs.

This conference will be a time of artistry, discovery, and connection. Our headlining ensembles bring extraordinary vision to the stage: Elevation (Dr. Arreon A. Harley-Emerson), whose performances embody equity, authenticity, and innovation; mirabai (Dr. Sandra Snow), amplifying women's voices through groundbreaking repertoire; and the New York City Gay Men's Chorus (John J. Atorino), whose legacy of activism continues to inspire. Partnering with commissioned composers Scott Hoying (NYCGMC), Shara Nova (mirabai) and Kyle Pederson (Elevation), each of these ensembles reminds us that choral singing is a force for both beauty and change.

We are also proud to highlight our performing choirs, a combination of collegiate, community, and K-12 ensembles selected from across the Eastern Region. These ensembles represent the creativity, diversity, and com-

mitment of our colleagues, offering programs that inspire, dismantle barriers, and demonstrate the richness and vibrancy of our shared art.

The honor choirs remain a true heartbeat of the conference. This year, our four ensemble experiences—SATB, SSAA, Middle School Gospel, and Contemporary A Cappella Fusion—will include much more than rehearsals and presenting concerts. Students will attend headliner concerts, participate in improvisatory and circle singing experiences, learn from pop music industry experts, and personally engage with the composers of the extraordinary commissioned works that have been created for them.

Our sessions are designed to spark imagination and equip us for the future. Highlights include the contemporary and commercial choral panel, innovative resources for elementary and middle school choirs, meaningful explorations of music in worship, a stunning lineup of student masterclass clinicians and forward-looking perspectives from our insight and immersion choirs, which include Latin American, African, gospel, and social justice repertoire.

Finally, the One-Night Choir, led by Matt Goldstein, founder of the Gaia Music Collective, will bring us together in song—an unforgettable reminder that when voices unite, barriers dissolve and community flourishes.

As we gather in Providence, let us recommit to equity, collaboration, and imagination. Together, we will ENVISION a future where choral music thrives—in our schools, on our stages, and in the lives of all people.

Eastern Region Conference Registration Information

Attendee \$350 Retired \$250 Student \$125 **until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST**

Attendee \$390 Retired \$275 Student \$150 **January 16 - February 28**

One Day \$200 **only available on site**

Register at acda.org/region-conferences

Headliners/Opening Night Concert

Headliners

Elevation



Elevation is Elevate Vocal Arts's all-professional, intentionally diverse performing ensemble. As Delaware's only professional vocal ensemble, Elevation performances fuse traditional, classical choral music with jazz, hip-hop, R&B, storytelling, and spoken word. Unique to our model and our repertoire, we consider the vocal arts to be more than just singing and are inclusive of the many ways the human voice is used in creative and artistic expressions. More than just performers, Elevation's vocal artists support Elevate Vocal Arts's educational and workforce development programming through Bent But Not Broken, our biennial conference elevating vocal music of the African Diaspora; through our school-based residencies, which provide support and professional development to Delaware's educators; and through Summer Institute, our stipend-based Vocal Arts apprenticeship.



Arreon A. Harley-Emerson is an assistant professor of choral music at the Pennsylvania State University, where he serves as director of Essence of Joy, an ensemble committed to music of the Black

Diaspora, and teaches courses in conducting, choral music, and music education. A conductor, composer, nonprofit strategist, and equity coach, he also serves as

the artistic director of Elevate Vocal Arts and president and CEO of Equity Sings, a consultancy that supports performing arts organizations with their inclusion. Harley-Emerson holds a bachelor's in music performance (voice) and music theory and composition from Goucher College, an MM in choral conducting and vocal performance from the University of Delaware School of Music, and a PhD in music education with a cognate in choral conducting from the Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University.

mirabai



mirabai is a professional women's choral ensemble that performs, commissions, and records new and historical musics that express the rich emotional terrain of a woman's life. mirabai artists are professionals in various music-related careers, many of whom sang as graduate students in the Michigan State University Mosaic ensemble. Inspired by the spirit of our namesake, the sixteenth-century mystic singer and poet who created her own destiny amid societal expectations to the contrary, each performer values the opportunity to share singing, mentorship, and connectivity with women engaged in their own communities as agents of change for young women and the arts. mirabai engages audiences in meaningful explorations of musics, texts, and conversation around contemporary issues of our time.



Sandra Snow is a conductor, pedagogue, and scholar who is widely recognized for guiding singers of all ages and abilities to achieve artful performances through an understanding of music and its context in the world around them. Snow serves as the director of choral programs and area chair of conducting at the Michigan State University College of Music, where she oversees graduate programs in choral conducting and conducts the MSU University Chorale. As a guest conductor, she travels extensively across North America and abroad. Snow founded mirabai in 2017. mirabai's recording, *Ecstatic Songs*, won the American Prize in Choral Music in the professional choirs' division in 2020. Snow has received the Michigan State University William J. Beal Award for outstanding faculty, the MSU Teacher-Scholar Award, and the John D. and Dortha J. Withrow Distinguished Teaching Award.



John J. Atorino is a professional music conductor from Ridgewood, NJ, and is the artistic director of the New York City Gay Men's Chorus. He holds a bachelor's from the University of Michigan and a master's from New York University. He taught music in public and private schools for over twelve years before becoming a full-time conductor. Atorino has conducted ensembles at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Apollo Theater. He has led ensembles for live television performances with highlights including *Good Morning America*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, *This Week Tonight with John Oliver*, and a commercial for *RuPaul's Drag Race*. He has also worked as a music copyist for Concord Theatricals and as a freelance arranger. Atorino is the host of a successful podcast about all things queer in pop culture.

New York City Gay Men's Chorus



The New York City Gay Men's Chorus comprises more than 280 talented singers of various ages, backgrounds, and experiences. They sing to challenge perceptions of the LGBTQIA+ community, to combat fear and hatred, encourage compassion and human connection, and to thrill with the superb quality of their sound. NYCGMC performs large-scale concerts around New York City, makes numerous special appearances, and participates in community programs. They have received international critical acclaim for performances in London, Amsterdam, Cologne, Berlin, Paris, Montreal, Munich, Barcelona, Dublin, and most recently in Mexico City and Puerto Vallarta.

Commissioned Composer

We are thrilled to announce composer and arranger Scott Hoying as the commissioned composer for the New York City Gay Men's Chorus at ENVISION 2026!



Scott Hoying is a Grammy and Emmy Award-winning vocalist, composer, arranger, and producer best known as a founding member of the a cappella supergroup Pentatonix. With over 13 million albums sold, 6 billion streams, three Grammy Awards, and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Pentatonix has become one of the most successful vocal groups of all time. Hoying's solo work, including his Grammy-nominated single "Rose Without the Thorns" (feat. säje & Tonality), showcases his signature blend of heart and harmony. He is also a composer/arranger for Disney Parks and arranges for other major pop artists, blending choral artistry with the pulse of contemporary music and media. A passionate advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and visibility, Hoying's artistry and activism will infuse this landmark commission with purpose, joy, and inspiration.

Special Events

Immersion Choirs

At ENVISION 2026, the immersion choir sessions invite participants to step deeply into the rich soundscapes of global choral traditions, offering transformative, hands-on experiences with Latin American, African, gospel, and social justice repertoire. These sessions are not simply about learning new music; they are about embodying the rhythms, stories, and cultural contexts that shape it—immersing ourselves in traditions that

broaden our understanding of what choral music can be. In alignment with the conference's vision, the immersion choirs challenge us to ENVISION a world where choral singing is recognized as an act of humanity, dissolving barriers of access and amplifying every voice. Led by expert clinicians in these disciplines, the immersion choir sessions will be offered on both Thursday and Friday, ensuring broad access and participation.

African Choral Traditions



Lulu Mwangi Mupfumbu is an assistant professor of music at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where she conducts the Camerata Chamber Choir and teaches music education and conducting courses. She holds a master's in conducting from Ohio State University and a BME from Atlantic Union College. Her passion lies in blending excellence in music education and performance with service to humanity. Beyond the classroom, she is active as a guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator, presenter, singer, and author both locally and internationally. An award-winning conductor, her ensembles have performed on five continents, received five medals at the World Choir Games, and been featured at ACDA regional and national conferences. Her groups have also performed at prestigious venues including the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and the White House.

Gospel Choral Traditions



Patrick P. Lundy is a native of Thomasville, Georgia, where he received his early childhood education. He began his music ministry by playing the piano at the First Missionary Baptist Church in Thomasville before his feet could touch the pedals. For twenty

FROST SCHOOL of MUSIC
CHORAL STUDIES

JOIN OUR **DYNAMIC COMMUNITY**
WHERE **ARTISTRY INSPIRES INNOVATION**

Renowned graduate programs:
(MM/DMA in Choral Conducting, and more)

Exceptional undergraduate programs:
(Performance, education, industry, and more)

Comprehensive support available: full scholarships, health insurance, and teaching assistantships.

DIRECTOR OF CHORAL STUDIES
DR. MATTHEW BRADY

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CHORAL STUDIES
DR. REID MASTERS

LEARN MORE:

Where music ennobles the human spirit.

ty-three years, Lundy served in music ministry at the Reid Temple AME Church Glenn Dale, Maryland, alongside the “Sweetheart of Gospel” Myrna Summers. In his last position at Reid, he served as director, Christian fine arts. In 2023, Lundy received the President Joseph R. Biden Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his over four thousand hours of community service. In August 2025, Lundy was appointed director of music and worship & arts at the historic Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

Latin American Choral Traditions



Diana V. Sáez is the director of choral activities at Towson University in Towson, Maryland, directing the University Chorale, Treble Voices, and Choral Society.

Prior to this appointment, Sáez served as visiting choir director at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, and visiting choir conductor at McDaniel College in Westminster, Maryland. As a leading specialist in the field of Latin American music, Sáez is a frequent guest conductor, adjudicator, and lecturer in both the United States and abroad. She began her musical education at the Escuela Libre de Música in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and later earned a master's of choral conducting from Temple University and a DMA at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her compositions for choir are published by Hal Leonard, Boosey & Hawkes, Roger Dean, and La Voz Publishing. She is currently co-editing *The Oxford Book of Latin American Choral Music* with José Rivera from the University of North Carolina in Pembroke.

Social Justice in Song



Jonathan Palant is associate dean of the arts and director of choral activities at the University of Texas at Dallas. He is founder and conductor of both Credo, a two hundred-member community choir,

and the Dallas Street Choir, a musical outlet for those affected by homelessness. Palant currently serves as president emeritus of the National Alliance for Music in Vulnerable Communities and sits on the board of directors of the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses. In 2017, the *Dallas Morning News* named Palant one of nine Texan of the Year finalists, and in 2016, *Musical America* named him one of their Innovators of the Year. Both Palant's book, *Brothers, Sing On! Conducting the Tenor-Bass Choir*, and the Jonathan Palant Choral Series are published by the Hal Leonard Corporation. He holds degrees from Michigan State University, Temple University, and the University of Michigan.

One-Night Choir

Led by **Matt Goldstein**,
founder of the Gaia Music Collective
February 26, 9:30pm
Providence Place Mall



Matt Goldstein (he/him) is an NYC-based choir director, educator, facilitator, vocal arranger, singer-songwriter, and improviser known for his heart-forward facilitation, emotive arrangements, and visionary leadership. He is the founder and artistic director of Gaia Music Collective, a collaborative music community that is achieving international recognition for its work in creating inclusive, accessible spaces for everyday folks to pursue musical expression and connection. His award-winning arrangements are sung by ensembles worldwide, and he has been featured as an educator at national festivals such as BOSS and NACC. Beyond Gaia, he directs at A Cappella Academy; leads Rock Voices Brooklyn Heights; teaches improvisation through his studio, Flow Labs; and performs globally with his international vocal improv trio, Ecce.

Student Conducting Masterclasses

Undergraduate and Graduate

Clinicians



Kimberly Dunn Adams is the director of choral activities and professor of music at West Chester University's Wells School of Music, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses. Her choirs have received top prizes in competition, conference performance invitations, and recognition for their recordings. She has presented and guest conducted throughout the United States and internationally. Adams was previously the director of choral activities at Western Michigan University and at Mount Holyoke College. She holds degrees from Oberlin College & Conservatory, the Yale School of Music, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Adams is highly praised for her energetic, positive, and insightful work as an honor choir conductor and is a frequent guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator.



Edward Maclary is professor emeritus at the University of Maryland School of Music. Under his two decades of leadership, the UMD choral program achieved global recognition. The UMD Chamber Singers won top prizes in numerous international competitions, and the UMD Concert Choir became the symphonic choir of choice for both the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He has served as chorus master for esteemed conductors. From 2014 to 2017, Maclary was the director of the masterclass in conducting at the Oregon Bach Festival. Maclary holds graduate degrees from Boston University and Indiana University. He was a frequent collaborator with Robert Shaw and also studied with Margaret Hillis and Helmuth Rilling.

Sandra Snow will be a clinician for this masterclass. Her photo and bio are on page 11.



Anthony Trecek-King, a highly acclaimed choral conductor, scholar, pedagogue, and media personality, has a career spanning over twenty years. He's an active guest conductor, resident conductor with the Handel and Haydn Society, artistic director of the Berkshire Choral International, and creative advisor for the VOCES8 US Foundation. Ensembles under his direction have won a Pulitzer Prize, received a Grammy, and earned a National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. He has worked with artists like Leslie Odom Jr., Melinda Doolittle, and Yo-Yo Ma, and has led performances in venues such as Boston Symphony Hall, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Sydney Opera House. He hosted the classical radio show *The Silent Canon* and appeared on the Emmy-nominated WGBH television series *Sing That Thing* and two TEDx Boston talks.

Demonstration Choirs

Chorus of Westerly Chamber Ensemble



The Chamber Ensemble is a relatively new venture of the Chorus of Westerly, created in the 2022–2023 season as a smaller, flexible group of singers who can more readily participate in outreach activities beyond their regular symphonic concert season. All of the singers are also members of the full Symphonic Chorus.

and have extensive choral experience and/or degrees in music.



Andrew Howell is the Marion & Bill Palm Music Director of the Chorus of Westerly, appointed in 2012 as the second music director in the organization's sixty-seven-year history. In addition to his extensive duties with the Chorus of Westerly, he also serves as music director for Mystic Congregational Church in Mystic, Connecticut, and during the summer months at the Watch Hill Chapel in Westerly, Rhode Island. Howell received his BME and MM in choral conducting and organ performance from the University of Rhode Island, where he previously conducted the University Chorus and taught ear training and sight singing and music appreciation. He lives in Westerly, RI, with his wife, Emily, and their four children.

University of Connecticut Chamber Singers



The University of Connecticut Chamber Singers is the premier choral ensemble at the University of Connecticut, comprising twenty-six talented vocalists. The ensemble presents a diverse repertoire spanning from the sixteenth century to contemporary works, including twenty-first-century commissions. The group has toured nationally and internationally, collaborating with renowned artists such as Kristin Chenoweth and

Jacob Collier. Recently, the Chamber Singers partnered with Connecticut's professional choir CONCO-RA to present Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard* throughout New England. The choir frequently collaborates with high school choirs across Connecticut and performs throughout the state.



Jamie Spillane is the director of choral studies at UConn, where he oversees an active program that includes eight choirs and teaches conducting and choral literature classes from undergraduate through doctoral degrees. Spillane has directed all-state and honor choirs throughout the United States and has presented interest sessions and conducted performances at state and region conferences of ACDA and NAFME. Recently he directed the national concerts in Carnegie Hall as well as the Indiana all-state vocal jazz choir. For fourteen years, Spillane was chair of the Ledyard High School Music Department. Spillane has earned degrees from Ithaca College, the University of Connecticut, and the University of Arizona, is the president-elect of the Eastern ACDA Region, and recently received the Lifetime Achievement Award from CT-ACDA.

University of Maryland Chamber Singers

The University of Maryland Chamber Singers will be a demonstration choir for this session. Their photo and bio are on page 23.

Jason Max Ferdinand is the conductor of this choir. His photo and bio are on page 23.

Insight Choirs

Choral Pedagogy in Practice: Equity, Expression, Technique

This insight choir session explores the transformative power of engaging with a living composer through vocal pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. Composer B. E. Boykin joins the session to reflect on her work and creative process as the choir performs and rehearses her commissioned piece live. Participants will observe teaching strategies that center student identity, vocal development, and community building using Estill Voice Training, Laban Movement Analysis, and Social-Emotional Learning. The session invites conductors and educators to reimagine the choral process as an inclusive, collaborative journey—where voice, culture, and artistry converge to shape a more equitable future for choral singing.

Slippery Rock University



Our choir is a non-auditioned collegiate mixed ensemble at a regional public university. Our singers represent a wide range of majors, backgrounds, and musical experiences. The ensemble serves as a lab choir for

Excellence at Every Stage

Choral Resources from Alfred Music and Lawson-Gould

From elementary chorus to adult community choir,
we have resources to help your ensemble **succeed**.

Learn More at alfred.com/ChoralResources26



Alfred Music
LEARN • TEACH • PLAY



pre-service music educators and music therapists, with a mission to center process over product and equity over elitism. We emphasize culturally responsive teaching and cocreate musical meaning through dialogue, identity reflection, and repertoire by living composers. Our work extends beyond traditional performance goals to empower student voice, challenge dominant norms, and reflect the diversity of our campus and broader community.



Timothy Little Trần is a Louisiana native singer/songwriter, conductor, church music minister, and educator. He serves as director of choral studies and associate professor of music at Slippery Rock University, where he conducts the Chamber Singers and Concert Choir and teaches music education and theory. Formerly executive director of performing arts at Notre Dame College, he developed programs in music, theatre, and dance. He has held leadership roles at Oberlin Conservatory, SOCAPA, Interlochen Arts Academy, Shenandoah Conservatory, Columbia Choirs, and Louisiana State University. Little Trần holds a DMA from the University of Washington, an MM from Louisiana State University, and a BM from Shenandoah Conservatory.

Free at Last: Exploring a Forgotten Masterwork

This session serves to advance awareness of the cantata “Free at Last: A Portrait of Martin Luther King, Jr.” by African American composer Lena McLin with a thorough discussion of the composer’s life and work, textual and musical analysis of the piece, and a full performance for SATB choir, strings, and piano. Undeterred by its lesser-known status among choral masterworks in the canon, the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers’s performance of “Free at Last” will allow the work to be heard and considered as a repertoire resource by present and future generations of choral musicians.

Ithaca College Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers



This ensemble brings together college students and community members from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds to preserve and perform African American sacred music, particularly Negro Spirituals. Rooted in a mission of social justice, the group honors the resilience and artistry of Black ancestors through historically informed performance and community engagement. The ensemble provides an inclusive space for learning and healing, often collaborating with local organizations and schools to uplift underrepresented voices and connect intergenerational experiences through music.



Baruch J. Whitehead is a professor of music education and world music at Ithaca College specializing in elementary music through the Orff-Schulwerk approach. He studied at the Orff Institute in Salzburg, Austria, and founded Orff-Schulwerk certification programs at both Ithaca College and Marshall University. He also serves as a lead teacher in Boston University’s Orff certification program. Whitehead is a national specialist in gospel music and committed to preserving its legacy within mainstream music education. He performed at the Gospel Music Festival in Prague, Czech Republic, and is the founding director of the Ithaca College High School Gospel Invitational. He also founded and directs the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers, a group of college and community singers dedicated to the preservation of Negro Spirituals at Ithaca.

Performing Choirs

Berklee College of Music Advanced Vocal Jazz Ensemble



The Berklee College of Music Advanced Vocal Jazz Ensemble has performed at the 2016 and 2024 Eastern ACDA Region Conferences; and 2014, 2020, 2022 (Main Stage) and 2025 Jazz Education Network conferences. The ensemble has placed first or second in the *DownBeat* student music awards between 2018 and 2024. The ensemble will be performing with the world-renowned New York Voices for a second time in April 2026.



Ned J. Rosenblatt currently holds the position of professor in the Voice Department at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Rosenblatt holds a BME from the University of Connecticut, Storrs, and a master's in jazz pedagogy from the Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory.

Boston Choral Ensemble



Boston Choral Ensemble is an auditioned mixed-voice chamber choir based in Boston that performs compelling and relevant repertoire, particularly by diverse and living composers. Their concerts encourage audience interaction, lowering the barriers between their audience and the works they are performing through the use of nontraditional locations and innovative formats. Over the past twenty-four years, BCE has expanded its mission, strengthening its core values through its members, volunteer-led board of directors, and an ever-growing musical presence in the greater Boston community.



Katherine Chan is the director of choral activities and associate teaching professor of music at Northeastern University, where she conducts the University Choral Society, Chamber Singers, and Mosaic Advance Treble Ensemble. She also serves as artistic director of Boston Choral Ensemble. Chan has appeared at numerous international festivals, including Oregon Bach Festival, Taipei Bach Festival, and Hong Kong SingFest. In 2024 she was runner-up in the American Prize Dale Warland Award in Choral Conducting (college/university division). Chan received her BM in performance and pedagogy from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University; MM in choral conducting from the University of Washington; and DMA in conducting from the University of Minnesota.

Cabin John Middle School Advanced Chorus



The Cabin John Middle School Advanced Chorus, located in Potomac, Maryland, is a voluntary ensemble that brings together middle school singers from diverse backgrounds with a shared commitment to musical excellence and inclusivity. Our mission centers on finding joy in collective singing while celebrating the rich diversity of both our members and our repertoire. Under the direction of Min Nam, Cabin John Middle School Advanced Chorus has received numerous superior ratings from state and interstate adjudications and competitions, establishing a positive reputation that extends well beyond the immediate community.



Min Nam is a choral director at Cabin John Middle School in Potomac, Maryland, with over a decade of teaching experience. Her choirs have achieved numerous superior ratings at county, state, and interstate festivals. Nam presents reading sessions at state-level conferences. She is also a mentor and adjudicator for middle school-level ensembles and festivals. Nam is actively involved in professional organizations such as NAfME, MMEA, and ACDA.

Cantigas Women's Choir



Cantigas Women's Choir is a nonprofit organization comprising a diverse and inclusive group of women based in Hudson County, NJ. Through the power of our voices, they work to connect audiences of all backgrounds by performing a broad spectrum of music, both ancient and contemporary, from singing traditions around the world. In addition to their community outreach, Cantigas has performed for the Eastern ACDA Region (2010) with a program of Arabic music. In 2023, Cantigas traveled to Ireland to sing in conjunction with Diva Voces to perform the premiere of Sean Doherty's original composition *Eternal Rebel* based on a poem by Eva Gore-Booth for the centennial of Irish Independence.



Hannah Carr is director of choral activities at William Paterson University, NJ, and is an active clinician, festival conductor, and adjudicator in Europe and the United States. She holds degrees from Trinity College Dublin, the Kodály Institute, Hungary, Yale University, and Rutgers University. Carr is director of Cantigas. She has worked with various professional choirs and was a featured conductor on C4's debut album, *Uncaged*. Carr has won prizes including the Irene Alms Prize, Rutgers University; the Director's Prize, Yale University; the Highest Bursary Award in 2009 and 2010, Irish Arts Council; and the Gerard Victory Composition Prize, Trinity College Dublin.

Performing Choirs



Erasmia Voukelatos is active as a pianist, conductor, arranger, and concert presenter. Her ethnic heritage and Kodály training has fueled a lifelong interest in multicultural arts, and she is a regular presenter on song and dance rituals of Greece and India. Since 2002 she has been accompanist and assistant director of Cantigas Women's Choir, and her arrangements of Greek folk songs are performed regularly by Greek and American choirs. An educator for over twenty-five years, Voukelatos is director of choral music at Far Brook School in New Jersey. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree in piano performance from the University of Western Ontario and Brooklyn College, respectively.

Ithaca College Treble Chorale



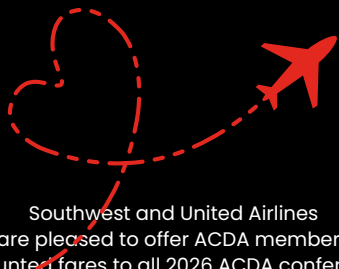
The Ithaca College Treble Chorale is a dynamic and inclusive ensemble dedicated to exploring and performing a diverse array of choral music for treble voices. Comprising undergraduate students from across the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance—as well as other academic disciplines—the chorus embraces a wide range of styles, cultures, and time periods. For over thirty years under founding director Janet Galván, and now under the direction of Sean Linfors, the ensemble has been committed to artistic excellence and social engagement, often premiering new works and collaborating with composers, ensembles, and guest artists.



Sean Linfors is an associate professor of music education at Ithaca College, where he directs ensembles and has taught choral methods, choral conducting, and choral literature. He received degrees from the University of Richmond and The Florida State University, and he taught public school in Florida and Virginia. Linfors is the artistic director of two community ensembles, the Syracuse Chorale and the Cayuga Vocal Ensemble. Ensembles under his direction have been featured at ACDA national and regional conferences. The Ithaca College Choir under his direction was awarded the 2023 American Prize in Choral Performance for larger collegiate programs. Recent performances have included Reena Esmail's *This Love Between Us*, Margaret Bonds's *Credo*, and Carol Barnett's *Bluegrass Mass*.

ACDA 2026 REGION CONFERENCES

**Your Region Conference is closer than you think—
and now it's even more affordable!**



Southwest and United Airlines
are pleased to offer ACDA members
discounted fares to all 2026 ACDA conferences.



Details at
acda.org/2026-acda-conference-travel-discounts

Ledyard High School Chamber Choir



The Ledyard High School Chamber Choir is the premier choral ensemble at Ledyard High School. This auditioned group comprises twenty students in grades ten through twelve. The group has enjoyed success at national music competitions for many years. During the Covid-19 shutdown, the group produced dozens of virtual choir performances, which helped to raise over five thousand dollars for charities and scholarships. The LHS Chamber Choir has premiered several new choral compositions, including music from Rob Dietz, Tehilla Alphonso, Jared Gravely, Shawn Kirchner, Stacey Gibbs, and Jim Papoulis. The LHS Chamber Choir was a national finalist for the 2024 American Prize in Choral Performance.



Melanie Wade Cometa is the director of choral activities at Ledyard High School, her alma mater, where she conducts over 150 students in nine choirs. Her ensembles have performed as guest artists with CONCORRA, Voce, the Mystic River Chorale, the Shoreline Chorale, and as a featured choir at the 2017 CT-ACDA state conference. From March 2020 to June 2021, Cometa and the Ledyard choirs produced over fifty virtual ensemble projects, including three world premieres and a feature-length virtual musical. Her work has been featured on *ChoirBuzz*, *The Choir Project*, and most recently at Carnegie Hall. Cometa is the president of Connecticut ACDA and is a regular clinician and guest conductor throughout the Northeast.

New Jersey Youth Choirs Coriste



The New Jersey Youth Chorus was founded in 1992 and is the auditioned choral program of Wharton Arts for students in grades three through twelve. Its premier high school women's ensemble, Coriste, has collaborated with leading ensembles like the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Canadian Brass, and VOCES8 Foundation's Lyyra, and has shared the stage with esteemed artists. They have performed at the White House, Super Bowl XLVIII, and in iconic venues such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Coriste has been featured at regional and national music educator conferences, and through the choir's Kids for Kids initiative, the ensemble uses music as a force for service.



Trish Joyce, founder and director of the New Jersey Youth Chorus and director of Coriste, holds a BM from Marywood College and an MM from Westminster Choir College and is certified in Kodály methodology. Joyce has taught in Pennsylvania and New Jersey schools, served as adjunct professor at Westminster Choir College and Rutgers University, and has worked as an organist and choirmaster in several local churches. She has led workshops, presented sessions, and adjudicated festivals for NJSMA, NJ-ACDA, and NJMEA, and has conducted the NJ all-state women's choir and central NJ junior high honors choir. Joyce served on the NJ-ACDA board as R&R chair for children's choirs and as president and co-chaired the 2016 ACDA National Children's Choirs Retreat.

Performing Choirs

North Penn High School Troubadours



The North Penn High School Troubadours (upper voices) are one of three ensembles at North Penn selected by audition. They rehearse for about ninety minutes each week and sing for a number of events in the Lansdale area, including the annual Ecumenical Thanksgiving service and Memorial Day ceremony. They have received superior ratings at recent Music in the Parks events. The Troubadours have performed at PA-ACDA (2016), PMEA (2016 and 2023), and NAFME Eastern Division (2017 and 2025).



Matthew Klenk is in his sixteenth year of teaching at North Penn High School. He is responsible for directing all of the NPHS choral ensembles, which include the 235-voice Mixed Curricular Chorus

and the extracurricular groups the Troubadours (upper-voice choir), Bards (lower-voice choir), and Chamber Singers. He is the NPHS building department chair for music and serves as the high school R&R chair for ACDA Pennsylvania. He recently was the guest conductor for the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Honor Choir. Klenk also serves as director of music ministries at Corpus Christi Church in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. He was named Teacher of the Year at North Penn High School and Outstanding Teacher in the North Penn School District.

Susquehanna University University Choir



The University Choir has been a cherished commodity of Susquehanna University for over one hundred years. The mission of the ensemble brings a combination of music excellence with the broader goal of sharing diverse choral music to a wide range of audiences. Known for their high level and engaging performances, the University Choir strives to balance excellence in choral singing with an ability to acknowledge our humanity through the choral art and engage with an ever-evolving world.



Amy Voorhees is the director of choral activities at Susquehanna University and holds the Cyril M. Stretansky Professorship in Choral Music. Voorhees conducts the University Choir and Chamber Singers and teaches courses in choral conducting.

Under her direction, Susquehanna University Choir appeared at Eastern ACDA in 2022 and was a finalist for the 2023 American Prize in Choral Performance. They recently performed at the 2025 PMEA Conference. A graduate of Michigan State University and a Doctoral University Distinguished Fellow, she previously taught public school and served as the director of choral activities at Waukeg High School, where the A Cappella Choir performed at the 2015 ACDA National Conference. Voorhees is in demand as a clinician and has conducted honor choirs and all-state choirs across the country.

University of Maryland Chamber Singers



The University of Maryland Chamber Singers have achieved international renown with acclaimed performances of the most challenging repertoire ranging from the sixteenth through the twenty-first centuries. In 2011 they won the Premier Prix for Mixed Choirs and the Prix Ronsard for their performance of Renaissance music at the 40th Florilège Vocal de Tours in France. They also performed by invitation at the Tenth World Symposium on Choral Music in Seoul, South Korea (2014). The UMD Chamber Singers collaborate frequently with the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in major works such as Bach's *Mass in B minor*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. In addition, the ensemble has worked with internationally renowned conductors.



Jason Max Ferdinand is an inspirational musician, leader, and teaching mentor whose gifts are sought after by choirs and orchestras worldwide. Since 2022 he has served as the director of choral activities

at the University of Maryland, having spent the preceding fourteen years as professor at Oakwood University, conducting the renowned Aeolians of Oakwood University. He is the founding artistic director of the Jason Max Ferdinand Singers. In 2023 they performed at the ACDA National Conference in Cincinnati, which included a surprise appearance from Jacob Collier. This followed their appearance on *Saturday Night Live* with Coldplay and Jacob Collier. They made their debut at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, London, in 2024. His GIA publications include *Teaching with Heart: Tools for Addressing Societal Challenges Through Music* and the *Jason Max Ferdinand Choral Series*.

Walter Johnson High School Madrigals



Walter Johnson High School is located in Bethesda, MD, about twenty miles north of Washington DC. The Walter Johnson Madrigals have consistently received superior ratings at county and state festivals, and have performed at the MMEA state conference, the Strathmore in Bethesda, the governor's mansion in Annapolis, the NEA foundation gala, and the opening of the National Museum of African American History & Culture in DC. Singers from Walter Johnson have also appeared on TNT's program "Christmas in Washington."



Kelly Butler grew up in La Crosse, WI. She received her BME from St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, and sang in the St. Olaf Choir under the direction of Dr. Anton Armstrong. Upon moving

to Maryland, Butler completed a master's of choral conducting at the University of Maryland and sang in the Chamber Choir under the direction of Dr. Edward Maclary. She has been teaching music at Walter Johnson since 2012 and has taught in Montgomery County Public Schools since 2008. She has been the vocal director for Walter Johnson's musicals, including *Sweeney Todd*, *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Into the Woods*, and *Aida*. She and her husband have three daughters and coach a summer swim team in Silver Spring, MD.

Performing Choirs

Yale University Yale Camerata



Yale Camerata is a community ensemble that performs a varied spectrum of sacred and non-sacred choral literature and programs larger choral work with orchestra several times a year. Composed of a diverse group of singers, the ensemble includes as part of its membership both graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and talented singers from the surrounding community. The ensemble has approximately eighty singers and maintains a special commitment to performing diverse choral music from the BIPOC community.



Felicia Barber is an associate professor, adjunct of choral conducting, and conductor of the Yale Camerata at Yale University. She teaches graduate-level choral conducting and is developing a new initiative designed to prepare Yale students to work in both school and church settings. Her research includes effective teaching strategies, fostering classroom diversity in choral curricula, and the linguistic performance practice of African American spirituals. Her book, *A New Perspective for the Use of Dialect in African American Spirituals: History, Context, and Linguistics*, was released in 2021. She is a guest conductor for all-state festivals and has conducted at the Eastern ACDA Region Conference in 2024 and Carnegie Hall Festival in 2025. Barber holds a BM in voice from ORU, an MME from MU, and a PhD in choral music education and choral conducting from FSU.

Interest Sessions

A Cappella 101: No Experience Necessary

This interactive session empowers music educators to envision a more inclusive and creative future for choral music through contemporary a cappella. Even with minimal experience, educators can launch an a cappella group that builds student leadership, strengthens musicianship, and reaches singers who may not connect with traditional ensembles. Participants will sing, explore vocal percussion, and leave with tools for selecting repertoire, structuring rehearsals, and advocating for program support. No experience necessary—just a willingness to try something new.



Marci Major is a visionary leader, conductor, and educator who serves as faculty associate to the graduate school dean and chair of music education and music therapy at West Chester University. With over twenty years in higher education, she leads strategic initiatives that advance social and economic mobility through music education. Her work reimagines how collegiate music programs connect with K–12 schools and communities—creating innovative curricula, building sustainable partnerships, and expanding access to real-world teaching experiences. An active choral conductor and clinician, she remains grounded in the artistry and community that make choral music transformative. Major holds degrees from West

Chester University, Michigan State University, and The Ohio State University.



Spencer Camacho is a multifaceted educator, musician, and researcher whose work spans music technology, leadership, and creative collaboration. A first-generation college graduate, Camacho is currently pursuing a PhD in leadership with a focus on organizational development at the University of Southern Maine. He holds degrees in music education and music technology from West Chester University and NYU, with additional studies in music production and civic leadership. He brings a unique lens to music education rooted in identity, access, and innovation. As a proud member of the LGBTQ+ and Colombian communities, his work centers on empowering others through inclusive artistry and service-based leadership. He has produced music for university campaigns, com-

posed original works for film, and remains an active performer and clinician.

A Cappella Pop Choral Reading Session for Everyone!

Come join us to explore pop a cappella repertoire arranged with choir in mind—no soloists or vocal percussion! These pieces can be performed by any size ensemble, from one on a part to a choir of one hundred plus. We'll do a deep dive into some contemporary repertoire of arrangers, voice parts, and accessibility levels. Pop music is a great tool to “bring in” students who may not have otherwise been interested in choir, and this session will provide responsive strategies to explore multiple contemporary genres and attract new students to your program.



Summer at Westminster

1- and 2-week intensive programs for high school students, young artists, and professionals offered by Westminster Choir College.



RIDER
UNIVERSITY

Adult Programs:

- » CoOPERative
- » Conducting Intensive
- » Choral Festival
- » Voice Pedagogy Institute
- » Special Topics in Choral Pedagogy

High School Programs:

- » Solo Pianist Week
- » Vocal Institute
- » Organ Institute
- » Game Design Academy
- » Solo Vocal Artist



RIDER.EDU/SUMMERARTS

Interest Sessions



Rebecca Saltzman is the choral director at Simsbury High School, where she directs five curricular ensembles, supervises three a cappella groups, and directs the extracurricular Gertrude Banks Gospel Choir. She also serves as the head of the Simsbury High School Equity Council and is the advisor to the school's GSA. Additionally, Saltzman is an adjunct faculty member at the Hartt School, where she teaches their course on school choral programs and supervises the pre-service educator secondary choral teaching lab experience. Saltzman holds an MME from The Florida State University and a BME from Ithaca College. She is a frequent festival adjudicator, festival conductor, and conference presenter in the tristate area. She is currently serving as the Eastern ACDA Region vocal jazz and a cappella R&R chair.



Ben Bram (he/him) is a two-time Grammy and Emmy Award-winning vocal arranger, producer, engineer, and educator based in Brooklyn, NY. As a cocreator of the renowned pop a cappella group Pentatonix, R&B outfit Citizen Queen, kids' music brand Acapop! KIDS, and the summer vocal program A Cappella Academy, Bram has been a driving force in the world of contemporary vocal music. In the realm of film and TV, he has contributed to NBC's *The Sing-Off*, *Glee* and the *Pitch Perfect* films, and his arrangements can be heard in commercials for Super Bowl LVII, Honda, Covergirl, and Lifetime. He is the founder and artistic director of the New York Vocal Collective, a brand-new pop/jazz/R&B choir bringing together top-tier vocalists from various careers and backgrounds in New York City.

Accessible to Advanced: High School SATB Reading Session

Are you looking for meaningful repertoire selections for your high school program? Whether your choir is at the beginner level or preparing for competition, this

reading session will aim to address repertoire needs for a wide variety of skill levels. With a focus on living composers, our hope is that all choral conductors who conduct a high school SATB ensemble can take away pieces that will be successful with their students.



Matthew Chi Lee (he/him) serves as director of choirs at John P. Stevens High School in Edison, New Jersey. The choirs at JPSHS have been featured at regional and national ACDA conferences. His conducting credits include the central Jersey HS Treble Choir, Morris Area Honor Choir, Sussex County Honor Chorus, and the Connecticut Eastern Region HS Festival. He is proud to serve on the Eastern ACDA Region's Diversity Initiatives Committee as well as the NJMEA Choral Procedures Board. Lee holds a BME from Northwestern University and an MM from The Florida State University.



Moll Brown is the choir director at Lewiston High School in Lewiston, Maine. He directs the Chorus, a cappella ensemble "Blue Notes," and the Chamber Choir, which was recently awarded a superior rating at the Maine ACDA adjudicated festival. Brown is the artistic and music director for Lewiston High School's musical theater program and the music director for musical theater at Lewiston Middle School. Outside of teaching, they also serve as music director for shows with local community theater organizations. Brown holds a BME from Connecticut College and an MME from the University of Bridgeport.

All Mixed Up: Musical Theatre Pedagogy for the Choral Director

This session will demystify the multitude of sounds students make when singing musical theater repertoire and encourage educators to use musical theater sing-

ing as a vehicle for vocal exploration and development. Through critical listening, making the sounds, and applying the sounds, participants will solidify their understanding of physiological registration (head and chest), acoustic vocal quality (open, closed, loft), and how to craft group warm-ups they can take into classroom teaching and musical direction.



Jared Trudeau is a voice teacher based in NYC and cofounder of BroadwayVox, a musical theatre education company aimed at changing education for performers and teachers. He holds a master's in voice pedagogy for musical theatre from Penn State and degrees in music and psychology from Tufts University. Trudeau's research focuses on the acoustics and physiology of how elite professionals sing across styles. He has been published in the *Journal of Voice* and presents nationwide on vocal registration, anatomy, and teacher mentorship. His NYC studio includes Grammy- and Tony-nominated clients performing on Broadway, national tours, and beyond.



Joey Harrell is an educator, researcher, and voice clinician with a PhD in music education from Penn State, specializing in musical theatre voice pedagogy. His research explores speech-based singing for voice building and habilitation as well as how novice teachers learn to teach. A sought-after guest lecturer, Harrell presents nationally on functional anatomy for breathing, registration, and practical strategies for fostering vocal exploration in both private and group settings. Based in NYC, he works with professional performers on Broadway, national tours, TV/film, and in top BFA programs. He is cofounder of BroadwayVox, which offers innovative resources for teachers and singers.

Artistry in Adolescence: Nurturing Young Singers to Become Independent Musicians Through Repertoire

Join Rollo Dilworth, Roger Emerson, and Karla McClain as we guide you through warm-ups and repertoire that will teach your students the skills they need to become expressive musicians with artistry. You can develop artistry through accessible music and attention to building skills while navigating the challenges of adolescence.



Roger Emerson is a professional composer/arranger and educator. He has spent over thirty years in the classroom at all levels from K-12 through college. His workshops on changing voice, middle school methods, and contemporary music are in constant demand. He has presented at numerous ACDA and state MEA conferences. His arrangements and compositions include the popular, "Shoshone Love Song," "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel," "Seasons of Love," and "Both Sides Now."



Karla McClain (she/her) is a national board-certified teacher in early adolescent/young adulthood music in her twenty-seventh year of teaching. Currently she teaches choir and is the Music Department facilitator at Illing Middle School in Manchester, CT. She served as conductor for the RI All-State Jr. High Mixed Choir in 2023, and the CMEA Southern Region Treble Choir in 2020. She has served CT-ACDA on the Diversity Initiatives Committee and is currently the middle school R&R chair for Eastern ACDA Region. As a performer, she sings with the South Church Chancel Choir in New Britain and is a member of the professional choir CONCORRA. McClain received her BME from Ohio Wesleyan University and her MME from Central Connecticut State University.

Rollo Dilworth will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 171.

Interest Sessions

Bach for Our Time

In a time when we are all grappling with the many crosscurrents in public life, turning to an anchoring figure like J. S. Bach can provide a moment of respite and a chance to refresh ourselves in the ongoing musical stream that is our choral heritage. Both presenters have extensive experience with Bach's music, while at the same time being strong advocates for current cultural and musical trends. Responding to our twenty-first-century landscape can mean pairing Bach with new works from different traditions; sometimes this can mean focusing directly on this unique figure in music history. In this session, we will present a list of Bach's works that are far more accessible to the average choir—of any age, in any setting—than might be imagined. We will sing through pieces by Bach as well as contemporary works that use Bach as a reference point.



Chris Shepard launched The Complete Bach in 2024, a 132-concert project to present live performances of all of J. S. Bach's works for the first time. Shepard is a conductor and music director of CON-CORA (CT's oldest professional choir), the Worcester Chorus, and Con Brio Choral Society. He has been the steward of two longstanding annual Handel's *Messiah* traditions: Worcester Chorus's annual performance at Mechanics Hall; and from 2015 to 2023 he conducted annual performances at Carnegie Hall by the Masterwork Chorus. He holds degrees from the Hartt School, the Yale School of Music, and the University of Sydney, where his PhD thesis on the performance history of the *B Minor Mass* received ACDA's 2012 Julius Herford Prize.



Christopher Jackson is the artistic director and conductor of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, America's oldest Bach choir, founded in 1898. He has worked for eighteen years as a conductor, educator, professional singer, and scholar. He was nominated as a finalist for the American Prize in Virtual Performance for his work with the Muhlenberg College choirs

during the Covid-19 pandemic. Jackson remains an active professional choral singer and soloist, with focuses in the Baroque, Renaissance, and modern eras. He has appeared on three Grammy-nominated albums (Best Choral Performance) and also serves as Skylark Vocal Ensemble's director of education, where he focuses on how to make Baroque and modern compositions more accessible to large ensembles.

Beyond the Years: The Vast Legacy of Florence Price

Led by Dr. Stephen Spinelli (Boston Conservatory) and Prof. Tamara Acosta (Ithaca College), with guest expert Brenda Ulrich, JD, this session explores Florence Price's vocal music as a lens into autobiography, race, and authorship. Participants will engage with rare manuscripts, critical editions, and recordings—including selections from ONEcomposer's Grammy-winning album. A primer on copyright law will address how systemic barriers shaped Price's exclusion and what her entry into the public domain means for today's performers and educators. Attendees will receive a curated guide to current research, scores, and archival holdings. More than a historical correction, this session presents a path forward—toward a choral future that is inclusive, representative, and resonant.



Stephen Spinelli is director of choral studies at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee and music director of the Back Bay Chorale. Formerly assistant director of choral programs at Cornell, he has taught at several universities and performed with leading vocal ensembles, including The Crossing and Roomful of Teeth. He is cofounder of ONEcomposer, a nonprofit dedicated to celebrating historically excluded musical voices. ONEcomposer's 2024 debut album, *Beyond the Years: Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*, won the 2025 Grammy for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. Spinelli curated, edited, and coproduced the project based on archival research. A former Beinecke

Fellow at Yale and current Ecker Fellow in Boston, his research explores music, race, and “othering” in historical narratives.



Tamara Acosta, the soprano, is a co-founder of ONEcomposer and an assistant professor of voice at Ithaca College and the former interim director of voice studies at Cornell University. She has performed with Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Santa Fe Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis, where she appeared in the world premiere of Judith Weir’s *The Vanishing Bridegroom*. She holds degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music (BM) and the New England Conservatory (MM).

Circling Up: Collaborative Vocal Improvisation for Choirs

Collaborative vocal improvisation provides a space for choral singers to develop creativity and deepen community within the ensemble. Drawing on the Circle Singing practices of Bobby McFerrin and Deep Listening philosophy of Pauline Oliveros, this session invites participants to engage in spontaneous group singing and envision how to incorporate this inclusive practice in their own choral context. Rooted in the aural-oral tradition, these practices invite directors to coconstruct collaborative music alongside choir members, fostering a more equitable community through sound. Participants will leave with a rich collection of tools, exercises, and resources to guide collaborative vocal improvisation with their own ensembles.



Erica Breitbarth is a doctoral fellow in music education at Temple University with a focus in urban education policy. She holds degrees in music education from the Wheaton Conservatory of Music (BMEd) and Northwestern University (MMEd). She served for fourteen years as a high school choir teacher, musical theater director, and Music Department chair at an international baccalaureate public school. Breitbarth was the cofounder and president of the Milwau-

kee MEA, which recently fought to restore one hundred music teacher positions in the Milwaukee public schools. She served as the diversity initiatives liaison for the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association and was named the WCDA Outstanding Young Choral Director (2018). She was a Grammy Music Educator finalist (2017) and currently serves as the Presser Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellow.

Conducting with Style: Envisioning Gesture as Leadership

We often use our physical conducting gesture to guide the ensemble and communicate a wide range of musical ideas. Conducting gesture is one of our most powerful leadership and rehearsal tools in ensembles. Using the repertoire as our guide, this interactive session will offer participants a variety of strategies and techniques to enhance musical expressivity within the ensemble. This workshop will provide opportunities to observe, explore, and experience conducting gestures and techniques that enrich the choral experience.



Jennifer Sengin is the Raymond R. Neev-el/Missouri Professor of Choral Music and director of choral studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where she leads the graduate choral conducting program and conducts the flagship ensemble, Conservatory Singers, and the Choral Union. In addition to ensembles, Sengin teaches graduate choral conducting and choral literature. An active guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and presenter, Sengin has conducted honor choirs throughout the country. Future engagements include guest conducting at Carnegie Hall, and all-state and honor choirs in Florida, New York, California, Mississippi, and Missouri. She has presented sessions and served as a panelist at international, national, regional, and state conferences. She sings in the award-winning professional ensemble mirabai.

Interest Sessions

Design Challenge: Arranging Under Pressure

In this fast-paced, hands-on session, participants will be split into teams and given just two things: a well-known song and a pitch pipe. No scores, just voices, ears, and imagination! After a brief primer on a cappella arranging techniques and performance style, each group will collaborate to create an arrangement on the spot using intuition, vocal experimentation, and teamwork. The presenter will hop from one group to another to provide insights. Afterwards, we will all come together and share the performances in a mini final concert! The goal? To foster musical instincts, build collaboration skills, and expand a cappella arranging vocabulary.



Shams Ahmed is an Emmy Award-winning producer, music director, and arranger based in Los Angeles. A graduate of Northeastern University, where he directed The Nor'easters, Ahmed has built a career at the intersection of choral tradition, popular music, and industry innovation. He made history as the first Bangladeshi American to win an Emmy Award for Music Direction for *Ragged Old Flag: An American Chorus* at Super Bowl LVII. He is the creator of Acapop!, a groundbreaking music brand for children that brought contemporary a cappella to primetime audiences on *America's Got Talent* and *The Kelly Clarkson Show*. His vocal production work spans international collaborations, including *Invincible*, a bold English/Hindi crossover with Shreya Ghoshal and Pentatonix.

Easy Korean Diction: Inclusive Access to Korean Choral Works

This is an interest session that demystifies Hangul for choirs and presents a singer-friendly pronunciation system that bypasses confusing romanizations, lets you and your ensemble master Korean vowels and con-

sonants in minutes, and frees you to program vibrant Korean repertoire. Leave with a quick-reference guide, proven rehearsal tips, and renewed confidence to include diverse voices on your stage.



Sinhaeng Lee, assistant professor of music and director of choral programs at Colgate University, conducts the University Chorus and Chamber Singers, and teaches music history. Founder/artistic director of Vox Amicus in Seoul, he champions Korean and Western repertoire and has led choirs across North America, Europe, and Asia. His DMA (Illinois), MM (Westminster), and BM (Yonsei) underpin a research focus on Korean diction, captured in his dissertation "The Choral Music of Chong Jong Yeoul." Lee has won the Korean Federation for the Choral Music conducting competition, placed at MidAmerica's international conducting competition, and will debut at Carnegie Hall in 2026. A versatile bass-baritone and keyboardist, he is invited regularly for masterclasses, ACDA/NCCO clinics, and guest conductor engagements.

Envision a World Without Grades: Solving the Conundrum

This session is for the choral music educator who is ready to examine their grading practices to find areas of improvement that allow for greater access, fosters leadership, elevates diverse voices, ensures equity, and ultimately makes for a healthier and more creative music-making space. Led by a current public school music educator, this will be an exploration of the history of grading practices and the reality of pressures on teachers. Attendees will leave with a new lens from which to view their own assessment and feedback practices. As music educators, we should be on the forefront of this movement that aims to serve every child's health and well-being while providing an environment where music making thrives without barriers. There is a better

way. Join us in a practical exploration of how to free yourself and your singers from the chains of standardization.



Doreen Fryling, EdD, is a thirty-year public school music educator. She teaches IB music and chorus in Rockville Centre, NY, and has taught K–5 general music and middle school chorus.

She teaches graduate courses in music education at Hofstra University in philosophy, research, and curriculum and instruction. Fryling is a founding member of the eVoco Voice Collective. In addition, she directs the MYO Nassau Concert Choir. She has a doctorate of education in learning and teaching from Hofstra University. She holds degrees from Susquehanna University and the University of Michigan. In 2015 she was recognized as a semifinalist for the Grammy Music Educator Award. Fryling is a past president of NY-ACDA. She shares her love of music making with her husband, David, and their two adult children.

Envisioning Auditions for a New Era— From “Next” to “Welcome”

We are in the midst of a long-overdue effort to increase diverse representation in choirs across the United States. Yet, there is an area in our field that continues to be overlooked: the audition process. How can we build on the progress we’ve made and work to increase diverse representation in our select, auditioned choirs? This session will examine frequently assessed audition criteria and propose adaptations for a more equitable audition process. Although auditions were never designed to be inherently inclusive, that doesn’t mean we can’t take steps to make them more equitable. Together, we can implement audition criteria that affirm, welcome, and celebrate the wide spectrum of musical aesthetics and lived experiences that our prospective musicians bring to the table and, ideally, to our choral ensembles.



Katy Green is the director of choral activities and assistant professor of music education at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. In this role, she conducts the Chamber Singers and Concert Choir,

teaches choral music education and conducting courses, and oversees the Choral Project: an after-school music program taught by undergraduate music education majors for K–12 musicians. Green’s research focuses on the cognitive, behavioral, and social impacts of poverty on learners and provides support strategies for music teachers in Title I schools. Currently she is engaged in scholarship aimed at adopting procedures to support and promote a broader array of musical aesthetics and reduce implicit bias within choral auditions. She earned her DMA in choral conducting from Michigan State University.

Envisioning Communities of Belonging and Growth

We envision a space where every member of your choir can thrive as both an individual and a collaborative musician. This session is designed to empower music educators with practical strategies for advocating program needs to stakeholders, creating meaningful individualized learning opportunities and ensemble experiences, and sharing that work with the community. We will explore the integration of: individualized student goals, interdisciplinary standards, student-centered repertoire selection, games that teach learning targets, meaningful leadership roles, recruitment and retention strategies, and tiered objectives within ensembles. Interactive discussions will foster the exchange of ideas and experiences among attendees. Participants will leave with access to tangible resources ready for immediate use.



Louise Carrozza is the choral director at Farmington High School in Farmington, CT. At FHS she directs five choral groups and teaches guitar, discovering the world through music, and a music cap-

Interest Sessions

stone course. She earned a BME from Western CT State University and an MM and MME from Teachers College, Columbia University. She is committed to delivering holistic and culturally responsive pedagogy through the art of choral music that is relevant to every child. She is currently serving as chair of the CMEA Northern Region high school mixed choir as well as the R&R chair for treble choir for CT-ACDA.



Rebekka Rosen is a dedicated choral educator and scholar with a passion for using music as a vehicle for creating a more connected world. Rosen is a vocal music teacher for Greenwich Public

Schools, where she strives to create a program culture that fosters respect, sets high expectations for growth, cultivates a love for the art form, and empowers student voice. She earned a BME from Susquehanna University and an MM and MME from Teachers College, Columbia University. Rosen most recently served as the choir coordinator for the CMEA Northern Region high school choirs and choir chair for the CMEA Western Region middle school festival.

Envisioning Every Voice: Inclusive Vocal Pedagogy

Choral conductors serve as both musical leaders and vocal educators. This session offers practical strategies to integrate vocal pedagogy into rehearsals, promoting healthy singing and inclusivity. Attendees will learn techniques to address vocal challenges and foster an environment where every singer's identity is respected and celebrated.



Frances Fonza is the director of choral activities at Southeastern Louisiana University, where she teaches conducting, choral methods, and conducts the Bella Voce, Concert Choir, and Gospel Choir. She earned a BME from the University of Missouri-Columbia and both a master's and doctorate in

music education/choral conducting from The Florida State University. Fonza has served on the faculties of the University of Central Arkansas and Stephen F. Austin State University. She also taught choral music at the middle and high school levels in Kentucky and at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington DC. Fonza is an active singer, clinician, adjudicator, and guest conductor for all-state, honor, public school, and church choirs.



Brittany Chanell Johnson is a dynamic performer, educator, and visionary rooted in a rich legacy of Black artistic excellence. Raised in Augusta, Georgia, she has graced stages from church sanctuaries to

global venues, with a mission to tell transformative stories through music. With degrees from Furman and The Florida State University, she has spent over twenty years shaping artists across genres and backgrounds. She is known for her personal vocal fingerprint method—an individualized, holistic approach to voice training that honors each artist's identity, sound, and story. Chanell Johnson is the founder of OnStage Performing Arts Collective and has held leadership roles at Howard University and Metropolitan AME Church. She currently serves on the faculty at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Envisioning Success and Inclusion for Changing Voice Ensembles

Working with singers during the voice change is one of the most daunting challenges of teaching adolescent-aged ensembles. The most important foundations of successfully guiding singers through this time lie in two categories: common vocal challenges and their physiological roots, and voicing and grouping ensembles for healthy pedagogical growth, success, and inclusion. The session will begin with attendees playing the role of pedagogue or diagnostician as they listen to audio samples of many common vocal challenges that changing voice singers face. With the presenter, attendees will assess the technical issues the singers experience and

determine their connections to the physiology of the voice change based on the research of leading changing voice pedagogues, Lynne Gackle, Bridgett Sweet, John Cooksey, and Joanne Rutkowski.



Kurtis Heinrich is the choir director at Pattonville Heights Middle School and the director of Cantate Youth Choir at Manchester UMC in St. Louis, MO. He has more than a decade of experience working with adolescent singers in both the studio and classroom. This experience, paired with the research he completed in his master's work at Webster University, have made him an emerging expert in working with the changing voice. He holds degrees from Lindenwood University in vocal performance and vocal music with a minor in education and an MM in choral conducting from Webster University.

Everyday Social Change: The Importance of Daily Action

ACDA's vision statement positions choral musicians as having the potential to "create powerful artistic experiences" and become "advocates for cultural and educational change" with the hope that such practices "might transform people's lives." In light of this vision, ACDA has developed numerous ways in which the organization and its members can pursue equity, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion through choral music. In this session, we offer practical starting points for enacting everyday social change, asking: (1) What could reflective and reflexive practice look like in choral music and choral music education?, (2) What could community look like in choral spaces?, and (3) What could working with/for the broader community look like?

Get more attached to your music.

From their sturdy rear hand strap to their heavy-duty stitching and solid metal corner protectors, our folders have been the choice of close to a million choir singers, instrumentalists and directors since 1993. How about you?



MUSICFOLDER.com
The world's best music folders. Since 1993.

www.musicfolder.com • Toll-free (USA and Canada): 1.877.246.7253 • sales@musicfolder.com

Interest Sessions



Cara Bernard is associate professor of music education at the University of Connecticut. She is immediate past president of CT-ACDA. Bernard has conducted, performed, and prepared choruses for performances at some of the most prestigious venues throughout the Northeast. She was the director and conductor of the Count Me In program at Carnegie Hall, where she created a choral curriculum for beginning-level middle school music students. Additionally, she worked with the Young People's Chorus of New York City in their school choral program, bringing a choral experience to over one thousand children throughout the city.



Kelly Bylica serves as assistant professor of music education at Boston University, where she works with both undergraduate and graduate students. Originally from Chicago, Bylica taught general and choral music throughout the Midwest and has also served on the teaching faculty of several community-based youth music programs. Her research agenda is focused on curriculum and policy, critical pedagogy, and middle school musical experiences. She has presented on these and other topics at regional, national, and international conferences. She has also published chapters in several edited volumes as well as articles in publications such as *Arts Education Policy Review*, *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, *Music Education Research*, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, *Journal for Popular Music Education*, and *British Journal of Music Education*.

Every Voice Belongs: Building a Low-Barrier Choral Festival

Honors choral festivals can be life changing, but access often remains out of reach for students from small or under-resourced programs. This session shares the creation of a new, low-barrier choral festival designed to reimagine participation and make choral music

more inclusive and accessible. Led by a former high school teacher now in higher education, the session explores a model grounded in equity, community, and artistic collaboration. With no audition or fee and full material support provided, entire school choirs and their teachers join in a one-day, transformative singing experience. Learn about the planning, repertoire, and outcomes from the first two years, including powerful student connections and teacher feedback. Leave with adaptable tools and inspiration to create similar programs that remove barriers and provide a space for every voice.



Rebecca DeWan is an assistant professor of choral music education at the University of Maine, where she teaches undergraduate courses in music education and conducts the Collegiate Chorale. With fourteen years of experience in the K–12 classroom, DeWan's research focuses on trauma-informed, equity-centered teaching and learning. She holds a PhD in music education from Michigan State University. In addition to her academic role, she serves as the music director for the Acadia Choral Society in Maine and conducts honors festivals for elementary and secondary students. Passionate about building community through music, she is dedicated to creating accessible, low-barrier musical opportunities for all.

From Past to Future: Amplifying Historical Women's Voices

This session invites conductor-teachers to envision new possibilities for their choirs by exploring under-performed repertoire: the music of cloistered women composers from seventeenth-century Italy. Composers like Raffaella Aleotti, Isabella Leonarda, Sulpitia Cesis, and Chiara Margarita Cozzolani created expressive, accessible works for voices similar to those in today's treble choirs. Participants will discover the historical background, composer profiles, and a vast repertoire all with available modern editions. Alongside musical

selections, the presenter will share stories about these composers' lives, which offer rich connections for students and classroom discussion. This session invites conductor-teachers to explore music that combines rigorous vocal writing with compelling history—ideal for building vocal technique, musical independence, and cultural understanding in treble ensembles.



Meredith Bowen is an assistant professor of choral music at Michigan State University, where she teaches graduate choral literature, graduate and undergraduate conducting, and conducts the auditioned treble ensemble, Mosaic. Bowen works to expand the canon and amplify marginalized voices through publishing historical editions and performing music by women. Her commitment to inclusive programming and pedagogy inspires student engagement and artistic growth. She enjoys an active guest conducting schedule, edits and restores historical choral music, and sings in mirabai. Boosey & Hawkes and MusicSpoke publish her music editions by historical women. Bowen holds a BME from West Chester University, and an MM and DMA in choral conducting from Michigan State University.

From Tones to Tunes: Performance Practice of Cantonese Choral Music

Cantonese is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, yet choral music in this language remains significantly underrepresented. This session invites participants to explore the richness of Cantonese choral music, offering tools for conductors and singers to confidently approach the language. Attendees will gain insight into Cantonese phonetics, tones, and Romanization while developing practical strategies for teaching and singing in a tonal language. A curated catalogue of contemporary Cantonese choral works will be shared, providing accessible entry points for culturally inclusive programming. The session culminates in a collective reading of a short piece, allowing participants to apply learned techniques in real time. No prior Cantonese knowledge required.



Jeffrey Chan is a Hong Kong-born conductor, scholar, and educator whose work has spanned Europe, North America, and Asia. He is currently pursuing a DMA in choral conducting at McGill University, studying with Jean-Sébastien Vallée as a recipient of the Graduate Excellence Fellowship. At McGill, he also teaches conducting and directs the University Chorus. His research focuses on the French Requiem tradition and Asian choral music.

Game On! Rehearsal Games to Cultivate Agency and Independence

In an ideal rehearsal atmosphere, the conductor and choir equally share responsibility and investment. This session features imaginative and adaptable activities to increase motivation and focus within choral rehearsals. Influenced by research in learning psychology and game-based learning, these responsibility-centered games specifically target accountability, memorization and retention strategies, and informal assessment of concept comprehension. This approach transforms traditional musical content into unconventional modalities that are familiar and enticing to our students: bingo boards, memory relay races, riddles, etc. Attendees will learn how to customize these activities and game templates to suit their own programs. Packaging the activities as games mitigates classroom anxiety, improves engagement, and enables students to meet rigorous standards of comprehension and performance.

Kimberly Dunn Adams will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 14.



Margaret Winchell is the director of choral activities and assistant professor of music at Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts, where she conducts Chamber Singers and Concordia and teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in choral conducting and literature. Winchell has com-

Interest Sessions

pleted coursework for a DMA in choral conducting at Yale University and holds degrees from Western Michigan University and Wheaton College (IL). Before her graduate studies, Winchell taught high school in Chicagoland and worked as a teaching artist at the Goodman Theatre. She enjoys presenting and guest conducting for clinics, workshops, and honor choirs across the country.

Good Treble:

Envisioning a Choral World Beyond Hierarchy

In the realm of choral music, long-standing hierarchies among ensemble types have influenced our perceptions and practices, particularly regarding treble, mixed, and tenor-bass choirs. This session invites us to visualize a choral landscape where every voice has a place and treble ensembles are embraced as equal contributors to the choral tradition. In this presentation, we aim to uncover historical biases related to treble choirs, acknowledge both the growth and challenges remaining in contemporary treble ensembles, and provide suggestions for choral directors to support their treble singers. By examining history, addressing current challenges, and envisioning future aspirations, we advocate for meaningful changes that will uplift all voices for generations to come.



J. Christine Linschoten has worked as a conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and collaborative pianist across the United States. She serves as the associate director of choral activities at Texas State

University, where she conducts the Treble Choir and University Singers. She taught chorus in Florida and Louisiana public schools for nine years. While in Florida, her choirs performed at state, regional, and national conferences. Linschoten holds degrees from Centenary College of Louisiana, Michigan State University, and the University of North Texas.



Julianna LoBiondo is assistant professor of choral music education and associate director of choral activities at the University of New Mexico. She earned degrees from the University of North Texas, Ithaca College, and The College of New Jersey. Her research areas include disability critical studies, fat studies, and music teacher education. Her research can be found in the *Journal of Music Teacher Education* and *Visions of Research in Music Education*.

Love City Sings!

Philly Youth Learning Songs in the Aural-Oral Tradition

This session will explore Love City Sings: a free, inclusive, participatory day of singing that brings together two hundred youth in Philadelphia to learn songs in the aural-oral tradition from community experts. All are welcome to “come as they are” regardless of choral experience to “be” in the aural-oral tradition with their peers. Unlike typical high school choral festivals where singers (and their instructors) prepare music in advance, singers learn music in the aural-oral tradition to honor the tradition as a cultural experience and rich way of teaching and learning music. In this session, participants will explore and experience how the aural-oral tradition is an accessible framework for teaching choral music and how it has particular relevance for emerging choral programs in city schools. We will learn a composition for the event by Norma Jean Hughes called, “I am Enough.”



Whitney Covalle is a singer, researcher, and choral music educator. Her research focuses on urban music education, the aural-oral tradition, and the intersection of race and teaching music. She is assistant professor of music education at Montclair State University and is the conductor of a free youth choir in Philadelphia. As an active clinician, Covalle leads participatory singing events throughout the region, most

notably Love City Sings. Her research is published in the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*. Previously she was a choir director in public schools and community settings for seventeen years, primarily in Chicago at Jones College Prep High School (Chicago Public Schools) and Uniting Voices Chicago (formerly Chicago Children's Choir.)

Music in Worship Reading Session

Join an inspiring reading session with celebrated composer and songwriter Shawn Kirchner. From the piano, he'll lead an exploration of original sacred music for congregation and choir: simple songs for prayer/worship and the seasons of the church year, choral introits and anthems in many styles, and excerpts from larger works *Songs of Ascent*, *Princeton Motets*, and *The Light of Hope Returning*. Come and discover new, immediately usable material for your own church settings and concerts—or just come for an hour of uplift and spiritual renewal. Over the years he has written dozens of hymn settings and original anthems. Kirchner's most recent projects include new service music for communion liturgy at Princeton Chapel and a “bluegrass” mass setting for congregational use at Holy Innocents' Episcopal in Atlanta.



Shawn Kirchner is a composer/songwriter and singer/pianist whose choral works are sung throughout the world. He served as composer in residence for the LA Master Chorale from 2012 to 2015 and has collaborated with many leading choirs, including Conspirare, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and the San Antonio Chamber Choir. Kirchner's choral works reflect his reverence for the inherited traditions of folksongs, carols, and hymns, and incorporate the rhythmic vitality, counterpoint, and improvisatory spirit of Baroque and bluegrass traditions. His original songwriting ranges in style from jazz/gospel to folk/bluegrass, the latter featured on his album *Meet Me on the Mountain*. As a classical choral singer, Kirchner has sung with the LA Master

Chorale for twenty-four seasons and with the LA Philharmonic. He has also sung on four dozen feature film soundtracks.

Progress & Pushback: LGBTQ Inclusion in Divisive Times

This session explores LGBTQ+ inclusion in choral music education amid increasing political polarization, censorship, and anti-“woke” rhetoric. Participants will examine the challenges of restrictive policies and cultural pushback while learning strategies to build inclusive, affirming classrooms. Topics include integrating LGBTQ+ content into curriculum, addressing backlash from parents and administrators, navigating tough conversations, and developing resilient, values-driven responses. The session emphasizes the power of educator allyship and collective advocacy, reinforcing that inclusive education strengthens all students and the school community as a whole.



Nicholas McBride (he/him) is associate professor and coordinator of music education at The College of New Jersey. His research interests include LGBTQ+ and gender issues in music education, queer pedagogies and curricula, music teacher education, teacher evaluation, and empathic learning processes in arts education. McBride's scholarship appears in the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, *Music Education Research*, *Visions of Research in Music Education*, and the *Music Educators Journal*. He is also co-editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Queer & Gender Research in Music Education*. McBride is founder and principal conductor of the “This is Me” National Choral Festival for LGBTQ+ youth and allies at Lincoln Center and a human rights campaign “Welcoming Schools” national facilitator.



William Sauerland (he/they) is an assistant professor of music and director of choral studies at Purdue University, Fort Wayne. Sauerland is the author of the

Interest Sessions

2022 Rowman & Littlefield book *Queering Vocal Pedagogy: A Handbook for Teaching Trans and Genderqueer Singers and Fostering Gender-affirming Spaces* and numerous articles, including “Sound Teaching: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in Choir” (*Choral Journal*, 2021). As a choral and voice teacher, they have served on the faculties of San Francisco State University, Chabot College, Lick-Wilmerding High School, and the Pacific Boy-choir. Sauerland holds degrees from Miami University, the Royal College of Music, and Columbia University.

Reclaiming Repertoire: Programming with Power, Passion, and Purpose!

Repertoire is more than music—it’s a powerful tool for inclusion, equity, and human connection. This panel brings together four choral educators from diverse settings to explore how intentional programming can break down barriers, elevate underrepresented voices, and reflect every singer’s identity. Topics include selecting pedagogically strong, emotionally resonant, and culturally relevant works; discovering new music; and crafting concerts with purpose and impact. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for creating meaningful, artistically rich programs that center students and advance a collective vision of choral singing as an essential, inclusive force in everyday life.



Edryn J. Coleman teaches choir and piano at Oakland Mills High School in Columbia, MD, and has taught music at all levels—elementary through college. His wide-ranging experience fuels his commitment to accessible, high-quality music education for all students. He is an active guest conductor, adjudicator, and lecturer; his choirs have performed at state and national conferences, including an insight session at the 2023 ACDA National Conference. He currently serves as membership chair for Eastern ACDA Region and is past president of the Maryland Choral Educators Association. Coleman holds degrees from Stillman Col-

lege (BA), The Florida State University (MME), and Shenandoah University (DMA).



Ocie S. Banks is director of choirs and voice at Thomas G. Pullen K–8 Creative & Performing Arts School in Prince George’s County, MD, where he is also an alumnus. His choirs consistently earn superior ratings, and he leads curriculum development for middle school chorus and voice. He recently conducted the PGCPSS all-county honors chorus. Banks holds degrees from George Mason University (BM) and Messiah University (MM, CAGS). He serves as president of Maryland/DC-ACDA, member-at-large for MCEA, and Eastern Region representative on NAfME’s Council for Choral Education. He is also CEO of OSB Music, LLC, and an active clinician and advocate for equity and excellence in choral music.



Khyle Wooten (he/they) is director of choral activities and assistant professor of music performance at Ithaca College. A Philadelphia native, Wooten is a conductor, educator, composer, and researcher whose work centers on Lena McLin and extended choral works by Black women composers. He has presented nationally and published in *Choral Journal* (2023). Formerly associate director of choral activities at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, he also taught K–12 music in Philadelphia and Atlanta. Wooten has held church music roles with the UMC and the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. He was a fellow with the Future of Music Faculty Fellowship and ACDA/ASTA’s New Canon Project. He holds degrees from Lincoln University (BS), Georgia State University (MM), and The Florida State University.



Gyasi J. Blanton, a New Jersey native, is a dynamic conductor, educator, and Tommy Tune Award-winning music director (*Young Frankenstein*). He currently serves as assistant director of choirs at Stratford High School in Houston, TX, where his ensembles consistently earn UIL sweepstakes. Passionate

about developing young voices, Blanton selects diverse repertoire to enrich student growth and expression. He previously served as artistic director of the New Jersey Youth Chorus's Coro Vivo, leading performances at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Madison Square Garden. He has guest conducted the ILMEA District 1 Honor Choir and presented at NJMEA, TCDA, SWACDA, and TMEA. He holds degrees from Lincoln University (BS/BA) and The Florida State University (MME).

Rethinking the Sacred/Secular Dichotomy in Choral Music

Choral music has deep roots in religious traditions, especially within Judeo-Christian contexts, yet also thrives outside them. Over time, repertoire has been placed into "sacred" and "secular" categories, a binary that continues to shape programming. This divide can limit how choirs engage with music's spiritual aspects. In this session, participants will explore the history and effects of these labels and consider how choral singing can make room for diverse spiritual expressions and find common ground. With seven in ten adults in the United States identifying as spiritual in some way, choral singing remains a vital means to explore this aspect of the human experience. Attendees will examine inclusive programming strategies that transcend religious boundaries, align with ACDA's call to include a multiplicity of cultural traditions, and highlight music's potential to unite across worldviews.



Philip Silvey is professor of music teaching and learning at the Eastman School of Music, where he teaches the Treble Chorus, choral arranging, and other courses in music education. He has

served as clinician and adjudicator in numerous states and directed state honors choruses in Maryland, Virginia, New York, New Jersey, and Georgia. He has presented interest sessions at national, regional, and state ACDA and NAfME conferences. His writings appear in *Choral Journal*, *Journal of Research in Music Education*,

Music Educators Journal, and the *Bulletin for the Council for Research in Music Education*. His choral compositions and arrangements are published by Santa Barbara Music, Carl Fischer, Boosey & Hawkes, Hal Leonard, and ECS Publishing and have been performed by all-state and national honors choruses in the United States.

Something Old, Something New: Literature for Treble and Bass Clef Choirs

This reading session features tried-and-true favorites and exciting newer works for treble and bass clef ensembles. Attendees will explore music written for two-, three-, and four-part treble and bass clef voicings suitable for high school, collegiate, and community ensembles. The session includes a diverse selection of genres, styles, and difficulty levels with varied instrumental accompaniments.



Brandon Williams serves as associate professor and director of choral activities at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. In this role, he conducts the Rutgers Kirkpatrick Choir and Rutgers Glee Club while also leading the graduate choral conducting program. Williams holds degrees from Western Illinois University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Michigan State University. He regularly appears as a guest conductor, clinician, and presenter at festivals, conferences, and workshops throughout the United States and abroad. Williams curates The Brandon Williams Choral Series with Gentry Publications and a tenor-bass choral series with MusicSpoke. His own compositions and arrangements are published with Hal Leonard, Oxford University Press, G. Schirmer, Mark Foster, Colla Voce, MusicSpoke, and Morningstar Publications.



Kelly S. Rocchi has been the choral director at Nazareth Area High since 2006. A graduate of Penn State University, she has also earned a master's in vocal performance from West Chester University.

Interest Sessions

She is the director of the high school Concert Choir (non-auditioned “come-all” choir), Nightingales (select soprano/alto ensemble), Cantus (select SATB ensemble), and oversees two student-directed a cappella groups. She also teaches four levels of piano and one level of music theory at the high school. Nazareth Area School District was recognized as one of the best in the nation for music education by the NAMM Foundation for the past five years. Rocchi has served as the guest conductor for several choral festivals and was selected as the 2020–2021 Penn State School of Music Outstanding Music Education Alumni Award winner.

Songs That Tell the Story: A Reading Session for Elementary and Community Youth Choirs

Great repertoire fuels every thriving youth ensemble in classrooms and community settings alike. As singers grow in literacy and performance, the right music sparks both skill and imagination. This session explores eight to ten choral works for singers from elementary through high school. Each piece highlights storytelling through bravery, rhyme, adventure, or the deeper story of our shared humanity. Selections range from unison to mixed voicings, offering practical tools to inspire growth and connection. This session provides accessible yet rich repertoire that builds vocal technique, ensemble sound, and expressive artistry.



Emily Crowe Sobotko is a NYC-based choral conductor, educator, and arts leader. As the director of music programs for Uncommon Schools, she oversees fourteen K–12 music programs across

Brooklyn, New York, coaching teachers, developing curriculum, leading professional development, and guiding the strategic growth of music education across the network. She continues to sing with and is associate conductor of the Young New Yorkers’ Chorus Treble Ensemble. She holds a BME from Lawrence University and a master’s in teaching from Relay Graduate School

of Education, with certifications in both Kodály and Orff-Schulwerk pedagogy. She is the R&R chair for elementary school choirs for Eastern ACDA Region, the R&R liaison for NY-ACDA, and is on the board with NYC-AOSA.



Kenneth Griffith is the music director of Boston Children’s Chorus and artist faculty in choral conducting at the Osher School of Music at the University of Southern Maine. At BCC, he leads

artistic programs, coaches the conducting staff, leads school-based programming in Boston Public Schools, and conducts the flagship ensemble, Premier Choir, which was featured at the 2024 Eastern ACDA Region Conference. He regularly serves as an adjudicator, clinician, and conductor for regional and state choral festivals. He prepared a chorus and ensemble for Anthony Davis’s Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. He holds a BM from Capital University and an MM from Bard College.

Start with Joy: Power Warm-Ups Using Part-Songs and Rounds

A productive, focused rehearsal often begins with a quick sprint to joyful, successful singing—so why not start with a round or part-song? This session offers quick-to-learn songs you can bring directly to your ensemble. Participants will explore practical ways to use these pieces in warm-ups to promote part singing, refine intonation and solfège, and increase ensemble engagement. Once learned, these songs become tools for reinforcing vocal techniques like timbre, placement, dynamics, and articulation. Beginning rehearsal with accessible, meaningful music fosters focus, connection, and joy while setting the tone for a vibrant and effective rehearsal.

John J. Atorino will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 11.

The Superpower of the Introverted Conductor

Introverted conductors offer unique leadership gifts that can transform choral spaces into deeply inclusive, human-centered communities. This session explores how introversion is a superpower, aligning with inclusion values and envisioning a choral profession without being limited by a narrow view of leadership models. The Myers-Briggs Company reported in 2024 that nearly 57 percent of the population are introverted. Participants will gain strategies for leveraging introverted strengths—deep listening, authentic connection, and reflective artistry—to create choral environments where every voice belongs.



Chris Maunu is a conductor, educator, and composer dedicated to inspiring young singers and shaping the future of choral music. He serves as artistic director of the Pacific Youth Choir and affiliate faculty at Portland State University. A four-time Grammy Music Educator finalist, his ensembles have performed at numerous national and regional ACDA conferences, earned the American Prize in Choral Performance, the Gold Diploma at the Rimini International Choral Competition, and more. Maunu conducted the 2025 ACDA National 11-12 Honor Choir and is in demand nationally/internationally as an all-state clinician, guest conductor, and composer. He serves as the R&R chair for youth choirs for NWACDA, editor of the Pacific Youth Choir Series with Pavane, and is a published author.

It starts with
your leadership

And leads them to CARNEGIE HALL.

FEB 15 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	MAR 15 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	MAR 30 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	MAR 30 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	MAR 30 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	APR 12 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY
APR 17 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	JUN 12 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	JUN 15 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	JUN 21 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	JUN 21 CARNEGIE HALL New York, NY	APR TBA MEYERSON SYMPHONY CENTER Dallas, TX

NATIONALCONCERTS.COM INFO@NATIONALCONCERTS.COM

Interest Sessions

Survival Imperative: Reimagining What Concerts Accomplish

Traditional arts programming faces an existential crisis in our overstimulated digital age. This session equips conductors with a comprehensive framework for reimagining concerts beyond entertainment to address authentic community needs including connection, healing, and civic engagement. Through hands-on application of a community-centered programming framework, participants will learn systematic needs-assessment processes, develop strategic program design that maintains artistic excellence while creating social impact, implement change management skills for organizational transformation, and create measurement frameworks that demonstrate tangible benefits securing sustainable funding. Conductors will discover how to align repertoire and rehearsal processes with community needs while creating inclusive spaces.



Erin Guinup is a composer, conductor, and arts consultant whose innovative work spans multiple continents. As founding executive and artistic director of the Tacoma Refugee Choir, she led singers from seventy-five countries in performances for more than fifty thousand people, including TEDxSeattle and national conferences for ACDA and Welcoming America. She serves as director of Puget Sound Singers at the University of Puget Sound. As founder of Arts Resonance—a consulting firm centered on strategic planning, audience development, and the art of belonging—and choral composer, she creates transformative musical experiences. Guinup's accolades include the American Academy of Teachers of Singing Award for Inclusion.

The Visionary Integration of Choir and Industry

Step into “the room where it happens” with five of today's most renowned pop, jazz, a cappella, and cho-

ral arrangers and singers. From their earliest choir experiences to their current careers at the top of the vocal world, they'll share how formative moments shaped their artistry—and what still drives them today. You will hear untold stories and “choral secrets,” gain insight into how traditional choral training impacts their modern work, and learn how the recording world and the choral world can better connect. Discover practical ways to record in acoustic spaces without breaking the bank, how choirs are hired for professional projects, and whether networking or formal channels matter most. We will explore the pathways to high-level collaborations, what's missing between the recording and choral industries, and how educators, conductors, and composers can position themselves for meaningful industry connections.



Cheryl B. Engelhardt is a Grammy-nominated composer and artist who creates music for theater, choirs, commercials, meditation apps, and beyond. Engelhardt's seventh album, created during a cross-country train journey, earned critical acclaim and a Grammy nomination. As a certified trauma-informed coach, she empowers musicians and creatives through her mastermind program, Amplify, and her resource platform, In The Key of Success. A Cornell University alumna with advanced orchestration training from Juilliard, she is a moderator and panelist at conferences like SXSW and the ASCAP Expo and has shared her expertise at numerous universities. She also serves as R&R chair of contemporary/commercial for the Eastern ACDA Region.



Tehillah Alphonso is a New Jersey-born and Nebraska-raised, Nigerian American vocalist, pianist, music director, and Grammy-nominated arranger based in Los Angeles, California. A proud graduate of the University of Southern California, she received her bachelor's in popular music performance from the Thornton School of Music and was named 2020 Outstanding Graduate, becoming the first Black woman from the pop program to achieve this award. While a full-time

student at USC, Alphonso served as business manager and music director of USC's premier a cappella group and five-time ICCA champions, the SoCal VoCals. She has sung on a number of films (*Wicked*, *The Color Purple*, *NOPE*, *Encanto*) and television shows (*Brooklyn 99*, *The Rookie*, *All American*) and alongside notable artists.

Scott Hoying will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 11.

Ben Bram will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 26.

Shams Ahmed will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 30.

Vocal Exercises to Diversify Tone and Style in Young Singers

Diverse and inclusive practices must be applied to the development of choral tone. By intentionally crafting exercises, we can develop a young choir's tonal palate to perform all musical selections with integrity. This session will introduce a format to develop skills with singers ages eight to thirteen, with applications for older singers. Using an approach that seeks to be culturally responsive and culturally expansive, we will address alignment, respiration, aural skills, and vocalization in a variety of timbres that can be applied to a diverse range of repertoire styles. Directors will leave with a repertoire of exercises, strategies that encourage singers, and conducting gestures that evoke nuances of color and style.



Kimberly Doucette has been artistic director of the Wilmington Children's Chorus since 2009 after joining the staff as associate director in 2005. Doucette oversees WCC's artistic and educational programs, which provide tuition-free music education to over seven hundred children annually. Under her leadership, WCC has solidified their reputation for vocal artistry, musical excellence, and community connections. Doucette

holds bachelor's degrees in music education and voice performance from the Pennsylvania State University and a master's degree in voice performance from the University of Delaware. She is certified in elementary general music by The Gordon Institute for Music Learning and has served regionally as a presenter, clinician, and adjudicator.

Voice and the Vagus Nerve: The Key to Unlocking Vocal Freedom

How do we envision a choral world where every voice truly belongs? This transformative session explores the vagus nerve's role in vocal freedom and how nervous system regulation can reduce anxiety, tension, and disconnection, especially for singers navigating trauma or marginalization. Learn how stress shapes vocal production and experience embodied, trauma-informed tools (like humming, breathwork, and vocal toning) that promote regulation, access, and expression. If you're ready to reimagine choral singing as a sanctuary for diverse bodies and nervous systems, this session will inspire and equip you to lead with both science and soul.



Natasha Valdes is a certified trauma-informed voice specialist through the Voice Study Centre (UK) and holds an MM in vocal pedagogy from the Boston Conservatory. She is the creator of the Embodied Vocal Wellness Program, developed after losing her voice to psychogenic dysphonia following a life-threatening trauma. Her work bridges vocal pedagogy, nervous system science, and trauma-informed care to help singers regulate performance anxiety, release vocal tension, and reclaim their authentic sound. Valdes has presented at ACDA, CCDA, CASMEC, PAVA, NATS, and TEDx Fullerton.

Honor Choir Conductors

9th - 12th Grade SATB



Marques L. A. Garrett (he/him) is a Virginia native and associate professor of choral studies at the University of North Texas. He earned his PhD in music education (choral conducting) at The Florida State University. An active conductor, Garrett is the founding conductor of the Nebraska Festival Singers and leads conducting workshops at other universities and conferences. A versatile voice that performs both as a baritone and countertenor, Garrett has sung with several community, church, and university groups and currently sings with the Festival Singers of Florida and the Jason Max Ferdinand Singers. Garrett is an avid composer of choral and solo-vocal music whose compositions have been performed to acclaim by high school all-state, collegiate, and professional choirs, including Seraphic Fire and the Oakwood University Aeolians. His compositions are available through several publishers.

Garrett is an avid composer of choral and solo-vocal music whose compositions have been performed to acclaim by high school all-state, collegiate, and professional choirs, including Seraphic Fire and the Oakwood University Aeolians. His compositions are available through several publishers.

6th - 8th Grade SATB Gospel Choir



Robert T. Gibson is a Houston native and a conductor, composer, and clinician who desires to develop future music educators for future generations. Gibson received a BME from the University of North Texas and an MM at Missouri State University. His choral arrangements can be found through Walton Music, Alfred Publications, and Oxford Press. Gibson currently resides in Texas, where he is the head director at Strickland Middle School and leads the Unity Choir at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship under the leadership of Dr. Tony Evans. He is the proud husband to Amber Renae and father to Truly and Lovie Gibson.

Gibson currently resides in Texas, where he is the head director at Strickland Middle School and leads the Unity Choir at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship under the leadership of Dr. Tony Evans. He is the proud husband to Amber Renae and father to Truly and Lovie Gibson.

9th - 12th Grade SSAA



Cindy Ellis is a native of Holguín, Cuba, who immigrated to the United States in 2005. She earned her bachelor's in music education and jazz voice from Florida International University and her MME from the University of Missouri. Ellis is a full-time choral director at Miami Arts Studio, a 6th- through 12th-grade public performing arts magnet school in Miami, FL. MAS students have recorded and performed background vocals for Gloria and Emilio Estefan and several music award shows, including the AMAs, Latin American Music Awards, and the Latin Grammy Awards. In 2024, Ellis conducted her students at the Miami show of Jacob Collier's DJESSE Volume 4 World Tour. Ellis is Miami Arts Studio's 2025 Teacher of the Year, a 2025 Grammy Music Educator semifinalist, and serves the Southern ACDA Region as the R&R coordinator for world musics & cultures.

Ellis is a full-time choral director at Miami Arts Studio, a 6th- through 12th-grade public performing arts magnet school in Miami, FL. MAS students have recorded and performed background vocals for Gloria and Emilio Estefan and several music award shows, including the AMAs, Latin American Music Awards, and the Latin Grammy Awards. In 2024, Ellis conducted her students at the Miami show of Jacob Collier's DJESSE Volume 4 World Tour. Ellis is Miami Arts Studio's 2025 Teacher of the Year, a 2025 Grammy Music Educator semifinalist, and serves the Southern ACDA Region as the R&R coordinator for world musics & cultures.

SATB Contemporary A Cappella Fusion



Rob Dietz is a multi-award-winning singer and vocal percussionist who has been arranging, composing, teaching, and performing contemporary a cappella music for over twenty years. Based in Los Angeles, Dietz is best known for his work as an arranger and group coach for NBC's *The Sing-Off*. Through his work as an arranger, Dietz has had the pleasure of collaborating with some of the top talent in the vocal music world, including Grammy Award-winning groups Pentatonix, The Swingles, and Kings Return. Dietz is a founding codirector of A Cappella Academy and the author of *A Cappella 101: A Beginner's Guide to Contemporary A Cappella Singing* (Hal Leonard, 2022). Dietz is an avid choral composer and serves as the National ACDA R&R co-chair for contemporary/a cappella music.

Dietz is best known for his work as an arranger and group coach for NBC's *The Sing-Off*. Through his work as an arranger, Dietz has had the pleasure of collaborating with some of the top talent in the vocal music world, including Grammy Award-winning groups Pentatonix, The Swingles, and Kings Return. Dietz is a founding codirector of A Cappella Academy and the author of *A Cappella 101: A Beginner's Guide to Contemporary A Cappella Singing* (Hal Leonard, 2022). Dietz is an avid choral composer and serves as the National ACDA R&R co-chair for contemporary/a cappella music.



Celebrating the Awe & Wonder of the Christian Story Through the Arts



CREATIVE ARTS COLLECTIVE FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE & FAITH

CREATE.
EDUCATE.
NETWORK.

creativeartscollective.com



Experience *Requiem for Colour: A Journey through Lament and Joy*

Composed & conducted by Dr. Jeffery Ames

Southern Region Conference in Memphis, March 2026



William Burden (Juilliard & Mannes)
Master Clinician
SVC Nationals 2024-25

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MUSICAL JOURNEY!

For more than 25 years, **Schmidt Vocal Arts** has opened doors and unlocked potential for the next generation of classical singers. Through performance opportunities, networking, master classes, mentorship, and transformative awards and scholarships, SVA supports young artists in their first steps to the stage.

\$650K

IN CASH AWARDS
& SCHOLARSHIPS

Aaron Crouch
1st Place
Washington, DC 2015-16

- PERFORM

Competitions for high school & undergraduate singers with direct feedback from adjudicators

- LEARN

60+ scholarships awarded each year from \$1K to \$25K+, master classes, and educational programs for students

- GROW

Networking opportunities, alumni connections, and continued support for aspiring professionals

Explore our programs and opportunities
www.schmidt vocal arts.org





2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Conference Overview



Derrick Fox

It is my honor to invite you to join us for the 2026 Midwestern ACDA Region Conference, February 25–28 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Our theme, “Reflections of Us,” speaks to the heart of

who we are as choral musicians, educators, and human beings. Together we will celebrate the music, the people, and the communities that make our region so vibrant.

This conference is more than a gathering; it is a reunion. For many of us, the MWACDA conference is the rare moment where we reconnect with long-time colleagues, mentors, and friends. It is where we share ideas freely, where a chance conversation in a hallway sparks a new project, and where we are reminded that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

At the same time, it is also a place of welcome—an opportunity to meet new faces, form new collaborations, and expand our circle of friends and colleagues. Whether this will be your first conference or your fifteenth, you will find yourself embraced by a

community of people who care deeply about both the art and the people who make it.

The program in Milwaukee promises to inspire and challenge. You will encounter world-class choirs from across the Midwest and beyond, hear new works alongside treasured classics, and experience the remarkable diversity of choral traditions that define our profession. Our honor choirs will showcase the talents of singers from across the region, and our reading sessions, interest sessions, and exhibits will offer practical tools you can carry back to your own ensembles. And, of course, who wouldn’t want an opportunity to take a photo with Curdy!

Beyond the music, we will also enjoy the warmth of Milwaukee itself, a city with a rich cultural heritage, a thriving arts community, and a welcoming spirit. Against the backdrop of Lake Michigan, our time together will be filled not only with music but also with laughter, conversation, and renewed purpose.

I hope you will join us. Come ready to be challenged, encouraged, and renewed.

Midwestern Region Conference Registration Information

until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

Attendee \$325 Retired \$250 Student \$100

January 16 - February 28

Attendee \$375 Retired \$275 Student \$125

One Day \$190 **only available on site**

Register at acda.org/region-conferences



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Headliners/Opening Night Concert

Headliners

JOA Choir (South Korea)



JOA Choir was founded in January 2016. Based in Busan and designated a professional arts organization by Busan Metropolitan City, this ladies' choir is guided by conductor Gun Yoon Lee. They interpret and perform a diverse repertoire—from classical to popular music, traditional Korean sounds, and jazz—through the distinctive beauty and delicacy of women's voices. Pursuing a sound that stands apart from conventional female choirs, they offer a fresh model to Korea's arts scene and are growing toward the global stage. In 2022 they drew strong attention as one of the most notable choirs on the audition TV show *Sing For Gold*, and in 2025 they won the Grand Prix at the Korea International Choral Competition.



Gun Yoon Lee was born in Busan, South Korea. Drawn to the allure of music in middle school, he began composing and studying music and later pursued conducting, graduating from Chung-Ang University, where he was the student of Dr. Hak-Won Yoon, Korea's "Grandfather of Choral Music." He currently serves as the principal conductor of the Anyang City Boys & Girls Chorus and conducts the Sunhwa Arts School Choir. In addition to choral conduct-

ing, his versatility is evident in both Western symphony orchestra and traditional Korean orchestra conducting and instruction. He has elevated the stature of Korean choral conductors and composers on the global stage both in performance and as a competition/festival juror. He has composed numerous choral works, traditional Korean pieces, and even opera, all earning high praise.

Lyyra



Lyyra is the new all-women vocal ensemble from The VOCES8 Foundation and is based in the United States. Lyyra records exclusively for Warner Classics and seeks to redefine the genre of upper voice music in the choral landscape, highlighting the astonishing capabilities within the full spectrum of women's singing. The sound of this bright, young group combines velvety richness alongside star-like brilliance. With a broad texture and exhilarating range of sound, the group's talented members specialize in classical, jazz, pop, and folk music from diverse traditions and backgrounds. Lyyra tours in the United States and internationally. The group gave its debut performances in 2024, including ACDA, and released its debut EP *More Love* on the VOCES8 label. Lyyra is Anna Crumley, MaryRuth Miller, Elizabeth Tait, Aryssa Leigh Burrs, Ingrid Johnson, and Cecille Elliott. Lyyra's creative director is Erik Jacobson.

Reflections of Milwaukee (Opening Night Concert)

As choral artists, our work transcends leading rehearsals and presenting concerts. Choral music making can reach deep into the lives of both singers and listeners to provide a space for hope, connection, and shared experience—a space desperately needed in this

time of algorithms and media sequestering us firmly into ideological bubbles. Choral singing builds and enriches community, and at this opening night concert, we meet several featured choirs who are integral to the fabric of Milwaukee. While these choirs all present regular concerts, their primary missions utilize singing to explore and uplift the health, faith, education, identity, and/or dignity of community members.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Special Events

Choral Leadership Academy for Pre-Professional Teachers

Designed for high-achieving undergrad and graduate-level pre-service educators, the Leadership Academy fosters management skills, pedagogical growth, and community building in the early stages of professional development for the next generation of choral music educators. The Leadership Academy provides pre-professional teachers with meaningful learning experiences and direct access to mentors among thought-leaders in the field, shaping an innovative, inclusive, and enduring future for choral music education.

Music in Worship

Come and raise the roof with us as we create the Big Midwestern Church Choir! Join local church choirs and conductors from around the region for an opportunity to learn new music for worship contexts. Participants will have the opportunity to take music back to their home choirs, and directors will leave with new resources and tricks of the trade to share with their ensembles. Selected repertoire will be relevant, meaningful, and accessible for congregations of all sizes.

ACADEMIC CHOIR APPAREL

- Custom Colors
- Quality Fabrics
- Made in the USA



Scan for



fabric samples
and catalog

Quality and Style since 1946

ACADEMICAPPAREL.COM



800-626-5000



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs Concert Choir



The Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs is one of the oldest and most respected children's community choral programs in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area. The artistic staff includes directors Ann Williams, Michelle Gehrz, Elizabeth Egger, and Dr. Joseph Kemper. ACYC offers ten ensembles for singers in grades K–12, including opportunities for diverse levels of experience and an adaptive program for youth with special needs. ACYC is guided by its mission to inspire and nurture a creative community of singers through high-quality choral experiences. Performance highlights include the 2018 Super Bowl, National ACDA Conferences in 2019 and 2025, and recognition as the Best Community Choir in Minnesota.



Elizabeth Egger (she/her) directs the Angelica Cantanti Youth Choir's Concert Choir and teaches choir at Scott Highlands Middle School in Apple Valley, MN. Her ensembles have performed at MMEA (2014, 2015, 2025) and ACDA (2015, 2022). She conducted ACYC singers at Super Bowl LII (2018) and led the children's chorus for Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand* with Osmo Vänskä (2022). In 2024–2025, she presented at MMEA and ACDA conferences and directed the Children's Chorus for Turandot with the Minnesota Orchestra. Also a passionate performer, she has sung with professional ensembles across the Midwest. Egger holds an MME from the University of St. Thomas and a BM from the University of Minnesota.

Bowling Green State University Men's Chorus



The Bowling Green State University Men's Chorus is open to all tenor and bass students, faculty, and staff. The ensemble encompasses students from across many majors, representing all seven colleges at the University, with over half being non-music majors. The chorus functions both as a student organization and as a course offered through the College of Musical Arts, promoting an atmosphere of camaraderie and exemplary musicianship. During the group's fifty years of existence, the BGSU Men's Chorus has toured annually, produced numerous recordings, and performed at state, regional, and national conferences and seminars of ACDA, NAFME, and IMC.



Richard Schnipke, DMA, serves as director of choral activities and associate professor of music performance studies at Bowling Green State University. His duties include conducting the Collegiate Chorus and the University Men's Chorus as well as teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in choral conducting and choral literature. Previously, Schnipke was a member of the faculty at Xavier University and The Ohio State University, and was a public school choral director in Ohio for fifteen years. As a vocalist, Schnipke has sung professionally with Cincinnati's Vocal Arts Ensemble, the Cincinnati Fusion Ensemble, Collegium Cincinnati, Cincinnati Opera, and Opera Columbus. Schnipke also presents frequently on the incorporation of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in the choral rehearsal.

Central Michigan University Chamber Singers



The Chamber Singers are the flagship ensemble at Central Michigan University School of Music. The ensemble comprises twenty-four undergraduate students studying music as their primary area of emphasis. The ensemble's strength is the versatility and range of vocal ability and approach to a truly diverse repertoire. "Full body" is a phrase often used to describe the sound of this choir, but they also move in and out of styles elegantly, from Renaissance to romantic, pop, and even vocal jazz, and do so authentically. The ensemble's proposed program reflects just this, with contemporary choral standards, spirituals, vocal jazz, and so on.



Amon Eady serves as the director of choral activities at Central Michigan University, where he conducts four ensembles and teaches undergraduate and graduate choral conducting and choral literature.

Before arriving at CMU, Eady taught at both the middle school and high school levels over the course of nine years in the White Station community of Memphis, Tennessee. Eady's choirs have performed at state and regional ACDA conferences, including performances by the Central Michigan University Chamber Singers at the 2020 Michigan ACDA Conference, and the White Station High School Men's Choir at the 2014 Southern ACDA Region Conference. Eady was recognized by Tennessee MEA as Music Educator of the Year in 2014.

Chorale NouvEAU



Chorale NouvEAU, based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, is an auditioned adult community choir of mixed voices founded in 2019. Known for its elevated performances and diverse repertoire, the choir blends artistic excellence with a strong commitment to community impact. Each season, the choir partners with a local nonprofit, using its concerts to raise awareness and support for causes that matter to the community. Rehearsing once a week for two hours, the ensemble prepares two concert programs annually. Chorale NouvEAU actively supports the broader Chippewa Valley arts scene by collaborating with other local performing groups.



Kate Larson is a passionate choral conductor with twenty years of experience in music education. She holds a BM in vocal music education from St. Olaf College and an MME from the University of St. Thomas. She began teaching in Davenport, Iowa, and spent nine impactful years at Mound Westonka High School in Minnesota, where her choirs were honored to perform at MMEA and ACDA state conferences, and twice at the Minnesota Choral Arts Finale at Orchestra Hall. In 2014 she was honored as the Outstanding Young Choral Director of the Year by Minnesota ACDA. Now based in Eau Claire, WI, Larson is the founder and artistic director of Chorale NouvEAU, choir director at Christ Church Cathedral, and artistic/musical director of the Stand in the Light Memory Choir.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Detroit School of Arts Concert Choir



The Detroit School of Arts Concert Choir is the premier vocal ensemble of the Detroit School of Arts, a nationally recognized fine and performing arts high school in Midtown Detroit. Under the direction of Julian Goods, the choir has earned consistent superior ratings at MSVMA festivals and received top honors at the 2025 WorldStrides Heritage Festival in NYC, including Best Concert Choir and the Choral Sweepstakes Award. They have performed with the Detroit and Lansing Symphony Orchestras and the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club (2022, 2024). Featured appearances include the Kennedy Center, Michigan Youth Arts Festival, and Abyssinian Baptist Church.



Julian J. Goods is codirector of choirs at the Detroit School of Arts and artistic director of Rackham Choir. At DSA his ensembles have earned consistent superior I ratings at MSVMA festivals, performed with the Detroit and Lansing Symphony Orchestras, and won top honors at the 2025 WorldStrides Heritage Festival. A University of Michigan graduate (BM, MM), he teaches at Lutheran Summer Music and serves as organist at Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. Goods has conducted *Messiah* and led the Illinois ACDA Join Voices Festival. His performance credits include *St. John Passion*, Faure's *Requiem*, and *Porgy and Bess*. He is a recipient of the MLK Spirit Award and the Earl V. Moore Award.

First Community Church Marble Cliff Singers



The Marble Cliff Singers was formed in the fall of 2021 and is one of three adult-aged ensembles comprising singers from our two choirs who sing for weekly worship services at First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio. The singers range in age from twenty-one to seventy, with varying levels of music experiences. The choir performs repertoire that is musically challenging and in which the message is one of inclusion and acceptance. They sing for special projects throughout the church year, provide music for the annual Good Friday worship service, and perform on the annual Carols for Christmas concert.



C. Andrew Blosser, DMA, is an assistant teaching professor at The Ohio State University, where he also serves as the area head of the voice department. An active performer, he has presented master classes and recitals throughout the United States and internationally. Blosser served as cantor for services at the Berlin Cathedral and as soloist for Mozart's *Missa Longa* at the Salzburg Cathedral. Highlights as a featured soloist include Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* (Carpe Diem String Quartet), Handel's *Messiah* (Columbus Symphony Orchestra), and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (Bach Society of Dayton). Blosser has also served as the director of music at First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio, since 2019.



Amy Johnston Blosser served for nine years on the ACDA national board as the R&R committee chair and was the 2023 National Conference chair for auditioned choirs. She has helped plan ACDA conferences in Cincinnati, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Dallas, Oklahoma City, Miami, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Under her direction, Bexley High School Vocal Ensemble has performed at NAFME and ACDA state conferences, including Central Region performances in 2012, 2016, and 2020. Her choirs tour extensively throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Blosser was named Educator of the Year for Bexley City Schools in 2011 and is the associate director of music at First Community Church. She was selected for the 2015 ACDA International Conductors Exchange Program with Sweden.

ACDA Membership

AUTOMATIC RENEWAL

Simplify your to do list.
☒ Check the box for auto-renewal!



Scan to learn how!

acda.org

Indian Trail High School and Academy Chorale



The Indian Trail High School and Academy Chorale is the premier mixed choral ensemble at Indian Trail High School and Academy in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Founded in 2010, this seventy-voice ensemble is the cornerstone of the school's vocal music program. The group has performed at regional festivals, state conferences, and internationally in cities including Rome, Paris, London, Vienna, and Salzburg. Representing a diverse student body, the Chorale offers inclusive musical experiences that foster both artistic and personal growth. Through a wide-ranging repertoire, adjudicated events, and global collaborations, the ensemble helps students develop lifelong skills and become thoughtful, creative, and engaged citizens.



John Choi is the director of choral music at Indian Trail High School and Academy in Kenosha, WI, leading Chorale, Cantare, Concert Choir, and Treble Choir, and codirecting the KUSD Madrigal Choir. He served on the Wisconsin Choral Directors' Association board (2008–2012) and planning committees for WCDA conferences (2006–2013), and received the WCDA Outstanding Young Choral Director Award in 2008. In 2023, Choi earned the KUSD Spark Award for excellence in education. He holds a BM from Carroll University and an MME in choral conducting from UW-Milwaukee. Choi also advises the Indian Trail National Honor Society chapter.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Isthmus Vocal Ensemble



The Isthmus Vocal Ensemble was founded in 2002 and has maintained itself as one of Madison's most beloved summer musical traditions. The sixty-member, all-volunteer choir gathers each July for two intensive weeks of rehearsal, culminating in a weekend of performances for the community. Initially drawing from alumni of the UW-Madison Concert Choir, the membership now includes singers from across the Midwest and beyond. Founding artistic director Scott MacPherson led the ensemble from its inception until 2017, building a foundation of musical excellence and fellowship that flourishes to this day under current music director Michael McGaghie.



Michael McGaghie joined the Isthmus Vocal Ensemble as artistic director in 2018. As professor of music and director of choral activities at Macalester College, he conducts the Macalester Concert

Choir and Chorale and teaches courses in musicianship, music history, and conducting. An advocate for the music of living composers, he has commissioned and premiered works by Dominick Argento, Saundor Choi, Dominick DiOrio, Jocelyn Hagen, Tarik O'Regan, Jake Runestad, and Dale Trumbore, among others. He has served in multiple leadership roles within the NCCO.

Lawrence University Cantala



Cantala is a select ensemble comprising SSAA voices (mostly first year and sophomores) whose fields of study represent the broad diversity in a liberal arts education. Founded in the fall of 2000, the choir performs literature that includes traditional advanced treble literature, world, folk, and contemporary works. They perform and record newly commissioned compositions by established and emerging composers from around the world, with over seventy works since 2002. Cantala annually joins forces with all LU choirs and orchestra in performances of choral/orchestral masterworks.



Phillip A. Swan is director of choral studies at Lawrence University and musical director for LU musicals. Swan directs Cantala and LU Vocal Spectrum and teaches courses in conducting and music education. He serves as artistic director for NEWVoices and was the recipient of the 2016 Chorus America Education and Community Engagement Award. Swan has conducted Cantala at two ACDA national conferences (2011 and 2019); four regional conferences (2006, 2014, 2018, and 2022); and one state conference (2004). He participated in ACDA's 2014 International Conductor Exchange Program to China and serves as state president for the Wisconsin CDA. Swan received degrees from Concordia College (Moorhead), UT El Paso, and the University of Miami (Florida).

Linn-Mar High School Bella Voce



Bella Voce is the advanced treble choral ensemble at Linn-Mar High School in Marion, Iowa. One of seven concert choirs and one of three treble choirs in a vibrant and growing program, Bella Voce comprises forty auditioned treble singers in grades ten through twelve. The group is part of a robust fine arts department in which over 750 students participate in at least one of sixteen curricular ensembles across choir, band, and orchestra. Bella Voce is known for its stylistic versatility and ability to perform a wide range of global choral literature, with particular attention given to repertoire that reflects diverse styles, compelling texts, and emotionally resonant experiences.



Jack Jorgensen is a vocal music teacher at Linn-Mar High School in Marion, Iowa, where he directs Bella Voce, Lux, and Concert Chorale. He also serves as the director of the treble prep show choir, Hi-Style, and the music director for Linn-Mar's annual spring musical. Jorgensen earned his BME from Luther College, where he sang in Nordic Choir under the direction of Andrew Last and was assistant conductor to Mark Potvin. A proud Wisconsin native, he now lives in Marion with his wife, Liz—an elementary music teacher in the district who inspires him daily with her creativity and heart. He is grateful to be part of a vibrant fine arts program that values musical excellence, personal growth, and shared joy.

Luther College Nordic Choir



Nordic Choir honors the Lutheran choral tradition while exploring new and innovative choral works that span styles and genres. Nordic Choir has earned a reputation as one of the premier collegiate choral ensembles in the United States. Founded by Sigvart Steen and memorably conducted for fifty-seven years by Weston Noble, previous conductors include Craig Arnold and Allen Hightower. Since 2017 the choir has been under the direction of Andrew Last, who views his role as facilitating the journey from technical artistry to an emotional awakening, saying, "Great choral music stirs within us a spirit and passion, connecting us in a community of belonging and acceptance."



Andrew Last is the Weston Noble Endowed Professor and director of choral activities at Luther College in Decorah, IA, where he conducts the Nordic Choir, teaches conducting, and serves as the artistic director for Christmas at Luther. Last holds a DMA in choral conducting from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he was named a Hixon-Lied Fellow. He received his MM from Northern Arizona University and his BM in education and voice from Luther College. Ensembles under Last's direction have been featured at National ACDA (2017, 2025) and Regional ACDA (2016, 2022). Last made his Carnegie Hall conducting debut in 2019. Last is a frequent clinician and guest conductor around the United States and abroad.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

North Scott High School Singers



North Scott Singers is the flagship ensemble at North Scott High School and have consistently received high marks at state contests. Singers are consistently accepted into the all-state program. The choir has performed in Chicago, New York City, Toronto, and the Kansas City Renaissance Festival. The ensemble has premiered three commissioned pieces by Moira Smiley, Connor Koppin, Paul Langford, and Julie Thomas. All North Scott Singers follow a solfège/takadimi curriculum and receive voice instruction, culminating the year by performing a solo.



Lori Potts is the head choral director at North Scott High School in Eldridge, Iowa. She is in her thirty-first year of teaching at North Scott, where she leads three curricular choirs and two jazz choirs with over 180 participants. North Scott Choirs have consistently received high marks at state contests. In 2017, the North Scott Choir made their mark on the all-state scene with nineteen students accepted and averaging fifteen to twenty-five ever since. The program was featured on KWQC TV covering the success of the program. She credits years of adaptability, determination, creative education, Paul Skyles at the junior high, and husband, Bruce, as being her keys to leaving a legacy of building the high school program from “nothing to something.”

Stare at the Sun



Stare at the Sun was founded in 2018, with an inaugural series of concerts presented in January 2019. The ensemble originally comprised graduates from Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music who sang under Donald Nally and were highly influenced by his work with the Crossing and Northwestern's elite chamber choir, the Bienen Contemporary/Early Vocal Ensemble. Since the organization's founding, the ensemble has become much more varied and now consists of professional singers who are active throughout the Chicagoland area. We are currently finishing up our fourth full concert season, which consisted of three full concert cycles, a Call for Scores, and a composer workshop with an educational outreach component.



A.J. Keller serves as associate director of choral organizations at Northwestern University. He recently conducted the world premiere of a commissioned work for Chicago's Ear Taxi Festival. He has served as a chorus master with Chicago Opera Theater, chorus mastering premiere performances of works by Jake Heggie, Justine Chen, and Errollyn Wallen. He served as assistant chorus master for the world premiere of David Lang's *prisoner of the state* with the New York Philharmonic in 2019. He is also internationally active, serving as guest conductor in an artistic collaboration with the Danish contemporary-music chamber choir Ensemble Edge, involving performances of Lang's *the little match girl passion* at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus.

University of Wisconsin-Madison Concert Choir



Concert Choir is the premier choral ensemble at the Mead Witter School of Music. The ensemble is composed of singers who demonstrate exceptional musicianship, vocal technique, and ensemble skills. Concert Choir is dedicated to performing a diverse repertoire that spans the entire breadth of the choral literary tradition. In recent years, Concert Choir has achieved significant recognition for its artistry, earning the honor of performing at the 2022 Wisconsin MEA Convention and the 2025 ACDA National Conference. In 2024, Concert Choir was selected as the winner of the American Prize for Best Choral Performance in the large collegiate choir category.



Mariana Farah is the director of choral studies at UW-Madison, where she conducts Concert Choir, teaches courses in graduate choral conducting, and oversees all aspects of a comprehensive choral program. Prior to her appointment at UW-Madison, Farah served as the associate director of choral activities at the University of Kansas. Choirs under her leadership have successfully performed at the Missouri, Kansas, and Wisconsin MEA conventions and at the 2008 and 2018 Southwestern ACDA Region Conferences. The UW-Madison Concert Choir performed at the 2025 ACDA National Conference in Dallas. Farah's research focuses on Brazilian choral music, particularly the choral works of Ernani Aguiar. She maintains an active schedule as a clinician for festivals in Brazil and in the United States.

Waukee High School A Cappella



A Cappella is the premier ensemble at Waukee High School and is part of a comprehensive choral program with a tradition of excellence. A Cappella has appeared twice at national ACDA conferences and multiple regional conferences, including 2022. Over the past ten years, A Cappella has been selected for the Luther College's Dorian Choral Invitational, the featured choir at Wartburg's Meistersinger Honor Choir Festival, the Morningside University Choral Invitational, and the featured 4A ensemble for ICDA's Iowa Choral Showcase three times. In recent years, students from this ensemble have performed with the Urbandale Singers, the King's Singers, VOCES8, the Iowa State Singers, and the Wartburg Choir.



Jeff Knutson is in his ninth year at Waukee High School, where he directs A Cappella, two bass clef choirs, a show choir, and a jazz choir. Each year, Knutson coordinates Festival of Peace, directs a masterwork, and plans a choir tour, with international tours occurring every three years. Knutson received his bachelor's degree from Luther College and his MM in choral conducting from Michigan State University. Knutson serves as an R&R chair for the Iowa Choral Directors Association.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Appropriation or Collaboration? Programming World Music

Are you interested in programming world music repertoire but unsure how to select and teach pieces while avoiding cultural appropriation? In this session, we will discuss concepts of authenticity, cultural validity, appropriation, and collaboration as they relate to world music repertoire in the choral ensemble. The presenter will introduce a checklist for selecting choral arrangements of world music pieces and a brainstorming worksheet for how to teach and rehearse world music for choirs based on research and practitioner articles. Participants will use the checklist to evaluate sample octavos for cultural validity, cultural bias, and practicality. Participants will then discuss how to introduce and rehearse sample pieces with their ensembles in ways that engage cultural collaboration and avoid cultural appropriation.



Austin Norrid is assistant professor of instruction for choral music education at The Ohio University, where he conducts Bella Voce (SSAA) and Choral Union (SATB) and teaches coursework in music education and choral conducting. While completing his PhD in music education at Pennsylvania State University, Norrid served as interim director of Essence of Joy. His research focuses on inclusion and belonging for LGBTQ and multilingual music students and music educators. He has presented research and professional development sessions at state and national conferences and has guest lectured at universities across the United States on topics including multilingual learners, world music pedagogy, and empathy in choral ensembles.

Choir as a Mirror: Reflect and Celebrate Student Identities

What if deeper musical engagement starts by understanding who your students are beyond the notes they sing? This session explores centering identity formation—the ongoing, dynamic process through which individuals come to understand, define, and express who they are. Affirming identity builds trust, celebrates individuality, and encourages rich, expressive ensemble singing. Participants will learn research-backed approaches and methods to create spaces that support healthy identity formation and will leave with a comprehensive toolkit of practices such as expansive, inclusive language, thoughtful rehearsal design, and meaningful repertoire curation that promote student engagement and retention. Reimagine musical excellence and transform your space into one where every voice is truly heard and valued.



Leah Wyman shapes emerging musicians as a graduate instructor of conducting and choral/vocal pedagogy at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She earned degrees from the University of Washington and Manhattan School of Music and directed nine ensembles of diverse voicings during her graduate studies. Wyman's doctoral research explores conscious choral pedagogy, an innovative framework blending cognitive science, interpersonal growth, and social awareness to foster transformative choral experiences. Wyman has conducted and presented at Southwestern ACDA Region and ACDA state conferences in Missouri and Washington. With over a decade leading community and church music, she has spearheaded landmark projects like the Ohio premiere of Joshua Clausen's *Requiem: For Victims of American Mass Shootings* with the Fairmount Choir.



Cee E. Adamson (she/they/Mx.) stands as a beacon of versatility and excellence, seamlessly weaving together her roles as an opera singer, voice teacher, choral di-

rector, and arts administrator with grace and passion. As a choral educator, Adamson assumes the role of a visionary choral director whose leadership has transformed vocal ensembles into beacons of musical excellence. Adamson serves as the artistic director and conductor of STANCE: Seattle Trans and Nonbinary Choral Ensemble. Adamson earned a DMA in vocal performance and choral conducting from the University of Washington. She also earned an MM and a master's of performance from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Her other education includes the Advanced Artist Diploma and MM from Shenandoah Conservatory and undergraduate degrees in music, theatre arts, accounting, and management from Franklin Pierce University.



Anjali Chudasama is a singer, educator, and conductor focused on developing individual identities and connecting with the community through music. Chudasama is the director of choirs at Shoreline Community College, where she serves students in classroom-based, ensemble, and private studio contexts. She earned an MM in choral conducting at the University of Washington, where she worked with students in the Treble Choir and Chamber Singers, and in the music history and music education departments. She is thrilled to work the vibrant Seattle community and enjoys participating as a conductor and singer in the community and professional ensembles such as Harmonia Chorus and Orchestra, the Choir of the Sound, and the Evergreen Ensemble, as well as serving as an interim director of the Chamber Singers at Seattle University.

Collective Wisdom: Reflections from Midwestern Prison Choirs

This session will be led by five prison choir practitioners who will each share snapshots of their unique settings, exploring the many forms musicking in prison may take and the challenges experienced along the way. Reflections from currently and formerly incarcerated

singers will be shared, as well as select audio and video footage of the prison choirs. In addition to discussing specific carceral contexts, this session will connect more broadly to anyone interested in the intersections of justice and choral singing. The presenters will share how their work in prisons has impacted the work they do with choirs on the outside. Participants will leave with educational resources, suggested repertoire (including songs by incarcerated composers), ideas and “how-tos” for collaborating within prisons, and inspiration from a population that is most often forgotten in our “reflections of us.”



Amanda Weber is passionate about uniting music, art, and community through her work as an artist and collaborator. Weber is the founder and artistic director of Voices of Hope, an organization that builds choral singing communities in correctional facilities in the state of Minnesota. Founded in 2015, Voices of Hope has been featured through numerous publications including the *Choral Journal* (2021), a chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Community Singing* (2023), a 2016 TEDx Minneapolis Salon, and Weber's doctoral dissertation, which was awarded ACDA's Julius Herford Dissertation Prize in 2018. In addition to her work as a



ypcnational
Francisco J. Núñez
Founder/Artistic Director

SUMMER STUDIO & LAB
July 22-25, 2026 | New York City



Summer Studio
CHORAL CONDUCTING WORKSHOP
FOR TEACHERS



Summer Lab
CHORAL INTENSIVE
FOR SINGERS, AGES 8-18

with Choirs in Residence *Young People's Chorus of New York City*
and *Veus - Cor Infantil Amics de la Unió*

Visit ypcnational.org to learn more!



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

prison choir practitioner, Weber is active as a conductor, singer, pianist, and composer. She currently serves as the director of worship and the arts at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis.



Catherine Roma has created vibrant choral communities that reach across barriers of race, religion, class, sexual orientation, and age for over forty years. She works to translate the values of social justice and

inclusion into fundamental experiences of community for both audience and singers. Roma became one of the founding mothers of the women's choral movement when she started Anna Crisus Women's Choir in Philadelphia in 1975 and founded MUSE Cincinnati's Women's Choir in 1983. She is emeritus professor of music at Wilmington College. Through Wilmington, she has directed numerous prison choirs, beginning with the UMOJA Men's Chorus at Warren Correctional Institution in Lebanon, OH. Currently she conducts NIA Men's Chorus at Chillicothe-CI. In 2012, Roma founded the one hundred-voice World House Choir in Yellow Springs, OH, which often performs for peace and justice within prisons.



Mary Cohen is a professor of music education at the University of Iowa and lead author of *Music-Making in US Prisons: Listening to Incarcerated Voices*. She led the Oakdale Community Choir, comprising

non-incarcerated and incarcerated singers, from 2009 to 2020. The participants wrote 150 original songs, and the choir sang seventy-five of those songs. She created the Inside Outside Songwriting Collaboration Project with incarcerated and non-incarcerated partners who build relationships while creating original songs. Cohen coleads the International Music and Justice Inquiry Network Caring Communities: scholars from over twenty countries who lead or research music making in prisons and collaborate virtually. She has been a keynote speaker in Germany, Canada, Portugal, and England, interviewed by BBC3 *Music Matters*, and completed over forty publications.



Jody Kerchner is NEA Conservatory Professor of Music Education at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She teaches courses in choral conducting, community music engagement, music psychology, creativity, and pedagogy. She is president-elect of the International Society for Music Education. Kerchner is also the founder/conductor of the Oberlin Music at Grafton Prison Choir, an all-male choir at a state-level, minimum- and medium-security prison in Northeast Ohio, where the choir has just completed its tenth year. Kerchner holds a PhD in music education from Northwestern University, and MM in vocal performance and BME from West Chester University.



Laura Clapp is a graduate student in choral conducting at the University of Michigan, where she directs the university's prison outreach choir, Out of the Blue.

A recipient of the 2025 Presser Graduate Music Award, she is currently researching prison choirs in the United States and UK. Prior to her graduate studies, Clapp worked with Voices of Hope, a Minnesota-based prison choir organization, as a recipient of the Yale Glee Club Service Through Music Fellowship. While in Minnesota, Clapp also codirected StreetSong, a choir for people who have experienced homelessness. She has been a researcher for the New Muses Project, helping build their database of marginalized composers, and a soprano and teaching artist with Border CrosSing.

Due Diligence: First Steps for Ethical Native Engagement

Choral educators are often asked to include diverse voices, but "due diligence" is not always part of the equation. In this session, we will explore what it means to ethically engage with Native American music. Thomas Goedecke and Alyssa Beltran (Pyramid Lake Paiute) will share how to navigate the complex

layers of colonialism, appropriation, and misrepresentation in Native music programming. We will also examine how to build authentic relationships with Native communities, ensuring that your programming goes beyond tokenism. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for respecting Native music, creating space for Native voices, and ensuring that your programming benefits Native peoples through academic research and community-based projects, including Nā Haku Mele, a yearly call for scores for new works in 'ōlelo Hawai'i.



Thomas Goedecke (PhD, music composition), based on Maui, Hawai'i, is most known for his work intersecting sound worlds from Western and Pacific non-Western voices. He specifically finds joy in working with indigenous languages of the Pacific and combining them with traditionally western ensembles, advocating for the proliferation and celebration of Polynesian, Asia-Pacific, and American indigenous art. Goedecke is currently a tenure-track instructor at the University of Hawai'i Maui College, where he directs the College Chorus and Hawaiian Chorus and teaches in the Institute of Hawaiian Music and music studies programs. As a composer, conductor, and educator, he is dedicated to preserving and promoting these cultural traditions.



Alyssa Beltran (Pyramid Lake Paiute) is a Native music educator, scholar, and Powwow dancer based in Santa Cruz, California. She currently serves as the director of choral activities at Pacific Collegiate Charter School, teaching choir and intro to performing arts to students in grades seven to twelve. Beltran also serves as the vocal director for the school's spring musical, working alongside the department's theater, instrumental music, and dance educators. She is pursuing a master's in secondary education at San José State University, where she earned her BME and minor in Native American studies. Her teaching experience spans concert and jazz choirs, concert and jazz bands, strings, performing arts, and general music. Beltran is committed to fostering inclusive musical environments full of meaningful collaborations.

Evolving Landscapes: Choral Music Education in Underserved Areas

Higher education is facing more and more challenges as the world continues to change. Additionally, many of us teach in areas where students are often underserved. Each student is different when it comes to their preparation for studying music in college. Our panel discussion seeks to ask some tough questions: How do we meet the needs of our students? How do we “meet them where they are” while also preparing them adequately for the future of music education? Our goal is to start a conversation so we can share ideas about how to better prepare our students for today's world.



Erin Colwitz is professor of music and director of choral activities at Northern Michigan University (NMU), where she conducts the Arts Chorale and the University Choir. Under her leadership, NMU choirs have toured Italy, Finland, Austria, and Poland, as well as throughout the United States. Her choirs were chosen to sing at both Michigan and Alabama educators' conferences. Colwitz is a frequent guest conductor, lecturer, contest adjudicator, and choral clinician throughout the United States. As a clinician and lecturer, Colwitz presents at conferences at the state, regional, national, and international levels, including at the Athens Institute of Research and in Bangkok and Chiangmai, Thailand. She earned her MM and DMA from the University of Southern California.



Gabriela Hristova is an associate professor of music at the University of Michigan-Flint. She conducts the University Chorale and Chamber Singers, and teaches courses in conducting, choral literature, and music performance. Hristova directs the Summer Vocal Academy of Music for middle and high school students at the University of Michigan-Flint, which is recognized for its high level of music instruction. She previously taught as a visiting professor of conducting and director of choirs at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio, and conducted



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

the University of Michigan Women's Glee Club during her doctoral studies at the University of Michigan.



Gerald Case-Blanchard, baritone, serves as vocal director and music program area coordinator at Kellogg Community College, where he has taught since 2004. A native of Philadelphia, he holds a BME from West Chester University of Pennsylvania, an MM in vocal performance from Central Michigan University, and a DMA in voice performance from Michigan State University. His recordings include *With a Song in My Heart* (Blue Griffin Records), *I Can Tell the World*, *Live with the Earl Nelson Singers*, and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Detroit Symphony Civic Orchestra. He has held faculty appointments at the University of Michigan–Flint, Adrian College, Lansing Community College, and the Michigan State University Community Music School. He currently serves on the board of directors for Michigan ACDA.



Steven Hankle is associate professor of choral music and music education at the University of Dayton, where he directs the University Chorale and Bella Voce and teaches choral conducting and methods. He also serves as chorus director for the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra Chorus and as choral faculty at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, where he conducts the Festival Choir, Vocal Ensemble, and Staff Choir. A versatile conductor and educator, Hankle has led performances of major works by Rutter, Brahms, Hagenberg, Thomas, Faure, and Mozart, and has served as conductor, clinician, and adjudicator throughout the United States, Kenya, and Mexico. A native of Chicago, Hankle earned degrees from San Francisco State University and The Florida State University.

In Her Voice:

Spotlighting Female Choral Composers

The purpose of this interest session is to introduce attendees to *In Her Voice: Spotlighting Female Choral Composers* (GIA, 2025), a book that focuses only on women composers who write primarily for choral ensembles and who represent a span of several centuries, multiple countries, and various genres of music. Fifty-six authors wrote about 225 composers, giving information about their lives and music. Each entry includes biographical information; the titles of several compositions with details about voicing, instrumentation, duration, publishers; and a bibliography for further reference. A panel of four people involved in the book's creation will describe the context of the project and share video recordings from additional contributors.



Hilary Apfelstadt is professor emerita of choral studies at the University of Toronto. She remains active as a guest conductor, clinician, masterclass presenter, and author. She has served ACDA as interim executive director, national president, Central Region president, North Carolina president, and has received leadership awards from both ACDA (NC-ACDA, Ohio-ACDA, Central Region, Midwestern Region) and Choirs Ontario in Canada. She has taught public school, community, and church choirs and was a faculty member at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and The Ohio State University. Her ensembles have performed at conferences of ACDA and Choral Canada, and she has guest conducted many festival choirs, including forty all-state choirs in the United States and the National Youth Choir of Canada. She curates a choral series by Canadian composers for Hinshaw Music.



Alan Troy Davis is a conductor, music educator, voice teacher, and tenor with experience in academic, church, and community music settings. Davis has taught choral music at high schools in Oregon,

Colorado, and California, earning superior ratings and awards with his ensembles. He has completed doctoral coursework in choral conducting at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he was assistant conductor for four choirs and teaching assistant for the advanced conducting course. He holds an MM in choral conducting, an MME in secondary education, and a BM. His research focuses on choral intonation, conducting pedagogy, and repertoire by women composers. He is the architect, associate editor, and contributing author for *Choral Repertoire by Women Composers* (GIA, 2025) and copresented an interest session at the 2025 ACDA National Conference.

Lynne Gackle is a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 96.



Mari Ésaabel Valverde is an award-winning transgender Mexican American composer who has been commissioned by ACDA, Boston Choral Ensemble, Cantus, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, Los Angeles Master Chorale, One Voice Mixed Chorus, Portland's Resonance Ensemble, Seattle Men's and Women's Choruses, TMEA, and the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club. She has also built a reputation as a singer, educator, adjudicator, and translator. Following six years as a high school classical voice instructor, she spent two years specializing in transgender voice training. Proficient in Spanish, French, and Brazilian Portuguese, she has translated numerous vocal works and documents. A native of North Texas, she holds degrees from St. Olaf College and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

FINANCING HOMES IN HARMONY

As a trusted Loan Officer with GoRascal Inc., I help people secure the right mortgage for their needs. From pre-approval to closing, I guide you every step of the way, making the home financing and buying process simple, stress-free, and tailored to you.

Let's get you pre-approved and closer to your new home!



Johna Barrow, Loan Officer

NMLS ID 2547236

GoRascal Inc.

(914) 690-6860

johna@gorascal.com

<https://www.gorascal.com/team/johna>



NMLS #2072896





2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

The Intersections of Gospel and European Choral Traditions

This session will explore the dynamic intersections between gospel music and European choral traditions through the lens of gospel composers Isaac Cates, Diane L. White-Clayton, and Raymond Wise. Choral directors will be provided with pedagogical insight and repertoire suggestions that are both stylistically authentic and accessible to ensembles trained in traditional Western art music. Participants will engage with annotated score excerpts, conductor's analysis charts, and performance recordings to examine how gospel's oral tradition, rhythmic drive, and expressive spirituality can harmonize with the structural clarity, counterpoint, and vocal balance of European choral works. By engaging both traditions, we discover deeper connections across race, history, and musical lineage, honoring gospel not as "other" but as part of our shared choral heritage.



Bryon Black II is an active choral conductor and composer. He currently serves as an assistant professor of music and director of choirs at DePauw University. He received his DMA in choral conducting from the University of South Carolina. His research of the intersections between gospel music and European choral traditions provides choral conductors with accessible repertoire and pedagogy for approaching gospel music. Black's compositions have been performed by several collegiate, church, and community ensembles. This includes a live concert album, *In the Spirit! An Encounter with Spirituals*, featuring original choral arrangements of spirituals by himself and Durrell LeGair. Black resides in Indianapolis, IN, with his wife, Briannah.

Más Que Ritmo: Heart and Heritage of Latinx Choral Music

This session explores the rich diversity of Latinx vocal music and how it reflects the many voices, cultures, and stories within Latinx communities. What makes Latinx music Latinx? Is it language, rhythm, or the history behind it? We'll examine the defining influences—Indigenous, African, European, and contemporary—and how they blend into a living tradition. From folk songs to modern Latinx composers working within classical forms, this session highlights how music expresses unique identities and shared experiences. Participants will gain practical tools for teaching this repertoire, including Spanish diction, rhythmic feel, culturally responsive rehearsal strategies, and approaches to oral tradition. Together, we'll sing and move, embracing the vibrant rhythms and emotional vitality central to Latinx expression. Attendees will leave with rehearsal-ready resources, historical and cultural context, and curated repertoire lists suitable for varied ages and ensembles.



Eric D. Reyes is a Mexican American conductor who was born and raised in Southern California. Reyes is assistant professor of music and director of choral activities at Hope College, where he leads ensembles such as the Chapel Choir, College Chorus, and VERITAS. He also founded ¡Canto!, a program supporting high school Latinx vocalists. Reyes holds an MM and DMA in choral conducting from the University of Michigan. He is grateful for the support of his wife, soprano Jennie Judd Reyes, and his mentors.

Redefining Community: Choral Music at the Margins

What does "community" choir really mean? This session invites choral leaders to rethink inclusivity by

exploring music making at the margins of society. Drawing on the presenter's experience starting a choir in a women's correctional facility, we will examine how choral music can restore dignity, build connection, and foster artistic expression in overlooked spaces. Topics include how to begin a program in a prison or similar setting, suggested musical resources, and strategies for building trust and access in nontraditional ensembles. Participants will also engage in broader reflection on access, justice, and belonging in the choral world. Whether you're starting something new or reimagining your current community, this session offers practical tools and inspiration to expand your definition of who gets to sing.



Elena Cressy is a passionate conductor and educator pursuing her DMA in choral conducting at the University of Iowa. She earned her MM in choral conducting from the University of Kansas and holds a degree in music education from Carthage College. Cressy taught elementary music and high school choir in Milwaukee and was music and theatre director at Kettle Moraine School for Arts and Performance. At KU, she assisted with several choirs, served as minister of music at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, and was associate director of the Lawrence Children's Choir. Her work explores the intersection of choral music and social justice, including founding a choir at the Women's Correctional Facility in Topeka, KS. She is an active guest conductor and clinician known for her vibrant energy and collaborative spirit.

Selecting and Programming Repertoire with Purpose

At all levels of musical experience, skill, and maturity, the singers we work with deeply desire to connect with the music we assign them to learn. We make great efforts to select pedagogically appropriate repertoire that will engage singers and audiences. However, many choral performances just simply don't connect with our community. The questions that need to be

considered are: Is this music and the program that it is a part of relevant? Are we setting our singers up for success and opportunities to meaningfully engage with the repertoire we have chosen? Does it cultivate their musical and nonmusical skills to serve? This session will provide new national data-based repertoire selection trends, suggest programming models for choirs of all abilities, and provide resources to ensure the music we select is diverse in conceit, origin, and impact.



William McLean is the associate director of choral activities at Baylor University, where he conducts choirs and teaches courses in conducting and choral literature. He has served as associate conductor of the Dallas Symphony Chorus and on the faculty of the University of Texas at Arlington. Ensembles under his direction have performed at the national ACDA conference and state NAFME conferences. McLean has presented sessions at international, national, and state ACDA and music education conferences on topics of community building, programming, and innovative rehearsal strategies. He holds degrees from the University of North Texas, Baylor University, and St. Olaf College.

Singing by Heart: Aural Tradition in the Choral Classroom

Cultures around the world use the aural tradition to teach and share songs. While notation and music literacy are essential aspects of our choral classrooms, teaching songs through the aural tradition (i.e., "by heart") encourages and promotes active listening, focus, and teaches style and artistry in ways that notation cannot. In this session, participants will learn a variety of songs by rote, hone pedagogy for teaching aurally, and see how incorporating this music and pedagogy strengthens our communities and ensembles. Come to this session ready to sing, connect, and expand your aural abilities.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions



Elisabeth Cherland (she/her) is a fourth-generation choral conductor as well as professor, singer, song leader, violinist, and Lutheran church musician. As director of choral activities at Minnesota

State University, Mankato, she teaches courses in choral methods, conducting, theory, private voice, and conducts the Concert Choir and Chamber Singers. Cherland earned a DMA in choral conducting at the University of Washington, an MME with certification degree from VanderCook College of Music, and a bachelor's in music and English from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Her research interests include women in academia, feminist and narrative research, and song leading and aural pedagogy. She lives with her partner and two children in St. Peter, Minnesota, and loves story-telling and story-hearing, knitting, bubble tea, and sunshine when it's available.

Standards-Based Grading in the 6–12 Music Curriculum

Discover how Standards-Based Grading (SBG) can bring clarity, consistency, and equity to grades six to twelve music assessment. This session shifts the focus from points and participation to mastery of clearly defined learning goals aligned with the National Core Arts Standards. Led by a teacher using SBG since 2018, you'll see real examples from ensemble, general music, and composition classes. Learn to create rubrics, design student-friendly learning targets, and track growth with digital tools. Whether you're new to SBG or refining your system, you'll gain practical strategies and solutions to common challenges such as communicating grades to students and families. Leave with rubrics, lesson materials, and a digital tracker to support meaningful, student-centered assessment.

Matthew Clark is the choral director at Daniel Wright Junior High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, where he



leads a comprehensive vocal music program for grades six through eight. He holds degrees from Vanderbilt University (BM, MME) and Michigan State University (MM in choral conducting). Clark has taught at both middle and high school levels and regularly presents on standards-based grading, curriculum development, and adolescent vocal technique. A committed advocate for student-centered music education, he fosters a classroom environment focused on growth, creativity, and collaboration. He frequently serves as a clinician and guest conductor.

Supporting Sopranos in the Choral Ensemble

Do the sopranos in your ensemble complain of vocal fatigue? Do you want to help them to be successful? Sopranos face a unique challenge in that their part is often the most audible and can be difficult to sing with healthy vocal technique. There can be a disconnect between what they learn in private lessons versus what they are asked to do in a choral rehearsal regarding vibrato, resonance, diction/vowel modification, and register shifts. This session is based on interviews with sopranos who have made careers both as soloists and ensemble singers, and will give you tools to help the sopranos in your choirs to be successful. Although this session gives specific advice for sopranos, much of it can easily be applied to other voice parts.



Christiana Howell directs the Women's Choir, All-College Choir, and teaches private voice at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's College in St. Joseph, Minnesota. An active singer, she is a soprano with the Minnesota Renaissance Choir, Bach Roots, and The Summer Singers, and has sung in professional choirs and opera choruses in the United States and abroad. She holds degrees in music educa-

tion, vocal performance, and choral conducting. She has conducted choirs across North America, the UK, and Europe, and currently directs the South Metro Chorale in Savage, MN.

Unified Music: A Practical Demonstration of Music for All

Unified Music is a celebration of belonging and inclusion that offers a practical model where students of all abilities—those receiving accessible education services and their general education peers—make music side by side. This interactive session demonstrates the daily structure of a thriving Unified Music program, including classroom rituals, a mini lesson, and a closing activity. Designed for educators new to or experienced with inclusive practices, the session includes resources, curriculum ideas, and Q&A. We'll explore advocacy tools and student perspectives that highlight music's power to unify. Join us as we expand access to music making and help Unified Music become a celebrated practice across the Midwest and beyond.



Zack Carlson-Giving is the vocal music director at Buffalo High School, where he leads all curricular and extracurricular choirs, directs annual musicals, and teaches Unified Music. Under his leadership, the Concert Choir was selected to perform at the 2020 MMEA Midwinter Clinic. Unified Music performed at the 2024 ACDA-MN Fall Conference and the 2025 MMEA Midwinter Clinic. Carlson-Giving cofounded the Minnesota Choral Mentorship Program and has presented sessions at MMEA and ACDA conferences at the state and regional levels. He is the current ACDA-MN R&R chair for high school choirs and was honored in 2021 as the ACDA-MN Outstanding Young Choral Director of the Year. In 2024 he conducted the ACDA-MN 7-8 CTB Honor Choir. He holds degrees from the University of Minnesota Duluth and Michigan State University.

Using Technology to Enhance Student Learning in Choirs

As this year's conference theme eloquently states, we as choral music educators should strive to embrace the "ever-evolving tapestry of our art." One of the most significant aspects of our evolution in the choral classroom over the past decade has been innovation in technology. This immediately applicable session will explore a range of technological tools that can enhance student learning in the choral setting. Current trends in music technology will be examined, including the use of performance assessment platforms, laptops/tablets, smartphones and web-based collaboration, Artificial Intelligence, and more. Benefits of using technology-assisted learning tools will be discussed alongside barriers that may impede successful technology integration. The session will also feature practitioner-focused demonstrations of technology-assisted tools and suggestions for effective implementation.



Jason Hawkins is a professor of choral music education at Western Illinois University, where he directs choral ensembles, teaches music education courses, and serves as the assistant director of the School of Music. He earned degrees in music education from WIU, Governors State, and the University of Illinois. Hawkins returned to WIU as a professor following twelve years at Plainfield North HS, a program that grew from thirty-five to two hundred students during his tenure and received numerous honors, including a spotlight performance at Carnegie Hall and a *DownBeat* award in vocal jazz. Hawkins makes frequent appearances as a clinician/conductor for state choral festivals and nationally with WorldStrides Heritage Festivals. He has presented research on the use of technology in the choral classroom at multiple state music education association conferences and has related publications in print.



2026 ACDA Midwestern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

6th-9th Grade Treble



Coty Raven Morris, a New Orleans native, is the Hinckley Assistant Professor of Choir, Music Education, and Social Justice at Portland State University. She holds a master's in choral conducting from Michigan State University. A newly published composer, Morris's works have been performed at honor choirs and festivals across the country. She is also a two-time Grammy Music Educator nominee (finalist, 2024; semifinalist, 2025). Morris is a host at All Classical Radio and the International Children's Arts Network. She also serves as chorus master and artistic collaborator with Portland Center Stage, the Oregon Symphony Orchestra, and Choirs of America. She is the founder of Being Human Together, a community focused on conversations around mental health, diversity, and inclusivity in music education.

10th-12th Grade Tenor/Bass



Ryan Beeken serves as director of choral activities and associate director for the School of Music at Wichita State University, where he conducts the Concert Chorale and Madrigal Singers and teaches graduate and undergraduate conducting and literature. His choirs have been featured at state, regional, and national conferences of ACDA and NAfME. A frequent guest conductor and clinician, Beeken has received invitations to lead nearly one hundred all-state and honor choirs in twenty-two states and internationally. He recently concluded service on the national executive board of ACDA as chair for student membership and previously held leadership roles at regional and state levels. Prior to WSU, he taught at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Michigan State University, Drake University, and in Iowa public schools.

6th-9th Grade Tenor/Bass



Herbert Washington is the Harvey K. Smith Artistic Director of the Grammy Award-winning Phoenix Boys Choir and a proud alumnus of the organization. Widely recognized for his dynamic teaching style, he is an active choral clinician, conductor, lecturer, and adjudicator. He also cofounded The Choral Window, an international resource for directors that shares innovative techniques to enhance music literacy and energize rehearsals. Beyond choral education, Washington is a passionate advocate for diverse musical styles, having produced, composed, and arranged music in both commercial and radio settings. A graduate of St. Olaf College and the University of Arizona, he founded the award-winning cappella ensemble Meow or Never and has served in leadership roles with ACDA.

10th-12th Grade Treble



Kelly A. Miller is an associate professor of music and coordinator of music education at the University of Central Florida, where she conducts the SoAl Chorus, TeBa Chorus, and the UCF Community Choir. She teaches undergraduate and graduate classes in music education while coordinating and supervising student teachers through their junior and senior internships. She enjoys presenting choral, vocal, and leadership workshops and frequently serves as a clinician and festival adjudicator. Miller is the current editor-in-chief of the *Florida Music Director*, the chancel choir director at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Orlando, and a past president of Florida ACDA. She holds National Board Certification in secondary choral music and a DMA in choral conducting from Michigan State University.



&



THE REVIEWS ARE IN!



**"It was a truly
dazzling experience."**

"Thank you MAP for the opportunity to conduct so many magnificent musicians in the premiere concert hall and for your support, professionalism, and kind words throughout the entire experience."

DON KRUDOP, GUEST CONDUCTOR



"Such a great experience for all!"



"It was a magical experience for me, and I am so grateful for the opportunity you gave me to be creative with my students and their families, working toward this performance...Our families and students continue to share how meaningful this experience was to them. What a blessing for our community!"

ALYSON MOORE, GUEST CONDUCTOR

"Fabulous time!!"

"It still feels surreal that I had the chance to perform at Carnegie Hall. It's wild, overwhelming and truly a dream come true. Thank you for believing in me. I'm crying as I write this because it means so much to me. That's something I'll carry with me forever."

STUDENT FROM THE PHILIPPINES, CHOIR PARTICIPANT

"Excellent organization!"

Stop By Our Booth At These Upcoming Regional Conferences:

TMEA- San Antonio, TX

ACDA Eastern- Providence, RI

ACDA Midwestern- Milwaukee, WI

ACDA Northwestern- Tacoma, WA

ACDA Southern- Memphis, TN

ACDA Western- San Jose, CA



212-239-0205 | contact@midamerica-music.com

www.midamerica-music.com



Hark!

Your international
tour awaits.

KI CONCERTS

KIConcerts.com



Conference Overview



Bill Campbell



Steven Zielke

We are excited to invite you to the 2026 Northwestern ACDA Region Conference, “Sing for a Change,” to be held March 4–7, 2026, in Tacoma, Washington.

Our region is one of breathtaking beauty and geographical diversity. From the shores of Alaska to the rugged landscapes of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana, to the coasts of Washington and Oregon, we are bound by a love of choral music and the communities it creates. Tacoma, with majestic Mt. Rainier rising above it, provides a striking setting for our gathering. This land is on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup and Nisqually Tribes and on lands with deep significance to other Coast Salish Tribes. We are inspired to use our voices for change, to connect, heal, and inspire.

This year’s conference will present the quality and diversity that is present in the Northwestern Re-

gion—lifting up voices and experiences to inspire you in your work. Together we will connect with colleagues and friends who share our passion for the choral art. We will learn from some of the greatest minds in our field, gaining fresh insights and practical tools to bring back to our singers at home. We will be moved by the artistry of outstanding choirs from across the region, each performance reminding us of the transformative impact of music made in community.

The theme “Sing for a Change” calls us to action. Singing has always been more than notes and rhythms. It is a way of shaping the world around us. Whether advocating for justice, nurturing belonging, or simply lifting spirits, our voices carry the power to make a difference. In 2026, as we gather in Tacoma, we will celebrate not only the beauty of our region and the excellence of our choirs but also our shared vision to use our voices to build a better world.

We cannot wait to welcome you to Tacoma. Join us as we “Sing for a Change.”

Northwestern Region Conference Registration Information

Until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

Attendee \$335 Retired \$250 Student \$100

January 16 - March 7

Attendee \$360 Retired \$275 Student \$120

One Day \$180 **only available on site**

Register at acda.org/region-conferences

Headliner Concert/Opening Night Concert

Headliner Concert

All of Us: *Considering Matthew Shepherd*

Our headliner concert is a collaborative performance of Craig Hella Johnson's three-part fusion oratorio on the murder of Matthew Shepherd, featuring singers from Seattle University and the University of Washington; coaching by the composer, Craig Hella Johnson; staging design by Rod Caspers; and projections by visual artist Camilla Tassi. Composed on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of Matthew's death, the work premiered in 2016 by Conspirare and has been performed by hundreds of choirs around the world, leaving listeners hopeful and joyous while spreading a message of compassion and understanding.

Seattle University Chorale, Chamber Singers, and University Singers



Leann Conley-Holcom has served as director of choral and vocal activities at Seattle University since 2018, interim director of music from 2022 to 2023, and music program director starting in July 2023. Previously, Conley-Holcom was director of choral activities at Chabot College and led choirs for the Grammy Award-winning Pacific Boychoir Academy

and the Tacoma Youth Chorus. She presents workshops and master classes in schools throughout the region and is in demand as a clinician, adjudicator, presenter, and guest conductor. Recent guest conducting highlights include the Seattle Men's & Women's Chorus and the Shaoxing Philharmonic Children's Chorus in China.

University of Washington Chamber Singers



Geoffrey Boers is director of choral activities at the University of Washington in Seattle, a program widely recognized as forward thinking, unique, and of great distinction. Under his direction, the graduate choral program has developed a singular mission: to nurture the whole student as conductor-teacher-servant-leader-scholar. Boers maintains an active conducting, teaching, workshop, and clinic schedule, and in addition to his position at the UW, he sings professionally and is the conductor of the Tacoma Symphony Chorus, where he conducts both the choir and symphony players in a four-concert season.

University of Washington Chorale



Giselle Wyers is the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Professor of Choral Music at the University of Washington, where she conducts the award-winning University Chorale and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in choral conducting and music education.

Wyers is the newly appointed director of Concord Chamber Choir, an adult community chorus within the Columbia Choirs community. Her professional project choir, Solaris Vocal Ensemble, specializes in the performance of contemporary American choral literature. Wyers has guest conducted high school honor choirs and all-state choruses around the country, and she is a leading national figure in the application of Laban movement theory for conductors. Her choral works are published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing Company as part of the “Giselle Wyers Choral Series,” as well as with MusicSpoke and Hildegard Publishing.

Opening Night Concert

Northwest Sings

The NWACDA conference opens with Northwest Sings in the acoustically remarkable Lagerquist Concert Hall on the campus of Pacific Lutheran University. The evening includes a performance by the Portland State University Chamber Choir under the direction of Dr. Ethan Sperry, a collegiate showcase featuring each of the participating seven college choirs, and the combined NWACDA choir with more than 225 singers. The Combined Collegiate Choir will be under the direction of Dr. Tram Sparks, professor of practice at USC. The Combined Collegiate Chorus is performing a newly commissioned work by Saunder Choi with an original text by Brian Sonia-Wallace, titled, “Citizens of the Neon Republic.” The text, created in conjunction with ChatGTP, imagines a dystopian future where AI reigns. Paired with this new work is Brahms’s lament of the death of beauty, *Nänie*, and an arrangement of Vienna Teng’s “The Hymn of Axcion.”



Tram Sparks is a professor of practice at the USC Thornton School of Music and serves as Choral Music Department chair. She holds degrees in piano performance and an MM from Temple University and a DMA from Yale University. Prior appointments include the associate director of choral activities at Temple University, Boyer College of Music & Dance, and Dordt University. Sparks’s research interests include conducting technique rooted in modern dance theory and cheironomy’s forms and functions in contemporaneous early communities of worship. A child refugee of the Vietnam War, Sparks’s early musical training was in Okinawa, Japan, and subsequently, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Pre-College Division.

Headliner Concert/Opening Night Concert

Participating Choirs

University of Montana
Chamber Chorale
Conducted by Stevie J. Hirner

Eastern Washington University
Symphonic Choir
Conducted by Kristina Ploeger-Hekmatpanah

University of Portland
Singers
Conducted by David De Lyser

Shoreline Community College
Chamber Chorale
Conducted by Anjali Chudasama

Oregon State University
Chamber Choir
Conducted by Steven Zielke

Boise State University
Meistersingers
Conducted by Richard Hutton

Pacific Lutheran University
University Chorale
Conducted by Raul Dominguez

Special Events

Music in Worship Service

Break Forth, Sing Together!

This will be an eclectic event emphasizing singing together with a variety of music suitable for places of worship. Featured presenter Dr. Stephen Newby will lead a massed choir and audience in a community sing event based on the music of pioneer gospel musician Andrae Crouch. This portion of the event will be based on research for the 2025 book, *Soon and Very Soon: The Transformative Music and Ministry of Andrae Crouch*, coauthored by Newby and Robert Darden and published by Oxford University Press.



Stephen Michael Newby holds the Lev H. Prichard III Endowed Chair in the study of Black worship and professor of music and serves as ambassador for the Black Gospel Music Preservation Program at Baylor University. He formerly served as minister of worship at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA; and as director for the Center for African American Worship Studies at Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, TN. He held a tenured professor of music post at Seattle Pacific University, where he also served as director of university ministries, director for the Center for Worship, and senior advisor to the university president for missional excellence. Newby holds music degrees from Madonna University, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of Michigan, and an MA in theology from Seattle Pacific Seminary.

Encounter Choirs

Force of Nature: Singing and Resistance in the Baltic Region

A presentation of history, stories, and repertoire focusing on the importance of choral music in the Baltic region, the use of nature as a metaphor during times of censorship, and the vital role women played in the resistance movements. At the centerpiece of the session is the composition “Div’ dūjiņas gaisā skrēja” by Latvian composer Laura Jēkabsons. “Dedicated to the ‘Daughters of the Forest’—Latvian women who got involved in the partisan movement, which stood up against occupation and Soviet rule after World War II. Living in inhumane circumstances for many years, in a state of constant fear, hiding, and sacrificing themselves in the name of Freedom” (Jēkabsons). The audience will learn about the importance of singing in resistance and cultural identity in the Baltic and how women were and still are an integral part of those elements. New and rarely heard pieces by women-identifying composers from the Baltic region will also be showcased.

Māgi Ensemble



The Māgi Ensemble is a professional SA vocal ensemble that specializes in music from the Baltic region of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. We perform and record music from these countries and promote new choral works from Baltic women composers. Our vi-

sion is to use the power of music to connect with the community and continue to celebrate cultural heritage through the arts. Our philosophy as both a specialized repertoire ensemble and a treble ensemble is to demonstrate the effect music can have for empowerment, both in social responsibility and gender identity.



Heather MacLaughlin Garbes is affiliate assistant professor at the University of Washington, where she helped develop and maintains the UW Baltic Choral Library, the first collection of its kind in the United States. She is also founder and artistic director of the Māgi Ensemble. MacLaughlin Garbes has presented at ACDA national and region conferences, College Music Society’s national and international conferences, the Library of Congress, and the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies conferences. She coauthored the chapter “Baltic Languages: Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian” in the book *The Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal* (Scarecrow Press). She has conducted collegiate and community ensembles in Seattle, Chicago, and Houston.

Making Sense of the Squiggles: Building Blocks to Music Literacy

The choral score presents a complex array of musical symbols that can overwhelm developing musicians. Many young singers bypass this “complicated mess of squiggles” in favor of learning by ear. While rote learning is valuable, exclusive reliance on this method prevents singers from accessing the full interpretive possibilities that written scores provide. Jean-Marie Kent and Intermezzo from Seattle Children’s Chorus will demonstrate practical strategies and fun activities for teaching Western notation theory that is connected to the repertoire being studied. Through this Encounter Session, participants will gain a better understanding of why music literacy matters, will learn how to scaffold building blocks of pitch and rhythm, will develop

Encounter Choirs

techniques for making the score a dynamic part of the rehearsal for young singers, and will learn rehearsal techniques that enhance attention to the score.

Seattle Children's Chorus Intermezzo



Intermezzo, part of Seattle Children's Chorus, is a non-auditioned treble choir for singers in grades four through seven. Choristers rehearse once each week, performing in three main series concerts each year.

The Seattle Children's Chorus, founded by Kris Mason thirty-eight years ago, nurtures excellence in young musicians through performance of the finest choral music. Every rehearsal fosters musical development and personal growth through teamwork, friendships, community, and cross-cultural experiences.



Jean-Marie Kent is the artistic director of the Seattle Children's Chorus, conducting *Arioso* and *Intermezzo*. She also serves as the director of choirs at Holy Names Academy. Previously, she taught choir and vocal jazz at Roosevelt High School and directed the Magnolia Chorale, a community choir. Before moving to Seattle, Kent taught music on Vancouver Island and in New York City, where she developed public school music programs for gifted children. She earned her MM in conducting at McGill University in Montreal and her BME from the University of Regina. She has conducted orchestras and choirs such as the University of Regina Chamber Singers, the UW Women's Choir, Nanaimo Symphony Orchestra, and the Victoria Civic Orchestra.

Student Conducting Masterclass

Graduate and Undergraduate

Tram Sparks will be the clinician for the masterclass. Her photo and bio are on page 73.

Demonstration Choir

University of Montana Chamber Chorale

The University of Montana Chamber Chorale is the flagship choral ensemble of the University of Montana located in Missoula. Under the direction of Stevie J. Hirner, the ensemble performs ethically sourced and previously overlooked repertoire in addition to selections from the Western canon. Chamber Chorale was



a featured ensemble at the 2025 Montana International Choral Festival, where they collaborated with the LandesJugendChor Saar from Saarbrücken, Germany. The Chamber Chorale is excited to participate in the NWACDA Collegiate Showcase, where in addition to serving as the demonstration choir for the collegiate conducting masterclass, they will be the demo choir for Hirner's interest session, "We're Voice Teachers, Too!—Science-Informed Choral Pedagogy."



Stevie J. Hirner, DMA (she/her), is a choral conductor, composer, singer, and educator specializing in cultivating transgender and gender expansive inclusivity through empathetic practices and science-informed vocal pedagogy. As a transgender musician and one of the leading researchers in her field, Hirner is a lecturer at universities and regional, national, and international conferences to discuss her gender-inclusive methodology, "Line Recombination," and her science-informed "Flexible Fach Gender Affirming Singing Protocol." Hirner completed her DMA in choral music at the University of Southern California with secondary emphases in music theory/analysis, vocology, and gender and sexuality studies and has served as the director of choral activities at the University of Montana since 2024. Hirner also holds a BME from Auburn University and an MM in choral conducting from the University of Missouri.

A performance travel partner like no other.

Every trip begins with your vision, **customized** to your program and performers

Over **9,000** trips with **700,000** students to all **50** states and over **25** countries

BRT

Bob Rogers Travel

Making Moments That Matter

Call: **(800) 373-1423**
bobrogerstravel.com

We craft incredible travel experiences that allow you to share the world with your students.

Performing Choirs

Bellevue High School Bellairs



The Bellevue High School Bellairs is an award-winning vocal jazz ensemble open to high school students (grades nine through twelve) by audition. Accompanied by a rhythm section (piano, bass, drums, guitar), this ensemble meets daily before school and travels frequently to jazz festivals and workshops throughout the year. This group performs difficult literature ranging from four to twelve parts in a variety of styles, including swing, blues, Latin, and funk. This group is the most demanding of the choral ensembles at BHS. Students in Bellairs must be enrolled in a large music ensemble at BHS (band/choir/orchestra).



Andrew Jacobson is a composer, educator, conductor, and active pianist who is currently the director of choirs at Bellevue High School in Bellevue, Washington. He holds an advanced degree in music education from Boston University and a BME from the University of Washington. He is a Washington State solo and ensemble clinician for the male voice, small vocal ensembles, and large vocal ensembles. He is active as a choral festival clinician across Washington State. He is a proponent of and educator in teaching music literacy to junior high and high school choral students. As a composer, his works have gained popularity across the country and internationally.

BlueStreet Voices



BlueStreet Voices is a community jazz choir based in Seattle that was started by Ken Wilson over twenty years ago. They have also been led by Dave Cross and, since 2021, by Dave Barduhn. They comprise doctors, lawyers, accountants, business owners, teachers, retirees, and of course, moms and dads. Their literature includes jazz-inspired standards, blues, gospel, ballads, bebop, big band, Latin, and contemporary jazz. They present three anchor concerts yearly, including a holiday, an early spring (featuring a guest artist) and their season finale in June at Seattle's famous Triple Door. They also perform at local high schools, colleges, retirement homes, and jazz festivals.



Dave Barduhn received his education at Puccini Elementary, Buddy Rich JH, Count Basie HS, Sarah Vaughan CC, and the University of Stan Kenton. He has played piano for Ernie Andrews, Dianne Reeves, Diane Schuur, Mark Murphy, and several Stan Kenton alumni bands. Barduhn recently conducted all-state vocal jazz in California, Colorado, and Oklahoma. His extensive list of jazz band charts have been published with Hal Leonard, and his vocal jazz charts are published with Anchor Music Publications. After thirty years of teaching both vocal and instrumental jazz (his vocal jazz group Genesis receiving eight Downbeat awards and performing at ten national conventions while at Mt. Hood CC), he now directs BlueStreet Voices in Seattle and is available as a clinician.

Evergreen Ensemble



Evergreen Ensemble is a professional choir located in the greater Seattle area. Bringing together some of the finest singers in the PNW as well as from around the country, Evergreen uses choral music to explore a variety of voices and cultures and works to help change the ethics of art consumption in our communities by offering fair and equitable wages to artists for their enriching work at the highest level. Evergreen's programming focuses on ways to advocate for social causes like environmental care and to speak to universal human experiences such as grief and the search for community and hope. The ensemble is focused on preserving great works of the Western choral canon and has also highlighted and commissioned works from a variety of modern composers.



David Hendrix is a conductor, singer, and composer based in Edmonds, WA. He is the founder and artistic director of Evergreen Ensemble, a professional choir based in the PNW created to present choral music at the highest artistic level and to bring more professional singing opportunities to the region. He is also the director of music and worship at Edmonds United Methodist Church. As a freelance singer, he has been featured as a soloist and ensemble member with some of the region's premier vocal ensembles, including Cappella Romana, Byrd Ensemble, and the Tudor Choir, as well as The Benedict Sixteen Choir and the Grammy-nominated St. Tikhon Choir and Artefact Ensemble. He also recently entered the world of composing and arranging.

Gonzaga University Concert Choir



The Gonzaga University Concert Choir presents an eclectic repertoire spanning classical masterworks, contemporary pieces, and global choral literature. Annually, the choir collaborates with other university choral groups, performing both on campus and throughout the local community. In addition, the ensemble embarks on a regional tour of northwest high schools each year. Every two years, the choir expands its horizons with international travel—most recently touring Italy in 2023 and Germany in 2025.



Meg Stohlmann, DMA, is associate professor and director of choirs and vocal studies at Gonzaga University. She conducts the Musea Treble Chorus, Glee Club, and Concert Choir, and advises Big Bing Theory, the university's premier pop a cappella group. She also directs the Spokane Symphony Chorale. Previously she taught at Appalachian State University and in Lexington, Kentucky, leading her high school treble choir and children's choir to performances at the Kentucky music educators state conference. Stohlmann was one of six conductors selected for the 2023 ACDA International Conductors Exchange in Germany. She holds degrees from the University of Washington, University of Kentucky, and Sonoma State University.

Performing Choirs

Great Falls High School Delphian Choir



The Delphian Choir was incorporated into the music curriculum of Great Falls High School in 1958. They achieved regional and national acclaim through appearances at three MENC National and five MENC Northwest Division conferences under the conduction of long-time director Paul Ritter. The choir has also appeared on six Northwest ACDA Region conference programs, most recently in 2022. Delphian frequently collaborates with the Great Falls Symphony and the Electric City Choral Union, and commissions and works by prominent composers. The choir has twice been awarded the American Prize in Choral Performance, high school division second place.



Patrick Ryan is a choral director at Great Falls High School, where he leads a thriving program of seven choirs and over two hundred students. Ryan is a past president of Northwest ACDA Region and the Montana Choral Directors Association. He holds degrees from Pacific Lutheran University and Northern Arizona University. Choirs under Ryan's direction have appeared at five Northwest Region conferences and have commissioned and premiered works by composers Thomas LaVoy, Timothy Takach, and John Muehleisen. GFHS choirs recently performed Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Great Falls Symphony, as well as the Mozart *Requiem* with chamber orchestra and Eric Whitacre's *The Sacred Veil*.

In Medio



In Medio is a community of accomplished singers who make brave, relevant, and thoughtful music for everyone. Based in NE Portland, In Medio (Latin for "in the midst") was founded by John Eisemann in the fall of 2019. The thirty-six-member choir has been featured in Oregon Arts Watch, on All Classical Radio 89.9, and regularly commissions new works from local northwest composers. The choir produces four concert cycles per season, one of which (Sing, My Child) is dedicated to sharing the stage with local area high school choirs along with providing scholarships and mentorship for emerging singers. Through their pay-what-you-will ticket model, In Medio is committed to making choral music approachable and equitable.



John Eisemann has been the choir director at Grant High School since 2012. In 2019 he founded In Medio. He is also the artistic director of Evenstar Ensemble, a professional early music group specializing in Renaissance polyphony. Eisemann studied music education at Knox College and sang for eight seasons with the Portland Symphonic Choir, serving as interim artistic director in 2018. He has led Grant's chamber choir, the Royal Blues, on multiple local and international tours and has facilitated clinics for his students with world-renowned ensembles including Chanticleer, VOCES8, and The King's Singers. He has sung with the Byrd International Singers and Cappella Romana.

Lake Oswego High School A Cappella Choir



The Lake Oswego High School A Cappella Choir is the school's premier, mixed-voice, advanced choral ensemble consisting of students in grades ten through twelve. This auditioned group enjoys learning and performing choral music from a variety of time periods, styles, traditions, and cultures. They perform frequently throughout the year at school concerts and festivals around the state, and have recently enjoyed commissioning and premiering new choral works. The LOHS A Cappella Choir has earned superior ratings in both performance and sight reading, earning them second place in 2024 and first place in 2025 at the OSAA 6A State Choir Championships.



Tara Bamford is in her eleventh year of teaching and seventh year at Lake Oswego High School, where she directs five choirs and teaches AP music theory. Her love for choral music flourished at Wheaton College (IL), where she sang in multiple ensembles, accompanied choirs, and earned a BM in piano performance. Additionally, Bamford holds an MME from Arizona State University. Under her direction, choirs and ensembles have consistently placed at league, district, and state levels, and have been selected to perform at the Oregon MEA conference. In 2025 she led the LOHS A Cappella Choir to earn the state title. She is passionate about empowering young musicians and strives to foster empathy, curiosity, joy, and leadership in her choral program.

Les Bois Junior High School Improv



Improv is an auditioned ensemble of thirty-one talented eighth and ninth graders and one of three choirs at Les Bois Junior High. The group has earned recognition with invitations to perform at the ID-ACDA Conference (2019), the Idaho MEA Conference (2023), and at various venues across Boise, Idaho. The Les Bois choral program also includes the Vivace Treble Choir and Bravo Tenor/Bass Choir, providing a rich and inclusive musical experience for students of all backgrounds and voice types.



Cassie Horner is a Boise School District graduate and director of choirs at Les Bois Junior High, her alma mater, now in her eighth year. With fourteen years of teaching experience, she started as a music specialist at Desert Sage Elementary in West Ada. Horner holds a BME from Idaho State University and a master's in educational leadership from Boise State University. Her choirs have performed at Idaho's ACDA fall conference and IMEA annual conference, and her students have been selected for ID-ACDA, IMEA, and NWACDA honor choirs. She has served as secretary for Idaho ACDA, chaired the Idaho MEA's DEIAB committee, is Building Belonging Lead, and sits on the boards of directors for Boise and Idaho Education Associations, chairing the IEA's LGBTQ+ Caucus. She enjoys life with her husband, cat, and two dogs.

Performing Choirs

Northwest Choirs Northwest Boychoir



The Northwest Boychoir, founded in 1974, is a cornerstone of Seattle's cultural landscape. As part of Northwest Choirs along with Vocalpoint! Seattle, it provides exceptional music education and performance opportunities to boys aged six through eighteen from across the Puget Sound region. Its members perform regularly with esteemed organizations such as the Seattle Symphony, Seattle Opera, and Music of Remembrance, and have contributed to major film and video game soundtracks. The Northwest Boychoir has also served as the official "Singing Ambassadors" of Washington State, showcasing the rich musical talent of the region.



Jacob Winkler is the artistic director of Northwest Choirs, an organization he has been part of since childhood. A former chorister with the Northwest Boychoir and Vocalpoint! Seattle, he toured internationally and performed with the Seattle Symphony and Seattle Opera. From 2009 to 2022 he led the Seattle Girls Choir, earning international accolades and commissioning numerous new works. Winkler teaches conducting, orchestration, and music notation at the Pacific Northwest Film Scoring Program and works professionally as a vocalist and music copyist. He holds a master's degree in instrumental conducting from the University of Washington, where he studied with Tim Salzman and the late Peter Erös.

Pioneer Middle School Advanced Treble Choir



The Advanced Treble Choir of Pioneer Middle School is located in DuPont, WA. This auditioned choir comprises singers in grades seven and eight. This small middle school of 760 students is located within the Steilacoom Historical School District. The Advanced Treble Choir is an auditioned group that sings music ranging from unison to SSAA. They have earned superior and superior plus ratings at regional solo ensemble contest and large group choir festivals. In 2015 this group was selected to perform at the WMEA State Conference, and in 2018 they performed at the NW WMEA Conference.



Katie Elshire is in her thirtieth year of teaching and has taught at Pioneer Middle School for ten years. She holds a bachelor's in secondary choral education from Pacific Lutheran University. Elshire was honored with the Middle Level Educator of the Year Award by Washington MEA in 2018 and the Outstanding Educator Award by the Mountain Region MEA in 2024. Under her direction, the Advanced Treble Choir and Tenor/Baritone Choir were selected in 2015, 2016, and 2018 for the WMEA state and NW WMEA conferences. Elshire conducted the 2023 Eastshore MS Honor Choir and the 2024 Kenai Peninsula Middle School Choir in Homer, Alaska.

Portland State University Chamber Choir



The Portland State Chamber Choir was called “amongst the finest choirs in the world” by *Classics Today*. They are the only American choir to have won the Seghizzi International Competition for Choral Singing in Italy (2013) and the Bali International Choral Festival in Indonesia (2017). Their 2017 album *The Doors of Heaven* is the only album by a university chorus to hit number one on the Billboard Classical Chart, and their 2020 release *Translations* was named an Album of the Year by both Gramophone and Stereophile. In 2022 they represented the United States at the World Choral Exposition in Portugal.



Ethan Sperry is the Barre Stoll Professor of Choral Music at Portland State University, Gil Seeley Artistic Director and conductor of the Oregon Repertory Singers, and editor of the Global Rhythms series

for earthsongs music, one of the best-selling choral series in the world. Choirs under his direction have performed at over a dozen ACDA and NAfME conferences and toured over twenty foreign countries. Sperry has been a frequent guest conductor for composer A. R. Rahman and serves as a consultant for the KM Music Conservatory in Chennai, the first classical music school in India, which opened in 2009.

Seattle Pro Musica Orpheon



Orpheon, the TTBB ensemble of Seattle Pro Musica, has been recognized throughout their fifty-three-year history for the caliber of their programming and performances. They’ve received the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence and the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming, and they were ranked as “among America’s very best choirs” by *American Record Guide*. They’ve received international acclaim for their CD recordings and live performances, and have appeared by invitation at numerous international and national festivals.



Karen P. Thomas has conducted at international festivals in Europe and North America, and has received awards from the NEA, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and ASCAP, among others. With Seattle Pro Musica, she received the Margaret Hillis Award and the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming. For her leadership in multiple areas, including making choral ensembles welcoming spaces for transgender and nonbinary singers, she received the 2018 Seattle Mayor’s Arts Award. She was also named the Washington State Outstanding Choral Director. An award-winning composer, her music is regularly performed internationally by groups such as The Hilliard Ensemble, The Vocal Consort of Brussels, NOTUS, and Cathedra of the Washington National Cathedral.

Performing Choirs

Steilacoom High School Advanced Treble Choir



The Steilacoom High School Advanced Treble Choir is an auditioned ensemble of twenty-four to thirty treble singers in grades ten through twelve. Steilacoom High School (Steilacoom, WA) is a 2A high school in the Steilacoom Historical School District and serves 950 students. Advanced Treble Choir is active in their local community through collaborations with community choirs, feeder schools, and universities. Over the past ten years, they have earned superior ratings at regional large group contests. Advanced Treble Choir has placed in multiple recent years at the WMEA/WIAA state solo and ensemble contest (including first place in 2023 and third place in 2024).



Kasey Eck is the director of choirs at Steilacoom High School in Steilacoom, WA. She completed her undergraduate studies at Western Washington University and her master's in choral conducting at the University of Oregon. Under Eck's direction, the Advanced Treble Choir and Tenor-Bass Ensemble earned first place at state solo and ensemble in 2023 and 2024. Other highlights include performing at Carnegie Hall in 2017 and 2024 with her Chamber Choir. She was recognized by Washington ACDA with the Outstanding Emerging Choral Director Award and received the Graduate Employee Teaching Excellence Award in 2020. She has served as the treble choir R&R chair on the WA-ACDA board, the choral curriculum officer with the WMEA executive board, and is currently on the board of directors for Tacoma Youth Chorus.

West Salem High School Choir of the Titans



The West Salem High School Choir, located in Salem, Oregon, was established in 2002 and has consistently epitomized musical excellence. Renowned within the Salem community and the state of Oregon, West's choirs have showcased their talent at numerous music festivals, earning accolades for their performances both locally and nationally. Beyond that, the choirs have received invitations to showcase their passion at music conferences and workshops. West is excited to continue performing for others outside of their community and to create relationships with other choirs and music admirers.



Cole Haole-Valenzuela was raised in Salem, Oregon, where he was involved in various Salem-Keizer performing arts programs. He graduated from Sprague High School and attended Oregon State University, where he earned a BME and a music education master of art in teaching. While serving on various NFHS, OSAA, and OMEA boards as a music representative, Haole-Valenzuela has consistently strived to amplify student voices and guide discussions toward decisions that prioritize what is best for kids. He has been presented the Emerging Conductor Award from Oregon ACDA (2019), the Outstanding Early Career Music Educator Award from OMEA, the NFHS Outstanding Music Educator Award (2023), the Oregon Symphony Music Educator of the Year Award (2024), and was named one of the 50 Music Teachers Who Make a Difference in *SBO+* Magazine.

Whitworth University The Whitworth Choir



The Whitworth Choir is regarded as one of the premier university choirs in the Pacific Northwest and continues to build upon a ninety-year heritage of fine choral singing. The members of this award-winning choir represent a variety of academic majors, commit themselves to daily rehearsals, and celebrate the joy

of singing and community through the study and performance of a wide variety of music. The Whitworth Choir has performed by invitation at Northwest ACDA Region and NAFME. Repertoire selection ranges from chamber music to orchestral-choral works. The choir was named the winner of The American Prize in Choral Performance in 2024.



Xiaosha Lin serves as the director of choral activities at Whitworth University and is a conductor, adjudicator, and choral clinician in both the United States and China. Known as a dynamic conductor with her efficient and engaging rehearsal approach, her choirs are often given praises such as: “sang with strength, beauty, creativity, and such musicality.” Under her direction, The Whitworth Choir was named the winner of the 2024 American Prize in Choral Performance. Lin received graduate degrees in choral conducting from Michigan State University, Westminster Choir College, and Hong Kong Baptist University.



2026 ACDA Northwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

A Cornucopia of Carnatic Curriculum

The choral canon is changing! Composers like Reena Esmail and Shruthi Rajasekar are writing wonderful music influenced by Hindustani (North Indian) and Carnatic (South Indian) traditions, and their music is increasingly popular with choirs of all ages. Our choir embarked on a year-long exploration of South Asian music through multiple lenses; we learned from choral composers as well as from local culture bearers, and we are eager to share what choristers learned while giving suggestions on how to replicate this project or

similar ones. This session explores several possible paths into South Asian music: from the choral perspective and from the Carnatic perspective. We will introduce the art of *konnakol* (vocal percussion), *swaras* (improvisatory solfège), traditional songs appropriate for beginner musicians of all ages, and Bharatanatyam dance.



Ethan Chessin teaches choir, songwriting, and music production at Camas High School. His expertise in producing major collaborative premieres has earned his choirs invitations to record and perform alongside Portugal. The Man, Stanley Jordan, Y La Bamba, AU, Michael Allen Harrison, Bright Moments,

Interest Sessions

Kingdom Sound, Trio Tsuica, Carpathian-Pacific Express, and many others. Chessin was a 2025 Grammy Music Educator Award finalist, a 2023 and 2025 Country Music Association Music Teacher of Excellence, and a 2018 Give A Note Foundation Music Educator Innovator Award winner. In his previous life, he performed alongside Pink Martini, opened for Gwen Stefani, and was featured on the soundtrack of the Pixar film *Monsters University*.

A Voice from the Piano: Conductor-Pianist Collaboration

This session will explore the immense power of the conductor-accompanist relationship and its effect on developing your ensemble. As conductor and pianist codevelop a collaborative model, shared teaching in conducting, vocal pedagogy, artistry, technique, and leadership becomes possible. This session will discover ways in which a conductor can encourage and help develop a collaborative relationship with the accompanist—no matter the level—and utilize keyboard skills and aural skills to a greater degree. In addition, session attendees will discover tricks of the trade: ways in which a collaborative pianist can help the choir with rhythm, tuning, onsets, sight singing, and vocal pedagogy.



Amy Boers is well known as a collaborative pianist, music director, singer, and church musician. She currently holds positions at Pacific Lutheran University, Symphony Tacoma Voices (pianist and assistant rehearsal conductor), and is director of music at Mountain View Lutheran Church. Her work at PLU varies between rehearsal pianist for three choral ensembles, opera workshop, accompanying and coaching private students, team-teaching theater courses, and she is resident music director in PLU's theater and dance department. As a conductor, Boers has led regional honor choirs and coached developing choral conductors from across the Western Hemisphere at the

annual Cascade Conducting Workshop in Tacoma. As a true collaborative artist known for her deep insight and “getting inside the conductor’s head,” she provides feedback through the special lens of accompanist, singer, and conductor combined.

An Ethic of Care in Choral Music Education

Nel Noddings taught that caring should be the foundation of every K–12 education and that our primary responsibility as educators is to model caring behavior, engage students in dialogue, give opportunities to practice, and acknowledge progress when it occurs. Undergraduate music education majors often talk about engaging repertoire, inspiring mentors, lifelong friends, and unforgettable memories. Too often, they speak also of erratic teachers who demonstrate a sincere dislike for teaching. This session, copresented by two undergraduate students, will share strategies for establishing an ethic of care in the choral ensemble. Examples will come from work with the Pocatello Women's Correctional Choir. This session includes survey results from 150 undergraduate choral students; resources from Fred Rogers, François Clemmons, and others; and information about how to start a prison choir.



Jeffrey Francom is director of choral activities at Idaho State University, where he also serves as artistic director of Pocatello's Camerata Singers, the Pocatello Women's Prison Choir, and the Idaho International Choral Festival. From 2009 to 2024, he taught at SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music. Prior to '09 he directed the Stony Brook Camerata Singers and Babylon Chorale, and taught at Suffolk County Community College and Duval Public Schools. Recent professional engagements have included premieres for chorus and orchestra by Rollo Dilworth, Gary Fry, William Averitt, and Shavon Lloyd; chorus master for JoAnn Falletta, Duain Wolfe, Ann Howard Jones, and

Helmuth Rilling; for performances at Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; and international performing tours of Costa Rica, Spain, Germany, France, Peru, Argentina, and Czechia.

Appropriation or Collaboration? Programming World Music

Are you interested in programming world music repertoire but unsure of how to select and teach pieces while avoiding cultural appropriation? In this session, we will discuss concepts of authenticity, cultural validity, appropriation, and collaboration as they relate to world music repertoire in the choral ensemble. The

presenter will introduce a checklist for selecting choral arrangements of world music pieces and a brainstorming worksheet for how to teach and rehearse world music for choirs based on research and practitioner articles. Participants will use the checklist to evaluate sample octavos for cultural validity, cultural bias, and practicality. Participants will then discuss how to introduce and rehearse sample pieces with their ensembles in ways that engage cultural collaboration and avoid cultural appropriation.

Austin Norrid will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 58.

EMU MUSIC'S NEWEST MAJOR

MUSIC & PEACEBUILDING

**INNOVATIVE MAJOR
THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND**

Access to the world-renowned Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and its faculty

Join a growing and thriving network of practitioners and researchers

COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

LEARN MORE!

EMU

THEY TRY TO BURY US

Interest Sessions

Culturally Responsive Music Programming for Secondary Choirs

Repertoire selection is a critical part of the work of a secondary choral music educator, but it can feel time consuming, costly, and increasingly fraught as we seek to break down systemic biases our music libraries perpetuate. This session will define important terms related to culturally responsive music programming, provide an overview of current best practices, and provide directors with two practical tools for programming in their own work: a template for tracking music selections that creates a culture-focused overview of the pieces they are programming, and a guiding framework of probing questions to ensure music selections are culturally responsive. Identity groups addressed include racial/ethnic minority groups, the LGBTQ+ community, religious beliefs and practices, communities of persons with disabilities, and others.



Emily McKinney is the choir director at Mead High School in Spokane, WA, where she has taught for seven years. Her teaching style and outlook have been profoundly impacted by the uncertain climate in which her career began and the changes that both she and her students have undergone: from A-day/B-day masked choir nine feet apart during 2020, to publicly coming out to her community as bisexual (and her wife as transgender) in a conservative city with a volatile political climate. These experiences have given her a passion for serving LGBTQ+ and other marginalized students in her community through her classroom teaching, SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance), and Hope Squad (a peer-to-peer mental health assistance program). She earned her master's in curriculum and instruction from WGU in 2024.

Do, Re, But What About Mi? Centering Singer Identity

This session explores a shift in mindset: from focusing solely on the music to fostering a rehearsal culture built on student motivation, emotional connection, and belonging. Drawing from student voices and supported by practical strategies, participants will discover how to lead with empathy and imagination. Learn how solfège-based literacy techniques and reflective leadership can help create rehearsals that not only build skills but also identity, connection, and change in your singers...and in yourself!

Ryan Beeken will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 68.

Enhancing Rehearsals and Performances Through Movement

Singing is an art form that engages the whole person. This is a collaborative session between the presenter and Samuel Booth's high school chorus from Bellarmine Preparatory School. This session reminds the body of what it did naturally through movement rehearsal techniques as an aid to our singers' vocal development for performance. Attendees will learn said rehearsal techniques that can be used immediately with their ensembles, followed by a live demonstration with Bellarmine's singers utilizing accessible repertoire. Attendees will also participate alongside Bellarmine's singers. The strategies provided allow ensembles to build community by working together and invite singers to develop a full-bodied tone for performance.



Raul Dominguez is the associate director of choral studies at Pacific Lutheran University in the Tacoma, WA, area, where he conducts the University Chorale (mixed), University Singers (treble), teaches three levels of conducting, and repertoire and

rehearsal techniques for secondary choral music education majors. Dominguez earned a DMA in choral conducting and literature from CU Boulder, an MM from Ithaca College, and a BM in education and vocal performance from Oklahoma City University. He previously taught at Clear Lake High School for four years in his hometown of Houston, TX, after graduating with a BM in music education and vocal performance from Oklahoma City University.

From Chaos to Choir: Building a Program that Works

In this session, Lesli Olson shares practical strategies for building a strong middle school choir program—starting with culture, not just cutoffs. With over two decades of experience in K–12 music, she offers real-world solutions for sight reading, behavior management, and developing confident singers. Learn how to create warm-up routines that build connection, give students ownership in repertoire, and structure your week to keep kids learning and engaged. You will leave with tools, ideas, and a whole lot of reassurance.



Lesli Olson is a twenty-two-year music educator with experience teaching Orff-based elementary music, high school choir, and (her favorite) middle school choir. She holds Orff Levels I & II, Kodály Level I, and extensive Dalcroze training. After eleven years in classroom music and seven years in high school choir, she realized her true passion is preparing middle schoolers with the confidence, skill, and musicality she once wished her high school singers had. Her rehearsals blend structure and spontaneity, serious musicianship, and joyful connection. Olson believes in student voice, flexible routines, and creating a safe space where kids feel seen, capable, and excited to sing.

From “Next” to “Welcome!” — Equitable Auditions for a New Era

We are in the midst of a long overdue effort to increase diverse representation in choirs across America. Yet, there is an area in our field that continues to be overlooked: the audition process. How can we build on the progress we’ve made and work to increase diverse representation in our select, auditioned choirs? This session will examine frequently assessed audition criteria and propose adaptations for a more equitable audition process. Although auditions were never designed to be inherently inclusive, that doesn’t mean we can’t take steps to make them more equitable. Together, we can implement audition criteria that affirm, welcome, and celebrate the wide spectrum of musical aesthetics and lived experiences that our prospective musicians bring to the table and, ideally, to our choral ensembles.

Katy Green will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 31.

How to Jazz When You’ve Never Jazzed Before

This session is for choral directors who want to start a jazz choir—or suddenly find themselves leading one—but aren’t sure where to begin. We’ll break down the essentials of vocal jazz in an accessible, encouraging way, covering key stylistic elements, rehearsal techniques, and concepts like swing feel, jazz harmony, and scat singing. Learn how to use tools you already have to choose repertoire, work with rhythm sections, and guide students through improvisation and performance practice. With practical tips and resources, you’ll leave confident and ready to start jazzing—even if you’ve never jazzed before.



Steve Danielson is a father, musician, educator, composer, and podcaster—in that order. He received a BA in voice from BYU, a master’s in choral conducting at



Interest Sessions

the University of Memphis, and a doctorate in choral conducting at the University of Washington. He has been in music education for nearly twenty years and enjoys every bit of it, even when days get hard. He has conducted church choirs almost everywhere he has lived since the late 90s. Danielson's choral compositions have been performed throughout the United States as well as internationally. Since 2023 he and his wife, Angi, have lived in Meridian, ID, with their rapidly shrinking family. They have seven children, most of them grown, and one grandson.

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? Refresh your choral director toolkit by exploring tips and ideas from various master choral music educators who teach adolescent singers. Be ready to move and sing!



Lynn M. Brinckmeyer recently retired as professor of music, associate dean of the College of Fine Arts, and communication and director of choral music education at Texas State University. During 2006 to 2008 she served as president for NAFME. Brinckmeyer has published five books, and her research initiatives continue to focus on developing young voices, music from across the globe, and music advocacy. She has conducted all-state choirs, honor choirs, lectured, presented master classes, and performed in forty-nine states and over twenty-five countries, including China, Brazil, South Africa, Cuba, Peru, and Australia. Brinckmeyer continues to serve as a choral clinician and mentor teachers and other professionals as a life mastery certified coach/consultant.

MusicSpoke Reading Session

MusicSpoke will present a reading session of new and exciting works focused on composers who live in the Pacific Northwest. You'll find new pieces for your ensembles and interact with the composers who created the works.



Kurt Knecht is a composer and keyboardist living in Kansas City, Missouri. His compositions have been described as "funky" and "joyous" in the *Washington Post*, and "brilliant in concept" in *The Tracker* magazine. His music has been performed at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Kimmel Center and by Grammy Award-winning groups like the KC Chorale and the Washington Chorale. His music has been performed at the national conventions of ACDA, the Organ Historical Society, ClarinetFest, the National Flute Association, and the Association of British Choral Directors. He has been featured on the American Public Media program "Pipedreams" multiple times as a composer and performer. Knecht has been a featured soloist with groups ranging from Smokey Robinson to The Florida Orchestra.

One Voice: Vocal Pedagogy Ideas for Solo and Choral Singing

We each sing with just one voice, but we use it very differently depending on what genre we're singing and with whom we're singing. Join a voice teacher and choral conductor as we dive into the similarities and differences between teaching solo and ensemble singing. We'll explore the science of resonance, breath, phrasing, tone, diction, style, vocal health, movement, and more in a way that is accessible to all teachers. With a healthier knowledge of vocal pedagogy, we can all teach our students healthy singing concepts regardless of whether they're singing alone or in a large group.

Learn how to help your students understand the role of their voices and find freedom and balance no matter where or how they sing!



Matthew Myers serves as associate director of choral activities at Washington State University, where he conducts the University Singers and Treble Choir and teaches choral methods, conducting, and vocal pedagogy. He earned his DMA in choral conducting at Louisiana State University, MM in choral conducting from Northern Arizona University, and BA in vocal performance/music education from Luther College. Prior to his time at WSU, he taught choir at The American International School of Muscat in Oman; Boylan Catholic High School in Rockford, Illinois; and the University of Alabama. He conducts the Palouse Choral Society and cohosts the *Choir Fam* pod-

cast. He serves ACDA as the Northwest Region membership chair and as a member of Washington ACDA's Diversity Initiatives Committee.



Alisa Toy is an award-winning coloratura soprano who hails an impressive thirty-year performing and teaching career. Internationally, Toy soloed in Great Britain, Canada, Pakistan, and Italy, including a concert for Pope Benedict XVI with the Rome Symphony Orchestra. She works as lecturer in voice at Washington State University. She currently serves as the assistant conductor of the Palouse Choral Society and served as the artistic director for the Columbus Choral Society for seven years. She holds an MM in vocal performance and choral conducting from the University of Idaho and a BME from Mississippi University for Women. She taught K-12 music in public

RENEW & REFINE

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Choral Studies

choirs.music.txst.edu

GRADUATE STUDIES IN CHORAL MUSIC

Fall/Spring Enrollment

Conducting Assistantships

Extensive Podium Time

TXST/Conspirare Choral Conducting Symposium

July 20-23, 2026

Conductors | Choral Artists
Choral Enthusiasts

Summers Only in 3 Years

Master of Music in Choral Conducting

Master of Music Education

Impactful Engagement

3 Week Annual Residency

Interest Sessions

and private schools and currently teaches voice and piano through her private studio, Singingtoy Studio.

Secondary Trauma Stress and the Choral Director

Teachers often find themselves in the role of counselors, supporting not only students' academic growth but also students' emotional healing. The stress teachers incur working with students who have experienced trauma is known as secondary trauma. Dr. Lynn Ryan's research study examined the impacts of secondary trauma stress on the emotional health of secondary choral directors in the Pacific Northwest. This session will highlight the results of her study as well as resources that can support teachers in their own emotional health dealing with secondary trauma stress.



Lynn Ryan teaches instrumental and choral music in Great Falls, Montana. She taught K–12 music in rural Montana for five years and was lead choral director at C. M. Russell High School from 2011 to 2022, directing the Chanteur Choir at four Northwest Region performances. Ryan now teaches elementary instrumental music in Great Falls and has founded a nonprofit choral arts organization, the Electric City Choral Union. She has served on the Northwest ACDA board, organizes the MCDA Central Montana Youth Sing, and enjoys guest conducting and adjudicating. She earned a BME in choral music (Pacific Lutheran University), an MM in choral conducting (Northern Arizona University), and an EdD in educational leadership (Saint Leo University).

Step Up Your Game: Revitalize the Community in Your Classroom

In this dynamic and engaging session, you will discover powerful strategies for revitalizing the sense of

community in your choral classroom. Whether you're a seasoned educator or new to teaching, this session is designed to help you foster an environment where students feel connected, valued, and excited to participate. We'll explore methods for developing inclusive and interactive classroom activities that promote teamwork, mutual respect, and creativity. You'll also gain insights into effective classroom management strategies that keep students engaged and motivated. By focusing on creating a positive, supportive environment, you'll help students develop not only as musicians but also as individuals who feel connected to one another and to the music they create together.



Jennifer Kercher is the choir director at Walker Middle School, located in the Salem-Keizer School District. Prior to teaching at Walker, her twenty-two-year career has seen her at Crossler Middle School, Silverton High School, Mark Twain Middle School, and North Salem High School. Kercher serves as the OMEA D4 choral chair and the Oregon ACDA middle school R&R cochair. She was the 2023 recipient of the OMEA Outstanding Middle School Music Educator Award. A Silverton native, Kercher completed her undergraduate work at Western Oregon University and her graduate work at George Fox University. She shares her love of music and performing with her supportive husband, Jedidiah, and two amazing children, Elijah and Liliana.



Becca Hollen has been teaching choir in the Salem Keizer School District for thirteen years and currently teaches at Whiteaker Middle School. She earned her BME from George Fox University and her MAT. In 2015 she was presented with Music Educator of the Year by the Oregon Symphony Association, and in 2016 she was presented with a Crystal Apple Award by the Salem Keizer Education Foundation. Her choirs received consecutive championship trophies at multiple festivals. She is passionate about empowering middle school students to be impressive young adults that surprise the adult world with their

maturity and professionalism. She is the mother of two lively little boys.

Vocal and Mental Wellness: Cultivating Long-Term Well-being

This session focuses on vocal and mental wellness for choral music educators led by presenters familiar with vocal fatigue and burnout/vicarious trauma. Attendees will gain practical resources, coping strategies, and guidance on when to seek professional help. There will be hands-on activities to identify stressors (burnout, vicarious trauma, vocal fatigue) and find support resources within attendees' schools or communities, including contact information/directories for medical professionals and voice-care resources. We invite you to come with questions and specific challenges to workshop together.



Olivia Salzman-Coon holds a PhD in music education from the University of Oregon, an MME from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a BME from the University of Oregon. Salzman-Coon has taught general music, band, and choir from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade in Oregon. She has presented at multiple OMEA conferences and at the national NAfME and Northwest ACDA Region conferences, and has published in the *Choral Journal* with Dr. Kendra Taylor.



Kendra Taylor is director of choral education at Western Oregon University. Taylor holds a PhD in music education from the University of Oregon, a master's in teaching, and a BM from Southern Oregon University. Before working as a graduate teaching assistant at the UO, she taught concert choir (2018–2020) and choral methods (2020–2021) at Southern Oregon University. She has taught bands, choirs, and orchestras at the elementary and high school levels. She has presented at multiple OMEA conferences and at the National NAfME and Northwest ACDA Region

conferences, and has published in the *Choral Journal* with Dr. Olivia Salzman-Coon.



Melissa Brunkan, Women's Choral Society conductor as of fall 2021, brings twenty-five years of experience as an active clinician, conductor, and vocal pedagogue. Currently associate professor of vocal/choral music education at the University of Oregon, she conducts the University Singers choir and teaches courses on conducting, vocal pedagogy, choral teaching methods, and teaching in higher education. Brunkan has taught a wide range of singers in choirs and private voice work, teaching students from pre-K through adult.

We're Voice Teachers Too! Science-Informed Choral Pedagogy

This is an interactive session designed to share and reinforce current science-informed vocal pedagogy essential to choral ensembles. Often, the vocal pedagogy presented in choirs is outdated, rooted in a Western classical master-apprentice model that may not be supported by modern vocology, or not applicable when performing music outside of the Western canon. Because of this, there are many misnomers used by choir directors that may be unhelpful, inaccurate, or even detrimental to the ensemble's progress or the singers' vocal development across all styles. To examine the science behind these misconceptions, volunteers will have the opportunity to lead a warm up of their choosing in order to explore a more effective means of achieving their desired outcome in any genre or style through the application of science-informed practices.

Stevie J. Hirner will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 77.

Spotlight Reading Sessions

Reading sessions curated for every level to help attendees find repertoire to address educational and artistic goals.

Artistry Without Compromise: Accessible Repertoire for K-12 Choirs

Presenters: Chris Maunu,
R&R Chair for Children and Youth Community
Choirs, and
Aubrey Patterson,
R&R Youth Choirs Coordinator

Creating Community with Song

Presenter: David Dickau,
R&R Chair for Composition/Composers

Creating New Opportunities for Tenor/Bass Singers

Presenter: Alonso Brizuela,
R&R Chair for Tenor/Bass Choirs

Feel it in Your Bones: Music with Body Percussion, Movement, and Intention

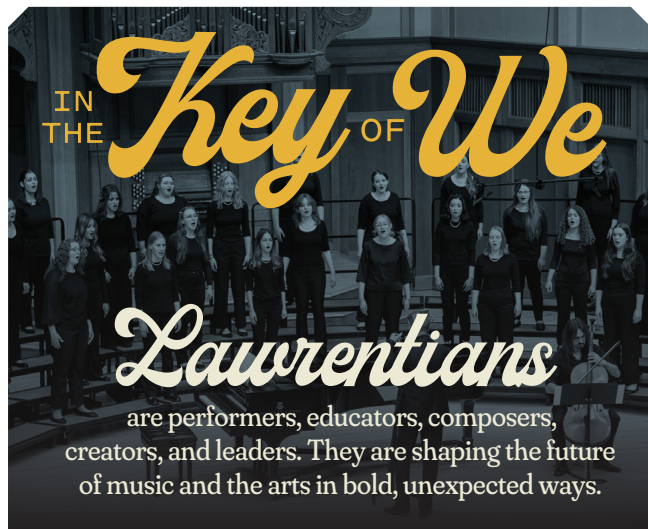
Presenters: Jordan Lee,
R&R Chair for High School Choirs, and
Aubrey Patterson,
R&R Youth Choirs Coordinator

The Frugal Conductor's Survival Guide

Presenter: Raul Dominguez,
R&R Chair for 4-year College & University Choirs

Rooted and Reaching: Repertoire for Growing Choirs

Presenters: Chloe Eklof,
R&R Chair for Middle/Junior High Choirs, and
Aubrey Patterson,
R&R Youth Choirs Coordinator



are performers, educators, composers, creators, and leaders. They are shaping the future of music and the arts in bold, unexpected ways.

WE ARE LAWRENCE.
NOT JUST LEARNING MUSIC,
REDEFINING IT.

lawrence.edu/conservatory



LAWRENCE
UNIVERSITY
APPLETON, WISCONSIN



**Sing, Swing, and Start Somewhere:
Secrets for Crafting a Great Vocal Jazz Set**

Presenter: Mike Scott,
R&R Chair for Vocal Jazz Choirs

**Repertoire & Resources
for Cross-Cultural Collaborations**

Presenter: Erin Guinup,
R&R Chair for World Musics & Cultures

Untried Yet True:

**Lesser-Known Jewels for Treble Choirs with Ideas
for Teaching Empowering Treble Singers
with Repertoire**

Presenter: Angie Kasper,
R&R Chair for Soprano/Alto & Treble Choirs



2026 ACDA Northwestern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

4th-7th Grade Children and Community Youth



Maria A. Ellis is an acclaimed conductor, music educator, and media personality whose work blends artistry, scholarship, and community engagement. She serves as artistic director for The Sheldon's All-

Star Chorus and the University of Missouri–St. Louis Voices of Jubilation Ensemble. Ellis is the owner of Girl Conductor LLC, which provides innovative music education resources worldwide. She is chair of the Choral Music Council for NAfME and a board member for Chorus America. She earned her BME from the University of Missouri–St. Louis and her MA in choral conducting from Webster University. Her work has been recognized with multiple awards for innovation, artistry, and community impact. She is also the host of the award-winning radio programs *Bach & Beyoncé* and *American Gospel* with Maria A. Ellis.

6th - 8th Grade Middle School



Victor C. Johnson, a native of Dallas, Texas, is school choral editor for SING!, the educational publishing division of Choristers Guild. He has over 350 published choral works, vocal solo books,

and keyboard collections. He earned his music education degree with an organ concentration from the University of Texas at Arlington, where he served as student conductor and opera workshop accompanist. From 2000 to 2018 he directed choirs at the Ft. Worth Academy of Fine Arts, including the Academy Singers, Academy Men's Choir, and the Singing Girls and Children's Choirs of Texas. Johnson has led all-state and honor choirs across the United States. His choirs have performed at TMEA (2011, 2014) and Southwest ACDA Region (2016). Since 2007, he has served as minister of worship and arts at Shiloh Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.



SING MARCH 4-7, 2026
for a Change TACOMA, WASH.

2026 ACDA Northwestern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

9-10 Grade SATB



Jeffery Redding is director of choral activities at the University of Central Florida and the 2019 Grammy Music Educator Award recipient. He has led choirs at national, regional, and state

ACDA conferences, earning top honors at prestigious festivals worldwide. A sought-after guest conductor and speaker, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Sydney Opera House, and major sporting events such as the 2024 and 2025 Pro Bowls and the 2025 Super Bowl. Redding is a conductor for Walt Disney World's Candlelight Processional and Harmonious Live! He founded the Winter Garden Community Choir and the Orlando Choral Society, and serves as worship arts director at Tuskawilla UMC. He holds degrees from The Florida State University and Florida A&M University and is active in leadership roles with ACDA.

11th-12th Grade Soprano-Alto



Lynne Gackle, Professor Emeritus of Music at Baylor University, served as director of choral activities, chair of the ensemble division, and held the Mary Gibbs Jones Chair of Music. She previously taught at

the University of South Florida, University of Mississippi, and University of Miami (FL), earning degrees from LSU (BME) and the University of Miami (MM, PhD). An active clinician and conductor nationally and internationally, Gackle is past national president of ACDA and has held multiple regional leadership roles. She is editor of *Choral Artistry for the Singer* and the *Lynne Gackle Choral Series*, and author of *Finding Ophelia's Voice*, *Opening Ophelia's Heart*. Her honors include Baylor's Outstanding Faculty Award in Research, TCDA Texas Choir Masters Award, MacPherson Prize, and the Frost Centennial Medal.

9th-12th Grade Jazz



Greg Jasperse, world-renowned composer, arranger, vocalist, and pianist, is director of vocal jazz at Western Michigan University and leads Gold Company, WMU's award-winning vocal jazz ensemble.

His voice appears on numerous film soundtracks, including *Jurassic World*, *Star Trek*, *Oz: The Great and Powerful*, and Disney's *Sofia the First*, as well as albums by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Muse. A member of Vertical Voices and a touring sub with New York Voices, Jasperse has performed internationally with artists such as Adele, Bobby McFerrin, Dianne Reeves, and Rosemary Clooney. His works are sung worldwide by premier ensembles, and he has conducted all-state vocal jazz ensembles across the United States and in Canada. Jasperse is a graduate of the University of Miami and Western Michigan University.

11th-12th Grade Tenor-Bass



Brandon A. Boyd is the Mary M. and Harry L. Smith Endowed Chair, director of choral activities, and associate professor of music at the University of Missouri, where he leads the graduate choral conducting program and conducts MU University Singers, Sankofa Chorale, and Choral Union Symphonic Chorus.

His work includes choirs for the homeless, senior singers, and prison partnerships. An active composer and arranger, Boyd's works appear in major choral catalogs, and he curates the *Brandon A. Boyd Choral Series* with Hinshaw Music. Boyd has guest conducted and taught internationally, served as composer-in-residence for the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and received commissions from universities, festivals, and national organizations. He holds degrees from The Florida State University and Tennessee State University.



ACDA CHILDREN & COMMUNITY YOUTH CONDUCTORS' RETREAT

JANUARY 17-18, 2026

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Dr. Angela Kasper, Headliner

Sessions

- Beyond "Just A Warm Up" | Kelly Wyszomierski
- Beyond Advocacy: Growing Your Choir Through Community | Jeremy Bartunek
- Beyond the Notes: Inspiring Artistry in Every Rehearsal | Chris Maunu
- Bridging Cultures Through Choral Collaboration | Michael Wu
- Creative Choir – Creating Arrangements with Body Percussion | Beth Ann Hepburn
- Draw the Circle Wide: Mentorship and Leadership Development | Anna Wade
- Finding Your Voice: Beginning & Intermediate Repertoire | Aubrey Patterson
- Grounded Gesture: Laban, Breath, and Mindful Conducting | Dr. Lisa Billingham
- Low Budget, High Impact: Smart Tools for Choir Management | Caitlyn McGlynn
- Navigating the Changing Voice | Stephen Holmes
- Raising Your Voice: Intermediate & Advanced Repertoire | Aubrey Patterson
- Supporting LGBTQ+ Singers in Youth Choruses | Dr. Paul Heins
- Vocal Exercises to Diversify Tone and Style with Young Singers | Kim Doucette

Performing Choirs

Baltimore Children's Choir • Maryland State Boychoir
Children's Chorus of Maryland • Olney Community Youth Chorus
Deer Creek Youth Choir • Singing Sensations Youth Choir
Glorystar Children's Chorus • Strathmore Children's Chorus
Youth Chorus of Annapolis

**SCAN to
Register!**



ACDA.org



Building Bridges *and* Transforming Lives *through the* Power of Music

Perform International / Perform America 2027 Festival Experiences



Hawai'i International Choral Festival
Featuring the World-Premiere of "Mele Ho'okele"
Honolulu, Hawai'i
March 4-8, 2027



Long Beach Choral Festival
Michael Barrett / Matthew Lyon Hazzard / Jonathan Talberg
Long Beach, California
April 1-4, 2027



Rome Choral Festival
Marcela Molina
Rome, Italy
June 11-15, 2027



Rome Choral Festival
Alex Gartner
Rome, Italy
June 11-15, 2027



Lisbon Choral Festival
Cameron F. LaBarr
Lisbon, Portugal
June 29-July 3, 2027



Paris Choral Festival
Jeffery Redding
Paris, France
July 3-7, 2027

Custom Tours - Domestic & International



Let us help **YOU**
DREAM up the **FUN STUFF**
and have us
deal with the **DETAILS**
for your **CONCERT TOUR**

Visit us at our booth
at all ACDA Regional
Conference Exhibits.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Conference Overview



Jeffery Ames

Our Southern Region is culturally diverse. We scatter and shine like a prism of light. This truth heavily influenced this year's conference theme, "Prism of Voices."

When considering a program for our ensembles or worship services, we subconsciously think of how music can be viewed through the lens of a prism. By embracing different styles and cultures, music naturally breaks into a broad spectrum of sounds, textures, and experiences. When viewed through the lens of cultural diversity and stylistic interpretation—which includes the Western canon—music transforms into a soundscape rich with stimulating tonalities, rhythms, and emotional expressions.

We are all different and have varying thoughts about music along with different beliefs and biases. These variances contribute to our beauty.

Just as a prism reveals the hidden beauty within light, exploring music through the lens of various styles and cultures unveils an expansive sonic landscape, inviting listeners into new experiences, emotions, and connections across time and place. This is the purpose of the 2026 Southern Region Conference, and we believe there is so much to offer.

All roads and flight paths lead to Memphis, Tennessee! The conference team and I are very excited about the 2026 conference being held where the iconic Mississippi River flows along the banks of the birthplace of the Blues, Rock & Roll, and the home of Elvis; it's also a hotspot for foodies.

Okay now... "Y'all come!" Be ready to experience beauty on many levels, and may your heart, mind, and soul spread music, love, and light. We'll see you at "Prism of Voices" 2026!

Southern Region Conference Registration Information

until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

Attendee \$325 Retired \$250 Student \$100

January 16 - March 7

Attendee \$375 Retired \$275 Student \$125

One Day \$175 **only available on site**

Register at acda.org/region-conferences



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Headliner/President's Concert

Headliner

Ansan City Choir (South Korea)



Ansan City Choir was founded in 1995 and has attracted attention for its diverse repertoire from the Renaissance to the contemporary, with original compositions showcasing the music and traditions of Korean culture. The choir receives praise for its demanding season of over seventy concerts that are innovative and diverse. Ansan City Choir has been invited to prominent choral events such as the World Choir Symposium (2002 US and 2017 Spain), the Vatican Concert (2011), and the 2012 and 2019 ACDA National Conferences. At home and abroad, the Ansan City Choir proudly promotes the heritage of the Korean choral tradition. After celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 2025, the Ansan City Choir is pioneering a new path of choral artistry with conductor Dr. Jihoon Park.



Jihoon Park is a well-respected composer and the conductor of the Ansan City Choir. He has composed choral music in various styles that include traditional settings as well as others that incorporate his Korean heritage. Park has conducted professional and semi-professional choirs in Korea and guest conducted in venues across the United States, Europe, and the UK. Park has received favorable reviews for his robust programming, which is balanced with repertoire that showcases his musical sensitivity. As a conductor and composer, he will continue his development into

a performer who leads his singers into a diverse and innovative future.

President's Concert

Requiem for Colour: A Journey through Lament and Joy

Requiem for Colour: A Journey through Lament and Joy is more than a typical requiem. It is a journey from West Africa to present-day America told through music, spoken word, and powerful imagery. Composed in the Western tradition, the work skillfully incorporates Black idiomatic styles to include spirituals, jazz, R&B, hip-hop, and gospel to mourn the conflicts and celebrate the successes of Black Americans. This powerful opus reckons with our past and current societal vices of injustice; yet amid the despair, life is renewed as we celebrate new beginnings and hope for a better tomorrow. *Requiem for Colour* will be performed by the 2026 Collegiate Honor Choir, accompanied by the Belmont University Symphony Orchestra, two dynamic orators, a soprano soloist who will melt your heart, and a tenor soloist who will empower your heart.



André J. Thomas is an associate artist with the London Symphony Orchestra and emeritus professor of music at The Florida State University. He served as visiting professor of choral conducting at Yale University (2020–2022) and has been a faculty member at the University of Texas, Austin. A renowned guest conductor, Thomas has led prestigious orchestras and choirs worldwide. He is also a distinguished composer and arranger, with works published by Gentry, Hinshaw, Lawson Gould, Boosey & Hawkes, Heritage Music Press, and others. His book, *Way Over in Beulah Lan'... Understanding and Performing the Negro Spiritual*, is a significant contribution to the field. Thomas has received numerous honors, including the Robert Shaw Award from ACDA (2017) and the Samuel Si-

mons Sanford Medal from Yale University. He is a past national president of ACDA.

Belmont University Chorale



Chorale is the flagship classical choral ensemble of the School of Music at Belmont University. Formed in 1970, it is also one of the earliest performing ensembles in Belmont's musical history. This auditioned, mixed ensemble performs diverse literature from all genres. The Belmont Chorale has been recognized for its musical excellence with performances at MENC conventions and the Southern ACDA Region. The ensemble tours annually, and international performances include the St. Moritz Festival in Switzerland (1985 and 1987); Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia (1989); England (2004); the Republic of China (2007); Italy (2011); Latvia and Estonia (2015); the Republic of Ghana (2019); and Puerto Rico (2024).



Jeffery L. Ames serves as the Southern ACDA Region president, director of choral activities, and full professor at Belmont University. A published composer and writer, Ames specializes in composing works that are from the heart. His literary publications focus on choral music in the concert gospel genre as well as choral music in the Western tradition composed by modern Black composers. Ames holds the honor of being the first recipient of the prestigious ACDA James Mulholland Choral Music Fellowship (2005), being the

first African American ACDA International Conductors Exchange Program Fellow (2016), and being the first African American recipient of the Presidential Faculty Achievement Award (2023), the highest honor bestowed to a faculty member at Belmont University.

Belmont University Symphony Orchestra



Symphony Orchestra is a full symphony orchestra of the finest string, woodwind, brass, and percussion musicians on campus. The Symphony Orchestra seeks to prepare classical and commercial music majors for successful careers performing professional-level repertoire that includes classical historic eras, contemporary classical, globally influenced compositions, jazz, popular, and folkloric styles of music. In addition to its annual performance in Belmont's "Christmas at Belmont," the Symphony Orchestra has performed with music celebrities Andrea Bocelli, Trisha Yearwood, Cody Fry, CeCe Winans, and Tracy Silverman.



Christopher H. Fashun is a versatile conductor, performer, and music educator known for his ability to conduct and perform across classical, popular, and folkloric styles. A champion of new music, Fashun has commissioned choral works, conducted the Oregon and Iowa all-state orchestras, and presents frequently at national and state music education conferences. A distinguished recipient of a 2019 Fulbright Award in the U.S.

Scholar Program, Fashun lived in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, researching Afro-Brazilian music and culture. His project title, “The Dissemination of Afro-Brazilian Music in Salvador da Bahia,” explored the cultural, racial, religious, and musical milieu that contribute to the shared musical identity of Afro-Brazilians.

Coahoma Community College Concert Choir



The Coahoma Community College Concert Choir maintains an established reputation in Mississippi for performing diverse repertoire that includes arranged concert spirituals, oratorios, and gospel music. They have sung at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation in Washington DC, Mississippi ACDA, and the Southern Miss Invitational Choral Conference. Kelvin K. Tower’s arrangement of “A Change is Gonna Come” was featured in the internationally aired *Pulse* film documentary (London, England). The choir continues to garner the profoundly honored place of representing Coahoma Community College nationally and globally. They have toured throughout the United States and most recently in Tokyo, Japan.



Kelvin K. Towers serves as the fine arts department chair and director of choral activities at Coahoma Community College in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Since joining the college in 2002, Towers has

built a distinguished twenty-three-year career leading a wide range of vocal ensembles including Concert Choir, Gospel Choir, Show Choir, Barbershop Quar-

ter, and Men’s and Women’s Vocal Ensembles. Towers has adjudicated choral festivals and competitions at the local, state, and national levels, including for Southern ACDA Region. He has served as president of the MACJC Choral Directors Association and currently leads the two-year college R&R division of Mississippi ACDA. Towers holds a PhD and an MME from the University of Mississippi.

Mississippi Valley State University Valley Singers



The Valley Singers have been Mississippi Valley State University’s premier choral ensemble since 1960 and exemplify the university’s commitment to excellence in the performing arts. Comprising forty-five select vocalists, the Valley Singers represent the pinnacle of MVSU’s choral tradition, showcasing a diverse repertoire that spans centuries and styles. The Valley Singers have earned invitations to prestigious conferences and festivals, including their historic debut at the 2025 Mississippi MEA/Mississippi ACDA State Conference. The ensemble also represented the university on the international stage at the 2025 International Verona Choral Competition in Italy, where they proudly received the Silver Cup in their category.

Brandon T. Cash is director of choral activities and assistant professor of music at Mississippi Valley State University, where he conducts the University Choir,



Men's Glee, Women's Chorale, and Valley Singers. He also teaches secondary choral methods, choral conducting, and applied voice. Cash holds a doctorate in choral music education from the University of Georgia, an MM in choral conducting from the University of Nebraska–Omaha, and an MA in counseling and a BME from Hampton University. He has earned advanced certifications in educational leadership, law and policy, and music education. An accomplished clinician, adjudicator, tenor soloist, and researcher, Cash serves as Mississippi ACDA's R&R coordinator for world music and cultures, chair of repertoire-specific choirs, and a national board member of NCCO.

Tennessee State University Meistersingers and University Choir



The Meistersingers is the premier chamber choral ensemble at Tennessee State University. As an auditioned mixed ensemble, many members also participate in TSU's larger choral ensemble, the University Choir. Meistersingers performs literature from Renaissance to current popular music genres. The University Choir is the large choral ensemble of Tennessee State University. The ensemble prides itself on having high musical expectations and performing a wide variety of standard choral literature while also being open to all students of TSU. Over half of the members of the University Choir hold majors other than music. The University Choir comes from a long, respected tradition of choral singing among Historically Black Colleges and Universities.



Jasmine Fripp is a Grammy-nominated music educator and the director of choral activities at Tennessee State University, where she leads the University Choir, the Meistersingers, and the newly reinstated TSU Showstoppers Showchoir. She is also the founder of The Passionate Black Educator, a platform that empowers music educators and advocates for holistic, culturally responsive education for Black and Brown students. With nearly a decade of teaching experience, Fripp has developed award-winning choral programs known for excellence and cultural relevance. Her students have performed at Bridgestone Arena, the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the Nashville Schermerhorn Symphony Center. She is a recording artist and songwriter and holds degrees from Winthrop and Belmont Universities.

Corona del Mar High School Madrigal Singers singing with high school students from Cape Town, while on tour to South Africa in 2024. Photo by Vanessa Valdes

We Only Offer One Tour: Yours

Whatever your touring experience, interests or goals, ACFEA Tour Consultants is dedicated to designing an exceptional concert tour — just for you.



ACFEA TOUR
CONSULTANTS

acfea.com | info@acfea.com | 800 627 2141 |  

WST 601 273 533 | CST 2063085-40



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Special Events

Music in Worship Event

Longing for Light

In a world filled with uncertainty, we long for light to guide us. In this interfaith service we will look for light together, raising our voices in song. We will sing and hear familiar and beloved hymns/anthems. There will also be new music, including “Shine, O Light,” a new hymn setting of HYFRYDOL by Terre Johnson. The featured performing ensemble is the Inspirar Choir from Rock Hill, SC, conducted by Jeremy Mims.

Inspirar



Inspirar is a nonprofit ensemble based in Rock Hill, South Carolina. They strive to engage, educate, impact, and inspire audiences through exceptional, high-level choral singing; promote unity and harmony through the performance of diverse choral literature; and provide transformative, awe-inspiring choral performances to listeners and supporters. They are composed of conductors, voice teachers, and performers committed to providing quality performances for their community.



Jeremy Mims is associate professor of music and director of choral activities at Winthrop University. Previously he was on the faculties of Clarke University and Whitman College, where he conducted the choirs and orchestra, and was a public school edu-

cator in El Paso. Mims has served as conductor and pianist for numerous high school all-region and all-state choirs, as well for professional and university choruses. His choirs have performed at state and regional conferences, at Carnegie Hall, and in festivals in Bulgaria, Italy, and the Czech Republic. Mims has presented at regional and national ACDA conferences and is president-elect of SCACDA. In 2022 he received second place for the Dale Warland Award in Choral Conducting. Mims holds degrees from Hardin-Simmons University and UMKC.

Presider



Emily Floyd is the director of traditional music at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Charlotte. A graduate of The Florida State University, she has served as director of music in various congregational settings, including Shallowford Presbyterian Church (Atlanta) and First Baptist Church (Asheville). Additionally, Floyd serves as the president of Presbyterian Association of Musicians and music in worship R&R chair for Southern ACDA. Her ministry has long been marked by a strong congregational focus coupled with a vigorous connection to the wider music community.

Requiem for Colour: A Pre-Concert Talk

The composer will share the impetus for *Requiem for Colour: A Journey through Lament and Joy*. Jeffery Ames will lead the listener into a deeper dive of the meaning, understanding, and celebration for this momentous work. An explanation of the title and symbolism will be shared, as well as a short description of each movement. An invitation is extended to share, learn, and celebrate a resilient American culture.

Jeffery L. Ames will be the speaker for this talk. His photo and bio are on page 101.

Opening Night Concert

A Cappella: Back By Popular Demand!

Our opening night concert celebrates the power and creativity of contemporary a cappella, bringing voices together for an unforgettable evening of music. This concert highlights the artistry of singing without instruments, featuring everything from pop favorites and soulful ballads to upbeat rock anthems and jazz-inspired harmonies. Audiences will be swept away by tight harmonies, vibrant vocal percussion, and stand-out solos that showcase the full range of the human voice. Each ensemble brings its own unique sound and personality, making every moment fresh, exciting, and inspiring.

Whether you're a devoted fan of a cappella or experiencing it for the first time, "Back By Popular Demand" promises to entertain, uplift, and amaze. Don't miss this unforgettable celebration of music reimagined—completely a cappella—and discover why this concert truly lives up to its name!

Pearl River Community College The Voices



The Voices is the premier contemporary a cappella

ensemble from Pearl River Community College in Poplarville, Mississippi. Known for their dynamic sound and engaging performances, The Voices have quickly built a reputation as one of the most exciting collegiate groups in the region. Last year, they released their album *Absence of Time* and won their first CARA award for Best Country Song. The group also traveled to Puerto Rico, where they combined their passion for music with meaningful service opportunities. On the competitive stage, The Voices earned first place and best choreography at the 2023 ICCA Athens Quarterfinal.

LaDona Tyson, Director

Mississippi State University TrellDawgs



The TrellDawgs, founded in 2016 at Mississippi State University, are a spirited collegiate a cappella ensemble dedicated to pushing the boundaries of vocal artistry. Their name marries musical roots and university pride: "Trell" nods to the treble clef in sheet music, while "Dawgs" honors the MSU Bulldogs mascot. The TrellDawgs blend varied backgrounds into a tight-knit musical family united by a passion for harmony and creativity. Their repertoire spans chart-toppers, timeless classics, and imaginative new arrangements, all delivered with rich harmonies, bold vocal runs, and dynamic beatboxing. Beyond performance, the group emphasizes community impact through benefit concerts, charitable outreach, and musical education.

Caleb Studdie and Maddie Chapman, Student Directors



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Special Events

Belmont University The Pitchmen



The Pitchmen are a male-identifying a cappella group from Nashville, Tennessee, composed of eigh-

teen students from Belmont University. From their debut album, *Ultraviolet*, to becoming the 2023 and 2025 ICCA champions and taking home numerous awards for outstanding soloists, outstanding choreography, and outstanding vocal percussion throughout the competition season, the student-run group has set themselves apart because of their dedication to their craft and to one another. While encompassing the modern Nashville sound, they pride themselves on singing a broad range of music that offers something for every audience member to enjoy. The Pitchmen recognize the importance of each member of their team and are empowered by their differences.

Javi Castro, President



Worship & Music Conference

Presbyterian Association of Musicians

2026 WORSHIP & MUSIC CONFERENCE
JUNE 21-26 & JUNE 28-JULY 3

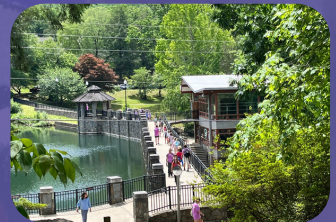


WHO'LL BE a WITNESS?

Join the Presbyterian Association of Musicians for a week in Montreat, North Carolina, to learn, worship, sing, and fellowship.

This year's conference highlights include:

- Choirs for children, youth, and adults
- Instrumental ensembles
- 36 classes and 16 topical interest session offerings
- Daily worship
- Renowned faculty
- The True Story of Cinderella (Comic Operetta), Talent Show, Hymn Festival, Chamber Concert, and Closing Concert
- And much more!



Registration open now

presbysmusic.org/conference



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Student Conducting Masterclasses

Graduate and Undergraduate



Alissa Mercurio Rowe serves as associate professor and Galante Chair and director of choral studies at Louisiana State University, where she conducts the LSU A Cappella Choir and leads the graduate choral conducting program. Under her leadership, the LSU choral area established an annual choral conducting intensive for aspiring conductors, a high school choral festival that serves hundreds of music educators annually, and a choral composing symposium providing a workshop space for Louisiana composers. The LSU choirs performed abroad with the Vox Anima Festival in London and with guest artists Adolphus Hailstork and Grammy Award-winning soprano Hila Plitmann. Rowe is an active adjudicator, guest conductor, and clinician.

University of Mississippi Concert Singers



The University of Mississippi Concert Singers is a mixed ensemble of college students who represent a diverse student population pursuing a variety of majors from across the campus. Most of the singers participate for the duration of their tenure at the university, which creates many lasting friendships. The Singers have appeared at five ACDA conferences in 2006, 2007, 2010, 2016, and 2022. The choir performs commissioned works, including a premiere of Ivo Antognini's *Veni*

Sancte Spiritus at the 2025 Mississippi State Conference. Several prominent composers have worked with the choir, including Eric Whitacre, who stated, "Conducting this chorus is like driving a Ferrari. If you ever get the chance to do it, I highly recommend it."



Donald Trott is the director of choral activities at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) in Oxford, where he coordinates the graduate conducting program and conducts the Concert Singers, Men's Glee, and University Chorus. His choirs have performed at ACDA conferences (1998, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2016, and 2020); and MMEA conferences (2005, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2018). Trott is a past president of the Southern ACDA Region. He is the recipient of the 2022 ACDA Southern Region Distinguished Service Award and 2024 Award of Excellence, and the 2023 MS ACDA Ernestine Ferrell Award. Trott previously created an ACDA monograph and was editor and contributor for *Conducting Men's Choirs* (GIA). Trott is a graduate of Westminster Choir College and the University of Oklahoma.

Some great little numbers for your choir.

MUSICFOLDER.com
The world's best music folders. Since 1993.

Toll-free: 1.877.246.7253 • sales@musicfolder.com



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Apex and Apex Friendship High Schools Peak Ensemble Treble Choir



The Peak Ensemble Treble Choir comprises the honors treble classes from Apex High School and Apex Friendship High School. They believe wholeheartedly in the importance of collaboration and have seen the many benefits that come from working together. The students, or as they say “cousins,” and directors have grown from learning and working together. They are two separate schools, two separate ensembles, with two separate directors, but they do a concert together and travel together annually. Singing their stories together has proven more impactful in the growth of the students in and out of the classroom.



Sam Wanamaker has been the choral director at Apex Friendship High School for the last ten years. Wanamaker earned a BME from Appalachian State University and is a proud Mountaineer alumnus. Wanamaker is a board member on the high school choral section of NCMEA and the TTBB high school R&R chair for NC-ACDA. His choirs have sung at the North Carolina Music Educators Conference and twice at the North Carolina ACDA Conference. Wanamaker has performed as a soloist with the North Carolina Symphony and the North Carolina Master Chorale. He has conducted and performed throughout the United States and Europe.



Heather Copley is in her twenty-seventh year as the choral director at Apex High School. She holds a BA in voice and a BME from Meredith College. Copley teaches choir full time at Apex and serves as the vocal director for her school’s musical each year. She also serves as the PLC coordinator for the high school chorus teachers in Wake County and enjoys mentoring new teachers. Copley also enjoys adjudicating MPA and working with all-county and festival choirs and leading workshops on vocal technique around the state. She served on the NC MEA high school chorus executive board for many years. Copley also has a small studio where she teaches private voice lessons.

INSPIRE EXCELLENCE. TRANSFORM LIVES.

SUPPORT REGION HONOR CHOIRS



Go to acda.org/donate

Available Funds* ☐ ACDA Fund for Tomorrow ☒ Select other fund

- Click circle for Select other fund
- Click the drop down button
- Scroll thru and select the Region Honor Choir to which you want to donate

- ACDA College Students National Conference
- ACDA Fund for Tomorrow
- ACDA General Operating Support
- ACDA Honor Choir National Conference
- ACDA: ONE ACDA
- Eastern Region: ACDA College Students Region Conference
- Eastern Region: Helen Kemp Award
- Eastern Region: Honor Choir Region Conference

Charlotte Master Chorale Chamber Singers



The Chamber Singers, Charlotte's premier chamber choir, consists of thirty volunteer singers of professional caliber drawn from the Charlotte Master Chorale, renowned for vocal prowess and artistic expression, and dedicated to performing challenging repertoire from all periods of music from Baroque motets to the art music of today. The Chamber Singers are recognized as one of the premier chamber choruses in the Southeast.



Kenney Potter has served as conductor and artistic director of the Charlotte Master Chorale for the past ten years. His choirs have received widespread acclaim, including winning the Grand Prix for best choir in the Pärnu International Choral Festival in Pärnu, Estonia. He has been a featured soloist in Carnegie Hall and was choir soloist for the Grammy-winning Oregon Bach Festival Choir as well as the International Bach Academy conducted by Helmuth Rilling. Under Potter's leadership, the Master Chorale has received critical acclaim for artistic excellence and creative programming. He spent thirty years teaching middle school, high school, and at Wingate University. In addition to his work with the Chorale, Potter is president of the ECS Publishing Group, overseeing the production of E. C. Schirmer, Galaxy, and Morning-Star publishers.

Cordova High School Men's Chorale



The Men's Chorale of Cordova High is an ensemble for tenor/bass singers in grades nine through twelve. The ensemble exists to build character and future male leaders through the means of making music. While there is an entry audition, any gentleman desiring to be a part of this brotherhood is welcomed! The Men's Chorale has quickly grown to be another highlight of the choral program at Cordova. This ensemble continuously receives superior ratings and best in class at assessments and festivals. What is most valued by this ensemble is the change that is harvested in each young man through the power of music making.



Adrian Maclin is in his twelfth year as director of choirs at Cordova High School and nineteenth year of teaching. While at Cordova, his groups have performed at Southern ACDA Region, Tennessee MEA, Carnegie Hall, and in numerous halls throughout the country and internationally. His ensembles are widely known for their inspiring, thought-provoking, and moving performances. In addition to his work at Cordova, he serves the Memphis-Shelby County School District on the music leadership team. Maclin also serves on the board of the West Tennessee Vocal MEA as past president and state choral chair for Tennessee MEA. In 2025, Maclin received the Music Educator Award presented by the Recording Academy and Grammy Museum.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Florida Atlantic University Vocalis



Vocalis, Florida Atlantic's treble ensemble, has been under the direction of Stacie Lee Rossow for over twenty years. The ensemble comprises students from across the university and has been privileged to premiere numerous works, including those by resident composer and collaborative pianist David P. Rossow and Irish composer and founder of Anúna, Michael McGlynn. Vocalis completed their first studio album in 2023, which featured a newly commissioned work by McGlynn titled *Wind in the Reeds*, and they traveled to Dublin in summer 2025 for the European premiere of the work.



Stacie Lee Rossow serves as associate chair and associate director of choral and vocal studies at Florida Atlantic University and holds degrees in choral conducting from the University of Miami and Florida Atlantic University. She has received several research and teaching awards, including the Theodore Presser Award for her work in Irish choral music and the Talon Leadership Award. Rossow has served as studio conductor for several Anúna recordings, and her ensemble just completed a new recording: *The Wind in the Reeds*. Rossow's ensembles have performed at numerous conferences, and she conducted the European premiere of Michael McGlynn's *The Wind in the Reeds* with Vocalis in 2025.

Furman University Furman Singers



Furman Singers is Furman University's flagship choir, bringing together students from diverse academic backgrounds who share a passion for choral music. Since its founding in 1946, the ensemble has captivated audiences with a wide-ranging repertoire that spans centuries, styles, and languages—expressing the human experience through the power of song. The choir maintains a strong presence on campus, tours annually across the United States and abroad, and regularly collaborates with the Furman Symphony Orchestra, Furman Symphonic Band, and Greenville Symphony Orchestra. The Furman Singers strive to build community and continue a history of excellence through the presentation of compelling musical programs.



Stephen Gusukuma is the Bingham L. Vick Jr. and Judith S. Vick Assistant Professor of Music and director of choral activities at Furman University. Under his guidance, the Furman Singers performed at the 2023 South Carolina ACDA Conference and the 2025 South Carolina MEA Conference. Ensembles under his direction have appeared across the United States and internationally. Gusukuma holds the DMA in choral conducting from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance, and BME and the MM degrees from Baylor University.

George Mason University Mason Jazz Vocal Ensemble



The Mason Jazz Vocal Ensemble is the award-winning jazz vocal group of George Mason University. They have performed at Blues Alley, Kansas City Jazz Summit; been featured with symphony orchestras and big bands; and members have performed with Ben Folds and the National Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Virginia Beach Symphony. They were awarded a *DownBeat* Student Music Award for Outstanding Performance-Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble and Outstanding Ensemble at the Kansas City Jazz Summit. Conference performances and presentations include the ACDA National (Dallas), JEN (Dallas and New Orleans), and Virginia MEA (Richmond).



Darden Purcell is an Origin Records recording artist and featured soloist with symphony orchestras, big bands, small ensembles, and vocal educator. Purcell has shared the stage with artists such as George Benson, Sara Bareilles, Christian McBride, Branford Marsalis, Maria Schneider, as well as ensembles National Symphony Orchestra, Airmen of Note, Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra, Navy Commodores, Army Blues, and the American Festival Pops Orchestra. She has performed throughout the world in prestigious venues. Purcell is the director of jazz studies and jazz voice instructor at George Mason University.

Lost Mountain Middle School Eighth Grade Chorus



The Eighth Grade Chorus comprises non-auditioned singers in their third year of chorus. The chorus has performed twice at the GMEA in-service conference, the Georgia State University Mid-Sing Fest, Georgia ACDA, and has received invitations to perform at Kennesaw State University and the University of South Carolina. The chorus has received superior ratings at LGPE for over twenty years at both the Class M and Class D levels. The choral department regularly maintains a membership of over two hundred singers. Lost Mountain Middle School, a Cobb County Public School in Kennesaw, GA, has a diverse population of just over one thousand students.



Jay Champion has taught chorus, general music, and music technology at Lost Mountain Middle School in Kennesaw since 1998. Champion has a long history of contributions to choral music education, most recently as GMEA District 12 Choral Chair, a member of the all-state chorus standing committee, and the state choral chair-elect. Champion earned undergraduate degrees in music education and music composition from Louisiana State University. He earned his master's and education specialist degrees at the University of Georgia. He has performed and recorded with the LSU A Cappella Choir, the Moses Hogan Chorale, and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus and Chamber Chorus, the Orpheus Men's Ensemble, and Coro Vocati.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Lux



Lux, derived from the Latin word for “light,” is a professional treble choir based in Northeast Georgia. Born out of a collective desire to infuse beauty and illumination into a world fraught with darkness, Lux specializes in delivering exquisite treble music that uplifts the soul. Our diverse ensemble is in its fourth season and comprises both full-time musicians and members

from a variety of professions united by our shared passion for creating musical experiences that resonate deeply with audiences. Under the direction of Ashley Conway and Emily Allison alongside Benji Stenger, collaborative pianist, Lux offers a distinctive approach to a professional-level ensemble tailored to meet the demands of busy musicians who cannot rehearse weekly.



Ashley Conway is the assistant professor of music education at Brenau University, where she directs Vocal Chamber Ensemble (lobby performing choir, GMEA, 2022), and Spectrum Singers, and teaches music education courses, aural skills, and conducting. Conway’s previous appointments have included public and private schools, colleges and universities, churches, and community music programs throughout the United States. She is an active scholar, guest conductor, and adjudicator, and is a founder and conductor of the professional treble choir, Lux (GA-ACDA performance, 2024). Conway holds a BME and MME from Brenau University and the University of Georgia. She earned the DMA in choral conducting from Arizona State University. Her research interests include women’s choirs and music and hearing loss.



Emily Allison is in her sixth year as choral director at Cherokee Bluff Middle School, following twelve years at East Hall Middle, where she was named 2019–2020 Teacher of the Year. She was also named Cherokee Bluff’s 2024–2025 Teacher of the Year and the 2025 District 14 Music Educator of the Year. Her seventh- and eighth-grade chorus performed at the 2025 GMEA In-Service Conference. Allison holds a bachelor’s in vocal performance and an MME from Piedmont University. She serves as a leadership team member, Tome Sponsor, and former Grade Level Chair (2020–2024). Outside school, she is the children’s director at Jefferson First UMC and cofounder/conductor of Lux. She enjoys reading and adventuring with her husband and two kids.



The Fifth International Meeting of the Symposium for Research in Choral Singing

A hybrid symposium held in person and remotely

April 30 - May 1, 2026

The Big 10 Conference Center
Chicago, Illinois



Marsteller Middle School 8th-Grade Women's Choir



The Marsteller Eighth-Grade Women's Choir frequently receives invitations to perform at community and county-wide events. The ensemble has performed twice at the Virginia MEA's annual conference, and in 2012 they performed for a Christmas party at the White House, where they had the distinct honor of meeting and singing for President Obama and the First Lady. They have a standing invitation to perform the national anthem at a GMU men's basketball game each season. However, if you were to ask these ladies, they would tell you that one of their favorite yearly performances is singing for their elementary feeder schools and area nursing homes. The ensemble consistently achieves superior ratings at assessment and in competition.



Julie Phelan is in her twenty-sixth year as a middle school choral director and her twenty-first year at Marsteller. Born and raised in Iowa, Phelan attended Wartburg College double majoring in music education and music therapy. Her women's choir has performed twice at the VMEA fall conference. Her choirs consistently achieve superior ratings at assessment, while individual students regularly participate in county, district, state, as well as regional and national honor choirs. She is a frequent adjudicator for honor choir auditions and assessment. She is a member of her church's worship team and has served as a worship leader for several churches and ministries in Michigan and Northern Virginia.

Miami Arts Studio 6-12 @ Zelda Glazer Maverick Singers



The Maverick Singers are the premier SATB ensemble at Miami Arts Studio, a performing arts magnet school in Miami, FL. Students are predominantly first- or second-generation immigrants from Latin America, which parallels the community in which the school is situated. We make it our mission to bring Miami's English, Spanish, and Haitian culture to audiences throughout the United States. The ensemble has recorded for several artists and award shows, including the Latin Grammys, the American Music Awards, and a performance with Jacob Collier on his DJESSE Volume 4 World Tour.



Ryan Ellis is a jazz pianist and director of vocal music at Miami Arts Studio. In addition to leading the vocal magnet, he is also piloting a sound engineering program that connects students with leading music professionals to provide a relevant music education in a rapidly evolving industry. Ellis's mixed ensembles have performed throughout the United States with concerts at FL-ACDA, Washington DC, Chicago, Atlanta, Orlando, and New York, including five featured concerts at Carnegie Hall. Ellis is published as a contributing author on Jason Max Ferdinand's *Teaching with Heart and Teaching Beyond the Music* (GIA). As a professional jazz pianist, Ellis has worked extensively in the Caribbean, Florida, and Hawaii.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

New Manchester High School Jaguar Singers



The New Manchester High School F.A.M.E. “Jaguar Singers” is one of the premier choral ensembles within the FAME (Fine Arts Magnet Education) program at New Manchester High School. The choir comprises students in grades nine through twelve who consistently earn superior ratings in performance and sight-reading at the Georgia MEA Large Group Performance Evaluations. Members of the ensemble are actively engaged in district honor choir, all-state chorus, and all-state reading choir. The Jaguar Singers’s accomplishments include a featured performance at the 2025 GMEA State Conference and the honor of performing with three-time Grammy Award-winning jazz artist Samara Joy during her 2023 holiday tour at Atlanta Symphony Hall.



Antwain Holman is a music educator with over twenty-five years of experience. He is in his third year as the choral director of the FAME chorus at New Manchester High School. Holman holds a BM from Philander Smith College and an MME in choral music and conducting from The Florida State University. Holman’s choirs have been prominently featured at Florida ACDA and have earned first-place honors at Heritage Festivals in Washington DC and Atlanta, Georgia. Most recently, his advanced choral ensemble, the Jaguar Singers, performed at the 2025 Georgia MEA Conference.

Shenandoah Valley Children’s Choir



The Shenandoah Valley Children’s Choir of Harrisonburg, Virginia, is in its thirty-third year and nurtures young people by developing excellent musicianship, creating artistic choral performances, and fostering meaningful relationships. SVCC currently serves 175 youth, ages five through eighteen, in four auditioned choirs and two non-auditioned music explorers classes. Founded by Julia J. White in 1991 and under Janet M. Hostetter’s direction since 2014 with assistant director Joy Anderson since 2001, SVCC continues to inspire audiences worldwide. Concert Choir tours annually, having participated domestically in events and videos from their own valley to Pike’s Peak to the Pacific Rim, and internationally.



Janet M. Hostetter received her doctorate and master’s in choral conducting from James Madison University and her BME from Eastern Mennonite University. Her published research project, “Tone Production, Musicianship Training, Repertoire Development, Performance Practice: A Pedagogical Overview of Selected International Children’s Choirs,” provided her the joy of interacting with respected children’s choirs in Australia, the Czech Republic, Canada, and the Philippines. SVCC choirs under her direction have performed nationally and internationally, collaborated with renowned children’s choirs, performed in elite venues, and produced numerous YouTube music videos.

Stetson University Concert Choir



The Stetson University Concert Choir is one of four choral ensembles in the Stetson University School of Music. It is a highly selective principal vocal touring ensemble made up of forty-eight vocalists. The Concert Choir has performed concerts throughout the United States and Europe. The group has appeared in performances for NCCO, Southern ACDA Region, MEA, and at numerous conventions of the Florida Vocal Association, Florida ACDA, and Florida MEA. Concert Choir comprises upper-class music majors and singers representing numerous academic areas.



Timothy Peter is a professor of music at Stetson University. He is a native of Minnesota, received his undergraduate degree from Luther College, and completed his DMA at the University of Arizona.

Before coming to Stetson University, he was professor of music at Luther College and served as the head of the music department. He has been a high school choral director and church musician in Minnesota, Iowa, Arizona, and Florida. Peter joined the faculty of the Stetson University School of Music in the fall of 2012 and conducts the Stetson Concert Choir. He has held positions as the ACDA regional R&R chair for college and universities and the state and regional chair for TB choirs.

University of Memphis University Singers



The University Singers is the flagship SATB ensemble at the University of Memphis. The ensemble includes auditioned graduate choral students and undergraduates from across the campus. Through conceptual programming and diverse repertoire, University Singers engages audiences in thought-provoking performances. The ensemble maintains a robust schedule that empowers its members to grow as artists and citizens. Recent performances include the 2024 National CMS Conference, 2024 TnMEA Conference, a 2023 international tour to Greece, and tours throughout the United States.



Francis Cathlina, DMA, is a Vietnamese American conductor. He is the director of choral activities at the University of Memphis, where he received the dean's award for creative achievement. He leads the choral area, the MM/DMA choral conducting program, and conducts the University Singers. A two-time Grammy-nominated educator, Cathlina draws on his Eastern heritage to foster excellence and collaboration. He conducted in Brazil and the Philippines in 2025 and was the headliner for the 2025 Alabama MEA Conference. The University Singers, under his direction, have been invited to perform for national and state conferences. Cathlina has over sixty presentations worldwide, international publications, and a robust conducting schedule. He earned degrees from UNT, Michigan State, and Baylor.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

University of Tennessee Men's Chorale



The University of Tennessee Men's Chorale is open to all UT students and focuses on building community through the choral tradition while exploring a wide range of repertoire written specifically for tenor and bass voices. In addition to regularly scheduled seasonal concerts, the Men's Chorale performs outreach concerts across east Tennessee and performs for UT Volunteer Men's and Lady Volunteers sporting events. They occasionally join with the UT Symphony Or-

chestra and other UT choirs to perform masterworks of the choral repertoire.



Andrew Skoog made his Carnegie Hall debut as tenor soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir John Rutter. Skoog has sung with orchestras all across the United States, including the American Symphony Orchestra in Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. Skoog made his international debut singing *Carmina Burana* with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra in Bergen, Norway. Critics hail him as ideal in *Carmina Burana*, which he has performed forty-eight times across the United States and abroad. Twice a Metropolitan Opera regional finalist, Skoog made his professional operatic debut as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera San Antonio. Skoog is professor of voice at the University of Tennessee, where he also conducts the UT Men's Chorale.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Access and Belonging in Adult Choirs as a Societal Benefit

How does the promotion of belonging in choirs benefit not only singers but also the larger society as we face increasing loneliness, high levels of anxiety, and sociocultural divisions? This presentation summarizes current social science findings on the effectiveness of group singing at improving well-being and bridging social differences. This session presents data collected from interviews of prominent directors who lead

non-auditioned choruses, including a pop choir in the UK, a university-affiliated community ensemble, a children's choir program, a suburban women's choir, a large city community choir, and a family of choruses based around a single genre. Session attendees will leave with suggested practices for use with their own ensembles.



Helena von Rueden is Elliott Associate Professor of Music at Hampden-Sydney College, a small liberal arts college in VA, where she teaches conducting, pia-

no, music history, and music as social behavior. Under her direction, the tenor-bass Hampden-Sydney College Chorus has toured major cities, including New York, San Juan, New Orleans, Boston, Quebec City, and Montreal. She is the past assistant director at the Institute of Composer Diversity. A past presenter at national ACDA and NCCO and a *Choral Journal* contributor, she researches programming trends and best practices for creating belonging in singing groups. Creator of the Expanding Choral Practice Database, von Rueden curates a collection of resources on practices and music outside the Western European tradition. She is founder/director of The Piedmont Singers of Central Virginia, a professional octet in central VA.

Adding Strings, Subtracting Stress

This practical session offers an introductory pathway for choral conductors aiming to refine their gestural faculties and develop the shared language needed for meaningful collaboration with string musicians. Engaging with a curated selection of choral-orchestral works by historically marginalized composers from Europe and Latin America as both lens and laboratory, the session will explore techniques that deepen artistic expression and illuminate historically informed performance practices. Viewed through the prism of inclusivity and intentional artistry, this session underscores the critical role of purpose-driven score study in fostering thoughtful musical interpretation.



Ryan R. Fellman is an American conductor based out of the greater Atlanta area who serves as interim director of choral activities at Kennesaw State University. There he conducts the KSU Chamber Singers, University Chorale, Men's Ensemble, Community and Alumni Chorus, and teaches courses in conducting. Fellman is a graduate from Michigan State University, where he served as assistant conductor to several prominent university ensembles. Prior to his time at MSU, Fellman earned an MM in choral conducting from Ithaca College. From 2013 to 2019 he served as

choir director at Oñate High School in Las Cruces, New Mexico, significantly expanding the program's enrollment. Fellman holds a BM in vocal music education from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, where he sang in The Concordia Choir under the direction of Dr. René Clausen.

Being the Best... or Being Your Best Self?

The life of a professional musician is inherently connected to evaluation and competition. How do these, along with cultural phenomena like stereotypes or social media, affect our self-perception and growth? How can we be discerning in our evaluation of ourselves and others in ways that result in positive, valuable contributions to the choral art? Unrealistic expectations, professional disappointment, and self-doubt may inhibit our progress toward becoming our best selves. Instead, we can cultivate a positive self-image based on the implementation of our values. This session will offer honest conversation and guidance about self-image and defining professional success. The goal is to help conductors navigate their careers with wellness, integrity, and courage.



Alicia W. Walker is professor of music and director of choral studies at the University of South Carolina, where she directs the Concert Choir and Garnet Chorale (SSAA) and supervises the graduate conducting program. Walker has taught continuing education workshops for choral directors in South Africa, and she is frequently invited to conduct and teach in the UK and in Taiwan. She has conducted at major venues, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, Southwark and Canterbury Cathedrals in England, and St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Her choirs have been selected to perform for NCCO (2021, 2023); SCMEA (2016, 2018, 2022); and South Carolina ACDA (2018, 2022, 2024). Walker's pedagogy and professional interactions are marked by a commitment to excellence, collaboration, and inclusion.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Bring a Friend to Choir Day: Reframe, Recruit, and Reflect

As choral directors, we are often tasked with balancing the current needs of our programs with pressure for growth in numbers. Beginning with an identification and reframing of the ways in which we assess the growth of our choral programs, this session will provide a recruitment event model to implement at your school or organization. This session is suitable for elementary, middle, high, collegiate, church, and community choral programs and is adaptable to meet you where you are in your program's journey. This session will prepare you with tools and resources to address your desire for significant growth in numbers while enhancing the quality of your program in a way that is sustainable for you as the director.



Victoria Alvarez is completing her seventh year at Grovetown Middle School, located outside of Augusta, Georgia. She holds a BME and MM in choral conducting from Mercer University. She also

holds an education specialist in advanced educational studies with an emphasis in P-12 music from Augusta University. Alvarez creates a learning environment with shared responsibility; because she is actively engaged in learning every day, she expects the same of her students. She serves as the Georgia MEA District 10 choral chair and was Grovetown Middle School's 2024–2025 Teacher of the Year.

The Choral (...and Orchestral?) Conductor

Choirs and orchestras are the perfect pair! Have you wanted to add instrumental or orchestral accompaniment to your choral pieces? Are you intimidated by stepping in front of a professional orchestra? This session will focus on demystifying working with an orchestra. Discussion will be on preparation for the first

(and maybe only) rehearsal, how to communicate with an orchestra for a more efficient rehearsal, and reviewing instrument specific terms and techniques that the orchestra is used to hearing. This session will include a survey from both the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra with feedback for choral conductors on how we can better communicate with orchestra players.



Daniel deShazo is the director of music and worship at Riverchase United Methodist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. There he conducts the sixty-voice sanctuary choir and oversees handbells and children's music as well as conducts the instrumental ensemble. He has previously served Alabama ACDA as R&R chair for music in worship and is currently on the executive board as lifelong learner chair. He has a BME from Loyola University New Orleans and a master's in choral conducting from the University of Alabama.

Get into the Groove: Diverse Beats, Unified Voices

This interactive session explores rhythm as a key to unlocking stylistic fluency and cultural depth in choral music. This session offers practical strategies to improve rhythmic reading and performance across Western and non-Western traditions. Attendees will engage with diverse rhythmic patterns—both written and taught by rote—and learn how genre-specific beat emphasis can shape authentic, expressive performances. From gospel to African, Latin to pop, participants will discover tools to help choirs internalize groove and connect more deeply with the music. This session highlights rhythm as a bridge between cultures and a pathway to more expressive, stylistically informed performance.



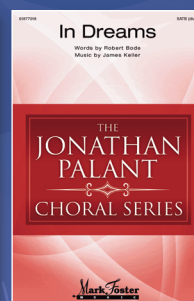
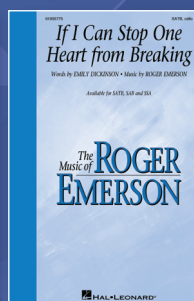
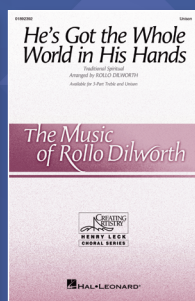
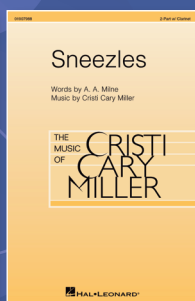
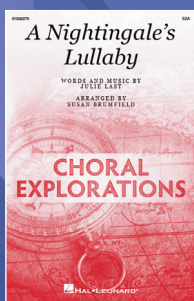
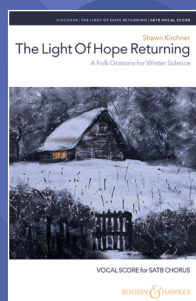
Willis Rosenfeld is the choir director and fine arts department chair at Loudoun County High School in Leesburg, VA. His choirs have earned superior ratings at festivals in Chicago, Orlando, New York, and Williamsburg. He also serves as director of music ministries at Sterling United Methodist Church, where his teams have led music for Virginia state and district Methodist events. Rosenfeld has worked as a music director, actor, and technician in numerous productions and is active as a collaborative pianist across northern Virginia. He earned his DMA in choral conducting from George Mason University, where his research focused on pedagogical repertoire selection. He also holds a BM from George Mason and degrees from Messiah University and Regent University.

I Sing! You Sing!

We All Sing with Solfège Harmonization

There are many ways to access musical language beyond the visual method of sight-reading. Sole focus on visual aptitude of sight-reading may isolate singers who excel at aural skills or struggle with visual processing of music notation. Utilizing her method of solfège harmonization, Michelle Folta will demonstrate ways that singers can analyze music, predict harmonic structure, and create unique arrangements. Session attendees will perform a solfège harmonization exercise before learning how to create one. In collaboration with colleagues, attendees will design their own exercise by identifying chords, creating a roadmap, and making artistic choices. We discuss practical uses of the solfège harmonization method in differentiating instruction,

EXPLORE THE LATEST CONCERT CHORAL RELEASES FROM HAL LEONARD



Learn more about these titles and other new releases at halleonard.com/choral





2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

inclusive pedagogy, accompanying choirs, composing and improvising, predictive sight-reading, and building a collaborative culture in your choral program.



Michelle Folta is professor of choral/general music education at Columbus State University and the artistic director for the Voices of the Valley Children's Chorus. Folta earned her master's and PhD in music education at the University of North Texas and a BM from the University of Texas at Austin. Graduates of Folta have earned the title of teacher of the year on their campuses and have been named finalists for their district's top educator award. The Voices of the Valley Children's Chorus has performed internationally, at Georgia MEA, and Southern ACDA. Folta has served as the guest clinician nationally and serves on the Georgia ACDA board of directors and is president-elect for Georgia ACDA.

Just Sing!

Informal Choral Music for Non-Performers

To the outside world, choral music is practiced with the end goal being a performance. But this is not always the case, and informal singing experiences that lack the expectation of a performance can create special moments for participants. This session will explore why singing for singing's sake is important and why we should create more opportunities for people to do it. This session will also provide methodology for creating these opportunities based on the tried-and-true methods of sacred harp singings as well as newer informal singing organizations. These techniques help establish a welcoming choral environment for singers of any age and skill level. Come and explore the ways we can facilitate growth in our singers as we offer freedom from the expectation of performance.

Christopher Powell is the director of choirs at Georgetown College. Powell previously spent ten years as choir



director and music teacher at public high schools in Louisville and Shelbyville, KY. He has held several part-time or interim church positions, most recently as director of contemporary music at First United Methodist Church in Frankfort, KY. Powell has led interest and reading sessions at the KMEA's annual conference and has served multiple times as all-state choir and large ensemble assessment judge. He has been a guest clinician/director at all-district or all-county choirs across the state of Kentucky. He holds a BME and MME from WKU and UK and is a DMA candidate in choral conducting at UK.

KoroNation:

A Culturally Informed Filipino Reading Session

As Filipino choral music becomes more visible in conference concert setlists and all-state programs, sharing Filipino geographic and historical context, language pronunciation, and composer knowledge becomes necessary. Session presenters will lead participants as they explore various Filipino works through the Choral Allyship Framework, applicable to music from any borrowed culture, aiming for a more informed approach and process from programming to performance. Attendees will read a selection of accessible Filipino choral pieces from traditional folk songs to contemporary compositions and immerse themselves in the unique musical idioms of the Philippines. Each piece will be accompanied by insightful commentary on its place within the Filipino choral space and live diction coaching from a Tagalog speaker.



Roger David Jr. is a Michigan State University graduate student pursuing a DMA in choral conducting and is a recipient of a University Distinguished Fellowship. He serves as assistant conductor for Singing Spartans and assists choral conducting courses. David enjoys working with and meeting new people as

a presenter, clinician, and guest conductor. Originally from Alaska, he is a product of the Anchorage School District and the University of Alaska Anchorage. After teaching middle school in ASD, he completed a master's degree at Wichita State University, and served as a clinician and adjudicator for middle and high schools in Kansas. His interests include culturally informed processes, conductor leadership styles, and Korean BBQ.



Kyra Stahr is a visionary conductor, educator, and vocalist passionate about the transformative power of choral music. She serves as an assistant teaching professor at Syracuse University and is a DMA candidate in choral conducting at the University of Miami. She is a conducting fellow with Spire Chamber Ensemble and assistant conductor of Seraphic Fire. At Syracuse, Stahr conducts the premier treble ensemble, Crouse Chorale, and teaches conducting, rehearsing, and voice courses. Known for motivating ensembles with authenticity, courage, and determination, Stahr is an active guest conductor, clinician, and presenter. She has shared her work at conferences including National ACDA, TMEA, and the World Symposium on Choral Music. She holds an MM from the University of Southern California and a BM in vocal performance and music education from Miami University. Stahr co-founded the podcast *conduct(her)*, amplifying women's voices in choral music.

Making Treble: Empowering SA Choirs in a Mixed Choir World

Despite their prevalence in secondary and collegiate settings, soprano-alto (SA) choirs are often undervalued in the choral field, viewed as stepping stones rather than artistic destinations. This session challenges the traditional choral hierarchy by making a research-informed case for the empowerment of soprano-alto singers and the elevation of SA choirs. Through demographic insights, repertoire exploration, vocal pedagogy, and programmatic strategies, we will examine how to create and advocate for equitable opportunities for

SA ensembles; and how shifting the narrative can transform the identity and experience of SA singers in our choral programs.



Elizabeth (Libby) Hearn is an assistant professor of choral music education at the University of Mississippi, where she conducts Women's Glee and University Chorus. She also teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in choral music education, conducting, and qualitative research. Additionally, Hearn serves the MidSouth Music Organization as conductor of the Mississippi River Chorale. Before joining the faculty at Ole Miss, Hearn received a PhD in music education from the University of Alabama. In addition to teaching and conducting, she has presented her research in published journals and at international, national, regional, and state conferences. She is currently the president of Mississippi ACDA.



Alicia Vorel serves as assistant professor in music education in the Department of Music in the College of Arts and Sciences at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate music education majors. A Georgia native, she earned a BME at Mercer University, an MME from Texas Tech University, and PhD from the University of Mississippi. Vorel is an experienced public school educator focusing primarily on elementary general music and children's choirs teaching. She is Orff Level 1 and 2 certified. Her research interests include SA choirs, music teacher education, assessment, teacher effectiveness, acquisition of teaching skills, and turn-of-the-twentieth-century singing schools.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Mind the Gap:

Building a Bridge to the Tenor-Bass Head Voice

This session equips choral directors with a clearer understanding of head voice in tenor-bass singers and how to help them build a resonant, lifted, and in-tune choral tone. Using peer-reviewed research, the session defines head voice, clarifies terminology, and explains what occurs anatomically and acoustically in this register. Attendees will explore video and vocal examples, practice targeted exercises, and learn how to access head voice through both falsetto and non-falsetto approaches. The session also explores passaggio and offers strategies for guiding singers through this difficult part of the range in ensemble settings. Participants will leave with practical tools and vocal exercises to support developing singers.



Braden Rymer is a DMA candidate in choral conducting at the University of Miami Frost School of Music, where he serves as a graduate teaching assistant.

He earned an MM in choral conducting and performance and pedagogy from the University of Georgia (UGA). While at UGA, he conducted the Repertory Singers, Men's Glee Club, and Women's Glee Club while also serving as the choir director and organist/pianist for the Commerce Presbyterian Church. He also served as the instructor of record in aural skills and music theory. Prior to that, he worked for six years as the choir director and AP music theory instructor at Maple Mountain High School in Utah. Choirs under his direction were invited to perform at various concerts and state conferences, including Utah ACDA and UMEA.

Modeling Balance in Rehearsals

As choral conductors and educators, we regularly model essential skills: breath, phonation, phrasing, engagement, etc. Vocalists rely on posture and alignment

for resonance and support, making it crucial that we exemplify these principles from the podium. This session explores how conducting gestures, breath management, and body alignment influence ensemble sound and reinforce healthy movement. It also examines how physical engagement shifts across repertoire styles and how holding music can impact vocal production. By integrating these principles into our conducting, we provide a clear model that empowers singers to develop sustainable performance habits.



Amanda Moreno serves as the choral music education specialist at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She has served as a teacher and choral director in Oregon, California, Washington, North

Dakota, and Germany. She has also maintained a private voice and piano studio, worked with church and community choirs, adjudicated for local and state festivals, supported musicians as a collaborative pianist, and music-directed for musical theatre productions at all age levels. Moreno holds a BME from California Baptist University, a master's in teaching from George Fox University, and a PhD in music education from the University of North Dakota, where she completed the first fully quantitative research study on the use of body mapping instruction for singers. She is a licensed body mapping educator with the Association for Body Mapping Education.

Pathways to Curricular Pacing: Developing Choral Skill Sets

Musical literacy is the backbone of a successful choral program. However, the sequencing of those skills is not always laid out in a clear manner that works for most students through some popular sight-reading curriculums. As educators we often struggle to empathize with our singers, as we are trained to just do it and forget how overwhelming the tasks can be for beginners. The same struggles can also be found in the approach

to developing harmony through quality repertoire. Many teachers often ask, “Why can’t my singers perform music in parts?” The answer is in selecting the proper repertoire to meet students where they are. This session seeks to walk participants through the developing and pacing of many different musical skill sets as we build harmonic independence in our singers.



Eric G. Johnson is the assistant professor and coordinator of music education for Gardner-Webb University. Prior to pursuing a PhD in music education with a choral conducting emphasis from the University of Mississippi, he was the choral director at Holmes Middle School in Eden, NC, where he directed a vibrant choral for ten years. With a BM in music education and sacred vocal performance from Appalachian State University and an MME from The Florida State University, Johnson is active as an educator, clinician, and presenter. He has presented at national conferences for both NAFME and ACDA and conducted honor choirs in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. He serves as the president-elect for North Carolina ACDA and supports churches in the region as an interim music minister.

Prism of Perspective: Cultivating Transgender Vocal Identity

This session convenes a diverse panel of experts to support choral directors at all stages of their teaching. Featuring a medical doctor, a DMA-trained voice teacher and performer, and a PhD professor of vocal music education, the panel will address key aspects of working with transgender voices. Topics covered will include vocal health, repertoire, pedagogy, terminology, and identity all aimed at fostering inclusive and affirming choral environments. The session will explore relevant literature and resources for deepening understanding while also providing an opportunity for open dialogue and questions.



Jill Campbell works in choral/vocal music and music education at Eastern Kentucky University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate classes in pedagogy, research, and sociology of music. She also directs choral ensembles and supervises student teachers. Campbell is a direct and actively engaged ally for all students and singers. She is a frequent guest adjudicator and clinician for district and all-state honor choirs; she has also presented clinics and workshops in numerous states on topics of music education, church choir leadership, vocal health, performance-based assessment, dyslexia and music reading, and sight singing. Campbell is the state research chair for Kentucky MEA. Recent invitations include the 2024 Southern ACDA Region Conference and the 2024 KMEA Conference.



Sarah Marks is the director of family and community medicine at the University of Kentucky, including the Transform Health Clinic. A native of Lexington, Marks holds degrees from the University of Kentucky and UNC Chapel Hill. She completed her family medicine residency at St. Joseph Family Medicine Residency in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She worked in medical student education and the interprofessional teaching clinic at the University of Kansas before coming to the University of Kentucky in 2019. At UK, Marks is the associate program director and maternity care director in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and is focused on residency education and curriculum design. She is one of the primary physicians with the Transform Health program at the University of Kentucky, an interprofessional health-care home for LGBTQ+ patients of all ages.



Brittany Benningfield is a lifelong performer and teacher with an overflowing vocal studio of singers of all ages, including many transgender students both trans-masc and trans-femme. She received her undergraduate degree in music education from Campbellsville University and received master’s and doctoral degrees in vocal performance from the

Interest Sessions

University of Kentucky. Benningfield has performed several operatic roles, including three of Mozart's most well-known leading ladies: La Contessa in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. Professional performances include programs with Cincinnati Opera and the Southern Illinois Symphony Orchestra. She is the program director of vocal music with the Governor's School for the Arts of KY and a lecturer of voice at Berea College.

Rehearsing for Understanding: Educating All Singers

Church choirs and non-auditioned community choruses unite musicians of all experience levels, offering a unique opportunity for directors to nurture growth through integrated music literacy and contextual learning. Instruction can go beyond vocal technique to include score marking, theory, IPA, and culturally informed performance practices. By exploring diverse musical styles and traditions, directors create inclusive, accessible, and meaningful rehearsal environments. Though instruction may progress more slowly than in academic settings, this intentional, practical approach fosters expressive, collaborative growth. These ensembles become spaces where all singers connect deeply with music, each other, and a broad spectrum of cultural and emotional experiences.



Jennifer Adam is in her twenty-third year of teaching and is the director of choirs at Christian County High School in Hopkinsville, KY, having previously taught in elementary through college classrooms

in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Adam possesses degrees and certifications in music education, violin and vocal performance, Kodály methodology, and choral conducting. Making and teaching music is her passion, and she greatly enjoys working with a variety of musicians every day. Outside of school, she is active in her church, singing in her

church choir, and spending time with her family.



Matt Caine is director of traditional music at St. John's United Methodist Church, Aiken, SC. In addition to being an active conductor of orchestras and church, community, professional, and symphonic choruses, Caine has served as interim director of choral activities for St. Petersburg College and Allen University. Both a Fulbright Scholar and a FLAS Fellow in Bulgarian Language of the US Department of Education, his published research in Bulgarian music is frequently cited by scholars in both Bulgaria and the United States. Caine has presented interest sessions at two ACDA national conferences as well as regional and state conferences.

Spirituals, Anthems, and Gospel Music: Is There a Difference?

Concert spirituals, ethnic anthems, and gospel music are distinct styles of sacred choral songs by African American composers influenced by Western European classical music. While unique, these styles do share musical characteristics, leading to the incorrect interchangeable use of terms and mislabeling. This miscategorization overlooks contributions to the classical music tradition and leads to inappropriate performance practices. The learning outcomes of this session are to provide general characteristics of spirituals, gospel, and ethnic anthems, and to assist in categorizing, describing, and performing these songs more appropriately and respectfully.



William Powell is the director of choral activities at Auburn University, where he teaches choral courses and conducts the Chamber Choir, Men's Chorus, Concert Choir, and Gospel Choir. He is a guest conductor for various choral events in the United States and abroad, including performances at Lincoln

Center through Distinguished Concerts International New York. Powell adjudicates state and regional choral festivals and frequently judges for Festival Disney. His choral arrangements are published by Hal Leonard, Oxford University Press, and Fred Bock Music, which also publishes *The William Powell Choral Series*.



Rosephanye Powell has been hailed as one of America's premier women composers and the most performed African American female composer of choral music internationally. She serves as professor of voice at Auburn University, where she teaches courses in voice, vocal pedagogy, and vocal literature, and conducts the Women's Chorus and Concert Choir. She is a graduate of The Florida State University, Westminster Choir College, and Alabama State University and is in high demand as a composer and conductor. In addition to her choral works, Powell is also known for her art songs and spiritual arrangements for solo voice and piano. Her numerous awards and honors include the 2025 Brock Commission, Honorary Life Member of NCCO (2023), the National Vanguard Award from the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. (2023), and the Luise Vosgerchian Teaching Award presented by Harvard University (2022).

The Tenor-Bass Choir: A Tennessee Directors' Panel

Tenor-bass (TB) choirs at the collegiate level are thriving in distinct and innovative ways. This session brings together three conductors from diverse regions in Tennessee to share strategies, challenges, and inspirations unique to leading tenor-bass collegiate ensembles in the modern era. The session highlights how the multifaceted identities, sounds, and experiences within TB ensembles can be celebrated and elevated. Through the lens of regional practice and shared values, presenters will explore: approaches to programming and performance, supporting developing TB voices with thoughtful pedagogy, inclusive language, and community building in TB ensembles.



Angela Tipps has taught in the MTSU School of Music for twenty-eight years. A graduate of MTSU and Scarritt Graduate School, Tipps conducts the SOAL (Soprano-Alto) and TEBA (Tenor-Bass) Chorales, coordinates the music appreciation courses, and serves as musical director for shows in the department of theatre and dance. During the 2021–2022 academic year, her choirs went through a student-led name change, from Women's and Men's Chorales to SOAL and TEBA. This is the first ACDA appearance by the TEBA Chorale; the SOAL Chorale has performed twice at Southern ACDA Region in 2018 and 2024.



Emily Frizzell is assistant professor of music education at the University of Memphis, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate music education courses, supervises music residents, and directs Tigerchor Tenor/Bass Choir. Frizzell is an active presenter, adjudicator, clinician, and researcher, with writings featured in *PLOS One*, *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, *Choral Journal*, and GIA Publications.



Lauren Ramey is associate director of choral activities and director of music education at East Tennessee State University, where she conducts BucsWorth Tenor Bass Choir. She also teaches courses in choral conducting and music education. Ramey maintains an active guest conducting and presenting schedule throughout the country. Recent conference presentations and poster sessions include topics such as preparation of the EdTPA, acoustic configuration of ensembles, impostor phenomenon in music educators, cultivating community through relationship building, and inclusivity for diverse learners in the choral classroom. She serves as the tenor bass R&R chair for Tennessee ACDA and has held many leadership positions in TNMEA and ACDA.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Through a Different Lens: Empowering Neurodiverse Conductors

Many conversations in music education focus on supporting neurodivergent students, but what about the educators? This session explores the experiences of neurodivergent choral directors through both research and lived perspective. Presenters Rebekah Bridges and Jacob Ven Huizen will highlight common challenges neurodivergent educators face, such as executive dysfunction, social navigation, and masking, while offering insights for neurotypical colleagues to foster empathy and support. The session will also provide practical strategies for neurodivergent educators to manage their workload, reduce stress, and focus on what matters most: making music. Join us for a candid, empowering discussion within the vibrant Prism of Voices.



Rebekah Bridges is a middle school choir director in Bethesda, Maryland. A Texas native, she grew up in a strong culture of music education with her mother as her first music teacher. Bridges is a ten-year educator with experience primarily at the elementary and middle school levels, including eight years in public schools. She performs regularly as a singer with The Washington Chorus, where she is also a soprano section coach. She holds a BME from Baylor University and an MM in conducting from Simpson College.



Jacob Ven Huizen is a conductor, educator, and composer based in Lincoln, NE. A native of northwest Iowa, he spent six years teaching grades seven to twelve at West Lyon CSD, where his ensembles earned consistent division I ratings. His Wildcat Jazz Choir became a top competitor, earning multiple first-place finishes and a top-three finish at the 2024 Iowa Vocal Jazz Championships. He holds degrees from Northwestern College and Simpson College and is pursuing a DMA in choral conducting at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he conducts the All-Collegiate Choir and teaches undergraduate conducting.

Tone and Style: Using Pop Music to Build Better Singers

Why should we perform popular music with our choirs? How can we use contemporary music to build stronger singers and diverse programs while expanding traditional technique and challenging choral norms? This session will reveal the benefits of popular and contemporary music to choral singers and their communities while addressing the most common roadblocks directors face while teaching it. Participants will leave the session with a better understanding of the importance of culturally native pop music in the choral program, strategies to successfully and authentically teach this music to their singers, and practical ways to incorporate it into their programs.



J. D. Frizzell is the director of fine arts at Briarcrest Christian School in Memphis, TN. He earned the DMA from the University of Kentucky. His ensembles have performed by invitation at state, regional, national, and international conventions. Their music has been downloaded and streamed over 120 million times worldwide. They have performed at the Emmy's, competed on *America's Got Talent*, and collaborated with multiple Grammy winners, including The Swingles and Foreigner. Frizzell is the cofounder and president of the A Cappella Education Association and the founder of the National A Cappella Convention. He is a member of The Recording Academy and a published composer, arranger, and author. In 2024 and 2025 he was named a top-ten national finalist for the Grammy Music Educator Award.



2026 ACDA Southern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

4th-6th Grade Children's



Coty Raven Morris, a New Orleans native, is the Hinckley Assistant Professor of Choir, Music Education, and Social Justice at Portland State University. She holds a master's in choral conducting from Michigan State University. A newly published composer, Morris's works have been performed by honor choirs and at festivals across the country. She is also a two-time Grammy Music Educator nominee (finalist, 2024; semifinalist, 2025). Morris is a host at All Classical Radio and the International Children's Arts Network. She also serves as chorus master and artistic collaborator with Portland Center Stage, the Oregon Symphony Orchestra, and Choirs of America. She is the founder of Being Human Together, a community focused on conversations around mental health, diversity, and inclusivity in music education.

10th-12th Grade Senior High TTBB



Richard Schnipke, DMA, serves as director of choral activities and associate professor of music performance studies at Bowling Green State University. His duties include conducting the Collegiate Chorale and the University Men's Chorus as well as teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in choral conducting and choral literature. Previously, Schnipke was a member of the faculty at Xavier University and The Ohio State University, and was a public school choral director in Ohio for fifteen years. As a vocalist, Schnipke has sung professionally with Cincinnati's Vocal Arts Ensemble, the Cincinnati Fusion Ensemble, Collegium Cincinnati, Cincinnati Opera, and Opera Columbus. Schnipke also presents frequently on the incorporation of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in the choral rehearsal.

7th-9th Grade Junior High SATB



Jessica Nápoles is professor of choral music education at the University of North Texas, where she teaches undergraduate choral methods, supervises graduate research, and conducts the UNT Concert Choir. A native of Florida with a Cuban American background, Nápoles taught in Miami and Orlando, FL. She received three degrees in music education from The Florida State University. Prior to her appointment at UNT, she taught at the University of Utah for eleven years. Nápoles frequently engages in guest conducting opportunities locally, regionally, and nationally. She has conducted all-state and honor choirs in over twenty states. In addition to her work as a conductor, Nápoles is a well-known researcher, with numerous publications. Nápoles serves as National ACDA president-elect.

10th-12th Grade Senior High SSAA



Nicole C. Lamartine is the director of choirs at Central Washington University. She conducts the flagship CWU Chamber Choir, integrates twenty-first-century relevancy into MM choral studies, and teaches conducting, voice, and music education. She has conducted over twenty all-state, international, and ACDA honor choirs; her own ensembles have appeared on ACDA, MEA, NCCO, and CMS regional and national conferences. She has headlined choral conferences in Hong Kong and Costa Rica and seven US states. Lamartine conducts Chor Anno, comprising choral music educators, and she is the founder of the Santa Barbara Gay Men's Chorus. She is a past president of Northwest ACDA Region. The *Nicole Lamartine Choral Series* is published with Santa Barbara Music Press.



File Sharing

Sheet music, audio tracks, documents.



100% Free

No character limit, no member limit.



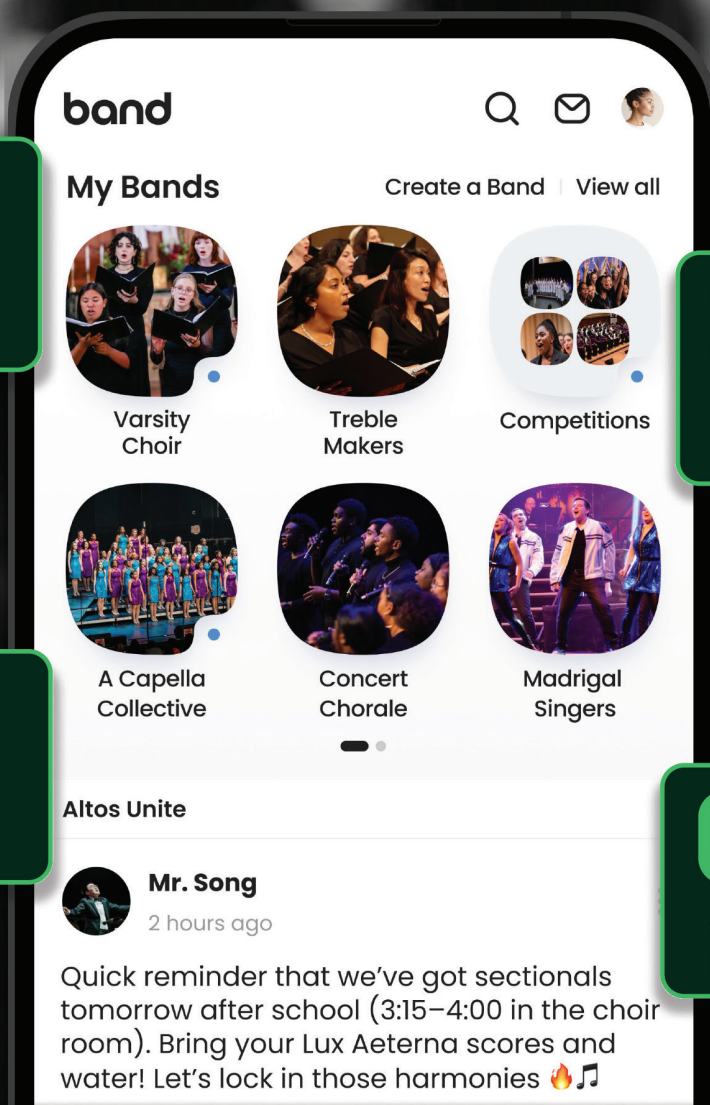
Group Posts

Rehearsal reminders, set lists, updates.



Private Chats

Sections, 1:1, and full program chats.



Harmony starts with Communication

BAND makes it easy for choral directors to keep every student, parent, and conductor in sync - **all in one secure place.**

Share rehearsal updates, scores, videos, and reminders instantly, without endless emails or group texts.

learn more at band.us

PROUD PLATINUM SPONSOR
ACDA WESTERN



JOIN THOUSANDS OF MUSIC DIRECTORS ALREADY USING BAND



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Conference Overview



Jonathan Owen

Mark your calendars and pack your bags! This year's SWACDA Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, promises an unforgettable experience for choral musicians, music educators, and enthusiasts alike. Under the inspiring theme "New Horizons," we'll gather to

share music, ideas, and community in a city bursting with cultural richness and Southwestern charm.

Prepare to be inspired by a series of world-class concerts featuring outstanding choirs from across the region and beyond. Each performance will be an opportunity to hear artistry at its highest level. These concerts will not only showcase the diversity and talent of our choral community but also send you home renewed and ready to create more music in your own corner of the world.

In addition to unforgettable performances, our interest sessions will open new doors of creativity and knowledge. Whether you're seeking fresh repertoire ideas, innovative rehearsal strategies, or insight into vocal health and pedagogy, presenters will offer practical, inspiring tools you can use immediately. Each session is an opportunity to expand your skills and connect with leaders in

the field.

And before New Horizons officially begins, you can experience Albuquerque from a higher perspective—literally. Start your conference adventure with a breathtaking hot air balloon ride, rising gently over the Rio Grande Valley as the sun paints the Sandia Mountains in brilliant shades of pink and gold. This special add-on event is a pre-conference treat that will set the tone for the inspiring days ahead.

Albuquerque itself offers an incredible backdrop for our gathering. Savor the flavors of authentic Southwestern cuisine, from chile-infused dishes to handmade tamales. Wander through vibrant local markets, take in breathtaking sunsets, and explore the city's deep Native American and Hispanic cultural heritage.

Beyond the music, the food, and the sights, this conference is about community. It's about reuniting with colleagues, meeting new friends, and discovering together what's possible when voices join in harmony. SWACDA New Horizons is more than an event—it's an experience that will inspire, challenge, and refresh your spirit.

Don't miss your chance to be part of it. The music is calling, the city is waiting, and the horizon is wide open. See you in Albuquerque!

Southwestern Region Conference Registration Information

until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

Attendee \$325 Retired \$250 Student \$150

January 16 - March 7

Attendee \$400 Retired \$280 Student \$190

One Day \$190 **only available on site**

Register at acda.org/region-conferences



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Headliner/Opening Night Concert

Headliner

APOLLO5



Celebrating its sixteenth year in 2026, APOLLO5 continues to thrill, move, and inspire audiences as one of Britain's smallest but most impressive vocal groups. Comprising a soprano, mezzo-soprano, two tenors, and a bass, the ensemble has become known for its ability to connect with intimacy and directness, showcasing with dynamic and distinctive sound how powerful five voices alone can be. With a versatile approach to music programming and a diverse repertoire, the group's five voices bring the music of five centuries to life. Hailed by *BBC Music Magazine* as "faultless" and *Classic FM* as "exceptionally beautiful singing," APOLLO5 performs throughout Europe, the United States, and Asia to consistent critical acclaim. As part of the VOCES8 Foundation, APOLLO5 delivers an ambitious education program to deliver workshops, masterclasses, and concerts to over forty thousand young people annually.

Welcome to Albuquerque Concert

University of New Mexico Concert Choir

The University of New Mexico choirs boast a music-making history of over one hundred years. As the flagship choral ensemble and ambassadors for UNM,



the Concert Choir draws its membership from all majors across campus and is proud to celebrate a long tradition of musical excellence established and cultivated by past conductors, including Douglas McEwen, Eph Ehly, Bradley Ellingboe, and John Clark. Highlights of the Concert Choir include their performance with the NM Philharmonic of Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* No. 2 in C minor, a special concert presentation curated by Dr. Javier Marín-López (University of Jaén, Spain) Sacred Choral Music and Ritual Dance on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, a collaboration with the UNMSO to present Antonio Estevez's *Cantata Criolla*, and numerous world premieres, including Andrea Clearfield's *Singing Into Presence* and Kile Smith's *Where the Mind is Without Fear*.



David Edmonds is director of choral studies at the University of New Mexico, where he directs the UNM Concert Choir and teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting and choral repertoire. Since 2023 he has also served as artistic director and conductor of *Dolce Canto*, a community-based choir in Missoula, Montana. Edmonds led the New Mexico Symphonic Chorus as interim artistic director for their 2023–2024 season. Choirs under his direction have presented invited performances at regional conferences of both ACDA and NAfME. Edmonds served as the ACDA national R&R chair for student activities from 2015 to 2021. His own original compositions and arrangements are published by Alliance Music Publications, Colla Voce, and MorningStar Music Publishers. Edmonds obtained advanced degrees in conducting from the University of North Texas and Westminster Choir College.

Coro Lux



Coro Lux (“Chorus of Light”) is an auditioned community chorus based in Albuquerque and founded in the fall of 2015. Under artistic director Bradley Ellingboe, the chorus has grown into one of the top choruses in the Southwest. Coro Lux consists of a “family of choruses,” including the fifty-five voices of Coro Lux, as well as the chamber ensemble Luminare and the El Faro Youth Chorus. Highlights of the 2025–26 season include collaborations with the Pulitzer Prize-winning Indigenous composer Raven Chacon, two performances of Craig Hella Johnson’s *Considering Matthew Shepard*, conducted by the composer and including narrator Ali MacGraw, our annual celebration of African American music (FebFest), and April’s performance of *Cardera de las Islas* for chorus, guitar, and charango under guest conductor Dr. José Daniel Flores Caraballo.



Bradley Ellingboe has led a wide-ranging career in the world of singing, including accomplishments as a choral conductor, soloist, composer, scholar, and teacher. As a conductor, he has led festival choruses in thirty-five states and fifteen countries. A bass-baritone, Ellingboe has been a soloist under such conductors as Robert Shaw, Helmuth Rilling, and Sir David Willcocks. Ellingboe has more than 160 pieces of music in print. For his scholarly work in making the songs of Grieg more accessible to English-speaking singers, King Harald VII of Norway awarded him the Medal of St. Olav. The University of New Mexico Alumni Association named Ellingboe Faculty of the Year in 2008. Upon his retirement from UNM, he founded Coro Lux.

Opening Night Reception Open to All Attendees

Join us for a warm Southwestern welcome at the New Horizons Welcome to Albuquerque Reception, immediately following the Welcome Concert. We’ll gather in the beautiful First United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall—the church’s original sanctuary—for conversation, connection, and community as we begin our 2026 SWACDA journey together.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Special Events

Hot Air Balloon Rides (Wednesday 6:30am)

Kick off your SWACDA 2026 Conference with an unforgettable adventure high above Albuquerque! On Wednesday, March 4, conference attendees will have the opportunity to experience a hot air balloon ride with World Balloon, one of Albuquerque’s premier operators. This add-on event costs \$189 per person and \$125 for children (ages 5–14) and includes free round-trip

transportation from the Clyde Hotel to the World Balloon headquarters and back. The morning begins with a 6:00 a.m. pickup followed by a breathtaking ride over the beautiful New Mexico landscape—a once-in-a-lifetime experience and the perfect way to launch your New Horizons journey.

Availability is limited, and reservations must be made directly with World Balloon before February 1, 2026 (505-293-6800).



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Special Events

APOLLO5 Interest Session

How Can We Help? Learning and Connection with the VOCES8 Foundation

The VOCES8 Foundation's ensembles VOCES8, APOLLO5, Lyyra, and the VOCES8 Scholars work with thousands of people every year. From high school choirs to university ensembles; elementary classes to children's and youth choirs; community choirs, and choral societies, the singers engage and support choral ensembles of all ages and experiences. In this interactive session, Ann Wright and APOLLO5 will explore

the programs the Foundation delivers, sharing the VOCES8 method as well as resources from recent collaborations in engaging new singers and audiences.



Ann Wright is director of education with the VOCES8 Foundation, where she curates and delivers programs, collaborates with a range of partners, leads workshops, trains and supports the Foundation's singers, and mentors teachers. Wright also works with partners in the United States, including Albuquerque's Quintessence, and in France. During her time with the VOCES8 Foundation she has commissioned Professor Graham Welch to evaluate the Foundation's projects. Recent research involves Singing for Wellbeing, a multiyear program in a London primary school.

REFRESH YOUR REPERTOIRE



**Discover expertly curated sacred choral music series designed for every choir,
with beautiful options to suit any ensemble, ability, or occasion.**



Start browsing now!
ocpchoral.com

ocp Choral

Susan Brumfield Interest Session

Kodály-Inspired Teaching
in the Choral Classroom

Part 1

From Classroom to Chorus:
Building on the K-5 Foundation

It's a big leap from the "happy circle" of the K-5 music class to the structure and pace of a choral rehearsal. There's a lot to learn, and even kids who love to sing can be overwhelmed and intimidated by the change in their environment. Making connections between your rehearsals and the musical skills your singers bring with them from the K-5 classroom is essential when it comes to helping them feel successful in choir. Building on the "other" musical skills (playing instruments, literacy, composition, improvisation, memory, inner hearing, and part-work) can build confidence and keep young singers engaged as they grow into choral musicians. Fast-paced and fun, student-tested and approved, these Kodály-inspired activities fit easily into your rehearsal and lesson plans, with minimum planning and maximum results. We will explore five- to seven-minute practice activities designed to save planning time and to provide efficient and fun ways to deliver instruction and assess your singers' progress in all areas of musical skill.

Part 2

What's Next? Repertoire, Planning, and Teaching
Strategies for Young Choirs

Whether you're working with beginning singers in elementary choir or more advanced singers in middle school or community ensembles, teaching in a choral setting brings unique challenges and exciting opportunities to move beyond the K-5 classroom. Choral singing creates a unique environment where children can grow into well-balanced, independent musicians. In a Kodály-inspired approach, the goal isn't simply to

move quickly from "score to stage." It's all about building knowledge and skills through small, intentional steps over time. This session will explore strategies for readiness, preparation, and presentation of repertoire for young choirs while continuing to develop singing, reading, writing, part-work, and aural skills in the choral setting. We'll explore Kodály-based tools for analyzing and teaching repertoire at beginning, intermediate, and more advanced levels. A complimentary choral reading packet will be provided.



Susan Brumfield is professor of music education at Texas Tech University, artistic director of The West Texas Children's Chorus, and academic director of The West Texas Kodály Initiative. An internationally recognized expert in the Kodály approach, she is widely known as a dynamic teacher, conductor, author, and composer. She is the author of *First, We Sing! Kodály-Inspired Teaching in the Music Classroom*, a series of textbooks and song anthologies published by Hal Leonard. Her additional publications include *Hot Peas and Barley-O: Children's Songs and Games from Scotland*, *Over the Garden Wall: Children's Songs and Games from England*, and *Kentucky Mother Goose*, coauthored with American folk legend Jean Ritchie. Brumfield's choral music is published by Galaxy Music Corp, Colla Voce Music, Hal Leonard, and BriLee.

The West Texas Children's Chorus



Originally founded as a teaching lab for music education majors, The West Texas Children's Chorus has



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Special Events

grown into a successful nonprofit community music organization comprising five choirs with singers from kindergarten age through college. Choirs and classes are led by a staff of university faculty, area school music and movement specialists, professional singers, and Texas Tech University undergraduate and graduate music education interns. In addition to the choral ensemble, singers meet in small groups for Kodály musicianship training. The philosophy of The West Texas Children's Chorus emphasizes the joy of singing for its own sake and the development of the whole child through diverse musical experiences of the highest caliber.

shaw, Pavane, and Walton. She has presented at European Center for Jewish Music (Germany), College Music Society, NCCO, North American Jewish Choral Festival, NAFME, and ACDA. She is vice president of NCCO and recently was NWACDA president-elect. She earned degrees from University of Southern California (DMA), University of Miami (MM), and University of Michigan (Juris Doctor/BMA/BA).

University of Colorado-Boulder Chamber Singers



The CU Boulder Chamber Singers commit to underrepresented composers in every program, performing the historic canon while promoting ethically sourced contemporary and previously overlooked repertoire. This year, our ensemble includes undergraduate and graduate students from a wide variety of disciplines across campus, including atmospheric and oceanic sciences, psychology, astrophysical and planetary sciences, business, and aerospace engineering sciences, as well as majors within the College of Music. By aspiring to our highest level of performance—technically, artistically, and emotionally—we create a shared musical experience through which we seek a better understanding of our humanity and capacity for empathy.

Coreen Duffy Interest Session

Sh'ma: Global Jewish Choral Music

The University of Colorado Boulder Chamber Singers, under the direction of Coreen Duffy, will perform Jewish repertoire in a hybrid concert/interest session designed to invigorate directors' programming considerations of music with Jewish connection. Selections will embrace musics from the Sephardic, Ashkenazic, and Mizrahi traditions, including historic and contemporary diasporic literature. The session will focus on how to program quality music from the Jewish liturgy and culture while avoiding appropriation, tokenization, and caricature. Attendees will receive an expansive repertoire list, including literature suitable for all voicings, occasions, and levels, including K-12, collegiate, community, and music-in-worship choirs.



Coreen Duffy is director of choral activities at CU Boulder, where she conducts Chamber Singers and oversees the choral program. She is artistic director of Seicento Baroque Ensemble, which champions period-instrument performances. Duffy is an active clinician/composer published by ECS, Hin-

Special Session - Live Podcast

**Podcast: Beyond the Buzzwords –
Rigor, Inclusion, and Reality in Choral Education**

Hosted by Chris Munce with panelists Reginal Wright, Odell Ziegler Jr., and Betsy Cook Weber, this timely conversation tackles the most pressing—and often unspoken—questions in our profession. In an era shaped by shifting cultural norms, political polarization, and evolving educational values, choral educators must navigate complex challenges while remaining committed to excellence. What do we really mean when we talk about rigor, standards, and achievement in the choral classroom? Can we embrace political and philosophical diversity in our ensembles while still fostering genuine community and inclusion? How do we address the gender imbalance in singing without creating barriers or exclusions? And are we engaging with diverse repertoire in truly thoughtful and nuanced ways? This panel will move beyond platitudes to confront the realities of twenty-first-century choral education, offering a space for honest dialogue, reflection, and growth. Audience Q&A will follow, with all perspectives welcome.



Chris Munce is a choral conductor, educator, and clinician with experience leading ensembles from youth to professional. He directs Kantorei KC, a professional choir in Kansas City, and has shaped the choral program at Lee's Summit High School for twenty years. Munce also produces the *Choralosophy* podcast, the world's largest and longest-running choir podcast, known for fearlessly confronting complex issues in music education and in the arts. A frequent conference presenter, he works at the intersection of academic rigor, student agency, and cultural nuance. He lives in the KC area with his wife, Beth; daughter, Clara; son, Colin; and Sam the dog.



Reginal Wright has over twenty years of experience as a public school educator and currently serves on the choral faculty at Baylor University. Previously head

choral director at Mansfield High School, his choirs had featured performances at SWACDA (2012 and 2022), TMEA (2018), and ACDA National (2023). Wright is an active clinician and conductor, frequently leading honor choirs across the United States. As a composer, his works have been commissioned by middle school, high school, collegiate, and professional ensembles, with performances at ACDA conferences, Texas all-state choirs, and Carnegie Hall. His music is published by BriLee, Carl Fischer, Graphite, Hal Leonard, Oxford, and Santa Barbara Music Publishing. Wright earned a BME and MME from Stephen F. Austin State University.



Odell Ziegler IV is the choral director in Norfolk Public School system in Norfolk, Virginia. Zeigler is a Virginia Symphony Orchestra's Education Committee member. He serves as a national reader for Advanced Placement (AP) Music Theory and AP Psychology exams. He holds a BA in music and psychology from North Central College in Naperville, Illinois; an MME from the University of Rhode Island; and an MME (educational leadership with a principal certification endorsement) from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.



Betsy Cook Weber is artistic director of the Grammy Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir and enjoys an international reputation as a conductor, clinician, adjudicator, and presenter. She is Madison Endowed Professor of Music Emeritus at the University of Houston Moores School of Music and director emeritus of the Houston Symphony Chorus. Weber is among the few conductors to have directed a major university choral program, the chorus of a symphony orchestra, and a professional ensemble. Choirs under her direction have won top prizes internationally and have appeared at state, regional, and national conferences across the United States. Internationally, she has conducted at Leipzig's Bachfest and the Litomyšl Festival in the Czech Republic and has adjudicated widely. In 2013 she became the first woman to receive TCDA's Texas Choirmaster Award.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Special Events

Big Sing (Friday)

One of the most joyful and talked-about events from the 2024 conference is returning for SWACDA 2026 in Albuquerque: the Big Sing. Coordinated by Jennifer Sengin, this informal gathering brings together many of the conference's performing choirs to share one or two of their favorite pieces with fellow ensembles. What makes the Big Sing unique is its spirit of support and community. Choirs perform not for adjudication or critique but to celebrate one another's artistry, creating an atmosphere of encouragement that is truly inspiring. In 2024, the event was a highlight of the conference, with each choir receiving extraordinary support and appreciation from their peers. For 2026, the Big Sing will be

even bigger, as all SWACDA attendees are invited to join this uplifting experience. Don't miss this chance to hear a wide variety of choirs in a relaxed, joyful setting that embodies the best of our choral community.

All-Conference Dinner (Friday @ 5:30 pm)

Held in the vibrant Albuquerque Convention Center Civic Plaza (with a beautiful indoor ballroom option in case of inclement weather), this gathering is the perfect opportunity to celebrate with both new and longtime friends. Enjoy an unforgettable evening featuring the passion and artistry of a Flamenco dance performance, along with the creativity of local Albu-

THE CHORAL MUSIC OF PAUL JOHN RUDOI

from the Cantus Publishing Series

More Than Enough - SATB, TTB, or SSA and percussion

Commissioned for Cantus' 2025 TTBB Festival, *More Than Enough* is a rousing call to acknowledge our own potential and change the world with those around us.

America the Beautiful - SATB, TTBB, or SSAA a cappella

A familiar tune coupled with a narrative moment to bring home its message of community, empathy, and the ideal of selfless patriotism.

from PJR Music (exclusively distributed through Graphite Marketplace)

Oranges - TBarB or SSA, solo, and piano

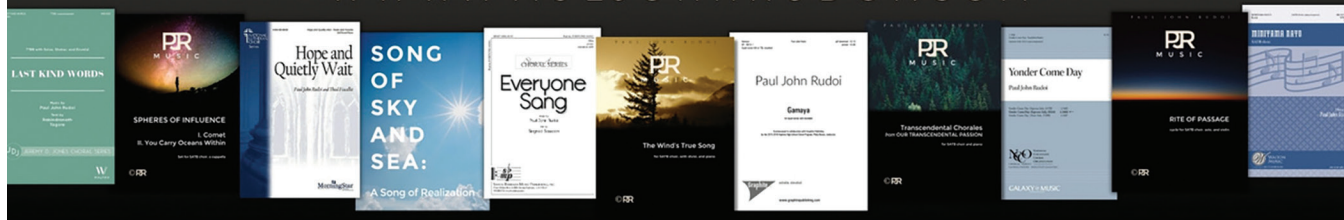
Commissioned for the 2021-2022 TTBB MN All State Choir, Paul's *Oranges* is a testament to young love, focusing on the nostalgia of Gary Solo's famous poem.

Love Never Ends - Choral Set for SATB choir, violin, and piano

Continuing on the success of *Hope and Quietly Wait*, Paul adapts three more of Thad's iconic works into a choral set focusing on the universal nature of love.



WWW.PAULJOHNRUDOI.COM



ququerque artisans who will showcase their work. Add to that a delicious dinner, lively atmosphere, and the joy of connecting with colleagues from across the region, and you'll have an experience that truly embodies the spirit of our New Horizons conference. Be sure to reserve your place when you register for the conference. Tickets are just \$10 per person to reserve your seat (dinner courtesy of SWACDA). Don't miss this special night of music, culture, and community!

Horizons in Higher Education Fairs

As part of the 2026 New Horizons Conference in Albuquerque, SWACDA will host two distinct Horizons in Higher Education Fairs—one for undergraduate programs and one for graduate programs. These



The SWACDA 2026 Conference launches with a powerful opening event, New Horizons Immersion Day, which kicks off at 9:30am on Wednesday, March 4. This full day of learning features sessions presented by our Repertoire & Resources chairs, representing every R&R area across the Southwest Region. These expert leaders will share practical strategies, fresh repertoire, and innovative ideas designed to strengthen and inspire your work in rehearsal rooms, classrooms, and concert halls.

Adding to the excitement, Immersion Day also includes presentations from all seven honor choir clinicians, offering attendees a rare opportunity to learn directly from some of the finest conductors in the profession. Their artistry, insight, and experience will provide invaluable perspectives on rehearsal techniques, artistry, and the future of choral music. Where else can

events provide universities, colleges, and graduate schools a meaningful opportunity to connect directly with prospective students and future choral leaders from across the Southwestern Region. By hosting separate fairs, SWACDA aims to foster intentional conversations, build relationships between institutions and attendees, and highlight the diverse educational pathways available in our choral community.

New Horizons President's Reception

Following the President's Concert on Friday evening, all conference attendees are invited to the New Horizons President's Reception—a celebration of the presenters, performers, participants, and attendees who make the conference shine. Join us as we honor the creativity, collaboration, and community that truly embody the spirit of New Horizons.

2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

you learn from such a breadth of true experts in a single day? Make plans to arrive early and experience the best of New Horizons from the very beginning.

R&R Areas

Children and Youth Choirs

From Idea to Premiere: Commissioning Choral Music at Any Level

Commissioning a new piece of music can feel intimidating, especially for those navigating it for the first time. This session breaks down the process with



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

insights from both composers who write commissioned works (including Kyle Pederson) and directors of all levels who have led successful commissions. We will explore timelines, communication tips, collaborative best practices, and how to participate in consortiums or co-commissions if your budget is tight. Attendees will walk away with practical tools, clear expectations, and the confidence to bring new music into the world.



Nathan Wubbena holds a BME from the University of Northern Colorado and an MME with a conducting specialization from Colorado State University. He has taught and conducted ensembles for all ages across Colorado, specializing in choral, musical theater, and contemporary genres. Wubbena is artistic director of the Boulder Children's Chorale and Longmont Chorale and is founder and board president of Ascent Vocals. A frequent guest clinician and conductor, he has led honor choirs statewide and adjudicates at ACDA festivals. He is chair emeritus of the Colorado middle all-state choir board and received CMEA's Outstanding Young Music Educator Award in 2015. He lives in Longmont with his family and is committed to making music accessible to all, fostering joy, collaboration, and community through singing.

College and University Choirs/ World Musics and Cultures

Navigating Cultural Appropriation in Choral Music

This session will explore the complexities of cultural appropriation in choral music, focusing on the challenges of borrowing and performing music across cultures. Using the analogy of the British Museum's display of an ancient Babylonian vase, we'll discuss how cultural ownership can be ambiguous for intangible forms like music. Musicians often balance the sharing of traditions with respecting their cultural significance. From

performing translated choral works to arranging folk songs, questions arise about cultural engagement. Is it acceptable to perform religious music outside its context? Can anyone arrange African American spirituals? This session encourages reflection on these issues and invites a conversation about the ethical responsibilities of musicians navigating cultural boundaries.



Eduardo Garcia-Novelli is an Argentinian American conductor and teacher and the director of choral studies at the University of Kansas. He earned two undergraduate degrees from state conservatories in Argentina, an MM from Westminster Choir College, and a DMA from the University of Houston. His choirs have performed at state, national, and international events, including TMEA, NCCO, WMEA, WCDA, KMEA, the International Choral Festival in Panama, and multiple tours in Europe and South America. He made his Carnegie Hall conducting debut in 2011 and returned in 2015 and 2017. García-Novelli has been a guest conductor, lecturer, and clinician with engagements in the US, Europe, China and South America. His ensembles have won first prizes at international competitions. He has served on the boards of WCDA, NCACDA, and as a national officer for NCCO.



Rayvon T. J. Moore, a Southern California native, is assistant professor of music and director of choral studies at Friends University and artistic director of the Wichita Chamber Chorale. An acclaimed conductor and baritone, he leads Friends's internationally recognized Singing Quakers, performing domestically and in Spain and Portugal. Moore has been a national finalist for the American Prize Dale Warland Choral Conducting Award and was recognized in 2023 by the *Wichita Business Journal's* 40 Under 40. He has guest-conducted and served as chorus master with Wichita Grand Opera, Forum Theatre, and Crown Arts Collaborative. Moore holds degrees from USC, CSU Fullerton, and Eastman School of Music, and specializes in conducting gesture and musical interpretation.

Community Choirs

**State of the States:
A Conversation with Community Choir
Leaders from Every State in Our Region**

Join Andy Waggoner, SWACDA R&R chair for community choirs, and a representative from each state in our region for this collaborative session. We are going to pack so much information into this fifty-minute session: programming ideas, auditioning, budget management, chorus membership and database management, promotion, and much more! In addition, participants will submit information ahead of time so that attendees can have packets of information to take home. Community choirs are at the heart of ACDA's lifelong singing commitment. Whether you've been on the podium for decades or just getting ready to start your first appointment, we hope you will join us as we all learn and share together.



Andy Waggoner was appointed artistic director of the St. Louis County Community Chorus in 2016. The chorus has an active membership of two hundred singers from across the St. Louis area. In addition, he serves as director of worship arts at Webster Hills UMC in St. Louis, Missouri. He served Missouri ACDA as representative for community choirs and music in worship and currently serves in various capacities, mainly in welcoming new members and special events. Waggoner has prepared choruses and conducted residencies in London, Dublin, New York City, Washington DC, and festivals and tours throughout the Midwest. He has had the honor of working with many composers on commissions and premieres, most notably two new works by Mark Hayes at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

Junior High/Middle School Choirs

Voices in Transition

The session will provide choral voicing options to meet the needs of both the changing transgender voice and those of cis-gender singers. As choir directors are faced with more students who identify as transgender, the need to be able to choose literature that meets those needs is imperative. In addition to existing voicings, options for adapting scores with a new "flex" part using guidelines created by Stevie J. Hirner will be included. The key learning outcomes include building awareness of the needs of singers going through both a voice change and a life change, awareness of terms and categories of singers, placement within the ensemble, voice testing, and part creation.

Roger Emerson will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 27.

Senior High School Choirs

**Southwest Rising:
A Reading Session Featuring Emerging Composers**

This reading session will highlight choral repertoire written by emerging composers from the Southwestern ACDA Region. Featuring a diverse selection of original works and arrangements for all levels of mixed choirs, the session will showcase the creative and unique perspectives of composers who are currently shaping the future of choral music in our region. Whether you're seeking innovative programming ideas or more opportunities to support new artists, this session offers an opportunity to engage with works that reflect the cultural and artistic diversity of composers from the Southwest.



Spencer Wiley earned a BME from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and an MME at Texas State University while remaining active in Austin-area choral pro-



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

grams. He previously taught at Henry Middle School in Cedar Park, Texas, where he assisted the Varsity Treble Choir for their 2008 TMEA performance. In 2010 he joined Rouse High School as assistant choir director, earning multiple first-division ratings, and became head director at Leander High School in 2014, where he launched the school's IB music program, AP Music Theory course, and show choir. Wiley is currently head director at Harker Heights High School, where his choirs perform a range of repertoire and have earned recognition at UIL contests, contemporary a cappella competitions, and were invited to perform for TMEA in 2024. Wiley is a frequent UIL adjudicator and TMEA clinician.

Show Choirs

From Score to Stage: Making Magic Without Breaking the Bank

Discover how to create dynamic, crowd-pleasing show choir performances without blowing your budget. This session dives into effective communication strategies with arrangers, explores semi-custom and budget-friendly arrangement options, and shares practical tips for maximizing impact with limited resources. Whether you're a seasoned director or just starting out, you'll leave with tools, templates, and inspiration to build shows that shine—creatively and cost effectively.



Michael Shimp is a respected educator and conductor with over seventeen years of experience teaching choral music. He earned a bachelor's of vocal performance from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and studied in the Tulsa Opera Young Artist Program and Inspiration Point in Eureka Springs, AR. Shimp currently teaches at Jenks High School and previously taught in Owasso from 2007 to 2018. His choirs have earned recognition at state conventions,

including honor group selections at Oklahoma MEA in 2014 and 2022. He has served in leadership roles such as OkCDA vocal jazz all-state chair, Oklahoma Children's all-state choir cochair, and Region R coordinator. Shimp is an active clinician, adjudicator, and quad chair for Oklahoma Music Educators Northeast All-State Region.

Soprano-Alto Choirs

Beyond the "Blend": Empowering Treble Singers Through Vocal Technique, Repertoire, and Identity

This session explores the unique challenges and immense potential of treble ensembles at all levels. Participants will leave with practical rehearsal strategies, fresh repertoire ideas, and vocal technique tools tailored specifically for treble voices. We will also examine how to develop a strong ensemble identity and shift away from outdated stereotypes that often limit what treble choirs are expected to achieve.



Tanner Oglesby is director of choirs for the Bryant School District, leading the secondary choral program, teaching high school choir, and collaborating with administrators to advance fine arts. Under his direction, students have achieved high ranks in state and national honor choirs, and his ensembles have earned multiple best in class awards at the Arkansas State Choral Festival. Bryant choirs have performed at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City (2022) and Cadogan Hall in London (2023), with a European tour planned for 2027. Oglesby holds a BME from Henderson State University, an MME from Arkansas State University, and an MM from Western Illinois University.

Student Activities

Meaningful Relationships, Meaningful Work, Meaningful Life

An invitation to reflect on one's personal values and reimagine how balance might be possible in the midst of our fast-paced daily lives.



Charles Robinson is professor of choral music and music education at the University of Missouri–Kansas City Conservatory. He conducts the Conservatory Concert Choir and teaches a broad range

of courses in choral methods and performance at both undergraduate and graduate levels. A frequent clinician and workshop presenter, Robinson has led honor choirs across the United States. His research interests include choral performance evaluation, conducting, music preference, and inclusive practices in choral settings. He has held leadership roles in the Southwestern Region and served as president of the Missouri Choral Directors Association. Robinson holds degrees from The Florida State University (BME, PhD) and California State University–Long Beach (MM) and began his career teaching middle and high school choirs in Florida.

Tenor-Bass Choirs

Fostering Community in the Tenor-Bass Choir

From his twenty-six years conducting the Baylor University Men's Choir (BUMC), Randall Bradley will explore ways to build a culture of trust, inclusion, vulnerability, and communal connection in the tenor/bass choir. These strategies are also applicable to all choral groups. What best practices build traditions, foster collaborative rehearsals, and create vulnerable spaces? He will also share how the BUMC has maximized social media to enhance its reach and influence.



Randall Bradley is dedicated to the sense of community that emerges when people sing together. He has directed the Baylor University Men's Choir since 2000 and previously led Oklahoma Baptist University's Bison Glee Club. At Baylor, he is the Ben H. Williams Professor of Music, director of the Church Music Program and the Center for Christian Music Studies. A longtime ACDA leader, he has served as Oklahoma president-elect and Southwestern Region R&R chair for male choruses. His ensembles are recognized for fostering inclusion, trust, and musical excellence, performing at ACDA, state, and denominational events. A church musician since 1978 and author of widely used texts, Bradley shapes generations of choral leaders.

Two-Year Collegiate Choirs

The Future is Vocal: Reimagining Choral Rehearsal Culture

As we step into a new era of choral music making, our rehearsal rooms must evolve along with our singers. This session explores how to create a rehearsal culture that prioritizes wellness, autonomy, collaboration, and joy. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies to shift from a traditional, top-down model of rehearsal toward one that empowers students, fosters belonging, and strengthens musical outcomes. Whether you are in a high school, collegiate, church, or community setting, come discover new approaches that reflect the changing needs of today's singers and tomorrow's leaders.



Tatiana Taylor, a Northwest Arkansas native, is a conductor, music educator, pianist, and soprano. She serves as director of choirs and vocal music at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, where she directs the Concert Choir and Chamber Singers and teaches courses in sight singing and ear training, music appreciation, and applied voice. Taylor has been recognized with the Dobson Excellence in Teaching Award



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

Honor Choir Conductor Sessions

4-6 Grade Treble

Evolving Harmony: Crafting a Purposeful Career in Choral Music

This session invites choral music educators to create a career pathway as dynamic and responsive as their art. We will explore how to intentionally define success beyond traditional metrics, embracing personal and professional pivots that honor evolving family and life responsibilities. Learn strategies for setting effective boundaries, navigating the complexities of grief and loss, and finding new opportunities to “bloom where you’re planted.” This presentation provides a compass for designing a fulfilling career that is resilient, flexible, and deeply connected to your well-being, ensuring you can lead with authenticity and purpose throughout your journey.

Elizabeth Hogan will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 170.

7th-9th Grade Tenor-Bass

Look, Ma, No Hands! Developing Artistic Gestural Expression Through Confidence, Individual Gestures, Musical Instinct, Facial Expressions, and Much More

At some point we stopped playing, laughing, and enjoying our intuition for both musical and non-musical things. Creativity is born from our ability to “color outside the lines” and like it! As we learn more, we often surrender our confidence, individualism, instincts, and more. We stop laughing, we stop playing, and our

Vocal Jazz

Strengthen Community Through Tonal Memory

Tonal memory can be a useful tool to strengthen your choir’s cohesiveness as a confident community. It builds independent musicians and empowers student leadership. Students’ intonation and ability to have a “hearing eye” will easily increase, and valuable rehearsal and performance time will be saved.



Beth Enloe Fritz holds degrees in music education, music therapy, psychology, and an MM in jazz with an emphasis in vocal jazz arranging. She taught for thirty-one years across K–12, including general music, AP Music Theory, band, choral music, and vocal jazz. Under her direction, the FZWHS Jazz & Madrigal Ensembles performed at the MMEA State Conference (2008, 2019); and the 2019 J&M received the 43rd Annual Student *DownBeat* Award for Outstanding Performance and Lead Soloist. She has led numerous sessions and served in multiple R&R chair roles in MMEA and MCDA, and she coordinated the MO all-state vocal jazz ensemble for nine years. She currently works as a clinician, adjudicator, substitute teacher, and assistant director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra’s IN UNISON Chorus.

creative process and intuition retreats into a regiment of rules that no one should gatekeep. Session attendees should be ready and willing to conduct with your left hand only; be willing to explore decisions concerning musical intuition and the choices we want to make but rarely do; be okay with communicating through facial expressions; and be open to rethinking “gesture” and all that comes with it.

Gary Packwood will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 170.

7th-9th Grade Treble

The Voice in Motion

Join Elizabeth Núñez, creative director of the world-renowned Young People’s Chorus of New York City, in this engaging workshop that explores the powerful relationship between singing and movement. Drawing from her extensive experience over two decades in curriculum development and collaboration with professional artists, Núñez will show you how to help your singers connect with their bodies and unlock new levels of expression while also improving their vocal sound and building confidence that leads to an impactful stage presence. Leave this session with actionable takeaways to elevate your choir’s artistry and create unforgettable performances.

Elizabeth Núñez will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 170.

10th-11th Grade Mixed

Enhancing Audience Engagement Through the Aural/Oral Tradition

When programming a concert, choral directors sometimes consider repertoire choices that enable their audiences to feel more connected to the performance.

Once an audience member becomes familiar with the melodic or harmonic elements of a song they are hearing from the stage, they are more likely to add their voices to the performance when invited to do so. By employing the aural/oral tradition, a culturally rooted practice of teaching and preserving vocal music, audience members can fully participate in singing without needing to read a printed score. This session will focus on repertoire and strategies for teaching choral music in the aural/oral tradition as a means of enhancing audience engagement.

Rollo Dilworth will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 171.

12th Grade Mixed

Voices in Exile

Throughout its tumultuous history, the Russian state forced into exile scores of its greatest talents: composers, writers, dancers, and visual artists. Those who remained faced the challenge of creating under relentless censorship and the constant threat of persecution. This session explores choral music written in exile and highlights the strength, ingenuity, and faith that sustained composers such as Shostakovich, Schnittke, Prokofiev, and Sviridov, who continued writing and performing under the regime’s pressure; as well as Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Gretchaninoff, and Gubaidulina, who found themselves far from their native land, language, and culture.

Elena Sharkova will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 171.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

Collegiate

More, Please!

What a Lifetime of Tasting, Cooking, and Eating Great Food Has Taught Me About Teaching Music

Conducting requires extraordinary preparation, the right repertoire, organization, commitment to excellence, and a moral obligation not to poison the populace. Are you looking to run the most efficient rehearsals, choose and prepare great scores, and organize a three-star program? The French Kitchen Brigade System—designed in the nineteenth century by Auguste Escoffier—can provide unexpectedly delicious answers. In this session, Jonathan Talberg will share what he's figured out thanks to Julia Child, Thomas Keller, Jacques Pépin, and a Barefoot Contessa named Ina.

Jonathan Talberg will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 171.

High School Jazz

The Vocal Jazz Director's Playbook: Rep, Groove, and Musical Integrity

Directing a vocal jazz ensemble that is impactful, educational, and meaningful to both performers and audience members is so much more than just “the show.” It's about cultivating a sound, a style, and an artistic vision that inspires. This session offers directors practical tools for building a successful ensemble, from selecting repertoire, to teaching authentic swing and groove, to fostering musical integrity in rehearsal and performance. Participants will leave with strategies to balance technical precision with expressive artistry, empowering singers to connect deeply with the music while keeping the joy, energy, and creativity of vocal jazz at the center.

Christine Helferich Guter will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 171.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Music in Worship Immersion Day - Thursday

The Southwestern ACDA Region invites church musicians to a rich day of learning, conversation, and worship at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Albuquerque. The Music in Worship Immersion Day offers a series of engaging sessions led by distinguished leaders in the field, providing fresh perspectives and practical ideas for today's church settings. At midday, participants will gather for a lively roundtable discussion over lunch, creating opportunities for connection and exchange with fellow church musicians. The day

concludes with an inspiring Ecumenical Service, celebrating the diversity of worship traditions through choral artistry. This gathering is more than a workshop—it is a community, a chance to learn from experts, share experiences, and renew your vision for music ministry. If you are a church musician, this is the place to be.

Sessions

Tried, True, and New— Inspiring Church Anthem Reading Session

One of the best ways to encourage success and excitement in our church music programs is to share exciting and trusted choral anthems. This session will include a reading session for those attending, with several inspiring directors that will lead us through wonderful examples of church anthems tried, true, and new!



Bryan Taylor, the current SWACDA music in worship R&R representative, holds various positions at Liberty University in Missouri. He serves as the director of traditional music and worship arts and the artistic director of the Liberty Community Chorus. Notably, Taylor recently retired from singing with the Grammy Award-winning Kansas City Chorale after a remarkable thirty-three-year career.



Karen Marroli, the director of music ministries at Central United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a multifaceted artist. In addition to her classical training as a composer and conductor, she is a prolific singer-songwriter. Her choral works are published independently and through esteemed publishers like ECS Publishing Group and Santa Barbara Music Publishing.



Matthew Greer, the director of music and worship ministries at St. John's United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was appointed artistic director of Quintessence in 2009. His contributions have been recognized with the Creative Albuquerque's Bravos! Awards in 2012, which honored artistic innovation, entrepreneurship, and community impact. Greer has also had the privilege of serving as a guest conductor for the New Mexico Philharmonic.

Session Block 2

Wonderful Worship Through the Arts Ideas

This second Music in Worship session will delve into inspiring and welcoming art and creative activities that have been incorporated into worship and church music programs. Join us as we share the activities of several music ministries in the worship arts throughout the SWACDA community.

Andy Waggoner will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 139.

The poster for INCHOIR features a large, stylized title "INCHOIR" in blue and green block letters. Below the title is the subtitle "CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CHORAL MUSIC, THE ARTS, AND LIFE". The poster includes logos for Troy University, College of Arts & Humanities, Troy Public Radio (with frequencies 89.9, 88.7, and 91.7), and the Alabama Humanities Alliance 50th Anniversary (1974-2024). A QR code is located in the bottom left corner.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Music in Worship Immersion Day - Thursday

Holy Disruption: Composing Faithful Music for a Changing Church

This session will examine the dynamics involved in finding or creating choral music for churches in today's climate. Subjects include: adapting music for smaller voicings, cultural appropriation issues, commissioning, and current trends in composition.



Mark W. Lawson serves as the CEO of ECS Publishing Group, which owns E. C. Schirmer, Galaxy Music, Morning-Star Music Publishers, and distributes Colla Voce publishing. He also chairs the board of Chorus America, a leading organization for community and concert choruses in the United States and Canada.

Ecumenical Service

Singing Our Faith Together: A Community of Voices

On Thursday, March 5, 2026, SWACDA invites conference participants to a special ecumenical worship service, *Singing Our Faith Together: A Community of Voices*, at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Albuquerque. This service offers an opportunity to experience the unity of Christian traditions through music, with congregational hymn singing and choral offerings that highlight the power of shared faith expressed in song.

The service choir will feature singers from Central United Methodist Church and St. John's United Methodist Church, directed by Karen Marolli and Matthew Greer. Speakers include Mark Lawley, past SWACDA president; Karen Marolli, composer and music director; and service leader Bryan Taylor, SWACDA R&R chair for music in worship. Accompanists are Stephen Montoya, organist; and Nathan Cleaveland, pianist. Join us in a vibrant hour of praise, prayer, and music as we lift our voices together in worship.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Student Conducting Masterclasses

Undergraduate



A. Jan Taylor, conductor, pianist, and educator from Houston, holds music degrees from the University of Houston and Prairie View A&M University. She served as associate professor and director of choral activities at Prairie View A&M (1996–2022) and has

taught music at all levels in Houston public schools. A respected clinician, adjudicator, and lecturer on the Negro Spiritual, she has conducted nationally and internationally, including with the Houston Symphony Chorus, Houston Ebony Opera Guild, and the “105 Voices of History” HBCU National Choir. In 2023 she received the Texas Choral Directors Association's prestigious Choirmaster Award.

— — — — —

Demonstration Choir

McNeil High School Chamber Singers



Chamber Singers is an elite ensemble within a vibrant 6A high school with a population representing more than fifty countries and a choir program that serves over 230 students. McNeil High School is a true melting pot of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Chamber Singers consistently receive top ratings at state evaluations, contests, and festivals, but the ensemble's greatest success is found in the way community is built through shared musical experiences. They perform the stories of people from all over the world, believing that through shared stories, we deepen our connection to each other, to history, our community, and to the world we aspire to make better.



Wendi Burwinkel is in her twentieth year of music education and her eleventh year as the head director at McNeil High School in Round Rock, TX. Prior to McNeil, Burwinkel directed for Cedar Valley Middle School in Round Rock ISD, Round Rock Community Youth Choir, and Burnet Middle School in Austin ISD. She earned her BM from the University of Texas in Austin followed by an MM in conducting from the University of Texas in El Paso. Her choirs consistently receive Sweepstakes at UIL and top performance awards, including the Mark of Excellence National Choral Honors (2023), Mark of Distinction at

Madrigal Festival (2023, 2025), and the Mark of Distinction at Celebration of Excellence (2025). She resides in Pflugerville, TX, with her husband and three children.

Graduate



Jennaya Robison is the artistic director of the National Lutheran Choir and a nationally recognized conductor, educator, and soprano. She has held faculty positions at the University of Missouri–Kansas City and Luther College, and regularly conducts all-state and honor choirs, festivals, and workshops across the United States, Europe, and southern Africa. An active composer and arranger, she edits a choral series with MorningStar and Pavane Publishing. Robison serves as the ACDA national R&R chair for music in worship and holds degrees from Luther College, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Arizona. Her work champions sacred, intergenerational choral artistry.

Demonstration Choir

University of Northern Colorado Chamber Choir



The UNC Chamber Choir is the premier select mixed vocal ensemble at the University of Northern Colorado, specializing in choral chamber music from a variety of music genres ranging from early music to



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Student Conducting Masterclasses

twenty-first-century repertoire. The Chamber Choir comprises majors from across campus and includes graduate and undergraduate singers. This choir tours regularly and has performed at ACDA regional conferences. Recent performances include Vienna, St. Nicholas Church in Prague Old Town Square, and the Vatican (St. Peter's Basilica). The Chamber Choir hosts the annual UNC High School Choral Invitational and serves as the choir for the Colorado Choral Conducting Symposium.



Jill Burgett is director of choral activities at the University of Northern Colorado, where she has taught for sixteen years. She conducts the Concert and Chamber

Choirs and teaches graduate choral methods and conducting. Previously, she was associate director of choral activities at Ball State University. She holds a doctorate in choral conducting with a cognate in music education from Ball State, where she was a recipient of the Don Neuen Fellowship. Burgett has served on ACDA and NCCO boards and is an active clinician, speaker, and all-state conductor. She has been a K-12 educator and private voice and piano instructor for over twenty years. Burgett has performed internationally and has been published in the *Choral Journal* and the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Her research focuses on sacred choral music of Villa-Lobos, Catalonia, and Mexico.



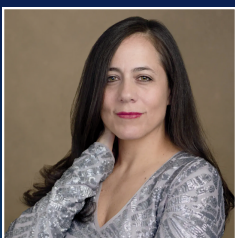
NATIONAL LUTHERAN CHOIR

CONDUCTING, LEADERSHIP, & VOCATIONAL INSTITUTE

JUNE 14-18, 2026 | AUGSBURG UNIVERSITY, MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Jocelyn Hagen



Marcela Molina



Lee Nelson



Jennaya Robison



Timothy Takach

CONDUCTING & SINGING opportunities tailored to your experience level

- **High School Track (Grades 11 & 12)** - Explore your calling in music
- **Undergraduate / Graduate Track** - Develop advanced skills
- **Career Musician Track** - Refine your skills, earn continuing ed credit

Receive **vocal training**, **podium time** with singers & instrumentalists, and **career development** & **networking** opportunities



Erin Gaffaney

Director of Education & Outreach

More Info and Registration at [NLCA.com](https://www.nlca.com)



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Christ Church Cathedral Treble Choir of Houston



The Treble Choir of Houston at Christ Church Cathedral is an acclaimed ensemble of young women grades 5-12 that provides outstanding musical training in a nurturing environment. The Treble Choir was founded in 2006 by Marianna Parnas-Simpson. The ensemble performs widely in the community and also service as the resident children's choir at Christ Church Cathedral, Houston. Highlights include: featured performance in Carnegie Hall and the Kathomew International Choral Festival, and an annual collaboration with the Grammy Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir Christmas at the Villa de Matel.



Marianna Parnas-Simpson was born and raised in Ukraine and graduated with a master's degree in choral conducting from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Russia. She founded the award-winning St. Petersburg Girls' Choir, KAMERTON, which she directed for ten years before coming to the United States. Since 2000, Simpson has taught at Parker Elementary School, a HISD Magnet school for music. In 2002, Parker Music Program received the Signature Grammy Award. Parnas-Simpson was named Teacher of the Year in 2005. Her choirs were the winners of the American Prize Competition and performed at National ACDA (3x) and TMEA (5x). Parnas-Simpson is in high demand as a clinician and conductor in the United States and abroad.

Danielson Middle School Varsity Treble Choir



The Danielson Middle School choir program, founded in 2020, is home to approximately 250 students spread over six ensembles. The Varsity Treble Choir is an auditioned group of seventh and eighth graders who consistently receive sweepstakes at UIL concert and sight-reading contest. Members of this group have earned chairs in the Region 32 all-region choir and have received first division ratings at solo and ensemble contest. Varsity Treble members are involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. Multi-disciplinary support has built a strong community of singers, and growth continues, looking to the future of our program.



Stephanie Rayl is in her fifth year of teaching, with three years as the head choir director at Danielson Middle School in Leander ISD. DMS choirs consistently earn superior ratings at UIL Contest and perform at district festivals and community events. She is committed to fostering musical excellence and leadership among members of her choral program. Rayl graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and Case Western Reserve University, receiving a BM in voice and a BA in international studies. She completed her MME at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before returning to her hometown of Austin.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

First Colony Middle School Bobcat Select Tenor Bass



The First Colony MS Bobcat Select Tenor Bass Choir comprises about thirty-five to forty auditioned seventh- and eighth-grade tenor/bass singers, all of whom must have at least one year of experience in Bobcat Choir before auditioning. The singers in this choir come from a variety of musical backgrounds, but most only experience music making in public school. First Colony MS (Fort Bend ISD) is located in Sugar Land, TX, which is a suburb of Houston known for its diverse community. FCMS is a prime example of this, with on average, thirteen different languages spoken at home in the Select Tenor Bass Choir alone. There is no clear majority of any demographic (highest is 40% Asian) at FCMS.



Tommie Trinh is in his ninth year as head director at First Colony Middle School. Trinh is a native Houstonian and is a first-generation Vietnamese American. He began singing in choirs in fifth grade and thanks the public school system for his musical knowledge. He has sung twice at TMEA: in 2011 as a high school senior with Cypress Woods HS under Marsha Robinson and Jason Womack, and in 2013 with the University of Houston Concert Chorale under Betsy Weber. In 2015 he performed in the European Choir Games in Magdeburg, Germany, with the UH Concert Chorale. In 2024 he directed the FCMS Varsity Treble Choir at TMEA.

Fort Worth Chorale



The Fort Worth Chorale was founded in 1962 as Schola Cantorum and is the oldest independently operated, auditioned, volunteer adult civic choir in Texas. Over its sixty-three-year history, FWC has performed across North Texas, the United States, and Europe, including at the Kennedy Center, Robert Shaw's Festival of the Masses, and festivals in Germany. Members include professionals from many fields, with many choral directors and voice teachers. FWC is deeply connected to FW through concerts and partnerships with the Fort Worth Symphony, Texas Ballet Theatre, and local schools. In 2021 it launched the Schola Cantorum Project, commissioning composers from underrepresented backgrounds to provide free music to Title I schools.

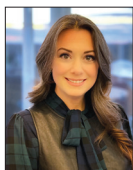


Karen Kenaston-French has been artistic director and conductor of the Fort Worth Chorale since 2019, elevating its reputation with imaginative programming and community engagement. She has led performances of classical masterworks, contemporary works, and popular pieces, including Dan Forrest's *Three Nocturnes*, Bob Chilcott's *Circlesong*, and Martín Palmeri's *Misatango*. Major works include Mozart's *Requiem*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and Jenkins's *Te Deum*. Kenaston-French champions new music and education, commissioning works and integrating student choirs. Also professor and director of choral activities at UT Arlington, she has led the A Cappella Choir to regional and national acclaim.

**Francis Howell North High School
Bella Voces**



Bella Voces from Francis Howell North High School in Saint Charles, Missouri, is an auditioned treble chamber ensemble that was founded in the fall of 2018 and encompasses sophomore through senior students. Since then they have been featured on concerts with Webster University and Lindenwood University, earned top ratings at national festivals, and consistently received exemplary ratings at the Missouri State High School Activities Association Large Ensemble Contest. They have enjoyed residencies with Distinguished Concerts International at Carnegie Hall, featuring the works of Ola Gjeilo in 2018 and 2024, and under Eric Whitacre in 2022.



Jennifer Oncken is in her ninth year as director of vocal music for Francis Howell North High School in St. Charles, Missouri, where she conducts five ensembles. Oncken serves on the Missouri Choral Directors Association Executive Board as the St. Louis metro district representative and as choral co-vice president for the St. Louis Metro District of Missouri MEA. She obtained a BM from Lindenwood University in 2016, where she was recipient of the Supero Asperum Award. Oncken is pursuing an MM with a concentration on music education from Missouri State University. She resides in Saint Charles, Missouri, with her daughter, Emma.

**Granbury High School
Varsity Treble Choir**



The Granbury High School Varsity Treble Choir is one of three varsity choral ensembles at Granbury High School and is an auditioned group of treble singers in grades 9–12. The Granbury High School Varsity Treble Choir was awarded second place in the high school division of the 2024 American Prize in Choral Performance, has earned multiple recognitions in the Foundation for Music Education Mark of Excellence Project, and consistently earns top ratings and best in class designations in choral festivals. Members participate in the TMEA all-region and all-state process, and are involved in a variety of extracurricular activities and service organizations.



Kendra Fisher is in her twenty-third year teaching secondary choral music in Texas public schools. She is director of choirs at Granbury High School and director of choral activities for Granbury ISD. She is serving TMEA as vocal chair for Region 30. Choirs under her direction consistently earn sweepstakes, first division, and best in class ratings at UIL and choral festivals. The Granbury High School Varsity Choirs have each earned distinctions in the Mark of Excellence Project sponsored by The Foundation for Music Education, and have each been named national finalists in the high school division of the American Prize in Choral Performance. Fisher holds a BME from Dallas Baptist University and is an active clinician, adjudicator, and accompanist.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Hebron High School Varsity Tenor-Bass Choir



The singers of the Varsity Tenor-Bass Choir make up the tenor and bass sections of the Hebron A Cappella Choir. Students in this ensemble are selected through a three-part audition process. Many choir students are actively involved with other school activities such as student council, DECA, a variety of sports, track, band, orchestra, theatre, and National Honor Society. In the choir room, students are challenged daily to work within their ensembles to prepare, perfect, and perform varied musical genres to share with our diverse community.



Alexander Carr has served as the director of choral activities at Hebron High School since 2019. He previously taught in Fort Worth ISD, Keller ISD, and Arlington ISD. In 2023, Carr directed the

Hebron A Cappella Choir in performance at TMEA. He holds both an MM and BME from Texas Christian University. At TCU he was the choral conducting graduate assistant, director of the TCU Men's Chorus, and the drum major of the Horned Frog Marching Band. Carr is an active performer and adjudicator in the DFW area. He sings with the Turtle Creek Chorale, where he serves as artistic associate and co-conductor of the Chamber Chorus. He is also a founding member of Brothers In Song.

Jordan High School Jordan Warrior Choir



The Jordan High School Choir program, founded in fall 2020, opened its doors during the height of a global pandemic—facing unique challenges from day one. Yet, from those early days, a resilient and passionate group of students laid the foundation for a thriving choral community built on excellence and unity. Now in its fifth year, Jordan Choir proudly celebrates their third graduating senior class. Many of these founding members are part of Warrior Chorale, which has witnessed the program's growth from just thirty singers to seven full, competitive ensembles.



Raegan Grantham, a Southeast Texas native, is in her fourteenth year of conducting choral music. Her choirs have earned sweepstakes in concert and sightreading, best in class, outstanding performance at

festivals, and recognition as a commended winner in the National Mark of Excellence. She is an active adjudicator and clinician across Texas and has presented for TMEA in 2023 and 2025. Grantham has taught every level of choir from sixth grade to high school varsity mixed. She has taught in Dallas and Austin and now serves as head choir director at Jordan High School in Katy ISD, where she was named Teacher of the Year.

Kansas City Kansas Community College The Standard



The Standard is the award-winning contemporary vocal jazz ensemble from Kansas City Kansas Community College. They have been invited to perform at the national conferences of the Jazz Education Network (2025, 2022, and 2019), ACDA (2017), and NAFME (2018). Within the last nine years, The Standard has won fourteen *DownBeat* Magazine Student Music Awards and has recorded two studio albums. The group has shared the stage with such highly acclaimed artists as Take 6, The New York Voices, m-pact, säje, Carmen Bradford, Dianne Reeves, and Marilyn Maye.



John Stafford II is professor of music, director of choral activities, and coordinator of the music department at Kansas City Kansas Community College.

Stafford was a 2015 recipient of the John & Suanne Roueche Excellence Award for outstanding teaching and leadership at the community college level. He was also the recipient of the Henry Louis Award for Teaching Excellence at KCKCC in 2020. He has also received two other teaching awards from KCKCC for recruitment and teaching excellence. Previously he was appointed at Millikin University, Eastern Illinois University, and Danville Area Community College. He holds degrees from Millikin University, Bowling Green State University, and has done additional doctoral studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Lubbock Christian University Best Friends



Lubbock Christian University's Best Friends has represented LCU in national and international concert and worship venues since 1983. In 2013 the group began receiving international recognition as the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America (CASA) nominated that year's album to receive a Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award (CARA). In 2019, Best Friends's album *Risen* was awarded the CARA for Best Religious Album. In February 2025, the album *On Our Way* received two CARA nominations for best religious album and best show tunes song.



Philip Camp serves as professor of music and director of choral activities for Lubbock Christian University. He earned degrees from Abilene Christian University and Arizona State University, and earned

a PhD in music with an emphasis in choral conducting from Texas Tech University. He has taught choral music for thirty-three years and will be completing thirty years as collegiate faculty in 2026. He began serving as director for LCU's award-winning contemporary a cappella ensemble, Best Friends, in 2018. LCU choirs under Camp's direction have performed throughout the Southwestern United States as well as Ireland, Eastern Australia, and Eastern Europe.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Marble Falls High School Chorale



The Marble Falls Chorale is the varsity mixed choir at Marble Falls High School. MFHS is a Title 1 small school in the beautiful hill country of Texas that is home to 1,125 students. The Chorale, under the direction of Bryce Gage and Clark Stanley, is the pride of the choral department, which houses seven ensembles. A consistent sweepstakes winner, the MFHS Chorale consistently places students in the Texas all-state choir. This ensemble has been honored to perform at the National Cathedral of Washington DC, Coventry Cathedral of London, Vatican in Rome, and the White House. The Marble Falls High School Chorale performed at the 2025 TMEA Convention.



Bryce Gage is the director of choirs for Marble Falls ISD and has been the head choral director at Marble Falls High School for the past nineteen years. Gage received his BM from the UNT. His choirs are known for their mature tone and passionate singing and have been invited to perform in St. John the Divine in NYC, the National Cathedral, Coventry Cathedral, the Vatican, and at the 2025 TMEA Conference. Chorale was named the 2024 Small School Texas State Champion by the Perform America Next Level Contest and National Commended winner in the Mark of Excellence Awards. Gage's Chamber Singers was named the Performance of Distinction at the Madrigal Festival along with his Elite Women receiving third runner-up.

Missouri State University Men's Chorus



Established in 2014, the Missouri State University Men's Chorus includes students from various majors within the university. This ensemble, consisting of freshmen through graduate students, performs regularly throughout the year and rehearses twice per week. The Men's Chorus has performed twice at the IMC Tenor-Bass Choral Consortium National Seminar (2016, 2025). In 2016, the Men's Chorus performed at the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses National Seminar at the University of Illinois, and in 2018, the choir performed at the annual conference of the Missouri MEA (2018, 2025). The ensemble regularly commissions new works.



Cameron LaBarr is director of choral studies and the Clif and Gail Smart Professor in Music at Missouri State University. He earned the MM and DMA from the University of North Texas. LaBarr has an international reputation as conductor, clinician, and choral juror, and serves as board member for the International Federation for Choral Music. LaBarr's recent engagements include concerts and events in Indonesia, France, Chile, Argentina, South Korea, South Africa, and Spain. LaBarr curates two choral series with Santa Barbara Music Publishing and Walton Music, where he champions emerging and established composers, and is additionally published by Colla Voce, Choristers Guild, and GIA Publications.

Missouri State University Women's Chorus



The Missouri State University Women's Chorus was founded in 2014 and is open to all MSU students. Women's Chorus personnel consist mostly of undergraduate students who come from diverse backgrounds and a variety of majors. The Women's Chorus performs multiple concerts each semester and tours to area high schools and throughout the region and was invited to perform at the Missouri MEA 2022 in-service conference, the 2022 SWACDA Conference, and the 2023 National ACDA Conference. In November 2023, the Women's Chorus performed at the NCCO National Conference, where they performed a world-premiere work by Reena Esmail.



Erin Plisco is the associate director of choral studies at Missouri State University. She is a frequent guest clinician across the United States and abroad and currently serves as the National ACDA SSAA R&R chair. Choirs under her direction have performed at the 2022 Southwestern ACDA Region Conference, the 2022 and 2025 Missouri MEA Conferences, the 2023 National ACDA Conference, the 2023 NCCO National Conference, and Carnegie Hall. Plisco completed the DMA in choral conducting from the University of Arizona. She also studied at Trinity College, University of Cambridge, where she was a recipient of the prestigious Gates Cambridge Scholarship.

Neosho High School Choraleers



Choraleers is the varsity mixed choir at NHS and has been in existence since 1968. They have a busy performance schedule, actively performing throughout the year as both a concert choir and a competitive show choir. Choraleers consistently advance to finals at show choir competitions and have earned several grand champion awards in recent years, as well as consistently earning exemplary ratings at MSHSAA state large ensemble contest as a concert choir. The group averages fifty to fifty-five members in grades 9-12. Members tend to be highly involved in the vocal music department at NHS as well as regularly participating in all-district, all-state, SWACDA, and ACDA National honor choirs.



Melanie Soule received her BME from the University of Central Missouri and has taught high school for twenty-one years. She has been at Neosho High School for fifteen years, where she directs show choirs, concert choirs, and teaches a voice class. Soule has served as the music director for many school musicals, served as both a judge and clinician at show choir competitions and MSHSAA contests, and has mentored several student teachers and young educators. She has served on the executive board for MCDA and is the SWMMEA district president, a music rules interpreter for MSHSAA, and is on staff for the Missouri Ambassadors of Music.



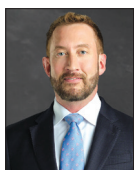
2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Oklahoma State University Cantamus Camerata



Cantamus Camerata is an auditioned treble chamber ensemble of twelve to twenty singers and welcomes all self-identifying treble voices from the campus of Oklahoma State University. Cantamus Camerata performed at the Oklahoma Music Educators Winter Conference in 2025, premiered Martín Palmeri's *Nisi Dominus* at Cadogan Hall in London, and received first place in both the treble choir and chamber choir categories at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in 2024. The singers have embraced the final line of their mission statement, "to be examples of light in the world," since the ensemble's inception in the fall of 2022.



Christopher Haygood is a faculty member of the Michael and Anne Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University, where he conducts Cantamus Camerata and the Concert Chorale, teaches courses in graduate and undergraduate choral conducting, and serves as chancel choir director at First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) of Stillwater. Haygood's research on the music of Holocaust survivor Petr Eben, Māori composers, and the intersection of teaching snow sports and singing has led to presentations at NCCO, NWACDA, SWACDA, OCDA, and OkMEA. He has served internationally as a guest choral clinician and conductor.

Plano East Senior High School Concert Choir



Plano East Senior High School is a 6A campus with an enrollment of over three thousand students. Plano East houses the IB World School for Plano ISD, which affords our campus and program a complete ninth-through twelfth-grade environment. The Plano East Senior High School Concert Choir is the top-performing ensemble of seven vocal ensembles within the choral program. The Concert Choir has a tradition of excellence with consistent sweepstakes awards at UIL concert and sight-reading. Members of this chorus are involved in the international baccalaureate program and other clubs throughout the school. The Plano East Concert Choir was featured at the 2020 SWACDA Conference and performed at TMEA in 2022.



Daniel Knight is in his twentieth year as a choral director at Plano East Senior High School and has been teaching in Plano ISD for the past twenty-five years. Knight graduated from UNT with a BME and a master's in education. In 2014 he was selected as the Teacher of the Year. His Plano East Varsity Men's Choir was invited to perform at SWACDA (2016) and National ACDA (2019). The Plano East Concert Choir was invited to perform at SWACDA (2020) and TMEA (2022). He has been a member of the Orpheus Chamber Singers and sings frequently in the Highland Park Chorale.

Ridge Point High School Ridge Point Choir



Ridge Point Choir proudly serves two hundred students across six ensembles. The program consistently earns sweepstakes awards at UIL concert and sight-reading, performance of distinction at the San Antonio Madrigal Festival, and best in class at the Kemah Choir Festival. Ridge Point Choir also enjoys regular invitations to perform in the Houston and Sugar Land Community, most notably performances for the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Fort Bend's commemoration of the Sugar Land 95, and The Gregory School's commemoration of George Floyd. In the heart of one of the country's most diverse school districts, the students of Ridge Point Choir thrive learning music from all time periods and parts of the world.



Chelsea Berner has served as a choir director at Ridge Point for the past eight years. Currently in her eleventh year of teaching high school choral music, she holds degrees from Baylor University (music education) and Michigan State University (choral conducting). Prior to teaching at Ridge Point, Berner served as a choir director at Spring High School. She is active as a clinician, adjudicator, and singer in the state of Texas and is also a founding member of the choral ensemble mirabai under the direction of Sandra Snow. She is a member of TMEA, TMAA, ACDA, and has served Region 13 in various capacities.

Texas Christian University Purple, White, and Blues



Purple, White, and Blues is an auditioned vocal jazz ensemble in the TCU School of Music comprising music and non-music majors. The ensemble performs a mix of standard jazz repertoire, arrangements of contemporary popular songs, and newly composed pieces in the vocal jazz style. In 2020, Purple, White, and Blues was awarded Outstanding Ensemble by the M-Pact Vocal Festival along with two Outstanding Soloist awards. The following year, the Kansas City Jazz Summit also recognized the group with an Outstanding Ensemble and two Outstanding Soloist contributions. They were invited to perform at the 2022 Jazz Educators Network Conference in Dallas, Texas.



Amy Stewart is an instructor in the choral, jazz, musicology, and theory departments at TCU, and conducts the Purple, White, and Blues vocal jazz ensemble. She has a BM in vocal performance, MM in organ performance from TCU, and doctor of worship studies degree from the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies. She serves as assistant organist at University Christian Church. After graduating from TCU, she moved to New York City, where she performed in many solo venues and was the featured soloist in four concerts with the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall with Skitch Henderson.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Trinity Springs Middle School Chamber Mixed Choir



The Trinity Springs Middle School Chamber Mixed Choir is a distinguished, non-auditioned ensemble comprising dedicated students from all choirs across our campus. Meeting once a week after school, these students exemplify commitment, musical excellence, and a love for choral artistry. Despite its informal structure, the ensemble has achieved national recognition, being named the national winner of the Mark of Excellence Award from the Foundation for Music Education in 2024, 2022, 2021, and 2020. They also consistently earn UIL sweepstakes awards at the annual concert and sight-reading evaluation, showcasing their musical artistry. Above all, the Trinity Springs Choir Program is committed to cultivating humanity through music—empowering students to become kind, resilient, and compassionate individuals while creating memories that will resonate throughout their lives.



Clinton Hardy Ferrie is the head choir director at Trinity Springs Middle School and is in his seventeenth year of teaching. He received his bachelor's degree from TCU and his master's degree from UNT. His Varsity Treble Choir was invited to perform at the 2025 National ACDA Conference, 2023 TMEA Conference, 2022 SWACDA Conference, and the 2019 TMEA Conference. He also conducted his Varsity Tenor-Bass Choir at the 2021 National ACDA Conference.

Trinity University Chamber Singers



The Chamber Singers have performed for NCCO, TMEA, and at the CMS national conference. In 2018 they were ensemble-in-residence at the Eisenstadt Classical Music Festival in Austria. In 2021 they collaborated with Sinfonia Spirituosa on French Baroque works, including Delalande's *De profundis*. Their Carnegie Hall debut came in June 2022 as the featured ensemble in Mozart's *Requiem*. In 2024 they performed Fauré's *Requiem* at L'église de la Madeleine in Paris. They earned third place in the 2022 American Prize as the smallest school among the cohort of national finalists.



Gary Seighman is a professor, director of choral activities, and chair of the Music Department at Trinity University in San Antonio. Under his direction, Trinity's choral ensembles have garnered many accolades with invited conference performances, tours throughout the United States and abroad, commercial recordings, and third prize for The American Prize. Seighman has traveled to East Asia six times, where he conducted the Peking University Summer Opera Program and led graduate masterclasses in Taiwan. He holds degrees from Westminster Choir College, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Maryland. Seighman will conduct the 2025–2026 Texas Private School All-State Choir.

University of North Texas A Cappella Choir



The University of North Texas A Cappella Choir was founded in 1938 and is the premier ensemble of the UNT Choral Studies Program, which comprises eight student choirs. Conference appearances include 2022 Southwestern ACDA Region, 2020 TMEA, and five National ACDA Conferences (1999, 2005, 2013, 2021, and 2025). International appearances include choral festivals in 2009 and 2012. The A Cappella Choir serves as the core of the one-hundred-and-fifty-voice UNT Grand Chorus, performing major choral-orchestral repertoire each spring semester.



Allen Hightower leads the graduate program in choral conducting at the University of North Texas as the director of choral studies, where he oversees a choral program of eight ensembles. Hightower serves as the conductor of the UNT A Cappella Choir and the UNT Grand Chorus, which collaborates annually with the UNT Symphony Orchestra in performances of major choral-orchestral works. As a member of UNT's early music faculty, he leads the vocal ensemble Vox Aquilae, an artistic partner of the UNT Baroque Orchestra. From 2000 to 2010 he served as professor of music and director of choral studies at Sam Houston State University. From 2010 to 2016, Hightower held the Weston Noble Endowed Chair in Music at Luther College, where he served as conductor of the renowned Nordic Choir.

University of Texas at Austin Concert Chorale



The Concert Chorale is the premier choir within the Butler School of Music and bears a rich tradition and legacy of the highest standards of musical excellence. The Chorale has appeared in significant venues throughout the United States and has sung at previous ACDA regional conferences. This ensemble offers students an opportunity to study and perform a broad range of choral literature and to tour annually throughout the Texas region. The Chorale forms the core of the symphonic chorus at UT, collaborating with other UT choirs and the UT Symphony Orchestra for performances of significant choral/orchestral repertoire.



J. D. Burnett is director of choral activities and head of the division of vocal arts at the University of Texas Butler School of Music, where he conducts the UT Concert Chorale and guides the graduate program in choral conducting. He is also the artistic director of the two professional choirs Kinnara (Atlanta) and Orpheus Chamber Singers (Dallas). He has held artistic appointments with the Dallas Symphony Chorus, New Jersey Youth Chorus, Masterwork Chorus of New Jersey, New Jersey Chamber Singers, Houston Masterworks Chorus, and Men's Consort Houston. Burnett did undergraduate study at Stanford University and Oklahoma State University and holds advanced degrees in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College and the University of North Texas.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Veterans Memorial Early College High School Varsity Treble Choir



The Veterans Memorial Varsity Treble Choir is the premier treble ensemble at Veterans Memorial ECHS in Brownsville, TX, a Mexican American border town. Directed by Iliana Guerrero and accompanied by pianist Dr. Uzziel Guzman, the ensemble consists of auditioned sophomore, junior, and senior treble singers. Our singers consistently excel in regional and statewide competitions, both as soloists and within their ensem-

bles. Additionally, members perform in the program's Varsity Mixed Chorale. Singers are involved in academics, athletics, and actively engage in the community.



Iliana Guerrero is a choral educator, clinician, adjudicator, and professional vocalist in South Texas. She holds a BME from the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley and began graduate studies in vocal performance. Now in her seventh year at Veterans Memorial ECHS, she directs the Freshman, Advanced, and Varsity Treble choirs, Show Choir, and codirects the Chamber Choir. Under her leadership, the choir program has set new records in TMEA all-state and UIL solo and ensemble, earning sweepstakes at UIL concert and evaluation. In 2023 she presented "Yes, You Can(va)" at the TI:ME Convention and was named TCDA's Young Director of Distinction. In 2025 she copresented at TMEA and was a section leader for the TMEA all-state treble choir.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

A Tenor Tantrum: Passaggio Training in the Choral Rehearsal

The successful and sustainable development of young tenor and bass voices within a choral ensemble setting presents a formidable challenge for many choral conductors. In order to support the development of singing technique, it is imperative that the choral rehearsal be a place where vocal technique is actively taught and cultivated. This interactive presentation aims to clarify and apply modern vocal pedagogy schol-

arship to address common issues encountered in the development of tenor and bass voices—in particular, the management of registration changes or the "passaggio." Attendees will learn evidence-based strategies and examples of teaching techniques derived from modern vocal scholarship. These resources are designed to assist emerging choral conductors in delivering accurate and effective instruction to maturing tenor or bass voices in their ensembles.

Cody Parrott, DMA, serves as director of choral activities at Illinois Wesleyan University, where he teach-



es ensembles, conducting and rehearsal techniques, and applied voice. Before this appointment he was associate director of choral activities at Mississippi State University. In 2024 he completed the DMA in choral conducting at the University of Texas at Austin, where he served the Butler School of Music choral area as assistant conductor of the Texas Concert Chorus and conductor of the University Treble Chorus, which was named the third-place winner for the 2023 American Prize in Choral Performance under his direction. Parrott comes to collegiate teaching after a distinguished twelve-year career teaching in Texas public schools and enjoys training the teachers of tomorrow at the intersection of vocal pedagogy, choral conducting, and music education.

An Unconventional Approach to the Urban Choral Classroom

Many choral directors enter urban programs eager to inspire but quickly encounter unexpected challenges in music literacy and vocal technique. This session shifts the focus from broad systemic barriers to the specific obstacles directors may face, such as students' limited experience with solfège, sheet music, sight-reading, vocal technique, tongue placement, and classical repertoire. This session offers practical strategies to help choral directors overcome common challenges and foster musical growth. The presenter will outline key concepts followed by techniques to strengthen music literacy among students of color while complementing traditional instruction. Ideal for new and experienced directors, this session provides insights to enhance engagement, build foundational skills, and create an inclusive choral experience.

Odell Zeigler IV will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 135.

Auditions:

Assessing Students' Ability to Hear Harmony

Testing how students hear harmony is the most important aspect a director needs to learn from the audition process. This presentation will provide unique exercises on how to auditions students' "ears."

John Stafford II will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 153.

Breathing New Life into Your Choral Warm-Ups

Each rehearsal we are challenged with making the warm-up session functional, educational, and interesting. Like a prism, the warm-up must be addressed from a variety of perspectives. What is the point of the warm-up? What are we trying to achieve? How can we keep our singers engaged and mindful? Should the warm-up change as the repertoire changes? This session aims to address these questions and more based on observations of choir rehearsals and interviews with leading choir directors working with singers across a variety of ages, levels of experience, genres, languages, and locations. Attendees will leave with a variety of warm-ups they can modify for their own ensembles.



Kym Scott is the director of choral activities at West Virginia University, where she conducts the WVU Chamber Singers, Mountaineer Chorus, and Community Choir. She also teaches conducting, choral techniques, and choral literature, and oversees the choral conducting graduate program. She has directed choirs in Australia, Asia, Europe, the UK, and the United States; and regularly presents at state, regional, national, and international conferences. Scott is the artistic director for the Pittsburgh Pride Choir and the president of West Virginia ACDA. An Australian native, Scott has worked with all age groups and is passionate about choral music in the community.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Draw the Circle Wide: Programming Music by Black Composers

As choir directors, we strive to program diverse choral music that is accessible for our middle school/junior high and high school programs. Oftentimes, our classrooms or rehearsals are the places where students receive a sense of belonging; we nurture these social and emotional needs with the music that we program. This reading session will focus on programming and performing the non-idiomatic music of Black composers accessible for middle school, junior high, and high school programs.



Gyasi J. Blanton, a native of New Jersey, serves as the assistant director of choirs at Stratford High School in Houston, TX. Choirs under his direction have earned sweepstakes at the UIL concert and sightreading evaluation. He holds degrees from Lincoln University, PA, and an MME from The Florida State University. He has also served as the guest conductor of the Illinois MEA district 1 honor choir.

Estonian Choral Repertoire and Diction: A Practical Approach

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many Western choirs and audiences have become enamored with the spellbinding choral music of the Baltic nation of Estonia. Home to the world's largest quinquennial choral song festival, the special connection of Estonians to choral music is undeniable. While there is an increase in the availability of Estonian choral repertoire for Western choirs, American choral conductors who want to program these works may find themselves intimidated by the Estonian language and its application for choral singing. The purpose of this session is to explore Estonian choral repertoire, offer resources for discovering and investigating new works, and intro-

duce principles and practical application of lyric diction for singing Estonian.



Alex T. Favazza Jr. is assistant professor of music and director of choral activities at Ouachita Baptist University, where he conducts the Ouachita Singers, Concert Choir, and teaches courses in conducting and choral music. He holds a PhD in music education specializing in choral conducting from The Florida State University, MM in choral conducting from the University of Southern Mississippi, and BME from Middle Tennessee State University. As a composer, Favazza's choral works are published by Hinshaw Music, Colla Voce Music, and Oxford University Press. His compositions have been performed by numerous all-state and regional honor choirs as well as collegiate, high school, community, and religious choirs throughout the United States. Favazza is a lifelong church musician and serves as director of worship ministries at First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, AR.

Evolutionary Conducting

The needs of your choral ensemble evolve throughout the rehearsal process, and your conducting will ideally adapt along with those shifts. This session will look at the various "texts"—both musical and non-musical—that your singers are interacting with at any given time in order to help determine how the conductor can most effectively support student learning and music making. Through participatory demonstrations, we will consider methods to give students the tools to interact effectively with the score, their instrument, their surroundings, and your conducting. The final goal is musical achievement and ownership from the ensemble paired with meaningful and effective conducting from you, their leader.



MB Krueger is the director of choral activities at Metropolitan State University, where she directs the Chorale, University Treble Choir, and University Basso Choir, and teaches basic and advanced conducting. She earned her bachelor's degree at Michigan State University, where she was a National Merit Scholar, and her master's degree from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Krueger served ten years on the board of Colorado ACDA and has been a regular presenter at various clinics and conferences through CoACDA and CMEA. She is also active as a clinician for high school honor choirs and choral festivals. Krueger is a member of St. Martin's Chamber Choir and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Choir, and has also sung professionally with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, the Santa Fe Opera, and the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado.

Fight, Flight, and Forte: Cultivating Vocal Courage

It is harder than ever to help students “put themselves out there.” Risk-taking is integral to vocal development, and yet students are more risk averse than ever. In this interactive session, teachers will learn what is going on in students' brains and bodies during risk-taking, how we got here, and what we can do to help our choristers sing better and live bravely.



Clelyn Chapin serves as the associate director of choirs at University of Northern Colorado, where she leads choral ensembles and teaches courses in choral music education. In addition to her work at UNC, Chapin conducts the Denver Women's Chorus, a 180-voice treble choir founded for members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community with a focus on social justice programming. Her research focuses on creating collaborative, efficient rehearsal spaces; her work is available in *Choral Repertoire by Women Composers* (GIA, 2025). Before beginning at UNC, she spent fourteen years teaching and conducting secondary, collegiate,

and community ensembles in Texas, Colorado, and Michigan and received her doctorate from Michigan State University.

Folk Roots, Global Reach

Folk traditions in singing practices have stood as a building block for community, culture, and artistic exploration around the world. By including a myriad of disparate repertoire within your musical selection, your ensemble will experience a spectrum of sound, heritage, and commonality. To introduce these topics, Thai, Korean, and United States folk selections are placed under the magnifying glass. Within each example, an overview of cultural significance, historical background, and musical traditions will be reviewed to demonstrate a variation of commonalities and individually unique traits by respected culture-sharers who bring unique expertise. Session attendees will receive supporting materials that not only outline the promotion of global folk music in the choir room but will act as a vehicle toward individual confidence in varied repertoire collections.



Samuel Sherman is pursuing his DMA in choral conducting at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, serving as a graduate teaching assistant. Sherman holds a BM in vocal performance from the University of Northern Colorado and an MM in conducting from the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music. Recent engagements include working as a guest choral clinician in New World Symphony's BLUE Project, leading the Denver Philharmonic and Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic in the International Conducting Institute workshop and competition, and serving as the assistant conductor of the Master Chorale of South Florida.



Jisu Oh is a DMA candidate and teaching assistant at the University of Miami Frost School of Music. She earned a BA in choral conducting with a vocal minor



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

from the Korea National University of Arts, where she conducted the award-winning Collegium Vocale Seoul and taught underprivileged students. After her BA, Oh directed the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Choir and earned an MM in choral conducting from the University of Texas at Austin, serving as associate conductor of the UT Concert Choir and Tenor-Bass Choir. A strong advocate for Korean choral music, she continues her research in this field. Oh is currently the organist and assistant choirmaster at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Miami and associate conductor of Miami Collegium Musicum.



Supitcha Kansirisin, originally from Thailand, is a DMA student in choral conducting at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, where she serves as a graduate teaching assistant. She holds a BME from Chulalongkorn University, where she was recognized as the Outstanding Student-Teacher of the Faculty of Education. In 2018, she earned an MM from the University of Southern California. Supitcha is a founding committee member of the Thailand Choral Directors Association, dedicated to enhancing the potential of Thai choral directors to meet international standards. She currently serves as an assistant conductor of the Miami Children's Chorus.



Jennifer Grover joins the University of Miami's Frost School of Music as a DMA candidate in choral conducting, chorus master for Frost Opera Theater, and assistant conductor fellow with Seraphic Fire. She earned her MM in choral conducting from Brigham Young University and holds a BM in vocal performance and music education from CSU Stanislaus. Grover served as artistic director of the Tracy Community Choirs and led choral and piano studies at Tracy High School for ten years. She has worked with Opera Modesto and the Modesto Symphony Orchestra. At BYU, she directed the University Chorale and assisted with their major ensembles. A collaborative pianist and operatic soprano, Grover has performed

widely and remains active as a clinician and educator.

Fostering Choral Composition: A Student-Led Choir's Journey

How can we support choral composition within our programs? The Renova New Music Ensemble, a student-led choir at the University of Colorado Boulder, has done just that—premiering and workshopping over sixty-five student-composed works in just four years. This session explores how Renova collaborates with emerging composers, details the administrative infrastructure behind running a student-led new-music ensemble, and highlights the impact of student-driven leadership on the future of choral repertoire. Attendees will receive templates for recruiting, auditioning, scheduling, and more. From recording sessions and composer workshops to concerts and community events, learn how to create meaningful opportunities that provide real-world experience for composers. Tap into the creative potential in your own community and help debut the next era of choral music!



Blake Clawson is a musician at the intersection of composition, conducting, education, research, and performance. Currently serving as music director for the new-music choir Renova New Music Ensemble as well as a dual master's student in composition and choral conducting at the University of Colorado Boulder, Clawson is an active collaborator and seeker of art who inspires and draws people together. His music weaves the serenity of natural landscapes with wonder, occasionally infusing modern folk sensibility and rollicking groove. In addition to teaching aural skills courses at CU Boulder, he serves as a graduate assistant in the choral department and teaches composition, piano, and jazz at the Parlando School of Musical Arts.

Joshua Carter Maynard is a composer and conductor



from Colorado Springs, CO, who specializes in bringing passion for choral and chamber music to a new generation of musicians. He holds a BM in composition from the University of Boulder Colorado

along with certifications in music theory and music technology. He began a master's in choral conducting at the University of Oregon in 2025. In addition to producing many awarded compositions for mediums like choir and orchestra to electronics and jazz combos, Maynard served as a president and founder of the Renova New Music Ensemble—CU Boulder's premier contemporary choral group.

Imposter Phenomenon, Musical Excellence, and Mentorship

As musicians and educators, we strive to create meaningful musical experiences while encouraging growth in technical skill and artistry. When high expectations, musical excellence, and personal growth collide, performers often experience a paralyzing sense of self-doubt, sometimes referred to as imposter phenomenon. In this session, we will explore strategies directors might use to help combat feelings of imposter syndrome both personally and in support of their students. While this session is aimed toward collegiate-level learners and mentors, particularly at the graduate level, the general practices apply to a wider audience. Participants will learn about some of the perceived social and emotional causes contributing to imposter phenomenon. Additionally, we will explore how positive and active mentorship can provide support to individuals suffering from imposter phenomenon.



Emily T. Peterson is a graduate student at the University of Colorado Boulder pursuing a doctoral degree in choral conducting and literature. She studies under the tutelage of Drs. Coreen Duffy and Elizabeth Swanson. Peterson formerly studied with Dr. Brian C. Murray at the University of Wyoming, where she participated in various masterclasses and conduct-

ing symposia. In January 2024 she participated in the Northwestern ACDA student conducting masterclass with Dr. André J. Thomas. She earned a BME, MME, and MM from UW.

It's Not Skynet (Yet): Practical Uses of AI for Conductors

This session will delve into the potential for Large Language Model (LLM) systems to assist choral conductors. Focusing on practical application use, areas such as repertoire programming, the development of rehearsal strategies, and even the description of effective conducting gestures using Laban Movement language are explored. As LLM systems become integral to diverse software applications, the discussion addresses crafting nuanced user prompts specifically within the music performance discipline. We will also learn how to navigate around the risks of AI, including misinformation, copyright issues, and plagiarism. The session will conclude with a glimpse of future applications such as AI's potential for visual analysis of musical notation in score study and the more nuanced connections with physical conducting gesture.

Gary Seighman will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 158.

The Lavender Scores: Repertoire from LGBTQIA+ Composers

Join us in an immersive workshop exploring the choral works of LGBTQIA+ composers. One of the easiest ways we can foster inclusivity in our classrooms is through the works we program. If you have been wanting to find pieces by LGBTQIA+ composers but don't know where to start, this session is for you! The music presented in this session has been carefully selected for its accessibility, ensuring ensembles of any experience level will be engaged through varying opportunities for musical growth. This session will include a live read-



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

through of music, as well as information on a brand-new resource for choral educators.



Joshua Donaldson is the director of choral activities at Emporia State University, where he leads four ensembles and teaches classes in conducting, choral methods, and music theory. He is an active choral artist, singing with KC VITAs. He clinics choirs across Kansas and most recently was the clinician for the SEKMEA district honor choir. His research focuses on creating inclusive classrooms and repertoire by women composers and LGBTQIA+ composers. Donaldson presented at the 2025 National ACDA Conference on crafting inclusive classrooms for LGBTQIA+ students. He holds a BME, MM in choral conducting, and MM in vocal performance from Pittsburg State University, and a DMA in choral conducting from the University of Kansas.



Jackson Thomas is the director of choral activities at the University of Central Missouri, leading choral ensembles and teaching courses in conducting, literature, and techniques. He previously taught at Pembroke Hill School and in Kansas City public schools. As founder and artistic director of KC VITAs, he has premiered nearly one hundred contemporary-classical works, with the organization earning recognition in national competitions. He also directs the Northland Community Choir and previously led the Schola Cantorum of the Greater Kansas City chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Since 2015 he has been director of choral music at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Lenexa, KS. He frequently directs honor choirs and adjudicates festivals.

stories that shape Latinx identity. What makes Latinx music Latinx? Is it the language, the rhythm, the history? We'll explore its rich blend of Indigenous, African, European, and contemporary influences—highlighting music from folk traditions to works by present-day Latinx composers writing within classical frameworks. Attendees will gain practical tools for teaching this repertoire, including guidance on Spanish diction, rhythmic integrity, culturally responsive strategies, and approaches to oral-tradition music. Participants will sing and move together, and leave with rehearsal-ready resources, historical context, and curated repertoire lists for a variety of ensembles—centering music by living Latinx composers.

Eric D. Reyes will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 64.

Passing the Baton: Leadership Through Student Conducting

Student conducting offers more than podium time—it's a transformative tool for cultivating leadership, ownership, and ensemble unity. This session will explore how empowering students to lead from the podium can develop essential skills such as communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. Through student testimonials, personal experiences, and real-world case studies, we will highlight the lasting impact of student conducting and its role in building confident, capable leaders. Attendees will walk away with practical, adaptable strategies to incorporate student conducting opportunities into their choral programs, regardless of ensemble size or institutional setting.



Kaitlin DeSpain enjoys a varied career as an educator, conductor, performer, and clinician. She earned her BME from Marshall University, an MM from the University of Kentucky, and a DMA from the University of Houston. DeSpain previously taught

Más Que Ritmo: The Heart and Heritage of Latinx Choral Music

This session explores the wide range of Latinx vocal music and how it reflects the many voices, cultures, and

grades 6–12 at schools in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Texas. She has also worked extensively with collegiate, community, and professional ensembles, including the Houston Symphony Chorus, the Symphony of Southeast Texas Chorus, and the Houston Chamber Choir. DeSpain frequently leads workshops and masterclasses for educators. She is passionate about emphasizing expressive artistry and strong technical foundations to create meaningful musical experiences.



Emily Hobson-Gallardo is the director of choral activities at the University of North Georgia. She previously served on the faculties of Georgia State University and Oglethorpe University and completed her DMA in choral conducting at the University of Houston. In Houston, she worked with several acclaimed ensembles, including Mercury Chamber Orchestra, the Houston Symphony Chorus, and the Grammy Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir. She previously taught at the University of West Georgia and led secondary choral programs in Georgia public schools. Hobson-Gallardo earned her BME from Mississippi State University and her MM in choral conducting from Georgia State University. She has also performed with professional ensembles such as the Atlanta Symphony Chorus and Chamber Chorus.

Rehearsal Renovation: Culture-Building “Power Tools”

Choral directors hold substantial power. How they leverage that power with their singers has direct implications for choral culture. This session examines how directors can wield power responsibly to shape positive choral experiences for singers. Presenters will suggest three approaches to sharing power with students in the classroom, recommending strategies for developing trust with singers through activities that build relational capital. They propose methods for soliciting singers’ experiences and ideas, effectively positioning the director and the singers on the same team. They suggest expanding definitions of success to build positive energy

and buy-in from singers. Ultimately, careful attention to “power tools” in the rehearsal room enables directors to humanize singers, uplift their experiences and ideas, and promote a spirit of belonging in their programs.

Margaret Winchell will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 35.



Evan Stoor is a proud New Mexico native who graduated from New Mexico State University with a BME before beginning his career teaching both middle and high school choir. Stoor received an MM in choral conducting at Western Michigan University and began his first year as a PhD student in music education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2022. His doctoral dissertation focuses on the measurement and application of empathy in the choral rehearsal. Stoor is an active choral conductor, choral singer, and guest clinician, and he currently conducts the Youth Chorale of the Central Illinois Youth Chorus organization.

Resonating Roots: Women Composers from Latin America

Latin American contemporary women composers are reshaping the choral and vocal repertoire by blending diverse musical traditions with contemporary techniques. Their works draw from regional, folk, and pre-Hispanic roots, creating compositions that reflect cultural identity and artists’ depth of inspiration. This session features composers such as Diana Syrse, María Granillo, Gisela Crespo, and others whose pieces or arrangements incorporate indigenous instruments and inspirational material, pedagogical strategies, and traditional songs reimaged for SATB and treble choirs. Participants will explore new repertoire focuses on cultural, traditional influence and popular choral music, programming ideas, and inclusive approaches that elevate diverse voices in academic, professional, and community contexts.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions



Citlalli Gonzalez Del Valle is a master's student in the conducting program at the University of Northern Colorado. She is a professional soloist, choir singer, and conductor with experience in liturgical and Mexican choral music. She studied for a BM at Universidad de las Americas Puebla, where she was awarded with an artistic scholarship as a singer in the Chamber Choir. She has conducted in Mexico and Italy in the Orquesta Camerata Anima Tonalli (Bologna, 2024), at the Universidad de las Americas Puebla Orchestra (Puebla, 2021–2023), and has also been principal conductor and assistant of the Chamber Choir of the Universidad de las Americas Puebla (Puebla, 2022–2023). She is currently the assistant conductor in the Chamber Choir at the University of Northern Colorado.

The Silent Choral Rehearsal: Rehearsing Without Words

We often hear the advice to “speak less” in rehearsals to allow more time for actual music making, but what if you didn't speak at all? This interactive session challenges traditional rehearsal methods by demonstrating a completely silent choral rehearsal. Audience members will actively participate as a peer ensemble while Dr. Jay Dougherty leads a short rehearsal using only gesture, facial expression, and nonverbal cues, revealing how silence can heighten focus, encourage deeper listening, and foster ensemble independence. Following the demonstration, attendees will engage in a discussion to analyze what worked, what challenges arose, and how these techniques can be adapted for daily rehearsals. Learn how conducting without words can sharpen musicianship, reduce verbal clutter, and create a more immersive, efficient, and artistically rich choral environment.

Jay Dougherty is the performing arts department chair and director of choral activities at Drury University in



Springfield, Missouri. He holds a DMA in choral conducting and an MM in choral conducting from the University of Colorado Boulder, and a BME from Brigham Young University, Provo. Dougherty is an in-demand coach and clinician for quartets and choruses around the world, a prolific arranger and composer with more than one hundred arrangements, compositions, and publications in print across various styles—including barbershop, choral, and contemporary a cappella—and a frequent presenter, having delivered more than one hundred conference sessions worldwide. A proud father of five daughters, he resides in Nixa, Missouri, with his bride of more than twenty years, Megan.

There's No Place Like Tone

Learn how to implement voice-building techniques in the classroom and how to transfer these techniques to your music. Heather Orr will demonstrate a systematic approach to teaching breath management and vocal technique so that you can maximize your choir's true potential.



Heather Orr serves as assistant director of choral activities at Texas A&M University, where she conducts the freshman ensembles *Bella Voce* and *Legacy Voices*. Formerly head choir director at Montgomery High School, she enjoyed a distinguished thirty-year career in public school music education. Her choirs performed at TMEA (2024, 2018, 2010, 2005); National ACDA (2025, 2021, 2011); and SWACDA (2022, 2018). Orr holds degrees from The Ohio State University and Heidelberg College and is pursuing a doctorate in music education. Her honors include the TCDA Choral Excellence Award, UIL Sponsor Excellence Award, and recognition as a two-time Grammy Music Educator semifinalist. She has been married for thirty-two years and is the proud mother of four adult children.

Voces de México: Authentic Perspectives from the Homeland

This session, developed in collaboration with University of Northern Colorado graduate students from Mexico, is designed to thoughtfully and authentically represent the multifaceted heritage of the choral music from their homeland and to inspire American directors to confidently program this repertoire for their ensembles. Music has been selected to sensitively represent a cultural legacy that is rich, diverse, and expansive. A historical context of these works will be discussed, with salient characteristics and rehearsal/programming strategies. Musical examples will be provided along with programming aids and resources. The material is organized in four segments: 1. Indigenous language of indigenous people, 2. Novohispanic music, 3. Contemporary Mexican composers, 4. Mexican Folk Music.

Jill Burgett will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 148.



Sergio Castro Medina is a Mexican conductor, violist, and cultural manager who is currently pursuing a doctorate in orchestral and choral conducting at the University of Northern Colorado. At UNC he serves as assistant conductor of the Symphony Orchestra, graduate assistant for Coro Polaris, and performs with the Chamber Choir, where he has also conducted selected works. He is founder and artistic director of Camerata Anima Tonalli Orchestra, dedicated to innovative and crosscultural programming. Previously, he was general director of cultural affairs at Universidad de las Américas Puebla, where he directed ensembles, implemented the Artistic Scholarship Program, and produced archival revivals with Mexican

NYC + CARNEGIE HALL PROGRAMS

COA NATIONALS FOR TOP CHOIRS

April 4-5, 2027

Conductors: Jason Max Ferdinand, Jessica Nápoles, Coty Raven Morris
Composer-in-Residence (World Premiere): Ēriks Ešenvalds

April 17-18, 2027

Principal Conductor & Composer-in-Residence: Rollo Dilworth
Guest Conductor: Brandon Boyd

HARMONY HONORS INVITATIONAL (Symphony Orchestra + Massed Choir)

April 25-27, 2027

Principal Conductor: Jason Max Ferdinand

MASTERWORK PREMIERES

May 26-28, 2027

Creation (Composer-in-Residence: Jocelyn Hagen, Carnegie Hall Premiere)

Wellspring! The Way of Water (Composers-in-Residence: Alexander & Joanna Forbes L'Estrange, North American Premiere)

IN HARMONY COLLABORATIVE FESTIVAL

June 9-11, 2027

With Rollo Dilworth (Youth Choirs) and Jason Max Ferdinand (Adult Choirs)



**HARMONY TOURS
CHOIRS OF AMERICA
HARMONY PRODUCTIONS**

Engage | Inspire | Educate

(800) 284-2177 | Hello@Go2Harmony.com | www.Go2Harmony.com

Save the
DATE 2027



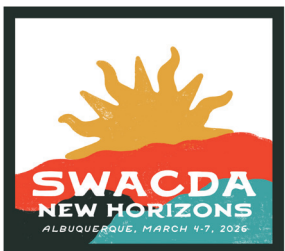


2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

musicologist Luisa Vilar. As a violist, he performs with the Gioia Quartet, touring internationally with an emphasis on Mexican repertoire.

Citlalli Gonzalez Del Valle will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 168.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

4th-6th Grade Treble



Elizabeth Hogan is a conductor, educator, and community builder whose work spans education, sacred music, and nonprofit leadership. She is the artistic director of Bel Canto Women's Chorus in St. Louis, MO; sings with the professional women's ensemble mirabai; and serves as director of Gathering Kids at The Gathering United Methodist Church. In 2021 she founded Elevated Harmonics Studio, offering music lessons, professional development, and educator coaching. Hogan previously served as assistant professor of music education at Southeast Missouri State University. Her leadership includes roles as executive director of the St. Louis Christmas Carols Association and deputy director of the St. Louis Children's Choirs. She holds a PhD from the University of Missouri and an MM from Michigan State University.

Eastern, Midwestern, and Southwestern Regions, as well as performances at the White House and with universities in Brazil and Malaysia. He has headlined ACDA conferences in multiple states and held residencies at institutions across the United States and abroad. Also an active composer, his works are published by Gentry, Santa Barbara, Alliance, and MusicSpoke. A lifetime member of ACDA and past president of the Southern Region, Packwood continues to influence the profession as a conductor, educator, composer, and consultant.

7th-9th Grade Treble



Elizabeth Núñez is creative director of the award-winning Young People's Chorus of New York City, where since 2004 she has shaped programs and led choruses in performances across New York City, on national television, and internationally. She has directed all-state honor choirs, the 2016 OAKE National Children's Honor Choir, and led YPC as a featured choir at the 2020 Eastern ACDA Region Conference. Núñez is the founding artistic director of the SoHarmoniums Women's Choir and creator of WIT: Women Inspiring Tomorrow, a mentoring program connecting YPC's high school girls with alumnae and professional women. She earned music education degrees from Lee University and the University of Oklahoma, receiving Lee's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2017. She serves on the Chorus America Board of Directors.

7th-9th Grade Tenor Bass



Gary Packwood is recognized internationally as a conductor, pedagogue, author, and clinician. He has conducted all-state and honor choirs in forty states, led large festival choirs nationwide, and appeared four times at Carnegie Hall. His conducting highlights include ACDA regional conferences in the Northwest,

10th-11th Grade Mixed



Rollo Dilworth is vice dean and professor of choral music education at Temple University's Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts, where he has taught since 2009. He conducts the Temple

University Singing Owls, serves as artistic director of Singing City, and leads the Philadelphia All-City High School Chorus. He has over two hundred published choral works, many in the *Henry Leck Creating Artistry Series* with Hal Leonard. In demand nationally and internationally, he is a frequent conductor of all-state, honor, festival, and professional choirs. His research and presentations focus on African American choral music, composition and arranging, social justice, social-emotional learning, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dilworth serves on the boards of Chorus America, NCCO, and the Presser Foundation.

12th Grade Mixed



Elena Sharkova, a native of St. Petersburg, holds a graduate degree in conducting from the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory, and has built an international reputation as a versatile conductor, clinician, and educator. Since 1999 she has served as chorus master of Symphony San Jose, preparing over fifty major works for distinguished conductors and leading annual orchestral and choral programs. As artistic director of Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley since 2004, she has expanded the program to 250 singers, performed at the 2019 ACDA National Conference, toured eighteen countries, won two international gold medals, and recorded at Carnegie Hall. Sharkova has guest conducted ensembles including the BBC Singers and Seraphic Fire, and has led festival and all-state choirs worldwide. She has been a member of the World Choir Council since 2015.

High School Jazz



Christine Helferich Guter is a renowned jazz vocalist, studio singer, and educator based in Los Angeles. Her studio credits include dozens of Hollywood soundtracks such as Disney's *Wish*, *Hocus*

Pocus 2, *Dr. Strange and the Multiverse of Madness*, *Mulan*, *Star Wars: Rogue One*, *Jurassic World*, and *Sing!* Guter is in demand internationally as a lecturer, adjudicator, and conductor of all-state jazz and honor choirs. She serves on the board of Jazz Education Abroad, is the jazz voice instructor for the Thailand Jazz Workshop, and is a teaching artist on the Imagineering Campus at Disneyland. In 2018 she received *DownBeat* Magazine's Jazz Education Achievement Award. She is currently director of vocal jazz at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music, California State University Long Beach, where she leads the award-winning ensemble Pacific Standard Time.

Collegiate



Jonathan Talberg, recipient of the California MEA's President's Award for extraordinary accomplishments in music education, is director of choral activities at California State University Long

Beach's Bob Cole Conservatory, where he conducts the internationally acclaimed Chamber Choir and University Choir. He holds the Frank Pooler Endowed Chair as the Conservatory's first endowed professor. Under his leadership, the Chamber Choir has won top prizes at the Austrian Spittal International Choir Festival and the prestigious Choir of the World competition in Wales, and has performed with ensembles ranging from the Kronos Quartet and Pacific Symphony to the Rolling Stones. Talberg is a frequent conductor of all-state and national honor choirs. He is also an editor for Pavane Publishing and a dedicated mentor.

2026

CHORUS AMERICA CONFERENCE

MINNEAPOLIS, MN
JUNE 3-6



© SEAN PAVONE/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

REGISTER
BY MARCH 31
for the
BIGGEST
SAVINGS!



Inspiration, insight, and community—all in one place.

chorusamerica.org/conference-2026



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Conference Overview



Julie Dana

I am so very thrilled to welcome you back to San Jose for the first time in forty years for the 2026 Western Region Conference, “A Tapestry of Voices.” Our conference celebrates the power of connection, community, and collaboration—the threads that make our

musical tapestry beautiful and strong. After four decades, it’s an exciting moment to return to San Jose, where we will weave together past, present, and future through the collective voices of our choral community. Our five states will come together to celebrate our history by introducing past presidents, showcasing our present with extraordinary performances by our region ensembles, sharing informative practices presented by colleagues and composers, and highlighting the potential of our future through the beautiful voices of our honor choirs.

The conference kicks off with our Welcome Concert, featuring the ACDA Western Collegiate Consortium conducted by Dr. Joshua Habermann, and an inspiring keynote address from Melanie DeMore. Our days together will be filled with performances by fifteen selected choirs, over twenty interest and reading sessions, eight poster sessions, conducting masterclasses, a composer track, four honor choirs, and opportunities to learn from

renowned ensembles like Chanticleer and Lyyra.

This year we also invite you to enjoy two special choral events before and after our conference! Our pre-conference offering, Nurturing Our Roots, invites both members and nonmembers to explore specialized learning for teaching young singers. Presented by the staff of the Tucson Girls Chorus, this session promises to provide invaluable tools for anyone working with children in choral settings.

After closing our conference with the Honor Choirs Concert, you are invited to stay and enjoy a special performance offered by the San Jose Symphony & Symphony San Jose Chorale on Saturday evening at the historic California Theatre. The Symphony’s concert, *The Enigmatic Voice*, will feature Handel’s *Zadok the Priest* and Vaughan Williams’s *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Conference attendees can receive a 15% discount on tickets with a special conference code available on the Western Region website.

Our amazing Western Region conference team has planned an unforgettable celebration of choral artistry for us. Like a centuries-old wall tapestry, we, too, weave stories through our voices and experiences, contributing to a legacy that will endure for the next generation of choral musicians. Join us in San Jose, March 4–7, 2026, as we weave a powerful Tapestry of Voices together!

Western Region Conference Registration Information

Until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

Attendee \$325 Retired \$225 Student \$125

January 16 - March 7

Attendee \$375 Retired \$250 Student \$145

One Day \$175 **only available on site**

Register at acda.org/region-conferences



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Headliners/Opening Night Concert

Headliners

Chanticleer



Known around the world for its eclectic repertoire and dazzling virtuosity, the Grammy Award-winning vocal ensemble Chanticleer—under the leadership of Music Director Tim Keeler—has been hailed by the *Boston Globe* as “breathtaking in its accuracy of intonation, purity of blend, of color and swagger of style.” Founded in San Francisco in 1978 by singer and musicologist Louis Botto, Chanticleer quickly took its place as one of the most prolific recording and touring ensembles in the world, an “orchestra of voices” performing thousands of live concerts and selling more than one million recordings. Rooted in the Renaissance, Chanticleer’s repertoire has expanded to include classical, gospel, jazz, and popular music, and the group performs its beloved “A Chanticleer Christmas” program on tour every December. A new Christmas album, *Joy to the World*, released in fall 2025. The group is the recipient of Chorus America’s Dale Warland Commission Award and the Chorus America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming.

Lyyra



Lyyra is the new all-women vocal ensemble from The VOCES8 Foundation and is based in the United States. Lyyra records exclusively for Warner Classics. Creating world-class musical experiences to inspire audiences, Lyyra seeks to redefine the genre of upper voice music in the choral landscape, highlighting the astonishing capabilities within the full spectrum of women’s singing. The sound of this bright, young group combines velvety richness alongside star-like brilliance. With a broad texture and exhilarating range of sound, the group’s talented members specialize in classical, jazz, pop, and folk music from diverse traditions and backgrounds. Lyyra tours both at home in the United States and internationally. The group gave its debut performances in 2024, including ACDA, and released its debut EP *More Love* on the VOCES8 label. Lyyra is Anna Crumley, MaryRuth Miller, Elizabeth Tait, Aryssa Leigh Burrs, Ingrid Johnson, and Cecille Elliott. Lyyra’s creative director is Erik Jacobson.

Opening Night Concert: Collegiate Consortium

The Western ACDA Region Conference will open with the debut performance of the Collegiate Consortium, an honor chorus bringing together singers from northern California colleges and universities. Under

the direction of Dr. Joshua Habermann, conductor of the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, the ensemble reflects the conference's commitment to fostering collaboration among the next generation of choral artists.

The program, Bridges of Song, traces themes of praise, nature, and the human search for belonging. Works such as Johannes Brahms's *O schöne Nacht* and Lili Boulanger's *Hymne au Soleil* capture the beauty of night and the brilliance of dawn, while other selections lift up themes of reverence, home, journey, and hope.

Reflecting on the occasion, Habermann notes: "I'm thrilled to be returning to California for the opportunity to gather with collegiate singers from across the state, and sharing a session with an artist like Melanie DeMore is an inspiration."



Joshua Habermann leads the O'ahu Choral Society and is in his seventeenth season as artistic director of the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, one of America's leading professional choirs. Since joining the ensemble, he has broadened its repertoire to include choral-orchestral masterworks and unique concert experiences such as *Dancing the Mystery* and The American Immigrant Experience, fusions of music and poetry created for ACDA national conferences in Salt Lake City and Dallas. From 2011 to 2022 he led the Dallas Symphony Chorus and is a regular guest with professional and symphonic choirs. Recent projects include preparing choruses for Britten's *War Requiem* for the San Francisco Symphony and John Adam's *El Niño* for the Houston Symphony. Habermann is a frequent clinician for conducting programs and choral events.

20% OFF FOR ALL CHOIR DIRECTORS & MUSIC TEACHERS

OCTOBER PROJECT PRESENTS

THE BOOK OF ROUNDS

by Julie Flanders & Emil Adler

21 ROUNDS For Treble Voices

Single Line Rounds
with Piano Accompaniment
Arranged by Keiji Ishiguri
Cover Illustration: Anna DiVito Studios

ORDER HERE

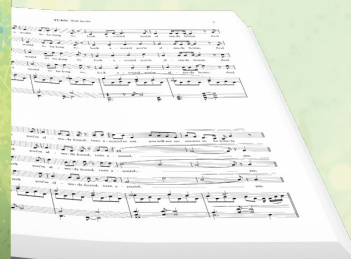


TURN

Choral Arrangements

A choral viral sensation.

- **SATB LARGE CHORUS**
arr. by Carrie Tennant
- **SATB, SSA & TREBLE**
arr. by Kirsten Oberoi
- **SAB** arr. by Keiji Ishiguri





2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Special Events

Pre-Conference (Wednesday)

Nurturing Our Roots: Elementary-Level Practice and Pedagogy for 21st-Century Choirs

Nurturing Our Roots emerges from a desire to attend carefully to the beginning of all of our choir programs—the unique needs of our youngest singers. Facilitated by the Tucson Girls Chorus, this workshop will supplement the elementary-level offerings already planned at the Western ACDA Region conference.

This interactive workshop will share strategies for building engaging choral music programs for K–5 singers, focusing on techniques for building comprehensive music literacy, movement-based strategies to increase singer engagement and reinforce musical concepts, exciting and accessible repertoire, incorporating play, and singer-led strategies such as composition and student leadership. Participants will leave this workshop with both practical ideas to apply to their teaching right away and pedagogical tools to deepen their approach to teaching elementary-level musicians.

The **Tucson Girls Chorus** was founded in 1985 and prepares a diverse group of young women to be confident leaders through participation in a well-constructed educational program that emphasizes music, performance, leadership training, and community service. The TGC unites communities through collaborative partnerships, diverse repertoire, and singer-led programming. We celebrate the strength of each girl's voice, embracing innovation to create initiatives that ensure every girl who loves to sing can participate.

Keynote Speaker

Why We Must Sing Each Other's Songs: Community, Connection, and Commonality

These days there is a great fear of appropriation and cultural missteps. Folks, out of fear, think it is best to stay in their own lane, only singing music from their own culture. This is dangerous thinking that works to keep us apart. We will explore the ways our various traditions and songs connect. Be sure to attend Melanie's interest session on Thursday, March 5.



Melanie DeMore is a three-time Grammy-nominated singer/composer, choral conductor, music director, and vocal activist who believes in the power of voices raised together. She facilitates vocal and stick pounding workshops for professional choirs and community groups, as well as directing numerous choral organizations across the United States, Canada, and beyond. She is a featured presenter of SpeakOut!—The Institute for Social and Cultural Change, works with everyone from Baptists to Buddhists, and was a founding member of the Grammy-nominated ensemble Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir. She is a charter member of Kate Munger's Threshold Choirs and conducts song circles with an emphasis on the voice as a vessel for healing. In her own words, "A song can hold you up when there seems to be no ground beneath you."

Chanticleer Interest Session

Challenges, Techniques, and Benefits of Unconducted Ensemble Singing for All Skill Levels

Unconducted ensemble singing increases agency and ownership among members, fosters interpersonal connection between singers, livens performances, and increases musicianship skills. Without a conductor, sing-

ers must work together, lift up one another, and share responsibility for the final product. Since 1978, Chanticleer has primarily performed as an unconducted ensemble. In this session, we will explore why and how Chanticleer works without a conductor, and how those lessons can be applied to choirs of all skill levels.

Lyyra Interest Session

Inspiring Through Music—
Combining Excellence with Creativity
to Create Inclusive Education and Performance

Lyyra and the VOCES8 Foundation will talk through their approach to various education programs that are crafted to inspire audiences of all ages and abilities toward a lifelong love of music. Hinging on meeting students and teachers where they are at, VOCES8 Foundation ensembles strive for a “music for all” approach that can drive excellence at the highest level, but all introduce music concepts in an accessible way for new singers. Lyyra will also touch on concepts of repertoire and vocal techniques that support inclusivity in choral music.

Post-Conference Offering

Symphony San Jose presents “The Enigmatic Voice”
Saturday, March 7, at 7:30pm

Discounted tickets available for Western Region conference attendees. Visit acdawestern.org/the-enigmatic-voice for the discount code and link to purchase.

Symphony San Jose presents “The Enigmatic Voice” at the majestic California Theatre, featuring three masterworks that celebrate power, peace, and mystery.

Handel’s *Zadok the Priest*, commissioned for King George II’s coronation, is a timeless masterpiece of

majesty and divine grandeur.

Vaughan Williams’s *Dona Nobis Pacem* blends Latin Mass with Walt Whitman’s poetry in a stirring 1936 plea for peace that resonates powerfully today.

Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* presents musical portraits of the composer’s closest friends, woven together with a hidden theme that has intrigued audiences for over a century.

Poster Sessions

Crafting a Flavorful Journey of
Asian Folk Choral Music
Supitcha Kansirisin

Last Things First!
Warm-ups that Perfect Your Concert
Jason Harney

Silly Songs to Foster Serious Music Skills
Anna Volodarskaya

The Heavens Declare the Glory of the Lord:
Our Tapestry of Voices Reflect Cosmological Heritage!
Harold Moses

The Motets of José Maurício Nunes Garcia
(1767-1830)
Youngeun Kim

The Voice of the Steppe:
Exploring Mongolian Choral Music
Through the Works of Se Enkhbayar
Mengda Jiang



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Special Events

Voices of the Philippines: Children's Songs for All Choirs

Lhara Groberg

Working Towards a More Equitable Honor Choir Process: A Content Analysis of Honor Choir Preparation Across the United States

Ramon Cardenas



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Student Conducting Masterclasses

Graduate and Conference Attendees



Craig Jessop is professor of music and coordinator of the master of music in conducting (choral emphasis) at Utah State University. From 2010 to 2019 he served as the founding dean of USU's Caine

College of the Arts, following his distinguished tenure as music director of the world-renowned Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square. He is the founder and music director of the American Festival Chorus and Orchestra, now in its eighteenth season, and continues to lead the National Memorial Day Choral Festival at the Kennedy Center. A former lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force music programs, Jessop served as director of the Singing Sergeants and conducted air force ensembles in the United States and Europe. He has recorded more than fifteen albums with the Tabernacle Choir.

Hawai'i, Manoa (MME, Choral). Nahulu has been involved as a music educator/director of choral music in Hawai'i since 1977. She has been the artistic director of the Hawai'i Youth Opera Chorus since 1986. She, with her family, are garment manufacturers. They are the owners of "Bete Mu'u," which celebrates the "Classic Mu'umu'u," a line of traditionally based elegant Hawaiian mu'umu'u. Nahulu also plays the organ at Wai'anae Hongwanji's monthly service.

Undergraduate



Edith A. Copley is a Regents' Professor Emerita at Northern Arizona University. During her thirty-one-year tenure in Flagstaff, she conducted the Shrine of the Ages Choir and taught courses in undergraduate

and graduate conducting and graduate choral literature. Prior to her NAU appointment, Copley taught secondary choral music for seven years in Iowa and four years at the American International School in Vienna, Austria. She has contributed articles and chapters for several publications and has conducted all-state choirs in over thirty states and international festivals in Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Luxembourg, Tasmania, England, Australia, China, Oman, Turkey, Ireland, Austria, and France. Copley has served ACDA in various leadership roles and is currently national president.

New Teachers and Emerging Conductors (5 years or less experience)



Nola A. Nahulu is a native of Makaha, O'ahu, Hawai'i. She received her education from Wai'anae Elementary School, Kamehameha Schools, Whitman College (BA Psychology), and University of



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Performing Choirs

California State University-Fullerton Concert Choir



The California State University Fullerton Concert Choir is a fifty-five-voice auditioned, mixed ensemble comprising primarily students studying voice in the School of Music. The ensemble gives a number of performances in Southern California every year and has also toured in Canada, Europe, and the United States. The choir has had the privilege of performing under the batons of John Williams and Gustavo Dudamel at the Hollywood Bowl, performing numerous times with Andrea Bocelli, and singing other professional engagements across the region.



Christopher Peterson teaches at Cal State Fullerton. He is a conductor, author, and arranger of music and books published in the United States and globally. In his over thirty-five years as a music educator, he has taught in public school, church, community, and collegiate settings. He earned a BME at the University of Southern Maine, the MM in choral conducting at the University of Maine, and a PhD in music education and choral conducting at The Florida State University. He has been invited to teach, judge, and conduct choirs in more than thirty US states, five Canadian provinces, and nine countries and has conducted all-state choirs across the nation. His textbook *Resonance: The Art of the Choral Music Educator* is used across the United States to train future choral music teachers and conductors.

Cantabella Children's Chorus



Cantabella Children's Chorus was founded in 1992 by Bee Chow in her Livermore living room with eleven young singers. Inspired by Zoltán Kodály's philosophy that the voice should be every child's first instrument, Bee aimed to create a local choral community for her own children, then ages six and eight. With an MME from the University of Iowa and certifications in Kodály and Suzuki methods, she built Cantabella into an award-winning program serving over 250 singers from kindergarten through high school. Under her leadership, the chorus has performed internationally and earned accolades such as the Grand Prix at the 2019 World Youth Choral Festival in South Korea. Bee Chow now serves as director emeritus, continuing to inspire the next generation of musicians.



Clement Cano holds a BM (voice) from San José State University and is pursuing an MME. With over twenty years of experience, he has served as choir manager, pit musician, accompanist, baritone, and musical theater director. He began singing in 1991 with Saringhimig and joined the SJSU Choraliers in 1995 under Dr. Charlene Archibeque, later serving as section leader and assistant conductor. Cano has performed at festivals worldwide. He is currently director of musical arts at Hillbrook School and music director at St. Joseph's Cathedral. He conducted Elaine Hagenberg's *Illuminare* at Carnegie Hall in June 2025. Outside of music, he loves video games, anything Disney, and cooking videos; as a longtime hockey player, he is proud to still have all his teeth.



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Casteel Junior High School Angels of Music



Angels of Music was founded in 2015 with the opening of Casteel High School. It is a women's choir comprising talented students in grades seven and eight. For many members, this marks their first experience in a choral setting. Despite their limited background, these young vocalists exhibit a strong dedication to personal and musical development. They consistently rise to the challenge, stepping outside their comfort zones to cultivate the vocal technique, discipline, and collaboration necessary to perform as a unified and expressive ensemble.



Jennifer Pearce holds a BM from Arizona State University and has over thirty years of teaching experience in the East Valley. Her diverse background includes teaching at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, as well as conducting church and community choirs. She currently serves as the Fine Arts Department chair at Casteel Junior High School in Queen Creek, Arizona. In addition to her work in education, Pearce is an accomplished pianist and maintains a private piano studio in her home. She continues to perform, record, and tour with Millennial Choirs and Orchestras. She is deeply inspired by her husband, Marvin, their six children, and seven grandchildren, who remain her most treasured source of pride and motivation.

Castro Valley High School A Cappella



A Cappella hails from the diverse San Francisco Bay Area and is the premier concert choir in their large public high school, comprising three separate auditioned classes that practice together one evening per month. They have performed spotlights at Carnegie Hall and toured domestically and internationally. In 2018, A Cappella—and a subset within it, Madrigals—both placed first in their respective competition divisions of the Northern California Golden State Choral Competition. In 2022, A Cappella won the grand prize of America's Top Choir and Best Ensemble Choreography in FeelItLIVE's competition for top high school choir.



Laryssa Sadoway is in her fourteenth year at Castro Valley High School, where she conducts five choirs. She trained at the University of Massachusetts and North Park University in Chicago. Sadoway received an MM in vocal performance at San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Career highlights include leading her choirs to double gold victory at the 2018 Northern California Golden State Choral Competition, conducting at Carnegie Hall, collaborating with the BYU Singers, and conducting a featured performance ensemble at California MEA. Sadoway has presented sessions at the California Choral Directors summer conference at ECCO and at the California MEA's Bay Section winter conference.

Choral Audacity



Choral Audacity is a chamber choir that centers stories of marginalized communities through the programming of underrepresented composers with a roster of underrepresented singers. Founded in 2018 as a project-based ensemble, we seek to cultivate excellence of underrepresented voices through performance, mentorship, scholarship, and community. Together, we have presented programs such as: “We All Live Here” (American music through the eyes of BIPOC), “Freedom Come” (music of Civil Rights Movement and the apartheid), “Wildfire” (music in response to the California wildfires), and “Balikbayan” (stories of overseas Filipino workers).



Darita Seth is a Cambodian American conductor, haute-contre, and composer who serves as founder, president, and director of Choral Audacity. He is the director of choral and vocal studies at Santa Rosa Junior College. Prior conducting affiliations include: interim director of choral studies and conducting at University of the Pacific; Cantare Con Vivo in Oakland, CA; St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Long Beach, CA; St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Danville, CA; Danville Girls Chorus; Cantabella Children’s Chorus; and the Grammy Award-winning Pacific Boy-choir Academy. Seth holds a BM in vocal performance from Capital University’s Conservatory of Music and an MM in choral conducting from the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at CSU Long Beach.

Downey High School EPIC Jazz Choir



Downey High School’s EPIC Jazz Choir is located in the beautiful city of Downey, some thirteen miles east of downtown Los Angeles, and has twelve to eighteen voices. They rehearse five to eight hours per week learning songs from a variety of jazz styles. They perform at various jazz festivals and events in the community. They also sang at Carnegie Hall (2003, 2007); the Lincoln Center’s Allen Room (2010, 2013); and at the Apollo Theater (2016). They won the sweepstakes at the Folsom Jazz Festival (2008, 2020, 2024); Reno (2018); and the gold medal at the inaugural Disney World Celebration Jazz Festival (2009).



Cory Olariu was born in Romania and studied piano and trumpet at Ion Vidu School of Music in Timisoara, his hometown. He came to the United States in 1989 and graduated from CSU Long Beach, CA, in 2001 with an MM in instrumental conducting. That same year he began teaching all bands and choirs at Downey HS. He has performed at Carnegie Hall with the Jazz Choir and at the 2006 Hollywood Bowl opening night with the Jazz Ensemble. His Jazz Ensemble performed at the Disney Hall in 2008 and has won numerous local and nationwide jazz festivals. The ensemble is also a *Downbeat* winner twice in its category.



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Ensign Singers



The Ensign Singers is a community chamber ensemble specializing in the performance of sacred choral repertoire. Founded in 2019, the choir initially performed primarily for community religious events before beginning a series of summer seasons in 2021. Each summer, the choir highlights a choral masterwork paired with contemporary compositions and arrangements. Previous seasons have included large-scale works by Bach, Rachmaninoff, Vivaldi, and Rheinberger, with new music by Carlos Cordero, Reena Esmail, Josu Elberdin, and others. The choir also performs new works and arrangements by local composers.



David Kime is currently pursuing graduate studies in choral conducting at Brigham Young University, where he assists the university's ensembles and sings baritone with the BYU Singers. Since

founding the Ensign Singers in 2019, he has led the community chamber ensemble in performances that combine sacred choral masterworks with gems of contemporary repertoire. He also conducts for A Voice for Good and is the assistant director of the Utah Valley Interfaith Choir. He also competed in the 2024 Gheorghe Dima International Music Competition, choral conducting section. With a bachelor's degree in piano and organ, he frequently performs in university, professional, and church settings.

Faith Community Lutheran Church Kantori



Kantori at Faith Community Lutheran Church, located in Las Vegas, Nevada, is a church choir that provides traditional music for weekly Sunday and mid-week worship services and special occasions in Faith's Chapel of the Resurrection. Its singers range in age from eighteen to seventy. The choir has been honored to serve two English cathedral residencies in recent years, with performances at St. Paul's London, Kings College, Oxford, Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge, Ely Cathedral, and Bath Abbey.



Joseph Svendsen is cantor at Faith Community Lutheran Church in Summerlin, Nevada, where he leads the church's traditional music program. He serves as director of choral studies and associate

professor of music at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he conducts the UNLV Singers and teaches graduate coursework in choral literature and conducting. Svendsen is also the artistic director of the Las Vegas Master Singers, a ninety-voice volunteer ensemble. He is active as a clinician and guest conductor for festivals, honor choirs, and workshops. He has presented, performed, and published with several professional music education, choral, and church music organizations. He holds a DMA from Texas Tech University, an MME from the University of Illinois, and a BA from Luther College.

Foothill High School Madrigal Singers



The Foothill High School Madrigal Singers is an auditioned ensemble composed of students in grades nine through twelve. Performing only the highest level of choral repertoire, the Madrigal Singers regularly perform for events in their hometown of Tustin as well as an annual performance tour. During the holidays, they sing at over twenty caroling engagements to fundraise for the choral music program. Each spring they are featured in Foothill's Knights on Broadway, a fully choreographed production, now in its sixty-first year. They performed a solo concert in Carnegie Hall in 2013 and were honored to perform for ACDA in 2014 and 2018.



Chelsea Dehn holds a BM in vocal performance from UC, Irvine, and an MM in choral conducting from CSULA. Dehn is currently in her twentieth year of teaching choral music at Foothill High School. She finds that serving the students and community of Tustin is a privilege, and she hopes to remain at Foothill for the longevity of her career. In recognition of her exceptional teaching, she was honored with the Tustin Unified School District's Teacher of the Year Award in 2023. In addition to teaching high school, Dehn directs the chancel choir at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Orange and has held this position proudly since 2003.

Green Valley High School Green NV



Green NV is the contemporary a cappella ensemble at Green Valley High School in Henderson, Nevada. They are a totally student-run ensemble. Green NV was featured in an interest session at the 2010 Western ACDA Region Conference in Tucson, AZ, titled "Contemporary A Capella: From the Radio to the Classroom." They have received superior ratings in several festivals, performed in Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm, and host the annual Acapalooza, which features middle and high school a cappella groups in the Clark County School District and surrounding areas.



Kimberly Barclay Ritzer is in her thirty-fifth year as director of the Green Valley High School Choirs in Henderson, Nevada, opening the school in 1991. She is a 1990 graduate of UNLV, where she received a BME, and a 2001 graduate of the University of Phoenix with a master's in educational administration. Ritzer is currently the task force chair for high school choir and facility chair for the Clark County School District secondary fine arts programs. In addition, Ritzer serves as the Green Valley High School Performing Arts Department chair and has taught secondary choral methods at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Los Gatos High School Treble Choir



The Los Gatos High School Treble Choir has maintained a tradition of choral excellence and active community service for years. The choir participates in concerts, festivals, and competitions throughout the year and consistently receives unanimous superior ratings in California MEA Large Ensemble Festivals and CMEA all-state choral festivals. In 2019 and 2025, the LGHS Treble Choir was selected as one of the featured ensembles at the California All-State Music Conference. In addition to performing locally and regionally, including Carnegie Hall, the choir has performed in prestigious venues internationally.



Ricel Riley is the choral activities director of Los Gatos High School and the artistic director of A Sharp Chorus based in Los Altos, California. Riley made her international conducting debut with the Los Gatos High School Choirs in England in 2014. Her audition choirs were chosen to perform at the CMEA All-State Choral Festival in 2024. Riley debuted her Carnegie Hall conducting with the Los Gatos High School Choirs in 2023. Choirs under her direction have earned unanimous superior ratings in the CMEA Large Ensemble Festival, first place at the Worldstrides Heritage Festival, and have performed in venues in Europe, including an invitation of her community choir to sing at a High Mass at the Vatican's St. Peter's Basilica.

Northern Arizona University High Altitude



Now in its eighteenth year under the direction of Dr. Ryan Holder, High Altitude has become one of the premier collegiate vocal jazz ensembles in the Southwest. With a strong emphasis on solo singing, stage presence, and vocal improvisation, the group is open to students of all majors. High Altitude has performed at state and regional conferences and shared the stage with internationally renowned artists, including the New York Voices, The Real Group, and The Swingles. In 2012 the ensemble was one of only three groups from the United States invited to perform at the Jazz Educators Network Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.



Ryan W. Holder is the associate director of choral studies at Northern Arizona University, where he directs the vocal jazz ensemble High Altitude and oversees multiple a cappella groups. A recognized vocal jazz educator and conductor, he has led all-state and honor vocal jazz ensembles across Arizona, Nevada, California, and Utah, and frequently serves as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the western United States. He coordinates the annual NAU Jazz Madrigal Festival, one of the nation's largest non-competitive choral events. His ensembles have performed at state, regional, and national conferences, and in 2023 he made his Carnegie Hall debut conducting the world premiere of *Lionteeth* by Anders Edenroth of The Real Group.

Ragazzi Boys Chorus Young Men's Ensemble



Grammy Award-winning Ragazzi Boys Chorus, Silicon Valley, under the leadership of artistic and executive director Kent Jue, provides outstanding musical education and performance opportunities for boys and young men ages five through eighteen. The largest boys' chorus in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ragazzi serves over 230 choristers in six tiered levels. Ragazzi ensembles have recently performed Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* with the San Francisco Symphony, Alma Deutscher's *Cinderella* with Opera San Jose, at the 2025 ACDA National and 2024 Western ACDA Conferences, and at the 2023 Chorus America Conference.



Travis Rogers has been a choral conductor for forty-nine years. Retired from Napa High School, he directed the activities of over three hundred students in seven ensembles. NHS choirs toured frequently, performing in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Notre Dame, Sydney Opera House, Westminster Abbey, Sagrada Familia, and the cathedrals of St. Patrick's, Christ Church, and Barcelona. Rogers began NHS's first men's choir with twenty singers. In subsequent years, up to 220 sang in one or more of three male ensembles at NHS. NHS's Beginning Men's Choir is the subject of the documentary *Top Row*. Rogers has served California ACDA in many capacities and is a past president of the Western ACDA Region.

University of British Columbia University Singers



University Singers is the premier choral ensemble of the University of British Columbia School of Music. This thirty-two-voice select ensemble performs the most advanced and exciting music written for chamber choir spanning the Renaissance to the modern day. The ensemble also performs major works with orchestra each season. The University Singers won several awards, including the CBC National Choral Competition and the BBC International Choral Competition, and is an active touring ensemble. The UBC choral program boasts five ensembles and a vibrant graduate program in choral conducting.



Graeme Langager is director of choral activities at the University of British Columbia School of Music and a frequent guest conductor, adjudicator, and clinician. He has conducted performances in cathedrals and concert halls throughout Europe and across North America, and at choral conferences and festivals. Langager served as the artistic director and conductor of the acclaimed Phoenix Chamber Choir in Vancouver from 2012 to 2018, during which time the choir released three CDs and was invited to perform at Canada's Podium Conference in 2016. He received his DMA in conducting from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and an MM in conducting from California State University.



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Westminster California Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society The Westminster Chorus



The Westminster Chorus was founded in 2002 and quickly climbed the ranks of the Barbershop Harmony Society; they became international champions in 2007, 2010, 2015, 2019, and 2024. In 2009 they were crowned Choir of the World at the International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen, Wales. The Westminster Chorus holds a mission to preserve and advance the

Barbershop art form, while providing and encouraging an inclusive community for youth in Southern California and around the world to engage in lifelong singing, music, and artistic expression.



Dan Wessler holds a DMA in choral conducting and literature from University of Colorado Boulder. In addition to his directorship of The Westminster Chorus, Wessler serves on the adjunct faculties of Concordia University Irvine and North Orange County Community College. He has had research published in the *Choral Journal* and has presented sessions at the annual conferences of Colorado MEA and California MEA. Wessler sings with After Hours, the 2018 International Barbershop Quartet champion. He is in demand as a clinician and coach, and is also an active barbershop arranger, having written over 250 arrangements for various groups around the world. In addition, he serves as a certified musicality judge for the Barbershop Harmony Society's contest and judging system.



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Interest Sessions

A Tapestry of Chinese and Taiwanese Choral Voices

Discover the vibrancy of Chinese and Taiwanese choral music through this culturally enriching session. The presenter offers a historical and practical exploration of repertoire, tonal language challenges, and performance practices in works by notable Chinese-speaking composers. Attendees will receive curated playlists, score access, and strategies for introducing this music to English-speaking choirs. This session is ideal for conductors seeking fresh, authentic repertoire that reflects today's global choral community.



Yu-Feng Huang is a Taiwanese choral conductor and scholar committed to bridging cultures through music. He holds a DMA in choral conducting from the University of Utah and has over a decade of experience directing university and community choirs in Taiwan. His research supports non-Chinese-speaking choirs in performing Chinese choral works authentically. As founder of the Chinese Choral Repertoire Promotion Project, Huang promotes access to diverse repertoire and fosters crosscultural engagement. He currently directs the Salt Lake Chinese Choir.

Building Literacy Through Play

Few elements speak to the deficiency of the American education system like our country's diminishing rates of literacy, which is affecting rates of music literacy as well. Working under the influence of Drs. Gordon and Krueger, this session serves to provide educators with strategies to promote music literacy through play-based approaches. Focusing heavily on rhythmic, melodic, and tonal acquisition, attendees will learn activities to be employed with lower elementary to adult learners. Educators will learn how to use these games as assessment tools and provide students with a more expansive vocabulary to understand their literacy skills. Attendees will walk away with a comprehensive understanding of the spiral of teaching music literacy, the value of audiation, dictation, and improvisation in the learning process, and how to implement these strategies in their classrooms through play.



Amanda Goldberg is a music educator passionate about the use of singing to develop the whole person. She holds a BME from St. Olaf College and is currently completing her MM in choral conducting at Michigan State University. She has worked on the artistic staff at the Girl Choir of South Florida and as a middle school teacher in Palm Beach County, FL, where she piloted a program for restorative practices in the classroom. Presently, Goldberg is the assistant director of Sistrum: Lansing Women's Chorus and the music director of First Presbyterian Church of Holt. Her passions include treble music and ensembles, caramelized onions, and the film *Titanic*.

Closing the Financial Gap in Your Choral Program

Imagine a choral program where funding supports—not limits—your vision, access, and impact. As conductors, we aim to provide meaningful, inclusive experiences for all students, but budget challenges often stand in the way. Whether it's paying for an accom-

panist, purchasing scores, or planning a tour, financial pressure is constant. In this session, Irene Messoloras offers real-world strategies drawn from her work in choral advancement. Topics include grassroots campaigns, donor tiers, grant writing, and cultivating lasting support. Learn how to build community partnerships, engage students in stewardship, and shift from scarcity to sustainability. Leave empowered with the tools to turn dreams into real opportunities for every voice in your choir.



Irene Messoloras maintains an active career as a conductor, clinician, and adjudicator, leading ensembles in powerful and dynamic performances across the United States, Europe, and Asia. Messoloras serves as director of choral activities at the University of California, Irvine, and conducts the London-based professional choir Meridian. Under her baton, professional, university, and community choirs have performed on some of the world's most prestigious stages. Her ensembles have been featured at ACDA National Conferences in 2021 and 2023, with major appearances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Beijing Concert Hall, as well as national commercial campaigns and professional music video productions. Her ensemble's work is represented by Signum Records and can be heard on all major streaming platforms.

Composing for Your Choir: Writing with Singers in Mind

This session explores effective strategies for composing and arranging music tailored to the unique strengths of your ensemble. Led by choral composers and arrangers MaryAnne Muglia Smith and Kate Crellin, the session will cover techniques for assessing vocal abilities, balancing accessibility with challenge, and crafting engaging textures that enhance ensemble cohesion. Attendees will gain insights into the commissioning process, hear examples of successful custom compositions, and explore ways to adapt existing works for specific groups. Interactive demonstrations will il-



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Interest Sessions

illustrate practical tools to create music that not only suits their singers but also elevates their artistry.



Kate Crellin (she/her) is a vocalist, arranger, composer, and educator. She has BAs in choral music and law from USC and an MM from Queens' College, Cambridge. Crellin is the choir director at Mira Costa High School and Manhattan Beach Middle School, and the director of music ministries at the Manhattan Beach Community Church. Additionally, she is on staff at A Cappella Academy.

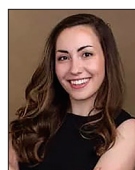


MaryAnne Muglia is an award-winning composer, singer, and educator known for creating music that is both melodically rich and emotionally impactful. Based in Arizona, she blends contemporary and classical influences to craft compositions and arrangements that resonate deeply with performers and audiences alike. Her enduring love for harmony and piano, which first inspired her to compose, remains at the core of her artistry. Muglia's music has been performed by a wide range of ensembles, from high school choirs to professional groups, and her work is celebrated for its ability to foster meaningful connections. She enjoys collaborating with musicians of all levels, crafting music that speaks to the heart while challenging and inspiring its performers.

Creating Artistry from Lead Sheets and Unison Singing

A vast and diverse repertoire exists beyond traditional octavo formats, offering accessible and engaging options for students of all ages. These flexible scores expand programming possibilities and empower students to play an active role in the creative process. This interactive session will explore strategies for elevating unison singing, interpreting lead sheets, and crafting collaborative arrangements from short melodies

that bring music to life in fresh and meaningful ways. Whether you're looking to diversify your programming or encourage student-led musicianship, you'll gain practical techniques for elementary, middle, and high school classrooms—and beyond! Participants will leave with a wealth of repertoire sources as well as innovative ideas for transforming simple charts into expressive, collaborative performances that foster creativity and confidence.



Jess Edelbrock is the director of operations at the Tucson Girls Chorus, overseeing all programming and strategy in partnership with Dr. Marcela Molina. She also directs TGC ensembles spanning grades K–12. Edelbrock earned a BME from Northern Arizona University and an MM in choral conducting from Michigan State University. In 2023 she was appointed adjunct professor of music education at the University of Arizona Fred Fox School of Music. She currently serves on the Arizona Choral Arts Association board and as the youth R&R chair for AZ ACDA. She is a frequent presenter at state conferences and a collaborative pianist for festival choirs, most recently accompanying the National ACDA 5–7 Treble Honor Choir. Under her direction, the TGC Bumblebees performed at the 2022 ACDA National C&YCC Retreat as the youngest choir to be invited to perform at a national ACDA event.



Nicky Manlove (they/them) is the community engagement director for the Tucson Girls Chorus, where they also conduct the Jubilate Choir and Las Estrellas at Prince Elementary, and accompany the Bumblebee Singers and Mariposa Singers. Manlove is a committed advocate of equity-centered and liberatory choral practice, and supports a number of justice-focused choral initiatives nationally. Their research has been featured at national conferences for ACDA, Chorus America, and Early Music America. Manlove is the chair of DEI for Western ACDA, has served on the ACDA National Diversity Initiative

Committee's task force for transgender justice, as well as equity-based committees for Western ACDA, Early Music America, GALA Choruses, and the Presbyterian Association of Musicians. They holds degrees from Seattle University and the University of Arizona.

Due Diligence: First Steps and Ethical Engagement with Native Peoples and Music

Choral educators are often asked to include diverse voices, but “due diligence” is not always part of the equation. In this session, we’ll explore what it means to ethically engage with Native American music. Thomas Goedecke and Alyssa Beltran (Pyramid Lake Paiute) will share how to navigate the complex layers of colonialism, appropriation, and misrepresentation in Native music programming. We’ll also examine how to build authentic relationships with Native communities, ensuring that your programming goes beyond tokenism. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for respecting Native music, creating space for Native voices, and ensuring that your programming benefits Native peoples.

Thomas Goedecke will be a clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 61.

Alyssa Beltran will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 61.

Harmonizing Through Hands: American Sign Language in Choral Music

Discover the power of American Sign Language (ASL) in choral music as a bridge to inclusivity and artistic expression. This session explores the use of ASL interpreters in choral performances, inspired by the presenter’s personal experience as a partially deaf individual. Learn how ASL connects those with hearing disabilities to music, offering a visual and emotional

pathway to understanding. Gain practical strategies for integrating ASL into your choral programs to create a richer, more inclusive experience for audiences and performers alike.



Jacob Boland was born in Khabarovsk, Russia, and is a passionate musician and advocate for accessibility in the arts. Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of eight, Boland faced social challenges, finding refuge in music. In 2021 he developed permanent hearing loss due to COVID-19, which transformed his relationship with sound. Rather than seeing this as a setback, he embraced it as a source of strength, exploring music through vibrations and emotional resonance. He took a break from his studies at California State University, Long Beach, to adapt to his new reality as a hard-of-hearing musician. His compositions challenge traditional notions of music, emphasizing inclusivity and sensory experiences. As a conductor, he fosters collaboration and innovation, mentoring fellow musicians with disabilities. Boland aims to create a more inclusive music industry.

Making Admin Your Biggest Choir Fan

Building strong relationships with administrators is essential for choral directors navigating K–12 and higher education. This interactive session provides key strategies, practical “dos and don’ts,” and expert advice on advocating for programs, securing resources, and achieving tenure—all while avoiding unnecessary conflict. Led by experienced administrators who are also choral directors, this discussion offers real-world insights on working within institutional systems. Attendees can submit questions (anonymously, if preferred) for live, on-the-spot answers from the panel. The session aims to equip choral directors with the tools needed to foster productive administrator relationships, advocate effectively, and create sustainable, thriving programs for their students.



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Interest Sessions



Kellori Dower is the dean of visual and performing arts at Cypress College in Cypress, California. She was the director of two award-winning high school choral music programs prior to serving as director of choral activities at the collegiate level. Past appointments have also included high school principal, asst. principal, and district arts administrator. She is a past recipient of the Outstanding Music Educator Award from the California MEA. Dower is published through Hal Leonard and continues to conduct honor choirs nationally. She currently serves as the director of DEIAB for the California Choral Directors Association and is the immediate past president of NCCO.



Iris S. Levine, a nationally recognized choral conductor, is the founder and artistic director of VOX Femina Los Angeles, LA's premier women's chorus. Under her leadership, VOX Femina has gained national prominence, performing at ACDA and Chorus America conferences and GALA Chorus events. Levine is faculty emerita at Cal Poly Pomona, where she served as director of choral activities, dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, interim dean of the College of Education and Integrative Studies, and provost and vice president for academic affairs. Levine holds a DMA from USC and an MM in choral conducting from Temple University. A leader in ACDA, she has served as state, regional, and national R&R chair for women's choruses.



Elise Hepworth is the dean of the College of Arts, Communication, and Social Sciences at Northwest Missouri State University. Before her appointment, she spent a decade at Missouri Western State University as a tenured professor, leading the choral music program and later serving as assistant vice president and vice provost for academic affairs. She previously taught at Wayne State College in Nebraska. Hepworth holds degrees from Northwest Missouri State University (BME), UMKC Conservatory (MME), the

University of Mississippi (DA), and the New Zealand School of Music (G.Dip.). She is nationally certified in Orff Schulwerk and Zoltán Kodály pedagogies and remains an active guest conductor, clinician, and vocalist throughout the Midwest. She resides in Saint Joseph, Missouri, with her husband, Matt, and their three cats.

(re)sounding Joy:

Best Choral Practices for Turbulent Times

Utilizing trauma-informed pedagogy and group-cohesion practices, this session addresses the unique challenges choral leaders face in these unprecedented times. By examining current (and past) choral practices, attendees will gain strategies to help reframe or replace potentially triggering or trauma-centered music. Additionally, we will explore current challenges and common shortcomings of DEI work in choral spaces. This session will conclude with a comprehensive list of accessible repertoire and resources that will help participants shift their choral practices and create more welcoming, safe, and joy-centered choral spaces.



Alyssa J. Cossey is a conductor, singer, educator, and scholar. She is a contributing author for a new textbook on women composers (edited by Hilary Apfelstadt), an inaugural member of mirabai, and is currently serving as interim director of choral activities at Wellesley College. Before relocating to the East Coast, she was an assistant professor of choral music at the University of Arizona. Prior to that, she taught both middle and high school choir in Southern California for nearly a decade. Cossey holds degrees from Michigan State University; California State University, Fullerton; and California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

Sing with Us: Inside an Accessible Choral Rehearsal

What does an accessible choir actually sound like? In this immersive session, participants will rehearse alongside students from an inclusive choral program to experience firsthand the strategies that make inclusive rehearsals work. Through warmups, rehearsal activities, and accessible tools like AAC devices and visual schedules, attendees will participate in a real rehearsal built for access and belonging. A guided debrief will follow, offering practical takeaways and real-world strategies to adapt in your own classroom. This is not a performance; it's a shared rehearsal experience rooted in the belief that all singers deserve access to community and musical growth.



Brandon Ellsworth (he/they) is a choral director, adaptive music educator, and advocate for inclusion in music education. He teaches choir and adaptive general music at North Salinas High School, where he explores inclusive teaching practices through both traditional and adaptive ensemble settings. His work focuses on rehearsal design through Universal Design for Learning and the implementation of practical accommodations in school choral settings. His adaptive curriculum earned recognition with the 2025 CMEA Innovations in Music Education Award. He holds a BME from Westminster Choir College and is pursuing an MME (autism concentration) at Boston Conservatory at Berklee. He is also the founder and director of SingAble, an accessible community choir based in San Jose, CA.

CCM SUMMER CHORAL INTENSIVE

Declared "one of this country's leading conservatories" by the *New York Times*, UC's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) offers an exceptional summer choral intensive program.

CHORAL CONDUCTING WORKSHOP

July 13-18, 2026

**Early bird registration due May 1
Registration deadline June 15**

Offers a focused immersion in new pedagogies, literature and performance practice.

- Receive coaching on body mapping, voice and choral pedagogy
- Explore a wide range of historic and modern repertoire
- Gain exposure to the CCM International Conducting program and performances
- No audition required

INTERNATIONAL CONDUCTING TRAINING PROGRAM

July 11-18, 2026

Application deadline April 4

Offers advanced training for conductors who seek to elevate their professional experience with guidance from CCM's renowned faculty.

- Refine your gesture, approach and score analysis
- Rehearse and conduct a professional chorus and orchestra
- Prepare masterworks for performances
- Audition required

LEARN FROM RENOWNED FACULTY:



MARIE BUCOY-CALAVAN, DMA
Artistic Director,
Choral Arts Society
of Washington



BRETT SCOTT, DMA
Professor of
Ensembles and
Conducting at CCM

Professional Development contract hours documentation is available upon completion of the Choral Intensive. **Apply online at ccm.uc.edu/summer-choral-conducting**

University of
CINCINNATI | **CCM**



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Interest Sessions

Transformative Vocal Techniques for Your Choirs: Tested, Tried, and True

A great educator is constantly searching for ways to improve their choral rehearsals. This session provides group vocal technique methods to build your choir's sound, strengthen individual singers, and achieve better choral tone and artistry. Designed for directors from elementary to high school, key learning outcomes include equipping directors with hands-on techniques for posture, breathing, support, resonance, and articulation. Participants will actively work on problem solving the many common issues within the rehearsal, experiencing creative teaching strategies used to increase focus and energy. This clinic is highly practical; participants will come away with new, useful techniques that can immediately be applied in their choral rehearsals.



Christine Bass has fifty years of teaching experience. She was former director of Temple University Men's and Women's Choruses and assistant professor of music education, previously DCA at Cherry Hill West High School, where her program grew from 60 to over 320 students in 7 choirs. Her ensembles have performed at multiple ACDA national conferences, MENC, and ACDA Eastern conferences. Bass's men's a cappella group won three consecutive national championships for Best of High School A Cappella. Bass has conducted numerous all-state honors choirs, including the 2009 ACDA National HS Honor Choir. Her educational products and her book are published by Hal Leonard: *Vocal Transformation*, *Where the Boys Are: Recruiting, Engaging, and Maintaining Tenors and Bases*, and *Front-Loading Your Choral Rehearsal: Constructing for Success*.

The Why and How of Student Leadership Programs

Strong student leadership can transform your ensembles, reduce director workload, and foster a positive, student-driven culture. This session explores the practical "nuts and bolts" for developing a leadership team that builds trust, accountability, and engagement while preventing cliques, disengagement, negativity, and retention issues. Learn the benefits of selecting vs. electing leaders, explore different leadership structures, and discover practical strategies for goal setting, retreats, and year-long leadership development. Whether you're refining an existing leadership program or starting from scratch, you'll gain actionable steps to empower student leaders and elevate your program's success.



Bruce Rockwell is the choir director at College Park High School in Pleasant Hill, California. He has taught choir, piano, and guitar at College Park for fifteen years. Rockwell received his MM in composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and his BM from the University of California at Santa Cruz. He has written and presented a number of articles and conference sessions on various topics of interest to music educators.

Vocal Pedagogy for Choirs: Keep the Magic, Lose the Myth

Better singers make better choirs. We know this, but so often it's hard to look beyond the notes and rhythms in the little time we have. Some conductors are highly trained singers and some are not, but all conductors face the same challenge of using phrases that mean something to us but, perhaps, mean nothing to our choirs. Voice teaching is both an art and a science, but finding ways to incorporate more science/reality-based pedagogy into the choral rehearsal will only make the

choir sound better and promote healthier singers. This session will examine the basic elements of singing (e.g., posture, breathing, phonation, resonance, and diction/articulation) to review what is actually happening, what we can actually feel, and give conductors strategies to convey this information to the choir within warmups, voice building, and rehearsals.



Aaron Humble has been described as remarkably virtuosic by the *Columbus Republic* and transcendent by the *Daytona Beach News Journal*. He is a Grammy-nominated tenor and conductor who has enjoyed solo appearances with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Columbus Philharmonic, and the Boston Pops with chamber music appearances at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, the Library of Congress, Wolf Trap, and the Chautauqua Institution. During his tenure with Cantus, Humble sang nearly one thousand concerts and recorded ten albums with one of the nation's premier vocal ensembles. He continues to sing with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Tucson's Grammy-nominated True Concord, and Bach Collegium San Diego. He serves as an assistant professor of music in vocal and choral music at CSU San Marcos, conducts the Chancel Choir at Foothills United Methodist Church, and leads the Zimriyah Chorale at Congregation Beth Israel in San Diego.

Vocal Tone and Technique for Middle School Singers

This session will provide a comprehensive approach to developing vocal technique for choral singers focusing on warm-ups, effective techniques, and metacognitive strategies to help students assess their own vocal progress. Attendees will learn methods to create a solid foundation for healthy, beautiful singing while emphasizing the importance of individual vocal technique. Many young singers struggle to view themselves as vocalists and often lack the skills needed for proper technique and healthy vocal habits. This session will guide educators in helping students balance ensemble

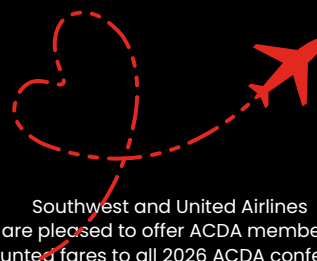
work with individual vocal growth. Key elements such as posture, breath support, resonance, and vocal placement will be explored, with practical exercises to incorporate into daily practice.



Athena Mertes is the director of choirs at Thurman White Academy of the Performing Arts in Henderson, Nevada. A graduate of UNLV with a master's in vocal performance and a bachelor's in music education, Mertes established the Choir Magnet Program at Thurman White Academy in 2016. She developed a curriculum offering choral and vocal performance classes for approximately four hundred students. Her Advanced Choir performed at the 2025 National ACDA Conference and the 2024 Western ACDA Region Conference. In 2020 she received the Teacher of the Year Award from Magnet Schools of America. Mertes, now in her fourteenth year teaching middle school choir, is a national board-certified teacher passionate about helping students and educators unlock the true potential of middle school singers.

ACDA 2026 REGION CONFERENCES

**Your Region Conference is closer than you think—
and now it's even more affordable!**



Southwest and United Airlines
are pleased to offer ACDA members
discounted fares to all 2026 ACDA conferences.



Details at
acda.org/2026-acda-conference-travel-discounts



2026 ACDA Western Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

4th-8th Grade Youth Unchanged Voices



Liana Salinas is a dynamic music educator and entrepreneur based in Miami, Florida. She serves as the artistic director of the Miami Children's Chorus, an organization she has been a part of for

twenty-six years. Having grown up in the chorus, she knows firsthand the power of choral singing and the beautiful community it fosters. In 2023 she proudly shared this message on national television during her interviews on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*. Under her leadership, MCC has built upon its sixty-year legacy with a fresh approach that embraces contemporary styles and skills such as jazz and songwriting. Salinas is also the CEO and founder of My Music Match, a company connecting students with private music teachers.

9th-12th Grade SSAA



Lynnel Joy Jenkins is artistic director of Westrick Music Academy, music director of Princeton Girlchoir, and a choral teacher in the Hopewell Valley Regional School District, New Jersey. Jenkins has

varied conducting and teaching experience from elementary to collegiate levels, including positions at the American Boychoir, Westminster Choir College, and the Haverford School. She has conducted choirs, lectured worldwide, and led several all-state choirs. She conducted the eighth- through tenth-grade National Treble Honor Choir at the 2025 ACDA National Conference. She earned degrees from Westminster Choir College (BA), Temple University (MM), and the University of Arizona (DMA), and received the Elaine Brown Conducting Award from both institutions.

7th-9th Grade SATB



Judith Herrington is the founder and artistic director of Tacoma Youth Chorus and conductor of the Treble Choir, Chorale and Chamber Choir. Recently retired from forty-four years of teaching

and conducting at Charles Wright Academy, she was the recipient of the Inspirational Faculty Award and Murray Foundation Chair for Teaching Excellence. A graduate of the University of Oregon, Herrington earned her MME from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Having served in several leadership positions for the WA-ACDA, she is the 2011 recipient of its Leadership and Service Award, and was recently inducted into the Washington State MEA Hall of Fame. A noted composer and arranger, she has published through Pavane Publishing, Hal Leonard Publishing, and Colla Voce Publishing. She also edits two choral series for Pavane Publishing.

10th-12th Grade SATB



Jason Max Ferdinand is an inspirational musician, leader, and teaching mentor whose gifts are sought after by choirs and orchestras worldwide. Since 2022 he has served as the director of choral activities

at the University of Maryland, having spent the preceding fourteen years as professor at Oakwood University, conducting the renowned Aeolians of Oakwood University. He is the founding artistic director of the Jason Max Ferdinand Singers. In 2023 they performed at the ACDA National Conference in Cincinnati, which included a surprise appearance from Jacob Collier. This followed their appearance on *Saturday Night Live* with Coldplay and Jacob Collier. They made their debut at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, London, in 2024. His GIA publications include *Teaching with Heart: Tools for Addressing Societal Challenges Through Music*, and the *Jason Max Ferdinand Choral Series*.

Let your music be heard!



Whether you want to sing in the **great cathedrals of Europe**, perform in **friendly village churches**, or make music **under the stars in an open-air stage**, we are here to help **share your talent with the world**.

witte Performance Tours

616.957.8113
performances@wittetravel.com
3250 28th St SE Grand Rapids



CHORAL JOURNAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Book Reviews	Dennis Malfatti	dm155@evansville.edu
Choral Reviews	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
Lift Every Voice	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
On the Voice	Matthew Hoch	mrh0032@auburn.edu
Recorded Sound Reviews	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
Rehearsal Breaks	Jennifer Rodgers	rodgersj@iastate.edu
Research Report	Elizabeth Hearn Elizabeth Cassidy Parker	ehearn@olemiss.edu eparker@temple.edu
Student Times	Micah Bland	mbland1613@gmail.com

For feature article submissions, contact the editor, Amanda Bumgarner, at <abumgarner@acda.org>.
View full submission guidelines at acda.org

Book and music publishers should send books, octavos, and discs for review to:
Choral Journal, Attn: Amanda Bumgarner, P.O. Box 1705, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73101-1705

OTHER ACDA PUBLICATIONS CONTACT INFORMATION

ChorTeach	Amanda Bumgarner	chorteach@acda.org
International Journal of Research in Choral Singing	Bryan Nichols	bnichols@psu.edu

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Academic Choir Apparel	49	National Concerts	41
ACFEA Tour Consultants	103	National Lutheran Choir	148
Alfred Music	16	Oregon Catholic Press	8, 132
Band app	128	Perform International	98
Bob Rogers Travel	77	PJR Music	136
Choirs of America	169	Presbyterian Association of Musicians	106
Chorus America	172	Schmidt Vocal Arts	46
Creative Arts Collective at Belmont University	45	Texas State University - San Marcos	91
Eastern Mennonite University	87	The October Project	175
GoRascal	63	Troy University College of Arts & Humanities	145
Hal Leonard	119	University of Cincinnati	191
KI Concerts	70	University of Miami	12
La Voz Music Publishing	BC	Westminster Choir College of Rider University	25
Lawrence University	94	Witte Performance Tours	195
MidAmerica Productions	IFC, 69	Yale Institute of Sacred Music	IBC
Musicfolder.com	33, 107	Young People's Chorus National	59



Photos by Randy Tunnell

Yale Institute of Sacred Music and
Yale School of Music

Welcomes

Grete Pedersen

Professor in the Practice of Choral
Conducting and Principal Conductor of
the Yale Schola Cantorum



Joining

FELICIA BARBER

Yale Camerata

JEFFREY DOUMA

Yale Glee Club and Choral Artists

MASAAKI SUZUKI

Yale Schola Cantorum,
principal guest conductor

Degrees offered

Master of Music

Master of Music Arts

Doctor of Music Arts



Yale

American Choral Directors Association
P.O. Box 1705
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73101-1705
<www.acda.org>



LA VOZ

MUSIC PUBLISHING

A new home for
Latin American
choral music



Scan the QR code or visit
lavozmusicpublishing.com
to learn more