

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

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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

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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



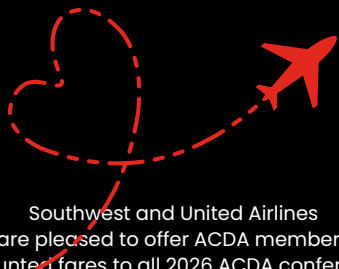
The Ithaca College Treble Chorale is a dynamic and inclusive ensemble dedicated to exploring and performing a diverse array of choral music for treble voices. Comprising undergraduate students from across the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance—as well as other academic disciplines—the chorus embraces 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*.

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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 CONCORA, 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.



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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?

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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.

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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

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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.

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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.

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.

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.

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