



Conference Overview



Bill Campbell



Steven Zielke

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

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

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

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

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

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

Northwestern Region Conference Registration Information

Until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

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

January 16 - March 7

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

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

Register at acda.org/region-conferences

Headliner Concert/Opening Night Concert

Headliner Concert

All of Us: *Considering Matthew Shepherd*

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

Seattle University Chorale, Chamber Singers, and University Singers



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

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

University of Washington Chamber Singers



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

University of Washington Chorale



Giselle Wyers is the Donald E. Petersen Endowed Professor of Choral Music at the University of Washington, where she conducts the award-winning University Chorale and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in choral conducting and music education. Wyers is the newly appointed director of Concord Chamber Choir, an adult community chorus within the Columbia Choirs community. Her professional project choir, Solaris Vocal Ensemble, specializes in the performance of contemporary American choral literature. Wyers has guest conducted high school honor choirs and all-state choruses around the country, and she is a leading national figure in the application of Laban movement theory for conductors. Her choral works are published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing Company as part of the “Giselle Wyers Choral Series,” as well as with MusicSpoke and Hildegard Publishing.

Opening Night Concert

Northwest Sings

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



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

Headliner Concert/Opening Night Concert

Participating Choirs

University of Montana
Chamber Chorale
Conducted by Stevie J. Hirner

Eastern Washington University
Symphonic Choir
Conducted by Kristina Ploeger-Hekmatpanah

University of Portland
Singers
Conducted by David De Lyser

Shoreline Community College
Chamber Chorale
Conducted by Anjali Chudasama

Oregon State University
Chamber Choir
Conducted by Steven Zielke

Boise State University
Meistersingers
Conducted by Richard Hutton

Pacific Lutheran University
University Chorale
Conducted by Raul Dominguez

Special Events

Music in Worship Service

Break Forth, Sing Together!

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



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

Encounter Choirs

Force of Nature: Singing and Resistance in the Baltic Region

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

Māgi Ensemble



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

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



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

Making Sense of the Squiggles: Building Blocks to Music Literacy

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

Encounter Choirs

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

Seattle Children's Chorus Intermezzo



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

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



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

Student Conducting Masterclass

Graduate and Undergraduate

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

Demonstration Choir

University of Montana Chamber Chorale

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



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



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

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Performing Choirs

Bellevue High School Bellairs



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



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

BlueStreet Voices



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



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

Evergreen Ensemble



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



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

Gonzaga University Concert Choir



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



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

Performing Choirs

Great Falls High School Delphian Choir



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



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

In Medio



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



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

Lake Oswego High School A Cappella Choir



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



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

Les Bois Junior High School Improv



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



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

Performing Choirs

Northwest Choirs Northwest Boychoir



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



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

Pioneer Middle School Advanced Treble Choir



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



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

Portland State University Chamber Choir



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



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

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

Seattle Pro Musica Orpheon



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



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

Performing Choirs

Steilacoom High School Advanced Treble Choir



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



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

West Salem High School Choir of the Titans



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



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

Whitworth University The Whitworth Choir



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

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



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



2026 ACDA Northwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

A Cornucopia of Carnatic Curriculum

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

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



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

Interest Sessions

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

A Voice from the Piano: Conductor-Pianist Collaboration

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



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

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

An Ethic of Care in Choral Music Education

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



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

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

Appropriation or Collaboration? Programming World Music

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

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

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

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Culturally Responsive Music Programming for Secondary Choirs

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



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

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

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

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

Enhancing Rehearsals and Performances Through Movement

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



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

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

From Chaos to Choir: Building a Program that Works

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



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

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

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

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

How to Jazz When You’ve Never Jazzed Before

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



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



Interest Sessions

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

Middle School Choral Students: How Do You Motivate Them?

When middle school students are motivated, they are unstoppable. How do you channel their energy so that you can guide them on a musical journey? Refresh your choral director toolkit by exploring tips and ideas from various master choral music educators who teach adolescent singers. Be ready to move and sing!



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

MusicSpoke Reading Session

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



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

One Voice: Vocal Pedagogy Ideas for Solo and Choral Singing

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

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



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

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



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

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

Secondary Trauma Stress and the Choral Director

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



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

Step Up Your Game: Revitalize the Community in Your Classroom

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

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



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



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

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

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

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



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



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

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



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

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

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

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

Spotlight Reading Sessions

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

Artistry Without Compromise: Accessible Repertoire for K-12 Choirs

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

Creating Community with Song

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

Creating New Opportunities for Tenor/Bass Singers

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

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

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

The Frugal Conductor's Survival Guide

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

Rooted and Reaching: Repertoire for Growing Choirs

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

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

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

Repertoire & Resources for Cross-Cultural Collaborations

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

Untried Yet True:

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

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



2026 ACDA Northwestern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

4th-7th Grade Children and Community Youth



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

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

6th - 8th Grade Middle School



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

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



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9-10 Grade SATB



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

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

11th-12th Grade Soprano-Alto



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

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

9th-12th Grade Jazz



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

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

11th-12th Grade Tenor-Bass



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

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