



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Conference Overview



Jonathan Owen

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

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

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

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

the field.

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

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

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

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

Southwestern Region Conference Registration Information

until January 15 at 11:59 PM CST

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

January 16 - March 7

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

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

Register at acda.org/region-conferences



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Headliner/Opening Night Concert

Headliner

APOLLO5



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

Welcome to Albuquerque Concert

University of New Mexico Concert Choir

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



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



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

Coro Lux



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



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

Opening Night Reception Open to All Attendees

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



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Special Events

Hot Air Balloon Rides (Wednesday 6:30am)

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

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

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



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Special Events

APOLLO5 Interest Session

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

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

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



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

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Susan Brumfield Interest Session

Kodály-Inspired Teaching
in the Choral Classroom

Part 1

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

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

Part 2

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

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

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



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

The West Texas Children's Chorus



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



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Special Events

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

Coreen Duffy Interest Session

Sh'ma: Global Jewish Choral Music

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



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

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

University of Colorado-Boulder Chamber Singers



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

Special Session - Live Podcast

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

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



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



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

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



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



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



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Special Events

Big Sing (Friday)

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

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

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

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

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A familiar tune coupled with a narrative moment to bring home its message of community, empathy, and the ideal of selfless patriotism.

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Oranges - TBarB or SSA, solo, and piano

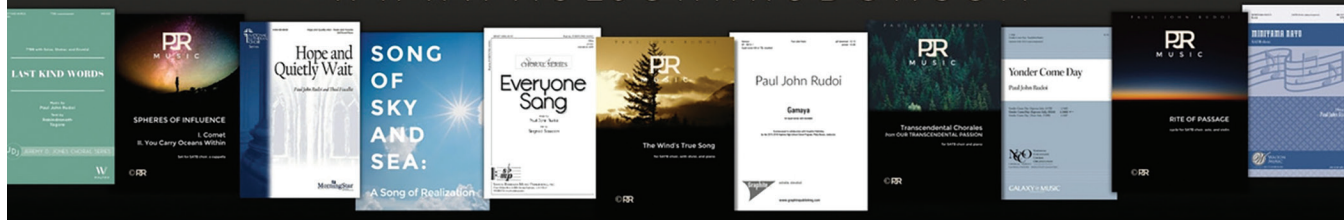
Commissioned for the 2021-2022 TTBB MN All State Choir, Paul's *Oranges* is a testament to young love, focusing on the nostalgia of Gary Solo's famous poem.

Love Never Ends - Choral Set for SATB choir, violin, and piano

Continuing on the success of *Hope and Quietly Wait*, Paul adapts three more of Thad's iconic works into a choral set focusing on the universal nature of love.



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ququerque artisans who will showcase their work. Add to that a delicious dinner, lively atmosphere, and the joy of connecting with colleagues from across the region, and you'll have an experience that truly embodies the spirit of our New Horizons conference. Be sure to reserve your place when you register for the conference. Tickets are just \$10 per person to reserve your seat (dinner courtesy of SWACDA). Don't miss this special night of music, culture, and community!

Horizons in Higher Education Fairs

As part of the 2026 New Horizons Conference in Albuquerque, SWACDA will host two distinct Horizons in Higher Education Fairs—one for undergraduate programs and one for graduate programs. These



The SWACDA 2026 Conference launches with a powerful opening event, New Horizons Immersion Day, which kicks off at 9:30am on Wednesday, March 4. This full day of learning features sessions presented by our Repertoire & Resources chairs, representing every R&R area across the Southwest Region. These expert leaders will share practical strategies, fresh repertoire, and innovative ideas designed to strengthen and inspire your work in rehearsal rooms, classrooms, and concert halls.

Adding to the excitement, Immersion Day also includes presentations from all seven honor choir clinicians, offering attendees a rare opportunity to learn directly from some of the finest conductors in the profession. Their artistry, insight, and experience will provide invaluable perspectives on rehearsal techniques, artistry, and the future of choral music. Where else can

events provide universities, colleges, and graduate schools a meaningful opportunity to connect directly with prospective students and future choral leaders from across the Southwestern Region. By hosting separate fairs, SWACDA aims to foster intentional conversations, build relationships between institutions and attendees, and highlight the diverse educational pathways available in our choral community.

New Horizons President's Reception

Following the President's Concert on Friday evening, all conference attendees are invited to the New Horizons President's Reception—a celebration of the presenters, performers, participants, and attendees who make the conference shine. Join us as we honor the creativity, collaboration, and community that truly embody the spirit of New Horizons.

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New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

you learn from such a breadth of true experts in a single day? Make plans to arrive early and experience the best of New Horizons from the very beginning.

R&R Areas

Children and Youth Choirs

From Idea to Premiere: Commissioning Choral Music at Any Level

Commissioning a new piece of music can feel intimidating, especially for those navigating it for the first time. This session breaks down the process with



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insights from both composers who write commissioned works (including Kyle Pederson) and directors of all levels who have led successful commissions. We will explore timelines, communication tips, collaborative best practices, and how to participate in consortiums or co-commissions if your budget is tight. Attendees will walk away with practical tools, clear expectations, and the confidence to bring new music into the world.



Nathan Wubbena holds a BME from the University of Northern Colorado and an MME with a conducting specialization from Colorado State University. He has taught and conducted ensembles for all ages across Colorado, specializing in choral, musical theater, and contemporary genres. Wubbena is artistic director of the Boulder Children's Chorale and Longmont Chorale and is founder and board president of Ascent Vocals. A frequent guest clinician and conductor, he has led honor choirs statewide and adjudicates at ACDA festivals. He is chair emeritus of the Colorado middle all-state choir board and received CMEA's Outstanding Young Music Educator Award in 2015. He lives in Longmont with his family and is committed to making music accessible to all, fostering joy, collaboration, and community through singing.

College and University Choirs/ World Musics and Cultures

Navigating Cultural Appropriation in Choral Music

This session will explore the complexities of cultural appropriation in choral music, focusing on the challenges of borrowing and performing music across cultures. Using the analogy of the British Museum's display of an ancient Babylonian vase, we'll discuss how cultural ownership can be ambiguous for intangible forms like music. Musicians often balance the sharing of traditions with respecting their cultural significance. From

performing translated choral works to arranging folk songs, questions arise about cultural engagement. Is it acceptable to perform religious music outside its context? Can anyone arrange African American spirituals? This session encourages reflection on these issues and invites a conversation about the ethical responsibilities of musicians navigating cultural boundaries.



Eduardo Garcia-Novelli is an Argentinian American conductor and teacher and the director of choral studies at the University of Kansas. He earned two undergraduate degrees from state conservatories in Argentina, an MM from Westminster Choir College, and a DMA from the University of Houston. His choirs have performed at state, national, and international events, including TMEA, NCCO, WMEA, WCDA, KMEA, the International Choral Festival in Panama, and multiple tours in Europe and South America. He made his Carnegie Hall conducting debut in 2011 and returned in 2015 and 2017. García-Novelli has been a guest conductor, lecturer, and clinician with engagements in the US, Europe, China and South America. His ensembles have won first prizes at international competitions. He has served on the boards of WCDA, NCACDA, and as a national officer for NCCO.



Rayvon T. J. Moore, a Southern California native, is assistant professor of music and director of choral studies at Friends University and artistic director of the Wichita Chamber Chorale. An acclaimed conductor and baritone, he leads Friends's internationally recognized Singing Quakers, performing domestically and in Spain and Portugal. Moore has been a national finalist for the American Prize Dale Warland Choral Conducting Award and was recognized in 2023 by the *Wichita Business Journal's* 40 Under 40. He has guest-conducted and served as chorus master with Wichita Grand Opera, Forum Theatre, and Crown Arts Collaborative. Moore holds degrees from USC, CSU Fullerton, and Eastman School of Music, and specializes in conducting gesture and musical interpretation.

Community Choirs

**State of the States:
A Conversation with Community Choir
Leaders from Every State in Our Region**

Join Andy Waggoner, SWACDA R&R chair for community choirs, and a representative from each state in our region for this collaborative session. We are going to pack so much information into this fifty-minute session: programming ideas, auditioning, budget management, chorus membership and database management, promotion, and much more! In addition, participants will submit information ahead of time so that attendees can have packets of information to take home. Community choirs are at the heart of ACDA's lifelong singing commitment. Whether you've been on the podium for decades or just getting ready to start your first appointment, we hope you will join us as we all learn and share together.



Andy Waggoner was appointed artistic director of the St. Louis County Community Chorus in 2016. The chorus has an active membership of two hundred singers from across the St. Louis area. In addition, he serves as director of worship arts at Webster Hills UMC in St. Louis, Missouri. He served Missouri ACDA as representative for community choirs and music in worship and currently serves in various capacities, mainly in welcoming new members and special events. Waggoner has prepared choruses and conducted residencies in London, Dublin, New York City, Washington DC, and festivals and tours throughout the Midwest. He has had the honor of working with many composers on commissions and premieres, most notably two new works by Mark Hayes at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

Junior High/Middle School Choirs

Voices in Transition

The session will provide choral voicing options to meet the needs of both the changing transgender voice and those of cis-gender singers. As choir directors are faced with more students who identify as transgender, the need to be able to choose literature that meets those needs is imperative. In addition to existing voicings, options for adapting scores with a new "flex" part using guidelines created by Stevie J. Hirner will be included. The key learning outcomes include building awareness of the needs of singers going through both a voice change and a life change, awareness of terms and categories of singers, placement within the ensemble, voice testing, and part creation.

Roger Emerson will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 27.

Senior High School Choirs

**Southwest Rising:
A Reading Session Featuring Emerging Composers**

This reading session will highlight choral repertoire written by emerging composers from the Southwestern ACDA Region. Featuring a diverse selection of original works and arrangements for all levels of mixed choirs, the session will showcase the creative and unique perspectives of composers who are currently shaping the future of choral music in our region. Whether you're seeking innovative programming ideas or more opportunities to support new artists, this session offers an opportunity to engage with works that reflect the cultural and artistic diversity of composers from the Southwest.



Spencer Wiley earned a BME from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and an MME at Texas State University while remaining active in Austin-area choral pro-



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grams. He previously taught at Henry Middle School in Cedar Park, Texas, where he assisted the Varsity Treble Choir for their 2008 TMEA performance. In 2010 he joined Rouse High School as assistant choir director, earning multiple first-division ratings, and became head director at Leander High School in 2014, where he launched the school's IB music program, AP Music Theory course, and show choir. Wiley is currently head director at Harker Heights High School, where his choirs perform a range of repertoire and have earned recognition at UIL contests, contemporary a cappella competitions, and were invited to perform for TMEA in 2024. Wiley is a frequent UIL adjudicator and TMEA clinician.

Show Choirs

From Score to Stage: Making Magic Without Breaking the Bank

Discover how to create dynamic, crowd-pleasing show choir performances without blowing your budget. This session dives into effective communication strategies with arrangers, explores semi-custom and budget-friendly arrangement options, and shares practical tips for maximizing impact with limited resources. Whether you're a seasoned director or just starting out, you'll leave with tools, templates, and inspiration to build shows that shine—creatively and cost effectively.



Michael Shimp is a respected educator and conductor with over seventeen years of experience teaching choral music. He earned a bachelor's of vocal performance from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and studied in the Tulsa Opera Young Artist Program and Inspiration Point in Eureka Springs, AR. Shimp currently teaches at Jenks High School and previously taught in Owasso from 2007 to 2018. His choirs have earned recognition at state conventions,

including honor group selections at Oklahoma MEA in 2014 and 2022. He has served in leadership roles such as OkCDA vocal jazz all-state chair, Oklahoma Children's all-state choir cochair, and Region R coordinator. Shimp is an active clinician, adjudicator, and quad chair for Oklahoma Music Educators Northeast All-State Region.

Soprano-Alto Choirs

Beyond the "Blend": Empowering Treble Singers Through Vocal Technique, Repertoire, and Identity

This session explores the unique challenges and immense potential of treble ensembles at all levels. Participants will leave with practical rehearsal strategies, fresh repertoire ideas, and vocal technique tools tailored specifically for treble voices. We will also examine how to develop a strong ensemble identity and shift away from outdated stereotypes that often limit what treble choirs are expected to achieve.



Tanner Oglesby is director of choirs for the Bryant School District, leading the secondary choral program, teaching high school choir, and collaborating with administrators to advance fine arts. Under his direction, students have achieved high ranks in state and national honor choirs, and his ensembles have earned multiple best in class awards at the Arkansas State Choral Festival. Bryant choirs have performed at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City (2022) and Cadogan Hall in London (2023), with a European tour planned for 2027. Oglesby holds a BME from Henderson State University, an MME from Arkansas State University, and an MM from Western Illinois University.

Student Activities

Meaningful Relationships, Meaningful Work, Meaningful Life

An invitation to reflect on one's personal values and reimagine how balance might be possible in the midst of our fast-paced daily lives.



Charles Robinson is professor of choral music and music education at the University of Missouri–Kansas City Conservatory. He conducts the Conservatory Concert Choir and teaches a broad range

of courses in choral methods and performance at both undergraduate and graduate levels. A frequent clinician and workshop presenter, Robinson has led honor choirs across the United States. His research interests include choral performance evaluation, conducting, music preference, and inclusive practices in choral settings. He has held leadership roles in the Southwestern Region and served as president of the Missouri Choral Directors Association. Robinson holds degrees from The Florida State University (BME, PhD) and California State University–Long Beach (MM) and began his career teaching middle and high school choirs in Florida.

Tenor-Bass Choirs

Fostering Community in the Tenor-Bass Choir

From his twenty-six years conducting the Baylor University Men's Choir (BUMC), Randall Bradley will explore ways to build a culture of trust, inclusion, vulnerability, and communal connection in the tenor/bass choir. These strategies are also applicable to all choral groups. What best practices build traditions, foster collaborative rehearsals, and create vulnerable spaces? He will also share how the BUMC has maximized social media to enhance its reach and influence.



Randall Bradley is dedicated to the sense of community that emerges when people sing together. He has directed the Baylor University Men's Choir since 2000 and previously led Oklahoma Baptist University's Bison Glee Club. At Baylor, he is the Ben H. Williams Professor of Music, director of the Church Music Program and the Center for Christian Music Studies. A longtime ACDA leader, he has served as Oklahoma president-elect and Southwestern Region R&R chair for male choruses. His ensembles are recognized for fostering inclusion, trust, and musical excellence, performing at ACDA, state, and denominational events. A church musician since 1978 and author of widely used texts, Bradley shapes generations of choral leaders.

Two-Year Collegiate Choirs

The Future is Vocal: Reimagining Choral Rehearsal Culture

As we step into a new era of choral music making, our rehearsal rooms must evolve along with our singers. This session explores how to create a rehearsal culture that prioritizes wellness, autonomy, collaboration, and joy. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies to shift from a traditional, top-down model of rehearsal toward one that empowers students, fosters belonging, and strengthens musical outcomes. Whether you are in a high school, collegiate, church, or community setting, come discover new approaches that reflect the changing needs of today's singers and tomorrow's leaders.



Tatiana Taylor, a Northwest Arkansas native, is a conductor, music educator, pianist, and soprano. She serves as director of choirs and vocal music at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, where she directs the Concert Choir and Chamber Singers and teaches courses in sight singing and ear training, music appreciation, and applied voice. Taylor has been recognized with the Dobson Excellence in Teaching Award



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

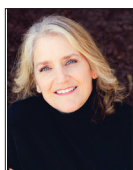
New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

(2020–2021), the Excellence in Education Award from the Miami Chamber of Commerce, and the Dobson Distinguished Service Award (2018–2019). She creates collaborative projects and shares her love of world music with students and the community. Taylor earned her DMA in choral music from the University of Southern California, her MM in choral conducting from the University of Oklahoma, and her BM from Rhodes College.

Vocal Jazz

Strengthen Community Through Tonal Memory

Tonal memory can be a useful tool to strengthen your choir's cohesiveness as a confident community. It builds independent musicians and empowers student leadership. Students' intonation and ability to have a "hearing eye" will easily increase, and valuable rehearsal and performance time will be saved.



Beth Enloe Fritz holds degrees in music education, music therapy, psychology, and an MM in jazz with an emphasis in vocal jazz arranging. She taught for thirty-one years across K–12, including general music, AP Music Theory, band, choral music, and vocal jazz. Under her direction, the FZWHS Jazz & Madrigal Ensembles performed at the MMEA State Conference (2008, 2019); and the 2019 J&M received the 43rd Annual Student *DownBeat* Award for Outstanding Performance and Lead Soloist. She has led numerous sessions and served in multiple R&R chair roles in MMEA and MCDA, and she coordinated the MO all-state vocal jazz ensemble for nine years. She currently works as a clinician, adjudicator, substitute teacher, and assistant director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's IN UNISON Chorus.

Honor Choir Conductor Sessions

4–6 Grade Treble

Evolving Harmony: Crafting a Purposeful Career in Choral Music

This session invites choral music educators to create a career pathway as dynamic and responsive as their art. We will explore how to intentionally define success beyond traditional metrics, embracing personal and professional pivots that honor evolving family and life responsibilities. Learn strategies for setting effective boundaries, navigating the complexities of grief and loss, and finding new opportunities to "bloom where you're planted." This presentation provides a compass for designing a fulfilling career that is resilient, flexible, and deeply connected to your well-being, ensuring you can lead with authenticity and purpose throughout your journey.

Elizabeth Hogan will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 170.

7th–9th Grade Tenor–Bass

Look, Ma, No Hands! Developing Artistic Gestural Expression Through Confidence, Individual Gestures, Musical Instinct, Facial Expressions, and Much More

At some point we stopped playing, laughing, and enjoying our intuition for both musical and non-musical things. Creativity is born from our ability to "color outside the lines" and like it! As we learn more, we often surrender our confidence, individualism, instincts, and more. We stop laughing, we stop playing, and our

creative process and intuition retreats into a regiment of rules that no one should gatekeep. Session attendees should be ready and willing to conduct with your left hand only; be willing to explore decisions concerning musical intuition and the choices we want to make but rarely do; be okay with communicating through facial expressions; and be open to rethinking “gesture” and all that comes with it.

Gary Packwood will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 170.

7th-9th Grade Treble

The Voice in Motion

Join Elizabeth Núñez, creative director of the world-renowned Young People’s Chorus of New York City, in this engaging workshop that explores the powerful relationship between singing and movement. Drawing from her extensive experience over two decades in curriculum development and collaboration with professional artists, Núñez will show you how to help your singers connect with their bodies and unlock new levels of expression while also improving their vocal sound and building confidence that leads to an impactful stage presence. Leave this session with actionable takeaways to elevate your choir’s artistry and create unforgettable performances.

Elizabeth Núñez will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 170.

10th-11th Grade Mixed

Enhancing Audience Engagement Through the Aural/Oral Tradition

When programming a concert, choral directors sometimes consider repertoire choices that enable their audiences to feel more connected to the performance.

Once an audience member becomes familiar with the melodic or harmonic elements of a song they are hearing from the stage, they are more likely to add their voices to the performance when invited to do so. By employing the aural/oral tradition, a culturally rooted practice of teaching and preserving vocal music, audience members can fully participate in singing without needing to read a printed score. This session will focus on repertoire and strategies for teaching choral music in the aural/oral tradition as a means of enhancing audience engagement.

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

12th Grade Mixed

Voices in Exile

Throughout its tumultuous history, the Russian state forced into exile scores of its greatest talents: composers, writers, dancers, and visual artists. Those who remained faced the challenge of creating under relentless censorship and the constant threat of persecution. This session explores choral music written in exile and highlights the strength, ingenuity, and faith that sustained composers such as Shostakovich, Schnittke, Prokofiev, and Sviridov, who continued writing and performing under the regime’s pressure; as well as Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Gretchaninoff, and Gubaidulina, who found themselves far from their native land, language, and culture.

Elena Sharkova will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 171.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

New Horizons Immersion Day - Wednesday

Collegiate

More, Please!

What a Lifetime of Tasting, Cooking, and Eating Great Food Has Taught Me About Teaching Music

Conducting requires extraordinary preparation, the right repertoire, organization, commitment to excellence, and a moral obligation not to poison the populace. Are you looking to run the most efficient rehearsals, choose and prepare great scores, and organize a three-star program? The French Kitchen Brigade System—designed in the nineteenth century by Auguste Escoffier—can provide unexpectedly delicious answers. In this session, Jonathan Talberg will share what he's figured out thanks to Julia Child, Thomas Keller, Jacques Pépin, and a Barefoot Contessa named Ina.

Jonathan Talberg will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 171.

High School Jazz

The Vocal Jazz Director's Playbook: Rep, Groove, and Musical Integrity

Directing a vocal jazz ensemble that is impactful, educational, and meaningful to both performers and audience members is so much more than just “the show.” It's about cultivating a sound, a style, and an artistic vision that inspires. This session offers directors practical tools for building a successful ensemble, from selecting repertoire, to teaching authentic swing and groove, to fostering musical integrity in rehearsal and performance. Participants will leave with strategies to balance technical precision with expressive artistry, empowering singers to connect deeply with the music while keeping the joy, energy, and creativity of vocal jazz at the center.

Christine Helferich Guter will be the clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 171.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Music in Worship Immersion Day - Thursday

The Southwestern ACDA Region invites church musicians to a rich day of learning, conversation, and worship at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Albuquerque. The Music in Worship Immersion Day offers a series of engaging sessions led by distinguished leaders in the field, providing fresh perspectives and practical ideas for today's church settings. At midday, participants will gather for a lively roundtable discussion over lunch, creating opportunities for connection and exchange with fellow church musicians. The day

concludes with an inspiring Ecumenical Service, celebrating the diversity of worship traditions through choral artistry. This gathering is more than a workshop—it is a community, a chance to learn from experts, share experiences, and renew your vision for music ministry. If you are a church musician, this is the place to be.

Sessions

Tried, True, and New— Inspiring Church Anthem Reading Session

One of the best ways to encourage success and excitement in our church music programs is to share exciting and trusted choral anthems. This session will include a reading session for those attending, with several inspiring directors that will lead us through wonderful examples of church anthems tried, true, and new!



Bryan Taylor, the current SWACDA music in worship R&R representative, holds various positions at Liberty University in Missouri. He serves as the director of traditional music and worship arts and the artistic director of the Liberty Community Chorus. Notably, Taylor recently retired from singing with the Grammy Award-winning Kansas City Chorale after a remarkable thirty-three-year career.



Karen Marroli, the director of music ministries at Central United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a multifaceted artist. In addition to her classical training as a composer and conductor, she is a prolific singer-songwriter. Her choral works are published independently and through esteemed publishers like ECS Publishing Group and Santa Barbara Music Publishing.



Matthew Greer, the director of music and worship ministries at St. John's United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was appointed artistic director of Quintessence in 2009. His contributions have been recognized with the Creative Albuquerque's Bravos! Awards in 2012, which honored artistic innovation, entrepreneurship, and community impact. Greer has also had the privilege of serving as a guest conductor for the New Mexico Philharmonic.

Session Block 2

Wonderful Worship Through the Arts Ideas

This second Music in Worship session will delve into inspiring and welcoming art and creative activities that have been incorporated into worship and church music programs. Join us as we share the activities of several music ministries in the worship arts throughout the SWACDA community.

Andy Waggoner will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 139.

The poster for INCHOIR (Inspirational Church Anthem Reading) features the following elements:

- TROY UNIVERSITY** logo with the text "College of Arts & Humanities" next to it.
- TROY PUBLIC RADIO** logo with frequency information: 89.9, 88.7, and 91.7.
- The word **INCHOIR** in large, bold, teal letters, with the subtitle "CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CHORAL MUSIC, THE ARTS, AND LIFE" below it.
- A QR code in the bottom left corner.
- The **ALABAMA HUMANITIES ALLIANCE** logo and a large "50" representing the years 1974-2024.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Music in Worship Immersion Day - Thursday

Holy Disruption: Composing Faithful Music for a Changing Church

This session will examine the dynamics involved in finding or creating choral music for churches in today's climate. Subjects include: adapting music for smaller voicings, cultural appropriation issues, commissioning, and current trends in composition.



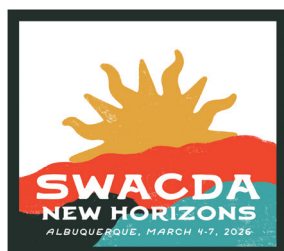
Mark W. Lawson serves as the CEO of ECS Publishing Group, which owns E. C. Schirmer, Galaxy Music, Morning-Star Music Publishers, and distributes Colla Voce publishing. He also chairs the board of Chorus America, a leading organization for community and concert choruses in the United States and Canada.

Ecumenical Service

Singing Our Faith Together: A Community of Voices

On Thursday, March 5, 2026, SWACDA invites conference participants to a special ecumenical worship service, *Singing Our Faith Together: A Community of Voices*, at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in downtown Albuquerque. This service offers an opportunity to experience the unity of Christian traditions through music, with congregational hymn singing and choral offerings that highlight the power of shared faith expressed in song.

The service choir will feature singers from Central United Methodist Church and St. John's United Methodist Church, directed by Karen Marolli and Matthew Greer. Speakers include Mark Lawley, past SWACDA president; Karen Marolli, composer and music director; and service leader Bryan Taylor, SWACDA R&R chair for music in worship. Accompanists are Stephen Montoya, organist; and Nathan Cleaveland, pianist. Join us in a vibrant hour of praise, prayer, and music as we lift our voices together in worship.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Student Conducting Masterclasses

Undergraduate



A. Jan Taylor, conductor, pianist, and educator from Houston, holds music degrees from the University of Houston and Prairie View A&M University. She served as associate professor and director of choral activities at Prairie View A&M (1996–2022) and has

taught music at all levels in Houston public schools. A respected clinician, adjudicator, and lecturer on the Negro Spiritual, she has conducted nationally and internationally, including with the Houston Symphony Chorus, Houston Ebony Opera Guild, and the “105 Voices of History” HBCU National Choir. In 2023 she received the Texas Choral Directors Association's prestigious Choirmaster Award.

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Demonstration Choir

McNeil High School Chamber Singers



Chamber Singers is an elite ensemble within a vibrant 6A high school with a population representing more than fifty countries and a choir program that serves over 230 students. McNeil High School is a true melting pot of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Chamber Singers consistently receive top ratings at state evaluations, contests, and festivals, but the ensemble's greatest success is found in the way community is built through shared musical experiences. They perform the stories of people from all over the world, believing that through shared stories, we deepen our connection to each other, to history, our community, and to the world we aspire to make better.



Wendi Burwinkel is in her twentieth year of music education and her eleventh year as the head director at McNeil High School in Round Rock, TX. Prior to McNeil, Burwinkel directed for Cedar Valley Middle School in Round Rock ISD, Round Rock Community Youth Choir, and Burnet Middle School in Austin ISD. She earned her BM from the University of Texas in Austin followed by an MM in conducting from the University of Texas in El Paso. Her choirs consistently receive Sweepstakes at UIL and top performance awards, including the Mark of Excellence National Choral Honors (2023), Mark of Distinction at

Madrigal Festival (2023, 2025), and the Mark of Distinction at Celebration of Excellence (2025). She resides in Pflugerville, TX, with her husband and three children.

Graduate



Jennaya Robison is the artistic director of the National Lutheran Choir and a nationally recognized conductor, educator, and soprano. She has held faculty positions at the University of Missouri–Kansas City and Luther College, and regularly conducts all-state and honor choirs, festivals, and workshops across the United States, Europe, and southern Africa. An active composer and arranger, she edits a choral series with MorningStar and Pavane Publishing. Robison serves as the ACDA national R&R chair for music in worship and holds degrees from Luther College, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Arizona. Her work champions sacred, intergenerational choral artistry.

Demonstration Choir

University of Northern Colorado Chamber Choir



The UNC Chamber Choir is the premier select mixed vocal ensemble at the University of Northern Colorado, specializing in choral chamber music from a variety of music genres ranging from early music to



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Student Conducting Masterclasses

twenty-first-century repertoire. The Chamber Choir comprises majors from across campus and includes graduate and undergraduate singers. This choir tours regularly and has performed at ACDA regional conferences. Recent performances include Vienna, St. Nicholas Church in Prague Old Town Square, and the Vatican (St. Peter's Basilica). The Chamber Choir hosts the annual UNC High School Choral Invitational and serves as the choir for the Colorado Choral Conducting Symposium.



Jill Burgett is director of choral activities at the University of Northern Colorado, where she has taught for sixteen years. She conducts the Concert and Chamber

Choirs and teaches graduate choral methods and conducting. Previously, she was associate director of choral activities at Ball State University. She holds a doctorate in choral conducting with a cognate in music education from Ball State, where she was a recipient of the Don Neuen Fellowship. Burgett has served on ACDA and NCCO boards and is an active clinician, speaker, and all-state conductor. She has been a K-12 educator and private voice and piano instructor for over twenty years. Burgett has performed internationally and has been published in the *Choral Journal* and the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Her research focuses on sacred choral music of Villa-Lobos, Catalonia, and Mexico.



NATIONAL LUTHERAN CHOIR

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Jocelyn Hagen



Marcela Molina



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Erin Gaffaney

Director of Education & Outreach

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2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Christ Church Cathedral Treble Choir of Houston



The Treble Choir of Houston at Christ Church Cathedral is an acclaimed ensemble of young women grades 5-12 that provides outstanding musical training in a nurturing environment. The Treble Choir was founded in 2006 by Marianna Parnas-Simpson. The ensemble performs widely in the community and also service as the resident children's choir at Christ Church Cathedral, Houston. Highlights include: featured performance in Carnegie Hall and the Kathomew International Choral Festival, and an annual collaboration with the Grammy Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir Christmas at the Villa de Matel.



Marianna Parnas-Simpson was born and raised in Ukraine and graduated with a master's degree in choral conducting from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Russia. She founded the award-winning

St. Petersburg Girls' Choir, KAMERTON, which she directed for ten years before coming to the United States. Since 2000, Simpson has taught at Parker Elementary School, a HISD Magnet school for music. In 2002, Parker Music Program received the Signature Grammy Award. Parnas-Simpson was named Teacher of the Year in 2005. Her choirs were the winners of the American Prize Competition and performed at National ACDA (3x) and TMEA (5x). Parnas-Simpson is in high demand as a clinician and conductor in the United States and abroad.

Danielson Middle School Varsity Treble Choir



The Danielson Middle School choir program, founded in 2020, is home to approximately 250 students spread over six ensembles. The Varsity Treble Choir is an auditioned group of seventh and eighth graders who consistently receive sweepstakes at UIL concert and sight-reading contest. Members of this group have earned chairs in the Region 32 all-region choir and have received first division ratings at solo and ensemble contest. Varsity Treble members are involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. Multi-disciplinary support has built a strong community of singers, and growth continues, looking to the future of our program.



Stephanie Rayl is in her fifth year of teaching, with three years as the head choir director at Danielson Middle School in Leander ISD. DMS choirs consistently earn superior ratings at UIL

Contest and perform at district festivals and community events. She is committed to fostering musical excellence and leadership among members of her choral program. Rayl graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and Case Western Reserve University, receiving a BM in voice and a BA in international studies. She completed her MME at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before returning to her hometown of Austin.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

First Colony Middle School Bobcat Select Tenor Bass



The First Colony MS Bobcat Select Tenor Bass Choir comprises about thirty-five to forty auditioned seventh- and eighth-grade tenor/bass singers, all of whom must have at least one year of experience in Bobcat Choir before auditioning. The singers in this choir come from a variety of musical backgrounds, but most only experience music making in public school. First Colony MS (Fort Bend ISD) is located in Sugar Land, TX, which is a suburb of Houston known for its diverse community. FCMS is a prime example of this, with on average, thirteen different languages spoken at home in the Select Tenor Bass Choir alone. There is no clear majority of any demographic (highest is 40% Asian) at FCMS.



Tommie Trinh is in his ninth year as head director at First Colony Middle School. Trinh is a native Houstonian and is a first-generation Vietnamese American. He began singing in choirs in fifth grade and thanks the public school system for his musical knowledge. He has sung twice at TMEA: in 2011 as a high school senior with Cypress Woods HS under Marsha Robinson and Jason Womack, and in 2013 with the University of Houston Concert Chorale under Betsy Weber. In 2015 he performed in the European Choir Games in Magdeburg, Germany, with the UH Concert Chorale. In 2024 he directed the FCMS Varsity Treble Choir at TMEA.

Fort Worth Chorale



The Fort Worth Chorale was founded in 1962 as Schola Cantorum and is the oldest independently operated, auditioned, volunteer adult civic choir in Texas. Over its sixty-three-year history, FWC has performed across North Texas, the United States, and Europe, including at the Kennedy Center, Robert Shaw's Festival of the Masses, and festivals in Germany. Members include professionals from many fields, with many choral directors and voice teachers. FWC is deeply connected to FW through concerts and partnerships with the Fort Worth Symphony, Texas Ballet Theatre, and local schools. In 2021 it launched the Schola Cantorum Project, commissioning composers from underrepresented backgrounds to provide free music to Title I schools.



Karen Kenaston-French has been artistic director and conductor of the Fort Worth Chorale since 2019, elevating its reputation with imaginative programming and community engagement. She has led performances of classical masterworks, contemporary works, and popular pieces, including Dan Forrest's *Three Nocturnes*, Bob Chilcott's *Circlesong*, and Martín Palmeri's *Misatango*. Major works include Mozart's *Requiem*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and Jenkins's *Te Deum*. Kenaston-French champions new music and education, commissioning works and integrating student choirs. Also professor and director of choral activities at UT Arlington, she has led the A Cappella Choir to regional and national acclaim.

Francis Howell North High School Bella Voces



Bella Voces from Francis Howell North High School in Saint Charles, Missouri, is an auditioned treble chamber ensemble that was founded in the fall of 2018 and encompasses sophomore through senior students. Since then they have been featured on concerts with Webster University and Lindenwood University, earned top ratings at national festivals, and consistently received exemplary ratings at the Missouri State High School Activities Association Large Ensemble Contest. They have enjoyed residencies with Distinguished Concerts International at Carnegie Hall, featuring the works of Ola Gjeilo in 2018 and 2024, and under Eric Whitacre in 2022.



Jennifer Oncken is in her ninth year as director of vocal music for Francis Howell North High School in St. Charles, Missouri, where she conducts five ensembles. Oncken serves on the Missouri Choral Directors Association Executive Board as the St. Louis metro district representative and as choral co-vice president for the St. Louis Metro District of Missouri MEA. She obtained a BM from Lindenwood University in 2016, where she was recipient of the Supero Asperum Award. Oncken is pursuing an MM with a concentration on music education from Missouri State University. She resides in Saint Charles, Missouri, with her daughter, Emma.

Granbury High School Varsity Treble Choir



The Granbury High School Varsity Treble Choir is one of three varsity choral ensembles at Granbury High School and is an auditioned group of treble singers in grades 9–12. The Granbury High School Varsity Treble Choir was awarded second place in the high school division of the 2024 American Prize in Choral Performance, has earned multiple recognitions in the Foundation for Music Education Mark of Excellence Project, and consistently earns top ratings and best in class designations in choral festivals. Members participate in the TMEA all-region and all-state process, and are involved in a variety of extracurricular activities and service organizations.



Kendra Fisher is in her twenty-third year teaching secondary choral music in Texas public schools. She is director of choirs at Granbury High School and director of choral activities for Granbury ISD. She is serving TMEA as vocal chair for Region 30. Choirs under her direction consistently earn sweepstakes, first division, and best in class ratings at UIL and choral festivals. The Granbury High School Varsity Choirs have each earned distinctions in the Mark of Excellence Project sponsored by The Foundation for Music Education, and have each been named national finalists in the high school division of the American Prize in Choral Performance. Fisher holds a BME from Dallas Baptist University and is an active clinician, adjudicator, and accompanist.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Hebron High School Varsity Tenor-Bass Choir



The singers of the Varsity Tenor-Bass Choir make up the tenor and bass sections of the Hebron A Cappella Choir. Students in this ensemble are selected through a three-part audition process. Many choir students are actively involved with other school activities such as student council, DECA, a variety of sports, track, band, orchestra, theatre, and National Honor Society. In the choir room, students are challenged daily to work within their ensembles to prepare, perfect, and perform varied musical genres to share with our diverse community.



Alexander Carr has served as the director of choral activities at Hebron High School since 2019. He previously taught in Fort Worth ISD, Keller ISD, and Arlington ISD. In 2023, Carr directed the

Hebron A Cappella Choir in performance at TMEA. He holds both an MM and BME from Texas Christian University. At TCU he was the choral conducting graduate assistant, director of the TCU Men's Chorus, and the drum major of the Horned Frog Marching Band. Carr is an active performer and adjudicator in the DFW area. He sings with the Turtle Creek Chorale, where he serves as artistic associate and co-conductor of the Chamber Chorus. He is also a founding member of Brothers In Song.

Jordan High School Jordan Warrior Choir



The Jordan High School Choir program, founded in fall 2020, opened its doors during the height of a global pandemic—facing unique challenges from day one. Yet, from those early days, a resilient and passionate group of students laid the foundation for a thriving choral community built on excellence and unity. Now in its fifth year, Jordan Choir proudly celebrates their third graduating senior class. Many of these founding members are part of Warrior Chorale, which has witnessed the program's growth from just thirty singers to seven full, competitive ensembles.



Raegan Grantham, a Southeast Texas native, is in her fourteenth year of conducting choral music. Her choirs have earned sweepstakes in concert and sightreading, best in class, outstanding performance at

festivals, and recognition as a commended winner in the National Mark of Excellence. She is an active adjudicator and clinician across Texas and has presented for TMEA in 2023 and 2025. Grantham has taught every level of choir from sixth grade to high school varsity mixed. She has taught in Dallas and Austin and now serves as head choir director at Jordan High School in Katy ISD, where she was named Teacher of the Year.

Kansas City Kansas Community College The Standard



The Standard is the award-winning contemporary vocal jazz ensemble from Kansas City Kansas Community College. They have been invited to perform at the national conferences of the Jazz Education Network (2025, 2022, and 2019), ACDA (2017), and NAFME (2018). Within the last nine years, The Standard has won fourteen *DownBeat* Magazine Student Music Awards and has recorded two studio albums. The group has shared the stage with such highly acclaimed artists as Take 6, The New York Voices, m-pact, säje, Carmen Bradford, Dianne Reeves, and Marilyn Maye.



John Stafford II is professor of music, director of choral activities, and coordinator of the music department at Kansas City Kansas Community College.

Stafford was a 2015 recipient of the John & Suanne Roueche Excellence Award for outstanding teaching and leadership at the community college level. He was also the recipient of the Henry Louis Award for Teaching Excellence at KCKCC in 2020. He has also received two other teaching awards from KCKCC for recruitment and teaching excellence. Previously he was appointed at Millikin University, Eastern Illinois University, and Danville Area Community College. He holds degrees from Millikin University, Bowling Green State University, and has done additional doctoral studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Lubbock Christian University Best Friends



Lubbock Christian University's Best Friends has represented LCU in national and international concert and worship venues since 1983. In 2013 the group began receiving international recognition as the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America (CASA) nominated that year's album to receive a Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award (CARA). In 2019, Best Friends's album *Risen* was awarded the CARA for Best Religious Album. In February 2025, the album *On Our Way* received two CARA nominations for best religious album and best show tunes song.



Philip Camp serves as professor of music and director of choral activities for Lubbock Christian University. He earned degrees from Abilene Christian University and Arizona State University, and earned

a PhD in music with an emphasis in choral conducting from Texas Tech University. He has taught choral music for thirty-three years and will be completing thirty years as collegiate faculty in 2026. He began serving as director for LCU's award-winning contemporary a cappella ensemble, Best Friends, in 2018. LCU choirs under Camp's direction have performed throughout the Southwestern United States as well as Ireland, Eastern Australia, and Eastern Europe.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Performing Choirs

Marble Falls High School Chorale



The Marble Falls Chorale is the varsity mixed choir at Marble Falls High School. MFHS is a Title 1 small school in the beautiful hill country of Texas that is home to 1,125 students. The Chorale, under the direction of Bryce Gage and Clark Stanley, is the pride of the choral department, which houses seven ensembles. A consistent sweepstakes winner, the MFHS Chorale consistently places students in the Texas all-state choir. This ensemble has been honored to perform at the National Cathedral of Washington DC, Coventry Cathedral of London, Vatican in Rome, and the White House. The Marble Falls High School Chorale performed at the 2025 TMEA Convention.



Bryce Gage is the director of choirs for Marble Falls ISD and has been the head choral director at Marble Falls High School for the past nineteen years. Gage received his BM from the UNT. His choirs are known for their mature tone and passionate singing and have been invited to perform in St. John the Divine in NYC, the National Cathedral, Coventry Cathedral, the Vatican, and at the 2025 TMEA Conference. Chorale was named the 2024 Small School Texas State Champion by the Perform America Next Level Contest and National Commended winner in the Mark of Excellence Awards. Gage's Chamber Singers was named the Performance of Distinction at the Madrigal Festival along with his Elite Women receiving third runner-up.

Missouri State University Men's Chorus



Established in 2014, the Missouri State University Men's Chorus includes students from various majors within the university. This ensemble, consisting of freshmen through graduate students, performs regularly throughout the year and rehearses twice per week. The Men's Chorus has performed twice at the IMC Tenor-Bass Choral Consortium National Seminar (2016, 2025). In 2016, the Men's Chorus performed at the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses National Seminar at the University of Illinois, and in 2018, the choir performed at the annual conference of the Missouri MEA (2018, 2025). The ensemble regularly commissions new works.



Cameron LaBarr is director of choral studies and the Clif and Gail Smart Professor in Music at Missouri State University. He earned the MM and DMA from the University of North Texas. LaBarr has an international reputation as conductor, clinician, and choral juror, and serves as board member for the International Federation for Choral Music. LaBarr's recent engagements include concerts and events in Indonesia, France, Chile, Argentina, South Korea, South Africa, and Spain. LaBarr curates two choral series with Santa Barbara Music Publishing and Walton Music, where he champions emerging and established composers, and is additionally published by Colla Voce, Choristers Guild, and GIA Publications.

Missouri State University Women's Chorus



The Missouri State University Women's Chorus was founded in 2014 and is open to all MSU students. Women's Chorus personnel consist mostly of undergraduate students who come from diverse backgrounds and a variety of majors. The Women's Chorus performs multiple concerts each semester and tours to area high schools and throughout the region and was invited to perform at the Missouri MEA 2022 in-service conference, the 2022 SWACDA Conference, and the 2023 National ACDA Conference. In November 2023, the Women's Chorus performed at the NCCO National Conference, where they performed a world-premiere work by Reena Esmail.



Erin Plisco is the associate director of choral studies at Missouri State University. She is a frequent guest clinician across the United States and abroad and currently serves as the National ACDA SSAA R&R chair. Choirs under her direction have performed at the 2022 Southwestern ACDA Region Conference, the 2022 and 2025 Missouri MEA Conferences, the 2023 National ACDA Conference, the 2023 NCCO National Conference, and Carnegie Hall. Plisco completed the DMA in choral conducting from the University of Arizona. She also studied at Trinity College, University of Cambridge, where she was a recipient of the prestigious Gates Cambridge Scholarship.

Neosho High School Choraleers



Choraleers is the varsity mixed choir at NHS and has been in existence since 1968. They have a busy performance schedule, actively performing throughout the year as both a concert choir and a competitive show choir. Choraleers consistently advance to finals at show choir competitions and have earned several grand champion awards in recent years, as well as consistently earning exemplary ratings at MSHSAA state large ensemble contest as a concert choir. The group averages fifty to fifty-five members in grades 9-12. Members tend to be highly involved in the vocal music department at NHS as well as regularly participating in all-district, all-state, SWACDA, and ACDA National honor choirs.



Melanie Soule received her BME from the University of Central Missouri and has taught high school for twenty-one years. She has been at Neosho High School for fifteen years, where she directs show choirs, concert choirs, and teaches a voice class. Soule has served as the music director for many school musicals, served as both a judge and clinician at show choir competitions and MSHSAA contests, and has mentored several student teachers and young educators. She has served on the executive board for MCDA and is the SWMMEA district president, a music rules interpreter for MSHSAA, and is on staff for the Missouri Ambassadors of Music.



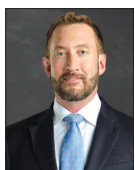
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Performing Choirs

Oklahoma State University Cantamus Camerata



Cantamus Camerata is an auditioned treble chamber ensemble of twelve to twenty singers and welcomes all self-identifying treble voices from the campus of Oklahoma State University. Cantamus Camerata performed at the Oklahoma Music Educators Winter Conference in 2025, premiered Martín Palmeri's *Nisi Dominus* at Cadogan Hall in London, and received first place in both the treble choir and chamber choir categories at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in 2024. The singers have embraced the final line of their mission statement, "to be examples of light in the world," since the ensemble's inception in the fall of 2022.



Christopher Haygood is a faculty member of the Michael and Anne Greenwood School of Music at Oklahoma State University, where he conducts Cantamus Camerata and the Concert Chorale, teaches courses in graduate and undergraduate choral conducting, and serves as chancel choir director at First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) of Stillwater. Haygood's research on the music of Holocaust survivor Petr Eben, Māori composers, and the intersection of teaching snow sports and singing has led to presentations at NCCO, NWACDA, SWACDA, OCDA, and OkMEA. He has served internationally as a guest choral clinician and conductor.

Plano East Senior High School Concert Choir



Plano East Senior High School is a 6A campus with an enrollment of over three thousand students. Plano East houses the IB World School for Plano ISD, which affords our campus and program a complete ninth-through twelfth-grade environment. The Plano East Senior High School Concert Choir is the top-performing ensemble of seven vocal ensembles within the choral program. The Concert Choir has a tradition of excellence with consistent sweepstakes awards at UIL concert and sight-reading. Members of this chorus are involved in the international baccalaureate program and other clubs throughout the school. The Plano East Concert Choir was featured at the 2020 SWACDA Conference and performed at TMEA in 2022.



Daniel Knight is in his twentieth year as a choral director at Plano East Senior High School and has been teaching in Plano ISD for the past twenty-five years. Knight graduated from UNT with a BME and a master's in education. In 2014 he was selected as the Teacher of the Year. His Plano East Varsity Men's Choir was invited to perform at SWACDA (2016) and National ACDA (2019). The Plano East Concert Choir was invited to perform at SWACDA (2020) and TMEA (2022). He has been a member of the Orpheus Chamber Singers and sings frequently in the Highland Park Chorale.

Ridge Point High School Ridge Point Choir



Ridge Point Choir proudly serves two hundred students across six ensembles. The program consistently earns sweepstakes awards at UIL concert and sight-reading, performance of distinction at the San Antonio Madrigal Festival, and best in class at the Kemah Choir Festival. Ridge Point Choir also enjoys regular invitations to perform in the Houston and Sugar Land Community, most notably performances for the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Fort Bend's commemoration of the Sugar Land 95, and The Gregory School's commemoration of George Floyd. In the heart of one of the country's most diverse school districts, the students of Ridge Point Choir thrive learning music from all time periods and parts of the world.



Chelsea Berner has served as a choir director at Ridge Point for the past eight years. Currently in her eleventh year of teaching high school choral music, she holds degrees from Baylor University (music education) and Michigan State University (choral conducting). Prior to teaching at Ridge Point, Berner served as a choir director at Spring High School. She is active as a clinician, adjudicator, and singer in the state of Texas and is also a founding member of the choral ensemble mirabai under the direction of Sandra Snow. She is a member of TMEA, TMAA, ACDA, and has served Region 13 in various capacities.

Texas Christian University Purple, White, and Blues



Purple, White, and Blues is an auditioned vocal jazz ensemble in the TCU School of Music comprising music and non-music majors. The ensemble performs a mix of standard jazz repertoire, arrangements of contemporary popular songs, and newly composed pieces in the vocal jazz style. In 2020, Purple, White, and Blues was awarded Outstanding Ensemble by the M-Pact Vocal Festival along with two Outstanding Soloist awards. The following year, the Kansas City Jazz Summit also recognized the group with an Outstanding Ensemble and two Outstanding Soloist contributions. They were invited to perform at the 2022 Jazz Educators Network Conference in Dallas, Texas.



Amy Stewart is an instructor in the choral, jazz, musicology, and theory departments at TCU, and conducts the Purple, White, and Blues vocal jazz ensemble. She has a BM in vocal performance, MM in organ performance from TCU, and doctor of worship studies degree from the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies. She serves as assistant organist at University Christian Church. After graduating from TCU, she moved to New York City, where she performed in many solo venues and was the featured soloist in four concerts with the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall with Skitch Henderson.



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Performing Choirs

Trinity Springs Middle School Chamber Mixed Choir



The Trinity Springs Middle School Chamber Mixed Choir is a distinguished, non-auditioned ensemble comprising dedicated students from all choirs across our campus. Meeting once a week after school, these students exemplify commitment, musical excellence, and a love for choral artistry. Despite its informal structure, the ensemble has achieved national recognition, being named the national winner of the Mark of Excellence Award from the Foundation for Music Education in 2024, 2022, 2021, and 2020. They also consistently earn UIL sweepstakes awards at the annual concert and sight-reading evaluation, showcasing their musical artistry. Above all, the Trinity Springs Choir Program is committed to cultivating humanity through music—empowering students to become kind, resilient, and compassionate individuals while creating memories that will resonate throughout their lives.



Clinton Hardy Ferrie is the head choir director at Trinity Springs Middle School and is in his seventeenth year of teaching. He received his bachelor's degree from TCU and his master's degree from UNT. His Varsity Treble Choir was invited to perform at the 2025 National ACDA Conference, 2023 TMEA Conference, 2022 SWACDA Conference, and the 2019 TMEA Conference. He also conducted his Varsity Tenor-Bass Choir at the 2021 National ACDA Conference.

Trinity University Chamber Singers



The Chamber Singers have performed for NCCO, TMEA, and at the CMS national conference. In 2018 they were ensemble-in-residence at the Eisenstadt Classical Music Festival in Austria. In 2021 they collaborated with Sinfonia Spirituosa on French Baroque works, including Delalande's *De profundis*. Their Carnegie Hall debut came in June 2022 as the featured ensemble in Mozart's *Requiem*. In 2024 they performed Fauré's *Requiem* at L'église de la Madeleine in Paris. They earned third place in the 2022 American Prize as the smallest school among the cohort of national finalists.



Gary Seighman is a professor, director of choral activities, and chair of the Music Department at Trinity University in San Antonio. Under his direction, Trinity's choral ensembles have garnered many accolades with invited conference performances, tours throughout the United States and abroad, commercial recordings, and third prize for The American Prize. Seighman has traveled to East Asia six times, where he conducted the Peking University Summer Opera Program and led graduate masterclasses in Taiwan. He holds degrees from Westminster Choir College, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Maryland. Seighman will conduct the 2025–2026 Texas Private School All-State Choir.

University of North Texas A Cappella Choir



The University of North Texas A Cappella Choir was founded in 1938 and is the premier ensemble of the UNT Choral Studies Program, which comprises eight student choirs. Conference appearances include 2022 Southwestern ACDA Region, 2020 TMEA, and five National ACDA Conferences (1999, 2005, 2013, 2021, and 2025). International appearances include choral festivals in 2009 and 2012. The A Cappella Choir serves as the core of the one-hundred-and-fifty-voice UNT Grand Chorus, performing major choral-orchestral repertoire each spring semester.



Allen Hightower leads the graduate program in choral conducting at the University of North Texas as the director of choral studies, where he oversees a choral program of eight ensembles. Hightower serves as the conductor of the UNT A Cappella Choir and the UNT Grand Chorus, which collaborates annually with the UNT Symphony Orchestra in performances of major choral-orchestral works. As a member of UNT's early music faculty, he leads the vocal ensemble Vox Aquilae, an artistic partner of the UNT Baroque Orchestra. From 2000 to 2010 he served as professor of music and director of choral studies at Sam Houston State University. From 2010 to 2016, Hightower held the Weston Noble Endowed Chair in Music at Luther College, where he served as conductor of the renowned Nordic Choir.

University of Texas at Austin Concert Chorale



The Concert Chorale is the premier choir within the Butler School of Music and bears a rich tradition and legacy of the highest standards of musical excellence. The Chorale has appeared in significant venues throughout the United States and has sung at previous ACDA regional conferences. This ensemble offers students an opportunity to study and perform a broad range of choral literature and to tour annually throughout the Texas region. The Chorale forms the core of the symphonic chorus at UT, collaborating with other UT choirs and the UT Symphony Orchestra for performances of significant choral/orchestral repertoire.



J. D. Burnett is director of choral activities and head of the division of vocal arts at the University of Texas Butler School of Music, where he conducts the UT Concert Chorale and guides the graduate program in choral conducting. He is also the artistic director of the two professional choirs Kinnara (Atlanta) and Orpheus Chamber Singers (Dallas). He has held artistic appointments with the Dallas Symphony Chorus, New Jersey Youth Chorus, Masterwork Chorus of New Jersey, New Jersey Chamber Singers, Houston Masterworks Chorus, and Men's Consort Houston. Burnett did undergraduate study at Stanford University and Oklahoma State University and holds advanced degrees in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College and the University of North Texas.



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Performing Choirs

Veterans Memorial Early College High School Varsity Treble Choir



The Veterans Memorial Varsity Treble Choir is the premier treble ensemble at Veterans Memorial ECHS in Brownsville, TX, a Mexican American border town. Directed by Iliana Guerrero and accompanied by pianist Dr. Uzziel Guzman, the ensemble consists of auditioned sophomore, junior, and senior treble singers. Our singers consistently excel in regional and statewide competitions, both as soloists and within their ensem-

bles. Additionally, members perform in the program's Varsity Mixed Chorale. Singers are involved in academics, athletics, and actively engage in the community.



Iliana Guerrero is a choral educator, clinician, adjudicator, and professional vocalist in South Texas. She holds a BME from the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley and began graduate studies in vocal performance. Now in her seventh year at Veterans Memorial ECHS, she directs the Freshman, Advanced, and Varsity Treble choirs, Show Choir, and codirects the Chamber Choir. Under her leadership, the choir program has set new records in TMEA all-state and UIL solo and ensemble, earning sweepstakes at UIL concert and evaluation. In 2023 she presented "Yes, You Can(va)" at the TI:ME Convention and was named TCDA's Young Director of Distinction. In 2025 she copresented at TMEA and was a section leader for the TMEA all-state treble choir.



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Interest Sessions

A Tenor Tantrum: Passaggio Training in the Choral Rehearsal

The successful and sustainable development of young tenor and bass voices within a choral ensemble setting presents a formidable challenge for many choral conductors. In order to support the development of singing technique, it is imperative that the choral rehearsal be a place where vocal technique is actively taught and cultivated. This interactive presentation aims to clarify and apply modern vocal pedagogy schol-

arship to address common issues encountered in the development of tenor and bass voices—in particular, the management of registration changes or the "passaggio." Attendees will learn evidence-based strategies and examples of teaching techniques derived from modern vocal scholarship. These resources are designed to assist emerging choral conductors in delivering accurate and effective instruction to maturing tenor or bass voices in their ensembles.

Cody Parrott, DMA, serves as director of choral activities at Illinois Wesleyan University, where he teach-



es ensembles, conducting and rehearsal techniques, and applied voice. Before this appointment he was associate director of choral activities at Mississippi State University. In 2024 he completed the DMA in choral conducting at the University of Texas at Austin, where he served the Butler School of Music choral area as assistant conductor of the Texas Concert Chorus and conductor of the University Treble Chorus, which was named the third-place winner for the 2023 American Prize in Choral Performance under his direction. Parrott comes to collegiate teaching after a distinguished twelve-year career teaching in Texas public schools and enjoys training the teachers of tomorrow at the intersection of vocal pedagogy, choral conducting, and music education.

An Unconventional Approach to the Urban Choral Classroom

Many choral directors enter urban programs eager to inspire but quickly encounter unexpected challenges in music literacy and vocal technique. This session shifts the focus from broad systemic barriers to the specific obstacles directors may face, such as students' limited experience with solfège, sheet music, sight-reading, vocal technique, tongue placement, and classical repertoire. This session offers practical strategies to help choral directors overcome common challenges and foster musical growth. The presenter will outline key concepts followed by techniques to strengthen music literacy among students of color while complementing traditional instruction. Ideal for new and experienced directors, this session provides insights to enhance engagement, build foundational skills, and create an inclusive choral experience.

Odell Zeigler IV will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 135.

Auditions:

Assessing Students' Ability to Hear Harmony

Testing how students hear harmony is the most important aspect a director needs to learn from the audition process. This presentation will provide unique exercises on how to auditions students' "ears."

John Stafford II will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 153.

Breathing New Life into Your Choral Warm-Ups

Each rehearsal we are challenged with making the warm-up session functional, educational, and interesting. Like a prism, the warm-up must be addressed from a variety of perspectives. What is the point of the warm-up? What are we trying to achieve? How can we keep our singers engaged and mindful? Should the warm-up change as the repertoire changes? This session aims to address these questions and more based on observations of choir rehearsals and interviews with leading choir directors working with singers across a variety of ages, levels of experience, genres, languages, and locations. Attendees will leave with a variety of warm-ups they can modify for their own ensembles.



Kym Scott is the director of choral activities at West Virginia University, where she conducts the WVU Chamber Singers, Mountaineer Chorus, and Community Choir. She also teaches conducting, choral techniques, and choral literature, and oversees the choral conducting graduate program. She has directed choirs in Australia, Asia, Europe, the UK, and the United States; and regularly presents at state, regional, national, and international conferences. Scott is the artistic director for the Pittsburgh Pride Choir and the president of West Virginia ACDA. An Australian native, Scott has worked with all age groups and is passionate about choral music in the community.



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Interest Sessions

Draw the Circle Wide: Programming Music by Black Composers

As choir directors, we strive to program diverse choral music that is accessible for our middle school/junior high and high school programs. Oftentimes, our classrooms or rehearsals are the places where students receive a sense of belonging; we nurture these social and emotional needs with the music that we program. This reading session will focus on programming and performing the non-idiomatic music of Black composers accessible for middle school, junior high, and high school programs.



Gyasi J. Blanton, a native of New Jersey, serves as the assistant director of choirs at Stratford High School in Houston, TX. Choirs under his direction have earned sweepstakes at the UIL concert and sightreading evaluation. He holds degrees from Lincoln University, PA, and an MME from The Florida State University. He has also served as the guest conductor of the Illinois MEA district 1 honor choir.

Estonian Choral Repertoire and Diction: A Practical Approach

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many Western choirs and audiences have become enamored with the spellbinding choral music of the Baltic nation of Estonia. Home to the world's largest quinquennial choral song festival, the special connection of Estonians to choral music is undeniable. While there is an increase in the availability of Estonian choral repertoire for Western choirs, American choral conductors who want to program these works may find themselves intimidated by the Estonian language and its application for choral singing. The purpose of this session is to explore Estonian choral repertoire, offer resources for discovering and investigating new works, and intro-

duce principles and practical application of lyric diction for singing Estonian.



Alex T. Favazza Jr. is assistant professor of music and director of choral activities at Ouachita Baptist University, where he conducts the Ouachita Singers, Concert Choir, and teaches courses in conducting and choral music. He holds a PhD in music education specializing in choral conducting from The Florida State University, MM in choral conducting from the University of Southern Mississippi, and BME from Middle Tennessee State University. As a composer, Favazza's choral works are published by Hinshaw Music, Colla Voce Music, and Oxford University Press. His compositions have been performed by numerous all-state and regional honor choirs as well as collegiate, high school, community, and religious choirs throughout the United States. Favazza is a lifelong church musician and serves as director of worship ministries at First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, AR.

Evolutionary Conducting

The needs of your choral ensemble evolve throughout the rehearsal process, and your conducting will ideally adapt along with those shifts. This session will look at the various "texts"—both musical and non-musical—that your singers are interacting with at any given time in order to help determine how the conductor can most effectively support student learning and music making. Through participatory demonstrations, we will consider methods to give students the tools to interact effectively with the score, their instrument, their surroundings, and your conducting. The final goal is musical achievement and ownership from the ensemble paired with meaningful and effective conducting from you, their leader.



MB Krueger is the director of choral activities at Metropolitan State University, where she directs the Chorale, University Treble Choir, and University Basso Choir, and teaches basic and advanced conducting. She earned her bachelor's degree at Michigan State University, where she was a National Merit Scholar, and her master's degree from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Krueger served ten years on the board of Colorado ACDA and has been a regular presenter at various clinics and conferences through CoACDA and CMEA. She is also active as a clinician for high school honor choirs and choral festivals. Krueger is a member of St. Martin's Chamber Choir and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Choir, and has also sung professionally with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, the Santa Fe Opera, and the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado.

Fight, Flight, and Forte: Cultivating Vocal Courage

It is harder than ever to help students “put themselves out there.” Risk-taking is integral to vocal development, and yet students are more risk averse than ever. In this interactive session, teachers will learn what is going on in students' brains and bodies during risk-taking, how we got here, and what we can do to help our choristers sing better and live bravely.



Clelyn Chapin serves as the associate director of choirs at University of Northern Colorado, where she leads choral ensembles and teaches courses in choral music education. In addition to her work at UNC, Chapin conducts the Denver Women's Chorus, a 180-voice treble choir founded for members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community with a focus on social justice programming. Her research focuses on creating collaborative, efficient rehearsal spaces; her work is available in *Choral Repertoire by Women Composers* (GIA, 2025). Before beginning at UNC, she spent fourteen years teaching and conducting secondary, collegiate,

and community ensembles in Texas, Colorado, and Michigan and received her doctorate from Michigan State University.

Folk Roots, Global Reach

Folk traditions in singing practices have stood as a building block for community, culture, and artistic exploration around the world. By including a myriad of disparate repertoire within your musical selection, your ensemble will experience a spectrum of sound, heritage, and commonality. To introduce these topics, Thai, Korean, and United States folk selections are placed under the magnifying glass. Within each example, an overview of cultural significance, historical background, and musical traditions will be reviewed to demonstrate a variation of commonalities and individually unique traits by respected culture-sharers who bring unique expertise. Session attendees will receive supporting materials that not only outline the promotion of global folk music in the choir room but will act as a vehicle toward individual confidence in varied repertoire collections.



Samuel Sherman is pursuing his DMA in choral conducting at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, serving as a graduate teaching assistant. Sherman holds a BM in vocal performance from the University of Northern Colorado and an MM in conducting from the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music. Recent engagements include working as a guest choral clinician in New World Symphony's BLUE Project, leading the Denver Philharmonic and Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic in the International Conducting Institute workshop and competition, and serving as the assistant conductor of the Master Chorale of South Florida.



Jisu Oh is a DMA candidate and teaching assistant at the University of Miami Frost School of Music. She earned a BA in choral conducting with a vocal minor



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from the Korea National University of Arts, where she conducted the award-winning Collegium Vocale Seoul and taught underprivileged students. After her BA, Oh directed the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Choir and earned an MM in choral conducting from the University of Texas at Austin, serving as associate conductor of the UT Concert Choir and Tenor-Bass Choir. A strong advocate for Korean choral music, she continues her research in this field. Oh is currently the organist and assistant choirmaster at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Miami and associate conductor of Miami Collegium Musicum.



Supitcha Kansirisin, originally from Thailand, is a DMA student in choral conducting at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, where she serves as a graduate teaching assistant. She holds a BME from Chulalongkorn University, where she was recognized as the Outstanding Student-Teacher of the Faculty of Education. In 2018, she earned an MM from the University of Southern California. Supitcha is a founding committee member of the Thailand Choral Directors Association, dedicated to enhancing the potential of Thai choral directors to meet international standards. She currently serves as an assistant conductor of the Miami Children's Chorus.



Jennifer Grover joins the University of Miami's Frost School of Music as a DMA candidate in choral conducting, chorus master for Frost Opera Theater, and assistant conductor fellow with Seraphic Fire. She earned her MM in choral conducting from Brigham Young University and holds a BM in vocal performance and music education from CSU Stanislaus. Grover served as artistic director of the Tracy Community Choirs and led choral and piano studies at Tracy High School for ten years. She has worked with Opera Modesto and the Modesto Symphony Orchestra. At BYU, she directed the University Chorale and assisted with their major ensembles. A collaborative pianist and operatic soprano, Grover has performed

widely and remains active as a clinician and educator.

Fostering Choral Composition: A Student-Led Choir's Journey

How can we support choral composition within our programs? The Renova New Music Ensemble, a student-led choir at the University of Colorado Boulder, has done just that—premiering and workshopping over sixty-five student-composed works in just four years. This session explores how Renova collaborates with emerging composers, details the administrative infrastructure behind running a student-led new-music ensemble, and highlights the impact of student-driven leadership on the future of choral repertoire. Attendees will receive templates for recruiting, auditioning, scheduling, and more. From recording sessions and composer workshops to concerts and community events, learn how to create meaningful opportunities that provide real-world experience for composers. Tap into the creative potential in your own community and help debut the next era of choral music!



Blake Clawson is a musician at the intersection of composition, conducting, education, research, and performance. Currently serving as music director for the new-music choir Renova New Music Ensemble as well as a dual master's student in composition and choral conducting at the University of Colorado Boulder, Clawson is an active collaborator and seeker of art who inspires and draws people together. His music weaves the serenity of natural landscapes with wonder, occasionally infusing modern folk sensibility and rollicking groove. In addition to teaching aural skills courses at CU Boulder, he serves as a graduate assistant in the choral department and teaches composition, piano, and jazz at the Parlando School of Musical Arts.

Joshua Carter Maynard is a composer and conductor



from Colorado Springs, CO, who specializes in bringing passion for choral and chamber music to a new generation of musicians. He holds a BM in composition from the University of Boulder Colorado

along with certifications in music theory and music technology. He began a master's in choral conducting at the University of Oregon in 2025. In addition to producing many awarded compositions for mediums like choir and orchestra to electronics and jazz combos, Maynard served as a president and founder of the Renova New Music Ensemble—CU Boulder's premier contemporary choral group.

Imposter Phenomenon, Musical Excellence, and Mentorship

As musicians and educators, we strive to create meaningful musical experiences while encouraging growth in technical skill and artistry. When high expectations, musical excellence, and personal growth collide, performers often experience a paralyzing sense of self-doubt, sometimes referred to as imposter phenomenon. In this session, we will explore strategies directors might use to help combat feelings of imposter syndrome both personally and in support of their students. While this session is aimed toward collegiate-level learners and mentors, particularly at the graduate level, the general practices apply to a wider audience. Participants will learn about some of the perceived social and emotional causes contributing to imposter phenomenon. Additionally, we will explore how positive and active mentorship can provide support to individuals suffering from imposter phenomenon.



Emily T. Peterson is a graduate student at the University of Colorado Boulder pursuing a doctoral degree in choral conducting and literature. She studies under the tutelage of Drs. Coreen Duffy and Elizabeth Swanson. Peterson formerly studied with Dr. Brian C. Murray at the University of Wyoming, where she participated in various masterclasses and conduct-

ing symposia. In January 2024 she participated in the Northwestern ACDA student conducting masterclass with Dr. André J. Thomas. She earned a BME, MME, and MM from UW.

It's Not Skynet (Yet): Practical Uses of AI for Conductors

This session will delve into the potential for Large Language Model (LLM) systems to assist choral conductors. Focusing on practical application use, areas such as repertoire programming, the development of rehearsal strategies, and even the description of effective conducting gestures using Laban Movement language are explored. As LLM systems become integral to diverse software applications, the discussion addresses crafting nuanced user prompts specifically within the music performance discipline. We will also learn how to navigate around the risks of AI, including misinformation, copyright issues, and plagiarism. The session will conclude with a glimpse of future applications such as AI's potential for visual analysis of musical notation in score study and the more nuanced connections with physical conducting gesture.

Gary Seighman will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 158.

The Lavender Scores: Repertoire from LGBTQIA+ Composers

Join us in an immersive workshop exploring the choral works of LGBTQIA+ composers. One of the easiest ways we can foster inclusivity in our classrooms is through the works we program. If you have been wanting to find pieces by LGBTQIA+ composers but don't know where to start, this session is for you! The music presented in this session has been carefully selected for its accessibility, ensuring ensembles of any experience level will be engaged through varying opportunities for musical growth. This session will include a live read-



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through of music, as well as information on a brand-new resource for choral educators.



Joshua Donaldson is the director of choral activities at Emporia State University, where he leads four ensembles and teaches classes in conducting, choral methods, and music theory. He is an active choral artist, singing with KC VITAs. He clinics choirs across Kansas and most recently was the clinician for the SEKMEA district honor choir. His research focuses on creating inclusive classrooms and repertoire by women composers and LGBTQIA+ composers. Donaldson presented at the 2025 National ACDA Conference on crafting inclusive classrooms for LGBTQIA+ students. He holds a BME, MM in choral conducting, and MM in vocal performance from Pittsburg State University, and a DMA in choral conducting from the University of Kansas.



Jackson Thomas is the director of choral activities at the University of Central Missouri, leading choral ensembles and teaching courses in conducting, literature, and techniques. He previously taught at Pembroke Hill School and in Kansas City public schools. As founder and artistic director of KC VITAs, he has premiered nearly one hundred contemporary-classical works, with the organization earning recognition in national competitions. He also directs the Northland Community Choir and previously led the Schola Cantorum of the Greater Kansas City chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Since 2015 he has been director of choral music at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Lenexa, KS. He frequently directs honor choirs and adjudicates festivals.

stories that shape Latinx identity. What makes Latinx music Latinx? Is it the language, the rhythm, the history? We'll explore its rich blend of Indigenous, African, European, and contemporary influences—highlighting music from folk traditions to works by present-day Latinx composers writing within classical frameworks. Attendees will gain practical tools for teaching this repertoire, including guidance on Spanish diction, rhythmic integrity, culturally responsive strategies, and approaches to oral-tradition music. Participants will sing and move together, and leave with rehearsal-ready resources, historical context, and curated repertoire lists for a variety of ensembles—centering music by living Latinx composers.

Eric D. Reyes will be the clinician for this session. His photo and bio are on page 64.

Passing the Baton: Leadership Through Student Conducting

Student conducting offers more than podium time—it's a transformative tool for cultivating leadership, ownership, and ensemble unity. This session will explore how empowering students to lead from the podium can develop essential skills such as communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. Through student testimonials, personal experiences, and real-world case studies, we will highlight the lasting impact of student conducting and its role in building confident, capable leaders. Attendees will walk away with practical, adaptable strategies to incorporate student conducting opportunities into their choral programs, regardless of ensemble size or institutional setting.



Kaitlin DeSpain enjoys a varied career as an educator, conductor, performer, and clinician. She earned her BME from Marshall University, an MM from the University of Kentucky, and a DMA from the University of Houston. DeSpain previously taught

Más Que Ritmo: The Heart and Heritage of Latinx Choral Music

This session explores the wide range of Latinx vocal music and how it reflects the many voices, cultures, and

grades 6–12 at schools in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Texas. She has also worked extensively with collegiate, community, and professional ensembles, including the Houston Symphony Chorus, the Symphony of Southeast Texas Chorus, and the Houston Chamber Choir. DeSpain frequently leads workshops and masterclasses for educators. She is passionate about emphasizing expressive artistry and strong technical foundations to create meaningful musical experiences.



Emily Hobson-Gallardo is the director of choral activities at the University of North Georgia. She previously served on the faculties of Georgia State University and Oglethorpe University and completed her DMA in choral conducting at the University of Houston. In Houston, she worked with several acclaimed ensembles, including Mercury Chamber Orchestra, the Houston Symphony Chorus, and the Grammy Award-winning Houston Chamber Choir. She previously taught at the University of West Georgia and led secondary choral programs in Georgia public schools. Hobson-Gallardo earned her BME from Mississippi State University and her MM in choral conducting from Georgia State University. She has also performed with professional ensembles such as the Atlanta Symphony Chorus and Chamber Chorus.

Rehearsal Renovation: Culture-Building “Power Tools”

Choral directors hold substantial power. How they leverage that power with their singers has direct implications for choral culture. This session examines how directors can wield power responsibly to shape positive choral experiences for singers. Presenters will suggest three approaches to sharing power with students in the classroom, recommending strategies for developing trust with singers through activities that build relational capital. They propose methods for soliciting singers’ experiences and ideas, effectively positioning the director and the singers on the same team. They suggest expanding definitions of success to build positive energy

and buy-in from singers. Ultimately, careful attention to “power tools” in the rehearsal room enables directors to humanize singers, uplift their experiences and ideas, and promote a spirit of belonging in their programs.

Margaret Winchell will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 35.



Evan Stoor is a proud New Mexico native who graduated from New Mexico State University with a BME before beginning his career teaching both middle and high school choir. Stoor received an MM in choral conducting at Western Michigan University and began his first year as a PhD student in music education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2022. His doctoral dissertation focuses on the measurement and application of empathy in the choral rehearsal. Stoor is an active choral conductor, choral singer, and guest clinician, and he currently conducts the Youth Chorale of the Central Illinois Youth Chorus organization.

Resonating Roots: Women Composers from Latin America

Latin American contemporary women composers are reshaping the choral and vocal repertoire by blending diverse musical traditions with contemporary techniques. Their works draw from regional, folk, and pre-Hispanic roots, creating compositions that reflect cultural identity and artists’ depth of inspiration. This session features composers such as Diana Syrse, María Granillo, Gisela Crespo, and others whose pieces or arrangements incorporate indigenous instruments and inspirational material, pedagogical strategies, and traditional songs reimaged for SATB and treble choirs. Participants will explore new repertoire focuses on cultural, traditional influence and popular choral music, programming ideas, and inclusive approaches that elevate diverse voices in academic, professional, and community contexts.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions



Citlalli Gonzalez Del Valle is a master's student in the conducting program at the University of Northern Colorado. She is a professional soloist, choir singer, and conductor with experience in liturgical and Mexican choral music. She studied for a BM at Universidad de las Americas Puebla, where she was awarded with an artistic scholarship as a singer in the Chamber Choir. She has conducted in Mexico and Italy in the Orquesta Camerata Anima Tonalli (Bologna, 2024), at the Universidad de las Americas Puebla Orchestra (Puebla, 2021–2023), and has also been principal conductor and assistant of the Chamber Choir of the Universidad de las Americas Puebla (Puebla, 2022–2023). She is currently the assistant conductor in the Chamber Choir at the University of Northern Colorado.

The Silent Choral Rehearsal: Rehearsing Without Words

We often hear the advice to “speak less” in rehearsals to allow more time for actual music making, but what if you didn't speak at all? This interactive session challenges traditional rehearsal methods by demonstrating a completely silent choral rehearsal. Audience members will actively participate as a peer ensemble while Dr. Jay Dougherty leads a short rehearsal using only gesture, facial expression, and nonverbal cues, revealing how silence can heighten focus, encourage deeper listening, and foster ensemble independence. Following the demonstration, attendees will engage in a discussion to analyze what worked, what challenges arose, and how these techniques can be adapted for daily rehearsals. Learn how conducting without words can sharpen musicianship, reduce verbal clutter, and create a more immersive, efficient, and artistically rich choral environment.

Jay Dougherty is the performing arts department chair and director of choral activities at Drury University in



Springfield, Missouri. He holds a DMA in choral conducting and an MM in choral conducting from the University of Colorado Boulder, and a BME from Brigham Young University, Provo. Dougherty is an in-demand coach and clinician for quartets and choruses around the world, a prolific arranger and composer with more than one hundred arrangements, compositions, and publications in print across various styles—including barbershop, choral, and contemporary a cappella—and a frequent presenter, having delivered more than one hundred conference sessions worldwide. A proud father of five daughters, he resides in Nixa, Missouri, with his bride of more than twenty years, Megan.

There's No Place Like Tone

Learn how to implement voice-building techniques in the classroom and how to transfer these techniques to your music. Heather Orr will demonstrate a systematic approach to teaching breath management and vocal technique so that you can maximize your choir's true potential.



Heather Orr serves as assistant director of choral activities at Texas A&M University, where she conducts the freshman ensembles *Bella Voce* and *Legacy Voices*. Formerly head choir director at Montgomery High School, she enjoyed a distinguished thirty-year career in public school music education. Her choirs performed at TMEA (2024, 2018, 2010, 2005); National ACDA (2025, 2021, 2011); and SWACDA (2022, 2018). Orr holds degrees from The Ohio State University and Heidelberg College and is pursuing a doctorate in music education. Her honors include the TCDA Choral Excellence Award, UIL Sponsor Excellence Award, and recognition as a two-time Grammy Music Educator semifinalist. She has been married for thirty-two years and is the proud mother of four adult children.

Voces de México: Authentic Perspectives from the Homeland

This session, developed in collaboration with University of Northern Colorado graduate students from Mexico, is designed to thoughtfully and authentically represent the multifaceted heritage of the choral music from their homeland and to inspire American directors to confidently program this repertoire for their ensembles. Music has been selected to sensitively represent a cultural legacy that is rich, diverse, and expansive. A historical context of these works will be discussed, with salient characteristics and rehearsal/programming strategies. Musical examples will be provided along with programming aids and resources. The material is organized in four segments: 1. Indigenous language of indigenous people, 2. Novohispanic music, 3. Contemporary Mexican composers, 4. Mexican Folk Music.

Jill Burgett will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 148.



Sergio Castro Medina is a Mexican conductor, violist, and cultural manager who is currently pursuing a doctorate in orchestral and choral conducting at the University of Northern Colorado. At UNC he serves as assistant conductor of the Symphony Orchestra, graduate assistant for Coro Polaris, and performs with the Chamber Choir, where he has also conducted selected works. He is founder and artistic director of Camerata Anima Tonalli Orchestra, dedicated to innovative and crosscultural programming. Previously, he was general director of cultural affairs at Universidad de las Américas Puebla, where he directed ensembles, implemented the Artistic Scholarship Program, and produced archival revivals with Mexican

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Composer-in-Residence (World Premiere): Ēriks Ešenvalds

April 17-18, 2027

Principal Conductor & Composer-in-Residence: Rollo Dilworth
Guest Conductor: Brandon Boyd

HARMONY HONORS INVITATIONAL (Symphony Orchestra + Massed Choir)

April 25-27, 2027

Principal Conductor: Jason Max Ferdinand

MASTERWORK PREMIERES

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Creation (Composer-in-Residence: Jocelyn Hagen, Carnegie Hall Premiere)

Wellspring! The Way of Water (Composers-in-Residence: Alexander & Joanna Forbes L'Estrange, North American Premiere)

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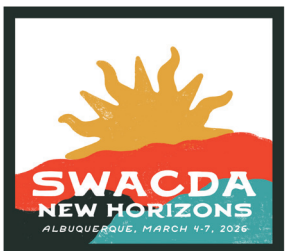


2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Interest Sessions

musicologist Luisa Vilar. As a violist, he performs with the Gioia Quartet, touring internationally with an emphasis on Mexican repertoire.

Citlalli Gonzalez Del Valle will be a clinician for this session. Her photo and bio are on page 168.



2026 ACDA Southwestern Region Conference

Honor Choir Conductors

4th-6th Grade Treble



Elizabeth Hogan is a conductor, educator, and community builder whose work spans education, sacred music, and nonprofit leadership. She is the artistic director of Bel Canto Women's Chorus in St. Louis, MO; sings with the professional women's ensemble mirabai; and serves as director of Gathering Kids at The Gathering United Methodist Church. In 2021 she founded Elevated Harmonics Studio, offering music lessons, professional development, and educator coaching. Hogan previously served as assistant professor of music education at Southeast Missouri State University. Her leadership includes roles as executive director of the St. Louis Christmas Carols Association and deputy director of the St. Louis Children's Choirs. She holds a PhD from the University of Missouri and an MM from Michigan State University.

Eastern, Midwestern, and Southwestern Regions, as well as performances at the White House and with universities in Brazil and Malaysia. He has headlined ACDA conferences in multiple states and held residencies at institutions across the United States and abroad. Also an active composer, his works are published by Gentry, Santa Barbara, Alliance, and MusicSpoke. A lifetime member of ACDA and past president of the Southern Region, Packwood continues to influence the profession as a conductor, educator, composer, and consultant.

7th-9th Grade Treble



Elizabeth Núñez is creative director of the award-winning Young People's Chorus of New York City, where since 2004 she has shaped programs and led choruses in performances across New York City, on national television, and internationally. She has directed all-state honor choirs, the 2016 OAKE National Children's Honor Choir, and led YPC as a featured choir at the 2020 Eastern ACDA Region Conference. Núñez is the founding artistic director of the SoHarmoniums Women's Choir and creator of WIT: Women Inspiring Tomorrow, a mentoring program connecting YPC's high school girls with alumnae and professional women. She earned music education degrees from Lee University and the University of Oklahoma, receiving Lee's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2017. She serves on the Chorus America Board of Directors.

7th-9th Grade Tenor Bass



Gary Packwood is recognized internationally as a conductor, pedagogue, author, and clinician. He has conducted all-state and honor choirs in forty states, led large festival choirs nationwide, and appeared four times at Carnegie Hall. His conducting highlights include ACDA regional conferences in the Northwest,

10th-11th Grade Mixed



Rollo Dilworth is vice dean and professor of choral music education at Temple University's Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts, where he has taught since 2009. He conducts the Temple

University Singing Owls, serves as artistic director of Singing City, and leads the Philadelphia All-City High School Chorus. He has over two hundred published choral works, many in the *Henry Leck Creating Artistry Series* with Hal Leonard. In demand nationally and internationally, he is a frequent conductor of all-state, honor, festival, and professional choirs. His research and presentations focus on African American choral music, composition and arranging, social justice, social-emotional learning, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dilworth serves on the boards of Chorus America, NCCO, and the Presser Foundation.

12th Grade Mixed



Elena Sharkova, a native of St. Petersburg, holds a graduate degree in conducting from the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory, and has built an international reputation as a versatile conductor, clinician, and educator. Since 1999 she has served as chorus master of Symphony San Jose, preparing over fifty major works for distinguished conductors and leading annual orchestral and choral programs. As artistic director of Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley since 2004, she has expanded the program to 250 singers, performed at the 2019 ACDA National Conference, toured eighteen countries, won two international gold medals, and recorded at Carnegie Hall. Sharkova has guest conducted ensembles including the BBC Singers and Seraphic Fire, and has led festival and all-state choirs worldwide. She has been a member of the World Choir Council since 2015.

High School Jazz



Christine Helferich Guter is a renowned jazz vocalist, studio singer, and educator based in Los Angeles. Her studio credits include dozens of Hollywood soundtracks such as Disney's *Wish*, *Hocus*

Pocus 2, *Dr. Strange and the Multiverse of Madness*, *Mulan*, *Star Wars: Rogue One*, *Jurassic World*, and *Sing!* Guter is in demand internationally as a lecturer, adjudicator, and conductor of all-state jazz and honor choirs. She serves on the board of Jazz Education Abroad, is the jazz voice instructor for the Thailand Jazz Workshop, and is a teaching artist on the Imagineering Campus at Disneyland. In 2018 she received *DownBeat* Magazine's Jazz Education Achievement Award. She is currently director of vocal jazz at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music, California State University Long Beach, where she leads the award-winning ensemble Pacific Standard Time.

Collegiate



Jonathan Talberg, recipient of the California MEA's President's Award for extraordinary accomplishments in music education, is director of choral activities at California State University Long

Beach's Bob Cole Conservatory, where he conducts the internationally acclaimed Chamber Choir and University Choir. He holds the Frank Pooler Endowed Chair as the Conservatory's first endowed professor. Under his leadership, the Chamber Choir has won top prizes at the Austrian Spittal International Choir Festival and the prestigious Choir of the World competition in Wales, and has performed with ensembles ranging from the Kronos Quartet and Pacific Symphony to the Rolling Stones. Talberg is a frequent conductor of all-state and national honor choirs. He is also an editor for Pavane Publishing and a dedicated mentor.