

Robert Shaw Award Reception for Dr. Charlene Archibeque

The American Choral Directors Association is pleased to award its highest honor, The Robert Shaw Choral Award, to a choral leader who has made unusual contributions to the art of choral music. The recipient is chosen by the ACDA Past Presidents' Council from a pool of nominees that come from the ACDA membership. The Robert Shaw Choral Award is presented during each National Conference.

Dr. Charlene Archibeque is considered one of America's foremost choral conductors and teachers. She was the first woman to earn the DMA in Choral Conducting (University of Colorado, 1969) and served for thirty-five years as director of choral activities at San Jose State University, where she trained hundreds of today's choral conductors and mentored over eighty master's students. The world-renowned SJSU Choraliers took sixteen tours abroad, winning seven international competitions and performing in major music halls. Choirs under Dr. Archibeque's direction have performed at twenty-five state, regional, and national ACDA conferences. Her honors include receiving the 2008 Howard Swan Award presented by the California Choral Directors Association, the 2013 Excellence in Choral Music Award presented by the University of Colorado, being named Outstanding Alumna at the University of Colorado, and receiving both of San Jose State's highest honors: Outstanding Professor and President's Scholar.

Dr. Archibeque has conducted and prepared over 150 major choral works with orchestras and performs music from all historical periods. She has conducted hundreds of honor, festival, and all-state choirs in forty-six US states and six Canadian provinces. She has served as headliner for state, regional, and national ACDA, MENC, and MEA conferences. Dr. Archibeque holds degrees from the University of Michigan, San Diego State, and the University of Colorado. She is editor of the Charlene Archibeque Choral Series with Santa Barbara Music Publishers.

Photos courtesy of Margie Camp and André Thomas.



Charlene Archibeque speaking at the award reception in the Moody Performance Hall on Friday, March 21.



Charlene with ACDA Vice President Edith Copley. "It was my honor to present the Robert Shaw Choral Award to Dr. Charlene Archibeque on Thursday and Friday nights in the Winspear Opera House. She is a dear friend and an incredible musician, teacher, conductor, and clinician who has been an inspiration to her students and choral colleagues for decades."



Lou De La Rosa (Western ACDA Region Past President) shared, "As a graduate of her program, I experienced the love that Charlene holds for her choir members, instilling in us a love for the literature; respect for audiences, peers, clinicians and adjudicators; and a drive for excellence in performance and scholarship. She is the epitome of a lifelong learner, always taking notes as she attends interest sessions and performances and posing specific questions to her seatmates afterward to hear other viewpoints."



Charlene Archibeque with past Robert Shaw Choral Award winners, André Thomas (2017) and Rodney Eichenberger (2021)



ACDA President-Elect Pearl Shangkuan, Anton Armstrong, Charlene Archibeque, and ACDA Past President André Thomas



Presenters (L to R): Former student Lou De La Rosa, CCDA President-Elect Kristina Nakagawa, Trent Patterson with André Thomas, CCDA Past President Jeffrey Benson, and daughter, Melissa, kneeling beside Charlene.



Women in choral music attending the reception, many crediting Charlene Archibeque with blazing the path for them.

An Interview with the 2019 National Legacy Directors Chorus Conductors

Compiled by Amanda Bumgarner

Editor's Note: This article was originally published in December 2019 as part of the ACDA sixtieth anniversary series. It has been condensed for this reprint to highlight the interview with Charlene Archibeque, winner of the 2025 Robert Shaw Award, which was presented at the 2025 ACDA National Conference in Dallas, Texas.

The National Legacy Directors Chorus was an exciting collaboration between eleven iconic conductors and an intergenerational chorus at the 2019 ACDA National Conference in Kansas City, Kansas. All eleven conductors received the same list of questions and chose several to respond to for this article. Note that not all conductors chose to participate in the interview. The responses are presented in alphabetical order.



Charlene Archibeque was the first woman to receive the doctorate of musical arts in choral conducting. She prepared hundreds of choral directors and mentored over eighty master's students during her thirty-five-year tenure at San Jose State University. SJSU choirs performed for twenty-five professional conferences, and won seven international competitions, including Wales, Tallin, and Spittal. She has conducted festival choirs, honor choirs, and all-state choirs in forty-six states and six Canadian provinces.

Briefly describe the experience of participating in ACDA's Legacy Conductors Choir.

What an honor to be asked to be one of the conductors of the Legacy Conductor Choir! Needless to say, I was happy to be one of the women conductors and happy to still be able to represent this age group—still able to walk, see, hear, and conduct! I was thankful that so many fine singers/conductors were willing to miss so many interest sessions at the convention to take part in this experiment and hope that the experience was rewarding enough to merit their time and dedication! It was fascinating to be able to be with the other conductors—my long-time friends—and observe again the elements of their personalities, conducting, and rehearsal techniques that have put their individual stamp on their work throughout their careers.

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

Two changes that have made a huge difference in audience enjoyment: the incorporation of World Music in programming and the use of choreography and multimedia in concerts. The change that causes me the most discomfort: the tendency to only program the “latest fad composers.” This results in concerts lacking in variety, strength, and often emotional satisfaction.

Not all that is new is great, and much that is new is derivative. I long for programs that are centered on great choral music of all historical periods, programs that are carefully thought out with a unifying thread but that are totally diversified in musical style, textual content, rhythmic variety, visual enhancement, and a true communion with the audience. I worry somewhat at the current trend of turning concerts into political and social events, music selected for its “agenda.”

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

I always remember Charles Hirt saying he wouldn't change his career for any other and that he was happier in choral music than any of his friends in other professions. I feel the same way: lucky to have landed where I did and immensely happy every time I am in front of a choir or working with choral conductors.

What do you want your legacy to be?

I want my life to have touched others in positive ways. I hope that I have encouraged people to strive for excellence in all aspects of their lives and that the joy we have known together in making great music will sustain and give direction to them. I continue to want to help choral directors be more efficient, more effective, better conductors, and better communicators of the choral art.

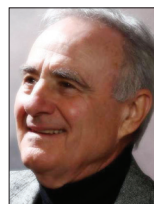
Describe your most important musical mentors in terms of how they contributed to your professional development.

I was fortunate to have many fine musical mentors starting with my piano teachers as a child and my high school piano teacher, who taught me the great composers and harmony lessons in the summer; Rosemarie Grentzer at Oberlin who taught me to memorize the Harvard Dictionary and respect for musical terms; and my theory teachers who got excited at chord pro-

gressions; Sally Monsour at the U. of Michigan who showed me personality in the choral classroom—and again at Colorado when she helped me learn chironomy and pointed out that a bright e vowel can be just as pretty as a dark, covered e. Maynard Klein, my choral director at U of M, who made us write in the text translation in every piece before we rehearsed it and made me feel that he was always looking right at me in rehearsal. Lynn Whitten was my mentor for my doctorate: he cleaned up my conducting and encouraged me to do deep research, along with Warner Imig who shared some vocal secrets.

What do you miss most about your job(s) after retirement, and why?

What I miss most in retirement is being around young people and being able to make beautiful music happen.



Eph Ehly has conducted over eighty all-state choirs and more than 600 festival ensembles. As a conductor, author, lecturer, and clinician he has appeared in forty-eight states and around the world. Ehly retired from the Conservatory of Music, University of Missouri-Kansas City, after twenty-seven years of service. He has additionally served at the University of Oklahoma and University of New Mexico. Ehly is the recipient of numerous teaching and performance excellence awards and grants.

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

Positive: The quality of the performances has continued to improve quite remarkably. Exploration of music from distant and different cultures has increased dramatically. There is evidence of outstanding teaching in the preparation of young music educators. Communication of professional services, namely ACDA and State CDAs, has increased greatly and communication

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is enhanced.

Negative: There appears to be a preponderance of performances of non-traditional contemporary literature that is to be appreciated more for its theoretical compositional components than for a more humanitarian message. It's good to explore any and all new compositional styles, but not at the expense of our great heritage of literature that has spoken to generations of peoples from the Renaissance to the present.

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

I would be kinder, gentler, and more sympathetic to the less talented and less popular student. I would give more time and attention to those in need. I would be

a more thoughtful mentor to the younger, less experienced teachers and colleagues around me.

What is the best professional advice you were given early in your career?

Look for what's NOT in the score—i.e., seek the Original Source of Inspiration.

—John Finley Williamson

Let your gentleness be evident to all.

— Phil. 4:4

Be joyful always...give thanks in all circumstances.

— 1 Thes. 5:16-17



Legacy Conductors with Accompanist Kevin Tison. Conductors (L-R): Jerry McCoy, Ann Howard Jones, Donald Neuen, Charlene Archibeque, Rodney Eichenberger, Sigrid Johnson, Albert McNeil, Kenneth Fulton, Dale Warland, William Hatcher, Eph Ehly

You can't do too much, but you can do too many.

—George Lynn

How did you keep yourself fresh and enthusiastic during your career?

Maintain a positive attitude in spite of any and all circumstances. Stop teaching and start sharing. Choose the subject/music that excites you. Exercise. Maintain a healthy relationship with family, colleagues, friends, and neighbors. Look for the extra in the ordinary. Consider every waking moment an adventure in living.



Rodney Eichenberger is professor emeritus at the Florida State University. He joined ACDA in the early sixties and served as the local chair of the last ACDA convention in conjunction with MENC in 1968. He served as Northwest Region president from 1969 to 1973. He led graduate conducting programs at the University of Washington, the University of Southern California, and the Florida State University. His conducting DVDs are widely used in university conducting classes.

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

When I first immersed myself in the world of choral music there were some outstanding choirs in the United States; now there they are all around us and at all levels. One of the most significant developments is that musicianship of conductors and singers has multiplied sevenfold.

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

Never could I have dreamed when I joined the high school choir in the second semester of my junior year that I might have the professional career I have enjoyed. I believe the fact that I knew so little when

my colleagues with years of experience knew so much actually made me a better teacher, because I have always understood the student who hasn't experienced "it" yet. I have enjoyed so many exhilarating times in my life as a singer and conductor that it's difficult to list the most significant ones, but certainly conducting the Brahms *German Requiem* in the Sydney Opera House was among them.



Kenneth Fulton was alumni professor of choral studies at LSU for twenty-seven years, where he conducted the LSU A Cappella Choir and produced over one hundred graduates of advanced degrees in choral conducting. He was named one of LSU's distinguished professors and received the Sanders Alumni Professorship. Fulton conducted honor festival choruses, master classes, and conductor/teacher workshops in forty-seven states. He is a past president of the Southern ACDA Region, Texas ACDA, and Louisiana ACDA.

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

The diversity of what we produce—so many more groups and music of all kinds that touch so many. Again, our collective interest in each other across cultures and peoples.

What choral trends, if any, do you wish were different and why?

We are living in an age where "new" music is readily available and accessible through the internet and the traditional sources. There are so many new and wonderful composers writing music that is challenging, clever, poignant—all of those qualities that appeal to our musical, intellectual, and aesthetic curiosities. And we can't wait to do them all! I get it, and I've been there myself. But I am concerned about "balance" in the longest and richest repertoire base of all the musical arts

stretching back many centuries in our programming. (Band conductors would love to have our repertoire base!)

In the hundreds of performances I've attended in the past ten years, the number of pre-1900 works performed seems to me to be far fewer than in the past (this is an impression and certainly not the result of any "hard" research). So I guess that I'm encouraging our professional responsibility, in this new age of musical accessibility, to explore and promote ways of ensuring the continued exploration in performance that continues to celebrate this wonderful repertoire legacy. At the very least, we should be constantly mindful and careful in our programming decisions to encourage performances that are inclusive and representative of that legacy.



William Hatcher resides in Rancho Bernardo, California, having retired after forty-three years of conducting and teaching choral music. He was the national president of ACDA from 1991 to 1993 and served as chair of the ACDA Endowment Trust. He was the recipient of the Howard Swan Award for lifetime achievement by the California ACDA and received the Weston Noble Award for Lifetime Achievement by North Central ACDA.

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

The greater attention to and study of multicultural music is a very positive contribution to choral literature, but I am concerned that our traditional western literature might be slighted. I especially grieve the diminishing of music training in our public and private schools. We have, in a sense, lost generations of people who were once given the fundamentals of musicianship and a love of singing.

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

I was gratified to be chosen to teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels as early as I did, but I regret not furthering my graduate study. And, I did not fully appreciate and study the music of women composers whose works I believe are more deserving of attention, such as Ethyl Smyth, Thea Musgrave, Amy Beach, Judith Weir, and Carol E. Barnett.

What do you miss most about your job(s) after retirement?

Since retiring from full-time university teaching, I have served as a guest professor at different campuses and have directed church music programs for a number of years. I truly miss the singers, the curious ones, the smiles on their faces after performing, the thrill of getting a phrase just right, the deep power of a wonderful anthem, and the absolute change we all would feel in making good music. I would love to do the Bach *B Minor Mass* and the Britten *War Requiem* one more time!



Ann Howard Jones is professor emerita of music at Boston University. From 1981 to 1996, Jones was the assistant to the late conductor Robert Shaw with the Atlanta Symphony Choruses and the Robert Shaw Institute. She received the Robert Shaw Choral Award from ACDA (2011), the Distinguished Service to the Profession Award from Chorus America (2014), and the Metcalf Teaching Award from Boston University (2003).

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

When I stop to think about my professional life, there are so many things that have happened that I would neither have predicted nor planned for my-

self that I am less inclined to think about the things I would change than to feel overcome with gratitude for the chances I have had, for the confidence others have had in me, for the great and inspiring students and colleagues with whom I have worked, and for the mentors who helped shape my musical life.

Implied in the question is the premise that I had some kind of grand plan in mind when this whole thing started. The fact is, at the end of the master's degree, I applied for my first job, a sabbatical replacement. From then on and after marriage, I had one job after another (many part time) and went from one institution to another with my administrator husband, had a Fulbright professorship to Brazil, finished the DMA; and for the last fifteen to twenty years until retirement in 2016, my professional life was anchored by my work with Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus-

es and my professorship at Boston University. Would I have planned it that way? Probably not. Would I have changed any of it? At the time, perhaps. In hindsight, it all worked out very well.

What is the most outstanding choral music experience you recall in your life?

It is hard to discount any of the wonderful music we had the opportunity to make under Robert Shaw. Perhaps one of the most meaningful was the performance of the 9th Symphony of Beethoven in the Schauspielhaus in East Berlin before the Berlin Wall came down. The audience was in tears, and many in the chorus were choking back emotions while trying to sing "Freude" and "Brüder" in that context.



Legacy conductors onstage with the choir.

An Interview with the 2019 National Legacy Directors Chorus Conductors

One performance among many that I will always cherish from my time at Boston University was the performance of the “War Requiem” of Benjamin Britten for the Eastern Division conference of ACDA. In a crowded Cathedral of the Holy Cross, that monumental work moved the audience so that at the end of the performance, there was total and complete silence. I stood there quietly and no one moved for the longest time. Very powerful.



Jerry McCoy is regents professor of music emeritus for the University of North Texas, where between 2000 and 2015 he led the UNT choral program to national and international acclaim while serving as director of choral studies and conductor of the A Cappella Choir. From 2007 to 2015, McCoy served as a member of the ACDA National Executive Committee, and he was national president from 2009 to 2011.

This legacy conductor interview was part six in a series of articles published in *Choral Journal* in 2019 during ACDA's sixtieth anniversary year. Below is a list of all six parts and the issue month where you can read those articles in full.

June/July 2019, Part 1 - “ACDA Celebrates 20th Anniversary in 1979—Observations from Six Choral Conductors”

August 2019, Part 2 - “ACDA's 40-Year Journey (1959-1999)” by Russell Mathis

September 2019, Part 3 - “Interviews Through the Years: A Selection of Excerpts from *Choral Journal* Interview Articles” (Part 1 of 2)

October 2019, Part 4 - “Interviews Through the Years: A Selection of Excerpts from *Choral Journal* Interview Articles” (Part 2 of 2)

November 2019, Part 5 - “Repertoire Selections from National and Regional Conferences”

December 2019, Part 6 - “Interview with the 2019 National Legacy Directors Chorus Conductors”

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

The availability of the ever-expanding world of choral literature has deeply changed our art form. To experience literature from all sides of the globe deepens our human experience and expands our sense of shared humanity. My only caveat to this is that we also must maintain awareness of the core historical works that first launched our concepts of communal singing.

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

When I began college work back in 1982, I never dreamed I'd advance as far as I have, especially considering I was told by a music education professor that I should do something else with my life because I'd never make it as a conductor/teacher! The one thing I might want to change would be my initial response to that teacher's statement. Although I ultimately finished my BA degree in music and went on to earn my MM and DMA degrees as well as a graduate certificate in voice performance and a professional certificate in music education, that teacher's single comment drove me out of choral music making and study for eight years!

What is the most outstanding choral music experience you recall in your life?

One that first comes to mind happened in New York

City. As a new participant in the Robert Shaw Festival Singers, I was in my first rehearsal with Mr. Shaw in the NYC's Manhattan Center. Mr. Shaw was introduced, we did some vocal warm-ups, and launched into our first rehearsal of Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*—count-singing! Although I'd been in bands for many years as a student, I'd never been taught the techniques of count-singing. As I recall, we sang deeply into the work in this manner. After no more than six to eight minutes of this activity, all my concepts of unity of ensemble, unity of rhythmic singing, unity of musical expression, unity of tuning, simultaneity of and dialogue between voice lines were upended. That week-long experience reformatted my concepts of what I taught and how I approached choral music. What I learned that week still lies at the core of my work as a conductor/teacher/coach.



Donald Neuen retired in 2014 as distinguished professor of music/conducting emeritus after serving twenty years on the UCLA faculty. He was previously director of choral activities for the Eastman School of Music for twelve years. Beginning in 1963, Neuen held choral positions with the Universities of Wisconsin, Tennessee, Georgia State, and Ball State. He authored *Choral Concepts*, a choral conducting textbook. In 2017, Neuen retired as the conductor of the internationally televised Hour of Power Choir.

What do you think are the most striking changes (positive or negative) in choral music today?

I'm sorry to see the gradual demise of quality traditional church music in many areas nationwide, and a lessening of the Palestrina-to-Britten legacy in the programming of many school, university, and community choirs. Also, somewhat lacking, seems to be the consistent effort of teaching beautifully mature "soloistic vocal tone quality"—as established so perfectly by Robert Shaw and Roger Wagner.

What, if anything, would you change about your professional life?

I would have been far greater involved, on a consistent basis, in ACDA—and a closer colleague with other choral conductors. Having worked until I was in my eighties, I think I probably climbed most of the mountains that God had planned for me.

What is the best professional advice you were given early in your career?

From Robert Shaw: "90% will never be good enough."



Dale Warland has made an indelible impression on contemporary choral music, nationally and internationally. After disbanding the Dale Warland Singers in 2004, he served as music director of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra Chorale and the Minnesota Beethoven Festival Chorale. Warland's many honors include awards from ASCAP, the McKnight Foundation, Chorus America, and a Grammy nomination. In 2012 he was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame.

How did you keep yourself fresh and enthusiastic during your career?

- A. Primarily through an ongoing effort of seeking out and commissioning, inspiring "new" choral works from emerging and established composers.
- B. By seeking out choral works of the highest quality from times past that have been neglected or have fallen off the radar and that need to be "kept alive" and enjoyed by choirs and audiences far and wide. 