

The ACDA Soprano-Alto Choirs National Commission Consortium

by Erin Plisco

The ACDA Soprano-Alto Choirs National Commission Consortium is a long-standing collaborative initiative through which treble choirs pool financial and artistic resources to commission new works specifically designed for soprano-alto ensembles. By distributing the cost of commissioning across many participating ensembles, the consortium makes the creation of high-quality new repertoire both feasible and accessible, while ensuring that the resulting works enter immediate and widespread performance circulation.

Founded in 2007 by Debra Spurgeon, then the ACDA SSAA R&R chair, the consortium was conceived to address the relative scarcity of advanced, high-quality repertoire for treble choirs. Since its inception, the consortium has convened nearly every year, continuing under the leadership of Iris S. Levine and later Phillip Swan, with a brief pause in 2020 through 2023. Participating directors and ensembles contribute a commission fee, which grants them access to and performance rights for the works created through that specific consortium cycle.

At its core, the consortium exists to promote the creation of new treble choir literature by established composers while providing choirs with an affordable and meaningful opportunity to engage directly in the commissioning process. By focusing exclusively on soprano-alto choirs, the consortium addresses a long-standing imbalance in the availability of repertoire and affirms the artistic legitimacy of treble ensembles across educational and community contexts.

Commissioned Works, 2007–2019

The ACDA Soprano-Alto (formerly Women's/SSAA) Choirs Consortium has generated a substantial and stylistically diverse body of repertoire by many of today's leading choral composers. Following is a list of the commissioned works between 2007 and 2019:

2007 – *Softly, Little Child* by Daniel Gawthrop

2008 – *The Singing Place* by Joan Szymko

2010 – *Tundra* by Ola Gjeilo

2010 – *Reasons for the Perpetuation of Slavery*
by Elizabeth Alexander

2011 – *Moon Goddess* by Jocelyn Hagen

2011 – *Chapo Pou Fanm* by Sydney Guillaume

2011 – *Leshana Haba'a BiYerushalyam*,
arr. Shawn Kirchner

2012 – *Full Fathom Five* by Paul Carey

2012 – *Flare* by Dale Trumbore

2012 – *Carmel Highlands* by Daniel Kallman

2013 – *I Want to Die While You Love Me*
by Rosephanye Powell

2013 – *Yellow Twig of Willow* by Stephen Smith

2013 – *Mother O’ Mine* by Lauren McLaren

2014 – *Truth* by Andrea Ramsey

2014 – *Spring Shall Bloom* by Susan LaBarr

2014 – *A Blessing of Cranes* by Abbie Betinis

2015 – *Patito* by Gabriela Frank

2015 – *Two Friends Like Fireflies* by Joseph Gregorio

2015 – *I Have a Voice* by Moira Smiley

2016 – *At the Heart of Our Stillness* by Kathleen Allan

2016 – *Patterns on the Snow* by Mari Esabel Valverde

2016 – *Rise Up!* by Jake Runestad

2017 – *Fall, Sweet Music* by Eric William Barnum

2017 – *I Am the Wind* by Elaine Hagenberg

2017 – *You Are the Light of the Stars* by Joanne Metcalf

2019 – *Lux Veritatis* by Daniel J. Hall

2019 – *We Are the Ones* by Marie-Claire Saindon

The 2024–2025 Consortium: Scale, Community, and Renewal

The consortium was reactivated in 2024 with the intention of commissioning two to three new works, contingent on participation levels. The response from the choral community far exceeded expectations: more than 130 ensembles from across the United States elected to participate, resulting in an unprecedented thirteen newly commissioned works for treble choirs.

This extraordinary level of participation speaks to the vitality of the ACDA Soprano-Alto community and to a shared, collective commitment to shaping the

future of the repertoire. The scale of the 2024–25 consortium reflects a field-wide recognition that repertoire development is a communal responsibility—one best undertaken collaboratively rather than individually. In this way, the consortium functions not merely as a funding mechanism but as a model of artistic citizenship, fostering connection, shared ownership, and long-term investment in the treble choral tradition.

A defining feature of the 2024–25 consortium was the introduction of two distinct commissioning tracks: one for developing ensembles and one for advanced ensembles. This model was designed to broaden participation and ensure that newly commissioned works address the pedagogical and artistic needs of a wide range of treble choirs.

Developing Ensemble Consortium

- Cristian Grases, *Cha Cha Cha Elemental*
For SS or SSA choir and piano (alto part optional for two-part version)
- Daniel Brinsmead, *Paper Plane*
For SA choir with optional descant and piano
- Sherry Blevins, *To Run in the Wild*
For two-part treble choir and piano
- Tracy Wong, *I Am Here*
For three-part treble choir, piano, and optional audience participation

Advanced Ensemble Consortium

- Ambrož Čopi, *When Wistful Swings Forget to Dream...*
Three songs for SSAA and piano:
I. “Spring Rains”
II. “There Will Come Soft Rains,”
III. “Evening Rain”
- Carlos Cordero, *Thaima*
For SSAA a cappella

- Hyowon Woo, *Sul-lae-don-da* (솔래돈다)
For double SSAA choir with piano
- Jennifer Lucy Cook, *Fair-Weather Friend*
For SSAA a cappella
- Kyle Pederson, *Are You Listening?*
For SSAA with piano and optional soprano saxophone or clarinet
- Laura Jēkabsons, *The Winds*
For unaccompanied SSAA choir, soprano solo, rain stick, and bass drum
- Matthew Lyon Hazzard, *The Redwood*
For SSAA choir and piano
- Melissa Dunphy, *nymphs*
For SSAA choir with piano and güiro
- Reginal Wright, *Songs for the People*
For SSAA choir and piano

Looking Ahead: The 2026–2027 Consortium

Plans are underway for the 2026–27 ACDA Soprano-Alto Choirs National Commission Consortium, continuing the dual-track model for developing and advanced ensembles. The number of works commissioned will again be determined by participation levels, with composers announced by the fall of 2026. Upon completion, each participating choir will receive manuscript copies with the right to reproduce materials for premiere performances, and all ensembles and directors will be acknowledged in the published scores and on the ACDA Soprano-Alto Choirs webpage.

How to Participate

The call for participating choirs will be announced on the Soprano-Alto choirs R&R page and in the ACDA e-newsletter in the coming months. Submit the call for participation for the project of your choice when it becomes available. An invoice will be sent to

the director/organization following the close for participation. The submitting director must be an active, retired, or life member of ACDA in order to participate. For questions, contact Erin Plisco (erinplisco@missouristate.edu).

Concluding Reflection

As choral musicians continue to examine questions of equity, representation, and sustainability within the repertoire, the ACDA Soprano-Alto Choirs National Commission Consortium offers a compelling model for collective action. Its history demonstrates that meaningful repertoire development does not need to rely solely on individual institutions or isolated commissions but can emerge through shared investment and collaborative vision.

The extraordinary participation in the most recent consortium underscores the strength and cohesion of the treble choral community. When more than 130 ensembles commit resources to a single commissioning initiative, the result is a remarkable body of new literature and a reaffirmation of the artistic value of treble choirs at every level. Through its longevity, adaptability, and remarkable recent participation, the ACDA Soprano-Alto Choirs National Commission Consortium stands as a powerful example of how collective action can meaningfully shape the artistic future of choral singing. We look forward to seeing what we can do in 2026 and beyond. ■

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