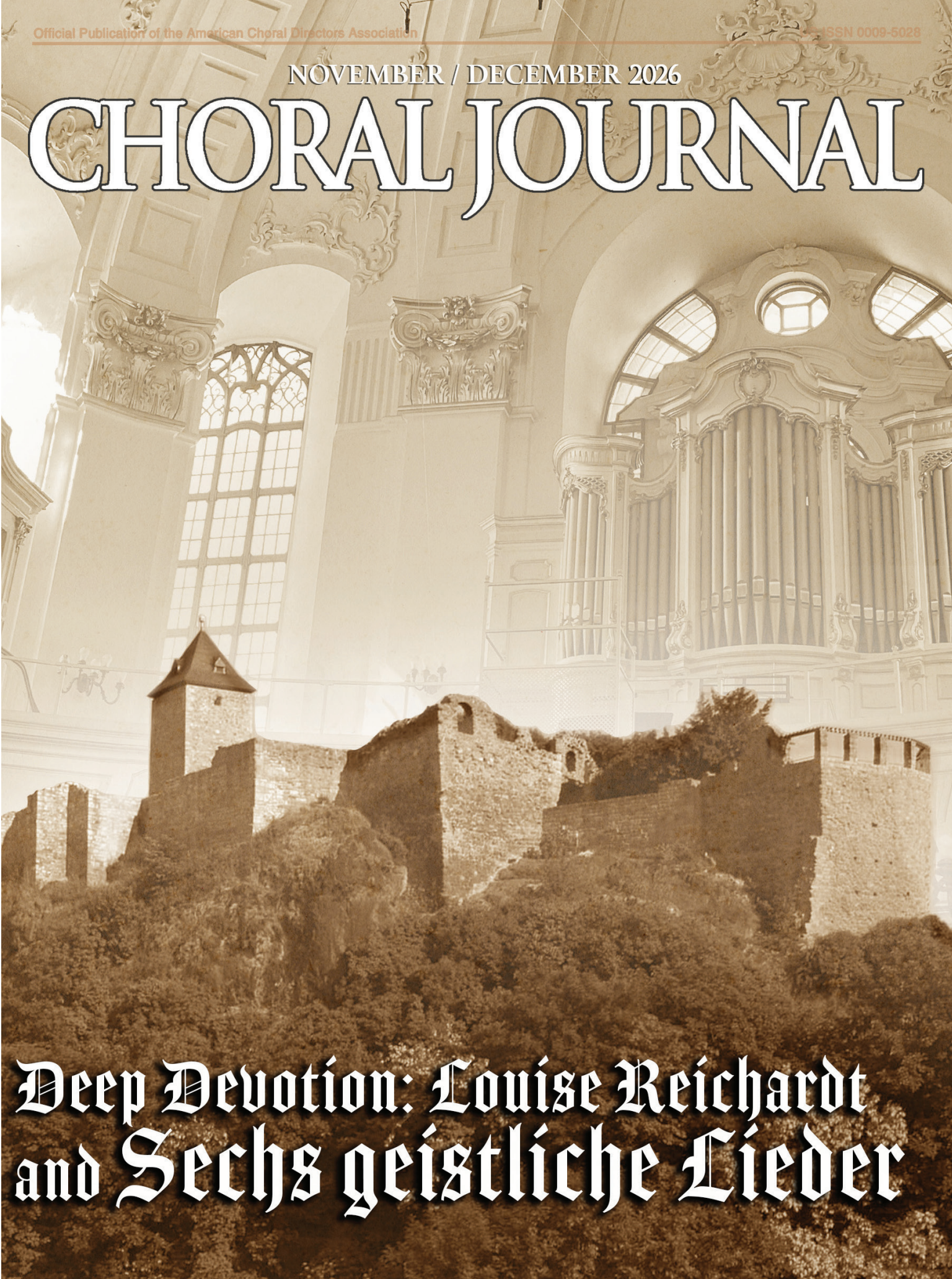
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CHORAL JOURNAL



Deep Devotion: Louise Reichardt and Sechs geistliche Lieder



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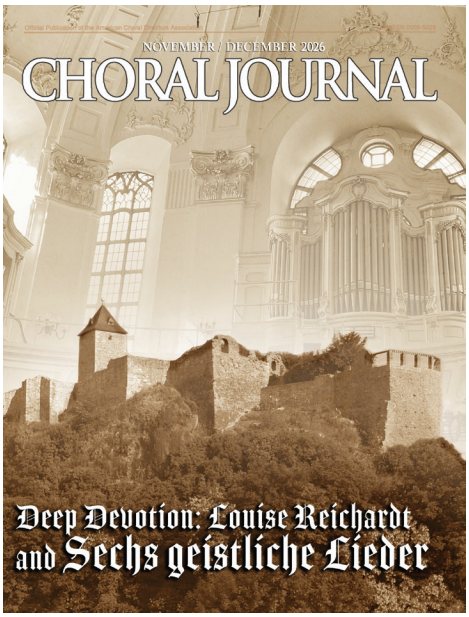
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ADVOCACY STATEMENT

The human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself and its place in the world through the study of and participation in choral music. Singing in a choir produces more active and involved citizens. It affects self-worth in youth and adults. It builds connectivity throughout communities. Society benefits from the aesthetic beauty and community of singers created by choral programs within schools, houses of worship, and community organizations through involved citizenry, connectivity throughout communities, and feelings of personal self-worth. The American Choral Directors Association and its membership resolve to ensure the survival of choral programs for this and future generations by:

Actively voicing support for funding at local, state, and national levels of education and government; collaborating with local and national organizations to ensure the distribution of arts funding data and arts-related activism opportunities; advocating for full access to choral singing and inclusion of all singers in a choral program; and ensuring the distribution of advocacy statements and data regarding choral programs.

From the **Executive Director**



Robyn Hilger

With Gratitude

This time of year invites us to slow down and reflect on the people who make a difference in our lives. As we approach Thanksgiving and the holiday season, I find myself thinking about the extraordinary people who make ACDA what it is.

Yes. YOU. I'm talking about YOU!

It is easy to think about ACDA as our conferences and programs. Those are certainly important, but they are not what makes ACDA special. **What makes ACDA extraordinary is the people who believe in our mission and choose to give something of themselves to advance our work and our profession every day.**

First, I think about our volunteer leaders across the country. Our national leaders, state and region presidents, committee members, conference chairs, repertoire and resources leaders, honor choir adjudicators and countless others who say "yes" when asked to serve. These are people who already have full calendars, demanding jobs, families, and responsibilities of their own. There are many reasons to say no, yet somehow they find the time to organize one more event, mentor, lead a committee, answer one more email, or help someone solve one more problem. Almost all of this work happens quietly, without recognition or applause. But I see it, and I am deeply grateful.

I am equally grateful for you, our members. Whether you have been part of ACDA for decades or have only recently joined us, you bring something valuable to this community. Every time you share an idea, encourage a colleague, attend a gathering, welcome a new member, or advocate for choral music, you strengthen the organization we share.

One of the great privileges of my work is witnessing this generosity firsthand. I get to see people working together across generations, geographic boundaries, and professional experiences, united by a shared belief in the power of singing. It is a remarkable thing that music can bring so many different people together in service of something larger than themselves. How lucky we are to spend our lives this way!

As we enter this season of gratitude, I hope you know that your contributions matter. ACDA is stronger because of your leadership, your participation, your generosity, and your willingness to care about one another.

From all of us at the National Office, thank you for making this organization not simply a professional association, but a community to which we are proud to belong.

Wishing you and those you love a season filled with gratitude, music, joy…and ultimately some well-deserved rest.

Robyn Hilger

From the **President**



Edith Copley

This summer I read an essay by Angela Duckworth in *The New York Times* titled, "I Study Successful People; They Have One Habit in Common." After reading the title, I started thinking what the habit might be: a strong work ethic, communication skills, sense of humor, a good listener, time management, etc. No, the habit that successful people have in common is they're willing to ask for help. Most of us understand the importance of asking for help in a life-or-death scenario—calling 911 for an ambulance or signaling a lifeguard—but we hesitate to admit we may need help to successfully complete a task. Duckworth found that a willingness to ask for help is crucial to achievement.

Growing up on an Iowa farm, I was taught I should see what needs to be done and just do it. However, after many sleepless nights at the beginning of my first year of teaching, I called a former teacher to ask for help with classroom management and repertoire ideas for my junior high choirs. Barack Obama once said, "Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength. It shows you have the courage to admit when you don't know something."

For another positive benefit, Heidi Grant Halverson, a social psychologist and researcher at Princeton, wrote, "There is no better way to give someone the opportunity to feel good about themselves than to ask them for help." So, asking for help will make you more successful and brighten another person's day in the process!

Let's take asking for help into the rehearsal. One of my most influential mentors was Weston Noble at Luther College. Mr. Noble's most successful rehearsal technique, in my opinion, was asking individual members of the choir specific questions. He would ask about dynamics, phrasing, intonation, tone, etc. He already knew the answer, but he wanted us to listen, think, and demonstrate. He asked for our help and our opinions, and it made us feel seen and part of the journey to become a successful choral community.

Alex Haley, the famous author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* said, "Anytime you see a turtle on top of a fence post, you know he had some help." As we enter into the holiday season, one of the busiest times of the year for choral directors, who can you ask for help in order for you to be even more successful?



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From the **Editor**



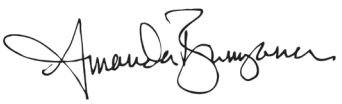
Amanda Bumgarner

As we close another *Choral Journal* calendar year, I want to acknowledge the work of Dr. C. Michael Porter, who has served for many years behind the scenes as a member of the *Choral Journal* editorial board and completes his term in 2026. While the editorial board members' names may not be on the cover of every issue, the product you read each month is a direct result of their work. I am grateful for Michael's service to ACDA and the wider choral profession, particularly sharing his expertise in areas of choral literature and choral history, among others. Michael, along with editorial board member Sean Burton, guest edited a focus issue on the French choral tradition, which was published in September.

The 2026 calendar year featured a variety of topics and several focus issues. January previewed the regional conferences. February and March/April featured parts two and three of the focus section "A Bigger Table," guest edited by Dr. Elizabeth Schauer. Find part one of this section in the November/December 2025 issue. August highlighted the life and legacy of Helmuth Rilling. We also had a wealth of other articles and columns. As always, you can view the annotated *Choral Journal* index online to search for topics and articles from this and previous years. I am indebted to Scott Dorsey for continuing this work for ACDA. This coming January 2027 issue will include a full preview of the interest sessions and performances available at the national conference in Minneapolis, and the February 2027 issue will serve as the conference program book.

This November/December issue features a cover article on German composer and music teacher Louise Reichardt. The images on the cover were taken by the author and show the ruins of a medieval castle in the small village of Giebichenstein in Halle near where the Reichardt family lived; and an organ at St. Michael's Church in Hamburg, where Louise contributed to a festival performance of both Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem* in 1818. Other content in this issue includes an exploration of the choral music of Australia, a collection of R&R content, book reviews, a choral conversation, and an article on finding your teaching identity.

As we look ahead, consider what topic you haven't seen in *Choral Journal* that you might want to write about or encourage a colleague to write about. Our membership is vast, covering a range of interests, expertise, and experience, and everyone has knowledge to share. Reach out to me at abumgarner@acda.org with feedback, questions, or a submission. Cheers to another year of *Choral Journal*!



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DEEP DEVOTION:
Louise Reichardt and *Sechs geistliche Lieder*

CARRIE E. HALL

In early nineteenth-century Germany, women were generally confined to the domestic sphere and expected to prioritize marriage, motherhood, and household management over artistic pursuits. Even so, Louise Reichardt (1779–1826) pursued a professional career as a music teacher, choral director, and composer. She opened a music school for young women in Hamburg and formed a small women's choir decades before Johannes Brahms established the Hamburger Frauenchor in 1859.[1] Reichardt also collaborated with Heinrich Clasing to start the first choral society for amateur men and women in Hamburg and assisted with performances of Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem*. Her multi-movement SSAA composition *Sechs geistliche Lieder* [Six Sacred Songs], published in 1823, was likely inspired by her female voice students.

The year 2026 marks the two hundredth anniversary of Reichardt's death, yet significant research about her is still mostly available only in German. Her Lieder and Italian art songs have received increased attention in recent years, but English-language scholarship about her life journey and choral works is limited. With the help of modern technology, Reichardt's story has become more accessible, revealing a deeper understanding of how a woman in the early nineteenth century built a career in music.[2] This article will provide a biographical background and conclude with an analysis of *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, which represents a juxtaposition of Reichardt's passion for choral music, composition, and teaching.

Carrie E. Hall
Vocal Music Teacher
DeWitt Middle School
Ithaca, New York
carrie.e.hall@gmail.com



Sechs geistliche Lieder unserer besten Dichter, vierstimmig bearbeitet für 2 Sopran- und 2 Altstimmen

Early Years

Louise Caroline Reichardt was born on April 11, 1779, into a prominent musical family in Berlin.[3] Her mother, Juliane Benda Reichardt, was a talented singer, pianist, and composer; her father, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, was a noted violinist and composer who directed operas for Frederick II, King of Prussia. Unfortunately, Juliane died of complications from childbirth when Louise was only four years old.[4] In 1783, Johann married Johanna Alberti Hensler, and the newly blended family included Louise, her younger sister, and Johanna's three children from her first marriage. Johann and Johanna Reichardt had five children of their own, creating a combined family of twelve.

As a young child, Louise survived smallpox, which left prominent facial scarring. When she was older, she was tasked with raising her younger siblings and managing the household because her stepmother had little interest in either activity.[5] Louise's domestic responsibilities placed significant demands on her and fostered the independence she would need to pursue a music career.

Although Louise was born into a musical family, she did not receive a formal music education. Her mother had died, and her father was often away, either fulfilling obligations at court or traveling for other musical opportunities. When Johann was home, his pedagogical philosophy appears to have been largely hands-off. Louise later recalled his approach: "You have often said to me about many things, 'You just start, and I'll help you then.'"[6] She taught herself to play the harp, guitar, lute, and piano; she also had access to her father's extensive music library, which included works by Palestrina, Porpora, Pergolesi, Hasse, Bach, Handel, Mozart, and others.[7] These musical selections formed the foundation of her music aesthetics and instilled in her an appreciation of historical composers.

During extended trips to Paris, Johann grew sympathetic to the French Revolution and began speaking openly about his disapproval of monarchical governments.[8] In 1794, Johann was dismissed from his kapellmeister position for his political views, and the Reichardt family was suddenly left without a stable income. Two years later, Johann was pardoned and appointed director of a salt mine near Halle, restoring much-needed financial security. The family relocated to a small village just north of Halle called Giebichenstein, which was by the ruins of a medieval castle along the Saale River.[9] Their residence soon became a gathering place for poets, musicians, and philosophers, and was known as the "Hostel of Romanticism." The poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was among its guests; he described the Reichardt estate as *Dichter-Paradis*, or "Poet's Paradise."[10]

For fifteen-year-old Louise, the home became more than a place to live; it was an intellectual and artistic hub that nurtured her love of learning and music. She assisted her father with hosting duties and actively participated in discussions with guests—an opportunity not afforded to most young women her age. Evening performances offered Louise the opportunity to experience excellent music making by her father and visiting musicians, and to hear the works from Johann's extensive music library come to life. Although she was not permitted to perform in public, she was allowed to participate in these evening performances at home. It was noted that "all of Reichardt's daughters were gifted with beautiful voices; Louise's beautiful, very extensive soprano attracted a lot of attention from an early age."[11] One winter, she traveled with her father to Berlin so she could take voice lessons and have formal training. Unfortunately, she developed a lingering cough during the trip and was unable to benefit from the opportunity.[12]

During her time at Giebichenstein, Louise also began composing folk and art songs. Her future brother-in-law, Henrich Steffens, noted, "the songs she composed had something entirely unique about them and were by no means to be regarded as echoes of her father's."[13] Johann was a strong supporter of her work; four of her first songs were included in the 1800 publication *XII Deutsche Lieder von Johann Friedrich Reichardt und dessen Tochter Louise Reichardt* [XII German Songs by Johann Friedrich Reichardt and his daughter Louise Reichardt].[14] Researcher Iris Boffo-Stetter notes: "it is unlikely that another example can be found in the literature of that time of an artist father or a father at all recognizing his composing daughter in this way."[15] Johann continued to speak positively of his daughter's compositions; in an 1806 letter he praised one of her art songs, writing that she had set it "very beautifully and simply" and that "every stanza and every word fits the melody perfectly."[16]

Trouble in Dichter-Paradis

Between 1800 and 1803, Louise was engaged twice, but tragically both suitors died before the wedding day.[17] Heartbroken, she abandoned her desire to marry, devoting herself instead to her family. A few years later, her life was dramatically changed by the Napoleonic Wars. Johann was a vocal opponent of Napoleon and wrote popular publications critical of the dictator's leadership.[18] Napoleon demanded punishment of the professeur de musique, and in 1806, following the defeat of the Prussian army, the estate in Giebichenstein was attacked.[19] The Reichardt family fled to Berlin. In 1807, Louise, her stepmother, and her siblings returned to Giebichenstein to find their beloved home destroyed. Johann had continued north to aid the Prussian resistance.

Now twenty-eight years old, Louise felt a responsibility to financially support her family in her father's absence. She made handicrafts with her sisters and taught singing lessons to earn money.[20] She also formed small choral ensembles that performed Handel's *Messiah*, Bach chorales, and old Italian church music.[21] In 1807 she wrote to her father:

> I've gathered a bunch of all the sweetest girls here, two of whom come to me every morning and all of them on Tuesday afternoons, as well as a few pure bass and tenor voices that I found among our acquaintances, and together they form a pretty nice choir.[22]

Johann returned to the family estate in late 1807.[23] In 1808 he was recruited as kapellmeister for Napoleon's youngest brother, King Jérôme of Westphalia, a strategic move to keep the problematic composer under surveillance.[24] The family moved to the capital city of Kassel, where Louise developed a close friendship with author Wilhelm Grimm, of the fairytale-writing Brothers Grimm. Following an increase in artistic and political conflict at court, Johann left for Vienna in November 1808 under the guise of recruiting new singers for the Kassel theatre.[25] A few weeks later, he was formally terminated, and the family returned to Giebichenstein in dire financial straits.[26]

Louise wanted to find more teaching opportunities in larger cities, but relocating to a new city and choosing to pursue a career in music was complicated. After consulting with her close male friends, including Grimm, she devised a plan to teach in Hamburg.[27] The main obstacle was securing her father's approval, which was important to her. At first, Johann did not approve, believing his daughter could teach from their home in Giebichenstein, but after several months he changed his mind.[28] According to biographer Martin W.G. Brandt, Johann advised her on how much to charge for lessons and how to conduct herself in society.[29]

Music in Hamburg

In October 1809, Louise arrived in Hamburg and found patronage with a family friend, Louise Sillem. She lived in the Sillem residence for many years, and her patron helped her to secure students among bourgeois society.[30] By December, she had twenty-six female students whom she saw multiple times a week, and by 1811, the number had grown to forty-two.[31] She also started a small choral ensemble:

> Thank God I have now brought some of my students to the point where their singing refreshes and warms my heart, and I have a small choir of six perfectly pure voices, which I intend to expand.[32]

With her early teaching success and a set of newly published vocal collections, Louise was able to send money home to support her parents and the estate.[33] She also brought Fritz, her youngest half-brother, to Hamburg and paid for his education with a local pastor.[34] In 1814 she expanded her teaching activities and opened a music school for young women, where she taught piano and voice either at her students' homes or in the Sillem residence.[35]

Louise suffered another profound loss when her father died in 1814 after a stroke.[36] She wrote, "since I no longer have him, it is as if music has also been taken from me."[37] In the years following, she refrained from publishing her music, explaining that, "it had been my intention to publish nothing further after the death of my father."[38] Instead, she devoted her attention to teaching and developing new choral opportunities.

In addition to her teaching studio, in 1816, Louise

collaborated with pianist and composer Heinrich Clasing to form an amateur choral society in Hamburg.[39] She was already familiar with the Berlin Singakademie and its current director, Carl Friedrich Zelter, and was likely inspired to create a similar organization. The mixed choir, referred to either as *Musikverein* (Music Society) or *Gesangverein* (Singing Society), featured her female voice students in the soprano and alto sections. Reichardt prepared materials, helped rehearse the choir, and trained both male and female soloists, but she did not conduct for concerts. She may have partially conducted a large music festival in Lübeck,[40] although this was never confirmed in local reports.[41] For performances, Clasing or another male colleague directed.

The Musikverein performed sacred masterworks, especially those of G. F. Handel, for which Reichardt prepared rehearsal reductions and German translations.[42] She also made German translations of other works: "I have tried to add the wonderful psalms of our Lutheran Bible to the old Latin masses without changing a single line."[43] In doing so, she made music by composers such as Johann Hasse, Carl H. Graun, Carl F. C. Fasch, and Andreas Romberg more accessible to the local community.

In 1818, Reichardt played an important role in a massive two-day festival performance of both Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem* at St. Michael's Church in Hamburg. (One of six organs at St. Michael's Church appears in the opening artwork on page 7.) Five thousand people were in the audience for both concerts, and over 360 professional and amateur musicians from across the region performed in the orchestra and choir.[44] Clasing conducted the choir, and Wilhelm Grund, a local conductor and music teacher, led the orchestra. Reichardt was closely involved in preparing the ensemble, particularly in rehearsing and training the vocalists. According to August Gathy, she "paid attention to and influenced every single voice" during rehearsals, working directly with the singers despite not serving as the formal conductor.[45] A concert review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* similarly acknowledged her contribution:

> First of all, the thoughtful artist, [Demoiselle] Louise Reichardt, worthy daughter of the unforgettable Kapellmeister Reichardt deserves to be mentioned here. Her tireless activity, her careful teaching, and her unselfishness in the training and cultivation of the female voices, have made it possible to form a choir and to place female singers at the head of the performances, which, although they want to be considered only for amateurs, true virtuosos are to be respected equally.[46]

Working Through Societal Constraints

By this time, Reichardt had established herself as a composer, music teacher, and choral director, and was recognized particularly for her expertise with treble voices. As mentioned previously, in the early nineteenth century, women were typically confined to a private, domestic life and expected to engage with music primarily as an accomplishment rather than a profession. Those who sought to compose or pursue music more seriously often struggled with limited educational opportunities and challenges related to publication and the promotion of their music. Reichardt navigated these constraints and built a musical career by working within what was considered socially acceptable.

Although Reichardt did not receive a formal music education, she benefitted from access to her father's extensive music library and thrived in the musically enriching environment cultivated in Giebichenstein. Further, she composed Lieder, a genre well suited to domestic music making, as it could be written and performed at home.[47] Teaching was also considered acceptable work within the domestic sphere, and she had already gained experience teaching her siblings and forming small choirs. At the same time, Reichardt's career still relied heavily on the support of others—particularly men—to access professional opportunities and achieve her musical goals. Her father promoted her compositions in his publications, helping to establish her reputation and work around barriers to publication.[48] Later, she also relied on friends and relatives to promote and sell her music on a subscription basis, avoiding booksellers who Reichardt says mistreated her.[49]

In Hamburg, the pattern continued. Reichardt depended on Clasing to help organize and lead the Musikverein, as this work extended into the public

sphere, where women were typically less welcome. He obtained the necessary permits for concerts and conducted the choir in performance, while she was still able to rehearse and prepare materials.[50] In this context, their collaboration was both practical and necessary. Her success reflected both her own initiative and the realities of the system within which she worked.

Return to Composing and Publishing

Although Louise had moved to Hamburg to help financially support her family, Johann left behind considerable debt after his death, and the Giebichenstein estate was auctioned in 1817.[51] She continued to support her younger brother, Fritz, until he completed his studies in 1825—a responsibility she repeatedly noted had cost more than she expected.[52]

In 1819, Reichardt traveled to England to visit friends and attempted to expand her opportunities as a music teacher. Unfortunately, illness prevented the venture from becoming profitable. After returning to Hamburg, she faced increasing competition from a newly established Singakademie directed by Grund and his colleague Jacob Steinfeldt, and she lost several students to the new school.[53]

Although she had sworn off publishing after her father's death, financial pressures forced Reichardt to reconsider. In the same year as her London trip, she published two works: a set of mostly secular vocal solos with piano accompaniment and a republished collection of solos accompanied by guitar.[54] As Reichardt returned to composing, she also developed an interest in four-part writing. In an 1821 letter to Wilhelm Grimm, she wrote:

> To my unspeakable joy, I have, in my old age, begun a serious study of harmony […] and hope, since no woman before me has ever achieved pure four-part composition, that I will thereby establish my reputation in Germany forever.[55]

She likely took her instruction from Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Anweisung zum Generalbaßspielen*, as she wrote to Zelter in 1822:

> [W]ith General Bass, Türk's instructions were very helpful to me and I would now like to have an equally good book for harmony and composition, because I fear that Clasing trusts my talent too much. You deserve God's reward if you would like to tell me your opinion, in which I have so much confidence, the more Clasing is absent and I now have to guide myself entirely.[56]

Türk would have been familiar to Reichardt, as he was a professor at Halle University and a visitor of Giebichenstein during her youth.

Evidence of her harmonic studies can be found in her choral compositions. *12 Christliche, liebliche Lieder*—a collection for two, three, and four voices—demonstrates a tendency toward homorhythmic texture and includes a reharmonization of *Adeste Fideles* ("O Come, All Ye Faithful").[57] An 1822 manuscript containing twelve chorales and one Lied is currently held at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky in Hamburg, Germany.[58] Works by Reichardt were included in a collection of chorales published in 1832 by her brother-in-law, Karl Raumer, although it is unclear which individual compositions belong to her.[59]

Reichardt also composed a collection of six sacred songs for SSAA voices that remains relatively unknown. Published in 1823, *Sechs geistliche Lieder* is a combination of her solo art songs and four-part harmonic studies, demonstrating both her interest in sacred choral music and experience teaching treble voices.

Sechs geistliche Lieder

Sechs geistliche Lieder unserer besten Dichter, vierstimmig bearbeitet für 2 Sopran- und 2 Altstimmen [Six sacred songs by our best poets, arranged for two soprano and two alto voices] was likely written with Reichardt's vocal students in mind. In 1820, she recalled her students performing works for treble voices:

> I had a pretty nice day on Wednesday. My four favorite students visited me, and God gave me the long-awaited joy of being able to accompany them on the organ in the small, pretty church here with the beautiful 51st Psalm, which Hasse beautifully composed for four female voices. [...] The ladies then all had to

> sing their solo from Messiah to us. [...] Finally, the lovely girls surprised me with my song by Novalis: 'Wenn ich ihn nur habe,' which they sang completely unaccompanied, deliciously pure, in 4 voices. This evening will remain forever unforgettable for me.[60]

In early 1823, Reichardt formed a select treble ensemble of six to eight singers that rehearsed weekly.[61] There is no record that her treble choirs performed publicly, although they may have sung in small, private gatherings.

Compositionally, *Sechs geistliche Lieder* blends elements of Reichardt's early *Lieder* style with four-part harmonic writing. Each movement features a decorative soprano 1 melody, reminiscent of her solo melodies, and the lower three voices form a homorhythmic harmonic foundation using limited vocal ranges and simpler rhythmic patterns. The alto 2 line is typically more melodically interesting than the soprano 2 or alto 1 part, and voice-crossing is common. Most movements are short and strophic, except for the final song, "Tiefe Andacht," which is through-composed.

Sechs geistliche Lieder explores several Christian themes and events, ranging from Christ's birth ("Weihnachtslied") to a prayer for the dying ("Fürbitte für Sterbende"). As she explained, "I tried to treat the songs as differently as the subject matter permitted, three cheerful and three serious ones."[62] Most movements are given expressive descriptions instead of tempo markings to reflect the character of the chosen text. Dynamics are only notated for two movements: "Weihnachtslied" and "Tiefe Andacht" (Table 1).

Several modern editions of *Sechs geistliche Lieder* have been published, although the work has not achieved widespread popularity. An edition by Carolyn Raney,

Table 1. Movements of *Sechs geistliche Lieder* by Louise Reichardt

Title	Translated title	Text by	Expressive text	Key	Total Measures	Number of verses
1. "Dem Herrn"	To the Lord	Johannes Gossner (1773-1858)	*Erhaben* (exalted)	D♭ Major	13	3
2. "Bußlied"	Penance song	Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1750-1819)	*Demüthig* (humble)	E harmonic minor	35	2
3. "Morgenlied"	Morning song	Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801)	*Kindlich* (childlike)	B♭ Major	12	3
4. "Fürbitte für Sterbende"	Intercession for the dying	Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803)	*Sehr Langsam* (very slow)	D minor	19	3
5. "Weihnachtslied"	Christmas Carol	Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg	*Unschuldig* (innocent)	F Major	21	3
6. "Tiefe Andacht"	Deep Devotion	Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock	*Versunken* (sunken)	G Major	44	2 (through-composed)

published by Broude Brothers in 1979, is out of print. A more recent edition, edited by Renate Moering, Ursula Reichert, and Bettina Strübel, was published in 2016 by Reichert Verlag; however, the program notes and performance instructions are available only in German. Individual movements have also appeared in nineteenth-century German hymnals, and in some cases are adapted for SATB voicing.[63]

The following excerpts are taken from an edition prepared by the author from the 1823 original publication, accessed through the libraries at Harvard and Yale universities. Ornamentation—including appoggiaturas, turns, and trills—have been carefully notated to aid rhythmic clarity. Tempos were selected based on meter and the character of the music.[64] Efforts were made to adhere to classical-period performance practice, reflecting Reichardt's harmonic studies and the early influence of her father. This edition is available through the Choral Public Domain Library (CPDL).

"Dem Herrn"

Lord! look down on us, our songs sound for you,
you are our heart's desire!
oh, to have you as a friend is more than any gift,
is eternal life, blessed rest! [65]

Like an opening hymn or prayer, "Dem Herrn" begins the set with a song of praise and adoration. Reichardt marks the music *erhaben*, meaning exalted or sublime, and the 3/2 time signature implies a broad tempo. Although the song is strophic, subtle text painting shapes the overall character. Each phrase begins with an anacrusis, creating a sense of forward momentum that pulls toward the following measure. The gesture is particularly effective in the opening verse, with the accented *Herr!* [Lord!] calling God to hear the prayer (Figure 1 on the next page). Harmonically, frequent secondary dominants also create a sense of forward motion, as if the harmonic progression itself were striving toward God.

"Dem Herrn" demonstrates the common texture and voicing treatments of *Sechs geistliche Lieder*. The lower three voices form a homorhythmic accompaniment for the soprano 1 melody. The ranges for soprano 2 and alto 1 are small, spanning a fifth, whereas alto 2 covers a wider range of a ninth (G♭3 to A♭4). Voice-crossing is demonstrated in measure 5, as alto 2 rises above the middle voices.

"Bußlied"

For "Bußlied" [Penance song], singers are directed to sing *mezza voce*, or half-voice, and *Demüthig* [Humble] for their plea for forgiveness. Set in E harmonic minor, the repeated pitches and carefully placed descending steps imply a crying sensation and emphasize syllabic stress of the text. The soprano 1 melody and text are echoed down the octave in the alto 2 line at measure 4 (Figure 2 on page 15). This overlap creates practical challenges within the otherwise homorhythmic texture, as two different texts are heard simultaneously. The section closes with a dramatic octave leap in the alto 2, followed by voice-crossing pairing at the cadence, emphasizing *meine Schuld* [My guilt].

After the opening section, the harmony moves to the relative G major, providing a moment of hope, and features music that resembles a hymn or chorale. "Bußlied" ends in resignation with a return to E harmonic minor and an optional E3 in alto 2.

"Morgenlied"

You, the source of grace and blessing,
Everyone rushes for a first glance of you;
Eyes, hands, and hearts desire to rise only for you,
You, cover us with your wings,
And refresh and awaken us with peace.

"Morgenlied" [Morning Song] is a light, joyful part-song praising God. The soprano 1 melody is playful and more ornamented than the previous movements. In the original work, the soprano melody is notated with appoggiaturas and turns. Considering this ornamentation, a simplified melodic option is provided for developing singers while still retaining the character of the music (Figure 3 on page 15). Marked *Kindlich* [Childlike], the movement conveys a sense of innocence and renewal. Though the text is not explicitly about the morning time, the text evokes the joy of waking to a new day and being grateful for God's blessings. "Morgenlied" is only twelve measures long but has three verses.
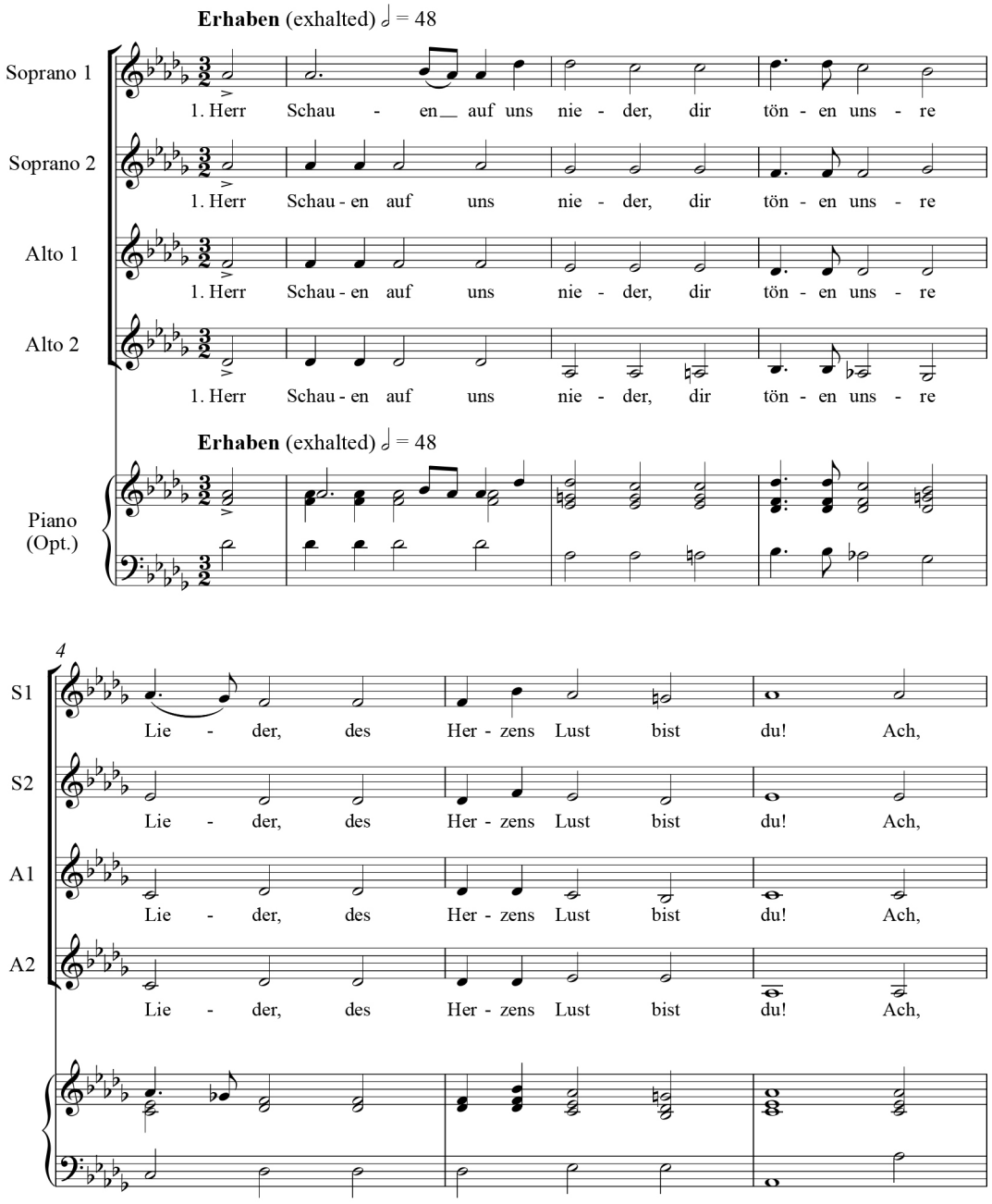


Figure 1. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Dem Herrn," mm. 1-6.
All musical examples in this article are edited by Carrie E. Hall and available in CPDL.
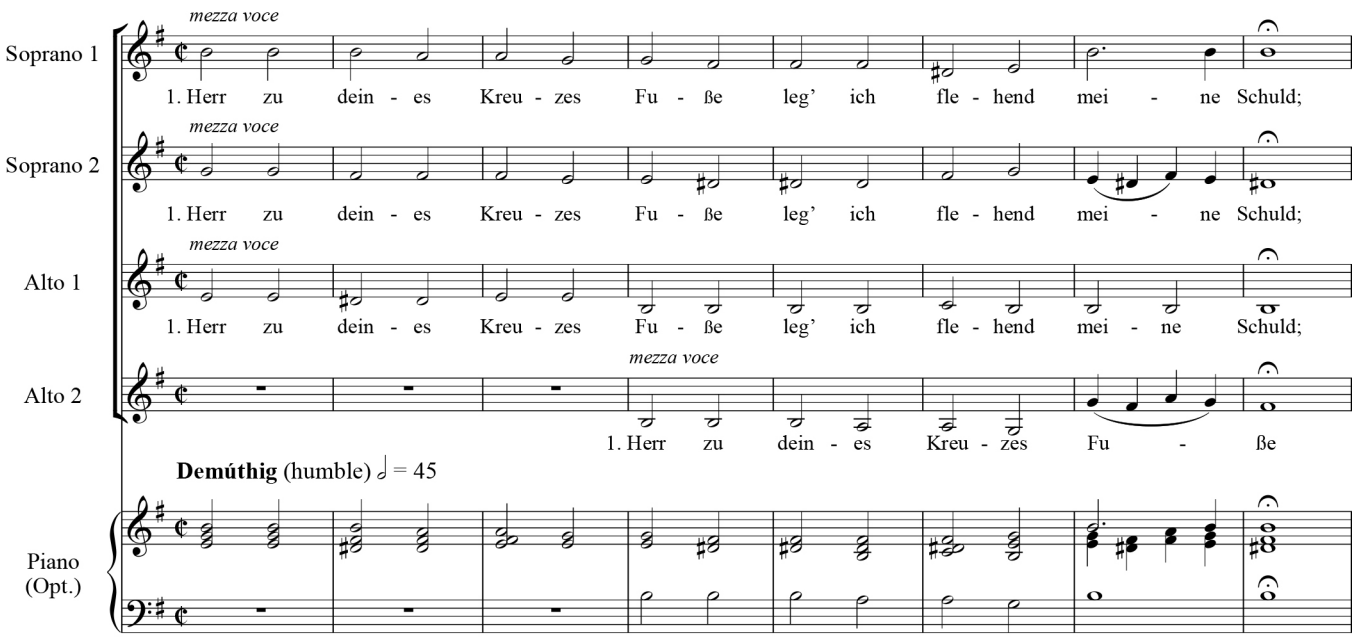


Figure 2. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Bußlied," mm. 1–8.
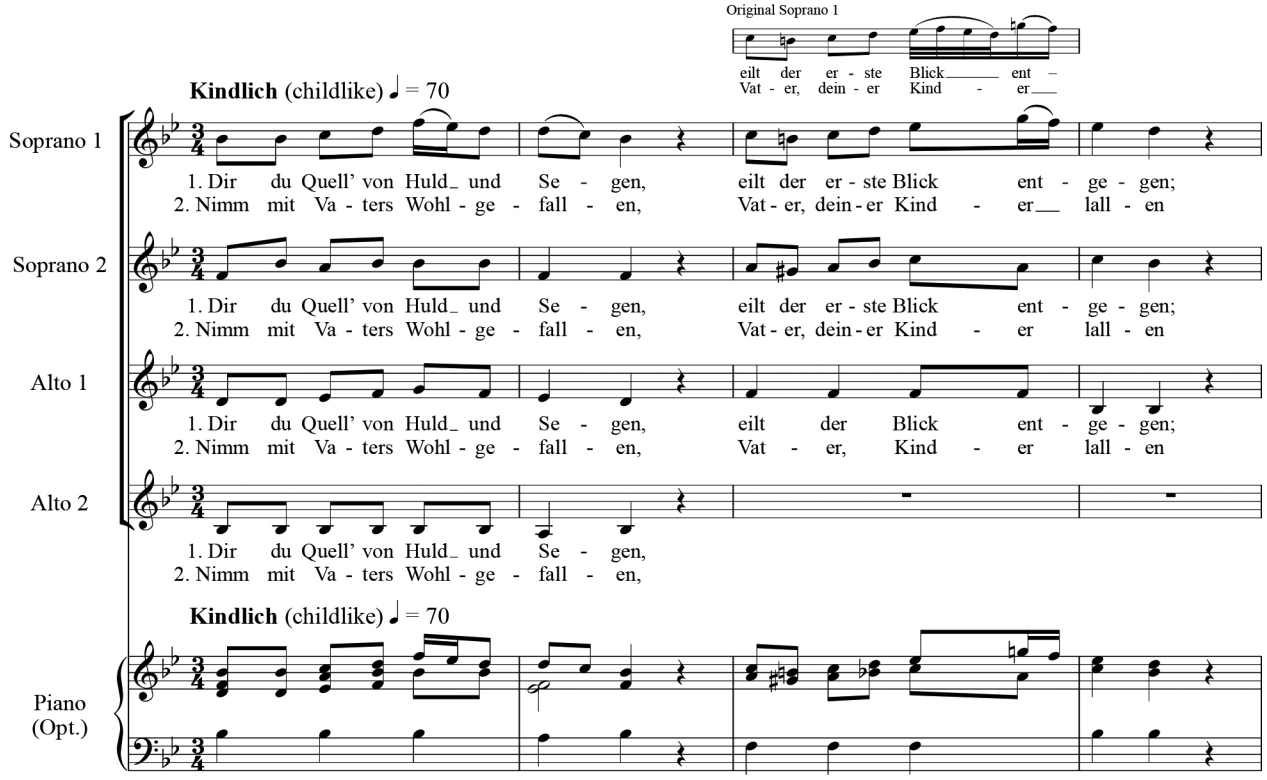


Figure 3. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Morgenlied," mm. 1–4.

"Fürbitte für Sterbende"

Hear their prayers, God,
Don't subject them to judgement,
Those who are so close to your eternity,
To be freed soon from this vanity.

"Fürbitte für Sterbende" [Intercession for the Dying] is a solemn plea for mercy. It is the only movement with a direct tempo indication; *Sehr Langsam* [Very Slow]. The simple rhythms and homorhythmic texture allow focus of the harmonic progressions and declaration of text. Written in D harmonic minor, the work opens simply, maintaining a m3 drone in the alto voices for the first three and a half measures (Figure 4). A viiø/V V cadence in mm3-4 emphasizes *ihr Flehn* [their plea], while the next phrase moves toward the relative major in measure 8, lifting the prayer to God. The chromatic alto 2 melody leads into a m7 leap, representing an inner struggle beneath the soprano 1 melody.

Though most of *Sechs geistliche Lieder* is homorhythmic, the ending for "Fürbitte für Sterbende" offers some variety in texture. The last six measures feature an imitative motif passed between soprano 2, soprano 1, and alto 2 (Figure 5 on the next page). The accent on B♭ to A leans into a crying motion as Reichardt brings the movement to a close. Note the alto 2 voice crossing for the last three measures as it sits higher than the other three voices.

The verse cadences in measures 18–19 with trills in the soprano 1 and 2 lines. During the Classical era trills began with an appoggiatura and were shorter than their Baroque predecessors.[66] For clarity, this edition notates the trill simply as an appoggiatura, though more experienced singers may choose to add additional ornamentation.

"Weihnachtslied"

"Weihnachtslied" [Christmas Song] (Figure 6 on the next page) depicts the night of Christ's birth. Performed *Unschuldig* [Innocent], the first section of the song is sung by solo SSAA quartet, followed by a contrasting tutti SSSAAA chorus refrain. The quartet is presented as the narrators, and the full chorus acts as either characters or provides commentary. The range expands in the full chorus section, with an F3 in alto 2,
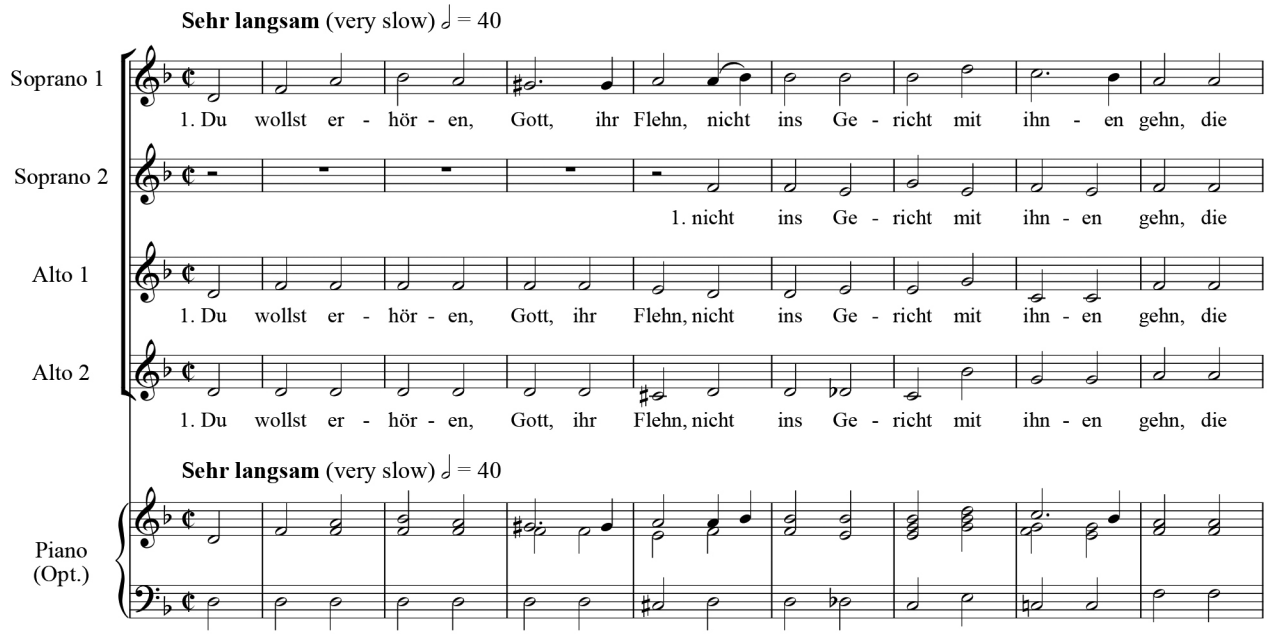


Figure 4. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Fürbitte für Sterbende," mm. 1–8.
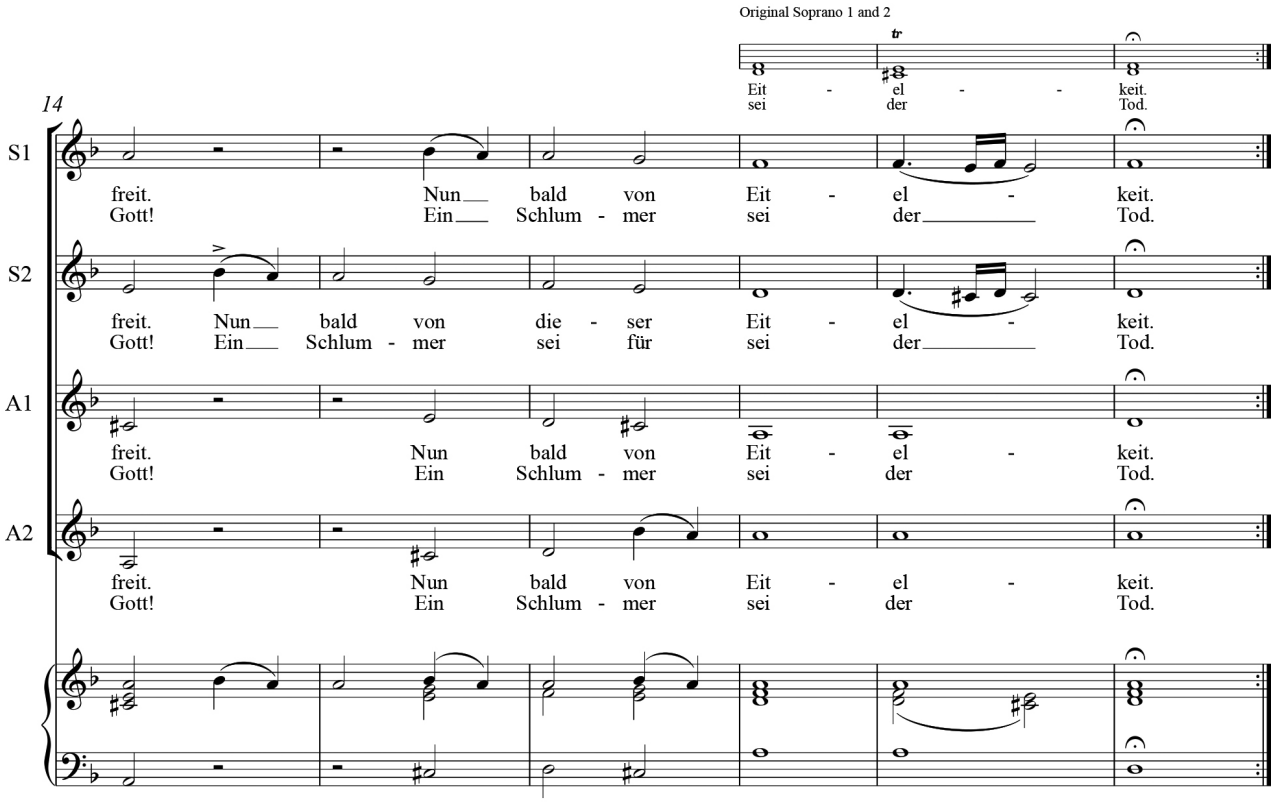


Figure 5. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Fürbitte für Sterbende," mm. 14–19.

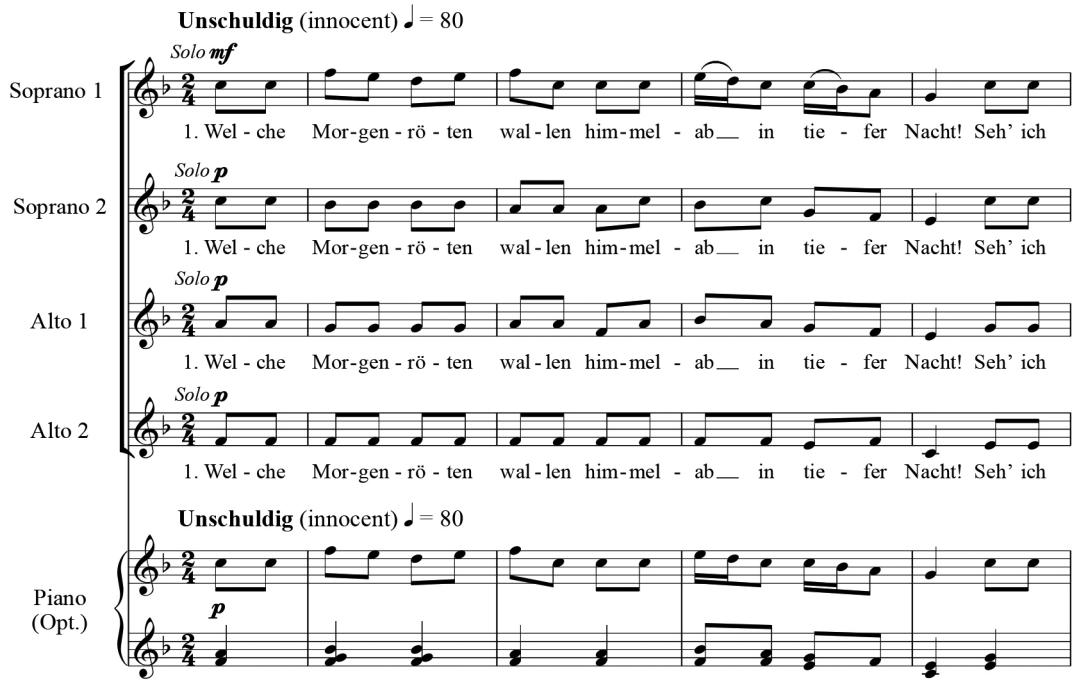


Figure 6. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Weihnachtslied," mm. 1–4.

and an A5 in soprano 1 (Figure 7). Harmonically, this movement seems more straight-forward. While there are a few secondary dominant chords in the opening section, the tutti chorus uses only diatonic harmonies. The purity in chord progressions emphasizes the innocence and joy in the birth of Christ.

There are two thoughts on how to treat the meter transition from *alla breve* to 2/4 in measure 15 of Figure 7. In his 1771 treatise, music theorist Johann Philipp Kirnberger suggests *alla breve* is slower than 2/4.[67] Two paragraphs later Kirnberger claims, "2/4 meter has the same tempo as *alla breve* but is performed more lightly." Considering the texture of "Weihnachtslied," the second suggestion would work nicely with the alternating ensembles.

"Tiefe Andacht"

The final movement, "Tiefe Andacht" [Deep Devotion], is through-composed and more musically complex than the preceding works (Figure 8 on the next page). Reichardt described it as a demonstration of her compositional capabilities, remarking, "I have elaborated on the last one in order to show roughly what can be expected from a larger work that I am very happy to be occupied with."[68]

Considering Reichardt's life, the text seems more personal, explaining her deep devotion to God after the darkness of losing her two fiancés and her family's hardships. When considering the German text, the word ihr can be translated to [her], [it], [you] (informal plural), or [their], depending on the context. Looking at the first two lines of text, one can infer the *ihr* refers to *die Seel'* or [the Soul]:

Wenn die Seel' in tiefe Stille versunken ist,
wenn ganz ihr Wille der Wille dess ist, der sie liebt,

When the soul has sunk into deep stillness,
When the soul's will is the will of the one who loves it,

The second line may also be translated as [when *her* will is the will of the one who loves her], allowing for a more personal interpretation of the text. Notably, Reichardt repeats the text *wenn sie wieder liebt* [when it/she loves again] and ornaments the soprano 1 reiteration (Figure 9 on the next page). Reichardt rarely repeats text, giving this phrase particular emphasis.

The final phrase of the first verse ends with a plea: *o Herr, versöhn' auch sie* [O Lord, reconcile it/her too].

A particularly triumphant section occurs between measures 35–39 (Figure 10 on page 20), where a fortissimo, hymn-like texture leads into an alto 1 call and response with the rest of the choir. Reichardt includes markings not used in previous movements, including *marcato* and *tenuto* articulations. This passage functions as a Christian doxology, with its declarative text praising God.

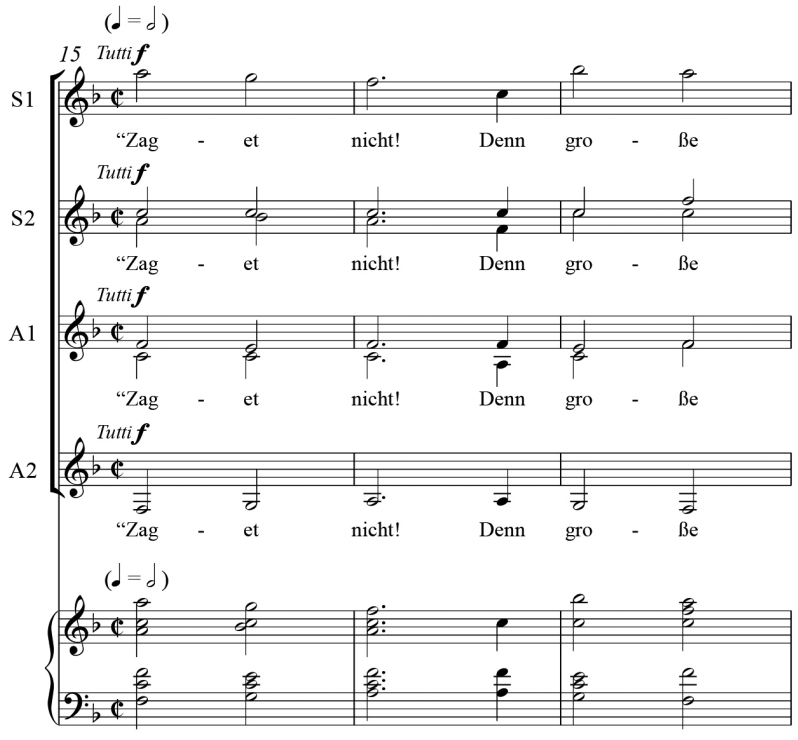


Figure 7. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Weihnachtslied," mm. 15–17.

Performance Considerations

Sechs geistliche Lieder could be performed unaccompanied, like how Reichardt's students performed "Wenn ich ihn nur habe," or with the written piano accompaniment. The full title and publication give clues to Reichardt's intention for instrumentation. Reichardt was clear in other publication titles whether accompaniment would be used: *Zwölf Gesänge mit Begleitung des Forte-Piano komponiert* (1810), *Sechs Lieder von Novalis mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte* (1819). For *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, Reichardt mentions the arrangement is for two soprano and two alto voices, leaving out any mention of other instruments. At the end of the collection, Reichardt isolated and printed each voice part separately like a Renaissance part book for unaccompanied madrigals or motets.

The movements could also be performed with accompaniment. Reichardt wrote a mostly *colla parte* piano part with figured bass; however, given the overlapping voice parts and SSAA range, this is not the most natural accompaniment. In the edition available on CPDL, the lowest pitch in the piano is occasionally notated an octave lower to create a more balanced sound, and the rhythm is simplified in the faster movements

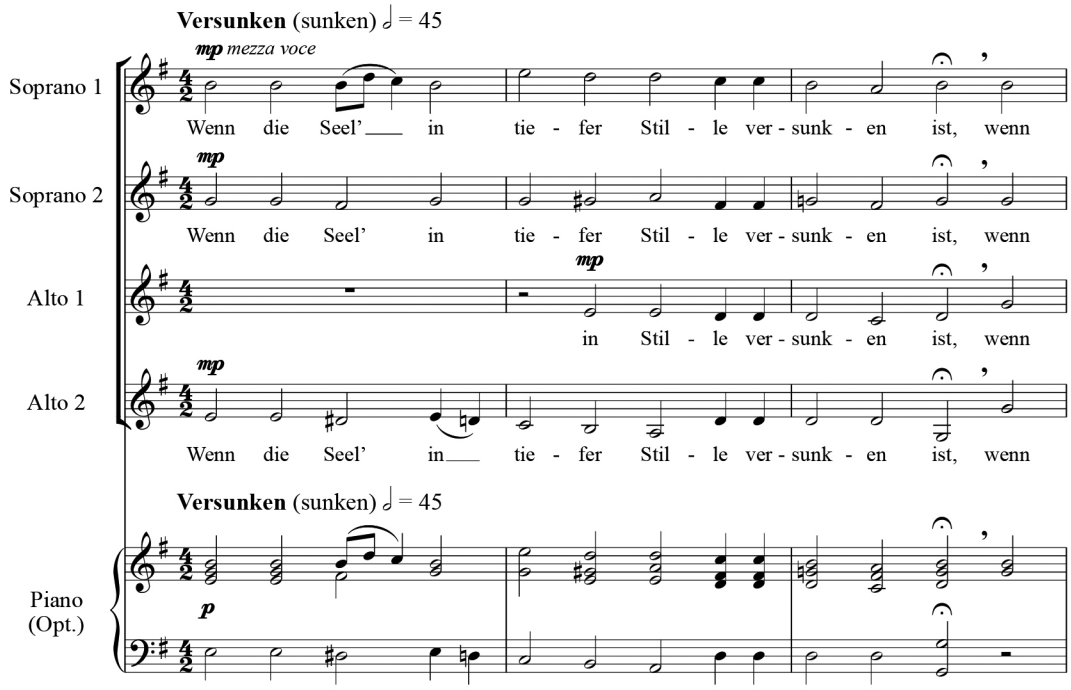


Figure 8. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Tiefe Andacht," mm. 1–3.
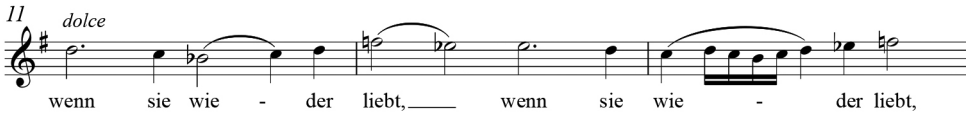


Figure 9. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Tiefe Andacht," mm. 11–13.
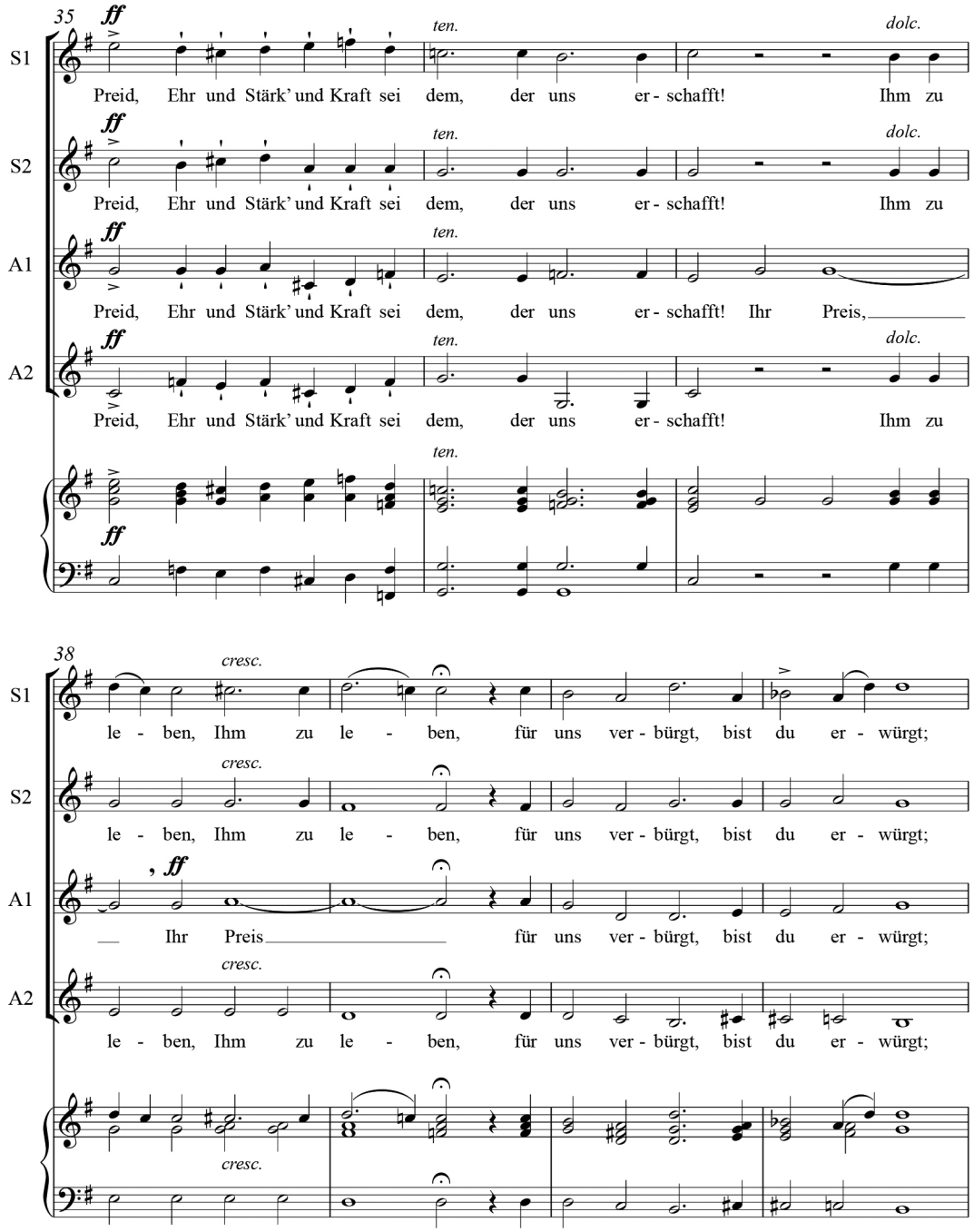


Figure 10. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Tiefe Andacht," mm. 35–41.

("Morgenlied" and "Weihnachtslied") to improve clarity. Ultimately, conductors must consider their performers, performance space, and the music to determine if unaccompanied or accompanied is most appropriate.

The songs can be performed as a set, or individual movements could be extracted and performed alone. For example, "Weihnachtslied" would be a nice addition to a Lessons and Carols program for Christmas. Another option would be to program this music with other songs that Reichardt's students would have performed, including Psalm 51 by Hasse or solo or treble works by Handel, or to include works of other 19th-century German female composers, including Clara Schumann or Fanny Hensel-Mendelssohn.[69]

Complications and Death

Louise Reichardt died on November 17, 1826, at the age of forty-seven. Throughout her life, she struggled with chronic illness, facial pain, and headaches, frequently noting in letters to friends that she felt unwell.[70] During her final year, she also faced housing and food insecurity. In 1825, Fritz completed his training and was able to support himself, relieving his older sister of financial responsibility. Reichardt began working less and gave most of her income away to charity as part of her deepening Christian beliefs.[71] Her financial situation deteriorated further after the death of her patron Louise Sillem in early 1826 and some ill-advised financial decisions.[72] She moved several times, struggling to pay for rent and food. In an effort to raise money, she arranged for a composition by her father to be published. However, the publisher printed three hundred copies of Johann's *Christmas Cantelina* without collecting subscriptions in advance, leaving her responsible for a substantial bill.[73] The resulting financial strain, combined with her weakened physical condition, left her increasingly vulnerable. Reichardt collapsed on November 15 and remained unconscious until her death two days later.

Conclusion

Louise Reichardt dedicated her life to music making and pushed herself to create something worthy of being remembered in the history books. She started a music school for young women and co-directed the first amateur mixed choir in Hamburg when society expected women to simply stay home and mind the household. Her composition *Sechs geistliche Lieder* is a rare example of choral music written by a woman for women in the early nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the details of her trailblazing life and career have not been as accessible in the English language, and her full story is not widely known. Hopefully, with the addition of this research and a renewed interest in *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, Reichardt will find the recognition she deserves. CJ

NOTES

[1] "At first, Friedchen [Wagner] sang folksongs arranged by Brahms with [her sisters] Thusnelda and Olga. Then, she invited other young women…until circumstances drew many more music lovers into the original intimate group." See Sophie Drinker, "The Origin of the Hamburger Frauenchor 1856–1858," in *Brahms and his Women's Choruses* (Musurgia Publishers, 1952), 9–13, accessed July 9, 2026, https://dn720508.ca.archive.org/0/items/brahmshiswomensc00drin/brahmshiswomensc00drin.pdf.

[2] Although some information is available in English, the most detailed research of Louise Reichardt's life and career remains in German. Google Translate was used to translate some sources in this article from German to English. In addition, the author thanks the *Frau und Musik Archiv* in Frankfurt, Germany, for their early assistance in research.

[3] Iris Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin: Untersuchungen zu den Bedingungen beruflicher Musikausübung durch Frauen im frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Gmbh, 1996), 54. Two spellings of her name were used: Louise is the French spelling, Luise is the German. Reichardt used both spellings during her lifetime.

[4] Juliane developed puerperal fever and died nearly six weeks after giving birth. Ellen Freyburg, "Juliane Reichardt," *Musik und Gender im Internet*, March 27, 2012, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/receive/mugi_person_00000675.

[5] Martin G. W. Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt: nach Quellen dargestellt*, 2nd ed. (Basel: Bahnmeier, 1865), 14.

[6] Gabriele Busch-Salmen, Renate Moering, and Walter Salmen, *Nur nicht lesen! immer singen—: Musik und Musiker im Umfeld Goethes* (Germany: Freies Deutsches Hochstift, 2003), 73.

[7] Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Verzeichniss der von dem zu Giebichenstein bei Halle verstorbenen Herrn kapellmeister Reichardt hinterlassenen bücher und musikalien* (Halle: n.p., 1815). This book is a record of books and musical repertoire in J. F. Reichardt's library.

[8] Busch-Salmen et al., *Nur nicht lesen!*, 74, 80.

[9] Busch-Salmen et al., 90.

[10] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 55.

[11] G. W. Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 17.

[12] Boffo-Stetter, 56.

[13] Henrich Steffens, *Was ich erlebte, 1802–1814: Knechtschaft und Freiheit*, ed. Dr. Th Landsberg (Leipzig: F. Eckardt, 1913), 185.

[14] *XII Deutsche Lieder von Johann Friedrich Reichardt und dessen Tochter Luise Reichardt* (Zerbst: C. C. Menzel, 1800). Publication details from Ellen Freyburg, "Louise Reichardt," *MUGI: Musikvermittlung und Genderforschung—Lexikon und multimediale Präsentationen*, Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/receive/mugi_person_00000676.

[15] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 120.

[16] From an April 22, 1806, letter J. F. Reichardt wrote to poet Achim von Arnim. Renate Moering, "Arnims künstlerische Zusammenarbeit mit Johann Friedrich Reichardt und Louise Reichardt," in *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, ed. Roswitha Burwick and Bernd Fischer (P. Lang, 1990), 232.

[17] Boffo-Stetter, 58–59; Ruth Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen: Zur Rezeption von Komponistinnen in Deutschland um 1800* (Wiesbaden: Springer-Verlag, 2016), 165. Her first fiancé, poet Friedrich Eschen, died on a hike in the Swiss Alps in 1800. Her second fiancé, painter Franz Gareis, died of dysentery on a trip to Italy in 1803.

[18] Eric Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies: Johann Friedrich Reichardt und die Herberge der Romantik* (Halle: Gebauer-Schwetschke Verlag Nachf, 1949), 96–97.

[19] Steffens, *Was ich erlebte, 1802–1814*, 98; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Weil nicht alle Blütenträume reiften: Johann Friedrich Reichardt, Hofkapellmeister dreier Preussenkönige: Porträt und Selbstporträt* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1992), 345–46.

[20] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 32.

[21] Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies*, 99. The "old Italian church music" was not specified, but separately the Reichardt daughters were noted to perform music by Leonardo Leo and Giovanni Palestrina (Neuss, 48).

[22] Busch-Salmen et al., *Nur nicht lesen!*, 73.

[23] Renate Moering, "Introduction," Louise Reichardt (1779–1826) *Lieder romantischer Dichter für Singstimme und Klavier, Band 1* (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 2007), 8.

[24] Busch-Salmen et al., *Nur nicht lesen!*, 110.

[25] Busch-Salmen et al., 213.

[26] Moering, *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, 212, 255.

[27] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 61–62.

[28] Reinhold Steig, "Die Familie Reichardt und die Brüder Grimm," *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*, Fünfzehntes Ergänzungsheft (1923): 31–32.

[29] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 34.

[30] Franz Lorenz, *Franz Benda und seine Nachkommen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), 128.

[31] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 75.

[32] Moering, *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, 263f.

[33] Reichardt's publications during this time include *XII Gesänge mit Begleitung des Forte-Piano* (Hamburg: Johann August Böhme, 1810); *XII Gesänge mit Begleitung des Fortepiano*, Op. 3 (Hamburg: Böhme, 1811); and *Sei Canzoni di Metastasio coll Piano-Forte*, Op. 4 (Hamburg, 1811). See Freyburg, "Louise Reichardt," MUGI.

[34] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 82.

[35] Boffo-Stetter, 78.

[36] Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies*, 110.

[37] Moering, *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, 269.

[38] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 99.

[39] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 105–06.

[40] Steffens, *Was ich erlebte*, 98.

[41] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 107.

[42] Boffo-Stetter 107, 110. Handel masterworks performed include "O be Joyful in the Lord" (HWV 246) and Judas Maccabeus in 1817, Jephthah in 1818, Samson in 1819, Saul in 1820, and Athalia in 1823.

[43] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 81.

[44] Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, *Geistliches Musikfest in Hamburg*, no. 41 (October 14, 1818), 713; Josef Sittard, *Geschichte des Musik- und Concertwesens in Hamburg vom 14. Jahrhundert bis auf die Gegenwart* (Altona: A. C. Reber, 1890), 292. AmZ estimates 360–400 performers; Sittard's research claims

there were 500.

[45] August Gathy, *Erinnerungen an das erste Norddeutsche Musikfest zu Lübeck: den theilnehmenden Kunstfreunden gewidmet* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1840), 16.

[46] AmZ, 714.

[47] Marcia J. Citron, "Women and the Lied, 1775–1840," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane M. Bowers and Judith Tick (University of Illinois Press, 1986), 224.

[48] Citron, "Women and the Lied," 232.

[49] Steig, "Die Familie Reichardt und die Brüder Grimm," 46. Reichardt writes: "My friends here are persuading me to publish songs on subscription because the booksellers are mistreating me so much."

[50] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 106–07. Permits were required for concerts in Hamburg. Robert von Zahn, *Musikpflege in Hamburg um 1800: Der Wandel des Konzertwesens und der Kirchenmusik zwischen dem Tode Carl Philipp Emanuel Bachs und dem Tode Christian Friedrich Gottlieb Schwenkes* (Hamburg: Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1991), 141.

[51] Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies*, 114.

[52] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 98.

[53] Helen Kastinger Riley, *Die weibliche Muse: sechs Essays über künstlerisch schaffende Frauen der Goethezeit* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1986), 141. This organization would later be known as the Hamburg Singakademie.

[54] *Sechs Lieder von Novalis mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte* (Hamburg: Böhme) and *XII Gesänge mit Begleitung der Gitarre* (Breslau: C.G. Forster). The latter was originally published in 1810.

[55] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 126–27.

[56] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 206.

[57] Louise Reichardt, *12 Christliche, liebliche Lieder* (Hamburg: August Cranz, n.d.).

[58] Although the title is simply *Choralbuch*, it is listed as 13 Sacred Songs in the RISM Catalog Online (RISM ID no.: 451513425).

[59] Karl von Raumer and Louise Reichardt, *Choralbuch: Lehret Und Vermehret Euch Selbst Mit Psalmen Und Lobgesängen* (Basel: Spittler, 1832). In the introduction, Raumer admits adding works by additional composers, but there is no distinction in the book as to who composed which songs.

[60] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 114–15. There is an SATB setting of "Wenn ich ihn nur habe" in *Sechs Lieder von Novalis mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte*. It is assumed her students performed a treble arrangement.

[61] From a letter Louise Reichardt wrote on June 2, 1823. Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 133–34.

[62] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 207.

[63] See, for example: Friedrich Eickhoff, ed., *Theomele*, Zweites Heft (Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann, 1836), 31–32 ("Bußlied"), 32 ("Tiefe Andacht"); R. W. Enslinhaupt, ed., *Liederkränz* (Würzburg: J. R. Richter, 1861), 23 ("Dem Herrn"); E. Linder, ed., *Unsre Lieder für Schule und Leben* (Reading, PA: Pilger Buchhandlung, 1893), 38 ("Welche Morgenröten wallen," an SATB arrangement corresponding to "Weihnachtslied" from *Sechs geistliche Lieder*).

[64] Dennis Schrock, *Performance Practices in the Classical Era* (GIA Publications, 2011) 78–89, 113–17.

[65] Daniela Nguyen assisted with translations of the lyrics for *Sechs geistliche Lieder* for this article.

[66] Schrock, *Performance Practices*, 351.

[67] Schrock, *Performance Practices*, 83.

[68] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 207.

[69] Although Clara Schumann did not compose for treble choir, several of her Lieder have been arranged for treble voices.

[70] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 192; Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 137.

[71] Boffo-Stetter, 146.

[72] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 48. Sillem had left her 3,000 marks; however, Reichardt invested the sum in an annuity in London and received only a small portion of the money.

[73] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 200–01.

More than Desert Songs: The Choral Music of Australia

Graeme Morton

The vast Australian continent is 35 percent desert or semi-arid and is the second-driest continent after Antarctica. As a country where European settlement and culture are less than 250 years old, and are predominant, and where a unified Australian nation was only established in 1901, ideas of an *Australian* choral tradition are very recent indeed, perhaps as recent as the last forty years. In his 2014 book *From Deserts the Prophets Come,* author Geoffrey Serle explores the history of the creative arts in Australia and suggests that the previous lack of a dominant tradition has provided an environment in which creativity and experimentation can thrive.[1] This article serves as a stylistic and practical overview of Australian choral music. After a discussion of the history of this music and a brief exploration of repertoire, readers will find a table with selected Australian choral works for consideration on future programs.[2]

Graeme Morton, PhD
Director of Higher Degree Research & Choral Fellow
The University of Queensland, Australia
g.morton@uq.edu.au



The Australian Context

Australia was first settled as a penal colony in 1788. If members of the English civil service were prepared to voyage for nine months to a new place that had yet, in their minds, no established cultural activity, it can be assumed that a vibrant cultural life was of less significance for them. And as they established a new society struggling for its very survival, cultural (musical) activity could not be a priority. Nor were these settlers attuned to the rich and vibrant cultural life of the Indigenous peoples of Australia. When cultural activity did emerge, it was often characterized by a nostalgia for the traditions left behind. This is exemplified in many ways: singing "In the bleak midwinter" during a blazing hot Australian summer Christmas; Australians building the world's newest neo-gothic cathedral, which is a stunning space but an anachronism in a modern sub-tropical city; the prevalent attitude, current until the mid-twentieth century, that a "proper" garden in Australia was one planted with English flora and not native Australian species.

Cultural historians such as Jeffrey Richards (a leading British historian and educator) go so far as to see the last stage of English Imperialism to be the exporting of English musical culture to the colonies, exemplified in the installation of British-built organs in every capital city/town hall in the country, the appointment of British musicians as heads of Australian conservatoria, the attitude (still not insignificant) that Australian musicians must establish their credibility by studying overseas, the dominance of the eisteddfod tradition[3] in choral societies and community choirs, and the prevalence of European repertoire in established Australian ensembles.[4]

It is only in recent decades that the dominance of European influences has been impacted by a stronger sense of an Australian cultural identity, since of all the arts, music was the last to develop a uniquely Australian style. In the visual arts, the painters of the Heidelberg school had a unique view of Australia from as early as the 1890s, exemplified in their painting of Australian birds as larger than life, since many are disproportionately large compared to birds in "mother" England. Literature was soon to follow, particularly in the hands of Henry Lawson and A. B. Paterson also late in the nineteenth century (Paterson wrote the poem *Waltzing Matilda* in 1895). Theatre followed later, and the first classic Australian play dates from 1955 with Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll.* Music had to wait until the mid-1960s.

This leaves two broad traditions in the choral music of Australia: a European tradition and an Australian one. In Australian choral music, the focus on "English-ness" that had prevailed for the first two hundred years since colonization still does feature to a significant extent, resulting in the first of these two general approaches to choral music: music by Australian composers that complements or parallels the traditions of music from the Northern Hemisphere. This music is written by Australian composers, but stylistically its roots are elsewhere.

The second tradition seeks to express in music something that is uniquely Australian, exemplified in the contemporary music of Peter Sculthorpe and Ross Edwards, and in the choral music of Sarah Hopkins, Stephen Leek, Paul Stanhope, and Andrew Schultz, to name a few. This is more than texts that reflect geography or describe cultural heroes. It speaks to the musical language itself, and to approaches to music composition that are distinctive and new in this environment. It is often seen as innovative, with innovation being a necessary survival characteristic of early Australian settlement, established as it was, without any nearby support systems.

This distinctive musical language often uses specific musical devices and approaches. Peter Sculthorpe, who more than most was an advocate for an Australian musical accent, "remarked on a certain flatness in melodic contour in much Australian music, and particularly his own."[5] Drones and pedal points feature in Australian music, reflecting the above and perhaps hinting at the Indigenous didgeridoo.[6] This music may have a certain static quality, linking to the timeless land in which Australians live. Bird song and sounds from nature are often incorporated into Australian music.

One can also identify a third tradition in the choral music of Australia arising from Indigenous music. Contemporary thinking regarding the appropriation of aspects of Indigenous culture suggests that actual Indigenous musical material belongs to Indigenous people and is not a source of ideas to "prop up" music of those outside that culture. One concern is that

creators and performers may exploit aspects of Indigenous culture rather than honoring that culture. Indigenous Australian composers such as Deborah Cheetham Fraillon and Christopher Sainsbury have become significant spokespersons on issues of Indigenous support, respect, and performance. Readers are referred to the work of Frederick Mabalot, whose 2020 doctoral thesis is a comprehensive exploration of Indigenous Australian music and is an excellent starting point for understanding what *respect* means in this context.[7]

Indigenous choral activity flourishes within the increasing number of children's choirs that are created within specific communities, often with a focus of teaching the language and heritage of that cultural group to the young singers. Perhaps the most established of these is the internationally known Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir based in Cairns near the northern tip of Australia. Their repertoire often arises from collaborations with non-Indigenous Australian composers such as Luke Byrne, Paul Stanhope, and Dan Walker with Indigenous artists, composers, performers, and cultural custodians, of which William Barton and Felix Riebl may be the best known.

Aside from such works, there is as yet a limited amount of Indigenous musical material that has been incorporated into mainstream Australian choral repertoire. One particularly beautiful example is Peter Sculthorpe's *Lullaby* (a movement from his *Requiem* but also published separately as an eight-minute composition for SATB).[8] Another example is *Juljul* by Christopher Sainsbury:

> [Written] for children's voices, guitar, and percussion with words in the Sydney Aboriginal language known as *Dharug* or *Eora*, the composer's own people. The piece reflects the structure of clan songs with its simple melodic structure, repetitive quality, and room for improvisation; perhaps one sung around a campfire solely for the purpose of enjoyment.[9]

Other composers take inspiration from music of Indigenous cultures without using specific musical elements. The chant section in Sarah Hopkins's *Past Life Melodies* is one such example, as is *Missa Alchera (Mass of the Dreaming)* from Ross Edwards. Figure 1 on the next page shows the use of the bass drone in the opening of the Kyrie and an example of the repetitive nature of the melodic and rhythmic material.[10]

Underpinning this discussion is the need to distinguish between works authored by an Indigenous person, genuine collaborations, and non-Indigenous compositions that engage with certain themes or materials. Again, a full discussion on this history is beyond the scope of this article; however, conductors are encouraged to approach such repertoire with awareness of authorship, consultation practices, and cultural sensitivities.

This article so far has focused on the creators of music, but a few words about the performers of Australian music is also appropriate. The attitudes hitherto expressed concerning a bias toward cultural traditions of Northern Hemisphere "mainstreams" has also influenced choirs, and for two centuries Australian composers were too often ignored by conductors in their home country. When St Peters Chorale released a CD of Australian composers in 1989, it was the first full recording entirely devoted to Australia's choral music. Thankfully, Australian music is now more accessible through new technologies, and there is an eagerness on the part of Australian conductors to perform this music.

Themes

Landscape figures prominently in both Australian instrumental and choral music. Stephen Leek is a significant figure who has used such musical approaches. His "Kondalilla," the third movement of *Great Southern Spirits,* references the Kondalilla Falls in southeast Queensland and is a highly performed Australian work. The composition is largely aleatoric and often performed with singers placed around (or within) the audience (Figure 2 on page 29).

Other works reflect qualities of the Australian experience rather than specific places. Clare Maclean's *We Welcome Summer* is one such example. The piece brings to mind Southern Hemisphere Epiphany music, where the January light of the Epiphany star in the darkness is replaced by the brilliance of the Australian sun bringing light. The composition is based on text from Australian poet, cartoonist, and philosopher Michael
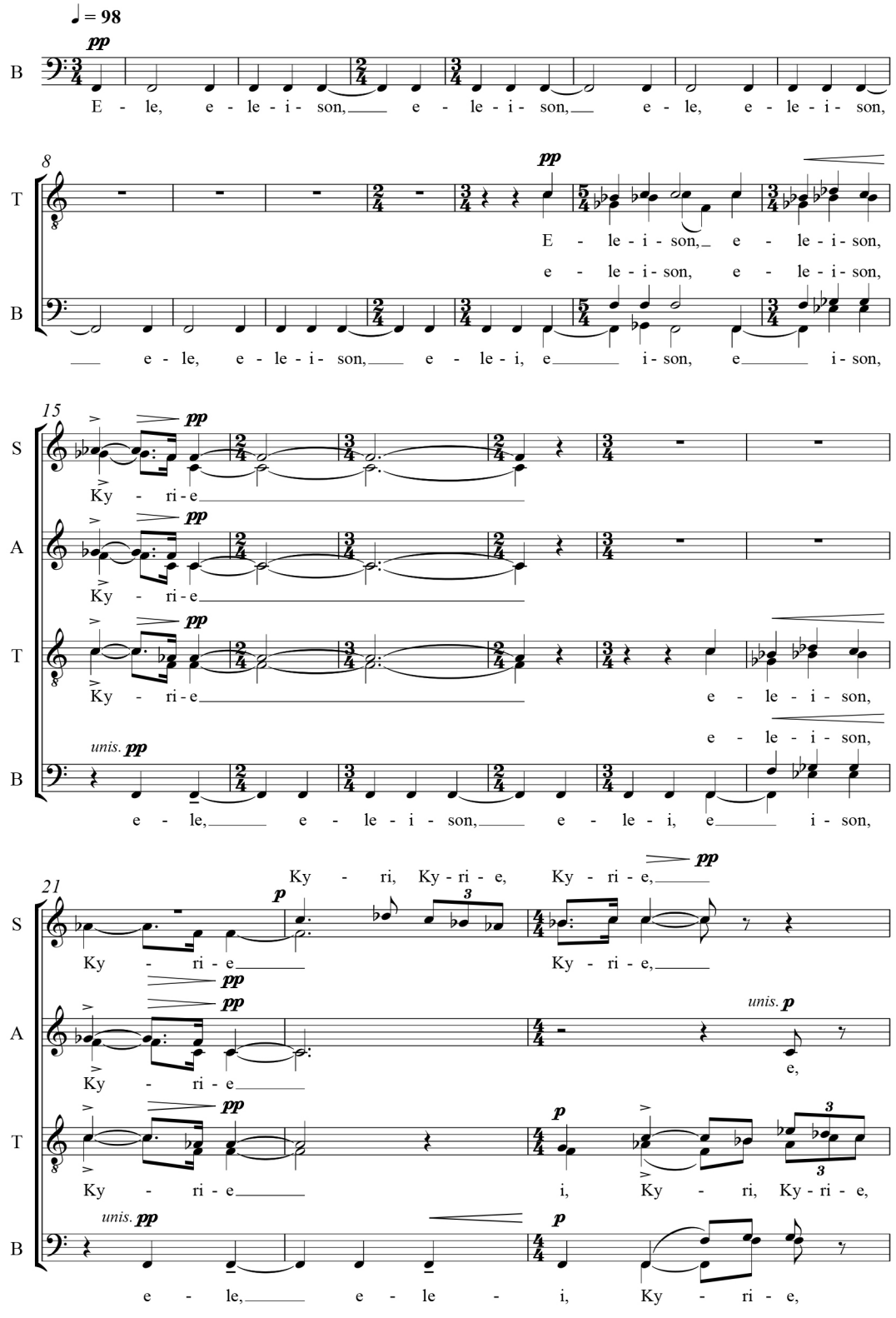


Figure 1. Ross Edwards, *Missa Alchera (Mass of the Dreaming)*, mm. 1–23.

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Leunig (1945–2024):

> *We welcome summer and the glorious blessing of light. We are rich with light, we are loved by the sun. Let us empty our hearts into the brilliance. Let us pour our darkness into the glorious forgiving light. For this loving abundance let us give thanks and offer our joy. Amen.*[11]

Another example is Stephen Leek's "Midsummer Noon" (the third song in *Voices of a Land*), describing the oppressive heat in the stillness of the Australian bush.

Australian compositions often replicate natural sounds. These might be specifically notated by the composer but more usually will be aleatoric or improvised. Bird song is common, often arising from a composer directive for singers to improvise bush sounds; the sound of rain (clicking fingers or vocally generated) or wind are also quite frequent. With such a distinctive physical environment in Australia, there is a ready source of material for musical ideas.

As far as sacred themes, although Australia lacks a strong church tradition and has no deep historical roots upon which to draw for choral texts, the best of Australian church music maintains high standards. Composers such as David Drury, Andrew Ford, Gordon Kerry, Clare Maclean, Matthew Orlovich, John Rotar, Andrew Schultz, Brooke Shelley, Paul Stanhope, and Joseph Twist have made significant and recent contributions. Much of this music suits concert performance as well as that which is liturgical.

Enigmatic Texts

The texts set by Australian composers often link to the themes articulated in this article. In addition, there seems to be a prevalence for enigmatic (ambiguous) texts. Peter Sculthorpe's *Morning Song for the Christ Child*, setting a text by Australian musicologist and author Roger Covell, illustrates this:

> *The quilted sea is gone like rain*
> *Gone and never found again*
>
> *A thin tree grows in starlit thirst*
> *Old and deep and past all hurt*
>
> *Green morning sleeps, the sky is sown*
> *Kind and calm and all alone*

Other texts are humorous or tongue-in-cheek. Noel Ancell's *Animals Noah Forgot* describes the animals that

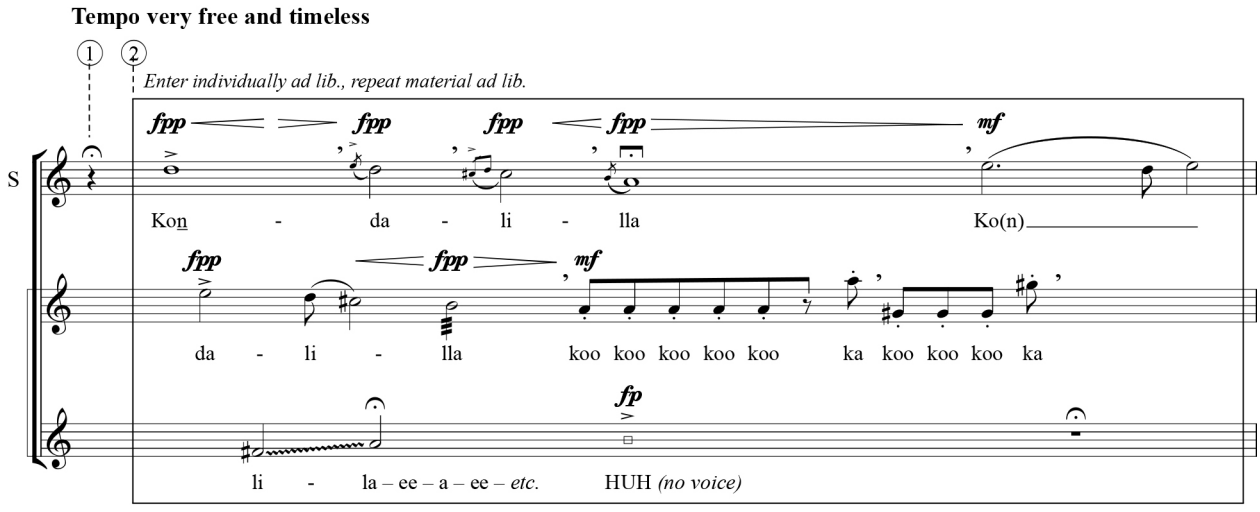


Figure 2. Stephen Leek, *Great Southern Spirits*, "Kondalilla"
Aleatoric Soprano Opening
Copyright © 2009 by Stephen Leek. Reprinted with permission.

Noah supposedly did not take in the ark (all of which are native Australian animals). Paul Stanhope set Michael Leunig in his *Lost the Plot* (including the titles "La La Land," "Underpants anthem," and "Talking to my shoe"). Matthew Orlovich set Pat Edwards's poem *If Christ had been born in another place and time,* giving Christ's nativity an Australian context.

In contrast, and perhaps taking the lead from Australian-born composer and arranger Percy Grainger (1882–1961),[12] there are works that are wordless or that use new words devised by the composer. Such words are usually conceived for their colouristic qualities and the way those qualities can influence the music itself.

Choral Music as Social Response

Australians like to see themselves as socially responsible. They were the second country to give women the vote (after New Zealand). The music of Australian composer Robert Davidson often speaks to humanity in a contemporary way. His gentle and lyrical *The Earth's Prayer* is a plea for the environment. A technique Davidson uses frequently in his instrumental and choral music is to transcribe speeches to generate musical material. His *Not Now, Not Ever!* utilizes this technique in a multimedia choral work based on, and incorporating, the famous "Misogyny Speech" delivered in Australia's national parliament by the first female prime minister, Julia Gillard, in 2012.

Australian poets often reflect on aspects of Australia's history. *Waltzing Matilda* (1903), arranged by Marie Cowan with text by A. B. Paterson, has a melody of Scottish origins and a text by one of Australia's best-known poets.[13] Many Australian songs describe aspects of an interesting colonial past, and the struggle of convicts, or the heroes Australians made of "bushrangers" (highway thieves), of the life of the small holding farmers and their struggle to survive. For example, *Andy's gone with cattle*[14] refers to the difficulties of drought impacting small farmers, such that the husband leaves the farm with the cattle, possibly for some months, as the farm can no longer sustain them. It makes specific reference to the hardship of the wife living alone without her partner's support. This is social history in song.

People and Events

A popular view in Australia is that its European history is too new to have much historical detail recorded in choral music. A more nuanced view is that what is lacking is the Australian people's *sense* of their history. This history does not appear to be attached to the national pride many Australians feel. However, several composers write music that has an historical underpinning. Of these, songsmith Paul Jarman is one of the most prolific; his choral songs often recount events from Australia's historical past. Other composers include Stephen Cronin, Matthew Orlovich, and Andrew Schultz, while the Indigenous perspective of Australian history is represented with such composers as Deborah Cheetham Fraillon, most notably in her *Eumeralla, A War Requiem for Peace*, which highlights the Australian frontier wars.[15]

Choral Timbre

The "sound" of an Australian choral composition is likely an amalgam of any or all of the following:

1. Choral timbre is obviously related to speech, and Australians generally speak with a forward tone, lacking the rich sonority of language often found elsewhere—nor is Australian speech significantly modulated.

2. Australian cultural influences, as previously discussed, are highly English-centric, and choral tone is also subject to such influences.

3. Australian choirs in education contexts are usually cocurricular and do not have as strong a sense of embeddedness in their respective educational setting as is so often found in North America. Additionally, there are not as many opportunities in Australia for conductors to study choral pedagogy.

There is less of a *tradition* of an Australian sound and more the accidental consequence of young Australians liking to sing in a choir. In tertiary education institutions there is a focus on mixed-voice ensembles. Recordings of leading Australian choirs such as The Australian Voices provide examples of tone that may be helpful for international choirs.



Desert Songs Revised

Australia has significant landscape diversity. There are tropical rainforests of the north, snow-capped mountains in the south, grassy plains, wetlands, gorges, open bushland, temperate forests, and so much more. In the same way, Australian choral music is more than "desert songs." The voices of Australian composers from decades past and the newly emerging artists are exciting and engaging. After two centuries of composition that imitated the music of Northern Hemisphere traditions, the defining concern from the late twentieth-century Australian composition was the search for a distinctive national voice, often expressed through representations of landscape and environment. Currently, many twenty-first-century Australian composers are moving toward a more pluralistic conception of identity, one that privileges story, community, cultural diversity, Indigenous perspectives, and lived experience over a singular notion of what it means to be Australian.

Table 1 on pages 32–39 provides a selection of Australian choral works across a range of voicings ready for exploration and presentation in future concert programs. This table is organized into three traditions that mirror the themes presented in this article: 1. Inherited European tradition; 2. Distinctive Australian tradition; and 3. Emerging tradition of respectful Indigenous acknowledgment and collaboration. CJ

NOTES

[1] Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788-1972*. 2nd ed. (Monash University Publishing, 2014). The second edition includes an introduction by John Rickard, author on Australian cultural history and biography.

[2] This article is based on material from the author's interest session, "A Distant Music: Introducing Choral Music of Australia," presented at the 2024 Midwestern ACDA Region Conference, Omaha, Nebraska.

[3] An *eisteddfod* is a community music competition originating in Wales and usually held annually, with sections for instrumental and vocal solos typically within a specific age range, choral and instrumental ensembles, and poetry.

[4] Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music* (Manchester University Press, 2001).

[5] Jonathan Paget, "The Guitar Music of Peter Sculthorpe" (DMA diss., Eastman School of Music, 2003), 13.

[6] The didgeridoo is the world's oldest instrument and is "associated with the Aboriginal tribes of Arnhem Land in Northern Australia… The sounds of the instrument mimic sounds of the earth—of animals, humans and nature." Didgeridoo Down Under, accessed June 1, 2026, https://www.didgedownunder.com/culture-charity.

[7] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, "A Path to Song: The Incorporation of Aboriginal and Environmental Influences in 20th and 21st Century Australian Choral Music" (DMA diss., University of Washington, 2020), https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/items/b27d7edc-f7ee-4a86-920d-afe9762c8ae9. Specifically relating to cultural appropriation, see pp. 43–59.

[8] "Lullaby is based upon one of the number of Indigenous Australian melodies collected by Dr. H. C. Lethbridge during the 1930s and is a lullaby for children victimised by war," Faber Music, accessed August 25, 2026, https://www.fabermusic.com/shop/lullaby-p2715.

[9] Mabalot, "A Path to Song," 188.

[10] *Missa Alchera (Mass of the Dreaming)* was commissioned by St Stephen's Catholic Cathedral, Brisbane, and St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane, with funds provided by the Australia Council. Dedicated to Graeme Morton.

[11] Michael Leunig, *The Prayer Tree* (HarperCollins Publishers Australia, 1998).

[12] Percy Grainger moved to the United States in 1914 and became an American citizen in 1918. He returned several times to Australia during his life, and his remains were brought to Australia for burial. Percy Grainger Society, accessed June 1, 2026, https://www.percygrainger.org/Percy-Grainger.

[13] View lyrics and images from the original manuscript at Project Gutenberg Australia, accessed June 1, 2026, https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks21/2100391h.html.

[14] Henry Lawson, *Andy's Gone with Cattle* in *In the Days When the World was Wide and Other Verses* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1896).

[15] "The Australian frontier wars refers to a lengthy period in Australian history, beginning in the 1780s and extending by many accounts into the 1940s, characterized by ongoing hostilities between British colonists and Aboriginal Australians." Mark Dziak, "Australian Frontier Wars," Research Starter, 2023, EBSCOhost, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/australian-frontier-wars-0/.

Table 1. Selected Australian Choral Works

Category	Voicing	Title/Composer	Notes
Tradition 1: European Influence (Sacred)	SA and organ	*Ave Maria*/Robert Boughen	For the advanced choir of children's voices or adult ensemble. From one of Australia's legendary cathedral musicians.
	SA unaccompanied	*Three Carols*/Wendy Morrissey	Three medieval texts suitable for concert or church service.
	SATB unaccompanied	*And loud we sing and long*/ Jacqueline Atherton	This carol for Christmas mentions the traditional winter cold of Christmas and the summer heat that is part of the Australian Christmas experience. It also combines "scat" syllables in a classical style.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Arise my love my fair one*/ Keren Terpstra	A text of anticipation, celebration, and redemption. Appropriate in concert or church service.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Christ the King*/Clare Maclean	An Australian choral masterpiece. Suitable for concert or church service.
	SATB with organ	*Christ the Lord is Risen again*/ Graeme Morton	Hints of the original hymn melody pervade the accompaniment of this joyous liturgical celebration.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Crossing the Bar*/ Graeme Morton	A setting of the Alfred, Lord Tennyson, text and a popular alternative to more traditional settings. Suitable for concert or church service.
	SATB and keyboard	*Gloria in Excelsis*/Mark Puddy	An energetic rhythmic Gloria in more popular style, with alternative texts for Christmas and general use.

SATB unaccompanied	*Lo there is light*/ Matthew Orlovich	Commissioned by Harvard University Choir and combining the text of "Brightest and Best" with "Sunrise on the coast" by Australia's A. B. Paterson.
SATB unaccompanied	*In Paradisum*/Moya Henderson	Composed after the death of Henderson's twin brother, Peter, and first sung at his funeral.
SATB unaccompanied	*Missa Alchera: Mass of the Dreaming*/Ross Edwards	Latin text. An advanced work.
SATB unaccompanied	*Magnificat* Op 79/ Andrew Schultz	Latin text. For concert hall as well as more liturgically focused churches. Also a companion to Schultz's Latin *Nunc dimittis*.
SATB unaccompanied	*Morning Song for the Christ Child*/ Peter Sculthorpe	A short, beautiful, and understated work.
SSATBB unaccompanied	*Nativity*/Brooke Shelley	Usually sung at Christmas, this text by Australian Catholic poet James McAuley is not specific to Christ's nativity, and as such is applicable to all choirs who wish to express wonder at birth and rebirth.
SATB unaccompanied	*Requiem for a Tribe Brother*/ Malcolm Williamson	Williamson became the first non-British composer to become *Master of the Queen's Music*.
SATB & orchestra (or organ reduction)	*Requiem*/Peter Sculthorpe	"The Requiem…confirm[s] his status as arguably the finest composer Australia has ever produced" (*International Record Review*, 2007)

	SATB with organ	*The Winchester Service*/ Joseph Twist	*Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* commissioned for the Evensong of Winchester Cathedral that celebrated the coronation of King Charles III.
Tradition 1: European Influence (Secular)	Unison & piano	*Animals Noah Forgot* (Vols 1 & 2)/ Noel Ancell	Humorous texts and simple songs for the youngest choristers.
	Unison & piano	*Where go the boats*/ Graeme Morton	For young singers. A graceful setting of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous poem.
	SA & piano or SSA & piano	*Lost the Plot/Losing the Plot*/ Paul Stanhope	Three humorous songs with texts by Australia's whimsical poet and cartoonist Michael Leunig.
	SSA & piano	*Butterflying*/Elena Kats-Chernin	Originally written for the 2003 Rugby World Cup opening ceremony in a version for full orchestra.
	SSA & piano OR SATB & piano	*She Walks in Beauty*/ Sally Whitwell	Setting a text of Lord Byron. This piece launched Whitwell's career as a composer.
	SSA & piano also SATB & piano	*We are the future*/Carl Crossin	Uplifting piece with solos throughout. Text written by year eight students sharing their hope for the future and their place in it.
	SATB & piano	*Difference*/Stephen Leek	A setting of the poem by Robert Frost. Full of vitality and energy, perhaps treating the poem more as narrative than reflection.
	SATB unaccompanied also treble voices unaccompanied	*Let Evening Come*/ Graeme Morton	Text from award-winning American poet Jane Kenyon, which contemplates the end of the day and parallels it to twilight of life.

SATB & piano	*Mind*/Andrew Schultz	Commissioned by St Peters Chorale, a high school ensemble. Effective for SATB ensembles of all ages.
SATB & string quartet (or piano)	*There is music- A Song Cycle of the Ages*/Stephen Leek	A text that reflects on the importance of memory in life's journey, triggered by beauty, images, sounds, colors, and of course, music.
SATB unaccompanied	*On the Night Train*/Joseph Twist	An evocative choral depiction of a train journey.
SATB unaccompanied	*Sing Out!*/Katy Abbott Kvasnica	Commissioned for the 2005 Australian Society of Music Education Conference. A short, fun, rhythmic piece celebrating singing and is to be sung "with joy."
SATB unaccompanied	*Something childish, but very natural*/Joshua Adams	Written in response to the COVID-19 lockdown. Simple yet lush setting of poetry by Samuel Taylor Coleridge that expresses a first glimpse of hope and return to normality.
SATB unaccompanied	*Tides of Ocean*/Matthew Orlovich	An exuberant piece whose high energy makes it an excellent opener to a concert or choral segment.
SATB unaccompanied	*Until I Saw*/Stephen Leek	A beautiful, imaginative piece that reflects on the ocean.
SATB unaccompanied	*Wake Up!*/Paul-Antoni Bonetti	A rhythmic and energetic piece that reimagines the choral ensemble as a band.
SATB unaccompanied	*We Welcome Summer*/ Clare Maclean	A wonderful piece to suit an advanced college or church choir.

Tradition 2: An Australian Idiom (Landscape, Places, and the Natural World)	Unison & piano	*Birdsongs*/Stephen Leek	Three imaginative songs for young singers with independent piano writing. Score has separate vocal parts.
	SA & piano	*Ancient Cries*/Stephen Leek	Three imaginative songs performable alone or as a set with texts that reflect on the Australian landscape.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Araluen*/Matthew Orlovich	A characteristic "Orlovich sound": fresh, buoyant, vital, and energized but without weight, drama, or sentimentality.
	SATB	*Butterflies Dance*/ Matthew Orlovich	Butterflies dance above the waves in a buoyant piece that captures their motion, lost in the movement of the water.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Breakers*/Stephen Leek	Highly energetic piece about dolphins at play.
	SATB unaccompanied	"Kondalilla" (from *Great Southern Spirits*)/Stephen Leek	A simple piece with aleatoric elements that will surround an audience with the sounds of the Australian rainforest.
Tradition 2: An Australian Idiom (Choral Music as Social Response)	SA or SATB & piano	*In Flanders Fields*/ Graeme Morton	A poignant setting of the poem by John McCrae.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Hush: On the death of a Bush Church*/Iain Grandage	A secular piece reflecting on the loss of cultural foundations.
	SATB choir unaccompanied (concise version)	*Not Now, Not Ever!*/ Robert Davidson	The full version intersperces choral writing with Julia Gillard's 2012 speech in the Australian House of Representatives. The concise version presents her speech within the choral parts only.

	SATB unaccompanied or version 2 SATB/SATB	*Route March*/Stephen Cronin	A poignant and tuneful work, opening with the (vocal) sound of drums as soldiers march to war, and later the silence of the return.
	SATB unaccompanied	*The Earth's Prayer*/ Robert Davidson	Taking its structure from The Lord's Prayer, this contemporary poem by Sally Clark is a lyric and poignant plea for us to love the earth. Suitable for SATB choirs.
Tradition 2: An Australian Idiom (Natural Sounds)	SA or SATB a cappella or accompanied	*Honour the Earth*/ Sarah Hopkins	With simple voice parts, this piece brings together many cultural influences as well as the music of nature herself. Sung a cappella or accompanied by small ensemble or concert band, orchestra, string orchestra, or cello ensemble.
	SSAA & piano	*Rain Dream*/Joseph Twist	A highly imaginative choral piece. In it a young child who lives in the dry central Australian outback and has never seen rain dreams of what it would be like to be in a thunderstorm.
	SATB unaccompanied	*Three Australian Bush Songs*/ Iain Grandage	Can be sung as a set or individually. All three pieces are evocatively set, and the middle piece fills the auditorium with the calls of the Australian bush.
Tradition 2: An Australian Idiom (Non-lexical Choral Compositions)	SATB unaccompanied	*An Australian Up Country Song*/ Percy Grainger	Percy wrote, "I had wished to voice an Australian Up-Country feeling as Stephen Foster had with American Countryside feelings in his songs."
	SSATB unaccompanied	*At Sunset*/Stephen Leek	Australian lyricism is at its best in this sweet partsong.

	SSAA or SATB usually unaccompanied	*Past Life Melodies*/ Sarah Hopkins	Featured on the Hollywood film *Boychoir.* Commissioned (in the SATB version) for St Peters Chorale. Accompaniment available for full orchestra or concert band, string orchestra, or cello ensemble.
Tradition 2: An Australian Idiom (Australian History and Events)	SA and piano	*Child of the Goldfields*/ Paul Jarman	A rollicking song of the Victorian goldfields in the lead-up to the Eureka Stockade. Part of the song cycle trilogy *Eureka*.
	Various voicings and piano	*Pemulwuy*/Paul Jarman	Pemulwuy means "man of the earth," and he is known as the Rainbow Warrior. From 1790 to his death in 1802, Pemulwuy led the Eora people in a major response to the British invasion of Australia.
	SATB, 2 percussion, didjeridu	*Larrakia Lament Op. 105*/ Andrew Schultz	Scored for didjeridu, choir, and taiko drummers. Takes a Lutheran chorale, "When in the hour of need," and mixes it with excerpts of diary accounts of the 1942 Bombing of Darwin.
	SATB unaccompanied	*On Sutherland's Grave*/ Matthew Orlovich	Sets Henry Kendall's "Sutherland's Grave," "Journey to Birdsville 1966" from *The Log and Field Book of Russell Drysdale*, and excerpts from "Missa pro defunctis."
	Double SATB and piano	*To your shore*/Sally Whitwell	Australia is a land of immigrants, and this work acts as a kind of twin soliloquies: the first from a person on a boat catching first sight of land, the second from another person standing on the shore ready to welcome the ship they spy on the horizon.
Tradition 3: Indigenous Composers and Respectful Collaborations	Unison (with descant) and piano	*Buruwan Elegy*/ Luke Byrne	Dharawal text by Jodi Edwards and English text by Luke Byrne.
	Treble (with some 2 part)	*Land Sleeps, Ocean Rests*/ Dan Walker	English text, some translated into Yarrahapinni Gumbaynggirr language.

SA and piano	*Woolah Waakle*/ Dan Walker	Text by Sandra Harben, students of All Saints College, and the composer.
SA and piano	*Birinyi*/Luke Byrne	Text by Luke Byrne with Gudju Gudju.
SATB and orchestra	*Adira Arenio and Agnus Dei*/ Alice Chance	A collaboration with Kaylynn and Noel Zaro, Torres Strait language and song custodians. A setting of the Agnus Dei preceded by an equivalent Indigenous text in Meriam Mir language.
Various choirs and orchestra	*Eumeralla, a war requiem for peace*/Deborah Cheetham Fraillon	This requiem acknowledges wars between the composer's people and the European settlers who invaded their land. Sung in the dialect of the Gunditjmara people it expands the structure of the traditional Requiem.
SATB unaccompanied	*Kalkadunga yurdu*/ William Barton	High-energy work from Australia's best-known didgeridoo musician.
Various voicings and piano and percussion (3 separate versions)	*This is my home*/Paul Stanhope	Final movement of the Dramatic Cantata "Jandamarra: Sing for the Country" about the Indigenous Resistance hero of the 1890s. Text is in Bunuba language and English.
SATB unaccompanied	*The Land is Healed*/ Paul Stanhope	Text in English with some Bunuba words. Also from "Jandamarra."
SA junior trebles, SSAA senior trebles, SATB choir (advanced), piano and 3 percussionists	*I am Martuwarra*/ Paul Stanhope	A multi-choir piece about the Fitzroy River (Martuwarra) in the Kimberley, with its peoples and cultures. Text by Steve Hawke. A good pairing with *Carmina Burana* in its piano/percussion version.

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Contemporary A Cappella

Amplifying Your Group

by Rob Dietz with Trist Curless

While the human voice is at the core of contemporary a cappella music, we must acknowledge the important role that amplification plays in modern pop a cappella. Many ensembles struggle with amplified sound, whether mastering mic technique, choosing the right equipment, or understanding the mixing techniques unique to the style. The following interview with Trist Curless will help demystify some of these challenges. Curless is sound engineer for Pentatonix, Straight No Chaser, and Take 6 as well as former bass vocalist with The Manhattan Transfer and m-pact.



Let's say a group is getting on mic for the first time. What do they need to be thinking about?

I'm surprised by how often singers aren't given a moment to just learn how the mic works. Every microphone is different—there are different styles and brands. If you know what microphone you're going to use with your group, give your singers a moment to play with how it sounds depending on where they place it. The sound drops off very quickly the farther away you hold the mic. Usually, holding it an inch away is about right. It's important to develop your singers' awareness of how mic distance impacts their sound. It can be closer for moments that need more low-end presence (more on that in a minute), and farther away for big, belty moments!

For the rhythm section (bass and vocal percussion), the mic is an even more important part of the sound and is usually very close to the mouth. It's basically its own instrument! Cupping the mic can add a whole different dimension to the tone.

What do you mean by "cupping" the mic, and how does it change the sound?

Cupping the mic means holding it with your hand covering the grille (the metal mesh you sing into). That causes the plosives we're amplifying to be focused right into the mic. Beatboxers do this a lot to add extra thump to their sound. The trade-off is that it cuts down on high-end frequencies, so it may not be the best approach for every beatboxer…and it should be avoid-

ed by the rest of the singers. (Regardless of how much they have seen other performers do this.)

Bass/VP singers often take advantage of the "proximity effect" when they're on mic. Can you tell us what that is and how it works?

If you're talking about a microphone like the Shure Beta 58 or SM58, the proximity effect happens when you're close to the microphone. The lower frequencies become amplified at a more exaggerated rate than the high end. The entire signal gets bigger as you get closer, but the lower frequencies especially tend to get much bigger when you're super close. Sometimes that's detrimental. As a vocalist, there are parts where you may not want that sound, whereas the bass and drums really love that boost. It's an essential part of the sound that allows them to not push as hard.

Going back to the ensemble, how does a group's blend change on a mic?

In terms of vowels and tone, the work a group has to do to blend remains the same. The biggest difference with a mic has to do with volume and balance. Groups have to think about that acoustically, too, but add the mic, and they're dealing with a mic and their voice together to achieve the balance they are after. It adds an extra dimension.

Speaking of the sound board, let's talk about gear. What sound equipment does a typical high school or college a cappella group need?

You need a mixing console with at least enough input channels for the number of singers you have, but it's best to have more than the minimum. Also, be sure it has the outputs you require. You need microphones, monitors, and main speakers. These days, most monitor and main speakers are powered, or "active." An active speaker has an amplifier built into it, which makes the sound louder. Ideally, you'll want a subwoofer as well, which gives added presence to your bass and drums. Here are some gear recommendations:

Mixing Consoles:

1. Allen & Heath Qu-16 or SQ-5
2. Behringer X32 Yamaha TF1

Microphones (wired/wireless):

1. Shure SM58
2. Shure Beta 58

Monitors:

1. Sennheiser e835 Monitor Speakers
2. JBL IRX-112BT
3. Mackie SRM550 1600W 12-inch Powered Speaker
4. QSC K10.2

Subwoofers:

1. JBL EON618S Powered Subwoofer
2. QSC KS118 Powered Subwoofer

Once we have our gear set up, what do we need to do to get a basic mix happening?

First, check each microphone by starting with the gain all the way down [this is usually a knob on your mixing console]. It's important to understand the difference between gain and volume. Imagine there's a magical ball of sensitivity around the microphone. As you turn up the gain, that ball gets bigger. Essentially, gain controls how sensitive the mic is. Volume is how loud you make the sound you're receiving from the microphone in the mix. Have the vocalist sing normally and slowly turn the gain up until the level meter peaks just above green into yellow. If you hit red, you've gone too far and the sound will distort.

Now take one of the microphones you've set the gain on and go to the monitors. Start the monitors at zero and turn them up slowly. You might notice certain frequencies of your voice sticking out. That's where EQ comes into play! EQ allows you to turn frequencies within your sound up or down. Most of the time, you want EQ to be subtractive rather than additive, with the goal of lowering frequencies that are too loud. For most voices, we often use what's called a high-pass filter (meaning the high frequencies pass through while the low frequencies get cut). Cutting frequencies below

around 150-200 Hz leaves more space for the bass in the mix. Do not apply this to the bass and percussion mics.

Two other common effects used in a cappella mixes are reverb and delay. Reverb allows you to simulate an acoustic space so the mix sounds more natural and buoyant. Delay is generally used in two ways: very short delay adds depth to the sound while long delays add… delay… delay… delay. In a cappella, we sometimes add what's known colloquially as an "octavizer" to the bass—an artificial double of what the bass is singing, one or two octaves down. This can be accomplished with pitch shifters built into your mixing board or with separate effects pedals.

Any final words of advice?

If you're going to use mics, try to rehearse on them as much as you can. My ideal is to rehearse on microphones the same percentage of the time as I perform on microphones. Why get good without them if you're never going to perform without them? Bass and vocal percussion especially, because their sound is most impacted by the mics. Give them a little amp so they can be on mic even when the group is rehearsing acoustically. I know not every group has regular access to mics, but do as much as you can so you can get used to the sound. CJ

Rob Dietz is an internationally recognized vocal percussionist and arranger. He is the national R&R chair for contemporary a cappella. rdietz55@gmail.com



Vocal Jazz

The Reverse Triangle: Teaching Vocal Jazz Ensemble Tone Based on Vocal Register

by John Stafford II

Within a traditional choir, tenors and basses learn to tune unisons, octaves, thirds (sometimes sixths), fourths, and fifths. These intervals are usually sung in chest voice, so the resonance is maximized to properly tune the harmony (which complements with the overtone series). The struggle with introducing the vocal jazz ensemble to tenors and basses is that they must sing the thirds and sevenths of every chord. They rarely sing the root, fourth, or fifth of a chord, and instead of tuning octaves, they must learn how to tune sevenths (especially the major seventh interval, which is more common than the minor seventh interval in jazz 3/7 voicing). The students will want to sing these dissonance intervals in chest voice, but singing sevenths in chest voice will conflict with tuning the chord.

Chest voice, especially if sung with a healthy vibrato, will cause too many overtones for the interval to tune. Tenors and basses (more so the basses) really must learn how to use their mixed register or sing with minimal vibrato with a lighter chest voice. Vocalists must understand the intervallic content within the chart to sing the material in tune. Educators should understand how to teach these students how to sing the material with the correct tone associated with the interval and how to do so in a healthy manner. The diagrams below demonstrate the difference in tuning a vocal ensemble (Western Art Music vs. American Jazz Music).

In traditional choral music, the bass section is the harmonic foundation of the ensemble, regardless of whether the music is accompanied or not (see Figure 1). The soprano, alto, and tenor sections tune to the bass. Thus, the bottom/wide portion of the triangle represents the harmonic foundation, and the other three voices complement that foundation. Figure 1 also shows that the bottom of the triangle is chest voice, and the transition to the top of the triangle is sung in head voice.

In the accompanied vocal jazz ensemble, the opposite, in some ways, occurs (see Figure 2). The soprano is usually assigned to sing the "head" of the chart (meaning the melody), while the other three voice parts sing the harmonic content below them. The tenors and

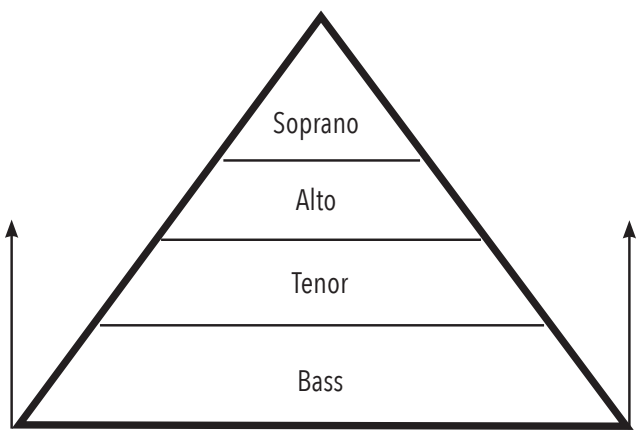


Figure 1. The Reverse Triangle - Traditional Choir
Created by the author. Used with permission.

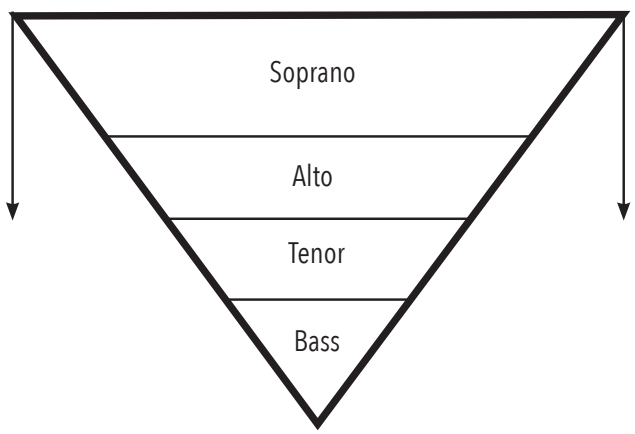


Figure 2. The Reverse Triangle - Vocal Jazz Ensemble
Created by the author. Used with permission.

basses sing mostly thirds and sevenths (the harmonic foundation of 3/7 voicing), while the sopranos and altos sing the chord extensions (a combination of chord tones, including ninths, elevenths and thirteenths).

Sopranos and altos, generally, have an easier time adjusting to jazz harmony, because jazz harmony tends to stack in triadic harmony between the upper voices (the chord extensions), while the tenors and basses tend to be in fourths (major and minor chords), fifths (major and minor chords), or tritones (dominant chords). In some more traditional jazz standards/arrangements, the tenors and basses sing quite a bit of dominant harmony in succession, which causes them to sing parallel tritones.

The root of accompanied vocal jazz ensembles is provided by the bass player. Students must be aware of tuning to the bass players because of chord function, but the lower voices must be aware of and also fit under the soprano so the melody is heard. Altos, tenors, and basses must always hear and adjust to the soprano melodic line to truly be in tune. The diagram represents the soprano being the most dominant/foundational voice in the ensemble, and the other three parts must fit under them, in terms of volume, balance, and tone. Stylistically, the best vocal jazz ensembles have the soprano part dictate the nuance, and the other three voice parts must adjust and/or copy that nuance, sometimes even during performance.

Conclusion

The idea of the reverse triangle is to: 1) help students understand the basics of listening to the foundational voices of the ensemble, and 2) sing the intervallic content using the correct register of their voices to tune the harmony. Teaching the vocal jazz ensemble is not as complicated as many directors think. Here are a couple of basic points for directors preparing students to sing jazz/understanding the Reverse Triangle concept:

Learn jazz theory. Understand the five chord qualities found in most jazz charts: major, minor, augmented, half-diminished, and full-diminished. It's also important to understand the correct chord extensions associated with each chord quality. Plus, learn how to read chord changes. All this knowledge is especially helpful for both tuning and understanding the correct accidentals for each chord tone.

Listen extensively. The best way to learn jazz is by listening to jazz music by both vocal and instrumental artists. Jazz is a genre that was originally developed by rote, not through notation. By listening to jazz, directors will develop an aural vocabulary that will help them in the rehearsal process. CJ

John Stafford II is professor of music and coordinator of the Music Department at Kansas City Community College. He is the ACDA national R&R chair for vocal jazz. jstafford@kckcc.edu

Vocal Jazz in the Archives

Other vocal jazz articles are available in the September 2025 issue of *Choral Journal* on pages 52–63.

acda.org/choraljournal



All Choirs

Keep the Student First… and the Rest Will Take Care of Itself

by Nathan Dame

It's the first day of school. A freshman treble singer walks in with a major attitude toward structure, other students, and basically everything that counters what she wants to do. Each rehearsal is a struggle, but each day gets a little better than the last. After a few weeks, we discover that she loves to sing and is actually quite good at it. A few weeks later, we begin work on our tradition of holiday processional music. As we're practicing how to move with tea lights, our freshman pushes another student in class because she was walking too close and later explains, "She was looking at me funny." Singing…check! Community building…still a work in progress.

After a swift reaction (one she still remembers to this day), we start to chip away at the "why." As each rehearsal passes, our relationship strengthens. We begin to understand why she's here, why working with others is such a challenge, and, essentially, why there is so much anger. That connection turns into retention, and she comes back sophomore, junior, and senior year—not just because she likes to sing, but because through building the relationship first and putting the music second, she has found trust in others through something she enjoys.

Twenty years ago, before I stepped into the classroom, a wise boss gave me some parting words: "Keep the student first, and everything else will take care of itself." That phrase has anchored my philosophy. I've carried it into several communities, at different levels, in schools of different sizes, and with students from every socioeconomic background. The circumstances change. The students change. The challenges certainly change. The philosophy has not.

Success happens when kids know they are cared for, that they are seen, that they are part of something successful, and that the priority of "student first" is consistently reflected in our teaching. So when I think about building a choral program, I keep coming back to the most important phrase in that advice: KEEP. THE STUDENT. FIRST.

Keep

Any conversation about recruitment should begin with retention. Simply put, engage the singers you already have through the experiences and lessons you provide. Before we worry about getting more singers, we should think about keeping the singers already in the room. Of course, that discussion is loaded. College programs deal with non-major course conflicts, campus fees, and degree requirements. High schools seem to offer more and more specialized electives alongside a top-down push toward college preparatory courses, leaving less room for choral music. Middle schools often ask students to choose between beginning an instrument or singing, among many other competing opportunities. We cannot control all of those things, but we can control the experience students have when they walk into our rooms. Consider these questions:

1. How does your choral program engage the students who are already there?

2. How does it make them want to return tomorrow? Next semester? Next year?

3. How does their experience make someone standing outside your program think, *I want to be part of that*?

Recruitment and retention are not separate ideas. Your current students are your greatest recruiters. Consider how visible experiences such as concerts, public events, traditions, trips, social opportunities, and performances can create "buzz" among singers and those not yet in choir. Students notice when their peers are part of something exciting. They notice when a group performs with excellence. They notice when students are proud to wear the shirt, talk about the trip, cele-

brate a performance, or simply enjoy being together. Excellence attracts. That doesn't mean every performance has to win an award or every choir has to sing the most difficult literature. Quality matters because students want to know that what they are doing matters. They want to belong to something successful, meaningful, and larger than themselves. There is joy in doing something well, especially when that success is shared with others. Yet visibility and excellence only get us so far. We also have to ask questions.

Why do your students stay? Why do they leave? What do they look forward to? What gets in their way? What would they tell another student about being in your program? Sometimes we spend tremendous energy trying to figure out what students want without ever actually asking them. Listen to them. That doesn't mean every suggestion becomes policy or that students dictate the direction of the program. It means their perspective matters because their experience matters. Recruiting a student into choir is only the beginning. When they take a chance on us, they're showing vulnerability. It's that same vulnerability that can lead to a deeper, longer-lasting relationship. The bigger question is: How do we *keep* them? We look at THE STUDENT.

The Student

Notice that the foundational phrase isn't "keep the choir first," "keep the program first," or "keep the music first." It is "keep the student first." We teach kids music, in that order. Choir directors are trained to hear singers. We hear the unsupported tone, the late entrance, the spread vowel, the wrong pitch, the singer who isn't matching the section. Our training teaches us to listen to what we hear, diagnose the problem, and determine what needs to happen next. But how well do we know the person producing that sound?

Relationships matter. Students need to know they are more than the voice part they sing, the spot on the riser they occupy, their ability to sing a solo, or the contribution they make to the ensemble. We have to know who they are when they are not in the choir room. Some of our singers leave rehearsal and head to athletics. Others go to theatre, band, debate, robotics, or dance. Some agonize over making sure they remain at the top of their class. Some go straight to work. Some go home to care for siblings. Some are balancing responsibilities we will never see. Knowing their stories enriches what we create together in the choir room. It also means recognizing that every student sitting in front of us has a different level of investment.

Choir can be every student's "thing," but it doesn't have to be *the* thing. Whether you have a die-hard choir kid, an overcommitted student, or someone who was placed in the class by a counselor, all of them deserve our attention and the opportunity for a meaningful relationship. That leads to an uncomfortable question: What do our rehearsals look like? If they cater primarily to the most committed student, should we be surprised when others fail to see how they fit and ultimately drop the class?

The same is true instructionally. Students don't all process information the same way. Some need to see it. Some need to hear it. Some need to move. Some need repetition. One student can understand immediately, while another student needs the same concept presented three different ways before it clicks. Student-centered teaching asks us to adjust instead of simply wondering why they haven't adjusted to us. Knowing the student does not mean abandoning the needs of the ensemble. In fact, the better we know the individuals in front of us, the better equipped we are to move them toward a common goal. A choir becomes a community when students realize two things at the same time: *I matter here* and *who I am and what I do matter to everyone else here.*

First

The final word may be the most difficult one. Putting students first sounds obvious. Most educators would say they do it. But our priorities are revealed less by what we say and more by the decisions we make. I continually try to ask: *Who is this decision actually serving?* Look inward at the traditions in your program. Are they serving the students you have now, or are you protecting them because "that's what I've always done"? Consider the rehearsal structure. Is it designed around how students learn best or simply around how you learned to rehearse? Consider the performance calendar. Are all of those events meaningful experiences for students, or

are some there because you feel obligated to maintain them? Consider the literature. The trips. The auditions. The uniforms. The expectations. The schedule. Whom are they serving?

Putting the student first occasionally requires us to let go of something we like. It might mean changing a tradition. It might mean choosing different literature. It might mean saying no to a performance opportunity that looks impressive on paper. It might mean realizing that another trophy, another ensemble, another trip, or another line on the director's résumé isn't what the students in front of us need. And this is important: *student-first does not mean student-easiest.*

Putting students first does not require lowering expectations. It does not mean eliminating accountability, avoiding difficult conversations, or allowing students to determine every decision. Remember the freshman from the beginning? Sometimes putting the student first means holding a firm boundary because the student needs it. Students deserve excellence. They deserve teachers who believe they are capable of more than they currently believe about themselves. They deserve meaningful literature, thoughtful instruction, high expectations, and the satisfaction that comes from doing difficult things well. Caring about students and demanding excellence are not competing philosophies. In the best programs, they feed each other.

Students are more willing to take musical risks when they trust the person asking them to take those risks. They are more willing to accept correction when they know correction isn't rejection. They are more willing to work for the ensemble when they believe the ensemble has a place for them. That is where student engagement becomes something greater than simply keeping kids entertained. Engagement means doing. It means singing, moving, listening, questioning, struggling, trying again, and eventually succeeding. The students in our choirs aren't audience members in the rehearsal. The students *are* the rehearsal. And when students rise to the top of the priority pyramid, other things begin to find their proper place. Director ego gets out of the way. Awards matter less. Traditions become more purposeful. And the all-too-common comparison trap becomes a waste of energy.

Keep the Student First

That freshman from the first day of school eventually became a senior. I would love to say that somewhere along the way every challenge disappeared and every rehearsal became perfect. It didn't. That's not how students work, and it certainly isn't how relationships work. But she stayed. She sang. She grew. She learned how to function within a community that needed something from her while discovering that the community had something to give her. And ultimately, that is why the philosophy given to me twenty years ago has remained so important. We spend a lot of time in our profession talking about building successful programs. We count enrollment. We celebrate ratings. We post audition results. We recognize invitations, performances, awards, and accomplishments. There is nothing wrong with celebrating those things; they represent tremendous work by students and teachers. But they make poor starting points. The success of a choir program should be the *result* rather than the objective.

If we KEEP students by creating experiences they want to return to; if we know THE STUDENT behind the singer and build a place where that individual can belong, contribute, and grow; and if we put that student FIRST when our priorities are tested; then retention, community, musical excellence, program identity, and growth have strong foundations on which to develop.

The numbers may grow. The performances may improve. The traditions may become stronger. The awards may come. But more importantly, the students will know they were part of something that mattered and that they mattered to it. Twenty years later, I still haven't found better advice: Keep the student first… and the rest will take care of itself. CJ

Nathan Dame, PhD, is director of choirs at Wylie East High School (TX), where he leads a thriving choral program of over 500 singers, including more than 200 tenor-bass singers in four leveled tenor-bass choirs. He is the national ACDA R&R chair for tenor-bass choirs. nathan.dame@mac.com

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QUARTERLY ENDORSEMENTS



WILLIAM V. MALPEDE

Be in Love

3' 00" SATB; piano
English (Rumi)

An exansive call to be in love with every aspect of life, as only Rumi can urge! The writing is accessible even to less advanced groups, yet satisfying in style and message for any ensemble seeking clarity of communication with their audience. Very reasonable ranges for all voice parts, and a memorable refrain the audience will carry with them.

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

Get Curious

4' 00" SSAA, Narrator; a cappella
English (Elizabeth Alexander)



Fascinating text suggesting that curiosity (about what lies beneath, what is assumed, etc) is the tonic that can turn the powerful, transformative, sometimes even beautiful force that is anger into something constructive rather than destructive. Have a treble choir ready to bite into rhythms, consonant sounds, text of real meaning? This one's for you!



BERNARD HUGHES

I Sing of Love

13' 05" SSAATTBB; S solo; a cappella
English (Song of Solomon 2, Jalal ud-Din Rumi, I Corinthians 13)

Drawing on three traditions, the text celebrates love's power to awaken life, transforms what seems impossible, and sustain us in patience, hope, and perseverance. This is a musical and emotional *tour de force*, requiring an ensemble with professional skill, and the stamina to convey an expansive message. Could be a masterful concert centerpiece. Stunning!

RAPHAEL AMADIO FUSCO

An American Requiem

40' SATB div; SATB soli; scorings for organ or piano
Requiem Mass, in English translation



Written to provide a distinctly American response to the wave of American mass shootings, begun just after that in Orlando in 2016. Set the traditional Requiem text in English translation, blending Gospel, Romanticism, pop, serialism, and counterpoint. Nine very substantial movements; stunning choral and solo wiriting. Musically powerful, emotionally moving. Worthy to stand with all great requiems!



ROBERT PATERSON

The New Colossus

6' 00" SSATBB; piano
English (Emma Lazarus)

Composer's perspectives on redefining America as a place "grounded in love and acceptance," through the famously beloved words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. Abundant use of choral resources! Full-bodied singing for "Mother of exiles" text; sensitive setting of "Give me your tired..." Beautifully pianistic independent piano writing; more than accomp! Rewarding for a good choir!

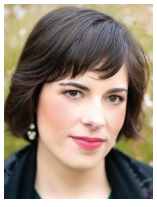
JOSHUA FISHBEIN

Of the Ages

10' 30" SATB; a cappella
English (Elizabeth Hart Pennell, Laurence Alma-Tadema, William Butler Yeats)



This is straight-up fun! A gem for those who delight in independent lines in varying forms of counterpoint, surprising shifts of mode mid-line, clear chords emerging at lines' ends, etc. Affectively (and often humorously) juxtaposes childhood's wonder and youthful exuberance with the heightened perception, reflection, and awareness of impermanence that come with age. Fun for a semi-pro ensemble.



JESSICA FRENCH

Thy Will Be Done

4' 00" SATB, divisi; organ
English (The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6)

In the anglo choir and organ church music tradition, making often dramatic use of both instruments. Some a cappella passages contrast with organ writing calling upon registration flexibility from the organist. Divisi voicing and chromaticism drive to a dramatic peak at "deliver us from evil." Fabulous addition to the repertoire for church with the resources! Requires a choir of some size and power.

JOSHUA CARTER MAYNARD

A Fog Bank Lies O'er Farthingderry

3' 40" TTBB, Baritone solo; a cappella
English (Joshua Carter Maynard)



A nostalgic evocation of a beloved coastal homeland, recalling its misty fields, wildlife, waterways, and villages with vivid affection and expressing a deep longing to return to the place that still feels like home. "Danny Boy" character, but with full use of the men's ranges, skills, and flexibility. Baritone solo is brief, but requires a good soloist. Stunning addition to the TTBB a cappella repertoire!



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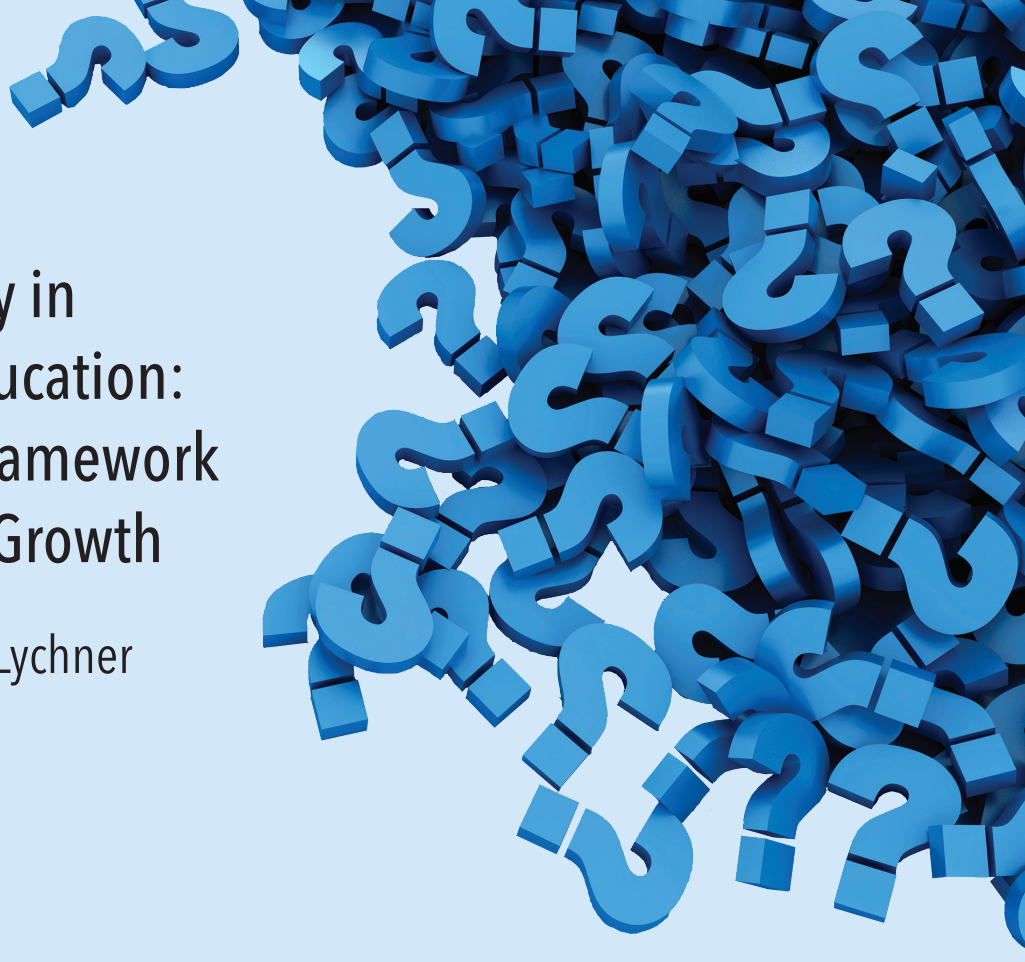
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Teaching Identity in Choral Music Education: A Three-Phase Framework for Professional Growth

Greg LeFils and John Lychner

There is often a moment during a choral rehearsal when a decision must be made quickly: whether to stop and correct a musical detail, whether to adjust repertoire difficulty, or how to respond to a struggling singer. In these moments, decisions are rarely guided by technique alone. Instead, they draw upon something deeper—our teaching identity.

Brian C. Murray reminds us that a philosophy of music education should not be something written for a class or job application and then forgotten. Rather, it is a living statement of beliefs that evolves as educators grow and change.[1] A similar idea applies to teaching identity, which we define as the internal understanding of who we are as educators and why we teach the way we do. Teaching identity reflects the values that shape daily decisions in program design, repertoire selection, rehearsal, and assessment. It influences how educators balance musical excellence with student growth, how they define success in their programs, and how they respond to the many expectations placed upon school music programs.

Choral music educators constantly navigate competing expectations from administrators, parents, students, community members, and colleagues. Some stakeholders prioritize visible performance achievements such as festival ratings or public concerts, while others emphasize student development, community engagement, or inclusive participation. Without a clear sense of professional identity, these competing voices can create confusion or stress. When educators are grounded in a well-developed teaching identity, however, decision making becomes more coherent and purposeful.

Teaching identity also contributes to professional resilience. Educators who are grounded in their own priorities and beliefs are better equipped to navigate challenges and maintain long-term commitment to the profession.[2] Rather than reacting to every external pressure, they are able to interpret those pressures through the lens of their own educational values.

This article explores the concept of teaching identity for choral music educators as it develops across three identifiable phases of a choral educator's career: Pre-Service, Transition, and Career. Although these phases are presented sequentially, readers do not need to approach them linearly. Choral educators are encouraged to begin with the phase that best reflects their current career context, using the others as points of comparison, reflection, and long-term planning.

Five Questions to Clarify Your Teaching Identity

Before exploring the three phases of development, it is useful to pause and consider several foundational questions. Drawn from both common challenges in choral education and the authors' experience working with developing and practicing teachers, these questions highlight areas where beliefs most directly shape day-to-day decisions. Reflecting on them encourages educators to articulate the values that guide their teaching.

1. **What do I believe is the primary purpose of choral music education?** Is it to create excellent performances, develop musically literate singers, build community, provide emotional expression, or some meaningful combination of these goals?

2. **How do I balance performance excellence with student growth?** When these priorities conflict, which takes precedence and why?

3. **What role does repertoire selection play in expressing my values?** Does my repertoire reflect diversity of musical style, historical period, cultural perspective, pedagogical progression, or student engagement?

4. **How do I define success in my choral program?** What does success look like in my context—musically, educationally, and relationally? How, if at all, do I measure it? Is it reflected in festival ratings, student retention, musical growth, personal development, or something else entirely?

5. **What kind of musical community am I building?** Is my choir a family, a team, a class, a performance ensemble, or a unique combination shaped by my vision as a teacher?

Writing responses to these questions—and revisiting them periodically—can help clarify the identity that shapes teaching decisions. Many directors find that their answers evolve over time as their experience grows and as the needs of their students change.

Understanding the Three Phases of Teaching Identity

For the purposes of this discussion, we organize the development of teaching identity into three practical phases of a choral educator's professional life: Pre-Service, Transition, and Career. While every educator's journey is unique, these phases represent common developmental patterns that influence how teaching identity forms, evolves, and deepens. Teaching identity is not static. Instead, it develops through a continuous interaction between experience, reflection, and professional growth.

Phase One: Pre-Service

The pre-service phase is often characterized by excitement, curiosity, and a certain degree of impatience. Many future educators spend years observing teachers and ensemble directors and are eager to step into those roles themselves. Research suggests that much of a teacher's professional identity begins forming even before entering an undergraduate music education program.[3] Students bring with them years of experience as ensemble members, observing the rehearsal styles, expectations, and values of their own teachers. These early experiences often shape initial assumptions about what effective teaching looks like. Pre-service preparation, therefore, does not create identity from scratch; instead, it helps students examine, challenge, and refine the beliefs they already hold about teaching and learning.

One of the earliest opportunities for this reflection is the philosophy of music education statement. Writing such a statement requires students to articulate their beliefs about the purpose of music education and the role of the teacher in facilitating musical growth. Rather than viewing this as a one-time assignment, pre-service teachers benefit from revisiting and refining this philosophy throughout their preparation.

Fieldwork and student teaching provide especially powerful opportunities for identity development. These experiences place future teachers directly in rehearsal settings where they must translate philosophy into practice.[4] The decisions made during rehearsals—how to structure warm-ups, how to respond to student mis-

takes, how to select repertoire—reveal whether teaching actions align with underlying beliefs.

Several practical tools support identity development during this phase. Self-observation is one of the most valuable. Recording a rehearsal or teaching segment allows future educators to compare what they intended to do with what actually occurred. Although watching oneself teach can feel uncomfortable, it provides insight that is difficult to gain otherwise.

Observation by mentors and peers is equally valuable. Cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and fellow students can provide perspectives that help pre-service educators recognize strengths and areas for improvement. Reflection, however, must move beyond simple emotional reactions. Instead of asking, "Did that rehearsal feel good or bad?" educators should ask a deeper question: "Did my teaching decisions reflect the kind of choral educator I hope to become?" This shift from reaction to reflection helps ensure that teaching identity develops intentionally rather than accidentally.

Phase Two: Transition

The first two to five years of teaching represent a critical transition period. During this phase, new educators are fully responsible for their own classrooms while still learning many aspects of the profession through experience. The transition from preparation to professional practice can be challenging. New choral directors must navigate administrative expectations, parent communication, scheduling complexities, and the day-to-day realities of managing multiple ensembles.

For many new directors, the transition also involves building or reshaping a program. A teacher may inherit ensembles with uneven skill levels, limited rehearsal time, or few established traditions. In these circumstances it becomes tempting to focus on short-term solutions that produce immediate results rather than long-term musical growth. Having a clear teaching identity serves as an anchor during this period. When faced with competing demands, educators who understand their professional values are better positioned to make consistent decisions. Clarity of identity has also been linked to increased confidence and professional self-efficacy among music educators.[5]

Professional community plays a crucial role in supporting educators during this transition. Mentors, colleagues, and professional organizations provide both encouragement and perspective. Participation in state and national professional communities, such as ACDA, allows newer teachers to learn from experienced educators who have navigated similar challenges.

Teachers who successfully navigate this phase often maintain several habits established during their preparation. Two of the most consistent are reflective self-observation—recording rehearsals, analyzing teaching decisions, and identifying areas for improvement—and the active cultivation of professional relationships that provide support, feedback, and inspiration.

Phase Three: Career

The career phase often brings greater stability and confidence. With experience comes a deeper understanding of repertoire, rehearsal pacing, vocal pedagogy, and program management. However, this phase introduces a different challenge: maintaining curiosity and professional growth over time. Without intentional renewal, routines can become stagnant. For this reason, continued exploration of teaching identity remains essential.

Reinvention in the career phase can take many



forms. Some directors pursue new repertoire traditions; programming works by living composers or exploring choral music from cultures previously absent from their concerts. Others experiment with rehearsal structure, incorporating student leadership, peer sectionals, or student-led programming decisions. Some teachers develop additional ensembles—such as chamber choirs, vocal jazz groups, or contemporary a cappella ensembles—to meet evolving student interests.

Another valuable practice during the career phase is revisiting and rewriting one's philosophy of music education. Returning to this document after several years often reveals how professional beliefs have evolved through experience.

Professional engagement beyond one's own classroom can also provide renewal. Serving as a clinician, adjudicator, guest conductor, or community ensemble director allows educators to contribute to the broader musical community while gaining new perspectives on their own teaching. Scholars of music teacher development note that professional identity continues to evolve across a teacher's career through reflection, community engagement, and ongoing learning.[6] The same lifelong learning we encourage in our students should remain central to our own professional lives.

Conclusion

Teaching identity should be a framework that evolves throughout a professional lifetime. By recognizing the phases of pre-service preparation, early-career transition, and long-term professional practice, choral educators can better understand how their identity develops and how it continues to change.

Returning periodically to the reflective questions presented in this article can help educators remain grounded in their values. Through observation, reflection, and engagement with professional communities, teaching identity becomes clearer and stronger.

The question for choral educators is not whether they have a teaching identity—every teacher does. The question is whether that identity is being shaped intentionally. In the end, teaching identity is the throughline connecting every rehearsal, every performance, and every student interaction. Nurturing that identity allows choral educators to grow not only as musicians and teachers but as leaders who shape vibrant musical communities. CJ

Greg LeFils Jr., PhD, is visiting assistant professor of music education at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. glefils@stetson.edu

John Lychner, PhD, is the director of music education at Stetson University. jlychner@stetson.edu

NOTES

[1] Brian C. Murray, "Revisiting Your Personal Philosophy of Music Education," *ChorTeach* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2024): 21–24.

[2] Paul J. Mayhew, "Choosing to Thrive: A Music Teaching Career Based on Core Values," *Music Educators Journal* 112, no. 1 (2025): 30–37.

[3] Paul Woodford, "The Social Construction of Music Teacher Identity in Undergraduate Music Education Majors," in *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning: A Project of the Music Educators National Conference,* ed. Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson (Oxford Academic, 2004), 675–94.

[4] O. G. Tucker, "Preservice Music Teacher Occupational Identity Development in an Early Field Experience," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 30, no. 1 (2020): 39–52.

[5] Cynthia L. Wagoner, "Measuring Music Teacher Identity: Self-Efficacy and Commitment Among Music Teachers," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education,* no. 205 (2015): 27–49.

[6] S. L. Chua and G. F. Welch, "A Lifelong Perspective for Growing Music Teacher Identity," *Research Studies in Music Education* 43, no. 3 (2021): 329–46.

Steven M. Demorest Research Grant

The Steven M. Demorest Award was established in 2019 to recognize the highest scoring poster proposal at the American Choral Directors National Conference. In 2026, the Research and Publications Committee redesigned the award as a grant for choral music research projects. The purpose of the Demorest Research Grant is to support meaningful and rigorous choral music research by defraying costs relating to participant recruitment, compensation, or incentivization, data collection, management and/or analysis, or other research needs.

Steven Demorest was driven by the belief that singing should not be an elitist activity for the chosen few; rather, singing was a way for everyone to build community and find joy. A prolific researcher, Demorest studied the assessment and remediation of inaccurate singing, cross-cultural music understanding, and sight-singing pedagogy. He authored two books: *Building Choral Excellence: Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal* (Oxford) and *Choral Music Methods and Materials* (Cengage), co-authored with Barbara Brinson. Additionally, he edited the book *Creating the Special World: A Collection of Lectures* by Weston H. Noble (GIA). Former Professor of Choral Music Education at Northwestern University, University of Washington, and the University of North Texas, and alumnus of Luther College, Demorest received the Weston Noble award for outstanding contributions to choral music in 2007. He passed away in 2019 and has left a rich legacy of scholarly inquiry and excellence in choral music research.

The Steven M. Demorest Research Grant will be awarded to one recipient annually in the amount of $1,000 and is non-renewable. The Research and Publications Committee welcomes applications that meet the following criteria:

- The author must be an active or student member of ACDA.
- The research must be the original work of the author seeking funding.
- The research project may be in planning or in progress, but cannot be completed, in-press, or published.
- The research method, recruitment practices, and implementation must be approved by the author's institutional review board.
- The topic must be related to choral music, including but not limited to choral music education, performance practice, conductor guides, an analysis of a composer's oeuvre, a historical analysis, a pedagogical tool, etc.
- Co-authored or multi-authored submissions are acceptable, but only one $1,000 will be awarded for the project. If co-authored or multi-authored, the submitting author must be an active or student member of ACDA.
- The author's research project may have additional funding from other entities. In those cases, authors should detail funding sources and expenses covered by those funds in their budget.
- ACDA will support the recipient's dissemination of the research project in a poster session within a regional or national conference.
- Recipients will be expected to submit for consideration a research synopsis in the Choral Journal's research report column.
- Recipients are to include the following statement in publication and presentation: "This research project was made possible, in part, by the Steven M. Demorest Research Grant of the American Choral Directors Association."

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Identity, Innovation, and Interconnectivity: A Conversation with Composer Hyowon Woo

by Rose Hellmers



For the past thirty years, Hyowon Woo (b. 1974) has built a reputation as one of the foremost composers in South Korea. Her works have been featured at major international events: her oratorio *CREO* was performed at the 2014 International Federation for Choral Music World Symposium; she served as official theme composer and music director for the 2023 World Choir Games; and her music was performed at the 2025 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation World Leaders' Gala Dinner, a gathering of the world's presidents and prime ministers. She also served as composer-in-residence for ensembles including the Seoul Ladies Singers and the Incheon City Chorale.

When did you first begin composing, and when did you realize composition could become your profession?

My mother was a professional pianist, and my father was an East Asian painter, so the arts were always a natural part of my life. Even in elementary school, I enjoyed writing melodies, and some of my early pieces were performed at school events. As a child, I was also interested in other artistic fields, particularly fashion design; I was drawn to form, color, and the shaping of space. Looking back, that interest is closely connected to the work I do now. Although the materials have changed, I have always been fascinated by bringing different elements together into a unified whole.

Eventually, with my father's encouragement to pursue a life as a creator, coupled with the realization that composing came most naturally to me, I decided to major in composition at Sungshin Women's University. In Korea, music majors typically specialize in a specific performance instrument. Instead of choosing an instrument, however, I wanted to focus exclusively on com-

position. By the time I completed my undergraduate degree in 1996, I was already working as the full-time resident composer for the professional choir Seoul Ladies' Singers, followed by the Incheon City Chorale, both directed by Maestro Hak-Won Yoon, a pioneer in choral conducting in South Korea. These opportunities launched my career, and this year now marks my thirtieth year as a professional composer.

How would you describe your compositional voice, and how has it evolved throughout your career?

My compositional voice is built around three central ideas. First, my work grows naturally out of my identity and cultural background as a Korean while existing within a framework of Western musical language. In Korean conservatory training, studying composition generally means learning to compose in a Western style. My goal has always been to combine that training with my own cultural background to create music that reflects my Korean identity yet resonates with performers and audiences from all around the world.

Second, I always strive to develop something modern. I ask myself, "What is new? What would make this more experimental and experiential?" When I begin imagining a piece, I rarely start with a melody or harmonic idea. Instead, I consider the space, the performers, and the overall experience I hope to create. I then search for the materials that can express that experience most precisely: choir, orchestra, percussion, silence, physical movement, lighting, and even the resonance of the venue can all become part of the work. For that reason, I think of myself not only as a composer of scores but as a creator of experiences. Throughout my career, I have continued exploring new possibilities within choral music.

Third, because much of my career developed from my work as a resident composer with ensembles such as the Incheon City Chorale, my music is centered on collaboration. Each composition is part of an interconnected relationship between composer and commissioner, shaped by its specific purpose, context, and occasion. More recently, projects for significant international events such as the World Choir Games and the APEC Leaders' Gala have expanded my work into different genres and settings, including collaborations with symphonic orchestras and solo voices. Still, across all these contexts, these three foundational elements—Korean identity within a Western framework, innovation, and collaboration—continue to guide my work.

For conductors who hope to commission new works, what does an ideal collaboration between composer and conductor look like, and how does that collaboration shape your creative process?

For me, composition is collaborative: every commission begins with a specific purpose and context. Before I begin writing, I want to understand as much as possible about the venue and its acoustic character, the size and level of the ensemble, the theme and purpose of the event, and even the nature of the audience. The same theme requires a different musical language, scale, and approach depending on who performs it, where it is heard, and why it is being created. These are essential points of departure for my work, which is why it is important for conductors and organizations to share the full context of the performance with the composer. The piece then becomes music for real people and a real space rather than for an abstract choir.

Within this framework, I consider text, imagery, and



the nature of the performance space together. Sometimes I write the text myself or develop an original text with a collaborator. Other times, I use existing texts, though I may select or reshape phrases according to the larger dramatic and musical flow. When working with text, I am interested not only in its meaning but also in how the words move in the mouth and where the breath naturally falls. I visualize the nuance and meaning of the words, almost as if I am seeing images in my mind, and those images become the source of my melodic elements. Yet not every piece begins with text; sometimes a work begins with a space, an image, physical movement, or the atmosphere I hope will remain after the performance.

I then choose the musical materials and build the structure, but the creative process does not end when the score is finished. Collaboration during the rehearsal process is equally important. Through many years of working with professional choirs, I have often had opportunities to listen, experiment, and revise my compositions alongside the performers, even as late as tech week. Through rehearsal, the piece encounters the interpretations of performers and conductors and the unique resonance of the venue. Once the music becomes actual sound, possibilities and problems that were invisible on the page become clear. I do not consider these revisions to be a failure or compromise. Instead, they are a vital part of the creative process through which the piece becomes the best version of itself.

As you mentioned, your music integrates Korean folk elements within Western compositional techniques. How do you approach this balance, and what would you like Western choirs to understand when performing and hearing your music?

I do not begin a piece by deciding that I must write something "Korean." Although I have never formally studied traditional Korean music, I was born and raised in Korea, within its language and culture, so those sensibilities already exist within me. Rather than intentionally trying to insert Korean elements into my music, they emerge naturally because they are part of who I am.

Traditional Korean elements like folk rhythms, *pansori* (traditional narrative singing), and *sigimsae* (Korean ornamentation) are woven into my natural musical language rather than added as decorative devices. For example, to me, *sigimsae* concerns the entire life of a tone—how it begins, trembles, moves, and disappears. My goal is not to reproduce these folk traditions exactly but to allow their sense of time, breath, and sound to live again within contemporary music.

Because of that, I am generally not overly concerned that Korean elements will be misunderstood or misrepresented by Western choirs. I hope performers approach the music with openness and sensitivity, trusting that the Korean identity is already embedded in the musical language. Ultimately, whether my pieces are heard or performed by Korean or Western audiences, the music remains Korean because it comes from my own identity and experience.

Thus, when Western choirs perform my work, I do not believe they must follow one prescribed interpretation. I believe singers and audiences should have the freedom to experience my music in their own ways. I fully respect the individual experiences that performers and audiences bring to the music, and I want them to take my music as they feel.

Is there a particular work that is most meaningful to you or that you feel best represents your artistic voice?

One work that was especially significant for me was *Me-Na-Ri,* one of my commissioned works for Incheon City Chorale's performance at the 2009 National ACDA Conference. This piece represented a turning point because it combined traditional Korean elements with a new idea of creating visual music for space, in a new genre I call spatial music. In this work, I had three SATB choirs separated throughout the performance venue with specific staging and lighting instructions, creating what I call a "four-dimensional" musical experience. This piece opened new possibilities for me as a composer.

The work also uses relatively limited musical materials: a folk-like melody, repetition, and a restrained harmonic language. I focused on how sound accumulates and disappears, how human breath continues

through the music, and how the resonance of the space becomes part of the composition. At that time, I still carried some assumptions that a strong piece required more advanced techniques and greater structural complexity. But *Me-Na-Ri* showed me that simple materials can contain great depth. Since then, I have thought less about what else I can add and more about what the work truly needs. Complexity should be used when the work requires it, but complexity itself should never become the goal.

What advice do you have for young composers who are seeking to develop their own artistic voices?

I tell younger composers not to define "their own style" too early. They should encounter excellent art across many fields—not only classical music, but contemporary music, jazz, visual art, theater, architecture, and the world around them. By remaining open and absorbing a wide range of experiences, their own artistic sensibility and language will gradually emerge.

At the same time, I emphasize that writing a good score and creating a good performance are not quite the same. A score may look excellent on the page and yet fail to come fully alive onstage. I encourage composers to hear their own works performed as often as possible and to bring what they learn back into the score. A strong work is not completed at the desk alone—it grows through people, spaces, and repeated performances. I hope younger composers will move beyond writing good scores and become creators of music that lives onstage.

What are your thoughts and strategies for balancing the popular American choral styles that are triadic and emotionally evocative with music that probes the further potential of melody, harmony, rhythm, and poetic/philosophical insights? (This question was supplied by the previous Choral Conversations interviewee. See "A Conversation with Robert Geary," *Choral Journal*, October 2026.)

Perhaps one of the hardest things to write is music that is both simple and truly good. Simple does not mean shallow. Sometimes the simplest melody or harmony can leave the deepest impression. But achieving that kind of simplicity is not easy. It may even be easier to make something complicated. To say more with less, and to write music that feels immediate but stays with you—that, to me, is one of the greatest challenges of being a composer. So rather than trying to find a balance between popular and more exploratory music, I am more interested in how deeply we can go with something simple.

Please provide a question for the next Choral Conversations interviewee.

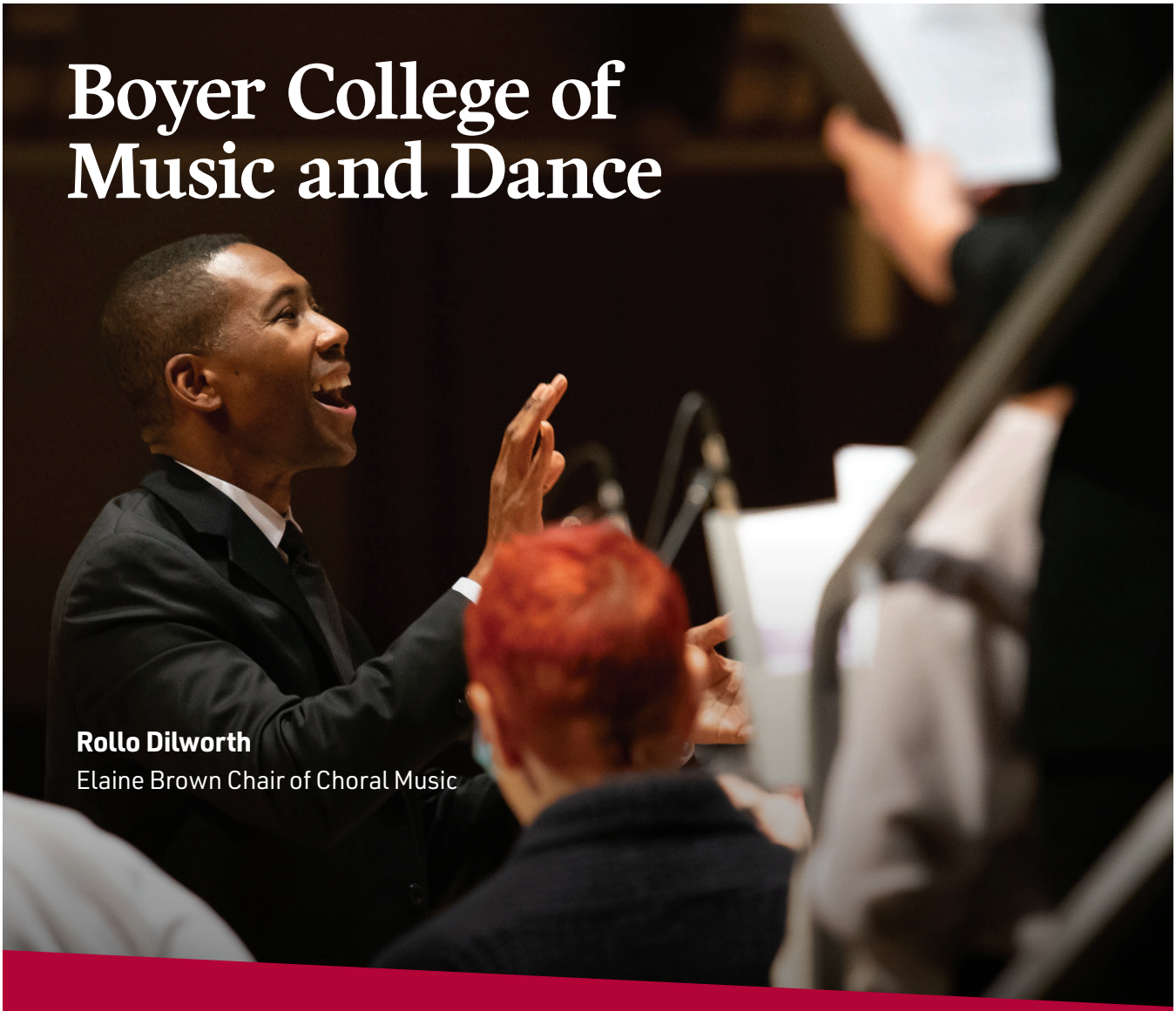
If you could keep just one thing that makes choral music special, what would it be? CJ

For past installments of the Choral Conversations column, see the following issues:

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Rose Hellmers is a PhD student in choral conducting and music education at Florida State University. She previously taught middle school and high school in Tennessee and Michigan and served as assistant conductor of the Nashville Symphony Chorus.
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Choral Conducting: A Life of Building
Dale Warland with Brian Newhouse
E. C. Schirmer, 2026

Dale Warland has held a well-deserved place of honor and respect in the choral profession for decades. As a highly esteemed conductor and composer, he set exemplary standards of music making with the Dale Warland Singers, commissioning 270 works; since disbanding the group in 2004, he has continued to share his expertise in a variety of ways. Now in his nineties, he remains articulate and passionate about choral music.

Choral Conducting: A Life of Building compiles Warland's most important ideas into a succinct volume that is filled with practical information for conductors at all levels. It gives insights into the thinking and practice of this remarkable musician by focusing on three areas: the conductor, the choir, and the repertoire. No matter what age or experience level of musician we work with, those areas are basic to our field. As conductors, we must be musical leaders, in command of musicianship, of conducting technique, of pedagogy, and interpretation.

Choirs of all ages and stages share similarities. In part two of the book, Warland speaks about the leadership team, auditions, and influences on tone. Again, regardless of age or stage, all choirs' tone is affected by things like space, unified pronunciation, dynamics, vitality, and balance. In addition, each of us must choose appropriate repertoire to suit the ensembles we lead. Many of the ideas about programming can be translated into non-professional choir contexts. This section includes quotations from noted contemporary conductors, as well as a series of statements drawn from Carole Glenn's publication, *In Quest of Answers* (Hinshaw, 1991). The need to account for conductors' and singers' interests as well as audiences' is a theme throughout.

The section on auditions deserves special mention. Warland's process is tailored to a professional choir, and parts of it could certainly be used for advanced groups. While it might not translate exactly to everyone's situation, the lesson learned here is the attention to detail. It was Warland's ears and meticulous listening that resulted in the remarkable sound consistently produced by his professional ensemble. Warland's championing of commissions as outlined in chapter ten remains one of his most outstanding contributions to the field. His recommendations on this topic are practical and helpful.

Two things especially stand out: Warland's insistence on the importance of hearing as the foundational

skill for conductors, and the centrality of score study as a basis for rehearsal. He mentions that fine gestures never substitute for good ears; it is effective hearing that enables the conductor to build the choral instrument. Writing bluntly, he says, "Know your stuff." That applies to the music as well as the other responsibilities we have. His process for score marking is detailed and revealing. In addition to musical issues, the book also addresses things like gesture, rehearsal, and interpretation.

Choral Conducting is written in a conversational style. With the help of Brian Newhouse, a former member of the Dale Warland Singers, Warland has produced a readable volume that is a wealth of information, insights, and wisdom. Many of us have memories of workshops and masterclasses with Dr. Warland and appreciated his clear direction, kindness to people, and encouraging manner. Those same characteristics come through in the publication. Even the "Epilogue" (Special Topics) with its relatively short observations on a variety of things is profoundly wise. I am deeply thankful that Dale Warland and Brian Newhouse chose to collaborate on this project.

Hilary Apfelstadt
Professor Emerita of Choral Studies
University of Toronto

Choral Concepts: Conducting Technique and Choral Methods (2nd ed.)
Donald Neuen, ed. Rebecca Lord
GIA Publications, 2025
300 pages

Donald Neuen is among the most influential American choral conductors of the past several decades and is known for his years leading the choral programs at the Eastman School of Music, at UCLA, and through the widely televised "Hour of Power" broadcasts. His legacy has been sustained by conductors he mentored, singers who sang under him, and the numerous honor choirs, festivals, and workshops he has led. His reach was broadened with the 2002 publication of his book, *Choral Concepts*.

In 2025, GIA published a second edition with an expanded title: *Choral Concepts: Conducting Technique and Choral Methods*. While much of the text, including the chapter numbers and chapter titles, remains unchanged from 2002, wording has been updated and ideas expanded throughout. The most notable additions can be found in chapters ten and eleven. Chapter ten, which in the first edition was a primer on conducting Handel's *Messiah*, is now doubled in length, covering conducting major choral-orchestral works in general. Chapter eleven, "Artistic Musical Conducting," has also been expanded, starting with the basics of posture and baton technique followed by conducting in different styles, mixed meter, and recitative conducting, among other topics.

In chapter one, "Artistic Excellence," Neuen presents his philosophy, which is centered on an uncompromising pursuit of excellence. He urges conductors to "[d]edicate yourself 100 percent to your current job… Remember, the day we stop getting better is the day we start getting worse" (pp. 3–4). Chapter two introduces pedagogical techniques to help achieve excellent singing, including a five-week plan for teaching breath support followed by a four-step method for applying breath support to singing tone.

In chapter three, "Developing a Great Singing Sound," Neuen addresses varying degrees of vibrato for different styles with the goal of a "natural" choral sound. He states that conductors must generate energy from their singers. Neuen refers to energy in the broadest sense. Instead of mere energy of the singing voice, he emphasizes that the entire physical presence (voice, facial expression, posture, and movement) of each singer must exude energy, and it is the conductor's job to elicit this energy from singers without inhibition. Energy must also be coupled with an absolute insistence on beauty of sound. "When we hear an unacceptable sound," he writes, "we must stop *immediately* and correct it… If you are capable of accepting a negative sound, even for an instant, you will eventually come to hear it as the norm" (p. 35). As with the previous chapter, philosophical viewpoints are followed up with pedagogical applications. Neuen devotes several pages to techniques for developing resonance and establishing head tone placement.



More technical issues are addressed in chapter four, with a focus on individual voice parts, including balance between sections. The next chapter, which is devoted to warm-ups, includes numerous examples of vocalises to achieve specific results. Neuen again emphasizes energy that projects beyond the voice into the entire presence of the singer. Several of the warm-ups contain arrows marked over weak subdivisions of the beat, illustrating what Neuen calls "forward motion phrasing," which is described in the next chapter.

Echoing the approach of Robert Shaw, Neuen writes in chapter six, "We use rhythmic interest, forward motion, and phrasing to create interest in music… rhythmic interest means a *slight* emphasis on offbeats, or those beats that are normally de-emphasized" (pp. 87–88). Neuen argues that the energy between the beats is the impetus that moves the music forward. Similar to the markings he introduced in the previous chapter on warm-ups, he details his own brand of score marking (applied here to excerpts from repertoire) using hooked arrows above and below groups of notes, usually beginning on weak beats, to show how a phrase or semi-phrase should propel forward. Neuen argues that "without rhythmic interest, forward motion, and phrasing, there is no *music*, only the *mechanical mathematics* of accurate pitches and rhythms" (p. 96). In chapter seven, "English Diction," the principles of the previous chapter are adapted to text and syllabic stress. He writes, "No consecutive notes, syllables, or words should receive equal emphasis!" (p. 150)

Chapter eight, "Score Preparation and Analysis," incorporates the approach of Julius Herford, with whom Neuen had a long association. "Awake the Harp" from Haydn's *Creation* serves as a model. He presents a schematic of the work and a system of score marking that includes an annotated score of the entire movement. Chapter nine covers rehearsal technique, seating arrangements, long-range planning, and rehearsing large works with orchestra and soloists. He includes both a sample six-week rehearsal schedule as well as a sample schedule of a single full orchestra, choir, and soloist rehearsal of *Creation*, both scheduled down to the minute. Like the schematic and score marking examples in chapter eight, these rehearsal plans serve as excellent models that conductors can adapt to nearly any situation. Chapter twelve presents a final summation of the "Role of the Conductor."

The book includes supplementary videos, which can be purchased separately. While the videos reinforce the concepts Neuen presents in the book and are particularly helpful in demonstrating the conducting techniques in chapter eleven, they are especially valuable for those who have not had the opportunity to witness Neuen's work. His charisma and vitality on the podium come through in the videos. As excellent as the book is, the videos best capture Neuen's insistence on "energy" and the relentless pursuit of excellence.

Donald Neuen represents a lineage of choral luminaries from the recent past. *Choral Concepts* can be seen as a text representing an entire school of choral conducting in which the ideas of Shaw, Herford, Alfred Mann, and others come through in Neuen's distinctive voice. As Allen Hightower of the University of North Texas writes on the back cover, "In the field of choral conducting and pedagogy, there is no other book to rival the depth and breadth of Donald Neuen's *Choral Concepts*."

Dennis Malfatti
Director of Choral Activities
University of Evansville (IN)

Becoming a Choral Music Teacher: A Field Experience Workbook (2nd ed.)
Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman
Routledge, 2018

Becoming a Choral Music Teacher: A Field Experience Workbook is a comprehensive manual for pre-service choral conductors to be successful as secondary choral educators. The main objectives are to provide practical and actionable tasks to use in choral methods courses as well as to serve as a resource that can be used during the first years of in-service teaching. Dr. Ward-Steinman starts with theoretical and philosophical implications of teaching vocal music. The book then includes advice for new teachers, warm-up plans, rehearsal outlines, and repertoire lists. There are also "brainteaser" activities to help put the theory into practice. These in-

clude creating a ten-minute warm-up plan, auditioning middle school singers, creating a rubric for an assessment, and attending a vocal jazz ensemble.

This is the second edition of the original workbook from 2009 and includes updated NAfME standards and licensing guidelines along with updated research and tools for including and empowering special education learners and LGBTQ+ members. This text further introduces new ideas for classroom management as well as insights for incorporating kinesthetic and aural learning domains.

The updated workbook is particularly relevant since there is an emphasis on including traditional choral composers as well as underrepresented composers of varying styles. One section of note is "Directing Vocal Jazz and Other Non-Traditional Choral Ensembles," which includes basic jazz theory exercises, examples of well-respected jazz ensembles and composers, and performance practice. Another section discusses the updated National Core Arts standards and provides ways to assess student achievement in middle and high school choral settings. Additional benefits include information on passing music education certification exams and tools for setting the new director up for success.

While it is impossible for one book to cover everything a pre-service choral director needs to know to be successful, this textbook provides a foundation for continued learning after graduation. Additionally, undergraduates tend to enjoy constructivist tasks of learning by doing instead of spending a lot of time on theory and pedagogy. This workbook offers a balance of the practical with the theoretical and is a useful resource to encourage and foster the next generation of choral directors.

Christopher S. Loftin
Assistant Professor of Choral Music Education
Huntingdon College,
Montgomery, Alabama

Being a Singer: The Art, Craft, and Science
Linda Balliro
Chicago Review Press, 2020
208 pages

It is more difficult to learn the art and processes of singing from a book than from vocal study, yet that is often what must be the case for certain people. I can think of the person in the small rural high school with a single K–12 music teacher who barely has enough time for all their preps or who may have little vocal training. Or take that band teacher who is asked to teach a choir because the district has been reduced to having one music teacher for the coming year. While there is no substitute for studying with a voice professional, this book could help fill that void.

Linda Balliro, educated in voice at the New England Conservatory and teaching at the Berklee College of Music, provides a pragmatic yet resourceful tool for self-study and reference in *Being a Singer*. Balliro has classical training yet also works with students and singers in CCM (contemporary commercial music) and musical theatre realms. The book demystifies singing terminology and comes from that philosophy first.

The book is divided into two main sections ("How Your Singing Functions" and "How to Develop Mastery"), each with five chapters. Section one contains the following chapters: "Mobilize Your Voice, Mind, and Body"; "Discover What Needs Training"; "Connect the Lower and Upper Ranges"; "Extend the Connection"; and "What About Breathing?" The chapters in section two are: "Refine Resonance"; "What About Power?"; "Broaden Perspective"; "Expression and Interpretation"; and "Expand Flexibility." The structure of the book follows a natural progression, and exercises are plentiful within each chapter. There are reflections and/or conversations with artists and teachers at the end of each chapter that offer useful insight; for example, there is a conversation with Dr. Ingo Titze, internationally recognized voice pedagogue, that is accessible and not bogged down with lofty terminology. These conversations provide useful guidance and motivation throughout the process.

The voice approach is from the neutral vowel uh [^], more common in commercial styles, rather than



the classical ee, oo, or ah [i, u, a], also in line with what may be more comfortable for the novice singer. The wide range of styles also helps beginners to have a neutral vocabulary. Some of the exercises may seem challenging at times, but all are presented with a logical progression in mind.

Being a Singer is also suitable for the classical pedagogue or choral conductor who wants more guidance in pop and musical theatre styles and their terminology. Students may also appreciate the author's recalling of experiences from her own life. In short, this book is well worth the small investment, and I have already mapped out several ideas and exercises to use in the studio and with ensembles during the coming season.

Donald Callen Freed, PhD
Professor of Voice and Choral Music, Emeritus
Sul Ross State University,
Alpine, Texas

Teaching Music Each Day Inspired
Advice, Ideas, Encouragement, and Motivation for Music Teachers
Peter Boonshaft
GIA Publications 2026
Softcover, 220 pages

As conductors and music educators, we occasionally need a dose of motivation, sage advice, and opportunities for reflection. *Teaching Music Each Day Inspired* is a collection of short reflections from Dr. Peter Boonshaft that provides inspiration, advice, and a wealth of helpful, practical classroom strategies based on decades of experience in the field of music education. In the forward, Dr. Anthony Maiello writes that Boonshaft's book "is full of great inspirational and informative lessons. It is a treasure chest representing his many years of outstanding teaching experience, knowledge, and lessons well learned."

I personally found each of the short reflections to be doses of motivation and a musical "Vitamin C," offering wisdom phrases and poetry that related to the life of a musician/educator. One entry titled "A Marvelous Feast" (pg. 185) highlighted our need to explain what we teach, why what we teach is important, and how we should promote the benefits and rewards to all who are connected to our teaching, be it students, parents, administrators, or members of our community. My daily encouragement included the entry, "Winnie-the-Pooh Knew!" (pp. 167–168): "Winnie-the-Pooh state[d] so profoundly, 'How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.'" It reminded me how fortunate I was to be able to spend my career doing something so wonderful as making music with children. It also reminded me of why it is so difficult saying goodbye to a senior class, a group of fifth graders who move on to middle school, or when we decide it is time to retire.

Teaching Music Each Day Inspired offered numerous opportunities for personal reflection. For example, I appreciated Boonshaft's "mantra" in the entry titled "Beauty" (pp. 107–108): "I believe that every day, every child needs to hear something beautiful." We can expand on that thought to include visual art and say, "I believe that every day, every child needs to hear and/or see something beautiful." The entry "Biography" (pp. 118–119) contained a short entry with a profound quote: "For us as teachers, our biography, in great measure, will be written by those we teach." As choral educators, we have invested our minds, hearts, and souls into an artistic endeavor that ignites the lives of many of our students. It is our passion and what drives excellence for our students and ourselves. *Keep Teaching Music Each Day Inspired* close—by your choir room desk, music office, or nightstand for a quick dose encouragement and motivation to continue each day inspired.

Thomas Blue
ACDA Michigan President
Elementary Music Educator,
Oakland Christian School

CHORAL JOURNAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Book Reviews	Dennis Malfatti	dm155@evansville.edu
Choral Reviews	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
Lift Every Voice	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
On the Voice	Matthew Hoch	mrh0032@auburn.edu
Recorded Sound Reviews	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
Rehearsal Breaks	Jennifer Rodgers	rodgersj@iastate.edu
Research Report	Elizabeth Hearn Elizabeth Cassidy Parker	ehearn@olemiss.edu eparker@temple.edu
Student Times	Micah Bland	mbland@southalabama.edu

For feature article submissions, contact the editor, Amanda Bumgarner, at <abumgarner@acda.org>.
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OTHER ACDA PUBLICATIONS CONTACT INFORMATION

ChorTeach	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
International Journal of Research in Choral Singing	Bryan Nichols	bnichols@psu.edu

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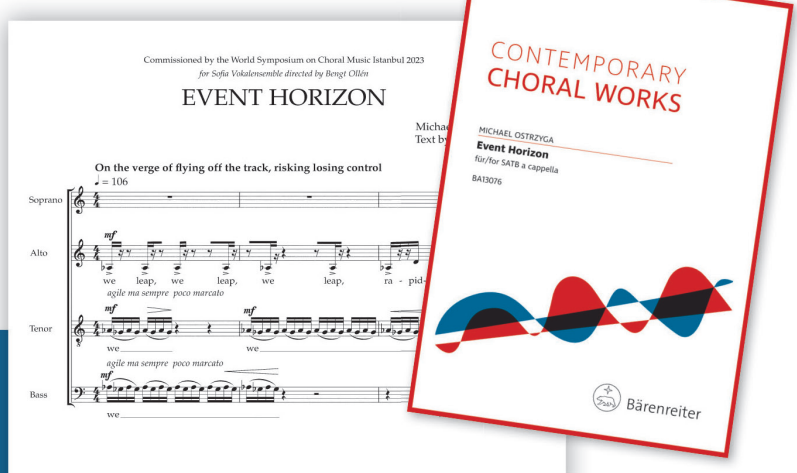
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