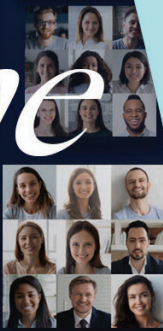
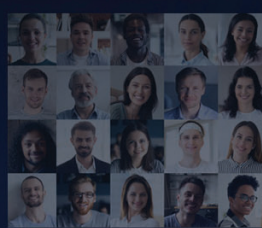
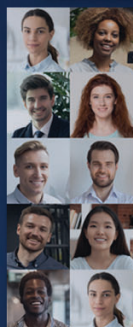
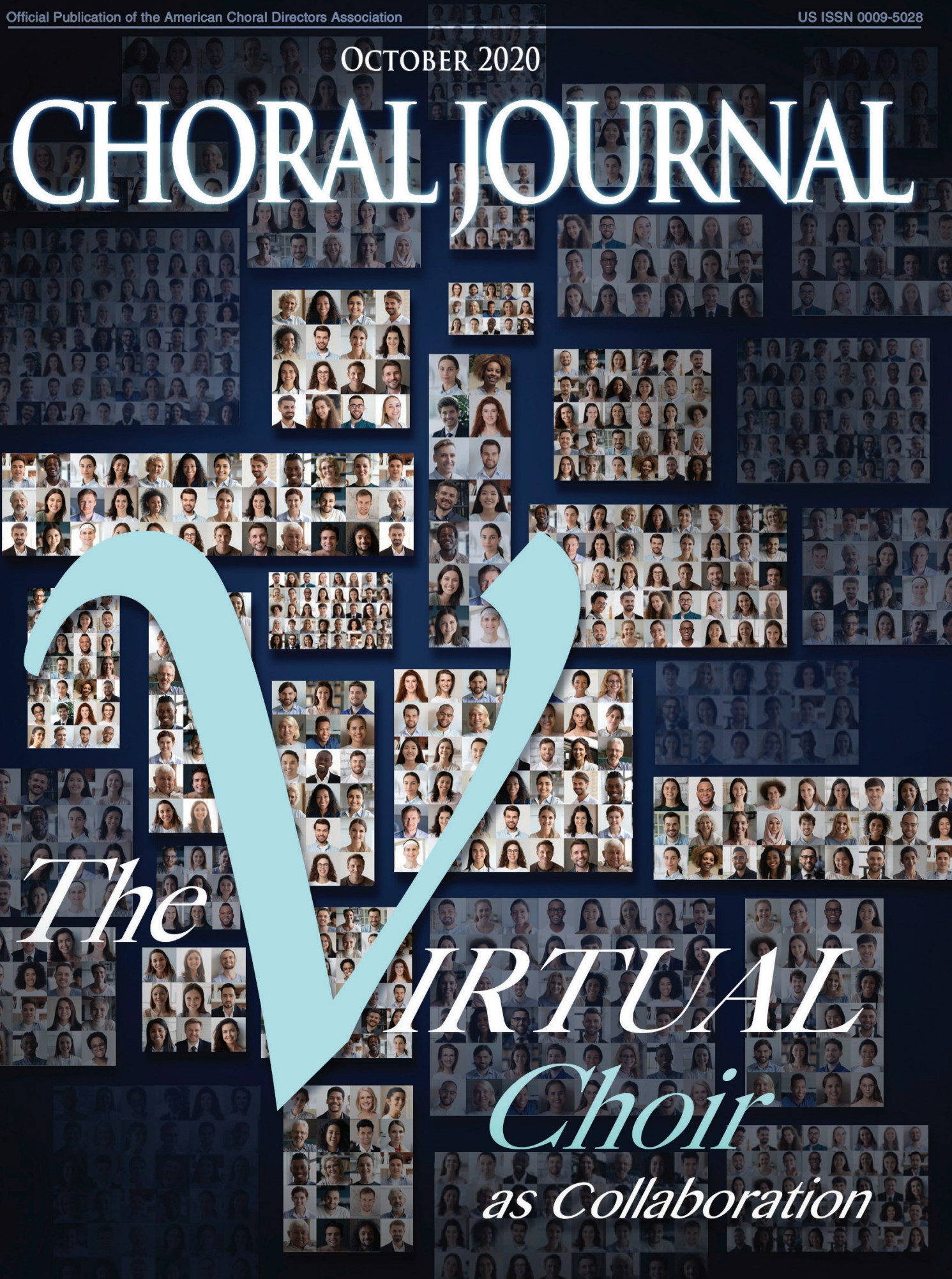


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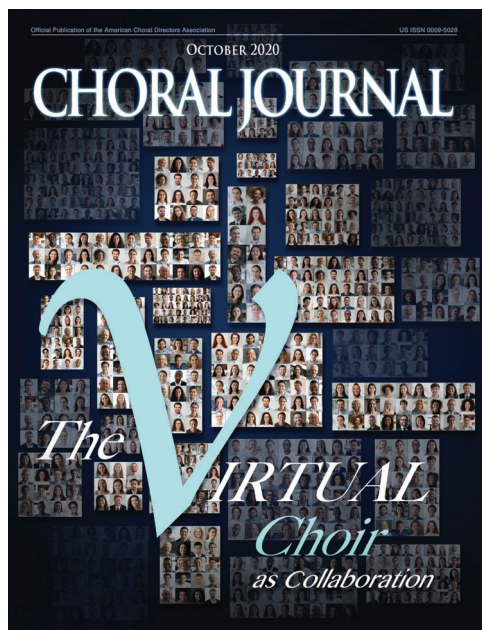
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Whereas the human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself through study and performance in the aesthetic arts; and

Whereas serious cutbacks in funding and support have steadily eroded state institutions and their programs throughout the country;

Be it resolved that all citizens of the United States of America actively voice affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations.

# From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Tim Sharp

## ACDA's 2021 Virtual National Conference: An Immersion into a World of Ideas

I believe one of the most powerful forces at work in the world is an idea. When I think of the belief systems or courses of action that have been truly game-changing or even world-changing, those movements or theories are embodied in a single idea. More often than not, the genome of a movement is a simple and beautifully stated single idea.

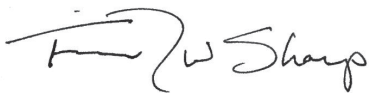
I also hold the opinion that every book I read is the result of one single idea at work in the mind and pen of the author. When I pick up a new book, my pursuit is always to uncover that driving theory or idea, which results in an additional 100-600 pages or more of prose and occasional quotes, diagrams, and pictures that constitute that book. My family and acquaintances have commented to me regarding their amusement that I often display many books open and half-read at the same time, as I read multiple books with an abundance of bookmarks and dogears in every partially read book. This might seem confusing and unfocused to some, but for me it is very natural—I am usually seeking the fundamental idea in each volume. The details beyond that single idea are significant and often instructional, but what I really am after is that transforming idea. If the author makes the case for that idea, I choose to either continue reading, or perhaps come back later for more layers of the same argument.

Earlier in my career I changed vocations, moving from teaching and administrative work in higher education to the profession of music recording, publication, and distribution. I remember my long talks with collegiate colleagues and deans about leaving the ivory tower and idea-driven world of academia, and moving to the profit motive-driven world of commerce, thinking I was somehow leaving the great ideas behind. It was a whirlwind of a decade that saw music distribution begin its migration from analog and paper distribution to digital distribution. It was my first real immersion into the real-world reality that innovation and ideas abound in every aspect of life, and the greatest motivator for our actions are ideas that work.

As I fast-forward to today, I think of our activity and programming through the American Choral Directors Association. Our signature events are our regional and national conferences. A feature of these four-day annual events is our offering of interest sessions in areas that cover the interest spread of our diverse membership. Our attendees

come to this event looking for those ideas that can move us forward and upward in our pursuit of excellence. The common complaint I hear from our conferences, year after year, is “I can’t get to everything.” We all seem to have an insatiable appetite for those motivational new ideas, and we don’t want to miss a single one.

As we head into conference season, we are preparing for our very first National Virtual Conference in response to the current COVID-19 environment. All of us have been making this shift to online and distance learning, and now the American Choral Directors Association will move into this educational and performance space with our biennial conference. We are excited to continue the planning that will bring an explosion of new and motivating ideas into our thinking. And the good news is this year, for the first time in our recent history, we won’t have to have that feeling of, “I can’t get to everything,” because, we will be able to get to everything! Let’s look forward to one of the most innovative educational events of our lifetime.

  
sharp@acda.org

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- To foster and promote choral singing, which will provide artistic, cultural, and spiritual experiences for the participants.
- To foster and promote the finest types of choral music to make these experiences possible.
- To foster and encourage rehearsal procedures conducive to attaining the highest possible level of musicianship and artistic performance.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral groups of all types in schools and colleges.
- To foster and promote the development of choral music in the church and synagogue.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral societies in cities and communities.
- To foster and promote the understanding of choral music as an important medium of contemporary artistic expression.
- To foster and promote significant research in the field of choral music.
- To foster and encourage choral composition of superior quality.
- To cooperate with all organizations dedicated to the development of musical culture in America.
- To foster and promote international exchange programs involving performing groups, conductors, and composers.
- To disseminate professional news and information about choral music.

—ACDA Constitution and Bylaws

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- Oct 3 EdTech Academy  
Virtual (online)
- Oct 13 Beethoven “Mass in C”  
Virtual Performance
- Oct 19-20 Connect Marketplace  
Las Vegas, NV
- Oct 23 GA State ACDA  
Fall Conference  
Atlanta, GA
- Oct 26 Spain Choral Directors  
Association  
Virtual

### WHAT'S ON TIM'S IPAD?



*This Mortal Boy*  
by Fiona Kidman

*Making Musical Meaning*  
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# From the PRESIDENT



Lynne Gackle

I write this article for the October issue of the Choral Journal today, on August 17th. As I do so, I realize that many of you are just learning that the ACDA Executive Committee, in consultation with the 2021 ACDA National Conference Steering Committee, has determined that a pivot from the traditional on-site ACDA national conference to a virtual one is necessary during this time of COVID-19. The dates for the virtual conference will remain the same: March 17–20, 2021. This decision was an incredibly difficult one to make and was not made in haste or without much discussion and anguish on the part of many on both committees.

Our whole profession has been and continues to be affected by this pandemic. However, first and foremost, the safety and health of our members and our choral singers is of utmost importance. Please understand that not one person on the EC or the Steering Committee would have ever dreamed that this would be the path for our 2021 Conference. On behalf of the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee, we so appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate this decision.

As the Introduction to the ACDA COVID-19 Response Committee Report aptly states, “Choral directors are resilient, resourceful, and exemplary leaders.” Throughout the pandemic, this statement has been shown to be true. Choral directors and choral educators have waited patiently for reports from new research and have sifted through mountains of scientific data to understand the virus, its implications, and ways to more efficiently mitigate risk—for the safety of their singers, for their love of the choral art, and for their belief in the power of choral singing within our culture. Choral directors have re-imagined every aspect of their rehearsals, re-vamped their approach toward pedagogy, incorporated technology in ways that many of us never thought possible, and have closely studied the social and emotional ramifications of this situation, seeking ways to best address these issues for their singers. Choral educators from every sector have gone back into teaching scenarios armed with as much information as they can muster, positive attitudes, and committed spirits, all the while facing situations that are unknown and uncharted.

In July, I was fortunate to attend the TCDA Virtual Summer Conference. I must admit that I was rather skeptical regarding the effectiveness of this experience. I tried to envision sitting in front of a computer

for hours watching a screen without the benefit of the live, person-to-person interaction that I've become so accustomed to since moving to Texas. What I experienced was not only highly informative and stimulating, but it was also encouraging and surprisingly personal on many levels! It was wonderful to see the many familiar faces of my colleagues (who are some of my dearest friends), to learn, to find encouragement and affirmation amidst the strife that we were and will continue to walk through as a country and as a profession. In two words, the experience was emotional and uplifting! I know that many within the ACDA membership will agree with my observations because they experienced the same type of excitement and professional development opportunities through conferences held in their own states.

On behalf of the EC and myself, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude for the work that has already been given to this conference—for the countless hours spent by the listening/selection committees, for the work of Conference Chair Dr. André Thomas and the Steering Committee, the Honor Choir committee and conductors, the National staff, and especially, for the patience and understanding of the conductors of the performing choirs who were selected.

While we will miss the joys of being physically together, I am excited about the new opportunities this change will offer:

- More of our membership can attend because travel costs will be “virtually” eliminated, and participation can be more flexible.
- You will not “miss” any sessions that you might want to see, since they will be recorded and can be viewed either in “real time” or later, at your own convenience and in the comfort of your own living room!
- Dr. André Thomas and the Conference Steering Committee are continuing to re-vision and re-tool the splendidly designed Conference program for this virtual format.

- In addition to the already invited Interest Session Presenters, Headliners, Performing Choirs (now featured in Virtual Concert Hall sessions), Reading Sessions, and Exhibitors, the possibilities now exist to have even more guest speakers and headliners! These guests who would not have been available for an in-person conference, now will be able to join us virtually!

The purpose of our ACDA Conferences is to serve YOU, our membership. It is my sincere hope that you will make plans now to join us VIRTUALLY for this unprecedented Conference experience! Mark your calendars NOW!

*Lynne Hackle*



# From the EDITOR

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Amanda Bumgarner

As we face the start of a new semester, I am excited to be able to share the articles in this October issue of *Choral Journal*. We sincerely hope these are an encouragement and help in your work with choirs this fall. I don't think anyone could have imagined how COVID-19 would still be affecting our daily lives as educators, conductors, composers, parents, and students. Regardless if your return to the classroom is virtual or in person, this is a school year unlike any other.

Janet Galván and Matthew Clauhs write about the virtual choir as collaboration in the article featured on the cover of this issue: "We present a collaborative virtual choir project that engaged college students from distinct yet complementary music classes, facilitated by the director of choral activities and a music technology instructor (authors). The model could be adapted to meet the needs of a variety of vocal ensembles and music technology classes at a range of educational levels."

We know that singing together is beneficial for our mental and emotional health, but singing in a choral ensemble is also beneficial for our physical health. In "The Biochemical Power of Choral Singing," author Nicholas Sienkiewicz states: "Using a data-driven approach to understand choral singing may be one of our best allies in supporting the choral art form. The more we understand about how choral singing affects our bodies, the more tools we have in our armory to promote its necessity."

Authors John Nix, Harald Jers, and Sten Ternström share a practical article discussing considerations for choral singing in the world of COVID-19. They examine several implications for singing and "provide some suggestions for how best to respond, based on prior research in the acoustics and psychoacoustics of choral singing, stressing as always that observing necessary health measures is paramount."

This issue also contains a Hallelujah Amen section focused on Music in Worship with introduction from Terre Johnson, a column from retired choral educator Frank R. Lloyd, and a Children's Repertoire & Resources column from R&R Chair Joy Hirokawa. Joy shares lessons on virtual singing from her 2020 virtual summer camp.

Finally, I would like to thank Timothy Michael Powell and Sandra Chandler for contributing choral reviews to this issue. If you are interested in writing Choral Reviews for *Choral Journal*, please email [abumgarner@acda.org](mailto:abumgarner@acda.org) for more information. Also note the call for applications for *Choral Journal* and the *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*. Applications are due for either position on September 15.



# Letters to the EDITOR



Editor,

Thank you for including the article “Mouthing the Text” by Micah Bland in the May 2020 issue. This is a topic most choral conductors contemplate. I thought the perspective was somewhat one-sided in that all those interviewed conduct

in the college/university academic atmosphere. In that setting, choral ensembles include multiple (if not almost all) music majors or music minors. Also, the vast amount of music is performed memorized. Given that context, I understand and agree with their discouragement of the conductor mouthing the text. When I was in school, my conducting professors also discouraged my mouthing the text.

Unfortunately, most choral conductors do not have the luxury of directing university ensembles. My career path has led me to directing community and church choirs consisting of adults and older adults. In my choirs, there is always a significant number of singers who do not read music and have no formal music training. Performing music by

memory is not an option with the groups that I have conducted. *If memorization would have been required of the singers, many would have dropped out of the choir because that challenge would have been too great for them.*

In my context, I have found mouthing the words helpful. On many occasions, I have had singers thank me for mouthing the words. My action of mouthing the text has given them the comfort and reassurance to look at the director more than having their eyes glued to the music. When the singers know that I will be helping them remember an occasional word, they feel more confident to look up. I am willing to do what I need to in order to encourage the singers to take their eyes out of the music, which has many benefits.

In the article, it was mentioned that there are situations where mouthing the text can be appropriate. From my perspective, conductors working with adult volunteer singers may need to mouth the text more than was discussed in the article.

Thank you,

Matthew Frable  
Mesa, AZ

## *In Memoriam*

**Josephine Abney** (1919-2020) was one of the founding ACDA Endowment Trustees, serving until 2009. She was childhood friends with Raymond Brock and was instrumental in launching ACDA's Raymond W. Brock Memorial Endowment, which supplies funds for the annual Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission. While not a choral conductor herself, Josephine remained a faithful supporter of ACDA's mission throughout the years. She passed away in July 2020 at the age of 101 at her home in Greenwood, South Carolina. ACDA would like to recognize her service and generosity, not only to ACDA, but to the myriad institutions that benefited from her contributions.

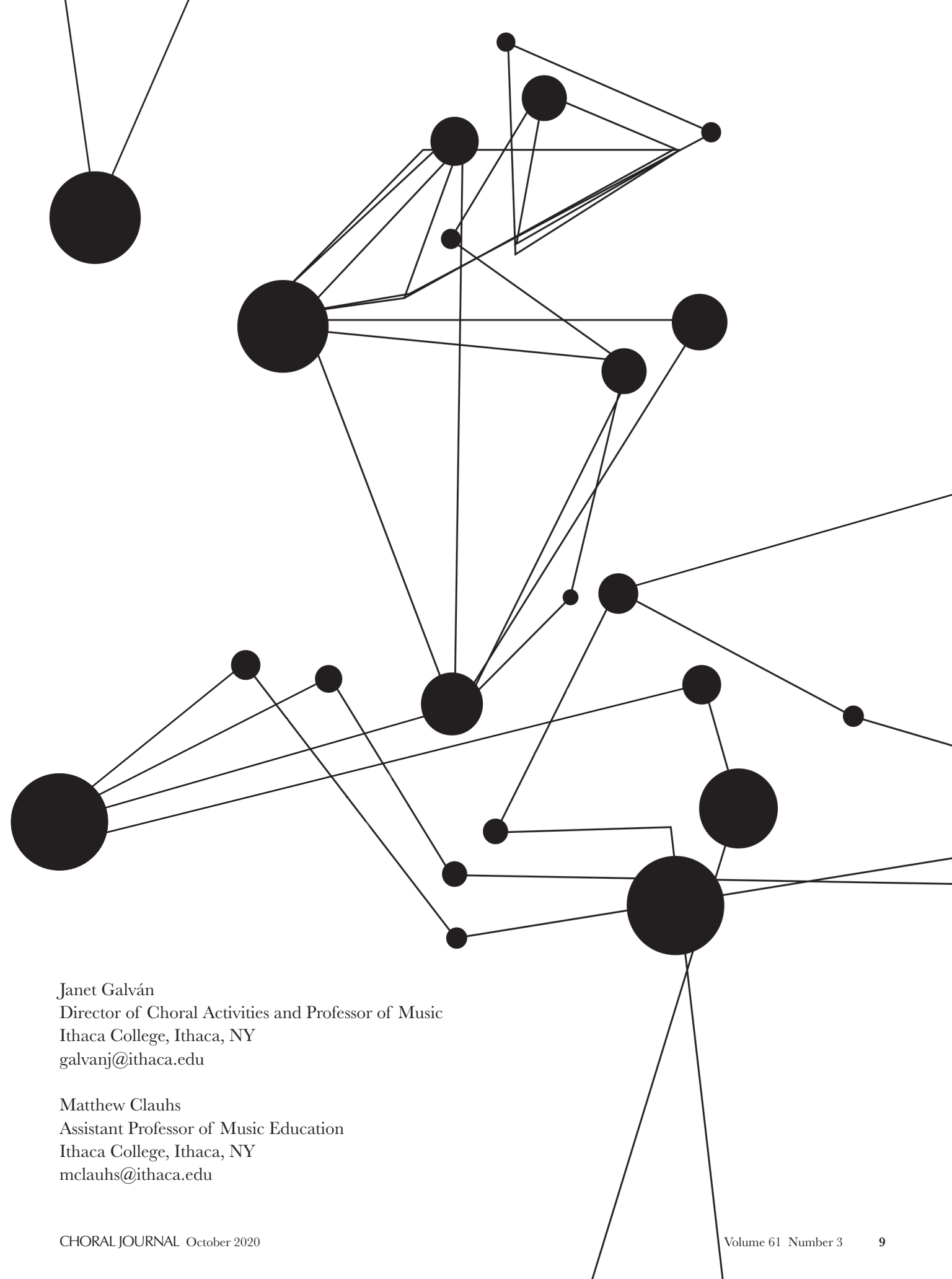
# THE VIRTUAL CHOIR AS COLLABORATION

**JANET GALVÁN**  
**MATTHEW CLAUHS**

The outbreak of novel coronavirus COVID-19 led to a global pandemic in the spring of 2020. At the time when this article was written, the virus had infected fifteen million people around the world and caused over 619,000 deaths.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, schools and universities closed their campuses to slow the spread of the virus and minimize the loss of life. As a result of school closures, music educators were faced with a daunting task of adapting their classes and ensembles for remote instruction, using video conferencing tools to deliver synchronous (at the same time) content and online learning management systems such as Google Classroom and Blackboard for asynchronous (not at the same time) teaching and learning.

We (the authors) responded to this challenge by planning and implementing a collaborative virtual choir project. It was important to us that the project be focused on process and the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and experience, rather than

the production of a single video. As the director of choral activities at our institution, I (first author), wanted to keep our singers connected to their choral community and also provide them with a performance opportunity. Prior research demonstrates the vast benefits of group singing for community mental health,<sup>2</sup> especially in response to adverse life events<sup>3</sup> such as a global pandemic. Keeping communal singing alive (no matter what format) seemed important for the well-being of the students. Additionally, there is evidence of higher perceptions of social presence in virtual choirs when compared to live formats.<sup>4</sup> After having conversations with the second author, a music education professor who taught a music technology class in the spring semester, we determined a virtual choir would be mutually beneficial for both the choir and technology class. The virtual choir would also be a model for future collaborations between our music performance and music education departments.



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## Background on Virtual Choirs and Digital Collaborations

Music education scholar Christopher Cayari defined a virtual vocal ensemble as “a video containing multiple audio-visual tracks layered together through a technique called multitracking. In this performance practice, a virtual vocal ensemble creator records and combines multiple tracks to make a choir of clones or works with others in collaborative or collective ways.”<sup>5</sup> Eric Whitacre created a virtual choir to perform “Lux Aurumque” in 2009, and this choir now includes more than 20,000 singers from 124 countries.<sup>6</sup>

Many forms of virtual choirs exist outside of school music programs, and products of these choirs are shared through social media platforms and YouTube. Viral YouTube videos featuring clones of performer/arranger/producer Jacob Collier singing in split-screen frames have tens of millions of views. Collier and other YouTube artists have inspired many amateur and professional vocalists to produce their own a cappella arrangements at home, recording themselves in layers to create a virtual vocal ensemble. Relatively low-cost apps, such as Acapella, make it easy for individuals to record themselves or collaborate with small groups of others to create and share virtual ensemble videos. Many scholars believe these modern recording technologies have caused a surge in amateur music-making practices.<sup>7</sup>

Although virtual choirs may be less common in K-12 school programs and university-level settings than they are on YouTube, scholars and music educators have examined how these practices from contemporary culture may be applied in classroom contexts. Brian Franco, a high school music teacher in upstate New York, has been creating what he calls “9 Square Videos” with his music students for several years. Franco teaches high school students how to record and edit audio and video tracks into a virtual ensemble of nine video frames on a single screen.<sup>8</sup> Christopher Cayari’s dissertation research examined how three types of virtual vocal ensembles: *collective* (videos of more than one performer compiled by an audio-video editor), *collaborative* (multiple individuals interact with each other at various stages of production), and *one-person* (featuring one individual recorded multiple times in layers), could be applied to music education practices to “expand conceptions of ensemble, perfor-


mance, and medium.”<sup>9</sup> Among many findings, Cayari reported that music educators can help students learn skills for lifelong music making beyond the classroom through participation in a virtual choir, noting that a collaborative model that involves students in the song selection and editing process allows for the greatest amount of interaction and sense of ownership.

Collaborative virtual choirs allow for asynchronous (not at the same time) and distant partnerships, which is particularly useful when in-person music-making experiences are not possible due to geographical barriers or remote learning. Scholar Janice Waldron recommended that online communities transcend both time and space,<sup>10</sup> an approach that allows for flexibility and unlimited partners for collaboration. Others have noted how these partnerships empower students and help them find pathways to continue creating and performing music for life.<sup>11</sup> This research on virtual ensembles and digital collaborations informed the model that we propose in this article. Here, we present a collaborative virtual choir project that engaged college students from distinct yet complementary music classes, facilitated by the director of choral activities and a music technology instructor (authors). The model could be adapted to meet the needs of a variety of vocal ensembles and music technology classes at a range of educational levels. While we were fortunate to have a class with goals in line with editing a virtual choir, schools who do not have this setup could partner with another program or involve the singers in the editing process. In fact, the singers in our two projects began doing some editing when they added their audio tracks.

## Partnership

### *Choir Members*

Two ensembles were involved in this project, and both groups had approximately forty-eight members. The first was the Ithaca College Choir, and the second was the Ithaca College Treble Chorale. During the week before remote instruction began, I (first author) sent a questionnaire asking which composition the singers would most like to record to present as a virtual performance. The work toward the virtual choir performance was the required part of the ensemble instruction. Because of lim-



itation of access for some students and heavy demands from other courses, only one rehearsal a week was held for each student. Because I wanted to take the time to explore topics and experiences that we do not have time to do during what was at that time considered “normal” ensemble experiences, I also offered a wide variety of workshops suggested by students from both ensembles. There were sessions presented by guest clinicians as well as sessions that I presented, and the subjects included body mapping, professional choral singing, the changing voice, the history and repertoire of women’s choruses, rehearsal techniques, cultural appropriation, Michael Bussewitz-Quarm’s ideas about her composition, and continuing vocal and musical growth during the time of COVID-19. Students could choose to go to as few or as many as they wanted, and all sessions were open to both ensembles. Guiding principles for all online instruction were community, creativity, compassion, and collaboration.

#### *Sound Engineers*

Eleven sophomore undergraduate students taking a music education course on audio recording and music production served as sound engineers for this project. The class met every Friday for seven weeks online via zoom while the campus was closed. The specific course section was titled *Music Production and Sound Recording Pedagogy* and was part of a larger class titled *Contemporary Ensembles in the Public Schools*, required of all sophomore music education students at the college. The broad goal of the course was to examine emerging ensembles and pedagogies in contemporary music education. Any group of students could assist in the sound engineering part of the project. Many students are eager to learn how to create and edit audio projects. While we had a class devoted to this, we feel confident that ensembles and schools at all levels would have students interested in this work. It might even lead to the creation of a course for a public school similar to our contemporary ensembles course.

#### *Facilitators*

We (the authors) served as facilitators on this project, bringing complementary skill sets as the director of choral activities and a music technology instructor. Together, we established a timeline that would work for

the music technology class and choral ensembles and developed instructions for each group of students. We shared a broader vision of the work, knowing well how each class was engaging in the collaboration, identifying challenges and brainstorming solutions together along the way. We met in real time with our respective classes providing reports on the progress of the collaboration and feedback on how students could continue to refine their work. As facilitators, we communicated through email, text messages, phone calls, and zoom conference calls, depending on the urgency and nature of the issue. We shared recordings, updates, and agreed on necessary adjustments to the project. At times, we reached out to individual students to redo a portion of their recording.

### **Process**

The preparation for the two ensembles was quite different in format because of the choice of repertoire. The Treble Chorale chose to sing a composition that is a signature piece for the ensemble, “Blessing” by Katie Moran Bart. Typically, the members of the ensemble surround the seniors on their last day of rehearsal and sing it with them. When performed in concert, alumni are invited to join the group on stage. The composition is mostly homophonic and is primarily in unison and two parts. Because of this, the rehearsals were always synchronous and with the entire ensemble.

The choir chose to do a virtual performance premiere of “The World, This Wall, and Me” by Michael Bussewitz-Quarm, which was initially scheduled for a world premiere in a live performance at the end of March 2020. The choir was in the midst of rehearsing at the beginning of spring break. There was still one section that needed much more work. This composition had many parts, including three solos, and was rhythmically complex with several tempo changes. I (first author) rehearsed the choir in synchronous sectional zoom rehearsals to prepare for the recording.

During rehearsals, students sang as the conductor played their parts or the accompaniment, and all singers had their microphones muted while they sang. The group would sing small sections and then take time for questions or clarifications. I would answer verbally or with a vocal demonstration. Before moving on to the

next section, I would check on the singers' comfort level with the part of the composition just rehearsed. Occasionally, one person would demonstrate an idea of pronunciation, articulation, or phrasing. Specific vowel formation was also addressed. Students chanted text with microphones on so that vowels could be unified. Also, as a regular part of each rehearsal, the group members spent time giving a brief statement of how things were going as people signed on. Each rehearsal had a dedicated time for anyone to discuss news or concerns. On the rare occasion that someone did not show up, I would check in with them to ask if they were okay. The ensemble members worked to keep the feeling of community and support going in spite of being in different places.

## *Recording*

We (the authors) emailed written directions and an online video tutorial to choir members, detailing instructions to contribute an audio recording using Soundtrap, a cloud-based digital audio workstation (DAW) that was available for free while schools were closed. A DAW is a tool that allows users to record, edit, and mix audio. Any DAW (e.g., Pro Tools, Logic, GarageBand, Audacity, Mixcraft) could have worked for this project, but we chose Soundtrap because it was free to students, accessible on any device, and fairly easy to use. We assigned students to individual Soundtrap projects specific to their voice part (e.g., soprano, alto, tenor, bass). This allowed them to hear other members of their section as each student contributed their part. For one of our virtual choir projects, the Soundtrap session included a piano accompaniment; for another, the session included a reference track of the composer playing all of the voice parts together on the piano, emphasizing an individual voice part by playing the part stronger or singing the part out loud.

The instructions demonstrated how to add a track to the project and adjust the level of the microphone to avoid clipping (when the signal is too loud and distorts the sound quality). We encouraged students to practice their part several times and record as many takes as necessary to get it right. Students could also redo specific parts of the composition without recording an entire take. We instructed students to listen to their recording along with the tracks other students had previously re-

corded, striving for balance, intonation, phrasing, and similar attacks and releases that one would expect in a live ensemble setting. Students used headphones so the background track(s) would not be audible in their individual recording.

In the second phase of the project, choir members recorded a video of themselves singing along to a reference track posted at Flipgrid.com. Flipgrid is a quick and effective way to gather videos using whatever devices are available to students. Much like Soundtrap, Flipgrid was free to our students and easily accessible. It works with the built-in camera and microphone on any internet-enabled device, such as a desktop, laptop, phone, tablet, or Chromebook. We instructed students to record an entire take without using headphones so we could properly line up the videos with the audio recording. Students chose the location for the video and the clothes they wore to emphasize these recordings were made in their individual homes with their own personal technologies.

## *Editing*

I (second author) first demonstrated basic principles of audio engineering including editing the length of recordings, adjusting entrances and releases, volume automation, EQ, and reverb, using Soundtrap during synchronous class sessions with music education students over zoom. After collecting audio recordings from members of the choir, we workshopped them together in class, starting out as a full group and then separating into Zoom breakout rooms to edit individual voice parts (e.g., soprano, alto, tenor, bass) in smaller groups. I would cycle through the breakout rooms, listen to the current project, and make recommendations to the team of sound engineers for improvement. By the end of each individual class session, the small groups of sound engineers (organized by voice part) would plan how they would continue their editing outside of class. Groups often divided up the number of tracks, so that each engineer was responsible for editing the same number of individual student recordings. After the sound engineers completed the editing for each individual voice part, the first author listened to the parts individually and collectively to make note of additional edits. Once the soprano part was complete, we mixed the altos into

the sopranos, the tenors into the treble voices, and the basses into the whole choir, ensuring that all voice parts were as unified as possible. Then each individual voice part was imported into a new project (Figure 1) to make final adjustments to the dynamics and balance of the ensemble.

After the audio recording was complete, the sound engineers downloaded video recordings of the choir members from Flipgrid.com and organized them into online shared-folders by voice part. I then imported these video files into Final Cut Pro to create a video that would accompany the final audio recording. Final Cut Pro is a relatively expensive software program and is only compatible with MacOS; therefore, we did not require sound engineer students to purchase and use this software. Instead, I demonstrated some of the video editing principles briefly during our final class sessions so that the class would have a fundamental understanding of this process. The video editing process involved resizing and cropping each choir member's video and then placing them on a premade grid, all of which were imported into the video editing software (Final Cut Pro). I created four separate video panels that could be arranged altogether on the screen or stacked upon one another to create a scrolling wall of voices. This was

particularly useful for the longer composition, as visual effects complemented the text and further engaged the viewer throughout the seven-minute long performance (Figure 2 on page 14).

## The Result

When the project began, I (first author) told the choir members that the purpose of the project was to learn and that I would be happy if the final recording was at a level of 50 percent of what they normally do. The goal was to keep the pressure low because of the circumstances that everyone was in. The entire experience was process-based. I viewed this venture into the world of virtual choirs as an expansion of choral music, not a replacement of live performances. I also wanted to take the time online to learn and explore ideas, topics, and activities that we do not have time for in our (then) normal year of meeting in person. This will not be the last time singers will need to record themselves or be in a project in which singers are participating online.

Despite the focus on process, the final product was touching and beautiful. In the recording of "Blessing," the singers were placed on the screen with the seniors in the middle and all their colleagues surrounding them

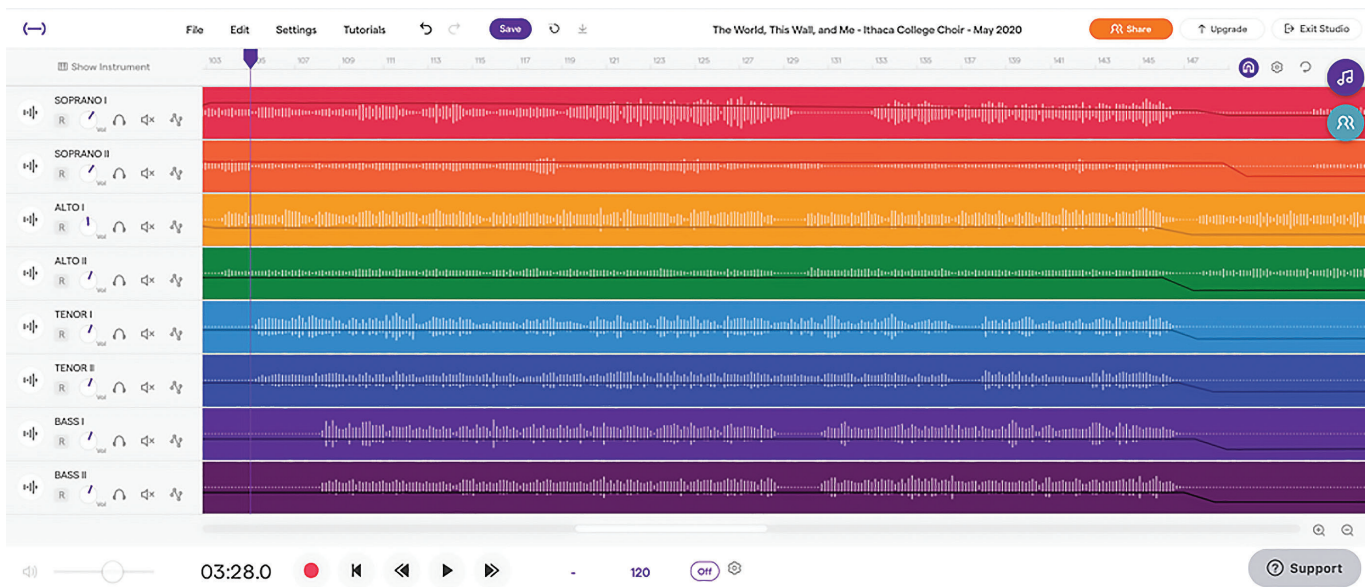


Figure 1

# THE VIRTUAL CHOIR AS COLLABORATION

just as they would have been in the final live rehearsal of the year. At the end of that video, we added a slide with the words, “Until we meet again.” For “The World, This Wall, and Me,” the second author created visual panels of choir members with transitions and special effects to fit the texture, form, and rhythm of the composition. Rather than just placing the videos on our website, we

created a concert atmosphere and released the two videos and a video of Michael Bussewitz-Quarm discussing her composition. On the day of the release, the Ithaca College technical team began the virtual concert with a live introduction from my (first author’s) living room that transitioned to a countdown to the video release (Figures 3 and 4).

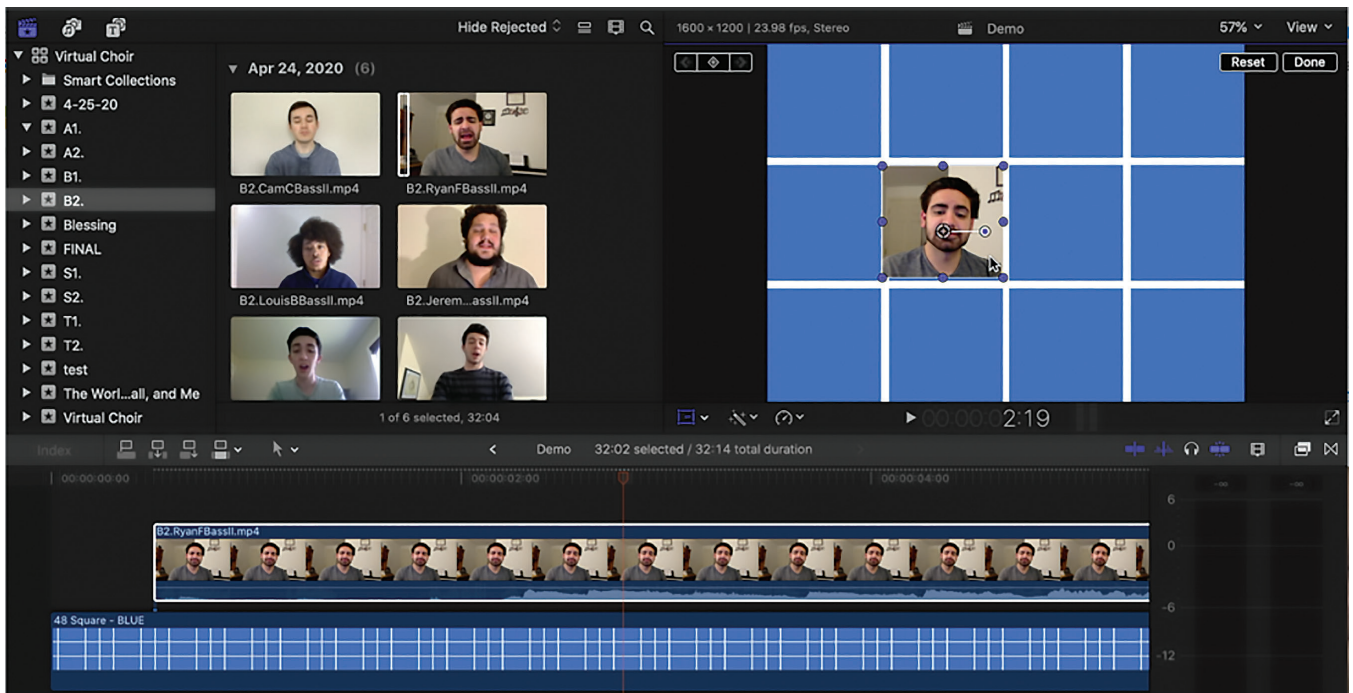


Figure 2



Figure 3

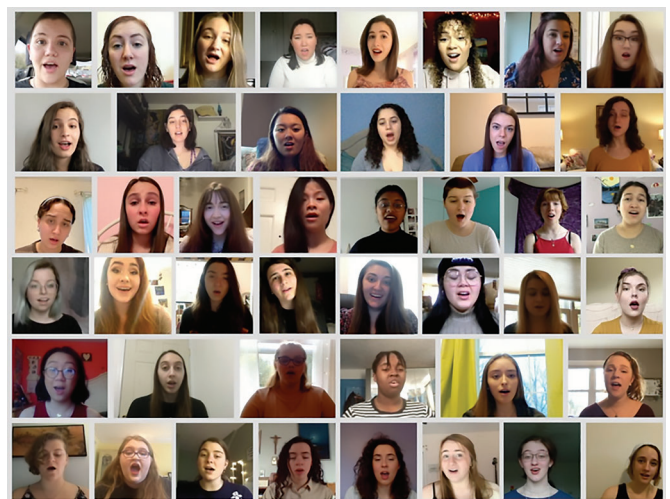


Figure 4





## Discussion

Members of both ensembles expressed appreciation for being able to work collaboratively with fellow singers again and to have the opportunity to take part in a performance. One student commented on the hidden blessing of being able to rehearse in sectionals to continue to feel a strong bond with singers in his section. Students also noted the importance of having a performance goal. The Choir members loved being able to premiere Bussewitz-Quarm's composition because the message of the composition was so meaningful to them. The singers acknowledged that it was difficult at first to sing alone in their rooms without hearing people around them and feeling the presence of others. They also struggled with getting everything together with the other singers. Some admitted being in low spirits about the entire COVID-19 situation and were unmotivated to prepare the recordings. One singer commented, "Once I was actually singing and could hear other sopranos on the website it was exciting to be with people again." This is one of the advantages of using Soundtrap: singers can hear their section when they add their recording.

Another student commented on how interesting it was to have to be so reliant on her own self-assessment. She felt that it made her take on the role of both teacher and student, and she appreciated that opportunity. Another student commented that "nothing can replace the physical feeling, act, and sonority of performing in a choir, though this experience still captured the beloved collaborative essence of doing so." She went on to say that it reminded her that her ensemble friends were ready and willing to support her. She stated, "We are so lucky to have the means to allow us to collaborate and be together even when we cannot be in the same place" and that "we are quite resilient." They also loved the final product. One person compared being in a virtual concert to being an actor at the premiere of a movie because they had not seen the final product before the virtual concert. Another said that the result of our collaborative effort was inspiring, and it was emotional to listen to the beautiful music they made and to watch everyone singing from their hearts. "Not only did we collaborate as a full ensemble, but we even worked with a class of music editors to make it happen. Being able

to function symbiotically in this way to achieve one unanimous goal was really beautiful."

Many of the students serving as sound engineers for this project shared that this experience provided them with a hands-on application of skills they learned in other music technology classes. The project led to a deeper understanding of sound recording and music production techniques and demonstrated a model for how these could function in a school music program. A student in *Music Production and Sound Recording Pedagogy* reflected on her experience at the conclusion of the semester:

I spent a lot of time trying to make each entrance and word line up in my assigned voice part. With the detailed instruction and inspiration, my colleagues and I were able to complete a wonderful world premiere of "This Wall, The World, and Me." Adding a music production course in a school music program would benefit students, showing them how creative and free you can be by composing original works or mixing virtual ensembles.

## Challenges

Several technical challenges arose throughout the course of the project. Many students reported the sound of their voice was delayed in their headphones, making it difficult to record. This is often the result of digital audio latency, the time it takes for a sound to be processed by the computer and sent back through the headphones (or speakers). Latency is a common problem in all sound recording projects, but especially those using cloud-based digital audio workstations with added elements of internet bandwidth and speed. Some students were able to minimize latency by closing other windows and applications, restarting their computer, using wired (not Bluetooth) headphones, switching to a different device (e.g., from laptop to tablet or vice versa), or freezing existing tracks in the project—the last solution is a special feature of Soundtrap, which frees up CPU processing power. If this troubleshooting was unsuccessful, students had to record their voice without monitoring (hearing one's own voice in their

headphones).

The quality of the recordings was highly variable, depending on the equipment that students were able to access at home. It was not reasonable to expect students to have—or for the school to supply—expensive USB microphones that would be ideal for recording audio. Most students used the built-in microphone on their devices, and unfortunately some student recordings were unusable because of excessive noise in the recording; at times it was almost impossible to hear the student's voice. Similarly, students in the audio recording and music production class could not be expected to have expensive video editing software, so that part of the project was primarily edited by the instructor (second author). There are lower-cost applications, such as Acapella, that allow for multiple frames of video and audio, but might not accommodate larger choirs.

Some of these challenges could be mitigated by offering more choices of digital audio workstations or inviting students to upload their audio file into a project or shared folder. If students recorded using an offline DAW, or even a sound recording app on their phone (e.g., voice memo), there would be minimal issues with latency, but they would lose the ability to hear the voices of other contributing students. Another alternative is to forgo the digital audio workstation altogether and simply record a video using the camera app, or other video recording application, on a phone, tablet, or computer. In Eric Whitacre's virtual choirs, participants were instructed to create a video along with a reference recording (playing in headphones) led by a conductor. This may be the simplest approach if audio editing is not an essential, or desired, part of the project. We chose to focus on the sound recording aspect of this project as an opportunity to teach audio engineering, but that goal may not be shared by others. Some school programs might wish to have a single audio/video editor compile the media into a virtual ensemble in what Cayari calls a *collective* virtual ensemble, similar to Eric Whitacre's virtual choir. However, Cayari expressed that students may feel less ownership of a collective virtual ensemble that does not include student input or interaction with the elements of production.<sup>12</sup>

We also learned that simpler, shorter compositions require far less editing than longer and more complex

pieces. Homophonic pieces with a limited number of voice parts and a quick performance time may be most appropriate for a virtual choir, especially if the editor(s) have limited experience creating them. Whitacre considered the power of simplicity—and engaging the greatest number of participants—when planning for his own virtual choir 5, pondering, “What could it be if we made the music simple enough and hooked as many people as possible?”<sup>13</sup>

### Implications for a (Post) COVID-19 Era of Choral Music Education

The project we described in this article was completed in the spring of 2020, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of writing this article, there is uncertainty regarding the 2020-2021 academic year and how policies and regulations might affect choirs and other school music programs in the future. We believe that nothing can replace the experience of making music together at the same time in one shared space, and we are hopeful to return to that process as soon as possible. However, there are many positives that we took away from this virtual choir project that will influence the ways we teach and create music far into the future, long after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

As a choral conductor, listening to the individual recordings of students singing alone without the support of singers around them revealed specific individual vocal and musical challenges. Having this more detailed information about the individual students is important in allowing one to develop ways to address the specific needs of each student. The spring was our first experience with Soundtrap. This summer my colleague, Sean Linfors and I team-taught the summer chorus. We used a portion of rehearsals for singers to be in their Soundtrap section at the same time and listen together, using the chat function to suggest improvements. We visited each section to assist and answer questions. We also listened more frequently to what had been recorded and used that information to address warmups and rehearsal plans for the following rehearsal. Additionally, we used the Soundtrap time in rehearsal to coach singers one-on-one. This allowed us to take care of sound issues that would normally be addressed with the

entire group in live rehearsals.


While we do not expect virtual choirs to replace choirs meeting together in one place, they could be an expansion of choral music. The purpose of this article is not to compare virtual choirs to live rehearsal or performance. We want to offer a possible replacement for live performances when they cannot happen and suggest that virtual choirs, when approached in a collaborative, process-driven way, can have very positive outcomes.

**Members of the choir expressed appreciation for being able to work collaboratively with fellow singers again and to have the opportunity to take part in a performance.**

The response to the video was astoundingly positive. Seeing our students performing together after being apart for such a long time made faculty and community members respond with gratitude and great emotion. People who are not choral music fans tuned in just because of the “cool factor” of technology. After they saw the video, they were just as moved by the musical performances as by the technology. Doing this type of project alongside live performances could possibly attract students to the music program who might not otherwise be interested. This experience also demonstrates how music students can learn valuable skills for sound recording and editing as well as taking more agency for their sound and musical accuracy. These concepts will almost certainly become more relevant for both music teachers and performers as programs at all levels leverage technology to facilitate group music making locally and from distant geographical locations. Using cloud-based digital audio workstations, music educators can engage their own K-12 classrooms in projects with artists around the world, developing partnerships with composers, performers, and producers everywhere. Now more than ever, artists can create and share their music globally through online technologies, such as

the ones described in this article. As Cayari stated, “Applying the practices of virtual vocal ensembles to music education is one way the profession can expand instructional practices to be inclusive of modern technologies, media, and society.”<sup>14</sup>

In David Pogue’s Facebook live interview with Eric Whitacre on CBS’s “Sunday Morning,” Whitacre discussed both positive and negative results of virtual choirs. He said that he had received letters from teachers who were concerned that school administrators might decide that virtual choirs should replace in-person choruses. He commented on the television broadcast that “a virtual choir is this gorgeous, delicate, ephemeral art work. And what’s beautiful about it is that it will exist for all time, but singing together in a room—taking that first breath together and then singing together—nothing beats that, and nothing ever will.”<sup>15</sup> While we agree with this statement, we believe that virtual choirs can expand the choral art, provide new ways of working with individual students, provide opportunities for students to function at the highest level of Bloom’s taxonomy, and keep students engaged in singing so that they do not lose interest in ensemble musical collaborations with choruses. With engagement through virtual choir activity, there can be an impetus to move forward when we emerge from the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that things beyond our control can have a powerful impact on our choral music programs. But through this project we learned that it is possible to continue making music together in groups when social distancing measures are in effect. We also learned more about the power of collaboration and the importance of supporting one another. A collaborative virtual choir project can be mutually beneficial to students aspiring to learn audio/video editing skills and students wanting to create music together with a community. Indubitably, technology will evolve to provide more synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for choral music students to create, practice, perform, collaborate, record, and share music in online spaces. Choral musicians might embrace these technologies and look with hope toward the future of stretching the boundaries of choral music and involving even more people in community singing. 

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) *Situation Report—185* (Geneva: World Health Organization, July 23, 2020).
- <sup>2</sup> Stephen Clift and Ian Morrison, “Group singing fosters mental health and wellbeing: findings from the East Kent ‘singing for health’ network project.” *Mental Health and Social Inclusion* 15, no. 2 (2011): 88–97. <https://doi.org/10.1108/20428301111140930>.
- <sup>3</sup> Genevieve Von Lob, Paul Camic, and Stephen Clift, “The use of singing in a group as a response to adverse life events.” *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion* 12, no. 3 (2010): 45–53.
- <sup>4</sup> Daisy Fancourt and Andrew Steptoe, “Present in Body or Just in Mind: Differences in Social Presence and Emotion Regulation in Live vs. Virtual Singing Experiences,” *Frontiers in Psychology*, April 10, 2019.
- <sup>5</sup> Christopher Cayari, “Virtual Vocal Ensembles and the Mediation of Performance on YouTube” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016), ii.
- <sup>6</sup> “Sing Gently,” Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir, accessed July 20, 2020. [ericwhitacre.com/music-catalog/sing-gently](http://ericwhitacre.com/music-catalog/sing-gently).
- <sup>7</sup> Mark Katz, “The Amateur in the Age of Mechanical Music,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, ed. T. Pinch & K. Bijsterveld (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 459–479.
- <sup>8</sup> Matthew Clauhs, Brian Franco, and Radio Cremata, “Mixing It Up: Sound Recording and Music Production in School Music Programs,” *Music Educators Journal* 106, no. 1 (2019): 55–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432119856085>
- <sup>9</sup> Cayari, “Virtual Vocal Ensembles,” 4–5.
- <sup>10</sup> Janice Waldron, “Exploring a Virtual Music Community of Practice: Informal Music Learning on the Internet,” *Journal of Music, Technology & Education* 2, no. 2–3 (2009): 97–112.
- <sup>11</sup> Radio Cremata and Bryan Powell, “Online Music Collaboration Project: Digitally Mediated, Deterritorialized Music Education,” *International Journal of Music Education* 35, no. 2 (2017): 302–315.
- <sup>12</sup> Cayari, “Virtual Vocal Ensembles,” 5.
- <sup>13</sup> Tom Wine, “Searching for an Icon: Eric Whitacre on Composing & Conducting.” *Choral Journal* 58, no. 2 (2017): 44–58.
- <sup>14</sup> Cayari, “Virtual Vocal Ensembles,” 370.
- <sup>15</sup> Sunday Morning. Central Broadcasting System (CBS). July 19, 2020.

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**The Studies in Choral Music Series** helps serve ACDA purposes in fostering and promoting research and pedagogy of choral music. We invite books from musicological, philosophical, pedagogical, and other disciplinary perspectives related to choral music. We especially encourage proposals that may be supplemented by octavo editions in the companion Historical Works Series.

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# International Journal of Research in Choral Singing

The Scientific Research Journal of the American Choral Directors Association

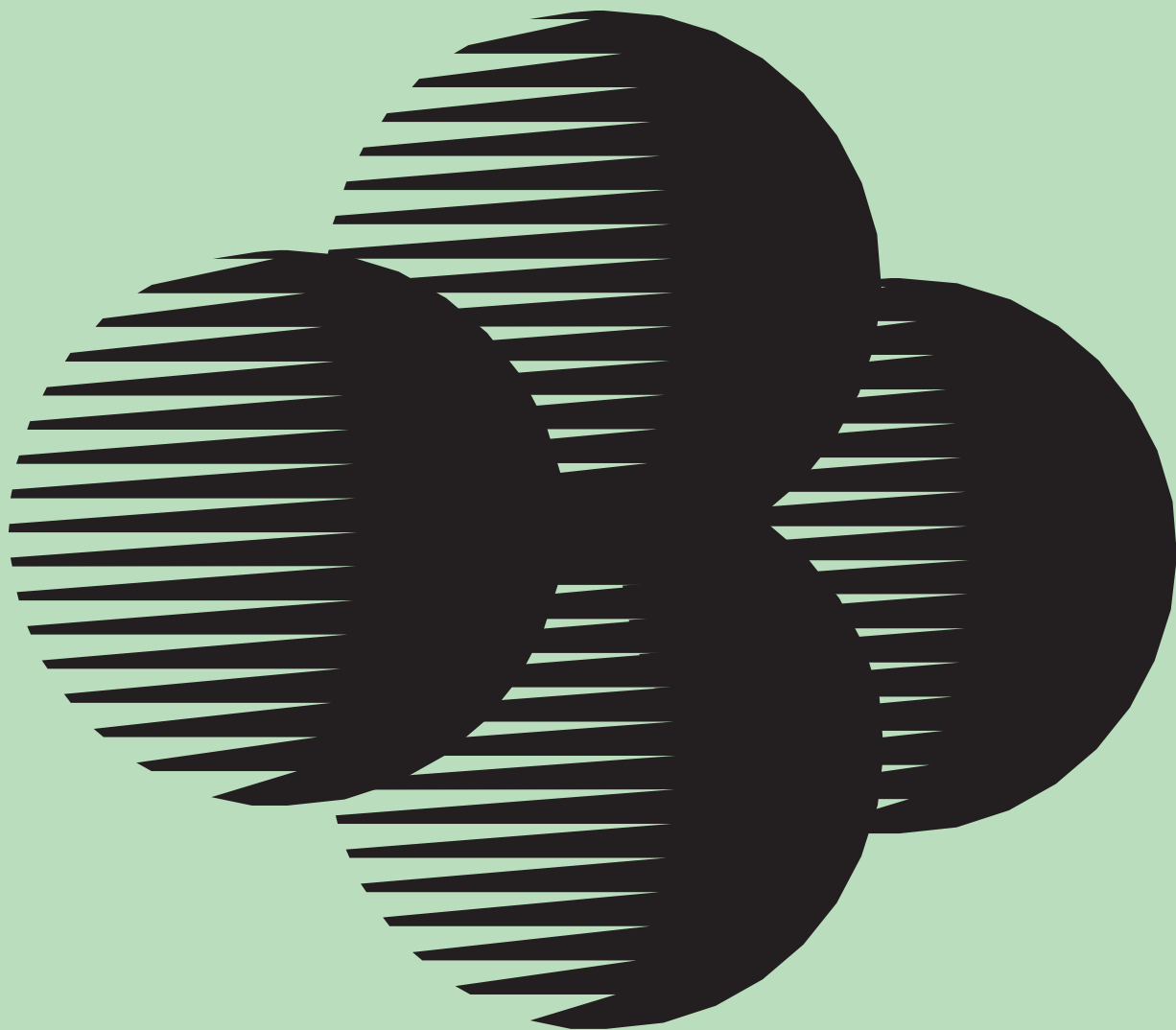
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### Editorial Board and Associate Editor/Editor

The editor of the *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* requests nominations for membership on the Editorial Board (2021–2026). Nominations are additionally invited for the position of Associate Editor (2021-2022), with intention to serve as Editor from 2023-2026. Electronic files of nomination materials will be accepted through September 15, 2020, addressed to Patrick K. Freer, IJRCS Editor, at [IJRCS@acda.org](mailto:IJRCS@acda.org).

**Editorial Board.** Nominees should hold a completed doctorate and have a record of research publications. Nominations must include: 1) a letter of nomination from another individual that includes description of the nominee's qualifications to evaluate quantitative and qualitative research manuscripts; the letter should also highlight the nominee's most important research publications and any previous editorial/reviewer work; 2) the nominator's ACDA membership number/membership expiration date; 3) the nominee's Curriculum Vitae; and 4) a PDF or direct link to a representative published research article selected by the nominee. International nominees need not be ACDA members. Application materials may be emailed directly by the nominee; the letter of nomination may be sent separately, if desired.

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# THE BIOCHEMICAL POWER OF CHORAL SINGING

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In a time where the state of the arts is ever more fragile, it is important to be reminded of the profound benefits of choral singing. It is well understood that music, in general, contributes to our emotional, physiological, and spiritual well-being. But what about choral music *specifically*? What if I told you that choral music could have an impact on our biochemistry, affecting areas including stress, social bonding, and our immune response? In the midst of a global health crisis where the fate of near-future singing is uncertain, discussing the biochemical benefits of choral singing is an essential concept.

## Biochemistry and the Implications for Choral Music

Biochemistry is the branch of science that explores the chemistry in and related to living organisms. It brings together both biology and chemistry. By using chemical knowledge and techniques, biochemists can understand and solve biological problems.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, it's the chemistry of life. Photosynthesis in plants is a great example of biochemistry; plants use light energy to convert carbon dioxide and water into vital glucose. Digestion is a great example of the biochemistry in the human body, as pepsin is an enzyme in the stomach, which breaks down proteins into smaller, biomolecular pieces (more on this later). Our biochemistry plays an essential role in a large host of functions within our body. It's what allows our brain to respond to stimuli in our environment via neurotransmitters. It gives our muscles the capacity to repair and our legs the capacity to run. It even gives rise to our capacity to feel certain emotions. The chemistry you may feel between you and a prospective partner is not simply due to their beautiful smile but also to a *chemical reaction* within yourself. These reactions play an essential role in the way in which we respond to our environment. Understanding group interactions, and how those interactions may influence our biochemistry, play a critical role in understanding the complex human response to choral music.

Science has firmly established that music has profound effects on the mind and body. Moderate, early musical training has been shown to decrease age-related auditory declines, even if the training is discon-

tinued.<sup>2</sup> A study done by Toyoshima et al., found that playing the piano significantly reduced cortisol stress levels and anxiety. The effect of playing the piano was more profound than other activities, including calligraphy and clay molding.<sup>3</sup> Even just listening to music has been shown to increase dopamine levels, make you consume less calories, and reduce pain.<sup>4</sup> And those are just naming a few! As an anecdotal example, take Oliver Sacks's book *Musicophilia* in which a woman regains control over her leg by being bombarded with a plethora of dance tunes.<sup>5</sup>

In a choral rehearsal, although we may not consciously think about it, physical and mental health are often emphasized. Warm-ups involving motion and stretching are common practice and allow our bodies to feel alive and rejuvenated. Intimate connection to the music gives choristers a means of healthy emotional output, allowing them to be vulnerable in a safe space, reaping positive benefits for the collective mental health. But what about what's actually happening inside our bodies? Could the practice and performance of choral music really be modulating our biochemistry, affecting things like hormone, protein, and neurotransmitter levels? What if we could argue that choral music not only contributes to the wide range of musical, artistic, mental, and physical health benefits, but also benefits our immune system and modulates our brain chemistry?

We already know that singing, especially with others, does wonders for us. However, many of the currently discussed benefits of choral singing come from anecdotal tales of conductors and choristers. This is not to say that they are not reliable, for the individual experience of every person is of the utmost importance. It is, however, to say that using a data-driven approach to understand choral singing may be one of our best allies in supporting the choral art form. The more we understand about how choral singing affects our bodies, the more tools we have in our armory to promote its necessity. Moreover, through an increased understanding of choral singing, it allows us to develop better rehearsal strategies, become more compassionate leaders, and give way to a whole host of new research into the effects of choral singing. With that in mind, let's talk about some biochemistry.





## Proteins

Before we dive into all the elements that these studies examine, let's talk about proteins. Now, if you don't feel like reading this entire set of background, no need. Simply use this as a reference as you go through the data, if you have questions. However, if you want to know a bit more about how our body operates, continue reading.

When you first hear the word proteins, you probably think of the typical things we associate with the term: steak, turkey, maybe a soy protein shake. However, protein in its most basic definition refers to a string of amino acids: 10 of these amino acids are made in the body, while we consume another 10 in our diet. Some proteins are rather large, and some can be quite small. Smaller proteins are usually categorized as peptides, as in the case of oxytocin. Many other proteins are built up of multiple protein strands and are intertwined in complex structures that dictate their function. Proteins are present in nearly every living creature, and even in some non-living creatures. In the human body, proteins play major roles in our physical structure along with the transport of molecules. Furthermore, these chains of amino acids play significant roles in catalyzing and facilitating biochemical reactions, known as enzymes. Some proteins, like oxytocin, act as signaling molecules within the body and work to regulate our physiology and influence behavior. These strands of amino acids work around the clock to perform a whole host of functions!

## Oxytocin

Oxytocin is a peptide hormone that acts as a neurotransmitter in the brain and is therefore referred to as a neuropeptide. Neuropeptides are a class of neurotransmitters that send messages in your brain via nerve cells and allow these cells to communicate within the body. Similar to humans, where we communicate with others via a whole set of complex speech patterns, body language, and social cues, neurons communicate with each other via neurotransmitters! It's literally the fastest phone call ever (up to 268mph). Each neurotransmitter functions slightly differently, depending on the context of the situation. One of the most

famous neurotransmitters, epinephrine, plays a role in the fight-flight-freeze response.

Oxytocin plays a crucial part in social interactions and reproduction. It is famously known as "the love hormone," due to an increase in blood oxytocin levels after couple's hug or kiss.<sup>6</sup> It plays a major role in social bonding, which is why it is noteworthy when studying choral singing. Furthermore, oxytocin has been shown to play a part in developing trust with others. One study found that those who inhaled oxytocin before a simulated investment game were more likely to entrust their money with a complete stranger.<sup>7</sup> Not only does it play a significant role in social bonding, but it also showcases itself in situations where trust is generated.

## Antibodies and Immunoglobulin A

Secretory Immunoglobulin A (S-IgA) is an antibody that plays a role in mucosal immunity. Immunoglobulins are also proteins in the most basic sense. They are composed of many different types of protein strands, and even some sugars. Immunoglobulins play an essential role in our fight against infection. Secretory Immunoglobulin A is found in the highest concentrations in tear glands, salivary glands, and mammary glands and in the genito-urinary tract, respiratory system, and gastrointestinal tract. This subclass of Immunoglobulin A plays a substantial role in protecting the oral cavity, lungs, and gut from disease. Levels of Salivary Immunoglobulin A fluctuate in response to physical and psychological stress, and a lack of secretory immunoglobulin can produce significant immunodeficiencies.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, this important immunoglobulin responds to the autonomic nervous system, which includes the part of our nervous system that controls our stress response.<sup>9</sup> It is the human body's first line of defense to many pathogens that plague the mucus membranes.<sup>10</sup> It is generally used as an indicator to measure immune system response.

## ACTH and Cortisol

The adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) regulates the secretion of cortisol in your body. ACTH is released via the pea-shaped gland in your brain called the

pituitary gland. This little ball of tissue is responsible for regulating many other hormone-secreting glands in your body. Cortisol, also known as the stress hormone, contributes to the flight-fight-freeze response. Unlike oxytocin, cortisol is a steroid hormone, rather than a protein. This just means that it is not composed of amino acids but instead is based on a four-ring chemical structure. It regulates blood sugar levels, metabolism, inflammation, and memory formation.<sup>11</sup> Cortisol levels increase when we experience stress, including both eustress (positive stress) and distress (negative stress). During the day, our cortisol levels rise and fall in response to our environment—a natural and necessary process as a part of our stress response. So, what do these biomolecules have to do with group singing?

## The Data

In a study done at Western Michigan University entitled *The Neurochemistry of Social Singing: Bonding and Oxytocin*, researchers examined both standard and improvised performance in a group of four jazz singers.<sup>12</sup> In one case, they were given music and sang exactly what was written (standard performance). In the other condition, improvised embellishments were made throughout the piece (improvised performance). Levels of both oxytocin and ACTH were measured before and after each set of conditions, with recovery time between each session. There was a mean decrease in plasma ACTH after participants sang together. The change in this level was also 21% greater in the improvised performance compared to that of the standard performance. Other studies have also observed similar effects with cortisol and ACTH. For example, a study done at the University of Regensburg found that cortisol levels decreased significantly through all of the rehearsal processes.<sup>13</sup> However, in the case of performances, other researchers have found data to support the contrary. There seems to be an experiential difference in stress when comparing a rehearsal versus a performance. A rehearsal may exhibit a reduction in stress, given the right environment, whereas a performance may illicit experiences like performance anxiety that would contribute to an increase in cortisol.

Oxytocin levels increased in the improvised perfor-

mance, while there was a mean decrease in the standard performance condition. Interestingly, these levels decreased in the standard performance in stark contrast to the improvised performance. These results imply that the improvised performance was much more conducive to social bonding, compared to the standard performance. This could be due to a number of factors, but may be primarily due to the more active behaviors involved in improvisation, such as listening, responding, and eye contact, among others. But what facilitates this social bonding? Could it be simply due to the social aspect of choir, or is there something more significant at play?

In a study by Kreutz et al., choristers took part in a thirty-minute rehearsal and were assessed for their positive and negative feelings along with levels of cortisol, oxytocin, and DHEA.<sup>14</sup> DHEA is used to calculate a more reliable cortisol level. In order to determine if group singing played a more significant role than verbal interaction, the researchers also had a “chatting” control group. This control group chatted with their neighbors, switching every ten minutes, for a total of three sessions. This was an important control group, as researchers were interested in understanding if verbal interaction alone was enough to elicit the oxytocin response. It was found that oxytocin levels increased in the group rehearsal but not with chatting. Furthermore, positive feelings increased and negative feelings decreased after a choral rehearsal. In the chatting condition, positive feelings also increased, but negative feelings stayed the same.

This is a striking finding with the incorporation of the control group. What this study seems to showcase is that although both chatting and group singing are social exercises, choral singing facilitates social bonding, while verbal communication does not. This increase in oxytocin is similar to that seen in intimate relationships.<sup>15</sup> It was also shown that choral singing increases positive feelings while decreasing negative ones, at least in a rehearsal setting. What is even more interesting is that most of these individuals were amateur singers, underscoring the fact that it is not necessary to be professionally trained in order to elicit these biochemical responses.

In a study by Beck et al., members of the Pacific



Chorale were evaluated in preparation for a performance of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.<sup>16</sup> Changes in S-IgA levels, along with cortisol, were evaluated in two rehearsals and a performance. It was found that secretory IgA levels increased in all three conditions but especially after the performance condition. Cortisol levels increased after the performance but decreased in the rehearsals. It is important to note that these reactions often go hand-in-hand, as stress may also promote an immune response. Moreover, both positive and negative feelings were more closely associated with the performance condition. The primary purpose of this study was to see if certain emotions and experiences associated with singing could be predictors of enhanced immune responses. From largest to smallest predictor, the researchers found that these six phrases were correlated to modulations in S-IgA levels:

- I feel relaxed when singing.
- Singing gives me a kind of high.
- Before singing, my mood usually rises.
- I usually feel detached while singing.
- I was satisfied with my performance.
- I usually feel stressed during performances.

This study showcases that we as human beings are pretty complex, experiencing both more positive and negative emotions within a choral performance. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this is a group of experienced singers who have had at least a decade of experience performing and rehearsing in the choral world. Interestingly, we experience an increase in S-IgA both in performance and rehearsal conditions, showcasing the positive benefit choral singing has on the immune system. The researchers also measured cortisol, but it was later eliminated due to a lower-than-average baseline level. Although seemingly insignificant, this implies that prolonged participation in a choral group may decrease the baseline levels of cortisol in the body. This is a perceived health benefit, as chronic, high lev-

els of cortisol have been associated with anxiety, depression, heart disease, and insomnia.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, high levels of cortisol increase your insulin resistance, which could potentially lead to type 2 diabetes.<sup>18</sup>

Other studies have examined immune responses due to choral singing and found similar results. A study done by the Royal College of Music and Tenovus Cancer Care found that singing in a choir for just one hour resulted in significant reductions of cortisol and an in-

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**“CHORAL SINGING INCREASES POSITIVE FEELINGS WHILE DECREASING NEGATIVE ONES, AT LEAST IN A REHEARSAL SETTING.”**

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creased number of cytokines (proteins of the immune system), which they believe may benefit the immunity of these cancer patients.<sup>19</sup> Another study done with amateur singers also observed the increased amount of S-IgA in a choral rehearsal but found no observable effect when only listening to choral music.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Breakdown**

What does this all mean and how can we apply it to choral singing? As evidenced, there seems to be a significant biochemical effect that occurs during group singing. The research indicates that this effect is not based merely on the social interaction itself or the music that is being performed. The act of choral singing generates a complex web of social, emotional, psychological, and physiological factors that generate these biochemical benefits.

Certainly, the data indicates that choral singing increases our S-IgA levels, thereby ramping up one of the first lines of defense in our immune system. Cortisol levels have been shown to increase or decrease based on whether the situation is a rehearsal or performance. Oxytocin levels, however, remain inconclusive, increasing in one study but decreasing in another. It is important to consider when studying the complex interaction and biochemical response of human beings that there

are many variables that cannot be controlled.

One of the most significant results that comes from these studies is that stress plays a very important role in modulating our cortisol levels. The data indicates that we generally see a decrease of cortisol levels in a rehearsal setting. This showcases the generally lower stress conditions of a choral rehearsal, compared to that of a performance. Taking time to address stress and performance anxiety especially in a choral performance is extremely important in attempting to reduce stress levels. It may even contribute to long-term reductions in baseline cortisol levels. It has been found that early exposure to mild stressors increases our ability to regulate emotions and also allows us to develop resilience.<sup>21</sup> Prolonged exposure, on the other hand, has been shown to have a negative impact on human health, even resulting in immunosuppression.<sup>22</sup> Taking time for deep breathing has been shown to decrease cortisol levels significantly, under high stress conditions.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, cracking a joke or two may positively benefit cortisol levels, as a study of 18 adults showed decreased cortisol in response to laughter.<sup>24</sup> What these studies have not done is evaluate higher stress rehearsal conditions. If a performance elicits spikes in cortisol levels due to a combination of more positive and negative feelings, why couldn't a rehearsal? Even small activities such as deep breathing or small bits of physical exercise put an emphasis on the chorister's overall well-being. According to the data, there seems to be a relationship between the positive and negative effects of choral singing and our body's actual biochemical response. In a study of orchestra musicians, there were several positive coping strategies that were related to reducing performance anxiety. These included increased practice, deep breathing and other relaxation techniques, positive self-talk, and mock performance practice.<sup>25</sup> Running through a mock performance, when accessible, and promoting positive coping mechanisms, may lead to decreased stress levels during a choral performance. This may benefit the overall health and well-being of your choristers, while giving them positive tools that contribute to their overall mental health! It is important to note, however, that these stress-management strategies have yet to be researched in a choral setting. Nevertheless, managing stress in the choral rehearsal

could ultimately modulate the levels of cortisol and S-IgA within the body, improve our physical health, and benefit our mental well-being.

Oxytocin levels, and its role in social bonding, also requires further exploration. Choral singing is not only a musical activity but also an extremely social one. Whether oxytocin levels decrease or increase after a choral rehearsal varies among studies. As shown in the study done at Western Michigan University, improvisation led to an increase in oxytocin levels, therefore potentially leading to increased social bonding. Incorporating improvisation into the choral rehearsal will not only impact our biochemistry but also our mental health. Studies have shown that the use of improvisation in music therapy enhances self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional well being, and self-awareness.<sup>26</sup> See Patrick Freer's article for a practical discussion on incorporating improvisation into the choral classroom.<sup>27</sup> Although this may seem dismissible, it is important to note that social bonding is an extremely complex phenomenon. As stated previously, oxytocin levels increase in the space of intimate connections. It is still unclear as to what influences intimate connection in a group setting and how that may relate to oxytocin. However, social connectedness does have a positive impact on health and well-being. According to Stanford Medicine's Center for Compassion and Altruism, strong social connection leads to a 50% increased chance of longevity, strengthens your immune system, contributes to lower levels of anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem, and greater empathy for others.<sup>28</sup> These positive benefits showcase the necessity of encouraging connectedness within an ensemble. Generating a choral culture of connectedness is pivotal to experiencing the effects of social bonding. It is not explicitly clear in the data what factors could have contributed to the reduction in oxytocin levels in one study but an increase in another. It would be especially intriguing to look at what factors facilitate social bonding in a choral rehearsal and if those activities lead to an increase in oxytocin levels. Nevertheless, it has been shown that oxytocin levels increase and stay increased in individuals who are in intimate relationships. Yes, it is important to listen and respond to each other in a choral rehearsal. However, without *intimate* social connection, it doesn't



seem that this biochemical effect could be possible.

### Final Thoughts


Although the data we have looked at is intriguing, as with all science, there are variables that must be discussed that could have influenced the final results. Although not an exhaustive list, this outlines a few of the potential circumstances to consider when contextualizing this information.

First and most importantly, many of the studies presented did not have an actual control group. A control group is an important part of determining what factors actually played a role in producing the expected outcome rather than other variables that could have influenced the data. Generating control groups for these studies is, however, often difficult, as trying to determine which variables can be controlled and what factors can influence the data in humans is tedious and sometimes impossible. Sample size is also very important. Many of these studies had a relatively small sample size, even as small as four singers. This leads to higher levels of variability among the actual data. Humans are unique, and evaluating individual levels of these biochemical molecules can also be highly variable. It can be difficult to normalize these levels when many of the studies are not done on a larger scale. Larger scale studies are necessary in order to establish precision.

These studies viewed momentary snapshots of modulations in biochemical levels. Understanding the long-term effects of choral singing on our biochemistry, in comparison to other social activities, may be most beneficial. Furthermore, understanding the factors that play a role in facilitating these effects, such as social bonding, are pivotal in understanding how choral singing affects our biochemistry and how we may modify our rehearsals in order to reap these positive benefits. Finally, an increase or decrease in the levels of these neuropeptides, steroids, and antibodies does not necessarily mean they will have a profound influence on human behavior or physiology. Consider this example.

You are having a group of friends over for dinner. You make a nice pasta dish but realize that you added way too much salt to the tomato sauce. You serve it to your guests and half of them have a disgusted look on

their face, while the other half of them did not even notice. Even though the level of salt was too high, only half of the individuals at your dinner party had some sort of response. It's the same way with our biochemistry. Although the levels of oxytocin, cortisol, and S-IgA may have changed, it doesn't mean they will illicit the same physiological or behavioral response in every individual.

All things considered, these studies showcase how choral singing influences our biochemistry and how it affects, and is affected by, social bonding, trust, attachment, stress, and our immune system. For the most part, these are positive impacts, related to positive affects emphasized by many of the researchers. It's a pivotal starting point in researching the effects of choral singing on the individual and on the group. We now understand that choral singing not only impacts our physical and mental health but also contributes to modulations within our biochemistry. We can use this understanding to have more well-rounded discussions regarding the necessity of choral music. Furthermore, we can use these foundational studies as a means to promote and support further research. Choral music is an absolute necessity; it feeds our soul, our heart, our mind, *and* our biochemistry. 

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- <sup>25</sup> Dianna Kenny, Tim Driscoll, Bronwen Ackermann, "Psychological well-being in professional orchestral musicians in Australia: A descriptive population study," *Psychology of Music* 42, no. 2 (2014): 210-232. Running through a mock performance, when accessible, and promoting positive coping mechanisms, may lead to decreased stress levels during a choral performance. This may benefit the overall health and well-being of your choristers, while giving them positive tools that contribute to their overall mental health!
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# ACOUSTICAL, PSYCHOACOUSTICAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHORAL SINGING WITH COVID-19 HEALTH MEASURES

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HARALD JERS

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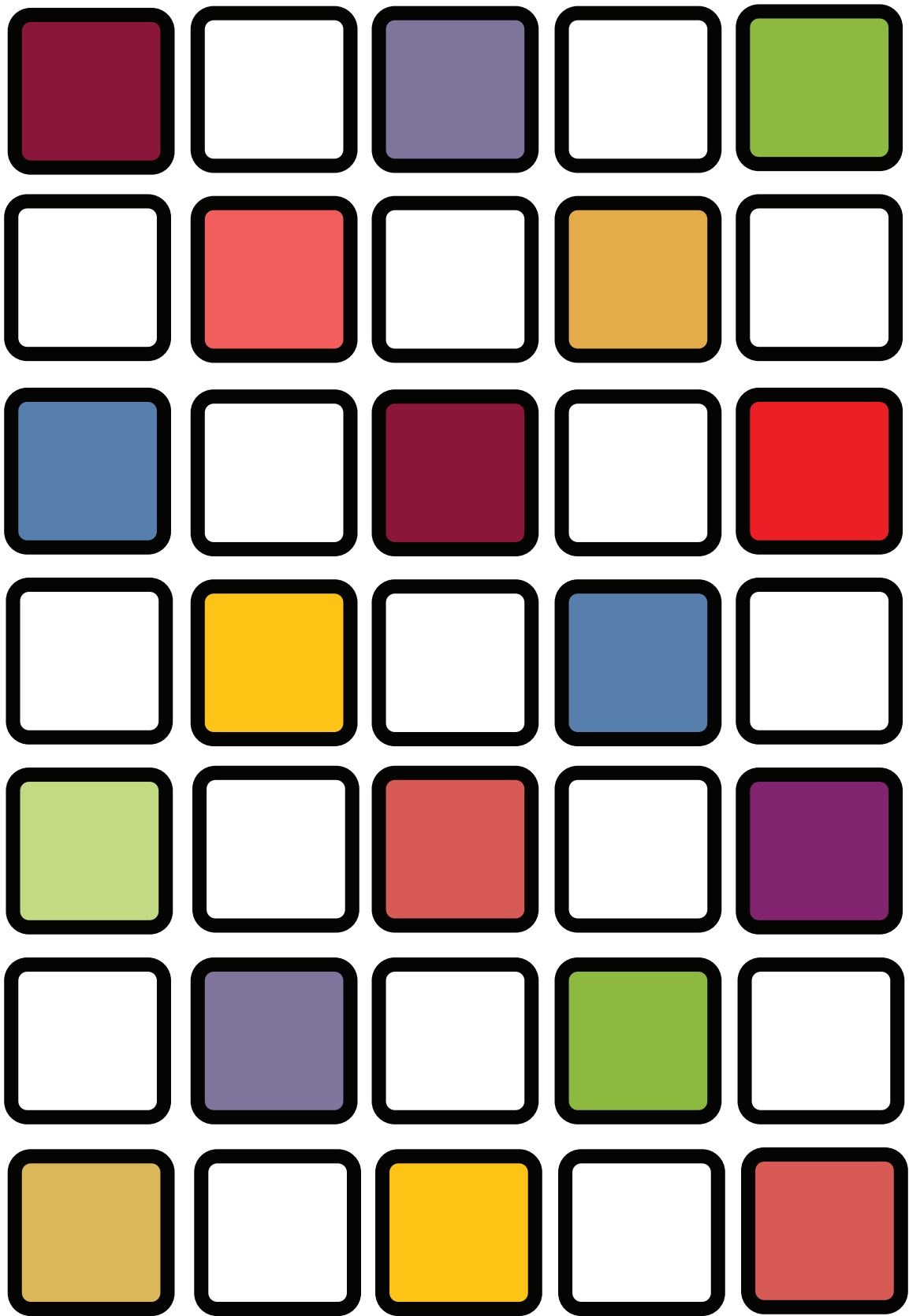
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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on many aspects of daily life. Accepted means for safely gathering persons for any activity include meeting outdoors if possible, maintaining 2 or more meters (6 feet) physical distance between persons, using high ventilation rates (preferably natural ventilation) to provide multiple air changes per hour if indoors, and wearing masks to prevent the spread of larger droplets.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> However, applying these health practices to choral singing<sup>4, 5, 6, 7</sup> has significant implications for the nature of the sound a choir creates, the perception of the choir's sound both within and outside of the choir, and the vocal production of the singers. In this article, we hope to examine a few of these implications in more detail and to provide some suggestions for how best to respond, based on prior research in the acoustics and psychoacoustics of choral singing, stressing as always that observing necessary health measures is paramount.





### Singing Outdoors

Singing outdoors has the potential to remove much if not all of the typical reverberant character of a performance space on the choir's sound (as experienced inside and outside of the choir), radically changing the Self to Other Ratio (SOR) experienced by the singers. By the 'Self' signal, we mean those sounds of one's own voice that arrive directly to one's own ears. By the 'Other' signal, we mean the sum of all *other* sounds that reach the singer, both direct and reflected. The Self-to-Other ratio is represented as the level difference  $L_{\text{Self}} - L_{\text{Other}}$ , in dB.<sup>8</sup> A significant component of Other is the diffuse field of sound reverberating in the room. When singing indoors but with wide spacing, the diffuse field dominates

the Other sound. When singing outdoors, however, the diffuse field is absent, and only the direct sound from the rest of the voices in the choir remains in the Other. Together with the inverse square law, which states that every time the distance from a sound source is doubled, the intensity reduces by a factor of four,<sup>9</sup> this means that one will hear an Other sound that is weaker and greatly dominated by one's immediate neighbors in the choir, while the singers who are furthest away might be basically inaudible. This has significant implications for maintaining synchronization within the choir.

To help clarify this idea of the effect of the room on the singer and the listener, consider the situation diagrammed in Figures 1 and 2. In Figure 1, the left portion

Figure 1. Room with Reflecting Walls and Ceiling with an Echogram of Sound Energy over Time

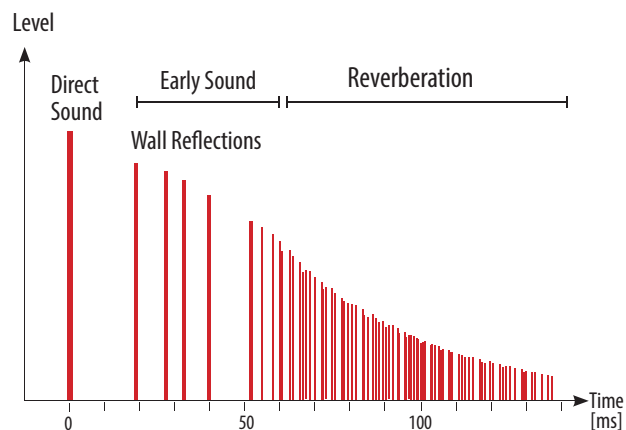
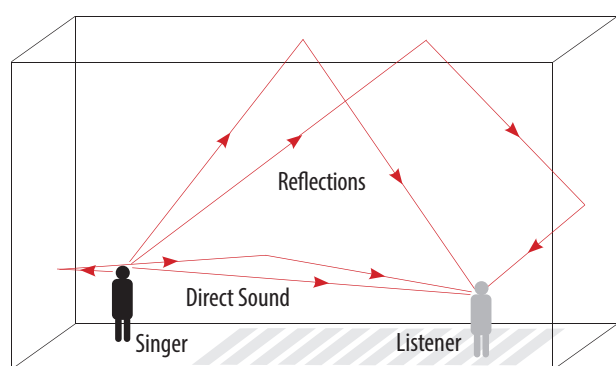
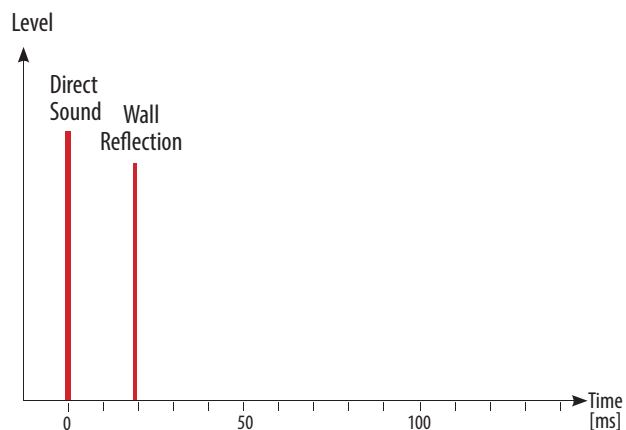
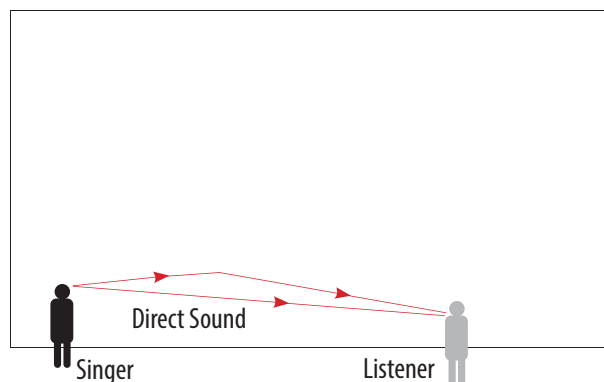


Figure 2. Reflections Outdoors Near a Wall with an Echogram of Sound Energy over Time





represents the typical situation where a singer or singers perform in a room. The singer hears their own direct sound, receives early reflections from nearby walls and perhaps the floor, and gets later reflections from walls and the ceiling, which are further away. The listener gets the direct sound from the singer as well as a vast number of reflections that gradually taper off in strength over time. This gradually tapering reverberation over time is shown graphically on the right. Contrast that with the situation in Figure 2, where the singer and listener are outdoors near a single wall. As there is only one surface for sound to reflect from, the singer receives very little external feedback beyond an early reflection from the wall, and the listener receives only the direct sound from the singer plus one reflection. The effect of the room and its reverberation “tail” is gone, as is shown graphically on the right.

Another aspect of singing outdoors to be considered is the absorption of sound by natural materials. While singers and conductors in a hall have the benefit of reflective and absorptive materials that have been selected and strategically located by building engineers to enhance some aspects of ensembles’ sound and attenuate others, outdoors one finds materials that are less regular in shape and location and quite variable in the amount of sound they absorb. This absorption also varies widely with frequency, as can be seen in Table 1. Across the top right of the table, different frequencies one octave

apart are shown, with the approximate musical pitch perceived immediately below (with middle C=C4). The numbers below the pitches indicate the ratio of sound absorbed versus sound reflected by each type of material at each octave frequency band, so the lower the number, the less sound the substance absorbs. A concrete floor absorbs only 1 to 2 percent across a wide range of frequencies, so its absorption is very uniform. In contrast, plywood (as might be found in the ceiling of a barn-like hall with open sides) absorbs more at lower frequencies than it does at higher frequencies. Grass, gravel, soil, and indoor/outdoor carpet are modestly absorptive at low frequencies, but become very absorbent at higher frequencies. In such a setting, vowels might be fairly distinct, but high frequency consonants such as /f/, /s/, and /t/would be greatly affected. The SOR also increases as room or space absorption increases, so singers (particularly treble voices) rehearsing or performing on a grass-covered lawn would hear themselves very strongly and relatively little of their colleagues.<sup>10</sup>

### Physical Distancing

Increased spacing between singers increases the SOR, whether indoors or outdoors, and tends to make the bulk of the Other sound consist of the direct sound from each choir member’s immediate neighbors. With increased spacing indoors, the number of singers on a set of risers

**Table 1. Sound Absorption Data of Common Outdoor Materials and Surfaces**  
(from [http://mapleintegration.com/sound\\_ab.php](http://mapleintegration.com/sound_ab.php), accessed 7-2-2020)

Material	Frequency in Hertz	125	250	500	1000	2000	4000
	Approximate musical pitch	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7
concrete floor, smooth		0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
indoor-outdoor carpet		0.01	0.05	0.10	0.20	0.45	0.65
plywood 3/8 of an inch thick		0.28	0.22	0.17	0.09	0.10	0.11
loose and moist gravel		0.25	0.60	0.65	0.70	0.75	0.80
grass, 2 inches high		0.11	0.25	0.60	0.69	0.92	0.99
rough soil		0.15	0.25	0.40	0.55	0.60	0.60

or on a stage will by necessity need to decrease. From a viral risk reduction standpoint, fewer singers performing at one time is beneficial, although from a perceptual standpoint for the singers, directors should understand that the SOR will increase as the level of the Other sound is reduced. Increasing the distance between choir members also introduces greater delays in the sound of one performer reaching another.

For a choir used to rehearsing and performing in closer spacing, singing with 2 or 2.5 meters (6.5 to 8 feet) between singers, as an ongoing study in Germany recommends,<sup>11</sup> could result in challenging ensemble difficulties. A 15-meter (49 feet) separation between singers on the edges of the choir on a large stage would lead to a 45-millisecond delay in the sound from one side reaching singers on the other side. Other considerations include sound delays due to the location of accompanying instruments (also distanced from each other, the audience, and from the singers for safety purposes); the location of the singers relative to the audience (again, for safety reasons); changes in the reverberation characteristics of a performance hall with reduced numbers of listeners who are widely spaced from each other (fewer people in the room would tend to make the room more reverberant); and the very real difficulty of the performers seeing the conductor's cues at an increased distance.

### **Singing Indoors with Increased Ventilation**

If it is necessary for the choir to sing indoors, health guidance suggests increasing the room ventilation, preferably with natural ventilation from the outside.<sup>12</sup> Increased ventilation, however, comes with its own set of complications to consider. If flow rates in HVAC systems are increased, the potential for turbulent sounds in the air supply to and air return from the rehearsal or performance hall also increases, which could have an impact on the intelligibility of the sung text. Turbulent sounds in duct systems range in frequency from 31.5 Hz up to 1000Hz—e.g., the full range of the human voice—while noises from airflow around and through the dampers that regulate the amount of air flow and the diffusers that distribute the air evenly in the room range in the 1000-4000 Hz bands,<sup>13</sup> which coincides with the second

resonances of many vowels and the frequency of voiced consonants. Furthermore, the well-known Lombard effect, where speakers or singers increase their vocal output in response to background noise, has recently been shown to be sensitive to the specific frequencies of the competing noise and is not merely a general response to overall noise.<sup>14</sup> Thus, one would expect that choir singers would respond to increased room noise in these bands associated with vowel and consonant production and comprehension with increased vocal effort. Increased ventilation, whether natural or through HVAC systems, may also have a drying effect that can impact the ease of the performers' vocal production.

### **Wearing Masks**

Wearing masks that cover the nose and mouth are strongly recommended by the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic: "CDC recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain."<sup>15</sup> Singing together in a choral rehearsal or performance certainly meets all of the criteria listed by the CDC as a situation where mask usage is warranted, although like the other health risk reduction measures previously discussed in the article, wearing a mask while singing does pose some challenges of which singers and directors should be aware.

One obvious concern is maintaining appropriate coverage of the nose and mouth while still allowing freedom of movement for articulation, especially when opening the mouth wide. This would most importantly apply to the higher range of female singers. From an acoustical standpoint, wearing a cloth or surgical mask while speaking (and, by inference, singing) tends to reduce the intensity of higher frequency components of a voice, especially above 2000 Hz.<sup>16, 17, 18, 19</sup> The perceptual effect of this would be a more dull vocal quality. How singers might respond to this loss of intensity of higher frequency aspects of their voices due to a mask is unknown. The authors surmise that singers might compensate by wanting to sing louder or sharper on the pitch or by making vocal tract adjustments



to “brighten” their timbre. Furthermore, in an indoor setting, masks would appear to damp the very high frequencies that might be already obscured by turbulent noise from ventilation systems.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the effect of wearing a mask on the directivity of the singing voice has not been explored. As this concept of directivity may be unfamiliar to some readers, a summary of information for choral musicians on the directivity of the voice can be found in “The Impact of Location on the Singing Voice” by Harald Jers in the *Oxford Handbook of Singing*.<sup>21</sup>

### Practical Suggestions for Choral Conductors, Music Educators, Choral Singers

So far the authors have tried to explain a few of the ramifications of four important and practical means of reducing COVID-19 health risks while gathering together for singing: singing outdoors, increasing physical distance between choir members, increasing ventilation if singing indoors, and wearing a mask before, during, and after singing. We wish to stress that in every situation, the safety of all the participants in a group singing activity is paramount. *Acoustical, psychoacoustical, and pedagogical concerns are not life threatening; artistic concerns are not life threatening; a COVID-19 infection is.* What follows are some suggestions or best guesses, based on prior research and what evidence we have, which may help conductors, educators, and singers enhance the quality of their singing experience *without compromising safety*.

#### Outdoors

- Locate near a reflecting surface, such as a smooth brick or concrete wall or a performance stage shell; stand on a smooth hard surface, such as brick, concrete, or wood; or stand underneath the roof of an open air covered pavilion. If possible, try to find a wall-less location that is wide but has a low and hard ceiling and floor, and stand in a half circle. Curiously, some forest locations (especially cultivated pines) with many tall straight trunks offer a surprising amount of pleasant reverberation!

- Use music folders as personal reflectors.
- Use block sectional formation, so singers can balance within sections better.
- Select repertoire carefully, especially with regards to contrapuntal part writing.
- Avoid locations with a noisy environment to reduce competing sound sources, such as a loud stream, river or fountain, street noise, or other city noises.
- Do not encourage the singers to sing too loudly. The overall intensity of the sound is not much affected by a mask, but the level in the high-frequency range is greatly affected, attenuating the treble and giving a muffling effect to the mask-wearing singer and the listener. This spectrum change may possibly give the impression of a lower vocal effort, e.g., maybe *mezzo-forte* instead of *forte*. Singers must be guided to resist the intuitive temptation to compensate for this. Singing louder does not increase intelligibility.
- Placement of the audience in an outdoor performance can be crucial. Listeners should not be “downwind” of the singers for health reasons, but should be located away from other noise sources and spread out more laterally so as to not be too far away from the singers.

#### Indoors

- Use sectional circumambient (equal spacing between singers in all directions) rather than mixed formations to assist within-voice part balance.
- Use natural ventilation with windows and doors open as much as possible instead of HVAC.
- Consider repertoire for reduced forces due to stage size/auditorium limits with safe spacing.
- In the case of long distances between the conductor and choir singers or rooms with high reverberation, consider amplification of the conductor with a headset

microphone in rehearsals in order to clarify announcements by the conductor to the choir.

- If using fans for ventilation, for a given amount of air flow, a larger blade fan running at a low speed would be quieter than a small fan running at a high speed.
- When the conductor wears a mask, consider using one with a transparent window so that the choir can see mouthed cues.

### Reinforced Sound

For ensembles with such resources, using individual microphones and a sufficiently large mixing desk with monitor loudspeakers could be an option that opens up many possibilities. When used correctly, a sound system can counteract not only the reduced sound level outdoors but also the greater delays that come with greater spacing between singers. Artificial reverberation, too, is possible. For organizations and schools that have show choirs, what we are suggesting is judiciously applying that technology and expertise to other ensembles. However, for some choirs this will be an entirely new mode of performance that requires a lot of experimentation and practice time in any given venue, not just a “sound check.” Perhaps the pandemic can be an incentive for this kind of work.

- It is very difficult to share microphones between several singers in a balanced way, especially when distancing is mandated. The microphones should be individual, preferably of the wireless, fixed position, head-worn type, since most singers do not have the technique for handling microphones. Prices for such microphone systems (microphone, transmitter pack, and receiver) start at approximately \$1500 per octet of singers.<sup>22</sup> A power amplifier and multi-channel mixer would also be needed, with the price of these varying with the wattage of the amplifier and the number of channels, respectively. Prices for a 16-channel mixer start at \$450.<sup>23</sup> Hygiene precautions such as disposable wind/pop shields and appropriate cleaning are recommended.
- The monitor loudspeakers (for hearing of Other)

should ideally be small and many in number, dispersed around/behind the choir for an even distribution of power. A really flat loudspeaker frequency response is more expensive, but it will significantly reduce the risk of feedback, sound better, save time, and reduce annoyance.

- Separate public address speakers facing the audience might not be needed at all, which is good, since they tend to detract from naturalness.
- Initially, a skilled sound technician in full attendance will be needed, to help balancing and optimizing the intra-ensemble listening. The ends of the choir need help to hear the opposite ends of the choir, so a crossed stereo monitoring setup could be advisable.

### Other Technological Possibilities

There are other creative ways to use technology to rehearse in a low-risk, distanced fashion. One recent effort involved singers in cars using wireless microphones, which were connected to a receiver/mixing board system; the director then had the singers in the cars tune their car radios to a specific frequency for the mixed feed of the whole ensemble!<sup>24</sup> For others seeking an indoor solution, placing performers in separate rooms, each with a computer, external audio interface, and microphone, and using low latency audio software like SoundJack<sup>25</sup> and a local area network internet connection to connect the various performers may be appealing, especially in urban areas where gathering outdoors may not be an option. See the materials created by Ian Howell at New England Conservatory for more information on this option.<sup>26, 27</sup>

### Conclusion

The pandemic is an overwhelming experience for all choral musicians. The depth and breadth of safety issues to take into account as educational, civic, and religious institutions consider how to move forward with corporate vocal music are daunting. Even so, as safety decisions are made, we hope that you will consider some of the strategies we have suggested above.



If nothing else, as you make safety decisions about rehearsal and performance locations, distancing between singers, room ventilation, and masks, you will be better informed regarding how those decisions might impact the sound the singers in your choir may hear as they rehearse and perform, and you will be better able to anticipate questions and have possible solutions available before problems occur. Likewise, we encourage you to closely follow the latest research on healthy singing practices in this journal and in other peer-reviewed voice publications. Finally, as vocalists and choral musicians ourselves, we share your desire to once again gather people together in song. May we find safe, smart ways to continue the choral art form for years to come.



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## CHORAL RESOURCES FOR THESE TIMES

ACDA is hosting a webpage that is updated daily containing resources that are particularly useful for choral professionals:  
**Resources for Choral Professionals During the Pandemic.**

The screenshot shows the ACDA website with the following elements:

- Navigation Menu:** Home, Conferences, Repertoire, Publications, Resources, About, Membership.
- Sign In:** A button in the top right corner.
- Member Benefits:** Access Your Member Benefits Including Conferences, Repertoire, Mentoring, Publications & Much More!
- Resource Cards:**
  - Resources for Choral Professionals During a Pandemic:** A card with a red circle around it, featuring a woman wearing a headset and a laptop. Text: "Resources for Choral Professionals During a Pandemic. Check back often for resources to aid you in teaching during this critical time. [Learn More](#)"
  - 2021 ACDA National Conference:** A card with a city skyline image. Text: "Check often for updated information regarding auditions, interest session proposals and registration. [Learn More](#)"
  - Career Center:** A card with a person at a laptop. Text: "The resources you need to find the perfect job and advance your career. Employer? Choose from the most qualified choral candidates in the industry! [Learn More](#)"
  - Need Vetted Repertoire?:** A card with an image of sheet music.
  - Access Choral Journal:** A card with an image of the Choral Journal cover.
  - Get the App:** A card with an image of hands holding a smartphone.
- Help:** A blue button in the bottom right corner.



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Kantorei



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# THE AEOLIANS

Aeolians of Oakwood University

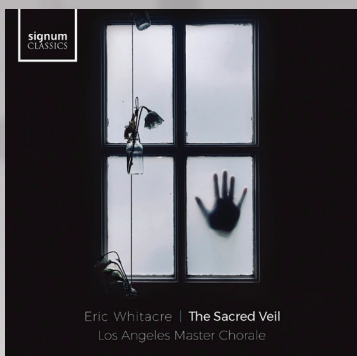


"This recording project was captured mere days before the semester was abruptly altered. This phenomenon is in full effect as I write during this two headed pandemic: COVID19 + racial tensions. These two viruses are literally killing humanity. Through our programming, we can bring hope to so many in need. We, the Aeolians, are no longer satisfied with solely displaying musical prowess. Coupling hope with mastery could be the combination that produces uncompromising societal transformation." – Jason Max Ferdinand

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# Hallelujah, Amen!

## A Focus on Music in Worship

### **Introduction by Terre Johnson**

The stresses that have been created by the worldwide pandemic have made the already stressful job of directing music in a house of worship fraught and overwhelming. The musicians who work full time or part time in these positions have been forced to find creative ways to keep their singers engaged while not endangering them. In many cases, they have also been forced to defend their positions in the long-term planning of the congregation while short-term financial damage is being experienced.

But along with these difficulties has come the opportunity for these musicians to take time for reflection about their leadership, musicianship, and pedagogy. With the following article, it is hoped that musicians in houses of worship can

draw on the knowledge and skill of one of the nation's best-known and longest-serving sacred musicians, John Yarrington. His career continues with passion and energy after six decades serving in various denominations and institutions of higher education.

John and I recently spoke about his vast experience, and how this is a unique time in which conductors can take a moment to reflect on their own skills and experiences, and can benefit from the perspective of one of the most admired leaders in the fields of sacred music and conducting. He has written an insightful reflection on his philosophy and technique, and it will be valuable to all conductors, whether or not they are currently serving in a house of worship.

# Less is **More**

by John Yarrington

A three-year-old, whom I know, always referred to me as “the connector.” Like many malapropisms, her delightful slip of the tongue reveals a lot. Conducting is about connecting; and hope that by strengthening these links, you are a conductor in the specific sense of the term.

Contrary to some people’s perception of conductors, it appears that, in fact, a monkey would not be able to do a better job. Bad news for the monkey. Good news for the conductor.

## Premise

Conductors who expend too much energy in an effort to obtain musical results can learn to conduct less and listen more. One sees a variety of conducting where the sound of the group bears little resemblance to the gestures seen. The picture of flailing, flopping, swaying, bobbing, and weaving actually gets in the way of the music. When effortful gesture is expended, one simply does not listen well. When all the work is done by the conductor, players and singers are not asked to take their part of the responsibility for the music making. Ann Jones says we should “engage the music makers.” We only engage when we expect and trust players and singers to mark changes in articulation, tempo, and dynamics. Marking lifts and breaths allows articulation and space. Circling important weighted syllables gives life to the text. Marking is a sign of intelligence.

John Yarrington  
Director of the Chancel Choir  
First Presbyterian Church of Houston  
[john@johnyarrington.com](mailto:john@johnyarrington.com)

I believe in a standard grammar of conducting gesture, which is instantly recognized by players and singers alike. Most of us have studied conducting in books that show pattern maps of two, three, and four. These gestures can be shortened or lengthened—one can show short, loud, soft, and long by letting the gesture serve the music. When a pattern is used out of habit rather than one that serves the essence of the music, conductors can, out of frustration, resort to anger and sarcastic remarks. This destroys the very nature and spontaneity of the music. Asking for detail and keeping everyone on track is one thing. Insulting anger rarely solves the problems. If you really cannot make anyone sing or play better by swaying, grunting, clapping, and tapping, then what appropriate steps might one take to use with less effort but much more meaning?

One could say, “But you have not been in my classroom. To get any energy, I have to cheer-lead with exaggerated gestures.” After fifty-five years of directing volunteer church choirs, collegiate choirs, and symphonic choruses, I believe strongly that I must train my people to respond to recognized gestures. This is particularly important when singing with orchestra. Our gestures should focus on the music and not detract from it. This means adjusting patterns to convey what, in your opinion, allows the composer’s intentions to be brought forth. A beginning downbeat, in a definite tempo allows the music to live in its most habitable environment. We ask everyone to join in our intentions

without swaying, grunting, clapping, tapping, or talking.

Ask any orchestral players if, on the first run, they need to be stopped over and over again. You have made sure individual parts have numbers or letters or both corresponding to the full score. Much will be corrected in the second playing. With a chorus, it is important to let the orchestra play and not be concerned, at the beginning, about balance. A technique I use is to let the orchestra play a passage and the choir or soloists, listen. Then let the choir sing, and let the orchestra listen. Gestures should be practiced until they feel comfortable. Practice creates muscle memory and security.

As conductors, understanding and acceptance of our equal role with musicians is a prerequisite to great music making. We actually do not conduct; we evoke sounds from our gestures. Gestures set in motion with our own breath—the miracle which is the musical phrase. After that, we guide singers not with our hands, but with our ears. It is our responsibility as conductors to intimately understand which gestures hinder singers, which gestures help singers and which gestures hinder singers and cause the music not to sing.

### **The Human Quotient**

No matter what we do in rehearsals, or how we do it, we have to always remember they’re people.

They may be young or old. They may be seasoned or inexperienced. They may be sharp as a tack, or need a bit more time. These are people. They don’t belong to us, nor will they stay with us. We just have to make certain they will be all the better for the time we share together as human beings.

I have come to believe that the pursuit of musical excellence must involve responsible action and reaction of the music makers. To uphold the highest standards of our art without honoring those who play and sing is a huge mistake. The atmosphere should be collaborative always with clear responsibility placed on everyone. Do singers vote? Subtly, of course, they do. This is very evident in most any choir of volunteers. The collaboration of which I speak is not about voting on the music or the popularity of the conductor. It is about the essence of working for excellence with everyone sharing in the responsibility of the outcome. I do not believe worthwhile music is ever made in an atmosphere of fear or intimidation. We allow the process to unfold. We are well prepared to lead, but we expect the responsibility of which I spoke earlier. This is not weakness, but real strength. In this, both the product and the producer are recognized and honored.

### **The Perils of Notation**

Our first responsibility to the page is to discover how the melody should sound, and then to sing it so convincingly that it would hold the attention of a three-year-old child.

When you perform music without having found the sound, you are skating over its surface. When you can sing the melody and convey its possibilities, you are in a position to learn whatever the composer or arranger has done with that melody, and to teach it to your group or to write your own arrangement.

We must begin with text! From the beginning introduction, we bring all the musicality to bear on the project. To gain correct pitches and rhythms is important. Unlearning mistakes is costly and time consuming. The question is: Where do these pitches go? How many go together toward a destination? Do we honor the text by first, carefully reading aloud with awareness to the natural accentuation of the words? The performance practice of singing Gregorian Chant is based on the natural accentuation of the words, and those words supply the rhythm. If all is correct in pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and vowel sounds, and the outcome is correct but sterile, we have failed the composer, the singers, and the audience.

Being yourself is more important than being who you think some people might want you to be. Even though you might have to highlight some aspects of your character more than others, you are who you are. Better to adjust the volume than twiddle the dial in search of another channel. Therein lies only madness.

Learn to receive the sound and

encourage the music makers to be part of the process. This is the meaning of ensemble. The music we sing or play is important, but equally important are the players and singers. Singing, at its best, is relational. The job of the conductor is to harness all of the intelligence in the room. Ann Jones once remarked, “You are through with your rehearsal, you are sweating and your choir asks, ‘What was that all about?’”

When asked to state weaknesses in young choral conductors, Margaret Hillis remarked:

They need to learn to study a score properly and make contact with the sound. There is a feeling that the sonority is in your hands and the music goes right by. You must stand up straight in rehearsal. Conducting is really the psychology of motion. If your body is open and poised and free when you conduct, you’re going to get that kind of sound. If it’s tight and closed, your forces aren’t going to breathe very well. A music director who sincerely loves music and works with people as fellow human beings all focused on the same thing makes conducting as easy as falling off a log. But if it’s one of those martinets who whips them over the head, you don’t get the same kind of conduct.

### Score Study

Nothing gives security and power like knowledge of the score.

Strength in clear, precise gestures conveys not just the technical demands of the music but its spirit and life. Knowledge of performance practices in our study of music history allows each piece to exist in its natural environment. The labor of score study takes time and effort. Once properly learned and effectively rehearsed, a spirit-filled performance is possible. Our job is to represent the intentions of the composer with understanding of the style and performance practices we have studied. Analysis can help us understand the score well enough that we are not swimmers driven by a sea of emotions. Analysis lays bare the skeleton, but the bones should not show through in performance. We will study the technique of composition so that the spirituality of the composer may reveal itself to us.

We as conductors have to discover the unique spirit of the piece or work of music we wish to perform. I like to involve students in this discovery through the question techniques I mentioned before. What emotion is evoked at this moment in the music? Why does the composer use a certain technique at this point? What colors would you use if you were painting a picture right now? Were I to tell the choir all about the music, the singers would have limited involvement. However, if the choir members discover insights about the music, the act of singing, then, is more meaningful.

Alice Parker will hold up a piece of music to her ear and remark, “I don’t hear any music.” She refers to the notes as “black blobs.” They convey very little of the essence,

style, performance practice using the printed page.

“In teaching works to your choir, don’t please let them read the notes and rhythms on the page and then add the words later. It simply doesn’t work—the words are never able to generate the line, and become squashed into the notes. If your choir can speak an entire anthem without pitches, words, rhythm, color, mood, dynamic accentuation, formal structure contrast, etc, with wonderful communication of the text then you are in the best position to drop the pitches gently in the words without losing their spoken value. If your choir can speak an entire anthem without pitches: words value.”

I always begin a new piece by speaking the text, listening for the rise and fall of words. I know that I cannot teach correct pitches and rhythms and then put the music in later. Every beginning aspect of the teaching begins with color, nuance, shape, sound, phrasing, articulation text meaning, weight and emphasis. I also listen for destination places.

While I believe that the black blobs often don’t reveal the true nature of the music, one does not have the right to impose upon the music intuition practices devoid of scholarship. One should try to represent the music with appropriate sound, articulation, care for the beauty, and natural accentuation of the words. Effective gesture with

attention to destination places and dynamic variation allows the music to sound authentic. The conductor invests in his or her group responsibility for the finished product.

In choosing a piece, I want to speak aloud the text, as poetry, and not in the rhythm notated. I begin with concepts of color, nuance, shape, sound, phrasing, articulation, and text weight and emphasis. Listening to the rise and fall means: 1) Speak for meaning, 2) Pause for importance, 3) Linger to love. Before presenting any music, I must absolutely be convinced of the worth and meaning of the text. If the music does not enhance and amplify, I cannot in good conscience put it before the choir. I have done a considerable amount of the music of American composer, Daniel E. Gawthrop because, without exception, his music enables, enlivens, colors, and carries the message(s) of the text. Mr. Gawthrop often says, “The music is in the words.”


I love conducting. I never turn over chairs in anger or single an individual out for criticism. I believe in a sacred quality of kinship with those I conduct. I think the best music is always made in an atmosphere of community. My job is to take what I have and do the best I can with it.

I have found the following to be helpful to my conducting students:

- With tall alignment, Palm down, forearm level with the floor, shoulders relaxed, arm back a bit with space under the arm.
- In a pattern of 3, emphasize beat

1, with 2 and 3 less. Then, emphasize beat 2 with 1 and 3 less. And then emphasize beat 3 with 1 and 2 less. This is not a jab or an accent, rather an elongation.

- In a pattern of 4, do the same.
- Try to rehearse without saying anything and using your gestures to indicate what is wanted.

Just as position five won’t make one a ballet dancer, these gestures alone will not insure success. However, if you train your choir to respond, you will see that, truly, less is more. 

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mark Wigglesworth, *The Silent Musician Why Conducting Matters* (London, England, Faber and Faber, 2018), 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> James Jordan, *Evoking Sound* (Chicago, Illinois, GIA, 2009), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Loel Boonshaft, *Teaching Music with Passion* (Gainesville, Maryland, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Alice Parker, “The Voice of Chorus America,” Volume 23, Number 3 Spring 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Wigglesworth, *The Silent Musician Why Conducting Matters*.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Hillis, “The American Organist,” January 1992, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Julius Herford, unpublished lecture notes.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Weston Noble.

<sup>10</sup> Alice Parker, *Ibid.*

# Sacred Music

## Choral Reviews

### *Prayer of St. Francis*

Text: “Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi” [Anonymous]

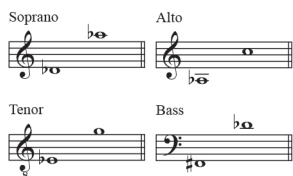
By Mari Esabel Valverde

SATB, piano

<http://marivalverde.com/MVC-111>

Performance demonstration:

<https://soundcloud.com/mari-valverde/prayer-of-st-francis>



Mari Esabel Valverde's setting of the famous *Prayer of St. Francis* leaps off the page with immediate energy, highlighted by a forceful opening secondary dominant seventh chord in 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion, which is made all the more pleading by its colorful harmony. In fact, Valverde delays any hint of tonic harmony until the golden mean, and even then only nods at it briefly, after which she begins to gradually reveal her ultimate harmonic goal, almost always in inversion. Her piece, thusly, could be thought of as an extended cadence

that only finds its final tonic resolution on the final note—appropriate and fitting.

The piece is written in *non-divisi* SATB, though the harmonic language is fresh enough that it may challenge less experienced choirs. Valverde's piano accompaniment alternates between supportive chordal harmony and an undulating sixteenth note dreamscape. She seems to pass through and around the listener's harmonic expectations with fluid non-chord tones, ending each section of the prayer by hinting at new keys, before quickly moving on.

The music is in two large sections, highlighted by the opening chord which Valverde uses when the poet addresses the Deity directly. She creates melodic cohesion throughout with the use of lilting triplet figures, which drives each phrase's rhythmic energy toward important textual landmarks, arriving with unresolved dissonance and ethereal beauty.

### *O Thou Who Camest from Above*

SATB divisi choir, organ

Text by Charles Wesley

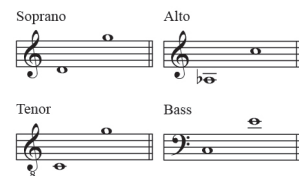
Music by Philip W. J. Stopford

MorningStar Music Publishers  
MSM- 50-5209

e-address and

performance demonstration:

[www.morningstarmusic.com/o-thou-who-camest-from-above-stopford.html](http://www.morningstarmusic.com/o-thou-who-camest-from-above-stopford.html)



Phillip Stopford's setting of Charles Wesley's hymn *O Thou Who Camest from Above* begins with a brief, almost brooding organ introduction which pulses in 3/4 time in A minor. The thick organ texture continues under the entrance of the TB voices singing a hypnotically rocking unison theme, slowly and gently dancing, now in C Major. Stopford descends at the end of this poignant melody with an unexpected F minor plagal harmony on the text

## Sacred Music Choral Reviews

“mean [lowly] altar of my heart” before cleverly returning back to C major with a swelling organ as the SA voices join the TB in unison.

The middle of the piece features a shift to Eflat Major, perhaps foreshadowed by the earlier brief F minor passage, as the choir symbolically climbs into the heights of the firmament on the text “and trembling to its source return”—a particularly glorious moment. Stopford expertly expresses the text by dropping the accompaniment out from under the choir on the words “in humble prayer,” highlighted by a crossed-voice dissonance on “fer-

vent praise.”

In the third verse, Stopford eschews the pulsing accompaniment for a more flowing instrumental line, supporting the sopranos, who now sing the melody in their upper registers. Stopford’s skills with voice leading and choral texture are on display as he once again removes the organ in favor of a warm, full choral palette. In the transition to verse four, back in C Major, the sopranos soar in a moving descant as the rest of the choir returns to the strong unison theme. The entire choir then evolves into a beautiful, heartfelt duet in thirds, the highlight of the

piece, before ending gently and quietly. The organ recalls the melody with a deceptive cadence on the relative minor underneath an extended unison choral pedal on the word “complete,” which is followed by a final, conventional repetition of the word with a perfect authentic cadence.

### *Kyrie (from the Missa Brevis San Francesco d’Assisi)*

SATB divisi choir, unaccompanied  
Text: Ordinary of the Mass and  
“Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi”  
[Anonymous]

Music by Anthony Bernarducci  
GIA Publications G-9262

e-address and

performance demonstration:

[www.giamusic.com/store/  
resource/missa-brevis-san-](http://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/missa-brevis-san-)

[int-g9262](http://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/missa-brevis-san-int-g9262)

Musical notation for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts. The Soprano and Alto parts are on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Tenor and Bass parts are on a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation shows a few notes for each part, with a fermata over the final note of each part.

It is just happenstance that there are reviews of two different settings of the *Prayer of St. Francis* in this issue. Anthony Bernarducci’s setting, from his *Missa Brevis*, is a gem of a piece. Combining the *Kyrie* text from the Mass Ordinary with the opening lines of the Francis prayer, Bernarducci creates a poetic litany that could form the basis for meaningful worship, even outside of this music! The combination, however, in an unaccompanied choral piece is stunning. The music is difficult

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but well worth the effort.

Though often attributed to St. Francis, the poetry is likely the work of an anonymous publisher in the early 1900s. Regardless, it is a universal and beloved text. Bernarducci begins in F minor, echoing the first *Kyrie eleison* phrase with paired voices in ascending and descending duets. After the initial cadence, he begins the opening lines of the Francis poetry, with a slightly different, more homophonic texture. The interplay of voices, subtle dissonances, and slight syncopations are wonderfully written! Following the plea to “Let me sow love,” the *Kyrie* returns, this time even more florid and moving.

In the next phrase “where there is injury, your pardon, O Lord,” Bernarducci moves to the relative D<sup>b</sup> Major, before immediately eliding into the *Christe eleison* text. The music is elegant, beginning to sparkle with more rhythmic energy followed by moments of profound beauty, particularly the brief deceptive landing on supertonic followed by a suspended resolution. He continues in D<sup>b</sup> Major with the return of the *Kyrie*, this time serving as macaronic accompaniment to the opening line of the Francis prayer, sung by the tenors. The coda continues this texture with the SA voices singing *Kyrie* in *divisi* harmony that seems to weep with emotion, while the TB voices repeat the opening line of the Francis prayer in unison. At the final moment, all voices repeat the line before cadencing on a profoundly emotional B<sup>b</sup> minor.

### *Let Us Love One Another*

SATB choir, organ (or piano)

Text: 1 John 4:7-12, adapted

Music by Mark Sirett

Augsburg Publishing

9781506463612

e-address and

performance demonstration:

[www.augsburgfortress.org/store/productgroup/1207/Let-Us-Love-One-Another](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/productgroup/1207/Let-Us-Love-One-Another)

The image shows the first few notes of the piece for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The Soprano and Alto parts are in treble clef, while the Tenor and Bass parts are in bass clef. The music is in D-flat major, indicated by two flats (B-flat and E-flat) in the key signature. The Soprano part begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4. The Alto part begins with a half note F4, followed by a quarter note G4. The Tenor part begins with a half note E4, followed by a quarter note F4. The Bass part begins with a half note D4, followed by a quarter note E4. The notes are arranged in a descending sequence across the voices.

Mark Sirett’s beautiful anthem sets the beloved passage from the Book of 1 John majestically, with stirring organ accompaniment that may also be adapted for piano. The piece is appropriate for all general times of the liturgical calendar and should be a permanent and lasting fixture in the sacred choral repertoire.

Sirett uses the opening line of the scripture as a chorus, opening the piece simply with his recurring theme. His choral writing is facile, yet is interesting, lyrical, and singable—aspects that choral directors at all levels will welcome. Subsequent passages from the scripture act as verses or episodes to his song, each with a unique counter melody and key, forming a succinct and symmetrical *rondo*. The anthem grows in power with each return of the chorus, ingeniously written with regular harmonic shifts that propel the music constantly forward.

The first verse is a particular

highlight of the piece. The SA voices weave in and out of each other in simple but well-written imitative polyphony. The second verse moves forward with unaccompanied energy. The return of the organ half-way through the verse is powerful, and begins to set up the climactic ending chorus, in which the ATB voices sing in powerful unison under a soaring descant. The ending is a resounding, floor-shaking, emphatic *forte*, voicing unequivocal support for the scripture’s premise. In all, Sirett’s work will resonate with choirs whose well-loved repertoire includes historic favorites from Gilbert Martin, Jane Marshall, and Moses Hogan, standing alongside these greats as a joyful celebration of love.

Timothy Michael Powell  
Atlanta, Georgia

## President Elect Candidates

To take office July 1, 2021



**Aimee Beckmann-Collier** is Director Emerita of Choral Studies and the Ellis and Nelle Levitt Distinguished Professor Emerita of Conducting at Drake University, where she taught from 1989 to 2019. She is a frequent clinician, adjudicator,

and guest conductor for high school and college choral festivals, contests, and all-states throughout the country.

Beckmann-Collier has served in a number of leadership roles for ACDA, including as president of the Iowa Choral Directors Association and ACDA's North Central Region, chair of two regional conferences and the ICDA Summer Symposium, and co-chair of ACDA's 2015 national conference. In addition, she was editor of both ICDA's and the North Central Region's publications.

Beckmann-Collier's articles on a variety of topics have appeared in the *Choral Journal* and the *Music Educators Journal*. She has served as an advocate for the teaching of music literacy and comprehensive musicianship, both in her own pedagogy and in providing learning opportunities for music educators. She was the co-founder of the Iowa Comprehensive Musicianship Project and director of Drake's Summer Music Institute, which, for twenty years, provided a variety of professional development courses for K-16 music educators.

A graduate of Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, which recently presented her with its Distinguished Alumna Award, Beckmann-Collier received master's and doctoral degrees in choral conducting from The University of Iowa, where she studied with Don Moses. She is the recipient of Drake University's Madelyn Levitt Award for Distinguished Community Service and the Stalnaker Lecturer designation, the Iowa Music Educators Association Distinguished Service Award, the National Federation Interscholastic Music Association Outstanding Music Educator Award, ICDA's Robert McCowen Award, and ACDA's Weston Noble Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2017 she was named Drake University's Teacher of the Year.



**Edith A. Copley** is a Regents' Professor and Director of Choral Studies at Northern Arizona University, where she has taught for thirty years. She conducts the Shrine of the Ages Choir and teaches graduate and undergraduate conducting

and graduate choral literature. During her time in Flagstaff, Copley also served as the music director of the Master Chorale of Flagstaff, conducting major works with the Flagstaff Symphony, including Bach's *B Minor Mass*, Mozart's *C Minor Mass* and numerous Requiem settings, including Britten's *War Requiem*. NAU choirs under her direction have performed at state, regional, and national conferences and have toured internationally to Eastern and Western Europe, China, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Baltics. Prior to her NAU appointment, she taught secondary choral music for seven years in her home state of Iowa and four years overseas at the American International School in Vienna, Austria. Copley has served ACDA as Western Region president, Arizona state president, Western Region and Arizona newsletter editor, state R&R chair for College & University, NAU-ACDA Student Chapter Advisor, and Interest Session co-chair for the ACDA National Conferences in 2013, 2019, and 2021.

She has received numerous honors, including the NAU Centennial Teacher of the Year, Arizona Music Educator of the Year, Arizona ACDA Outstanding Choral Director, and The Weston H. Noble Award from her alma mater, Luther College. Copley has her own choral series with Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and is in high demand as a clinician, adjudicator, and guest conductor. She has conducted all-state choirs in over thirty states and numerous choral festivals in prestigious concert halls in the United States. Copley has conducted international festivals in Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Luxembourg, Tasmania, England, Australia, China, Poland, France, Oman, and Turkey.



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# CALL FOR POSTER PRESENTATIONS

## 2021 ACDA National Conference - March 17-20, 2021



The American Choral Directors Association will sponsor a research session at the National Conference on March 17–20, 2021. The intent of the research poster session is to bring current research to light that impacts and informs the choral profession. Because the conference will take place virtually, the poster session will be presented virtually.

1. Abstracts submitted for presentation must comply with the following guidelines. If the data have been presented in whole or substantive part at any forum or at previous research sessions, a statement specifying particulars of the presentation must be included with the submission. Papers presented at other conferences will be considered only if the audience was substantially different (e.g., a state meeting or a university symposium). The paper may have been submitted for publication but must not be in print or in press prior to the submission deadline of the conference.
2. The research may be of any type, but a simple review of literature will not be considered for presentation. Manuscript style of articles representing descriptive or experimental studies must conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition, 2019). Authors of other types of studies must submit manuscripts that conform to either *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (K. L. Turabian, 9th edition, 2018) or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition, 2017).
3. The following items are required for submission: An abstract of no more than three thousand characters (including references) summarizing the research purpose, method, results, and conclusions. The name(s) or affiliation(s) of applicants must not appear in the abstract. Incomplete submissions (e.g., those discussing proposed research without any findings) will be rejected.
4. Financial responsibilities. Presenters must be current members of ACDA and are expected to register for the conference. They must be available to present their research in a virtual format, which will be determined by ACDA at a later date.

### Submission Timeline

The submission portal will be open on October 1, 2020. Submissions must be uploaded to: <https://acdanational.submittable.com/submit> by **November 1, 2020**. All submissions will be blind peer-reviewed by a committee of scholars. Applicants will be notified of the status of their submission via email by **December 15, 2020**.

## ACDA BOOK AUTHORS DISPLAY

2021 ACDA National Conference - March 17-20, 2021



The American Choral Directors Association is sponsoring a display of books authored by ACDA members at the National Conference on March 17–20, 2021. Purposes are to highlight the role of ACDA members in furthering the choral arts through published books, make these resources known and readily accessible to members, and generate dialogue among musicians and publishers for future publishing endeavors. Virtual “Meet the Author” conversations and a virtual display of books and author/publisher fliers are scheduled for this event.

### Guidelines

- a) Book topic is relevant to the ACDA purposes (<https://acda.org/about-us/>).
- b) Submitting author or editor of a critical edition or chapter book is a current ACDA member. Submissions by chapter authors are not accepted. Multi-author and multi-editor books represent a single submission.
- c) Book has been vetted, edited, published, and distributed for purchase by a publishing company. Submissions of self-published or unpublished books are not accepted.
- d) Book is in print and available for purchase by retailers.

### Submission Requirements

- a) Book title, author/editor name(s), publisher, date of publication, and ACDA member number.
- b) A description of the book (100 words or less).
- c) Category of participation:
  - Book Display Only—author/editor does not plan to attend the conference and agrees to provide requested materials (tba) for virtual display.
  - Meet the Author—author/editor plans to register for the conference and agrees to provide requested material (tba) for virtual display and to participate in virtual “Meet the Author” conversations as scheduled (tbd).

### Submission Timeline

Submit required information by email to Research and Publications Standing Committee member Alan Gumm at [gumm1aj@cmich.edu](mailto:gumm1aj@cmich.edu) between October 1 and November 1, 2020. Status of submissions meeting the guidelines will be sent via email by December 15, 2020.

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DECEMBER 1, 2020

# Repertoire & Resources

## Children and Community Youth Choirs



Joy Hirokawa  
National R&R Chair  
joyhirokawa@comcast.net

### Lessons from Summer Camp

by Joy Hirokawa

As our world reeled around us and the ground kept shifting over the summer, we struggled to come to grips with how to translate our instruction to the online environment. Music teachers are passionate and resourceful people. For those leading virtual summer camps, Zoom became the standard platform. We learned how to navigate setting up breakout rooms, manage students through the screen, and make learning engaging and meaningful. Teaching in this environment provided a testing ground to try a variety of pedagogical approaches. What worked? What didn't? Following are ideas from three different perspectives that may be useful as you plan for rehearsals this fall.

### Virtual Choral Village

The Choral Village format (see the April 2019 *Choral Journal* for more information on this program) provided a surprisingly adaptable structure to a different “deep dive” through a different delivery system. The focus of the week shifted from looking externally to looking inwardly; from performance to creation. Body percussion, improvisation, spoken word, discussion, and drumming provided artistic tools and ideas for students to create an artistic expression of their experiences and feelings living through these last few months. Following are some techniques used in Choral Village that would be easily transferred to any online choral setting.

### Exploit Zoom!

Each day of Choral Village began with a physical and vocal warm-up. These were also designed to build community within the group. Some familiar exercises translated well from in-person instruction to the online environment:

- Mirror the teacher’s body movement—stretches, breathing, creative movement.

- Partner students and have them mirror/follow each other.
- Select individual students to lead movement that everyone follows.
- Partner students and have one person “pull” or “push” the other toward or away by gesturing with hands as if pulling by a rope, and having the other person move towards or away from them (also works side to side).
- Step and echo clap patterns (students must have audio muted).
- Step and echo consonants rhythmically, then morph into vocal exploration (sirens, glissandi, etc.; again with students muted)

Other warm-ups took advantage of opportunities only available with a camera and computer screen, such as:

- Use your finger to draw in the air, tracing the edge of your image on screen, not the physical edge of the computer screen.
- Play “I Spy” with objects in the background of a student.

# Repertoire & Resources - Children and Community Youth Choirs

- Disappear and have hands appear at the bottom of the screen like puppets, and have a conversation or some interaction (creative examples could be performed for the group).

- Reach outside the screen on one edge and grab an imaginary object that is placed on another edge outside the screen (side to side, corner to corner, top and bottom, think Stephen Colbert); add sound effects.

- Experiment with moving close up and moving away from the screen, varying the speed used to approach the camera and looking for interesting effects; *super* close-ups can be particularly fun.

- Block the camera, and then hold up an everyday object right up next to it so that all that is seen is

a very close-up view of the object; other students guess what the object is (I used the bottom of a pen, which looked like an eyeball on the screen!).

- Experiment with appearing on the screen in different ways, from different angles, corners, edges; work the screen.

This last activity, in particular, can generate considerable hilarity and laughter! By having half the group watch with audio unmuted and the other half doing the movement, everyone can enjoy a hearty laugh and the joy of audience/performer interaction.

Any of these activities could be combined or expanded. Students could partner up and go to breakout rooms to work out and then “perform” their creative project.

- Create a humorous acted-out mime performance to accompany a song or tell a story.

- Expand on the puppet idea to have students create an actual story line, using the computer screen as the stage; by using a hand as a puppet, they could even “virtually” hop from screen to screen!

- Have two or more students work together passing imaginary objects from one screen to another or have them select a common object that “morphs” as it is “passed” from screen to screen; improvise dialogue to explain what is happening (think of the hanging portraits conversing in Harry Potter).

The possibilities are endless! Creative work in breakout rooms provides opportunities for students

## APPLICATIONS REQUESTED: NATIONAL YOUTH CHOIRS R&R COORDINATOR

THE NATIONAL YOUTH CHOIRS COORDINATOR OVERSEES THE REPERTOIRE & RESOURCES (R&R) AREA OF YOUTH CHOIRS, INCLUDING CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CHOIRS, MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR HIGH CHOIRS, AND HIGH SCHOOL CHOIRS. A DETAILED LIST OF RESPONSIBILITIES IS AVAILABLE AT [HTTPS://ACDA.ORG/ABOUT-US/ACDA-LEADERSHIP/](https://acda.org/about-us/acda-leadership/).

TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION, PLEASE SEND A RESUME AND SHORT STATEMENT OF INTENT (YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUTH CHOIRS R&R) TO GRETCHEN HARRISON, NATIONAL R&R CHAIR (GHARRISON.JHMS@GMAIL.COM).

THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS OCT. 1, 2020. ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS ONLY.



to get to know each other, work cooperatively, and perform for the rest of the group. Choristers love interaction with an audience! We can provide that in the Zoom context utilizing the features unique to the platform. Be sure to remind the “audience” to unmute so that their reactions can be heard by the performers!

### Body Percussion

Body percussion is a fun and creative way to incorporate rhythm, creativity, and physical interaction, and also build community. It is also a comparatively safe musical activity to do in person with a large group of students while still teaching the sense of working together as an ensemble. This can lay the groundwork for when your ensemble will be able to perform again in person.

In Choral Village, we explored the wide variety of sounds used in body percussion and ways of combining them to create interesting rhythmic patterns. A number of excellent tutorial videos are available on YouTube that vary from simple repetitive patterns to complex forms that coordinate with classical music. Pass the Sound (<http://www.passthesound.com>) has an informative collection of instructional videos for both creative movement and body percussion. Santi Serratos López is an innovative body percussionist with numerous YouTube tutorials and performances to accompany both popular and classical music.<sup>1</sup> (Check out his video of a large school group performing

to “Try” by Colbie Caillat.) Once students became familiar with the amazing range of possibilities of body percussion, they can work with partners in a Zoom breakout room to create their own body percussion patterns that can later be shared with the rest of the group.

### Sing

While singing creates challenges in Zoom due to the latency issue, it can still be satisfying to sing knowing that others are singing the same music with you. Students must be muted and the teacher is not, but everyone is able to see each other’s engagement with the song. *The Justice Choir Songbook* (<https://www.justicechoir.org>) is a free and useful source of music that is easy to sing, easy to learn, and available to all the participants. It also demonstrates how music does not have to be complex to be satisfying and meaningful to sing, and introduces the idea of using song for purposes of social justice.

### Improvise

Non-rhythmic vocal improvisation is another avenue to explore. The sustained and ringing sound of a Tibetan prayer bowl translated surprisingly well over the internet. I played a long, sustained, ringing sound while they listened with their eyes closed, and then vocally improvised over the tone. After I modeled some ideas for them, singing with the bowl and using varied sustained notes, melodies, and vowels, students tried vocal improvisation

on their own while listening to the prayer bowl through Zoom. Many students found this to be a uniquely satisfying experience due to the meditative nature of the sounds. Most had not experienced this kind of singing previously, and since they were alone in their own space and were muted, there was no fear of peer judgement.

### Guest Artists

While we did not have guest culture bearers for this virtual Choral Village, YouTube videos provided unique “guest” artists that exposed the students to new forms of musical and artistic expression. I focused on examples that were created by students of the same age and on issues that might be of importance to them or reflected their recent lived experiences. These included:

- The Detroit Youth Choir performance of the John Legend song “Glory” from the movie *Selma* with words rewritten to reflect the current situation in our country and dedicated to Representative John Lewis. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nWvOvTq94o&list=PLHGEvaVluXPAYqBWTmlPEI7zDn2\\_nvhr8&index=3&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nWvOvTq94o&list=PLHGEvaVluXPAYqBWTmlPEI7zDn2_nvhr8&index=3&t=0s)).
- Performance by Amina Iro and Hannah Halpern (from DC’s Youth Slam Poetry Team) at the 2014 Common Ground Awards with their slam poetry about stereotyping. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCUz2b0501E&list=PLHGEvaVluXPAYqBWTmlPEI7zDn2\\_nvhr8&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCUz2b0501E&list=PLHGEvaVluXPAYqBWTmlPEI7zDn2_nvhr8&index=3)).

• Video created by fourteen-year-old high school student Liv McNeil called *Numb*, expressing her experience of the last months of the school year suddenly going online due to the quarantine. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSkbd6hRkXo&list=PLHGEvaVluXPAYqBW TmlPEI7zDn2\\_nvhr8&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSkbd6hRkXo&list=PLHGEvaVluXPAYqBW TmlPEI7zDn2_nvhr8&index=4)).

These artistic expressions demonstrate the vast untapped creativity in our students, using their art to examine, distill, and convey their lived experience. I encourage you to explore some of these possibilities with your own students.

## Practical Ideas

Jamie Perez Sutta, Founder & Artistic Director of The Children's Voice ([www.thechildrensvoice.org](http://www.thechildrensvoice.org)) ran a virtual summer camp in July. She offered the following ideas for success while teaching in the virtual environment:

1) Provide a box with materials. Give the students something tangible to work with—dry-erase staff boards, markers, and some sheet music. Provide funding to help kids with some technology needs like headphones and tablets.

2) Make most activities interactive with lots of back and forth with the students.

3) In order to do #2, you have to make groups small (10 or fewer). Use breakout rooms in Zoom to create smaller groups.

4) Use lots of body movement. Start the class with stretching, breathing, and dance.

5) Build community. Spotlight individuals and give fun facts about them and let other students ask questions. Play team-building activities that get kids learning about each other. Have a spirit week with students sending in pictures and showing off their outfits daily.

6) Set expectations early on. Let parents and students know what they'll need, including a space that is quiet and where they have room to move. This isn't always possible for some of our students, but ask them to do their best.

7) We ask campers to always turn on videos, sit up (no one in beds or laying down), good lighting, use bathroom before or after session (as long as it's short enough) and chat box rules. Speaking of chat, we change the chat settings from public to host only depending on the activity. We do not allow for private messages between students since we can't monitor that.

8) Kids have been very excited about open mic. We ask students to submit pre-recorded videos through a Google form and then we have a watch party on Fridays. We allow the kids to submit any talent they wish to share. We had kids singing, playing instruments, and even showing off their karate wood-breaking skills.

9) Bring in clinicians! Mix things up and keep it fresh. This is especially important for us because our camp is four weeks.

## 10) Zoom Tips

a) Assign several people to do different tasks on Zoom or whatever platform you're using. One could be allowing students in from waiting room, spotlighting videos when different people are talking, and another setting up break-out rooms. The technology can get overwhelming.

b) Screen sharing with annotating is great! Especially when teaching theory and sight-reading. We like to do a double screen; one screen is highlighting the director, while the other is on an iPad where you can actually use an Apple pencil or something similar to write on the staff. Students can also use the annotate feature to write something on the screen for all to see. On this note, disable annotating if you do not want anyone else to type on screen.

Craig Hurley, Conductor of the Spivey Hall Young Artists offered the following suggestions from their summer camp that could easily be adapted to school and community choral settings for the regular season:

**1) Focus on relationships.** Just like you would in a face-to-face camp, include intentional relationship building into your daily

activities. We had dress-up days (i.e., red-carpet wear, crazy hat/hair day), played games (i.e., digital scavenger hunt, charades, etc.), and kept numbers manageable through a 10:1 student-teacher ratio.

**2) Recruit parents to be facilitators.** Digital camp requires parent buy-in even more than face-to-face camps. We held a parent Zoom meeting prior to camp starting to make sure parents were comfortable and aware of the technology requirements (we used Zoom, ClassDojo, and Flipgrid) and felt comfortable assisting their children. Our campers were in grades 4-7. We also provided parents with three questions to ask their campers at the end of each day. This allowed them to better understand what was happening at camp and helped engage the whole family.

**3) Have a balance of synchronous and asynchronous events.** Too much screen time is never a good thing. Provide a variety of activities. We also held individual coaching sessions in the afternoon to help students prepare for the final concert.

**4) Have a final product.** Whether it's a virtual choir, digital talent show, or online musical, having a performance goal helped focus our time together and build a sense of pride in the students. It showed the parents some of what we had worked on and provided a positive culminating event for camp.

**5) Use the technology to your advantage.** How often have you dreamed of being able to mute a student during rehearsal? It's possible in Zoom. During Zoom calls someone always acted as the "Zoom Wizard." The "Zoom Wizard" made sure student's names were labelled correctly (we discouraged last names for privacy reasons), disabled distracting chat features and ensured that everyone was where they needed to be, which freed the instructors up to focus on teaching. Passwords were a must.

Craig also offered the following things to *avoid*:

- 1) Large Zoom calls – students tend to get lost and become disengaged when they don't feel seen or heard.
- 2) Trying to recreate an in-person camp. Digital camp is a new way of doing camp. Be inspired by previous face-to-face camps, but let this new digital format inspire something new.

### **Boldly go...!**

Meaningful learning in the virtual choral rehearsal *can* happen! But rather than trying to replicate or recreate the traditional rehearsal, I encourage you to think outside the box and take advantage of the unique opportunity to reinvent your pedagogy.

- Consider what you might be able to do in a virtual world that you are not able to do in an in-person rehearsal.

- Consider how being in a room by themselves frees your singers to be unencumbered by peer pressure, and able to explore their creativity without judgement.

- Reconsider expectations and outcomes. If a pristine and polished performance is not possible due to restrictions on in-person rehearsing, in what ways might you expand your singers' musicianship and musical knowledge?

- This is a perfect time to explore improvisation and composition, two National Standards that are frequently shortchanged in the traditional choral setting.

Your singers will come through as stronger and more creative musicians in the end, which will only lead to more informed and inspired performances. Good luck! 🍀

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> While his website is unfortunately not in English, this page is a collection of the numerous instructional and performance videos he has created. <https://santiserratos.com/ca/videos/> You may need to copy and paste the titles of the videos into YouTube to locate the actual recordings.



## Call for *Choral Journal* Editorial Board Members

Over the next two years, there will be openings on the *Choral Journal* staff for Editorial Board members. Editorial Board members are responsible for reviewing article submissions while offering input and suggestions for the workings of *Choral Journal*.

### Criteria

Editorial Board members should have strong research skills and knowledge of a variety of topics related to choral conducting and pedagogy, music history and theory, vocal pedagogy, choral music education, world music, conducting performance, choral repertoire, and rehearsal techniques. A member need not have expertise in all of these topics but should have a wide range of knowledge. It is our desire that the board reflect a variety of voices, and *Choral Journal* encourages a diverse pool of applicants.

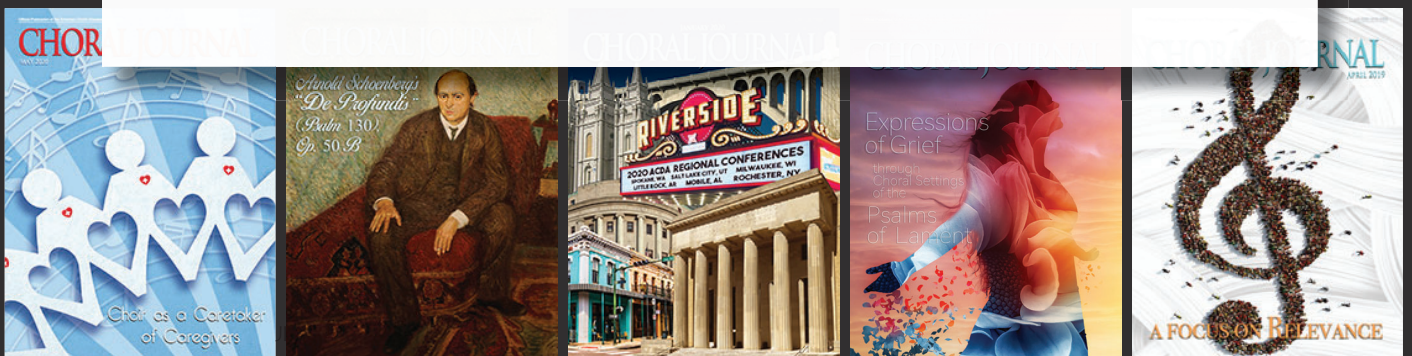
Editorial Board members will communicate directly with the *Choral Journal* editor and will meet at minimum every other year either at the ACDA National Conference or via an online meeting format.

*Choral Journal* Editorial Board members are volunteers recommended for a four-year term and may be reappointed once, for a maximum of eight years.

Board members review article submissions to assess their suitability for publication in the *Choral Journal*, and also help to determine overall policies for the Journal. Members are not responsible for line editing, rewriting, or proofing.

A letter of application, including a vision statement and resume, are due by September 15 to Amanda Bumgarner, ACDA Publications Editor, [abumgarner@acda.org](mailto:abumgarner@acda.org). There will be a review of applicants by the Publications Editor and our current editorial board.

Email [abumgarner@acda.org](mailto:abumgarner@acda.org) with questions. Applications are due September 15.



# RETIREMENT AND THE PROFESSIONAL CHORAL DIRECTOR



## Transition Journey: From Employee to Retiree

by Frank R. Lloyd

“It’s six days of Saturday and on the seventh day the big paper comes!” That was my friend’s enthusiastic description of retirement soon after he left his employer. In June 2018, I retired from Southern Methodist University (SMU). My first four months were just as he described. It was hard to remember what day of the week it was.

The major activity of the first four months was travel. My wife and I visited Kenya, Italy, New Mexico, Colorado, Northern Michigan, and East Texas, traveling with and visiting friends and family. This made the first four months seem like holidays.

After the trips finished, it was time to discover new priorities and routines. At about four months into his retirement, my friend felt the same. A physician, he became a volunteer teacher to interns and resident medical students. We feel the need to engage in things with meaning because it is hard to give up making a difference. I embarked on a quest to identify new opportunities for meaning, passion, growth, and service.

I quickly realized that the transi-

tion from employee to retiree is a *life* transition, so I set out to answer seven questions:

- 1) How can I stay professionally active?
- 2) How can I become more involved in my community?
- 3) How can I cultivate my faith and spirit?
- 4) How can I better maintain my body?
- 5) How can I continue to travel to stay in touch with widely dispersed family and friends?
- 6) How can I be a better friend to those who increasingly experience challenges of aging and transitions?
- 7) How can I develop new creative impulses in art and music and maintain my fifty-year commitment to choral singing and the joy it brings?

I sought as many friends and colleagues as I could, confident that their perspectives would yield an expanded set of new possibilities, options I would not have discovered on my own.

I spoke with many retirees. Without fail they all said the same four things:

- 1) “I should have retired sooner.”
- 2) “I have no trouble staying busy.”
- 3) “Take your time; don’t feel like you have to jump on the first things that come along; choose wisely.”
- 4) “You will miss IT support!”

The first three lessons of retirees let me know that a *life* transition takes time, patience, trial and error, and selectivity to settle on new priorities and a new routine.

To answer my questions, I had to reframe the transition. “Elderhood” better captures the life phase one enters after childhood and adulthood. The role in this life-phase is to model

# RETIREMENT AND THE CHORAL DIRECTOR

values, provide wisdom, and serve interests beyond the self. The transition to this phase is a journey, and it consists of three phases.

## Endings

The first is endings. Many people asked how I knew it was time to retire. Several indicators prompted the decision.

1) As my seventieth birthday came and went, I realized that the time available for priorities other than SMU would be increasingly limited.

2) At the same time, change was occurring at SMU that restricted prospects for future growth in my area.

3) Although I felt no pressure from the university leadership, I wanted to step down when it was my decision.

4) I felt my staff was ready to go forward effectively in my absence.

5) I found myself caring less about the business goals that had driven me and my department for nearly fifteen years.

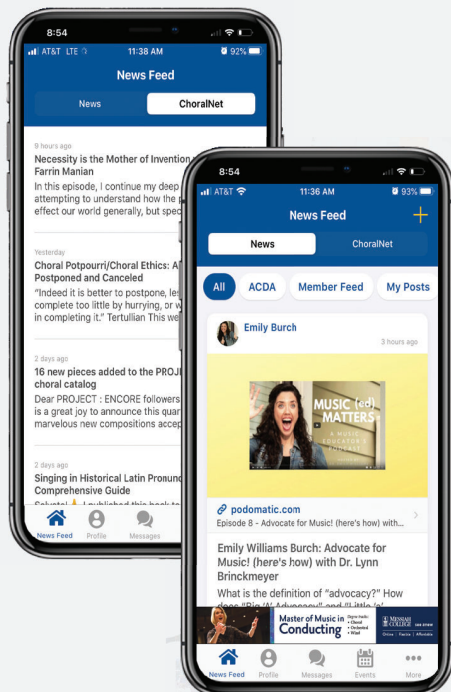
This list of indicators represents more hindsight than forethought. The simple answer to how I knew it was time to retire is, “I just knew.”

## Neutral Zone

Once you take the step you disengage from your employer and enter the second phase, a period of uncertainty—a “neutral zone.” It can be unsettling, but recognize it. Embrace it. Be patient.

I disengaged from my area at SMU. I had almost no contact with former colleagues. However, I stayed engaged with the university. My wife and I attend events without

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feeling obliged to network with people as clients, instructors, or service providers. This relationship with the school feels delightfully freer than an employment relationship.

Besides my relationship with SMU, there are three other areas in the neutral zone that I had to adapt to.

One is *time*. As an elder, I am freed from externally imposed roles and time frames, such as the university's semester and fiscal year. I can take shorter and longer views: "What will I do today?" "What might I do over the coming years?" And "What is my legacy?"

The second area of adjustment in the neutral zone is *administration*. Following retirement, I quickly discovered that the "yo-yo" principle—"you're on your own"—applies not just to tech support but to many other administrative tasks. As an employee, once a month I received a one-page document from my employer covering income, benefits, taxes, and other deductions. As a retiree, those items are disaggregated, and I am responsible for them all.

I also had to take personal responsibility for my well-being. This can be a revelation for retirees whose employers provided them with medical services. Now, in addition to a schedule of regular check-ups, I must ensure my providers accept my coverages and unravel the explanation of benefits forms that seem to come from everywhere.

Retiring employees should avoid being surprised or frustrated when time for these tasks gets in the way of more interesting and fun activ-

ities.

The third neutral zone adjustment is *spouses*. It is not just the retiree making a transition. One friend confided that she was more stressed about her husband's impending retirement than he was. People like her can take comfort that a transition can be planned, not feared. The spouse should be involved in and supportive of the plan. Another friend encouraged her spouse to find projects, passion, and purpose, and he has used these "3 P's" as touchstones to keep him busy, committed, and connected.

Such dialog should be personal, couple by couple, so it would be presumptuous of me to prescribe general guidelines. However, there is an old joke that can serve as a basic rule of thumb for retirees and spouses who must address changes in their daily routines: "for better or worse, but not for lunch!" A better

guideline might be "parallel work; parallel play" to accommodate one another's needs for space and "alone time" along with new "together time."

### Beginnings

The third phase of the journey is new beginnings. Two years following my retirement I am well along towards re-engagement.

I discovered a life review tool that helped me filter the possibilities. After sorting and discarding the books, papers, and files I brought home from my SMU office and combining them with the pre-SMU materials in my home office, the materials I kept revealed key life experiences, parts of my past, including choral singing, that led to meaning and growth, fun and passion. I started to create and update written messages about these experi-



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riences.

Here is where I now stand on my seven questions.

- 1) Professional. I now belong to the Center for Management and Executive Development's mentor alliance, where I am available to help center leaders at second- and third-tier universities build successful businesses and advance their careers.
- 2) Community. I joined the board of a Dallas nonprofit that teach-

es English to adult immigrants.

- 3) Faith and spirit. Weekly Bible classes at my church satisfy my current spiritual needs.
- 4) Body. Working with a personal trainer at the Y improved my strength and stamina.
- 5) Travel. My wife and I established a routine to visit friends and family annually while we pursue "bucket list" destinations.
- 6) Friendship. Regular lunches with friends help me connect with common needs and interests in elderhood.
- 7) Creativity. While my guitar has yet to be taken out of mothballs, I spent one afternoon with a good friend who oriented me to oil painting—color theory, composition, perspective, space, and equipment. My first attempt at a picture was discouraging. The more I mixed colors the more I got gray and brown. Then I saw an early Van Gogh that gave me hope. It depicted a gray house in a brown field! Impressionists' gestural brushstrokes suggest to me that life can be seen as a series of brushstrokes. Each act represents a "brushstroke" in a lifework. Now I am replacing the painter's brushstrokes with my writing about what the singer Sting called "the touchstones of the landscape of my life."

those touchstones. When I entered Occidental College in 1965, I took a friend's advice and joined the college and chapel choirs. I sang all four years I was there, and I sang in church choirs over the ensuing fifty years. Learning and performing choral works has allowed me to experience the emotional and physical thrills of blending into an ensemble whose output is greater than the sum of its individual parts. It has immersed me in caring communities, the world's best music, and inspiring messages. Losing myself in the ensemble connects me to something greater, which foreshadows a life to come. Now, the presence of Covid-19 along with my advancement to elderhood makes the possibility of that next life more imminent. My choral experience comforts me that losing myself in something larger is not to be feared.

This is so even though the pandemic shut down my church choir March 15. Our current choir roster contains nearly 140 names; many are in high-risk demographics. Our physical infrastructure makes social distancing, masking, and testing during rehearsals and worship services problematic. Local restrictions on gatherings do not allow more than ten people in the sanctuary to record online worship services. A small group of low-risk singers who are willing and able to form ensembles that meet local gathering guidelines lead hymn singing and provide offertory music during online worship. While the entire choir is not able to make music together, our choir community continues to support one another.

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- A weekly newsletter includes individual singer profiles as well as members' joys and concerns. The Choir Cares Committee remains active and responds to concerns.
- Regular meetings are held online to keep the entire community apprised of plans to open public worship and prospects to re-engage the entire choir.
- The staff regularly telephones members to check in with them.
- Individual members initiate messages of support.
  - Our prior accompanist offers soothing and inspirational piano music weekly on Facebook.
  - One of our Bass II's is the composer-in-residence for the Dallas Winds orchestra. He, too, is an SMU retiree. Like me, he is reviewing and updating his life work. On a regular basis he distributes excerpts from his compositions, less than ten minutes each, attached to an email that explains the music's backstory.
  - I shared an essay about my life as a choral singer—how I started, why I continue, and the joys of connection, community, and music quality I still find when I lose myself in our ensemble.<sup>1</sup> This is to remind others of all the reasons we sing and that the connections we share sustain us even though we are not singing together now.

Connection such as I gain through choral singing is critical in not experiencing retirement as a succession of Saturdays. I also cultivate and widen my network in pursuit of answers to the questions about what's important that structure my transition to elderhood. The transition is a three-phase process that supports a search for meaning, passion, growth, and service. It begins with ending. It continues in neutrality—when you explore and filter new possibilities and adapt to new time perspectives, assume new administrative responsibilities, and discover new arrangements with your spouse. It ends with new beginnings, new priorities, and new routines that shape the onward

journey. It is an engaging journey that I feel no urgency to complete. 

**Frank R. Lloyd** is the retired associate dean of Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business and a bass II in Highland Park United Methodist Church's (Dallas) Chancel Choir.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Frank Lloyd, "First a Voice, Then a Choir" ([choralnet.org/2020/07/first-a-voice-then-a-choir](http://choralnet.org/2020/07/first-a-voice-then-a-choir)) July 8, 2020.



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## A Webinar Summary: Preliminary Study Results on the Safety of Singing

by Amanda Bumgarner




In early August 2020, two webinars were released that discussed the safety of singing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The August 6 webinar featured co-chairs of a study on aerosols; Dr. James Weaver, NFHS Director of Performing Arts and Sports; and Dr. Mark Spede, CBDNA President, Director of Bands, Clemson University. View a full link to FAQs and a link to the webinar by visiting [acda.org](https://acda.org). The researchers involved in this study presented their preliminary results on August 6, with final results anticipated for late November/early December.

On August 10, 2020, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, the Barbershop Harmony Society, and the Performing Arts Medical Association presented a joint Q&A webinar. Dr. Jelena Srebric (Professor, University of Maryland) reviewed the preliminary findings for singers, Dr. Lucinda Halstead (Associate Professor, Departments of Otolaryngology, Medical University of South Carolina) reviewed mask options, and Olivia Lerwick (Soprano) described her participation in the research study.

The team analyzed the concentration of airborne COVID-19 particles in outdoor and indoor case studies while a speaker/singer was wearing a surgical mask. The outdoor case study included a person standing at the center of an open space covered by a canopy tent. The indoor case study featured a singer wearing a mask and standing at the center of a well-ventilated room, representing the average rehearsal space. The report stated, “The simulated results are compared to those of cases with person not wearing the mask, which were reported on 7/11/2020.”

The nearly two-hour webinar covered too much data to expand upon in this summary: however, you can find a link to the webinar at [acda.org](https://acda.org) or view the PowerPoint slides and FAQ links by visiting: <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/unprecedented-international-coalition-led-by-performing-arts-organizations-to-commission-covid-19-study/>.

The panel and researchers also discussed keys to reopening safe individual lessons, group singing, and performances at pre-COVID levels and considering current recommendations. The panel shared mitigation strategies including mask impact, spacing, and air flow. Preliminary study results concentrated on well-fitting mask impact on aerosol spread (best fit and poor fit), distance measuring (six feet between persons), time (indoor practice limited to thirty minutes), and risk assessment tools.

Readers are encouraged to visit <https://acda.org/resources-for-choral-professionals-during-a-pandemic/> for links to webinars, weekly membership emails, featured planning tools, professional development and learning opportunities, and ACDA's 100-page COVID-19 Response Committee Report. 

**View additional summaries in the following *Choral Journal* issues:**

### **August 2020**

- Singing: What Can We Do During a Pandemic?
- Advocacy for the Arts: Forging Our Way Forward

### **June/July 2020**

- What Do Science and Data Say about the Near-Term Future of Singing?



# PROJECT : ENCORE™ NEWS

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Excerpt from “A Pledge of Anti-Racism in Choral Practice:”

**As choral artists, we understand that critical self-reflection is a part of the artistic process; at this time, we feel called to hold up a mirror to our own practice.**

*. . . by candid awareness of the past and present.*

## **Mirror, mirror . . .**

Our contemporary mirror reveals a strong impact on the choral art of two ongoing pandemics, both with national and international implications for how we move forward. Due to evaluative diligence within the PROJECT : ENCORE organization, we are resulting in one temporary and one permanent shift in our operations:

- Response to COVID-19: temporary virtual-premiere acceptances. Given documented evidence of a programmed premiere that was replaced by a virtual performance of the composition, the virtual performance will clear the way for a P:E submission of the work. Our anticipation is that the October 15th submission deadline will complete this temporary accommodation.
- Response to racial inequality: Proactive initiatives are underway to serve BBI\* composers increasingly, by reaching out to collectives and to individual composers, to broaden awareness of the P:E opportunity for evaluation and endorsement. Additional proactivity is ongoing regarding greater diversity within the advisory leadership of P:E.

\*Black, Brown, Indigenous

“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.”

—Alfred Einstein

“Concerning that which cannot be talked about, we should not say anything.”

—Ludwig Wittgenstein

To the extent that our composers serve as conveyors of the mysterious, we all benefit from the most colorful rainbow possible of their modern-day prophecy.

**PROJECT : ENCORE™ is an online catalog of post-premiere, new choral music, reviewed and endorsed by an international panel of prominent conductors.**

## **Where are we headed with choral composition and with choral performance practice?**

We recently asked several of the noted conductors who have served throughout the majority of P:E's 11-year history as adjudicators, about what trends they may be noticing in choral composition. Here are some of their observations:

- **Writing for smaller forces:** Almost all observed that fewer large-scale works are being submitted than was the case a decade ago; specifically, scores requiring large orchestras. Several speculated that this is likely tied to increasingly tight production budgets, hence a greater difficulty finding even that first performance for music that is expensive to perform.
- **Increasing span of challenge level:** On one extreme, it was noted that more scores are coming through that could only be approached by ensembles with a professional level of singing and musicianship skill. On the other extreme, a possible increase in noticeably more accessible scores was also noted, many retaining a gratifying level of artistic interest.
- **Possible trend toward more secular texts,** with one of our reviewers noticing that some of the texts are by interesting, obscure writers of the past.

We also asked our reviewers if there are particular things that they look for in a score; and if there are characteristics that evoke their negative response.

- A score is likely to receive a “thumbs up” response from our reviewers when . . .
  - The inflections of the text are well set, and the music ‘enhances,’ or ‘illuminates’ the text (as a metaphor), rather than simply restates it.
  - The vocal writing is friendly for the voice, including tessitura awareness.
  - It has a clear sense of beginning, middle and end, causing one to want to stay with it all the way through.
- A score is likely to receive a less favorable response when . . .
  - The music seems dissociated from the intent of the text.
  - There are harmonies that sound contentious/challenging for their own sake.
  - The natural inflections and rhythms of the text are not honored.
  - There is too much repetition.
- All of our reviewers were interested in seeing greater risk-taking from composers overall!



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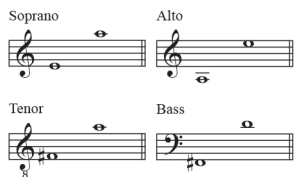


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# Choral Reviews

## *Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord*

Arranger: Undine S. Moore  
(1904-1989)  
SSAATTBB *a cappella*  
Difficulty: Moderate  
Publisher:  
Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.



Proclaimed as “Dean of Black Women Composers,” Undine Eliza Anna Smith Moore composed music in many genres showing great flexibility in many expressive styles. Her true influences were black folk music and Bach. She was the outspoken granddaughter of slaves, composer, educator, lecturer and one of the greatest influencers of the twentieth century. With exceptionally supportive parents, she began playing the piano at seven and went on to graduate cum laude in 1926 from Fisk University.

Moore commenced her teaching career in piano, organ, and music theory at Virginia State College in

1927, where she remained for over forty years as professor of music. She received a Master’s Degree in 1931 from Columbia University’s Teacher’s College. It was here that she co-founded and co-directed the university’s Black Music Center. She considered this one of the greatest accomplishments of her life.

“Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord” is in many ways a form of “theme and variation” and was released in 1952, born out of the songs she transcribed from her mother’s singing. College and community choirs have made this a favorite year after year. It was published by Warner Brothers and still remains in print.

The recording by the Fisk Jubilee Singers has a definite “Dan-ee-yul” with the most pleasing results. At barely two minutes, this short piece is confident and seems to bring the wisdom and comfort of those made wise by age. The hand of Moore herself is evident in this recording, and this spiritual takes the ear slightly into the classical idiom while maintaining the authenticity. It is deceptively difficult to perform this piece as it should be done. The notes are not enough. An understanding

of the piece and style are an absolute must, or it should not be attempted. Post notes and rhythms rehearsals, must be felt. The 1952 recording by the Jubilee Singers is warm and dignified and an outstanding demonstration of the work of Undine Moore.

A true pioneer in her field, Moore retired in 1972. Many feel that her best work came late in her life. Always unabashedly vocal about the civil rights movement, she said in an interview in 1986, “in retrospect, it seems I have often been concerned with aspiration, the emotional intensity associated with the life of black people as expressed in the various rites of the church and black life in general—the...desire for abundant, full expression as one might anticipate or expect from an oppressed people determined to survive.” She also said about her music, “the songs my mother sang while cooking dinner; the melodies my father hummed after work moved me very deeply... In making these arrangements my aim was not to make something ‘better’ than what was sung. I thought them so beautiful that I wanted to have them experienced in a variety of ways.”

# Choral Reviews

## *Ukuthula*

Arranger: André van der Merwe

Text: Traditional Zulu Prayer for Peace

SATB and SSAA *a cappella*

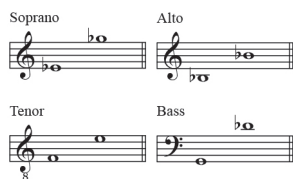
Difficulty: Easy

Publisher: earthsongs

Catalogue numbers: 10318789, 10356677

Performance Demonstration:

<https://youtu.be/UILevcJg2bs>



Emotional, powerful, poignant... André van der Merwe has preserved for choirs around the world a traditional Zulu prayer for peace, “Ukuthula” (pronounced as oo-goo-too-lah). Himself from Cape Town, South Africa, André is a conductor and composer who is in demand around the world. He conducts several choirs but most notably the South African Youth Choir with

singers auditioned and selected from across the country with the diverse demographics that are true of South Africa, reflecting unity.

Ken Wakia is the founding director of Nairobi Chamber Chorus and has become a tremendous ambassador for music in Kenya. He studied music at Kenyatta University and attended the University of Miami in Florida as a Fulbright scholar. Ken’s influence and infectious authentic spirit has been felt around the world. “Ukuthula” represents what Ken considers our “mission” as makers of music. Here is why you will hear this sung in every concert that he conducts, in his words:

Kenya has gone through several challenging moments “but still we rise” in wonderful unity of purpose. The world goes through many turbulent times “but still it rises” with untold optimism for a better tomorrow. One of the last African countries to gain independence was South Africa, where Nelson Mandela could have given up, but hope kept him going with the hope that one morning he will rise to see a free

nation.

In all these circumstances, music plays an important part in our psyche that makes it possible for us to find solutions for the difficult moments in our lives. I always remember the morning of August 7, 1998, as I was attending the World Youth Choir in Taiwan when my American roommate said, “Do you know what has just happened in Kenya?” He went on to tell me how the American Embassy in Kenya had been bombed and many people had died. I always think of the many political unrests in Kenya and the many people who have lost their lives as a result. I think of the many people around the world who have never known peace in their lives.

I first heard the song “Ukuthula” in 2008 performed by the University of Johannesburg Choir. I knew I had found THE SONG for a mission. I went back home and immediately taught it to my then three-year-old choir that had singers from different tribes, who just a few months earlier would not speak to each other just due to political differences. The impact of the song was immediate and profound. From that time, I programmed this song at every single concert and plan to do so still.

The song, “Ukuthula” is in isiZulu, one of the official languages of South Africa, and it means peace! I never found a song so simple, yet it had the ingredients to solve very complex issues. Even though the text is largely Christian, loosely translated as “Peace in this world of sin the blood of Jesus brings,” I have met people with extremely varying spiritual beliefs being moved by the pow-

An advertisement for Formal Fashions. On the left, a group of six models (three men and three women) are standing in formal attire. The men are wearing suits and bowties, and the women are wearing black dresses. On the right, there is text: "FORMAL FASHIONS" with a "1978" logo, "VOTED #1 BY TEACHERS", "41 years of affordable quality and amazing service" in a script font, and "formalfashionsinc.com 1.800.528.7909".



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er of this song.

I have resolved to use the power of this song to reach as many as would live to hear that the world needs peace and it needs it now. That music, and choral music for that matter, is one of the best agents and is an incredibly strong catalyst for peace because every singer in the choir needs the other. I believe that an amazing community is usually built within the three or so minutes that singers stand together on stage to sing a song because they all realize how much they need each other to get to that final note at the end. Even with the current pandemic, we still see singers calling each other, choirs finding solutions to sing together even virtually. Choral music has once again proved itself as a most powerful tool to unify the world. And I would say, "Amen."

### *Your Hand in Mine*

Music: Connor Koppin (b. 1991)

Text: Brian Newhouse

SSAATTBB *Chorus unaccompanied*

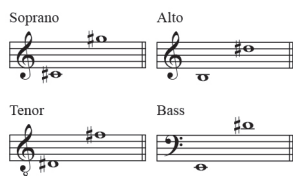
Difficulty: Moderate

Galaxy Music Corporation, Inc.

Catalogue Number: 11164366

Performance Demonstration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WNhVFbYrxw&t=252s>



The words of Connor Koppin, "I believe that there is wisdom in old

things." *Your Hand in Mine* is the seventh movement of a concert-length work for choir, string quartet, percussion and piano titled, *I Call Your Name*, meditations on *The Seven Last Words of Christ*...something old made new. Fascinating, exquisite, and somehow familiar, Connor has imagined and crafted a sacred subject in a secular fashion.

Connor Koppin is a third-year doctoral student in choral conducting at Michigan State. The Des Moines, IA, native is the recipient of multiple awards and has also composed for instrumental ensembles as well as film scores, but choral music

is his first love. His earliest musical experiences were related to "garage bands and punk music" and (thankfully) a mother that saw the value in piano lessons. He grew at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa under the conducting of Lee Nelson, and it was about this time he began to experiment with his own composing, greatly influenced by composers like Morton Lauridsen.

Connor says, "I really liked the idea of religion representing a moment in time, like a piece of art. Texts and liturgy have a sense of artistry to them that we so often neglect due to familiarity. In looking

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# Choral Reviews

at old texts associated with worship, I stumbled upon a text from The Seven Last Words From the Cross, *In Manus Tuas*. This translates “Into your hands” continuing with *spiritum meum*, “I commend my spirit.”

Brian Newhouse is a familiar name and renowned voice of Minnesota Classical Public Radio. He is a poet, writer, and friend of Connor. This project is a collaboration of these artists, with Brian writing about the end of life and Connor weaving the two together as a macaronic piece that was commissioned by The Shrine of The Ages Choir of Northern Arizona University and Dr. Edith Copley. Speaking about Brian Newhouse, Connor states, “He wrote about the end of life, what we

need in those tender moments, and the simple presence of loved ones. The text that sticks in my mind is, ‘place your hand in mine, here is mine in yours.’ Such a small gesture meaning so much. The touch of human hand is the centerpiece of life’s big moments, birth, death, love, etc.”

Written in the key of F<sup>#</sup> for unaccompanied SSAATTBB, *Your Hand in Mine* is gloriously lush with just enough dissonance. Beautifully wed to the text, the music is not too difficult for an excellent high school choir. It begins with a simple theme that is developed and appears again at the end. Rhythmic intricacies, varied tempi, and creatively staggered entrances keep the piece from stalling at any point. The tes-

situra is reasonable even in climactic moments. Every voice part will feel equally valued.

Not so secular that it is unworthy in worship or so sacred that it has difficulty finding its place in the secular concert, *Your Hand in Mine* is a brilliant and beautiful work. Linger over the text. Find comfort in the elegant harmonies.

You will find information on *I Call Your Name* at <http://www.connorjkoppin.com/i-call-your-name>

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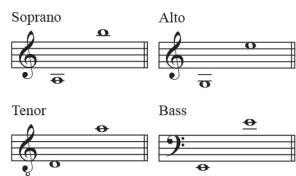
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## Angel Band

Composer/Arrangers: Tim Sharp and Timothy Michael Powell  
SATB choir, soprano solo and chamber orchestra  
Gentry Publications  
JG0741  
Difficulty: Moderate  
Catalogue numbers:  
Choral Book 11201241 and  
Orchestration 11201242



*Angel Band* is as visually intoxicating as it is nourishment for the soul. In addition to the string quartet, which is the foundation for the chamber orchestration, add into the brew, hammered dulcimer, accordion, Celtic harp, bodhran, guitar, flute, mandolin, and many other percussive “toys.” Embed the players into the choir and make them singers as well, and there is magic. Particularly relevant in 2020, every instrument (except for the flute) is non-aerosol producing. Christmas can be a reality for choirs this year in a way that blends the new with standard favorites in a gloriously fresh sound. While there are bluegrass elements, they are woven together with more classical and folk sounds, making *Angel Band* a pleasure for every palate.

*Processional: Shepherds Evening Prayer*  
(*Phos Hilaron*)

Unhurried and plaintive, the opening is *a cappella* and familiar to

many, eliciting strong emotion in those that know it. In the first person, the singer utters a deeply moving and poignant prayer calling the angels to take me to “my eternal home.” The *Phos Hilaron*—“Now as we come to the setting of the sun...” frames the Evensong outline of the work.

### I. *’Twas In the Moon of Wintertime*

Lilting and calling all to dance, the tune HURON CAROL by Jean de Brebeuf (PD, ca. 1642) is used in a hypnotic combination of Renaissance and Appalachia. *’Twas in the Moon of Wintertime* recognizes North American original nations in the lyrics... “That mighty Gitchi Manitou (Great Spirit) sent angel bands instead.” It pulls us between Bethlehem and an Appalachian lodge with mentions of “birds, hunters, lodge, bark, rabbit skin, beaver pelt, and forest.” Infectious instrumental interludes cryptically weave in other seasonal favorites, passing the melody from treble to bass and then back again. This is a tune that lingers.

### II. *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

In stark contrast to the previous movement, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* is silk. The tune is LAND OF REST from the shape-note Sacred Harp Hymnal (1844) and it begins hymn-like. (One of several shape-note tunes in this work.) The excitement grows through modulations and fresh melodies but it never loses the flowing beauty. The angels sing “Gloria!” their song to a weary world. The message is needed now as it was then of peace and goodwill.

### III. *Whilst Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night*

One of the outstanding characteristics of Angel Band is diversity, diversity of sounds and styles. Every movement references angels yet is in contrast to the last. *Whilst Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night* is true to the awe, mystery, and fear of the shepherds in the story according to Luke’s gospel as they saw the angel band sing “*Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*” Imagine the drone of the hurdy-gurdy with a tenor recitative declaring the story of the shepherds. Based on a Swedish folk melody (PD: DE TVÅ KONUNGABARNEN), “droned pitches, bagpipe sounds, hammered two-note musical phrases, and modal character of this tune evoke the image of shepherds and this mysterious encounter.” True in almost every movement, it flows and builds into a splendid climax. This movement requires an outstanding soprano soloist.

### IV. *My Soul Does Magnify the Lord* (*Magnificat*)

“Mary, the mother of Jesus, has her own hymn of praise which has anchored the Christian liturgy of prayer for centuries.” But, not like this! Perhaps the most original *Magnificat* ever written. It is crowd pleasing, foot stomping purely joyful bluegrass. Directly quoting from Luke 1: 46-55, *My soul magnifies the Lord* or the *Magnificat* is the prelude to the lullaby to come. Written in the Appalachian vernacular, words like “shoo” and “tend” season the text. This “call and response” will be the reprise when one is requested.

# Choral Reviews

## *V. Slumber My Darling*

*Slumber My Darling* is the only piece that is available as a “pull out” from this work. (Hal Leonard 00322981) It is also the only piece that is not particularly scriptural but works very well in this setting. There are many renditions of this Stephen Collins Foster lullaby on the internet, but none as choral and freeing as this. Foster was a contemporary of Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) and Sharp/Powell pay homage to him with a melodic quote from “Brahms Lullaby” (Wiegenlied, 1869) at the end of the piece with one of the most recognized motives

in the world. Angels appear again in the words “Pray that the angels will shield thee from harm.”

## *VI. Hail to the Lord's Anointed*

The guitar digs in from the onset and never lets go. Listen for the guitar riff from *Man of Constant Sorrows* (O, Brother Where Art Thou?) The most thrilling of *Angel Band*, *Hail to the Lord's Anointed* is another shape-note hymn tune called MORNING TRUMPET, which announces “the reign of David's greater Son” and his ministry which includes ruling in equity. A syncopated angel choir singing a “Glory, Glory” ostinato

OVER the melody enthusiastically driving the song.

The instrumentation is urgent and compelling and the audience will not breathe throughout the entire movement.

## *VII. The Night That Love Was Born*

A new poem by Stephen Bock *The Night That Love was Born* is wed with one of the most recognized and beloved tunes in much of the world. *Londonderry Air* is most often heard as “Oh Danny Boy.” From the program notes... “This Irish ballad brings the story into full awareness of the power of the angel's song inviting everyone



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to 'fall on your knees and worship Him the newborn King,' singing their song *Gloria in excelsis*." Unison into a lush and thick texture in a ballad that will touch the audience in a palpable way. What happens when a familiar story and beloved tune fuse in a new way? Simply stunning.

### VIII. *Angels We Have Heard on High*

The cascading melodic sequence of this carol is probably the best known melisma in the world, and to the singers' delight it is experienced by all parts. The tune GLORIA is likely the best-known carol as well. It IS the angels' song. With occasional hints of other classic works (hint: Handel and Vivaldi), this French inspired arrangement is exhilarating through the use of syncopation, counterpoint and a descant that will forever change the way you remember this carol.

### *Recessional: Shepherd's Dismissal* (*Nunc dimittis*)

"Now Master we depart in peace according to your Word." The story of the angels is complete and the opening tune is reprised. *Nunc Dimittis*—the song of Simeon who would not depart this life until he had seen the promised Messiah. It is sung *a cappella* as the choir recesses, fading away leaving the audience as well as the singers prepared for the season and feeling as though they had witnessed something significant.

The availability of a piano reduction provides the opportunity for performance without the orchestration. Also available with *Angel Band* is an order of service from *The Book*

*of Common Prayer*. This diverse setting of the story of the angels is effective as a concert but may easily be used in a liturgical setting or an Evensong Service, complete with Phos Hilaron, *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. There are additional resources including a professional recording

available through the composer/arrangers and AngelBandChristmas.com. Your performers will be grateful for this immensely satisfying musical experience.

Sandra Chandler  
Douglasville, GA



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