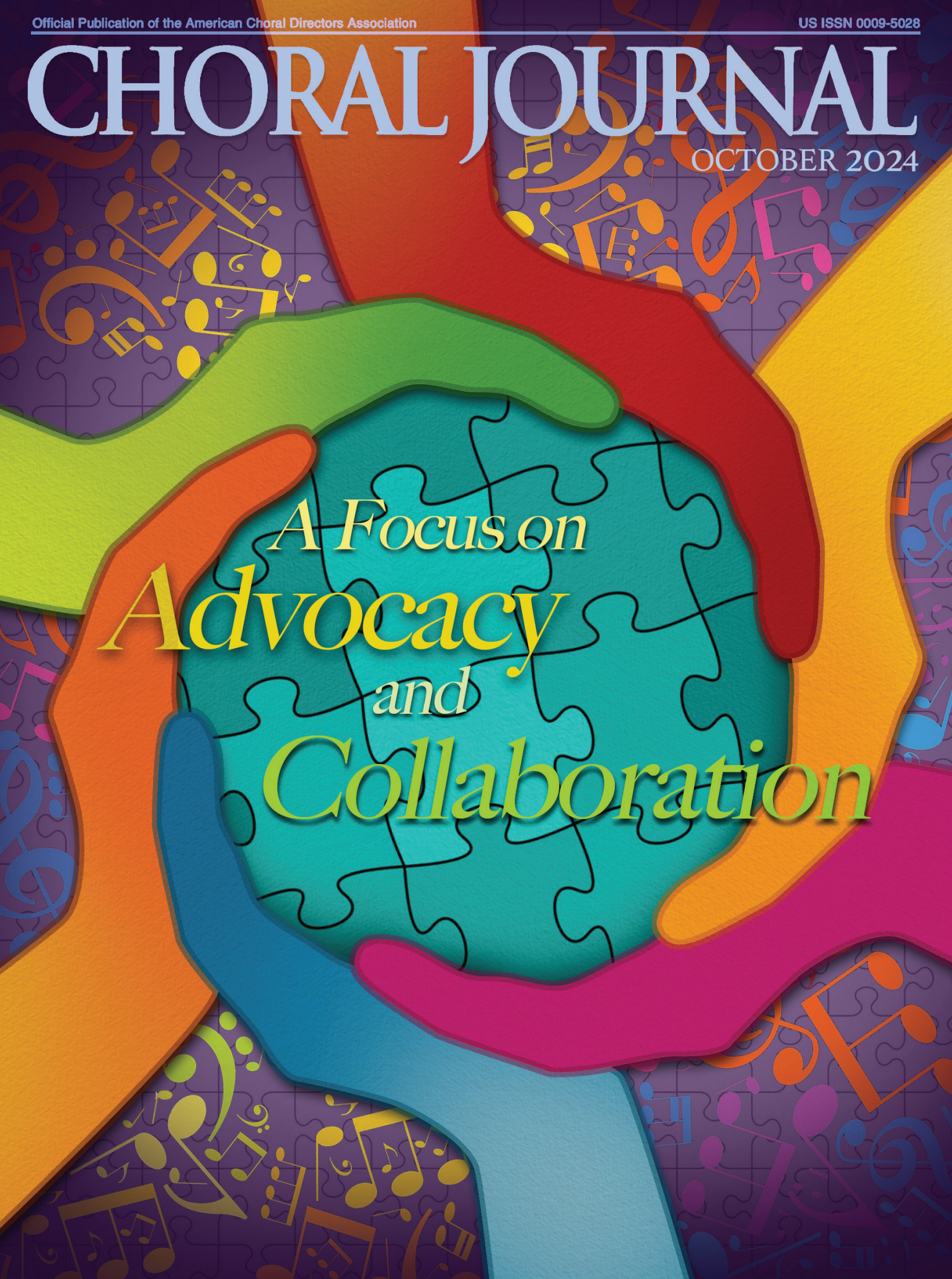


CHORAL JOURNAL

OCTOBER 2024

The cover features a central graphic of a hand holding a globe. The hand is composed of several interlocking puzzle pieces in various colors: green, orange, red, yellow, blue, and pink. The globe is a teal color with black grid lines. The background is a dark purple with scattered musical notes and symbols in various colors. The text is centered over the globe.

*A Focus on
Advocacy
and
Collaboration*



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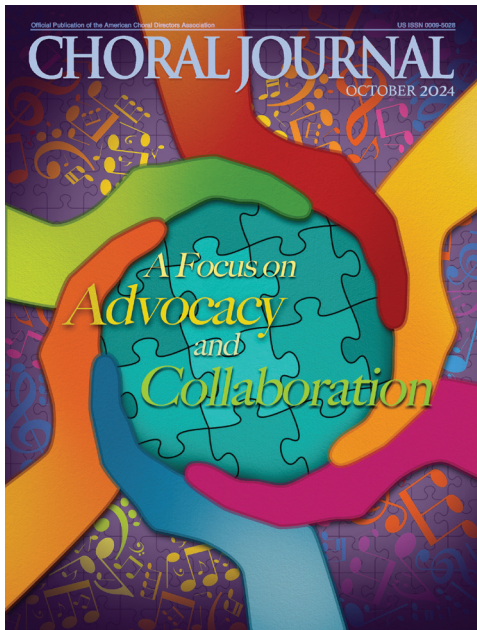
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Burnout

8 Tenacious Teachers:

A Methodical Approach to Burnout Management

by Peter Steenblik

16 A State of Stress:

Self-Care Strategies for Combating the Effects of Burnout

by Christina Vehar and Sierra Manson Randall

Advocacy

22 Advocacy for the Choral Art: Empowering Our Communities

by Lynn Brinckmeyer

28 Everyday Advocacy for Your Choral Program

by Karen L. Bruno

Collaboration

38 The Keys to Collaboration: Unlocking the Power of Partnership for Choral Organizations

by Alex Gartner

45 Choral Conversations

A Conversation on Collaboration with Judy Bowers

by Jeffrey Benson

56 Creating an Adaptive Choir: A Journey of Inclusivity

by Brandi Dignum

64 Collaboration Spotlights

Compiled by the Members of the Advocacy & Collaboration Committee

News

5 Call for Members for the Advocacy & Collaboration Committee

62 Call for Research Poster Sessions for 2025 National Conference

Editorial

2 From the Executive Director

3 From the President

4 From the Guest Editor

6 About the Advocacy & Collaboration Committee

83 Advocacy in Action: Get to Know the National ACDA Standing Committees

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ADVOCACY STATEMENT

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

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

From the Executive Director



Robyn Hilger

Empowering Teacher Advocacy

Advocacy might sound like a daunting task, but here's the thing: you're already doing it, and you might not even realize it. Whether you're speaking up in a staff meeting about an important concern at school or carefully nudging a student to do what you need them to do, you're advocating. You already convince people to do things they never thought possible to make beautiful music every day. And guess what? You're great at it.

You know your choir better than anyone else. You know their strengths, their struggles, and their potential. When you see something that isn't working—whether it's a policy, a curriculum gap, or even a classroom environment that isn't conducive to learning—who better to speak up than you? Your voice is experienced and carries weight.

Advocacy doesn't have to be grandiose or confrontational. It can be as simple as sharing your observations in a meeting or writing a note to your administrator, school board member, or city arts council. Start small. Maybe it's advocating for a student who needs a bit more support, or for a new resource that could benefit your entire ensemble. You don't have to take on the world all at once—just focus on what you see right in front of you.

Remember, too, that advocacy isn't a solo endeavor. Lean on your colleagues. Chances are, they've noticed the same issues you have. Sometimes it's as easy as saying, "Hey, I've noticed this too—what do you think we could do about it?" Suddenly, you're not just a lone voice; you're part of a chorus of voices.

Finally, in the middle of advocating for everyone else, don't forget to advocate for yourself. This looks like protecting your time and peace of mind. Just like the airlines tell us, "Put your own mask on first before helping others." People will take everything that you are willing to give. It's okay to say "no" or "not right now," and that is important advocacy for yourself.

It's worth repeating that advocacy is a skill you already possess. The same skills—communication, empathy, persistence—are all you need to advocate on a larger scale. So, don't be afraid to speak up. You're not just "the choir director"; you're a LEADER, a voice for your program, and a force for positive change. You have everything you need to advocate for what's right, and the more you do it, the easier it becomes. Trust yourself. You've got this.

Robyn Hilger

From the President



David Fryling

This issue of the *Choral Journal* represents a year of tireless work by ACDA's Advocacy & Collaboration Standing Committee. I want to thank the committee and its chair, Emily Williams Burch, for thoughtfully curating these articles to resonate with all educators, advocates, and collaborators in the choral community—in other words, each and every one of you!

I encourage you to read the guest editor column. It will orient you to the mission of A&C Committee and will help contextualize their important work. I also hope you'll head over to the committee's biography page and read each member's affirmation on why they love this work and why it's so very important.

You will notice that the articles are organized into three sections:

- First and foremost, a topic that is becoming increasingly critical in today's educational landscape: **Teacher burnout in the choral classroom**. The articles in this area delve into the various factors contributing to burnout among choral educators and offer practical strategies and resources to help educators manage stress. This section is not just a reflection of the difficulties faced; it is a beacon of hope that provides tools to reignite your joy of teaching.
- Next are **advocacy strategies for everyone**. This section aims to empower you with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for the arts, with actionable advice on how to make your voice heard. As Emmy says, "We often say advocacy is a scary word to many folks, but really it's just as easy as sharing your story—and every one of us has an incredible story to share!"
- Finally, we end with **stories of collaboration**. We all know that the choral community is the power of our voices coming together, both literally and metaphorically, and this section celebrates the spirit of that partnership. You'll read about uplifting stories of innovative collaborations that have pushed the boundaries of choral music happening across the country. From crosscultural exchanges to interdisciplinary projects, these stories exemplify the transformative power of people coming together.

The Advocacy & Collaboration Standing Committee members strongly believe that this issue will be a valuable resource and idea generator for all our members at any stage of their career. Each article is designed to provide practical insights, fresh perspectives, and the motivation to continue making beautiful music.

I trust that these articles will inspire you to tell your stories and push us all to explore creative avenues of future collaboration. Thank you to the Advocacy & Collaboration Committee for providing such a valuable resource.

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From the Guest Editor



Emily Williams Burch

Hello, choral colleagues! We are thrilled to present this Advocacy and Collaboration focus issue to you. It's something we've worked on for over a year with YOU in mind. What is the purpose of the Advocacy and Collaboration Committee? We help connect, communicate, and create opportunities for our community to continue impacting our world with the power of choral music. How? So glad you asked! Check out our mission statement:

ACDA Advocacy Statement

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

The American Choral Directors Association, and its membership, resolve to ensure the survival of choral programs for this and future generations by: 1) actively voicing support for funding at local, state, and national levels of education and government; 2) collaborating with local and national organizations to ensure the distribution of arts funding data and arts-related activism opportunities; 3) advocating for full access to choral singing and inclusion of all singers in a choral program; and 4) ensuring the distribution of advocacy statements and data regarding choral programs.

To access the content we've curated or reach out to us for help with your advocacy and collaboration needs, check out acda.org/advocacy or turn to page 7 for a quick overview and QR codes to the resources.

Speaking of resources, what lies ahead for you in this October issue of the *Choral Journal*? We start by addressing the first concern: burnout. You can't advocate or collaborate if you're in burnout mode. The articles in the burnout section offer tips, tools, and techniques to overcome and ultimately avoid the dreaded burnout phase.

Next, we define advocacy and explore a variety of tools just for you. We should all be practicing "little a" advocating (like sharing stories, sending pictures, or the likes), but we can also find ourselves needing the power of "big A" advocacy (these are the big state and national platforms). We are here to help you get started or take your advocacy or collaborative ideas to the next level.

Finally, we wrap up with all things collaboration. Good collaborations are like the best dinner party you've ever attended; instead of being told what to bring, you chat beforehand on what would best support all persons, and

you end up with the most epic, and mutually beneficial, spread ever! Not sure what I'm talking about? That's okay. We have a catalog of ideas and resources from folks doing great things all over the country.

Curating this issue has been an absolute dream, and it is an honor to share this with you. If you're tired, if you're running low on time, if you're feeling low on energy, we hope this issue sparks you. If you're inspired,

excited, and ready, we hope this issue empowers you. And if you're somewhere in the middle, we hope this issue offers you a resource for any and all future endeavors. We can't wait to see what you do! We are here cheering you on!



Leadership Opportunity

Advocacy & Collaboration National Standing Committee

The ACDA Standing Committee for Advocacy and Collaboration seeks applications for three committee openings. In addition to being committed to the choral arts, successful applicants will be service minded, have successful experience with advocating and/or collaborating, willing to attend conferences and meetings, prepared to assist in creating resources and programming, and interest in learning about or engaging with legislation, expanding their network, and collaborating both within and without the greater ACDA landscape.

The role of the ACDA Advocacy and Collaboration Committee includes:

1. Opportunities to internally and externally promote the choral art.
2. Situations to develop collaborations with other arts organizations as beneficial to the association, its goals, and the choral art nationally.

The goals for the A & C Committee are:

1. Advocate for the choral art
 - a. Through partnerships with Chorus America, Opera America, NAFME, Americans for the Arts, and other arts organizations, identify and disseminate opportunities to assist with local, state and national advocacy
2. Advocate for youth and individual singers
 - a. Support the work of partner committees within ACDA in areas that serve to advocate for singers and choral professionals
 - b. Disseminate ACDA information and projects to ACDA membership
 - c. Create action items that can be shared with the national choral community
3. Support and identify efforts to collaborate with arts organizations and ACDA members
 - a. Collaborations may include advocacy work, artistic collaborations, and collaboration across the choral community

For the application, have the following information prepared:

1. Name, ACDA membership number, Job/Title, a narrative description of your involvement with ACDA
2. Why do you want to serve on this committee?
3. How would someone in your choir describe you?
4. Tell us about one successful advocacy or collaboration experience.



Scan for application

About the --- Advocacy & Collaboration Committee

Jeffrey Benson is director of choral activities and professor of music at San José State University. He is also the conductor of Peninsula Cantare, a community choir in Palo Alto. “I am thrilled to serve on the Advocacy & Collaboration Committee with such an incredible team of collaborative conductors. I am always open to new and creative ways for us to collaborate as artist-teachers, and I love to dream about ways we can impact our audiences and inspire musicians across all cultures.”

Emily Williams Burch is a professor of music at the Savannah College of Art and Design and the host of the “Music (ed) Matters” podcast. She is the founder and former artistic director of the RISE Chorales & RISE Outreach. “Connecting people is one of my favorite things to do! I thoroughly enjoy listening to folks ideate, problem solve, or dream and then figuring out who needs to be connected to make those things happen. I love high-energy brainstorm sessions and getting creative with a solution for how to make something happen.”

Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey is a Finnish American teaching artist, conductor, and singer. She is an associate professor of the practice and director of choral and vocal performance at Boston College. Her compositions are published by Alliance Music Publications and Kandinsky Music. “I love meeting new artistic collaborators, coming up with wild ideas, and making them happen. I am passionate about bringing narratives to the forefront that are often hidden and highlighting the voices and dreams of our singers. I curate programs that bridge different art forms, styles, and cultural connections.”

Alex Gartner serves as the artistic and executive director of the Pensacola Children’s Chorus, a community-based youth choir comprising 300 singers. He is also a collaborative pianist, composer, author, and clinician. “I believe choral music is the ultimate example of how



L-R: Alex Gartner, Tim Westerhaus, Emily Williams Burch, Jeffrey Benson, Tom Merrill (ACDA National Treasurer, Executive Committee Liaison to the A&C Committee), and Riikka Pietiläinen Caffrey.

working together can make a noticeable difference in our lives. Choral singing is not only beautiful; it promotes teamwork, demands accountability, and helps us discover more about the world and about each other. That’s a message I seek to amplify on every stage.”

Tim Westerhaus is the director of choral studies and associate professor at Northern Arizona University. He is also director of Choral Arts Northwest in Seattle. “It’s those ‘light-bulb’ moments of transformation that inspire me when we sing together. I’m passionate about programming and collaborating in ways that bring about that transformation, leading us to a greater understanding and appreciation of our human family. I’m eager to support anyone who wants to intentionally broaden their programming and to create collaborative projects.”

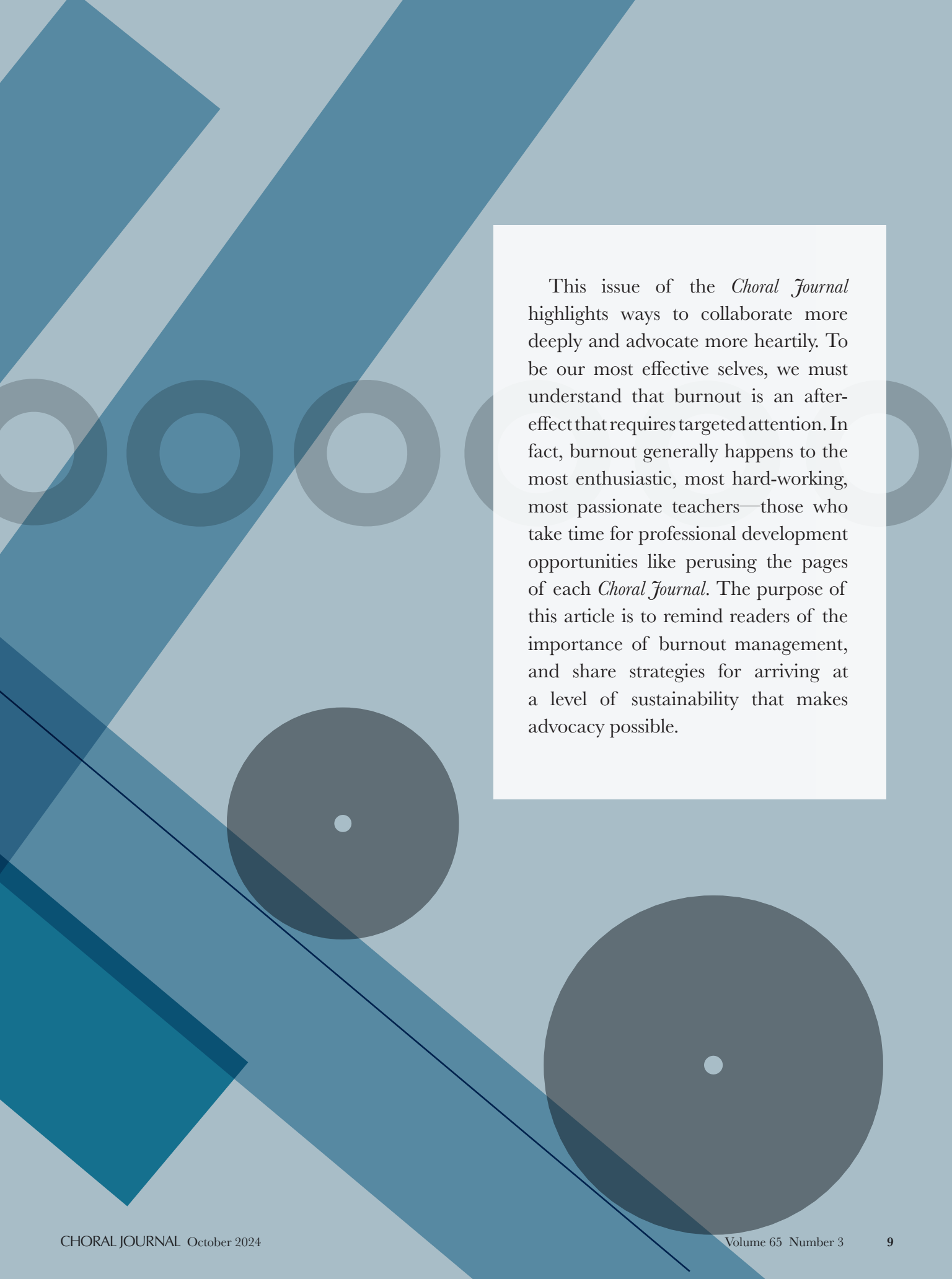
Advocacy & Collaboration Standing Committee Resources

 <p>SCAN ME</p>	<h2>ACDA Advocacy Homepage</h2> <p>https://acda.org/advocacy Your launchpad to learn & take action</p>
 <p>SCAN ME</p>	<h2>ChoralNet Monthly A&C Blog</h2> <p>From “Everyday Advocacy” to “Collaborating with Culture Bearers”</p>
 <p>SCAN ME</p>	<h2>ACDA Facebook Group</h2> <p>Your live community forum for support, brainstorming, timely resources, and events</p>
 <p>SCAN ME</p>	<h2>Music(ed) Matters Podcast</h2> <p>With A&C Chair Dr. Emily Williams Burch Topics to support and inspire you, from “Burnout” to “Choir Camp”</p>
 <p>SCAN ME</p>	<h2>A&C and ACDA's Leadership</h2> <p>A&C's roles and goals as part of our broader ACDA community</p>

Tenacious Teachers: A Methodical Approach to Burnout Management

PETER STEENBLIK

Peter Steenblik
Director of Choral Activities
University of West Florida
Artistic Director, The Choral Society of Pensacola



This issue of the *Choral Journal* highlights ways to collaborate more deeply and advocate more heartily. To be our most effective selves, we must understand that burnout is an after-effect that requires targeted attention. In fact, burnout generally happens to the most enthusiastic, most hard-working, most passionate teachers—those who take time for professional development opportunities like perusing the pages of each *Choral Journal*. The purpose of this article is to remind readers of the importance of burnout management, and share strategies for arriving at a level of sustainability that makes advocacy possible.

Recognizing the Source of Burnout

“Burnout is not an event, but rather a process... [and] should not be confused with occasional feelings of discouragement and unhappiness.”¹

Where do you find yourself on a sliding scale between inspired and fatigued? With constant monitoring, we maintain an environment that is tenable and enjoyable. Regularly take time to self-diagnose and eliminate perceived feelings of shame or guilt. If you find yourself questioning your status at this moment, recognize the fluid nature of our emotional health. All is not lost.

According to Barbara Brock and Marilyn Grady’s book, *Rekindling the Flame*, symptoms of burnout can be found in five common areas: 1) Physical: weight gain, migraines, tense muscles, back pain; 2) Intellectual: decisions become difficult, often overwhelmed; 3) Social: withdrawn, hobbies become nonexistent, hermetic at work; 4) Emotional: anxiety issues, hermetic at home; 5) Spiritual: personal values become affected.²

After identifying symptoms of burnout, identify the probable source(s) of aggravation, which, for music teachers, often fall into four categories:

1. Administration-related: perceived lack of support, poor salary, unreasonable expectations, insufficient preparation time, ongoing need for choral advocacy
2. Student-related: discipline problems within the broader school culture, lack of student engagement, poor public perception of teachers
3. Music-related: unreasonable performance expectations, lack of interest in musical study or discovery, attrition of musical skills
4. Personal circumstance: shifting life goals or family dynamics, relocation, personal or family illness; and one that affected us all in a global way: the Covid-19 pandemic

After ten years of public-school teaching—once I was able to realize that my sources of burnout were

administration- and student-related, rather than music-related—I chose to leave the classroom but remain active and happy within the profession. I was fortunate that my personal circumstances allowed for this change. While my feelings of burnout were valid, I discovered that I had further musical discoveries to pursue, and a shift of environment would make this possible.

Individual situations vary, but recognizing the source is an important first step and can enable a strategic plan to address specific aggravations. Depending on the situation, finding resolve is not typically immediate. Not all personal circumstances allow for more drastic changes such as moving or changing jobs. Everyone can and should, however, turn weekly attention to additional management strategies. Strive to manage burnout in three regular areas of focus, as seen in Table 1, below.

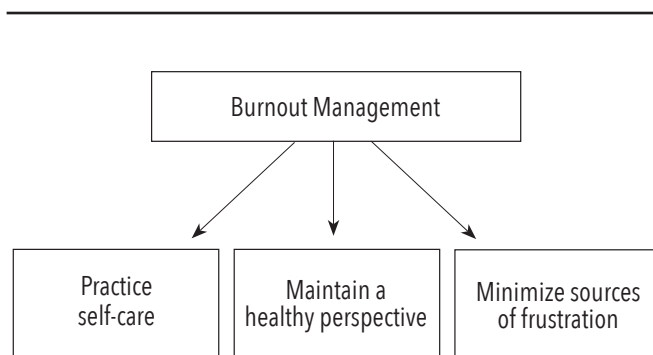
When we recognize that we are inching toward burnout, we can set a goal to implement one change in each of these three areas. Creating a tactical plan to address targeted areas on a weekly basis makes progress more manageable.

Three Burnout Management Strategies

One. Practicing Self-Care

One tried-and-true area of burnout management is regularly practicing self-care. This includes setting boundaries and establishing practices that increase one’s quality of life. Here are a few ideas to add to your personal plan.

Table 1. Burnout Management: Three Areas of Focus



Non-negotiables include adequate sleep and meals. I used to list these items as self-care numbers one and two, but sleep and meals are, in fact, basic human needs and could be held in the same category as going to the bathroom or breathing. (See the following article in this issue from Christina Vehar and Sierra Manson Randall for more.) Eat when it is time to eat. Breathe when it is time to breathe. Do not confuse elements of human survival with those of self-care.

Exercise is crucial and can take on various forms. It is wonderful to be in the regular habit of distance running or going to the gym. But even at our busiest times we can afford a ten-minute walk around the building. I am privileged to teach on a campus surrounded by woods and find myself refreshed if I walk the exterior perimeter of the building during the day.

Vocal health must be at the forefront of our practices. As choral musicians, ensure you are taking steps to maintain vocal health, including regular hydration, using a microphone, and monitoring your coordinated onset while singing and speaking. Take time once a year to visit a laryngologist and address any internal medical needs. Consider working with a voice coach during the summer.

Be a participant in the choral art. Too often, we are the ones doing the cooking but are unable to sit and enjoy a meal. Join a community choir, opera chorus, or sing in a church choir. If your schedule is restrictive, ask a student to conduct while you take a seat in the choir for a few minutes each day.

Designate spaces that are free of choral music. I have chosen to confine the listening of choral music to my offices at home and work. Recordings of choral music are not allowed while driving in my car or cooking in the kitchen. I enjoy cultivating playlists far from choral pedagogy.

Going home for dinner is a healthy way to escape. As previously mentioned, eating is not an appropriate use of the term self-care. Beyond that, however, try wearing jeans on a concert day. This practice creates an opportunity to eat at home before returning for the evening event. If you

do not have the luxury of living within a reasonable distance, the same principle can be applied by going out to a nearby restaurant and finding a moment to decompress.

Programming choices affect our daily mood. Avoid selecting music you don't like. The piece you like the least is generally avoided and risks being underbaked by the time of performance.

Consider adjusting the course load. This doesn't necessarily mean lighten. A respected teacher experiencing fatigue recently added a special-needs choir class to her schedule, which became an exciting change in an otherwise mundane routine and is now the class she looks forward to the most.

Two. Maintain a Healthy Perspective

The second area of management involves simply reframing or adjusting one's perspective. This requires very little action but can yield immediate results. Here are a few examples of mental changes that are easily implemented.

Bad day barometer. Let us stop and recognize for a moment the joyous nature of our choral profession. A bad day, for us, might be when a particular student breathes in the wrong moment of a phrase. Is this a true emergency? No. And aren't we lucky to be involved in a communal art form? When we feel our day is ruined due to a musical situation, take note of the bad day barometer.

Drawer of joy. When sitting at your desk, identify the drawer that is closest to you. This is where all the thank you notes, student success announcements, graduations, weddings, promotions, uplifting emails, and other items that make you smile can be stored. Open this drawer often.

Observation. There is satisfaction to be found when we can attend a nearby choral festival and appreciate the good work being done. Even at an event that involves your own choir, would it be possible to send the singers

Tenacious Teachers: A Methodical Approach to Burnout Management

home with someone else? You will find value in observing other fine performances.

Favorite music. Choral musicians are often asked, “What’s your favorite song?” To be effective, I truly believe the answer to this question is found in my active repertoire at that very moment. Successful journalists behave in a similar way: the most interesting story they’ve ever worked on must be the one they are researching at that time. Let yourself fall in love again and again with the music.

The student experience. A public-school principal once encouraged us to attend the class schedule of our students, which gave me an opportunity to experience the classes that bookend my rehearsal: in that case, physics and gym. I came to realize why, perhaps, it took the students a few minutes longer than expected for them to engage with the music and why they might feel a little anxious toward the end of rehearsal. The cognitive whiplash of a traditional high school schedule can be quite staggering.

Delegate. Many of us likely discovered our love of choral leadership when a trusted mentor gave us an opportunity to lead during a formative period in our development. Return the favor often. This not only pays tremendous benefit to the student but can positively influence our own perception regarding their capabilities.

Administration is temporary. If you are experiencing a beautiful period of support, prepare yourself for the eventual, and unfortunate, expiration date. If the opposite is true, and your present administration is less than ideal, remember this is a temporary situation.

Adapt with integrity. The companion to a regularly changing administration is the periodic implementation of new teaching strategies or educational “buzzwords.” It seems that each year, a passionate administrator will introduce a novel approach that we are required to honor. Most of the time, upon reflection, I find I’m already effectively executing the proposed concept. It is possible to apply the new label without

much adjustment. Take comfort in trusting your quality training and solid record of good teaching.

Extra-curricular obligations. During the busiest of times, choral directors may be required to put in a significant number of hours. Reframing our own perspective regarding those extra activities is key. Chaperoning the homecoming dance is a chore; spending time with your singers in a different environment while witnessing their wardrobe and excitement is a joy. Sitting in a dark concert hall for yet another evening is grueling; spending time listening to a particular student succeed in their senior recital is a delight.

Three. Minimize Sources of Frustration

The last area of management is identifying and minimizing sources of frustration. This can include simple solutions to problems that are a hindrance to one’s effectiveness; apply the Stephen Covey adage of “sharpening the saw.” Here are a few implementable ideas pertinent to our discipline.

Take care of your office personnel and custodians. What would we do without the people who keep the program and facilities running? A twelve-pack of soda is a nice way to show gratitude for a custodian. A handful of chocolate when making a last-minute request of the school treasurer goes a long way. When they are happy, you are happy.

Keep a clean desk. When the desk is piled high, we can spend an inordinate amount of time looking for that one important document, dongle, or pen. Recognize these moments of frustration and schedule time to clean it up. If not every day, make it a goal to leave a clean desk on Friday afternoons. A similar approach can be applied to our email inbox.

Voice preservation. Reminding ourselves to wear a lapel mic and limit the delivery of excessively loud instructions mitigates feelings of vocal frustration and fatigue. This topic is addressed previously as self-care but worth mentioning again.

Important tasks. Although unconventional, my very first principal coached me not to do any paperwork unless it is requested a second time. Every significant administrative request has a built-in reminder. Examples range from final grade entry to annual budget reports. This can be especially helpful to young teachers as they learn to identify what is truly necessary.

Encourage solutions. Amateur singers of all ages can conjure up a lot of questions, especially on performance day. I have trained my singers to think of the “Big 5.” If they raise their hand with a question, I’ll hold up my own outstretched fingers as a visual reminder for them to ask themselves:

1st finger) Is this important?

2nd finger) Is this important right now?

3rd finger) Can I solve this myself?

4th finger) Can anyone else in the whole world, other than the director, solve this for me?

5th finger) Even if I brought up this concern, is there anything the director could do about it?

My proudest moments have been when singers come up with solutions on their own.

Change the classroom setup. Numerous demonstrations are available regarding creative ways to rehearse. Dr. Charlene Archibeque’s fantastic work on choral rehearsal strategies is a standout example. Arrange singers in a circle around the room. Form small quartets. Move to another location like an orchestra pit, hallway, or reverberant bathroom. Each situation provides your singers an interesting new environment with challenges and benefits.

Time management. I teach best when I have immediate access to an analog clock with an accurate minute and second hand. Digital clocks require too much math during rehearsal. With an analog clock, I can visually assess the amount of time left.

Student-directed learning. It has proven helpful to plan a fifteen-minute sectional time into the middle of every lengthy rehearsal. This gives me, and the singers, time to breathe and refocus. Ninety minutes is a long time for even the most seasoned teacher to play the role of cheerleader. Give clear objectives, provide separate rehearsal spaces if possible, and send students on their own for fifteen minutes. The first few attempts may not go smoothly, but once singers settle into routine, it can be a tool of tremendous value.

Rehearsal architecture. Review your regular process. Are you beginning and ending rehearsal with something successful? Is the hardest work happening in the middle third? Reviewing the psychological needs of the singer can maintain positive momentum.

By taking moments of reflection, I hope we can all be sustainability minded as we routinely manage our own symptoms of burnout. The first step is to identify the various sources, followed by a three-pronged strategic plan: 1) Practice self-care, 2) Maintain a healthy perspective, and 3) Minimize sources of frustration. Such an approach enables longevity.

Suggested Resources

The choral art form is one of community. All that we practice and preach as individuals comes from a deep well of practices observed across this vast choral ecosystem. I do not claim any of the above to be original research. My observations and practices have evolved over decades of interactions with quality educators and friends who regularly inspire me. In addition to dozens of private conversations and memorable conference sessions, some of the publications that I regularly revisit are listed below:

Barbara L. Brock and Marilyn L. Grady, *Rekindling the Flame: Principals Combating Teacher Burnout* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc., 2000).

Carl B. Hancock, “National Estimates of Retention, Migration and Attrition: A Multiyear Comparison of Music and Non-Music Teachers,” *Journal of Research in*

Tenacious Teachers: A Methodical Approach to Burnout Management

Music Education 57, no. 2 (2009): 92-107.

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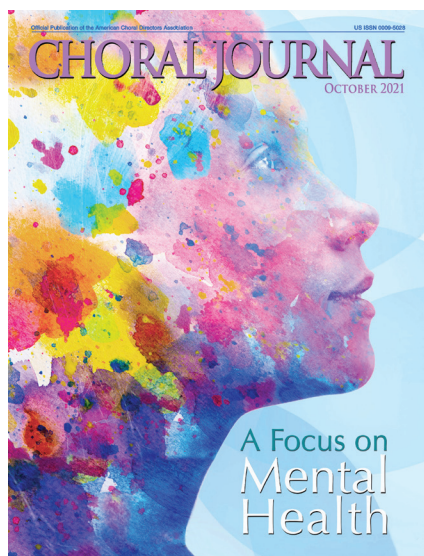
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¹ Barbara L. Brock and Marilyn L. Grady, *Rekindling the Flame: Principals Combating Teacher Burnout* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc., 2000), 4.

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A State of Stress: Self-Care Strategies for Combating the Effects of Burnout

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An Overview of Burnout Research

What is burnout? How do we define it and what can we learn from it? Burnout is uniquely personal to each lived experience, and the research is relatively young, having only been in literature for around forty years. However, understanding some foundations helps give us language for what we are experiencing.

Burnout is a combination of both internal factors—such as personal needs and values—and external factors—such as work overload, insufficient reward, and conflicting values. As Peter Steenblik mentions in his article in this issue, burnout is a process. We can also view burnout as in between stress (strain or pressure) and demoralization (corruption of morals and discouragement).¹ Stress can occur in two ways: eustress and distress. Eustress can activate and motivate us, but distress slows us down. Demoralization occurs when there is a conflict of values to the point where we are not able to do the right thing. Dr. Christina Maslach suggests three dimensions to burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization/cynicism, and 3) reduced personal accomplishment.² A study by Jessica Nápoles, et. al., found that impostor phenomenon and burnout are intrinsically linked.³ Additionally, burnout is nuanced, and the factors should be studied individually rather than collectively.⁴

Burnout has increased post-pandemic. Research from Devlin Peck explains that teaching is the most burnt-out profession.⁵ There are 500,000 fewer educators post-pandemic, with 300,000 resigning mid-year in 2022. Nearly half of teachers report feeling consistent burnout, and 67% of teachers view burnout as a major issue. Seventy-five percent of teachers have stress-related health issues, and the majority of teachers view the teaching profession as unsustainable.

Burnout is a process that has always existed but has certainly been amplified post-pandemic. A 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey by RAND found that one of the main stressors for teachers is health.⁶ Burnout truly affects our health by affecting us emotionally, mentally, and physically. The strategies to combat burnout must not come from teachers alone, but rather a collective that also includes administrators, school boards, families, communities, and beyond.

Burnout Effects

Once we know what burnout is, the next step is identifying its effects. Whether it be inside or outside of the classroom, burnout affects the person experiencing it and those around them. Some of the physical effects of burnout include weight gain or loss and irregular hair loss, attributed to change of appetite and fatigue. Most

effects of burnout, however, come in the emotional and psychological symptoms. These include anxiety/depression, potentially developing sleep disorders, lack of job satisfaction, and inability to enjoy downtime.

In the podcast “Ten Percent Happier with Dan Harris,” Harris interviews Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski. Emily Nagoski discusses the idea of an “emotion cycle,” where just like any other normal human function, your body has a process it must filter through when experiencing an emotion. Burnout happens when we get stuck in the middle of the cycle—experiencing the emotion, the stressor that caused said emotion, that “fight or flight” feeling—and are unable to properly process or separate ourselves and return to a state of balance.⁷ As educators, our triggers are often things we have to experience: student/parent behavior, school safety, toxic work environment, unsupportive administration, etc. When we are not able to successfully alleviate the issue causing our trigger because it is “just part of the job,” then we are in a constant state of fight or flight.

If we are constantly worrying about how to improve our work environment, or working so much overtime that there is no true downtime, or using our free time to doom-scroll through social media for hours and hours, then we are not able to properly complete the emotion cycle and run ourselves ragged. We then only notice the burnout feeling when the effects appear: the depression, sleepiness, and impacted psychological state.

We often ignore the signs of burnout until it seems too late to turn back. By addressing what these signs look and feel like, as well as what stressors potentially cause them, we are able to address the issues at large and work to improve them. There will be stressors that cannot be fixed immediately (or in the field of education it seems ever), but we do have coping mechanisms we can use to better manage our body’s reactions to these stressors. By knowing what to look for, addressing the cause, and finding ways to work through our bodies’ emotional cycles, we can better manage these symptoms and ideally alleviate them all together.

Self-Care Redefined

In-School Self-Care Strategies

It can seem counterintuitive to find strategies for self-care that are specifically in-school. Isn't that the whole purpose, to take care of yourself outside of the stressful environment? Oftentimes, we spend more time in our rehearsal spaces than we do in our own homes. It is imperative to find ways throughout the day to recenter ourselves and to create spaces that cannot be turned against us or do damage to us. Why shouldn't we also feel comfortable in the spaces we strive to make comfortable for our musicians?

Setting Boundaries/Defining Non-Negotiables

We as teachers are quick to say "yes" for many reasons: to prove we can be good team workers, work for our administration's praise, to do what we can for our students, to name a few. However, for us to be the best versions of ourselves we can be, we have to make our work environment a place where we feel comfortable saying a teacher's least favorite word: "no." Creating a calendar at the beginning of the school year with dates you can commit to and sticking to it is a way to ensure that your administration sees you are able to work, but you have set days that you cannot add extra. If you are an upper-level teacher, often students come to you with all of their hard issues and emotions. Finding a way to be supportive while not making their issues your problem is crucial to create those boundaries and keep your classroom not just a safe space for them, but a safe space for you.

Changing Your Environment/Organization

Take time to make an organization system that works for you. Whether that's labeled drawers or folders, or just having your own system of piles on your desk, keeping things organized will help to alleviate the panic of having to be "perfect." Creating a space in your classroom, whether you have an office or a corner with a desk that is your comfort space, can help.

Mindfulness and Crafting

The little things are absolutely allowed to bother us, but we should strive to not let it be the bane of our

existence. Remembering where you are and the group you are surrounded by and putting your situation into perspective is crucial. If you are a K-12 teacher or undergraduate college professor, it can be difficult to remind yourself that a student's prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until age twenty-five, which of course is the part of the brain to control complex behavioral performance and executive functions.

Use Your Time Off!

Sick days vs Personal Time Off (PTO) are two things teachers try to collect like gold coins. However, oftentimes PTO does not roll over for future school years! Take the time in the beginning of the school year to pre-schedule PTO for things you find important to you—birthdays, a mental health day after a particularly stressful concert series, a concert by your favorite band. This will also provide little spots in the year to be excited for outside of an otherwise hectic schedule!

Out-of-School Self-Care Strategies

Out-of-school strategies for burnout highlight yourself, the people you love, and that which you love to do. We want to emphasize that eating, sleeping, and resting are not self-care; they are basic human needs. Using those as "rewards" is not beneficial to our emotional, mental, or physical health, and trains our brains not to place value on them.

Setting Boundaries

There is a long-standing stigma that burnout is equated to success; we have the power to break that cycle and redefine what success is to us. Setting boundaries encourages us to give of ourselves in all aspects of our lives as we are able, which creates balance. Powerful tools to utilize include defining our own non-negotiables—the things in our lives that we are not willing to give up, the lines we are not willing to cross, and the values we hold—along with using "no" as a full sentence.

Spending Time with Loved Ones

Being in the presence of those we love can instantly shift our mood, our motivations, and our actions. Living life with and creating memories with loved ones is

something we carry with us forever, and therefore important to not miss out on.

Spending Time on Hobbies and Interests

These absolutely fuel who we are as humans and contribute to what makes us unique. There is nothing quite like time spent in creativity and inspiration! Another thing to consider is that remaining involved in music making for the sheer joy it brings you is vital. It is easy to get wrapped up when our hobby is also our profession. Staying involved in an ensemble encourages us to keep a love for music at the forefront.

Having Designated Mindful Spaces

Creating spaces in the places you most frequent can quite literally bring a breath of fresh air. The calm and peace we feel in a space that is cozy, organized, and uplifting can make all the difference.

Making the Ordinary “Extraordinary”

Being alive is the special occasion! Finding ways to bring light to your day can truly make the ordinary extraordinary! Even a small change can create a big impact. Something such as turning dinner into a picnic or picking up flowers on the way home to celebrate the day can remind you to love the present—knowing there is nothing better than the here and now.

In addition, remind yourself of how kind, brilliant, and beautiful you are always. Celebrate being human. Celebrate your hard work. Celebrate just because! This world would not be the same without you, and that is forever something to celebrate.

Perspective and Affirmations

Reflection and gratitude help us pour into and love ourselves while we pour into and love others. Take time to stop and think, “I do not get this moment in time, with these people, doing this thing ever again. How can I use this perspective to guide my day?” Affirmation is also a powerful tool that can be embraced in a variety of ways: words spoken or written, a small gift, or time. Positive words we speak to ourselves, things that bring us joy, or time spent in self-care connect us to greater health emotionally, mentally, and physically.

We hope that reflecting on these strategies helps bring into focus your life, your lived experience, and your needs. We also hope it affirms that self-care is not self-indulgent, but rather a means for greater mental, emotional, and physical health.

Advocating and Mentoring

Advocating and mentoring are both powerful tools in self-care. Advocating allows us to use self-care to help others. Mentoring allows other people to help us. This cycle of people helping one another creates an unstoppable and influential force for good and for self-care.

Self-Care Advocating Strategies

Strategies for advocating include speaking out, having courage, and recognizing humanity. While advocating, it is important to do so to the capacity you are able. It is not your responsibility alone to fix what needs to be restored. Partnering with and leaning on the common collective helps remind us we are better together. Know that both you and your actions are enough. Remember to pour grace into yourself. Advocating is work we all can contribute to, and it will look differently person to person. That is what makes it so powerful!

Speaking Out

Your voice has power. Speaking out against injustices, unfairness, systemic issues, work overload, and conflicting values when able encourages inquiry and open-mindedness in others, inspiration, and motivation. It is important to recognize that many voices are silenced. Helping break down barriers by questioning why they are there is vital in making sure all voices are heard. Speaking out can look like calling out harmful language used by a colleague. It can look like sharing your ideas at community meetings or at your capital. It can look like questioning policies. It can look like voicing concerns. The list is endless, so remember, the ways in which you speak out are powerful and do contribute to combating systemic issues that can cause burnout.

Having Courage

Advocating requires deep courage. Honor yourself. Give yourself rest. It can be exhausting when it feels like

you are the only person on your team/in your school/in your circle of influence who is voicing concerns or calling out issues. You are brave for the sheer fact that you have empathy and recognize humanity. Your courage will look different day to day, and sometimes even moment to moment. That is okay.

Recognizing Humanity


Seeing people as humans rather than commodities reminds us that each person is facing their own lived experiences each and every day. We approach life and our actions differently when we live in a space of honoring and celebrating all people. In modeling this in our own lives, we nurture it within our own singers and those around us. This also fosters space for us to learn from one another and create deeper understanding, building an impactful, never-ending cycle of growth.

Self-Care Mentoring Strategies

Some of our greatest assets are the others in our fields. Specifically as choral educators, we are often the only ones in our school, and our mentors are often another arts teacher who gets the school but not necessarily our subject or situation specifically. Creating a network for mentoring and collaborating is important. Having a group of people who understand what it's like to be in your shoes and are able to offer advice, sympathy, and help you to find humor in the situations you end up in will be a large part of completing those tense emotion cycles. Find your support, whether it's another chorus teacher in your district/a neighboring district, your undergraduate cohort, or a group of people you talk to online that all met in a chorus director Facebook page.

Make sure you find people who are unbiased to express your thoughts and feelings to. If you are able, find a therapist or counselor. Surrounding yourself with those you love who have no connection to your profession will give you space to find parts of yourself that are not solely weighed in what you do for work.

As singletons in our own environments, whether it's at a school, church, or community choir, often we keep our stressors and issues to ourselves. Sometimes, the most beneficial thing we can do is to reach out to an-

other person to function as a sounding board. By incorporating self-care strategies in your work and personal life, you will begin to see small but important changes in your physical, mental, and emotional health. 

NOTES

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Advocacy for the Choral Art: Empowering Our Communities

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In conversations with choral directors, the word “advocacy” can sometimes evoke feelings of apprehension or uncertainty. Yet, advocating for what we believe in, particularly in the profession of music and arts education, is not just the obligation of a select few—it is a responsibility we all share.

What comes to mind when you hear the word advocacy? Some people assume that advocacy is reserved for elected individuals in ACDA or NAFME leadership. Absolutely, that is one form of supporting our students to maintain the privilege of music learning, but it is certainly not the only one. When I served as national president for NAFME, teachers across the country would often tell me that someone needed to do something to save music education. Guess what—“we” are all someone! In this article, we will explore practical strategies for effective and user-friendly advocacy, focusing on the essential role of singing, the choral art, and music education throughout our schools and communities.

Why Advocate?

Understanding the Impact

Advocacy is a vital catalyst for change. By supporting music learning, we are safeguarding opportunities for all children and adolescents to learn and grow through the vehicle of music study and performing. We are shaping a future where every child has access to the transformative power of music. Expanding the awareness of others is crucial, especially if those individuals know little about music learning or they are not concerned about education.

Engaging the Community:

Bridging Gaps and Educating Others

Advocacy is more than just preaching to the choir—it is about informing and teaching those who may not fully understand the value of music education. Master choir directors start with the students' comfort zone, their baseline of knowledge and skills, then take them into the unknown territory of new material and skillsets. We do not typically program Bach chorales if the singers in an ensemble still struggle to match pitch. Consequently, members of the community who are removed from the performing arts, except as consumers, may need to know how they will be served by supporting music learning. In other words, we meet them in their world and care about the issues that are important to them.

Most humans are members of the WIIFM Club: What's In It For Me? Take a moment to think about how music is perceived in the world of non-musicians or by people with little exposure to the world of education. Respect and honor their points of view and be willing to learn from their perspectives. Have a conversation and say, "Tell me more." Remember that we also make assumptions about career and choices of study that are unfamiliar to us.

Advocacy informs people why every child benefits from music and other art forms. It is about providing opportunities for students' learning. Respectfully engaging with different viewpoints of individuals with limited experience of choral singing or other educa-

tional concerns is key. We can bridge that gap between their perspectives to an enlightened understanding of the myriad benefits that music brings to every child's holistic development.

Music is a vital component in all of our lives. I once heard a speaker at an Alaska Music Education Association conference share that only one to two percent of the world's population reads music. Yet, we know that every year billions of dollars are spent on music as consumers just in the United States alone. If only a small portion of the people across the globe read music, it makes sense why some believe that music study is reserved for a talented minority.

Music learning is more than just singing songs or playing instruments—it is also about instilling scientific, mathematical, linguistic, historical, and artistic understanding in students. Every person must take math in school, yet only a small percent of the people in our population pursue math as a profession. By studying math in school, students learn how to problem solve and expand their understanding of abstract constructs. Studying choral music also teaches students to problem solve and expand their comprehension of abstract concepts. We guide students on a journey to better understand themselves and the world, by engaging in music learning and performing.

So what is music? Add your own ideas to the list below:

- Music is science.
- Music is math.
- Music is a foreign language.
- Music is history.
- Music is physical education.
- Music develops insights.
- Music uses both sides of the brain.
- Music is literature.

- Music is art.
- Music is social emotional.
- Music is collaboration and teamwork.
- Music fosters a growth mindset.

Starting Point: Where and How to Begin

How do I start advocating for the importance of choral music? One effective strategy is storytelling. By sharing the narratives of students' journeys and achievements—their triumphs, struggles, and growth—we humanize the justification and vital need for music learning. Each of us can begin an advocacy journey in our personal comfort zones. Listed below are actionable steps that any educator, administrator, professional musician, parent, or supporter of music learning can take. Consider implementing a few of the following suggestions:

- **Highlight Student Success:** Showcase examples of everyday student achievement in concert programs and presentations to demonstrate the tangible outcomes of studying and making music. Display examples of photos and student's successes on a rolling PowerPoint as the audience arrives before a performance. Draw attention to Word Clouds comprising students' descriptive words of selected songs. Show students' responses to sentence stems used for reflection and analysis in the choral rehearsal.
- **Share an Informance:** Have students present an "informance" rather than a polished performance. Showcase the process of how they learn. Walk the audience through a rehearsal, step-by-step, including solfège/sight singing, historical context, assessment, and student self-reflection.
- **Call to Action for Parents:** Encourage parents to reach out to local decision makers. Equip parents with talking points and relevant information to advocate effectively for music learning at local, state, and national

levels. Provide a handout and/or digital access to talking points for parents to use when they contact their local, state, and national leaders. Include contact information for local legislators in programs to make it easy for parents to engage in advocacy.

- **Engage Decision Makers:** Invite school board members, administrators, and community leaders to performances and events, fostering a deeper understanding of the value of music education. Send them complimentary tickets, VIP seating, and invite them to a reception following the performance or event.
- **Invite Special Guests:** Have special guests deliver the opening welcome to the audience before concerts and other public events. Examples: The mayor, local or state legislators, school board president, university leadership, ACDA and state Music Education Association (MEA) leadership.
- **State and National Standards:** Print your state music standards and the National Standards for Music Education in written and/or digital programs. Highlight the standards that the students learned as they prepared for that specific concert.
- **Rehearsal Process and Progress:** Before a performance, play thirty-second video clips of the first week of rehearsal, a rehearsal midway during preparation, and the dress rehearsal to bring awareness to the progress and work ethic required of the students.
- **Bring a Parent Day:** Organize parent music classes where they come to class and learn alongside their children/adolescents to gain a better understanding of what and how their students are absorbing new ideas and concepts. During class, have parents sit with singers in the ensemble. Teach them solfège and simple rhythm patterns. Guide the singers to track the music notation with their finger while singing to help the parent follow along and demonstrate that singing music notation is similar to learning a foreign language.
- **School Boards:** Bring an ensemble to perform one to two songs for a school board meeting or other im-

portant boards or council meetings. Thank the members and leaders for supporting music and give each of them a one-page handout that summarizes three points to advocate for music study.

- **Show the Scope of What You Do:** When an administrator comes to visit or observe a rehearsal, provide them a spreadsheet of your plans for the next three to five years: travel plans, community service exchanges, outreach activities, performances, fundraisers, music standards that are covered each month, etc.

- **Utilize Social Media:** Leverage social media platforms to amplify your message and connect with a broader audience.

- **Share Research:** Print summaries of quantitative studies of why choir is good for your school and community. Hand out information physically or provide a QR code so parents and administrators can access details regarding the research.

- **List Websites:** Provide links for arts organizations that provide easy access to additional materials for advocacy. For example: ACDA.org, NAFME.org, NAMMfoundation.org

We can all learn practical strategies for effective and user-friendly advocacy that can be implemented right away in our schools, as well as our local and state communities. Take these ideas and communicate how all students deserve access to music education in every public, private, homeschool, and community setting.

Embracing Advocacy Together

Advocacy for music learning is not exclusive to a small number of elected leaders; it is a collective effort that requires the engagement of educators, parents, elected leaders, policymakers, community members, and many more. By sharing stories, engaging with diverse perspectives, and taking actionable steps, we can do our part to preserve music learning as a fundamental component of our educational landscape for future generations.

What are the ramifications if we do not advocate for music? If we do not step up, who will? How will our singers be better off in ten or twenty years? I strongly encourage all of us to reflect on these questions. Each one of us can start advocating in our own comfort zone, then progress to a more expanded version of advocacy strategies.

*Music sobs for you,
It laments,
It rejoices,
It explodes with vigor and life.* (Anais Nin)

All of us who love the profession of choral music can probably relate to this beautiful, succinct poem. We have had the opportunity in our lives to sob, lament, rejoice, and explode with vigor through singing in a choral ensemble together. Our future generations, of all economic backgrounds, deserve that privilege, too. Helen Keller once said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” What is one step to take today to advocate for music? Embrace advocacy as a powerful tool for creating positive change and ensure a brighter horizon for all students through music education. Our singers and our choirs need us to advocate for their future and this profession that we all cherish. ■

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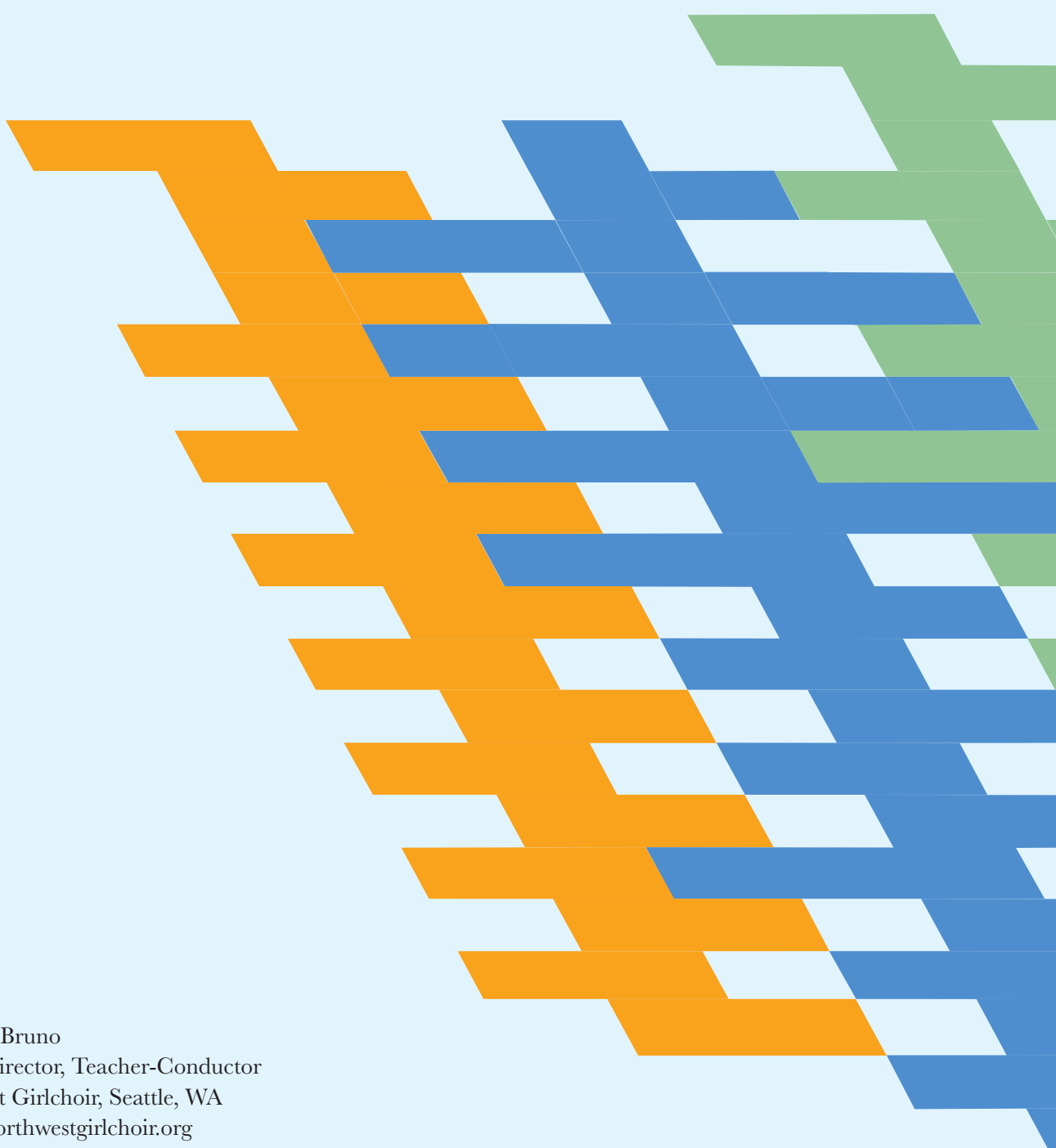
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WHAT IS ADVOCACY? Advocacy is an opportunity to share with other people, many of whom are decision makers in some way, why choral music matters—to us, to our singers, and to the world. Advocacy should not be a term that frightens us. It should be a term that inspires us to explain to others why choral music makes a difference for the better. There are many people who never had the opportunity to experience or understand the art form that is so important to us as choral conductors and music educators.

There are lots of ways to share the impact of music education, and many organizations have spent a good deal of time and energy compiling statistics, sharing research, and distributing creative tools for large- and small-scale advocacy. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME), Chorus America, Americans for the Arts, and National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) are some of the organizations who do this sort of work regularly, and we should all familiarize ourselves with the advocacy tools they provide. But statistics and studies tell only part of a story. They tell the larger story of why music or the choral art form is important and discuss the impact choral programs have in general; but these are probably not the primary reasons your principal, community foundation, or singers and their families support your choir. They are likely to be more interested in what you have to say than statistics provided by a national organization. Why are you a choral musician? Why do your singers show up to participate? When we tell our own story in conjunction with research about the impact of choral music, we provide complete and compelling reasons to prioritize, staff, and fund choral music in our schools and our communities.

Part of the problem is that we know we *should* advocate for choral music, but we aren't sure how to do it. What do we say? To whom do we say it? We have our hands full selecting repertoire, writing lesson plans, studying scores, teaching and conducting, and meeting the individual needs of our singers. We are busy! Isn't a beautiful concert advocacy enough?

Simon Sinek's 2009 TED talk¹ and subsequent book, *Start With Why*, took the business and leadership worlds by storm. His thesis was that people are not as interested in a product as they are interested in why a business exists in the first place. The core belief, cause, or reason a business exists can be a compelling story. If a company sells its story, consumers are more likely to purchase its product, he claimed. He encourages CEOs to build a culture within their companies that is mission-driven and to hire people aligned with the company's core beliefs rather than those who are just excellent salespeople. Identifying and prioritizing why a company exists, he argued, is foundational for success.

Although Sinek was speaking to business leaders, it is easy to see how his ideas are relevant to teaching and to advocacy. When we identify our core beliefs and values, we become better teachers, leaders, and storytellers. We can explain why it's important for a student to schedule choir amid Advanced Placement (AP) classes, a foundation to award our program a grant, or an adult to attend a weekly Tuesday night rehearsal across town. While we may have spent time creating our own mission statements as undergraduates, for most of us it has been a very long time since we checked in with our own "why."

Consider:

- Why do you teach and conduct choirs?
- Why do your singers choose (and continue) to participate?
- Why did you enter the profession?
- Why do you stay in the profession?
- Why does singing matter to you?

- Why does singing matter to your choristers?

These are not easy questions, but the answers will help you shape your everyday advocacy stories.

It's All in the Marketing

If your program has a mission statement and/or strategic plan, or if you have a clear sense of your "why," be sure you have refined your message for your stakeholders. This will ensure that people understand and care about what you have to say. In essence, it's marketing—you are selling your advocacy story in a way that will be compelling to your supporters and to those who have never experienced choral music. How we convey our message is important.

Sinek does not discuss how to frame your "why" in his TED talk, although he certainly doesn't ignore this crucial aspect of storytelling. Rather, he demonstrates how to do so through the cadence of his spoken delivery, by using specific (and sometimes visual) examples, and by repeating key phrases as he delivers his message. We are not necessarily aware of how he uses his presentation to sell us on his idea, and it works. In fact, if you have watched other TED videos that left you feeling inspired, you will see that they are all carefully crafted and practiced stories. Great storytelling is powerful, and humans have shared important information this way throughout time and across cultures. You have probably noticed that some of the best teachers are those who know how to engage a group of students through story. Great storytelling is great marketing, and advertising is built on powerful images, ideas, or vignettes.

Honing an idea so that it becomes more impactful is a great marketing skill and one we can all develop. In their 2007 book, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, Chip and Dan Heath analyze Malcolm Gladwell's concept of "stickiness"² to determine the principles that make an idea memorable. They came up with the acronym "SUCCES" as they identified these principles: simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, stories.³

While choral musicians don't necessarily need to consider each attribute when honing a story for advocacy purposes, there are a few that rise to the top. Remember that everyday advocacy is about working to

balance national data or statistics that can feel broad and a bit nebulous. We learn from NAFME:

Studies in the compendium show that the arts help to create the kind of learning environment that is conducive to teacher and student success by fostering teacher innovation, a positive professional culture, community engagement, increased student attendance and retention, effective instructional practice, and school identity.⁴

This is important information, but it's easy for someone outside the profession to see this as a statement full of buzzwords. Parents, students, administrators, and community members may have a difficult time understanding what this might mean to a student in their local high school, so we must help explain it. What we need here is an everyday advocacy statement—a concrete example to accompany the data results, a specific story from our own community.

If we take the statement above and consider specific instances where we can see “increased student attendance and retention” as a result of our choral program, we create deeper meaning. For instance, consider a letter my colleague received from R., who said that the reason he graduated from high school was because of choir. It was the only class in which he felt cared for and valued as part of a community. He wanted to feel that way every day, so he didn't drop out of school. *This* is a simple, concrete, credible, emotional example of “increased student attendance and retention.” It is a story we can tell funders, administrators, and parents. It is concrete evidence that someone who has never experienced being part of a choral community can understand.

As advocates for choral music, emotion is also important because it can factor heavily into the decision-making processes. It's likely the reason GoFundMe or Kickstarter fundraising efforts work: we read a compelling story of a person and their specific need, and we feel an emotional response. This translates into a small donation we might not otherwise make. The Heaths remind us that “when people think analytically, they're less likely to think emotionally.”⁵ Now return to the “why” questions in the first section. Are there any emo-

tional aspects to your answers? Is there anything there that might resonate with your community?

Consider engaging your singers in this process too. There is likely a significant emotional component to their experience in your choir. Diving into the emotional power of choral music is a way to help an audience member or decision maker care about your “why.” And when someone cares, they are more likely to advocate on your program's behalf; you have created additional supporters who can, and want to, tell your story.

Thinking carefully about *how* we share our “why” is an important part of advocacy. Nobody wants to be guilted into participation or funding (in fact, this doesn't work), and abstract or analytical statements will get us only so far. If we wish to engage in everyday advocacy, we need to tell a compelling story about why choral music is important and impactful, keeping our message heartfelt, specific, and easy to understand. What if we made this a key component of every performance?

Tell Your Story: Tools for Everyday Advocacy

Although our rehearsal schedules, personnel, and repertoire vary widely, we all share our choir's music with other people. While we know that a heartfelt performance is a type of advocacy, it helps to be intentional about your advocacy choices as you put together a concert. Whether formal or informal, your performance is outward-facing and an opportunity to help audiences understand why the music matters. Explore the following suggestions and consider trying one or two; think about what might be the easiest to implement. Consider, too, what can be done by volunteers—board members, parents, teaching colleagues, or singers themselves—with the messages you want them to use. If you begin to weave choral advocacy into your everyday tasks, you will notice that it becomes easier. It will be just one more lens you use when you make decisions that affect your program or your singers.

Concert Themes and Program Notes

The idea of concert themes is one that many teacher-conductors use to pull repertoire together for a concert. Themes are helpful because they can help to push us into a different mode of creativity as we work to connect pieces, create an arc of performance, and look for common threads. But themes can be far too limit-

ing (“animals,” “colors,” “nature”) and far too general (“folk songs,” “winter wonderland”) to be of significant pedagogical use. Furthermore, narrow themes don’t add depth to a program for our audience members or for our singers. They don’t inspire connection, global thinking, or deep conversations. When done well, thematic ideas can help us focus on larger concepts we want our singers (and attendees) to explore or learn more about. Whether musical or nonmusical ideas, themes are ways for us to explore our common humanity through the choral art.

For example, a concert theme I created in a previous role in Wisconsin, was “We Raise Our Voices,” a concert based on the words and lived experiences of Malala Yousafzai. The title was inspired by the following quotation from Malala: “I raise up my voice—not so I can shout but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot succeed when half of us are held back.” It would be easy for us to focus on the phrase “raise up my voice” and connect it to singing. Equally easy, since the choir program has been, historically, for those who identify as female, would be to create a concert that was about female empowerment, or about Malala’s specific cause: the importance of education for girls and women.

Instead, my approach to this theme was much broader, which encouraged the teacher-conductors to program diverse repertoire and explore a wide range of musical skills, emotions, and knowledge. It centered the words and life of a young Muslim woman from Pakistan and drew parallels to music and people across time and place. Here is an excerpt from my comments in the printed program:

Although it would have been easy to create a concert that focused solely on access to education and empowerment of girls and women, I was drawn to Malala’s entire story. She faced adversity, speaks publicly on behalf of other girls and young women, and believes in peace and forgiveness. As a young person, she lives as a refugee yet uses her remarkable story to increase girls’ access to education around the world. It seemed obvious to me that we could also examine access to music-making opportunities for women and girls throughout history,

explore the role of music in protest or social change, and be inspired to use our own voices for causes we care about.⁶

The theme was unpacked in extensive program notes beneath each selection, so the audience could see exactly how pieces like *Hine Ma Tov* (Naplan), *Blustery Day* and *Miss Rumphius* (Ebel-Sabo), *De Colores* (arr. Weston), *The Duel* (Cary Miller), “Esurientes implevit bonis” from *Magnificat* (Vivaldi), *Family Tree* (Hatfield), *Aure volanti* (Caccini), *Járba, Màré Járba* (Roma, arr. Adkins), *Iraqi Peace Song* (Hillestat/Reiersrud/Tennessee), *O virtus sapientiae* (Hildegard), *Miserere mei Deus* (Aleotti, ed. Bowen), *How Can I Cry* (Smiley), *Still I Rise* (Powell), *Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around* (arr. Dilworth), and several others related to the thematic idea. The program notes not only shared information about the composer, time period, compositional devices, or text; they also showed how each piece connected to the theme. Here is an excerpt from the program notes for “Esurientes implevit bonis”:

In this movement, Mary acknowledges that God sees and lifts up those in need. [Choir] members explored the concepts of ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ outside the context of this verse. They reflected on the question, ‘What needs are universal to all humans?’ ...Singers shared ideas related to physical needs (shelter, food, clothing) and emotional needs (love, safety, peace)... Just as Malala uses her voice to speak up, singers pledged to use their own voices to advocate for the needs of others in our community... Musically, this piece stretched our singers, as the vocal lines include parallel motion, imitation, and melodic sequences that require well-developed independent singing skills. The learning process required persistence and tenacity, the courage to make mistakes, and an unwavering focus on finishing the task as confident and accomplished musicians.⁷

Notice that this teacher-conductor shares musical and nonmusical learning goals, briefly describes the process by which those goals were met, and explicitly states that learning this piece was a challenging pro-

cess. These notes also brilliantly connect a biblical story set by Antonio Vivaldi to Malala Yousafzai and demonstrate how singers made connections between these themes and their own lives. These are powerful ways to explicitly show why being in this choir, or supporting this choral program, is valuable.

Programs that contain this much information, along with singers' names and other basic data, are admittedly expensive to create. Consider, therefore, ways to make the printing cost effective. Might your school's graphic design and printing classes work on this as a project? Can you find a business sponsor to cover the cost of professional layout and printing, or could you sell advertising to parents or local businesses? Is there a Booster Club with money to support this advocacy idea? Alternatively, what if singers themselves wrote program notes—with the same type of content—and narrated them to the audience in real time? Singers could contribute ideas, the teacher-conductor could compile them into a short paragraph, and a singer comfortable with public speaking could share the notes on behalf of the choir before each selection. Is there a screen and projector available for your use? If easy enough to see, notes for each piece could be projected while the choir sings it. In short, don't let money stand in the way of your goal to educate and advocate during your concert.

Taking the time to write program notes that explain both musical and extra-musical learnings is a deep form of advocacy and develops audience members who understand and care about a choral program. In addition, if program notes are supported by a concert theme that—while unifying the concert—encourages global thinking and allows for a diverse range of repertoire, it's easy for audience members to understand the power of choral music.

Invitations

An easy way to advocate for your program is to send invitations to local elected officials and other decision makers (superintendent, school or foundation board members, mayor, state or federal congressperson, etc). When you do, include your program's mission or your personal "why" along with your concert theme. Getting decision makers in the concert hall gives them a first-person experience with your program and helps them

understand why it matters. When they attend, they are likely to interact with parents or community members who already love what you do, so they will also hear positive stories from those in the seats around them. It's hard not to be swept up in the joy a choral concert brings. Consider inviting arts colleagues and local arts leaders with a similarly comprehensive invitation. Even if they don't attend, they will know a little more about your program and why you believe choral music matters. If they do attend, they will have an impactful first-hand experience with your singers. These colleagues may turn into collaborators, thereby strengthening ties in your community.

Another group of advocates are your alums. Do you have a way to encourage their attendance at your concerts? Are social media or an emailed newsletter ways to engage more alums than you currently do? Many alums feel sentimental about their time in choral programs and can be the very best advocates. Inviting them to your performances is a great way to keep them connected with your program. This can lead to donations, volunteers, or rehearsal visits that inspire your current singers.

Regardless of who you invite, try to keep track of who actually attends. One way to do this is to leave a ticket with their name at Will Call. After the performance, you can see whose tickets remain unused. If your concerts are free, have volunteers who pass out programs watch for certain "dignitaries." Follow up with a thank you card and be sure they know the date of your next performance. For those who don't attend, consider mailing a concert program so that they can see the concert theme fleshed out, and be sure to include an invitation to your next performance. Eventually, they may choose to join you.

Advertising

Depending upon your program, you may have a school newsletter, web page, or social media channels. You might do press releases and keep your fingers crossed that your event gets picked up by the local paper or news station. But do you just advertise the concert's date and time, or do you share your mission and an impactful concert theme when you write that newsletter article? Could your social media channels

point back to a web page that discusses your mission or theme more deeply? How else can you advertise for your *program*, not just your concert?

Local newspapers are becoming less responsive to local arts news in many areas of the country, and many papers that still include a few local stories are understaffed. What if you pitched the idea of writing a short arts-related article once per month with other arts leaders in your area? These articles can feature aspects of your program that people might not know about, highlighting the impactful work the arts can do. As you frame these articles, mention your concert, but don't make the article a substitute for a press release. Why should a non-musician care about your topic or your program? Lead with that idea and develop it so that musicians and non-musicians learn something more about your choir(s). This type of advocacy is holistic and shows many ways the arts impact your community. As a bonus, the next time you advertise for a concert, the general public may remember an article you wrote and decide to attend.

As you gather arts leaders to create a schedule of articles for your local newspaper, consider organizing a program that offers free tickets to each group's performances. This idea serves as advertising, advocacy, and addresses access by removing the barrier of cost. Several communities are bringing arts groups together and partnering with their local libraries to create these opportunities. Each organization donates one or two certificates for two tickets to an event, and library patrons check out these certificates as they would a book. The certificates contain the organization's mission statement and concert details (date/time/venue/theme). Groups who have been doing this for years report that it grows their audience and increases community awareness of their program. It's up to you to decide what the parameters will be, and the library staff will need to administer the program, but it's an easy and low-cost way to invite new people into your concert hall, hopefully creating new advocates.

Some conductors send singers to local television stations to sing a few morning spots in the lead up to a performance. But is the discussion about the choir's mission and the impact of the concert theme, or is more time spent talking about when the concert is and how people get tickets? Nuts and bolts are important,

but spending more time on why non-musician, non-family members should attend might motivate them to join you. Ask the television station if they would be willing to put the organization's name and website on the bottom of the screen as the choir sings; this visual reminder will help those watching remember how to find out more.

However you advertise, think like a newspaper reporter. Why should someone attend this particular performance? Why is your concert theme impactful and interesting? Why does your choral program's mission matter? These are all ways to advocate for choral music by telling your choir's story.

Singers' Voices

Musicians have a very public, yet simultaneously very private, job. We practice and rehearse until we are happy with our preparation, then step out into the world to share what we have done. What if, instead, we allowed our community to see our process, to watch how our singers grow, learn, and feel before the concert itself?

Open rehearsal or classroom days are good ways to show the joyful work we do. During these open days, provide a lesson plan write-up of sorts with octavos for visitors to look at, if possible. Your plan can be made accessible to non-musicians by discussing learning goals for that day and breaking them into musical skill, knowledge, and affective domains. Include the visitors in aspects of the rehearsal, whether singing or responding to a thoughtful question. After one rehearsal, they might be amazed at how much your singers—and they—have learned.

As assessment strategies have moved past "Listen for the correct notes and rhythms," we sometimes collect artifacts—index card responses, journal entries, perhaps projects or related art works. Save these and share some of them with the public in a newsletter article or social media post, as an addition to a note to your legislator, as part of a slide show before your performance, as a display in the lobby on concert night, or whenever you need to advocate for your program. Your singers' reflections on a carefully crafted question related to the music they are preparing will show how you are educating them beyond the notes and engaging them in their learning.

Have you had your singers write to younger singers who might one day join your class or choir? What advice would they give to those singers? What do they love about being in your choir now and what do younger singers have to look forward to? Asking why music matters by framing it with specificity (“What advice would you give to a singer at Odyssey Middle School who might choose to be in our high school choir?”) can yield powerful answers. It’s easy to turn these questions toward whatever audience you have in mind. Reword it accordingly to target future choristers, legislators, school board members or principals, or funders.

If you have a small group of singers in leadership positions, consider looking at some of the national data and statistics with them. As mentioned earlier in this article, you may be able to discuss a particular data-driven advocacy statement together and concretize it with a story from your program. Pairing a statement from NAFME with a few sentences from one of your singers is a great way to give specific examples to help people understand the data and its importance. These could appear in your concert program, on a website, as a social media post, in a newsletter, or on a bulletin board—there are myriad possibilities. The primary point is that your singers may be the ones to tell the most impactful stories, so help them do so by giving them carefully planned questions that will elicit deep responses. Then share those responses as widely and creatively as you can.

Be Comprehensive

We never really know who will become our strongest supporters, so we must learn to balance a variety of approaches as we advocate for our programs. Using tools from national music and arts advocacy organizations, being aware of the current laws, and learning to tell our own stories effectively can ensure a balanced approach. The companion articles in this issue of the *Choral Journal* will give you more of this information, as does former ACDA Advocacy and Collaboration committee co-chair Lynn Brinckmeyer’s book, *Advocate for Music! A Guide to User-Friendly Strategies*.⁸

If we want to tell our stories clearly and compellingly, we must identify our core values and guiding principles; these are the heart of everyday advocacy. Our

stories become the message of everyday tools to engage and educate our communities. Go beyond the general research, beyond the beauty of the choir’s performance, and articulate the most profound reasons you and your singers are involved in your choral program.

Former U.S. Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill is remembered for saying, “All politics is local.”⁹ Whether or not this statement is true, we do well to remember that local issues are important to communities, and that sharing the value of choral music is an important part of our job. If we don’t advocate for the choral art, who will? ■

NOTES

- ¹ Simon Sinek, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action,” TEDx Puget Sound (September 2009) https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en.
- ² Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2000): 89-132.
- ³ Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* (New York: Random House, 2007).
- ⁴ Music Achievement Council, Tips for Success, “Telling the Story: What Research Shows,” <https://nafme.org/my-classroom/music-achievement-council-resources-educators/telling-story-research-shows/>.
- ⁵ Heath and Heath, *Made to Stick*, 167.
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- ⁷ Toni Weijola, Program Notes, “We Raise Our Voices” (Appleton, WI: Lawrence University Memorial Chapel, March 23, 2019).
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- ⁹ Thomas P. O’Neill and Gary Hymel, *All Politics is Local and Other Rules of the Game* (Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, Inc., 1994).

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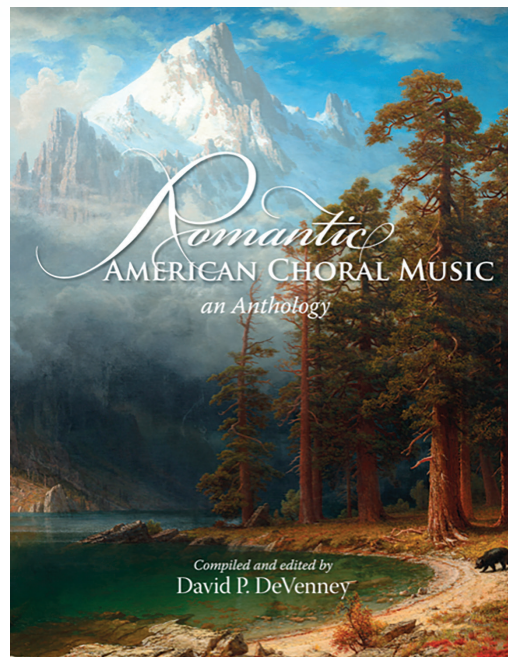


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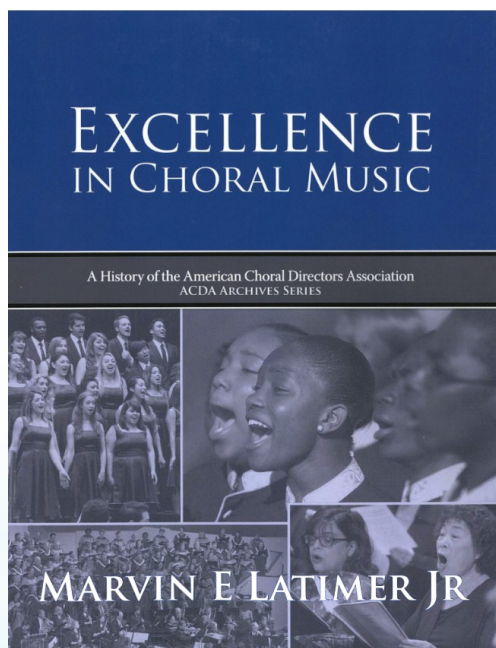


EXCELLENCE IN CHORAL MUSIC by Marvin E. Latimer Jr.

This comprehensive tome is a splendid history of ACDA and the luminaries that founded it, and built it, into the artistic statement for choral music that it is today. Beyond the history is also the vision, the leadership, the mission and the future dreams of the organization. Pictures and biographies are included that make this a treasure for all people involved in the choral arts.

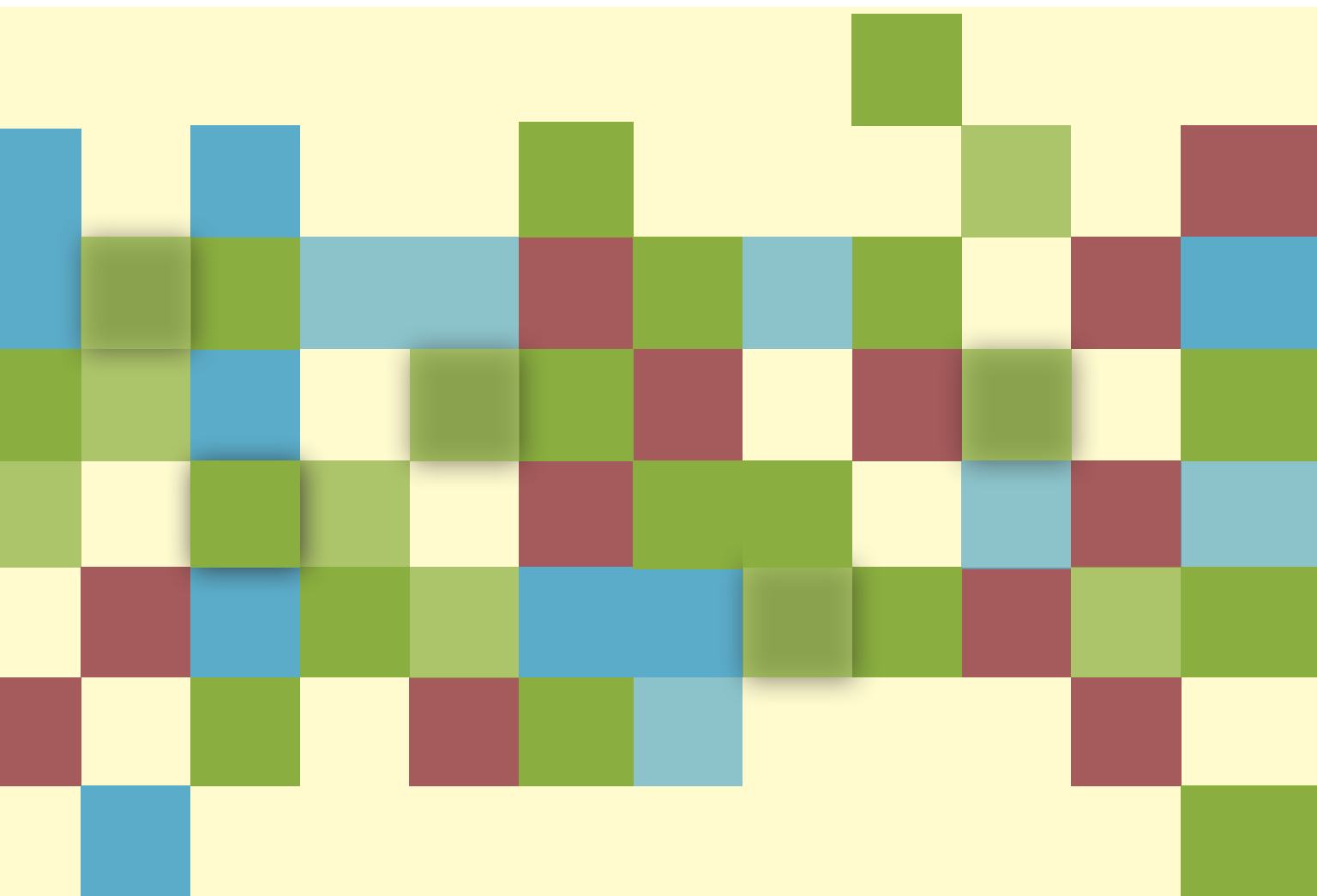


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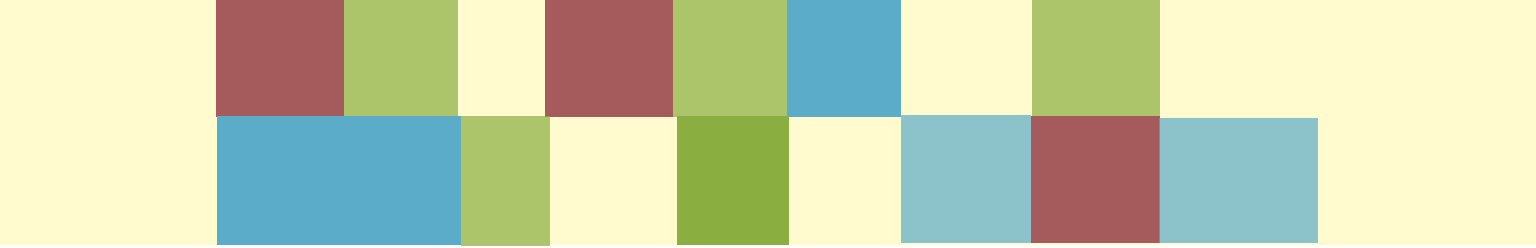


The Keys to Collaboration: Unlocking the Power of Partnership for Choral Organizations

ALEX GARTNER



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Choral singing is a model example of collaboration at every level. Singers collectively work to achieve blend, balance, and harmony. Conductors guide singers through music to ensure togetherness, integrity, and expression. Beyond the stage, audiences provide a conduit for shared emotional experiences and opportunities for music to make meaning in our communities.

For decades, ACDA has embraced the importance of collaboration as a means to strengthen the placement of choral music in the cultural firmament of the United States. ACDA's commitment to collaboration was cemented during the organizational restructure that created the Advocacy & Collaboration National Standing Committee. By engaging its members through focused areas of leadership, ACDA was able to provide greater awareness and relevancy to topics that impact nearly every choral organization, with advocacy and collaboration chief among them. Many of ACDA's peer organizations place great value in col-

laborating throughout the choral network and the broader arts sector. This article features a Q&A with three such organizations:

- (1) The National Endowment of the Arts: an independent federal agency that serves as a catalyst for arts participation through grantmaking and fostering public and private support of the arts
- (2) Chorus America: an advocacy, research, and leadership development organization that advances the field of choral music
- (3) The National Association of Music Merchants Foundation: the charitable arm of the organization that represents businesses who make, sell, distribute, and teach through musical products worldwide

With their national grantmaking capacity and wide-reaching purviews, these organizations provide significant insight into the key elements of successful and impactful collaborations in the choral field.

Representing the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) is Ann Meier-Baker, Director of Music & Opera, who oversees grantmaking to nonprofit choruses, chamber music organizations, jazz ensembles, and opera companies. Chorus America (CA) is represented by Kim Sidey, Director of Grants, who manages CA's grantmaking activities, including the notable Music Education Partnership program, which funds collaborations between community singing organizations and schools. The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation is represented by president and CEO, John Mlynczak.

The following commentary provided by these knowledgeable leaders dissects the anatomy of a truly successful and impactful collaboration. From their survey of the national field, their expertise serves as powerful testimony to how deeply choral music can make a difference through partnerships. While not every detail may be applicable to every choir, the ensuing responses offer a knowledgeable perspective on how choral leaders can leverage the ability of choral music to make a difference in the lives of their singers, audiences, and communities.

What role do collaborative efforts play in the art of choral singing?



Ann Meier-Baker (NEA): Choruses are all about collaboration. I once heard Anton Armstrong put it this way: “You’re a stand-out in choral singing when you don’t stand out.” Choral music depends on singers who listen, who pick up on one another’s contributions, and weave what each voice has to offer into the greater good. Each member must give a little here and take a little there in an effort to selflessly nurture the music for a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.



John Mlynczak (NAMM): Collaboration among ensembles nourishes the overall public view of the arts. By bringing people together, collaborative efforts strengthen perceptions of music advocacy, policymaking, and workforce development. When

people both in and out of the industry come together, their collective impact amplifies the need for funding and support of music and music education.




Kim Sidey (CA): Choral singing is inherently collaborative in nature. It taps into our human spirit and desire to connect with others, so it’s no surprise that partnerships can be key to promoting choral singing. Collaborations join together people from different groups, create spaces to reach people as they are, and become a vehicle for sharing new ideas and shared creativity.

What are some best practices that you’ve observed of impactful collaborative efforts that involve choral singing?

Meier-Baker (NEA): Effective collaborations include a few key elements. For one, the collaborators focus on what they’re going to *give* to the project, not just what they’ll get from it. Collaborative efforts can magnify the impact, but they also can significantly increase the amount of work and attention that each partner has to contribute.

Second, the most valuable collaborations are often not choruses working with other choruses. Rather, partnerships can be most powerful when different kinds of organizations work together to address an issue of overarching concern to their community. One example of this is the Urban Voices Project, an affiliate of the Street Symphony in Los Angeles. They provide accessible community singing and music education to unhoused individuals in Skid Row. They also offer special events throughout the year that connect participants to social services and health care.

Another example comes from rural Utah. To combat the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes, the Moab Music Festival collaborated with Japanese American composer and musician Kenji Bunch to create a work that shone light on the terrible history of confinement camps for Asians in the 1940s. Star Trek actor, author, and activist George Takei—who, with his family, spent four years in two internment camps—agreed to become the narrator for the piece. The partnership be-



tween the Festival, Bunch, and Takei eventually led to another original work that premiered in 2021 with support from the NEA.

In northeastern New York, the Saratoga Opera mounted a new production of composer Lembit Beecher and librettist Hannah Moscovitch's *Sky on Swings*, a musical and theatrical exploration of Alzheimer's disease as seen through the eyes of two women at different stages of dementia. They partnered with the Alzheimer's Association of Northeastern New York to create associated public events that explored the challenges of living with the disease and those caring for them.

One final element that unites these examples and so many others is the understanding that relationships among partners need to be nurtured and strengthened over time. Partnerships rely on people, and—just like any relationship—require open, thoughtful, and frequent communication about shared priorities and opportunities.

Sidey (CA): Many successful collaborations are community-led, where the needs and ideas of their stakeholders (e.g., participants, personnel, family members) shape programs and solutions that suit their local needs. Partners that engage in active listening and work from a curious mindset tend to learn a great deal from these types of individuals. Getting to know a community's needs and desires often helps partners articulate a shared definition of success.

Additionally, many impactful collaborations recognize that this type of work is people-powered. As such, they invest in individuals that make this work possible. Whether that means using grant funds to compensate teaching artists at fair market rates, supplementing teacher pay for additional assumed work, or financially honoring individuals for advisory roles, the act of recognizing the fair value of an individual's labor is an important part of a successful collaboration. When monetary compensation is not possible, project leaders might consider alternate forms of compensation, such as providing resources or supplies, offering professional development opportunities, and facilitating meaningful networking.

How do you measure the success of collaborations?

Meier-Baker (NEA): Measuring success can be difficult, which is why so many organizations resist doing it at all. From the onset, establishing clarity on a project's overarching goal is of primary importance. This goal must be routinely revisited and remain at the partners' top-of-mind so that any mid-course corrections can be made. A key question might be *what type of impact are you hoping to make?* For a broad impact, success may look like the total number of individuals reached. For a deeper impact, success may involve a smaller number of participants whose transformation demonstrates a lasting investment. Another common question relates to the "customer" of the project. Are they the singers themselves, or are you focusing more on the experience of the audience? Answering such questions will help identify which aspects of the project need to be measured to properly evaluate success.

Mlynczak (NAMM): It starts with clearly defined goals, a shared agenda, and individual roles and assignments for everyone involved. After continual progress, a first measure of success is the willingness of collaborators to continue to "show up" for the work at hand. At NAMM, a critical part of our work is building a coalition for music advocacy. In this space, success is defined by the readiness of individuals and organizations to continue to participate in advocacy work both at NAMM-sponsored national events, such as our policy-related work with federal legislators, and among grassroots efforts in their own communities.

Sidey (CA): Success can look very different from one project to another. In our grantmaking, we take time to learn and understand how projects define success and identify the changes they hope to observe or measure as a result of their work. As a funder, we rely on a partner's definition of success and not our own. Allowing grantees and project partners to define success is a valuable way of recognizing their community knowledge and expertise. Operating from a place of shared values nurtures freedom and trust to let grant partners define success and identify appropriate methods to observe or measure progress.

How might a choir obtain funding for a collaborative effort through your organization (or elsewhere)?

Sidey (CA): Applications for our Music Education Partnership occur every other year, and we are delighted to provide multi-year funding to support selected partnerships for two school years. This multi-year commitment echoes clear research that states longer-term support is critical for successful project implementation. As any choral educator will tell you, this type of work takes time.

Chorus America also supports the commissioning of new works through the Dale Warland Singers Commission Grant presented in partnership with the American Composers Forum. Eligibility for this opportunity rotates by chorus-type on a three-year cycle.

Meier-Baker (NEA): The application criteria and process is available to all on the NEA website, www.arts.gov. In my experience, however, seeking funding from grantmaking organizations isn't the only way to go about this. Sometimes, it's quicker and more efficient to ask individuals to financially support a project that you know they will care about. In reality, grantmaking agencies and foundations may change their focus from time-to-time. Meanwhile, people (especially local people) tend to stick with their priorities.

Mlynczak (NAMM): The NAMM Foundation supports the Best Communities for Music Education program. For over twenty-five years, this designation has celebrated districts and individual schools for their support and commitment to music and music education, as well as their efforts to ensure access to music for all students as part of a well-rounded education. While the Foundation does not provide direct grants to schools or organizations, working as a community to obtain this designation nurtures the local narrative surrounding music and music education and strengthens a compelling case for funding opportunities.

What advice would you give a choral leader who aspires to develop more impactful collaborations with their choir?

Sidey (CA): Prioritize shared goals and invest in your people. Remember, collaborations are driven primarily by people, so getting the right players and the right mindset in place is critical for success.


Meier-Baker (NEA): Choirs are composed of people with various skills, experiences, and networks. Each member of a partnership should have a tailored “job description” that will help them leverage their unique strengths for the good of the whole. It's easy to take a one-size-fits-all approach, but as is more often the case, one size only fits one. Be open to possibility.

Mlynczak (NAMM): Think big and believe in the power of a collective agenda. Music is a community-centered activity. Focusing on the local community and spreading the joy of music to those closest to you will ensure that support for music prevails over time.

Conclusion

ACDA's Advocacy statement says that choral music “builds connectivity throughout communities,” a sentiment certainly echoed by the organizations presented in this interview. Collaborative efforts among choral organizations and other partners, especially at the local level, yield a great potential to make a difference in the community and build considerable support for the future of choral music.

One thing is clear: one-sided partnerships are rarely successful. As the interviewees suggested, the development of successful partnerships—especially with collaborators outside the arts sector—require mutual goal setting, shared roles and responsibilities, and benchmarks for success. Prioritizing the local community's needs is especially key, and providing opportunities for stakeholder buy-in maximizes the potential for lasting change and impact.

As inherently communal entities, choirs have the ability to bring people together, build lasting relationships, and collectively create something remarkable. The possibility of partnerships—especially with organizations outside the realm of the arts—unlocks opportunities for new audiences, community investment, and lasting impact. 



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Miguel Raul Zayas,
George Mason University,
from Los Angeles, CA



"You can help students connect with music and each other in ways that they may not get in their day-to-day..."

Telah Harper,
George Mason University Student,
from Clinton, MD



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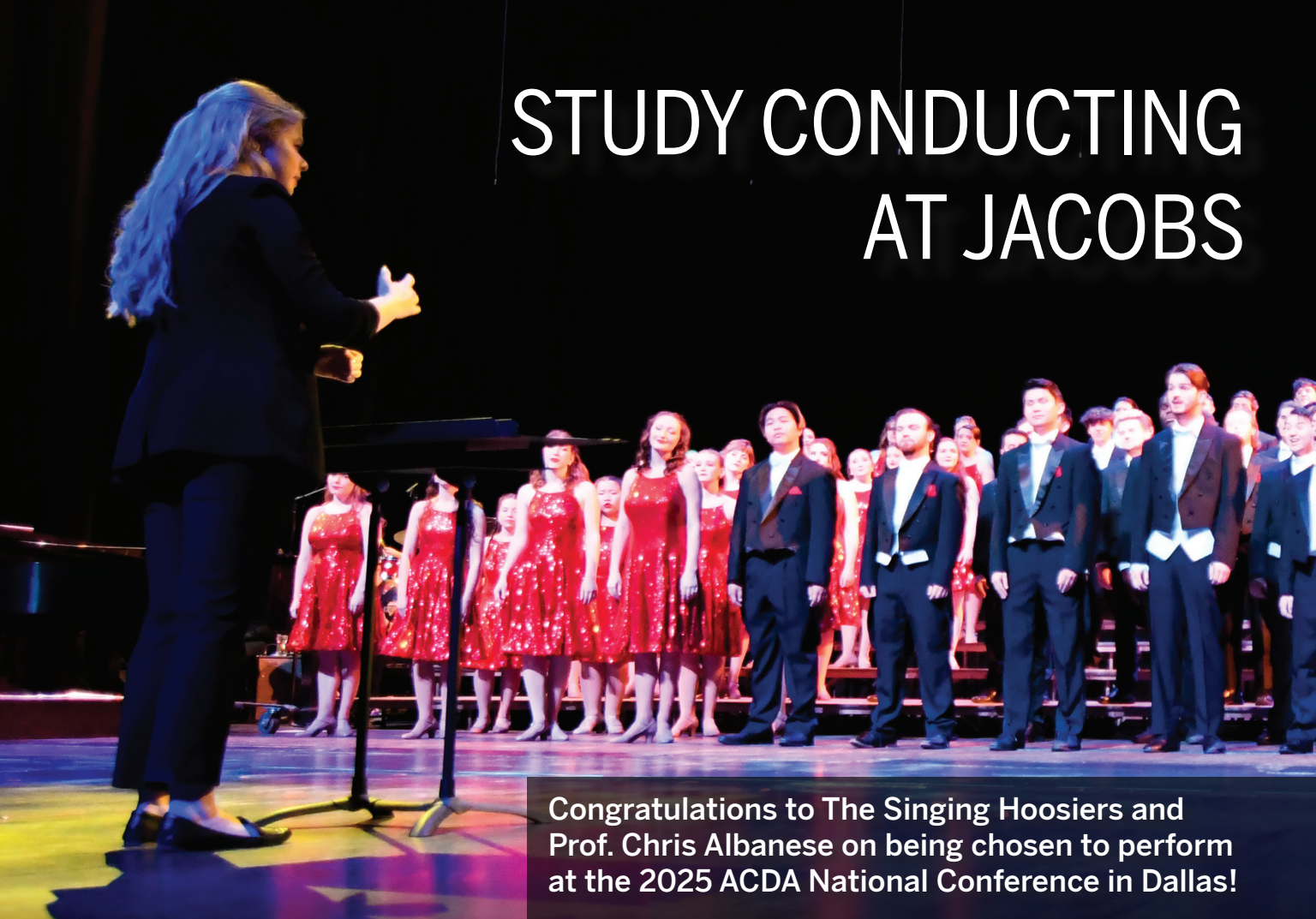
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CHORAL CONVERSATIONS



A Conversation on Collaboration with Judy Bowers

by Jeffrey Benson



Judy Bowers, Professor Emerita at the Florida State University College of Music, retired after almost three decades. Bowers has taught music education classes and choirs, in addition to conducting numerous all state/honor choirs in the U.S., Canada, and Africa. A unifying principle in all these settings has been the use of Developmental Teaching strategies, which allows singers of varying skills to successfully rehearse and perform together. Music partnerships between university students and school/community participants have served as building blocks for university students to master skills in music teaching. In 2014, Dr. Bowers was inducted as a Lowell Mason National Music Education Fellow.

How did your career filled with partnerships and collaborations get started?

First and foremost, I'm a teacher, and all of my collaborations/partnerships were a response to some problem or need in my classroom. I like partnerships because the premise of a true collaboration is that

it's a win-win. It's not a partnership if two groups or two people come together and one of them has all the power while the other does not. But if everybody wins, things are better, usually for everybody. It's a very positive way to live life. This was my rule from the earliest partnerships (I learned this in my counseling master's program). Each partner must benefit somewhat equally, and each has a voice in determining how the partnership might work. If all of us have a say, then it will likely be a success.

My starting point is always: know thyself! It's incredibly important to know who you are and know what you care about. For me, I always wanted to be a teacher. I wasn't sure it would be music until about the ninth grade, but always knew I'd be a teacher. In addition to music education degrees, I also hold a master's in guidance and counseling because I had no access to graduate music education study. We all know that we deal with music, but we deal with people first and foremost, so I thought counseling was a reasonable option. If we start from educating and wanting to help the whole person, then partnerships and collaborations naturally come out of that, and my graduate counseling study was a convenient accident.

When I started at the Florida State University, I was already an experienced teacher (sixteen years of K-12 teaching), but I was a brand-new college professor. I had to establish a means for success with undergraduate choral music education majors. Thus, I identified immediate challenges. Because student teachers were placed all over the state with few local placements nearby in Tallahassee, they needed to reach teaching independence before leaving for the internship. Thus, my first partnership was born: Adopt-a-Choir (AAC). This was specifically designed for my students who needed to gain practice and teaching independence before they left for student teaching.

AAC involved my college students partnering with at-risk high school students for learning three pieces alongside a college buddy and then performing together at the college choir concert. (This later evolved into adopting any choir from all levels of excellence and student experience.) Thus, students headed to internships were able to actively teach music to the AAC students in the partnership choir. Reflecting back on these partnerships, I now realize they were a rehearsal for student teaching, perhaps a “student teaching” for student teaching. This collaboration model is a short-term commitment of one semester (one and done, if needed).

Before the internship, it provided direct experience for university students to teach and work with all types of students (with two teachers in the room), as well as having my mentorship for planning and rehearsing the partnership choir. Over time, this evolved into having choral majors do the initial teaching at the three partnership rehearsals, pairing volunteer collegiate buddies and their adopted student. I also invited the partnership teacher to conduct one of the three songs. Area schools lined up to get “adopted,” and across my twenty-seven years at FSU (with 2 semesters per year = 54 semesters), I had AAC for thirty-nine semesters.

The short-term benefit for me was connection with area schools, because my college students could be out there any time I needed. The long-term benefits included enrollment gains in my university ensemble, as those singers, regardless of major, loved serving as mentors and singing buddies. During my first year (1990), there were twenty-two singers enrolled in my

treble, non-auditioned choir. As I continued to create collaborations, word spread and students found the choir. My peak enrollment was 108, though I preferred 70-80 for ease of managing everything and ensuring I still knew my students to some degree.

Were your collaborations organic or always well planned out from the start?

I always started with a plan, but things constantly changed as partnerships advanced. I originally wanted the teachers to introduce the three partnership songs to their choirs, and then my university buddies would have an after-school or weekend rehearsal together on those pieces, for at least three meetings. Adopted students attended the college dress rehearsal and joined us for the concert. My university choir volunteers received bonus points if they chose to participate. Initially, many non-major collegiate students were hesitant to try because some were not strong musicians and felt unprepared. I promised to make them successful; they were, and they loved it!

I always chose the repertoire, but the music reflected opportunities to learn specific concepts or skills chosen by the high school teacher (sight reading, singing high notes more effectively, structure of a mass, etc.—anything they wanted, this was their power). Each first rehearsal started with buddy assignments, and each buddy pair was assigned to a “teaching group.” I always used an ABA structure in these rehearsals, with A being music rehearsal and B providing social interactions among the partners, as planned by me. Initially I fully structured the student interactions and guided the interviews with handouts I created. During rehearsal (A), buddies reinforced my teaching by reteaching the task to each other. For more complicated things, buddies joined their small teaching groups such that a music major (usually choral music education) ran the mini rehearsal to fix things we were addressing.

At some point, other partnership opportunities began to magically appear, so I moved from only short-term, one-semester commitments, to long-term investments. These new settings still involved people working together for common success, but the time commitment and the ability to control important aspects took

more time and attention. That being said, these collaborations were aimed at powerful systemic change, thus commitments on my part were in terms of years rather than semesters. Three important long-term partnerships include: 1) Florida State University/Raa Middle School (instrumental and choral music education); 2) Middle School Memphis (Memphis City School District/University of Memphis/Choral Clinician); 3) MTC Glee Club (FSU singers, Gadsden County Correctional participants).

Did Middle School Memphis come from a need within your own classroom? How did that partnership come about?

Memphis City Schools, which is an urban school district, had middle school programs that had been decimated by a number of things over the years. There were thirty-seven middle schools, but only twenty-three had choral music teachers. Most were struggling, though four or five programs were considered quite good. Overall, many Memphis middle schools were struggling programs with teachers who were trying their best but barely surviving. It had gotten to the point where the high school choral programs were being negatively impacted, and some of these schools were nationally recognized choirs.

When they first called me, I thought, “I’m in Tallahassee and you’re in Memphis. This is not going to work.” But I had a connection at the University of Memphis. Dr. Nicole Robinson had been a former FSU student, and the Memphis City School District was willing to help create a partnership that could include all three participants. Jim Holcomb was an extraordinary fine arts supervisor, so he and Nicole convinced me that I would just have to come up to Memphis and become the person who retrained the teachers to use effective teaching strategies in order to meet standards found in the Tennessee State music curriculum. Basically, I was recreating my undergrad FSU methods class, but in smaller steps with more repetitions. Between my class meetings, Nicole Robinson reviewed classroom management, pacing, teacher effectiveness, etc., as well as providing unlimited support through site visits to assist teachers alongside Jim Holcomb.

Memphis City Schools and the University of Memphis created a partnership in response to a middle school choral music problem. They convinced me that providing a core of strong, effective choral teachers would be a powerful contribution to the thousands of middle students the teachers served; I was hooked. So I went many, many times. (We planned it for three years, but it turned into six years.) Honestly, it was so much harder than we all thought it would be, but I will go to my grave feeling deeply proud of those teachers in Memphis. They showed up on a Friday night, from 5pm to 8pm and then again Saturday mornings until noon. I’m sure not all of them loved it. They didn’t trust me for the longest time; I was surprised by this. Though I already had experience teaching in a challenging at-risk school early in my own career, it was really eye opening for me to once again have a first-hand view, now in a challenging urban setting. I gained so much insight about things to do and things not to do. Urban schools are different experiences for students and teachers than suburban and rural schools, whether all students are personally at risk or not. All three settings (rural, suburban, urban) have their own unique challenges.

So, can we make change through partnerships like this? Yes. Is it easy? No. Is it worthwhile? Yes. I believe collaborative projects and partnerships can bring out the very best in people. It takes patience and the consistency of folks fully buying in and committing to the mutual goals of a collaboration. I left Memphis admiring those teachers so very much. They started at the most difficult place I could have ever imagined, but they were good people who truly cared. They had the support of a supervisor of music and an outstanding music education professor. The University of Memphis played a big role in that partnership, and they managed to pull it all together. To this day, those teachers are still doing great work.

It may feel like choosing which child is your favorite, but what was your most memorable collaboration?

Truthfully, every partnership had some very wonderful aspects, especially our collaboration with Raa

Middle School in Tallahassee. When you get a lot of middle school kids excited to sing with college students, the nonsense that comes out of their mouths is often hysterical. And there were wonderful things about Middle School Memphis. But if I had to choose only one partnership, I think I would say the MTC Glee Club, involving women in prison singing with buddies from the Florida State University choir (Photo 1). I believe it is fair to say that every single FSU student experienced at least one epiphany while working with individual buddies in the prison choir. We always included time in the middle of rehearsal for collective activities with students and their buddies that did not involve singing. I focused on an ABA rehearsal format (the B section was a communication circle for discussions). It was truly life changing in many different ways for all of us.

Early in this partnership, it hit me so deeply when one woman in the prison choir walked up to me and said, “Dr. Bowers, I just wanna tell you I didn’t want to come to choir today. You know, I wanted to sing, but I just felt I’ve had the worst day of my life. But I feel much better now. Our songs saved me today.” That day opened my eyes to the experience of these women and what music and this collaboration meant to them. We learn (and teach) so much empathy through partnerships like this one. *Watch a video about this partnership that was put together by the Gadsden Correctional Facility.* Either scan the QR code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n7xr63c>.



That sounds tremendously rewarding. How did that empathy impact other collaborations for you and your students?

Helping others provides reinforcement all on its own. However, not only is contributing to others beneficial, it’s the insight that occurs from having multiple people know something about others, even when people are simply able to accept the differences. This was particularly apparent to me in the Adopt-a-Choir with the Senior Singers (a county funded group of senior citizens who sang in a partnership choir with FSU singers). Ultimately, when they knew each other, they

overwhelmingly liked each other.

When we first began this partnership, I paired my university students with their senior singer buddies. I was working on a paper at the time, so I was collecting data hoping to show the world that music could change ideas and opinions. I had been reading about how older people really get sick and tired of adolescents and college-aged folks. And college students get really impatient with older people, so I planned a pre/posttest to measure changes in attitudes. I passed out pre-surveys and asked the seniors to rate their feelings on a continuum between two adjectives (thoughtful/selfish, etc.) about adolescents and university students. Conversely, I asked the university buddies to rate the same scale but responding about their attitudes toward senior citizens. I was a bit surprised by responses (much more negative than expected for both groups).

Across the semester of rehearsal during the B of the ABA format, each pair discussed assigned topics and then analyzed together how old and young might view things differently and perhaps some reasons why. During the connection time (the B portion of rehearsal), these barriers started to break down. After the post-test, the attitude scores were a bit higher, though not by much. However, most of the seniors wrote notes on the back of their score sheets explaining to me that they answered honestly about people in general, but their college buddies were clearly not the ones honking at them when the stoplight turned green. They assured me that the FSU students were far superior than other young people in the world. (Of course they were not. There are good people everywhere!) These college students weren’t the ones revving their engines loudly or speeding around them on the local roads. They had genuinely made some true connections through their stories and sharing of life experiences.

I will not forget the day a senior buddy responded to a discussion prompt about some memorable moment involving music that was personally important. He was British and spoke of being in London during World War II and enduring the heavy bombing. The power was out, there was no food or water, and he sat through either stone silence or extremely loud bomb explosions. Police sent everyone into the underground train stations and told them to silently stay there or risk injury



Screenshot from the Gadsden Correctional Facility video showing a collaboration with the MTC Glee Club. Scan the QR code on the previous page to view the full video.

or death. This much-loved senior softly described the challenges of keeping small children and babies contained and quiet.

It evidently became very tense as time passed, plus a lack of food and water continued. Several men slipped out and managed to get into a bar that had an old piano, which they brought underground in the dark of night. Although the bombs were still loud and it was still pitch dark, someone began playing the piano and everyone began to softly “sing their hearts out,” as he described it. You could have heard a pin drop in our choir; we were almost holding our breath throughout his description. He shared that he would never forget that moment. He had always loved music and singing, and he would always sing because it made his life a little better.

Across this partnership, we worked to prepare beautiful music for the concert. But more importantly, we actually started to see stereotypes break down, opinions change, and real relationships flourish among people who viewed the world in different ways.

What were some of the most difficult aspects of your collaborations? If you could go back in

time, how might you do one or two things differently?

Do you know what you need to avoid at all costs? You don’t want to work with somebody who just needs you to do something for them, perhaps treating you like someone who can check off an item on their to-do list. This potential disaster is prevented if a collaboration gives equal work and equal benefit to both parties. However, if someone has a need and their solution is simply asking you to do it, this is a very unequal pairing and resentment may well result. “Saving” some group or person can also become a negative, as it may seem condescending or not equally beneficial. Of course, dumping a problem on someone, particularly if one has authority over the other, is equally unfair. In addition, we should not agree to a partnership that requires us to do something we don’t necessarily support.

Years ago, a grant opportunity came my way for the Raa Middle School/Florida State University partnership. It was more than \$20,000, which was exciting. However, one grant component asked that the partnership participants help publicize their grant dollars provided. When I asked what this would look like, the

supervisor said noontime concerts for local community clubs and newspaper photos of the at-risk students being served. My response was twofold: 1) I couldn't ask university students to miss their classes in the middle of the day, and 2) I could not support newspaper photos labeling the middle school students in the program as at risk. I took the grant but negotiated the terms.

So, if you are partnering with another group, find the people who want to solve the problems together. Don't let them just give you their problems, hoping you'll solve it for them. It's easy to say yes, but much more challenging to remove yourself from that situation if it becomes negative. It really winds up not being collaborative at all.

I had a wonderful partnership in place with Raa Middle School, strongly supported by the principal, music faculty, general faculty and FSU music education program. We had before-school jazz, steel pans, strings, and a world music choir—it was wonderful. My students were able to pull off their own full concerts with Raa Middle School, and then they moved seamlessly to their student teaching because of that Raa partnership.

How might we encourage those who may be feeling discouraged or having a hard time finding the time for a partnership? What are the best steps to take in a collaborative direction?

1. Make a plan. What do you want to accomplish? Is there a problem, or do you want to add something to your choral program that would benefit your program or your students?
2. Start small so you can control most things that might make you miserable as you learn from mistakes.
3. Adopt-a-Choir (AAC) is easy to do. I've had many former students set up a short-term, combined event with feeder programs. A teacher in South Carolina decided to create AAC with middle school singers and volunteer singers in a nursing home. Most any combination of singers can be adopted if approached in a tactful, diplomatic way.
4. If your choral program is not currently thriving, then

connect with someone who can help you. If you are not a singer and tone is not happening, partner with a voice person—you'll have to think of something valuable to them that can make this an equally beneficial event.

5. Rule of thumb: if you drive by a school each day as you go to work and you know that the program is struggling, perhaps you could connect with them in some small way that might be helpful and that would also allow your students to gain something as well. Don't just reach out to "save" a teacher or program that is struggling. The secret is for you to need something they could contribute to help you or your students. There needs to be a sense of equality, a mutual contribution and mutual benefit.

The Raa MS program was valued by the middle school students because I asked them to invest in making the FSU student teachers the best on the planet. To do that, we needed middle school singers who would work hard, pay attention, and then politely verbally provide specific examples of successful teaching during that rehearsal. They knew their job was to help me make them better and they took it seriously (and they also loved having all those highly motivated young teachers trusting them to help). This school district had once been a fabulous place to attend but had suffered student enrollment loss due to families moving farther out to the suburbs. This FSU/Raa partnership turned the school around. Anyone requesting to attend was accepted, and more than 100 academically moderate to very strong students transferred to the school for the arts enrichment provided by FSU College of Music.

Has advocacy for the choral art played a role in your career? How do we explain to the general population (to parents, administrators, and our audiences) that we are a naturally collaborative field and we provide more than excellent music?

I don't consider myself particularly strong as a professional advocate—I don't think I do that very effectively. During my career at Florida State University, I found my colleagues involved in the Florida Music Educators Association (FMEA) to be amazing advocates,

so I looked to those experts to be the professional voice. However, I do believe that collaborations and partnerships greatly increase visibility, and it helps to have more people in the community knowing what goes on in our music programs. For those teachers who feel invisible to administration or parents or professional music groups, a partnership might advance your cause.

I once took an Adopt-a-Choir tour with my ensemble to various community colleges in Florida, where we then invited high schools to join all of us—each choir sang individually and then we combined for three AAC pieces. I wanted to ensure that community colleges felt connected to a four-year school (many students transfer to in-state public universities), while also giving them an opportunity to provide services for high schools in their area (on-site hosting of the partnership event).

It's important to think about advocacy through the lens of partnerships because it naturally amplifies your

voice. If only one person is speaking up in your community, it could truly be the most important thing in the world, or it could be someone whining to people they don't know, like the local school board or administration. But if you've got partnerships going, people start to take notice. You've naturally doubled your participants and you have raised the volume of your voice in your school, community, and beyond. This allows individual teachers to broaden their influence, professional leadership, mentorship, and expand horizons for their students. Through our actions, we're really able to advocate more meaningfully. Advocacy naturally comes out of the collaborative process.

Advocacy is not a single person or even a group of people using their words to say, "we need this," or "why aren't you supporting us here?" Through the collaborative aspects of the partnerships we make, we are demonstrating to communities what advocacy looks like.

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Associate Professor Nathan D'Shon Myers conducts the ASU Gospel Choir.

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Audiences see positive collaborations and outstanding performances that result from the combined efforts of a partnership. They see hard work and success demonstrated by our students in conjunction with the other partnership participants.

Do you want to know the biggest key to success? When you are partnering with other groups, the performance must be good. This is my unbreakable rule! Even if you have to select music that is quite easy, it can still be a beautiful performance. Difficulty level doesn't matter if everything else is beautifully done. It's our duty to make sure that AAC events and performances are respectable and high quality.

What do you see as the future of choral music in America, especially when thinking about collaboration?

I've been thinking about this a lot recently because the next ACDA conference in Dallas will have the theme, "Celebrating the Choral Art: Past, Present, and Future." If you think about the history of music education in America, in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, we focused on creating ensembles and participating in shared competitions. We spent decades making beautiful music, and we didn't worry too much about training and music education because most people grew up around music. Many took piano lessons and sang or played music every week in their homes. And then we got to about the 1960s and 1970s and realized not everyone had that musical background anymore; we realized we needed music literacy, so sight reading and score study became real parts of national guidelines for curriculum. We wanted music education for all because music is the key to making everyone's life richer.


And so we get to today. In order for choral music to continue its vibrancy in school and community settings, we need to ensure all our students have opportunities to become independent musicians. We need conductors and teachers to fully embrace developmental teaching! Developmental teaching is less important in highly selective schools that have hundreds of trained singers, where most choristers are already high-achieving independent musicians. That's not the norm throughout a large percentage of U.S. schools, especially smaller

schools, rural schools, and schools without adequate funding or administrative support. It's also not the norm in many church or community choirs.

We should be able to combine novice singers who know little about music with more experienced singers. This can be done without some singers feeling lost or some hating it and becoming bored. Mixed-ability choirs can be successful, and those singers can be happy together if a teacher chooses to embrace developmental teaching.

All the partnerships I have created include singers of diverse levels of skill, training, and talent. I repeat: *Teaching in such a way that singers with limited experience can work together with expert singers is not impossible!* For example, I always quickly teach my "Rules for Expressive Singing." This is simply a shortcut to achieve the performance you desire with students who may lack the independence to look at the page and know what to do. Performing things correctly seems like a good first step (follow the rules), and then across time with sequenced instruction about how a singer can determine when to use a rule, our singers can demonstrate independent musical knowledge and skill.

If we are truly focusing on developmental teaching with effective pacing and feedback, where the sequencing is broken down, we're creating repetitions for the new singers and the superstars alike. One group is learning basic information (perhaps for the first time), while the more experienced group may be memorizing or singing in quartets around the room, etc., but all in response to effective teaching modeled or taught by the teacher. We give everyone a chance to succeed, and it doesn't bore students who can become off task and disruptive—they are all engaged at some level. The future is bright if we all commit to teaching singers musical independence. We can't let people fail when we are changing so many lives for the good.

I especially want interested (and sometimes very talented) singers who have not had any musical opportunities to *not* be "auditioned out" of a choir. Instead, I am hopeful we will all learn to "teach people in." Partnerships and collaborations can help us accomplish this goal. 



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The conference opens on the evening of Tuesday, March 18, with the Welcome to Dallas Concert. This will be followed by three full days of performances, interest sessions, exhibitions, headlining performances, and the ACDA Honor Choirs. Be sure to plan to stay through Saturday evening for the full conference experience.

Creating an Adaptive Choir: A Journey of Inclusivity

BRANDI DIGNUM



Brandi Dignum
Music Consulting LLC
Director of Education, Tucson Girls Chorus
brandi@dignums.com

Every student deserves the opportunity to experience the joy and transformative power of choral singing and all that comes with it: expression, creativity, leadership, confidence, belonging, and inclusion. Inclusivity, in its various forms, entails recognizing and celebrating the unique strengths of every singer. When considering neurodivergent singers, it is important to create a community where diversity is embraced and talents are showcased. Bringing neurodivergent and neurotypical singers together emphasizes the belief that every voice is significant and every singer is valued. This conviction underpins a special type of ensemble: the Adaptive Choir.

What is an Adaptive Choir?

There are a variety of ways to include neurodivergent singers in the choral program. A common approach is whole-group integration, where students of varying abilities are integrated into the existing choral structure. This method necessitates adjusting the music skill level and performance expectations daily, especially during competitions. As one might imagine, there are significant challenges with this model, especially when one considers the barriers to learning for the neurodivergent population. These barriers might be visual (e.g., reading skills, visual impairment, dyslexia, and tracking difficulties); physical (motor control, speech speed, range); and cognitive (understanding musical concepts and complexity).¹

Meanwhile, an Adaptive Choir is crafted to ensure that all students have equal access to musical experiences tailored to their cognitive and physical abilities. This unique model provides neurodivergent singers with a place of belonging within the choir department. By design, these groups integrate neurodivergent and neurotypical singers together in a learning environment primarily catered to the needs of its neurotypical members. This collaborative approach highlights the distinctiveness of each student while fostering unity within the choir family.



While Adaptive Choirs provide a special place for neurodivergent singers, some may express the desire to participate in neurotypical choirs as well. Indeed, there have been successful examples of singers participating in both neurotypical and Adaptive Choirs simultaneously. The decision to sing in both ensemble models stems from the desire to sing with friends in the Adaptive Choir, while also seeking additional opportunities to sing and perform at a higher level in the neurotypical choir. The unique abilities of each singer should be carefully considered when choosing placement in a specific choir or choirs within the choral program. Adaptive Choirs lay a foundation of inclusion for singers that might not have an opportunity to participate otherwise, yet they should not be limiting for the neurodivergent singer.

Similarities and Differences

What are the similarities and differences between an Adaptive Choir and a neurotypical choir? There are many similarities, especially the artistic richness and depth. Both choirs also require repertoire that is age appropriate, suits the vocal range of the ensemble, matches the skill level of the singers, and is musically engaging. They equally need structured lessons to reinforce the fundamental musical concepts embedded within the repertoire. Additionally, fostering a classroom culture of inclusion and acceptance within individual choirs and the broader choir community is imperative to ensure that students perceive choir as a safe and supportive environment that is conducive to musical exploration.


The key difference lies in adaptability. In an Adaptive Choir, every facet of the music is tailored to accommodate the cognitive and physical needs of the singers. This may entail simplifying melodies; modifying lyrics;



2023 Class Photo of the Adaptive Choir at Canyon del Oro High School in Tucson, Arizona. Used with permission.

or utilizing diverse activities aimed at engaging students through various modalities, such as integrating body percussion, instrumental accompaniment, and sign language. It is also essential to model for singers, caregivers, and the community what success can look like for this type of ensemble. Celebrating the unique abilities of this group—such as independently walking onto the stage, putting forth effort during performances, and showcasing the wonderful musical contributions of the performers—is key to understanding and acceptance.

Carl Orff famously stated, “Since the beginning of time, children have not liked to study. They would much rather play, and if you have their interests at heart, you will let them learn while they play.” Indeed, Orff’s philosophy of playful exploration of music is well at home among Adaptive Choirs. Incorporating multiple modalities such as singing, moving, listening, playing, and responding can create a dynamic learning environment where every student can actively participate and thrive. Providing various avenues for engagement is crucial for fostering student success. Offering choices in rehearsal gives agency to the singer and helps them personally connect to their learning. These choices could include assisting with repertoire selection and arranging, cre-



ating movement, and improvising. When considering the curriculum, it's important to select repertoire that addresses relatable social-emotional topics, captures the interest of the singers, and is easily accessible or adaptable. Music selections that have proven highly effective for Adaptive Choirs include unison pieces, call-and-response arrangements, and compositions where the teacher engages their own ingenuity to offer opportunities for lyric and melody writing for their students' diverse needs. The use of simple percussion parts and choreography can yield success as well.

Collaboration is essential for the success of Adaptive Choirs. In school settings, the Adaptive Choir might be best executed as a partnership between the Special Education department. By fostering discussions with departmental teachers, Adaptive Choirs can be specifically built with its prospective members in mind. Interactions among neurotypical and neurodivergent singers fosters a spirit of collaboration as well. The former serve as peer leaders and as singing partners that ensure the unity of the ensemble. Equally important is the Adaptive Choir's opportunity to perform both as an independent ensemble and as a collaboration with others. This model creates a sense of autonomy, belonging, mutual respect, and pride.

Preparing for Instruction

Before the teaching process begins, it may be necessary to modify or simplify selected music to ensure that students can approach it without frustration. For example, the amount of text in a song or the tempo at which the text is sung might necessitate modifications to the lyrics for neurodivergent students with speech challenges. To facilitate successful pronunciation, certain words may need to be omitted and replaced with activities like body percussion, instrument play, or choreography. Alternatively, this could be an opportunity for collaborative lyric writing or focusing on singing specific important words instead of entire lines. The musical content itself might also be worth examining for adaptation, especially with regard to the melodic range and harmonic complexity. In these instances, in unison or simplifying rhythmic phrases could increase a singer's potential for success.

To reinforce memory and cognition, it is beneficial to incorporate general music activities that emphasize key musical concepts. This practice can be expanded through the integration of instrumentation, movement, visual aids (scarves, games, books, videos), listening exercises, and improvisation. Given the shorter attention span of neurodivergent singers, it is essential that Adaptive Choirs maintain high levels of engagement by varying activities frequently and providing multiple modes of interaction. Offering visual, auditory, and kinesthetic options within each class helps accommodate diverse learning styles and sustain a high level of engagement.

Ways to Adapt

Text: Verbose lyrics or words that are meant to be sung at a fast tempo may require alteration.

- Pull out important words from the lyrics at large for the students to sing and omit smaller, perhaps less necessary, words.
- Adapt the lyrics for better facility, or perhaps engage the students' creativity and creating alternative lyrics.
- Build new meaning for the piece among the students by writing an additional verse as a group.
- When combining with other choirs, have the neurotypical ensembles sing the fast rhythmic passages while the Adaptive Choir performs a movement instead.

Free play: Difficult lyrical passages and extended instrumental interludes invite free play and improvisation on classroom instruments to maintain engagement.

- Reinforce the steady beat by allowing singers to play it on an instrument that complements the song's timbre and key.
- Use pitched instruments with a prepared tonal set (e.g., pentatonic) to accompany an instrumental interlude or to create an introduction or tag.
- Utilize vocal sound effects that can emphasize the

mood or setting of the piece, such as a rain storm or animal sounds.

Range: The pitches of a song's melody may require modification to accommodate the tessitura of the choir. For particularly challenging passages, consider crafting an adapted melody that has a more limited tonal range that matches the students' abilities.

Sign Language: Utilizing sign language on key words helps with memorization. This may also help those with hearing impairments feel more integrated within the group.

Movement: Create movements to reinforce or illustrate musical concepts.

- Use sweeping arm motions in an arch to demonstrate elongated, legato phrases.
- Emphasize staccato with short, dart-like hand or finger motions.
- Use stomps to reinforce rests along with other body gestures to help with breath intake, cutoffs, and concluding consonants.
- Create motions that emulate dynamic contrast, such as small movements for soft sections and larger, bolder ones for louder sections.

Adaptive Choir in Action: "Shine Like Stars" by Pinkzebra

Let's adapt Pinkzebra's "Shine Like Stars" for Adaptive Choir. Available in a variety of voicings, this piece could be performed as a standalone piece by the Adaptive Choir or alongside other choirs. Let's consider some potential adaptations.

First, to address visual barriers, consider creating a color-coded lyrics page (see sidebar on the next page) that differentiates between verses, refrains, and repeated sections. Words highlighted in blue, which are not repeated, can be reinforced through some simple sign language.

Next, let's consider some modification for the rapidly delivered lyrics beginning with "Listen up." One possibility would be to omit these sections (or perhaps have them sung by another choir) while the Adaptive Choir performs some free play on classroom instruments to the steady beat.

Choreography can help with ensemble unification and to reinforce musical concepts. During the chorus (highlighted in yellow), a simple leg pat can be used to unify the ending "s" of "stars." During gradual crescendo of the tag (highlighted in green), body movements that scale up in size can reflect dynamic growth. Additional movements can be used at other moments during the song to aid with memorization and melodic contour.

Watch the Adaptive Choir at Canyon del Oro High School (Tucson, AZ) perform "Shine Like Stars" with these suggested adaptations either by viewing the QR code or visiting <https://tinyurl.com/yvtezecf>.



Tips for Starting Your Own Adaptive Choir Program

The process of creating an inclusive choir program demands dedication, advocacy, collaboration, and a willingness to think creatively. To determine feasibility, begin by assessing the school population and consulting with administrators and special education teachers. Next, determine if a course format exists within the school catalog that could serve as the foundation of the class. If not, start advocating for its inclusion with school officials and other stakeholders.


Data is a powerful tool that can be used to build support for Adaptive Choirs. Existing programs, such as those at Park Hill School District in Kansas City, Missouri, and at Canyon del Oro High School in Tucson, Arizona, can provide example curriculum. Once established, be sure to build data collection measures during the Adaptive Choir's first year to evaluate success and ensure future support.

Funding is always an important consideration. Work with district officials to identify funding sources, perhaps through the Special Education department, to provide

for teacher salary, sheet music, instruments, adaptive aids, and other teaching and performance tools. Private support through local foundations, businesses, or even social service organizations can be viable as well.

Powerful and Positive Outcomes

Adaptive Choirs are already making their mark on the choral landscape. At one site in Tucson, Arizona, a neurodivergent student reported that “I like the friends that I made.” A neurotypical peer leader shared: “Music has been one of my passions and adaptive music is a place where I can explore that passion in a safe place while having the ability to help others.”

Ultimately, the journey of creating an Adaptive Choir is one that is equally gratifying, challenging, and empowering. To witness the remarkable growth and confidence in neurodivergent singers—people who are often overlooked in traditional ensemble settings—and those who sing alongside them is nothing short of inspirational. The impact of an Adaptive Choir can be deep and rewarding, but it cannot be done alone. It requires communication, collaboration, and an embrace of inclusivity. With these ingredients, an Adaptive Choir can enrich any choral program and create a more vibrant and harmonious community. 

NOTES

¹ When employing an adaptive model, it is crucial to structure lessons using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure success for all singers. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>; readers may also find information in Kathryn L. Evans, “Universal Design for Learning: Embracing Learner Variability in Choral Ensembles,” *Choral Journal* 64, no. 7 (March/April 2024): 8-20.

Shine Like Stars by Pinkzebra

Verse 1:

I'm dreaming wide awake
This is the life I make
Don't need a holiday
To make me feel this way

8 counts - Rhythm Activity

8 counts - Rhythm Activity

I want you to know

Chorus:

Oh yeah, we shine like stars
Oh yeah, we shine like stars

Verse 2:

What are we waiting for?
It seems we still want more
No one can take away
The dreams we have today

8 counts - Rhythm Activity

8 counts - Rhythm Activity

I want you to know

Chorus:

Oh yeah, we shine like stars
Oh **yeah**, we shine like stars
Like stars
Like stars

Tag:

Oh we shine, we shine like stars.
We shine, we shine 4X

Chorus:

Oh yeah, we shine like stars
Oh **yeah**, we shine like stars
Like stars
Like stars

Oh yes we shine like stars!



ACDA NATIONAL
2025
March 18-22 Dallas, TX

Call for Research Poster Sessions
2025 ACDA National Conference
Dallas, Texas
March 18-22, 2025

The American Choral Directors Association will sponsor a research session at the conference in Dallas, Texas, March 18 - 22, 2025. The intent of the research poster session is to bring current research to light that impacts and informs our profession and to encourage our colleagues in the choral world to stay in touch with research in choral music. We want to showcase the scholarship that is currently being done--including studies focusing on rehearsal techniques, performance practice, repertoire choice, or trends within the choral field. Of particular interest are papers about repertoire, performance practice, conducting pedagogy, rehearsal pedagogy, vocal development, critical editions, theoretical analysis that impacts performance, and research on vocal or compositional practices in contemporary choral music.

A poster session is a research report format used widely in the natural and social sciences, and increasingly in the humanities. The poster session space will include an easel that will accommodate up to a 36" x 48" poster. Your poster should be a single full color document no larger than 36" x 48" inches in size light enough to be pinned on the display board with push pins (the conference venue will have pins available).

1. Abstracts submitted for presentation must comply with the following guidelines:

(a) If the data have been presented in whole or substantive part in any forum or at previous research sessions, a statement specifying particulars of the above must be included with the submission; and papers presented at other conferences will be considered only if the audience was substantially different (e.g., a state meeting or a university symposium). A statement specifying particulars of past presentation and venue must be included with the submission.

(b) The paper may have been submitted 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, quantitative, or qualitative studies must conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition, 2020). Authors of other types of studies (e.g., historical, theoretical) may submit manuscripts that conform to either *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (K. L. Turabian, 8th edition, 2013) or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition, 2003).

3. The following items are required for submission: An abstract of no more than 3000 characters (including references) summarizing your research purpose, method, results, discussion, and implications. The name(s) or affiliation(s) of anyone involved in the submission must not appear in the abstract. Incomplete submissions (e.g., those discussing proposed research without any findings) will be rejected.

The submission form will also ask if this is your first time submitting to the research poster session as well as if you are a member of a historically marginalized group. These questions, in an effort toward equity and inclusion, will have no bearing in the blind review process, but will help ensure that emerging scholars as well as scholarship from diverse perspectives appear on the national research program.

Presenters must be current members of ACDA, and all persons whose work is selected for inclusion on the program are expected to register for the conference. It is understood that ACDA will not assume financial responsibility for travel, food, or lodging for poster session presenters. Your submission implies that you are prepared to travel and present at the conference if accepted.

4. The submission must be submitted to our online portal, Submittable, by 11:59 PM CST October 31, 2024.

Extensions will not be granted. You can access the submission portal by visiting:

<https://acdanational.submittable.com/submit>

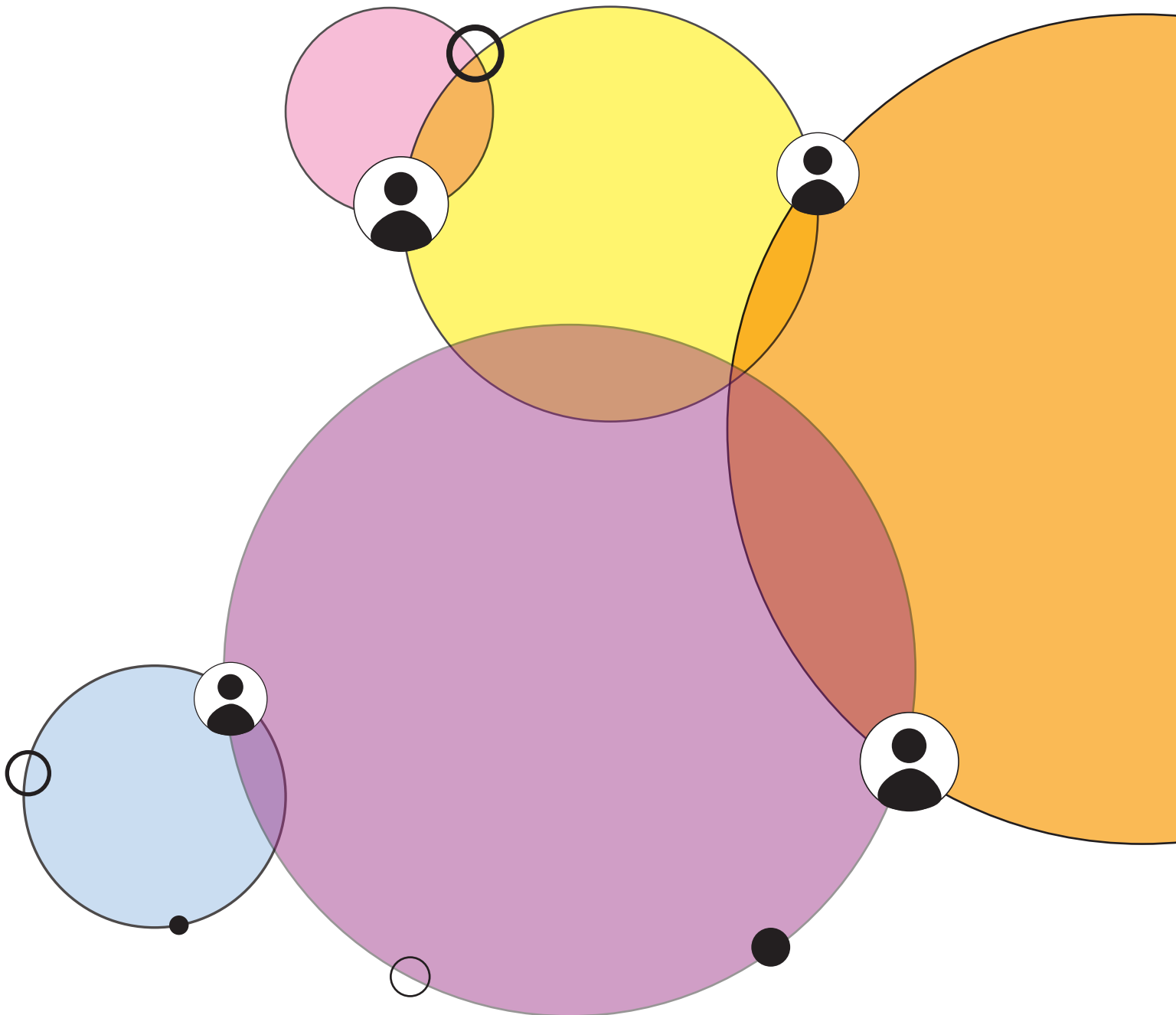
5. All submissions will be blind peer-reviewed by a committee of scholars. Applicants will be notified of the status of their submission via email by December 15, 2024.

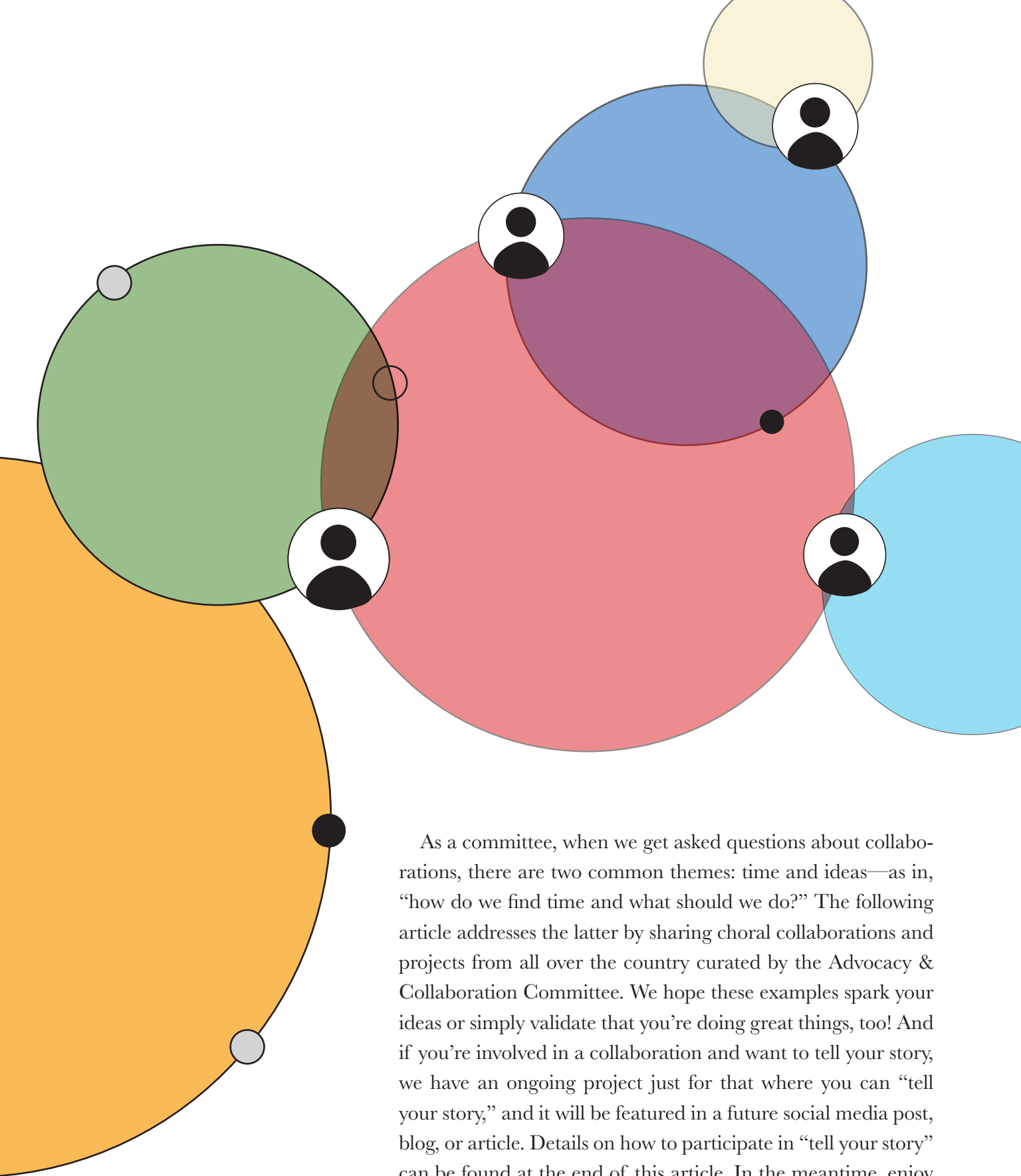


An example of poster session boards from the 2023 National Conference in Cincinnati.

Collaboration Spotlights

Compiled by the Members of the
Advocacy & Collaboration Committee





As a committee, when we get asked questions about collaborations, there are two common themes: time and ideas—as in, “how do we find time and what should we do?” The following article addresses the latter by sharing choral collaborations and projects from all over the country curated by the Advocacy & Collaboration Committee. We hope these examples spark your ideas or simply validate that you’re doing great things, too! And if you’re involved in a collaboration and want to tell your story, we have an ongoing project just for that where you can “tell your story,” and it will be featured in a future social media post, blog, or article. Details on how to participate in “tell your story” can be found at the end of this article. In the meantime, enjoy these dynamic and diverse collaborations.

Back Bay Chorale

Submitted by: Susanne Powers, Executive Director

Location: Boston, Massachusetts

www.bbcboston.org

Program or Project Title:

Bridges ESOL Chorus



Through the universal language of music, the ESOL Chorus provides a powerful platform for English-language learners from various backgrounds to come together, make music, and find joy and community amidst the challenges they face. The ESOL Chorus serves as a beacon of hope and solidarity for individuals navigating the complexities of adapting to a new language and culture. Through our partnership with the Boston Public Library we have been able to create an environment that fosters language acquisition and cultural exchange. From September through May, our weekly classes create an inviting community of Back Bay Chorale volunteers and Boston-area English learners to make music together and sing in public performances in Boston.

The program teaches music literacy, English vocabulary, and vocal technique, as well as conversational skills. Many of our ESOL students are immigrants who seek the opportunity to make connections in the community. Our community engagement coordinator and Bridges choral director, Riikka Pietiläinen-Caffrey, and our Back Bay Chorale volunteers create a safe, re-

laxed, and fun way for English language learners to feel equally empowered when making music together. In all other aspects of daily life, having a significant language barrier limits one's opportunity for full individual expression. But music is the great equalizer where people united in song become one cohesive micro-community, and where everyone belongs equally.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

Many non-English-speaking immigrants are at risk of experiencing loneliness and isolation. A recent UCLA study shows the rate of serious psychological distress more than doubled between 2019-2021 for immigrants who have been in the U. S. fewer than five years. The Back Bay Chorale offers an innovative way to combat the stresses related to navigating daily life and an increasing anti-immigration rhetoric in the U. S. We offer a community where new English skills are being practiced in a fun and safe setting, while forging meaningful friendships. Through IPA and carefully chosen repertoire, the newly acquired vocabulary is being reinforced, requiring the singer to pronounce the text rhythmically and unified through repertoire. During class, our students are given the opportunity and time to share elements of their cultural backgrounds and other personally meaningful experiences. This is a profound outlet for stress and supports the feeling of being welcomed and belonging in their newly chosen home country. Every fall and spring we also sing at the Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall!

What is the collaborative element of your project?

Our ESOL classes don't follow the conventional teacher-student class model. Our ESOL chorus classes include native English-speaking Back Bay Chorale volunteers and BPL library staff, all learning the music together and participating in the discussion groups. Our current choir director, Riikka Pietiläinen-Caffrey, is also an immigrant and non-native English speaker. Including experienced BBC singers reduces the students' fear of feeling exposed when trying out new words. Aside from helping our students learn English, our ESOL Chorus program is so much more: singing

side by side with our BBC singers in concerts, giving back to their new community, creating something joyful, feeling seen and heard, and being part of a larger community. All this has a profoundly positive impact on the lives of our singers, which we hope carries over to all aspects of their lives in this city they have chosen to be their new home.

Cincinnati Youth Choir

Submitted by: Robyn Lana, Artistic Director of Cincinnati Youth Choir; Keri McGuire, Director of Cincinnati Choral Academy

Location: Cincinnati, Ohio

<https://www.cincinnatichoir.org>

Program or Project Title:

Cincinnati Choral Academy



The Cincinnati Choral Academy (CCA) is an El Sistema-inspired approach to music education providing no-fee membership in the extensive after-school choral program created by the Cincinnati Youth Choir (CYC). Supported as a collaboration with the CYC, the Cincinnati May Festival, and the Vocal Arts Ensemble, CCA serves students in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) that are designated as Title 1. Through the art and teamwork established in choral singing, CCA's mission is to enrich and educate the community by building outstanding young leaders. The program is offered in seven schools to children in grades three through six. The learning environment is safe and creative, provid-

ing musical excellence while celebrating cultural diversity.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

CCA experienced tremendous growth during the 2023-24 school year. Currently, CCA serves seven CPS schools and is impacting the lives of 133 students and their immediate communities, with a growing list of schools requesting to participate. Through events and performances with the combined CYC choirs, CCA forms lasting relationships with children in urban communities and their choral colleagues in suburban and rural communities. The seven CCA schools combine as one large ensemble within CYC but also perform individually for their schools and in neighborhood-specific community events.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

CCA exists as an intentional partnership between the Cincinnati Youth Choir and the Cincinnati Public Schools. Together, they identify target schools whose students would benefit from this free after-school program. CCA singers also participate in numerous musical and artistic collaborations, such as performing with other CYC choirs, working with guest artists, and par-



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icipating in the CYC-hosted Cincinnati Public School Honor Choir conducted by Dr. Rollo Dilworth and Robyn Lana. CCA is a vital part of the CYC fabric, and singers throughout the program benefit from these shared experiences.

Common Ground Voices (Jerusalem)

Submitted by: André de Quadros

Location: The Holy Land: Galilee, Jerusalem, and beyond

Program or Project Title:

Common Ground Voices



Common Ground Voices (Jerusalem) was founded in 2016 as a peace-seeking music and dialogue project between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. The ensemble operates on a project basis with annual residencies mostly in the Holy Land. Since 2016, CGV(J) has worked to build understanding between a broad cross-section of communities through workshops, community engagement, and collaborating with local organizations such as Combatants for Peace. The repertoire represents an artistic fusion between music from Arabic, Hebrew, and Yiddish traditions, as well as world music. CGV (J) has had residencies and projects in Germany and Sweden, as well as in Galilee and Jerusalem.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

It is challenging to discuss success of a choral project

alongside a war. Perhaps its success lies in its durability and the commitment of so many people who continue to struggle against polarizing narratives to devote themselves to creative and justice-focused choral expression.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

The essence of this project is collaboration at all levels. Participants select repertoire, fuse them together, and create participatory peacebuilding circles. Not only is CGV (J) essentially collaborative in decision making, but it works at all levels on building consensus.

El Faro Youth Chorus

Submitted by: Gabrielle Dietrich

Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico
abqcorolux.org/elfaro

Program or Project Title:

El Faro Youth Chorus



El Faro Youth Chorus (EFYC) is the first-ever trauma-informed choral ensemble. Founded in October 2021 as a youth outreach program of ABQ Coro Lux (an auditioned community chorus in Albuquerque, New Mexico, conducted by Bradley Ellingboe), El Faro Youth Chorus welcomes young people ages seven to eighteen to learn musicianship skills and healthy vocal technique as they also learn about emotional regulation, self-awareness, healthy social relationships, and

leadership through collaboration. Our chorus values (as selected by choristers) are: kindness, collaboration, growth, harmony, and fun.

Dr. Gabrielle Dietrich, the conductor of EFYC, is a survivor of childhood trauma. During the summer of 2020, Gabrielle read Bessel van der Kolk’s “The Body Keeps the Score” and not only recognized herself in the stories included in the book but was also inspired by Dr. van der Kolk’s descriptions of the kinds of therapeutic environments that brought his patients solace, including choruses. Sadly, many choruses impede the inherently restorative aspects of choral singing through authoritarian, exclusive, or socially unjust approaches; recognizing the ways in which choral singing helped her as a young person, Dr. Dietrich began with the question: “What if we (conductors) got out of the way and intentionally allowed our choirs to be a place that centered safety, humanity, and wellness?” Later that summer, Gabrielle moved to Albuquerque and learned that New Mexico is tied with Arizona for the highest rate of Adverse Childhood Experiences (events that predispose individuals to experiencing post-event trauma) in the country. It was clear to her that this was an idea whose time had come and she was in the right place to carry out this work.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

El Faro Youth Chorus singers have had the opportunity to work with several distinguished conductors (including Dr. Rosephanye Powell and Dr. Anton Armstrong) and were the subject of a regional Emmy Award-winning news piece in December 2022 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QHdKX8C4Ic). These experiences have been inspiring for our singers and staff, and yet, we consider our chorus community to be our proudest achievement. Our singers feel safe to express their opinions, disagree vigorously, and still come together around their shared love of singing. In a world plagued by division and tribalism, this kind of openness is something we all should aspire to cultivate.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

As mentioned above, our singers selected their own

chorus values, and our rehearsals embody collaboration through allowing the singers themselves to be subject matter experts when appropriate (e.g., when we sing a piece in Spanish, Spanish-speaking students coach pronunciation), allowing singers to honor the cues of their own bodies (e.g., singers don’t have to ask to use the restroom), and encouraging mentorship between more experienced and less experienced singers. These are all ways of empowering singers and decentralizing authority, which in turn encourages self-advocacy, body awareness, and personal agency. As the comedian John Hodgman often says in his podcast, each singer is a “whole human being in their own right.” Their voices belong to them as individuals, and our purpose as conductors is not to objectify them as “our instrument,” but to nurture them as they grow into who they choose to be.

**Glenn Korff School of Music &
International Quilt Museum,
University of Nebraska-Lincoln**
Submitted by: Rhonda Fuelberth
Location: Lincoln, Nebraska
<https://arts.unl.edu/music/i2choir>

Program or Project Title:
i²Choir: Inclusive, Intergenerational,
Exponentially Better Together



i²Choir is an inclusive and intergenerational choral ensemble that has partnered with the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln Glenn Korff School of Music and the International Quilt Museum to provide music-making opportunities for individuals of all abilities. Participants range in age from fifth grade to adults. The community choir is open to all participants who can sing or who want to learn to sing. Participants are encouraged to join in cross-age, cross-ability groups or “singing teams” of two to four who want to participate in the ensemble together. Membership is made up of individuals who wish to sing with, and support, family members and friends with a variety of physical, sensory, and cognitive challenges.

Using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (<http://udlguidelines.cast.org>), musical growth activities are designed to maximize the learning potential for everyone who participates. i²Choir seeks to be an agent of social change both internally, through the process of exploring various issues within the rehearsal environment, and externally, by presenting performances that encourage audience participation and reflection. It is our intention that audience members connect to the power of their own voices and use them to advocate, to act, and to promote access, inclusion, diversity, and belonging within our communities.

The values and goals underlying i²Choir are encapsulated in its name. The lowercase “i” signifies the importance of technology as a learning tool, especially beneficial for those who face challenges in accessing information without its regular use. Additionally, the “i” represents “inclusive” and “intergenerational,” reflecting both the diversity of our singers and our mission to enhance access for the broader community, regardless of age or ability. The exponent suggests that expanding our reach and relevance can lead to exponentially greater outcomes than we might have anticipated.

What is the most successful aspect of your project?

Meaningful Connections

The most palpable success of the i²Choir Project has been the impact of singing on the lives of our singers and our community. The relationships built within our immediate community are also very special. Participating in this creative endeavor together—all un-

der the umbrella of mutual respect—is what makes i²Choir an impactful program.

Universal Design

One of the project outcomes for the i²Choir Project is the implementation and documentation of Universal Design for Learning Principles as a framework for music instruction. What makes i²Choir unique and successful is our focus on proactive planning for learner (singer) variability. In the same way that universally designed buildings are constructed for ease of navigation by all people, universally designed learning spaces can be purposefully and proactively constructed for all singers, no matter their abilities or stage of musical development.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

Organizational Collaboration

i²Choir represents a partnership between the Glenn Korff School of Music (GKSOM) and the International Quilt Museum (IQM). Quilting and choral music making are metaphors for community. Both the quilter and the choral musician use their respective materials to create patterns that express both collective (past practices and traditions) and individual artistry. In quilting and in choral singing, each piece/singer is beautiful, independent of the other pieces/singers, but when combined, they create something rich in dimension, full of meaning, and unique to that particular moment in time.

Participant Collaboration

In i²Choir, each singer brings something unique to the ensemble. We recognize and appreciate the distinct contributions of every member. By identifying and leveraging their individual strengths, we foster a sense of ownership and belonging among our participants. In i²Choir, we emphasize effort and the journey towards mastering key artistic concepts. All musical activities are structured around a central conceptual theme. For instance, a rehearsal might center on breath management and phrasing with all related learning activities aligning with this focus. Singers receive encouragement and guidance from one another, fostering rela-

tionship-building and exchanges that highlight each member's unique strengths.

Suggested Resource: Fuelberth, Rhonda J. "Lessons from i²Choir" in *Relevance in the Choral Art: A Pathway to Connections*, edited by Tim Sharp (United Kingdom: GIA Publications, Incorporated, 2021): 155-182.

Inspire and Empower SA Festival

Submitted by: David Verdoni

Location: Sarasota, Florida

www.inspireandempowerfestival.org/home

Program or Project Title:

Inspire and Empower SA Festival



The Inspire and Empower SA Festival is a one-day Leadership and Choral Festival open to SA singers in grades seven to twelve. It stemmed from an interest in increasing access to musical and personal growth opportunities to populations in the choral world that we felt are often overlooked; middle school-aged singers and SA voices, which we often have an abundance of when compared to Tenor and Bass singers. This day is focused on process, growth, and collaboration. It is currently held at the high school we work at in Sarasota, Florida. We bring in two clinicians for the day. One clinician conducts the honor choir during the day on music that is learned onsite. The second clinician

works with the teachers of the participating students, providing interactive professional development as well as facilitating leadership focused sessions with the participating students.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

The success is two-fold: Providing a space in which middle and high school students can learn and work together and make music together for a day. Second, providing teachers with a professional development opportunity in a personal way where you can interact with other participants and the presenter in a space where you feel comfortable to ask questions and collaborate with colleagues.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

Middle school students work with high school students throughout the entire experience with the leadership clinician and the choir clinician. The attending directors actively participate in the festival by collaborating with the PD clinician on topics relating to teaching in today's choral classroom.

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Minnesota Chorale and Border CrosSing

Submitted by: Kathy Saltzman Romey and Ahmed Anzaldúa

Location: Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota
mnchorale.org, bordercrossingmn.org

Program or Project Title:

Bridges/Puentes: Expanding the Canon Series



The Minnesota Chorale and Border CrosSing launched a collaborative, annual series in 2021 titled “Expanding the Canon,” curated and led by nationally-recognized BIPOC conductors. Each program seeks to re-imagine and explore the modern-day relevance of works from the choral canon. A ten-day artist residency provides the two professional choirs with the opportunity to collaborate with conductors noted for their commitment to innovative programming, social justice advocacy, and community building. The Twin Cities series is intended to broaden the scope of repertoire presented by both ensembles during the concert season. Each of the guest conductors is deeply invested in the education of the next generation, and committed to creating opportunities for people to experience choral music as a way of building community while breaking down societal and cultural barriers. Collectively, they represent leaders of the full panorama of choral ensembles, from academic and church-based choirs to community and professional choruses.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

“Expanding the Canon” has enabled the Minnesota Chorale, Border CrosSing, and local audiences to experience the leadership and expertise of dynamic conductors of color from across the country. The project promotes greater equity and inclusion in the field of choral music, and redefines our experience of the choral canon through innovative programming, which uplifts the work of marginalized composers and performers.

The primary beneficiaries are the host organizations, their singers, and artistic staffs. The series provides the choirs with exposure to new repertoire and concert experiences of high artistic merit amplifying underrepresented voices, equity and inclusion, and socially-relevant issues. The program also offers the opportunity to work with skilled BIPOC conductors whose knowledge and insight have a lasting impact on future programming, audience cultivation, and community engagement.

The combined audiences of both organizations also benefit from this series, as do participants in civic workshops and educational activity. Just as the two choirs are eager to learn from guest conductors and their programming, audiences are also excited to engage with new music and composers, and grow through their concert experiences with each of the conductors. We have long believed that while the canon of classical music is broad, we are all diminished as long as its scope is limited. The creative energy of juxtaposing works from that canon with music by composers unfamiliar to our choirs and audiences expands our collective thinking and provides the foundation for deeper systemic change.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

“Expanding the Canon” builds on collaborations between the two project partners dating back to the founding of Border CrosSing in 2017 and is presented under the Minnesota Chorale engagement program Bridges and Border CrosSing program Puentes. As independent and allied organizations, the two choirs have partnered in concerts of traditional and contemporary

choral works in new languages and contexts, and explored programming that furthers the missions of both organizations. "Expanding the Canon" features one to two conductor residencies each season in a program utilizing personnel from both choirs, as well as instrumentalists specific to the selected repertoire.

Conductors are in residence for ten days in the Twin Cities, leading rehearsals and concerts of their programs as well as presenting public workshops and singalongs specific to the concert repertoire, seminars at the University of Minnesota, and engagement activity through the educational programs of the Chorale and Border CrosSing. Artistic directors Kathy Saltzman Romey and Ahmed Anzaldúa, along with their administrative staff, alternate as project leaders and work closely with each conductor to ensure that the two ensembles are properly prepared prior to the residency. Guest artists are recognized in the field for

their achievements as conductors, composers, arrangers, producers, singers, scholars, and educators, and have included:

Adrian Davis, Minneapolis, MN – Bridges/Puentes: Black Voices Amplified (Fall 2021)

Anaida Carquez, Miami, FL – Puentes: Creer / Bridges: Believe (Spring 2022)

Alexander Lloyd Blake, Los Angeles, CA – Bridges/Puentes: Singing Truth – An American Conversation (Fall 2022)

Anthony Trecek-King, Boston, MA
Puentes/Bridges: In This Lan' (Spring 2024)



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Muslim Choral Ensemble

Submitted by: André de Quadros

Location: Sri Lanka

<https://muslimchoralensemble.com>

Program or Project Title:

Muslim Choral Ensemble



The Muslim Choral Ensemble is the world's first and only choir that is exclusively devoted to the collective singing of devotional traditions of Islam. MCE's mission transcends the mere presentation of spiritual performances; rather, it encapsulates a profound commitment to inspiring audiences to appreciate the intricacies and beauty inherent in Islamic devotional music while preserving cultural integrity. This dedication is underscored by the ensemble's efforts to revive endangered traditions within the contemporary context. The ensemble is partly anchored in the intricate compositions and devotional poetry inherent in repertoires from the Sufi mystical tradition of Islam, which was once a vibrant expression of spirituality, and now contend with potential disappearance due to modernization.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

The ensemble has succeeded in launching the World Muslim Choral Ensemble in 2022, attracting instrumentalists and singers from various countries.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

MCE collaborates with the local minority Muslim community and international choirs locally and abroad. In 2018, MCE engaged in intercultural work at the Yale International Choral Festival.

Resounding Achord Productions and San José State University

Submitted by: Kristina Nakagawa

Location: San Jose, CA

www.resoundingachord.org

Program or Project Title:

Summer Conducting Lab



The Summer Conducting Lab, started in 2015, is a partnership between Resounding Achord Productions (RAP) and San José State University's Three-Summer Master's Program that gives conductors-in-training an opportunity to work with a choir in a rehearsal setting, gaining valuable podium time and real-time feedback. The sessions are held in the parish hall at a local Episcopal Church, where Resounding Achord regularly rehearses, and gives singers in the area an opportunity to continue singing during a season when most organizations are on their summer break.

During the six two-hour sessions, three to five conductors work with the all-volunteer choir, comprising adult singers from across Silicon Valley. Occasionally high school and college-age singers participate. Conductors are students in the master's program, current

regular-term students at SJSU, or members of the greater community. Singing participants are asked to do their best to respond to the conductor's gesture, regardless if they have performed the piece in the past. On occasion, the conductors are given a moment to take the choir through one of their favorite warm-up exercises. Dr. Jeffrey Benson and Kristina Nakagawa provide feedback to the conductors both during the session and afterward in private communication.

In terms of costs, a professional collaborative pianist is hired, and a space is rented. Music is selected from Resounding Achord's recent repertoire and supplemented with works that the SJSU program has been focusing on during their classes.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

Approximately 100 conductors have benefited from participating in the program, and there are nearly 100 singers who sign up to sing each year. As one participant noted, "The Summer Lab Choir during the SJSU master's program is by far one of the best and most transformative experiences of the program. Having the experience of working with a live choir that really responds to each movement you make, and having a clinician on hand to give you direct feedback that you can try in that moment, is incredible."

What is the collaborative element of your project?

This program is entirely collaborative from start to finish. Resounding Achord Productions' (RAP) administration works with Dr. Benson beginning early in the spring to schedule the lab sessions and review repertoire to ensure that music is ready for all participants at the first meeting. RAP secures the venue, hires the collaborative artist, and manages all communications to the singers, and Dr. Benson manages scheduling the conductors. If the conductor is part of the three-summer master's program, he also meets with them privately, both to prepare for the session and also to work on aspects of what they experienced afterward.

Tacoma Refugee Choir

Submitted by: Erin Guinup

Location: Tacoma, Washington

refugeechoir.org

Program or Project Title:

Tacoma Refugee Choir



Amidst an epidemic of loneliness and ongoing divisiveness in our communities, the importance of creating spaces where connection and a spirit of welcoming can thrive for all community members cannot be overstated. One of the most joyful ways to develop a sense of belonging is singing with others. As we fulfill our mission—creating spaces for authentic expression, interconnection, and healing through song and music—we are meeting this fundamental need.

Since 2016 we have been welcoming immigrants, refugees, and allies into the Choir, with current membership including forty-five people from seventeen countries, including Iran, Ukraine, Belarus, D.R. Congo, Rwanda, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Cambodia. At weekly rehearsals and performances, we sing, dance, hug, and share our challenges and triumphs. Members are invited to actively contribute to the creative process, and after eight seasons, members have collectively written over thirty original songs that are frequently shared in the community.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

The most successful aspect of the project lies in the Tacoma Refugee Choir's commitment to nurturing a

supportive community. Choir members often refer to TRC as their family. This deep sense of belonging has proven transformative, particularly for individuals who lack local family ties. Through weekly in-person check-ins and an active WhatsApp group, choir members help one another through life's challenges and celebrate milestones such as graduations, births, citizenship, and new jobs. These relationships translate to trust and vulnerability within the creative process and enable rapid collaboration in the synthesis of new songs.

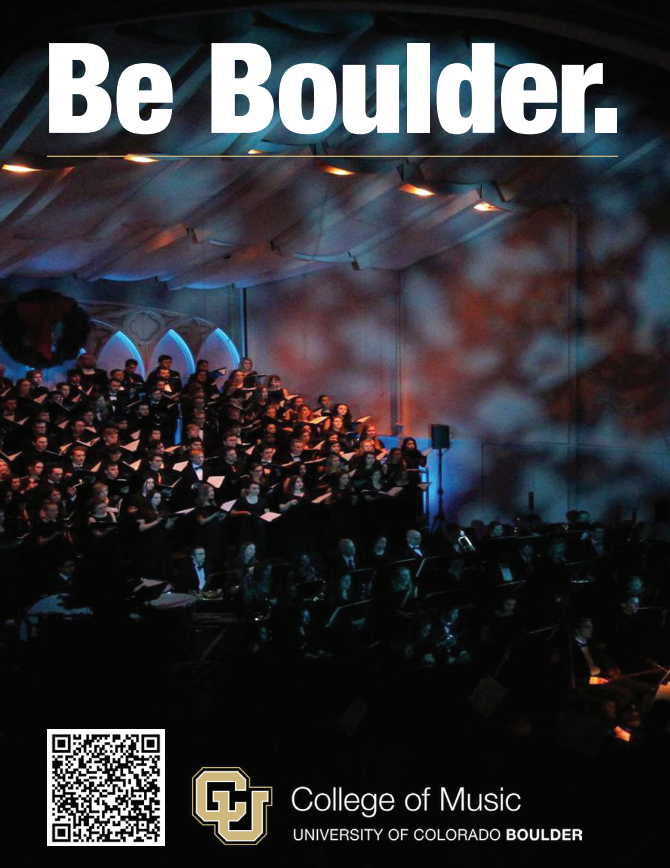
What is the collaborative element of your project?

Our repertoire and pedagogical approach, rooted in an aural tradition, are grounded in a spirit of collaboration. By deliberately creating space for choir members to co-create each piece, influencing elements such as harmonies, lyrics, composition form, and choreography, we aim to instill a sense of ownership and

creative autonomy, which can contribute to healing from trauma. Our repertoire includes texts that appeal to our diverse membership, including cultural songs introduced by members, original compositions created by choir members and staff, and one to two octavos per season taught by rote, often with some adaptation. For example, we taught Coty Raven Morris's "Who I Want to Be," and a choir member was inspired to create a spoken word element to include in the middle of the song, which we incorporated with composer's permission.

Additionally, our collaborative spirit extends beyond our choir community through our Welcoming Artists Series. This initiative involves partnering with guest artists for each concert, many of whom are introduced to us through existing choir member connections. Past collaborations have featured artists from diverse cultural backgrounds such as Mongolia, Venezuela, Ukraine, DR Congo, and Cuba. These partnerships enrich our

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performances, deepen cross-cultural understanding, and further amplify the spirit of collaboration and inclusivity within our project.

The Choral Project

Submitted by: Daniel Hughes, Artistic Director

Location: San Jose, CA

www.choralproject.org

Program or Project Title:

Winter's Gifts



The Choral Project presents an annual collaboration with the highly acclaimed San José Chamber Orchestra (Barbara Day Turner, Music Director). The collaboration is called Winter's Gifts, and it features classical and world music from the diverse cultures with which we are blessed in the San Francisco Bay Area; this program's themes have included honoring celebrations of light (Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, etc.), New Year/Lunar celebrations (Chinese New Year, Tet, etc.), and music about the winter season (Solstice, Yule, etc.).

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

The most successful aspects of this annual collaboration are the nature of the repertoire (both ensembles share a similar programming aesthetic) and the format of the program itself. The concert runs approximately seventy-five minutes with no intermission, organized into four concert sets. Barbara Day Turner (the conductor of the chamber orchestra) and I (the artistic

director) alternate conducting each set. Each year we trade who begins and who ends the concert. Within each set, there is no applause, so the "mood" of the pieces flow into one another, creating a program that is both reflective and energetic but never forced.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

Sharing the podium and stage with a world-class orchestra, the organic essence of the repertoire, and the emotional/spiritual effect of the program.

Tucson Girls Chorus

Submitted by: Marcela Molina

Location: Tucson, Arizona

www.tucsongirlschorus.org

Program or Project Title:

Community Engagement Program



The Tucson Girls Chorus programs are created based on the belief that all girls deserve access to a high-quality choral education that provides an empowering space for girls to share their voices. TGC's Community Engagement Program was founded in 2013 and was created to remove barriers that prevent families and singers from participating.

This program, central to our mission, allows the TGC to focus on digging deeper and expanding services. We provide robust scholarships and dependable subsidized programming to our partner school partici-

pants to ensure access to all. This includes operating choirs that meet weekly in underserved communities (Las Estrellas Engagement Choirs) and hosting one-day choral festivals for singers from around the Tucson community. As the program has grown over time, we are now able to connect with current and future music educators to offer a variety of support. This support is provided through visits by the TGC staff to schools at no cost to the school (includes lessons and clinics), free professional development sessions, and internships for undergraduate University of Arizona music education students. Additionally, TGC recently launched a Music Teacher Mentorship program aimed at increasing music teacher retention in Tucson. This new program pairs an interested music teacher with a TGC staff member for bi-weekly observation with instructional and/or curricular support.

Our Engagement Choirs meet weekly at partner schools throughout the school year for one-hour rehearsals led by versatile and highly qualified conductors who have experience working with marginalized communities. Participants are girls (grades 2–5), whose schools do not otherwise have a choir program onsite. Participation ranges from twelve to twenty singers at each location. Las Estrellas choirs sing a diverse repertoire that aims to reflect and validate both dominant and non-dominant singing styles and traditions in the Tucson community and the world.

What is the most successful aspect of the project?

When Dr. Marcela Molina became the TGC's director in 2006, she developed a vision of creating opportunities for all girls in the Tucson area to experience



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the many benefits of singing together and the values of the TGC's programming. The TGC's main building and rehearsal location is in an affluent part of the city, and although our robust scholarship program helps to remove financial barriers, it does not address the many other barriers that prevent youth from accessing group singing in a choral setting.


We identify sustainability and adaptability as the two main aspects of success in this program. The TGC's Engagement Program began in 2013 with Engagement Choirs as partnerships with schools and community organizations throughout Tucson. The first Engagement Choir was in partnership with a tuition-free private school that was serving primarily African refugees. Throughout this partnership, the TGC learned the importance of communication, flexibility, and ensuring the conductor is a qualified and experienced music educator. The TGC's current school partnerships are based on relationship building and the TGC positions itself as learners within the school community.

After some failed attempts, a pillar success today is our sustained partnership with seven schools/communities in three different school districts: Five are elementary schools, including a virtual program on the Tohono O'odham nation in partnership with the Native American Advancement Foundation (NAAF), and partnership at a middle school in south Tucson that supports students in pursuing education of all kinds, including trade schools and other professional programs. Through our Community Engagement programming, we have engaged youth and families within the community in a manner that is productive and constructive.

What is the collaborative element of your project?

The TGC's Community Engagement Program focuses on meaningful collaborations that provide access to subsidized programming for K-12 students and music educators. Engagement Choirs rehearse weekly at partner schools in Amphitheater, Tucson Unified School Districts, and the Guvo District at the Tohono O'odham Nation. Partner schools facilitate communication between the TGC and families and offer logistical support and valuable insight into the unique culture and needs of each school. TGC's partnership with the

Native American Advancement Foundation (NAAF) at the Tohono O'odham Nation (TON) serves students through a virtual format, and aims to develop music education capacity in the western region of TON to increase music programs in schools.

TGC's collaborations are designed to adapt to the characteristics of each specific community and to allow for flexibility to embark on creative initiatives. Our engagement programs are co-created with school partner leaders, and each program looks different. Across all of our programs, we've prioritized creating full access for all singers and developing culturally affirming community collaborations. In this co-creative process, it's been our great honor to thread connections with our singer-leaders and their families. Our engagement families continuously nudge us into a deeper understanding of our own values and how to practice. We've built a network of cultural partnerships to offer free public performances in collaboration with other community arts organizations to provide relevant and culturally affirming concerts in our singers' own neighborhoods. 

Share Your Story!

We know so many wonderful projects are happening throughout ACDA. These spotlights are just a few incredible collaborations, and we would love to hear about yours. How can you "Share Your Story"? Email the committee at advocacyandcollaboration@acda.org or visit ChoralNet to learn more: <https://choralnet.org/archives/684896>.



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Music as emotion—from real-life experiences

The music of Michael Bussewitz-Quarm emerges directly out of real-time, often difficult life events or circumstances. “What drives me to start a project is something that I feel deeply about. Sometimes I feel helpless about a certain situation, and [composing is] a way for me to work through that helplessness.” One particularly poignant example is her concert-length cantata written in response to gun violence against children.

Michael relates how the despair she felt at the time of the Parkland Shooting (February of 2018) was so great that she initially tried to block it out by avoiding the news

and social media. Quickly realizing that was not the answer, she set aside another project on which she was working at the time, in order to focus fully on developing what

“What drives me to start a project is something I feel deeply about.”

would ultimately become the eight-movement cantata called *The Unarmed Child**. Her navigation through the heart-wrenching subject evokes inevitable tears, yet concludes with an energized call to action that is infused with hope.

Michael’s musical journey began at the age of five, when the gift of a piano was made to her family. She recalls being drawn to specific tones and specific intervals as a very small child. As a young adult, she taught public school music in Long Island, and began writing for her school choirs. A significant influence as a young professional was Gregg Smith, whose assistant she became with his Long Island Symphonic Choral Association, and by whose Gregg Smith Singers she had several pieces performed.

“[Even with really tough subjects], we can’t stay stuck in despair. I try always to include a call to action, or some element of hope toward the end.”

When I asked Michael if she could describe her compositional style to someone unfamiliar with her work, she conceded difficulty in doing so, primarily because the style completely depends on the story. She describes her writing, however, as “always tonal, with dissonance as it presents itself [according to the subject].”

* *The Unarmed Child* is one of 13 scores by Michael Bussewitz-Quarm, endorsed as of exceptional value in the PROJECT : ENCORE catalog of contemporary choral music.

Developing teams as key to major projects

Michael cites the importance of “the team” in putting a project together – very different from the image of a lonely composer sequestered away in artistic creation. In the case of *The Unarmed Child*, “It means entering the community of families who have been affected by gun violence.” Her team on that project

“Team is everything when I am starting a project.”

consisted of one of the aggrieved parents who was very motivated to make a difference, along with her lyricist Shantel Sellers, and

Adrian Dunn, who collaborated on the hip-hop movement. The team worked together through the emotional challenges of the topic, in addition to the compositional process itself.

What is next? Michael has been commissioned by “Sing Democracy 250” to write a large choral work entitled “US”, which will be performed in all 50 states, in honor of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Thirty-three different leaders are quoted in the libretto, the theme of which is one of uniting all of “us” in the US, as we seek to move forward together.

• Explore Michael’s biography and full compositional activity on her website:

<https://www.listenafresh.com/>

• For immediate access to her style, check out her thirteen PROJECT : ENCORE works here:

ProjectEncore.org/michael-bussewitz-quarm



Michael Bussewitz-Quarm



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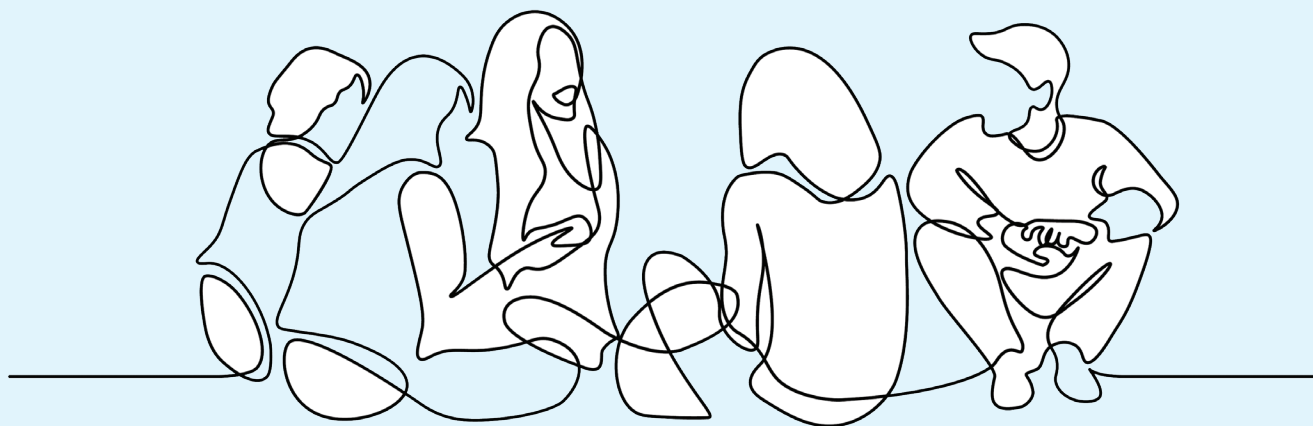
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Advocacy in Action: Get to Know the National ACDA Standing Committees



ACDA has seven national standing committees that serve the membership on the day-to-day tasks. In this issue, we advocate for those fellow standing committees by providing a space for you to get to know who they are, what they do, and how they can support you!

Standing Committee for Choral Repertoire and Resources

What is the committee's mission?

We source and curate widely varied and diverse repertoire and resources for ACDA members and the wider choral community.

What does the committee provide for ACDA members?

ACDA is about repertoire and its authentic, expert and artistic performance. The Repertoire & Resources Committee serves ACDA members 365 days a year. We serve conference-going members by providing Virtual Reading Sessions to all ACDA members whether conference attendees or not. We prepare Deep Dive sessions for chairs to guide conference attendees through four

to five pieces, offering expertise to add those pieces to their personal and professional repertoire. Finally, each chair curates their own forum, or interest session, to further meet the needs of members. Since 2023 we've also focused on providing experiences and events for members who can't attend a National Conference.

Who is included on the committee?

Collegiate Activities

- Collegiate Choirs Coordinator: Jenny Bent
- Four-Year University Choirs Chair: Caron Daley
- Two-Year Community Choirs Chair: Brandon Elliott
- Student Activities Co-Chair for Programming: Elizabeth Swanson
- Student Activities Co-Chair for Chapter Development: Ryan Beeken

Youth Choirs

- Youth Choirs Coordinator: Damion Womack

Advocacy in Action: Get to Know the National ACDA Standing Committees

- Children & Community Youth Chair:
Joy Hirokawa

- Junior High/Middle School Chair:
Clinton Hardy-Ferrie

- Senior High Chair: Philip Brown

Lifelong Choirs

- Lifelong Choirs Coordinator: Jack Cleghorn

- Community Choirs Chair: Matt Hill

- Music in Worship Chair: Jennaya Robison

Repertoire Specific Choirs

- Repertoire Specific Coordinator:
Gretchen Harrison

- World Musics and Cultures Chair:
Madlen Batchvarova

- S/A Choirs: Erin Plisco

- T/B Choirs: Dustin Cates

- Vocal Jazz: John Stafford

- Contemporary Commercial Co-Chair/
Contemporary A Cappella: Rob Dietz

- Contemporary Commercial Co-Chair/
Show Choir: Kelsey Burkett

How can members connect with the committee?

Feel free to reach out directly to any of the National R&R chairs at any time. Their names and contact information are available at <https://acda.org/about-us/acda-leadership>.

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Standing Committee for Diversity Initiatives

What is the committee's mission?

The Diversity Initiatives Committee of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) aims to foster diversity and inclusivity in our membership, ensembles, repertoire, and offerings through active engagement with underrepresented and historically marginalized choral musicians and potential choral participants. We will bring about a broader definition and understanding of choral excellence both as a result of this inclusivity and to maintain our relevance and expand both the reach and impact of our profession and its musical scope.

Who is included on the committee?

Chair: Arreon Harley-Emerson; Members: Ahmed Anzaldúa, Noël Archambeault, Mari Esabel Valverde, and Josh Palkki

What does the committee provide for ACDA members?

At the heart of our work, the Diversity Initiatives Committee is committed to truth-seeking and truth-telling. In doing so, we are both proactive and responsive. The DIC proactively works across the organization to ensure more equitable policies and intentional inclusion in the choral arts, most especially within ACDA. We also respond to real-world events in real time, assisting the organization in delivering on its commitments to ADEI. We serve as an advisory board for the National Board, Executive Committee, and the Executive Director.

Diversity has many facets and intersectionalities. Diversity can reference and celebrate culture, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, age, and religious ideals, among others. While we have not always been open, affirming, accepting,

and embracing in the past, we now recognize our shortcomings and resolve to address them. Our members represent a diverse community and deserve to be acknowledged and treated with dignity. We welcome you into our community of support and partnership.

How can members connect with the committee?

We welcome the membership to get more involved with our committee and with our organization as a whole. Members can send us an email at dic@acda.org, and join our thriving Facebook community, "ACDA Diversity Initiatives." We also welcome submissions to the DIC's *Choral Journal* column, "Lift Every Voice." We are always looking for members to share lived experiences and promising practices related to ADEI. On occasion, the DIC launches task forces to execute large projects on behalf of the association.

Standing Committee for Education and Communication

What is the committee's mission?

The mission of the ACDA National Standing Committee on Education and Communication is to foster and support educational initiatives that provide professional development and resources for emerging, mid-career, and late-career ACDA members as well those initiatives focused on inspiring the next generation of choral professionals. The standing committee assists with encouraging authors for online and print publication.

Who is included on the committee?

Chair: John McDonald; Members: Robert Sinclair, Mark Lawley, Grant Farmer

Resources:

Web-based professional development is available on the ACDA website. This committee has hosted several national webinars that are available for free (<https://acda.org/conferences/national-webinars>).

Education and Communication *Choral Journal* focus issue (September 2020)

List of recommended reading for K-12 choral teachers in *ChorTeach* (Summer 2022)

Standing Committee for International Activities (SCIA)

Who is included on the committee?

Chair: Joshua Habermann; Members: Nicolás Dosman, Jeremy Jones, Wendy Moy, and Giselle Wyers

What is the committee's mission?

To create connections between leaders of the U.S. choral community with counterparts across the globe.

To forge stronger relationships between ACDA and choral associations around the world.

To raise the visibility and leadership role of the American Choral Directors Association in the global choral community.

What does the committee provide for ACDA members?

The committee hosts a reception for international guests at the National Conference and has a presence in the regions during region years. If anyone is interested in hosting a visiting international conductor in their region, we can help facilitate.

The committee is responsible for the ACDA Inter-

national Conductors Exchange Program (ICEP), which provides annual opportunities for ACDA members to apply for an exchange program with the international community. ACDA members travel to the host country for an exchange experience and also host our international partners at an ACDA region or national conference. More information about the ICEP can be found at <https://acda.org/resources/icep>.

How can members connect with the committee?

ACDA International Activities Facebook page “ACDA International Activities” or via email: internationalactivities@acda.org

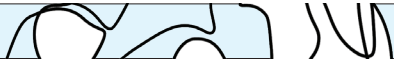
Standing Committee for Research & Publications

Who is included on the committee?

Chair: Jessica Napoles; Members: Elisa Dekaney, Patrick Freer, and Elizabeth Parker

What is the committee's mission?

Broadly speaking, we work to amplify the role of research and scholarship in our profession. Practically speaking, we also approve editorial members (including editor) for the *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*, (*IJRCS*) ACDA's research journal; appoint the Research Report column editor for the *Choral Journal*; and assist with the planning for the Symposium for Research in Choral Singing. For the national ACDA conference, we facilitate the Research Poster Session. If you are interested in furthering our goal of amplifying research endeavors in the choral profession, please consider submitting a manuscript for publication in the *International Journal for Choral Singing* or a proposal for the Research Poster Session.



Standing Committee for Composition Initiatives

Who is included on the committee?


Chair: Robert Bode; Members: Brandon Boyd, Katie Houts, and Joni Jensen

What is the committee's mission?

Officially, we're the Composition Initiatives Standing Committee. But our work is more than just "initiatives." You can find more in our *Choral Journal* Focus Issue (March/April 2023). Our committee encourages the creation of quality new music for choruses of all sizes, ages, and abilities by actively supporting the work of living composers. We advocate for the composer membership of ACDA and seek to foster increased collaboration and awareness between conductors and composers.

From Dan Forrest in the editor's column in the March/April 2023 focus issue: "As our committee advocates for composers, we've received such encouraging support from Robyn Hilger and the national leadership. Composers can now join ACDA as 'Composers' instead of having to choose some other primary activity. Our slate of annual awards has been doubled, with new prize amounts that re-establish ACDA prizes as some of the most substantial awards in the choral composition world; the new flexible Focus Prize nurtures the creation of repertoire to fill identified gaps for ACDA members and their ensembles, and connects choral publishers to composers. Brock Prize and Brock Commission pieces are being performed at every conference (even regional conferences), and we continue to offer and promote new and existing channels through which composers can network with each other as well as conductors."

How can members connect with the committee?

Take advantage of the Composer Membership option, and stay engaged on both our Facebook pages: "New Choral Music" and "ACDA Choral Composers." You can also email rbode@acda.org 

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CHORAL JOURNAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Book Reviews	Gregory Pysh	gregory.m.pysh@gmail.com
Choral Reviews	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
Lift Every Voice	Amanda Bumgarner	abumgarner@acda.org
On the Voice	Matthew Hoch	mrh0032@auburn.edu
Recorded Sound Reviews	Laura Wiebe	laurawiebe@gmail.com
Rehearsal Breaks	Jennifer Rodgers	rodgersj@iastate.edu
Research Report	Bryan Nichols	bnichols@psu.edu
Student Times	Micah Bland	mbland1613@gmail.com

For feature article submissions, contact the editor, Amanda Bumgarner, at <abumgarner@acda.org>.
View full submission guidelines at acda.org

Book and music publishers should send books, octavos, and discs for review to:
Choral Journal, Attn: Amanda Bumgarner, P.O. Box 1705, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73101-1705

For advertising rates and exhibit information, contact Sindy Hail,
National Advertising & Exhibits Manager, at <shail@acda.org>

OTHER ACDA PUBLICATIONS CONTACT INFORMATION

ChorTeach (online)	Amanda Bumgarner	chorteach@acda.org
International Journal of Research in Choral Singing	Patrick K. Freer	pfreer@gsu.edu

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Arizona State University	51	Savannah College of Art and Design	67
Indiana University	44	Schmidt Vocal Arts	54
Johns Hopkins University	78	Sing Democracy 250	87
KI Concerts	BC	University of Colorado	76
MidAmerica Productions	15, 36, 53, IBC	University of Southern California	82
Musicfolder.com	71	Vandercook College of Music	73
National Concerts	IFC	Westminster Choir College	27
Patti Drennan	84		



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