

ACDA ARCHIVES

MARVIN LATIMER, EDITOR

National Conference Collection: An Overview

by
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The American Choral Directors Association has long been known for its high-quality biennial national conferences. This is the place and time when legends are born and standards are set. Can any ACDA member who was present for the Estonian Men's Choir performance at the 1989 Louisville conference forget their tear-inspiring rendition of *America, the Beautiful* at a time when the Soviet bloc countries were emerging from communist rule and embracing the West? And who would dream of holding concert session performances in ballrooms at a national conference? Yet, before 1981, this was the norm. All of this and more is documented in the National Conference Collection held by the ACDA Archives. This collection includes documents and recordings from many of the national conferences held between 1960 and the present, and many of these documents are open to researchers, officers, students, and choral aficionados. This article will highlight some of the items included in the collection.

The ACDA Conference and its Significance

ACDA's history is deeply rooted in conferences. ACDA has always used its conferences to help reach its goal of promoting excellence in choral music through performance, composition, publication, research, teaching, and advocacy. Performances are observed and analyzed; interest sessions promote the newest and best in choral music research; onlookers attend honor choir rehearsals to learn from the masters

who conduct these exemplary choirs. The entire experience of attending a conference is therefore geared toward promoting the basic tenets of the organization.

The American Choral Directors Association got its start at the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) in 1959. In 1960, the organization began holding its conference in conjunction with the Music Educators National Conference (MENC). That first meeting featured five performing choirs, reading sessions, a panel discussion, and a lecture-demonstration. The basic structure of an ACDA conference was already present in that first event.

From this point on, the ACDA conferences have consistently expanded, and they continue to be influential in the world of choral music. In 1971, ACDA produced its first independent conference, thus enlarging the number of choirs to be featured. The year 1973 featured the first international choirs to perform at an ACDA conference. Concert session recording began in 1975, as did the prohibition of photography and recording devices during performances (1975 program book, p. 3). Expectations about the quality of performance venues began to rise after a performance hall was used in the 1981 national conference in New Orleans, Louisiana (Sharp & Prucha, 2009). An entire culture was born in 1983 with the addition of the first honor choir. The archives has fielded inquiries from numerous students interested in compiling repertoire lists featuring the programmatic choices of the highly regarded directors who conduct these choirs. However, to date, no one has published research on the effects of ACDA

honor choirs on choral music. In 1993, the first Brock Memorial was performed. The goal of this composition is to promote high-quality choral literature and, as such, it remains a highly prestigious award. Each of these national conference experiences has clearly affected choral music, whether expanding the number of choirs in the country's awareness of or by raising our awareness of and appreciation of the venue's role in a concert experience.

The Size and Scope of the Collection

The collection measures 33.39 linear feet and includes documents dating back to



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1960. It contains 30 record-storage boxes and seven flip-top boxes of documents pertaining to the national conferences. Each conference is represented in its own series and the series range in size from less than .5 linear feet to over five linear feet. Over the summer of 2010, an intern from the library science school at the University of Oklahoma arranged all of the documents from ACDA national conferences that are held in the ACDA Archives. The intern's work gave the documents order but, due to grant restrictions, she was unable to weed out the collection's. It is anticipated that when the collection is weeded, its size will decrease by at least one-third.

The earliest records of the collection date to the 1960 conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Included in this folder are conference programs (a folded piece of 8 1/2 x 11 paper), an outline for a panel discussion headed by Olaf Christiansen, Harold Decker, Helen Hosmer, George Krueger, and Ivan Trusler, and a list of reading session

titles promoted at this conference. The same binder also contains other documents from conferences in the 1960s and 1970s. Some items found in this box include examples of registration cards from the 1970s, program books, correspondence about the 1975 program book, and expenses from the 1977 national conference in Dallas, Texas.

In this collection, records covering the earliest years of ACDA are the scarcest. The earliest records from this collection were already housed at the ACDA national headquarters in Oklahoma City when the present archivist arrived in 2006. Their provenance before this is unknown. It is not clear whether they had been removed from the Hugoboom Papers at some time in the past, or if someone entirely different donated them, thus explaining why they are separate from other documents pertaining to ACDA's earliest years. Because they were located in the headquarters building with no known provenance, they were combined with the other national conference materials that

had been housed in the Lawton, Oklahoma, headquarters and moved to the Oklahoma City archives in the summer of 2008. Because these documents are separate from others of the same era, researchers will also want to consult the R. Wayne Hugoboom Papers, which contain additional information about early ACDA conferences.

The size of subsequent series grows significantly. It was not until the 1970s that ACDA began to understand the need to preserve its history. Officers donated their personal ACDA records from the 1960s and early 1970s to Wayne Hugoboom, ACDA's first executive secretary, but it was not until the headquarters in Lawton were built that documents and recordings would have the requisite storage space. This helps explain the lack of material from ACDA's first 20 years. The onsite storage and a paid archivist helped to ensure that the documents could be deposited and kept away from the elements in relative safety. Having an official archives, conference committee chair people continued donating their records, and the national office staff contributed their records as well. The result of this is a collection of materials that includes the correspondence between committee members, programs from the performance and demonstration choirs, final reports, exhibit information, conference program books, honor choir information, and conference concert session and interest session recordings.

Research Interest

Researchers interested in studying the construction and growth of ACDA conferences will find a wealth of information ranging from budgets to guest lists to correspondence about the conference and its planning. Anyone interested in analyzing how to build a successful music conference or how trends have evolved over the years will want to search these files. Historians interested in the individuals who put these conferences together will be drawn to the many instances of correspondence generated by each conference.

Through these events and more, ACDA conferences have influenced the world of



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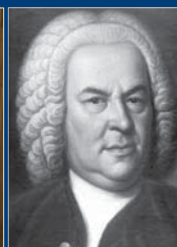
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choral music. The collection has been used in the past to create a list of all repertoire that has been sung at ACDA national and division conferences (Schmidt, 2000). The book goes only through 2000, and the project is in dire

need of updating. These program books also contain information about choirs that have sung, directors who have conducted, awards given out, in memoriam lists, officer lists, exhibitors, ads, honor choirs, and interest and

reading sessions. The information harbored in these books is ripe for trend analyses and list generation, and other research. When requested, extra program books can be sent out to researchers for their use. In the



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event that only archival copies exist, the books can be scanned and .pdfs generated for use. Future plans include placing digitized versions of the program books on the Web site for use by ACDA members and other choral enthusiasts.

ACDA National Conference Recordings

National conferences since 1973 have featured recordings of conferences. A performance of Brahms's *Requiem* conducted by Robert Shaw is the sole recording archived from this year. The archive also contains a 16mm film that is believed to be the recording of the 1977 national conference in Dallas, Texas, that was broadcast on German television. Researchers, scholars, students, and enthusiasts may also be interested in recordings by conductors such as Moses Hogan or in the many interest sessions covering a wide array of topics. For many of the newer recordings, personal copies can still be ordered by contacting the recording studio responsible for the recording. However, in the case of recordings that are 25–30 years old, the companies have gone out of business and ACDA remains the sole holder of the recording. In this case, for a small fee, a copy of the recording can be made and

shared for personal use.

The American Choral Directors Association's collection of choral music recordings is a singular treasure. Many archives and choirs may have a strong collection of a particular choir's recordings, but no one else has recordings that cover the breadth and depth of American choral music in the way that ACDA's collection does. The recordings have been made on reel to reel, 16 mm film, LPs, cassette tapes, VHS, CDs, and DVDs. In the case of the reel-to-reel audio and 16 mm film, ACDA lacks the equipment to play back these recordings. Migrating to newer formats must be outsourced. In the case of the cassette tapes and VHS tapes, they are approaching the end of their expected life and are in need of conservation or migration to a newer format. Work must be done on this part of the collection in order to keep it intact. Without the work, the organization risks losing this unique, precious, and irre-

placeable collection.

Conclusion

The National Conference Collection is another of ACDA's collections that is ripe for analysis. It covers more than 50 years of American choral music history and is a rich source of information for those looking at repertoire, choirs, directors, or even those working behind the scenes. Anyone with an interest in the history and evolution of American choral music stands to gain from this collection. It is a rich source of primary source material that documents the trends, sounds, and faces of choral music over the past fifty years in the United States.



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