

The Legacy of Choral Singing: A Directors' Choir Experience

by Gene Peterson



Editor's Note: This article is part of a series of articles that highlights themes and programming that will be part of ACDA's 2019 National Conference.

In the textbook *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*, edited by Harold Decker and Julius Herford, Howard Swan delineated six "Schools of Choral Singing in America."¹ Swan identified what he considered at the time to be the foundations of how choral concepts developed in the United States from the middle of the twentieth century to his day. He categorized and outlined these elements through the identification of six schools, Schools A through F. Below are the conductors Swan considered leaders or founders of a particular school and his brief summary of their basic tonal philosophy:²

SCHOOL A – John Finley Williamson and the Westminster Choir College: "A choral tone which is alive, vital, and responsive is secured by emphasizing and encouraging the physical and emotional development of each singer in the choir. To a considerable degree the director is concerned with the growth of the individual—personally, intellectually, and musically—and gives some-

what less attention to the needs of the group. The success of a chorus has an immediate relationship to the achievement of each individual in it."

SCHOOL B – Father William J. Finn: "A singer's tone is like the color of each orchestral instrument and should be developed accordingly."

SCHOOL C – F. Melius Christianesen and the St. Olaf Choir: "Every singer in the chorus has a primary responsibility to subordinate his own ideas concerning tone production, rhythmic stress, and pronunciation to the blended and unified sound made by the total ensemble."

SCHOOL D – Fred Waring: "By following the natural laws of good speech which are related to proper pronunciation and articulation, a singer and an ensemble can develop a beautiful quality of tone."

SCHOOL E – Joseph Klein, Douglas Stanley, and John Wilcox: "Good tone quality is induced by the physical motivation of an individual or a chorus. It is the consequence of a perfectly executed coordination of the entire vocal mechanism."

SCHOOL F – Robert Shaw: "Good tone has three concomitants: a rhythmic drive subordinated to the demands of a score, a knowledge on the part of conductor and singer of the shape of a musical phrase, and an understanding of the laws of vocal energy as they may be applied to a musical composition."

The choral legacy and concepts that Swan outlined have certainly influenced many American choral conductors and performances through the years that the ACDA has been in existence. How do these concepts influence the legacy and influence who we are as a larger choral community today?

Take a moment to think about your personal choral "family tree." Does your experience find its roots in one of Swan's Schools or a mixture of them? Think of those that have influenced you in your development as a choral musician. These individuals could have impacted you, as they may have been your high school choir teacher, your choirmaster at church, your university professor, or maybe a colleague who mentored and walked with you early in your career or a friend who changed the way you think about the choral

The Legacy of Choral Singing:

art. Maybe it was a lecture or a performance at an ACDA conference that challenged you to approach our art differently. All these experiences likely have come together to mold and shape who you are as a conductor. They have helped you develop your philosophy of the choral art, your teaching approach and demeanor, your tonal concept, and the values you hold throughout the process of rehearsal and performance.

This year's conference marks ACDA's Jubilee Anniversary, celebrating sixty years since the founding of our organization. One significant way that we will celebrate our legacy will be to host a "Legacy Directors Choir," a 200-voice intergenerational Directors Chorus, which will come together at the conference to learn from several iconic conductors from the United States. The leadership has surveyed various regions of ACDA and have collectively identified eleven conductors from around the country that will give participants a snapshot into the legacy and concepts within and beyond that which Swan

identified.

The following are the conductors and a brief look into their contribution and influence on our legacy:

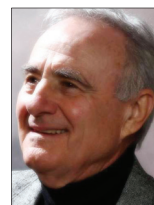


Charlene Archibeque

is considered one of the most influential American choral directors and teachers during the second

half of the twentieth century. She was the first woman to receive the Doctorate of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting and has prepared hundreds of choral directors and mentored over eighty master's students during her thirty-five-year tenure at San Jose State University. SJSU choirs performed for over twenty-five professional, conference including three ACDA national conferences. The world-renowned SJSU Choraliers took sixteen tours abroad, winning seven international competitions. She has conducted festival choirs, honor choirs and all-state choirs in forty-six states and six Canadian provinces. She has served as headliner for state, divisional, and

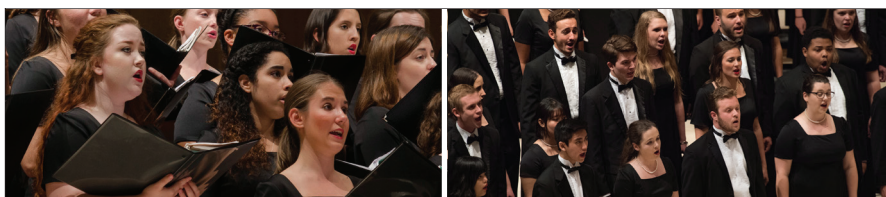
national ACDA, MENC, and BCMEA conventions; and presented lectures, reading sessions, and clinics at festivals, colleges, and universities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. She continues to appear at major universities to guest conduct, having prepared choirs for the San Francisco and San Jose Symphony Orchestra and conducted more than 160 major choral/orchestral works. Her DVD "How to Make a Good Choir Sound Great" is published by GIA, and the vintage DVD "Daily Warm-Ups for Beautiful Voices" is available from SBMP.



Eph Ehly

has conducted over eighty all-state choirs and more than 600 festival ensembles. As a conductor, author,

lecturer, and clinician he has appeared in forty-eight states, Canada, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, and various countries throughout Europe. Ehly retired from the Conservatory of Music, University of Missouri-Kansas City after twenty-seven years of service. He has additionally served at the University of Oklahoma and University of New Mexico, having supervised nearly 200 graduate students. He is the recipient of numerous teaching and performance excellence awards and grants, including the Missouri Choral Directors Association's Luther Spade Choral Director of the Year Award and the AMOCO Foundation Outstanding Teaching Award.



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Rodney Eichenberger

is a Florida State Professor Emeritus who joined ACDA in the early sixties and served as the local chair of the last ACDA convention in conjunction with MENC in 1968. He served as Northwest Division President from 1969 to 1973 and has attended all national conventions since the first independent convention in Kansas City in 1971. He led graduate conducting programs at the University of Washington, the University of Southern California, and Florida State University. His conducting DVDs "What They See Is What You Get" and "Enhancing

Musicality Through Movement" have been widely used in university conducting classes. He has conducted more than eighty all-state choirs and led workshops or guest conducted in all fifty states with international engagements throughout Europe, in Canada, Mexico, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Argentina and Brazil. He has played a major role in the Australian and New Zealand choral scene with more than thirty visits to guest conductor or lead workshops. He proudly follows the successful careers of former students and feels fortunate to continue to lead an active professional career at a much more relaxed pace.



Kenneth Fulton

was alumni professor of Choral Studies at LSU for twenty-seven years, where he conducted the LSU A Cappella Choir and produced over one hundred graduates of advanced degrees in choral conducting. He was named as one of LSU's Distinguished Professors and received the Sanders Alumni Professorship. For fifteen years, he was Chorusmaster for the Baton Rouge Symphony Chorus and served as artistic director/conductor for the Linz, Austria International Choral Festival for nine years. Fulton conducted

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performances in some of the most prestigious performance venues in the world and has conducted honor festival choruses, master classes, and conductor/teacher workshops in forty-seven states, and in Brazil, Belgium, Austria, and Germany. Prominent performances by his choirs include appearances for three national and eight divisional ACDA conventions. He has held a wide variety of professional offices and is a past president of the Southern Division of ACDA, Texas ACDA, and Louisiana ACDA.



William Hatcher resides in Rancho Bernardo, California, having retired after forty-three years of conducting and teaching choral music. His last

eleven years were at the University of Iowa, where he was director of choral activities. He was the national president of ACDA from 1991 to 1993, and also served as chair of the ACDA Endowment Trust. He later received the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, was the recipient of the Howard Swan Award for lifetime achievement by California ACDA, and received the Weston Noble Award for Lifetime Achievement by the North Central ACDA. Hatcher was also the coordinator and associate director of the 1,000-voice Olympic Honor Choir, which sang for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1984 Olympiad in Los Angeles.




Sigrid Johnson is professor emerita at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. She holds the bachelor of music degree from St. Cloud State University (Minnesota) and the master of music degree in voice performance from the University of Michigan. Johnson maintains an active schedule as a guest conductor and clinician at workshops, choral festivals, and all-state music festivals around the world. Johnson was a featured lecturer at world symposia in Minneapolis, Copenhagen, and in Argentina. She was also a member of the esteemed jury for the Béla Bartók International Choral Competition in Debrecen, Hungary, and was a featured lecturer and clinician at the Australian National Choral Association conference. Johnson has served as conductor of the Dale Warland Symphonic Chorus, associate conductor of the Dale Warland Singers, and associate conductor of VocalEssence in Minneapolis. Johnson was awarded the prestigious F. Melius Christiansen Lifetime Achievement Award for her lifelong conducting experience and for providing outstanding contributions and distinguished service to choral music in Minnesota.



Ann Howard Jones is professor emerita of music at Boston University, where she was responsible for the highly re-

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garded graduate program in Choral Conducting and conducted the Chamber Chorus and the Symphonic Chorus. From 1981 to 1996, Jones was the assistant to the late conductor Robert Shaw with the Atlanta Symphony Choruses and the Robert Shaw Institute. Jones conducted the chorus of the Young Artists Vocal Program at the BU Tanglewood Institute from 1984 to 1993. She conducted the world premiere of Dominick Argento's *Cenotaph* at the 2011 ACDA National Conference in Oklahoma City. Widely recognized for her conducting, leadership, and teaching, she has spoken, sung, and conducted all-state and honor choirs in the US, South Korea, Australia, Brazil, and Europe. In recognition of her achievements, she received ACDA's Robert Shaw Choral Award in 2011 the Distinguished Service to the Profession Award from Chorus America (2014), the Metcalf teaching award from Boston University (2003).




Jerry McCoy is regents professor of music emeritus for the University of North Texas, where between 2000 and 2015 he led the UNT choral program to national and international acclaim while serving as director of choral studies and conductor of the A Cappella Choir. In 2016/17, he served as visiting professor of music at Baylor University. From 2007 to 2015, McCoy served as a member of the ACDA National Executive Committee and as national president

from 2009 to 2011. He is currently in his eleventh season as artistic director of the Fort Worth Chorale. The 2013 winner of TCDA's Choirmaster Award, McCoy was recently nominated for a \$10,000 grant as

part of the national TIAA Difference Makers Program. His choirs have been featured on the programs of the Association of British Choral Directors national conference (Chester, England), the Daejeon



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(South Korea) and the Taipei (Taiwan) International Choral Festivals, four national ACDA conferences, and the national conference of the NCCO, and seven conferences of SWACDA, two TCDA conferences, and three TMEA conventions.



Albert McNeil is a living legend in the international choral community. Under his guidance, the Albert McNeil Jubilee

Singers has garnered international acclaim and focused worldwide attention on the vast body of folk music termed “African American.” In 1968 the Singers undertook their first European tour. Today, after eighteen sold-out European tours, twelve tours of the United States and Canada, tours of the Middle and Far East, Africa and South America, they are among the most honored singing ensembles in the world, having been selected three times to serve the U.S. State Department and USIS Cultural Exchange Program in areas of the world, including East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Iran, India, North and West Africa, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. AMJS has collaborated with such notable artists and institutions as Kathleen Battle, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Dale Warland Singers, Chanticleer, Vancouver Chamber Choir, and Pro Musica of El Paso.



Donald Neuen retired in 2014 after twenty years on the UCLA faculty. Prior to UCLA, he was director of choral

activities for The Eastman School of Music for twelve years. In 1970, Neuen became Robert Shaw’s assistant conductor and director of choral activities for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Neuen also sang in the Robert Shaw Chorale. Neuen’s additional orchestral experience includes positions with the Oak Ridge (Tennessee) Symphony Orchestra, the Georgia State University Orchestra, and the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted professional orchestras in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Japan, Spain, and the Russian Chamber Orchestra Kremlin on its U.S. tour. Neuen held choral positions with the Universities of Wisconsin, Tennessee, Georgia State and Ball State. Guest conducting activities included Europe, Asia, Mexico, Canada and nearly every state in the U.S. Major performances have been performed in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Chicago’s Orchestra Hall, and The Hollywood Bowl. He authored “Choral Concepts,” a choral conducting textbook. In 2017, Neuen retired as the conductor of the internationally televised “Hour of Power Choir.” He continues guest conducting and lecturing for state and national ACDA and MENC conventions and church music workshops.



Dale Warland has made an indelible impression on contemporary choral music, nationally and internationally.

In a quarter-century with the Dale Warland Singers (DWS), he shaped an all-professional a cappella ensemble lauded for its exquisite sound, technical finesse, and stylistic range. From that platform, Warland not only offered stunning performances of traditional repertory but also commissioned and premiered some 270 works from composers around the globe. After disbanding the DWS in 2004, he served as music director of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra Chorale and the Minnesota Beethoven Festival Chorale—both positions created for him. Warland’s many honors include awards from ASCAP, the McKnight Foundation, and Chorus America, as well as a Grammy nomination. In 2012 he was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame. In his mid-eighties, he remains sought-after as conductor, composer, and teacher. Guest-conducting has taken him to the podiums of the Danish and Swedish radio choirs, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, and Israel’s Cameron Singers, among many others. He curates choral series for five publishers; his own compositions and arrangements are widely performed.

If you desire to work with these conductors that have had a long legacy of excellence in our profession, consider being a part of the ACDA

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National Legacy Directors Choir. Sign up today at <http://bit.ly/legacychoir2019>.

We are committed to creating a schedule that would still allow participants to attend most of the conference, and we hope you will consider being a part of this unique opportunity. Due to the nature of the ensemble being a performance group at the conference, the Legacy Choir will be capped at 200 singers, and we are wanting to create a balanced SSAATTBB ensemble. Singers will be placed into slots on a “first come, first served” basis from the date that this form is completed. We wish we could accommodate everyone interested; however, we desire to make it a fine performance experience for both the singers and the conductors. Therefore having a balanced choir necessitates limiting participants. We will notify you on or before February 1, 2019, regarding your admittance into the choir, along with information about ordering the repertoire.

For your own planning purposes, the following is the rehearsal schedule during the conference: Morning rehearsals – Wednesday 9:00 – 11:30; Thursday 9:00 – 11:30; Friday 9 – 11:00. All morning rehearsals will be in the Founders Hall of Grace Trinity Church. Dress rehearsal will be ONSTAGE (Muriel Kauffman Theater) – Friday afternoon 12:30-1:30 p.m., Warm-up/Sound-check Saturday 2:15-3:15, with the performance following 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. More specific information to come once the ensemble is set.

In summary, the goal of this experience is to give our constituents, representing past and present gen-

erations, the opportunity to sing under the leadership of some of the most iconic conductors of the twentieth century who have played an important role in our choral legacy. Through this musical experience, it is our hope that the choir will have the rare opportunity for a memorable “snapshot” of each conductor’s method of approaching the music, the philosophy of their work with a choir and the passion with which they engage the singer and the music. Our vision for this Jubilee Conference of both legacy and community will certainly be manifest with this exciting project!

NOTES

- ¹ “The Development of a Choral Instrument” by Howard Swan (pp. 4-55); Herford Decker, *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*, (Prentice-Hall, Inc: New Jersey, 1973).
- ² Quotes taken from Swan, 8-9.



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