



Melisma

Official publication of the North Central Division—American Choral Directors Association



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editor's
corner

Bill Ross

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By the time you have this edition in your hands, your fall routines will be established and your music-making well underway. Nevertheless, welcome, or welcome back, whether you are new to NC-ACDA or have several (or many) years of experience, I hope this finds you excited and enjoying time with your singers, creating wonderful moments of choral music.

As I left you last spring, I had mentioned that we would be going to two issues of Melisma with a transition to an electronic issue by spring. Well, the two issue part is correct, but it seems that a bit more time is needed before the electronic part becomes a reality, so for this year we'll publish two paper editions.

By the way, the deadline for the next (final) paper issue is March 15, 2011. It was summer when I first wrote that date on my calendar and the perhaps hidden meaning of that date along with "last paper edition" didn't quite hit me until later. (I hope that isn't directly related to the aging brain cells of your editor!)

We welcome **Sheri Fraley** of Lincoln, NE to the Melisma Editorial Board as our new Advertising Editor. North Central is a very large geographic region, as we all know, so please help the "cause" by sending Sheri possible advertisers to get the word out regarding their products or services.

Also new to the Editorial Board this fall is **Mark Lehmann**. Readers will also see Mark's name listed on the Planning Committee of the 2012 NC-ACDA

Conference to be held in Madison, WI, February 8-11. Perhaps that helps answer the oft-asked question, "now that you have retired and have all this time...?"

To open this issue, President **Aimee Beckmann-Collier** offers several insights from one of her singers in answer to the question — "Why do you sing?"

One of the most interesting aspects of editing is the fact that frequently articles come in that are closely related, but from authors who didn't collaborate ahead of time. Vice-President **Kevin Meidl** discusses auditioning your choir for conference; Aimee follows with coverage of our 2012 Division Conference, "Beyond the Notes," presenting creative approaches to conference opportunities, including a unique Honor Choir experience.

Thanks to the diligence and hard work of several **R&S Committee Chairs**, we have these articles of interest: "Creating the Chemistry," "Keeping up with the Mozarts..." planning a choir retreat, and "High 5" ideas old and new (to borrow from Tom Porter) for Community Choirs, Two-Year Colleges, and Women's Choirs.

A guest article from **Kim Durr** details the INTERKULTUR approach to adjudicated festivals which quite possibly will provide a new vision for some readers.

On the back cover, Aimee gives us an assignment — to "Get Connected with ChoralNet." Happy reading! ■

contents

<i>"Melisma is the process of singing more than one note while singing a single syllable of the lyrics of a song."</i>	
"Why do you sing?" Aimee Beckmann-Collier, president	4
"I can't wait to hear your wonderful choir" Kevin Meidl, past president	5
NC-ACDA 2012 Division Conference: "Beyond the Notes," Madison WI	6-7
R&S Two-Year Colleges: Jeff Kitson "High 5"	8
R&S High School: Cathy Britton "If better is possible, then..."	10-11
R&S Community: Tom Porter "High 5: Something old, something new"	12
R&S College/University: Lee Nelson "Creating the Chemistry"	14-15
R&S Women: Rhonda Fuelberth "High 5"	16-17
"Keeping up with the Mozarts..." Jeff Kitson, R&S Two-Year Colleges	p
"World Choir Games: participation/ adjudication," Guest Author: Kim Durr	20

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Melisma, the official newsletter of the North Central Division of the American Choral Directors Association, will be published in fall/winter, 2010 and spring,

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NC-ACDA reserves the right to edit and approve all materials.

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president's
voice

Aimee Beckmann-Collier

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"Why do you sing?"

I posed that question to the 125 members of the Drake University/Community Chorus at the first rehearsal of the fall semester. Singers in this chorus range in age from 17 to 70+ and in skill and experience from "not so much" to "I've sung with the Robert Shaw Chorale." However, their answers were in a narrow range of somewhat predictable but inspiring remarks about the meaning of singing in their diverse lives. One member of the ensemble, a pastor who is an exceptional tenor and who exhibits an extraordinary awareness of life on many levels, chose to respond in an email which he sent the day after that rehearsal.

With his permission, I offer his comments on the transcendence of singing:

I sing...

- because my life can become quite confining with the press of daily responsibilities, schedules, and deadlines to fulfill. Singing moves me into community with others, others with whom, even without knowing them, I can immediately connect. In such connection is not the mere addition of person to person but multiplication, a geometric squaring of expression, communication, friendship, joy!

- to acknowledge there is life beyond me, a life of beauty, of excellence, of virtue. Post-modern life seems to be "all about me," but when I sing I'm reminded it's not about me but about our community, living not for my own advancement and pleasure but for the encouragement and betterment of my neighbors both near and far, known and unknown.
- to ascribe to my Creator the esteem He is due. When I sing well with others, attention is brought not to any particular individual but to messages of truth, inspiration, and hope, drawing both singer and listener to One beyond ourselves.

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“I can’t wait to hear your wonderful choir...”

The North Central ACDA family comes together every two years to celebrate, create and connect as a professional choral community. At each conference we present interest sessions, workshops, reading sessions and concerts...concerts that profoundly impact the performers as they do the listeners. Yet why do so few of us audition our choirs for these wonderful performance opportunities?

Steven Pressfield suggests in “The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles,” that the problem we face is resistance... “Resistance if fueled by fear.”¹ Although we have a great deal of pride in our choirs and the musical achievements they accomplish, we resist auditioning for a performance opportunity. What is it we fear the most?

Perhaps we are afraid of criticism. We are worried that our colleagues will criticize our choice of repertoire, our choral tone, our tempi...and the list goes on. So we don’t apply for a conference performance. But what about the notion that we gather to “celebrate, create and connect as a professional choral community?” Is there any truth to that aspect of our conferences?

It is likely that we have all been guilty at one time or another of making subjective judgments on performances we hear. Pressfield writes, “If you find yourself criticizing other people, you’re probably doing it out of resistance. When we see others beginning to live their authentic selves, it drives us crazy if we have not lived out our own.... Individuals who are realized in their own lives almost never criticize others. If they speak at all, it is to offer encouragement....”²

This is not to say that one shouldn’t fuss over the music and worry about creating the best possible performance for both the performers and the listeners. Dale Warland once said at an ACDA conference in Appleton, Wisconsin, “You have to sweat the details!”³ Pressfield suggests that the quality of self-doubt is a good thing.... “This is because it serves as an indicator of aspiration. It reflects love, love of something we dream of doing, and the desire to do it.”⁴

Bill Diekhoff, past president of WCDA and national R&S Chair for Community Choirs, tells a great story. He was at a Central Division ACDA conference a number of years ago and standing as a door guard with Morris Hayes. He relays the story as follows: “After hearing stunning performances by the Indiana University Chamber Choir, the Nordic Choir, and the St. Olaf Choir, Morrie turned to me and said, ‘Bill, I can’t wait to get home and hear someone sing a wrong note....’”⁵

And isn’t it often that way? We go to conferences and hear outstanding choirs doing what they do best. But we often forget or underestimate the quality of our own work and that of our choirs.

In October of 1998 Karle Erickson wrote a review of some of his most profound experiences as an ACDA member. He discussed attending ACDA national conventions and called them the “finest in-service education I could get!” He went on to say, “I was impressed that I could sit at the same table for dinner with Norman Luboff, Robert Shaw, Paul Salomonovich or Charles Hirt...and feel no atmosphere of ‘what’s this young punk doing here?’”⁶

Mark Aamot, former conductor of the Carroll College Choirs defined the supportive nature of ACDA beautifully:

“One of my early experiences was at a national convention in Kansas City, probably in the mid-60’s. I was watching Robert Shaw do a workshop and there were probably 250-300 people in the room, many of whom were on the floor, including Roger Wagner. To me that epitomizes ACDA; all learning from each other and respecting each other as we strive to do justice to this great field that we’re in.”⁷

Respecting each other is a common theme among ACDA members because we all know what kind of work it takes to get to a conference performance stage. Although we should “sweat the details” as Dale Warland once said, we should also take stock in what we do well. Our choirs represent our very best professional and personal efforts. They must—because that is who we are as ACDA teachers, conductors and advocates. It has meant the world to me to be associated with positive, uplifting, and artistic choral musicians. I look forward to coming together again as a professional choral community to celebrate, create and connect...and I can’t wait to hear your wonderful choir as part of the program! ■

¹ Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2002), p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³ Dale Warland, quoted by James Heiks following a conference in Appleton during the early 1990’s.

⁴ Pressfield, p. 39.

⁵ Bill Diekhoff, *Written reflections of a past president to Mary Elworthy* (Dec., 1998).

⁶ *Ibid.*, Karle Erickson to Mary Elworthy. (Oct., 1998).

⁷ *Ibid.*, Mark Aamot to Mary Elworthy. (Sept., 1998)

"Beyond the Notes:" 2012 North Central Division Conference

Madison, Wisconsin • February 8–11, 2012

—Aimee Beckmann-Collier, NC-ACDA President-elect

What's so great about an ACDA divisional conference?

Veteran conference-goers might respond enthusiastically by mentioning inspiring concerts and stimulating interest sessions, a chance to talk with colleagues and to step away from the daily rigors of busy lives in order to renew and refresh one's professional and personal perspective.

The 2012 North Central Division conference, to be held February 8-11 in Madison, Wisconsin, will offer both inspiration and practical opportunities for professional development.

All choral directors/conductors are teachers, providing musical and extra-musical instruction in every rehearsal and class, whether in churches, community choruses, or school choirs.

The 2012 conference is intended to provide a plethora of practical experiences that will assist NC-ACDA members in extending learning beyond the notes. The conference will focus on the development of artistry as a function of a comprehensive, holistically engaged approach to music-making which is transferable to singers at all levels and in all situations.

To accomplish this goal, the conference will include:

- **Informances**, not just performances, in which ensembles will demonstrate how they approached learning the music and what they've learned beyond the notes of those particular pieces.
- **Reading Sessions** that focus on "what could I teach with this piece, how could I introduce the piece, what strategies could use to make the learning process one of deep engagement for the singers?"
- **Interest Sessions** that focus on the process of teaching/rehearsing in a way that captures the imagination of singers, calls forth a high level of intellectual, physical, and affective engagement, and leads to musical independence.
- **Directors Choruses**, which will focus purely on the process of music-making, led by North Central members who teach at the elementary, middle school/junior high, high school, and college levels, as well as those who lead church choirs and community choruses. The directors choruses, *which will not perform*, will offer creative, engaging rehearsal strategies for pieces carefully chosen for their usefulness at various levels.

- **Honor Choirs**, which will prepare several pieces in advance, additionally will learn a piece "from scratch" during the course of the Madison rehearsals. Conference participants will have the opportunity to observe the honor choir conductors introduce the piece and rehearse it at each stage of development.
- **Immersion Day**, which will focus on teaching musical literacy as a function of tone quality, expressivity, and everyday commitment, as well as a comprehensive approach to teaching skills, knowledge, and affective engagement.

Madison is a truly vibrant city, with a tremendous performing arts facility, the Overture Center, where all performances will take place; as well as great restaurants, shops, hotels, with all conference sites within a two-block radius.

Because we are publishing only two issues of *Melisma* this year, be sure to visit North Central ACDA's "Community" on ChoralNet* for details regarding this powerful and practical chance to learn, connect, and renew.

***Don't miss the introduction to ChoralNet on the back cover!**

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Sun Rings (world premiere with the Kronos
String Quartet), Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*,
and Whitacre's *Hebrew Songs*.



Jeff Kitson

NC-ACDA Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair
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HIGH

1. *Bogoroditse Devo*, Arvo Pärt
SATB, *a cappella*. Universal Edition
UE30414.

A beautiful Russian setting of the *Ave Maria*, Pärt's stands in stark contrast to the much more prominent version by Rachmaninoff. While the piece contains several seemingly difficult elements—a chant-like mixed meter section and a large eight part divisi—these are much easier than they appear. All parts in the divisi are doubled, and the mixed meter flows with the natural inflections of the speech. This is a perfect yet attainable challenge for more able choirs!

2. *The Tortoise and the Hare*,
Darmon Meader. SATB, *a cappella*.
Carl Fischer CM9143.

A perfect fit for an inexperienced choir! Carl Fisher has started offering high quality part-by-part recordings for individual (or sectional) practice for free on their website. While not every piece is available in this format, *Hare* is! While that alone is not a reason to buy, the quality of the music speaks for itself. I decided to purchase this piece the second I heard the repeating “Run, bunny, run!” section. Like me, you’ll be energized and laughing all the way to concert day!

3. *That Ever I Saw*, Darmon Meader.
SATB, *a cappella*. Carl Fischer
CM8971.

A much more typical sound for Darmon Meader, *That Ever I Saw* combines beautiful modern harmonies that are easily sung. A few jazz-flavored chords are sprinkled throughout, but this could easily work for both jazz and concert choirs looking for a touching *a cappella* love song.

4. *Breaths*, Ysaye Barnwell. SATB,
a cappella. Musical Source YMB118.

If you have two capable female soloists, this piece is for you! This piece by Ysaye Barnwell, of Sweet Honey in the Rock, is an earthy and sensual gem about truly listening to the things around you. Simple repeating ostinato patterns ensure you can have this piece learned in less than five minutes. Then you can spend joyful hours perfecting. As I tell my students, “It’s easy to learn, and hard to sing!”

5. *The Talents We Possess*, Ruth Elaine
Schram. SATB and piano. Carl
Fischer CM9171.

I really think the subtitle of this piece should be “The Community College Anthem.” While the music is quite good with a running eighth-note theme that is undeniable, the text is captivating in its own right. With lines like, “We are not all destined to be the best, only to use the talents we possess” and our talents are “meant to be nurtured,” this creates a perfect teachable moment to talk with students about their own contribution to their surroundings. Musically, this piece is very singable, with one or two spots presenting range challenges for less experienced ensembles. However, these are easily worked around. Look for this on my spring concert! ■

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Cathy Britton

NC-ACDA Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair
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“If better is possible, then good is not enough.”

How to plan a retreat with your choir...

Each fall, my concert choir and I begin our years' journey on retreat together. I feel it is one of the most important activities I participate in with my junior/senior choir members. The retreat sets up a successful year in choir. The students spend time getting to know each other. As they do, they find areas of commonality and begin to realize that everyone in their choir is important for the success of the choir. I believe so strongly of the importance of this retreat that attendance at my retreat is mandatory. During the audition process the previous spring, my students sign a commitment form with the date of the retreat on it. If you have never taken your choir on retreat, I encourage you to give it a try. Here are some ideas and thoughts that have worked well for me. Let's see if we can get you started. I've put my ideas in the form of questions.

1. How long should the retreat be?

Try a one day retreat at first. If you can manage an overnight, that is even better. Get them around a campfire singing songs (with a guitar), take time to encourage students to affirm each other and you've got them hooked.

2. Should the retreat be just team-building or should I work in some singing as well? I've done both and think either is good. It all depends on how much time you have and what you want to accomplish. As long as you are organized and keep the students busy, you can incorporate some sectional time as well.

3. Where should I hold the retreat?

Take a bus and get out of town. Students can come up with all sorts of excuses to come late or leave early if you stay in

town. Check out your area church camp retreat centers. Don't allow cell phones to come with the students on the retreat. I take their phones as they get off the bus and give them back as they get back on the bus to come home. It's easy because it's a school activity and follows school cell phone policy.

4. Should I find someone to help me?

I suggest you find an individual in your community who does group team-building. It takes you off the hook to do and be everything for the retreat. I'm sure your students don't have "teacher deafness" like mine do...! I find the students enjoy working with other individuals that are good at team-building. I look for people that have experience working with youth in a camp or retreat situation such as youth pastors, camp deans or counselors for many other types of camps. Ask fellow high school choir directors for recommendations. A good team-builder will begin with fun "getting to know you" games and then as the day progresses, will move to activities that challenge the students to come up with ways to help the choir become successful. Some team builders will ask for payment, some donate their time. I also use former choir students as chaperones/section leaders. Make sure you invite alumni that contributed positively to your program as students and that your current students respect. Many of these alumni are majoring in music education so it's good for them to get some experience working with high school students. I usually wait until those alumni are at least 20 or 21 years old before I ask for their help.

5. What are some fun activities that you've used to build community?

My concert choir numbers range from 56–60 depending on the year. You can modify any of these activities to any size group. Here are some activities I do on a regular basis.

• I pair up the students as Choir

Brother/Sisters. This pairing is for the entire year. After the initial "getting to know your bro/sis" activity at the retreat, my choir officers come up with monthly out-of-school activities for the pairs such as a soda fountain date; movie night and each fall we go to the local corn maze... so entertaining! At the retreat, I tie the inside wrists of the bro/sis together before they eat lunch (or dinner). Each pair has to work together to eat together. Take lots of pictures (and videos). Just wait until one of them tells you that he/she has to use the bathroom....

• Photo Scavenger Hunt. This is one of the most fun activities I've done with students and they love it. I divide the students into families of not more than six or seven per group. You need one digital camera per group. I find that if I make it a competition, the students seem to try to be more creative. See the end of the article for an example of this activity. You are welcome to use any part of the example.

• Choir Commercials In A Sack.

I break the students into six or seven groups, give them a paper grocery sack filled with about 6 random items (cloths, toys, wigs, etc...anything!!!) and tell them they have to come up with a commercial to get students to join choir.

These are the guidelines:

All items must be used;

Everyone must participate;

Use a song from last year's spring musical and change the lyrics;

Must be all singing except for the final line of the commercial ("Join Choir Today!")

The commercials are hilarious and creative. We use them again in October when we combine with our junior high for our first concert of the year. The students and their peers love them.

• **Have the students participate in a Personality Assessment Exam.** There are many of these exams to choose from, such as colors (are you a gold, blue, green...?) or a compass (are you a north, south...?). All personality assessments are

very similar. They help students understand the strengths and weaknesses of all personality types, how to work with each personality type and how important it is to have all personality types in the choir.

• Of course, there are many, many team building activities on the internet so happy "surfing."

By the time we've arrived home from the retreat, the students have begun to understand that they can only do together what no one person can do alone. I continue to build community by allowing students ownership in their choir by having them vote on officers.

The officers have a plethora of jobs during the year and I'm always guiding their progress. I also have section leaders which are selected by me. If you allow

high school juniors and seniors ownership in their choir, you will be amazed at their maturity in helping you make them a better sounding choir and a choir/team that cares deeply about each other. Of course, I have to do some reminding as the year progresses, but for the most part, the choir almost always has a successful year on all levels. Each year I have a different quote up on my wall. It becomes my mantra and we read it together quite often. I leave you with this quote: ***"If better is possible, then good is not enough."*** ■

Notes: Copies of the Photo Scavenger Hunt and my Two-day Retreat Schedule will be available online at www.choralnet.org. Go to "Communities," scroll down to NC-ACDA, then click on "Pages."



DR. EUGENE ROGERS
Director of Choral Activities
Assistant Professor of Music

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December 3, 2010

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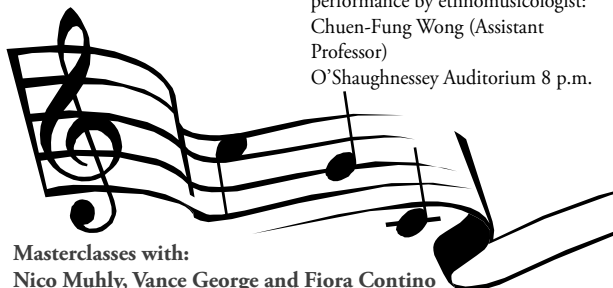
April 29, 2011

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Tom Porter

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Something **old**, something **new**...

Selecting repertoire for community choirs is like walking a tightrope, finding that point of balance between old and new, accessible and challenging, entertaining and evocative. The following are selections members of the Bismarck-Mandan Civic Chorus will find in their folders this season:

1. *O Holy Night*, Adolph Adam.
SATB (G. Schirmer).

A perennial favorite of both choir and audience members, this is an arrangement that affords a bit of drama ("Fall on your knees...") and several opportunities for goosebumps ("O night divine"). It is also a wonderful vehicle for a soloist from the choir.

2. *Northern Lights*, Ola Gjeilo (Walton).

Gjeilo, a Norwegian composer currently living in New York, is fast becoming one of the most performed composers of choral music. He describes *Northern Lights* as his "most Norwegian production in years." The text is "Pulchra es amica mea" from the Song of Solomon, and the setting is for SATB choir with no divisi. The music reflects the beauty of

the aurora borealis, serene and awe inspiring. Gjeilo's music is melodic with well-prepared dissonances, making this piece very accessible for community choirs as well as an opportunity to engage in the music of a contemporary composer.

3. *Magnificent Horses*, arr. Jing Ling Tam, SATB divisi (Alliance Music Publishing).

This setting of a traditional Mongolian melody provides diversity and drama for the choir and audience. Using nonsense syllables, diatonic lines, and driving rhythms, the composer creates a sense of movement and locale. Adding to the effect are the ehru (piccolo) and sleigh bells parts.

4. *Christmas in About Three Minutes*, arr. Mark Weston. SATB, piano (Heritage Music Press).

Do you ever get complaints about not programming enough familiar music in your holiday concerts? Here is a quick solution (about three minutes to be specific). This clever arrangement makes use of twenty-one familiar carols in short

order. The music is extremely accessible, and the stylistic changes from phrase to phrase keep the chorus members on their toes. Want to keep the audience engaged? Challenge them to list as many of the titles as they can. If you are interested in gathering information, also have the audience write on a card their name, address, and email, then have a drawing for a door prize during the concert.

5. *Little Birds*, Eric Whitacre. SATB divisi, piano (Walton).

The third of Whitacre's settings of Octavio Paz, *Little Birds* uses the original Spanish text and creates an evocative choral setting that is both interesting and accessible. The challenging piano part is available as a separate piece of music, and it is well worth the extra \$5 to the accompanist. The melodic and harmonic lines are typical Whitacre, and the effect of fluttering papers at the end of the piece always draws a gasp (and giggle) of surprise from the audience. ■

Omaha Chamber Singers, David Batter, director, at the 2010 NC Conference.



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Creating the **Chemistry**

It is obvious from the downbeat.

The eyes of the choir light up, they sing with sincere emotion and musicality, and there is an intense synergy that connects all the singers. The conductor barely has to conduct; she simply smiles at the singers and conducts more with her eyes than her hands. The music is electric, the singers completely draw in the audience and the entire experience is overwhelming. *The chemistry is apparent.*

We have all experienced this in some fashion, whether it has been as a conductor, a singer, an audience member, or all three! For many, it is life-changing. It is the reason we chose this career, it is the reason our singers joined the choir. *We all want to experience the magic of making great music.* But how does it happen?

Obviously, choirs that sing with great “chemistry” don’t just magically appear on the concert stage. Something takes place within the preparation, rehearsals and performance that allow for a critical connection to take place. So how do we create this chemistry within our ensembles? In Kennon L. Callahan’s article “The New Reality in Motivation,” he outlines five “motivational fuels” that energize and connect people.

COMPASSION: sharing, caring, giving loving, serving

COMMUNITY: roots, place, belonging, family, friends

CHALLENGE: attain, accomplish, achieve

REASONABILITY: data, logic, analysis, good sense

COMMITMENT: loyalty, duty, obligation

I believe these “motivational fuels” are the major components of creating an enduring chemistry within our choirs.

COMPASSION

Compassion is an essential element in our interaction with students. We must show them sincere respect, care and love (as difficult as that can be at times!). When students sense compassion from you, they begin to trust and respect you. This mutual respect fosters an environment that nurtures great rehearsals and even greater performances. When students feel as though they can trust you, they allow themselves to open their hearts and mind to the music.

In his book “The Perfect Rehearsal,” Timothy Seelig states:

They trust you to teach them, direct them, protect them and lead them in doing something they could never do on their own. They trust that you will respect them and the gift of their time and talent and use it wisely. They trust that you will not embarrass, humiliate or abuse them when they open themselves up to you.

If our students don’t feel as though they are cared for and respected, they will never allow themselves to be open to the music. They will connect at a very superficial level and just “sing the notes.” The music will be lifeless. If we model this openness in our rehearsals, it will be reflected in the singers. I know many great conductors who share personal stories and experiences with their choirs. When this happens, the singers begin to see themselves in the conductor. The students think, “I’ve felt that way! That same thing happened to me!” and they begin to feel connected to the conductor and to the music. Students gain a greater understanding of the music and as a result, a deeper, personal connection to its meaning. When conductors give of themselves and the students reciprocate,

a mutual respect, trust and compassion develop and manifest in the music, creating incredible musical experiences.

COMMUNITY

How many of us refer to our choirs as a musical family? Most of us! The singers look to and interact with each other as siblings in a family, and we are the parent. When our singers sense this relationship, they are more likely to give of their time and energy. They will feel as though they are an integral part of the ensemble and without them, the choir would be incomplete. Great conductors foster this attitude into their program and the students respond accordingly. The students come to rehearsals at 6:30 am to get ready for the madrigal dinner. They stay until 11:00 pm after the concert to take down the risers and come to the dress rehearsal the Saturday morning after prom. If the students feel a sense of belonging, they will do anything for the music and for the program. It is a place where they feel deeply rooted with their friends, their mentors and the music. Sadly, there are many students for which choir is the only place they receive this *fuel*. The choir family keeps them going. It changes their lives.

CHALLENGE

I have a dear friend who frequently tells his choir, “It’s more fun to be good!” How true! Our students *want* to work hard (even if some don’t admit it!). They *want* to be pushed beyond their limits. They *want* to achieve something they thought they never could. They *want* you to be honest with them. If they sing a passage sub-par and you tell them “great work,” they will not trust you. They *want* you to have high expectations and follow through with the consequences if they are not upholding them.

Kathy Saltzman Romey directs the University of Minnesota Singers and the University of Minnesota Symphony Orchestra at the 2010 NC Division Conference.



Successfully accomplishing a challenge is very rewarding and empowering to the singers and the conductor! Everyone has more fun when they know they have individually and collectively given 100% to accomplish the requisite task. The singers have seen a mountaintop, and from there, they see the next one to climb and go forth renewed and empowered by the experience. The attitude becomes contagious. They press each other to work even harder, dedicate themselves even more, and open up their minds and hearts to music they never thought they could perform. All of a sudden, attendance and classroom management isn't a problem. Their learning and music-making leap to the next level. Challenge them. It IS more fun to be good!

REASONABILITY

Reasonability needs to guide our decisions in all aspects of teaching. It keeps our "challenges" attainable. We want and need to have high standards for our choirs but we also need to make sure we have provided students with the *tools* they need to accomplish them. We have all over-programmed for our choirs and have suffered the consequences. Be logical and systematic with your curriculum. Know what your students are capable of and what needs to be covered next to further their musical education. Be well-prepared for each rehearsal. We quickly become at ease with "winging it" in rehearsals but we are doing a disservice to ourselves and to our students. Plan ahead, use good sense and the challenges we give to our students will be successfully achieved.

COMMITMENT

We ask our students to give 110% every day, so we must do the same. Our students must know that we are committed to them and their education. If we are not committed to the ensemble and their musical journey, the students will never be fully committed. We must also be

fully committed to the music, including the preparation of it. If the choir witnesses the conductor coming to rehearsals well prepared, enjoying the music and passionate about teaching it, the singers will enjoy it and be passionate too. In many ways, the choir is simply a reflection of the conductor. Rodney Eichenberger coined the phrase, "What THEY see is what YOU get!" If we instill loyalty and commitment within our students, they will begin to take ownership of the whole experience and all of the other "motivational fuels" will become even stronger. You can tell when an entire choir has committed to the learning process. It is evident in how they carry themselves in the classroom and out. They have a sense of confidence, pride, and self-confidence. They show respect and compassion toward others. Their performances are filled with a magical chemistry that overwhelms the performers and the audience. They have committed to excellence.

We have chosen a wonderful career that holds great responsibility. There are few other jobs that impact people the way music education does. Singing in a good choir is a tremendously formative experience and we have the good fortune of being the tour guide. If we are compassionate, we will build community among the singers. This community will

want to be challenged as long as they trust we are being reasonable about our expectations and are committed to the entire experience. When we carefully measure and balance out these elements, we create an intense chemistry within our choirs and all are changed for the better. ■

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1. **Universal Song**, Dan J. Hall. Text based on Shaker poems. SSAA, piano. Walton Music HL08501722.

Commissioned for performance at the 2009 National ACDA Conference in Oklahoma City, *Universal Song*, is an uplifting piece for women's voices, the text of which expresses gratitude and joy. "Praise, rejoicing and thanksgiving, is the glory of our song! While the angels from above us waft the blessed strain along... This our universal song, amen, alleluia, amen." The piece is an arrangement of two Shaker tunes *Festive Song* and *Gentle Deeds*. With a straight-forward melody and interesting variation between verses, the arrangement accomplishes the task of creating a joyful and exuberant musical landscape. Appropriate for high school or collegiate women's choirs, the piece includes unison, two-part, and four-part writing with only limited divisi at the end. An audio recording of the performance at the national conference is available through the ACDA website.

2. **I Dream a World**, Joan Szymko. Poetry by Langston Hughes. SSA, piano. Santa Barbara Music Press 613. "I dream a world where man No other man will scorn, Where love will bless the earth And peace its paths adorn."

Although she has published choral works for mixed and men's voices, ACDA's 2010 Brock Commission Composer, Joan Szymko, is perhaps best known for her significant contribution to choral music for women's voices. Szymko consistently writes thoughtful and challenging pieces that highlight the beauty of women's voices. The text, a poem by Langston Hughes, provides many opportunities for creating meaningful learning and performance

experiences for singers. Appropriate for youth, high school, or collegiate ensembles, the piece integrates unison, two-part, and four-part writing. A beautiful recording of this piece is available on the newly-released two CD set, *Heaven and Earth, San Francisco Girls Chorus*. In addition to Szymko's *I Dream a World*, the CD set is an excellent investment with beautiful recordings representing a varied palate of treble chorus literature.

3. **A Cradle Song**, Kurt Knecht. Poetry by William Blake, from "Songs of Innocence." SA, piano. Walton Music HL08501732.

It has been a pleasure to have the composer of *A Cradle Song* here on our campus for the past three years. In fact, he was the recipient of the campus-wide 2009 Folsom Distinguished Dissertation Award. This is the first time the award has been given to a recipient for a musical composition (*Missa Prolationem* for soloists, mixed chorus, organ, and string quartet). Kurt says of *A Cradle Song*, "I had an idea to write the kind of music that Gershwin might have written if he wrote for the church." Both vocal lines and piano accompaniment reflect this influence and beautifully serve the William Blake text. The piece combines a simple lullaby with many layers of depth in both poetry and musical development to create a work that will be fulfilling for both singers and audiences alike. *A Cradle Song* could be programmed at any time of year, although a veiled nativity reference would make it very appropriate for a holiday concert. There is a recording of the University of Montevallo Women's Chamber Choir singing the piece on the Walton 2010 music sampler site

<http://www.waltonmusic.com/CDsample2010.php>.

4. **Tatlo sa Buhay** (Three Philippine Songs on Life), arr. Sidney Marquez Boquiren. Boosey & Hawkes CME In High Voice series. SSAA, *a cappella*.

Rhythmically vibrant and at times complex, the three songs from the Philippines can be performed separately or together as a set of three. Singers should be able to make connections to the three songs (a children's song, a lullaby, and a love song) as they represent shared, cross-cultural, human experiences.

The first song in the set includes a variety of nonsense syllables that create a playful and buoyant atmosphere.

The lullaby, according to the arranger, was improvised from a given melody and, like the first song, contains nonsense syllables that create a soothing atmosphere.

The love song returns to a quick tempo and reflects a dialogue between a young man and a young woman that ends with her rejection of his argument that they should be together. A native of the Philippines, the arranger offers simple notation of the original melodies on the last page. The original melodies are helpful when introducing the songs to choirs and also provide opportunities to explore how arrangers use original materials to develop musical landscapes reflective of cultural experience.

5. **Deep Peace**, Gwyneth Walker. SA and piano, guitar, or string quartet. <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/deeppac.html>.

A composer of many staples in the women's chorus literature, Gwyneth

Walker occasionally posts a composition on her website that can be used for teaching and performance.

Deep Peace is simple and yet very beautiful. In addition to being musically gratifying, it is a very useful piece for developing literacy and various aspects of vocal technique, particularly vowel uniformity and a sense of breath energy connected to phrasing.

Be sure to peruse the website for additional insights into her life as a composer and her reflections on her own work. Accessible to a variety of women's choruses, *Deep Peace* is appropriate for beginning and advanced women's choirs. Along with a list of published work, the

website offers both *To Sing is to Fly* and *Tree of Peace* (a UNL University Chorale favorite) as downloadable pieces. ■



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Keeping up with the Mozarts:

the haves and the have-nots in choral music

—Jeff Kitson, NC-ACDA R&S Chair, Two Year College Choirs

She was crying. It was my first day on the job, and it was only a simple voice check, but there she was...crying. Certainly, our neighbor schools didn't have this problem. In that moment I realized, at least for the time being, that I was a "have-not."

Just moments before, I was standing in front of my very own college choir for the first time. I knew this job would be challenging, as I was starting with a large ensemble—15 singers.

After the typical new-teacher introduction and syllabus incantation, I asked each student to come up to the piano to see me privately and sing a few descending five-note patterns on "nah." My pianist tells me that outwardly I was very gentle as I coaxed a few barely audible gasps out of her, while I know that inside I pondered with a strong sense of dismay, "uh...if you don't want to sing, why take choir?!" This, I realized, was going to be more of an uphill battle than I'd ever thought.

I enjoy telling this story every year to show my students how far we've come.

Now, admittedly, I'm a bit competitive by nature. So, as I started hearing other college and some larger high school choirs around our state, there was some major choral envy going on. They had students who could consistently match

pitch, and sing in tune! Not to mention all the behind-the-scenes techniques that make singing together a magical experience. As hard as I was working to recruit and get my program started, I felt completely hung out to dry.

I gained some perspective when I met a few local teachers at their district honor choir concert. All of them were teaching K-12 general music, choir, and band.

All of them were also battling administrations where sports ruled, and music was hanging by a thread. One teacher was told to "...just let the kids pick the music," to avoid student and parental complaints. "Boy, glad I don't have to deal with that," I thought.

As music people we all know the euphemisms for those teachers who are less fortunate: "in the trenches," "doing God's work," etc. Usually, we speak of them with sympathy. How often, though, do we think of those who are more fortunate than us, "I could do a better job if I had those resources!"

What I've come to realize is that every school is a have or a have-not to someone else. Small community colleges may yearn for the support that the large state universities receive. Large state schools may lust after the graduate students recruited by the regional powerhouses.

The regional powerhouses may lust after the artistic freedom of the elite east and west coast universities. On and on it goes creating a spiral of avarice that can be overheard in some of the the post-concert chatter at conventions.

The solution is to connect with each other more. Don't try to keep up with the family next door, go over and have a party! Many of us in two-year colleges function with either the "have-not" *mentality* or the "have-not" *reality*. The best way to dig ourselves out of this is to explore and create the connections and resources around us. Larger well-supported schools (and we are all larger and more well supported than someone else!) should reach out. *Share* repertoire ideas, *share* a concert, *share* a recruiting/mentoring relationship. Smaller schools could attend concerts of larger schools to gain inspiration, or host a clinician in partnership with your well-heeled counterparts.

We all want to provide the best possible choral experience for our students, just like we all want to provide for those who depend on us. In economic times like these, the world would be a better place if we all shared a little more of what we have to offer with those in need.

So, go out and meet the neighbors! ■

Combined Choirs: Eastview & Wayzata, MN High School Concert Choirs perform the Raymond Brock Commission at the 2010 NC Division Conference, Jerry McCoy, ACDA National President, Guest Conductor.



A call for participation/adjudication



A personal perspective on an INTERKULTUR Choir Competition and Festival, and a call to participation in the American International Choral festival (AICF) in St. Louis, Reno, and the World Choir Games Cincinnati 2012

As a member of the music advisory committee for WCG Cincinnati 2012, I was invited to attend Concorso Corale Internazionale in Riva del Garda, Italy. I was curious about the competition, judging, types and quality of participating choirs, the conduct of the participants, as well as the general spirit of the event.

All the choirs delivered respectable performances covering a wide range of competence and artistry. The best choirs were most excellent—rivaling the finest university choruses in the United States. Each choir took its craft seriously and behaved with utmost decorum. Two choruses stood out among the rest. **Danmarks Radio Pigekeoret** from Copenhagen, the Audience Prize Winner, was lovely to the ear and eye as creative staging enhanced their musical performance. Grand Prize Winner **Akustika Chamber Singers**, from Pretoria, South Africa, was breathtaking in its artistry and technical proficiency, especially with their rousing finale, “Karimanatu kuicha” by Ko Matsushita. The competition, which spanned four days, culminated in a celebratory

—Kim Durr, Broadway Bound Academy, Loveland, Ohio
Co-Chair, Music Advisory Committee for World Choir Games, Cincinnati, 2012

Grand Prize Competition at which all participants were presented with diplomas, and the winner of each category announced.

Choirs enthusiastically cheered for one another in supportive revelry before a very large audience. There was no negative behavior, and no grumblings about judges’ decisions, just sharing of choral singing with mutual understanding. Indeed, support for one another was gleeful.

Sometimes, my experiences with competitions have not always felt this positive here in the United States, whether at my children’s baseball tournaments, show choir contests, marching band competitions, or the many choral competitions in which I’ve participated throughout my career.

What, I wondered, made the positive difference in this INTERKULTUR Choir Competition? I may never know all the reasons, but here are a few I think that are highly likely: *the Musica Mundi Evaluation System, the philosophy that participation itself is the highest honor, the higher goal of helping choirs improve rather than providing only a numerical scoring with brief comments for their performance, the transparency of the judging, direct jury feedback for directors, and expert advice from jurors to choirs.*

I believe the INTERKULTUR philosophy of adjudication is fair, compassionate, and makes common sense. Jurors not only give scores, but hold lively intellectual debate to fairly determine the best results. All judge’s

scores are revealed in a transparent system. Moreover, each director is given ample opportunity to meet with judges to discuss opinions and learn from their expertise.

The aim of INTERKULTUR is to provide pedagogical guidance for all choirs involved, above and beyond the competition results of bronze, silver, and gold. This style of judging and coaching provides a positive environment for sharing music. The international participants from around the globe provide the opportunity to hear some of the best choirs in the world. **This rich, cultural and artistic environment of an INTERKULTUR competition demands respect for the art of choral music, and for all the singers who make up the diverse choral ensembles that perform.**

If you are a director who finds competition stimulating opportunity for growth, **I urge you to register and participate in INTERKULTUR competitions in St. Louis, Reno and World Choir Games, Cincinnati 2012.** If you are a director reticent to compete due to negative past experience, consider this a fresh opportunity for civil and positive reinforcement. I am proud to support World Choir Games Cincinnati 2012, and encourage my colleagues to celebrate choral music with singers around the world in a competition that seeks to promote artistry as it honors choirs of every level.

Readers may contact Kim directly at: 513-280-1960 kim@artskonnnect.com. ■

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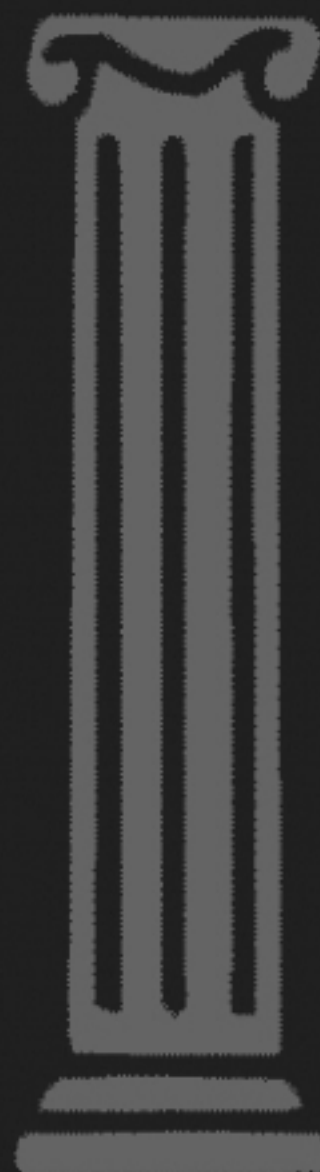
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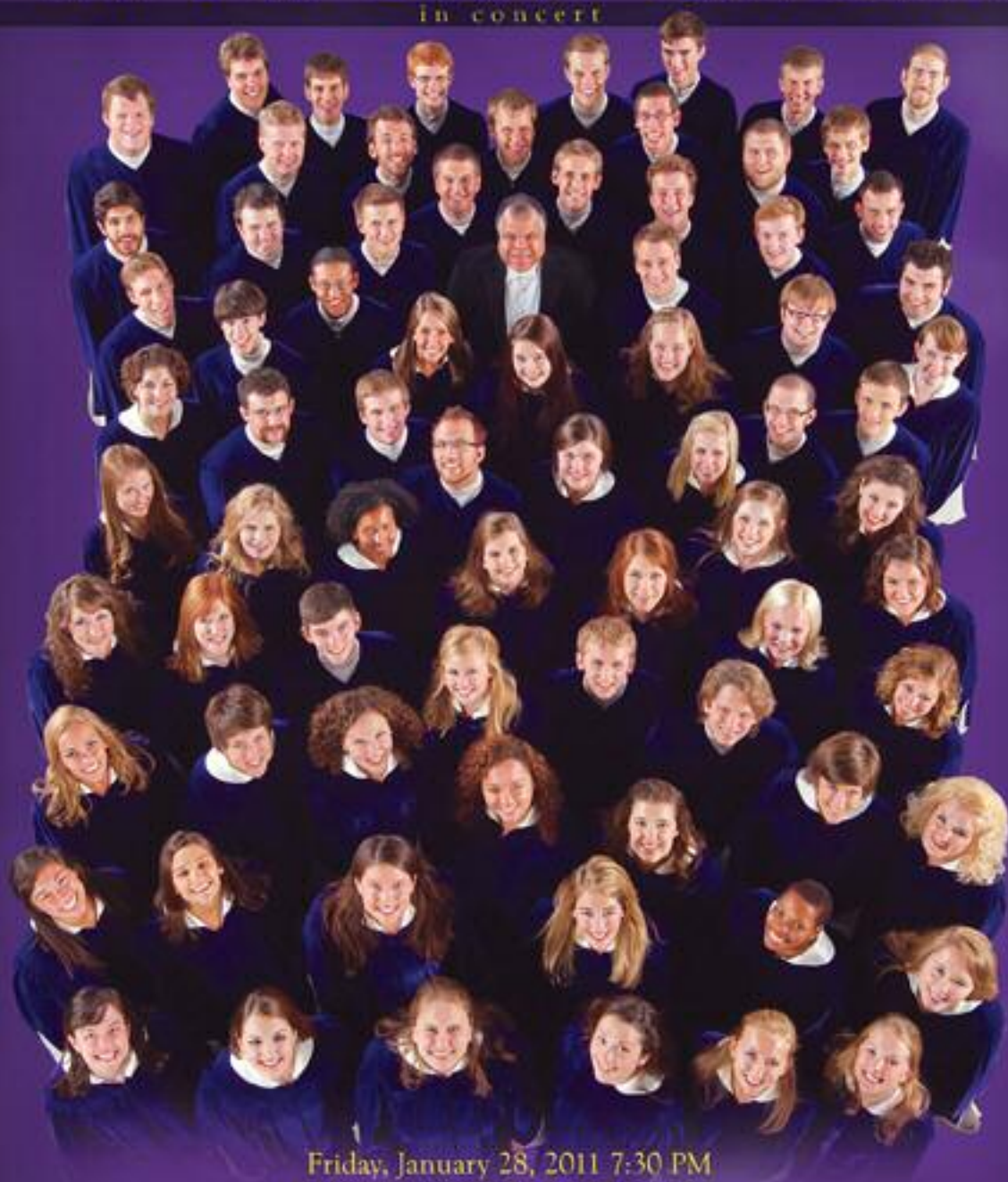
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Friday, January 28, 2011 7:30 PM
First Christian Church - Des Moines, Iowa

Saturday, February 12, 2011 7:30 PM
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Saturday, January 29, 2011 7:00 PM
First Plymouth Congregational Church - Lincoln, Nebraska

Sunday, January 30, 2011 4:00 PM
Holland Performing Arts Center - Omaha, Nebraska

Ticket information at StOlafTickets.com, 1-800-363-5487

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Get Connected with ChoralNet!

[www.choralnet.org, select “Communities,” scroll down to “ACDA North Central Division”]

Tim Sharp, executive director of ACDA, the professional association for American choral directors, and James D. Feiszli, president of ChoralNet, the online choral site, announced a merger on November 30, 2009.

What does this merger mean for NC-ACDA members?

Imagine communicating and networking with state, division, national, and international choral colleagues, as well as being informed about all things NC-ACDA, all at one site.

It's a reality with ChoralNet!

How does ChoralNet work?

- It hosts choral individuals or groups, such as ACDA states and divisions, as “Communities” under the ChoralNet umbrella, at no cost. Each Community creates its own pages.
- It operates online forums to exchange ideas, make professional connections, and share information about choral music.
- It provides links to other choral communities and organizations, job postings, as well as choir websites.
- Its online resources include repertoire lists, reference materials, rehearsal tips, choral accessories and technology.
- Its expanding multimedia section has podcasts, blogs, videos and downloadable scores and recordings.
- And, it is freely available to all users.

Does NC have “Community” pages?

There are currently a few fledgling North Central “Community” pages, and others will be added regularly. (Go to www.choralnet.org, select “Communities,” then scroll down to ACDA-North Central.) We are in the process of disbanding our traditional website in favor of the far more interactive possibilities of the North Central ChoralNet community, which is available to the division without charge. Our choral community will eventually contain repertoire banks, Melisma archives and future Melisma

issues, extensive information and opportunities to discuss the 2012 NC ACDA divisional conference, and many other chances for members to connect with one another and our professional organization. Please feel free to send any ideas or suggestions about NC pages to Aimee Beckmann-Collier at aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu.

Do I have to join?

It's up to you! You may visit the site at any time and as often as you wish and see what is available. If you wish to participate in forums, make comments, ask questions, and/or receive communications, then you can “opt in” by registering. *It's easy, and it's free.*

Why be a member?

As a member of ChoralNet, you have the option of receiving a daily email that contains links to blogs, forums, job postings, and member queries about a wide range of topics. As a member, you may also participate by asking questions and providing answers to others. Joining ChoralNet is a double win—you'll be hooked into the larger choral community throughout the world, and will also be able to participate in the information-providing, idea-seeking, opinion-sharing functions of the North Central Choral Community. Most NC-ACDA member states have formed choral communities as well, so this new service is practically an embarrassment of riches!

More information regarding the merger of ACDA and ChoralNet is posted on the ACDA website at <http://acda.org/ChoralNet+Merges+with+ACDA>

We'll see you online! Remember, the spring, 2011 issue of Melisma will be our final printed issue.

—Aimee Beckmann-Collier, Bill Ross, Judy Eckenrod