

# Melisma

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

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North Central-ACDA

**Celebrate  
CHORAL  
Diversity**

Des Moines  
March 19–22, 2014



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## REMINDER!

**NC-ACDA Honor Choir Online Audition Deadline is NOVEMBER 1.**  
Go to the [www.ncacda.org](http://www.ncacda.org) Home Page for links to choirs and instructions!

## *Voices from the Division: Cheri Helmer-Rienschke*

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**Melisma ARTICLES:** Submit digitally as .doc or .txt email attachments to: David Puderbaugh, editor, at [david-puderbaugh@uiowa.edu](mailto:david-puderbaugh@uiowa.edu) or send by postal mail to: David Puderbaugh, The University of Iowa, 2767 UCC, Iowa City, IA 52242.

### Deadlines for Melisma ARTICLES:

Issue	Submit by	Posted Online
Winter, 2014	December 15	February 1
Spring, 2014	April 1	May 15

**ADS:** Contact Sheri Fraley, advertising editor, at [sheri.fraley@yahoo.com](mailto:sheri.fraley@yahoo.com) for specifications, rates and reservation form.

### Deadlines for Melisma ADS:

Winter, 2014	January 15	February 1
Spring, 2014	May 1	May 15

### Website Advertising

To post an ad on the North Central-ACDA website, [ncacda.org](http://ncacda.org), contact Sheri Fraley, advertising editor, for details and rates at [sheri.fraley@yahoo.com](mailto:sheri.fraley@yahoo.com).

*Melisma*, the official newsletter of the North Central Division of the American Choral Directors Association, is published three times a year: fall, winter and spring.

The North Central Division comprises over 2,400 members in its six-state area, including Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

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

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## David Puderbaugh

*Melisma* Editor  
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David Puderbaugh

Happy Fall! Our division rings with the sounds of music-making as our community and church choirs and our college/school ensembles are already deep into preparations for performance. In addition to our own individual performances, the year holds a special treat for us in March—our division conference in Des Moines—and president James Kinchen provides an exciting overview of it in this issue of *Melisma*.

On a personal note, if you have not visited Des Moines since the last division conference twelve years ago, prepare to be impressed. The city has revitalized itself over the past several years and boasts a vibrant cultural life. It now regularly wins awards and designations, such as *Forbes* magazine's "Best City for Young Professionals" in 2011. As someone who grew up near Des Moines, I can vouch for these positive changes, and I encourage you to attend the division conference in March!

In this issue, our "Voices from the Division" series returns, this time featuring Nebraska's inimitable Cheri Helmer-Rienschke. Cheri's lifelong witness to choral music joins now with previously featured conductors Dale Warland and Bob Youngquist, as we continue to hear about choral luminaries across our division.

On the pedagogical front, Natalie McDonald makes a convincing case for the value and practical aspects of using *solfeggio* in choral rehearsals. As always, *Melisma* is enhanced by the expertise of our division R&S chairs; inside, you will find a wealth of information and repertory suggestions for High School, Boychoirs, College & University, Ethnic & Multicultural Perspectives, and Junior High & Middle School. Finally, Brian Burns reviews the latest CD release of Nebraska conductor Tom Trenney and his august ensemble *sounding* light.

If you have an idea for making *Melisma* better, or if you would like to submit an article on something of choral interest, I would love to hear from you. Have a wonderful, musical fall!

Until we meet in Des Moines,

David Puderbaugh, editor

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College of Arts and Sciences

## James Kinchen

NC-ACDA President  
Racine, WI  
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James B. Kinchen, Jr.

*“Who are we?”  
and “What do  
we want to be?””*

### **“Imagine with me...”**

The year is 2059. The American Choral Directors Association is celebrating its centennial. What will that celebration be like? More importantly, *what will ACDA be like?*

I have been tremendously pleased with the fresh winds that have been blowing within ACDA in recent years. One of the most exciting transitions has been from an organization where the locus of control was in the hands of a precious few to a community that has dared to ask a broad base of its leaders questions that in a different regime might have been considered forbidden, such as *“Who are we?”* and *“What do we want to be?”*

A couple of summers ago, I participated in a strategic planning exercise at the 2012 ACDA National Leadership conference in Dallas. There we gathered and pondered precisely these questions. People gave opinions and challenged assumptions in ways that indicated the relatively new feeling of freedom that has begun to pervade our beloved organization.

**From this exercise emerged strategic initiatives and directions**, products that are at least as salutary for *how* we arrived at them as for the promise that they hold for helping guide us into the future. And they run the gamut from the immediate to those that will need time to flower, from the very concrete to the more abstract, from the essential to the more esoteric. And all of these strategic tenets will help to determine *who* and *what* we are, nearly half a century hence.

**In many instances, I see essential linkage between where we want and need to go and our development of membership.** That is why I am so very happy that we are now engaged in a national membership initiative, *Sing Up!* This coordinated quest for increasing and solidifying our membership base poises us to make real gains in expanding our community to include many colleagues who, for whatever reason, are not members of ACDA.

**I invite**, even urge, you to go to <https://acda.org/singup> and learn more about *Sing Up!* The drive began on Labor Day (a very recent roll-out as of the time that I am writing this article) and will run through October 31. It has several components.

“Refer a Friend” allows each individual ACDA member to get involved in the membership drive. It encourages current ACDA members to get a kit (just call 405-232-8161 and they’ll mail one to you) and send personal notes of invitation to at least three colleagues.

The “Seeding New Memberships” initiative allows states and/or divisions to allocate complimentary memberships to active choral colleagues who are currently not ACDA members and haven’t been members for at least the past three years.

*Continued*



The “Student Initiative” looks to the future by allowing non-member students in participating states to join ACDA for the first year for only \$5.00. Where was this initiative when I was in school? The states and national office each pick up \$15 of the normal \$35 tab.

**Part of the answer to the opening query “What will ACDA be like in 2059?” obviously hinges on how well we continue to do the things that we have done so well in the past.** We must continue to encourage and abet *excellence* in the choral art in *every* way! For example, our conventions (now, conferences) have been archetypes of what choral excellence should be.

**Some of the most *amazing* choral performances** that have taken place on the planet in the past years and decades have happened in the places like Saint Louis, Kansas City, New Orleans, Nashville, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, Louisville, Phoenix, Washington, San Diego, Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, Oklahoma City, and Dallas at national gatherings of the American Choral Directors Association. That does not even begin to consider the exceptionally fine music-making that happens at divisional and state events. Whether through the Brock Commission or the many compositions that have been premiered by various choirs at ACDA conventions and conferences, we continue to encourage and inspire the creation of new choral music, much of it by some of our finest composers.

**A survey of issues of the *Choral Journal* going back to its earlier years offers vivid and dramatic testimony to the growth, evolution, and strength of our choral scholarship.** It doesn’t take much to imagine how choral education has been enhanced for conductors and singers at every level, from grade school to conservatory, thanks in large measure to ACDA. How many singers in all kinds of choral settings have had their lives enriched by inspiring, high quality choral experiences at state, divisional, and national (and even, international) events sponsored by ACDA? How many singers have been illumined by the spark brought to them by a conductor fresh back from an ACDA activity? We are effective and enthusiastic advocates for the choral art. Served by a visionary national office that totally understands that our present well-being and future health depend as much on promoting our art and organization in the outside world as it does maintaining our internal hygiene, we are more assertively declaiming the essentiality of “all things choral” than ever before!

**But how we fare in the decades to come will also depend on how we serve, empower, and embrace the people who conduct, teach, create, and sing choral music.** And how we fare in the decades to come will also depend heavily on how well we include those who are not presently members of ACDA or served by ACDA programming. We have rightly identified the needs of emerging conductors. Young conductors and conductors-to-be need *mentoring*. In the botanic world, plants are most fragile when they are trying to take root. So it is for colleagues just coming into the choral art, and part of helping them get settled is helping them connect meaningfully with those of us who are more experienced and accomplished. Our strategic initiatives point us in that direction. I am glad for this. In fact, our membership initiative is a lot about reaching out and connecting with our colleagues. With ACDA colleagues, one byproduct will be *retention*. With our non-member colleagues, one consequence will be to heighten their awareness of the benefits of and need for professional community—hence, ACDA membership.

*Continued*

*“It doesn’t take much to imagine how choral education has been enhanced for conductors and singers at every level, from grade school to conservatory, thanks in large measure to ACDA.”*

“Much of our viability and relevance moving forward into this century will be determined by the extent to which the American Choral Directors Association looks like that slice of America that sings choral music.”

“What might a creative and sensitive ACDA have to offer? How might the choral experience speak to a plethora of human needs beyond the essentials of food, shelter, clothing, and safety?”

Then, too, there is this all-important dimension: **Much of our viability and relevance moving forward into this century will be determined by the extent to which the American Choral Directors Association looks like that slice of America that sings choral music.** The demographers had been saying that around mid-century, groups of color will begin to make up the majority of the United States population. More recent projections, projections based both on birth rates and immigration, show this happening close to a decade sooner!

When I walked into that large room in the Dallas Hyatt Regency the summer before last, I surveyed it in vain for people who looked like me. Later that day came a moment that was then, and remains, a very special one to me. As the conversations ensued and different small groups of us joined in the discussion of where ACDA needed to go as it moves into the future, *someone else* looked around and noticed — and spoke of the need for ACDA to have a more *inclusive, diverse* embrace. I cannot begin to tell you how grateful I am that I was not the one who had to point this out. *Someone else noticed!* And so our strategic initiatives call us to act on this crucial reality. **Caring attention to the strategic directions that resulted—the call for a “successful urban outreach initiative,” the call for “cultural diversity in membership,” and being “welcoming and relevant to all races and ethnicities”—will help us enlarge our embrace.**

Some regions of the country offer more fertile ground than others. On the whole, North Central is not as ethnically heterogeneous as are some other divisions. Can we reach our urban and Native populations more effectively? Latino presence grows in many places where European descendants have long predominated. Cities often harbor surprising numbers of immigrants from other places, too. In some localities, these groups of color and the schools that they often attend, under-funded and over-stressed, are struggling simply to survive. **What might a creative and sensitive ACDA have to offer? How might the choral experience speak to a plethora of human needs beyond the essentials of food, shelter, clothing, and safety?**

**To a large extent, our future depends on how we answer these questions and meet these challenges.**

It is 2059, and we celebrate a century of existence. Will ACDA by then be a “museum” that is only for the choral elite and that focuses mainly on the most esoteric aspects of the choral experience? Or will it be a thriving, dynamic, inclusive reality in the professional lives of what could be approaching 100,000 choral artists/teachers and making a difference for the many tens of millions who will sing with them? Will ACDA be an *option* that few seriously consider or a *necessity* for choral conductors everywhere? Our success in continued efforts to enlarge and enrich our membership through drives like **Sing Up!** will help determine this. Our resolve to be an indispensable network where choral excellence abounds on every level and in every choral setting will help determine this. And, longer term, our determined and diligent efforts to make ACDA increasingly reflect a changing America, combined with us continuing to do those things that we do so well, will determine what we will be.

**Will those centennial celebrants thank us, by then long-gone, for our wisdom and far-sightedness? It is up to us. ■** **Back to “In this Issue”**



A large choir of men and women, dressed in dark formal attire, stands in a large cathedral. They are holding lit candles, and the scene is illuminated with blue light. A conductor stands in the foreground, facing the choir. The cathedral's architecture, including its arches and columns, is visible in the background.

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# GREETINGS NORTH CENTRAL COLLEAGUES!

Let me tell you about our *exciting* North Central Division Conference!

—James Kinchen, NC president and chair

“We will observe and celebrate diversity in the choral art in the many ways that it occurs and gives variety, interest, inclusiveness, accessibility, relevance, vitality, and strength to our choral community.”



For over a year, my conference team members and I have been planning and working to put the structure in place for our next choral conference, and have we got a conference for you! Our colleagues in Iowa, a state that boasts a strong and proud choral tradition, are already gearing up to welcome us. And the city of Des Moines promises to be a very attractive and exciting destination.

Our conference THEME for 2014 is: “**Celebrating Choral Diversity—our many songs, our many paths, our many voices.**” Our mission is to present a vibrant, growth-facilitating, inspiring, and memorable conference that will creatively focus on and celebrate the many aspects of diversity in our choral community and our choral practice.

We will observe and celebrate diversity in the choral art in the many ways that it occurs and gives variety, interest, inclusiveness, accessibility, relevance, vitality, and strength to our choral community. This includes the construction of “diversity”—racial, ethnic, and cultural—that most obviously and immediately comes to mind. As a multicultural nation within a global community, we are challenged to expand our horizons - the canons of our literature, the diversity of our performance practices, the inclusiveness of our choirs, the cultural sensitivity of our pedagogy, the demographics of our audiences - in ways that will better reflect these realities.

But we will also aim to engage diversity in broader ways. We do well to appreciate the varied approaches, philosophies, and pedagogic styles among us in our choral teaching and performance. If we dare to utter with any credibility the phrase “best practice,” we must quickly pluralize it. We are anything but monolithic! And beyond the diverse ways in which any of us may personally engage and actualize the choral art, consider the many variables in our own different choral settings that further make us diverse. We are a diverse art and a diverse community in so many ways!

**We will meet in Des Moines to celebrate that diversity!**

**HOST CITY.** Some of us remember our last conference visit to Des Moines in 2002. The warmth of friendly and fun Des Moines made up for the chill of February that year. We had a memorable convention, as we called them then. This time will be no different as Des Moines welcomes the 2014 NCACDA

*Continued*



Conference...and spring! Most of our conference activities will be conveniently situated within easy walking distance in the attractive downtown area.

**CONFERENCE VENUES.** The conference will be headquartered in the recently renovated **Marriott** of downtown Des Moines. Auditioned choir performances will take place a short walk away in the beautiful and acoustically sensitive **Roman Catholic Cathedral of Saint Ambrose**, see of the Diocese of Des Moines. The **Des Moines Civic Center** will house other performances. **The Drake University campus** will welcome the brand new “Vocal Jazz Experience Day.” Honor Choirs (with the exception of Elementary, which rehearses at the **Holiday Inn**) will rehearse in **downtown area churches**, all within walking distance of each other and the Marriott. Besides the Marriott, other hotels are: **Holiday Inn Downtown (Mercy Campus)**, **Hotel Fort Des Moines**, **Hyatt Place**, and **Renaissance Savery Hotel**

**HEADLINER CHOIRS.** Our conference will boast an amazing array of headliner choirs! Representing two different world choral traditions on Thursday evening at the Cathedral of Saint Ambrose will be the **Schola Cantorum de Mexico** and **South Korea’s Ulsan Metropolitan Chorus**. Sharing Friday night’s bill at the Des Moines Civic Center will be old and new friends of the division. Twin Cities-based **Cantus** is well-respected for both its impressive artistry and effective efforts in choral education, and we welcome for the first time the **Nathaniel Dett Chorale of Toronto**, known for its virtuosity and trademark Afro-centric programming. In fact, two other ACDA divisions will follow our lead in bringing the Dett Chorale to their conferences to sing! In addition to their performances, Cantus will also present for the conference, Brainerd Blyden-Taylor and members of Dett will work with two specially selected high school choirs, and Maestro Alfredo Mendoza will share riches from the Mexican choral repertory in a session.



Schola Cantorum de Mexico, Mexico City



Ulsan Metropolitan Chorus, South Korea



Cantus—Minneapolis, Minnesota



Nathaniel Dett Chorale of Toronto, Canada

*Continued*



**AUDITIONED CHOIRS.** Highlights of each conference are the concerts that featured the best choirs from our division, ensembles selected by blind audition. The Des Moines conference will bring these **fourteen** highly accomplished choirs to our conference mainstage. Photos and bios will be posted at [www.ncacda.org](http://www.ncacda.org).

**Cantala, Lawrence University, WI, Phillip Swan, conductor**

**Eastview High School Concert Choir, MN, Gregory Douma, conductor**

**Grand Forks Master Chorale, ND, Joshua Bronfman, conductor**

**The Gustavus Choir, MN, Gregory Aune, conductor**

**Heartland Youth Choir, IA, Barbara Sletto, conductor**

**Kennedy High School Select Women's Choir, Cedar Rapids, IA,  
Storm Ziegler/Matthew Armstrong, conductors**

**Lake Effect, University of Minnesota-Duluth, Tina Thielen-Gaffey, conductor**

**Lawrence University Concert Choir, WI, Stephen Sieck, conductor**

**Luther College Nordic Choir, IA, Allen Hightower, conductor**

**Princeton High School Concert Choir, MN, Mark Potvin, conductor**

**The Singing Statesmen, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, WI,  
Gary Schwartzhoff, conductor**

**University of St. Thomas Chamber Singers, MN, Angela Broeker, conductor**

**The Wartburg Choir, IA, Lee Nelson, conductor**

**West High School Chorale, Iowa City, IA, Ryan Person, conductor**

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## AUDITION DAYS

November 16, 2013

February 15, 2014

*(Application deadline 2 weeks prior)*



**INTEREST SESSIONS.** Choral colleagues of national and international reputation, including many from our own division, will share their insights and expertise in a rich smorgasbord of interest sessions that will address a diversity of choral topics.

Anton Armstrong, Saint Olaf College, MN:

**“Fostering Choral Diversity in a Bastion of Choral Tradition”**

James Bowyer, Indiana University, South Bend, IN:

**“Sightsinging in the Choral Classroom”**

Tim Buchholz, UW-Marathon County, WI:

**“Teaching Jazz Concepts in the Vocal Jazz Ensemble Rehearsal”**

Anna Burns, Highland Community Schools, IA:

**“Passport to the World”**

Constance Chase, West Point, NY:

**“Resonance in the Choral Voice: All Things Are Possible!”**

Wallace Cheatham, Milwaukee, WI:

**“Diversity within the Philosophy of an Afro-Canadian Composer”**

Nicholaus Cummins, Delta State University, MS:

**“Inspiration: Breathing New Life into the Choral Music of the Renaissance”**

Trey (Nick) Davis, UW-Platteville, WI:

**“‘Not-So-Major’ Works: Alternative, International Offerings from outside the Canon”**

James Estes, Barbershop Harmony Society, TN:

**“Level the Playing Field: Using Barbershop Harmony to Get More Males into Your Choral Program”**

Robert Gehrenbeck, UW-Whitewater, WI:

**“Exploring the Music of Brent Michael Davids”**

Steve Grives, DePaul University, IL:

**“Phrasing First: Practical Considerations for Teaching Artistry at the Beginning of the Rehearsal Process”**

Allen Hightower and Weston Noble, Luther College, IA:

**“The Choral Conductor as Mentor and Pastor”**

Bruce Kotowich, Loras College, IA:

**“Czech Composers Past and Present: Choral Music from the Heartland of Europe to the Heartland of America”**

Reid Larsen, MN:

**“Music 5: Fostering Diverse Musicians Beyond the Performance”**

Christopher Larson, SD:

**“For Everyone Born, A Place in the Choir”**

Daniel Mahraun, ND:

**“What Language Shall I Borrow...Singing in Translation”**

*Continued*

Charlette Moe, North Dakota State University:

**“Celebrating the Diversity of the Americas: The Choral Music of the Americas Symposium”**

Bryson Mortensen, UW-Rock County, WI:

**“Learning Harmonic Context through Solfeggio”**

Weston Noble, Decorah, IA:

**“Vulnerability - A Hidden Gift of Music”**

Jonathan Palant, TX:

**“Brothers, Sing On! Empower, Attract, and Engage Male Singers”**

Sarah Parks, St. Norbert College, WI:

**“Enriching the Life of the Aging Choral Singer”**

Susan Rice and Joy Beckman, Beloit College, WI:

**“Hearing the Hidden Harmonies: Pairing the Choral Art with the Visual”**

Jennaya Robison, AZ:

**“Exploring Diverse Tonal Potentials in the Choral Ensemble: Strategies that Allow Developing and Mature Singers to Sing Freely in the Ensemble”**

Christopher Russell, WI, Oltman Middle School, MN:

**“iPads in Choral Music Education”**

Stephen Sieck, Lawrence University, WI:

**“Teaching Your Singers to Fish: How Diction Frees Us to Sing Around the World”**

Wesley Smith, Cleveland, TN:

**“Making It Count: Getting the Most of Your College Education”**

Tom Trenney, First-Plymouth Congregational Church, NE:

**“Purpose Beyond Performance”**

Thomas Vozzella, SD:

**“K-12 Music in Worship: A New Paradigm”**

**READING SESSIONS.** There will be new literature reading sessions of interest to each Repertoire & Standards area.

**VOCAL JAZZ EXPERIENCE DAY.** Under the leadership of **Fred Ritter** and **Linda Vanderpool**, sixteen vocal jazz groups from around the division will come together on the Drake campus for a day of **choral education and exchange on Friday, March 21**. High school and college jazz choirs from each state will meet on that day to work with famed educator/composer/arranger/performer **Kirk Marcy** and each other. Then they will cap their exciting day with a moment of public show-and-tell.



Kirk Marcy, guest clinician for the Vocal Jazz Experience Day.

*Continued*



**Reminder! Honor Choir Online Audition Deadline is November 1.**  
**Go to the [www.ncaeda.org](http://www.ncaeda.org) Home Page for links to choirs and instructions!**

**HONOR CHOIRS.** So much of our conference addresses the needs and interests of member directors. **But an important, even essential, conference component is set to give outstanding choral students from around the division the opportunity for a peak choral experience.** This conference will be no different, as four select honor choirs come together to prepare and present programs to the conference attendees and their parents. As usual, they will perform on Saturday afternoon.

High School Mixed Choir Guest Conductor & Clinician:

**Robert Harris**, Professor Emeritus, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

Middle Level Boys Guest Conductor & Clinician:

**Vincent Oakes**, Chattanooga Boychoir, TN

Middle Level Girls Guest Conductor & Clinician:

**Maribeth Yoder-White**, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

Elementary Guest Conductor & Clinician:

**Martha Shaw**, Spivey Hall Children's Choir/Reinhardt University, Waleska, GA

**COLLEGIATE REPERTOIRE CHOIR.** **Laura Diddle** leads the second edition of the Collegiate Repertoire Choir. This project combines the excitement and high skill level of a collegiate honor choir with a focus on process rather than product.

**SPECIAL CONFERENCE GUESTS.** We welcome special guest **Anthony Leach** from the Penn State music faculty. Tony shares his expertise in teaching multicultural music within a high quality choral program in an **intensive demonstration project** that will take place on Thursday, March 20. He then leads the preparation and presentation of an unforgettable **Music-in-Worship** session, organized by Jerry Rubino, that will showcase styles and possibilities from a broad spectrum of worship traditions.

Our conference is also honored to host a guest choral conductor from the **People's Republic of China** who will share select music from his/her repertory with us. That colleague's visit is the "A" piece of an **exchange** that will have several of our own division colleagues traveling to China!

**A COMMUNITY THAT SINGS III.** Now in its third iteration, "The Community That Sings," under past president **Kevin Meidl's** leadership, continues to honor the vast repertory of American folk music by **inviting noted arrangers to create accessible settings of songs from our musical heritage.**

**EXHIBITS.** The capacious exhibit space in the Marriott will allow our music business friends and other exhibitors to have their displays on the same level and same hall, adjacent to conference registration and close to where the interest sessions will take place. Don Langlie of Poppler's Music will run this area for us in Des Moines. Conference attendees will want to spend time exploring the wares and services of our vendor friends in the exhibits area.

**NETWORKS AND RECONNECTIONS.** It is seldom formalized on the program beyond a reception or two, but we all look forward to what is arguably as important as any item on the conference schedule: **connecting with colleagues**



Robert Harris



Vincent Oakes



Maribeth Yoder-White



Martha Shaw

*Continued*



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**Dr. Julia Davids**  
Director of Choral Activities

**SCHOOL OF MUSIC**  
**NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY**

that are new to us or, at least, less familiar, while renewing ties with old friends and colleagues of long standing. All of that will be happening in Des Moines. Whether at exhibits, in a lobby, or at a downtown restaurant between sessions or after hours, we will take advantage of the opportunity to connect with our many colleagues from across the division to talk shop or simply to catch up!

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## Voices from the Division

### An Interview with Cheri Helmer-Rienschke

By Matthew Harden and Jessica Rajewich



Cheri Helmer-Rienschke

*“I would like for each of my students to look back on their lives and realize that the arts are really a door-opening experience for them toward other things.”*

**Cheri Helmer-Rienschke** currently teaches at Papillion-LaVista High School (PLVS), in Papillion, Nebraska, where she has taught for the past ten years. She has taught in Nebraska schools all of her career. These include Randolph, where she started after finishing her degree at Wayne State College, Seward, and Omaha PS-Benson High School, prior to PLVS. Cheri was president of the Nebraska Choral Directors Association twice, and this summer she received The Cornell Runestad Award for Lifetime Dedication to Choral Music in Nebraska.

The following is an interview conducted by Matthew Harden, Vice-President of the Nebraska Choral Directors Association, and Jessica Rajewich, a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. At the conclusion of the interview we have listed many of Cheri’s recognitions that we researched with others prior to the interview and we found it interesting that Cheri did not mention any of these in the interview. We hope you enjoy what follows as much as we have.

**MH– What inspired you to become a music teacher?**

**Cheri–** Well, it’s Cornell Runestad, because that is not the way I wanted my journey to go. I wanted to be a doctor. My parents were smart enough to guide me to another little road on the journey. When I did that and took their advice, I realized that music is my passion. Choral music. I was a French horn player and really thought that, if I **had** to go into music, I would probably go the French horn route, but I didn’t want to be a band director. I wanted to be a concert horn player. So I was really on the performance side of things. Then I met Dr. Cornell Runestad and I literally fell in love with the art and with him as my teacher. I say that respectfully, simply because he opened up my eyes to things that I never thought existed musically. He painted a picture. That’s what I like to do with my own kids.

**MH– What would you like your legacy to be?**

**Cheri–** I would like for each of my students to look back on their lives and realize that the arts are really a door-opening experience for them toward other things. Not just the choral arts, or whatever, but also opportunities offered here open up a door for life lessons. That’s what I would hope, and that someday they will look back, and just once remember who took them to the dance, opened up these experiences for them, and be grateful not only to me, but to all people who gave them those opportunities.

**JR–What challenges do you think current and future choral music educators face?**

**Cheri–** I think it is twofold. I think that we have to keep fighting to be a part of the curriculum, and the other is students and technology. I want to be cautious when I say technology; I believe in technology, I believe in social media—that is the era we are in. But the fine arts are really the only one where students need to still see each other face-to-face, and they need to share those emotions with each other. They need to see each

*Continued*

other when they speak and the emotions that are there, because texting has gotten in the way. Kids do not have to show emotion when they text. They don't always have to use good grammar. Curriculum-wise, other people have to teach to the test and we have to realize that they are putting more and more on the fine arts department to read and write across the curriculum, which I believe in. We are really the only ones left that don't have to teach to the test. We have to teach to the life experience. So, in my opinion, we are the luckiest educators out there.

**JR-What advice do you have for a young choral director?**

**Cheri-** Never stop learning. Never think that you are the end-all to your students' education. Getting to know people by networking with others is important. Call on people when you don't know something. Admit that you don't know something. Read, look up things, become a part of an affiliation, a professional affiliation. Have dialogue with professionals and with students. That is a big thing. Matt Harden is good at that. It's youth, I love that John is here (John is the collaborative pianist at PLVS). John is youth to me; he is very bright. He is a graduate of Dixie State in Utah and he is a keyboardist, an accompanist, and a professional piano player. He knows a lot and I love that youth about him. I learn every day from him. Never stop learning. People look at us from behind and say, "Oh, I bet they are set in their ways" or whatever they say about us from behind. Process in my classroom: I am set in stone and you have to chisel me out to get rid of the process and discipline, but when it comes to music I would take on the *Carmina Burana* with high school kids. Do you know why? I have sung *Carmina* and I want them to experience my joy. So I am willing to learn anything, even my wrong diction from John. Never Stop Learning!

**JR-How have you made a difference in your students' lives?**

**Cheri-** This is what I believe: I believe, in this business, that before you can ask kids to really give you their soul, you have to share a part of you with them and be unafraid about that. For example, I am human and I make mistakes; it is important that I tell my students, "I am wrong." It is important to me that kids know I am very sensitive. People would not guess that about my personality because I am very aggressive, but people can hurt my feelings in a heartbeat. So in order to bring those things around, to get to that student in that choir who is just like me, I will, many times, give a story or a piece of my heart in order to start opening up theirs. Student teachers will tell me, "I can't talk like you, tell stories like you." I tell them, "That's my voice. You don't have to be like me. Find your own voice and how you learn to relate to students." That's what is most important. I have always been like this. It is not something that comes with age and starting to feel like my life is winding down. Cornell did that for us, and there again, I saw it firsthand and I loved that type of teaching. Therefore I am, you know.

**MH-Would you take a moment to share what you currently do and have done in the past for a student when they graduated?**

**Cheri-** I used to give my guys a shoeshine kit, because that is a life skill that I expected of them and that I always wanted them to do when they left. Now I give a book to my students. I give a book as a great moral to the end of the story. It has to be a life-lesson book. I have got them all. I have seniors who can't wait to see what that book is going to be, because they know that is the last thing I do. To give that book out in front of that crowd, yeah.

*Continued*

"I believe, in this business, that before you can ask kids to really give you their soul, you have to share a part of you with them and be unafraid about that."



**MH-Talking about life lessons, would you share with us what you have your students learn when they get on the risers?**

**Cheri-** I tell them that carriage is probably the most positive and noticeable piece of character they can have about themselves. How they walk into a room, how they present themselves. The way they walk, the way they stand, the way they hold their head, so therefore when they walk onto the risers they have a purpose. They know where they are going before they get there. Carriage to me sets people apart and I believe we have four seconds to make that impression, so the minute that kid hits the stage, someone is watching them. They are making an opinion on that student when they walk on to that stage, and they either make it or break it at that point.



Carriage is my number one thing that I teach my kids for life skills when they come in. We think it is all about music, but it starts with social skills and our process.

**MH-As a young music educator, who were your mentors and role models? We know that Cornell was one, but could you list some of the others and at least one thing you learned from each one?**

**Cheri-** My father: my work ethic and my philosophies. I had somewhat of a contentious growing-up with my father. He was a wonderful man, but he would sit down and he would talk with me. He was a great disciplinarian, but we would have these discussions and I couldn't. Until about the age of nineteen, we did not get along at all. Now I find myself back in the classroom saying things that my father said to me as a young person of their age. So, my father is one. Number two: there was a teacher from a little tiny town when I first started teaching, who was a female and I can't recall her name. I was working the Wayne State District Music Contest and I begged every year to have her choir. I wanted to be the host, because she had discipline, she had heart, her kids got up from that tiny school, they stood and looked like a million bucks. She walked out on that stage and there was just this aura about her. She was a great mentor to me and eventually passed away sadly at about the age of forty-five, but she was a wonderful person.



I think it is interesting, and I am going to say this. When I started teaching in the 1970s, women weren't really well respected in the business. The people who came in to embrace me were all the men.

That was where I got to meet Jon Petersen and all those guys. Here I was, this young director, and I was just wild to become a part of NCDA and all this. Who were my friends? They were all men. That eventually carried through so that everyone thought that I was a "good ole' girl" in the "good ole' boys" system. To be really honest with you, I would come home from NMEA and even as a married person, I would be so hurt because women would say hi but then they never asked me out for coffee. I was with the men all the time. Some thought that I was unapproachable, untouchable, but it was just the opposite. I was hungry for that, but it did not happen. I want to make certain with women directors that this does not happen anymore.

*Continued*

Cheri—  
sharing,  
teaching  
and as a  
Symposium Honoree  
for the Music in Schools  
Initiative at Yale.



**JR-What important lessons have your students taught you? You have inspired them so well, but what have you learned from them?**

**Cheri-** My students have probably taught me patience, compassion, they've helped me put things in perspective. What is most important in life? I have these three questions that I use:

Who is the most important?

When is the most important time?

What is the right thing to do?

Kids have taught me that the most important time is now. The most important person is the one that you are with at that time. The third is "what is the right thing to do?" and that is what is best for them, not me. How will this affect, is this that important that this is the hill I want to die on? No, in most cases with kids it's not. When we are struggling all the time with kids, it's a power play. It's not what is best for people; it is a power play. I had a person tell me once, "Cheri, to be successful in this business, you have to remember to allow kids to be who they are, instead of who you want them to be, and you will get much further with each individual child." So, do I want kids to have multicolored hair in my choir? No, but that is who they are. But what do they have to do? For the performance, they have to do it my way. But every day of their life they can walk around with multicolored hair, tattoos, and things hanging.

**MH-What was/is your most memorable teaching experience? Why?**

**Cheri-** I have two. The one that sticks out in my mind the most, is that I took my choir to New York City when I was teaching at Seward. It was just a dream opportunity. We were chosen to sing at the Big Apple Choral Festival, held at St. John the Divine. There were only five choirs selected from the nation and this was unheard of in that town. The whole town got together and raised the money for us to go. We went to Momma Leoni's for dinner and they put us upstairs, because we were kids and they wanted us away from the regular crowd. We finished dinner and we had about another half an hour before we left for a show. I said to the kids, "Do you want to sing?" They said, "Let's sing." We started singing *a cappella*, and people and the waiters and waitresses all came up to listen and said, "More, more." Our kids just sang from the heart. They were so in tune; I said in my heart, "Yeah, yeah." They cut our bill in half, which was also a wonderful thing, but it was the point of seeing people realize kids as human beings rather than just youth.

My second, and probably the more important, was creating the special-needs curriculum and watching the special-needs kids. I did a Christmas program with just them and even the student who could not speak or do anything. My husband bought him a heart that was nothing but jingle bells and he got to play Jingle Bells with that heart. I spent, as did the people in the audience, most of the time in tears. I was so moved. High school parents of special-needs children, who hadn't sung or moved or anything. We did eurhythmics with scarves to a Christmas piece. We just did all of these wonderful things, and what joy I felt at the end of that. I still have it right here now (points to her heart); I can feel it again. I have sung many fine pieces, but there was a moment...a girl who did not speak and could speak very well, but just refused to talk to people. She sang one verse of Silent Night, with a microphone,

*Continued*

*"Kids have taught me that the most important time is now. The most important person is the one that you are with at that time."*



and her parents were moved; her mother wept out loud. That was in this district (PLVS) ten years ago. So there are many facets to my life, my interests. Of course, I get my greatest joy from my Concert Choir, you know, that is my baby, but any time a special-needs child is in my presence, I love them to death.

**JR-Why is it important to be a choral music educator and not just a choral conductor?**

**Cheri-** I don't consider myself a choral conductor; I consider myself an educator. Not even a music educator, because I believe that we have to bring in all of the curricula to us. Some days I may talk just about other things, like the day that we found out there was a new planet. The minute I started talking about that, kids started raising their hands because they, too, were interested in it and had heard it on the news. I am not that arrogant to think that it is all about music. Some kids just like to sing. They don't want to know anything about Bach, Beethoven, but they do want to know that I care about other things that they are interested in. That is a thing for first-year teachers, too. Kids don't care what you did in college, they don't care that you sang the greatest large works ever composed. They want to know: what are you going to do for me, and are you going to be committed to me? I really found that out at Benson, because teachers just came and went so quickly on them. They were very leery, asking, "How long are you going to stay?" Well, eleven years later I finally left, but part of me is always there. They needed stability.

**MH-Where have you taught?**

**Cheri-** I started out at Randolph and then went from there to Seward, which was my longest, really where I got my career going. I stayed fourteen years, followed by Omaha Benson, and then I started the program here. When I started at Seward High School, there were nine kids in 10-12 grade. Then I realized that I was probably going to be single my whole life and I wanted to move to a city school, where I could go to the theatre, go to dinner by myself, shopping. So



Presentation of the NCD A Runestad Award, (by Matthew Harden and Cornell Runestad, on the cover), above, with Peter Ecklund, Cornell Runestad, and Rhonda Fuelberth, followed by a standing ovation.

I gave up that wonderful program at Seward, a Lutheran university town, where everybody sang and well. But Omaha Benson is where I met my husband. I always wanted to teach a great amount of diversity, I always wanted an African-American choir and I got it, and had the lessons of my lifetime. Then PLVS opened and I had the chance to start a program from the bottom up.

*Continued*

**JR-How many people did you have when you left Seward?**

**Cheri-** I had 220 at Seward, when I left. The most I ever had during the fourteen years was 240, but I had 220 that last year. At Benson I taught everything during the day, from show choir to music theory to voice class, and two choirs. It was a dream schedule, where here I put in so much night work and morning work. We made great music at Benson; it was a good experience for me, a humbling experience, and I am a better person because I went to Benson High. It is an inner-city school, and I could write a book on that. There are some things I still weep for at night, because I wonder where kids have gone. I had kids who were homeless, but could sing like troopers. My biggest thing there was creating opportunities.

**MH-Do you have one more thing you would like to share that is important to you?**

**Cheri-** I am the type of personality that beats myself up every day over what is right and what is wrong, and what I did or didn't do. My goal every day is to be able to go home and say, "I was a good teacher today. I touched someone's life and I allowed someone to touch mine." If I don't have that feeling and I don't say to my husband, "I was a good teacher," then I will be the first to admit I was not a good teacher today, and spend the whole night thinking: "What could I have done that was better?"

**A selected list of Cheri's accomplishments:**

Yale University School of Music "Outstanding Music Educator" Award  
Nebraska Music Educators Association "Hall of Fame"  
National "Teacher of Note" in the Choral Director's Magazine  
Wayne State College "Outstanding Alumnae Award"  
National Federation of High School Activities Regional  
"Music Educator of the Year"  
Nebraska High School Activities Association "Music Educator of the Year"  
"Teacher of the Year" of Seward High School  
"Teacher of the Year" of Omaha's Benson High School  
Omaha Public School's Warren Buffet Award  
Nebraska "Spirit of the Prairie Award"  
Nebraska "Admiral of the Navy Award"  
Nebraska's Wal-Mart "Teacher of the Year"  
Nebraska Choral Directors Association "Teacher of the Year"

**Cheri has presented sessions at:**

Nebraska Choral Directors Association Convention  
Regional ACDA Conventions  
Nebraska Music Educators Conference  
Kansas Music Educators Conference  
Missouri Music Educators Conference

**and has conducted three Jr. All-States:** Maryland (twice) and Virginia.

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*"My goal every day is to be able to go home and say, 'I was a good teacher today. I touched someone's life and I allowed someone to touch mine.'"*





Lee Nelson

*“Music educators have developed many creative and engaging ways to teach these foundational concepts to ensure our students have the necessary tools to become lifelong musicians.”*

## ***The Art of the Affective Rehearsal***

We can all remember singing under the direction of a master teacher. We spent hours and hours watching them in rehearsal as they guided singers on transformative musical and emotional journeys. Most likely, their technical mastery of the elements of music was superb. But for many of us, the most memorable aspect of these rehearsals was how the conductor was able to connect the singers to the music on a personal level, resulting in an experience that changed us at our very core. These master teachers truly understood the art of the affective rehearsal.

Make no mistake, one of our primary duties as educators is to teach students foundational concepts. Students need to be taught correct notes and rhythms, musical literacy, vocal technique, diction, etc. These concepts are critical to the overall success of any music program and often make up the vast majority of our curriculum. Music educators have developed many creative and engaging ways to teach these foundational concepts to ensure our students have the necessary tools to become lifelong musicians. However, it is easy to get caught in a teaching pattern that only focuses on the technical components of music and we unintentionally neglect the affective response and understanding of the music. In the following paragraphs, I hope to provide a context and some rehearsal strategies to help demystify the affective rehearsal process.

### ***Environment***

Two key components of creating an environment that is conducive to an affective rehearsal are **trust** and **vulnerability**. Students must trust that their affective response to music will not be judged or considered right or wrong. They must feel empowered to share their thoughts, feelings and life experiences with themselves and others, allowing them to connect with the music in a deeper and more personal manner. This level of trust requires a certain degree of openness and vulnerability. Perhaps no one exemplifies this more than Weston Noble who states:

Vulnerability is the capacity to be open within ourselves in order that the music can flow through us—that we can be an open conduit, a free vessel...Being vulnerable allows us the freedom to speak honestly and directly, the freedom to show compassion equally to all. The freedom to share not only joy but suffering and pain. If one cannot openly weep with their ensemble, the garden of trust is not being tended to...

Mr. Noble calls us to model vulnerability for our choirs which, in turn, allows us and the choir members the freedom to perceive and connect with the music more deeply. When a choir experiences this personal connection to the music, their performances become more authentically emotive and the spirit of the music transcends the stage. It provides the context in which the singers begin to sing beyond the notes. *Continued*

## Rehearsal Strategies

The **affective component** of a rehearsal is rather difficult to quantify. For some conductors, the affective component is second nature to their rehearsal approach. For others, it is uncomfortable and often avoided. Ignoring the affective component of the music denies choir members the opportunity to experience the music fully. Below are some rehearsal strategies that may help conductors explore the affective components of the music with their singers:

- ~ Ask choir members to write down adjectives in their score that provide descriptors of the emotion, mood or atmosphere of the music. Use these words to influence the tone or timbre of the choir. Some examples of these descriptors might include words like joyful, buoyant, pleading, sorrowful, longing, rich, dark, light, etc.
- ~ Have choir members write three sentences regarding how they connect to the music on a personal level or simply what they have learned by singing the piece. Three sentences limits them to be concise, yet thoughtful. Collect this assignment and then choose one or two examples per piece and read them to the choir. (NB: only if the students feel comfortable sharing their ideas.)
- ~ Have multiple students read the text dramatically and discuss each interpretation. Analyze the speed, tone, timbre, and emphasis of the delivery of the text and consider what inspired those decisions.
- ~ Have the choir listen to a recording, after reading through the text silently. Ask them to draw a picture of what they hear/think. (This can be quite entertaining, especially for non-artists such as myself.)
- ~ Allot a portion of your rehearsals periodically for students to provide a personal reflection about the music or themselves with the choir. This time of sharing is a means of building trust and relationships within the ensemble.
- ~ Share your thoughts, interpretations, and questions about a piece of music with your choir. Model the openness and vulnerability that you hope to see from the choir members.
- ~ Simply ask the choir members, “How have you connected to the piece? What has this piece taught or inspired in you?” Facilitate the ensuing discussion.
- ~ Do your score study. Delve into the poetry, read other pieces by the author. Explore the historical and cultural context of the piece. Seek out new layers of the text and music. Skype with the composer and poet. The possibilities are endless.

Another excellent rehearsal strategy is the *Critical Response Protocol* designed by the Perpich Center for the Arts in Minneapolis. *The Critical Response Protocol* is a process that helps students analyze a text, a performance, a piece of music, or any art form by simply responding to the following questions:

- ~ What do you notice? (Describe without judgment: “I notice...”)
- ~ What does it remind you of? (What memory, experience, story, music, other work does this trigger? There are no wrong answers or associations.)
- ~ What emotions do you feel as you respond to this work? (Again, no wrong answers.)

*Continued*

*“Vulnerability is the capacity to be open within ourselves in order that the music can flow through us...”*

—Weston Noble

*“Ignoring the affective component of the music denies choir members the opportunity to experience the music fully.”*

*“For many of us,  
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Now it is our job  
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students with  
similar aesthetic  
and  
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experiences.”*

~ What questions does it raise for you? (“I wonder...”)

~ What meaning or understanding is intended or conveyed in this work?

**The developers of the *Critical Response Protocol* note:**

This tool engages and empowers all participants by setting them up for success. There are no wrong answers when people begin by describing or stating what they see and notice. Each participant has room to grow, connect, question, and draw meaningful insights from the work. Collectively, the community benefits from the whole, with meaning-making occurring through the sharing of all participants’ insights. Critical Response is... grounded in Dr. James Comer’s idea that “No significant learning occurs outside of a significant relationship.”

More information about the *Critical Response Protocol* and other “Artful Tools” can be found at <http://opd.mpls.k12.mn.us/ArtfulTools>.

Obviously this list is simply a start. We are limited only by our imagination and our own level of comfort with the affective rehearsal. Once the exploration begins, however, the musical and educational journey becomes much more fulfilling for our students and for ourselves. For many of us, it was an affective rehearsal, performance or person that provided us with our calling to be music educators. Now it is our job to provide our students with similar aesthetic and transformative experiences.



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## 1. *Juego a que me quemó (Chispa candela)*

Traditional Colombian, arranged with  
additional music by Julián Gómez Giraldo  
Hal Leonard 08748313  
SSA (also available in SATB)  
(optional piano part provided)

Julián Gómez Giraldo arranged a folk melody his father-in-law had heard as a child in the 1930s. It is a setting of a witty and humorous text:

A spark, a flame, let's see if I get burned. A spark, a flame, I am burned already.  
Women, when they are dancing and the candles go out,  
she who doesn't pinch, bites you, she who barely runs, flies.

In the era of “staged concerts,” this beautiful arrangement would lend itself to a great performance in the hands of an able and imaginative conductor. Rhythmically lively, yet lyrical in character, the piece offers a great concert ending: “Ay, se apagó!” (Alas, the little sparkle is out). Appropriate for an advanced middle school choir and for any age after that! It can really be lots of fun!

This piece may be performed unaccompanied; however, the arranger provides an optional piano part and chord symbols, and he suggests the possibility of using guitar, bass and percussion as well. Performance time: ca. 2:45.

## 2. *Meestelaaulud (10 Estonian Folksongs for Men's Chorus)*

Veljo Tormis  
SP Muusikaprojekt - 2301  
TTB and TTBB

Acclaimed Estonian composer Veljo Tormis is one of the towering living composers of choral music today, with more than 500 compositions to his credit. Born in 1930, Tormis attended the Tallinn Music School and the Moscow Conservatory. Like Hungarian master Zoltán Kodály, Tormis relies heavily on his country's folk traditions, which helped both of them to escape Soviet censorship.

Tormis himself explains the story behind this collection of men's songs in the printed edition, first by separating them from the age-old traditional Estonian song repertoire known as runo songs. This set of men's songs is newer: “just” 100 years old, as he writes. Different than ladies, who stayed at home and sang about their regular everyday lives, men sang of distant lands, reflecting their experiences as seafarers and warriors. Tormis adds: “These songs reflect, in general, a humorous and cheerful atmosphere. Some may be even indecent.” Indeed, the music is fun, lively, yet doable by high school singers and beyond. Estonian is very phonetic; do not worry!

*Continued*



Eduardo Garcia-Novelli

The beauty of this collection is that you can just perform one number (some are just about one minute long), or more, if you are able and interested. The songs are short, so from a programming perspective, they can be great ideas!

The collection is published in Estonia, but it can be found in the US by contacting Musical Resources at [www.musical-resources.com](http://www.musical-resources.com) or 800-377-0234.

### 3. блаженства (*The Beatitudes*)

Vladimir Martynov

Musica Russica CMR 011

SAATTB with S1 S2 S3 soli

You found it: the perfect piece for a medium to large ensemble in a preferably resonant space, in Russian, very appropriate for high school voices and beyond, with a traditional text, and all in a manageable rehearsal time. How so?

- 1) The choir does NOT sing text: it is all humming (only the three soloists have the text)
- 2) Vocal ranges are very manageable: all within the staff (including soli), with the exception of a low E-flat for the bass at the end.
- 3) Extreme rhythmic simplicity: choir sings long notes all the time which, indeed, may be challenging for supporting long lines.
- 4) All easy to sing using solfeggio.
- 5) Awesome work to play around with placement of the three soli (and maybe also the ensemble)
- 6) It's a winner!

### 4. *Lamma Badaa Yatathanna*

Joy Ondra Hirokawa, arr.

Hal Leonard 08754586

2 parts, piano, with optional violin, cello, and dumbek

The Iberian peninsula was under Moorish domination for over seven centuries, a period ending with the fall of Granada in 1492; *Lamma Badaa Yatathanna* comes from this period.

This is an Arabic love song (“when she appeared, with swaying gait”... “my love’s beauty bewitched me”) written in a haunting 10/4 (organized as 3+2+2+3) with lyricism and a careful attention to style. The arranger provides very thoughtful notes in the score. The piece calls for dumbek, which could also be played on a riq, and cello and violin, which could also be done with an oud, if available. Instrumental parts are published within the score. A piano part is also provided.

There are lots of opportunities for good teaching material, starting with an uncommon meter, with a recurrent long-short-short-long feeling that becomes “normal,” a lot of portamento, some ornamentation, and an interesting approach to neighboring notes. It is a subtle piece, somewhat sophisticated but not impossible, and surely rewarding!

*Continued*

5. *Išeu Macek* (Matthew Went)

Ivan Hrušovský, arr.

Alliance Publications, Inc. - AP-10274

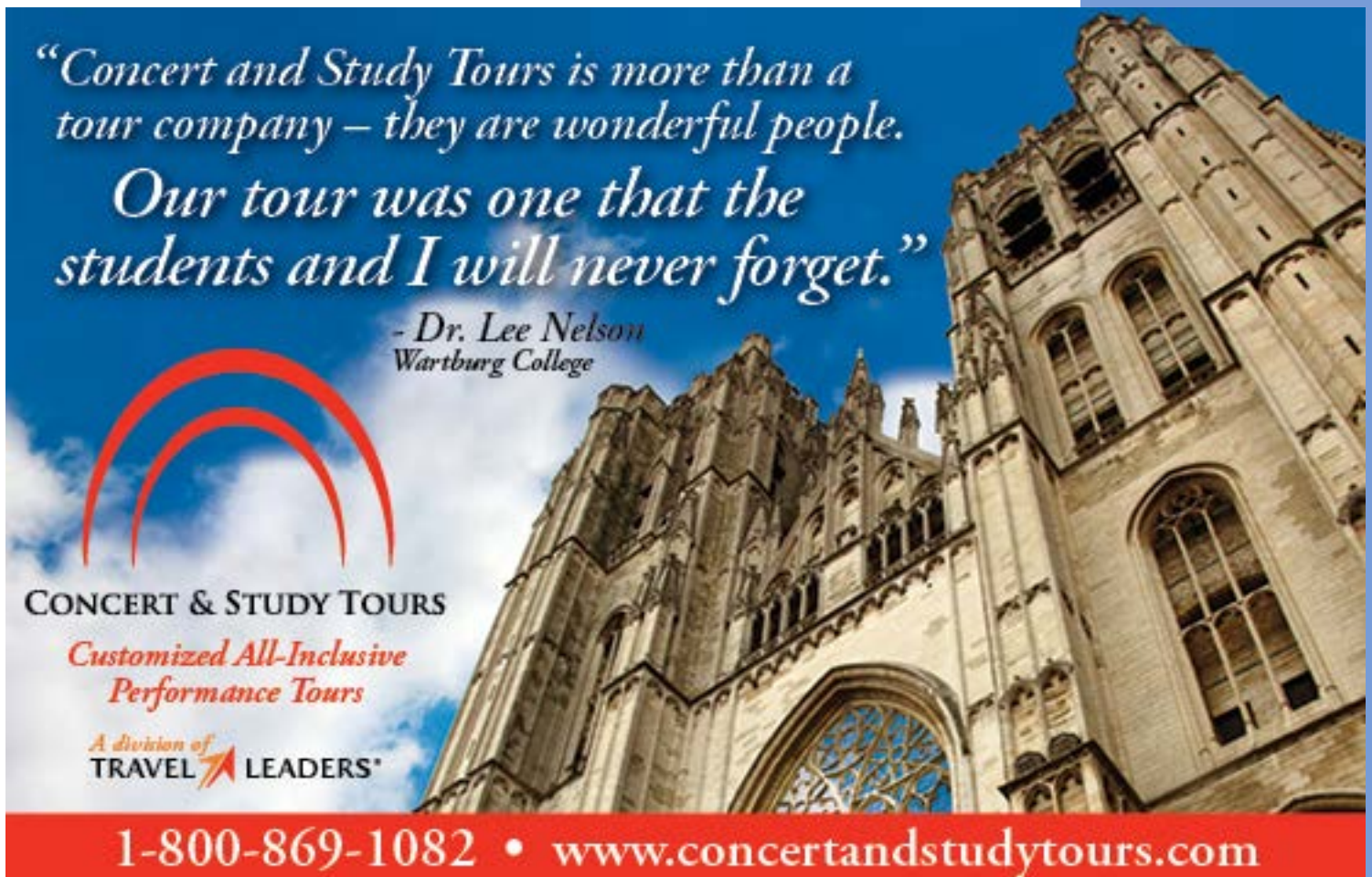
SATB

A lively setting of a beautiful Slovak folk song from the Záhorie region (western Slovakia, bordering with the Czech Republic and Austria). Contrasting sections of quarter = 60 and quarter = 150, finishing with a vivace section which will assure audience enjoyment. A Slovak diction recording is provided by the publisher. Estimated performance time: 2 minutes. The piece sports manageable vocal ranges and fast text. A piece to do!

Text excerpt:


Matthew when to Malacky to trash lentils,  
he forgot the beater at home and had to return. Aye! Hey!  
Matthew, play for us on a high string. Aye, kids.

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- Dr. Lee Nelson  
Wartburg College

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Cathy Britton

## **Tips for Making Your Choir *Musical* –**

Stolen Gems from around the Choral World

by Jeff Seaward, from the California ACDA Newsletter, *Cantate*: Winter, 2009. Reprinted with permission.

### **TONE**

*“You do not sing as you talk, any more than you run like you walk”*

- ~ Posture provides the opportunity for resonance
- ~ “It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that” ring!
- ~ Resonance is volume
- ~ Keep the soft palate raised with the brightening of the eyes
- ~ Sing with a mature quality
- ~ The inspiration is in the inhalation “*inspirare*”
- ~ Breath support, breath management
- ~ Spin the tone
- ~ Facial expressions can improve tone and intonation
- ~ Color your vowel sounds to fit the text, style, and genre
- ~ Keep eyebrows and bottoms up

### **RHYTHM**

*“Movement creates musicality; musicality lies in our physical movements. The rhythm of the piece should be internalized.”*

- ~ Rhythmic integrity
- ~ Attacks and releases
- ~ Consonants in front of the beat, vowel on the beat
- ~ Breathe - Sing
- ~ Cross-listen
- ~ Buoyancy

### **INTONATION**

*“Unification of vowel sounds is the single most important factor that influences intonation.”*

- ~ The sharper the dissonance, the freer the consonance
- ~ The beauty is in the dissonance (without conflict, there is no resolution)
- ~ Suspensions
- ~ Balance
- ~ Cross-listen
- ~ We should use our ears more, mouths less!

### **DICTION**

*“Elegance through syllabic stress”*

- ~ Buy in to ALL consonants
- ~ Sing the language and not the notes
- ~ Dynamic contrast and linguistic expressiveness
- ~ Articulation – space between notes

### **INTERPRETATION**

*“Squeeze the fruit. Let its juice drip out.”*

- ~ Let no note go un-nurtured
- ~ Never sing the same thing the same way twice
- ~ Each note should desire to go to the next one
- ~ Lines should pull like scarves from a magician’s coat pocket
- ~ Dynamics – contrasts explore ranges of dynamics
- ~ Style
- ~ Relationship of phrase and text
- ~ Energize phrases
- ~ Intensity and volume of a phrase grows or diminishes during rests
- ~ Give every note its FULL life (birth, school, marriage, grandparent, death)
- ~ Melody must always be present: back off and allow the melody to be highlighted

- ~ Physical movement can be a catalyst for musical movement
- ~ Don't sing the notes, sing the line
- ~ Lighten the vowel to fit the tempo and re-pronounce with clarity
- ~ Make the release of one phrase the springboard into the next

## COMMUNICATION

*"Enjoy the music. Sing the meaning of the text. Provide an experience, rather than perform music."*

- ~ Inform your face!
- ~ Music begins in the human experience of the poet
- ~ Sing with a performer's mentality: become a character, sell that character
- ~ Don't break my prayer
- ~ Think of a way you can relate to the song then apply it to the music
- ~ Paint a picture with your body, face, and voice
- ~ Know word-for-word translations
- ~ Color
- ~ Use of silence
- ~ Create beauty
- ~ Tell the story
- ~ Become the music

## MOTIVATION

*"Ask for more!"*

- ~ Positive reinforcement
- ~ Build relationships
- ~ Listen to your singers' point of view
- ~ Model what you want
- ~ Refuse to accept poor performance
- ~ Consistent discipline builds pride and *esprit de corps* among students
- ~ The team effort results in a product that

- is much greater than the sum of its parts
- ~ Get out of their way

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT LITERATURE

*"You must love it!"*

- ~ Music must fit the abilities and personalities of your choir
- ~ Choose literature of integrity
- ~ Be flexible and creative
- ~ Show off your strong points
- ~ Take risks

## ATTENTION IS IN THE DETAIL

*"No detail is too small."*

- ~ Outfits, uniforms
- ~ People hear what they see
- ~ Riser etiquette and placement
- ~ Create depth and utilize more of the stage during a performance
- ~ Acoustic considerations
- ~ Showering and deodorant help!

## OWNERSHIP

*"You are responsible for every single note."*

- ~ Know not only your own part, but others as well
- ~ Listen more and do not rely on the conductor so much
- ~ Keep your focus!
- ~ Go over your music alone!
- ~ "I will clear my mind of all external thoughts and dive into the music"
- ~ Become one with the piece
- ~ Put all your energy into what you are singing



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Joy Paffenroth

“People in chorus tend to be much more emotional or at least wear their hearts on their sleeve. They are generally the kind to hold hands and cry. It’s just a different personality type.”

—Eric Whitacre

## Relationships

Our opening all-district staff meeting this year was about **relationships**: our relationships with our students, our colleagues, and the community in which we teach. It made me step back and think about that in each of my choirs. I teach 6–12-grade choir and general music in my school system. We average about 85–95 in each grade level. This year, I have 70 in my 7th-grade choir, 65 in 8th-grade choir, and 140+ in my two high school choirs. That’s a lot of kids with which to build rapport and relationships. I wonder to myself: how in the world am I going to manage that? Is it really possible? Does it really matter? Middle school can be an especially challenging time to forge those relationships. It is the second-largest time of growth in human development. There are so many changes going on within the students themselves that sometimes they are unwilling or unable to maintain stable relationships. Sometimes, we feel like we have “lost” them – at a time when they really need to be “found!”

As I was thinking about what to write for this article, an experience from last school year came to mind. It is a story about a high school student of mine, but I think there are portions of the experience on a couple of different levels that are really important to examine.

This is a story about Jon. I met Jon when I first started in Chilton three years ago. Jon was a sophomore then and, I must admit, he was pretty much a typical sophomore boy. He followed the lead of a senior boy and that did not always end positively. But, toward the end of the year, something changed. He asked about attending a music camp. I suggested one and he went. He sent me a couple of emails over the summer expressing his delight in that experience, and I then suggested that he attend NextDirection (ND) in the fall (if you don’t know about this event sponsored by WCDA, you really should). He came back from that experience inspired to do more. He played a lead role in the musical, sang in both choirs, and took an independent study course with me. That next summer, he went to Lutheran Summer Music, a month-long music intensive at Luther College, and again, in the fall, attended NextDirection. This is where something changed...

After coming home from NextDirection, Jon approached me about writing a piece for the choir. He had heard Eric Barnum speak at ND and was really struck by the idea of creating his own music. I must admit at this point that I assumed this would be like many other “great ideas” that come from senior boys – a lot of talk and not a lot of action. However, this became a driving force in my entire program (middle school and high school) last year. Now, I don’t know about most of you, but I am not the most comfortable with the idea of composition. As a conductor, I am thrilled to investigate and dissect what someone else has written down and give it my own

*Continued*



spin, but the thought of writing original music terrifies me. Regardless of these feelings, Jon was on his way and I was going to be there to help him in any way I could.

As Jon had never composed and neither had I, the idea of the difference between what it sounded like in his head and what it sounded like being sung was something he really needed to get used to. That is where a strong relationship was built between his peers in our Concert Chorale and him. After writing the first eight measures of the piece, I wanted him to see what it would sound like in real life, so we made copies and handed it out and they sang it. I will never forget that experience, from all sides. I was excited as the teacher, he was thrilled as the composer, and they were amazed that they knew the person who wrote the music they were singing. We worked through this process many times over the next nine months of school until we sang the world premiere of this piece, Beautiful Dreamer, at our spring concert with Jon conducting and me at the piano. That piece even won the “Best Vocal Ensemble” award at the Wisconsin School Music Association composition project. I know this young man has a future in choral music as a conductor, teacher, and composer. He is definitely one to watch.

So, what does this story of a high school composer have to with being a Jr. High/ Middle School choral teacher? Well, as I got to know Jon through this process, some things about his middle school experience were shared with me, by him and by some of his teachers. For example, he did not take choir in middle school. He was not involved in our musical theater program in middle school. He was the kid in the sweatshirt with the hood pulled up over his head. He was quiet and kept to himself. All of those things would never, in a million years, have indicated that he was headed on this path of music-making for his future. I guess we never know when that spark may hit someone and it is important to remember to always “fight the good fight” for every kid that crosses our path and find a way to form a relationship.

I have an angel that sits on the shelf in my office with the following words of wisdom:

***Embrace Change!***

Begin today. Surround yourself with good people. Surrender your fear.  
Feel the brightness of being alive. What is calling you? Take flight toward  
your dreams. Wear red shoes. Believe in possibility. Be brave!

Let those words be your calling. If you live them, so will the people around you, especially your students! Best wishes for a great school year!



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*“It was my Mum  
who got me into  
singing properly  
- she knew I had  
to do something  
with my voice  
because she  
knew I was  
talented. She  
was the one who  
pushed me into  
joining a choir  
all those years  
ago, when I was  
about 12.  
I remember she  
told me to start  
with the choir  
and just see  
where it took  
me.”*

—Susan Boyle



André Louis Heywood

*“Singers can benefit greatly from an environment in which the connection between body and sound is put to the forefront.”*

## Keep it moving

Seven years ago, a boychoir colleague and I conducted a study aimed at identifying factors that keep boys engaged in choral activities, as opposed to the well-known factors that often take boys away from choir. The study seemed to indicate that boys go through a motivational maturity in which their original attraction to choir is rooted in extrinsic motivators – namely *commendation, parental encouragement/coercion, positive social interactions, and physical/kinesthetic engagement* – the latter two often working hand-in-hand.

The study also indicated that even as young male singers begin to gravitate toward more intrinsic motivational factors (*aesthetic/intellectual appreciation, spiritual connection, emotional response, etc.*), external motivators must remain in place to some degree in order for singing to continue to appeal to the developing male singer. While choral settings often provide ample opportunities for socialization, finding ways to engage boys kinesthetically can become increasingly challenging as boys move from childhood to early adolescence.

Inclusion of physical activities both in and out of the rehearsal setting is extremely beneficial, not solely due to the role it plays in keeping boys engaged in singing, but also because it is extremely effective pedagogy. Singers can benefit greatly from an environment in which the connection between body and sound is put to the forefront. Physical activity within the rehearsal room can yield musical and health benefits, while activities beyond rehearsal can strengthen socializing experiences and boys’ connection to choir. Here are a few ways in which I have tried to engage boys kinesthetically in my ensembles:

### Warm-ups

Many conductors already engage their singers in some sort of movement during specific warm-ups. In our rehearsals, we have several such exercises, and the boys know them well. For us, however, it is not enough to have movements associated with certain vocalises, but the singers have spent time (guided by their conductor, of course) discussing how the particular motion aids their singing. When asked, they will chime in with comments like “It sounds more open” or “I feel more free,” or even “I don’t think about the high note as much, so it’s easier to sing.”

The next step is then for the boys to be creative and invent their own movements. Sometimes this occurs by asking for volunteers to suggest a motion that they then teach to the entire group. Other times, each boy is allowed to create his own

*Continued*

movement. Not only does this engage boys in the process, it also puts into practice what they have previously learned regarding physical engagement while singing. I find these movements to be invaluable in setting up a choir that is comfortable with their bodies, leading to a free, relaxed, and balanced posture for singing, as well as promoting the flexibility and freedom to move during certain pieces.

During our week-long summer camp, we also include a thirty-minute long movement session near the start of each day. Extraneous from the singers' vocal warm-up, this session is geared toward becoming comfortable with movement, being creative with the space around you, and learning how to move efficiently. We invited a male college-age dancer to lead these sessions as it was important for the boys to observe a model with more movement experience than their regular conductor. This also provided them with an opportunity to observe another male, not considerably older than them, engaged in movement connected to music. This reinforced the idea that movement/dance is not something to be ashamed of or to be shy to attempt, helping to create an atmosphere of freedom, expressivity and creativity in our regular rehearsals.

## Choreography

"Choralography" is a turn-off to many, but we know the natural link between music and dance is undeniable. In several cultures, the two are inseparable, and even in our Western canon, dance plays an important role in several genres. My choirboys have come to expect that movement will be an important part of all of our programs, whether it is simply changing formation or enhancing our repertoire through movement. Because of this expectation, the boys come with a willingness to engage in movement while singing, taking on a natural appearance while performing, as opposed to an often staged/uncomfortable look when choirs try to add movement without first creating an environment in which movement is welcomed. The second benefit of this environment is that the boys set high achievement standards for themselves because they are concerned with the how they appear to the audience. This leads to very focused and engaged rehearsals in which the boys work diligently to ensure it meets their high standards. It also means that they vehemently oppose any movement that appears corny, awkward, or incongruent with the piece. The boys are also encouraged to offer suggestions for the movements to engage their own creativity.

Our choreography can be as simple as moving from side to side during a gospel number or African folk song, or it can be much more complex. My choirboys have enjoyed bringing to life Stephen Hatfield's *Tjak!* in which they aim to recreate a Balinese ritual chant. They sit in concentric circles, responding to a caller, moving their arms in perfect unison like a synchronized swimming team, all the while performing without a conductor. Such an endeavor not only strengthens their sense of internal rhythm, but builds both choral independence and interdependence. There are several pieces in the boychoir repertoire that could create equally wonderful artistic and educational experiences for your own male singers.

Perhaps our most unique endeavor each year is a production called "Boys on Broadway," in which the boys sing and dance to pieces in the musical theater idiom. There are several major choreographed numbers, including, in all

*Continued*

*"My choirboys have come to expect that movement will be an important part of all of our programs, whether it is simply changing formation or enhancing our repertoire through movement."*



*“I find these movements to be invaluable in setting up a choir that is comfortable with their bodies, leading to a free, relaxed, and balanced posture for singing, as well as promoting the flexibility and freedom to move during certain pieces.”*

seriousness, a tap dance. Yes, you read that correctly. During the first six weeks of each season, all our choirboys learn how to tap dance under the guidance of a professional choreographer. While the prospect of trying to keep a room full of middle school boys focused long enough to learn the difference between a shuffle and a flap may seem daunting, the boys actually enjoy the lessons. Because it is an annual event, clear expectations and standards have been set, and so the boys look forward to it and try to better themselves from year to year. This adds yet another layer to their artistry, all the while engaging them kinesthetically, connecting movement to music and body to singing.

### **Socializing/Competition**

You cannot go wrong with a good game of dodge ball. During break opportunities, ensure that your boys have the opportunity to engage in physical activities that match up with their age level. As boys grow older and get more into athletics whether at the school or community level, competition becomes more a part of their regular day. While it is important to be careful not to get carried away, opportunities for friendly competition can be huge motivators for boys. Our annual Camp Dodge Ball tournament is the highlight of Camp Week, and “Frisbee for Money” (a quarter for each catch) is always popular before rehearsals. (If they know we’re playing “Frisbee for Money,” they always show up on time!) We also play a trivia game that couples their musical knowledge and skills with their ability to shoot a ball into a basket – a great way to reinforce what you’ve taught in theory while engaging their kinesthetic and competitive energies.

The physical engagement of young boys in a choral setting, both in rehearsal and out of rehearsal, is an integral part of their musical and vocal development. The aforementioned activities aim at connecting body to mind, spirit and voice. These activities come with educational benefits (e.g. internalizing rhythms), vocal benefits (connecting voice to body), artistic benefits (enhancing programmatic elements), and can keep boys engaged and excited about singing in choir.

### **Reference**

Beynon, C. & Heywood, A. L. (2010). “Making their voices heard: A social constructivist study of youth and men who choose to sing.” *UNESCO Observatory Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research in the Arts*, 2 (1).



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## CD Review: “*Glories Stream from Heaven Afar*”

*sounding light*, Tom Trenney, conductor; 2013  
<http://www.manyvoicesonesong.org/recordings/>

*sounding light* possesses wonderful heft and maturity of sound, a rich darkness and solid core that creates an immediate feeling of warmth in the listener. The obvious gifts of both conductor Tom Trenney and his twenty-five singers shine through this entire recording; it is as solid a presentation of the Christmas choral repertoire as any released in some time, and will serve conductors as an excellent benchmark recording.

Trenney’s programming choices explore different identities for some familiar tunes through subtle variance of the tempo and style often associated with them. For example, the first track, Jeffrey Van’s arrangement of *Once in Royal David’s City*, is performed significantly slower and in a style guided more by the contemplative nature of the carol’s text than its traditional position as a processional. In a similar vein, the warhorse *Carol of the Drum* is performed at a tempo just on the edge of too quick, creating an atmosphere of forward motion and excitement in a piece more often offered as an inexorably plodding march.

In addition to the fine ensemble performance of *sounding light*, soloists shine on several tracks, a further indication of the depth of talent within the choir. Sensitive additions to the primarily *a cappella* program include some truly lovely piano and oboe playing; the possibility of monotony is easily avoided by including such accompanied works. The oboe in Dale Warland’s arrangement of *The Huron Carol* and the delicate piano performance in Abbie Betinis’s fresh setting of Holst’s *In the Bleak Midwinter* are standout moments. The alternate text employed in Betinis’s arrangement adds new layers of complexity and possibilities to this popular work; this is in keeping with the exploratory nature of the entire album.

In short, the album is full of excellent performances, each one with a finely wrought, compelling musical identity. Perhaps the two moments most indicative of the sensitivity of *sounding light*’s singing are the simple, elegant presentation of Stanford Scriven’s instant classic *Christ the Apple Tree* and the subtle attention to diction, particularly shifting intensity of consonants, in Tom Trenney’s own lovely arrangement of *O Come, All Ye Faithful*. These two moments alone would recommend purchase of this recording; the fact that the rest of the album is equally persuasive is a wonderful bonus!

—Brian Burns, Dubuque, IA

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## CD Review



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## Natalie McDonald

Vocal Music Director

Dallas Center-Grimes High School, Grimes, Iowa

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Natalie McDonald

“All of us want to lead choirs with great integrity, and we want students to grow personally..., but it is very easy for us to become driven by the deadlines and performances.”

### Introducing Bel Canto *sofeggio* in the high school choral setting

The art of teaching choral/vocal music at the high school level requires the teacher to juggle many things and be adept at setting priorities. Each year, we know there will be demands for high-level performances, honor choirs, auditions for extra-curricular groups, auditions for state-level groups, and other community demands to be met. As musicians, we feel called to create the best artistic product possible, while maintaining good participation numbers, organizing overwhelming paperwork, meeting deadlines, and managing many other tasks. What often gets lost in this high-stress environment is a clear process by which we lead our singers to high levels of individual musicianship. All of us want to lead choirs with great integrity, and we want students to grow personally and to be inspired toward excellence and accountability, but it is very easy for us to become driven by the deadlines and performances. This can lead to shortcut teaching which places the burden of the teaching and learning on the teacher and the pianists or band members in the group. *How can we meet demands, show measurable, objective achievement on an individual level, and help every singer in our groups to make progress?* Our best chance of success lies in an integrated approach that allows us to teach both literacy and beautiful choral singing.

**Bel Canto Solfeggio** is a system of hand-sign *sofeggio* that uses movable “do,” “la”-based minor, and a full ascending and descending chromatic scale. It blends well with Kodály methods and places strong emphasis on individual musicianship. The kinesthetic nature of the hand signs, when utilized with vertical accuracy, can help beginning pitch-matchers greatly, and the well-thought-out elbow placements and vowels encourage good intonation. Students pulse the tempo, sign in a *legato* or *staccato* fashion according to the articulations, and sign with appropriate articulations.

**During the past six years I have had the opportunity to use Bel Canto Solfeggio within three high school settings:** one school with an advanced curriculum in which most of the students were intermediate or advanced in *sofeggio*, one school with no prior experience, and my current school, where students had exposure in middle school. Clearly, a different approach was called for in each school. Teaching advanced students forced me to develop my own skill, which was of great value. I could not rely on the elementary and middle school teachers to teach the skills. In truth, very few of us can; our student population is mobile, teaching varies widely from district to district, and we will always be called to welcome students into our programs with little to no experience or knowledge of music.

**What I have found through these experiences is that students thrive with *sofeggio*.** While any new idea may be met with resistance, and while we will always be faced with individual motivationally challenged students, I have found that

*Continued*



the least-advanced students have actually been the first ones onboard philosophically, once they found that they, too, could succeed. Their journal entries for class reflect their excitement at being a contributing part of the ensemble and having someone hold them accountable for becoming a musician. Students respond well to high expectations when they are given the tools and the encouragement, and when they see that you really believe they can do it. Most of the negativity is due to insecurity, fear of embarrassment, and fear of change, and as educators we have many tools to help cope with these challenges.

**Introducing a new idea into a high school music program, especially one as transformative as this, can be tricky.** Students are emotional about their music classes, and upperclassmen can be resistant. Any change should be handled with care, patience, humor, and liberal doses of fun. Identify leaders early (both the positive and the negative ones) and bring them onboard in visible ways. Once students see that others are getting involved, they will buy in much more quickly.

**Bel Canto *Solfeggio* is not simply about sight-reading.** Choirs continue to use the skill as the music becomes more advanced, because students are able to identify and deal with key changes, dissonance, tuning chords, accidentals, etc., and they can prepare for challenges they know lie ahead (for instance, the *mi* of the chord is often flat, the raised *si* of harmonic minor requires careful navigation on the way down to *fa*, if you see a consistent *fi* then you have modulated to the dominant key). It gives students the tools they need to perform vocal music correctly, a language to communicate about the music, and the kinesthetic approach they need to keep a steady pulse, sing legato lines, breath together, and sing with pitch accuracy. Many common intonation problems are solved up front, or easily adjusted through a simple nonverbal reminder. The ensembles continue to improve and students are able to work independently, which frees me to observe and participate in the rehearsal, and not be glued to the podium or the piano. When I am absent the students are able to self-run rehearsals with minimal adult supervision.

**The way you introduce *solfege* in a high school program is key to your success.**

A useful mantra is: fewer words, more fun. Begin with a scale. No explanation needed, simply begin with the sign and pitch, gesture to them to join you. Lead them through. Watch and listen to your group to know how far to go. Make this a regular part of your rehearsal. Teach major and minor scales (they love adding *si* to sing a harmonic minor scale!). Put short excerpts on the board and start showing them things they have already learned “in the air” so they make the discovery for themselves. Again, do not talk much. Be prepared and lead them through the activities, letting them figure out the “how” and “why” along the way. High school students love a little mystery, and they respond well to this. For instance, teach a warm-up on *solfege* just with hand signs. Next, have the *solfege* written on the board and have them “sing what they see.” Then put the *solfege* syllables on the staff the next day. Then have the notes with the *solfege* under it the next day. By the last day, when you simply have the written notes, they have figured it out. Then try a different key in a couple of days and let them make that connection as well. Try having both keys on the board and let them discover the difference in the starting pitch.

“Students respond well to high expectations when they are given the tools and the encouragement, and when they see that you really believe they can do it.”

*Continued*

“Use student leadership. Many of my rehearsals may have as many as ten to twenty different students leading.”

**Other helpful ideas include using unison lines to teach *solfeggio* singing.** We use rounds and art songs liberally in class so that everyone is looking at the same thing. I include a bass clef option as well so the boys are used to that. We use a document projector, again to make sure all eyes are on the same thing. We all look at the same line of the octavo together and sing it (for example: “Everyone *solfege* the bass line.”). I made sure there was some challenge but a LOT of success all the time, and kept it very light for the entire first year. By the second year the old-timers were ready for more challenge and eager to show off their skills, and the new students learned much more quickly. By year four, the new students are at a good intermediate level within a few weeks, which continues to amaze me.

**Bring the students into the process.** Use student leadership. Many of my rehearsals may have as many as ten to twenty different students leading. I put an agenda on the board and have different students lead each activity, freeing me to observe and monitor. If a student is shy about leading, I let them choose a friend to help them.

**A note about learning music and taking the skill “on the page”**—do not be too quick to have students transfer their knowledge to their octavos. Take small excerpts, or work a single chord, or work chord-to-chord. Once they start to look at the music it is easy to lose them, and too many times of getting lost can cause a student to zone out permanently. Use a fairly simple song to transfer the *solfeggio* to the page, then use it strategically on the more difficult music. Keep increasing the length of the reading excerpts and the amount of each piece you learn this way, until it becomes the main language of the group. At this point, my singers “think” in *solfege*. They are no longer translating. Again, be patient: be responsive to your students’ reaction and do not make it punitive or boring or a real punishment. If your students are ready to dive in, then go! Just make sure they know how to swim first. Drowning students are not going to like you, or your stupid hand signs!

**Keep challenging.** Have a *solfege* excerpt on the board during rehearsal (maybe a folk song or a popular song) and see who has figured it out by the end of rehearsal. Send each section out with a four-measure part of their octavo, and have them learn it on their own, then sing it for the class. They love the competition. Keep changing your activities. Move to the chromatic scale, then do it in a round. We currently sing this in sixteen-part individual round, and the students love that challenge.

**It is also a great idea to buy some legitimacy for yourself by having other directors or other choirs come in and sing with your students on *solfeggio*.** During my second year, we had a treble choir festival with another school. They had prepared three concert pieces, but the fourth piece was introduced to them that afternoon. They learned it through *solfege* and performed it at the evening concert. The director, a respected collegiate choir director from the area, explained the process to the parents at the concert and had the girls demonstrate each step. The parents were more excited than I have ever seen them. I have actually had several parents ask to attend rehearsals so they can learn this.

**Is it a perfect world now?** No, it is still high school. But I can see that my teaching, and their learning, improves every day. I no longer feel that I am running from performance to performance. We learn the music quickly and then

*Continued*

spend more time on theory, creativity and improvisation, context, and refining expressivity.

**As a teacher, this change will push you out of your comfort zone.** I am a pianist, and it was difficult for me to move away from the piano so completely. However, the students now are leading the music, not following my playing. I am no longer fooled into thinking that we are singing expressively simply by having played expressively. I frequently make mistakes with the *solfeggio*, and occasionally I still struggle with trusting them enough to let them work through it. I want to just “show” them, but nothing makes my students angrier now, although four years ago they kept begging me to “show us how it goes.” I have had to work through my own ego and control issues in order to allow them truly to take the leadership positions. It is also a slower way to learn in the early stages. You must use simpler music and allow time for the process.

**Many of us also make the same mistake that I did for years.** We teach *solfeggio* through our warm-ups, and do not apply it to the music. It just becomes one more thing to teach, rather than the language of our teaching. This is not a good use of our time and is not truly teaching *solfeggio*. We need to be consistent in our teaching and continually use the same language and methods if we want our students to be accomplished musicians. I teach sequentially, just as a math teacher would, layering skills to continually move forward. This requires careful planning and preparation, and the ability to think like a student.

**In order to introduce Bel Canto Solfeggio into your high school classroom successfully, you must take the time to become proficient yourself.** Take a class or workshop, join a support group, familiarize yourself. Practice on your own. Then introduce it simply and without a lot of fanfare. Let the students see for themselves how this works. Having the chance to see other groups that are more advanced is a great way to prove the validity of this approach. As the students have gone to college auditions, they have discovered over and over again how much the universities respect their skills. Their testimony (I have them tell the choir what happened) has done more for our choir’s motivation than anything I would ever say.

**High school is a great level to introduce this.** These students are capable of very high-level thinking and performance and are mature enough to mentor each other. It is ideal to have students taught in a unified way from their entry to school until they leave us for college. However, that is rare in our music programs. That is no reason to hold back from introducing *solfeggio*. *It is not a choice between performance and process; it is a process that leads to great performance.* We owe both to our students.



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