



Melisma

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

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summer to-do list?*

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SUMMER IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL DIVISION: CHORAL OFFERINGS & CONFERENCES

Melisma

Summer, 2014

Vol. XXXIII, No. 3

IOWA

ICDA Summer Symposium

Mason City, July 21–25

<http://www.iowachoral.org/symposium/index.html>

MINNESOTA

Cantabile—Workshop for Church Choir Directors and Singers

Alexandria, June 12–15

<http://www.acda-mn.org/event/cantabile-workshop-church-choir-directors-and-singers-612-152014>

29th Annual Summer Dialogue

(See ad on page 20)

Moorhead, August 5–8

<http://www.acda-mn.org/summer-dialogue-brochure>

NEBRASKA

NCDA Summer Conference: Inquire, Invest, Inspire

Crete, July 13–16

<http://www.nebraskachoral.org/ncda-summer-conferences/>

SOUTH DAKOTA

SD-ACDA Summer Conference

Sioux Falls, July 30–August 2

<http://sd-acda.org/conferences/summer-conference/schedule.html>

WISCONSIN

Refresh!

Green Bay, June 16–18

<http://new.wischoral.org/refresh>

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 2,700 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.

Editorial Board

David Puderbaugh, editor

david-puderbaugh@uiowa.edu

Sheri Fraley, advertising editor

sheri.fraley@yahoo.com

Judy Perolat designer/publisher

judy.graphicsink@gmail.com

John Hughes

john.charles.hughes@gmail.com

Erin Kaufman

erin.kaufman.13@gmail.com

Todd O'Connor

toconnor@crossroadspres.org

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CD Reviews

Get your choral recording reviewed in *Melisma*!

A published CD review is an excellent way to get the word out. A *Melisma*-reviewed CD will get press across the six states of the division. Not only will that help your sales; the visibility of your choral program will grow, too! Only recordings that are commercially distributable can be considered at this time; they must be intended for sale to the public, with mechanical rights secured.

If you would like your recording reviewed, e-mail *Melisma* editor David Puderbaugh at david-puderbaugh@uiowa.edu.



Editor's Corner

David Puderbaugh

Melisma Editor
Iowa City, IA
david-puderbaugh@uiowa.edu



David Puderbaugh

*"If music be the food
of love, play on,
Give me excess of it;
that surfeiting,
The appetite may
sicken, and so die."*

—William Shakespeare,
"Twelfth Night"

Is spring here yet?

It is the beginning of May, and I am still hearing reports of snow in the more northern parts of our division. One of the seemingly few bright spots of the harsh winter was our NC-ACDA division conference in Des Moines. Hearing wonderful performances, learning from experts in our field, and meeting friends, both old and new, was a highlight for me. It was also testimony that our division is alive and well, and continues to provide a valuable service to the membership. Thanks to President James Kinchen and the myriad people who made the Des Moines conference the success it was. Staging a division conference is a major undertaking!

In this issue, Rita Stinner discusses the great value of touring for a collegiate choral program—benefiting singers, audiences, and colleges alike. Although she writes from the perspective of the two-year college choral program, her advice is of value to any type of choral program. Fred Ritter reports on the wildly successful Vocal Jazz Experience Day at the NC-ACDA conference and Eduardo Garcia-Novelli gives his top five suggestions for multicultural choral repertory. Pamela Burns provides excellent ideas for nurturing the relationship between choir parents and the children's/youth choral program.

Finally, James Kinchen pens his final, valedictory presidential column, an ode to the importance of promoting diversity in our profession, now and in the future. Thank you, James, for your leadership and for reminding us of the importance of taking our music to every corner of society.

Have a restful, rejuvenating summer, and see you back here in the fall!



Thank you, Des Moines!



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WORKSHOP CONTENT

The Art Of Vocal Jazz
Solo Jazz Performance
Jazz Theory
Aural Skills
Jazz Keyboard
Vocal Arranging
Rehearsal Techniques
Goals/Potentials Of The
Musical And Artistic Experience
Improvisation
Vocal Jazz And Choral Literature
Rhythm Section
Sound Reinforcement

DAILY SCHEDULE

8:30 Theory/Arranging/Keyboard /Aural Skills Classes
10:00 Lecture/Demonstration Seminar
10:30 Break
10:45 Choirs rehearse
11:30-12:15 Solo Singing/Improvisation Lessons
12:00 Lunch
1:30 Theory/Arranging/Keyboard/Aural Skills Classes
3:00 Break
3:10 Lecture/Demonstration Seminar
3:30 Choirs rehearse
4:15-5:00 Solo Singing/Improvisation Lessons
5:00 Dinner
7:00 Choirs rehearse
8:00 Solo Recital
9:30 "Afterglow"

The Phil Mattson Workshop is presented to address the musical and philosophical needs of high school and college teachers, students and professional singers. The workshop is extremely intensive, requiring personal involvement from each participant. All participants are placed in classes and seminars appropriate to their level of musical understanding. Reasonably priced dorm rooms are available on campus. Participants wishing to reduce housing cost by sharing a dorm room will be assisted.

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James Kinchen

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

"We have now come to understand better that diversity is important to our lives, even if our practice of that knowledge is still imperfect."

**"Thus the dream becomes not one man's dream alone,
But a community dream..."**

—Langston Hughes

Of course, I have known the importance of diversity for most of my life. I have lived with it! Many significant aspects of life growing up in my Florida hometown of Jacksonville did not reflect diversity, however, and one was acutely aware of that fact. The one aspect that really stood out most was the de jure segregation that was part of the fabric and fiber of everyday life. Neighborhoods were segregated. Way across on the other side of the huge field in front of our house was the "white section." No blacks allowed! It was another world. Schools were segregated. Some books and furnishings that we got in our schools were hand-me-downs. There was even a Director of Negro Education. The walls, real and virtual, were everywhere, separating people whom society deemed to be in need of separation because of their differences. I don't know that anyone thought it amiss then, but even within our color-segregated schools, there was another kind of separation going on. Children with learning disabilities were sequestered in "special classes," away from the mainstream student population. And the glass ceiling, strong and impervious as ever then, prevented women from rising above it to membership in any of the "good ol' boys' clubs" that would have permitted some modicum of equality between genders.

We have now come to understand better that diversity is important to our lives, even if our practice of that knowledge is still imperfect. We need to connect with people who are different in significant ways from us. For one thing, the world is a diverse place in many, many ways. There is racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Demographic realities are rapidly changing in the U.S., as the population "browns." It appears that we will now have a "majority-of-color" in this country well before the original projection of mid-century. While Palestrina, Schütz, Bach, Mozart, and Brahms are properly staples of our canon, imagine how impoverished we would be without music from other cultures here and abroad.

But we differ in other ways, too. And to embrace those differences is really to embrace ourselves in all our multifarious human beauty! It was exciting to see how the various choirs that performed at our recent conference, **"Celebrating Choral Diversity—our many paths, our many voices, our many songs,"** so thoughtfully wove the theme of diversity into their programming. It was interesting to see the ways, some subtle, some obvious, that "diversity" motifs appeared in many of the interest sessions and special events. I hope that our conference planted seeds that will continue to produce fruit into the future as our division enthusiastically embraces the diversity that more and more surrounds us at every turn. In addition to all its other virtues, diversity is exciting!

But I recently came to appreciate diversity in yet another light. As I prepared to write this piece, I received in the mail a copy of a book by ACDA National Executive Director **Tim Sharp**. It is entitled **Collaboration in the Ensemble Arts – Working and Playing Well with Others** (GIA Publications, Inc.). It is solidly researched, thoughtfully constructed, compellingly argued, clearly written, and witty in that way that those of us who know Tim have come to expect from him. Collaboration in the ensemble arts makes the strong, enthusiastic case for why we as ensemble directors and choral leaders must now transform and extend the skills of collaborative rehearsal and performance that have become almost second nature to us beyond our choral settings so that we can form partnerships with others whose missions complement our own. In doing so, we will be able to accomplish much more with our art than relying solely on our own resources and keeping to ourselves would likely afford us.

As I began to explore Tim's well-laid-out thesis, an excerpt from the great poem of Langston Hughes, "Freedom's Plow," came immediately to mind:

When a man starts out with nothing,
When a man starts out with his hands
Empty, but clean,
When a man starts to build a world,
He starts first with himself
And the faith that is in his heart—
The strength there,
The will there to build.

First in the heart is the dream—
Then the mind starts seeking a way.
His eyes look out on the world,
On the great wooded world,
On the rich soil of the world,
On the rivers of the world.

The eyes see there materials for building,
See the difficulties, too, and the obstacles.
The mind seeks a way to overcome these obstacles.
The hand seeks tools to cut the wood,
To till the soil, and harness the power of the waters.
Then the hand seeks other hands to help,
A community of hands to help—
Thus the dream becomes not one man's dream alone,
But a community dream.
Not my dream alone, but our dream.
Not my world alone,
But your world and my world,
Belonging to all the hands who build...

*"To seek
collaborators—the
'other hands to
help'—is to
necessarily seek
those who are
different from us,
even if they share
with us an affinity
for our mission."*

*"The answer
to moving
beyond survival
to a condition of
thriving
is found in the
exploration and
engagement of
collaboration in
the ensemble arts."*

—Tim Sharp

Continued

*“...I could not
have fathomed
that one day I,
the little boy
who grew up in
the little white
house on the dirt
road, would be
president of the
ACDA division
that Hayes first
presided over.
I thank you for
the opportunity
that you
entrusted to me.”*

President's Voice, *continued*

Diversity is central to Tim's blueprint for successful collaboration. To seek collaborators—the “other hands to help”—is to necessarily seek those who are different from us, even if they share with us an affinity for our mission. And Tim admits that opening the door to those potential collaborators, different in whatever ways they happen to be, engenders tension. But it is constructive tension, he argues, and I agree. Our conference “Music-in-Worship” event was certainly a case in point, as we reached beyond the predictably comfortable polish of well-established church choirs to find a way of including local church choristers, the result being a moving session that also had to strike those in attendance as “something that I can do with my own choir.” The destination was not always clear as Jerry Rubino and I, then Jerry and Tony Leach worked through the possibilities and challenges. Two of our Headliner Choir performances were the products of significant collaboration, each presenting its own “tensions” en route to satisfactory (and satisfying!) resolutions that worked themselves out over time.

I suspect that Tim is on to something major and transformative when he writes, “The answer to moving beyond survival to a condition of thriving is found in the exploration and engagement of collaboration in the ensemble arts.” This is, in many ways, our new frontier. May we explore and discover new ways to work and play well with others!

This is my final message to you as North Central president. I want to thank all of the people who have helped support my efforts to lead this wonderful, upper-Midwest choral community of ours. There are many who deserve mention. Our biennial conference is a very big, even dominating deal for a division president, and I will not restate here the detailed and deeply sincere expressions of gratitude that I included in the conference booklet acknowledgments. But I am grateful to many people for the support that they gave to our conference. As president, I owe much of my initial orientation to Aimee Beckmann-Collier, my immediate predecessor, who took the time to have extended and detailed telephone conversations with me about the job and the division. I thank Judy Periolat, our division executive, for the wide range of things that she did to help me each time I asked, and even when I didn't ask. I thank David Puderbaugh, our *Melisma* editor. My insight into David is that his parents had planned to name him Job (you know, the Old Testament patriarch known for his legendary patience), but switched to David at the last minute. I joke a bit, of course, but I cannot tell you how many versions of “It's coming, David,” he has graciously accepted from me, on the way to putting the next issue of *Melisma* to bed. I thank the executive board and the R&S chairs, too. I thank my predecessors Gregory Carpenter, Jo Ann Miller, and Kevin Meidl for their advice and support along the way. I thank the staff at the ACDA national office for all that they did to help.

Most of all, I thank you—my colleagues out there—for this opportunity to serve. When I sat as a high school junior there in the Daytona Beach, Florida Peabody Auditorium, singing the “Dixit Dominus” from Mozart's *Confessor's Vespers*, Roger Wagner's sonorous setting of *Go Down, Moses*, Eric Thiman's exquisite *Go, Lovely Rose*, Paul Fetler's enigmatic *Drum*, and other pieces in the Florida High School All-State Choir under the direction of the alternately charming and cranky Morris D. Hayes, I could

not have fathomed that one day I, the little boy who grew up in the little white house on the dirt road, would be president of the ACDA division that Hayes first presided over. I thank you for the opportunity that you entrusted to me. When I step down this summer, you will be in the hands of colleagues who, while different in their leadership gifts and styles, will, like me, care a great deal about our community and who will be trying to help us continue to be a vibrant, thriving choral community in the midst of the myriad challenges that will always confront us. I wish Robert Demaree, President-Elect, and Mary Kay Geston, President-Elect Designee, well.

North Central, I bid you blessings and warmest wishes!

Back to “In this Issue”

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Eduardo Garcia-Novelli

NC-ACDA Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair
Kenosha, WI
egarcianovelli@carthage.edu



Eduardo Garcia-Novelli



1. Title: *Beidh Aonach Amárach* (There'll Be a Fair Tomorrow)

Composer/Editor/Arranger: Irish Folksong - arr. Ruth E. Dwyer and Beverly Hardiman Jones
Publisher/edition #: Colla Voce - 24-96300
Voicing: Two-part treble
Accompaniment: Piano
Language: Gaelic

As the arrangers point out in the printed edition, *Beidh Aonach Amárach* is considered one of the first songs Irish children learn in Irish-Gaelic. This fact alone provides a very important link to Irish culture and makes the song worthy of attention.

The text of this song will resonate well with young singers:

There'll be a fair tomorrow in County Clare.
What good is that to me, if I'm not there?
Oh Mama, will you let me go alone?
My darling, don't demand it!
You are not yet ten or eleven.
When you are thirteen, you are old enough.

This thoughtful arrangement combines plenty of unison singing, some descant-like melodic material, a hint of imitation, and limited division up to four parts. It's a fun song with a contagious melody and rhythmic drive. In this era of staged choral performances, I imagine this would be a perfect piece to illustrate in song and movement what may well be a daily event in our singers' lives. Is there anything more fun and age-appropriate than this?

English transliteration of the text is provided (not IPA, but it works well). Only one verse is set to the music in this edition, but the arrangers offer other verses and encourage performers to expand the song as needed. It can certainly be fun, effective, and educational for all.

*"Music is the
universal
language of
mankind."*

—Henry Wordsworth
Longfellow

2. Title: *Por una cabeza* (By Just One Head)

Composer/Editor/Arranger: Carlos Gardel, arr. Vivian Tabbush

Publisher/edition #: Kjos - Ed. 9111

Voicing: SATB

Accompaniment: Unaccompanied

Language: Spanish

Singer and songwriter Carlos Gardel is arguably the most revered Argentinean tango singer of all time. In his short life (he died in a plane crash at the age of forty-five in 1935) he built a truly international career as a tango singer, composer, and actor. The song *Por una cabeza* was written for Gardel's last film, "Tango Bar" (1935), and it deals with one of Gardel's hobbies: horse racing. It is interesting to note that this song was also used for two other well-known and important movies: "Scent of a Woman" and "Schindler's List."

Known mostly as a dance, tango music actually has three facets: tango-dance, tango-song, and tango-concert. Though not originally a choral genre, tango music has been integrated into choirs with different degrees of success. Vivian Tabbush, a prolific Argentinean arranger and conductor, ably captures the essence of the style with excellent voice-leading, convincing harmonic progressions, stylistic rhythmic approach, and an effective ending. Vocal ranges are accessible, particularly for tenors. It is written *a cappella* but, quite frankly, I would certainly explore the possibility of adding instruments.

To conclude, let's remember that, as always with tango, this is not just about horse racing. As the arranger writes in this text, "Love and women are compared to the dangerous chance of a horse race, where luck is often elusive." Enjoy!

3. Title: *Chariots*

Composer/Editor/Arranger: Péter Louis van Kijk

Publisher/edition #: Alliance Music Publications, Inc. AMP 0830

Voicing: SSAATTBB

Accompaniment: Unaccompanied

Language: English

Chariots was commissioned in 2009 by the Texas State University Chorale (Dr. Joey Martin, director) and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Choir, Port Elizabeth, South Africa (Junita Lamprecht-van Dijk, director).

With an unstoppable rhythmic drive combining 3/4 and 6/8, **Chariots** is a dramatic and extremely effective setting of Psalms 20: 4, 5, and 7, which deal primarily with the psalmist's obedience to God over all worldly things:

Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God (verse 7).

It is an advanced work, suitable for competitions and conference performances, and it has a lot of flexibility in programming: a great opener or closer, but it also may work as the substantial center of a well-balanced program.

*"My idea is
that there is
music in the air,
music all
around us,
the world is full
of it and you
simply take as
much as you
require."*

—Edward Elgar

Continued

“A painter
paints pictures
on canvas.
But musicians
paint their
pictures on
silence.”

—Leopold Stokowski

R&S: Ethnic & Multicultural Perspectives, *continued*

4. Title: *Kal js kala debes s* (Blacksmith Forges in the Sky)

Composer/Editor/Arranger: Selga Mence

Publisher/edition #: Musica Baltica - MB 0727/2

Voicing: SATB/divisi

Accompaniment: Unaccompanied

Language: Latvian

Selga Mence is a Latvian composer of international repute born in 1953. She joined the Latvian Academy of Music in 1984 and currently serves as head of the composition department.

The text of this work may refer to Perkon, the god of thunder, found in mythological sources as early as 1320:

The Blacksmith forges in the sky,
Coal falls into the river Daugava.
A brooch is forged for the daughter of the Sun,
With golden bubbles.

It is important to note that the Daugava is considered Latvia's most significant (and largest) river.

A demanding choral work, *Kal js kala debes s* is an extremely effective piece that could be used on any stage of the world. It calls for four soprano soli toward the end, which add to the very conclusive nature of the setting. This is a highly recommendable work!

A helpful pronunciation guide is offered in the printed edition.

5. Title: *Sügismaastikud* (Autumn Landscapes)

Composer/Editor/Arranger: Veljo Tormis

Publisher/edition #: Fennica Gehrman (Helsinki) - distributed by Hal Leonard Corporation HL 48000919

Voicing: SATB/divisi

Accompaniment: Unaccompanied

Language: Estonian

By now, the great Estonian composer Veljo Tormis does not need a special introduction for American audiences; he is pretty well known in choral circles. *Sügismaastikud* is a part of that popularity. Written in 1964, “Autumn Landscapes” has become a staple for American choirs. The work is set in seven movements that, individually, depict different facets of autumn.

Tormis' suggestive and coloristic choral writing produces repertoire that is high caliber yet still accessible for many ensembles. Number seven (*Kanarbik*) is highly recommended—short and very impressive, but not extremely challenging.



Back to “In this Issue”



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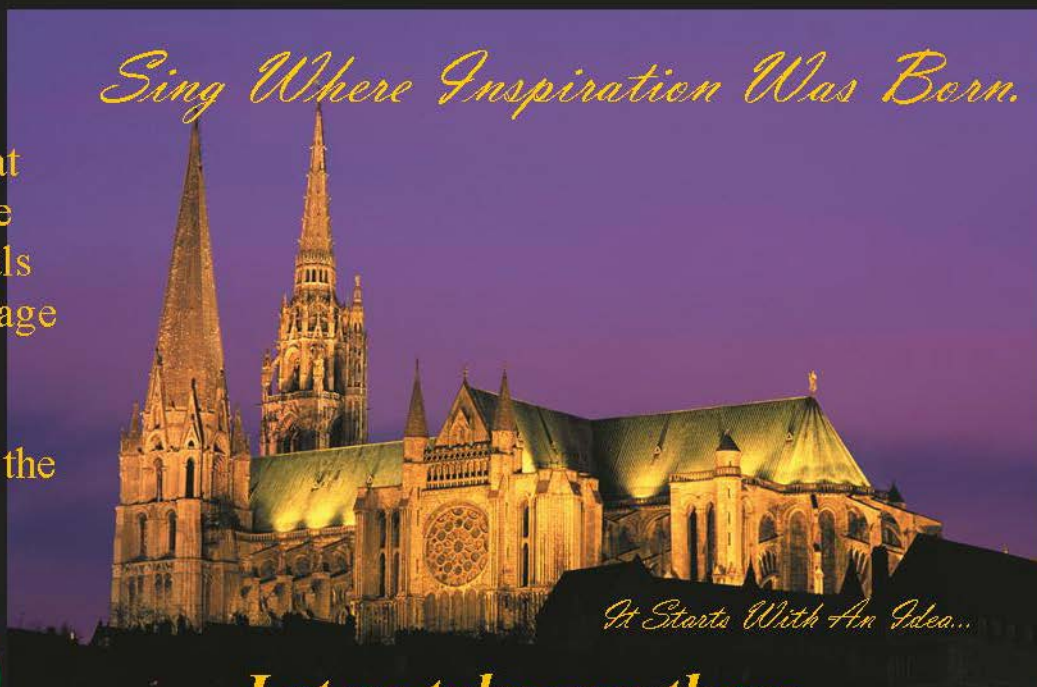
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*"I have my own
particular
sorrows, loves,
delights; and
you have yours.
But sorrow,
gladness,
yearning,
hope,
love,
belong to all of
us, in all times
and in all places.
Music is the only
means whereby
we feel these
emotions in their
universality."*

—H.A. Overstreet

Beckmann-Collier recognized for "outstanding contributions to the choral art"

NC-ACDA's **Weston H. Noble Lifetime Achievement Award** was presented to Aimee Beckmann-Collier by Weston Noble himself at the Des Moines Civic Center during the biennial division conference. She joins an elite company of choral leaders who have contributed much to the musical life of the North Central division.

Dr. Beckmann-Collier is professor of conducting and director of choral studies at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, where she has taught since 1989. She is a frequent clinician, adjudicator, and guest conductor for high school and college choral festivals, contests, and All-States throughout the country. She has twice conducted in Carnegie Hall and will conduct in Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center in May. Drake ensembles under her leadership have performed in major venues in England, Austria, Italy, Germany, Ireland, Wales, and the Czech Republic, as well as for conferences of ACDA's North Central Division. In 2013 she appeared as guest conductor and clinician at Minzu University in Beijing. She has also served on the adjudication panel for the ACDA national conducting competition.

Dr. ABC, as her students call her, recently completed a term as president of North Central ACDA, chaired the 2012 NC-ACDA conference, and continues to serve on the divisional executive board. She is a former president of the Iowa Choral Directors Association, chaired the 1992 NC-ACDA division conference and the 1995 ICDA Summer Symposium, and was Immersion Day chair of the 2002 NC-ACDA Division conference. She currently serves as assistant chair of the 2015 ACDA national conference which will be held in Salt Lake City. She is a former editor of the ICDA *Sounding Board* and the NC-ACDA *Melisma*. Her articles on a variety of topics, including Renaissance performance practices, music of the Classical period, teaching critical thinking skills in the choral rehearsal, and the role of music education in a global economy, have appeared in the *Choral Journal* and the *Music Educators*



Journal. She is chair of the Iowa Comprehensive Musicianship Project, a mastery teaching program for music educators.

A graduate of Saint Mary's College, which recently presented her with its Distinguished Alumna Award, Dr. Beckmann-Collier received master's and doctoral degrees from The University of Iowa, where she studied with Don V Moses. She is the recipient of Drake University's Madelyn Levitt Award for Distinguished Community Service and the Stalnaker Lecturer designation, the Iowa Music Educators Association Distinguished Service Award, and the National Federation Interscholastic Music Association Outstanding Music Educator Award.

The Weston Noble Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the choral art. It was created to honor Weston Noble's legacy and was initially presented to Weston himself. Currently professor emeritus of music at Luther College, Weston has received international acclaim as the conductor of the renowned Nordic Choir. He conducted over 900 All-State orchestras, choruses, bands, and festivals across four continents. His dedicated service, high musical standards, and insight into the choral art have made him an inspiration to generations of conductors and singers throughout the world.



Back to "In this Issue"

*"I think sometimes
could I only have
music on my own
terms, could I live
in a great city,
and know where
I could go
whenever I wished
the ablution and
inundation of
musical waves,
that were a bath
and a medicine."*

—Ralph Waldo
Emerson



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NC-ACDA Awards: Excellence in leadership

NC-ACDA Presidential Service Recognition Awards

These awards were presented by conference chair James Kinchen to past presidents **Kevin Meidl** (2008–2010) and **Aimee Beckmann-Collier** (2010–2012) at the Friday evening concert in Des Moines, March 20, 2014.

KEVIN MEIDL, also a past president of the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association, is director of choirs and music department chair at Appleton (WI) West High School. He has taught junior high school and high school choral music in Appleton for the past twenty-eight years. He is the artistic director and principal conductor with the Appleton Boychoir, a treble choir of young boys currently celebrating their thirty-second season.

As a national leader in choral music education and performance, Dr. Meidl is in high demand as a conductor, adjudicator, clinician, and speaker. His extensive conducting experience most recently includes performances with the South Dakota All-State Chorus and Orchestra, and the Wisconsin All-State Children's Choir.

As a speaker, he has presented a variety of subjects on national convention programs for NAFME and ACDA and has delivered keynote addresses at professional music gatherings across America. He has conducted international workshops focusing on

American choral styles in Estonia, the Czech Republic, Iceland, and the Netherlands. He has taught choral music at all levels of education holding positions with the Appleton Boychoir, the Badger State Girl Choir, the Fox Valley Symphony Chorus, the Appleton Public Schools and the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh.

His choirs have performed extensively for regional and state conferences of the American Choral Directors Associations, NAFME: The National Association for Music Education, the American Guild of Organists, the Organization of American Kodály Educators, the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses, Inc., and the Wisconsin Music Teachers Association. His choirs have performed throughout the United States and across the globe singing in over thirty countries and for major world events such as the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day in Normandy France and for world leaders including Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI in Rome.

Congratulations, Kevin.



The Presidential Service Recognition Award was presented to Kevin Meidl by Matthew Wanner, current president of Wisconsin Choral Directors Association.

The Presidential Service Recognition Award was presented to Aimee Beckmann-Collier, current NC-ACDA Vice-President, by Norm Grimm, Iowa Choral Directors Association Past President.

AIMEE-BECKMANN-COLLIER's bio is featured on pages 15–16 of this issue. Congratulations, Aimee.

Outstanding Service as Program Chair



MICHAEL WEBER received this award from conference chair James Kinchen, with steering committee chairs joining in the congratulations for a job well done.

Michael Weber is associate director of choral activities at North Dakota State University. He conducts the Madrigal Singers and The Statesmen at NDSU and teaches

classes in choral conducting, choral literature and music education. He conducts the Cathedral Choir at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, Minnesota and was previously the conductor and artistic director for the Grand Forks Master Chorale in Grand Forks, ND. He has extensive experience as a music director, conductor and stage director for numerous musical theatre productions in Maryland, Texas, California and North Dakota. He is a founding faculty member for the Summer Performing Arts Company with the Grand Forks Public School District.

Dr. Weber received the 1998 Outstanding Faculty Award from the Student Government Association at Salisbury State University and was named a Preferred Professor by the NDSU Mortar Board chapter in May 2004. In 2006 he received the Distinguished Educator Award by the NDSU Blue Key National Honor Society Chapter. He has recently published choral pieces for SAB and TTBB choirs with Alliance Music Publications and Alfred Music Publishing.

Mike Weber is currently president-elect for the North Dakota American Choral Directors Association and recently served as treasurer for the North Central Division. Congratulations, Mike.



Members of the steering committee joined ACDA Executive Director Tim Sharp, National President Karen Fulmer, and National Treasurer and colleague Jo Ann Miller in congratulating Mike Weber.



Pamela Burns

NC-ACDA Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair
Fargo, ND
lagirlschoir@gmail.com



Pamela Burns

“Parents who become “hooked on choir” can turn out to be lifetime benefactors of the arts...”

The Care and Feeding of Choir Parents

Why do we care?

ACDA held a fabulous “ACDA Children’s Choir Conductor’s Retreat” in Minneapolis in January, and it included a robust roundtable discussion on the “care and feeding of choir parents.” **We started by establishing that, yes, in order to be successful, it really IS essential for parent care and education to be a top priority.** We acknowledged that learning and performance are best with parental involvement and support, even though some students manage to rise above a lack of parental involvement and support. We determined that caring for our choir parents is an extension of caring for our students and that educating the parents is an important way to promote choral artistry. Parents who become “hooked on choir” can turn out to be lifetime benefactors of the arts, and let’s face it: even if we only hook them for a year, it’s better than nothing! Most of all, we care because we know that choral music enriches the lives of both the singers and their audiences.

How do we feed?

Some of our parents don’t know much about choir when they first become choir parents. In addition, there are substantial differences between various choral experiences. For instance, a parent who sang in a high school choir some time ago, or one who currently sings in a church choir, may not have a helpful frame of reference for a choir that is a part of a school music curriculum with standards and skill expectations. A parent with only school choir experience might not understand the mission and goals of a community youth choir program. As choral directors, we have much to gain by the “care and feeding” of our choir parents!

I think one of the most important concepts to teach both our singers and parents is that choir is a team experience! We can start by explaining that, in any musical ensemble, it is important to have the highest possible percentage of performers in attendance in order to make rehearsals worthwhile for the ensemble as a whole. I know parents and students who have tried ineffectively to apply what they know about other activities to the choral setting. For instance, if a piano student doesn’t show up for a private lesson, the student is obliged to pay for the lesson anyway, so no one truly suffers but the student. Some parents/students need to be taught that this reasoning doesn’t apply to a music ensemble. In the choral setting, an individual’s absence or lack of effort negatively impacts the entire ensemble.

Every team needs a fan club, so teach your parents how they can become “parent

champions!” Learning the intricacies of the choral art is kind of like learning the rules of the game, only our parents probably can’t learn this by watching TV! Many of them become fans simply because they’ve produced talented offspring. These parents will need lots of information.

Every team needs a coach—ONE coach, or maybe a coach and an assistant!

Occasionally there is a parent that wants to be too involved. Sometimes we need to gently, but firmly, establish the boundary between being a supportive fan and trying to share in the coaching of the team.

Another concept that might be new to some parents is that choir is a skill-based activity. Some parents will need help understanding that rehearsals include building vocal skills such as intonation, diction, breath management, vocal independence, sight singing, correct singing alignment, body and facial expression, etc. They may not know that we are strengthening rehearsal/performance skills and behaviors such as focus and eye contact, respect and self-control, energy and enthusiasm, positive attitude, rehearsal preparation, etc. For most of us, even soloist selection is a skill-based venture. Consider sharing your criteria for selecting soloists so that parents are less likely to believe that soloists are “teacher’s pets.”

One powerful way to teach your parents is to encourage them to observe a rehearsal—on your terms, of course. Some successful programs hold an open house during which parents actually experience rehearsal with their students by sitting next to them and participating in rehearsal activities. Others use more of a demonstration format. Just imagine how many parents could be astonished as they observe vocal technique and sight-singing exercises, not to mention rehearsal room procedures and skill-based problem solving while rehearsing varied repertoire!

Repertoire selection seems to be a universal mystery to parents and students alike. We can educate them about the things we take into consideration as we select repertoire for the choir. We can explain, for instance, that a goal is to choose music of various genres, meters, tonalities, etc. Most parents are likely unaware that certain pieces are especially well suited for teaching particular skills. We can be transparent about how particular curricula guide us to introduce baroque music, or multi-cultural music, or vocal jazz, for example. Find a way to share with your parents the way that choirs invariably end up loving the tough pieces, the pieces that have especially meaningful texts, or the ones that introduce the traditions of another culture resulting in a better understanding of ourselves. Confess to an audience that a particular piece was challenging, even for YOU, and explain why. Trust that most parents appreciate being enlightened, but that there will always be a parent or two who just can’t understand why we don’t sing the music that they listen to on their radios or iPods.

Teach your parents and your students about vocal health! Consider preparing a handout on vocal health and make it part of an assignment for students to teach their families. You might want to try having older choir members teach younger choir members about vocal health, or take a few moments at a concert to have a student talk to your audience about vocal health. If you’re like me, you’re always looking for ways to “kill two birds with one stone.” Reflect on ways to combine vocal health instruction with team-building or leadership goals.

“Every team needs a fan club, so teach your parents how they can become ‘parent champions!’”

"Find a way to share with your parents the way that choirs invariably end up loving tough pieces..."

Continued

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Millikin University, Decatur IL
*Which Choir Is This Anyway? A Practical
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Mary Kay Geston
Great River Chorale, St. Cloud MN
*What Every Choir Director Should Know
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HEADLINERS



René Clausen
Concordia College
Moorhead, MN
*And the Circle Won't Be
Broken: Thoughts of a
Choral Sojourner*



Greg Gilpin
Shawnee Press
*Practical Tips for a Better
Rehearsal (&) The Music of
Greg Gilpin*



Ruth Dwyer
Indianapolis Children's
Choir, Indianapolis, IN
*Harmony in Sequence:
Developing Part-Singing in
Grades 3-8*



Brandon Williams
Doctoral Candidate,
Michigan State University,
Lansing, MI
*Be Careful What You Teach,
It Might Be Learned!*

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James Cox, Eagan HS • *How Do I Do It? – The Tweeners (11-20 years of experience)*

Brandon Dean, Gustavus Adolphus College-St. Peter
Student Conducting Workshop

Shannon Dorscher, Bluff Creek Elem School-Chanhassen
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Matt Ferrell, St. Cloud State University • *Student Conducting Workshop*

Dan Hampton, Montevideo HS • *Personal Pick 6 for High School Choirs*

Thomas Hassig, Prior Lake HS • *President's Message: State of the State*

Kari Lace, Jackson MS-Champlin • *Personal Pick 6 for Middle Level Choirs*

Stephanie Trump, Armstrong HS-Plymouth
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Lin Warren, Hastings HS
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The Care and Feeding of Choir Parents, *continued*

How do we care?

Discovering the best ways to communicate with the parents in your situation(s) can be tricky, but it is ever so important! Keep in mind that great communication will probably mean using several different strategies at the same time. You will strongly want to consider maintaining a website, web page, or blog. You might also want to create or update a printed or online handbook. Periodic newsletters, either digital or printed, can be very useful. Realize that social networking can be a powerful way to reinforce other methods of communication. Sometimes you need a good, old-fashioned hard copy. For instance, I have a few kids in my church choir whose parents do not speak English very well and do not have regular internet access, so hard copies are necessary to keep those families in the loop. In my community choir, some information, such as our need for silent auction donations, seems to be ignored even though it is included in the handbook and weekly newsletter. Once we send home a hard copy, the donations start coming in: go figure! Still, in my own experience, the less often you send home paper, the more attention parents will give to the paper you DO send. No matter the ways you choose to communicate, updates and reminders by email, phone, or text will always be a necessary reinforcement for some families. It can be terribly time consuming, but worth it, to figure out which communication method works best for each parent. When you can't do it all, consider recruiting someone to help you rather than letting it fall through the cracks, and, by all means, if you find great success in the area of communication, shout it out to your music colleagues!

If you can manage it, demonstrate that you value each parent as an individual, not just as Jimmy's mom or Sally's dad. This might seem hopelessly unrealistic, and, in some situations where there are hundreds of students/parents, it may be too idealistic to take seriously. Each of us needs to find our own way. One director shared, "Quick emails, text messages, phone calls, or even Facebook messages do not need to take much time and might turn out to be well worth the effort." These messages can be short and sweet, such as, "How is your mom?" "Are you feeling better?" "Congratulations on your new job!" "So sorry for your loss." and "Have a great trip!"

It's a great idea to compliment students in front of their parents, both as a group and individually. Many parents feel personally complimented when you compliment their children. And, whenever you have a chance, tell your audience what awesome parents they are!

Be sure to express gratitude for every little thing your parents do for you and your program. Thank the parents in every printed program. Verbally thank the parents at every concert. Thank each committee, board member, treat-bringer, ride-giver, etc. Especially thank the people that entrust you with their negative remarks. Model respect to singers, and encourage them to express gratitude to their parents. Sometimes we can refer to our gratitude and respect for our own parents when there is a teachable moment.

There are lots of ways to respect your choir parents, and one of them is to teach your students to respect them, too. This is important for establishing good two-way communication with the parents, but it is also an excellent way to

"There are lots of ways to respect your choir parents, and one of them is to teach your students to respect them, too."

Continued

“One thing was crystal clear, and that is that the “care and feeding of parents” is a tremendously vital aspect of a successful youth choral program.”

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

—Helen Keller

The Care and Feeding of Choir Parents, *continued*

build character in your students. We can show respect by dismissing singers on time, especially when parents are waiting. We can show respect to students and parents when we are able to consider typical schedules when setting dates and times for rehearsals/events. We can ask our students to respect their parents by saying things like “I know your parents are super busy, so I just want to remind you about _____.” Just before Mother’s Day, you could say, “I know you probably argue with your mom sometimes, but today I want you to give her a big hug and tell her how much you appreciate her,” or “My dad is visiting me, and it reminds me how lucky I am to have had my parents’ support all these years,” or “I know some of you don’t agree with this decision by the board of directors/administration, but try to remember that they want what’s best for you.” You get the idea! It’s also important to respect your students and parents enough to disagree when it’s important. When you have to disagree with a parent, try to add something such as “I want you to know how much I admire your commitment and that I appreciate you even when we disagree.” A sincere compliment goes a long way!

Here ends the warm conglomeration of thoughts that were expressed over lunch on a chilly day in Minneapolis. Each thought seemed to stimulate a new one, and many of us left with spinning minds. One thing was crystal clear, and that is *that the “care and feeding of parents” is a tremendously vital aspect of a successful youth choral program.*



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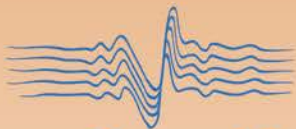
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Rita Stinner

“The true purpose of the tour is to showcase the talent and repertoire of the ensemble, to demonstrate the appeal of the college and program, to educate and entertain, and to give our own students alternative and interesting performance opportunities.”

The Tour

We just returned from our spring choir tour last night, and the significance of touring is freshly imprinted in my mind. With tighter budgets, higher costs, and shrinking college enrollments, why do we sacrifice our time and funds to tour? What kind of return do we make on our investment? What kinds of sacrifices do we instructors make? **Is it worth it? I think so.**

We take our entire choral program on tour both fall and spring. The fall tour is limited to a 100-mile radius, and primarily, a two- to three-day tour. We come home at night to avoid housing costs. We visit high schools that traditionally send students to our program, visiting each school once every couple of years. Of course, we hit those vital feeder schools as often as possible. Our spring tour covers a wider regional area and includes overnight stays. It is the more costly tour, but a favorite of the students.

My goal for touring is three-fold:

- To recruit and increase the visibility of our music program
- To expand the cultural experiences of our own music students
- To reward the music students for a year of hard work

1. There are many designs and many bottom lines to touring. The true purpose of the tour is to showcase the talent and repertoire of the ensemble, to demonstrate the appeal of the college and program, to educate and to entertain, and to give our own students alternative and interesting performance opportunities. Touring comes in many forms. Schools with church affiliations often perform in church settings and benefit from the generosity of local host homes and donated meals. State and regional trips are beneficial, but bus charters, meals, and housing are pricey. Some collegiate programs, rather than taking on the complexities of a tour, host clinics or conferences and bring potential students to the college campus. Many schools advertise an extensive bi-annual trip for recruitment purposes, with expenses shared by school and student. Some travel over holidays, spring break, or summer to avoid any conflict with regular classes and struggle and try to maintain their personnel when students are juggling employment, rising tuition, and personal responsibilities.

2. When touring, one of my goals is to enhance the student’s cultural knowledge. Over the years, our program has seen collegiate and professional orchestras and choruses, operas, plays, national tours, art galleries, museums, and historic sites. We have shared music with other colleges and conducted vocal clinics at the various schools we have visited. Each experience educates our students and develops their hunger for seeking further cultural growth. When visiting rural schools, we often

perform for K–12 audiences, stimulating involvement in music in all ages. Our own students see the importance of instilling in others the love of music that they possess.

3. The students in a two-year college music program work hard. They each perform several functions doing what I call “keeping the ship afloat.” When there are only freshmen and sophomores in a music program, those few do it all, and **I like to reward their stellar efforts.** When we tour, we have fun. You can’t put fifty young people on a bus for several days without some fun and silliness occurring. I am fortunate to be able to fund all our touring, including housing, meals, and some kind of cultural treat. We use funds raised at concerts and donated by local patrons. And while I term it a reward, the students work very hard performing while we travel. All expectations are met, but a good time is had by all. This spring, for example, there were several funny issues that arose. We tackled everything from almost running out of gas, to leaving a trail of forgotten personal items in every spot we visited, to an emergency off-road bathroom break for an embarrassed soprano. We all agreed we needed to write a book. Our memories are all in Technicolor, and will bring laughs for years to come: goal met.

Why tour?

We are heard often in our own concert halls by our regular patrons and our fans. There is nothing more gratifying than to be heard by new ears, and, even more so, to inspire young people to become involved in their own school music programs. Part of each of us hungers to share what we’ve created. Touring gives us a new direction. It takes us out of our comfort zone. We put ourselves out there. There are times when we are met with a huge audience and other times when only the faithful show up. Once, in a rural setting, we performed on another two-year college campus for a struggling music instructor who was trying to grow a music program. The only people who came were the family of one of our own kids. Rather than let our students be disappointed, we celebrated the joy of the grandparents, who had never seen their granddaughter perform. We educate and satisfy others, and we are educated and satisfied in return. Touring is a lot of work. It is stressful, and adds one more layer on the shoulders of an already overworked choral conductor, but **I believe the benefits far outweigh the costs. The return on your investment will benefit all.**



Back to “In this Issue”

“There is nothing more gratifying than to be heard by new ears, and, even more so, to inspire young people to become involved in their own school music programs.”

NC-ACDA 2014 Conference: “Celebrate Choral Diversity”

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Lawrence University (WI) Concert Choir; Phillip Swan & Stephen Sieck, co-conductors



Lawrence University (WI) Cantata; Stephen Sieck & Phillip Swan, co-conductors



Milwaukee (WI) HS of the Arts; Raymond Roberts, conductor, Anthony Leach, Clinician



The Wartburg Choir (IA); Lee Nelson, conductor



Schola Cantorum de Mexico; Alfredo Mendoza, conductor



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Ulsan Metropolitan Chorus of South Korea; Koo Chun, conductor

Venues represented: The Cathedral of St. Ambrose/Drake University/Scottish Rite Consistory
St. John's Lutheran Church/Des Moines Civic Center



Vocal Jazz Experience Day: Green County (IA) HS "Jazzatonics;" David Heupel, conductor



Princeton (MN) High School; Mark Potvin, conductor



Vocal Jazz Experience Day: Sparta (WI) HS "SHE;" Janette Hanson, conductor



The Gustavus (MN) Choir; Gregory Aune, conductor



Vocal Jazz Experience Day: Bellevue (NE) East HS "E Street;" Marjorie Simon-Bester



Iowa City (IA) West High School Chorale, Ryan Person, conductor



Grand Forks (ND) Master Chorale; Joshua Bronfman, conductor



University of St. Thomas (MN) Chamber Singers; Angela Broeker, conductor

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University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Singing Statesmen; Gary Schwartzhoff, conductor



Des Moines Interdenominational Choir; Jerry Rubino, coordinator, Anthony Leach, clinician



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



Collegiate Repertoire Choir; Laura Diddle, coordinator, Jo Ann Miller, 1 of 5 conductors



Cantus Men's Ensemble; Minneapolis, Minnesota



Heartland Youth Choir; (IA) Barbara Sletto, conductor



Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, conductor; Toronto, Canada



Luther College (IA) Nordic Choir; Allen Hightower, conductor

Full size digital files of these and other photos are available by request from judy.graphicsink@gmail.com.



Middle Level Boys Honor Choir; Vincent Oakes, conductor/clinician



Middle Level Boys Honor Choir, with drummers



Middle Level Girls Honor Choir; Maribeth Yoder-White, conductor/clinician



Middle Level Girls Honor Choir with soloists



High School Mixed Honor Choir; Robert A. Harris, conductor/clinician



High School Mixed Honor Choir; Robert A. Harris, conductor/clinician



Elementary Honor Choir; Martha Shaw, conductor/clinician



Elementary Honor Choir; Martha Shaw, conductor/clinician, closeup

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thassig@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us

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wes.hansmeyer@nsdtitans.org

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Michael Weber

North Dakota State University
m.weber@ndsu.edu

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Ann Deckert

Ann.Deckert@k12.sd.us

Wisconsin President

Matthew Wanner

Muskego High School
matthew.wanner@muskegonorway.org

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North Central Division R&S Committee Chairs

Boychoirs

Marco Melendez

Milwaukee Children's Choir
mmelendez@milwaukeechildrenschoir.org

Children's & Community Youth Choirs

Pamela Burns

Lake Agassiz Girls Choir
pacapuch@msn.com

College & University Choirs

Lee Nelson

Wartburg College
lee.nelson@wartburg.edu

Community Choirs

Lucinda Thayer

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Lthayer@uwsp.edu

Ethnic & Multicultural Perspectives

Eduardo Garcia-Novelli

Carthage College
egarcianovelli@carthage.edu

Junior High/Middle School Choirs

Joy Paffenroth

Chilton Public Schools
paffenrothj@chilton.k12.wi.us

Male Choirs

Stephen Boehlke

soboehlke@aol.com

Music in Worship

Jerry Rubino

jerry@jerryrubino.com

Senior High School Choirs

Cathy Britton

Sioux Falls Catholic School
cbritton@sfcss.org

Show Choirs

Sarah Van Waardhuizen

Johnson High School
svanwaa@gmail.com

Two-Year College Choirs

Rita Stinner

Western Nebraska Community College
rstinner1@gmail.com

Vocal Jazz

Fredrick Ritter

Columbus High School
fredrick.ritter@cps-ne.org

Women's Choirs

Rhonda Fuelberth

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
rfuelberth2@unl.edu

Youth & Student Activities

Laura Diddle

South Dakota State University
laura.diddle@sdstate.edu