



VOICE of WCDA

Summer Issue—July 2018

In This Issue...

[Letter from the President.....2](#)

[Letter From the Editor.....3](#)

[Equilibrium.....3](#)

[2019 Conference.....4](#)

[Inspired by a Retiring Director.....5](#)

[An Inspirational Mentor.....5](#)

[War Horses.....6](#)

[Inspiration from Music Composition6](#)

[Inspiration from Student Leaders: Success Does
Not Always Mean Being “The Best”.....7](#)

[Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination.....8](#)

[Rare Moments of Profound Inspiration.....9](#)

[Middle Level High Five.....10](#)

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Choral Inspiration

Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

Singing in Wisconsin
Registration— Sept. 1-Sept. 30

Composition Contest
Applications — Sept. 8-Oct. 15

All-State Choir
Nominations — Sept. 24-Oct. 19

WCDA Awards
Nominations— Oct. 1-Oct. 25

Conducting Contest
Applications — Oct. 1-Dec. 1

2019 State Conference
Early Registration — Nov. 5-Dec. 10
Early Bird Price \$125

Singing in Wisconsin
November 10, 2018

2019 State Conference
Registration — Dec. 11-Jan. 3
Registration fee—\$145

All State Choirs
January 11-13

2019 State Conference
January 11-12, 2019
Appleton, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Choral Directors Association: Part of American Choral Directors Association

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VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

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Letter from the President

Stephen Sieck

When Zack asked me to write something about inspiration, my mind filled immediately with all the great teachers I've had in my life, the performances that revived my soul, and the scores that spoke deep truths to me. I'm writing from the NextDirection conference, just a week after our Refresh conference. These experiences of working with colleagues and master-teacher clinicians has left me bursting with new ideas and, more importantly, inspiration. Perhaps the best way for me to tell my story is to share about Mike.

Mike was a baritone at Emory & Henry College who sang in my choir for four years, three days a week, for four years. My vocal pedagogy for the choir centered on the essential importance of a high soft palate. Our vocalizations lifted our soft palate; our kinesthetic gestures prompted soft palate lifting; my most common vowel improvement strategy was to say "don't forget to lift your soft palate!" Mike was with me as a senior in choir during a clinic with a high school men's choir, and, to no one's surprise, I coached the students there to lift their soft palates. Mike came up to me after the workshop very excited, and said, "wow, that idea of lifting the soft palate really helped – what a great idea!" Had he really never heard what I was saying before now? What Mike helped me to see was the distinction between teaching and learning. I had been *teaching* Mike how to lift his soft palate for four years. But Mike was ready to *learn* that skill late in his senior year.

I have been attending ACDA state, regional, and national conferences since 1999, and many, many brilliant ideas were *taught*, but this summer, I feel ready to *learn*. I learned amazing things from sessions led by Rick Bjella, Joe Miller, and Edie Copley. But I also learned books' worth of ideas and perspectives from my colleagues in WCDA. In hindsight, fellow choir directors have been teaching me how to do this job since the day I joined choir in 9th grade. It's up to me to be ready to incorporate their wisdom into my work. For example, this notion of being "not yet ready to learn" is something I learned from President-Elect Rebecca Winnie at Refresh!

While our colleagues in for-profit business view innovations as trade secrets, teachers *share* their knowledge. Like medicine, ours is a profession that pools our best practices for the common good. It requires, however, two things. First, we need to be ready to learn from clinicians and colleagues. Second, and most importantly, we need connect with each other – at conferences, online, on the phone, at SIW, and beyond. I am inspired by our profession, by you, my colleagues, and by the work we do for our communities. Thank you for teaching me!



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VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination

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Letter from the Editor

Zachary Durlam

When I was in ninth grade, I attended my first honor choir at the University of Iowa. I was from a small town with a small choral program, and I had never experienced anything like what I experienced there. I was surrounded by over a hundred amazing singers, and the sound we produced seemed incredible. I still remember every piece we performed, and there were over a dozen places in our program where I felt chills run down my spine every time we sang them. My absolute favorite piece on the program was *Ave Maria* by Bruckner. When the choir reaches the text “Sancta Maria,” the voices join in lush 8-part harmony and crescendo to fortissimo as the sopranos ascend to a high A. I bought the cassette of our performance, and I listened to that moment so many times that I wore out the tape. From that point forward, I sought opportunities to recreate the joy I found singing in that choir, and eventually that journey fostered a desire to share that joy with others and launched me into a career teaching music. There have been many people, experiences, and compositions that have inspired me along the way, but looking back, I recognize that was the moment that started me down the path to a life in music.

In this issue of *The Voice of WCDA*, current and former members of our WCDA board share stories of compositions, people, and experiences they encountered through music that have been inspirational to them. I hope you are able to connect with many of the stories in this issue and that these moments of inspiration help to recharge your batteries as you look forward to a new year of music-making with your singers!

Equilibrium

John Hughes - R&R State Coordinator

Until recently, I hosted a weekly podcast called *Choir Chat*, in which I interviewed conductors, composers, and other leaders in the choral field. Many episodes started with me asking guests about their earliest musical memories and the moment they decided to pursue music professionally. There was obviously some variety in the answers, but there was a commonality—people fell in love with choral music because of how it made them feel.

The following statement seems obvious but is easily forgotten: No one falls in love with choir because of a uniformly executed shadow vowel on the “and” of beat 4. At times, I myself, and probably others too, have lost sight of what makes an ensemble experience so meaningful. We’ve favored technical execution over artistic expression.

As we pursue careers in music, we can take for granted the paramount component of singing, the pursuit of artistry. Music theory, ear training, score identification exams, recitals, et al. rightly hone our insights into and understanding of music. However, if left unchecked, our rigorous training can blind us to the bigger picture. As we gain experience, maturity, and musical sophistication, we grow to appreciate nuances in areas such as articulation, phrasing, and diction. (Believe me, I love a unified off-beat release as much as anyone!) It’s easy to then assume that our choir members are where we are...that we don’t have to talk about the emotional component. We assume if you’re in choir, you already get it.

Wrong! It’s imperative that we always remember that choir members, even in the most elite professional ensembles, sing to be spiritually fed. I’m certainly not suggesting that we allow errant notes and rhythms to fly by or that the academic study of music is worthless. (After all, I’m such a big choir nerd that I had a choir-themed podcast!) Rather, I’m suggesting that our art grows best when the heart and mind are in equilibrium. As conductors our job is to feed our singers—to lead each rehearsal as if someone in the ensemble is about to fall in love with choir for the first time. How inspiring can we be?



VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring
Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music
Composition

Inspiration From
Student Leaders

Rilling and Bach: An
Inspiring Combination

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2019 Conference

Rebecca Winnie

Reflections

WCDA State Conference, January 11-12, 2019
Appleton, Wisconsin

The 2019 WCDA Conference, **Reflections**, will address a number of topics encouraging us to reflect on our practices – repertoire selection, teaching strategies, honoring our singers, feeding and recognizing our own resiliency. We plan to use the “Reflections” idea as a dual metaphor – we, as conductors and teachers, must be reflective about the choices we make so that our choristers can see *themselves* reflected in the music they sing and feel included the community we build in our music-making.



Our Dynamic Conference Planning Team (more to be added!):

Karen Bruno, Program Chair

Luke Aumann, Facilities Chair

Peter Dennee, Auditioned Choirs Chair

Schuyler Pietz, All-State Choir Chair

Stephanie Klockhow, Collegiate All-State Coordinator [begins Thursday, January 10]

Alli Gostomski, Children All-State Coordinator [grades 5-6]

Jean Enyeart, Middle-Level All-State Coordinator [grades 7-8]

Justin Ranek, High School Bass Clef Choir All-State Coordinator

Gillian Pacetti, High School Treble Clef Choir All-State Coordinator

Tim Buchholz, High School/Collegiate* Vocal Jazz All-State Coordinator

ers will
apply
the
limited
positions
All-State



*Collegiate sing-
be encouraged to
and audition for

section leader
in the Vocal Jazz

Our Dynamic Headlining Choir is *Women of the World*. Check out their story and music at womenoftheworldmusic.com. I have enjoyed their LIVE album which is available on iTunes.

Interest Session applications are due July 15 (information on website: wischoral.org/state-conference/interest-sessions). Share your insights with interested colleagues! **Let us Hear Your Voice!**



VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination

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Inspired by a Retiring Director

Eric Barnum - WI State Composition R&R Chair

When I went to undergrad I was not going to be a music major. I was one of those classic eighteen-year-olds who had "been there - done that" in high school with music and felt I was too burnt out to make it a career. I had reached the mountaintop in my small town and I was done practicing piano and performing in every ensemble (I think you may recognize this kid). There was at least a small part of me that wanted to stay connected to music and certainly make friends, so I at least decided to join the choir my freshman year.

That particular year happened to be the final year of a highly venerated old conductor in Minnesota: Dr. Paul Brandvik. He was an imposing figure and it didn't take me even a week to realize I had not reached the mountaintop; I hadn't even begun to climb. I wouldn't realize until much later that I actually only glimpsing the mountain from afar, not even near it. How the mighty high school graduate can fall!

That year was a year of preparing for a long European Tour in the early summer. It was to be Brandvik's farewell tour, singing at *Musica Sacra* in Marktoberdorf, as well as performing in some of the most beautiful spaces in the world. It was the last concert of this tour that became a flashpoint of change in my life and career path.

In Chartres, not too far southwest of Paris, is a spectacular cathedral, and it was where my little undergraduate choir gave their final performance of my freshman year and the final performance of a conductor's teaching career. There were several moments of tearful joy to be had over the course of the performance, but the pinnacle moment to me was at some point during Holst's "Nunc Dimitis." Something happened in the air that only singing in a choir can provide, and our wonderful old conductor beamed and cried.

Though I know now I didn't fully understand it then, what I thought I saw in his face and tearful eyes in that moment was the thousands upon thousands of students, peers, and audiences he had touched in some way through his gift and service through teaching and love of music. There were decades of performances, comforting conversations, regretted mistakes, smiles, heartaches, and unbelievably rich joys all tied to and experienced through one simple idea: choir.

I changed my major when we got home.

An Inspirational Mentor

Frank Watkins - Northwest District Representative

My inspiration in choral music comes from my mentor and teacher Dr. Sandra Snow. Dr. Snow always encouraged us to be "noticers" - to notice the beauty that is all around you from the curve of hands, to the veins of a leaf, to how the oak tree bends or how the weeping willow sways with each gust of air. When I was a second-year teacher, I found myself at probably one of the lowest points in my life. I didn't know what I was doing; I felt like I was failing as an educator. I attended the Texas Choral Directors Association Conference where Dr. Snow was the conductor of the All-State Women's Choir. I watched her rehearse, teach, encourage, and shape the music in such an inspirational way that I said to myself, "one day, I would love to study with her." Two degrees and six years later, I found myself at Michigan State studying with the one person who inspired me to "keep pushing, keep teaching, and work to make a difference in the lives of your students!" I will always be grateful for Dr. Snow's inspiration! Like so many say, "it was choral music and a passionate teacher that made me want to teach" - that is my inspiration.



VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination

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War Horses

Polly Amborn - former WCDA board member

Inspirational moments and memories are too numerous to recall, but I was recently struck by reading a brief essay answer on a final exam from one of my freshman women. She was writing about a piece from our past school year that stood out to her, and she noted the Wilhousky arrangement of "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Of all the pieces my students could have chosen to write about, this was the one she chose. She was the ONLY student to choose this piece. When she followed up her choice with her reasoning, that's where the inspiration came.

She stated that her grandfather used to sing the melody to her as a lullaby, and that the day we started learning it she went home and excitedly told her family about the new piece we would be performing at our District-wide festival. She went on to write that she looked forward to rehearsing this piece because of the personal connection she had to it.

This little story restored my faith in "the war horse." I tend to be more traditional in my repertoire selections as it is, but I doubt myself when I attend concerts and conferences where 90% of the literature programmed is new, slightly more dissonant than I think necessary, and seems to have very little melodic content. I go away from those concerts asking myself if I need to change my style. Surely I have tried some of the newer pieces and have found some my students and I really connected with, but the comments about "Battle Hymn..." made me realize that discounting those old tried-and-true gems would be cheating my students.

We performed Howard Hanson's "Song of Democracy" recently as well, and dissecting the text by Walt Whitman and discussing why Hanson set it the way he did was a fascinating and impactful experience. William Dawson's "Ain-a That Good News" has always been a favorite for my advanced women, and Mozart's "Ave Verum" has always been a tremendous and popular introduction to that style of music for my intermediate-level mixed choir. We never know what piece is going to hold a special place in our students' hearts or why, but I was so very thankful for Paige's point of view. Long live the 35-cent, crinkled octavos in my library!

Inspiration from Music Composition

Brad Burrill - Central District Representative

It was the summer of 2001. I had just finished my first year as choral director at Wisconsin Dells High School, my seventh year of teaching overall. Like most first years in a new school, it had been a very challenging one. I was the eighth or ninth choral director the school had in the last dozen years. There was no consistency, very little music literacy, very low expectations and almost no enthusiasm in the students I met. I did my best but felt quite depressed that nothing very special was being accomplished in my classroom.

Because my Wisconsin teaching license had lapsed (I had lived and worked in Minnesota for the previous four years), I needed to take a few graduate courses the following summer in order to renew. One of the classes I signed up for was the René Clausen Choral School at Concordia University in Moorhead, Minnesota. I admired both Clausen's Concordia Choir and his compositions, and I expected to learn some new ideas about conducting, composition, and educational strategies. I had no idea how that class would truly change my life.

The featured guest for that summer session was an up-and-coming young composer named Eric Whitacre. He was only a few months older than me, and in many ways personified the visions I had for myself when I was in high school of being a true *composer*. After sharing his very entertaining personal history with our class, he shared some of his music. It was incredible. His ideas were fresh, his music full of vitality and substance, and his personality extremely engaging and authentic. Clausen shared a lot about his own life and his approach to composition, too, which I found both inspiring and instructive. Each night after class I came home and worked on some of my own compositional ideas, truly inspired to new levels of aesthetic and artistry.

I was so inspired that I very seriously considered quitting my teaching job and focusing entirely on composition while staying at home with my two-year-old son. But I realized that a novice choral composer at the very least needed some performing group to work with, to learn from, and maybe even premier something with every now and again. I kept my job and stayed at Wisconsin Dells High School for another eight years. It was during this time that I feel I truly blossomed as a choral director, as a teacher, and as a composer.

I blossomed because I started looking at music differently. I had always known that choral music was both a functional and expressive medium capable of deep human communication. But by starting from the composer's perspective, and asking "why did they choose to write it *that* way?" I discovered a deeper understanding and passion for the art of choral music making. That passion has helped me to light a similar spark in my students ever since.



VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination

Rare Moments of Profound Inspiration

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Inspiration From Student Leaders: Success Does Not Always Mean Being “The Best”

Sam Wulterkens - Southeast District Representative

Editor's note: The two students mentioned below agreed to have their names and words published in this article.

When I think of stories of inspiration, I often think of the students who have had to overcome challenges. Those who rise up and conquer the obstacles they face are an obvious source of inspiration. Conversely, I think it's easy to dismiss the inspiring qualities of students who “have it easy.” If you've been teaching for any significant amount of time, you know the students I'm talking about. They shine in choir from the first days of class, equipped with most (or all) of the most important skills and traits necessary for success in choir (and pretty much everything else). While we celebrate these students, seeing them as a source of inspiration seems a bit disingenuous. This year, many of those students were part of the graduating class at my school. Two of them brought inspiration in unexpected ways.

From the first day of class, as freshmen, these young ladies stood out. They gave 100% effort at all times. They led by example, but also through the things they said. They were both incredibly hungry for the deeper learning that choir had to offer, and they expected that hunger from their classmates. As they progressed through high school, one of the things that set them apart from their classmates was their remarkable ability to be reflective and creative in their thinking. Again, these two were superstars from day one. They were destined for greatness, in choir and beyond.

Another thing they appeared to be destined for was competition. These young women were the top candidates for all leading roles and leadership positions throughout high school. While this would often create an adversarial relationship between students, for these students it was different. They developed a deep respect for one another, and often found that their greatest successes came when they worked together. In fact, the two of them collaborated to choreograph the competition set for their a cappella group this year, and they put together some of the most beautiful, complex art I've seen from anyone, much less high school students. But their leadership extended beyond that.

For obvious reasons, these two inspired me throughout their high school experience, but especially in their senior year. So many times during the year, I found myself feeling emotional with pride and adoration for these two incredible students. Often these thoughts were met with internal dialogue along the lines of, “Obviously they were going to be this. Obviously they were destined for great things. It was written in the stars.” While those thoughts may have been true, I think we sometimes sell ourselves and our programs short. It was in their goodbye addresses at the spring concert that they really helped me understand. Each of the students said many sweet and meaningful things when they spoke, but a few words really stuck.

The first student, Summer Kleppek, said, “If you would have asked me as a freshman if I would be giving a speech at my last choir concert, or anywhere for that matter, I would have said absolutely not. At that point I was not nearly passionate enough about anything to conjure up a whole bunch of sentimental thoughts or memories, and even if I did, I would have been far too insecure to share them with all of you. But somehow that little freshman girl became passionate and confident, and I owe much of that to choir. It was in choir when I had my first moments where I got chills on the back of my neck and tears in my eyes **not because I was sad, but because I was inspired.**” So much of what she said she learned about herself in choir seemed to be things that were obvious about her from the beginning. But would she have reached this incredible potential without the experiences that choir offers? I have serious doubts that she would have. We have something to offer that can't be replicated elsewhere, and I'm inspired by the opportunity that provides!

The other student, Lindsay Gleason, said something that made sent my mind spinning: “In choir, I realized for the first time that I don't have to be the best to be good enough.” These words would be meaningful enough without context, but when you know the student, the words are earth-shaking. As I said earlier, most of us know this student. We know how she wants the big roles, the solos, the spotlight. This is a student who is **DRIVEN**. Learning that success doesn't always mean winning or being the best is a massive revelation. These words **inspire me**, in that we all have tendency to compare ourselves and our choir programs to others. It helps me remember that what we are doing is more powerful and important than that. We don't have to be “the best” to be a success. How would we measure that, even if it mattered? We have to be the best we can for our students; and we have to help them find the best in themselves. Our sources of inspiration are all around us. We just have to be ready to see and hear their message.



VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

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Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination

Eduardo Garcia-Novelli - Repertoire-Specific and Ethnic/Multicultural R&R Chair

The Colón Theater in Buenos Aires opened in 1908, in a time of economic expansion and European splendor in Argentina. I am always inspired just by being inside that iconic building, arguably the best opera theater south of the Rio Grande, and a *must go* for opera lovers worldwide. The first performance I attended there was a concert of the famous Vienna Boychoir while they were on tour: I couldn't believe the beauty of the singing by those kids who were roughly my age at the time. Several operas followed, with Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* being the first. I was taken.

But nothing compares to what I experienced there with Helmuth Rilling, the *Bach Collegium Stuttgart*, and the famous *Gächinger Kantorei* for the closing concert of a seminar organized by the Bach Academy of Buenos Aires: it was just magnificence, beauty in its best possible form, and a virtually unattainable level of performance. It was Bach, of course, being Rilling, and my memory says it was a double choir motet. I can still picture the continuo in the center of the stage and two chamber-sized choirs standing on each side. The place, the composer, the performers, the conductor—truly unforgettable.

Years later I had the immense honor to sing under Maestro Rilling's baton: it was during my grad school years at Westminster Choir College, performing Bach's St. John Passion. We performed it with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Academy of Music, another breathtaking concert venue. Rehearsals with Maestro Rilling were revealing: there I was, in the presence of this genius, who gave precise instructions with a soft and gentle, but firm, voice. Picture with me the beginning of the concert: the soloists file onto the stage and, at the back, Maestro Rilling. Nothing out of the ordinary. Yet, he steps up to the podium, and, there and then, I realize there is no music stand in front of him (and no music, of course!). For a moment, I think it is a mistake, and I freak out. I feel bad for him, and I even fear for the success of the performance. The downbeat comes and Bach's immense music bathes everybody in the hall. Yes, Maestro Rilling conducted the entire, two-hour long Bach masterpiece completely by memory. I had never seen anything like it, nor had I ever felt such a drastic change of emotions: in just a moment, Maestro Rilling turned my fears into one of the most inspiring moments of my life.

I was fortunate enough to have the chance to perform again with Maestro Rilling while in my doctoral studies. This time, it was *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* by Mendelssohn, with the Houston Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. I knew what was about to happen and, indeed, it did. Rilling's power to inspire proved to be even more profound when, in a meeting with students, he unveiled his top secret: "*it's all about how you treat them, how you talk to them,*" he said, referring to any and all musicians in the performance.

Coincidentally, just about at that time, I stumbled upon a wonderful book entitled *Helmuth Rilling: Conductor-Teacher*, written by our very own (now retired) Dr. Sharon Hansen. That book clearly explains the reasons *why* I was so inspired by Rilling's work: I was benefiting from a life devoted to music and, particularly, Bach's music, a conductor with a superb mind and a unique talent, a true music professional with a work ethic like no other, and a human being who lives, breathes, and exudes music with and for people.

The *Teatro Colón* is inspiring, but the building would be nothing without music and, even more importantly, without people. Helmuth Rilling's inspiring message, delivered through music, puts people at the center. We would all do well to learn from his example.



VOICE of WCDA



[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

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Rare Moments of Profound Inspiration

Debbie Lind - Treble Clef R&RChair

Webster Dictionary defines “inspire” thusly: “to influence, move or guide by divine inspiration – to breathe into from a divine source.” Therefore, I describe true inspiration as a “vertical” experience – an experience that Joseph Campbell says “pitches you out,” (I say pitches you up) to the divine, or to the great out there. It is a place you glimpse fleetingly, but a place where you want to return. We as teachers/directors can help make powerful musical moments happen technically with phrasing, crescendo-ing to a sudden soft, leaning on suspensions, dramatic pauses, lined up vowels, etc. But the vertical experiences, the spiritual experiences, happen beyond our teaching, our manipulation, or our control. They are given to us, our choirs, and our audiences. They come to us from somewhere else. And they come to us maybe a handful of times in our careers. I’ll share one:

My girl choir had rehearsed Gjeilo’s *Tundra* like there was no tomorrow. They were a-pe over that piece. In our final rehearsal at Lawrence Chapel I told them to look at me but to also look way out to the back wall of the balcony, so when we got to .618 of the way through the piece (a sudden, dramatic climax) we could imagine the Northern Sky opening up to reveal the Great Aurora Borealis. At our final concert true inspiration came to us, visited us, our accompanist and our audience in that moment. Everything seemed to slow down and come into a new, indescribable focus. Following the concert we talked about this revelation. One girl declared finally, “Mrs. Lind! The heavens DID open up in that moment! But Mrs. Lind! They opened up to reveal not the Northern Lights, but to reveal US, the TRUE US, the genuinely beautiful US, US in our potential, US in our capacity to love!” And she burst into tears. I could not have orchestrated that moment in a millions years. And I could not have defined that moment the way she did. In that moment, and for a fleeting moment, I was changed. I was inspired. I wish I could return there.

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[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

Letter from the Editor

Equilibrium

2019 Conference

Inspired by Retiring Director

An Inspirational Mentor

War Horses

Inspiration from Music Composition

Inspiration From Student Leaders

Rilling and Bach: An Inspiring Combination

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Eric Leih - Middle Level R&R Chair

I Believe (SATB)

Composer/Arranger: Mark Miller

Alternate Voicing: SSA

Accompaniment: Piano

Publisher: Choristers Guild (CGA1310)

This beautiful setting of a text written on the wall of a concentration camp by a Jewish prisoner during WWII is a fantastic way to introduce your middle schoolers to singing in four parts. Despite being an SATB work, the basses do not drop below an E3 so it is very accessible for middle school boys. The piece opens with a soprano soloist and builds as each part layers into the texture until the soloist returns and soars above the choir. It concludes with the soloist making the final statement of the text followed by the ensemble fading out with an "oo" section. This work provides an excellent opportunity to develop dynamic contrast and lyricism. Once your students learn this piece, they won't want to stop singing it!

Stars I Shall Find (Three-Part Mixed)

Composer/Arranger: Victor C. Johnson

Alternate Voicings: SATB, Two-Part, SSA, TTB

Accompaniment: Piano

Publisher: Heritage Music Press (15/3176H)

Sara Teasdale's poetry lends itself to choral music and Victor Johnson knocked it out of the park with this setting. The beautiful accompaniment sets the tone from the very beginning for this stunning piece and the vocal lines are well written for middle school voices. The B section of the piece will be a challenge, because it includes a difficult line for the altos and some three-part divisi for the treble voices that builds to a five-part (SSATB) chord. Your students will absolutely love the harmonies within this piece and it will quickly become one of their favorites.

Shut De Do (Three-Part Mixed)

Composer/Arranger: Randy Stonehill/arr. Greg Gilpin

Alternate Voicings: SATB, SSA, TTB

Accompaniment: A Cappella with Optional Percussion

Publisher: Shawnee Press (HL 35031263)

The original Shut De Do has been a hit with older groups for years, but now Greg Gilpin has made this fun piece accessible for younger voices. This arrangement is a great way to introduce your middle school students to a cappella singing. The choral parts are simple yet fun to sing, so your students will enjoy learning and rehearsing this piece. There are a couple modulations that are challenging, but your students will be successful after spending a bit of time on them. Add in the optional percussion parts to bring another level of texture and excitement to this work and you'll have a high energy opener or closer for your concert!

Boats Sail on the Rivers (Two-Part)

Composer/Arranger: Victor C. Johnson

Alternate Voicing: SSA

Accompaniment: Piano

Publisher: Heritage Music Press (15/3244H)

Boats Sail on the Rivers is a great choice if you're looking for a beautiful, lyrical piece to show off a two-part ensemble. Christina Rossetti's poem about the beauty of the clouds is reflected in every aspect of this piece. The vocal lines are flowing and accessible, yet contain some harmonic twists that will keep your students engaged as they learn the piece. Parts are well written and provide your students with a great opportunity to develop their ability to shape phrases. This piece is highly recommended if you want a challenge for your younger middle school singers.

Let Me Fly (Two-Part)

Composer/Arranger: Traditional/arr. Cristi Cary Miller

Accompaniment: Piano

Publisher: Hal Leonard (HL 08551294)

This arrangement of Let Me Fly is pure fun and your students will love it! The piece opens with a slow statement of the melody by the piano before launching into an energetic setting of this spiritual. It builds through key changes, counter melodies, and hand claps before coming to a dramatic pause. The final section provides a challenge by breaking the choir into three parts and finishes with a build up to the upper two parts holding a chord while the lower part sings the final line of the melody. This piece is a great closer for any younger middle school choir.