



VOICE of WCDA

Spring Issue—May 2016

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Click [Here](#) to register for Refresh! 2016 and 55th Anniversary Dinner .

Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- May 29, 2016
RSVP for 55th Gala Dinner
- June 10, 2016
Applications for Performing Ensembles due
- June 20-22, 2016
Refresh! Summer Workshop
- January 6-7, 2017
WCDA State Convention

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Letter from the Editor

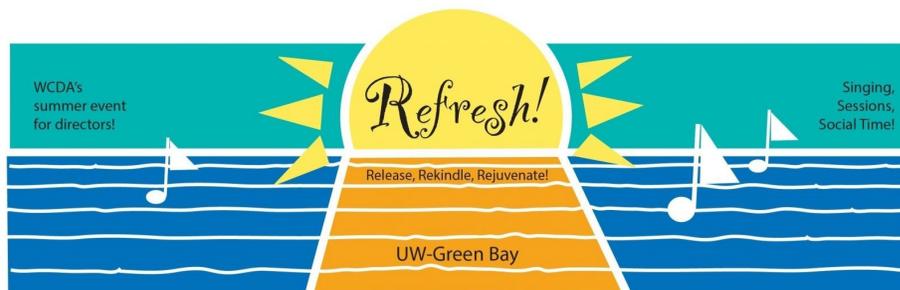
Zachary Durlam



The end of the school year is approaching, and spring performances are in full bloom even amid the snows of April! As your concert season, school year, or church choir comes to a close, I know everyone is in need of some rest, relaxation, and time away. You can find everything you need to rejuvenate your choral spirit at this summer's Refresh conference. Join us for three days of fellowship, recreation, and inspiration as choral directors from around Wisconsin come together at UW-Green Bay. Registration information is available on the WCDA website. Trust me, you do not want to miss this chance to hang out, share stories, and learn from your choral peers around the state!

In this issue of *The Voice of WCDA*, you can find information about the 2017 WCDA convention. Consider sending recordings of your choir or submitting an interest session proposal. Also take some time to read through the High 5 reviews. The R&S chairs have done an excellent job finding and reviewing top-notch literature for your ensemble. The final contribution is a summary of my own presentation at the 2016 NCACDA division conference. So many things compete for our time as choral directors, and often we have limited time to devote to score study. The article suggests how to proceed when time is tight.

Beginning with the next issue of *The Voice of Wisconsin*, each newsletter will carry a theme. We will be accepting submissions from you, the members of WCDA. Please consider sharing your expertise and contributing a short article. The theme for our summer issue is "Outside the Box," and our fall issue is entitled "Building Community." Submissions for the summer issue are due by May 10, and articles for the fall issue are due August 1. Any length is acceptable, and submissions will be reviewed by the WCDA editorial board. Share your knowledge and experience, and help this publication truly become the voice of WCDA!



WCDA's Summer Workshop – Refresh! – now in its 4th year – has always been billed as an opportunity for choir director/teachers to "Release, Rekindle, and Rejuvenate" after a long school year or performance season. This year, we add "Celebrate" to the list. That's right. During Refresh! this summer, a celebration will take place honoring the 55th Anniversary of WCDA and the event is included in the Refresh! schedule.

The WCDA 55th Anniversary Gala will include a Directors Choir – "Singing Our History" – which will include all Refresh! attendees and WCDA members who are coming to Green Bay for the sole purpose of being a part of the 55th Anniversary events. The choir will rehearse and perform repertoire that represents each decade of WCDA's existence from the 1960's through the 2010s led by our esteemed colleagues Mark Aamot, Greg Carpenter, Gary Schwartzhoff, Rebecca Winnie, and James Kinchen. The choir will perform at the Gala Dinner on Tuesday evening at The Woods Country Club in Green Bay. (The dinner is included in your Refresh! fee.)

The Refresh! schedule is again packed with many informative sessions: Maximizing Your Warm-Up Time in Rehearsal; Alexander Technique; Can Singers Belt and Still Sing with Healthy Technique?; The Unique Needs and Cultures of Boy/Men Choirs and Girl/Women Choirs; The Best Idea I Ever Had (Grading and Assessment); the performance of the WSMA Treble Choir, presentations by the WSMA Honor Choir Directors - Dr. Scott MacPherson and Dr. Guy Forbes, an EdCamp experience, Sharing Circles, and more. Graduate credit is available.



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Refresh! (cont.)

This would be an outstanding year for you to attend Refresh!. Many folks attend each year and WCDA is very proud of the spirit and the quality of this event. Our attendees represent all levels and genres of choral music in Wisconsin from elementary through high school, college/university, church and community choirs from youth to adult. We encourage you to join your colleagues and be a part of the special culture of Refresh!

The cost of Refresh! 2016 is only \$55.00 and this includes the workshop, parking, and the 55th Anniversary Gala Banquet. More information regarding the sessions, housing, schedule, and registration is available on the WCDA website at wischoral.org.

Hope to see you at Refresh! 2016.

WCDA 55th Anniversary Dinner

Gala Dinner

June 21, 2016

The Woods Country Club

530 Erie Road, Green Bay

6:00 pm – 9:30 pm

Snacks and Cash Bar

Family-Style Dinner \$15.00/person

RSVP by May 29 using the link below:

<http://goo.gl/forms/hde5tKe0Uq>



Singing Our History: WCDA Anniversary Choir

Join together for WCDA's 55th Anniversary and sing 6 pieces of repertoire, representing each decade of WCDA's history from 1961-2016.

Rehearsals:

Monday, June 20: 7:00-9:00 pm (Socializing to follow)

Tuesday, June 21: 4:00-5:00 pm

Rose Hall, Room 250 – UW Green Bay

Perform together at WCDA Gala Anniversary Banquet



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2017 State Convention - Wausau

Save the date for January 6-7, 2017 for our state convention and all-state festival!

For interest session applications, click [here](#).

For applications for performing ensembles, click [here](#).

The All-State Choirs will perform at the stunning Grand Theater, directed by:

- Children: Emily Ellsworth (Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus / Anima)
- Middle Level: Mark Johnson (Minnesota Boychoir)
- High School Men: Lee Nelson (Wartburg College)
- High School Women: Rhonda Fuelberth (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
- Vocal Jazz: Greg Jasperse (Western Michigan University)
- Collegiate: Andrew Megill (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

Our headliner concert will feature Cantus!

Mark the dates now and submit your applications for sessions and performances by June 10. I'm looking forward to seeing you in the center of our state!

— Steve Sieck, WCDA President-Elect, 2017 Convention Chair





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All State Wrap Up

2016 All State Choir Project
Successful Experience for All!

Three months have gone by since the completion of our annual WCDA convention and All State Project, and as I sit down to share thoughts and memories of that weekend, my mind immediately spins into overdrive again. The countless hours that so many people put into make the All State Choir Project a reality is simply amazing. My heart is grateful to my friends and colleagues in WCDA! It truly is a wonderful organization, and spending two years as All State Coordinator solidified that in my mind. Thank you to one and all, from my chairs, to the conductors, to the directors of the over 500 singers, to the singers themselves. Let's not forget the accompanists, instrumentalists, and people behind the scenes at the Radisson Paper Valley and Lawrence University, as well as St. Mary's Church. It was a huge team of people that made the music happen in January!

Each of the six all state choirs made incredible music over the three days, and their final performances were outstanding! The Collegiate Choir, under the loving and knowledgeable hand of Dr. Axel Theimer and his daughter Kira Morrissey at the piano, was one of the best I have heard in all my years of attending our WCDA convention! The Vocal Jazz Choir brought a Wisconsin native back to lead the way, with Jennifer Parker-Shaw directing a fantastic performance, with her former teacher Christine Salerno accompanying on the keys.

The final concert at the Lawrence Chapel brought tears to many a parent and director, as each of the choirs shared musical moments that were moving and memorable! Elizabeth Holmes transformed our high school treble singers into an amazing women's choir. The middle level choir was impeccable under the direction of Dr. Brett Robison. Their performance of Vivaldi's Gloria movement with strings, trumpet and oboe was so mature. What an accomplishment for those young singers! Greg Douma led our children in a truly moving performance, with wonderful literature for both the singers and the audience members. He has a true gift in working with the purity of young voices!

One of the most memorable choirs of all, at least for me, was the high school men's choir. An unfortunate medical emergency prevented our initial conductor, Dr. Reed Criddle, from being able to share the weekend with us in Appleton. This last minute emergency threw many on the all state team to spring into action to find a replacement conductor with a 24 hour notice. We were so fortunate to have someone right in our backyard step up to the plate. Dr. Eric Barnum, director of choral studies at UW-Oshkosh, joined the force with very little time to prepare the program assembled by Dr. Criddle. However, from the word "go" he was a leader who led the young men to masterfully interpret the music they were given into an incredible final product. Bravo to Eric, and to all of the young men!

My two years as coordinator of the all state project was a fabulous learning experience, in the midst of many changes in my personal life. As I look back at the experience, I again return to the word grateful. Our organization is filled with caring people who are passionate about kids and sharing our love of choral music with them. That is truly evident! Thank you from the bottom of my heart, and congratulations to all who had any part in the successful 2016 project!!

Kathy Alan
Director of Choirs
Waupaca High School





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Score Study for the Time-Challenged Choral Conductor

Zachary Durlam I find myself once again sitting in my office with just 15 minutes before rehearsal begins. I desperately flip through the scores trying to decide what we will cover today, struggling to learn the music and create an efficient and meaningful lesson for my students. How did I let this happen again? Why could I not find more time to sit with my scores in the days and weeks leading up to today – researching background information, mulling over interesting harmonic progressions, exploring the text at length, and immersing myself in the musical world created by the composer? I feel guilty and a little defeated. As much as I envision myself spending luxurious amounts of time contemplating the musical mysteries of our repertoire, I seem to forget the many hours spent in rehearsals, meetings with individual singers, staff and committee meetings, preparing for events and fundraisers, answering emails and phone calls, filling out seemingly unnecessary paperwork, and the countless other tasks that monopolize my time. If I am completely honest, I realize that the only way I could possibly study my scores as much as I envision would be to ignore my family and forgo all leisure activities.

Do you regularly find yourself in this scenario? I know I did for many years – especially while teaching high school. The solution for me is two-fold. First, I schedule 10-15 minutes each day for score study, and I do everything I can to keep this time sacred. I refuse to look at emails, and my office door is closed to prevent interruption. Second, I prioritize my goals and use a consistent method to examine scores. When time is tight, I may only have time to get through the first few steps, but those steps are designed to offer the most return on investment for my time.

For me, the primary purpose of studying scores is to learn and understand what is happening as thoroughly as possible – to develop a **vivid mental-aural image** of the work. I describe this to my conducting students as the ideal choir inside my head. In developing this mental-aural image, I have three goals:

Serve the music: Present a musically, historically, and textually informed concept of the work that accurately recreates the original intentions of the composer.

Serve the singers: Prepare for confident, efficient, and artistically engaging rehearsals.

Serve the listeners: Present an effective and engaging performance with attention to musical and emotional nuance.

When time is tight, these goals must be prioritized. Limited study time is most efficiently spent developing a vivid mental-aural image of one smaller section of the work. The primary goal of this study should be to serve the singers since unengaged singers will make it impossible to serve either the music or the listeners.

Some of us equate score study with an extensive harmonic or phrasal analysis of the work, and while this type of analysis can yield important insights, it is not necessarily the most efficient way for a time-challenged conductor to approach a new work. Instead, when time is limited, try the following singer-centered approach:

Structure: Play through or listen to a recording of the work and divide the piece into logical sections; decide which are major section breaks and which are subsections.

Don't worry yet about form – just mark any place that would make sense as a location to start rehearsing, and note any repetition of material. I personally use green colored pencil and draw a line through all staves. Breaking the piece into logical sections will make it easier for you deconstruct the piece and design logical rehearsals for your singers. Then choose just one section to examine in greater detail.

Text: In the section you selected, write in a word-for-word translation, speak the text aloud to be sure you know pronunciation, and take a moment to consider what it means and examine how it interacts with the music.

Sing each line: In the section you selected, sing each vocal line and do the following:
OBSERVE all expressive, articulation, and tempo markings (I trace over or circle dynamics in colored pencil – red for louder and blue for softer).
IDENTIFY vocal and musical challenges (and possible solutions) and determine who has the melody.

DECIDE musical issues in advance: breaths, phrase shape and text stress, what type of articulation to use (expand your palate beyond staccato and legato), how to handle divisi, appropriate tempo, etc.

Key concepts: Choose one or two key concepts to focus on in the section you are studying. Use your imagination to design creative, singer-centered ways to approach these concepts. Are there images or analogies you can use? Stories? Movements?

If you have a little extra time, do the following:

Conduct background research on the piece, text, composer, poet, historical context, and style/genre (including issues of performance practice).

Examine another section of the work.

Analyze the larger structure and character of the work. How do the sections relate to one another? Where is the musical climax of the piece? Where are other destination points within the piece? What elements give the work a sense of cohesiveness? What elements give it its distinctive character?

Obviously if time is not limited, use the processes you learned in undergraduate or graduate study to more thoroughly analyze the form, harmony, phrase structure, etc.

This prioritized method has helped me use my limited study time efficiently and has led to more focused and productive rehearsals with my ensembles. I encourage all of you to set aside a small amount of time each day for score study. Even with a very short amount of time, you can accomplish a lot, and I promise you will quickly see the results in both the productivity of your rehearsals and ultimately in the quality of your performances.



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Boy Choirs High 5

Margaret Jenks

1. Hashivenu

Israeli Folk Song arr. Doreen Rao
SSA in canon
Boosey & Hawkes M051464302

Even among beautiful, minor-mode Israeli melodies, this tune is a real gem. The deep sorrow from being in an isolated and broken state and powerful desire for reconciliation is played out in the extreme melodic range and artful contour. For a beginning choir that cannot yet hold three parts, it could be done in unison (or two part canon) and an instrument could be added on one of the canon lines.

2. Garden of Secret Thoughts

David Ott
SA, piano
Colla Voce Music 21-20534 (Henry Leck Series)

I looked at this piece many times before finally programming it. The text idea was attractive and the melody was just unusual enough to be interesting and curious, but the long piano interlude and rather concise vocal parts left me wondering if I should choose something else. Last season, we focused our concert on the pairing of music and movement and the long piano interlude was a perfect place to add movement. We paired with ballet dancers, but it could also be a place for students to dream and design their own free movement.

3. One Voice (as recorded by the Wailin' Jennys)

Ruth Moody
SSA, guitar chords, optional piano part
Also available in Orff instrument arrangement, as well as Children's Choir arrangement
For more information or purchase: <http://www.ruthmoody.com/store/one-voice-sheet-music/>

Many folk-singer/song-writer selections do not translate well for a choir, but this piece is an exception. Not only are the idea and text rich for exploration, but the tight harmonies and style translate well into the choral setting. This piece works well when you want something different from standard historical choral repertoire but do not want to choose something shallow and disposable!

4. Riu, Riu Chiu

Mateo Flecha the Elder, ed. Gerd Eichler
SATB
CPDL #28528 <http://www.cpd.org/wiki/images/5/50/Anonymous-Riu.pdf>

This classic Christmas work should not be overlooked when programming for middle school boys. The soprano part lies especially well for the unchanged, as well as the quickly changed bass that can still access a free treble voice. It is a huge Renaissance hit!

5. Dravidian Dithyramb

Victor Paranjoti
SATB
Earthsongs S-42

Though this piece would work, of course, with a standard SATB women and men's choir, I am including it as a reminder that not all advanced boy choirs need be SA or TB. Combining them and using them in different ranges for different pieces is something that I love to do. Often basses make great sopranos, for a selection or two. "Dravidian" refers to the languages and races of South India and "Dithyramb" is a Greek term for a wild, passionate hymn. According to a note likely written by the composer, "The *Dravidian Dithyramb* is an expression of uninhibited festivity. Notable for its use of typical Indian melodic motifs, this wordless work for double choir demands the highest precision of rhythm, and a wide range of tonal and dynamic values. An elusive but persistent pulse motivates the music, which is based on mere fragments of melody."



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Show Choirs High 5

Nancy Allen

1. All My Loving (Collection)

includes All My Loving, Jessie's Girl, Ring of Fire, That'll Be the Day & I Wish
Arranged by Deke Sharon and Anne Raugh
TTBB a cappella
Hal Leonard 08745430

If your choir men are ready for some pop a cappella singing, check out this arrangement of classic rock tunes. They are fun, they sound good, and they are easily accessible to your high school men. Add a little staging and you will have a crowd pleaser!

2. Boogie Wonderland

Arranged by Mark Brymer
SATB, 3-part Mixed, or SSA, combo parts or Show Trax CD
Hal Leonard 00141555

Boogie Wonderland is a Disco classic! I highly recommend using the live band when you perform this selection. The choral parts are well-written and the a cappella measures give your choir a chance to shine. A great selection for choreography featuring that 1970s disco style!

3. Uptown Funk

Arranged by Mark Brymer
SATB, SAB, or TBB, combo parts or PA/CD
Hal Leonard 00144297

This song makes you want to get up and dance! It is a great selection to choreograph and fun for the band to play. This was a #1 hit for Bruno Mars. The basses will love singing the opening line. All choral parts are accessible and compliment the original style of this recording.

4. Beautiful: The Carole King Musical (Choral Selections)

Arranged by Roger Emerson
SATB, SAB, or SSA, combo parts or Show Trax CD
Hal Leonard 00139266

I had the wonderful opportunity to see *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* on Broadway last year. The number of famous songs she composed was awe inspiring. Roger Emerson has set pieces from this musical into four main sections. Sections 1 and 2 are particularly suited to add choreography. Section 3 features the ballads. Section 4 is Beautiful. The audience will be thrilled to hear so many familiar songs and the students will experience music from a pop legend!

5. Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?

Arranged by Eric Van Cleave
SATB, SAB, or SSA, SoundPax and SoundTrax
Alfred 43476

Do you have a great combo? This one is for you! This classic by the band Chicago is true to the original score instrumentally and the choral parts have rich, tight harmony. The arrangement calls for a vocal soloist that will give that special singer a chance to shine. Check this one out!



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Two-Year College High 5

Christy Talbott

1. Noche de lluvia (Canciones por las Americas)

Music by Sid Robinovich; Words by Juana de Ibarbourou (from Uruguay)
SATB (divisi) with piano
Earthsongs ES.S-136A 2000

This slow and sexy tango in B-minor offers singers of each part an interesting and passionate line while demanding good breathing technique for the dynamic contrasts. Quarter note triplets and a variety of rhythmic figures keep the sound driving ever forward – mimicking the “rainy night.” Low voices pick up the story in the midsection, beginning the ascent to the climax. Choirs will need to spend considerable time with the Spanish text, but the difficulty is minimized with the return of the A section. The sultry but lyrical quality of this piece makes it a favorite for young singers, but beware. The Spanish subtext will bring out the Latin lovers in any choir.

2. Alleluia

Randall Thompson
SATB a cappella
E. C. Schirmer (EC.1786)

This is a classic choral piece that every two-year college singer should perform. Its beautiful melodies are found in every voice. The simplicity of the text complements the soothing diatonic progressions. Significant movement in thirds fourths propels the music through closely related keys before the serene return to D major, and simple inversions breathe gentleness into the piece.

While *Alleluia* has been performed by many types and sizes of choral groups since its first performance in 1940, the work is ideally suited for the two-year college chorus. A huge choir is not necessary, singers need to be able to hear one another, and the work is as efficient as a college student needs to be. The a cappella setting and the fluid lines of stable intervals help singers to develop good listening habits.

3. Let Rain Come Forth

Joy Coursey-Porter
SATB and piano
Self-published at www.choralnet.org/paint/423895/Let+Rain+Come+Forth.pdf

I stumbled across this gem on the Choralnet website. Featuring a chant-like melody combined with modern elements, this is a stunning work using both Latin and English lyrics and based on Isaiah 45 and 46 in the Old Testament. The English Standard version summarizes the message:

“Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it” (Isaiah 45:8)

With a lovely chant-like opening for the tenors, your chorus will enjoy the rich harmonies and lyrical melody of this piece. Sopranos will perform octave leaps with ease by the time they learn this work. A wonderful song to celebrate Earth Day, this piece encourages performance creativity in the making of a rain scene. With a thunder sheet or with finger snaps and claps, this music comes alive as your singers create a sound storm.



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Two-Year College High 5 (cont.)

4. Serenity (O Magnum Mysterium)

Ola Gjeilo
SSAATTBB with string solo
Walton WW1480

Eight separated parts with tranquil extended notes require singers with good pitch support for this a cappella setting. The Latin text and individual lines are not difficult, but the dissonances can be challenging. It is that very dissonance, though, that lends the sound an ethereal quality. The harmonies change incrementally to reach a wondrous moment on the text:

“O wondrous mystery, that the animals should see the newborn Lord lying in a manger; Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear this mysterious birth.”

This is easily one of my new favorites. Warm and soothing, the melody moves across parts until all are joined together. With an excellent violin or cello soloist, this will be long remembered by performers and audience members.

5. Earth Song

Frank Ticheli
SATB a cappella
Hinshaw HLHPC7098

Those who know Ticheli for his band compositions and arrangements may be pleasantly surprised by this melodious picture of the power of music over darkness. Singers love the simple text (in English) and the message that binds them as a choir:

“But music and singing have been my refuge, and music and singing shall be my light.”

Manageable dissonance and a homorhythmic texture make it accessible. Long, sustained notes allow your singers to develop skills performing crescendi and decrescendi. Choirs with true basses will do well with this piece.

Four-Year College High 5

Robert Gehrenbeck

1. Magnificat in D, ZWV 108

Jan Dismas Zelenka
SATB, SA soloists, orchestra
Carus 40.063 (full score, vocal score, and orchestral parts available separately) also available on CPDL, although that edition has many errors

Czech composer Zelenka (1679-1745) is often referred to as “The Catholic Bach.” Almost exactly Bach’s contemporary, Zelenka was the official church composer to the Catholic court in Dresden. The two composers knew each other personally, and some of Zelenka’s music found its way to the library of Bach’s choir in Leipzig, including the final Amen chorus from Zelenka’s Magnificat in D.

A master of counterpoint like Bach, Zelenka frequently utilized energetic, syncopated rhythms and daring harmonic progressions in his music, qualities on display in his 1725 Magnificat, scored for soloists, choir, and instruments (two oboes, strings, and continuo, with optional trumpets and timpani). The music is highly inventive, charming, and infectious. If you love Bach and Handel but want something just a bit different, try Zelenka! Also highly recommended are his Te Deum, ZWV 146, and his motets for Holy Week, ZWV 55, both published in handsome editions by Carus.



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Four-Year College High 5 (cont.)

2. Stars (Zvioletki), op. 27, no. 10

Sergei Taneyev

SSATTB a cappella

Musica Russica PS 032

Moscow-based composer Taneyev (1856-1915) was a student of Tchaikovsky and a teacher of Rachmaninoff. But his own music is quite different from that of his more famous associates. Somewhat unusually for Russian composers of that era, Taneyev was a devotee of Bach and advocated for a more classical and contrapuntal basis for Russian music. In this, he is a kind of Russian equivalent to Brahms.

Stars is a secular work scored for six-part choir. The 2nd tenor part lies lower than the first and can easily be mastered by baritones. The music is sonorous, exquisitely well crafted, and full of glorious modulations that make intonation a challenge, but one well worth the effort. This is one movement from a set of twelve choruses, op. 27 that range in voicing from SATB to SSAATTBB. Most of the other movements are available in equally fine editions from Musica Russica, and the entire set is a masterpiece of choral writing.

3. Spring Rain

Chen Yi

SATB a cappella

Presser 312-41858

Chen Yi is the foremost Chinese-American composer writing choral music today. She has many charming folksong arrangements to her credit as well as a large catalog of original compositions, using both English and Chinese texts (sometimes both in the same work). *Spring Rain* is exclusively in Mandarin Chinese.

At the outset of the piece, whispered ostinatos and fragmentary sung sounds evoke the beginning of a rain shower. Throughout the work, the use of pentatonic modes in a wide variety of voicings and textures hearkens to traditional Chinese music, but the treatment of all these elements is modern. There is no division, but because the tenor part is often quite high, it may be helpful occasionally to add 2nd altos to that line. The Mandarin Chinese transliteration is clear, but having a native speaker to consult is essential. The sounds are not difficult to sing, and the text is quite repetitive, with long ostinatos set to nonsense syllables. My advanced university choir is currently working on this piece and the students love it. The overall effect of the piece is magical.

4. Out Of Your Sleep

Peter Bloesch

SSAATTBB a cappella

Available from <http://peterbloesch.com/>

Peter Bloesch is a multifaceted composer from Iowa City with extensive experience in choral music, holiday pops arranging, and film and television scoring, including collaborations with Mike Post on TV hits “LA Law” and “Law and Order.” His concert music betrays the twin influences of his Hollywood training and a love Baroque music developed at an early age—Peter’s father Richard is a professor emeritus of choral conducting and literature at the University of Iowa. This music is accessible, well crafted, and heartfelt.

Last fall my choirs premiered three short works by Bloesch, including this original version of the medieval carol text, *Out of Your Sleep Arise and Wake*. Featuring lush harmonies, subtle metric shifts, and lilting counterpoint, this piece was a joy for the singers to learn, and it left the audience spellbound. Also on that program was his virtuoso eight-part arrangement of *Ding Dong, Merrily on High*, which made a great closer. Earlier in the season my all-campus choir premiered his gorgeous setting of *My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose* for SATB and piano that utilizes a soaring Scottish melody. I highly recommend these titles and many others that can be seen and heard on Bloesch’s helpful website. His choral works are available via PDF download at reasonable prices.



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Four-Year College High 5 (cont.)

5. Great God Almighty

Stacey V. Gibbs

SSAATTBB a cappella

Gentry JG 2448

In the genre of the choral spiritual, Gibbs is a worthy successor to the late Moses Hogan, deftly combining vernacular speech rhythms, harmonies derived from blues and jazz, and textures borrowed from contemporary popular music. *Great God Almighty* is one of Gibbs' most energetic and compelling works to date.

Of course, spirituals are not merely some of our students' favorite pieces to sing, but they are also emblems of the African-American experience of slavery, persecution, and resistance. Aware of this, I was puzzled by some of the imagery in this particular text: a sadistic "Cap'ain," a "Bully" pleading for mercy, and a narrator "figh'in' till my death...runnin' till my ver' las' breath." The theme of suffering and resistance was familiar, but the context was unclear to me. Fortunately, James Kinchen of UW Parkside (and former WCDA and North Central division president) was able to explain the background of this piece. According to James,

It is one of the few songs that has entered the performing domain which has penal roots—it is a prison work song. The singer is a convict. The "cap'ain" is a prison guard/overseer. While there were a few black men incarcerated during slavery, the number of black prisoners proliferated exponentially in the years after slavery. In fact, it is not far off the mark to understand the massive and pervasive incarceration of black men in the decades after slavery as one of several "proxies" for slavery that were employed to keep African Americans servile. (Other such institutions include sharecropping, hard manual labor in lumber camps, on railroad tracks, and in docks and such, and the terrorism of night-riding and lynching.)

In this text, the target of the captain's ire seems to be a mean and difficult prisoner. Maybe he's been a threat to some fellow convicts. Maybe he's perceived as someone who refuses to have his spirit broken and is, hence, a threat to order, who needs to be made an example of. The final verse simply seems to state the singer's resolve not to be broken and not to allow his dreams of freedom to be destroyed. "Great God A'mighty" is an exclamation that black persons of that time might have made upon witnessing some horrific incident, such as a beating that, if it were severe enough, could even kill a person.

It has come to light in the last ten to fifteen years that many companies—some of them old and established businesses who today have places on the Fortune 500—actually used prisoners—mostly black prisoners—for decades after slavery was over, to work in their operations. These companies paid the authorities, wardens, and law enforcement agents for the commercial benefit of free labor—essentially *slave* labor—in their various enterprises. The "captain" in this song may have been overseeing the work of black prisoners in support of a major (and "reputable") steel company, for example.

In light of the debates raging today over the mass incarceration of minorities and the payment of reparations for slavery, this arrangement by Stacey Gibbs could not be more relevant—or more powerful.

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Letter from the President

Joy Paffenroth

Dear Friends –

Do you hear that? It's the sound of another successful school year coming to a close! I'm sure to you it sounds like a cacophony of concerts, community events and graduations all mixed with the laughter and tears of students as they look to the next chapter in their lives. If you are like me, you are very much looking toward a restful summer...oh, who am I kidding? My summer is already booked with conferences, travel and family gatherings! And, I wouldn't have it any other way!



WCDA has also had a very busy year with successful events such as NextDirection, Singing in Wisconsin, State Convention and All-State. As we look toward summer, we are very excited to again offer Refresh! – our summer conference held at UW-GB June 20-22! This great conference, held in collaboration with WSMA is sure to help you release, rekindle and rejuvenate! We also look to celebrate WCDA's 55th Anniversary with a Gala Dinner on June 21st in Green Bay and a special anniversary choir event! Please be sure to see all of the details in the invitation headed to your mailbox!



The business side of WCDA has also been busy this winter/spring. We have hired a new Office Manager. Her name is Melissa Ebert and some of you may recognize her as she has presented interest sessions with me at state and national conventions. She is the Instructional Coach/ArtsCore Coach for the Chilton School District as well as choreographer for musicals within the district. Her knowledge of the arts as well as her understanding of educators' needs make her a great fit for our organization. She is getting to know the inner workings of WCDA and she will be on-site for Refresh! and the 55th Gala Dinner. Be sure to introduce yourself to her. With this change comes a change in contact info:

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I am also pleased to report that the 2016 revision of our Constitution and Bylaws passed the full membership vote in March. Those new guidelines are now in effect. In addition, as a result of the election, we welcome Sam Wulterkens to the board as the Southeast Representative effective July 1, 2016. We sincerely thank Eduardo Garcia-Novelli for his leadership in that role for the past 4 years. Thank you to all members who participated in the election process. Your voices were heard!



I wish you a successful month of May filled with the joyous harmonies of your singers and hope that you take time to enjoy the little moments that make our jobs so fulfilling.



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Philip Swan

Outstanding Middle
Level—
Marcie Russell



Outstanding Church
Musician—
John Albrecht

Outstanding Young
Conductor—
Johnathan Turba



Stanley Custer
Service Award—
Carol Dahle