



# VOICE of WCDA

Fall Issue—September 2016

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### Upcoming Dates and Deadlines

- September 1-30, 2016  
Singing in Wisconsin  
Registration
- October 15, 2016  
Student Choral  
Composition Contest  
Entry Deadline
- January 6-7, 2017  
WCDA State  
Convention

[Visit the Website](#)

Wisconsin Choral Directors Association: Part of American Choral Directors Association

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## *Letter from the President*

Joy Paffenroth

Dear Colleagues -

Welcome back to another school year/performance season! I hope your summer was filled with rest, relaxation and rejuvenation. The beginning of the year is always a great time to think about building community in your ensemble. Building community has been near and dear to my heart for years. In fact, I have presented on this topic at several state conferences as well as at the national conference in Salt Lake City.

I believe in this fast-paced, technology-driven world, it is important now more than ever to build community within our ensembles and within our organization. We are more connected and yet disconnected than ever before. Our classrooms and rehearsal spaces have become a time of respite for our over-worked and ultra-stressed singers. How many times have you heard a student say "choir is the class that gets me through the day"? Or maybe, like me, you've heard "I don't have to try to be something I'm not in this room. I can just be me and I am accepted for who I am!" Those are powerful words coming from young people who are just trying to find their way.



But sometimes we are trying so hard to help our students find community that we forget to foster our own relationships within OUR community. Many of us are "lone wolves" in our districts. We are a part of a small department or even a department of one. It's very easy to feel like we exist on an island. Technology has helped us get virtually connected to colleagues, but that's not a true way to build community. Nothing beats being in the same room with colleagues, hearing the same music, singing together, sharing ideas and looking each other in the eye when we speak. That's why it's so important to participate in WCDA events. Our annual State Convention and our summer conference are tailored to creating these type of experiences for us as conductors and teachers. But even NextDirection, Singing In Wisconsin and All-State can become those experiences for us if we let them. They may be geared toward our students, but it's a perfect opportunity to spend time together as colleagues and friends to foster our community.

Now, for a bit of "business"... As both WCDA and ACDA passed constitution and bylaws updates this past year, there will be some changes within our R and R structure and in the way we function as an organization. WCDA's current constitution and bylaws are published on our website if you would like to see them. I sincerely thank the board for their time and efforts to continue keeping WCDA a vibrant organization that is focused on keeping choral music an important part of Wisconsin life! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out at any time. My email is [jpaffenroth@wischoral.org](mailto:jpaffenroth@wischoral.org).

I hope to see many of you at WCDA events this coming year. I look forward to sharing ideas and getting to know you better! Have a great start to the school year!

Joy Paffenroth  
WCDA President



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## Letter from the Editor

Zachary Durlam



On a college campus with thousands of students, the five minutes before the start of my daily Concert Chorale rehearsal is almost like a family reunion. The students are genuinely excited to see one another, and often those that were having a rough day are able to relax, smile, and immerse themselves into our little family of community music-making. When the students connect with each other and form this kind of community in the classroom, everything changes. They learn faster, sing more musically, and begin building a sense of ensemble that goes beyond any director-imposed guidelines for balance and blend. There is a positive atmosphere in the room that seems to feed everyone present (including me). Of course, not every day is rosy, and not every ensemble is able to build this type of connection, but 20 years of teaching has convinced me that any time spent fostering a sense of community within my classroom is well worth it.

As a choral director, I'm also part of a larger community of choral directors from around the state. While it's easy to get caught up in our own little choral world, I know first-hand the power that comes from being a part of a strong community of choral colleagues. In my first year teaching, things were not going so well. Somehow the classroom management techniques that had worked brilliantly during student teaching seemed totally ineffective, and I felt like a complete failure. I reached out to a fellow ACDA member in desperation, and he contacted me several times a week to find out how things were going, offer advice, and just generally put things in perspective. I could complain, laugh, and grow with him and with other directors I encountered at festivals and conferences throughout the year. If it weren't for those individuals, I doubt I would still be teaching today.

We are all a part of many communities, and this issue of *The Voice of WCDA* explores these communities and offers suggestions for building and strengthening connections in three areas:

**The choirs we lead:** Cory Schneider provides practical suggestions for building community within our choirs. Karen Bruno explores ways to help the oft-ignored women of our choirs feel valued, and Raymond Roberts discusses techniques for building expectations and community within diverse choral classrooms. There is also information on the Singing in Wisconsin and All State Choirs – both excellent opportunities for our students of all abilities to experience choral community outside of our classroom.

**The places we live:** Richard Hynson looks at the choir in the larger community and suggests avenues for partnership and collaboration.

**Our colleagues:** We are so used to taking the lead in our own ensembles that many of us forget how extremely valuable it is to connect with our colleagues around the state. Matt Wanner outlines several ways we can connect with colleagues both locally and state-wide. Pictures from Refresh! 2016 and the WCDA 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala are included, and Tim Wurgler invites us to participate in the 2016 Wisconsin State Music Conference. In addition, everyone is invited to nominate deserving colleagues for the annual WCDA awards.

As you return for another fall with your own choir, don't be afraid to reach out and connect with your WCDA colleagues. All of us are an important part of the community of individuals from around the state who believe in the transformative power of choral singing!



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## Building Community in Your Choir

Cory Schneider

In today's digital age, singers are more isolated from each other than in previous decades. We are glued to smartphones or computers all day long. Now more than ever, we need to provide opportunities for students to interact with each other. Here are some fun and easy ways to begin to build community and "break down the walls" in your choir. I have collected these activities from a variety of sources throughout my career and have used many of them with all age groups and choir sizes. If you are interested in more, a quick search on the internet or Pinterest will help you find hundreds of activities to do with your choir. I have found the best source is to ask colleagues what works for them.

### Friday Icebreaker Day

In the fall, take 10 minutes from every Friday rehearsal to develop community. Do an icebreaker activity each week for the first two to three months. You can then cut back to once a month or as the need arises as the year progresses.

### Choir Brother/Sisters

If you are looking for an activity to build community throughout the entire school year, this is perfect. Pair students together into brothers and sisters. If you don't have equal numbers of boys and girls, then pair sisters or brothers together. For the first month, do several "getting to know you" activities to break the ice. We would initiate this at our first dinner on retreat each fall by tying wrists together and making them eat an entire meal together with their wrists tied. The kids LOVE this! Then develop monthly out-of-school activities for pairs such as movie night, ice cream night, Valentine's gifts, etc... It doesn't always have to involve money as they could ring bells for Salvation Army, volunteer at a local food pantry, or attend another choir concert in your school district. Be creative!

### Tradition Song

This is probably the best way to build community in a program. The only drawback is that it takes many years to develop. Start a tradition where you invite former singers to sing a "tradition" song with your program. At our school the song is Peter Lutkin's "The Lord Bless You and Keep You." It has been our tradition for over 50 years! It is the first song we sing with incoming freshmen and the last song a senior sings at graduation. In addition, we sing it on every spring concert and invite alumni to sing with us. Once this gets going, it is extremely powerful! I am fortunate to be in a program that has this tradition established, and each year we have generations of singers performing together on our spring concert. Then on anniversary years, have an Alumni Choir Reunion to celebrate the legacy of your program. We did this for the 50th Anniversary of our tradition song this past spring, and we had approximately 175 alumni singers representing eight decades of graduates show up to perform with current and past directors. It was an amazing event that pulled together the entire community!

### Social Committee

Develop a Social Committee to take this burden from you as the conductor. I am fortunate to direct the South Shore Chorale, a 150-voice volunteer community choir. While rehearsal time is very limited and logistics make it difficult to find room for bonding activities, it is crucial to take some time each semester to help build community even in a group of this size. In SSC, the Social Committee plans many different events each year to help our choir bond. They plan our concert afterglows following each concert at a local establishment. In addition, we have two socials each semester where we stop rehearsal 20 minutes short to socialize and have snacks and drinks (non-alcoholic). In the fall, we have one at the second rehearsal and one themed for Halloween. For spring, we have one around Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day. Each section takes one social a year and is responsible for food and beverages. The Social Committee also plans our summer picnic each August at our local park to kick off our year. This is a great way for new members (and spouses) to come and meet people before rehearsals actual begin.

### Mentors

Assigning a mentor to a new singer is a great way to promote community and team building within any ensemble. This has worked especially well with our community choir since it is so large. Having one person to answer questions or to say hello to each week is an easy way to make a larger choir feel a little bit smaller. You could build in some of the Brother/Sister activities with mentors/mentees throughout the year as well.



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## Building Community in Your Choir

*Continued*

### Two Truths/One Lie

One of my colleagues did this activity with his community ensemble throughout the course of an entire year. At the beginning of the year, they asked each singer to write two truths and one lie about themselves. Each week before a break in rehearsal, they would have three to four people stand in front of the choir and introduce themselves. Then the choir would have to guess which statements were the truths or which statements were the lies. Plan it out so that every singer has to do this once in your concert season.

### Multi-Generational Singing

In Fond du Lac, we have an unbelievable bond between our community's adult and youth singers. Over the last ten years, we have performed many multi-generational concerts between South Shore Chorale and various choral organizations such as the Fond du Lac Children's Chorale or local high schools. We have performed major works together with full orchestra or joined together for a couple of songs at the end of a concert. One of the coolest things that has transpired over the past few years is the major work performance with the combined forces of SSC and Fond du Lac High School. We had many mothers/fathers singing with their sons/daughters on the concert. We even had one three generation family. I encourage (or require) our high school students to attend some of the community choir rehearsals every Tuesday evening. In return, we invited the adult singers to rehearse with the high school choir every Friday from 11:15-12:00 pm. Since it was around the lunch hour, we had a great response. This gave our volunteer adult singers another rehearsal each week. The retired singers loved coming and some of the working singers would come during their lunch. At one point, we had 40 adults show up to sing with Concert Choir. This build a lot of rapport between our generations, and the singers (both young and old) are still talking about this time together.

As conductors, it seems like there is never enough rehearsal time. On the surface, it seems hard to "give up" time from rehearsing to do community-building activities. However, it is crucial to find five or ten minutes each week to work on community building. Your singers will look forward to this time, and rehearsal efficiency will actually improve in the long run as your ensemble knows each other better. Find a way to start small and allow it to grow from there. Your singers will love you for doing this. Good luck!

## WCDA All State Choirs

Are you looking for a way to challenge some of your more talented singers? Consider nominating them for one of the All State Choirs at the State Convention in Wausau from January 6-7, 2017. We have an AMAZING set of conductors for this year's All State Choirs.

### 2017 All State Conductors

COLLEGIATE

HIGH SCHOOL MEN

HIGH SCHOOL WOMEN

MIDDLE LEVEL

CHILDREN

VOCAL JAZZ

Andrew Megill, University of Illinois (IL)

Lee Nelson, Wartburg College (IA)

Rhonda Fuelberth, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (NE)

Mark Johnson, Minnesota Boychoir (MN)

Emily Ellsworth, Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus (IL)

Greg Jasperse, Western Michigan University (MI)

Watch your email or WCDA website for more information and online nominations in mid-September. Make sure to take a few minutes to nominate some of your students for the life-changing experience of singing in an All State Choir.



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## Singing in Wisconsin

Singing in Wisconsin is an all-day singing festival held at four sites throughout the state on Saturday, November 12, 2016. Any 5-12 choir student may participate! The day begins at 8:00 a.m., and the final concert for all choirs starts at 4:00. Lunch is provided, but students should bring snacks and water for the mini breaks throughout the day. All students receive a T-shirt upon arrival, and concert attire is this T-shirt with black slacks/skirts and black shoes.

Each site offers four choirs. Due to changing voices, the grades in parentheses below allow teachers to place each student in the choir that most closely matches their voice type and maturity level.

Youth Choir = Boys and Girls in Grades 5, 6, and (7)

Young Men's Choir = Boys in Grades (7), 8, and 9

Young Women's Choir = Girls in Grades (7), 8, and 9

High School Mixed Choir = Boys and Girls in Grades (9), 10, 11, and 12

The four sites are by geographic area:

The Northwest site is at Chippewa Falls High School, and the site chair is Katelyn Peterson [khpeterson8@gmail.com](mailto:khpeterson8@gmail.com)

The Northeast site is at Chilton High School, and the site chair is Amy Wright [alwright@pulaskischools.org](mailto:alwright@pulaskischools.org)

The Southeast site is at Carroll University in Waukesha, and the site chair is Sam Wulterkens [S.wulterkens@ocfsd.org](mailto:S.wulterkens@ocfsd.org)

The South Central site is at Wausau West High School, and the site chair is Karen Zuidema [kzuidema@wausauschools.org](mailto:kzuidema@wausauschools.org)

Registration is \$45.00 per student which covers the cost of the music packet, T-shirt, and lunch. Registration opens Sep. 1 and closes Sep. 30. Please register online at the WCDA website – follow the links for the Singing in Wisconsin registration page. Repertoire is listed on the WCDA webpage if teachers want to get a head start on ordering and preparing music for themselves.

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## Valuing Women Who Sing

Karen Bruno - Lawrence University

This summer, I had the pleasure of co-presenting at WCDA's *Refresh!* conference on the subject of girl choirs. While some of us teach single-sex ensembles, almost all of us teach females in a choral setting, alone or with males. At the end of the session, there were several wonderful questions about honoring and celebrating the women in every ensemble. I am so grateful for these questions, because it shows that we still have work to do. While most of us appreciate our female singers, we may also inadvertently neglect them. Here are a few topics to consider as we address this challenge.

### Recruiting

Because we generally have more girls than boys in our choral programs, we have been trained to consider creative ways to recruit boys. "Feed them!" "Go to all the football games!" "Create a special event just for them!" Or my (least) favorite: "Tell the girls to go find their male friends and bring them to our class/concert/event!" As the mother of a boy, I understand that there can be social stigmas against boys singing (or dancing, as my son does), but is SATB balance really the primary focus of your teaching? Have you ever intentionally and consistently recruited girls with the same enthusiasm?

Recruiting does not have to be an either/or proposition. In fact, our ensemble's sense of community is stronger when *every* singer feels wanted. If students see you at boys' sporting events but not at girls' events, they will assume that you value girls less. If you ask singers to bring a male friend but not a female friend to an event, they will hear that girls are not as important. They will assume that you value balance over every other aspect of the choral experience.

Are there challenges to having more girls than boys in a choir? Sure. But you are a professional – and a teacher who loves your students – so you can overcome that obstacle in creative ways. Don't just assume that the girls will show up because "they like to sing." When you recruit boys and girls with the same vigor, you improve the choral experience for all students.

### Voice Change

How much did you learn about the male voice change? How much did you learn about the female voice change? How much do you talk about each in class, given the fact that neither boys nor girls in school will have settled into their full adult voice before they leave you?

Discussing the voice change of both boys and girls in middle and high school (and in collegiate programs involving pedagogy) is crucial to helping each singer develop their best singing voice. Although the male voice change is more obvious, the female voice change is no less significant. If you are less familiar with the stages of the female voice change, educate yourself – and then educate your students. You probably have female singers who dropped choir when they "couldn't sing anymore" because they no longer had the high, clear voice of their youth. (Recruit them back to your program!)

Further, consider the sound you expect from your female high school singers. Are you teaching them to sing with a free and open sound post-voice-change, or are you asking them to emulate boy sopranos? Do you teach them to use breath to create a clear and full sound with their growing voices, or do you allow them to continue to use the breathy sound they habituated during the voice change? If you spend any time at all helping the boys navigate their growing voices but not the girls, you are inadvertently neglecting your female singers.

### Repertoire and Programming

If you have a women's choir and a men's choir, have you thought about how you program for each? Does the men's choir often get one goofy or exciting song to sing that brings the house down? Does the women's choir often get something equally fun or rousing, or do they more often get lyrical songs or lullabies?

How about your mixed choir? Do you select music that is obviously written from a female perspective (i.e. "Gartan Mother's Lullaby") or just those from gender-neutral or male perspectives (i.e. "I's the B'y")? Do you feel more comfortable with one than the other for your mixed choirs? If you program in both of these ways, do you discuss the stereotypes within compositions (in these examples, that female voices should be caretakers, male voices should be commanding), or do you just teach the music as written without commentary? Every time you make a decision about repertoire, you are conveying your values. Are your decisions aligned with how you value your female singers?



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## Valuing Women Who Sing (cont.)

Do you discuss your audience's responses with your students after the concert? Do you prepare them for an audience response ahead of time to something that may be new or different? I have one parent who always looks for the "Ms.-Bruno's-Weird-Song" and has learned to truly appreciate it.

The way in which we program the overall concert is another way choir teachers demonstrate value judgments. Do you typically progress from young mixed choir, to women's choir, followed by men's choir, and ending with the oldest mixed choirs in your concerts? Do you think that your audience notices that the "best" ensemble always goes last (or that better ones go later)? What silent signals are you sending about the importance of your female singers?

It is so important to make intentional decisions rather than rely on the conventions of our choral history when it comes to repertoire and concert programming. When we explore these ideas with our singers (and our audience!), suddenly everyone feels more valued, not just one group of singers.

### **Why does all of this matter?**

When we ask students to sing, we ask them to make themselves vulnerable, to share the very essence of themselves with a group. If some students feel less valued, it is difficult to get to that shared space that is the foundation of community-building. When we consciously celebrate our girls, in these ways and others, we begin to break gender barriers, thereby welcoming everyone – male, female, transgender – into our classroom. By demonstrating that we want every singer in our ensemble, we build trust and support, empower all voices, and create space for our students to take the necessary risks that enable learning.

## WCDA Awards

One way we build community among ourselves as choral directors is to recognize service, excellence, and meritorious contributions to the choral art in our state. Chances are you know somebody who fits the bill in one or more of these ways. Each year, our association is honored to present the [WCDA Awards](#). The recipients of these awards are formally nominated by the membership in the fall for consideration. The presentation of these awards takes place at the annual Awards Banquet connected to our state conference in January. To nominate a colleague for one of these awards, visit <http://new.wischoral.org/awards>. Here are the awards:

### **Morris D. Hayes Award:**

Established in 1985, this award was named for one of the founders of WCDA, Morris D. Hayes, who was president of WCDA, NCACDA, and National ACDA in three consecutive years. The award does not have to be given every year, but is to be reserved for people of outstanding merit. **CRITERIA:** Candidate must be a current or former resident of Wisconsin who has demonstrated a commitment to choral music whether through teaching, conducting, or service to the art and who has made outstanding contributions to choral music in Wisconsin.

### **The Stanley Custer Distinguished Service Award:**

Established in 1994, and renamed in honor of our unique benefactor and champion of choral music, Dr. G. Stanley Custer, in 1999. **CRITERIA:** Candidate must be an individual whose contributions to the organization are exemplary and/or go beyond the normal services provided for the operation of Wisconsin Choral Directors Association, Inc.

### **Outstanding Church Musician Award:**

Established in 1998 to recognize an individual whose contributions to music in the church are exemplary. **CRITERIA:** Candidate must be a current WCDA member who has made significant contributions in the field of church music in the State of Wisconsin.

### **Outstanding Middle Level Choral Director Award:**

Established in 1998 to recognize significant contributions made in the area of middle level choral directing. **CRITERIA:** Candidate must be a current WCDA member and middle level choral director (grades 6-9) with a minimum of ten years experience who exhibits characteristics of a master teacher.

### **Outstanding Young Choral Director Award:**

Established in 1993, this award honors teachers with ten or fewer years experience. **CRITERIA:** Candidate must be a current WCDA member who exhibits characteristics of a master teacher, including enthusiasm, energy, musicianship, student rapport, and professionalism; who has made a considerable impact on the size, quality of performance, festival involvement, and visibility of the program; and/or who has also made a commitment to the community through church or civic choral organizations, youth activities, or civic service organizations.



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## Building Expectations and Community in a Diverse

### Choral Classroom

Raymond Roberts

I note the obvious differences  
in the human family.  
Some of us are serious,  
some thrive on comedy.

The variety of our skin tones  
can confuse, bemuse, delight,  
brown and pink and beige and purple,  
tan and blue and white.

I note the obvious differences  
between each sort and type,  
but we are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unlike.

from *Human Family* by Maya Angelou

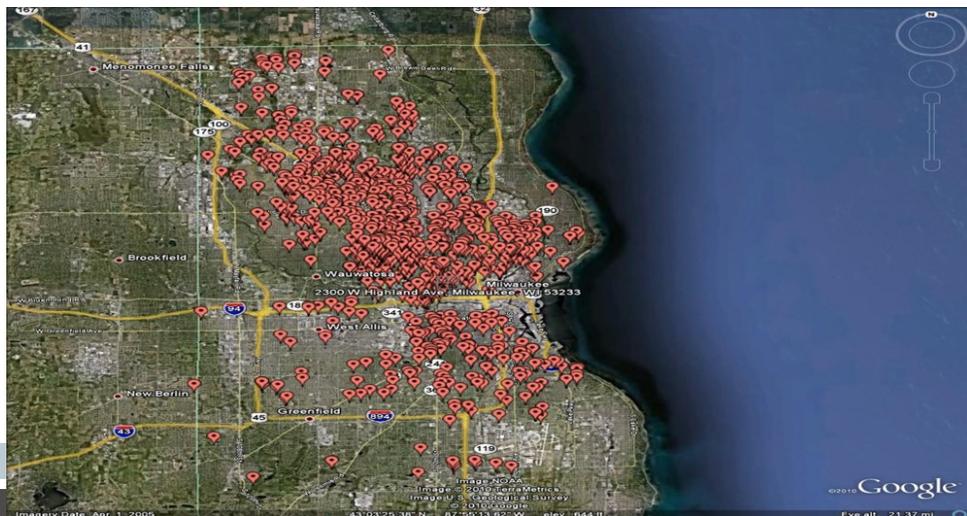
When I was asked to share my thoughts on “building community” in the urban choral classroom, I immediately reflected on the fact that when I am afforded the opportunity to speak about the choral program at Milwaukee High School of the Arts (MHSA), those gathered to hear the presentation often tend to gravitate toward the things that make my program “different.”

“It’s an arts school.” “It’s an urban district.” “It’s so pre-dominantly African-American.”

While these statements are, undoubtedly, true, they neither comprehensively convey the image of the total tapestry nor capture the true essence of the program because they ignore the simple profundity of Angelou’s sentiments in her poem, so ubiquitous during the recent Olympic Games. Although I will address the things that make MHSA unique, I will attempt to highlight the overarching philosophy that guides me to view each and every one of my students through a lens of likeness.

I count myself as one of the luckiest high school choral directors in the state of Wisconsin. I have a built-in “community” made manifest by the basic infrastructure of our school. In 1976, federal court orders were implemented throughout the United States to integrate the nation’s urban public schools. In Milwaukee, as in most other cities, specialty (magnet) schools were created to “draw in” students from all around the city in order to create an integrated student body. These students would be drawn in by a specialized curriculum; arts, law, health, and business curricula have been the most popular types of magnet schools. My students come from every zip code in the city and from beyond the city limits, creating a unique fabric of diversity unparalleled in the state.

Student Residences





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## **Building Expectations and Community (cont.)**

They are attracted by the idea of joining a community of high schoolers who have a common passion for the arts. That's where I get to start!

The fact that they represent a typical cross section of urban students around the country in terms of ethnic background (African-American 72%, White- 12%, Hispanic- 12%, Asian- 3%), socio-economic background (Economically Disadvantaged 65%, Economically Advantaged 35%) and Special Ed status (22%) certainly presents challenges. But, really, aren't they just a bunch of teenagers sitting in front of you in choir?

I base my educational philosophy on a succinctly stated quote by Goethe:

"If you treat individuals as they are, they will remain how they are. But if you treat them as if they **were** what they ought to be and could be, they will **become** what they ought to be and could be."

### **Acknowledge and move on....**

I build community by acknowledging the places from which my students come, and then launch in to the reason we are together: to study music and enrich our lives and the lives of others around us through the sharing of the joy of singing.

### **A serious place.....**

This sounds so antithetical to the typical choral classroom and to the idea of the joyful act of singing. However, it is the fundamental tenet on which I "build community." By establishing a climate whereby I refer to what we do as "studying music," I am able to daily demonstrate how much I respect my students' intellect, as well as their artistic and scholastic potential. They reciprocate (eventually J) with a level of focus and work ethic that yields outstanding artistic results and proves to be a source of enormous pride and sense of accomplishment. Many educators in urban settings spend so much time focusing on the challenges students face that they forget to "challenge" them in the classroom and inadvertently acquiesce to setting lower expectations of them than they would students in another setting. Many of my students are never expected to be "serious" students by anyone in their lives. And, often, as a result, are never taken "seriously" by anyone. Creating a "serious" classroom helps mitigate the effects of that negative stereotype.

### **Expectations....**

A close-knit community often shares similar values and norms. But exactly whose values and norms should those be? While addressing this delicate topic in a pluralistic environment may seem like a daunting task, I tackle it unapologetically. I expect my students to be or become hard-working, high-achieving, independent thinkers who are open to new ideas in their ever-changing world. Irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or political leanings, these traits serve people well in the pursuit of success in most facets of life.

I build these expectations into my curriculum through the repertoire I select for my ensembles and individual singers in the program. I present great music from every time period, geographic origin, and genre to each and every one of my students. I never shy away from any language if I believe the piece is replete with musical concepts that will enhance my students' musicianship. I never hesitate to present great music from the "dead white guys" to my students simply because white students represent a minority group in the program.

I simply expect all of my students to respond to great music from around the great globe. And they do. In recent years, the students' favorite pieces have ranged from "Wie Lieblich Sind" (Brahms) to "Loch Lomond" to "Balleilakka" to "Bogoroditse Devo" (Rachmaninoff). When they reflect on what they accomplish throughout the process of studying great music like this, they innately know they are an integral part of a special community.



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## Building Expectations and Community (cont.)

### Cultivating intrinsic motivation....

Finally, I attempt to build community by cultivating intrinsic motivation in my students. This is so critical for my students because they rarely have the type of support systems in place that offer many children the ability to develop this crucial life-skill outside the home. I strive to only offer communications and feedback that conduce feelings of competence accompanied by a sense of autonomy (essentially, I am extremely judicious with "praise"). Disingenuous praise and extrinsic motivators can easily undermine intrinsic motivation. The affirmation and genuine praise you offer must accompany the true mastery of a demonstrated task achieved by the student independently. This, in my opinion, affords the students opportunities to begin to believe that the great feeling they get when they accomplish something on their own by putting theory into practice is worth the effort and worth repeating. When students begin to repeat this independent problem-solving consistently, they become self-directed and self-regulated thinkers. That is my kind of community!

Whether you are reflecting on your current choral community or embarking on a mission to create a new choral community, it is important to remember two important things. First, your vision for the choral community must be driven by the unique and distinct needs of your students. Second, your plan for implementing this vision, based on the needs of the students, must be done in a manner authentic to your character and persona. When these two elements align, the community is destined to flourish.

The MHSA choral community is a challenging, exciting, and vibrant place. I so cherish the 25 years I have spent in and around these fellow music-makers. It has shaped me in so many wonderful ways. I look forward to many more.

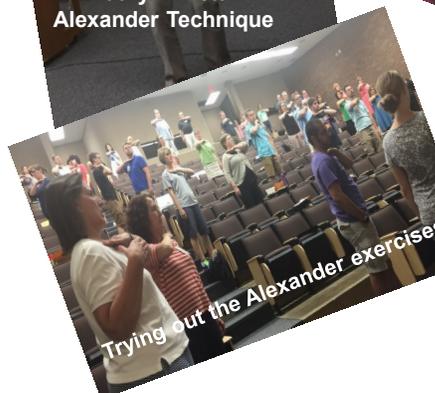
Memories of Refresh! 2016  
and  
WCDA's 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala



Dr. Guy Forbes  
WSMA Treble Choir



Dr. Kathy Privett  
Alexander Technique





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Dr. Scott MacPherson  
WSMA Mixed Choir  
Dalcroze sessions



Dr. Courtney Sherman  
Demo on Healthy Belting  
Technique



Guest Directors Panel  
Phillip Swan, moderator  
Rebecca Winnie, Greg Carpenter, Gary Schwartzhoff,  
James Kinchen, Mark Aamot, Kevin Meidl



Directors' Choir rehearsal  
"Singing Our History"

FUN at WCDA's  
55th Anniversary Gala Dinner



Great conversation  
memories, gratitude!



Fun stories from  
the past



New friends, old friends...



Thanks, WCDA!  
55 years!!!



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## Choral Collaborations

Richard Hynson

As Music Director for Wisconsin's Bel Canto Chorus since 1988, I have witnessed dramatic changes in the arts community over the years. Free Internet access to performances, the proliferation of performing organizations, and increased demand for public and foundation dollars have conspired to change the cultural landscape. One response to these many changes has been the increased priority given to collaboration.

“As the nation's nonprofit arts industry has been grappling in recent years with spiraling expenses and deficits of crisis proportions, it has become clear that fundamental changes in the way arts organizations conduct business must be considered. In response to this need, many nonprofit organizations, which have historically viewed other arts organizations as competitors, are now discovering creative solutions to their growing economic difficulties by building mutually beneficial collaborations with one another, with businesses, and with public-sector organizations.”

*Standing Room Only: Strategies for Marketing the Performing Arts,*  
by Philip Kotler and Joanne Schef

Many granting agencies and institutions have made collaboration a high priority. National funders such as the Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and Meet the Composer have let applicants know that partnerships and collaborative projects will receive higher priority for funding. In order to take advantage of this, arts organizations are pushing beyond their traditional parameters to connect with others.

Choirs are natural collaborators. The outgoing, engaged nature of choral membership predisposes choirs to collaborations in a variety of ways. These collaborations can help a chorus to celebrate community, whether faith-based, civic, or activist, by creating opportunities to bring people together.

Let's explore four ways in which choirs can collaborate to make a difference. During my tenure, Bel Canto has benefitted from collaborating in all four ways. They are:

### 1. Collaborating with an arts organization whose medium is the same or similar

While choral ensembles tend to be territorial, when two or more choruses combine to perform, the potential for enhanced music-making is great. Bel Canto has invited other area choruses to perform large, choral-orchestral works such as the *Requiems* of Brahms and Verdi. Not only is the balance between multiple choruses and orchestra better, but the camaraderie promoted by performing together has benefited all the singers.

### 2. Collaborating with an arts organization whose medium is different

Combining different performance media not only expands repertoire options but it allows for connection to different audiences. Bel Canto has collaborated with dance and opera companies to create productions that expanded the missions of the partnered organizations. The Milwaukee Ballet and Bel Canto presented a choreographed performance of Mozart's *Requiem*; Bel Canto collaborated with Milwaukee Dance Theater to premiere dance pieces accompanied by a *cappella* choral works; and Skylight Opera invited Bel Canto to join them in a production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

### 3. Collaborating by subcontracting with a for-profit organization

When national and international touring companies have included local performers in their productions, Bel Canto has frequently been hired. Bel Canto singers have performed in live productions of the music from Star Wars and music from several different Video Games. Not only do the singers appreciate performing different repertoire, but audiences attracted to the performances are exposed to an ensemble from their community.

### 4. Collaborating in order to promote social awareness by producing a performance or event with a social services organization or in support of a specific cause

Because of choral music's unique characteristic of combining music and text, programs that promote social awareness can have extraordinary impact. Choruses can produce performances or events with a social services organization or in support of a specific cause. Choruses have a singular opportunity to collaborate with social-action groups to produce concerts commemorating events such as the anniversaries of 9/11 or of Martin Luther King, Jr., or the end of the American Civil War. These collaborations not only move audiences, they also educate and edify. Veterans' groups, civic and military organizations, and historians become natural partners in creating and presenting these programs. Bel Canto has been a leading catalyst in developing programs that engage audiences in issues and events relevant to the community.



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## Choral Collaborations (cont.)

Organizations do not always have to look to the past to benefit their communities through meaningful collaboration. Two projects currently in development by Bel Canto focus on immediate, vital community needs. The first collaboration promotes reconnection with community by inmates in the Ozaukee County jail through choral singing. Bel Canto, the Ozaukee County Sheriff, and the Jail Administration are working together to create men's and women's choruses for current inmates. As these choruses continue and participating inmates complete their sentences, Bel Canto plans to work with the parole system to provide a welcoming choral community for parolees who have found meaning and connection through singing.

The second collaboration will branch out from Bel Canto's Senior Singers program. The therapeutic benefits of music and choral singing have been well established for people suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementias. Collaborating with health agencies and funding sources that focus on geriatric and dementia-related issues, Bel Canto will launch a chorus designed for people suffering from dementia.

## 2016 Wisconsin State Music Conference

**Tim Wurgler**

The summer is passing quickly and preparations for another year begin as we look forward to the Wisconsin State Music Conference held each October in Madison. Now more than ever, the conference is an opportunity to meet and connect with colleagues, gain professional development through a wide variety of sessions and still have the opportunity to attend a number of choral performances. There is much to choose from as Wisconsin Music Educators Association strives to provide varied and pertinent offerings each year.

One of the highlights of the conference is the opportunity to attend the 2016 WSMA High School State Honors Project Choir Concert held at Overture Hall on Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m. and the Middle Level State Honors Concert held on October 29<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center of Waunakee Community High School. These concerts are the culmination of preparations by some of the most accomplished choral musicians in the state, outstanding choral teachers acting as section coaches and directed by nationally recognized conductors.

These three components for the High School State Honors Project gather on the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay campus for a four-day camp that is as intense as it is rewarding. At the completion of the camp there is a "Works-In-Progress" Concert followed by farewells, knowing that all involved will soon reconvene in Madison for the formal concert at Overture Hall. Middle Level State Honors students gather for the first time in October and meet fellow musicians who soon become fast friends and trusted musical colleagues. Following a day and a half of rehearsals, the music is honed to a high level and the performance given that afternoon is one of awe-inspiring music and chemistry amongst all involved.

Scott MacPherson, Associate Professor and Director of Choral Activities at Kent State University, conducts the High School State Honors Mixed Choir and Guy Forbes, Professor of Music and Associate Conductor of Choirs at Millikin University in Decatur, conducts the High School State Honors Treble Choir. Jennaya Robison, Assistant Professor of Music at Luther College in Decorah, conducts the Middle Level State Honors Choir. All of these conductors bring a great deal of energy, enthusiasm and musical expertise to the Honors Project. The concerts will be an unparalleled experience for students and audience members.



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## Wisconsin State Music Conference (cont.)

Section coaches are chosen from music programs from around the state and are recognized as outstanding music educators and leaders. This year's section coaches include:

### High School Honors Treble Choir:

Tasha Igielski (Pewaukee High School School), Soprano 1 Coach; Molly Petroff (Waunakee High School), Soprano 2 Coach; Katherine Janssen (Northland Pines High School in Eagle River), Alto 1 Coach; Doreen Athnos (Logan High School in La Crosse), Coordinator and Alto 2 Coach; and Kira Morrissey (Iola-Scandinavia High School), Treble Choir Accompanist.

### High School Honors Mixed Choir:

Victoria Donahue (Osceola High School), Coordinator and Soprano Coach; Allison Zeitler (Fond du Lac High School), Alto Coach; Joseph Anderson (Loyal High School), Tenor Coach; Brad Burrill (Wausau West High School), Bass Coach; and Derek Machan (Waterford High School), Mixed Choir Accompanist.

### Middle Level Honors Mixed Choir:

Michael Chapel (Brown Deer High School), Choir Coordinator; Kari Moskal (Amery High School), Soprano Coach; Christine Anderson (Shiocton Middle School), Alto Coach; Shawn Gudmunson (Saint Croix Falls Middle School), Tenor Coach; and Jason Troxel (Riverdale Middle School in Muscoda), Bass Coach; and Amanda Draheim is the accompanist.

High School Honors Project Chair-Elect is Mary Burczyk (Kettle Moraine Middle School) and the Chair for the High School Honors Project is Todd Jaeger (Kettle Moraine High School). Middle Level Honors Project Chair is Chris Gleason (Patrick Marsh Middle School in Sun Prairie) and Chair-Elect is Marcia Russell (Platteville Middle School). These outstanding educators have been a part of the Honors Project for a number of years and continue to show leadership in the project, respective schools and statewide.

## Connections and Mentorship Opportunities

Matt Wanner

After nearly twenty years of teaching, you would think that the element of surprise would be in short supply, but I have found the opposite to be true. In almost the same way I stare in dumbfounded amazement each fall when the first snow flies through the air (I've seen over 40 of them, for crying out loud), I can't help but marvel at what happens when I spend purposeful time with my colleagues. I would argue that time spent without a purpose is equally rich, but I will leave the musings of social evenings at our January and summer conferences to another article.

One of the most powerful forces, maybe the most powerful, in our development as choral conductors and teachers is the connection we share with our colleagues. This connection takes many different forms as we wear the hats of collaborator, mentor, and mentee. In thinking about the distinct roles of these professional connections and mentorship opportunities, I have considered some of my core beliefs as they relate:

- I am part of a choral community and I *belong*.
- People need people in order to grow. We must reach outside of ourselves with the readiness and willingness to both listen to new ideas not yet considered and contribute our own.
- My colleagues, both in and out of my building, will not feel burdened if I suggest collaboration. In most cases, they will enjoy the process with me.
- Far from wishing to remain on an "island," directors in other schools and churches generally want to connect with colleagues.
- I believe that I am capable of doing things differently than I have in the past.
- As a veteran choral conductor, I have a lot to offer in terms of sharing my experiences and gathered wisdom with the next generation of professionals. There is time to build professional connections. It is often simply a matter of getting creative in managing my time and efforts.

I would like to suggest a number of different ways you might consider making those professional connections and extending opportunities for mentorship. There are a many more, but here is a start!



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## Connections and Mentorship Opportunities (cont.)

### Professional Connections

#### At Home

Collaborate with the people in your own district! You will find that your combined creativity is exponentially greater than what you are capable of on your own. Create an agenda to give direction to your conversation, and let the creativity flow! Other music teachers are a great choice, but also consider the abundance of knowledge outside the music department. As you teach a spiritual, is there a social studies teacher who might talk about the history surrounding the people brought to this country as slaves? Is there an English teacher who might talk to your group about the Teasdale poetry in the piece you are studying?

Reach out using WCDA's [Helping Hands](#) program! Whether you need help with the pronunciation of a world language, help from nearby music ed students in preparing kids for Solo & Ensemble, or you would love the perspective of another conductor in rehearsal, [Helping Hands](#) makes it fast and easy to reach out! Contact a university conductor! We have a wealth of university conductors in this state who are very generous with their time and would be more than willing to visit your school. I have found that they are happy to work with your choir regardless of size or skill level. It's all about learning!

#### Nearby

Each November, WCDA hosts [Singing in Wisconsin](#) in four locations around the state. It is a one day festival dedicated to school age students who love to sing. There is no audition, and all are welcome. Spending the day at [Singing in Wisconsin](#) is a perfect way to connect with colleagues from other schools.

Have you ever considered putting together a choral festival with nearby colleagues? No matter the size, skill, number of schools, or voicing there is always a way to get it done. We have a plethora of colleagues in the state who would be wonderful guest conductors, and you need only ask! Professional connections like this will increase your feeling of community, and they are good for building your program!

#### Conference attendance

WCDA offers a state conference in January that is loaded with interest sessions and wonderful performances where colleagues have the chance to gather and share ideas. In the summer, be sure to attend Refresh! at UW-Green Bay where you will find more great idea sharing and even more social time.

Were you inspired by a terrific interest session or a great performance by one of your colleagues at a recent conference? Take a chance, and get outside the box a little by calling or emailing that person to let her know how important it was to you. Ask that person if it might be possible to follow up with some conversation on the topic at the next choral gathering!

#### Mentorship Opportunities

Consider taking a student teacher. Your experience has taught you valuable lessons worth passing on to those just about to make the leap into the professional world.

Mentor a student of yours who shows interest in our profession. These students enjoy talking about going to college and the path toward earning a music degree. They may also enjoy talking about repertoire, listening to recordings, and discussing what they heard. Depending upon their level of skill, you may even consider allowing that person in front of the class to conduct a piece at your next concert!

Veteran teachers, introduce yourself to a young teacher, and strike up a conversation while at a WCDA conference. It may not lead to anything more than a casual "hello, and welcome to WCDA", but it may also lead to a situation where you may humbly offer the wisdom of your experiences.

The people I have met and the work I have done with them have been the greatest blessings to me in my career. It might seem easier to "stay inside" and not reach out, but the rewards are just too great to miss! There are so many ways to connect and so many wonderful people in our state that you simply can't go wrong. Take a chance, and reach out. You won't be disappointed.



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## Men's Choir High 5

Dennis Gephart

### 1. Zikr

A. R. Rahman/arr. Ethan Sperry  
TTBB with percussion and guitar  
earthsongs S-254

If you are looking for something different to change up your concert programming, this is a great piece to consider. With intensity and passion, this song challenges your men to look deeper into the music for small nuances that have the ability transform the song into something both the students and audience will love. According to the earthsongs website, "A. R. Rahman is an Indian film composer who wrote this piece for the soundtrack of the documentary film *Bose: The Forgotten Hero*. While the text of *Zikr* is religious, the piece is not intended to be used in a worship ceremony." The language is Urdu, widely spoken in India and Pakistan.

### 2. Finlandia Hymn

Jean Sibelius  
TTBB a cappella  
Galaxy Music (E. C. Schirmer) EC 1.1845

Simple in nature, this is an excellent selection to start off the year with your men's choir. This beautiful piece is the unofficial national anthem of Finland. With no counterpoint, teachers and students can focus more on core concepts. The text is in English, translated by a personal friend of Sibelius.

### 3. What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor

arr. Alice Parker and Robert Shaw  
TTBB a cappella  
Alfred AP.LG51053

This piece has been a favorite of directors, including myself, for many years. With a focus on melody as opposed to harmony, the song is easier to learn than it looks. Once the verses and chorus are learned, the opportunities to teach about dynamics, countermelodies, mixed meter and other elements become evident. Many of the Parker-Shaw arrangements exude a quality of humor and wit. The portrayal of the drunken sailor by means of the staggering 5/8 meter, slurred glissandi, and the silly "poop-poop" ostinato bring a smile to the audience as well as to the singers.

### 4. I Am in Need of Music

David Brunner  
TTBB with piano. Optional chamber orchestra version available from the publisher.  
Boosey & Hawkes 48019728

While this song is somewhat easy, it will require all the musicality your chorus can muster. This aspect of the piece requires your men to reach the deepest parts of their souls. With text by Elizabeth Bishop, *I Am In Need Of Music* has the ability to create that intimate but moving moment in your concert for both the students and audience.

### 5. Jing-Ga-Lye-Ya

Bruce Sled  
TTBB a cappella  
Cypress Publications CP 1056

With infectious rhythms, this was one of my men's favorite pieces of the year. According to the publisher's description, "using nonsense words, it is rhythmic and upbeat, and uses cyclical repetition in the parts creating an incredibly catchy groove." *Jing-Ga Lye-Ya* is part of a three-song cycle along with *La-ba-lin-da*, "a gentle, lilting song that is flirtatious with sweet, swinging Latin rhythms," and *Simba Samba*, "a Latin-style romp."