



VOICE of WCDA

Spring Issue—2020

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Join the [WCDA Facebook](#) group, as well, to stay connected.

View the latest [COVID-19](#) roundtable resources from various [WCDA](#) members.



VOICE of WCDA

Letter from the President

Rebecca Renee Winnie

Spring 2020 is most certainly historic. It is hard to believe how much has changed in our work and personal lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in just a few short weeks. As I write this (April 10), I believe most of us have grieved the loss of our planned choral gatherings and events (including WCDA's *NextDirection* and *Refresh!*) and have moved on to design meaningful online connections with students, congregations, and community singers. Things have been changing so quickly that I cannot imagine where we will be when this newsletter gets to you, let alone what may await us in the coming months. Thank you for your quick and diligent work and for your willingness to share with one another in these challenging times. The Wisconsin Choral Directors Association Facebook group has been a beautiful place of connection, service, and support. Your inspiration and creativity have been a blessing to so many. Please join the group if you have not. I encourage you to share any of your successful online methods or activities for reaching and teaching singers with your colleagues in this Facebook group and to post questions or seek advice. Our WCDA leadership is ready to serve you as well. You can email them through the WCDA website: <https://www.wischoral.org/leadership>.

For the past 23 days, I have started each morning by listening to a choral work and then sharing it in the WCDA Facebook group. I have found this an important way for me to center myself and connect to my art. I believe that listening to great works of choral art can feed our hearts and minds – that this can be healing at a time when our lives have plenty of anxiety and stress. Although it is most certainly different, I also hope that as we listen together we are connecting and creating community with each other. It is my desire that you will find encouragement as we listen together. If you are averse to Facebook, here is a link to a YouTube playlist of the works I have shared: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDGAcnp5XEF7pZZ970H3CQBuGOIhaoXgo>. This is a curated list of choral repertoire from the Renaissance to the present. I plan to continue to add a recording each morning and further expand the eras and genres. If you have not yet considered it for your online course work, I encourage you to add some educational focus on active and responsive listening to choral music. What a powerful way to connect students with the wealth and rich variety that is our choral art. Usually, we have so little time in our regular rehearsals for this kind of learning through listening, and this seems an ideal opportunity to hone those skills.

Be encouraged, my friends. You are brilliant, focused, creative, and profoundly dedicated to your singers and their well-being. Let's continue to reach out and encourage one another during the coming months. I've copied below the WCDA detailed updates that were emailed to the membership on April 6, 2020.

Wishing you safety, strong health, and peace. I look forward to the time when we can gather again and raise our voices *together!*

Rebecca Renee Winnie

WCDA President 2019-2021

To foster musical excellence within an inclusive singing community through education, collaboration, and inspiration!

UPDATE:

The WCDA Executive Committee and Summer Conference Project committee have decided to postpone the 2020 NextDirection and Refresh conference until 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- We have secured the **2021 dates of July 12-16** for the Summer Conference at UW-Eau Claire.
 - ⇒ 2021 NextDirection: Collegiate July 12-16 and High School July 14-16
 - ⇒ 2021 Refresh July 14-15
- **Jefferson Johnson**, our featured conductor, is able to attend these new 2021 dates
- Applicants are being notified directly. Students had made no payments.
- ACDA and national student chapters are being notified.
- The **WCDA Awards Luncheon** (which was to take place at Refresh) will be postponed to the January 2021 conference (January 15-16), where there will be two years of Award winners celebrated.

We offer our deepest gratitude to Derek Machan, Karrie Been, and Matt Wanner for their devoted leadership to prepare an exceptional summer experience for us and for our students. Our great appreciation to additional WCDA members who helped to build a strong 2020 summer conference: Frank Watkins, Randy Swiggum, and Eva Stokes. We grieve the loss of this conference with you and know that your hard work will bear great fruit in 2021! ***Let's all put the dates on our calendars right now and plan to participate in Refresh 2021 and send students to NextDirection 2021!***



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Letter from the Editor

Alexa Doebele

Q: How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: One, but the light bulb really has to want to change.

Change. Most of us aren't fond of change, and some of us resist change more than others. It seems that the last few months have presented us with nothing but change, between "Safer at Home" orders, rapidly vacillating rules governing our elections, and the huge adjustment in switching to distance/online learning.

I hate to break it to you, but this issue of *The Voice* brings yet another level of change, but hopefully one that is not too disruptive and one that will be welcomed. Our state Repertoire & Resources chairs will continue to provide their "High Five" repertoire recommendations, but I have also asked them to provide articles of interest to their R&R areas on a periodic basis. I have asked our District Representatives to provide some content as well, beginning with this issue, in which we have articles by the Central and South East Representatives, and one solicited by the North West Representative. In this and future issues, we will continue to hear from our various project chairs (Refresh!, NextDirection, Singing in Wisconsin, and All-State Choirs) and about other items of interest to the WCDA membership. All WCDA board members at some point will make a contribution to an issue of *The Voice* over the course of their term on the board. My hope is that this will help increase visibility of and communication from our board, and that at least part of every issue will be relevant for the given reader.

There is always room, however, for more articles and ideas! Do you have a great idea or technique that you'd like to share with others? *Voice* articles tend to be short (about 1-2 pages typed) and practical. Maybe you wouldn't be interested in writing yourself, but there is something in particular you would like to see. Feel free to contact your District Representative and/or R&R Chairs to make requests for articles or suggestions for repertoire High Fives. You are also always welcome to send articles, ideas, and requests to me at thevoice@wischoral.org.

See? Change isn't always a bad thing!

Ready for some good news? We have a great start in the planning of the 2021 Refresh! Conference!

Karrie Been, Refresh! Chair

Refresh offers an opportunity for choir directors/teachers to "Release, Rekindle, and Rejuvenate." This year's event had been scheduled to be held on the campus of UW-Eau Claire for the first time. Due to the threat that COVID-19 may still present in July, the WCDA Executive Board and Summer Conference Committee together decided it would be best to cancel this year's Refresh. I hope that when our Safer at Home restrictions are lifted, you are able to find ways to connect with your choral colleagues throughout the state. This was such an important aspect of our summer conference. I encourage you to find ways to reconnect with your supportive community of educators.

We have already confirmed that the beautiful UW-Eau Claire's campus is able to host next year's event and that Jefferson Johnson is willing to be our guest conductor. The dates will be July 12-16, 2021. We look forward to working alongside the national NextDirection conference for aspiring choral musicians, which is also being held on campus. Erica Breitbarth will share a presentation about diversity. We will round out our "How we manage our district choral program" series, focusing on a K-12 program from Potosi led by teachers Kirstin and Edwin Boneske. Also on the program will be a roundtable discussion led by teachers with 0-5 years of experience who will be sharing successes and looking to our veteran teachers for feedback on their programs. Carol Dahle will also be leading a session, sharing with us her thoughts on the heart of being a choral teacher. You won't want to miss this conference!

I had planned for the 2020 Refresh! conference to be my final event as the chairperson. Please welcome Paul Gregg as our new chairperson. I am grateful to the WCDA board and members for the opportunity to serve in this capacity. I will be available to Paul and anyone else who may have questions in this transition to new leadership (refresh@wischoral.org).



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Saying Goodbye

John Hughes, Central Representative

Like it or not, you're going to leave your current job. At some point in our careers, we will have to say goodbye to a choir in order to pursue a new opportunity. Personally, I've left almost 10(!) positions between teaching and church music as I've built a career. No matter how many times one faces this bittersweet situation, it never gets easier. As choir directors, we pour our very beings into our programs, develop close personal relationships with our singers, and create deep bonds through music.

I am currently facing this. In February, I announced to my colleagues and students that this will be my final year teaching at Ripon College. I have accepted the position of Music Director of the Chicago Master Singers. Although this is an incredible opportunity to lead a top-notch ensemble in my hometown, I am very sad to leave my students, to whom I feel very close. The sudden move to online-only classes for the remainder of the semester (due to the COVID-19 virus) makes this already painful goodbye devastatingly abrupt. No spring tour; no final concert; no knowing what is to come.

Since this is a situation I am currently facing, I thought I would take this opportunity to share some thoughts on saying goodbye:

- **Be transparent.** Tell your singers as soon as you can. Holding this kind of decision in will not only negatively affect how you teach, but will also eat away at you. Be open and honest with them. It's never a pleasant task, but you'll feel much better afterwards and can focus on making great music during the remainder of your time together.
- **Set the next person up for success.** I have been very clear with my students that I don't want to hear reports that they are giving my successor a hard time: "We always did it this way," "Dr. Hughes said x, y, z," etc. For six years, I've tended to this program and made the decisions; now, it's someone else's turn. I also reinforce that it would be good for them to have another director with different ideas, pedagogical strengths, and tastes in repertoire. I don't have all the answers, and it's good for them to be exposed to new ideas.
- **Tell them you still care.** When students graduate and move on, I make a point of staying connected to them and letting them know that I want to continue to be in their lives. Likewise, now that I'm leaving, I still want to be in touch. Offer to write letters of recommendation; share your personal email address or cell phone number; add them on Facebook. Model with maturity that this is not a bad breakup. You're simply taking a new job, not abandoning them forever.
- **Start now.** Almost none of us will retire from our very first conducting job. To make this transition less painful, start now by not making your program about you. It should always focus on music. I often remark that the choir is called the "Ripon College Chamber Singers," not the "John Hughes Singers." It's bigger than all of us! The members and even director may change, but the ensemble will continue regardless. Engrain this idea into your singers' minds so that when (not if) you leave, they have their priorities straight.

I hope you find these suggestions to be helpful. By maintaining focus on music first, we create healthy, positive memories that will last longer than any of our individual tenures.



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Music: A Refuge for Your Singers

Eric Leih, Youth Area R&R/Middle Level R&R Chair

In these unprecedented times, it can be easy to get pulled into the negatives. We're missing face-to-face interactions with our students. We're longing to make music with our ensembles. We're spending countless hours staring at a computer screen, undertaking the seemingly impossible task of moving our performance classrooms into the virtual realm. And for some, we're grieving canceled final concerts with those faces that won't be in our classrooms next year. While it's ok for us to acknowledge the frustrations that come with school closures and online choir, it is also up to us to make the most of the current situation.

Last week, my principal popped into our fine arts department Zoom meeting. After asking how things were going, we all told him how we were struggling to help our students prepare music or work on art projects through a computer. After a brief pause, he said something that struck me. He said that our content areas (band, choir, and art) lend themselves to helping students escape the frustrating circumstances that we're living in, and he encouraged us to think of outside the box for ways we could help students see that.

Now first, let me say that I'm well aware that music is an escape for many (if not all) of us. I see all of the posts on my Facebook and Instagram of music teachers learning new songs or instruments while they're self-isolating in their homes. The lightbulb moment for me was that this was the perfect opportunity to help my students see that they could do this, too. Your students may be missing the community of your ensemble, but this is their chance to get creative and find a personal connection with music.

My recommendation during this indefinite period of online learning is to guide students through the process of exploring music. Maybe you record a chord progression and have them improvise over it. Perhaps you do a multi-week project where students find or write a text and then compose their own song. It could even be them creating a full performance with a costume and dance with a karaoke track. Whatever you decide to do, making the experience meaningful and fun for students will help them find a temporary refuge from stress, a deeper connection to what music can be for them, and a greater appreciation for our art.

Marcello's Psalms: A Baroque Goldmine for Developing Choirs

Chris McGinley, Professor at UWEC on behalf of the North West Representative

In a career largely focused on developing choirs – middle and high school, church and community – I have not always found it easy to include the level of historical diversity in my programming that I might wish, especially when it comes to music of the Renaissance and Baroque eras. Certainly I've taught my share of madrigals, motets, and chorales, but cantatas and other more substantial concerted works have often felt out of reach. And then there's the issue of voicing: the more advanced of my developing groups might be able to approach one of the easier Bach cantatas, but what do I do with my treble group, my SAB ensemble, or my TB choir?

Enter Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739), a dilettante composer of the Italian Baroque, who was once counted among the most important composers in Europe. His settings of the first fifty psalms (entitled *Estro Poetico-Armonico* and published in eight lavishly expensive volumes between 1724-27) garnered huge attention and high praise throughout Europe, but like Marcello himself, they have largely been forgotten in the intervening years.

History's loss is our gain. Here are several advantages and opportunities to programming Marcello's psalms:

- **Accessibility.** As a member of the Arcadian artistic movement, Marcello was chiefly interested in keeping the music simple, clear, and direct. He maintains the counterpoint and rhythmic vitality that many of us love in Baroque music, but at a level that our less experienced choirs can master.
- **Length and form.** These multi-movement settings resemble cantatas, made up of several contrasting short movements including choruses, recitatives, and short arias (providing numerous solo, duet, and trio opportunities!). Most of the psalms clock between 10-20 minutes, fitting neatly into a concert program while giving our singers the chance to tackle a mini-masterwork.
- **Voicing.** Each psalm is scored for a different combination of voices (never exceeding four). Although some combinations fall outside of our typical ensemble types, his fifty psalms include four SA, three TB, one SAB, and three SATB settings. Of special note for boychoirs are the sixteen ATB settings.
- **Flexible instrumentation.** The psalms can be played on any keyboard instrument. There are no separate instrumental parts (with the exception of Psalm XXI); rather, Marcello expected instruments to double the voices, thus providing additional support to our singers.
- **Cultural interest.** *Estro Poetico-Armonico* can be seen as one of the first multicultural, interfaith pieces of choral music. Marcello attended local synagogues and worked with cantors to collect Hebrew chants, from which he uses melodic quotations in several of the psalms. He even prints the chants into the score, from right to left, with the Hebrew text.
- **Historical interest.** As an Arcadian, Marcello was also interested in classical antiquity. He tries to reconstruct ancient Greek chants to use as melodic material, and he models his textural approach after the most up-to-date (at the time) research into ancient music.
- **Budget-friendliness.** The scores, which were published both in Italian and English, are available for free on IMSLP ([https://imslp.org/wiki/Estro_poetico-armonico_\(Marcello%2C_Benedetto\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Estro_poetico-armonico_(Marcello%2C_Benedetto))). For those who would prefer, easier-to-read modern editions are available from Ut Orpheus publishers, but only in collected volumes. There is a real opportunity for a conductor or scholar to produce performance editions of these great works.

Happy singing!



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The Power of Partbooks: A Reflection of teaching from partbooks in a non-auditioned collegiate choir

Jerry Hui, Collegiate Area R&R Chair

When applied to Renaissance music, partbooks are of course the choice for those who argue for historically informed practices (Hurty 1996; Shrock 1994). However, I find so much pedagogical benefits in partbooks, and have taught my non-auditioned choirs from partbooks and without the piano for at least one piece every year for the past few years. It's worth the extra rehearsal time because:

- Partbooks help novice singers focus on learning with notation. Singers who have not learned how to read notation, or have low confidence in their reading, are often overwhelmed by reading a full score. In a partbook, all other visual information is removed, so singers can focus on only their voice part. When we rehearse, they have an easier time to pinpoint the passage in question, and get a boost in their individual confidence using notation.
- Singing from partbooks levels the playing field in sight singing. Even for singers who read sufficiently well, they likely will not have sung from partbooks before, where helpful information from other parts is unavailable. This challenges them to practice many other skills that are equally important, such as audiation.
- Partbooks provide an addition to a list of tools for teaching audiation (Bland 2018). Without seeing what other parts are singing, singers are responsible for remembering key pitches (such as the tonic) and find their entrance notes on their own.
- Engagement with the music is heightened throughout. This is especially helpful in passages with rests. Singers will have to actively count the rest — no more daydreaming when they don't sing! They may also discover cues from other parts during the rehearsal process (if not printed in their partbooks) and listen for them during performance.
- Partbook singing trains ensemble listening. During the rehearsal process, I can often direct them to listen for one specific aspect: singing unison or octaves, arriving at homorhythmic passages or cadences, and placing ending consonants.
- Partbooks build ensemble confidence. Often I would choose one section of the music where we learn in separate voice parts, then put them all together without further rehearsing. Singers are often amused to hear how other parts interact with their own, and they (and sometimes myself, too) are amazed that everything comes together in one or two tries.

There are some practical challenges to consider if you'd like to consider incorporating partbook singing in your teaching. The first challenge is that you may have to create your own editions, though thankfully notation softwares have become much more approachable and available over the years so that you can even enlist students to help if you need to. With your own editions, you can even choose to provide cue notes to help singers find their entrances (pitch or timing) if you deem the help necessary.

You will have to choose your partbook repertoire carefully, since some pieces work better than others. In the past I have found early Italian madrigals (e.g. Arcadelt), three-part English madrigals, and shape-note music to be most beneficial. These pieces provide a balance between homophony and polyphony and do not usually shift drastically in tonality. Bonus: many such pieces are in the public domain, so we won't have to worry about copyright issues.

Using partbooks is a great way to challenge your singers and build confidence for both individuals and the ensemble. Give it a try!

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Treble Choirs Roundtable on Repertoire: Choosing with Intention (Part 1 of 2)

Debbie Lind, Treble-Clef R&R Chair

"Singing high quality, challenging, enriching repertoire teaches our singers to push through not only difficult note, rhythm and text reading. It asks them to learn about themselves as young women. It asks us to be better teachers and planners."

The above is just one of the responses I got from the teachers of Appleton's Lawrence Academy of Music Girl Choir Program during their monthly roundtable discussion, when I asked them what they consider when selecting repertoire for their choirs. Here are more responses:

"When selecting repertoire, I look for things that will expand my singers' experiences. That means looking for music written by women and/or texts that treble choirs may not typically get to sing and are not, like lullabies, stereotypically written for women."

"I need to be thoughtful and picky about the rep I choose. What about the music is thematically challenging? Musically challenging? Where does this piece come from? Who wrote it? Who wrote the poetry? What is the historical and cultural context of the piece? What kind of affect will it evoke in my singers? How does the piece fit our girl choir mission? When you teach only five to eight songs per year, each song HAS to be SO valuable. There is no time for 'dessert songs.'"

"When I am selecting repertoire I turn to the roundtable. Repertoire selection is a collaborative process. Sharing rep ideas makes us accountable to one another. We are stronger that way. Sometimes I look into my own past for ideas. Sometimes I find 'happy accidents.'"

"Every concert we plan starts with a theme. Working with a theme is not limiting. It opens doors for rep selection. It makes it fun. The theme is a lens through which we can see ideas for teaching. Our themes are not literal or tangible themes, like 'water' or 'peace.' They tend to be experientially driven, like 'elements' or 'I believe.' You can still teach the same musical skills through a great piece, but the theme helps create a new affective outcome. We strive for great repertoire with a lot of depth."

"I think the fact that we focus on affect in the music speaks a lot to our program because that's what's important to us. We can teach kids notes and rhythms. We could as an organization just pump concert after concert after concert. We could do that. We all have the skills to do that. But we want to do more than that."

LAM Girl Choir Teachers (members of the roundtable): Karen Bruno, *Bel Canto*; Marie Putman, *Cantabile*; Toni Weijola, *Capriccio*; Mari Card, *Allegretto*; Karrie Bean, *Primo*; Patricia Merrifield, *Ragazze*.

Lawrence Academy Girl Choir: *Where Girls Find Their Voice* (Est. 1991)

Mission Statement: The Academy Girl Choir program is the only non-profit girl choir in the Fox Valley region. Through the study and performance of diverse repertoire for treble singers, the Lawrence Academy Girl Choirs model curiosity, compassion, creativity, and collaboration. Singers learn to respect the uniqueness of all people, to take risks that foster individual growth, and to find their voice as they grow into confident adults.



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Dispelling Myths around Contemporary *A Cappella*

Sam Wulterkens, South East Representative

Since starting my journey of becoming a music educator, I've noticed a pattern of folks having reservations about the validity and usefulness of contemporary pop *a cappella*. At many moments along the way, I've found myself justifying my involvement in the genre, first as a performer, and then as an educator. I recognize that there are some consistent concerns that people have with the genre. While I am sure there are valid concerns, I find that the concerns are often misconceptions. In my experience, the study of contemporary *a cappella* music is filled with rich opportunities. In fact, I've found that my students have more options in music than ever before, now that we've added it as part of our serious study. Let's take a look at a few of the criticisms of contemporary *a cappella*:

Contemporary *a cappella* music is based on pop music, which is inherently lacking in complexity, textually unsophisticated, and does little to help singers build skills.

In fact, contemporary *a cappella* arrangements, when done well, are musically intricate on a level that goes well beyond what most of our traditional repertoire offers. There are complex rhythms, intricate polyphony, inventive harmony, and so much more. Good *a cappella* arrangers are using a wide variety of musical devices to keep the song interesting and exciting for the performer and listener. Certainly, there are examples of bad, uninventive texts in this genre. But the same can be said of some of our "serious" music. You just have to continue to look for the right texts!

It is difficult to find *a cappella* arrangements that are good, unless you buy a custom chart, and there are questions about the legality of those charts.

Excellent *a cappella* arrangements are becoming much easier to obtain, and you can even find great charts that are perfectly legal. Sheetmusicplus.com and Noteflight both have wonderful platforms for arrangers to use in publishing their arrangements. Copyright is all part of the process, so the performers and arrangers are on firm ground.

I don't like competition (many of us that enjoy this style of music have our students participate in a competition) in choral music. That's not what this is about.

I generally agree with this sentiment. It was my biggest reservation in getting students involved in the competitive part of the genre. That said, I've found that the best directors and ensemble have a very healthy balance of competitive drive and performance for the sake of making great art. In fact, the groups that win the competitions are clearly invested in their art first. Their level of excellence is also driven by their desire to share their stories at the highest possible level. Further, most of the performing these groups do is not competitive, but more of a showcase and celebration of the art.

I don't have time to do this style of music with my students. We have more important things to learn.

While students at my school all get the opportunity to sing contemporary *a cappella* each year, most of them do one only song in the style. This is another layer of differentiation that our administrators (and hopefully all of us) are seeking! About 15% of the students sing more than one song of contemporary *a cappella*. Those students are also incredibly literate musicians, self-motivated, and highly attentive to detail (musically and otherwise). They are students who explore music beyond the lessons we teach: writing their own arrangements, studying performances of others, and coming up with their own creative ideas for growing performance. They are the most expressive singers I've ever worked with. For years, I listened to my choirs talk about how their friends and families said we sounded great at concerts, but looked bored or boring. Our *a cappella* kids sing with such incredible emotional connection, and it has permeated the entire choir program.

In addition to those musical gains that can be tied back to many of the things we want to see in our traditional choir performances, contemporary *a cappella* opens doors that used to be a mystery for me and for my learners. We are finding opportunities to learn about setting up and running live sound equipment, studio recording and mixing, and microphone technique. Kids are learning how to use digital options to make loops and perform live or virtually (particularly noteworthy in this moment). Students are experiencing marketing within the area of music and performance and getting experiences that may lead them to a career in music that they may never have considered otherwise.

Truthfully, the possibilities are endless, and the reasons why contemporary *a cappella* can and does benefit choir programs are many. I am so thankful it's been a part of my musical journey, and even more so, I'm thankful that it's become a part of the journey for my students. If you'd like help getting your students (and you) going in this genre, all you have to do is ask. There are many directors here in Wisconsin who are some of the best in the country at this, and they are also some of the most generous when it comes to mentorship.



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Do We Really Need One More Artist Series?

John Albrecht, Lifelong Area/Music in Worship R&R Chair

Perhaps your faith community is in an arts-rich area with local university concerts and numerous concert series already in place. Adding another series to the mix could feel redundant, requiring too much time to “drum up” an audience and meet the financial responsibilities that would entail. Still, you know that your faith community (“Music is God’s greatest gift.” – Martin Luther) needs to be connecting with your greater community through the arts. How can additional performances be offered in a meaningful, relational way that complements (rather than competes with) existing artist series performances? A few ideas to consider:

- 1. Make it personal!** Are there members of your faith community who are professional musicians, and you can provide a place for them to perform? Do they have out-of-town family members who are musicians and would be willing to join you for a special event? Keep it personal, then throw open your doors to the public, too!
- 2. “Piggyback,” without breaking your piggybank!** National or international performing ensembles may be en route to a major city and would welcome a mid-week performance in your space. They also may be more than willing to negotiate a confidential performance fee. (This model allowed us to bring the world renowned Vienna Boys Choir to our church for a performance!)
- 3. Don’t hide your light under a bushel!** If you have an outstanding acoustic or instruments (organ, piano, harpsichord, portative organ, pitched percussion, etc.), get the word out that you are open to hosting recitals by university music faculty and other area artists. You might provide a “first run” opportunity for a recording session or future performance. . . and everyone wins!
- 4. But it’s not about us!** Musicians are generous and often excited to perform to benefit a worthy cause. Select a non-profit that has a missional connection with both the artist and your faith community; perform to help improve the lives of others.
- 5. Do you know where the kids are?** Our high school graduates head off to college, and we encourage them to continue to sing and play in performing ensembles. Keep in contact and explore hosting their ensembles on tour. College music major graduates, too, can appreciate being invited “back home” to perform again in the same “safe space” that fostered their musical development.
- 6. Practice makes perfect?** Providing free rehearsal spaces for area arts organizations is a tangible way to support your local arts community. And their “thank you” can take the form of music presented in worship or a separate performance in your space.

Faith communities can have a uniquely personal, relational role in fostering and celebrating the art of music. I encourage you to use some of these suggestions to offer concerts (no glitzy brochure, marketing blitz, formal logo or artist series name required!) that, on a smaller scale, complement your area’s existing artist series performances. Sharing “God’s greatest gift” with your greater community can be a blessing to all.

Best wishes to you in the new program year!



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weda@wischoral.org

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[Visit the Website](#)

Bass Clef (TB) High Five

Herb Berendsen, Bass-Clef R&R Chair

Love is a Sickness

Dale Trumbore

TTB *a cappella*

Graphite Publishing DT0031

This is a fun, swinging arrangement. Good ranges for high school boys. It has a very catchy melody and a 16th century text dealing with the woes of love. The harmonies can be a bit tricky, but are very doable with practice. There are some scat syllables, but no improv required. "Love is a Sickness" won the 2006 Chanticleer Student Composer Competition.

<http://www.graphitepublishing.com/product/love-is-a-sickness-ttb/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOOSwZVhhpA> (SATB version)

Invictus

Daniel J. Hall

TTBB with piano

Pavane Publishing 1541/Hal Leonard 00159350

Selected for the Jo-Michael Scheibe series, this may be one the most powerful songs of encouragement for men's choirs. The William Ernest Henley poem sets the stage, but it is the dynamic musical writing for both voice and piano that rock the house. Opening with a gentle chant establishes the theme, but the surprise hits as the keyboard assumes control. Superb choice for a dedication, graduation or concert program. Medium in difficulty. This piece was commissioned by the MacDowell Male Chorus of Appleton, in commemoration of their 80th anniversary.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/159350/invictus>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv1Qij7iMVI>

O wüsst' ich doch den Weg zurück

Johannes Brahms/arr. James McCullough

TTBB with piano

Galaxy Music Corporation 1.3462

Brahms' best songs are small, priceless jewels. "O wüsst' ich doch den Weg zurück," op. 63, no. 8, is a magnificent miniature masterpiece of nostalgic longing for childhood, relinquishing mature growth, and yearning for an earthly, unattainable paradise. Extensive program notes are included, as are both the German and English lyrics and translation.

<https://www.morningstarmusic.com/o-wusst-ich-doch-den-weg-zuruck-o-that-i-knew-the-way-back-home-ttb-tbb-ttbb.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBHfq0tg-mY> (SATB version)

Man of Truth

Shawn Kirchner

TBB with piano

Boosey and Hawkes HL48024506

A solemn "anthem of truth" written for young men, but appropriate for any men's chorus. The piano gives a strong grounding to this straightforward piece, in which the men often sing in unison or in two parts, with a middle section in three-part canon offering contrast. An inspiring, meaningful addition to any concert program. Kirchner was inspired by Tolkien in his treatment of the text.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/48024506/man-of-truth>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQ9JP4JrNW0>

Vive L'Amour

Traditional American/arr. Alice Parker and Robert Shaw

TTBB *a cappella*

Lawson Gould/Alfred 51026

One of the most well-known and oft-performed works for male chorus, it really is a stalwart for any men's choir library. It is a fun-filled Shaw/Parker arrangement. The dynamic text and its rousing treatment are a favorite for both singers and audiences. Some opportunities for soloists as well.

<https://www.alfred.com/vive-lamour/p/00-LG51026/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8liHcuAQgU>



VOICE of WCDA

Community Choir High Five

Bert Pinsonneault, Community Choir R&R Chair

Community choirs come in such a range of ability levels, and not all of these pieces below will be appropriate for all choirs. I have performed all of these with the Madison Chamber Choir, a 100% volunteer adult community choir of about 45 singers, based in Madison, WI. Some of these pieces were a stretch for my choir, but in stretching ourselves we find artistic, intellectual, and musical growth. I hope you find some compelling music below.

Choirmaster's Burial

Dominick Argento (1927-2019)

SATB (divisi) a cappella

Boosey & Hawkes M051479979

Dominick Argento is a musical giant whose music is criminally underperformed. He could set English text with all the subtlety of a Samuel Barber, yet with a completely novel and individual harmonic voice. Argento is America's Benjamin Britten. There are several of his pieces I would recommend, including the immaculate *Walden Pond* (20' for choir, harp, and three cellos) or the delicious *a cappella* octavos "The Devon Maid," "Dover Beach Revisited," or "Sonnet No. LXIV," but "Choirmaster's Burial" provides so much of Argento in one tidy package: a narrative story, the quotation of a favorite hymn, and always gorgeous music.

<https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Dominick-Argento-The-Choirmaster-s-Burial/55077>

Performance link unavailable

and the swallow

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)

SATB (divisi) a cappella

Caroline Shaw Editions

Shaw's piece is homophonic and employs triadic harmonies, but the primary difficulty lies in having your choir negotiate singing from eight staves and doing some four-against-three rhythms. It is completely worth the trouble. The haunting beauty of this work depicts the swallow searching for its nest, and in this regard it is a perfect complement to a range of programs, from ones featuring nature and animals to programs about housing adversity.

<https://caroline-shaw-editions.myshopify.com/products/and-the-swallow>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uzpBmW5DNo>

Komm, Jesu, Komm (BWV 229)

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

SATB + SATB (double choir) with *si placet colla parte* instruments

Multiple editions available

If you like suspensions and sequences, then I've got the Bach motet for you: *Komm, Jesu, Komm* is eight minutes of Bach at his best. Written in four short movements, this piece is amazingly quick witted, expressively close to the text, and exquisitely manifested. Though some modern performances are *a cappella* or with limited instrumental accompaniment, Bach would have probably employed instrumental doubling of all the parts, which makes this piece more accessible to perform. Luckily, the Baroque masters were practical when it came to performing forces, and you can be also by utilizing a pair of keyboards, or eight solo instruments, or more!

<http://www3.cpd.org/wiki/images/9/9f/Ws-bach-229.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UT6hv9JFG2Y>

Ripple

Ted Hearne (b. 1982)

SATB (divisi) a cappella

Unsettlement Music

"Ripple" takes its text from the Iraqi War Logs, excerpting one single sentence about an incident of friendly fire. Hearne deconstructs the text and sets this exactly like a Bach cantata in construction: chorales containing the entire text to begin and end, with snippets of the text presented in small interior movements, each with their own distinctive feel. The music jumps from austere neo-minimalism, to gospel, to impressionistic evocations of the sun and heat blurring the horizon in the desert, just as this piece blurs the boundary between just and justified. I've performed "Ripple" within a program contemplating gun violence, but it stands alone as a brilliant twenty-first century cantata.

<http://www.unsettlementmusic.com/works/tag/choir>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_tGTSRpluM

The Fruit of Silence

Pēteris Vasks (b. 1946)

SATB and piano

Schott Music ED 22723

This singularly gorgeous work is performable by ensembles of every ability level. Creating tension simply within the E-flat major diatonic scale, this piece slowly works through the simple and famous prayer of the same name by Mother Theresa. The piece is never flashy or saccharine, but rather the extreme length of the opening and ending piano sections forces audience and choir into a state of present mindfulness. This piece is perfect for big spaces, for programs on peace, and for events bringing together multiple choirs.

<https://en.schott-music.com/shop/the-fruit-of-silence-no320611.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxrNyY5AxTU>



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Children, Community, and Youth High Five

Toni Weijola, Children, Community and Youth R&R Chair

Windy Nights

Donna Gartman Schultz

Two-part treble with piano

Banks Music Publication 3156163

This setting of Robert Louis Stevenson's iconic poem is a wild one! Both piano and voices collaborate to portray a multitude of natural elements in this scene. Galloping eighth notes, dramatic pauses, and an unexpected glissando from high to low combine with melody and countermelody that sit beautifully in treble voices. Imitating the natural elements of the dark, wet night and the stormy, turbulent sea, singers will notice that the voice parts wrap around one another, sometimes crossing paths like crashing waves or intersecting gusts of wind. As the tension and mystery mounts, Gartman Schultz concludes this exciting ride with a final, climactic flourish!

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Windy-Nights/3156163.item#/submit>

Where'er you walk from *Semele*

George Frideric Handel

Unison with piano

Multiple editions available

Don't forget about the possibility of teaching a unison art song to your choir. There are a wealth of art songs, many of them available in voice anthologies (get permission to reprint first!) and on imslp.org and cpdl.org. "Where'er you walk" is an aria from *Semele* that is sung by Jupiter, who is describing the perfect place that he has created for a mortal he is trying to impress. Handel illuminates the text with clever compositional ideas, musically painting the picture of this beautiful place. Unison singing allows the choir to focus intently on creating a healthy, blended, balanced sound – is there nothing more beautiful than the sound of many voices expressing themselves as one?

[https://imslp.org/wiki/Semele,_HWV_58_\(Handel,_George_Frideric\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Semele,_HWV_58_(Handel,_George_Frideric))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d623OultRaw>

Shojojee

Japanese Folk Song/arr. B. Wayne Bisbee

SA with piano, finger cymbals, and temple blocks

Santa Barbara Music Publishing SBMP 741

Sung in Japanese, "Shojojee" (or, "Shojoji") tells the story of fictitious raccoon-dogs dancing and playing drums to compete with the music of the temple monks. These raccoon-dogs stand on their hind feet so their front feet are free to beat on their bellies like drums. Imagine a chorus of raccoon-like animals, beating "pon poco pon noh ponn" on their round bellies! The piece begins in unison, but as the frenzy of belly drums and the excitement of music-making overtakes the animals, the choir divides into two parts. Temple blocks and finger cymbals complete the soundscape for this charming story.

<https://sbmp.com/STM.php?CatalogNumber=741> (a recording can be found here as well)

Quittez, pasteurs

Old French Tune/arr. Erica Phare-Bergh

SA with piano (or organ)

Cypress Choral Music CP1422

Though mostly arranged in unison, Phare-Bergh includes moments of harmony that blossom out of the original melody, as if the shepherds' joy and anticipation are bubbling over with excitement. You will notice that the melody remains the same throughout this three-verse piece, but the piano will vary greatly. Singers will have an excellent time pondering the composer's purposes for her compositional choices. A lovely Christmas piece that can be performed by any combination of voice types.

<https://cypresschoral.com/composers/erica-phare-bergh/quittez-pasteurs/> (a recording can be found here as well)

Hallelu!

Stephen Paulus

Two-part (any combination) with piano

Schott Music Distribution EA 511

The announcement of Jesus' birth is portrayed in this piece with quiet reflection and reverent expressions of wonder without pomp or fanfare. An undercurrent of steady eighth notes partners with a simple and elegant melody in the voice parts. The piece offers opportunities to focus on unison blend and balance, as well as purposeful expression through dynamics. Written in unison to start, one voice part blossoms into two. Excellent for choirs of all ages, voice types, and genders.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/49012641/hallelu-ssa>

<https://youtu.be/SPn1h0xuyfl>, <https://youtu.be/57Dzdneb0wg>



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Contemporary *A Cappella* High Five

Dennis Gephart, Commercial/Contemporary R&R Chair

When the Party's Over

Billie Eilish/arr. Rob Dietz

Available for SATB or SMAB *a cappella*

Sheet Music Plus Press H0.714725-SC003715405

Rob Dietz has been a standard arranger that I know will write accessible music that sounds amazing and will be relative to the students performing. "When the Party's Over" does just that. The SMAB version places the male voices a little lower than I would like for middle schoolers; it would be very easy to place your higher male voices in the alto section. The SATB version will challenge your students' ability to blend and really draw a connection to the piece.

SATB (Advanced/ Intermediate):

<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/when-the-party-s-over-digital-sheet-music/21680331>

SMAB (Early / Intermediate):

<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/when-the-party-s-over-digital-sheet-music/21546350>

Higher Love

Steve Winwood/adapt. Whitney Houston/arr. Lee Stovall

SATB divisi *a cappella*

Sheet Music Plus Press H0.740213-SC000001378

One of Wisconsin's own, Lee Stovall is someone you definitely need to consider in programming for your next concert. "Higher Love" is a great uptempo chart for an intermediate/advanced ensemble with a soprano soloist. The end raises the key signature, which will make this an audience favorite.

<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/higher-love-digital-sheet-music/21702132>

Love Make the World Go Round

Jennifer Lopez & Lin-Manuel Miranda/arr. Alex Phan

SATB *a cappella*

Alfred Music Publishing 00-48507

Recorded as a charity single by superstars Jennifer Lopez and Lin-Manuel Miranda, this uplifting piece delivers a message of love, compassion, and courage in the face of darkness. Vocables and notated vocal percussion support the solo line and the rapid-fire rap solo in the bridge. This medium-easy piece would be great for both your small and larger ensembles.

<https://www.alfred.com/love-make-the-world-go-round/p/00-48507/>

Songbird

Eva Cassidy/arr. Deke Sharon

SSAA *a cappella*

Hal Leonard 08749914

Based on the Eva Cassidy recording, this intermediate-level chart allows for solos, duets and trios while the chorus is able to focus on supporting them with non-worded syllables. This piece is appropriate for both small and larger women's groups.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/8749914/songbird>

Take 6: The Official Scores

Various arrangers

SATBBB *a cappella*

Hal Leonard 00284855

Looking for quality contemporary *a cappella* arrangements for your advanced choir? These groundbreaking medium/advanced arrangements from Take 6 represent the highest quality of contemporary *a cappella* arranging style that laid the framework for so many famous *a cappella* groups to follow. It is impossible to put the Take 6 style into a musical style box. Jazz, gospel, R&B, pop, soul – they sing it all and at the highest level. Here are nine of their most famous songs available in print for the first time in their original forms: A Quiet Place; David and Goliath; Get Away, Jordan; Goldmine; He Never Sleeps; If We Ever Needed the Lord Before; Mary, Don't You Weep; Milky White Way and Spread Love.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/284855/take-6-the-official-scores>