



VOICE of WCDA

Fall Issue—2020

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Focus on Diversity Issues

Visit the [website](#) to get current information on all things WCDA.

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

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



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Letter from the President

Rebecca Renee Winnie, WCDA President

"This will affect the choral world for a very long time, and it hurts us that much more because everything we do is about community. The fabric of what brings us together and holds us together has been torn."

"I cannot fathom how teachers dealt with, and continue to deal with, the massive changes suddenly thrust upon them in March. Now they must deal with parents pulling one direction, politicians tearing at teachers from all directions, school administrators having differing opinions of how things work best, students who are confused, and teachers who are hanging on by their fingernails."

"August used to be a time for excitement and anticipation. Now it is filled with unease and anxiety."

"This has been one of the WORST summers ever. My stress is through the roof because of the unknowns of the future of my kids' schooling, my teaching job, my church job, our country, my community, everything. I am not the only teacher feeling this right now. Will we make it work in the fall? Absolutely! We ALWAYS do, but right now I am really struggling."

These are words from choir directors and their friends on social media this week (the last week of July) as many decisions regarding the manner of the fall start of K-12 schools and universities have been announced. The exhaustion and anxiety from carrying the burden for the safety and well-being of our students are overwhelming many of us. This is adding to the devastation we have already experienced in losing our musical and community connections with our singers.

How do we respond? I am sure that this is as varied as our personalities and our choral programs. Some are excited about meeting singers face-to-face again and making music together. Some are sick with worry. Others are working to improve their digital skills. Some are rethinking curriculum and focusing anew on the core of what we do in music instruction. Some are frozen with fear. Some are reading through every aerosol and scientific study. Some are making their own "singer's masks." Some are delving into music of unfamiliar genres. Some are withdrawing. Some are serving on advocacy teams (local and national). Others are serving on local school committees. At times, we are doing and feeling all these things. Our imaginations, creativity, and teacher-hearts are taxed.

How has WCDA responded?

- An advocacy video for K-12 choral music: <https://youtu.be/dIAWUKeXdmY>
 - Please "like" this YouTube video and share it everywhere! Teachers, please send it to your administrators. Ask key parents to share it on their social media. If you have connections with media or music industries in Wisconsin, share it with them.
 - It would also be helpful for you to use the above WCDA YouTube Channel link (which is also found on the first page of our website: wischoral.org) rather than any located on a personal YouTube channel. There are a number of links out there now. Thanks for your care in using the WCDA link.
 - Great appreciation to the dynamic team of "Js" with Jean Bartholomay Enyeart, Jerry Hui, Joy Fritz Paffenroth, John Popke, and Stephen Sieck (he supplies the plural S). The arrangement of "How Can I Keep from Singing" was created by Jerry Hui.
- Roundtable Discussions and More
 - Please check out this WCDA page: www.wischoral.org/wimusicstrong
 - A grassroots effort to support fellow directors was born on the WCDA facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/260023572692/>) and has grown to offer multiple virtual roundtable discussions. Please look at the website page linked above for future roundtable meetings, recordings, and materials. Thank you to all of the team leaders! Thank you to everyone who shared their best practices and expertise, as well as offered a kind, listening ear!
- Jerry Hui has created and continues to update a document with a dated collection of studies, "COVID-19 and Singing: Scientific Research and Contrary Opinions." Thank you, Jerry! <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f0NawDJ4fcjc7GXxzHxEemGA3z4kjuVD5YzP4Lkbq48/edit?usp=sharing>
- WCDA is a partner in the Wisconsin Music Strong Coalition: <https://wimusicstrong.wsmamusic.org>. Thanks to Steve Sieck for his representation on this team!
- Discussions around racism and the music classroom have been happening in roundtables and our Facebook group concurrently with our pandemic concerns. In this newsletter we will find information from our Diversity Initiatives Liaison, Erica Breitbarth, and our R&R Chair of World Musics and Cultures, Raymond Roberts. Let's continue to read, learn, and ponder so that our choices allow all of our choristers to see themselves reflected in the music they sing and feel included in the community we build in our music-making.



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Letter from the President (cont.)

We all need to rely on our best coping strategies during this challenging season of work and life. Of course, these coping skills are as individual as we are. We all seek to respond to our circumstances out of the best part of ourselves, and our self-care is part of that. Part of every practice is involvement in a supportive community. I believe many of us have found this kind of professional support in the above WCDA connections. Please reach out and connect with us. You are not alone in these struggles.

Connecting with choral art has been part of my personal practice in these months. I listen to one choral work each morning -- one that I have studied and taught. Musically, it is like visiting an old friend, and I am often flooded with memories of students and people with whom I shared that music-making.

Thank you for your dedicated and creative work to the choral art in these times. Thank you for your continued support of one another and for advocating for the importance of choral singing in all its manifestations. May you find comfort, peace, and inspiration as we work toward safe choral music-making ahead.

*My life flows on in endless song;
Above earth's lamentation,
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
No storm can shake my inmost calm,
I hear that music ringing;
It sounds an echo in my soul —
How can I keep from singing?*

Rebecca Renee Winnie
WCDA President 2019-2021

Letter from the Editor

Alexa Doebele, Editor of *The Voice*

Wow, it seems like it wasn't that long ago since I sat down to write my last "Letter from the Editor," but SO much has happened since that time. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage on, and heading into a new school year or concert season we continue to struggle with finding effective yet safe ways to continue choral singing in some form. That in and of itself is a huge challenge with a steep learning curve, but the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the late spring has also impressed upon us that we need to do more to honor and give respect to those who may be different from us.

A year ago — long before the recent Black Lives Matter protests — the Diversity Initiatives Liaison position was newly created for our WCDA board. This happened at the same time that I became editor of *The Voice*, and I immediately had the idea of compiling an issue dedicated to diversity issues, with the intent for it to be published in Fall 2020 in order to give us plenty of time to plan and gather articles on the topic. Who knew that these plans would end up being so timely?

Many thanks to Erica Breitbarth and other members of the WCDA board for writing articles and finding others to write articles for this issue. For an issue devoted to diversity initiatives, we wanted to find as many diverse voices as possible to address issues such as gender equity, LGBT concerns, the experiences of people of color, and repertoire that best gives voice to these frequently disenfranchised populations. Choral music is such a great tool to start addressing injustices. It is hard work, but it will be worth it, both for **all** singers and for us directors!





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WCDA 2021 State Conference

Zack Durlam, WCDA President-Elect and 2021 Conference Chair

The 2021 WCDA State Conference is going online! Conference activities will be held late afternoon and evening of January 15 and all day on January 16. The leadership team of Alexa Doebele (program chair), Jerry Hui (technology chair), Frank Watkins (interest session chair), Cody Miller (communications chair), Karen Bruno (reading session chair), and Amy Wright/Cassie Tingo (registration chairs) are planning an outstanding conference that will feature interest sessions from both nationally-known and local clinicians, reading sessions, roundtables, and unique online social events that allow us to connect with our friends and colleagues from around the state. Save the dates, and look for more information in late fall. We hope you'll all be able to join us in January!

WCDA 2021 All-State

Mike Jones, All-State Chair

New and exciting things are in the works for our first virtual All-State experience! Students accepted into ensembles will rehearse online throughout January 16th and 17th. Actual rehearsal times will be shared at a later date. The weekend will feature students working with their conductor and peers to explore engaging repertoire, attend sectionals led by section coaches improving skills and technique, and create memorable experiences meeting others who are just as passionate about making music.

Directors will be able to nominate students for our Vocal Jazz Choir, Treble Clef Choir, Bass Clef Choir, Middle Level Choir, and Children's Choir. Be on the lookout for more information in September.

WCDA 2020 Award Celebrations

Steve Sieck, Immediate Past-President

It is our tradition in the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association to take time in our January conference to celebrate colleagues whose work beautifully embodies our mission "to foster musical excellence within an inclusive singing community through education, collaboration, and inspiration." Because Wisconsin hosted the Central/North Central Regional ACDA conference in March 2020, we moved our celebration to the summer Refresh!/NextDirection conference, which was then cancelled because of COVID-19.

Please join me in reading about and honoring the work our 2020 award winners are doing! Please also consider colleagues who deserve to have their work celebrated in 2021. Take a moment to view our <https://www.wischoral.org/awards> page, and submit your awards nominations between September 1-October 25.



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Celebrations (cont.)

And now, let's celebrate these outstanding colleagues, with excerpts from their nomination letters:

Outstanding Young Choral Director Award

Established in 1993, this award honors teachers with ten or fewer years of 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.

2020 winner: Eric Leih, J.R. Gerritts Middle School, Kimberly, WI

"His passion for his students and the choral art is infectious... He goes above and beyond for his students and collaborates incredibly well with his colleagues at the high school level. He sings in and serves as a board member for the Oshkosh Chamber Singers and serves as Youth Chair for the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association. His ability to create authentic connections and rapport with students has led him to be one of the best choir teachers I've known."



Outstanding Middle Level 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.

2020 winner: Deanna Kulow, Fox River Middle School, Waterford, WI

"Deanna has continued to demonstrate the passion that the arts can bring to a community as well as the common ground that all the arts — visual, theatrical, and musical — have with one another. She has instilled confidence in her students, allowing them to think for themselves and make decisions while being able to feel pride and accept success in their accomplishments. Deanna has committed the time to all her students, whether they are naturally skilled or needing extra support to perform at a higher level. Deanna demonstrates to me that each and every student has the ability to succeed, and she continually emphasizes that to all of her students."





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Celebrations (cont.)

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.

2020 winner: Sue McAllister, President of the Green Bay Boy Choir & Girl Choir, president of WCDA (2013-2015)

"Sue is the rare leader who brings the organization's attention to both administrative detail and big-picture vision, and does so in a way that empowers its membership. Working with Sue was not just informative, but exciting. She brought her enthusiasm for teaching and her commitment to excellence from the classroom to the board room. From the planning and gathering of event details, to teacher workshops, creating new programs, researching inspiring music, and writing articles for publication, she was totally committed to WCDA and its goals. Sue McAllister has been a tireless champion of music education in Green Bay and the state of Wisconsin for many years. As a musician, Sue is absolutely top-notch. But as an educator, Sue is a legend in the state of Wisconsin, and her colleagues, students, and community alike would agree that she is a first-rate role model and an inspiration for all music educators!"



2020 Student Composition Winner – Nathanael Hahn,

"Love Bade Me Welcome"

Nathanael Hahn is a recent graduate of Concordia University Wisconsin with a major in mathematics and a minor in classical education. He is now a 3rd-4th grade teacher at Peace Lutheran Academy in Sussex, Wisconsin. He loves composing and listening to choral music, much due to his involvement in the choirs at Concordia. He also enjoys spending time with his family. "Love Bade Me Welcome" is a TTBB *a cappella* setting of the poem "Love (III)" by George Herbert. Although the melodic idea remains consistent throughout (as does Love in the poem), each verse is uniquely harmonized to illustrate the sequential themes of man's guilt, despair, and finally, Christ's forgiveness.





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Introducing WCDA Diversity Initiatives

Erica Breitbarth, Diversity Initiatives Liaison

Hello, WCDA Community! I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself as the newly appointed Diversity Initiatives Liaison to the WCDA Board of Directors. I have served for the last 11 years as Choir Director and Music Department Chairperson at Reagan IB High School in the Milwaukee Public Schools. I first became inspired by choral music as a high school student of WCDA President Rebecca Winnie. I was inspired to build a music program in Milwaukee after student teaching in the Chicago Public Schools and seeing the deep need for quality music education in the lives of city students. My recent work has been as a founder of the [Milwaukee Music Educators Association](#), a group of city educators that recently lobbied the MPS school board to [restore 70+ music teaching jobs to the district over the next five years!](#)

Over the last few years, the American Choral Directors Association has begun to [actively address issues of diversity and inclusion](#), with the goal of fostering “diversity and inclusivity in our membership, ensembles, and repertoire through active engagement with underrepresented choral musicians and potential choral participants. As a result of this inclusivity, the Diversity Initiatives Committee plans to bring about a broader definition of choral excellence to maintain relevance through the expansion of both the reach and impact of our profession and its musical scope.” As a member of the WCDA board, I am dedicated to looking at our operations, programs, repertoire choices, and organizational decisions through the lens of equity and inclusion.

Some of my goals in this position include:

- Providing professional development, resources and education and around the topics of race, poverty, urban/rural/suburban, LGBTQIA inclusion, gender equity, and related issues within the context of choral music
- Increasing participation of marginalized and underrepresented students and directors in WCDA state choral events by reducing barriers to entry
- Curating diverse repertoire and [culturally responsive tools](#) for choral directors
- Providing insight into ways to be more inclusive in our work and activities as WCDA
- Mobilizing WCDA members and leadership in the advocacy of quality vocal music education for all children in our state

I want to serve as a resource to all of you as you ask good questions and explore what it means to foster a diverse and inclusive choral culture that is open to singers of all backgrounds, especially those who are often marginalized. I hope that this issue of *The Voice* serves as a resource for all of you and will give you ideas for new ways to expand and diversify your singers’ understanding of music, themselves, and others through the choral art.

Feel free to reach out with any questions, ideas and suggestions!

Sincerely,
Erica Breitbarth
Diversity Initiatives Liaison



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Treble Choirs Roundtable on Rehearsal: Unlock the Voice, Unlock the Child (Part 2 of 2)

Debbie Lind, Treble-Clef R&R Chair

In the last issue I recorded 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. I also asked the teachers what they consider every week as they prepare for their rehearsals. The conversation very soon moved to working with girls and their specific developmental needs, and not simply treble singers. The LAM Girl Choir program accepts any singer who identifies as female and can sing successfully in the treble range. One teacher mentioned that the term "girl choir" is an asset when dealing with a deeply patriarchal society. She added that, if we were to change the name to "treble choir," we might undercut the power of specific developmental issues we explore that do not involve non-female-identifying treble singers. However, "girl" is not the best word either, especially for the older high school singers. But we do not have a great word for this coming-of-age time in their lives that is specific to those who identify as female. We're working on it.

So, here are more responses to the rehearsal topic – preparation and dealing with issues in real-time:

"With my group I have some very strong voices. I have to ask, 'How do you sing with a strong voice in a healthy way, as a member of an ensemble? When is it appropriate for you to sing out and be a leader, and when are you stealing the spotlight when it is not the right moment?' It's a question of balance. And this translates to the balance needed to be a strong woman in the community. Sometimes we are leading, sometimes we are following. As a teacher, when am I going to 'direct,' and when am I going to stand back and enable my singers to explore? If I am waving my hand around, I cannot listen."

"At my school, the boys have more energy. They are louder. They are more physical. They are more difficult to contain. So, what if we invited that energy for our girls? How many girls are more 'contained' because that is what is expected of young girls? When they are in an all-female identifying space, they feel free to take up ALL of that space. They are physically and emotionally allowed to have more energy. They don't have to be the antidote to all that boy energy. They can bring their whole selves."

"How do we push into a different space of expectation for our girls in girl choir? For myself, I want to push girls into spaces where they experience, via text, or music, or strategies, things that are not necessarily typical 'girl behaviors.' I want things to get messy. I want it to be uncomfortable. I want to give them images of women doing things that are strong and atypical from what they encounter in a day-to-day world with literature or poetry. I say, 'In this song you are going to scream, but that's OK.' I want girls to sing text that is grizzly. I want them to take risks. But first I have to build community."

"In the rehearsal every singer needs to be valued. For singers who do not often experience that validation, I need to offer a safe space that is liberating. In a culture that is patriarchally structured, girls need to feel valued as their whole selves."

"This is something we have done intentionally with our voice-change curriculum. We owe girls their own curriculum about how their voices are growing (most research is about the boys' changing voices). This is where my focus is, as far as helping singers find their own voice, literally. Their voices do weird things, but it's normal. During rehearsal we have the voice growth chart and I refer to it frequently. We often do a quick show of hands, like, 'Whose voice is feeling weird today?' Or, 'Raise your hand if your voice is feeling healthy, if your voice is feeling sick.' I am parsing through all of the ways that our voices are NOT how we expect them to be or want them to be, from maybe yelling too much at a sporting event, or being sick or tired. I am letting them have that voice, even if it is just raising their hands."

"When I am voice-modeling and my voice is not working, I explicitly say, 'This is menopause. This is the next thing that is going to happen to you!' Someone needs to tell them this! And there is almost NOOO research on it either! I have taken this on, too, and say, 'Sometimes my voice works, and sometimes it doesn't! It happens when you are in your teens and then it happens again when you are in your fifties!' Just naming it – I think there is power in that."

"We as women are taught to have this embodiment of self-critique. We are taught always to be thinking of something that is wrong with us, or needs fixing. That's the message that floods in from the popular culture. I should be able to say that my voice is not doing what I want it to, but I'm still going to sing and love my whole self for it. I believe we as teachers need to interrupt that negative messaging, and say, particularly with the voice change, 'It's OK that your body is not giving you what you want right now, but you can still be here and express yourself artistically.' How will that help our singers down the road to be more confident in their bodies and in the world?"



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Unlock the Voice, Unlock the Child (cont.)

"I just want to share this with the group here. I surveyed Arioso for my master's program. And I asked, 'Why are you part of Girl Choir? What do you get out of your experience and education that keeps you coming back every week?' The top five answers were: growth and improvement, love of singing and music, people and friends, love of learning, and the repertoire; followed closely by teacher/conductor. And do you know what the lowest rated response was? Concerts. Concerts! The most popular answers involved the words 'growth' and 'improvement,' verbatim. 'I love the music that we sing. It pushes me to learn something new. The music is more than just music.' Our singers are not coming to Girl Choir because they want to perform. They are coming to us for the rehearsal experience. 'Being in a room with all young women who love to sing just as much as I do; the process of learning and unlocking how my voice is growing and changing.'"

"We empower young women to find their voice through the vehicle of the musical rehearsal process. We are using the music as a vehicle to something larger. The repertoire does the heavy lifting. But so do our strategies. Every aspect of our building that space – the curriculum, the teaching, the repertoire – must contribute to the whole."

LAM Girl Choir Teachers (members of the roundtable): Karen Bruno, *Bel Canto*; Marie Putman, *Cantabile*; Jaclyn Kottman, *Arioso*; 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.

Desegregation and Vocal Music

Lee Stovall, Membership Chair

"'What's it like?' Lydia hesitated. Sometimes you almost forgot: that you didn't look like everyone else. In homeroom or at the drugstore or at the supermarket, you listened to morning announcements or dropped off a roll of film or picked out a carton of eggs and felt like just another someone in the crowd. Sometimes you didn't think about it at all. And then sometimes you noticed the girl across the aisle watching, the pharmacist watching, the checkout boy watching, and you saw yourself reflected in their stares: incongruous. Catching the eye like a hook. Every time you saw yourself from the outside, the way other people saw you, you remembered all over again."

~ Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*

I had my epiphany on a Sunday during my junior year at UW-Madison. That afternoon I experienced my very first UW Gospel Choir concert where I was the only (half) white person in the theater, and later that evening I attended a professional European classical concert, and I was the only (half) Black person in the venue. It felt like a culmination of my life as a student of music up until that point: pulled in separate directions and not feeling like I belonged completely in either one. For as much as we talk about the idea that music is the universal language that brings everyone from all walks of life together, it felt like there was such a deep cultural wall built up that even music couldn't break down. On that day, part of my personal mission as a music educator would be to try to desegregate the parts of society I have a small influence over through music. Now, with a new light shining on injustices and the increased belief that Black Lives Matter, is a great time to look at inequities in all of our existing systems, and then hopefully we can find ways to make connections so that all students in Wisconsin have a chance to enjoy vocal music as much as we all do.



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Desegregation and Vocal Music (cont.)

"The first step is admitting there is a problem." I think it is important to note that in observing "racist" structures, the purpose is to find places in which things are imbalanced. This is not to place blame or to make people feel guilt, but to reflect on the current facts and figures, try to see how we got here, and ways of moving forward from here. The music community in Wisconsin is segregated. Part of that comes from the fact that Wisconsin as a state is mostly homogeneously white and the state itself is segregated, but that does not change the fact that the music community in Wisconsin is also segregated. One of the challenges I consistently face is that very often I am the only Black musician or educator in the room, whether it be on state boards and committees, in professional and community choirs, or in most school settings I have taught in. Part of the challenge of my writing this article is that I am under the assumption that there will be few, if any, other Black voices in this newsletter that is supposed to be focused on diversity issues. The pressure to be a representative for an entire race is stifling, and something that I unfortunately have had to deal with constantly within my career. Think about this: Have you ever been the only member of your race in an ensemble? Have you ever been the only member of your race in a professional setting? For many of our students of color in rural and suburban settings, that answer is most likely "yes." I would guess that for many of our directors, that answer would be "no."

One of the clear solutions to our music segregation problem is to amplify Black voices within our state. While only 6.7% of people in Wisconsin are Black according to the 2020 census, that still amounts to 380,000 people, which would be equivalent to the second largest city in the state. 60% of that Black population lives within the city of Milwaukee, where music has been dismantled within the school system for decades. For a K-12 student population of 77,746 students, there are only four formal, full-time high school choir directors. That is one high school choir teacher for every 19,000 students, which would be in and of itself a school district bigger than any in the state except for Racine Unified, Green Bay Area, Kenosha, and Madison Metropolitan. The good news is that steps are being taken finally to bring back what used to be one of the strongest national urban music programs, with a new policy meant to help support the 26,000 students in Milwaukee Public Schools that did not have access to a licensed music teacher. Just this year, there will be 25 new music teaching positions within the district. Imagine the impact a robust music program in the city of Milwaukee can have on the population of students in our music colleges and conservatories, and then those students graduating and becoming part of our professional music community.

The simplest and most effective place from which to start as teachers is to *listen*. My piano teacher growing up was an incredible advocate for me as a complete musician. As I would learn a piece, I would frequently do my own theme and variations or remix of the song, and she not only tolerated the break from my formal training, but she encouraged it and had me perform my spin on Chopin in recital. In our modern world, every single piece of information is out there from every source. As choral educators, especially if you are a high school choir teacher whose students' only choral experience may be with you, we decide whether we want to continue staying in our comfort zone and reinforcing the walls we grow up with, or if we want to push through and seek out new things that can relate to all of our population and build bridges. A rule of thumb I use is to listen especially to those who are most disenfranchised in our society. Trusting and believing them can be challenging, especially if their experience is vastly different than yours, but it can lead to breakthroughs within yourself and your teaching.

My story is just one story, and my perspective is one of many. In the words of Chimamanda Adichie, "The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." If you are passionate about bringing positive change in the context of Black Lives Matter, I challenge you to seek out other stories that are being put out there into the world. Being uncomfortable in this process is a side effect, but often one of growth and positive change within. I am hopeful that there will be a day in the future where I can be amongst my colleagues and not feel different because I am the only one representing my background, and that students across the state can have equitable access to vocal music and use that access to break down barriers.



VOICE of WCDA

From Closeted to Advocate: My Journey as a Gay Educator

Colleen Doubleday, Lincoln Center of the Arts (Milwaukee, WI)

In US school systems today, there are countless kids who identify outside of the norm presented by *society*. In the most recent state-by-state research conducted by the GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network): *"Findings from the GLSEN 2017 National School Climate Survey demonstrate that Wisconsin schools were not safe for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) secondary school students.... Nearly 3 in 5 (58%) experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school during the past year"* (GLSEN State Snapshot, Wisconsin, 2017). It is imperative that educators find ways to make their classrooms more safe, inclusive, and welcoming for students in the LGBT+ community. By providing strategies, personal stories, and resources, I hope to provide a framework for educators to help make their classrooms a safer place for LGBT students.

Growing up in a predominantly straight, white, conservative community, I had no positive LGBT+ adults in my life, and I experienced almost no LGBT+ media or resources in school. Due to this, I struggled with massive amounts of internalized homophobia. Coming out as gay to my family was difficult; I remember in middle school telling my mom, "I just want to be normal," and feeling very ashamed of my sexuality. Unfortunately, many LGBT+ students today experience a very similar situation due to lack of education and exposure.

As educators it is our responsibility to make our classrooms safe for all students. In today's climate, much of our teaching has to be shifted from being "inclusive" or "diverse" to anti-homophobic, anti-transphobic, and so much more. We as educators have to fight actively against systems that keep our students from thriving. In the music classroom (and outside) there are three main ways educators can take accountability and make their classrooms as safe as possible: creating a safe space, removing gender norms from the choral classroom, and providing frequent, powerful, and positive exposure to LGBT+ artists.

Creating a safe space is the single most important way to improve your program for LGBT+ youth. A safe space isn't just a physical location; safe spaces are a way of teaching and interacting with students to show that you are not only an ally but an advocate. At the end of the day, you have to walk the walk and talk the talk. You are the best example for your students.

- Always model kindness, empathy, and appropriate language. Model the way you would want students to talk to you and each other, and model being vulnerable and honest with your students.
- Make accurate pronouns a regular part of class. Introduce your pronouns when you meet new students, and ask your students to share their pronouns as well if they are comfortable doing so. At the start of each school year (or when I get a new student) I give out getting-to-know-you surveys that include questions about preferred pronouns, names and more. Make sure to ask students if it is ok to call them by their preferred pronouns or name in front of other students, staff, and their family.
 - If you make pronoun mistakes, quickly correct yourself and move on. No one likes being misgendered, or to be the focus of attention.
- Immediately shut down hate speech and unacceptable language, and talk to students privately about issues you notice in class. Public shaming is never acceptable. If necessary, it could be helpful to have a non-specific discussion with your entire class about acceptable language and behavior.

As a product of the choral tradition, I know how much gender norms are ingrained into the way choral programs are run. However, there are simple swaps that can help make your program safer and more LGBT+ friendly.

- Work to move away from the title of *men's or women's* choirs; a simple swap to *treble* or *bass* choirs allows for more inclusivity and multiple gender expressions. The same applies to voice parts. I work hard to say, "Ok, sopranos and altos, start at measure 25," instead of, "Ladies, start at measure 25."
- Worried about performance wear? There are numerous non-gender-specific options that can fit your ensemble, such as: choir robes, concert black, sweaters, polos, or t-shirts and matching pants. If you would still like to go the more traditional tux and gown route, make sure to give students the choice of what to wear, and be ok with having tuxes in the soprano section and vice versa.

Lastly, expose your students to a number of different sources of music. Make LGBT+ artists a part of your curriculum, just as much as you would for Black, Native, Latinx, and other artists. LGBT+ artists should not be just a spotlight or included just during pride month. Music is intersectional, and to separate the work of LGBT+ artists would be removing a part of music education as a whole. As an educator you should actively seek to provide numerous opportunities for your students to experience LGBT+ musicians.

In the end, it's all about support. According to the Trevor Project's 2020 National Survey on LGBTQ Mental Health, youth who have at least one "LGBTQ-affirming space" are less likely to have suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide (Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Mental Health 2020). All of the changes above are hard work and slow going. I'm not asking you to change your program in one day, one week, or even a year. Work to break down anti-LGBT+ systems by making changes to your actions, language, and choices. Doing so will make your LGBT+ students feel more safe, accepted, and at home in your program. Change starts with you.

Want more? Here are my sources, including some of the most impactful resources I have found on my advocacy journey:

- *Teaching with Respect: Inclusive Pedagogy for Choral Directors* — Dr. Stephen Sieck
- [LGBT Youth and Family Acceptance](#) — Sabra L. Katz-Wise, PhD, Margaret Rosario, PhD, and Michael Tsappis, MD
- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) — this website has numerous pieces of curriculum and other resources for teachers to become LGBT+ advocates. Some of my favorite resources include:
 - A [blog](#) post about the intersectionality between being queer and being a member of the creative community
 - A [lesson](#) for students or adults on how to be active, not performative allies.
- [GLSEN state-by-state climate survey](#)
- [GALA Choruses](#) — directory of over 190 LGBT+ choruses throughout the world and resources for choir directors and community leaders on LGBT+ advocacy in the choral world.
- [The Trevor Project](#) — LGBT+ youth crisis hotline/chat line, as well as resources for advocates and educators



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Diversity in Vocal Jazz Standards: A Time for Women

Kathy Tuinstra-Schereck, Vocal Jazz R&R Chair

"A jazz standard is simply a tune that is widely accepted in jazz repertoire. The list of jazz standards is not definitive nor is it stagnant; it is, however, representative of a wide variety of styles, and originates from many sources. It illuminates and informs the course of our musical history. It is pervasive, persuasive and persistent. Our highlighted arrangers in today's program are active performers, composers, and educators currently working to realize the significance of this genre of music. They are also genuinely kind humans. Perhaps our program titles, singularly or in combination, remind you of a significant female influence in your life."

~ Janette Hanson, 2020 All-State Vocal Jazz Conductor.

In January, I had the privilege of witnessing my good friend Janette Hanson conduct the All-State Vocal Jazz Ensemble. Her program featured all female composers and included a variety of styles. Some selections were well known, while others not so much. In case you were unable to attend, the program and publication information are as follows:

Sometimes I'm Happy	Vincent Youmans/Irving Caesar
arr. Rosana Eckert, Sound Music Publications	
Lover, Come Back to Me	Sigmund Romberg/Oscar Hammerstein II
arr. Jennifer Barnes, Sound Music Publications	
Come Fly With Me	Jimmy Van Heusen/Sammy Cahn
arr. Jamie Dyer, Sound Music Publications	
Peace	Horace Silver
arr. Michelle Weir, michmusic.com	
Movin' Up	Sharon Broadley
uncjazzpress.com	

Female composers, artists, educators, and performers have taken a back seat for years. It is what was presented to us in our K-12 schools, colleges, and beyond. It's what we see in the media. Why didn't I notice this? Why am I not more vocal? I certainly don't consider myself an activist or political rabble rouser, but I am a strong woman who has overcome a variety of difficulties. I am someone who loves, probably too much, a good verbal fight. Maybe this instinct, not to make waves, just to sit on the porch and wave, is exactly why this inequality exists.



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A Tale of Two Choirs: More Than A Musical Exchange

Erica Breitbarth, Diversity Initiatives Liaison

How do I engage with diverse perspectives when the majority of my singers are middle class and white?

Choir directors often answer this question with their repertoire choices by finding selections that introduce singers to music from a broad range of cultures, languages, and musical traditions. While this is a great place to start, I would like to offer a view into another way to use choral music to engage with diverse perspectives in real time: a choral exchange.

On a cold Monday morning in February, two choirs from very different backgrounds met in an auditorium in Milwaukee. The first was Appleton North High School’s Varsity Treble ensemble, a group of about 40 high school vocalists from a school with a poverty rate of 26% and a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) student population of 25%. The second was my Chamber Choir from Reagan High School in the Milwaukee Public Schools, a group of 50 students from a school with a poverty rate of 61% and a BIPOC student population of 69%.

They began by learning a few pieces together. The two choirs faced each other and the directors taught short simple pieces by rote that were a part of each of each choirs’ repertoire. The opening text of the canon by Will Ulrich they learned foreshadowed what would transpire over the next two hours:

*Building bridges between our divisions
I reach out to you. Will you reach out to me?*

After learning the new pieces, the students spent some time in small group conversations with one another to break the ice. Next, each choir shared some of their favorite pieces in a mini-concert for the other group. As I watched the two groups listening to each other’s performances, it was clear that there was a mutual respect for the musicianship they saw on display. Musically, they were on the same page.

Once the musical performances ended and rapport was established, we had an hour to open up a dialogue between the two choirs. At the beginning, the verbal exchange was surface-level, almost forced. A few minutes into the conversation, I asked the Appleton students to raise their hand if they had music classes in elementary school. All of the hands shot up. What about a middle school choir experience? Most raised their hands. Then I turned to the Reagan students and asked the same questions: Did you have elementary school music? Three hands went up. What about middle school choir? One hand raised. The room fell silent for a moment, as both groups saw for the first time the vast difference in their opportunity and privilege as young singers.

A few seconds later, an Appleton student broke the silence:
“I’m sorry. I just don’t know what to say.”

After that moment of vulnerability, the conversation opened up. Students from both schools started honestly sharing their perceptions of each other, their fears and anxieties about high school and the future. They talked about the ways in which race and class impact their relationships and school communities. Students from both choirs asked difficult questions.

“Do you feel afraid in your neighborhood?”
“Do people at your school judge each other based on how much money they have?”
“How do you feel Black students are treated on your campus?”
“What are the things you wish were different about your school?”

Appleton North Choir Director Marie Putman reflected on the experience saying, “It was the highlight of the year for our singers. We left in awe of the sound they created together, but more than anything, we walked away with a huge appreciation for the community that was so apparent within the ensemble. In our reflections that followed the visit, we couldn't stop talking about how real everyone was, and it helped us realize our desire for the same rapport within our community.”

My student teacher Eva Mora summed it up well. She said, “I expected a conversation about music, but instead discussion began around privilege and experience in the school system. The way that two different worlds came together and opened up was astonishing. They shared perspectives on the world and found similarities. Both groups loved music, and both were trying to figure out their place in high school. The Reagan singers were open to discuss their experiences in school, their neighborhoods, and cultural backgrounds. Because trust was established, they were not afraid to bring to light some complex and challenging subjects. The Appleton students listened, asked questions, processed what they were hearing, and empathized with their peers. The day was supposed to be about music, but something bigger came from the two hours they spent together. They built a strong bridge of understanding and empathy with one another.”

The time flew by and the students did not want to leave. They exchanged numbers and snapchat usernames (even creating a group chat called “Rappleton”) and vowed to stay in touch. They immediately asked if we could set up another time for them to make music together and hang out, this time in Appleton. We ended the exchange the way it began, singing together, but instead of standing across from each other they sang side by side. The last line of the canon they learned together was:

*With all of our voices and all of our visions,
Friends, we can make such sweet harmony.*





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Diversity Initiatives High Five

Erica Breitbarth, Diversity Initiatives Liaison

I chose to focus this High Five on pieces by contemporary female composers and pieces that are in the native languages of students in my classroom.

1. TaReKiTa

Reena Esmail

SATB *a cappella*

Self-published — [Contact composer for permissions](#)

Reena Esmail is a young Indian-American composer who creates compositions that fuse her deep understanding of Hindustani traditional music and Western art music. The text of the piece is based on Hindustani rhythmic syllables (similar to Takadimi) used to learn complex rhythmic patterns. The fast tempo, repeating ostinato patterns, and tongue-twisting syllables make the piece instantly engaging and very accessible for younger choirs. She also [provides a guide](#) in which she sings all of the layers of the piece herself to help with pronunciation and the vocal nuances of the melody.

<https://www.reenaesmail.com/>

[Reagan Chamber Choir in Present Music Concert 2019](#)

2. La Llorona from *Three Mexican Folk Songs*

Traditional Mexican melody/arr. David Conte

SATB (divisi) with guitar, two violins, and double bass (or piano only)

TTBB and SSAA versions available

E.C. Schirmer Publishing 8199

“La Llorona” (translated as “weeping woman”) draws its melody from a haunting folk tale about the ghost of a mother who continues to roam the earth crying out to her children, a story familiar to most people of Mexican descent. Some of your singers may know the melody from the recent Disney film [Coco](#), but this choral arrangement expands on the original melody to include lush harmonies and a beautiful interplay between the voices and instrumental accompaniment. There is some eight-part divisi, but the passages are often repeated and provide an opportunity to work on tuning seventh chords. If you have any singers with a Mexican cultural background, they could tell the story of La Llorona the way they learned it within their family tradition and assist with the Spanish diction.

<https://www.canticleistributing.com/catalog/product/view/id/50236/s/three-mexican-folk-songs-3-la-llorona-piano-choral-score-for-satb-version/>

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

3. Dreamily

Lauren Barta

SSATB (with alto solo) *a cappella*

Self-published — [Contact composer for permissions](#)

“Dreamily” is an unpublished work by young Wisconsin composer Lauren Barta. Performed at the [Present Music Thanksgiving Concert](#) in 2019, the piece is based on a Sara Teasdale poem about the dream-like qualities of twilight. In describing the mood of the work, Barta said, “Twilight allows for our imagination to run wild, but can also stimulate a meditative state, both of which I tried to capture in the piece. I invite you to close your eyes and picture twilight throughout the piece and feel the slowness, stillness and sheer beauty of twilight.” The piece employs the percussive vocal elements of contemporary *a cappella* that rhythmically propels the work at some moments, but later moves to paint a placid musical tapestry below the soloist. For teaching the piece, I would suggest [reaching out to the composer](#) to gain more musical and personal insights about the work and perhaps inspire some of your young singers to try their hand at composing!

<https://bit.ly/39PoAwX>

<https://bit.ly/2PkqHzG>



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Diversity Initiatives High Five (cont.)

4. El Helwa Di
Edward Torikian
SATB *a cappella*
earthsongs S-450

“El Helwa Di” provides a musical window into Arab culture and language. Based on an Egyptian melody by Sayyid Darwish, this arrangement adds percussive ostinatos and overlapping melodic ideas to depict the sounds of the morning in an Egyptian neighborhood. The piece also utilizes some microtones, an opportunity to stretch your choir beyond traditional Western diatonicism. If you have Arabic-speaking singers or community members, this provides a great opportunity for cultural responsiveness, as they can provide assistance with interpretation and diction. (If not, here is a [Pronunciation Guide](#) from a native speaker.) The themes of this piece might also open up an opportunity for you to have your singers learn about each other as they describe the soundscapes of their own home, favorite place, or country of origin.

[http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/index.php?](http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_sheet_music_info&products_id=3027)

[main_page=product_sheet_music_info&products_id=3027](http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_sheet_music_info&products_id=3027)

<http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/media/mp3s/el%20helwa%20di%202.mp3>

5. Heart Chant
Pauline Oliveros
Any voicing (including your audience!)
Publicly available

“Heart Chant” comes from the Deep Listening tradition, created and cultivated by American composer and humanitarian Pauline Oliveros. Deep Listening encourages singers to interact sonically with their surroundings using their voices and bodies. Heart Chant was written in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and seeks to unite a group of people through sound. It was recently performed around the world in June 2020 for [Make Music Day](#) in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Try performing this piece at the start of a concert with your choirs and audience and experience the centering and unifying power of this piece. You could even try this virtually with your students, as the piece does not require rhythmically synchronous sound production. In performing many of [the sound meditations](#) with my choirs in both rehearsal and performance, singers felt freed from the hegemony of standard notation, as they listened and harmonized freely. For more information, go to [Pauline Oliveros’ website](#) or view her [TED Talk on Deep Listening](#).

<https://bit.ly/2DuJXrg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA5derxRc34>



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Repertoire & Resources High Five

Karen Bruno, Repertoire & Resources State Chair

Please note that the selections below are all composed or arranged by culture bearers, musicians who thoroughly understand the history, meaning, and context of the music they are putting to paper for us to learn.

1. Lift Every Voice and Sing

J. Rosamond Johnson (James Weldon Johnson, text)/arr. Rollo Dilworth

Two-Part Treble with piano

Hal Leonard 00291719

Often called the “Black National Anthem,” this arrangement is accessible for young voices and could easily be sung in unison throughout. This setting does contain all of the verses, and harmonies are easily attainable for less experienced singers.

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Lift-Every-Voice-and-Sing/11001656.item#/submit>

<https://www.facebook.com/phoenixboyschoir/videos/lift-every-voice-and-sing-arr-rollo-dilworth/1201903673532335/>

2. Lord, Make Me an Instrument

M. Roger Holland, II

SATB and piano (opt. orchestral and/or rhythm section parts available)

GIA G-5627, African-American Church Music Series

This slow, straightforward gospel tune begins in unison and then opens into homophonic four-part writing accessible for church choirs, early high school choirs, and older middle school choirs.

<https://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/lord-make-me-an-instrument-print-g5627>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDWbFXcIsn4>

3. Lammaa Badaa Yatathannaa

Traditional Mūwashshah/arr. Shireen Abu-Khader

SATB *a cappella*, but voicing can be flexible

earthsongs S-366

The mūwashshah is a strophic musical art song and poetic form that originated in Muslim-ruled Spain c.1492; the song form continues to exist in the Arab world in oral form. Palestinian/Jordanian composer and conductor Shireen Abu-Khader’s setting gives the *samai thaqil* rhythm to the basses as they imitate the typical pattern of the drum (thus the piece could be performed with instruments and treble voices, for instance). The piece is strophic, although the melody is given to different voice parts, and the poetry is about love. Since Arabic songs often refer to women with the male pronoun, the beloved could be male or female in this text.

http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_sheet_music_info&cPath=1_8_6&products_id=2813

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=he2ijaw323A>

4. Alma Llanera

Pedro Elias Gutierrez/arr. Angel Sauce

SATB *a cappella*

earthsongs S-37

(Also available SAB; earthsongs S-424)

This joyful piece, sometimes called the second Venezuelan national anthem, is a joropo, or dancing song that uses 3/4 and 6/8 simultaneously. This arrangement has the singers occasionally imitating the instruments that would traditionally accompany a joropo: the cuatro (four-stringed guitar) and the harp. Consider adding maraca and joropo dance steps.

http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_sheet_music_info&cPath=1_8_6&products_id=2128

<https://youtu.be/9I2UWwNelus>

5. Kaisa-isa Niyan

Nilo Alcala

SSAATTBB *a cappella*

Walton WJMS1156

This fast, highly rhythmic composition is based on a children’s counting song from the southern region of the Philippines. It is, therefore, sung in the regional Maguindanao, not Tagalog. Filipino composer Nilo Alcala’s setting uses onomatopoeiac syllables that imitate a traditional Maguindanoan percussion ensemble. [A pronunciation guide is available on Alcala’s website.](#)

<https://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/kaisaisa-niyan-print-wjms1156>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86qX3_rzIXg

Additional links with diversity-focused repertoire and resources:

- A [listing](#) of non-idiomatic compositions by Black composers, compiled by Marques Garrett.
- Theory examples by women: <https://musictheoryexamplesbywomen.com>
- Composer Diversity Database: <https://www.composerdiversity.com>
- [LGBTQ+ Choral Repertoire and Resources](#), compiled by GALA Choruses.
- [Music](#) by living Black composers.



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World Musics and Cultures High Five

Raymond Roberts, World Musics and Cultures R&R Chair

1. **Lizela**
South African (Xhosa)/collected by Mollie Stone
SATB a cappella
4524B (book & DVD)

This joyful Xhosa folk song sounds like an invitation to be happy! There is joy in the text. There is joy in the rhythm. There is joy in each section of the choir as they ululate and “move the spirit” in the room! Collected by Mollie Stone, the teaching resource features a community choir from South Africa singing each voice part (and parts combined) to ensure the authenticity of a genuine oral tradition musical experience. Program this piece to bring joy to your students and audience and to enjoy the process as much as the final product.

https://www.singers.com/item/Mollie_Stone/Vela_Vela/4524b/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3gBBXlacdE>

2. **Ojos Azules**
Andean folk song/arr. Stephen Hatfield
SSA voices and percussion
Hal Leonard 48019623

“Ojos Azules” is an Andean folk song, attributed to both Bolivian and Peruvian composers. Whether it was Gilberto Rojas Enriquez or Manuel Casazola Huancco, the song captures the mystery of the Andes, giving voice to the soundscape of traditional Andean instruments like the antara, while the poetry acknowledges the complexity and tension that existed throughout the period of the colonization of South America by Spain. Treat your singers and your audience to the music of a region rich with hauntingly beautiful musical traditions.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/48019623/ojos-azules?subsiteid=1>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waS2ZpBVCoA>

3. **Dwijavanthi**
Indian raga/arr. Ethan Sperry
SATB a cappella
earthsongs S-337

“Dwijavanthi” is a Carnatic raga that has its roots in Hindustani music. This arrangement of the raga by Ethan Sperry challenges the singers to imitate the sounds that you would hear in a small traditional Indian instrumental ensemble: overtones to recreate the shruti box, percussive sounds to replicate tabla, and the use of *sollukattu*, which are rhythmic syllables and phrases linked to specific units of dance movement. Celebrate the incredible capacity and versatility of the human voice with this stunning selection.

http://earthsongschoralmusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_sheet_music_info&cPath=1_8_6&products_id=2770

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVdSE34YRIY>

4. **Caturog Na, Nonoy**
Lullaby from the Philippines/arr. George Hernandez
SATB a cappella
Pavane Publishing P1228/Hal Leonard 08301768

This song evokes the reassuring feelings of the warmth and comfort of a mother cradling her baby as she sings the infant to sleep. Featuring a beautiful alto solo and simple, yet sublime harmonic accompaniment from the chorus, this arrangement by George Hernandez captures the essence of a lullaby. Hernandez is a significant voice in bringing to larger and wider audiences the beauty and vitality of Filipino folk songs.

“Caturog Na, Nonoy” is from the Bicol region, a group of islands situated near the central region of the Philippine Islands.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/8301768/caturog-na-nonoy>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ys-cp-T-wU>

5. **Nocturne**
Adolphus Hailstork
SATB a cappella (divisi)
Theodore Presser 312-41645

“Nocturne” is the second song in a set of songs entitled *Five Short Choral Works*, composed by Adolphus Hailstork. The song is in English and composed by an American. I am including this song in the World Cultures and Musics High Five repertoire list as it represents an oft-overlooked and rarely-performed genre of choral music: non-idiomatic music of Black composers. Let’s change that! The composer himself describes “Nocturne” as an “impressionistic tone poem.” It is certainly that, and more. Hailstork sets an extraordinary text by Unitarian Universalist Rev. Jim Curtis to music that incorporates an aleatoric opening section, Anglican-style chant, powerful homophony, and changing meter that reflects the natural stress pattern of the text. Program this extraordinary work and get to know the non-idiomatic work of Black composers. You will be glad you did!

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Nocturne/1955459.item#/submit>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpMw5XHEAcc>