



# VOICE of WCDA

Spring Issue—2021

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# VOICE of WCDA

## Letter from the President

Rebecca Renee Winnie

As my term as WCDA president comes to a close and Zack Durlam prepares to take the helm, I thought it worthwhile to look back at the work of WCDA over the past two years. Much of this work will continue as the dynamic team of leaders on the WCDA board and their committees serve our members and profession in remarkable ways.

Thinking back to the summer of 2019, we experienced WCDA's first Summer Conference that combined our NextDirection and Refresh! projects. This linking of two previously separate events allows our professional development and our students' exploration of the choral profession to feed each other while sharing the resources of experts and facilities. In 2019 we were at UW-Parkside, and great thanks to Phillip Swan, Herb Berendsen, Karrie Been, and Steve Sieck for their leadership in making the Summer Conference a success. In 2020 there was some further re-envisioning and great preparatory work done for a dynamic Summer Conference, which will now happen fully July 11-15, 2022! Please take time to encourage your high school and collegiate students who are showing interest in our profession to take part in NextDirection in 2022, and please plan to attend Refresh! each summer for your own professional development. Thanks to our Summer Conference leadership: Derek Machan, Paul Gregg, and Matt Wanner.

In November of 2019, WCDA held the annual Singing in Wisconsin, and hundreds of students grades 5-12 participated enthusiastically in a festival choral experience in four different sites across the state. Thank you to Katelyn Peterson and the District Reps for your dedicated work on this project! In the past two years, the board has had lengthy discussions about the strengths of and concerns regarding the Singing in Wisconsin project. As a result, an ad hoc committee was formed and spent an enormous amount of time and care reimagining Singing in Wisconsin to be more relevant, accessible, equitable, and engaging for all students. A proposal was made and accepted by the WCDA board to make the following changes:

- ⇒ Since SIW often provides the first choral experience for many younger singers, we are **expanding to include 4th grade** to provide choral opportunities to more of our young singers. This will further serve our elementary general music teachers. It is important to note that this is the only WCDA project for students that does not require the director to be a member of WCDA, allowing for additional outreach to Wisconsin teachers and students.
- ⇒ Also, sixth grade will now be a pivot point. In some schools grade 6 is part of elementary school, others intermediate school, and still others it is part of middle school. There are many social and musical reasons that teachers may make different placement choices for their sixth grade singers, including voice changes.
- ⇒ Therefore, three choirs will now be offered in Singing in Wisconsin:
  - **Youth Choir – Grades 4, 5, 6 (treble voices)**
  - **Middle-Level Choir – Grades 6, 7, 8 (all voice types)**
  - **High School Choir – Grades 9-12 (all voice types)**
- ⇒ **In another tweak to the project, SIW sites will now be listed without boundaries. This will allow directors to choose the site most convenient and best for their students.** Our most recent sites are in Chippewa Falls, Kaukauna, Wisconsin Rapids, and Waukesha.
- ⇒ **Repertoire for SIW will also be adjusted:**
  - **Now, all of the music will be learned on the day of SIW**, eliminating the musical preparation time needed of participating teachers. There will be repertoire collaboration and substitution opportunities for the featured conductors.
  - Also, there will now be **one common piece** of repertoire across all sites and **all choirs**, further expanding the original spirit of the Singing in Wisconsin concept – now having grade 4-12 students singing the same piece, on the same day, in various locations throughout the state.
  - **The High School SIW experience will become an exploration of contemporary a cappella singing.** This offers a unique experience both for singers who are “non-traditional” choral festival participants, as well as students who may be “festivaled out” as leaders in their choral programs. Contemporary a cappella is a specific repertoire genre that treats the popular vocal style in a creative choral manner. WCDA is excited to serve students through this particular repertoire during the SIW experience.
- ⇒ Finally, WCDA wants Singing in Wisconsin to be the MOST accessible choral experience for students and families throughout the state.
  - Therefore, SIW will have a “Flex Registration” plan – \$45 will continue to be the standard fee, but there will be a lower \$20 fee for students who receive free/reduced lunch.
  - The performance at the end of SIW will shift to a donation/pay what-you-can model
  - The R&R Chairs for Community and Music in Worship will reach out to directors to ask their adult singers to sponsor a child's SIW choral experience, knowing that for many of the younger students, this is often their first choral experience. \$45 from a number of the adult choristers in the state could greatly assist a scholarship program AND connect singers across the ages!
- ⇒ Watch for more detailed SIW information coming out this spring, and let us hope that our students might be able to sing face to face this year on November 13th. Thank you to Jaclyn Kottman and the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for their hard work on restructuring Singing in Wisconsin!



# VOICE of WCDA

## Letter from the President (cont.)

Rebecca Renee Winnie

In January of 2020, we had an exceptional stand-alone All-State Conference in Appleton reaching hundreds of our advanced singers grades 5-collegiate level. Thank you to Schuyler Pietz and her All-State team! In 2021, Mike Jones and his team created an exceptional virtual All-State experience for our students. I stand amazed at the work of our leaders who completely reimagine our choral experiences for these pandemic times.

The 2020 Central and North Central ACDA Regional Conference occurred the first week of March in Milwaukee. Many Wisconsin choirs gave exceptional performances; a number of Wisconsin directors presented inspiring interest sessions; the Cream City Honor Choir brought Milwaukee Public high school music students together for a choral experience and performance; and there was an evening of *Sing Wisconsin!*, featuring a variety of Wisconsin Choirs as well as a conference reading of two works by Wisconsin composers.

In 2019 we added two positions to our WCDA board: a Diversity Initiatives Liaison and a Membership Chair. Great appreciation to Erica Breitbarth and Lee Stovall for being the first in these positions and for their remarkable contributions to our WCDA work.

All of the WCDA board's work in the past two years has been influenced by the desire to address issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. To this end, we have done high-level work with a committee of past-presidents, led by Jerry Hui, to create a WCDA Foundation, with the expressed aim to generate more funding capacity so we can eliminate financial barriers to participation in our events. Our working mission statement is this: *The Wisconsin Choral Directors Foundation (WCDF)* supports underserved students and teachers by providing financial assistance for opportunities to engage with, be inspired by, and grow through choral music.

In other news, WCDA's *The Voice* has continued to be published three times a year with wonderful articles and repertoire suggestions provided by leadership on the board and guest writers. Thank you to Alexa Doebele for her dedicated work on *The Voice* content and to Melissa Ebert for her expert technical work. Please, remember that past issues of this helpful newsletter are available on our website.

During 2020, WCDA has addressed the pandemic head-on with roundtable discussions led by R&R chairs and other state leaders, an advocacy video, an active Facebook community offering expertise and support, daily choral videos on Facebook, and an active presence in the Wisconsin Music Strong coalition, led by WSMA/WMEA executive director Laurie Fellenz. Thank you, Steve Sieck, for representing WCDA in this coalition and for organizing our Wisconsin Strong resources on the WCDA website. And most importantly, thank YOU, WCDA members, for your generous support and for YOUR sharing in all that I've listed above and more. It has been inspiring to see the support that you have offered one another in such a challenging time.

Of course, we all remember that in January (2021) WCDA presented its first virtual state conference. Great thanks again to Zack Durlam and a dynamic conference team for their planning and expertise! The performance video brought tears to many eyes and joy to many hearts as 30 choirs shared one precious minute of their pandemic music-making with us. Thank you!

Please know that WCDA is financially stable and able to continue to keep our website up to date, expand our technical capacity for online events like our January conference and the All-State choirs, and pay our fantastic office manager, Melissa Ebert, all while having a significant reduction in revenue streams.

WCDA is presently working on a website page to easily accept donations to support need-based scholarships for our Singing in Wisconsin, All-State, and NextDirection students. Watch for details in the coming months and consider making a contribution.

Finally, know that your WCDA organization is here to help. Reach out to one another. You can contact the leadership team through the website. It has been my pleasure and honor to lead you and this incredible leadership team, and I look forward to my new role as Past-President beginning July 1.

Thank you WCDA members for your dedicated work to keep choral music happening in creative and new ways during this past year. Thank you for the innovative, powerful, joyful music-making in our state. Thank you for your perseverance and for your dedication to this art, to your singers, and to one another. May you keep hope and know strength.



# VOICE of WCDA

## Letter from the Editor

Alexa Doebele

Just one year ago (it seems more like five!) I wrote about change. I think at this point I can safely say that we have all experienced more than our fair share of change over this last year. We have had to endure change by design – that is, change as a result of external forces – but the time is approaching for us to be able to take control of the changes in our lives. We all want our lives to be “normal” again, but we are more likely to experience a “new normal” than to go back to the way things were. Now is the time to take stock of what I have come to call “pandemic silver linings” as we rebuild our lives and our profession. Several of the articles in this issue of *The Voice* do just that: the authors examine what they have learned from their experiences leading choirs during these most interesting times and reflect on what they do not wish to lose moving forward. I hope you find these reflections to be as inspirational as I did!

There is yet one more change I should mention – that after this issue, I will be stepping down as editor of *The Voice* because of some additional professional obligations I’ll be taking on. I have been privileged to serve the WCDA membership, and I have enjoyed providing a forum for the wealth of knowledge shared by WCDA members for WCDA members. Thank you to Rebecca Winnie, who brought me on as editor, to Melissa Ebert, WCDA’s Office Manager, who formats and distributes *The Voice*, and to all those who have contributed articles, “High Fives,” and other content. All of *YOU* are the ones who truly give voice to *The Voice*!

## WCDA Recognitions

Steve Sieck

President Barack Obama once said, “If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.” Let us take this moment to celebrate colleagues in our organization who have filled our world with hope.

Please join me in celebrating WCDA members who completed terms of service in 2019 and would have been celebrated last January (except that we had the regional conference in Milwaukee) and then would have been celebrated at Refresh! (except that we had the pandemic). We give thanks to you for your service.

### **Completed term 2018-2019 -- were to be recognized 2020 Refresh Conference**

**Joy Paffenroth:** Past-President (President, President-Elect), 2013-2019

**John Popke:** Treasurer, 2015-2019

**Brad Burrill:** Central District Representative, 2017-2019

**Amy Wright:** Northeast District Representative, 2015-2019

**John Hughes:** R&R Coordinator, 2017-2019

**Phillip Swan:** NextDirection Chair, 2017-2019

**Herb Berendsen:** NextDirection Chair, 2017-2019

**Sara Holub:** Refresh! Chair, 2017-2019

**Zachary Durlam:** Editor of *The Voice*, 2015-2019

**Susan McAllister:** Summer Conference Chair, 2018-2019

**Ellen Shuler:** R&R Children & Community Youth Individual Chair, 2013-2019

**James Carpenter:** R&R Community Choirs Individual Chair, 2016-2019

**Alexa Doebele:** R&R Collegiate Chair, 2017-2019

**Tim Buchholz:** R&R Vocal Jazz Individual Chair, 2013-2019

**Eric Barnum:** R&R Wisconsin Composition Chair, 2017-2019.

Please join me in celebrating friends who rotated off of terms of service in summer 2020.

### **Completed term 2019-2020 -- recognized 2021 Conference**

**Sam Wulterkens:** Southeast District Representative, 2016-2020

**John Hughes:** almost one year as Central District Representative, 2019-2020

**Katelyn Peterson:** Singing in Wisconsin Chair, 2017-2020

**Karrie Been:** Refresh! Chair, 2017-2020

**Schuyler Pietz:** All-State Chair, 2018-2019

**Raymond Roberts:** R&R High School Individual Chair, 2018-2020

**Bert Pinsonneault:** R&R Community Choirs Individual Chair, 2019-2020

**Eduardo Garcia-Novelli:** R&R Repertoire Specific Area Chair and World Music and Cultures Individual Chair, 2013-2020

With gratitude,

Steve Sieck

WCDA Immediate Past-President



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## **In Memory of Sara Holub**

Karrie Been, Former Co-Chair of Refresh! with Sara, Kimberly Area School District colleague and friend

Our friend and colleague, Sara Holub, left us unexpectedly on March 26. Much the same as any shocking event, I will always remember where I was when I received the text message to tell me of the news. “This can't be true, we were just chatting over text last night.” Sadly, it was true. So many exchanges with friends and colleagues followed, each person as much in shock as the previous.

Sara offered her skills and compassion in so many places. She was a teacher in Pulaski, Kimberly, and Green Bay Preble. In 2021 she was a Golden Apple Awards “Teacher of Distinction.” Her passion for choral excellence was equivalent with her ability to connect with her students, as well as her colleagues. Sara received the WCDA Outstanding Young Choral Director Award. She reached outside of the classroom in the choral field by serving WCDA as an All-State Choir coordinator and Co-Chair of Refresh. She also accompanied the Boy Choir in Green Bay. Her passion for mentoring young people reached beyond the choral world, as she also served as a coach for students in marksmanship.

Sara’s passion for Jeopardy was realized when she qualified to compete in the teacher tournament. I remember one state conference in Wausau when she was diligently practicing her trivia in our hotel room. Through her television appearances, her bucket list item was checked, and she was so grateful for the new friends she made through the experience.

Reading through the vast number of tributes to Sara on her Facebook page, it is impossible to completely understand the great ways she has positively influenced so many people. Her students’ messages are among those that hit hardest. One young man wrote that he is currently enrolled as a choral music education major due to Sara.

“I never really fit in until 8th grade jazz choir. I had friends, but not many, and they were very on and off. 8th grade jazz choir was the first time I felt like I was part of a community. I felt special. Ms. Holub was very proud of that group. She really cared. And looking back on some of the petty middle school drama she had to deal with, I know it wasn't easy. If I had stopped singing then, my life would look very different right now. I can safely say that if it weren't for Ms. Holub, I wouldn't be where I am today. I think many people would agree when I say that Ms. Holub changed my life, and I would not be the person I am today without her. It's sad to see a choir director pass, especially knowing how passionate music teachers are. I'll be happy with myself if I turn out anything like her.”

Choral friends, let us be moved by this legacy, through Sara’s excellent and humble example, and continue to embrace our challenges and rewards as music educators.

Obituary posted for Sara Holub:

<http://www.muehlboettcher.com/obituary/Sara-Holub>



# VOICE of WCDA

## A Year of “Opportunity”: Reflections of 2020-21

Heather Thorpe, Southwest Representative

**Heather Thorpe Facebook – March 29, 2020**

“All lessons for the first full week of online teaching are done and uploaded to Canvas. Whew! Now to see if anything will work. Trying to anticipate what students may need when you are not with them and helping them is tricky. This is a HUGE learning opportunity for me right now (that's the way I am choosing to look at it anyway).”

### **Present-day**

Well, what a “learning opportunity” it has been. As I am wrapping up my 25th year teaching, I can confidently say this has been the most challenging year I have ever had. I am generally a positive person. I love teaching, and I love music, but if I never see a Zoom screen or teach in a room by myself again, I'll be happy. But educators need to continue to reflect on our teaching, to build and grow as educators. We already do most of these things, but we have to examine HOW we do them this year. Though I have often broken down in tears over the constant changes brought before me, I would be remiss if I ignored what I learned. I know that we'll never be completely back to normal, and I think that is likely a good thing.

### **Relationships**

We all know that relationships with students are essential, and every educator I know does a fantastic job forming these relationships. What this year highlighted for me was the importance of relationships with other colleagues. We all attend conferences and workshops, but this year communication, connection, and building community with each other have been vital. I called, emailed, Zoomed, and webinar-ed more educator and music friends this year than any other time in my career. Let's be honest. We have always held each other up, but not like this year. We all went beyond the standard check-in at convention type of connection. These connections proved valuable for getting new ideas from colleagues, but we also held each other up and supported each other with words of encouragement, empathy, and suggestions. I will forever treasure the times I reached out to colleagues, and they sent me all of their teaching materials for the week in the hope that it would help me. I will never teach in a silo again. Whether through text, email, and Zoom, annual check-ins need to continue to keep our art strong. Imagine what we can do when we continue holding each other up and helping each other. No longer left to “figure it out” on our own, we will only be better for our students.

### **Course Management Systems**

I started using the course management system Canvas several years ago to house all class recordings and resources. Whether Canvas, Google Classroom, Schoology, or something else, having every single lesson plan available for the students to see has given the students more ownership of their learning. We have had students doing audio submissions, reflections, and goal-setting for years. These systems have streamlined how we communicate their growth while giving immediate feedback to the individual. I was able to make videos for every student that directly correlated with the content they just submitted. Because we were virtual, this also allowed me to connect with every student. I just can't do this with 50 other kids in the room and no small group lessons.

When they could see the entire lesson plan every day, I had students mention that I missed some things. They went back and wanted to delve deeper into the learning. I am not going to say that every single student did this. That's completely crazy. But this allowed students to delve deeper into their learning and allowed me to give multiple entry points to their learning: Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced, and even an Intro Beginner level if needed.

### **Projects and Project-Based Learning**

Many educators said how much they loved not worrying about performance and focused on learning about the music. Though full performances will be back, we will continue to perform less music and focus on the Standards of *Perform, Create, Connect, and Analyze*. We explored using *SoundTrap* to collaborate and create arrangements, *MusicFirst* to monitor progress towards goals, ear training with *Auralia*, *SightReading Factory*, and many more. These allow for differentiation, encourage student voice and choice, and center on their creativity and musicianship.

### **Practice Tracks**

Before the pandemic, I rarely used practice tracks. It just didn't work for me. I made them occasionally for some sectional work, but I always focused on the entire ensemble learning everything together. The act of making practice tracks is here to stay. When I created practice tracks, I learned, sang, and played every single line of music. I had always done score study like this before, but creating an entire performance helped me understand the music more than ever. I listened carefully to how the music worked together, found places where my voice struggled to match or tune, and changed my voice's timbre and style for each piece. I focused on the entire text within the music, re-doing certain parts of a piece so it would work better musically, and the list goes on and on. This process helped me understand the full score at a whole new level. My struggles are often my student's struggles. My working them out with a complete performance helped my students better understand the music. I always have come to class with hundreds of strategies and outcomes, but this strengthened those strategies and teaching standards (also, I have a lot of fun SSAA performances by yours truly of typically SATB pieces).

This year has not been perfect. I know I have made many mistakes (my students are the first to tell me that). But because of the relationships I have with them, they were the first to let me know that it was ok. We were all in uncharted waters. The list of takeaways from our year will be vast both as students and as teachers.

I look forward to discussing what you learned and what you plan to continue in your future. It is what will continue to keep our art strong—our connections, relationships, and holding each other up.

A special thanks to Molly Petroff – Waunakee High School, Amelia Armstrong – Platteville High School, Marcy Russell – Platteville Middle School, and Madelaine Trewin – long term sub for Savanna Oaks Middle School (Verona) for contributing their thoughts and ideas.



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## Hearing Ourselves for the First Time

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

As my singers have come to expect, I posed a question at the start of our final rehearsal:

*“What will it be like when we hear our voices together, live, for the very first time tonight?”*

Yes, for the very first time.

I teach a girl choir of 5th, 6th and 7th graders with the Lawrence Community Music School in Appleton. Our Girl Choir season this year was conducted in a fully virtual format for the duration of the entire year.

By now, most of us are not unfamiliar with virtual choir rehearsals, so I will save the commentary on how outrageously challenging virtual choral instruction is. We all know it already. What I do want to point out is that because our rehearsals were fully virtual, we had no idea what we sounded like together. The singers knew how they sounded in their own spaces, what I sounded like through their devices, and how they sounded in duet with me. But the sound of our combined voices was an unknown entity to us. We were a choir that had never heard themselves.

Throughout the course of the year, we had developed routines and procedures that allowed for individual and small groups of voices to be heard in the virtual space. We turned on our microphones for specifically assigned phrases and embraced the use of the chat for learning and quick personal assessment activities. It was always a particularly delightful occasion when it was a choir member’s birthday, as she was given the choice to hear the birthday song performed for her in one of two versions: the “Neat and Tidy” version (i.e., microphones muted) or the “Hot Mess” version (i.e., all the microphones on). And I’m sure it will come as no surprise that the birthday person chose the “Hot Mess” version every single time.

Nonetheless, we know that it just isn’t the same.

So when it was announced that we had made arrangements to be able to meet in person for our final rehearsal of the year, the response from my singers was nothing short of unbridled, giddy, all-the-exclamation-points-in-the-chat excitement! (Remember: these are 10-13 year olds.) In the two sessions preceding that final, in-person rehearsal, we doubled down on preparations and eagerly anticipated making live recordings in our beautiful performance venue.

Thus, for the very first time, we gathered – masked and six feet apart from each other. And when we let loose that first siren of sound, our eyes brightened, our ears tingled, and our spirits soared through the space. It was a moment filled with wonder and full of awe. Hearing our voices unified for the first time as a choir was almost indescribable. It was magical. It was beautiful. Our voices sounded as one, and we were reminded that we were limitless.

Dear colleagues, I share this story because it is April at the time I write this, and you may be tired and weary. Hold on to hope; press on, friends. As you continue to find new and creative ways to make music with your students, let their voices once again fill you with wonder and awe. Whether it is the first time or the hundredth time this year, may you remember that you are magical, and you are beautiful. Together, we can be limitless, both in music and in life.



# VOICE of WCDA

## Community Choirs and the Lifelong Benefits of Singing

Cathy Reitz, Community Choirs R&R Chair

Well, let's get it out of the way. The last twelve months have not been easy on anyone, and in my opinion, community choirs really took a hit. We all tried to figure out a way to keep our choirs alive and keep ourselves sane. If you are reading this, you have been successful at keeping your choir alive (in some way) and yourself sane (in some way). I'd like to share the stories of three community choirs that have found success, each in their own way. Each choir did what was best for them.

The first one is the Chippewa Valley Youth Choir. This choir has been going in one form or another since the late 1980's. After a short break from 2010-2016, the choir started up again and had just reached 50+ members in the fall of 2019. We had outgrown our rehearsal location and moved to the choir room at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. We began a partnership with UWEC. A beautiful relationship was formed, and I could not wait to see what was going to happen. January and February were exciting. March was also exciting in quite a different way. When it became apparent that rehearsals would not be in person, a decision was made to hold off on any type of rehearsals. Elementary students were being bombarded by virtual classes, and the choir did not want to add to that. Success came from our plan: get the music library updated (from 1986), get an organizational board, start plans for a 501c3, make a one-, three- and five-year plan for the choir, and solidify the partnership with the university. This included plans for UW students to work with the choir. When singers come back, this choir will be ready to make music. This choir found success.

The second choir is the Chippewa Valley Community Chorus, formed in the 1970's. I was the fourth conductor in their history and had just completed ten years of leading the choir in 2020 and was passing the position on to a wonderful young conductor. Our season is short – only nine weeks and a concert. It has always been a bright spot in January, February, and March. This choir had also blossomed in 2020. It had attained its largest membership, donations were up, and there was an amazing sold-out concert at the beautiful Heyde Center in Chippewa Falls, on March 8, 2020. Attendance was 300 plus. One week later, before we could have our wrap-up meeting, we were in lock down. This choir decided to make sure each member had a copy of the concert to keep the memory alive, to keep in touch with the singers, and to continue to make plans for 2021. The new director took on the challenge, and we had a successful 2021 virtual season. We sang because we had something to say. We used songs from our past concerts, added a weekly sing-along led by a choir member, and we gained a few new members who really needed to be singing. We could not be the choir we were used to being, but we became an awesome music club choir ready for our next season in 2022. This choir found success.

The third choir is the Stand in the Light Memory Choir. Stand in the Light Memory Choir uses the power of music to move people with memory loss and their care partners to rediscover themselves, make new friends, laugh together, and contribute to their community. I was one of the co-founders when the choir started in the fall of 2016. Like the first two choirs, we were growing. When we started this choir, we knew that consistency was key to our members success but COVID-19 put a stop to that consistency. We not only sing, but the choir also gives members the chance to engage socially and continue to participate in a community event. We needed to find a way to continue. A plan was formed so we could start going virtual on Zoom in July. A team was formed that included our original staff, young college graduates, community members willing to donate money for devices, technical help, and a lot of learning. It took a month of emails, phone calls, and actual mail to reach all our members. When someone needed a device, we could provide one. Do you need technical help? Our phone lines are open. Do you need to learn how to Zoom? We've got you covered. Health facilities where some of our members reside stepped up to help. My living room became a recording and Zooming studio, and through it all we kept singing and produced an hour-long virtual showcase in November. (The second one is in process.) A personal note here – if you want to see this choir in action, please visit [www.standinthelightmemorychoir.org](http://www.standinthelightmemorychoir.org). This choir found success.

I believe we will all find success with our community choirs. Music is good for us. It inspires us, calms us, excites us, helps us express our feelings, and makes us laugh. It is part of our everyday lives. Singing is even better for us, and singing in a group is great for us. Community choirs will be needed as we move forward. Singing is the way we can change the world, and I hope we can all be a part of this healing and change that is coming our way. Let us get our communities singing and devote ourselves to spreading the lifelong benefits of singing. We will find success.



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## **YOU Are What THEY Need**

Michael Pufall, Northeast Representative

For many of us, this has been a year of transitions. My school year began in a hybrid model for the first four weeks, transitioned to full virtual for three months, returned back to hybrid for a month, and is now settling in to all in-person instruction. Despite teaching fully in-person, I still have several virtual students tuning in for class via Zoom. Like every educator, the amount of planning for this year’s classes has been unlike any other in my career. To accommodate for synchronous and asynchronous learning, I have been in an endless cycle of learning, creating, implementing, and revising in ways that I have never tried in past years. I’ve created composition projects, developed new warm-ups, implemented unique Zoom activities that promoted both choral and social and emotional learning objectives, and researched YouTube videos for music analysis; the list is endless. After all the time and energy I’ve dedicated to developing a novel curriculum for my choirs, I have wondered if my efforts have impacted students in meaningful ways. Was I providing them with valuable experiences? Was the music we were working on appropriate? Were my students engaged and motivated? Was I satisfying their social and emotional needs? Will my underclassmen continue with choir in future years? Was I enough for what these students deserved?

After weeks of agonizing over the answers to these questions and dreading what the answers could be, I decided simply to ask my students. I created a Google form and crafted some questions to help me better understand my students’ thoughts. Here is what I shared with them:

- Tell me about your experience with the blues composition project.
- If you have been attending choir IN-PERSON, please share some aspects of class that you find helpful and work well.
- If you have been attending choir VIRTUALLY through Zoom, please share some aspects of class that you find helpful and work well.
- When in-person choir resumes in March, we will have twelve rehearsals left in the year. What creative ideas do you have for how we can spend that time together? How can we maximize our time and make it meaningful to you?
- Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors, are you planning to continue with choir next year?
- Anything else you wish to share with me?

The results of my survey surprised me. I learned that most of what I was doing was working for the vast majority of my students. None of the feedback portrayed the negative responses I feared or the attacks on what we were or were not able to do. For the most part, students adapted to the limitations and appreciated the units that we could do. I gained insight from both virtual and in-person students about how to navigate positively the hybrid teaching and learning model. I was happy to find out that almost every singer registered to continue singing next year. But what I learned most came from the responses to the last few questions. Worried that I continually had to create something new and exciting to keep the morale of the choir high in these strange times, I dreaded the thought of planning for all of the new ideas the students would share about how to spend the rest of the year. I have spent more time than ever designing and implementing many different things this year, and I felt exhausted and unsure of their effects. There was a commonality within the student responses. They wanted a singing experience like previous years. Sure, some responses included “nothing,” “sleep,” and “nice sweater you’re wearing today,” but many also acknowledged gratitude for all the things I’ve done to make this year work. Those comments took me by surprise and filled me with hope. After reading all responses, the overall theme was they just wanted to sing with their peers, continue getting to know their peers, and have as “normal” of a choir experience as possible. What a relief! They are wanting what I feel I can do best; they want a choir director to direct their choir.

In times of doubt, please remember that YOU are enough. You give your best to your students everyday. You strive to adapt to new situations and create the best opportunities for students. You spend hours creating plans for new teaching scenarios that may or may not work out the way you want. You are not perfect, and that is okay. You are what your students need right now, and that is enough. Thank you for being who your students need you to be.



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## What If...

Herb Berendsen, Bass-Clef R&R Chair

Just over a year ago the words *What if* nearly always held promise. “What if we did this?!” “What if we were able to...?”, but in the past year it seems as if those two words are now used almost exclusively in the negative. “What if COVID spikes again?”, “What if we can never sing together the same way again?”, “What if someone gets sick?” Speaking as an eternal optimist, I am weary of the negative *what ifs!* Our singers thirst to get back together in whatever way they can, and they need us to move positively into the future.

Without an exception, the past year has been so difficult for all. I hardly feel I need to delineate the ways we have been affected. As I look around (safely online, of course!!) I am amazed at and proud of the ways my colleagues, especially those of you who are teachers, have risen to the call and been exemplars of what excellence in education is, even if at times the weight of what you are doing is almost unbearable. Many have dealt with death, sickness, and depression. We had no idea that our world would turn upside down nearly in an instant. We had no idea that our *What ifs* would turn into *What nows*. As the panic set in, we thought: what will we do for the next two weeks?... which became two months, which became an entire school year and more. Distanced, hybrid, virtual, and Zoom were concepts of which we had little to no knowledge only one year ago! My, haven’t we grown!?

We have sweat, we have cried, we have learned, we have persevered, and we have excelled. Now I want to ask this one question: *What if* the future far exceeds the past? And when I say future, I mean the NEAR future! Most of you are now meeting with real live singers and have recognized their strong desire to make music again in whatever way allowed. It’s so exciting to be able to do what we love to do again! Don’t get me wrong, I HATE rehearsing in masks (how many do you go through in a day?!), but it is moving in the right direction. Although I’m not in the public schools any longer, I am rehearsing all three of my choirs weekly, with masks, spread out, and for a limited time. Not ideal, especially for us directors who simply cannot communicate with our groups as we would like and cannot get out of our groups what we would like. (Crisp diction, what is that?!) Yet being back together is SO important to our singers!

I have witnessed so many musicians coming to each other’s aid and supporting each other during this troubled time. It has been one of the most positive things that has happened this year! One concept I often stress to young singers is that there is nothing like being a part of the choral community. I was a music geek in high school, and I still am! There is no group of people that I would rather be with than choir people! In saying that, I would like to offer some new “what ifs” and “how cans” to encourage and spur you on to a more positive mindset:

- *What if* the choral community grows and prospers due to our bonding under COVID?  
*How can* I help that to happen?
- *What if* I have learned skills this year that will drastically improve my teaching, communication, and listening?  
*How can* I cultivate these skills as we move forward?
- *What if* the communities we live in are ready to support our art like never before?  
*How can* I spread the good news?
- *What if* the hardships that we have faced this year fill us with love and appreciation for all we have?  
*How can* I remember this EVERY day!

Let’s all make a pact to get rid of the negative *What ifs*, and to encourage others to do the same.



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## Refreshing Futures...

Paul Gregg, Refresh! Chair

I constantly feel we are the “rugged optimists” in the world of education – wearing the brave face for all our singers and planning for events that may or may not occur. But even the bravest choral servants will eventually tire and need to rest. I hope you are all finding moments to rest. Perhaps you haven’t found as many sources of optimism, even in your moments of rest and clarity. In either case, I know what we all need right now, and what has been notably lacking, is connection.

One of the most common feelings shared by colleagues this year is a feeling of exhaustion. Not the exhaustion of a musical tech week, or 6:03 pm at the end of hosting a festival Saturday, but the exhaustion of this unfamiliar disconnect. We’re looking at memories on our Facebook feeds, and the memories are becoming foggy. The ennui creeps in. And so we “get moving”; we get the blood pumping, and we reach out to our students, our neighbors, our colleagues and try to rekindle those connections (albeit sometimes electronically). We do everything in our power to remind these people that connecting with one another is the circulation our lives need to function.

And so we planned for our *Refresh!* program...

Unfortunately, after surveying our membership regarding comfort levels with an in-person gathering, we ultimately decided to postpone *Refresh!* until July 2022. *Refresh!* is a wonderful opportunity to gather with friends and colleagues to connect and learn in a more “summer-casual” setting. We eagerly await the outstanding programming and social opportunities planned for July 2022 when *Refresh!* and its partner program *NextDirection* make triumphant returns as our WCDA Summer Conference at UW–Eau Claire!

Until then, I invite you to consider releasing the exhaustion, rekindling relationships and connections with colleagues, and rejuvenating your circulatory system. Let’s reconnect in 2022, and *Refresh!* our futures together!



# VOICE of WCDA

## Mind/Body/Spirit: Finding the Balance

David Bowman, High School R&R Chair

Allow me to brag for a moment. I teach in the most beautiful high school in the state of Wisconsin. Don't believe me? Look it up: <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/most-beautiful-public-high-schools-in-america>. Interestingly enough, the picture that shows the building does what so many of us in the "special" areas of teaching complain about: the photo crops off the ends of the building that house the Arts and Athletics. That which remains is merely the academic portion. The building's design was based on the ancient power of the three: mind/body/spirit. If you "read" the building from left to right you would find areas devoted to Arts (spirit), Academic (mind), and Athletic (body), each with distinct design features, yet with unifying elements that enhance the overall aesthetic of the building. Even the more recent remodels and additions have details that allow you to feel harmony with the older portions of the building. Perhaps more than anything, the pandemic has taught us that each of these three facets (mind/body/spirit) is dependent on the others and to ignore one or to focus too much on one is always to the detriment of the others. My question to us as vocal educators is, what are we doing to offer a different experience of this "trinity" for our students?

**Singing IS an academic event.** But singing is supposed to be fun! If we spend too much time talking about academic things it will turn into just another "class." We won't have time to prepare our concert! I would like to push back on those ideas. How many things have you learned to enjoy because you learned more about "how" they work? If your students are engaging with music as academicians, aren't their levels of skill and knowledge going to increase, thus easing concert preparation? How does the academic aspect of music play out in the classroom? We spend time working on music theory. We spend time working on understanding historical timelines and the implications not only for music, but society as a whole. We spend time understanding mathematical language. We talk about the etymology of words within our texts. We discuss the nuance of meaning that is provided by choosing one word over another. We talk specifically about how a performer's or composer's phrasing/melodic/harmonic/dynamic choices emphasize meaning and musicality of the words and ideas presented within the text. We spend time looking at visual and literary art from periods or cultures that align with music that we are doing. When we start thinking of ourselves as "mind" teachers, it becomes easy to see how we fit into most educational initiatives. While we are not reading for content, we are reading words as well as deciphering graphs at the same time, not to mention creating musical choices to enhance what those words mean. Our challenge is to stop sitting back in faculty meetings and saying that literacy does not apply to us, but taking what is being said and finding the ways that we do incorporate what the rest of academia is talking about. An example: Close reading is *thoughtful, critical analysis of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, and meanings. It is a key requirement of the Common Core State Standards and directs the reader's attention to the text itself.* Does this sound like reHEARSing to you? It should! What if we replaced the word "text" with "music"? As teachers of music do we not want our music makers to find patterns? Derive meaning? Understand composer intent? Of course we do! Creating the intentional learning opportunities to engage with music on an intellectual (academic) level is imperative to creating successful, competent musicians.

**Singing IS an athletic event.** Several years ago I attended the VoiceCare Network summer symposium. Other than CMP, it was the most transformative thing to my teaching that I have ever encountered. Our singers (and dare I say, many of us!) do not know their bodies. How am I put together? How do I function at the optimal ease? How do I create sound without "work"? We as teachers spend so much time coaching to fix mistakes that if the singers just knew how things worked, they would be able to self-regulate and correct on their own. Singing is about understanding how to produce sound in an appropriate way for any style, while doing no harm to yourself. Perhaps we need a Hippocratic Oath for teachers of singing: First do no harm! That being said, two years ago I decided to push my comfort zone and started working out with a physical education teacher in the building who had been less than supportive of music. Growth mindset on two levels: I am a capable though not a confident athlete, nor did I think that I could get along with him as a human being. Don't we ask students to take risks everyday? The long and the short of it is that we start each workout with Reflexive Performance Reset. This is a series of moves, stretches, and trigger point manipulation that enhance our abilities to breathe properly, find our core, and center our bodies on the earth. We do this in choir now, and I never mention "posture," which I believe is a loaded term. (As an aside, one of the gurus of this method works with a group called The Pentatonix before they go out on stage.) Now, what does this mean in the classroom? Students expect that we will be doing RPR as part of our warm-up routine. This has helped them discover how breathing actually works on a whole body level and how it is the fuel for their singing voice. Incorporating this, as well as some yoga/tai chi moves, has allowed students to become more adept at articulating how their breathing works. Understanding how they can then "manipulate" the airflow through their resonance spaces allows them to "self-medicate" when things are going wrong when performing. Learning is now a combination of me asking questions and setting up activities that allow students to feel, hear, and experience their voices in different ways. So many more students are now capable of discussing what was not working and then making informed choices to "fix" things on their own.

Do these different methods trigger the same response for all students? Of course not! Every human is a unique combination of mind/body/spirit. But if we are trying to reach the maximum number of individuals so they can become part of the greater whole, we continually need to reimagine ways to engage the mind, body, and spirit of each "I" in our cho"l"rs.



# VOICE of WCDA

## Advice for the Student Teacher

Eva Stokes, Collegiate & Early-Career Liaison

The transition from student to teacher can be an exciting and daunting task. Luckily we get our student teaching experience to practice our craft while alongside a professional. A group of veteran cooperating teachers, with years of experience and dozens of student teachers combined, were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What was the best thing your student teachers ever did?
2. What is a common challenge you see with student teachers?

So, what is the best thing you can do as a student teacher? Here's what our panel of experts said:

**Build relationships with your students.** Getting to know your students, and equally important, letting the students get to know you, needs to come before real music making. Take time to get to know their names and a little something about them. It will make all the difference.

**Ask questions.** Be proactive and ask questions constantly. Try to get inside your cooperating teacher's head. Observe and take notes to ask later. Why did your cooperating teacher make that choice during rehearsal? Why did they pick this repertoire? Why did they do this warm-up? Some questions may be philosophical and turn into broader conversations, and some may be very specific regarding rehearsal technique or a specific student concern.

**Be organized.** Gather as many resources as you can during your student teaching experience and keep them organized. Someday you will be looking for "that one thing from student teaching," and you'll want to be able to find it! Keep your notes from observations organized, and keep a journal of your daily experiences.

**Take initiative.** Look for ways you can help the department or school while you are there, and get involved in organizational or leadership activities. This is a great experience when heading into the "real world," and you get to see the other aspects of the teaching job that regularly happen outside of the classroom or after school hours.

**Bring your enthusiasm and passion.** Your excitement and passion for teaching and music will shine and draw students to you. Share your authentic enthusiasm while building relationships with students and throughout your classroom teaching.

**Don't be afraid to share something new.** Many cooperating teachers shared that they loved when a student teacher shared with them a new warm-up, a new way of thinking, or a new piece of music. During your college studies you are learning the newest educational methods and the newest research. Bring that to your student teaching experience.

**Understand the adolescent voice and how it develops.** Student teachers often come into a classroom and treat young singers as college singers. Know your vocal pedagogy for working with developing voices. And if you are unsure, lean on your cooperating teacher or other resources so you can be the best teacher for your students.

**Consider Co-Teaching from Day 1.** Your cooperating teacher or your university may have a prepared outline of how your student teaching experience will play out. However, cooperating teachers that have co-taught love this method and its benefits. Even if it's as simple as leading one warm-up on the first day, at least you are in front of the students. You have two teacher brains in the room, so use them! If one is conducting, the other is at the piano. Consider breaking into sectionals, or if needed, stand in the choir to help them while they learn parts. Co-teaching takes intentional planning everyday, but in the long run it can be the best thing for students, and it gives you more experience teaching versus only observing.

After reading some of the things that have helped student teachers thrive, also be aware of the following concerns shared by cooperating teachers. Student teachers regularly struggle with these issues, and you can prepare yourself accordingly.

**Practice your piano skills.** Many cooperating teachers find their student teachers do not come in ready with the piano skills needed to be a choral director. You need to know your level and work hard to be competent and comfortable at the piano during a rehearsal. In addition, explore ways to not use the piano during rehearsals if it's not your strong suit. Consider making electronic accompaniment tracks or part tracks. Use your resources to help create the best learning environment for your students. Try to find ways to support your time at the piano so that you can be more focused on the classroom management and actually teaching instead of being frustrated by not being able to play what's needed.

**Know the repertoire.** Many student teachers don't know the repertoire. Cooperating teachers across the board recommend familiarizing yourself with as much repertoire for all different levels as possible. Consider keeping a spreadsheet or database of repertoire selections, spending time in your school's music library reading through pieces, and looking through old programs. Expose yourself to as many songs, composers, styles and difficulty levels as you can. This is a time-consuming task, but so rewarding in the end.

**Be friendly but not friends.** The relationship between student and teacher and even between student teacher and cooperating teacher is very important. You are not there to be friends with your students. Know the boundaries and be professional. Love your students, but make sure there is a clear line. This goes for your relationship with your cooperating teacher as well. While you may become friends and colleagues after your student teaching experience, know your boundaries here as well.

**Focus more on listening during rehearsal.** Cooperating teachers find their student teachers regularly too focused on the correct conducting pattern or playing the piano, such that they forget to listen to the ensemble. It's much more valuable to listen and be able to provide feedback than it is to correctly wave your arms around in some pattern that young singers may not even understand. Listening and observing skills are vital to the success of leading a rehearsal.

At WCDA we encourage collaboration and strive to offer support to choir teachers new and experienced. We hope these quick do's and don'ts help you thrive during your student teaching experience. Special thanks to all those who contributed to this article by sharing your vast expertise: Polly Amborn, Bridget Duffy-Ulrich, Judith Kirby, Joy Paffenroth, Cathy Reitz, and Dale Witte.

I wish you all the best while you are a student teacher! Welcome to our profession. We're lucky to have you.



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## Tooting Your Own Horn

Todd O'Connor, Treasurer

While I volunteer as treasurer on the WCDA Board of Directors, my “full-time day job” is serving on a church staff, specifically as the Worship Ministry Director at Crossroads Presbyterian in Mequon. In my position, my greatest pleasure comes from planning creative and impactful worship series and services to bless God and God’s people.

I have served alongside four senior pastors separated by three interim senior pastors (not to mention eleven associate pastors), all over a mere 16 years. Even with a new head of staff every other year, they always find time to schedule performance reviews, which I have dreaded with a passion almost equal to the joy of making music. I become anxious and feel vain “singing my own praises,” even in the safe space of a pastor’s study. Thankfully, I have found a few ways to make this important recurring experience more manageable.

I am asked annually to demonstrate core competencies, document achievements, and set new goals. A list of several core competencies applicable to my occupation is below; of course many others exist, including creativity and flexibility (especially during a pandemic). You might detail areas that highlight your best attributes and contributions in relation to your current position description.

Between reviews, I try to keep a running list of both general and specific accomplishments so I don’t have to recall them on short notice. Given the opportunity, I like to tell a brief story highlighting a significant success during face-to-face meetings with my supervisor, who otherwise might not fully understand my art. Similar practices also work well when applying or interviewing for a new church or school job.

Finally, I find SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**imely) goal-setting to be most successful when I choose projects that appreciably benefit myself or my department and for which I have great personal enthusiasm. These strategies help keep me focused and encouraged throughout the year and better prepare me for performance reviews. The combination of knowing my gifts and understanding my vocation allows me to be an effective self-advocate and properly “toot my own horn.”

### *Sample Core Competencies*

**Leadership:** Shepherded and empowered volunteers in many settings; provided guidance for worshipers both up front and behind the scenes.

**Project Management:** Planned, organized, and executed weekly worship experiences involving other staff and many volunteers and participants.

**Communication:** Used verbal and written skills to connect clearly and appropriately with co-workers and congregation members.

**Collaboration:** Worked alongside co-workers and volunteer teams in the creation of meaningful worship services and other church-wide events.

**Integrity and Trust:** Practiced direct, honest, and transparent communications; responded to situations with constancy and reliability; admitted mistakes.

**Musicianship:** Exhibited vocal, instrumental, and directing skills during rehearsals and services; expanded knowledge and use of repertoire and resources.

**Worship Design:** Created and facilitated relevant and inspiring worship experiences; crafted worship flow and liturgy that reinforced a theme or purpose; holistically integrated elements of theology, music, and visual media.

**Spiritual Maturity:** Showed authentic personal depth through humble service and selfless love; sought wisdom and guidance from God and mentors.



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## Middle Level High Five

Eric Leih, Middle Level R&R Chair

### 1. I Will Sing You the Stars (SAB)

Mark Burrows

SAB with piano (also available for SATB and SSA)

Alfred Music Publishing 00-47563

This original piece by Mark Burrows is stunning for any upper middle school mixed ensemble. The delicate accompaniment and unison opening lines set the tone for the opening lines about going into the world and facing the challenges of life. Then, the song opens up as we learn the true message of the piece, which is being there to support and care for each other through it all. Between the text and the rich harmonies throughout this song, your students are sure to love it. Perfect for spring concerts and recognition/promotion ceremonies.

<https://www.alfred.com/i-will-sing-you-the-stars/p/00-47563/>

<https://youtu.be/J--nAfIC0BY>

### 2. Awake My Song (SAB)

Christopher Fox

SAB with piano (also available for SA and SSA)

Santa Barbara Music Publishing SBMP 1514

After a year that has been hard on the music world, we all cannot wait to “awake” our song on the stage again. This song is a great message for young singers about finding their place on the stage and enjoying the art of performing. Christopher Fox has done an excellent job capturing the feelings/emotions of a new performer through music. The song begins by sounding almost tentative before finally becoming confident after taking a deep breath and hearing the piano launch into the piece. A great concert opener!

<https://sbmp.com/SR2.php?CatalogNumber=1514>

[https://youtu.be/Yhn\\_VJDW970](https://youtu.be/Yhn_VJDW970)

### 3. Bist Du Bei Mir

J.S. Bach/arr. Russell Robinson

Three-Part Mixed with piano (also available for Two-Part)

Shawnee Press HL 35002073

Russell Robinson is excellent at taking classical standards and making them accessible for younger singers. This arrangement of Bach’s “Bist du bei mir” is a great way to expose your middle schoolers to this iconic Baroque composer. In a nod to the original solo, Robinson opens the piece with the voices in unison before breaking the choir into parts for the remainder of the work. This piece is a great way to help your students develop phrase shape and learn a bit of German along the way. Highly recommended!

<https://www.shawneepress.com/product/viewproduct.action?itemid=35002073&lid=1&keywords=bist%20du%20bei%20mir&subsiteid=204&>

[https://youtu.be/\\_cA2\\_wZS1io](https://youtu.be/_cA2_wZS1io) (Two-Part version)

### 4. Red, Red Rose

Kara Stacy

Two-Part/SSA with piano

Excelcia Music Publishing UTP2002

Kara Stacy has taken this Robert Burns text and breathed new life into it. This folk-feeling arrangement is refreshing and filled with joy. It opens in unison and progressively expands to two and later three parts. A playful piano accompaniment and tapped tambourine inject additional energy throughout the song. Any upper middle level treble ensemble will be sure to love this piece from the moment they listen to it.

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Red%2C-Red-Rose/11198805.item#.YHOBvT9Ok2w>

<https://youtu.be/O0dEiZGYsIA>

### 5. For the Beauty of the Earth

Greg Gilpin

Two-Part with piano and optional flute (also available for SATB, SSAB, and SSAA)

Alfred Music Publishing 00-46980

This traditional text has been set by a number of composers over the years, and now Greg Gilpin has put his own contemporary spin on it. This setting features a variety of voicings for ensembles of all ages, as well as an optional flute part. “For the Beauty of the Earth” is a great piece to use with your ensemble to develop lyricism and get them thinking about all of the beauty they take for granted in our world. This is sure to be a piece that both your students and the audience will enjoy.

<https://www.alfred.com/for-the-beauty-of-the-earth/p/00-46980/>

<https://youtu.be/kvpgc2cKDwU> (SATB version)



# VOICE of WCDA

## Treble-Clef High Five

Debbie Lind, Treble-Clef R&R Chair

**1. Beau Soir (Beautiful Evening)**  
Claude Debussy/arr. Linda Spevacek  
SSA with piano  
Hal Leonard 08756903

Originally written as a French art song for soprano soloist, "Beau Soir" was written by Debussy when he was 15 years old. The music is classic Parisian Impressionism, focusing on atmosphere, on conveying a mood or an emotion, or on capturing a moment in nature. The song is an excellent opportunity for choirs to sing in French; singing the song in English would result in a tragic loss of its seductiveness. The song is accessible to high school and college choirs, and possibly also advanced children's choirs. Singers can explore the song's unexpected scales and harmonic progressions. Challenges come from tuning, blending, and balancing parts. As with all Impressionistic art, singers must navigate the song's "blurriness," its lack of a clear focal point, and no solid resolution until the very last chord. The soloistic accompaniment, arpeggiated against the singers' homophonic texture, adds to the challenge, but also enhances the song's exotic charm.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product-family/PC12643/beau-soir>

<https://youtu.be/N5XRLLy8Pw8>

**2. Ave verum corpus (Hail, true body)**  
Francis Poulenc  
SSA a cappella  
Salabert Editions/Hal Leonard 50498640

French composer Francis Poulenc's gift was setting words to music. In this short Eucharistic hymn (motet), the greatest challenges come from dealing with repeated collisions between sweet, gentle, long, connected phrases and the five extremely short dissonant, detached phrases, each trickily different from the others, which appear without warning throughout the song. These interruptive phrases are extremely sophisticated harmonically and difficult for young singers to hear and sing accurately. What my choirs wound up doing was to dissect the song completely, laying each phrase out on the table, to analyze and learn separately. Then we reassembled the song to see how these phrases fit into the overarching flow of the composition. Here is what happened: we learned how to learn. We learned that we needed to make judgments and comparisons. We learned how to start with a pile of little pictures in order to get to the big picture. We learned that the most technical elements elicit the most emotional and artistic responses. I would recommend this song for vocally-developed high school choirs and college choirs.

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/50498640/ave-verum-corporus>

<https://youtu.be/vV7NjSBJS1w>

**3. No, Di Voi Non Vo'Fidarmi (Oh No, Never Will I Trust You)**  
G. F. Handel/arr. B. R. Henson  
SA with piano  
Colla Voce Music 59-22000

Originally written in 1741 as an Italian treble duet, Handel used this melody again in his oratorio *Messiah* in the four-part chorus, "For unto us a child is born." This song is filled with long sixteenth-note melismas. The challenge is to sing these melismas rhythmically, tunefully, and on synced vowels, with lots of abdominal muscle involvement and with no effort from the throat and mouth, in order to achieve smooth, elegant phrases. These long melismas are sequences; on every fourth beat there is a two-note skip that causes the melody to ratchet up and up, creating a joyous, exuberant, emotional response, as in the movement from Handel's *Messiah*. However, this song tells a different story:

No, I do not want to trust you, blind love, cruel beauty.  
You lie too much like blandishing gods.

This song is appropriate for upper elementary choirs through college singers. It can also be sung by two-part mixed choirs. Sopranos sing an A5.

<https://collavoce.com/catalog/item/no-di-voi-non-vo-fidarmi-59-22000>

[https://youtu.be/b89auBq\\_Ek0](https://youtu.be/b89auBq_Ek0)

**4. Alleluja, from the motet *Exultate, jubilate***  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart/arr. Wallingford Riegger  
Three-Part Treble with piano (also available for SA and SATB)  
Shawnee Press B-5002/HL 35000735

Mozart's *Exultate, jubilate*, a three-movement motet, was written in 1773, when he was seventeen. The third movement ends with the brilliant, exuberant setting of *Alleluja*, rife with gladness and joy. With the only text being the word "Alleluja," sung at least forty times by each vocal part, singers must learn and memorize the song without the help of lyrics or a storyline. An efficient way to learn and memorize the song is to study its form and to create descriptors for each section. Make it a game. Singers must also listen to cues from the piano interludes and their counterparts, and they must listen to the harmonic development of the piece as it moves from the key of F, to the key of C, and then back to the key of F. The piece is rich with opportunities to sing sweeping parallel thirds and to learn to sing with word stress and lift to advance each phrase. This song makes an excellent, energetic, "out-of-the-starting-gate" concert opener. An A5 is written for sopranos, but can be modified.

<https://www.shawneepress.com/product/viewproduct.action?itemid=35000735&lid=1&keywords=alleluja%20mozart&subsiteid=204&>

<https://youtu.be/2LtkePxHgmA> (This recording is not exactly like the choral arrangement, but it really captures the spirit of the song.)

**5. Wood River**  
Connie Kaldor/arr. Willi Zwozdesky  
SSAA with piano  
Rhythmic Trident Music Publishing RTCP-004

"Wood River" is not one of the tried-and-true greats of classical choral literature. "Wood River" is comfort food. The actual Wood River flows through southern Saskatchewan in the heart of the Canadian prairie. The song's text is an invitation to join together at its banks and share dreams of the heart. Singers are directed to sing *legatissimo*, as smoothly as they can. Close harmonies sung in the voices' lower ranges supply the song's rich, lush texture and easy Canadian folk-song style. Alto 2s sing a G3, but these notes can be modified for younger singers. There is an opportunity for a solo or small ensemble to sing over the choral parts. An extended, free-flowing, contemplative piano solo provides opportunities for choral movement or dance, for blocking changes, or for just standing in quiet reflection. The song's message is simple, yet profound.

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Woodriver/3102233.item#.YHOQxD9Ok2w>

[https://youtu.be/gsMRdKP\\_wUk](https://youtu.be/gsMRdKP_wUk)