



VOICE of WCDA

Fall Issue—2021

♪ In This Issue...

[Letter from the President.....2](#)

[Letter From the Editor.....3](#)

[A New Beginning for Community Choirs.....4](#)

[Moving Forward.....5-6](#)

[All-State 2022.....6](#)

[Singing in Wisconsin.....7](#)

[Bringing the “Corners” of the Earth to the “Center of our Classroom.....8](#)

[Church Choir High Five.....9](#)

[Collegiate High Five.....10](#)

[High School High Five.....11-12](#)

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

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



VOICE of WCDA

Letter from the President

Zack Durlam, President and 2022 Conference Chair

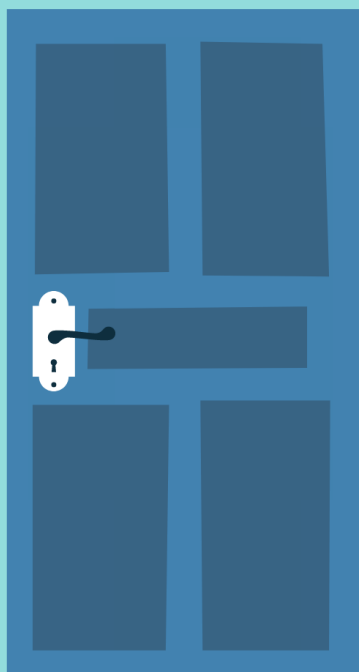
Last evening the weather was beautiful. As I stepped outside, I looked forward to a peaceful, hour-long walk with John Denver in my headphones and some *"sunshine on my shoulders..."* 15 minutes from home I felt a raindrop, and soon I was caught in an unexpected shower. My cell rang, and my wife wondered if she should pick me up. I said no, it wasn't too bad (*"You fill up my senses...like a walk in the rain"*), and I didn't mind getting a little wet. Shortly after, as if sensing my determination to remain upbeat, the wind picked up and the rain turned aggressive. Five minutes later, my wife drove up in the car bearing towels to rescue her now drenched, cold, and miserable husband.

That walk felt remarkably similar to my fall choral preparations. Mid-summer I was finally shedding the exhaustion induced by an entire choral year of expending maximum effort for at best marginal results (coupled with social isolation, Covid at home, and more hours staring at a screen than I ever thought possible). Fully vaccinated, I was mask-free and excited for a year of live concerts, singing an entire rehearsal in person and in one space, standing close enough to hear other singers, and possibly even (gasp) seeing the smiles of my choir members again! In mid-July, I felt the first "raindrops," but I was determined to remain upbeat. Cue the storm.

The good news is this is NOT last fall. We now have easily accessible vaccines. We have a year of reimagining our craft we can draw on to improve choral experiences for our singers and ourselves. We have the hope and the reality of in-person events. And we continue to have our colleagues and friends in WCDA that we can lean on for support, ideas, and encouragement. If we find ourselves caught in a storm, our peers in WCDA are here to pick us up, throw us a towel, and help us find our way home (*"Country roads, take me home, to the place I belong..."*).

WCDA is composed of extraordinary humans, individuals who devote a portion of their life to making the world a better and more beautiful place by bringing people together in song. I am honored to begin my term as your president. Special thanks to Rebecca Winnie, who tirelessly guided our organization through these past two extremely unusual years. She has the heart of a servant, and we are all grateful for the countless hours she has devoted to our association.

Please mark your calendars for our 2022 WCDA Conference (*"Finding Our Voice"*) on January 14-15, held in person in Milwaukee. I know it can be difficult to get away, but if this last year has taught us anything, it is the value of coming together to learn, laugh, and rejuvenate together. More details are forthcoming, but I promise you will be glad you attended. Have a great fall, reach out to your WCDA colleagues or to WCDA directly if you need any help or support, and I hope to see you in Milwaukee in January!



WCDA HAS MOVED!

20816 RIVER HILLS WAY
KIEL, WI 53042

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR RECORDS - LET YOUR BILLING DEPARTMENT KNOW AT SCHOOL!



VOICE of WCDA

Letter from the Editor

Dr. Kevin Kriegel

Each time we get in a vehicle, we have GPS to help reach our destination and prevent us from losing our way. If we inadvertently miss a turn, GPS recites the infamous “recalculating” to help guide us back to our original route. After spending a lot of time preparing for an unprecedented fall semester and all its *unknowns*, I felt like I was ready to “follow the route guidance.” However, sometime in late November, I felt as if my GPS was in a perpetual “recalculating” loop—I was mentally and emotionally lost. But why? I did not understand because I was fortunate to be able to meet face-to-face with my conducting class and choir. Being lost bothered me. If I was feeling directionless in the past, I frequently relied on Bikram yoga – it had always been my GPS. Unfortunately, my yoga studio was closed. To simulate any semblance of a live Bikram yoga studio experience, I purchased an electric heater for my bathroom and attempted to follow along to a yoga instructor on YouTube. It was not the same. And as I spent the next few weeks trying to understand the root cause of my mental and emotional distress, a friend informed me that a gym had opened. Hurray!

I entered Basecamp for the first time fully-masked and was pleasantly greeted by one of the fully-masked coaches who took my temperature. She enthusiastically guided me to the work-out studio (which was only reserved for 10 people) and pointed to my assigned, physically-distanced area. What struck me most as I was guided to the work-out studio was the walk-through tunnel decorated with the bright blue and white light catch phrases: Reach Your Potential, Determination, Progress, Commitment, You Can Do This, etc. As I began the highly-energetic and carefully-structured work-out routine coupled with the coach’s cheerleader-like enthusiasm, I kept thinking about those catch phrases, and after about 20 minutes into the work out, it finally hit me: in my efforts to create musical experiences for the students that were as close to pre-COVID as possible, an elevated level of anxiety and stress consumed me and prevented me from truly enjoying my profession. I was so focused on the students’ needs, anxieties, and even in some instances, depression in the time of COVID, that I completely disregarded my own mental and emotional needs. I knew I needed to fix this, so I invested many hours at Basecamp during the holiday break focusing on my mental, emotional, and physical well-being. It became my new GPS.

Spring 2021 was such a refreshing semester for me and my students. I used the experience I gained at Basecamp, particularly the use of catch phrases as a motivational tool and guide to assist the students through yet another COVID-laced semester. I asked students to create their own catch phrase and create artwork of it to be placed next to their bed or taped to a mirror so that each day they awoke, they saw it and were reminded daily of their goal. Not only did I see an improvement in their demeanor and attendance each class, but I could also hear through their singing voices a happier, freer tone than the previous semester. (I think they also could sense that I was less anxious). Finally, I felt like I was back on my original route guidance.

What will this fall semester have in store for us as we try to find our way back? How many *unknowns* will we face? I wish I knew! A few things are certain for me: the less anxious and stressed I am, the more productive I am with my students, and the more time I take to care for my own mental and emotional needs, the more connected I am with my students. Fixing our own GPSs allows us to be more fully engaged with our students and to guide them more effectively on their educational journey. We do not want to become our students’ GPSs, but we want to be able to redirect them should they find themselves in a perpetual “recalculating.”

I am excited to be the new editor of *The Voice* and want to thank Alexa Doebele for her years of service as past editor.





VOICE of WCDA

[In This Issue...](#)

Letter from the President

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Community Choirs**

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A New Beginning for Community Choirs: Ideas for a Successful Start

Kathy Reitz, Community Choir R&R Chair

This is certainly an interesting time for Community Choirs. Whether you are a director, singer, board member, donor, or loyal audience member, you have experienced a year like no other. A year we certainly did not plan for. We made it through and as we approach the fall semester you may be wondering who will show up to sing with me or who will be comfortable coming to hear my choir? I know that I am concerned, so I am going to be proactive and make sure I reach out to my community for choir members and, in time, audience members.

It is almost like a new beginning for our choirs. Here are a few ideas that will make this a successful singing year.

1. Social media. Get the word out that you have space for new and returning members. Remind people about the importance of making music together, both physically and mentally. Show off some clips from your last live or virtual concert. Be honest and open with your safety precautions and what will be expected. Make sure your choir members are all on the same page with this. We know so much more than we did in March 2020.
2. Remember bulletin boards? Get your poster up in churches, grocery stores, YMCA, libraries, coffee shops, hospitals, and learning centers. Become a presence in your community. A choir does more than just sing. You create magic and music that brings people together. We need that right now. I will say it again, become a presence in your community.
3. Get on local TV and radio. We need to promote what a choir can do, not only for the singers but for your community. Promote the benefits of what music can do for memory, medical, emotional, and the physical in each of us. We need “feel good” stories, make them your choir’s stories.
4. Reach out to past members. They may be ready to join again and if not ask who they suggest for your choir. Don’t forget to reach out to current members. We have all gotten out of the choir rehearsal habit.
5. Get your information on every Community Calendar you can. Most of these are free. If possible, buy a few ads and get the word out.
6. Put together a short presentation and take it to the schools and businesses in your area, and promote wellness through singing. I have had success getting my choir on the wellness list for several schools. Singing in a choir is a great wellness activity. I think it’s the best one.
7. Don’t do this all by yourself. Even though we were physically separated while working through the pandemic, I found the real value of teamwork. I plan on keeping that as part of my conducting repertoire.

I believe we all need some healing, support, and community-building. What better way to do this than by singing together. Here is my call to all choirs, let’s share what we know to be true. Singing together is the way we can change the world. Let’s stimulate the mind, energize the body, and elevate the spirit one song at a time. It’s what we do.



VOICE of WCDA

Moving Forward: Lessons We Can Learn from Teaching During COVID

Dr. Cody Miller, Central Representative

As Patches O’Houlihan taught us in the movie *Dodgeball*, “if you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball.” I cannot think of a quote more apropos to teaching pre- and post- pandemic. COVID presented challenges to choir directors that we have not faced during our lifetime, and because of that, I believe we will enter the fall more effective and creative than ever before. Just as iron is forged in flame, we too are refined in the fires of adversity. Some directors taught choir entirely online, others in-person but in smaller groups, a few in nearly normal circumstances, and every variation of hybrid of which you could imagine. These changes forced us to reimagine choral music in the age of a pandemic. We created meaningful ways to engage with the choir while adjusting our teaching techniques to fit a brand-new format. We can now apply those lessons under normal, or more normal, circumstances to give our students a better director and a better experience.

Lessons from Zoom Rehearsals

Engaging students online during a Zoom rehearsal was a tough task. Students were infinitely more distractible than in a traditional classroom, physically removed from peers and the teacher, could prevent us from hearing or seeing them, and yet we managed to make it work. Think of the ways that you brought students into the classroom experience. How did you successfully engage students? How might that enhance a normal rehearsal?

I struggled to teach choir over Zoom since I often could not hear my students singing, and therefore did not know how successful they were at meeting the objective. I instead attempted to predict the problems and drilled sections at length to build skills and confidence. I knew this would quickly bore them, so I developed slight variations that I could add to each repetition. We might listen to piece, listen again while they hum along to their part, all sing the soprano line on “doo,” sing it again while swaying to the big beat, repeat those two steps but now on the tenor line, add the soprano and tenor lines together (SA on Sop, TB on Tenor), sopranos hum and tap the small beat while tenors sing text, swap, sing both parts on text, draw the phrase arcs with their arms while I sing, they sing while drawing phrase arcs, etc. Whew!

General Music teachers have proven the value of this technique when teaching by rote. The variations, combined with repetition, help our struggling students learn the notes and rhythms while still engaging the more advanced students. When we return to our more normal classrooms in the fall, how many “variations” can we create when rehearsing? How can we add higher-level concepts to a passage and not leave others behind?

Many students turned on their cameras during rehearsal, but because true choral singing cannot exist over Zoom, many of us did not get to hear them sing. Instead, we relied on our eyes. We know what proper posture looks like. When teaching a piece over Zoom, if we notice the tenors are raising their chins and tensing to sing the high notes, we know they will sound tight and strained. We also know that if students slouch their upper body, it leads to an unsupported sound, and if they raise their shoulders when they breathe, they are likely taking a shallow breath. When we return in the fall, what physical cues can we look for? How can we use our eyes to help our students sing better?

Repetitive Rehearsals

Many of us led the same rehearsal multiple times per week with a different group of students. If you had a similar experience as me, then by the end you knew the music inside and out and upside down. My knowledge of the score showed in my teaching. I taught the content faster and more efficiently as the week progressed. I knew where the pitfalls were, the structure of the piece and how to rehearse it quickly, the vocal challenges for each voice part, and how to communicate my suggestions and musical ideas more effectively. This did not always work beautifully – what works with one student might not work with another – but overall, I was a better teacher. What would our rehearsals look like if we knew *every* song that well by the first rehearsal? How quickly and directly could you address challenges and prevent unnecessary mistakes? How much better would our choirs sing?

Small Ensembles

Due to classroom limitations and distancing guidelines, we had to break our larger ensembles into smaller groups. There is immense educational value in this format, which is why choir directors across the nation encourage students to participate in solo and ensemble contest. This value was still present, but harder to see through the fog of COVID. Our students were forced to rely more on themselves rather than neighbors and to speak up when they needed assistance. They learned the importance of listening louder than they sing, the level of refinement they can reach even with smaller numbers, and the power of ownership over the music. How can we develop that same level of ownership when we return to our larger ensembles? How can we pass the baton to our students so they lead and hold themselves accountable?



VOICE of WCDA

Moving Forward: Lessons We Can Learn from Teaching During COVID (cont.)

Dr. Cody Miller, Central Representative

Piano vs. No Piano

At the beginning of the fall semester, our choirs were rehearsing in small groups outside, and I thought it would be easier to simply rehearse without a piano rather than lug a keyboard up and down three flights of stairs five days a week. For pitch reference, we used a mini-keyboard app on my phone. The result? My students sang more in-tune, with more confidence, and more sensitively to each other than ever before. In the middle of COVID! Many respected conductors recommend rehearsing without a piano, but fear always held me back from implementing this practice. Those fears were not unfounded; it took longer to learn the music and we fell apart more frequently. The result, however, even after only a couple of weeks, was noticeable and well worth it. If our choirs can improve that significantly during COVID, how much better might they sing under normal circumstances? What if we led every rehearsal without a piano? What might their aural skills be if we did not use piano for a full year?

Conclusion

COVID taught us just how important choir is to us and our students. With reflection, this experience can act as a tuning fork in our lives, reminding all of us why we chose this profession. The stakes are never as high as we imagine they are; we should therefore feel free to take risks and try new things.

To be the best teachers we can be and to always look to the unseen benefits, think on your experiences last year. You found ways to reinvent choral music and bring passion, hope, and joy to your students through music. What were the strategies you used to successfully reach and instruct your students? Let us reflect, adapt, and implement to give our students the best version of choir and ourselves.

All-State 2022

Mike Jones, All-State Chair

Nothing compares to the life-changing experience of making music with the best singers in the state, led by one of America's best teacher-conductors! Send your finest students to Milwaukee this January, and see their leadership take wings when they come back.

We have an AMAZING set of conductors for this year's All-State Choirs.

COLLEGIATE CHOIR: Gary Schwartzhoff, Professor Emeritus University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

HIGH SCHOOL BASS CLEF CHOIR: Christopher Peterson, California State University, Fullerton

HIGH SCHOOL TREBLE CLEF CHOIR: Mollie Stone, University of Chicago

MIDDLE LEVEL CHOIR: Penelope Cruz, White Plains (NY) High School

VOCAL JAZZ: Kate Reid, Frost School of Music - University of Miami

Registration will run September 13 – October 8, 2021. **All participants must be fully vaccinated for Covid-19.**

Watch your email, Facebook, and the WCDA website for more information about online nominations. It only takes a few minutes to nominate some of your students for the life changing experience of singing in an All-State Choir!



VOICE of WCDA

[In This Issue...](#)

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All-State 2022

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Singing in Wisconsin: A Focus on Inclusion & Accessibility for 2022

Jaclyn Kottman Hittner, Singing in Wisconsin Chair

While we are disappointed to announce that Singing in Wisconsin has been postponed until 2022, the pandemic hiatus gives us the opportunity to explore how this annual festival - a WCDA tradition for more than 30 years - can be more intentionally inclusive and accessible upon its return. How can we make sure all of our young singers are able to participate, regardless of geography or financial need? How can we make bringing students to Singing in Wisconsin easier for teachers who have ever increasing demands on our time and energy? How can we include and uplift students across experience and skill levels, from those who eagerly audition for every honor choir to those who have never sung in a choir before? We're excited to introduce several changes to support these goals:

-  Singing in Wisconsin will take place at four sites throughout the state with **borderless registration** so you can choose which location is most accessible for you and your students.
-  The Youth Choir will expand to **include 4th graders**, and teachers will have the flexibility to **place 6th graders** either in the Youth Choir (grades 4-6) or the Middle Level Choir (grades 6-8), depending on the structure of your school and each singer's vocal development.
-  The High School Choir will be a **contemporary choral a cappella ensemble**, providing the opportunity for 9-12th grade singers across all levels of experience to explore the rich genre of contemporary a cappella singing together under the leadership of top Wisconsin a cappella educators and supported by collegiate mentors.
-  All repertoire will be taught and learned **on the day of the Festival...** no pre-teaching involved! Just get your students there, and we'll immerse them in a day of choral singing, learning, and connecting.
-  **A flexible registration fee** will be offered to enable participation for students in need of financial support.

Even with these changes, the heart of Singing in Wisconsin remains the same - each choir will be led by a fantastic Wisconsin choral music educator, participation is non-auditioned and is open to any Wisconsin choral educator and their students in grades 4-12, and enthusiastic singers will continue to come together for a uniquely accessible and inclusive day of singing and connecting through choral music. We hope to see you and your singers at the re-launch of Singing in Wisconsin on **November 12, 2022!**





VOICE of WCDA

Bringing the “Corners” of the Earth to the “Center” of our Classroom

Raymond Roberts, World Musics and Cultures R&R Chair

How do we explore, together with our students, the wide world of music? I trust that we collectively believe this collaborative exploration is truly a fundamental tenet of the choral educator’s philosophy. I also trust that we collectively (and intuitively) understand that the effective practice and realization of this philosophical tenet requires an enormous investment of intentional time and energy on our part. Our musical journey beyond the walls of our classroom and outside the comfort of our lived experiences must begin (and continue) with tried and true benchmarks and guiding principles so that it leads to a place of enlightenment for us individually and, perhaps more importantly, for our students.

I am both honored and humbled to have been asked to serve WCDA as the Repertoire and Resources Chair for World Musics and Cultures. In this role, I hope to continue my own journey toward broadening the horizon of my appreciation and knowledge of the wide world of music and culture and offering some ideas about charting and navigating new musical waters collaboratively. I respectfully submit that the first step on this journey must be engaging in the process of decentering whiteness in the choral classroom. Whiteness needs to be taken out of the center of American culture (where it exists as “standard,” “normal,” “common,” and “undifferentiated”), while cultures of color need to be moved from the margins to the center. I am fully aware of the seeming paradox that exists when a white man speaks about decentering whiteness, thereby recentring whiteness in the dialogue. But, leaving it unsaid is a form of complicity that only perpetuates its centrality.

After making the intentional decision to decenter whiteness in this process, you will be faced with the challenge of how to chart the course for your (and your students’) journey through the murky waters of potential cultural appropriation. While daunting, take comfort in embracing the “flip side” of this concept, as expressed by G. Phillip Shoultz, III, associate conductor of VocalEssence, a Minneapolis-based chorus. He states, in an article written by Eugene Holley, Jr., for Chorus America, “There’s a positive attribute to sharing culture, right? And you can’t separate us artificially because now we are so intertwined together, thanks to social media and technology.” Shoultz goes on to make a point that resonated deeply with me, considering my experiences teaching in Milwaukee since 1991. He expressed that, as an African-American who spent time studying in Germany, the fear of cultural appropriation would dictate that he not sing any music composed by Bach. I believe it to be a moral imperative to engage in this work. If you consider the gift that singing is to all of humanity, I think you will agree that we have all the tools we need to engage in this movement successfully. We will undoubtedly question ourselves. But, through that questioning and reflection, and even mistakes, growth will happen!

Quite a journey, thus far! Trusting that you are still with me, let us consider a few fundamental tenets as we chart our course.

1. Search intentionally for music from all corners of the globe
2. Search for composers and arrangers who are native to the country of the song’s origin
3. Search for performances of the piece by choirs native to the country of the song’s origin
4. Search for composers or arrangers that have spent substantial time observing and studying in the country of the song’s origin
5. Search for local composers and musicians from diverse cultural traditions (BBIA — Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian) in your area and arrange for exchanges and sharing sessions
6. Commit to teaching the song in the same manner and style that it would be taught in its place and culture of origin
7. Make sure you spend as much (if not more) time searching for world musics as you do for any other style you incorporate in your classroom (helpful hint: start with places and cultures that you may have a connection to — having travelled there, having family or extended family from those countries, having colleagues and friends who have first-hand experience and knowledge of the culture, etc.)

The time is now to embrace and practice what we know to be universally true: singing speaks to the human condition in deep and moving ways. Allow that universal commonality to inform your commitment to engage in the exploration and study of songs that originate from the farthest corners of the earth, and bring them into the center of your classroom.

Here is a list of resources to consult as you continue your journey:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wjxuHDrpgtYlIbJuqx4M3BmgQaAECxGe5ga9PLU7Zc8/edit?usp=sharing>



VOICE of WCDA

Church Choir High Five

John Albrecht, Director for Music Ministries at First Congregational UCC, Appleton;
former R&R Chair for Music in Worship/Lifelong

Choral Collections for the Church Choir

Many of our music ministries regularly turn to IMSLP for public domain choral music. Another “budget friendly” option for both smaller and larger church programs is to invest in collections appropriate to both their full choir and seasonal small ensembles – meeting summer music needs, as well as rebuilding our choirs as we emerge from the pandemic. A multi-year purchase approach could include purchasing a set of six copies for small ensemble use, with more copies purchased for the full choir in the following budget year(s). This listing shares some recommended collections, many of which will serve choirs of many sizes and balances. . .Enjoy!

1. A First Motet Book – ed. Paul Thomas
SATB, SSATB, SAB; a cappella and accompanied
Concordia: 97-4845

<https://www.cph.org/p-4456-a-first-motet-book.aspx>

This time-honored collection includes 17 motets in a variety of styles, ranging from Renaissance to contemporary. Accessible settings (vocal range, duration) for the smaller choir, including such composers as Distler, Pitoni, Vaughan Williams, Bender, and more.

2. Second Motet Book – ed. Paul Thomas
SATB, SSATB, SATTB, SATBB; a cappella and accompanied
Concordia Publishing House: 97-5205; Instrumental part set: 97-5219

<https://www.cph.org/p-4482-a-second-motet-book.aspx>

A continuation of the first collection, with 16 motets of medium difficulty, branching into music of Brahms, Bruckner, Reger, and more. The parts set includes woodwind and string parts.

3. St. Olaf Choirbook for Men – ed. Christopher Aspaas
TB, TTBB, TTB, TTBB/TTBB (double choir)
Augsburg Fortress: ISBN: 978-1-4514-9903-2

<https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/9781451499032/St-Olaf-Choirbook-for-Men>

St. Olaf Choirbook for Women - ed. Carol Carver

<https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/9781506426310/St-Olaf-Choirbook-for-Women>

Accessible accompanied and a cappella literature for the full church year (includes pedagogical notes) from established composers/arrangers such as Jennings, Ferguson, Scholz, Aspaas, Johnson, and more. Part of the respected Viking Chorus/St. Olaf choral tradition.

4. Bach for All Seasons – ed. Richard Erickson, Mark Bighley
SATB, SSATB; accompanied and a cappella
Augsburg Fortress: ISBN: 0-8006-5854-X

<https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/search?ss=bach+for+all+seasons&c=0>

Contemporary poetic language, clearly readable scores, drawing from cantatas and other extended works. Topical and scriptural indices are helpful. Some obligato instrumental parts included. Strong realizations of continuo parts. German texts also included. A beautiful and practical collection of this master composer’s music for the church of today.

5. The Oxford Book of Flexible Anthems – ed. Alan Bullard

Flexible scorings for mixed choirs that can be adjusted for upper-voice choirs, choirs with few men, unison choirs, small choirs; a cappella and accompanied

Oxford University Press: ISBN: 978-0-19-335895-9

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-book-of-flexible-anthems-9780193358959?q=The%20new%20oxford%20Easy%20Anthem%20book&lang=en&cc=us>

Spans repertoire from Renaissance to contemporary, including such current composers as Chilcott, Wilby, Archer and Rutter. Accessible choral & accompaniment parts, well-suited for use throughout the church year with smaller and/or beginning choirs. Includes listing for the liturgical year and themes.



VOICE of WCDA

Collegiate High Five

Jerry Hui, Collegiate R&R

1. And They Lynched Him On A Tree

William Grant Still

SATB double chorus, soloist, narrator, orchestra

Available through williamgrantstillmusic.com

The 18-minute oratorio opens with powerful punctuation from the orchestra and an ominous chorus that set the tone of the entire piece: a protest against lynching. The slow middle section features a soprano or mezzo soprano solo, which is at times sorrowful, and at times filled with angst. The poem, written by Katherine Garrison Chapin, was contemporary with another famous poem *Strange Fruit*. It depicts the horrific event of lynching, and at the end calls for social justice. Toward the end, various themes are brought back together and built toward a triumphant and brass-dominant passage that is briefly harmonious; yet Still intentionally ended the piece unresolved, hanging on a loud dissonance. At its premiere in 1940, the text was described to be difficult to perform in public because of how antagonistic its last line might seem to the audience, and as such, three different texts exist. Eighty years later, there is much social progress, yet there's still many needed changes to better the lives of the African American community and people of color. In this time of Black Lives Matter, this piece will serve to open this difficult dialog for the chorus and for the audience. [Thanks to Dr. Frank Watkins for the suggestion]

Performance by the [Harry T. Burleigh Society and Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra in 2019](#).

2. The Rumor Of A Secret King

John Mackey

SATB choir with divisi

Available through [the composer's website](#)

The composer's own note indicates that this piece is "about power in flux." Mackey used the famous coronation text from Handel's *Zadok the Priest*, but "replacing the jubilation of Handel's anthem with ambivalence and anxiety. A new world is a promise and a threat: What will become of us?" Political overtone aside, this piece explores the rhythmic and dissonant sound of a choir. Accented nonsense syllables weave together in an interlocking web of rhythm that is reminiscent of Balinese gamelan, while other voices with long notes engage in ebb and flow between jarring dissonance and massive extended harmony. [Thanks to Dr. Zack Durlam for the suggestion]

Performance by the [BBC Singers, conducted by Eric Whitacre](#)

3. Imagine We Are Trees

Timothy C. Takach

SATB choir

Available through [Graphite Publishing](#)

This piece "explores two trees as a metaphor for love, for caring." A gentle vocalese opens the piece "embodies the branching out of a growing tree," after which Takach delivers a text about the love and codependency between people in a warm and intimate sound. After the pandemic's long interruption to choral singing, it will be nice to celebrate human interaction and relationship.

Performance by Madison Choral Project, also available on [Graphite Publishing](#)

4. Arise, Beloved!

Rosephanye Powell

SATB choir

Hal Leonard: HX.253864

Based on Song of Solomon 2:7-13, this is a romantic setting that features idiomatic melodies in all voice parts. Powell wrote that she drew on the influence of Romantic art songs of Schubert and Schumann. The voices often engage in duets with their harmonization well supported by the piano, making this a fantastic piece for teaching and on a program.

Demo recording available on the [composer's website](#)

5. Longing From Afar

Dai Fujikura

Open score for any instruments/voices

Available for free on the [composer's website](#)

2020 brought us many creative responses in ensemble music making. This is an evocative piece that, in the composer's own words, was designed such that "the conductor has a direct influence on the sound of the music working ensemble with other musicians." Any instruments or voices can be incorporated. There are often highly dissonant polyphony as a result of overlapping lines with close intervals, but there are also many sweet moments where musicians serendipitously arrive at a sonorous chord. Sometimes musicians breathe together, leading to a momentary restful silence that hints at the breath-driven tradition of Gagaku. The result is a haunting yet contemplative soundscape that resembles the empty streets of the pandemic.

[Multiple performances of various instrument/voice combination](#) available on the composer's website.



VOICE of WCDA

High School High Five

David Bowman, High School R&R

1. By the Waters of Babylon (Unison/Canon)

Philip Hayes

3-part: https://www.cpd.org/wiki/images/a/a3/By_The_Waters_of_Babylon_Eb_CPDL_SJC.pdf

4-part (recommended version): <http://threeoranges.org/2011/09/13/by-the-waters-of-babylon/>

Are we all not dealing with loss in one way or another these days? Now, imagine a people who have been uprooted and placed into a land where there were similarities to their homeland, yet the difference was palpable to them. Here, we have just that. The Hebrews have been placed in a land where there is a "river," it is just not "Jordan" to them. Perhaps with its chromaticism, the "weeping" phrase is my favorite. This is a challenge for singers. This piece is a good introduction to more challenging chromatic passages in repertoire. It also allows for the discovery of compositional techniques that have been used to create emotional impact. Line 3 sits high in the voice. Solution: take it down an octave for those who can't match easily in their high voice. Possible tie-ins: there are many choral arrangements of this text (I would recommend the William Boyce). *Va, Pensiero* (from *Nabucco* by Verdi) utilizes the same text and circumstances and is a glorious connection to opera to boot!

2. Of the Father's Love Begotten

Arr. Paul Wohlgemuth

SATB, a cappella

Hope Publishing: A454

This small gem is a journey through Western harmony. What is it that holds this piece together? The constant melody that is never changed. All generations go through trials and tribulations. What are the things that you want to hold onto as you look one or two hundred years from now? Starting with a chant melody from the 13th Century, we travel through the highlights of Western music. Unison, drone with melody, polyphony, four-part chord structure. When we engaged with this piece, the students discovered that the things that "changed" over the past one hundred years were just that: things. What they hoped to be constant pointed to values: family suppers together, the passing on of knowledge, respect for the world around them. Allow students to see music as a transcendent experience and you will not go wrong!

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

3. Riu, Riu Chiu

attributed to M. Flecha el Viejo

SATB, a cappella

https://www.cpd.org/wiki/images/4/42/Riu%2C_riu%2C_chiu_Flecha.pdf

This delightful piece is a great addition to a "winter" concert. Composed in a verse/chorus style, there are opportunities for many of your more soloistic actors/voices to shine. Or you could contrast male and female voices leading unison verses. Pick a key that works for your ensemble. The resulting contrast between small groups (or solos) is a concerto grosso for singers. Listen to some of the great concerti grossi to highlight the possibilities when one considers dynamic contrast as a means for conveying musical meaning. Recordings to listen to include Chanticleer and (believe it or not) The Monkees. The arrangement I have shared includes rests after the first line. We have performed it that way, as well as with no rests. Chanticleer has actually recorded it both ways as well. That is the beauty of music... there are many things that YOU can decide in order to make it your own.



VOICE of WCDA

High School High Five (cont.)

4. Cantos del Agua

Dante Andreo (text Federico Garcia Lorca)

SATB, a cappella

Santa Barbara Music Publishing: SBMP 261

If you are unfamiliar with the poetry of Lorca, I encourage you to stop reading this and find his poetry. Lyric yet conversational, epic yet personal, his voice shares words you can visit time and again and find something new to feed your soul. This musical choice is actually a three-fer! The first piece can stand alone but the three together are especially powerful. *Agua, Donde Vas?* sets the tone harmonically with a nod to a d-minor 9 chord. This movement (written homophonically for the most part) is a conversation between the singer and different “characters”: the river, the sea, the tree. The transcendent moment is the cadence when the poet merely observes four birds in a tree. Which of these characters are your students? Are they able to recognize themselves in these lyrics? *Cortaron Tres Arboles* includes some spoken text to create the chilling effect of a river without its covering trees. (Or is it us who have been laid bare?) I am always curious about Lorca’s choice of THREE trees. As each gets chopped down in its turn. The symbolism is heavy for me. *Balada de Los Tres Rios* is based on Flamenco style poetry. Dark and foreboding, it matches the circumstances of Lorca’s life. The undulating accompaniment of the tenor and alto voices supporting a haunting soprano melody share hardship and pain with us as performers and listeners. The 9th added into the melody creates a longing that is not resolved. Read up on the history of Lorca and you will agree that Andreo (an Argentinian) hit the nail on the head with this tragically wonderful piece. Musically, this is evocative of river communities. How could music “sound” like in your community? What are the things that, without them, your community would be just another dot on the map?

Recordings:

Movement 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RZPuEXNbSs>

Movement 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RZPuEXNbSs>

Movement 3 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-fgZO_hdgY

5. Verbum caro factum est

Hans Leo Hassler

SSATTB, a cappella

notAmos Performing Editions: <https://www.notamos.co.uk/detail.php?scoreid=145490>

What have you chosen not to see? That, to me, right now is what this text is all about. Which vocal line should come to the forefront? Which lines work as support? Written as SSATTB. I have done this as SSAATB. Hassler was a genius. His vocal lines are elegant and singable throughout the piece. Use the text to guide your choices about dynamics and balance between the parts.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cai1Fovi7EY>