



VOICE of WCDA

Fall Issue—2022

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Kiel, WI 53042

weda@wischoral.org

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Letter from the President

Zack Durlam, President

Here it is - the start of another year of music-making. I love this career, I really do, but as the first days of school, community choir, and church choir bear down on me, I'm meeting them with equal parts excitement and exhaustion. The last couple years have brought profound lows and incredible highs accompanied by a complete recalibration of the "why" behind my work and a new appreciation for the gift of being in the same room making music together. The longer I do this, the more I realize that while I love choral music, it's the connections and community with singers and colleagues that feed my soul and help me overcome this post-pandemic-protocol-launching-back-to-normal-activities-but-not-quite-the-normal-we-knew-so-buckle-up-and-work-extra-hard exhaustion I feel.

Unfortunately, I tested positive for Covid prior to our summer conference, but I heard both Refresh and NextDirection were wonderful times of community, learning, and inspiration for all involved. Luckily, I was able to attend a day and a half of the Iowa Choral Directors Association summer conference in late July (I spent the first 12 years of my teaching career in Iowa), and though I expected it to be great, I was surprised how invigorating it was to see old friends and colleagues, reconnect, and "talk shop" for a couple of days. Those of you able to attend either our winter or summer conference this past year know how life-giving this time with colleagues and friends can be, and **I hope to see many of you at our upcoming winter conference.** It looks like a fantastic event!

These times of connection outside of our regular rehearsal spaces can be equally valuable for our students. This past year, one of the choirs I direct sang a piece in Afrikaans. A member of our faculty is a native speaker, and we asked him to meet with us to help with pronunciation. After getting some coaching, we sang through the piece for him, and this straight-forward matter-of-fact scholar broke down in tears. He was moved to hear a piece in his native language and struck by how the beauty of the music elevated the text. His reaction made a profound impact on the singers. They connected to the piece in a completely new way and recognized the innate power of their music-making.

These outside-of-the-box experiences can change the lives of our singers. Do you remember the first time you participated in an honor choir or all state? I certainly do. I bought the cassette tape of that performance and listened to it until I wore it out. 33 years later those are still some of my favorite choral pieces. WCDA is here to help you provide students with these life-changing experiences through both **our non-select Singing in Wisconsin festival and our All State Choirs.** I hope all of you teaching grades 4-college will nominate students!

We've had a lot of summer turnover on the WCDA board. I want to offer a special thanks and send-off to two members who are embarking on adventures in new states. First, special thanks to Cody Miller, our Central District Rep, who is headed to a new position in Pennsylvania. We appreciate his service to the board, and he will be missed! Second, a HUGE thanks to Karen Bruno, our president-elect, who has accepted a new position in Seattle. She has been an incredible asset to WCDA for many years, and she has done an exceptional job planning our upcoming conference. Karen - we're really going to miss you in Wisconsin, but we know you'll do great things in Washington! Finally I want to thank Phillip Swan who is stepping in as our new president-elect. Taking over conference planning mid-stream is an unenviable task, and it's a testament to Phillip's generosity and service to WCDA that he was willing to take this on.

I look forward to seeing many of you at various WCDA and non-WCDA events over the coming year. All of you that show up in choral rehearsals and classrooms around the state are my heroes, and however exhausted or excited you feel facing this new year, know that you are changing lives!



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Winter Conference 2023: *Invitation*

Karen Bruno, President-elect

I am so pleased to let you know that WCDA's winter conference will be held January 12-14, 2023, in Appleton. We will gather in familiar conference places – Lawrence University and Memorial Chapel, St. Mary's Catholic Church, and the Paper Valley Hotel. I am really excited about this year's plans and hope you will be, too.

The title of this conference is "Invitation," as I wished to lift up under-invited voices and expand our circle of inclusion. I also wanted the title to serve as a reminder to continue to invite our colleagues to join, or re-engage with, our professional choral organization for connection, inspiration, and support. Finally, some of you may know that "Invitation" is the title of the shape note tune upon which "Hark! I Hear the Harps Eternal" is based. One musician noted that it is a "flood-crossing song," that description has stayed with me. In this new landscape of COVID, racial reckoning, abundant mental health challenges, and more, we are navigating deep floodwaters at every turn. How can we help one another, and our students, in the "crossing" to healing?

Our All State clinicians will give our singers amazing experiences over the course of the weekend, too. I'm so excited that Diane Skrobis from Waukesha will be with the children's choir, Tesfa Wondemagegnehu will teach our middle level singers, Kerry Marsh will lead our vocal jazz ensemble, and Dr. Felicia Barber will conduct our collegiate singers and provide us with a session on the use of dialect in African American spirituals taken from her recently published book. Treble and Bass Choir clinicians are not yet finalized, but we have asked some terrific people and I'm confident there will be news to share soon.

Please plan to join us in Appleton this January, and watch carefully for Paper Valley room block deadlines and registration deadlines that will include our annual luncheon banquet at Lawrence's Warch Campus Center (omnivore, vegan, and gluten-free options are available). <https://www.wischoral.org/state-conference>

Finally, I wish to thank you. By now, you may have heard that I am resigning from my position as president-elect of WCDA due to my imminent departure from Wisconsin. I have been named the Artistic Director of the Northwest Girlchoir program and will move to Seattle very soon. You, my WCDA colleagues, have been one of the biggest joys of my 30+ years in Wisconsin; to say that I will miss you all is a wild understatement. Thank you for helping me grow and inspiring me as a human and choral educator, and know that I will continue to carry you in my heart as I join a different WCDA. Your singers are lucky, indeed, that you continue to support, lead, and inspire them as musicians and as people. I sincerely hope that our paths will cross again.



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Celebrating Student Success Through Community

Kevin Kriegel, editor – *The Voice*

As choral directors, we strive to create and sustain a community of engaged singers who support one another. A strong choir community creates a safe space that allows for critical thinking, authentic discussion, and creativity. When a singer feels like they can express themselves freely without fear of judgment, wonderful opportunities are created for the choir community, and that should be celebrated.

A powerful activity that I learned from my experience first as a tutor-counselor and then as a teacher for the Upward Bound program at Central College, and one that I implement in my choir classroom every year, is the “warm fuzzy seat.” I place a chair in the middle of the choir classroom, have a selected student sit in the chair, and offer praise for their success, words of encouragement, and appreciation. I usually select three students: 1) one who has had a challenging day/week; 2) one who has had a great, creative week; 3) one who is a more reserved, behind-the-scenes leader who rarely receives acknowledgement. I always begin, and then I hand it off to the rest of the choir members. I am always amazed and delighted to hear the praise from the other choir members to the selected student. Sometimes a few tears are shed, sometimes joyful laughter is shared. Whatever the shared emotion from the activity, my heart swells to see the reaction from the selected student, whether it be an increase in confidence or the student’s humble realization that the other students have positive and caring perceptions about them.

Several former students sent me emails about how this activity impacted them both personally and academically, and inspired them to make creative choices about their future projects and endeavors. One student wrote, “this activity gave me the courage and confidence to inspire and push me to be a better student and musician.” (This student also decided to return to school as a music major). Another wrote, “this activity gave me back my love for music and it made me feel like I belong.” (This student is thriving as a music major). A third wrote, “the warm-fuzzy chair activity gave me the confidence to really focus on my composition skills.” The creativity from this student became apparent to me when they approached me last December to ask if I would be willing to have my choir learn and perform a choral piece that they had composed during the lockdown. I listened to the story about the inspiration for their composition, took one look at the music and poetry (which they wrote as well) and said, “absolutely, let’s program it for the last concert of the year.” The singers in the choir grew quite attached to this piece of music and performed it so brilliantly. Finally, a fourth student shared with me that this activity proved to them that singers in a choir really do care for and support one another. (This student had been struggling with gender issues, and they thanked me on the last day for providing a safe place in which they could feel accepted.) This student’s confidence level increased ten-fold as they not only became a section leader, but more importantly, realized and acknowledged that they could drop down barriers and sing freely. SUCCESS!

Undoubtedly, many of us have had successful student experiences like these, and I think it is important and necessary to acknowledge and celebrate those moments. May you continue to find ways to acknowledge and celebrate those student successes this coming school year.





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Impact

Derek Machan, NextDirection Chair

Recently, I received an email from a college student attending Luther College in Decorah, IA. He was a college participant in NextDirection this past July, and he was nice enough to share with me the following:

“I’ve been able to experience NextDirection in both high school and in college. In the high school experience, you really get a glimpse of what being a choral leader looks like, and get the opportunity to experiment in that role. In the collegiate experience, you assume more of a leadership role and really start to understand what it means to be a choral educator. NextDirection truly showed me what being a choir conductor looks like inside and outside of the classroom. Getting the opportunity to teach my peers and gaining feedback was extremely helpful and one of my favorite parts of NextDirection! Working with some of the best choral educators was a very insightful experience, and I got to build friendships and professional relationships that will last a lifetime.”

Jacob Klingsten is one of so many young choral education majors and high school singers that were brought to the profession by an experience that changed their life. However, the experience Jacob had at the NextDirection would not have happened had it not been for the encouragement of his high school teacher. The impact we have as choir directors can not be overstated. We daily have the chance not only to change lives through the making of music, but also to change lives through the making of future choral directors.

Honor choirs, summer camps, collegiate choral festivals, guest artists, workshops, tours, and countless other activities are once again returning and available to our students. They participate and have wonderful experiences because we share information and encourage them to participate. As Michael Jordan once said, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” If we truly believe in what we do and the importance of our choral art... we *need* to take a shot on our very best students and encourage them to consider a career in music education.

Garrett was perhaps the most well-rounded student I have had in my career. An exceptional tenor singer, a repeat state-bound solo & ensemble trumpet player, a multi-sport athlete in football and track, music honor society president, and student council officer. His father was an important community leader and business owner. When it came time for Garrett to attend college, he started on a path to become an IT specialist. His father wouldn’t give a music degree a second thought. Garrett is a great IT technician, but he would have been an *exceptional* music teacher and coach. He just never had the chance to explore that direction.

We as music teachers can impact students like Garrett and parents like his father by communicating about professions in the arts. We can also inspire and get families thinking about choral music careers by encouraging participation in events such as those mentioned above. In essence, we can impact the future of our own profession by encouraging our best and brightest to join us. NextDirection, a national choral leadership conference, is just the sort of experience students “on the edge” might need to focus their future studies.

Many students consider music degree programs in college because they like to sing, or they enjoy being in a choir. Although this is important, I would encourage students who are also leaders in their school – communicators, bright, energetic, and magnetic to their peers. We all know choral directors who teach because they personally love to sing... but how about teachers who love to teach kids through music? To me, loving music isn’t enough. You have to love teaching kids, too. NextDirection is a program that seeks out high school students who have some of these qualities. Maybe we should seek out students who are not necessarily considering a career in choral music YET!

Encourage your students to attend NextDirection and change a life. Next year’s conference is July 17-21, 2023 and will be held at Carroll University in Waukesha. We are absolutely thrilled to welcome our guest teacher-clinician, Dr. Derrick Fox, from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Check out NextDirection and scholarship opportunities at <https://www.wischoral.org/nextdirection>. Registration will open in January!

Impact the future of choral music. Impact your choral program by developing and encouraging their leadership in your school. Impact the future of one of your students by showing them the opportunities for a career in our profession. If we don’t encourage our best and brightest among our students – who will??





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Celebrating the Middle - Stories from a 6-8 Choral Classroom

Jean Enyeart, Northwest Representative

As a college student, I had my sights set on teaching High School. I knew I wasn't geared for teaching the littles, and I understood High School to be where the "real" music happened. Out of college, I was hired for the only position available in my area of the state: 6-8 Choral music. I remember thinking I would commit to the program for 3 years, then leave it stronger than I found it and get a "real" job teaching High School. The fall of 2022 marks the start of my 21st year teaching 6-8 choir, and over those many years, I grew to love this unique age group.

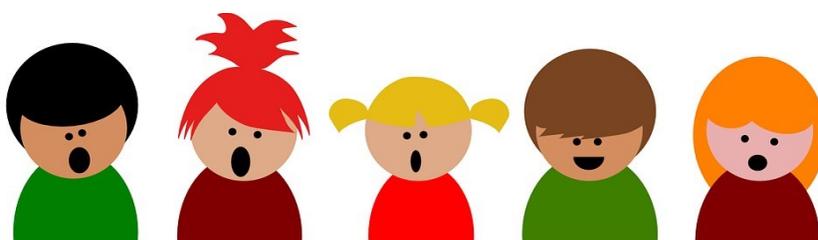
The first reality I needed to adapt to in the middle school classroom was the students' uncomfortable authenticity. As any of you who have worked with this age group can appreciate, these students say so many things that are both so completely honest and hilariously inappropriate. I have learned to love that one always knows where they stand with these students. I have also learned to roll with it and laugh with them - sometimes at myself. However, as genuine as this group is, I have also learned that despite their strong statements to the contrary, they often don't actually know what they need or want. Somewhere around year 6, the incoming 6th grade choir was known to be one of "those" groups. I worked with this class of 90 choir students, including around 30 with varying levels of identified need, every other day for 50 minutes. They were tough, they were talkative, they were a little bit feral, and the only way I found to maintain any level of order was to make as many individual connections as I could, and sweat the small behaviors in class. By the end of the year I was convinced that in an effort to maintain order, I had become the mean teacher and no one would sign up for choir the next year. I was wrong. By 8th grade, they were still by far my largest class to that point, and many connections last to this day. This class taught me that students need and even like the boundaries they fight so hard against.

One musical aspect I learned to love about teaching middle school was the opportunity to focus on process rather than product. Because students are enrolled for the entire year and we only have 2-3 scheduled performances a year, we can truly focus on their skills September through May. I now celebrate that I get to prioritize music literacy skills rather than try to fit them in. I have discovered that the biggest hurdle to students learning music literacy isn't the complexity of the subject. It is making the commitment to teach it every day and helping students overcome our cultural aversion to being bad at things while we learn. Around year 10, I was listening to a [story](#) on NPR about a graduate student observing a math class in Japan while researching various educational approaches. The teacher selected a student who was struggling with a concept to go up to the board and demonstrate for the class while the teacher moved on to a different problem. Every few minutes the teacher would ask the class if the student at the board had achieved the goal. The class would say no and the student would keep working. By the end of class, the student had accomplished the goal and the teacher and the other students applauded. Since the day I heard this story, I have relayed it to every class every fall. We discuss how we feel extreme discomfort at that idea of volunteering an answer in class that is wrong. We discuss which skill is more important: getting something right the first time, or working at it until we experience success. We watch videos about failing forward and connect building vocal skills to time in the weight room. I then tell them that one of our goals is to fail everyday. They know that when I see them struggle, they may come up for some individual time with me while the class works. By recognizing as a group that failure makes us uncomfortable, but that it is not only unavoidable in a choir but desirable as a necessary step, we try to approach the year as many small daily failures leading to successful learning and growth through the year.

Most recently, the aspect of teaching middle school that I have grown to love is the widespread lack of credit given to this age group. It seems adults don't really expect these students to be able to produce high quality concerts or productions. Yet year after year, these students rise to the expectations set for them. In recent years, some of my favorite comments from families are along the lines of, "That concert/musical production was fantastic - I forgot I was watching middle schoolers". These types of statements used to feel like backhanded compliments, but I have come to appreciate them as an indication that these students are exceeding the community's expectations.

So as those of us in the middle school classroom look forward to another year, take a moment to appreciate these students - laugh with them, celebrate failures, and remember to not underestimate them. These amazing students will rise to the expectations you set for them, and they will never be boring.

NPR story referenced above can be read in its entirety [here](#).





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Into the Muddle: Opening the High School Choir Room

Luke Hrovat-Staedter, Diversity Initiative Liaison

"In having strayed afield of myself and of the borders that have defined the forms I have come to know and love, I bear witness to strange beauties... I have encountered a richer and more diverse array of human, sonic, and sociomusical relationships: relations in which power shifts quickly, classrooms where students talk and I listen, musical encounters and fractious debates that are so confusing - sometimes angering - that they continue in arterial fashion beyond school walls and back. Moving past mere decoding, listening more than hearing... has made music more tinted, more many colored. It's fair to say that the pleasures of receptivity and generosity... have made me different than I once was and different than I otherwise would be."

The consensus from educators after the past 2-3 years has been an urgency to revolutionize. The feeling of "we can't go back to the way things were" has been the topic of professional developments, staff meetings, professional conferences, and conversations around the dinner table after frustrating days. I believe Randall Allsup, quoted above and author of *Remixing the Classroom: Toward an Open Philosophy of Music Education (2016)*, offers us a path towards revolutionary praxis within the music teaching world and distinctly points us towards the best possible guides: our students.

It can be hard to work against some of the hardwiring that centers teachers as rehearsal technicians intent on extracting the best out of our students as efficiently as possible - it certainly is for me. In an educational environment that routinely devalues music teachers, encroaches on music-making time, and distills quality music programs to public performance, the tendency is to maximize rehearsal time with as little "waste" as possible. These environments tend to recreate the musical laws and traditions of our past, keeping us within the boundaries we've fought for and established in our field.

As music educators, we are often very intimate with the amazing capabilities of our students. While parents, family members, and community members stand in awe after performances of young musicians, I often find myself thinking "duh!" and confused at their surprise. Young people are fearless, compassionate, and experts in their own experiences. An open philosophy of music education asks us to slow down, relinquish our power, and dive into what Allsup calls the "unholy muddle." Students are the first and most powerful place to look when seeking transformational change in our musical communities.

In our first year back from virtual classrooms, it was time to shake up the routines and "borders" I had become comfortable with. I was eager to reach for more open spaces in the music room and explore more democratic and activist ventures. If students had the curricular space to deploy music as an antidote for a community problem, how would they shape our creating and learning? What follows are a few stories from this venture into the unholy muddle in a high school choir classroom.

The first space that needed to be created was curricular space. What do I need to "give up" for us to have adequate time in the sandbox? We traditionally have a year of four concert cycles - one each quarter - so these projects ended up taking the place of our 3rd quarter concert cycle. Far enough along in the year that students had built musical skills and social relationships to allow for a certain level of vulnerability and trust, without interrupting some of the end of the year traditions we all look forward to. The next question was "what will we do with this space?" To save you from some of the details - many of which you can find in the slideshow included below - I'll say that through my own research and conversation with students, we decided to do musical actional research projects that used music to address a challenge/problem/issue in our community in medium-sized groups (10-12 students).

Our 10th/11th grade treble choir was particularly small this year, so they formed their own group and titled their project "AOTF: Anxiousness of the Future." When identifying a school-based challenge to address musically, most of these students felt some weight about what their future held, along with general anxiousness about school, social issues, family issues, etc. Their project included a student survey, a TikTok page (@treblechoir), peer interviews, a playlist of "anti-anxiousness" songs, a vocal arrangement of a popular song, and an audio recording of that arrangement. All these outcomes were defined and achieved through student dialogue, and each student was able to bring their own strengths to the project.





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Into the Muddle (cont.)

Naiya, a strong musician and songwriter, took charge of teaching the class the song and leading them through the creation of the arrangement. Z, a compassionate includer, helped coordinate interviews with non-choir students and create a TikTok page to share songs students listened to in order to curb anxious feelings. Other students were in charge of editing interviews, contacting teachers about sharing surveys in their classes, and curating playlists. This is not dissimilar to the way choirs become more than the sum of their parts, but in this situation the students applied music and non-music based skills to content and outcomes they designed. My positionality changed from that of a director to a stage manager. I became someone who made sure each group had what they needed to engage deeply with their sociomusical outcome.

Additional student-created action projects included a black artist showcase hosted by choir students to feature musicians and poets who are not enrolled in music classes, a mockumentary about choir to build community around the arts ed department, and an original children's song about renewable energy. Many culminated with public performances of students, others were turned in as audio/ video recordings, while others were presented conversationally in class.

Student feedback from these explorations were mixed, with some enjoying the autonomy and some yearning for traditional structure. Although we spent time doing vocal exercises and warm-ups most days, we didn't work on repertoire during this quarter. In subsequent iterations of these projects, I'm hoping to intertwine the work with traditional rehearsing, potentially combining the 4th quarter concert cycle with the 3rd quarter ensemble projects to fill the entire 2nd semester. Further reflection exposes the lack of connections made outside of the immediate school-based community. True participatory action research, which we partially engaged in, requires continual collaboration with experts and culture bearers. The next version of these projects will require a deep bench of resources, experts, friends, and professionals to enhance the growth of our community. Ultimately, we will continue to seek joy and celebration through the participatory work of co-creating musical experiences aimed at community betterment.

The instinct to create space brought some rich dialogue, ideas, projects, imaginings, struggles, and musical creations. The class periods were sometimes messy, ebbed-and-flowed within each group, and were filled with surprises. Feedback from students communicated both freedom and frustration with the lack of bumpers. Some students missed the traditional practices of a large ensemble rehearsal while understanding the opportunities of more choice. Paradoxically, I believe that endeavors into openness will require even more planning, and based on student feedback, should be more intertwined with a traditional ensemble schedule. More rehearsal days must be included to maintain momentum and the spirit of ensemble music, and outside voices, along with more explicit community activism are a necessity.

How can I connect the classroom version of this undertaking with potential extracurricular options? How can ensembles engage in liberatory, student-generated musical collaboration to impact themselves and their community while still retaining the spirit of large ensemble work? As with many new explorations, this experience has left me with more questions than answers. This work continues to give our classroom spaces permission to keep venturing into the unknown.

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[Slideshow included](#) with numerous links, including the overview of the quarter, activities, philosophical/scholarly grounding, "completed" projects, student feedback, and reflections/next steps. Feedback/questions are welcomed.



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Summing Up Success

Jerry Hui, Collegiate R & R Chair

How do you define success for your choir? Perhaps it is through increasing enrollment. Or the ability to take on a very challenging piece. Or the opportunity to perform at conferences. We are used to measuring success from our viewpoint. What about success from the viewpoint of our students?

In years past, I ask graduating students to do a written "exit interview", reflecting on their choir experience. The power of music for emotional expression and stress relief is to be expected. Meanwhile, the everlasting connection between students during their formative years is simply beyond any measurement.

Being involved with choir has been so helpful with reducing stress in my life. It has been great knowing that there's that hour and a half a couple times a week where the only thing to worry about is making beautiful sounds. (from a student in BS Production and Operation Management)

The friendships that you build are those that will get you through these challenging years of your young lives. Having a place to come and sing each week can help relieve the stresses of college life. (from a student in BS Apparel Design)

Thank you Jerry for creating a family I have grown with and shared so many memories with. You have made such an impact on my college experience and I consider you one of my mentors. Thank you for everything! (from a student in BS Retail Merchandising Management)

Recently, Dr. Mariana Farah shared a lovely email from Ave Vystrcil, a singer in her Treble Choir at UW-Madison:

Hello Dr. Farah,

My mother was in a women's chorus during her college years. When I told her that we were doing pieces by women composers that were very beautiful and meaningful she was pleasantly surprised. She remembered women's chorus as mostly love songs and lesser pieces, of course written by men. Her comment got me thinking:

I never considered creating music, because women just supposed to sing what they're given. Women aren't talented enough to compose. We're better as passive vessels for the artistry of the opposite gender. I've never heard female composers because men just have a special gift.

I didn't realize the above were my subconscious thoughts until being accepted into this Chorus. I didn't realize how much I was affected by sexism in classical music culture. Experiencing the excellence of Andrea Ramsey's work (and yours) has made me feel empowered. Thank you for giving us repertoire that is not only written by amazing women, but that showcases the dignity of femininity in of itself, apart from the male gaze.

The choir gave this student a new connection to her mother. Dr. Farah's work and the music by women composers gave her a new, more powerful sense of self.

As we begin a new academic year, I hope you will be able to look upon various success stories from your own choirs, and let their positive experience recharge your work.

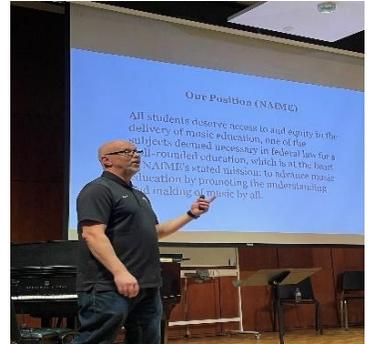




VOICE of WCDA

Summer Conference 2022

From July 11-15, college students and high schoolers (July 13-15) came together at Carroll University for NextDirection, a national program that helps these young people gain a clearer vision of possibilities for their musical future. Veteran choral leaders also came together for rejuvenation at The Refresh! program (July 13-14). As you enjoy some pictures of the experience, please consider attending the 2023 Summer Conference <https://www.wischoral.org/refresh>.





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20816 River Hills Way

Kiel, WI 53042

wcda@wischoral.org

WWW.WISCHORAL.ORG

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It's Back! Singing in Wisconsin - Saturday, November 12

Jaclyn Kottman Hittner, Singing in Wisconsin Chair

For thirty years, WCDA's Singing in Wisconsin Festival has brought young musicians together across our state for a day of choral music and connection. After a two year pandemic-induced hiatus, we are thrilled to bring back this unique festival on **Saturday, November 12!** Hosted at four regional sites and directed by fantastic clinicians, this is a festival choir for *all* of your singers - from the seasoned choir student who signs up for every extra-curricular musical opportunity, to the new singer who is curious to try their first large ensemble experience.

Bring your students in grades 4-12 to one of **four regional sites** (Appleton, Waukesha, Wisconsin Rapids, or Menomonie/Eau Claire) for a day of learning and the joy of singing together. All repertoire will be learned on site during the Festival itself - **no pre-teaching needed!**

Register your students this Fall for one of three ensembles. The **Youth Choir** has been expanded to include 4th graders, and teachers will have the flexibility to place 6th graders either in the Youth Choir (grades 4-6 treble voices) or the **Middle Level Choir** (grades 6-8 mixed changing voices), depending on the structure of your school and each singer's vocal development. Singers in grades 9-12 can register for the **High School Acapella Choir**, an opportunity for singers across all levels of experience to explore the rich genre of contemporary a cappella under the leadership of top a cappella educators and supported by collegiate mentors.

Singing in Wisconsin is for everyone! **Teachers** will have opportunities to relax and connect with each other throughout the day with a series of informal events in the Director's Lounge at each site. **Families and community members** will be able to hear what their singers have learned and celebrate the joy of choral music at a 4:00pm concert that afternoon. **Singers** will leave the day with new friends from around the region, a colorful t-shirt, and enthusiasm for choral singing to bring back to your program.

Whether you bring singers every year or are hearing about Singing in Wisconsin for the first time, we hope to see you and your students on Saturday, November 12!



SINGING IN
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All-State 2023

David Murphy, All-State Chair

Ready? Get set. Go! Plans for this year's All-State Choir are underway. You can expect the usual excellent All-State experience for your students this year—great conductors, great staff, great facilities—AND a streamlined nomination/registration/payment process designed to get the music in your singers' hands earlier this year. Expect the return of the Children's Choir this year and the continuation of the Middle Level, Bass Clef, Treble Clef, Vocal Jazz, and Collegiate All-State Choirs as well.

In order to get the music in your singers' hands earlier, the All-State timeline has been tweaked. We will all need to be alert and aware because deadlines are slightly different from past years. **Put these dates on your calendar now.** You don't want to miss them. Again, the timeline is new, and the deadlines are hard and fast. The plan is that the nomination/registration process moves quickly so the learning can begin sooner. None of us want our students to miss this promising experience.

We are modeling our registration/payment process after that of the State Honors Project and hope it will simplify the process for teachers, students, and their parents. Our goal is to get all information to participants at once and avoid multiple emails, keeping the All-State details together. The hope is that you and your students will find All-State 2023 a breeze.

All-State Timeline:

- **Sept. 1** - All-State info out to teachers and Nominations Open (submitted by teachers)
- **Sept. 30** - Nominations Due to WCDA
- **Oct. 3** - Acceptance Notifications and Registration Opens (ONE WEEK TO REGISTER!!!)
Teachers will be notified by email when their students have registered.
- **Oct. 10** - Registration closes (Registration & medical forms completed by parents)
- **Oct. 12** - Final payment notice to teachers from WCDA (Teacher/School pays)
- **Nov. 1** - Music to singers/directors
- **Jan. (12) 13-14** - All-State in Appleton

Watch your email, Facebook, and the WCDA website for more information about online nominations. Nominate some of your students for the life-changing experience of singing in a WCDA All-State Choir!

Questions? Please email me at: allstate@wischoral.org

See you in Appleton!





VOICE of WCDA

Vocal Jazz High Five

Dr. Kristin Sponcia, Vocal Jazz R & R Chair

1. Blue Flower - Rosana Eckert/arr. Kerry Marsh
SSA with rhythm section (SATB also available)
Kerry Marsh www.kerrymarsh.com



An accessible level 2.5 arrangement of the pretty pop ballad “Blue Flower” includes tasteful harmonies and poetic lyrics reflecting images of nature. Your singers will get to work on blend, dynamics, rhythmic accuracy, and nuanced background figures during the solo feature. It would work well between two mid- or up-tempo songs in a concert order. A fun initial approach to teaching this piece would be having the singers memorize the words and performing it spoken in rehearsal to ensure rhythmic accuracy.

2. James - Metheny/Mays, arr. Michele Weir
SATB with rhythm section
UNC Jazz Press (VJ1559)
<https://www.uncjazzpress.com/product-p/vj1559.htm>
<https://www.michmusic.com/product-category/arrangements-satb/>

This wordless, gentle samba may be classified by the publisher as a level 2, but to perform it well it requires singers to master group blend, unification of syllables, and an easy-going approach to the melody. The harmonic progression is interesting and accessible for beginning improvisors (try getting them to learn to hear and sing the roots of chords on random syllables along with the progression while using interesting and varied rhythms!) “James” is a great opportunity to learn about a samba groove and how that differs from swing and bossa nova.

3. Gotta Be This Or That - Sunny Skylar/arr. Eric Hagmann
SATB with rhythm section
Anchor Music Publications (HAG-S3-4196)
<https://anchormusic.com/product/gotta-be-this-hag/>

A solid level 3 medium-swing arrangement that features solos with lyrics and improvisation, entire section unisons with background figures, a brief drum solo, classic swing rhythmic figures and closed-voice harmonies characteristic of this style. Singers will love the light-hearted lyrics and variety of phrasing. Could be a great concert opener!

4. Home - Jennifer Parker/arr. Matt Falker
SATB a cappella
Anchor Music Publications (MFM-B3-4011)
<https://anchormusic.com/product/home-mfm/>

A reflective ballad featuring lush harmonies, a sweeping melody, brief treble voice solos, and the opportunity to work on group rubato singing. Some directors would prefer to conduct, but depending on the group’s size and level of ensemble unity, this type of arrangement could be an exciting dance led by the singers. Allowing them to dictate the pacing of the rubato phrases and which syllables to emphasize and de-emphasize can deepen their internalization of the music as well as the storyline of the lyric. In either scenario, its performance will be enjoyed by the singers and audience members alike!

5. Before You Know It - John Proulx, arr. Jennifer Barnes
SSAA/SAB with rhythm section
Anchor Music Publications (JBA-S3-3454)
<https://anchormusic.com/product/before-you-know-it-jba/>

A level 3 mid- or up-tempo contender for a concert opener or closer, this cool swing arrangement has an optimistic message, sensible voice leading, and nice chord changes for improvisation. The tempo is marked quarter note =184 but the demo recording is slower. Either tempo would work well depending on your programming needs and the ensemble’s ability. The group would get to work on octave and unison melody lines that break into harmony later on as well as a fun and hip soli section after the scat solos.



VOICE of WCDA

Community Choir High Five

Cathy Reitz, Community Choir R & R Chair

Music is good for you. It can inspire us, calm us, help us express our feelings and make us laugh or cry. It doesn't matter what we may be on the outside or the inside, when we make music and sing together, we are making this world a better place because we become one. Singing is good for you and singing in a group is great for you. Here are some of my favorites for community choirs of all abilities.

1. Good News

Gene Grier & Lowell Everson
Heritage Music Press
2-part

This upbeat and energetic original partners two infectious melodies with the rhythmic excitement provided by parts for speaking chorus. Spirited and fun! This recording is of a youth choir but I have had great success with adults singing this arrangement.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OEius9NcjU>

2. Sing On!

Lane Johnson
Santa Barbara Music Publishing
SA, SSA, SATB

"Whatever comes your way, sing on! Keep your music going... sing on!" This is a great concert piece with carefully crafted melodic lines and exciting rhythms that lie over a lovely harmonic progression. The uplifting text and spirit of the piece will appeal to singers and audiences alike. We all want to "sing on".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkOT1533BGA>

3. In My Life

John Lennon & Paul McCartney/arr. Greg Jasperse
Shawnee Press
SSA, SAB, SATB

It has a great lyric that conveys a timeless message. "...But of all these friends and lovers, there is no one compares with you, and these mem'ries lose their meaning, when I think of love as something new...In my life, I love you more."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KspebvlUx9Y>

4. Mighty Mouse

arr. Greg Gilpin
Shawnee Press
SA, SAB, TTBB

What a blast from the past. It may be from a cartoon but doesn't everyone love to have a Mighty Mouse around or maybe be one?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaYVNEdwg7o>

5. Better Times Will Come

Janis Ian

This song was written by Janis Ian during the pandemic to help her get through the tough times. Free downloads and sheet music can be found at www.janisian.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mr7rXgQwggk> – there is a great intro about this song on this YouTube clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QF83dg2pj3o>



VOICE of WCDA

Contemporary/A cappella/Commercial Choir High Five

Ryan Stuempges, Contemporary/A cappella/Commercial R & R Chair

1. I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For (OPB: U2) - arr. Deke Sharon

Hal Leonard

SATB (Divisi), a cappella

This was the very first a cappella arrangement I did with my a cappella group and it should be your first one, too, if you are starting out!!! First off, this song has once again become popular due to the finale scene in the movie "Sing 2". It's a song students will recognize right away and be excited to learn and sing. It also has a very straight forward chord progression which makes it simple for the bass part, and is a great chart to teach basic chord progressions. This arrangement will also introduce your groups to basic a cappella syllables and sounds, but I urge you to play around with those syllables until you get them to sound more instrumental rather than like vocal words. The solo is one that anyone can sing. <https://www.jwpepper.com/I-Still-Haven%27t-Found-What-I%27m-Looking-For/10094612.item#.YvbPLY-B1N0>

2. Can't Stop The Feeling (OPB: Justin Timberlake) - arr. Lee Stovall

Sheet Music Plus

SATB, a cappella

If you want to get your a cappella groups excited about learning one of the top 20 songs in the past 10 years, then look no further than this arrangement. This is an arrangement that really builds throughout and has a bass line that your students will love to sing once mastered. A very strong lead is needed to master this arrangement. My suggestion when picking soloists for anything is to have students send audio recordings to you. Give them a due date. This will narrow down those students who really are interested along with free up time during rehearsal so you aren't wasting your rehearsal time trying to do auditions. Use your rehearsal time for your entire group. This arrangement will also introduce you to one of the country's top a cappella arrangers, Lee Stovall. If you like this one, you will like his other arrangements, all found at www.sheetmusicplus.com.

<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/can-t-stop-the-feeling-from-trolls-digital-sheet-music/20738979>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22WuxfGUPIA>

3. May It Be (OBP: Enya) - arr. Mark Brymer

Hal Leonard

SATB with piano accompaniment

Here is a piece that my entire choir has loved singing over the years. Even though the movie Lord of the Rings came out years ago, most students have seen it. This piece's theme is hidden throughout the movie and only really shows up in its entirety at the end credits. I'm not sure what it is with this full choir arrangement. Maybe it's the celtic sounds and rhythms? Maybe it's the text that everyone can relate to? Maybe it's the simple yet unique piano accompaniment? All I know is that it has been a great piece for my choirs. The chorus to this piece is perfect for testing your choir's basic sight reading skills as well. Written in $\frac{3}{4}$ with lots of half and quarter notes, your students can focus more on singing correct intervals and can start to develop a sense of confidence with reading music. This is also a great piece for your soprano and alto singers to work on using their chest voice as the entire piece does not go higher than a B above middle C. <https://www.jwpepper.com/May-It-Be/3296761.item#.YvbQVS-B1N0>

4. The Climb (OPB: Miley Cyrus) - arr. Deke Sharon

Hal Leonard

SSA, a cappella

Every teenage girl loves Miley Cyrus and this song, so why not use it to help introduce a wide variety of things to your SA singers. First off, this is only a 3-part, SSA arrangement in which the solo line just gets passed from section to section. Every singer will get the ability to belt out a part of this song. This arrangement will also introduce the idea of contemporary a cappella with its very simple "doos" and "dahs" that are always backing up when every line has the solo. This is also a great piece to start with understanding singing basic harmonies as the chorus breaks into all 3 parts singing the lyrics but in harmony. Depending on your students' level, I highly recommend this piece to SA singers who are in junior high or beginning high school. Make sure your beginning group is ready to take on singing in basic 3-part and you'll have a winner with this one.

<https://www.jwpepper.com/The-Climb/10517137.item#.YvbQfC-B1N0>

5. The Story of My Life (OPB: One Direction) - arr. Lee Stovall

Sheet Music Plus

SSATB, a cappella

A very different take on One Direction's hit, this piece has some amazing moments if you're willing to dive into this one. I also have given this arrangement my own interpretation and turned it into a duet between a low and high voice singer. The piece starts out almost unrecognizable because of its slow tempo but as the first line is sung, the audience members who know this song will start to sit forward in their seats wondering where you're about to take them. The 2nds and cluster chords give the beginning a warm yet unresolved kind of feeling creating much tension but also resolution. The song then builds and you hear the tempo pick up and it's the song we are all used to. This all builds up to a very climactic moment where we get silence and then the chorus is yet again sung down tempo, yet again building to a big moment where you hear the chorus one last time performed like the original. This piece is for those directors who have had some success with their a cappella groups and looking to really start developing an artistic piece of music. Add blocking to this once you've mastered the arrangement and this will be your closer.

<https://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/story-of-my-life-digital-sheet-music/20739059>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mni1t1H2A>