



News

### FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

As I sit to write this, my last article as your OCDA President, I'm struck by the enormous privilege it has been to serve in this capacity. As an undergraduate at BGSU, I became a student member of ACDA, seeing my beginning as a choral professional begin to unfold. The leaders of OCDA, icons of what it was to be a professional, impacted me beyond measure. And now I find myself in the last few months as this organization's leader realizing how important we are as a community to our profession. New members of our vocation are looking for how they can "belong" and become fully effective. We provide professional development as well as a network for them to become welcomed members of the Ohio community of choral conductors. Our interaction with each other is a critical part in our professional lives as it provides each of us with support and friendship.



I often tell my students in music education that we are in the business of teaching differences, as people know what they like and like what they know. We must create opportunities for our students, or in this case colleagues, to hear varied points of view, styles of choral music, and performances from which they can make informed decisions. I believe that OCDA does this for our fellow professionals in most meaningful ways. We provide seven reading sessions annually. We nominate and subsidize four choral interest sessions at OMEA each year. We bring the best available speakers to Ohio for our summer conference at a very low cost to our membership. We provide choral performance opportunities, music suggestions through our various repertoire and standards chairs, and honor choirs for our singers. As I read the various newsletters I receive from each of the other state organizations in ACDA, I am encouraged by the level of activity and quality.

I must sound a bit like a broken record when I continue to encourage you to share our organization with your local colleagues. There are not very many states that would not envy us for our fabulous lineup at this summer's conference on June 20-22 at Otterbein. Our headliners include **André Thomas**, **Judy Bowers**, and **Jerry McCoy**, the current President of ACDA. Our own **Hilary Apfelstadt**, immediate past President of ACDA and Director of Choral Activities at the University of Toronto, will be giving a keynote address. Additionally, **Kathy Walker**, of Avon Lake Schools, will present a session on the beginning elementary

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT..... 1, 2

---

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR..... 3

---

BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY ..... 4

---

2011 SUMMER CONFERENCE..... 7

---

THE STORY IS NOT OUR OWN: WE HELP THEM WRITE THEIR TALE..... 8, 9

---

OCDA LEADERSHIP ROSTER 2010-2011 ..... 10

---

school choir from the young choral director's perspective. As for performance, we will once again have the **OCDA Children's Honor Chorus** and will be launching the first **OCDA High School Honor Choir**. Other concerts will include a vocal jazz performance by **Special Edition of North Olmsted High School** directed by **Chris Venesile**, the **Bexley High School Choir** led by **Amy Blosser**, and a performance by the **Chancel Choir of the First Community Church of Columbus** conducted by **Ron Jenkins**. There will also be four choral reading sessions and the **All Conference Party** sponsored by Bob Rogers Travel. Do take a moment and invite a colleague or two to the conference. It promises to be one of the best in the country.

Finally, I wish to thank the board for their tireless work over the last two years. These are fabulous choral professionals who make Ohio a great place in which to work. It has been a pleasure beyond words to serve this organization. I wish Bill Zurkey and his new OCDA leadership team the best in success as OCDA continues to lead the way in Ohio and to serve as an example of success in the country.

Ben Ayling, OCDA President

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

**Sharon Davis Gratto**

**The University of Dayton**

*By the time you see this latest issue of the OCDA News, it will be nearly time for the OCDA Summer Conference at Otterbein. Many of you may still be reflecting on the wonderful ACDA National Conference in Chicago this past March or looking forward to the Central Division Conference in Fort Wayne, IN in 2012 or even to the next National Conference in Dallas, TX in 2013. All of these events provide excellent opportunities to learn and to interact with colleagues.*

Dear Readers of the OCDA News...

*I hope that all of you are reading our on-line state publication regularly for information about upcoming OCDA events, for interesting articles written by your state colleagues, and for advertisers' offers and contacts. Assistant Editor Robert Jones and I make an effort each quarter to put together a publication that everyone can find both useful and enjoyable and that can serve to attract other choral directors to our organization. The summer conference alone is worth the membership fee, especially given the impressive annual array of clinicians.*

*This issue of the OCDA Newsletter marks my last as Editor due to continuing and new volunteer responsibilities in other organizations. In addition to being Department Chair at the University of Dayton and National Repertoire and Standards Chair for Ethnic and Multicultural Perspectives for ACDA, I am the new Chair for the Ohio Society for Music Teacher Education and a member of the Boards of the Dayton Opera and the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. Thanks to all of you who have supported this publication with your excellent articles and advertisements and to everyone for patience during the transition from the print to the on-line version!*

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## BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY

*Sheena Phillips, R&S Chair for Community Choirs  
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“Community Choir.’ It sounds obvious — a choir whose members are drawn from ‘the community.’ But actually every choir (including those in schools or churches) needs to work at creating its own community of singers, audience, and supporters. Here are a few thoughts, based on my own experience of working with amateur choirs in the UK and in Ohio, about what makes a community choir thrive both as a choir and as a community.

### **Value your singers**

Happy choirs thrive. Appreciate your singers in rehearsal. Build in some time for chat. Don’t take things so seriously that you can’t enjoy a joke — or the music. Listen to their suggestions about venues, schedule, repertoire, dress code, ticketing, and other details. Chorus members should have a formal chance to express opinions at least annually at a general meeting, and it helps if you are open to receiving suggestions at other times too. You are not bound by the singers’ views or wishes, but they may have good ideas, and it will pay you at least to listen. Socialize from time to time — share a beer, or have a party or a cookout.

### **Keep in touch with your audience**

Build up a mailing list (for example by having feedback forms at concerts) so that you can send letters or emails to people who would like to be kept informed about future performances. A feedback form is also a great way of enabling audience members to tell you what they liked best (“loved the folk songs”...) or least (“please print the lyrics next time”...). Provide ways for your audience to meet the singers, at the end of a concert, or at an annual reception. These days, a website is an essential part of any group’s public profile, and a Facebook presence is also extremely valuable. See Philip Copeland’s excellent article in the March 2011 edition of the ACDA Choral Journal for more on how to use electronic media.

### **Build community connections**

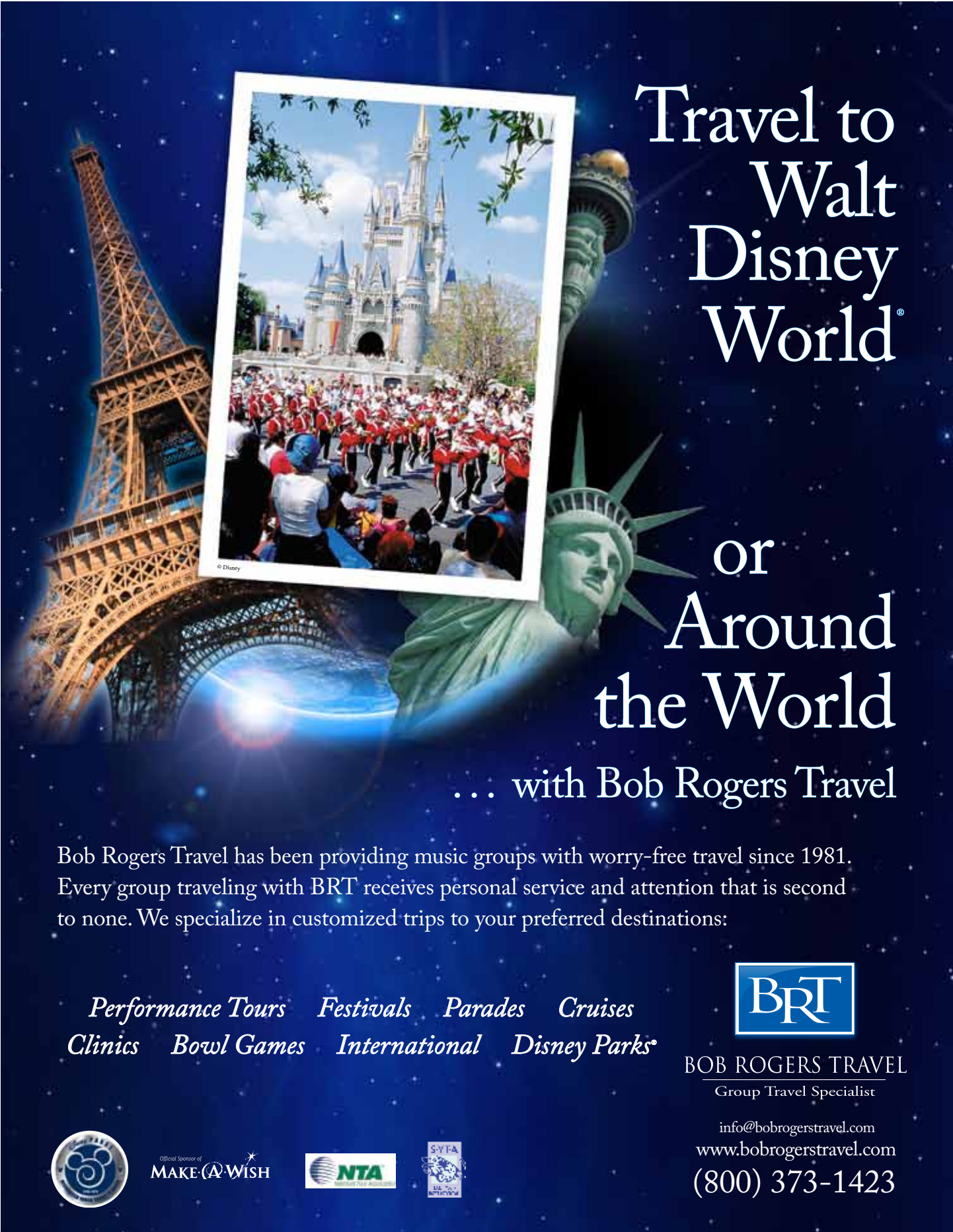
Collaborations with other groups or guest artists bring new people into your audience, and can lead to lasting relationships. A good narrator can create a great concert flow. A versatile percussionist, or a dancer, or a guitar player (for instance) can add extra color and variety to a predominantly choral program. A children’s choir can be invited to do a ten-minute segment in your concert plus one joint item with the full choir. And so on. Performing regularly at the same venue can build up a loyal local following, but it’s also good to explore new venues and build new relationships.

### **Spread your wings**

Finally, be adventurous. Take on some repertoire that stretches the group in an exciting way — whether it’s an 8-part renaissance motet, or a vocal jazz piece, or a new kind of collaboration. Consider a short tour. Go in for a competition — maybe the World Choir Games in Cincinnati next year!

I am leaving Ohio this summer and moving east to New Jersey, but will be at the OCDA conference at Otterbein in June and hope to see you all there. Community choir directors, please add your choir to OCDA’s community choir page <http://www.ohiocda.org/interestareas/page17/community.html> by sending me information about yourselves. I’d like this page to reflect the wonderful variety of community choirs here in Ohio.





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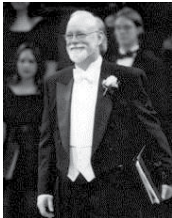
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**André J. Thomas**, the Owen F. Sellers Professor of Music, is Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Choral Music Education at The Florida State University. A previous faculty member at the University of Texas, Austin, Dr. Thomas received his degrees from Friends University (B.A.), Northwestern University (M. M.), and the University of Illinois (D.M.A). He is in demand as a choral adjudicator, clinician, and director of Honor/All-State Choirs throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, New Zealand, and Australia. Dr. Thomas has conducted choirs at the state, division, and national conventions of MENC and ACDA. He has also distinguished himself as composer/arranger and has work published by multiple music companies.



**Jerry McCoy** is the President of the American Choral Director's Association and in his eleventh year as Director of Choral Studies and Professor of Music at the University of North Texas. He is also Music Director of Schola Cantorum of Texas, one of the foremost volunteer choruses in Texas. Dr. McCoy is a member of the INTERKULTUR international music advisory board (the administrating entity for the World Choir Games) and a member of the editorial board of the Choral Scholar. For six years he was founder/music director of the Texas Choral Artist, a professional chamber choir based in Dallas, Texas. One of America's most well-respected choral conductors, Dr. McCoy has served as clinician/guest conductor all over the world, and his choirs have toured internationally, making distinguished appearances at many conventions and festivals.



**Judy Bowers**, Professor of Choral Music Education at Florida State University, teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in choral music and music education, as well as conducting the Women's Glee Club, a performing group that also provides Adopt-A-Choir and Study-Buddy partnerships with area secondary public school choirs. Professor Bowers is an active conductor of all-state and honor choirs across the United States, and frequently presents workshops and clinics for teachers, with topics including developmental choral groups, the adolescent voice change, learning partnerships, and voice use of music teachers and students.



**Robyn Reeves Lana**, Founder/Managing Artistic Director of the Cincinnati Children's Choir, Ensemble-in-Residence at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, has conducted the program at state, regional, and national conventions, and in hosting national and international children's choir festivals. Level III Orff certified, she teaches music at Montessori Academy of Cincinnati and has presented at regional and national conferences. Regularly serving as a clinician and guest conductor, she has led many state and regional honor choirs. National publications include American Choral Director's Association's Choral Journal, Choristers Guild's The Chorister, and Chamber Music America's CMA Matters.

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# THE STORY IS NOT OUR OWN: WE HELP THEM WRITE THEIR TALE

*Loren C. Veigel, OCDA Secretary*

My greatest mentor in music education, Dr. Lewis Phelps of Mount Union College, used to say to us: "You can't teach music — you must teach kids!" Another of his oft-repeated reminders included: "Never give up your principles." Throughout the next thirty-five years, his words have often echoed in my head and remain the core of my teaching philosophy. In the midst of contemporary pressures upon educators — from advocating for the survival of school music — to developing our own continuing education and defending our professional honor — we too often may lose sight of the necessity to keep the focus on our students. Allow me to share a few time-tested and proven ideas which may help to maintain a student-focused music classroom.

**Learn their names!** Many music educators are overwhelmed by the sheer number of students who travel daily through their lives. We are accountable for each of them. We must reach each of them. You will be absolutely amazed at the positive response you receive when you competently address each person by his or her name. It's the first step to success.

**Maintain order.** Another overwhelming task when confronted with high student counts is the orderly organization of the classroom. Whether it takes delegation, after-school time, extra janitorial duties, or even weekends — I've found it pays back richly to organize the room, materials, library, and classroom duties like attendance. When the room is clean, students will help to keep it that way. When they know you are organized and prepared, they will be encouraged to do the same, and they will assist you more readily.

**Insist upon the highest musical standards.** I often find myself listening to music educators who spin a tale of woe when their school administrators and parents just don't understand the importance of their program, then to discover that the students select some of the music to be performed, or that the concerts, printed materials, parent communications and special

*Continued on next page*



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events are not well-planned and organized. Duh! We are our own curriculum, my friends! Teach worthwhile literature — conquer the classroom management — break down the skill sets and stylistic elements of the music — and guide them to a deeper, higher plane of experiencing our wonderful art. How can we justify the necessity of music education when our own communications are filled with spelling and grammatical errors?

***Develop the voices.*** The establishment of vocal study offerings has been central to my own choral programs. I taught the choir that our sound isn't due to our talent, but due to our study of the voice, and strongly encouraged their involvement in the studio. The warm-up period of each rehearsal is likewise a crucial element for vocal development. It is often the only vocal study our singers experience. We must accept this as our time to care for the voices, to improve the choral tone, and to develop the muscle memory with which the choir will perform. This area is my "pet," and I will plan to write another article with more detailed thoughts on the subject at a later date.

***Individualize the approach.*** More important than anything above, don't allow the large groups you teach each day to become a sea of faces. All of us confront a time crunch, an overwhelming job list, and looming performances. Yet, our classrooms are full of individual kids whose needs it is our duty to fulfill. Personally, I developed a thirty-minute annual audition, including an interview. I had to start them in January to get around to each student! I found it the most valuable time spent alone with each choir singer. I often learned a great deal in that room; and found myself frequently inspired by my young people. Make sure your students expect to be accomplished on their part — quartet tests, whipping around the section, recorded "pass-offs" — there are many ways to create evaluation strategies. I promise you'll find nothing more helpful than when your students' self-esteem is raised. Do the same for literacy — make sure each student demonstrates their understanding. In my choirs, solo auditions were always in open rehearsal. When I first told the Freshman Choir that to get a solo they must stand and sing, they were terrified. Then, once the floodgates were opened, we often would listen to more than half the choir stand and sing alone!

Dear colleagues, it is an honor and privilege you've given me to serve on the OCDA Board. I'm just giving back to an organization that was a huge positive impact on my own development. Don't miss the myriad of things to be learned from your involvement at ACDA and OCDA events! For choral folks, it's the best professional organization we have. Thank you, too, for reading my suggestions herein. I hope they help you find greater satisfaction, success, and sanity in your own teaching. Best wishes — see you at Otterbein in June!

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