

From Your President

Upcoming Conferences

GREETINGS, OCDA MEMBERS! So much has happened in our lives since I last wrote to you—finding new paths in our work, constant shifts, surges, an election, a vaccine that hopefully some of you are starting to get, hope on the horizon.... And yet, things cannot be normal just yet. As much as we ache to return to full, in-person choir, we need to remain cautious a while longer. I have no doubt that you know someone who has contracted the COVID-19 virus, and maybe even you yourself have. Tragically, you probably now know someone who has lost his or her life to it. The risks are just still too great, and so for the sake of our private and public health, we march on.

I wish I were writing to you today to announce the return of an in-person Summer Conference. I can think of few things I would look forward to as much! But that will be for June 2022, in what I know will be a glorious homecoming for the cherished gathering that brings our members together each year. However, in the meantime, I am very excited to announce the virtual 2021 OCDA Summer Conference, which will take place June 21–22. This event will feature excellent interest sessions by nationally and internationally recognized clinicians, including:

- Janet Galván, recently retired Director of Choral Activities at Ithaca College, who will present on conducting, building community, and empowering choir members
- Derrick Fox, Director of Choral Activities at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, whose sessions will discuss inclusiveness in the choral community, avoiding conductor burnout, and assessment in the choral classroom
- Zebulon Highben, Director of Chapel Music at Duke University Chapel, who will present topics specific to music in worship
- Maria Ellis, owner of Girl Conductor, LLC, which provides diverse resources for music education; she will highlight ways in which to present historical and contemporary African American music in choral settings
- Lynn Brinckmeyer, Director of Choral Music Education at Texas State University, who will discuss advocacy for choral music education

In addition to this exciting and diverse array of interest sessions, the



OCDA President
Brandon Moss

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conference will feature reading sessions, virtual concert sessions (in which your choirs can participate!), a virtual exhibit hall, time for socializing and networking with fellow OCDA members, and our Annual Meeting. Because the conference is virtual, we are able to offer it for a greatly discounted price from that of an in-person event. Please see the flyer that appears later in this issue to register!

Sadly of course, a virtual conference necessitates the cancellation of this year's Children's Honor Choir and High School Men's and Women's Honors Choruses. But we can all look forward to the return of those two events at the 2022 in-person Summer Conference.

Though it may seem an odd thing to say, given how different

everything looks right now, it is a great time to be an OCDA member. Our organization has been hard at work this year to offer you as many resources as possible. I am particularly proud of the contributions of our two newest board members—Bryon Black, chair of the Standing Committee for Diversity Initiatives, and Emily Pence Brown, chair of the Standing Committee for Professional Development. Bryon and his committee have sought to engage conductors of color in our organization and to identify needs for inclusiveness within our organization. Emily and her committee have already hosted two webinars in our *New Directions* series and have many other ideas up their sleeves for the near future. I am also grateful to Presi-

dent-Elect Doug O'Neal and our superstar roster of Repertoire & Resources Chairpersons, along with our sponsor J.W. Pepper, for bringing to you a virtual reading session during the month of February, in place of those we would normally offer during the OMEA Conference. I hope you have had a chance to experience this! (And none of this could happen in our increasingly technological age without the amazing work of our Information Technology Coordinator, Eric West!)

Finally, I hope you will consider attending the virtual ACDA National Conference, March 18–20. In a "normal" year, the cost of a national conference can prevent many people from being able to attend, with the combined costs of



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registration, transportation, lodging, and meals. Though a virtual conference is rarely anyone's first choice, making a national conference virtual opens up the opportunity for attendance to many more people! Those who register will be able to access the conference sessions through December, so you are able to attend at your leisure, especially if your institutions will not grant you the opportunity to attend in real time. We will even have an Ohio reception on Friday,

March 19, at 8:30 PM (7:30 CST, which is conference time), so I hope to see you all there!

OCDA is continually looking for ways to best reach our membership. I hope that you are able to find something within our upcoming Summer Conference, our webinars, our reading sessions, or one of our other regular offerings. However, if you find we are missing something that speaks to your professional needs, please do not hesitate to reach out to me and let me

know what we can do to help. Ours is a great network of choral directors—seasoned, new, tried-and-true, fresh, and everything in between—and I have no doubt we can find a way to point you in the right direction or work to incorporate something new into the mix. As always, feel free to email me at brandonlmoss@gmail.com. It is my pleasure to serve as your President and my privilege to work on your behalf. ♦

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Me

Kelly Winner, World Musics and Cultures: Developing Voices Chair

ABOUT SEVEN YEARS AGO, I was introduced to the idea of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) by Dr. Julia Shaw, then a professor of Music Education at Ohio State University. I was teaching middle school choir in a culturally diverse and primarily socio-economically disadvantaged Columbus school. Everyday felt like survival mode. According to the standards by which I'd been taught to judge my students' performance, we were failing. I was failing them. None of my academic training (a BM, ME and MM in Choral Conducting) had prepared me for this.

Enter Dr. Shaw and CRP. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In my own words, CRP is knowing my

students and believing that what they think and feel—about music, the world, and themselves—has value.

So, how did this play out in the classroom? I started really listening to what my students had to say about music. I came to believe that what they knew and felt about music they loved was just as legitimate as what I know and feel about music I love. I asked more questions. I gave up some control—I changed my role in the classroom to be more collaborative than directive. And things changed. Everything changed. I was more open to performing music that students owned as part of their cultures, and they were more open to trying music I suggested from other cultures. We weren't just surviving, we had started thriving.

Fast forward to 2016: I've

moved to a different middle school. My students are predominantly Black and racial tensions are high. By this time, I was confident in my CRP skills and planned a collaborative concert with a predominantly White middle school choir. I worked together with their director to program songs about peace and community. I thought, "I am really crushing this CRP thing!" Then, while we prepared for the concert, a thirteen-year-old boy (whom many of my students knew) was killed by police just blocks from our school.

As we processed this tragic event, a group of students begged to sing "Tru" by Lloyd, an R&B artist I'd never heard of. The song is about a man who has been released from prison and wants to be



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accepted again by his community. I could see why my students connected to the lyrics of the chorus:

*So please accept me for who I am
And please accept me for what I do
I'm just doing everything that I can
'Cause all I wanna be is true*

I had a lot of excuses as to why we shouldn't sing it. It didn't fit the moment, and I just didn't like it. But in the spirit of CRP, I asked them to write new lyrics to the song so that it was more suited for the concert. These were not particularly ambitious students, so I never believed that they would actually do it. I would be off the hook.

But this is the magic of CRP. It

isn't just about knowing my students and being aware of the real life issues they face, but actually listening to how they want to use their voices to respond. If I had blown off their request, they never would have written their new lyrics.

Original Lyrics

*Apologies if I ever left you down
But so much sh*t done happen that
it's hard to talk about
So many losses that my lawyer said
don't talk about it
Just had to breathe keep it cool 'til I
can walk up out it
Came home helped my sister raise a
child
Kinda hurt me cause I could of had
my own now*

*Lost my baby damn it's really hittin'
home now
I just had to learn*

My Students' Lyrics

*Apologies if I ever let you down
But so much stuff done happen that
it's hard to talk about
So many losses that my parents said
don't talk about it
Just had to breathe, keep my cool 'til I
can talk about it
Came home to hear they hurt an-
other child
Really hurt me cause it could've been
me now
Lost my buddy so it's really hittin'
home now
I just had to learn*

This was the most direct, heartfelt and passionate plea for change I

had ever heard. I had to figure out a way to perform the song. I knew nothing about R&B music. I watched YouTube videos to try to learn how to play an accompaniment. I enlisted a Black staff member to play drumset with us. CRP demanded that I be the student in that moment, and I am so grateful that my wise-beyond-their-years students could be my teacher.

The next year, one of my students shared with me how worried she was about her family in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. My CRP brain clicked on—we should learn a song from Puerto Rico! She was one of many students with Puerto Rican heritage in my class. Singing this song would honor that heritage and help students feel connected to relatives who might still be on the Island. Plus, it would help educate everyone else about Puerto Rican culture. I picked out a folk song arrangement and again thought, “I am really killing this CRP thing!”

But my students were far from engaged. I had trouble “selling” this folk song to them—especially the Puerto Rican students. Eventually, the same student who expressed concern for her family after the hurricane decided to set me straight. It wasn’t that she didn’t like the song or appreciate that I wanted to sing something from Puerto Rico, it was just that she didn’t want her classmates thinking that this was the music she listened to. I mean, after all, what teenager has folksongs on their Spotify playlist? She suggested we sing a Spanglish cover of “Stand By Me” by the artist Prince Royce.

COMMITTEE REPORT

Expanding Our Landscape of Diversity

Bryon K. Black II, Chair of the Standing Committee for Diversity Initiatives



I am grateful for the opportunity to serve OCDA as the Chair of our new Standing Committee for Diversity Initiatives. Our committee members have begun to discuss how we can best mobilize to meet the existing needs regarding inclusion within OCDA. Among our goals, we are aiming to expand our organization’s landscape of diversity by engaging conductors of color currently in OCDA, re-engaging any lapsed members, and engaging collegiate choral students entering the field. We also aim to provide all directors with beneficial resources in repertoire by non-White composers. We recognize that the term “diversity” comprises an enormous category. We have decided to start this work by focusing on racial diversity as our first initiative. In doing so, we hope to provide greater connections with those who feel underrepresented, while providing greater education for all directors on the contributions of these individuals in choral music.

Our first initiative will be to invite Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) choral directors in OCDA to a virtual social meeting with committee members. We hope that this meeting will afford us the opportunity for conversation, the opportunity to establish beneficial connections between BIPOC directors, and the opportunity to discuss issues that require support and remedy. We’ll encourage these directors to engage in OCDA, to invite others, and to continue their membership. Additional information regarding our session will be forthcoming, and you are welcome to email any questions to me at bkblack28@gmail.com.

The committee members also discussed ideas for presenting sessions on African American choral repertoire. The goal of these sessions would be to equip conductors with knowledge of varying repertoire and how to teach and perform it authentically at any level. We discussed inviting an African American composer to host an in-depth session with directors to engage directors in learning through active performance. We are looking into what may be feasible for 2021.

We look forward to doing this important work!

As I often do, I had a myriad of reasons to reject this student’s idea. Neither the song nor the artist who covered it was Puerto Rican. The Spanish in the verses was too hard for middle schoolers. I had no idea

how I could create an accompaniment with the same type of Latin-pop feel as the original track. But, CRP told me I had to listen to this student. This is the music that she felt represented who she is as a



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bilingual Latina. This is the music that connected her to her family on the Island. This was the way she wanted to share her culture with her non-Puerto Rican peers.

So, we sang it. Instead of just talking about Puerto Rico, we talked about the entire Caribbean, forging connections between Black and Latinx students. And the difficult Span-

ish verses? Small groups of native speakers sang them together. And for the accompaniment, I used a pre-recorded track (gasp!). And wouldn't you know, I started to get more buy-in on those folk songs I had been selling. The folk songs didn't represent who those students are today, but rather the history of their beautiful and rich culture.

These days I am teaching primarily White middle school students in an exurban Columbus community. CRP continues to inform my teaching on a daily basis. I remain invested in learning my students' cultural backgrounds and helping them figure out how to use their voices to show others who they are. ♦

A Conductor's Lament During the Pandemic, or The Struggle is Real

Seattwa Jung, Northwest Region Chair

2020 WAS A DIFFICULT YEAR for us choral colleagues. We ensemble teachers and directors didn't really know what to do when the pandemic hit, and though over the course of the year I heard many success stories, I've chosen to write about my experience not because mine is another notable success story or something special, but because I hope to encourage you with the knowledge that you aren't the only one struggling these days.

I direct three different types of choirs: a college choir, a community choir, and a church choir. When the pandemic appeared last spring, I had no idea that it would impact my life as deeply as it has. By spring break, my university had closed the campus and switched all classes to remote learning. I had been busy preparing my college choirs for a concert, which was less than a month away, but with only remote learning for the rest of the

semester, plans for the concert had to be abandoned.

There was ample evidence that singing together during the time of COVID-19 was dangerous, and I was at a loss as to what to do with my choirs. For a while, staying at home was okay, but soon the absence of live music in my life left me feeling worse and worse. My students reported boredom and depression, too, and they suggested a virtual choir experience. I hesitated to jump in right away because I felt so strongly that asynchronous performance was not fully musical, and because I didn't want to confront even more technological obstacles than the ones already plaguing my other meetings and teaching. In the end, however, doing nothing wasn't a tenable option.

So far, I've created four virtual choir videos with all the choirs I direct: college, community, and church. The first one that I created

with my college choir in the spring semester of 2020 was quite meaningful. Even though I considered it a flawed first attempt, I discovered that my students really enjoyed singing from home. They provided lots of positive feedback, reporting that they had felt a sense of accomplishment and a positive attitude, which was especially welcome during this difficult and depressing time. While the students were recording their video, they could laugh again and enjoy singing. My wife and I did, too (she helped sing the women's parts for the guide recording).

There are many downsides to creating virtual choir videos. First and foremost, it is not an actual performance and cannot be the same as a live performance. The technical difficulty is also very annoying. I spent an enormous amount of time learning many dif-



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ferent kinds of video editing skills. There were countless times that I had to start over on editing the video because of technical problems. As a result, I needed to spend some of my budget to purchase software and upgrade my old laptop.

If you've ever tried to make a virtual choir video, you probably will agree that the most difficult part is syncing the sound and the singers' lips. I have to admit that listening to the same music over and over in the process wore on me. I learned that to make the production easier and improve the quality of the video, it's necessary to prepare a good guide for the singers to follow. A well-marked score, well-sung guide recordings, and detailed directions are absolutely essential.

In my case, I prepared scrolling score videos with singing, so that my singers could record their own singing while watching the video. You can find many good tips for creating a virtual choir now, but for my first video I had to figure out a lot of things for myself by watching YouTube.

I had hoped that the situation with the pandemic would get better after the long summer, but that didn't really happen. I'm grateful that my church choir is now split into two groups and sings with masks and distancing, but I still felt disappointed that we hadn't been able to perform the music I had planned for Lent and Easter. My community choir hadn't rehearsed for months and had lost support from the local performing

arts center because the center itself was struggling financially during the pandemic. Most of all, I was crestfallen that we wouldn't be able to present Beethoven's *Mass in C*, which I had planned to perform to celebrate Beethoven's 250th birthday.

It was still a struggle at the university in the fall semester, too. Maybe I was waiting for some kind of guidance from the administration, but no clear guidelines or instructions for choirs were forthcoming. I had to remind myself that I'm the leader of those ensembles, and I had to find my own way. We rehearsed in a larger space to support distancing, and singers were required to wear masks. I started the semester carefully with brief sectional rehearsals for two

weeks to ensure everyone's health and safety. I also tried different types of masks for better projection and breathing. Fortunately, no one who participated in the activities and rehearsals of my choirs tested positive for COVID-19, though many students were occasionally quarantined because of positive cases around them.

The semester concluded with a live-streamed concert with masks and physical distancing. Even though I felt very grateful to finish the semester without any huge problems, I realized afterward that I had missed something significant: facial expressions! Because of the masks, I couldn't deliver my facial expressions to the singers, and they

couldn't respond facially, either. I especially missed the students' smiles, and it was terribly sad to realize that I didn't really know what the freshmen's faces looked like because they had joined the choirs with masks on from the beginning of the semester! So, I suggested that we make another virtual choir video with the college choir and the community choir. It became a good collaboration and gave my community choir members a chance to sing again after almost a year of silence. Again, a virtual choir video cannot replace a live concert, but it is a way to show that our choral singing is still with us.

The pandemic continues to create hardship for choral musicians

and music programs everywhere. We all hope to have a better year in 2021, but we aren't completely sure what is coming. Even with widespread vaccines and improved treatments the world may not be the same. What I've learned is that whatever the circumstances are, we cannot just sit and wait for something to happen. We, as leaders and teachers, need to show our positive attitude as well as our good musicality, even when that means doing something that we don't especially like or that is uncomfortably challenging. Please know that you aren't alone in this struggle, and let's take comfort in continuing to make whatever positive impact we can in the lives of our singers! ♦

Re-Igniting an ACDA Student Chapter During COVID

Kendell Edgerton, Student Chapter Representative

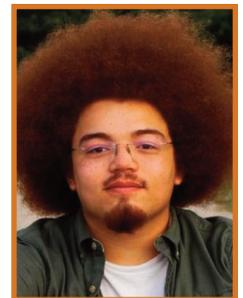
IF ANY GOOD HAS COME from the pandemic and stay-at-home orders, it's that the country has been given the opportunity to reevaluate how we spend our time and what we are doing to improve our future. This holds true in our choral community as well. I attend Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio, and over the past year my colleagues and I in the vocal department have found ways to amp up our passion for choral music and invest in our futures as choral conductors.

In a normal year, Otterbein has the luxury of hosting the OCDA summer professional development

conference in our music building. Obviously, with the pandemic, we were unable to host last summer. However, this year we were able to revitalize our ACDA student chapter. Our chapter had been inactive for a number of years due partly to personnel numbers, but also due to the fact that no one went through the simple process of getting ourselves re-chartered. Over the past year we decided that getting ourselves re-chartered would be an excellent opportunity to gain even more access to professional resources, since professional development conferences have taken on

such a different form. Since activating, we have been able to hold a few meetings, talk about techniques when conducting a choral ensemble of any level, and host guest speakers like OCDA President Dr. Brandon Moss. We were also fortunate to have a large number of freshman music students join the chapter. This put a lot of energy and excitement into our chapter, and I look forward to watching it grow.

There has never been a better time than the present to find out how *you* can get an ACDA chapter



started at your college or university. Otterbein University ACDA student chapter President Sidney Conn said this about activating our chapter: “It was honestly a super easy process and the ACDA Membership Coordinators were *so* kind and quickly responded to any questions I had.” Your first step is to go to acda.org and find the “student chapters” page under the “Resources for Student Members” tab.

From there you can find a list of current active student chapters, a sample constitution, and a charter checklist. Then, make sure your individual ACDA membership is current. Right now, student membership is only \$5 for a whole year, so take advantage of the deal while you can. There are many more benefits to having a chapter activated at your school. “I think it’s also important to point out that [the na-

tional organization] showcases student chapters on Instagram and in the *Choral Journal*. They also give you meeting ideas all on the website. I printed the forms, filled it out, mailed it, and we were reinstated, super easy!” said Conn. Whether you want to reinstate your inactive chapter or start from the ground up, you will find tons of helpful resources and guides at acda.org. ♦

Building Literacy within the Choral Rehearsal

Jeanne Wohlgamuth, Community Children’s Choirs R&R Chair



ANYONE WHO REALLY knows me knows my passion for building musically literate singers. What is literacy? According to several sources, literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials of varying contexts. Furthermore, the purpose of literacy is to build a student’s comprehension, writing skills, and overall skills in communication.

Every subject that we study during our education has a literacy component. I call it the “language” of the subject matter, the tools that we develop in order to converse fluently and intelligently in that subject. When in math class, you learn the language of mathematics. When you attend a science class, you are expected to acquire the language of science. Shouldn’t we also expect that our singers be fluent in the language of music?

When my time with a group of singers is over, I want them to have achieved more than just being able to sing their parts in the songs we have performed. My goal is for students to acquire the ability to read, write, create, and communicate fluently using the language of music. I believe this to be a necessary, lifelong skill.

In this article, I propose that we build music literacy following the same process a child naturally develops during the preschool years and early formal school instruction. The acquisition of literacy begins when we are born. Our parents talk to us, read to us, and sing to us, all the while building our toolbox of sounds and laying a foundation for our development. When we enter school, our literacy is further developed through phonics or the whole language approach until we are finally able to pick up a book, read it, and understand its

content.

Because a comparison of the two approaches can be quite lengthy and involved, I will only touch briefly on phonics, but delve more deeply into the whole language approach. To be clear, I believe that the best way to teach music literacy is to blend both approaches in order to provide our singers with the greatest tools for fluency. Knowing musical elements (phonics) helps our singers to identify, isolate, and fix problem areas that may occur when reading. Being able to identify melodic and rhythmic patterns within the context of the octavo (whole language) will help them become faster readers.

First, I think it’s important to note that building music literacy does not occur overnight or with the occasional use of sight-reading materials during the warm-up portion of our rehearsal. One must

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make a conscious effort to weave literacy into every rehearsal. After all, we did not learn to understand language by being spoken to once a week, or at our parents' discretion. Rather, we were immersed in language daily from the start.

When filling your toolbox with musical elements or sounds as they relate to musical symbols, you must have a system. It can be numbers, letter names, fixed Do, moveable Do. It does not matter. What does matter is that you are consistent with your process. For my purposes, I use solfège syllables with moveable Do and La-based minor, and rhythm syllables.

I begin my "whole language" journey through the teaching of an octavo by performing the following multi-step process. Through this

process, I am able to break down the music to its smallest components and gradually layer each component until we return to the whole.

Know Your Music

Take the time to analyze the score. It is imperative that you know what is in the music. For me, this process begins by writing in all of the solfège. This helps me to internalize the music and understand its harmonic structure while identifying the pitfalls my singers will encounter as they begin their journey through the octavo. Because I use moveable Do, I identify the places where there might be an implied modulation. When I encounter these modulations, I know that if I change to that implied key, my stu-

dents will be able to easily navigate reading that particular section. Once completed, I make a list of the melodic and rhythmic motifs/patterns in the song. Sometimes I identify all of them, and sometimes only those that are repetitive and good for teaching.

Task Analysis

During this phase of preparation, you should ask yourself the following questions: What do my singers need to know in order to read/sing/perform this piece successfully? Consider your choir's vocal skills, literacy skills, and maturity level. List all of the melodic and rhythmic elements in the octavo. Once noted, ask yourself: What can my singers perform independently? What aspects of the octavo

are beyond my singers' knowledge and skill level? What aspects can I teach through this octavo? By engaging in this process, you will break down the music to its smallest components and see a clear path to sequentially layering those components to build back to the whole octavo.

Brainstorm

This is the fun part of your preparation, the time when you can be creative and pull from the many different philosophies of teaching (Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze, etc.) to create engaging lessons for your singers. Develop three to four possible scenarios/activities for teaching this piece to your choir. Be sure to address both melodic and rhythmic elements/patterns in your

teaching. Show a progression from sound to symbol, concrete to abstract, known to unknown.

This is the creative aspect of my teaching! I work to balance skill learning and filling their literacy toolbox with preparation for a musical performance. Every rehearsal should include one or more of the following activities to help build literacy skills: music reading, writing, improvising, composing, memorizing, inner hearing (audiating), analyzing the form, listening, conducting, and learning terminology.

Presentation of Octavo

This is your rehearsal/lesson plan. Make every moment of your rehearsal count from the time your singers enter your rehearsal space to the time they leave.

Determine a way that you can move from one octavo to another in a timely manner while setting your singers up for success by front-loading or reinforcing their learning and keeping them actively engaged. Some techniques that could be implemented are as easy as asking your singers to listen and repeat as you sing several phrases taken from the octavo. These phrases can be sung and repeated on a neutral syllable or using your system of sight-reading (numbers, letter names, solfège). Or it can be as complicated as asking your singers to interpret or decode the melodic or rhythmic phrases that you sing or speak. Improvisation and error detection are also great transitional activities.

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Teaching Ideas

Below are some ideas I have collected over the course of my thirty-nine years of teaching. These can be incorporated directly into your lesson plan or used as transitions from one octavo to another. Many of these ideas can be used when reinforcing both rhythmic and melodic patterns found in your octavos.

Poison Pattern The Director presents a pattern to the singers, that becomes the “poison” pattern. This pattern can be either one that you will introduce or a known pattern to be practiced. Singers echo the pattern. Once the “poison” pattern is known, the singers are instructed to only speak the patterns that are different from the “poison” pattern. The Director begins to speak different patterns and if a student repeats the “poison” pattern, they are “out.”

Isolate Pattern The Director asks the singers to clap a specific rhythmic pattern pulled from the octavo. Each time the pattern occurs in the song they clap that particular rhythm or pattern as they sing.

Ping Pong Using rhythmic elements from the octavo, the director speaks a pattern. One singer is asked to improvise a new pattern which begins with the last beat of the director’s pattern. The choir is then asked to repeat the new pattern. The next singer then takes the last beat of the first singer’s pattern and improvises a new rhythmic pattern.

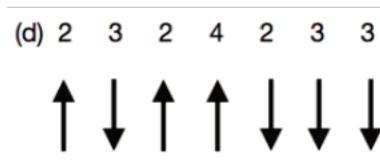
Audiation The Director sings, or speaks, a melodic or rhythmic phrase and the choir is asked to repeat singing or speaking aloud only certain parts of the phrase. For ex-

ample, sing or speak aloud only the first beat; all remaining beats are audiated. Or, sing aloud only Do, Mi, and So; all remaining scale tones are audiated.

Which pattern am I performing?

The Director chooses either melodic or rhythmic patterns from the octavo and puts them on the board. Each pattern is numbered. The Director speaks or sings a pattern on a neutral syllable and the choir holds up the number of fingers that show the answer. The choir is then asked to sing the correct answer using solfège or speak the correct rhythmic pattern using rhythm syllables.

Interval Arrows The singers decipher a melody using solfège given only the starting pitch/solfège and directional intervals. These numbers indicate an interval size, not quality (such as major or minor).



Chord Chart Use a chord chart as a way to prep chord changes in an octavo. Below is the chord chart for the first page of Jerry Weseley Harris’s “Music, When Soft Voices Die” (SSA, National Music Publishers)

Modal Exchange The Director sings a pattern in a particular mode and choir sings it back in a different mode. For example, change major to minor, major to modal, or modal

to minor. This activity can be used as you transition from one mode to another while changing octavos.

Improvisation Ask the singers to improvise new patterns using the melodic elements or rhythmic elements found in the octavo.

Create activities that can be implemented quickly as you move from one octavo to another. These activities do not have to be long and involved and will help build your singers’ ears and decoding skills.

Building your singers’ literacy skills is a slow process, but if you are diligent in your approach and you invest the necessary time, the outcome far outweighs and outlasts the time it takes to plan and build these skills. Your singers will achieve greater musical independence and ultimately have the ability to pick up a score and read/sing it for themselves. They will be able to learn new music faster and will become more secure in their acquisition of their music. Student ownership alleviates the constant need for repeated corrections which can subsequently lead to boredom and classroom-management issues. You will be able to spend more time with the interpretation of the music and communicating it more deeply in your performances. The biggest compliment that my singers have received is when an audience member tells them that their presentation was very moving and brought them to tears. What choir would not want to hear those words? ♦

Sop. 1	s	s	s	s	s	s	l	m	d
Sop. 2	s	f	s	f	m	r	d	d	t,
Alto	s	f	m	r	d	t,	l,	l,	s,



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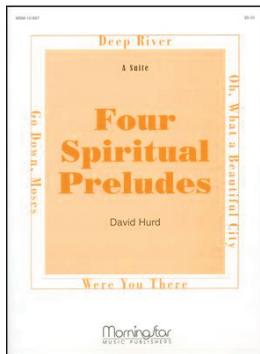
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Gems for Organ by Black Composers

Mario Buchanan, Music in Worship R&R Chair

GREETINGS! Inspired by OCDA's recent action to establish a Standing Committee for Diversity Initiatives, I thought I would highlight some organ music by Black composers. Sometimes in the unfathomable ocean of published scores, finding gems can be difficult, so I hope this article helps you in your search.



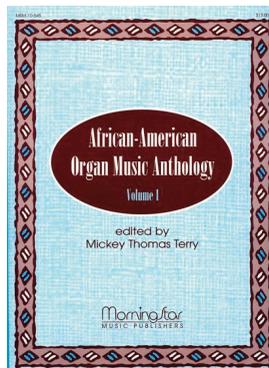
Four Spiritual Preludes by Dr. David J. Hurd (Canticle Distributing)

These are some of my favorite pieces to play. Each piece projects a different *affekt*, from a trumpet tune on "Oh! What a Beautiful City" to a jaunty, full organ arrangement of "Deep River." These pieces can be played for preludes or postludes, or as a concert set.

Organ Music of Florence B. Price (Classical Vocal Reprints)

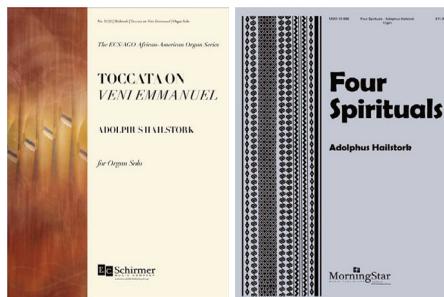
Florence Price was an accomplished organist and she composed a wide range of pieces for the instrument. These five volumes span the gamut of pieces for church and concert. The Toccata at the end of the First Sonata is a fabulous piece, especially for Easter.

- Vol. 1: Suite No. 1
- Vol. 2: Shorter Organ Works
- Vol. 3: Variations on a Folksong (Peter, Go, Ring Dem Bells)
- Vol. 4: First Sonata for Organ
- Vol. 5: Passacaglia and Fugue, Short Organ Works



African-American Organ Music Anthology (Canticle Distributing)

This set of eight volumes has a large breadth of music by various composers with something for every instrument. The collection also has many pieces that are not arrangements of spirituals. I highly recommend this collection.



Toccata on Veni Emmanuel by Adolphus Hailstork (Canticle Distributing)

Four Spirituals by Adolphus Hailstork (Canticle Distributing)



The *Toccata on Veni Emmanuel* has been on my "to learn" list ever since I heard it years ago. It has become a favorite to listen to, but I can warn you that it's hard(!), so plan accordingly.

Three Pieces for Organ by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (Hal Leonard)

This set of pieces is quite wonderful. Coleridge-Taylor, being a student of Charles V. Stanford, had a very whimsical and noble sense in his writing of these pieces. I recently bought these and am looking forward to learning them.

There are many, many other pieces by Black composers to choose from, and I hope that this list encourages you to include some in your yearly organ rotation. ♦

Educating Beyond the Concert: Contemporary A Cappella Concepts



Alex Phan, Contemporary Commercial: Contemporary A Cappella Chair

I AM CERTAIN I'd be hard-pressed to find a choral educator that does not teach an extra-curricular or co-curricular ensemble. Whether the ensemble existed when you accepted your teaching position, you created it as a recruiting tool, or you just wanted to live your passions vicariously through your students, you may find yourself having some of the same thoughts that my eccentric brain throws at me. Those include, but are not restricted to: "I don't want to just warm-up and rehearse this section again..." Or "how can these kids have some of the same experiences I had in choirs?" And everyone's favorite, "They are sick of hearing my voice (as am I), so how can I mix it up?" Through the years and with the assistance of countless professionals in the medium, I've been able to develop differing approaches to rehearsal and the music-creation process. Educating beyond the concert means just that; my students should not walk away from a performance with only a memory. My students should walk away with the spark for a future endeavor as well. The impetus for this approach is knowing that my students are not all going to become conductors, educators, or opera singers. Some might chase that dream, but others might pursue audio engineering, video production or other careers within the

choral world. Disclaimer: As Contemporary A Cappella R&R Chair for OCDA, this article will lean toward that genre, but I do think that many of my topics will most certainly apply to any type of choral education.

I'll begin with the justification for, and subtle art of, making sure the "meat and potatoes" accompany the "dessert" of non-traditional choral music rehearsals. I tend to tell my students that every type of performance music was new at some point, and was considered "popular." As educators, we tend to deem "popular" as easily performed or not fit to be analyzed under the microscope of a music scholar. However, at this point in our modern world, we have to acknowledge that to be false. Not always, but quite often. I am continuously finding aspects of modern music, be they in hip-hop, rock,

electronic, progressive, and so on, that prove to me the talents of their performers and composers.

But as an educator, our classical training conscience can cause us to avoid those genres because of their popularity before we even consider content. Please don't misconstrue my meaning, as my first priority as a choral educator is to foster a love and appreciation for classical literature above all else. And before I play devil's advocate, there is an infinite amount of quality literature for my students to ingest! I may be reprimanded for the following diatribe, but I've also perused classical choral literature that seemed to have no possible educational value for my ensembles. Levels of quality heed not discrimination.

So began my hobby/career as an arranger. My creative process has always harbored the idea that the

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COMMITTEE REPORT

Professional Development Opportunities

Emily Pence Brown, Chair of the Standing Committee for Professional Development



I've been honored with the task of chairing the new OCDA Professional Development committee. The committee members and I have spent our time developing accessible, meaningful, and diverse professional development opportunities for all members. So far, we continued the *New Horizons* webinar series with a presentation on virtual choral music making by Dr. Troy Robertson, and a session on Trans & Gender Expansive singers by Dr. Matthew Garrett, the latter of which was recorded and is now available on OCDA's website.

The committee also sent a call for submissions to the OCDA virtual concert series at the end of 2020. The goal of this project is to celebrate the unique ways that choral music continues to thrive during such a challenging time. We are excited to release the concert series on March 1st in order to kick off Music in Our Schools Month. As we continue to expand our professional development content, we welcome any suggestions for topics, speakers, or activities from our current members. Please feel free to reach out at any time (brownep@bgsu.edu). In the meantime, please keep an eye out for future emails and social media posts as we continue to schedule events to further our engagement in the future of choral music!

music can't simply be performed because "everyone loves this song." It has to present musical challenges for my ensembles, of the likes of Mozart, Bach, Dickau, and more. The end result may not agree tonally, but theoretically in its challenges. The same thought can be applied to my rehearsals. Though tuning, instrument technique, theory and more are at the heart of every minute in my classroom that is not where the process ends. So, armed with the techniques and processes I've pilfered from the countless educators I've been blessed with which to work, I've tried to expand the rehearsal to include every aspect of music-making

beyond simply learning notes, rhythms and techniques. The alternative approaches are out there, and if you've not read of them, you've considered them for yourself. I have found that the choral community works within a wonderful centrifugal force that pulls everyone toward phenomenal resources and other consummate lovers of vocal music. If you have the question, someone will gladly work you through it based on personal experience or point you in the right direction! Living on the defensive side of teaching contemporary a cappella has led me to become versed in more than just the notes on the page, and I truly believe that

to be the case for every educator. We don't educate as if we have all of the answers. We educate as if we're in constant search for them.

All of that said, I'd like to discuss a few of the approaches to ensemble rehearsals that work outside of the traditional choral setting. I am no pioneer in this regard. I simply want to be sure that my students don't leave for college with any of the thoughts that I heard in my time at that level and beyond. Thoughts like "I wish I didn't have to take remedial theory" or "What is editing and mixing?" and "How do I get my speakers and microphones to work for my kids?" I began to ask questions. And once I had my answers, I put them into clumsy practice. After a while, that practice slowly evolved toward some semblance of expertise. Once comfortable, I started to narrate for my students so that they learned with me. I've learned to avoid answers such as "you don't need to know that yet" or "you'll learn that when you take this course." I have landed on incorporating score arranging, sound engineering, record production and professional performance into our daily rehearsals in small but cohesive and meaningful pieces. All of these are achievable because I've been steered toward real pros that are willing to educate. If there is one particular idea that one should glean from this article, it is that I teach under the blanket that every class session should be spontaneous and a la carte depending on the situation and students involved. I encourage you to feel the discomfort of a new skill or technique

along with your students. It creates a thick skin and active curiosity for all involved! And when I learn a new skill in my classroom, students have reacted in such incredible ways when they saw the “light bulb” appear above my head and see me grinning from ear to ear as if I unwrapped a new toy on my birthday. Again, we garner much more respect when our students are fully aware that we are not flawless in our craft, but actively learning right along with them. This is the perspective with which I will share the following ideas. Trust that the experimental failures have been countless within my rehearsals. However, this article would not end if I shared those on top of a bit of success.

I’ll begin with including score arranging within our rehearsals. This was born out of the thought that I don’t particularly love giving the impression that I am a voice of authority on any subject. I arrange roughly ninety percent of the music that our three a cappella ensembles perform. Because of this, I often give a rather cohesive “run-down” of the piece prior to rehearsal, wherein I use a lot of technical terms. I found the need to dissect this language and present it in a way that didn’t require a translator of theory. Not that our students couldn’t grasp the concepts, but we often have very diverse grade levels within our ensembles. I err on the side of avoiding constant lecture. The easiest way to explain my motives within vocal textures was to get the students creating on their own. I was reluctant to fully “give up the reins” at first, but the outcomes were phe-

nomenal! A tradition that began years ago has become something that our ensembles look forward to annually. At first, I kept all of the students with me, and I interpreted and transcribed their ideas. They were slow to start, but once the engine turned over, it was a fascinating and educational process. These sessions gave the students new vocabulary for the thoughts they were creating, and also continue to help them create new interpretations for arrangements that are already cut and polished. Our relationship to our music is one of respectful customization. Successful arrangers and composers are plentiful and create excellent music, but the beauty in a cappella is the ability to customize a chart for a particular ensemble’s strengths, voicings, and so on. I have since used plenty of the ideas that my students have created within my arrangements, published or not. The balance between seasoned theorist and fresh musical ears helps to create something new with each “self-arrangement,” as we call them.

Again, one of the biggest “get the ball rolling” concepts was my ability to share my failures. In our rehearsals, we consistently reinforce the idea of “failing hard and often” as well as “exercising our thick skin.” I will gladly share my plethora of face-plants should you ask. The point is to take a viscous and malleable “poor idea” and ply it into a “win.” If the environment is friendly and welcoming, you’ll find that super creative students will share countless ideas whether they are good or not. And the quiet and often pensive students will often

jump on those ideas and enhance them exponentially. One of our unspoken tasks is socio-emotional health. Achieving openness through arranging has been a lifesaver for so many students struggling with anxiety, painful experiences, depression and the like. Again, a socially open rehearsal space will cause the students to jump up and sing through the ideas. Not only does this make them more outgoing, but they will be using aural skills in a watered-down way. They may not say things like there is no third nor fifth, but they will be able to recognize what sounds good or bad. Our job is to translate their thoughts and performances into tangible, theoretical vocabulary.

The ownership within this creative process also breeds bonus results as well. I find that students perform their own material with a different vim and vigor. They also show a newfound appreciation for arrangements handed their way, and the energy builds out from there. Because the process is community-building and everyone is involved, we are all aware of moments and ideas from their conception. Nothing sells stage presence like announcing “...hey altos, do you remember why you wrote this texture and the emotions it should invoke? Let’s see what it sounds and looks like when you tap into that idea! What was your big picture?!” At that point we’ve begun the trial process and students are most definitely out to prove the legitimacy of their creations. The energy in the next run-through is palpable. This also opens them up to taking risks as

performers. Try explaining the emulation of an electric guitar through vocals without having students fail and succeed within the creative process. If they've never experienced creating an original idea, they'll be more reticent to try something that could make the performance top notch.

As for sound production in rehearsals and eventually performances, I have tried a philosophy that has been encouraged of me for years. "Stop doing it for them...and have the patience to explain it in a fun way." Ever tried to explain how to tie shoes...to your son...who argues with you on everything from proper tooth-brushing techniques to how you break your own rules so frequently? Yup, that takes patience. For the record, I don't think I break them that frequently, but I digress.

My first experience with any microphone usage through an amplified system was in a performance with a group I had not heard of, called the New York Voices. It actually makes me blush to recall. I was clueless. I embarrassed myself when I was told to test the monitors and couldn't find the screen that was running Windows 98, which was followed by a "huh" into a wireless Shure microphone that fed back in an ear-piercing howl until another ensemble singer ran to me and thrust my microphone into the air as if I had just pulled "Excalibur." It wasn't ignorance, rather just a lack of particular experiences. In high school, I was afforded the opportunity to perform with a class "AA" chamber choir and ensemble. We were performing collegiate level literature on a nor-

mal basis, and all of that credit speaks to the talents, abilities and risks taken by my director at the time, Dr. William Zurkey. As a Metallica guitar-lick playing, hard-nosed nerd in the drama club, I had no claim in any of my experiences, but was trained up to appreciate them nonetheless. All this is to say that while my madrigal chops were feeling rather fresh, there simply isn't enough time or schedule space for a high school student to have it all outside of the confines of an arts conservatory. I had theory and chorale which saved me countless hours in college and provided life-changing memories, but the microphone/monitor situation was nil. Again, I have only gratitude for a fabulously rich choral experience in high school, but there were things we were unable to broach. Needless to say, the Voices performance may have been clumsy, but I took in every moment as an educational one and was able to be two feet from an award-winning jazz ensemble. It left me speechless, and it rekindled the artist within.

Fast forward to my first teaching position, and our first performance off-site. I was out "on my own," and the students were mostly bright-eyed, bushy-tailed freshmen. We had a list of sound gear that we were supposed to load into vehicles, but there ended my information. The good news; many of the students had been in the ensemble in previous years and knew generally how to tie a sound system together. Half an hour after arrival (as our first performance, I probably would have asked the students to arrive a day early had that been

acceptable), we had speakers on stands, mics in hands and a sound board in front of me. Cue Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra" in my head as my index finger pushed the master slider forward in the hopes that sound would emerge from the speakers in victorious thunder. You'll be happy to know that the "Pumpkinfest" performance went off without a hitch, and we even created a few smiles and memories of our own.

To bring this train of thought to a conclusion, I developed a healthy relationship between my knowledge of sound production and my inquiries to professionals. In my experience, you need not look terribly far for a professional that has the patience to share their love for making a space sound great and performers feel comfortable. Phone a friend, send an e-mail, look up a local studio. Again, I applied this philosophy to rehearsals and ended up bringing some wonderful future friends into my classroom for a group-learn. While the students didn't share the same concerns and information as I, their ownership allowed them to dig into aspects I wouldn't have considered as the soundboard technician I would eventually become. And we put theory to failed practice until it stuck. Every resource is different, and I am thankful to have been through what I would consider the whole gamut. Whether you have a sound system of piecemeal proportions, or a state of the art performing arts center, the ability to ask questions and adjust with your students will make everyone comfortable simultaneously. But it always

pays to return to the idea that we don't have all the answers. It seems obvious, but putting things together and trouble-shooting tech issues while your students are googling answers or calling the pro you had in the previous week, makes for future stories and commiserations. So does using duct tape to make sure the solo mic doesn't fall down mid-performance. Just remember to "sharpie" the duct tape so it doesn't sparkle in Nascar fashion on stage.

Now for my suggestion. Continue to make this process educational in every aspect. The singer's job is not just creating the sound that goes through the system, but listening and adjusting to a lot of technical pieces along the way. So, if you have to prep your equalizations in a new space, explain the process in a way that the students can understand and let them watch the process. If you have a sixteen member ensemble, have the first eight stay on stage with microphones and the last eight back with you at the sound board. Experiment with noises and try to explain what is happening. Take notes on the aspects that elude you, and make some phone calls or e-mails after the fact. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know, but we all need to look into this together." Your ego can be your worst enemy if you posture for a knowledgeable professional with knowledge you simply don't have. *They are a resource*, whether they like it or not.

My district fought for a new performing arts center and ultimately a new middle and high school for fifty years. I spent many

years creating a performance space within what we called a "cafegym-natheatorium." Say that five times fast. Finally, the community settled on a fair compromise and we have a wonderful new space in which to perform. New experiences and lessons presented themselves, but I was armed with my previous knowledge on a partially defunct sound system and we were ready to tackle this awesome space with objectivity as a team; students and teacher. Every new piece turned into a lesson. We took apart our digital microphones and researched the pieces and parts that eventually turned our sound waves into electrical signals. When I run a sound check, I always bring my tablet onto the stage and explain the entire process to the group before adjusting each student. I often encourage my students to sit near me while I make digital adjustments. They know to take notes and ask particular questions at the appropriate times.

Not only does this experience make them truly feel like a part of the process, but it also gives them the comfort of knowing there are no "dumb questions" and they can also tell me what they enjoy hearing or don't enjoy. If I get a bit liberal with the reverb saturation they might chime in and say, "can they really hear our tuning through all this fluff, Mr. Phan?" Two ears are better than one, and 9 ears bring us ever closer to our goal of a near-flawless, awe-inspiring performance. It takes the fun of singing in a ringing stairwell just one step further. This goes beyond my students singing accurate notes and rhythms

for a concert, the point of this piece of literature. They have created the entire project and it is their job to see it through in front of their friends and families. As long as I teach, I will always tell my students that my job is to remove myself from the equation. The sooner they don't need me, the sooner they've succeeded and become independent, confident and well-rounded musicians. I am not above calling myself a glorified "flapping bird" at a concert. Swinging my arms does not make them sound great. They do all of the hard work and deserve one hundred percent of the credit.

How can we turn recording into a multi-faceted educational tool? The real question is "why wouldn't we?" A Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) is the perfect opportunity for you to connect every rehearsal term to your students' instrument in a visual capacity. Pitch fluctuation visualized by a sliding line in editing software becomes a study in steady ensemble pitch versus the inflections that pop artists insert into their hits. Take one edited vocal line and move it one step under another vocal line and it can become a discussion on wavelength beats and why clean tuning creates empathetic vibrations and "goosebump" moments for an enamored audience. Effect processing and application can give the students an idea of the wonders of modern engineering while also encouraging them to take a conservative approach. A student will be the first person to say "that sounds way too robotic" if you've obsessed over editing and gotten into a place of

repetition as opposed to artistic listening and adjusting. They'll also (hopefully) have a particular cogent grasp of the literature and can help you to bring out certain textures and "pads" as if your studio recording were a live performance.

But the one piece of recording an annual album that I find to be most beneficial is the isolation of individual vocalists. If I've successfully fostered an environment of sharing and growing, then students should feel comfortable listening to their isolated vocals and learning about their own strengths and weaknesses honestly. My students always deserve to hear praise for their hard work. I am always inspired to give them a "you killed it, killer!" or "that's exactly what hard work gets for you." But it should never end there and that can't be it for them. Again, if they think the process is over, then they'll treat the rest of their endeavors as such. With the

compliment comes the suggestion and the encouragement for growth.

The final piece of this end of the year puzzle is bringing in the talents of others so that your students understand that you want them to be as successful as possible. We all want the talents of our students to be recognized, and another's experience helps lionize that prospect. We are all surrounded by wildly talented educators who are friends with wildly talented former professors who cavort with wildly talented performers. I count myself lucky that so many intelligent, incredible artists can stand me enough to share their energy on a regular basis. It truly is a blessing for my students and their journey. My suggestion here is to shoot for the sky. Should you get nine "rather-not's" against one "I'll see what I can do," consider it a win. The sharing of experiences by a professional legitimizes all of the

hard work that your students are giving up on a daily basis. And there is a high likelihood that the artist you tap into was once in the same shoes that your students occupy. And always remember to reciprocate and take care of the folks that push your program up to the next plateau. They deserve it!

Am I simply sharing a wealth of knowledge that I've accrued from every professional development conference I've attended? Yes. Do I steal wonderful ideas from talented friends? Also yes. I think this has to be the only way I'll make it through a thirty-five-year tenure in choral education. Variety is the spice of life, and variety in rehearsals change my drive home from a "Thank goodness it's over" to an "I can't wait for tomorrow!" Please feel free to contact me for conversations and exchanges of stories. That is what being a lifelong musician is all about. ♦

Upcoming Events

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March 17–20, 2021

acda.org/conferences

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June 21–23, 2021, Columbus, OH

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