

The Conductors' Podium

Illinois State Newsletter of the American Choral Directors Association



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Don't Miss The Convention in Madison, March 6 - 8

You owe it to yourself to get your battery charged up again at the North Central Division ACDA convention in Madison, Wisconsin. Let's support our seven chairs from Illinois which will be participating: Glenview Community Church Chancel Choir, Glenview, IL, Ted Klinka, director; Glenn Elyn Children's Chorus Doreen Rao, director; Lyons Township High School Treble Choir, Lynne Bradley, director; Moline Senior High School Choir, Cal Hedegaard, director; Augustana College Choir, Don Morrison, director; Illinois State University Madrigal Singers, John Ferrell, director; Wheaton College Concert Choir, Rex Hicks, director.

A new feature of the North Central Division convention will be the first Madrigal Dinner. The Illinois State University Madrigal Singers will provide the music. Seating is limited, so register early.

The convention program is packed full of inspirational sessions. Kenneth Jennings, conductor of the St. Olaf Choir, will lead an Honors Choir of outstanding singers from Wisconsin's colleges and universities with their performance closing the convention on Saturday afternoon, March 8. Paul Manz will be the organist for "Church Night" an evensong ecumenical worship service on Friday evening. Margaret Hawkins, Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, will present a session on orchestral conducting.

If you haven't received a registration form for the Madison convention, send your \$15.00 registration to Mr. Don Christensen, 901 Richards Ave., Watertown, Wisconsin 53094 by February 20.

College Choir Invitational Festival at ISU, February 16

The eleventh annual College Choir Invitational Festival will be held on the campus of Illinois State University at Normal on Saturday, February 16, from 9:00 to 4:00. Nine college choirs will participate: Bradley, Eastern, Greenville, U of I, Millikin, SIU-Carbondale, Wesleyan, Concordia Teachers College, Illinois State. Each choir will sing twenty minutes of music for each other and share in the inspiration of all the choirs singing several numbers together.

Visitors are welcome and choral directors particularly from high school, college and church would find the day very profitable for both new choral literature and the uplift of fine choral singing. Dr. Donald Armstrong will be the host director at ISU in Normal, 309-438-2443.



Illinois ACDA Recognizes Distinguished Conductor

At the Illinois Convention luncheon, held October 13, 1979 at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, the members of Illinois ACDA paid tribute to Harold A. Decker for his immense contributions to ACDA and the choral art. The presentation of the award by Illinois President A. Dennis Sparger was greeted by enthusiastic approval and a standing ovation.

Established as a continuing honor, the award which will bear his name, will be bestowed yearly on an Illinois choral conductor who consistently demonstrates the high standards of humanity, musicianship and literature, as exemplified in Harold A. Decker.

The President's Letter

Dear Friends in Choral Music:

The exciting and stimulating thing about starting a new year and now, a new decade, is that we offer ourselves an opportunity to identify our needs and accept new personal challenges. These resolutions demonstrate our desires to improve the quality of life through self-evaluation, followed by action. Beginning January 1, I resolve that I will:

1. eat less
2. exercise more
3. stop grouching
4. start rejoicing life
5. all of the above

Perhaps you have some refreshing items of your own that could be added to the list!

As choral conductors we need to make some professional resolutions. Based on a thorough self-evaluation and designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of our work, these resolutions must reflect our beliefs and visions for our singers and our art. Let us resolve that in the next decade we will:

1. use less piano in rehearsing, so our trained ears will be able to hear how our singers are singing and enjoyed.
2. sing more a cappella music, so the beauty of the voice will be nurtured.
3. stop blaming our singers' problems on their previous conductor.
4. start solving our singers' problems by teaching them--music, voice, ensemble, literature, style.

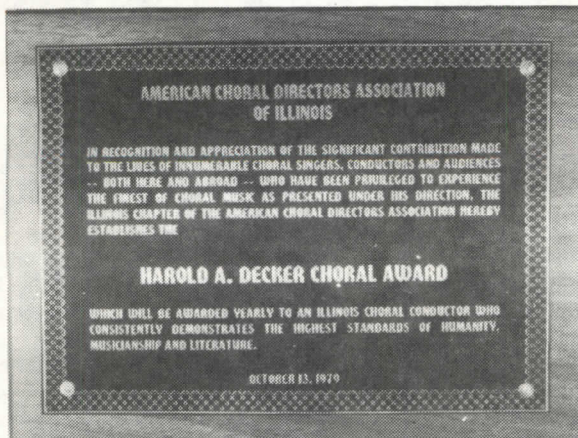
If we do believe on the aesthetic beauty of the voice, in the social and spiritual benefits of group singing, and in the significance of music in one's life, then we must channel our efforts to ensure that our vision for our singers will be realized.

At our state convention last October, Illinois ACDA honored a distinguished conductor for the significant contributions he has made to choral music, through the establishment of the Harold A. Decker Choral Award. No more suitable closing to this challenge for the future could be penned, than that written by Professor Decker in his Christmas letter:

"We are facing a generation of young people who have been bathed in the sounds of loud music which is 'felt' rather than listened to. Our challenge is to reach out, to communicate music that is sensitive, meaningful, and expression of ideals and beauty--quite the opposite to the norm. We do it because such expressiveness is needed. It's needed in communities to break down walls of misunderstanding, it's needed internationally for the same reason. Let our by-word be to 'communicate' love, understanding, ideals, beauty, drama, and sensitivity to all people and all good things in life - and let it be done with enthusiasm."

And we can do it with choral music.

Besh Wishes,
A. Dennis Sparger



Thanks from Doreen Rao

Congratulations and thank you to Charles Rand, Susan Boroian and Libby Larson and their fine junior high school choruses for an outstanding contribution to the Illinois ACDA meeting in Charleston, Ill., last October!

Each ensemble offered a unique insight into the process of choral music making at the junior high level of instruction and provided the meeting participants with musical and instructional reinforcements--something those of us working with adolescents need frequently.

It is essential that our state organization maintain its strong commitment to junior high school vocal music instruction through choral music. The Conductors' Podium can serve as a materials resource for Illinois Choral directors. You are invited to send your recommended lists of junior high school compositions to Doreen Rao, ACDA District I Chairperson, 2606 Braeburn Rd., Flossmoor, IL 60422.

The following format would assist in providing uniformity.

1. Composer
2. Annotation (Concise comments regarding the structural and musical significance of the piece and its appropriateness for junior high school choral performance.)
3. Voicing
4. Language
5. Publisher and Octavo number
6. Performance Timing

A Junior High Choral Resource

Recommended Literature for Junior High School Choruses (from the IACDA Meeting: Northeastern Illinois University)

Composer	Title	Voicing	Publisher
Arr. K. Davis	Bold Wolf,	SA(In the Galaxy Jr. Choir book	Presser
Natalie Sleeth	God of Great, God of Small	Unison	Carl Fischer
Ydstie	If There's A Song	SA	
Natalie Sleeth	Gaudeamus	3 pt. descant	Carl Fischer
Handel	Hallelujah, Amen	SATB	E.C. Schirmer
Wilhousky	Carol of the Bells	SATB	Carl Fischer (Carol-Noel)
Eugene Butler	Blessed Is The Man	SACB	Cambiata Press
Joyce Eilers	Brighten My Soul With Sunshine	3-part	Leonard-Us
J. S. Bach	Break Forth	Unison	E. C. Schirmer
Daniel Pinkham	In The Beginning of Creation	Unison	E. S. Schirmer
Foster, arr. Van Camp	If You've Only Got a Moustache	TB	Somerset
Mendelssohn, arr. Van Camp	The Lark	SATB	Music 70
Foster, Van Camp	Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair	SATB	European American Music Corp.
American Folk Song, Van Camp	The Poor Old Man	SAT or SAB	Presser

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News Across The State District I

February 18 - Northeast Conference Jazz Music Festival is to be held at Westmont High School at 3:00 p.m.

March 14-15, 21-22. Lisle Music and Drama Groups to produce My Fair Lady. Special performance given for the senior citizens of the area on Thursday, March 13. Admission free for senior citizens and area nursing home residents.

March 1 - IHSA Solo-Ensemble Contest (includes Madrigal Groups and Swing Choirs)

April 19 - IHSA Band Chorus Organizational Contest

Pat Densford, Lisle Senior High School, Chairman District I

DISTRICT III

ACDA Student Chapter and First Methodist Church of Champaign co-sponsored a MESSIAH Sing on December 13. A professional orchestra played, subsidized by Local 196. Members of the community, and soloists and conductors from the schools and churches in the area were invited to participate.

The University of Illinois School of Music will offer a summer workshop on Palestrina and his contemporaries. Contact the School of Music for further information.

Dr. Paul Steintz, internationally known musicologist and performer will give a lecture on Bach's ST. JOHN PASSION at the University of Illinois, March 24 and 25. Contact the Choral Division for more information.

Among the student conductors at the convention in Madison, Wis., will be Harry Mechell of Philadelphia, PA., and Greg Detweiler of Hummelstown, PA. Mr. Mechell and Mr. Detweiler are doctoral candidates at the University of Illinois

February 1 - The St. Olaf Choir in concert at Krannert Center, University of Illinois, 8:00 p.m. Kenneth L. Jennings, conductor, of the choir will lead a choral conducting workshop during the day sponsored by the ACDA Student Chapter of U. of IL. Topic "20th Century Choral Music: Program Building and Interpretive Conducting. Tickets at Krannert Center Ticket Office (217-333-6280) Group rates for 25 or more.

The University of Illinois ACDA Chapter sponsored a symposium in which four area conductors addressed themselves to the administrative and organizational duties of the conductor. Panel members were Joe Grant, Danville High School; Ron Kauffmann, United Methodist Church of Champaign; Willie T. Summerville, Brookens Junior High School and Carolyn Vermel, Children's Chorus of Champaign/Urbana.

Leonard R. Rummary, U of I, Chairman District III.

DISTRICT VI

February 14 - Greenville College--High School Choir Festival

March 14 & 15 - AN ELIZABETHAN MADRIGAL FEASTE--Belleville Area College, Chamber Chorus--Dennis Sparger, director.

Third Annual Feaste and will be given at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville.

March 21 - St. Clair County Choir Festival--O'Fallon High School

April 13 - Brahm's REQUIEM, St. Louis Symphony Chorus, Thomas Peck, director, sung in English utilizing the two piano edition that Brahm's used in London. The Penitential Motets by Poulenc.

April 20 - MESSIAH Parts II and III - Belleville Philharmonic and Chorale, Charles Rann, director. 3:30 p.m. at the Scottish Rite Temple, Belleville.

May 1, 2 & 3 - Verdi REQUIEM - St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Chorale, Jerry Semkow, conductor.

May 10 - Beer and Pretzel Concert--Belleville Philharmonic Chorale

Charles Rann, conductor. Exhibition Hall, at St. Clair County Fair Grounds, Belleville.

Richard F. Boyd, Lebanon, Chairman District VI

DISTRICT VII

Congratulations to Jerry Swanson and 100 voice Concert Choir from Forest View High School in Arlington Heights, IL. For the second year in a row, the choir will be performing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Henry Mazer, conductor, in the High School Concert Series to be presented February 25 at Orchestra Hall. The choir's performance will feature a world premiere by composer John Austin entitled "The Moon Wears a Wax Moustache". Jerry and his choir also have just returned from a two-week trip to Germany and Austria where they were invited to sing at the Dedication of the New United Nations Complex in Vienna, Austria.

Julie Shannon (known to District VII as Julie Geller from Shepherd Jr. High School in Deerfield, Illinois) has just recorded two of her compositions on Mercury Records, "It's the People--Celebration of Chicago" and "I Can Write You a Song". Soon to be published is "Sing Alleluia", a selection for the Christmas season.

The Mid-City Choral Society and Lane Tech Musicians under the direction of George Rico presented two performances of Handel's MESSIAH Part One in December at De Paul University and Irving Park Lutheran Church. The chorus and orchestra members volunteer their time and talents to make this fine performance.

Judy Lynn Moe, Prospect Heights, IL. Chairman District VII

Thanks from Doreen Rao

A Junior High Choral Resource Con't. from page 2

Foster, Van Camp	Beautiful Dreamer	SATB,opt descant	European American Music Corp.
Arr. William McRae	Bagpipe Carol	SATB	Carl Fischer
Foster, Van Camp	Call John	SATB	Presser
Ed, Van Camp	America	SATB	Somerset
Ed, Van Camp	Dona Nobis Pacem,	SATB	Somerset
Belcher, Van Camp	Welcome to Spring	SATB	Carl Fischer
Mason-Webb, Van Camp	A Dozen Rounds	3 or 4 equal voices	Carl Fischer
Ed, Van Camp	Fifteen Rounds for Reading, Recreation or Concert		Music Series
Van Camp	Sea Fever	SACB	Cambiata Press
Beethoven	Now The Eventide Approaches	SAB	Universal Ed.

Church Choir - Music Education Mutual Support

For about a decade and one-half church choir directors have been hearing the predictions of labor saving devices in the homes, shorter work weeks, and an increase in the availability of disposable personal leisure time. Church musicians were told that as these expectations were fulfilled, it would remove the excuse of people being too busy to participate in the church choir. In the ensuing years, these expectations have come to pass to some extent, but there does not seem to have been a proportionate increase in the available people for church choir membership. This would cause me to conclude that the "too busy" reason was just a convenient excuse all along; and, I guess, we have all really known that. This also makes me conclude that my wife's homemade, practical philosophy is correct when it says, 'everybody finds the time to do what they really want to do.'

As we look elsewhere for reasons to explain the paucity of young, interested recruits for the church choir, we come across the incompetent conductor as a prime candidate. In his conducting book¹ Royal Stanton has some stinging things to say about the relationship between inept conducting and church choir recruitment problems. Even though we don't care to hear these assertions, we must admit that we know this correlation exists. But that is not the point here. Even though there are many unfortunate exceptions, I believe the level of competency and leadership has been generally rising during the last fifteen years in church choir situations. And yet, even in places where good leadership exists, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a steady stream of interested, new, young people to replace choir members who move away, retire, or disengage from the choir for other reasons.

My thesis in this regard is that there is a direct relationship between the deterioration of public school, elementary and junior high music programs and the low interest in church choir singing on the part of young adults. People generally do not enjoy doing things that they don't know how to do. Since these people have been denied the skills they need to deal with musical notation, they will stay away from church choirs because participation is frustrating rather than satisfying. If during their school years, these people have never been lead to experience the honest thrill of participatory, aesthetic encounter, they do not understand how it can be a rich and rewarding personal experience. Thus, they have no way of knowing that being in a church choir can bring pleasure and excitement; and since their school denied them this insight, they are not motivated to move past the threshold of non-participation.

¹Royal Stanton, *The Dynamic Choral Conductor* Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania: Shawnee Press, Inc., 1971), chapter 1.

If the thesis mentioned above is valid, then several actions should follow. The first is that church musicians should become much more acutely aware that there is a strong relationship between the church situation and the school music programs in the public and private schools of their parishes. The second result is that church musicians need to become much more active in working with their local school districts to insure that in each school there is a level-by-level music curriculum that has identifiable and predictable outcomes. It will no longer do to sit in the church and complain about choral problems and continue to remain uninvolved in what's happening in school music programs. The improvement in the situation will require effort on the part of all of us together.

The church musician should not feel that because he speaks from the point of view of the church he has no influence in public education. He should remember that he is also a citizen of his local school district and that the school musician would welcome his or her active support. Nor should the public school music teacher feel that he or she is now to be training singers for the church. The first concern is the welfare of the child, and the growth and enrichment that are the right of that child. If some benefits of this education happen to be useful in the child's worship life, or to the church, that would be a very nice by-product. This would seem to be one of those rare situations where everyone would benefit.

Thomas Gieshen, Chairman, Music Department
Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois

My Choral Credo

1. Tone. For singing, the beauty of melody and harmony are dependent on the beauty of singing tone. Of course, tone depends on posture and a good low breath and free throat, tongue, and jaw. The tone can be solid and mature (but not forced) even with young singers. Vibrato or not depends on the music and your own taste.
2. Diction. Why bother to sing if the choir can't be understood! Let instruments play the piece. Careful mouth position for accurate vowels (the main carrier of meaning as well as the beauty of tone) and exaggerated consonants are necessary. Many singers go through the motions of consonants, but the sound of them must project to the director and audience. Lengthen and put breath pressure on pitch consonants; put out the sound for non-pitch consonants and do them precisely together.
3. Faces. The singers must project the meaning and mood of the text. Why aren't more college and high school choirs on TV? They are probably too dull to watch! Do you remember the Mitch Miller Singers on TV a few years ago? In order to get the singers to come alive, the director may have to be crazy enough to exaggerate.

James E. Wilson

The Conductor's Podium

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