



# The Conductors' Podium

Illinois State Newsletter of the American Choral Directors Association

VOLUME XII, NUMBER 3

FEBRUARY, 1987

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was good to visit with many of you recently at the All-State Conference in Peoria. Congratulations and thanks are due to many people involved in that event. To Jim Parks and Greg Lyne, the conductors of the All-State Choirs, bravo on a job well done! IL-ACDA sponsored two reading sessions during the convention and special thanks go to Brett Goad and Sandra Stoneham for selecting the music and organizing the packets. Their accompanists were Pete Driscoll and Martin Sirvatka. Marlene List of Kidder Music in Peoria once again provided an enormous service to IL-ACDA by ordering all the music from the publishers, coordinating the sessions with Brett and Sandy, bagging 225 copies for each session, and taking the financial risk of having to buy a copy for stock for every one of the 450 copies that they gave away. Many thanks Marlene.

The next issue of the *Podium* will contain the application form for tape auditions for next fall's state convention, and information regarding the nomination of this year's Decker Award recipient. Both of these important items bring to mind what seems to be the refrain for my term as president, "ACDA is YOU." Take time to give consideration to nominating an outstanding choral director for the Decker Award. Guidelines will be listed in the next issue. With the convention being held in Champaign next fall perhaps more of you from downstate will submit tapes. Make the effort. We all benefit from hearing other choirs.

Finally, as many of you know our friend and president-elect, Walter Lambie recently had a heart attack. I am not sure he would approve of my mentioning this in such a public forum but I know that he would enjoy hearing from you by card and letter. He is recovering well but will be out of school for six to eight weeks. Best wishes for a speedy recover Walt. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Joe Grant

## FROM THE EDITOR

As we all start a new semester of work and dig out of the snow and ice that blankets Illinois, another *Podium* comes to you. This issue you will find less news (is nothing going on?) and more articles. I hope you find the articles interesting — they cover three topics of value and should concern all of us.

Please send your news or concerns to your district or interest chairperson. Deadline for the April issue is March 15.

## WORSHIP AND THE ARTS SEMINAR

"Church Growth Through Worship and the Arts," a seminar for all church musicians, will be presented at the First United Methodist Church of Arlington Heights on Tuesday, March 3, from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Northern Illinois chapter of The Fellowship of United Methodists in Worship and the Arts, the seminar will feature Lyle E. Schaller as speaker. The fee for the day-long seminar is \$25.00 for Fellowship members and \$35.00 for non-members. For information, contact Norma Barnhardt, Registrar: Chicago Temple/First United Methodist Church, 77 West Washington, Chicago, IL 60602, 312-236-4548.

## FROM THE INTEREST CHAIRS

### Children's Chorus Festivals: April 1987

Two Children's Chorus Festivals will be sponsored by the Illinois ACDA in April, 1987. One festival will be hosted by Steven R. Jobman, conductor of the Carl Sandburg College Children's Choir, Galesburg, Illinois. This festival will service choruses in the central and southern regions of the state and will be held Saturday, April 11, at Carl Sandburg College, Fine Arts Building, South Lake Storey Road, Galesburg. Guest Con-

ductor for this festival is Carolee Curtright, Professor of Music at the University of Nebraska. She has published with Choristers Guild, serves on the Children's Chorus Interest Area National Board of ACDA, and has conducted children's choir sessions at the Montreat Conference. Host Steven Jobman is also minister of music at the Galesburg United Presbyterian Church.

Another festival will be hosted by Linda Gibson, conductor of the Classic Children's Chorale. The date for this festival is Saturday, April 25. This festival will be held at the Northshore Country Day School in Winnetka, Illinois, just to the north of Chicago. This festival will service the greater Chicago area and children's choruses in the northern part of the state. Guest conductor will be announced at a later date. Northshore Country Day School is located at 310 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, Illinois.

Invitations to participate should reach children's chorus directors by January and will come from the two hosts. Those who wish to contact the hosts directly for information may find the following useful:

Steven R. Jobman, Host  
First United Presbyterian Church  
Prairie and Ferris  
Galesburg, IL 61401  
Church: (309) 342-1871  
Home: (309) 342-6055

Linda J. Gibson, Host  
2225 W. Morse Ave. #3B  
Chicago, IL 60645  
Home: (312) 761-1430

## COMMUNICATION AND THE CHORAL ART

Above my piano is the following quote excerpted from remarks made at the 1985 ACDA National Convention in Salt Lake City by Howard Swan, certainly one of the deans of American choral music:

"I hope the time will come when we spend as much time dealing with the

text and its meaning as in developing beautiful tone."

How important to you, as a director, is the text of the choral pieces that you are rehearsing and performing this year? How much time do you spend with your singers providing insights into the music by attempting to develop a better understanding of the text? If we would prefer to avoid a discussion of the text or, as in some cases, actually hope that our students (or audience) do not understand the text of the song being sung, something is drastically wrong.

Communication is the essence of our art. But communication cannot take place, either between composer and performer or between singing group and audience, if the text is ignored. Many times as an adjudicator or clinician it becomes painfully obvious that the singers have little or no idea of what they are really singing about. The director may know, but the singers are just producing sounds. Often much attention has been given to the mechanics of choral singing while the "raison d'être" for our art's existence has been forgotten. With a little enlightenment about the text, the performance frequently begins to "shine."

Other directors have asked, "How do you get your students to sing like that?" "What causes your group to 'come alive' in performance?" Much of the answer is an emphasis on communication of the text. "Inform your face what you are singing about" has become a dictum for our choral ensembles.

Attention to the text is important not just for church choirs, or college ensembles, or large concert groups. The text may provide a significant key to style, inflection, and ornamentation in a vocal jazz group or the choreography and vocal projection of a show choir as well as valuable assistance for a chamber choir preparing a baroque motet influenced by the "doctrine of the affections" or a madrigal group singing a chanson involving word painting or the representational style. How better can you approach many of the idioms of contemporary choral composition than through the text?

Mood, tempo, and phrasing often convey either an understanding or a lack of awareness of the text. Tone quality, diction, rhythmic precision, ensemble, blend, style, may all be effectively approached through the text. The emotional and visual communication skills of our singers can be most dramatically improved by giving attention to the text.

During the recent Sheet Music Service of Portland/Hinshaw Music September reading session, Weston Noble said that he assigns the text for each song being

prepared to a member of the choir. That person becomes the resident text expert for that song, providing guidance in understanding the meaning of words, poetry, symbolism, and so forth. As directors and teachers, we must devote time and energy to providing explanations, paraphrases, and parallels in contemporary language or experience that will increase the understanding of our singers. Always provide translations for songs in foreign languages, not only for the audience in performance but for the singers in rehearsal. Do not assume that the singers or audience will know what a song is about just because it is a setting of a traditional text that is extremely familiar to choral musicians. Our efforts as choral educators will be greatly enhanced, our performances will speak more effectively to our audiences, and our singers will grow in significant knowledge of the arts and life when we understand and communicate the text.

by Richard L. Dalzell

*Reprinted from Choral Focus, the Oregon state ACDA newsletter, Vol. XII, No. 1.*

## BOYS AND THE TREBLE HONOR CHOIR

I have just finished filling out another application for a California Music Educators Association convention honor choir, and felt my usual frustration in trying to send a balanced voice grouping for a SAB junior high choir. Over the past several years there has been a trend for honor choirs to be featured at conventions and festivals. The resulting concerts are exciting, both for the audience and the participants. The quality of performance surpasses what is usually possible at our local school or church, and gives us inspiration to strive for that extra effort to improve our level of performance and produce superb music.

At the junior high level, however, a unique situation exists: the boys changing voice. Most boys' voices start to change in the 7th or 8th grade and begin to settle into the adult range in 9th or 10th grade. Although there is considerable variation in exactly when the voice changes, the younger your choir is, the more unchanged voices there are.

Junior High teachers constantly strive to keep their boys singing during the change so that we can have men in our choirs after the change. This requires

rearranging voice parts on a regular basis to accommodate a 5 note range or a gap of a 5th where no sound is produced in the changing voice. Unfortunately it too frequently means having boys with unchanged voices singing tenor (or even baritone) just to balance the girl sopranos and altos. This forces their young voices to sing in the extreme low register constantly, which could be damaging to the voice, but more significantly deprives the choir of the beauty and strength of the treble boys' voice.

This situation is further complicated by the various age groupings of what is commonly called Junior High School. Some schools are intermediate (7th and 8th grades), or Middle School (6th, 7th, and 8th), or Junior High (7th, 8th, and 9th). Most of the junior highs in the San Francisco Bay Area have become Middle Schools, and as a result, many have only a treble choir. There is nothing wrong with this. There is a large body of excellent literature for treble choir in various styles and levels of difficulty that is readily available and trained unchanged boys' voices can add richness and strength to the girls' voices in the choir. There must be opportunities for our young singers to hear or participate in really outstanding treble choirs.

Every junior high honor choir that I have heard or read applications for has used SAB or SATB voice classifications. Since we must send balanced voicing, many talented young girls and boys don't have the chance to participate because there are very few basses and tenors. Often the music selected for such choirs must be simplified to accommodate the less skilled changing voices. This dilutes the experience for highly skilled treble singers.

By selecting a Treble Honor Choir from time to time, we can provide inspiration and challenge to explore the artistic and expressive capabilities of young treble voices. I don't think it is reasonable always to perform treble music in honor choirs at this level, but it is just as unreasonable always to perform music that requires changed voices. I challenge directors who are organizing conventions and festivals to consider how long it has been since treble voices have been featured in a Junior High festival or honor choir, and include a Treble Honor Choir in your program, so that all of our colleagues and students can be inspired by the sound and interpretive possibilities of such a choir.

by Hal Sundquist

*Reprinted from the Western Division ACDA newsletter, Vol. 12, No. 2.*

## SHOW CHOIR vs. TRADITIONAL

### or "WHERE'S THE BEEF?"

At this writing I am some 24 hours away from the end of the Southwestern Jazz Festival, part of which is two days worth of Middle School, Mid-High, Junior High, and High School Show Choirs, and other popular music ensembles. Each year I become a bit more concerned about the future of Music Education in Oklahoma and all over the country, based on what I see and hear at the various solo, ensemble, and choral contests around our region. There is an inordinately large amount of interest in Show Choirs and various local jazz and commercial ensembles these days. We hear many rationales; they are largely found in the innate attractiveness of these kinds of performing groups to the students with whom we are associated. We all know that philosophically these ensembles are not ends unto themselves, but a means to strengthen our existing programs by attracting those students whose musical backgrounds are not sufficient to generate interest in traditional kinds of choral music. It appears, however, that in many schools in which I have observed, these groups are the core of the vocal music offering, with more traditional choral music taking a back seat, and sometimes being lost altogether. Is it any wonder that, as we take part in new musical reading sessions, we see less and less traditional choral music, and more popular music; fewer good texts, and more of the saccharin lyrics with a high level of juvenile appeal? (And very little intrinsic literary value!)

Many of the groups which I heard during our Show Choir contest had obviously worked very hard on their choreographed routines; they showed a great deal of group pride, and seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. There are the traditional justifications for public music education in evidence, namely the opportunities for self-expression, and the self-confidence such performances undoubtedly generate. But where is the educational value which in the end must be final justification for public school music?

Those of us who teach, and have taught in public education institutions, must take the responsibility to maintain standards of performance, and much more importantly, the standards of teaching practice and course offerings, including those involving the selection of quality choral literature for the young people who depend on us for their future stan-

dards. I believe that traditional choral music must be the core of our music education, and that it can practically be central to what we offer our students.

There is nothing basically wrong with good pop, jazz, and show music in the public school classroom, but they should be the "dessert," not the main course. When I hear kids sing this sort of music with poor tone, poor diction (allowing, of course, for stylistic considerations), badly formed, "Okie" vowels, etc., it simply confirms what I have already said: that this sort of music, with its accompanying "casual" singing habits, is much too strong a part of many Oklahoma choral music programs. You and I know what the demands of most communities involve; public opinion indicates that entertaining moms and dads is central to the requirements for being a good choral music educator. It is also unfortunately true that school administrators are most often impressed by performance excellence, not our contribution to the human spirit! The more often we appear before our local civic clubs and parent organizations, the more notoriety our choral program gains. These demands make our own responsibility even more intensely felt.

As I step down from my pulpit, I ask you to examine the reasons you first became attracted to this business. Was it "just for fun," for the associations with performance that are so ego-gratifying, or did you really intend to impart something of the first thrill you felt in singing "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling-place," or the satisfaction in conquering the new rhythmic and harmonic difficulties of the Persichetti or Hindemith choral piece? If you actually intend for your students to experience that same musical and intellectual satisfaction, then wake up and realize that music of that sort needn't be confined to the All-OMEA Chorus, or the university level choral ensemble.

I wish each of you a productive and musically satisfying experience with your own students during what remains of this school year. Refuse to completely "buckle" under the pressure the kids

exert for continuous "warm fuzzies," and get really involved in music education!

by Skip Klingman

Reprinted from *Sooner Style*, the Oklahoma state newsletter, February, 1986.

## ACDA GOES TO SAN ANTONIO

Once mainly recognized as a sleepy little Texas pueblo and site of the Alamo, San Antonio is today the ninth largest city in the United States.

San Antonio has it all. From 300 days each year of clear, blue skies, to the famous River Walk set 20 feet below sea level in the heart of the city, to LBJ's nearby ranch in the Texas hill country, San Antonio is a community with something for everyone.

The music that will sound from San Antonio's Center for the Performing Arts will be the highlight of the mid-March days, the 11th-14th, as hundreds of singers and thousands of choral musicians descend on the city. Program planners, David Thorsen and Tom Smith, together with Gene Brooks and Chuck Thomley, assisted by a committee of ACDA members and officers have packaged a convention that no choral musician should miss. Choirs of every type will perform and interest and reading sessions will touch upon nearly all the major areas of interest for ACDA members. The international growth of ACDA is reflected in the attendance of the Toronto Children's Chorus and the Doshosha Women's College Chorus from Kyoto, Japan. The entire convention is dedicated to Howard Swan whose heritage in the music world will always hold a special place in the art of choral singing.

The January issue of *The Choral Journal* — a special convention issue — gives you an overview of the program, the performers and the special sessions.

You won't want to miss a minute of the days in San Antonio. See you there!

### choral composition contest

Sponsored annually by the Illinois Chapter of the  
AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION

Contest is open to all composers who are current residents of Illinois.

Deadline for submission of entries is March 15, 1987.

For complete information and application materials, write to:

David L. Brunner, Chair  
ACDA Choral Competition  
605 West Indiana  
Urbana, Illinois 61801

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312-743-5516

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### Higher Education

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Normal, IL 61761  
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309-452-6257 (h)

### Children's Choir

Donald Roach  
Western Illinois University  
Macomb, IL 61455  
309-298-1163 (w)  
309-837-3776 (h)

### Junior High School

Sandra Stoneham  
Homer Junior High  
Rt. 1, Box 367  
Lockport, IL 60441  
312-460-2300

### Ethnic and Minority Concerns

Janet Underwood  
813 S. Ada  
Chicago, IL 60620  
312-723-0263

### Youth and Student Activities

Mona Quinn  
Music Department  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
815-753-1551 (w)  
312-393-9258 (h)

### Community & Junior College

Thomas Stauch  
Harper College  
Algonquin & Roselle Roads  
Palatine, IL 60067  
312-397-3000 (w)  
312-980-6771 (h)

### Community Choir

David L. Brunner  
605 W. Indiana  
Urbana, IL 61801  
217-328-4959

### Male Chorus

Greg Lyne  
DePaul University  
804 W. Belden Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60614  
312-341-8373

### High School

Dan Spreckelmeyer  
1537 S. Douglas  
Springfield, IL 62704  
217-546-2028

### Treble Choir

Diane Jankiewicz  
637 Bluff St.  
Carol Stream, IL 60188  
312-665-3925

### Church Choir

Eva Wedel  
First Congregational Church  
401 Country Club Road  
Crystal Lake, IL 60014  
815-459-6010 (w)  
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### THE CONDUCTORS' PODIUM

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