

The Conductors' Podium

Illinois State Newsletter of the American Choral Directors Association

VOLUME XVI, Number 2

APRIL 1990

From the President

I write this column still basking in glow of a very successful Regional Convention in Grand Rapids. Kudos to Illinois' Bill Schnell and his team for an outstanding job of organization and hard work to pull off a logistically-smooth and professionally-enlightening convention. I personally was extremely impressed with the hotel as a basic site and with the acoustical environments of the churches where the bulk of the concerts took place. Inevitably, there were moments which stood out to me personally as exceptional. The performance of *Singet dem Herrn* by the Earlham College Choir was, for me, the musical highlight of the convention, not just for the music itself, but also for the utterly musical and engaging performance which these singers gave. They sang this formidable motet from memory and it was evident to me from their physical involvement with the music and the expression on their faces that they were completely swept away by this grand music. And, consequently, so were all of us who were privileged to hear their fine performance.

I also was most interested in and challenged by the interest sessions on how grades are given in collegiate choral situations and in Doug Amman's (Indiana ACDA President) challenging session on accountability in the choral rehearsal. The two are related, it seems to me, and while both were done by and perhaps directed to collegiate people, the implications of these sessions have applicability for us all. I confess that for a long time I assumed total accountability for what went on with my choir--if mistakes were made, memorization didn't get done, attitudes were poor or concentration lacking it was somehow my fault. "If only I had done this or that differently or better..." was my lament and it is perhaps a thought that some others of you have

had. Of course, we need to be prepared and dedicated to the task of rehearsing and performing, but it isn't solely our fault when things don't go well. In reality, we are often more motivated and prepared than any of our students and what is needed is some mechanism to insure that our level of involvement and dedication is matched by that of our singers. When we hear excellent choirs perform or observe superior ensembles at contest, what we need to understand is that superiority is not solely the result of better talent, but also the product of an excellent teacher who knows how to motivate and challenge his/her singers and convince them that they have a vested personal interest in the success of this choir. Consequently, they need to put in the time and effort to make sure that they are prepared and be willing to exert the kind of peer pressure, gentle or otherwise, which is often the most effective tool in convincing new choir members of just what is expected of them in this group. Amman outlines the problem in the following points:

1. Choral ensembles (especially select groups) are sometimes not approached with the same degree of professionalism and expectation as are instrumental groups regarding the learning of notes.

2. Conductors need to place more responsibility and accountability on the individual singer by testing note accuracy in an organized (and yet humane) fashion.

3. Younger singers do not often understand the high standards required in a select group (especially one they are entering for the first time).

4. Singers (along with everyone else) become lazy or lose focus on the task at hand at certain points in the rehearsal process, whether on a daily basis or over the course of a term/semester. Consequently, the conductor must impose a structure which assists them

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in keeping "on task."

5. If we have low standards with no accountability, we will usually obtain mediocre results.

While Dr. Amman was specifically referring to the singers' responsibility in learning their part outside of rehearsal, it seems clear that this same attitude of expectation could extend to aspects of individual growth in whatever level ensemble we conduct. Young singers may not have the expertise to learn their parts outside of class, but they can learn scales, solfege, rhythmic patterns, etc., which will assist their general musical literacy and aid in the solution of specific problems posed by current repertory. Furthermore, the idea that they have to perform these assigned tasks in public, in front of their peers may be another extremely valuable motivational tool (it can, of course, work the other way and the determination of what is the most appropriate method of evaluation is one that will vary with the age of the singer, the physical layout of the rehearsal space, the amount of rehearsal time, etc.). Finally, there is a direct and obvious correlation between this kind of accountability and the way in which we evaluate (and grade) our singers. The bottom line seems to be that the more we ask of our singers (providing we give them the structure that will assure their growth), the more all of us will gain and the better our music making will be.

-Chester Alwes

From the Editor

"Can you believe what Bill did?"

Those of you who attended the Central Division convention in Grand Rapids certainly asked or were asked that question at least a couple of times. For those of you who were not there, Bill Schnell, Central Division president, removed his clothing (except for his underwear) during his address to the convention. And it was the talk of the convention.

Which is, I guess, unfortunate. And which is also precisely the point he was trying to make.

Unlike Chet Alwes, I did not come home from this convention basking in the glow. I have to admit to being somewhat troubled if this convention represents the paragon of the choral art. Perhaps I took Bill's action too seriously and didn't enjoy it for its outrageous humor. But I tried to listen

to what he said, and what he said cut right to the heart of what I hope we all believe about making music. Sad to say, I don't think most of the performances we heard in Grand Rapids lived up to Bill's challenge.

What Bill did was to stand before us in his underwear. What he challenged us to do was to dare to stand before each other in our underwear. What most of the choirs demonstrated in their performances was gorgeous tone, careful intonation, beautiful blend, impeccable balance, and precise diction. What virtually none of them did was to move me, to inspire me. (I had to miss the Earlham College Choir's performance of Bach's motet in order to stand guard duty at the door, so I cannot confirm Chet's feeling that this was a musical high point.)

I think that the American Choral Directors Association, in the past three decades, has admirably provided opportunities for choirs to demonstrate near-perfection in choral technique. What we have lost in the process, though, is the willingness to take chances in our performances. The technical standards have become so high that it is unthinkable to fall short in any way. How many choirs have you heard at Divisional or National ACDA conventions that were technically weak? I cannot think of a single one. How many choirs have you heard at these same conventions that were musically dull? For me, the list is far too long. If that statistic were reversed, oh, how we would complain! But which is the greater value, technical excellence or musical excellence?

In the past few years, I have learned a great deal from a friend and colleague who teaches art here at Eureka College and who is himself an outstanding sculptor. This is a man who has consistently, with his art and with himself, taken risks. In fact, he believes that an artist who doesn't take personal risks will never take artistic ones. His art may not please everyone, but it never fails to provoke a deep response. I entered a recent exhibit of his and almost lost my breath from the immediate visual impact of his work. Upon further contemplation, I was moved simultaneously on intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic levels.

You may say that he is a creative artist and we are recreative artists. But so much the more reason to be willing to take a chance in our work. The composers who dared to lay themselves bare in order to provide us with the music we perform deserve as much. And

the cost of not doing so is too great.

Bill took his clothes off. But I hope that isn't all you remember. He dared us all to do the same. Yes, it means being terribly vulnerable. It also means sharing our musical gifts with our colleagues. Isn't it worth it?

-Lane Galloway

Try A Choral Exchange!

by Kari Knudtson

South Central District Choir

The most exciting and rewarding event ever to hit a choral program for which I have been responsible is now over, but my students' fond musical and social memories will live on for years! Choral students from Jacksonville High School, Jacksonville, IL and Dorman High School, Spartanburg, S.C. recently shared two 60 hour weekends with 13 hours of charter bus, drive-through-the-night travel on both ends, laughing, loving and singing. The musical experiences of combining the two concert choirs for nine selections as well as performing individually at the informal and formal concerts in both communities were, of course, highlights. The bond was singing together.

However, the by-products of unity and sheer joy shared among and between the two choirs, beyond the music, were amazing and very inspiring. It seemed as though not a minute was wasted between the "how do you dos" and "The girl/guy I'm staying with is the greatest, and so are the parents. Do we have to go home?" Call it chemistry, call it good will, or go way out on a limb and call it the cleansing power of music; not only did the two groups fall in love with one another in general, but the students who seemed to have the least going for them were suddenly among the most beloved. Images, talent, or the lack of it were entirely unimportant. What was important (and the familiar proverb rings true) was the "giving." Self-esteem was high. The kids were at their best. All was well with the world!

We traveled south February 22. The Southerners gave and gave until we no longer knew how to graciously receive. They gave gifts, time, energy, hugs, and unreserved caring. Our mission when they traveled north three weeks later--to give as we had been given to. Never before has a group of mine been so purposeful. (not even in musical endeavors...Oh well, one thing at a time.) My students were so in love with

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the spirit that existed when they were the guests that they were intent on creating it as the hosts. What a worthy and rewarding musical and social investment for the price of a charter bus!

I strongly recommend trying an exchange with a school far enough away to make it seem extra special, but close enough to be manageable in three or four days. When the host group feeds and houses the guests it is not a terribly expensive trip. Extras like a police escort into town, parties after rehearsals, shopping mall performances, church service choir appearances, receptions, attending a local community theater musical, commemorative sweatshirts, and a mini-recital and masterclass by Prof. Ronald Hedlund of the University of Illinois filled the precious hours with fun and educational experiences which will not soon be forgotten.

If your choir needs a travel experience, your funds are limited, and your curiosity has been aroused, feel free to contact me for more of the nuts and bolts. I'll talk your ear off and try to answer any questions you might have. This will work for you if you and the other director are some what like-minded, well organized, and have a liberal long distance phone budget. It's also helpful if you're willing to give up entire weekends for the good of the cause. So what's new!

Higher Education Report

by Michael Schwartzkopf

Higher Education

Interest Chair

Collegiate Choral Festivals

Robert Harris at Northwestern University and David Nott at Illinois Wesleyan University hosted Collegiate Choral Festivals on February 17 and 24, respectively. Participating in the festival at Northwestern were the Northwestern University Singers, Cheryl Frazes, conductor; The Kapelle of Concordia University, Thomas Gieschen, conductor; the Northwestern University Chorale, Robert Harris, conductor; the Northern Illinois University Concert Choir, Elwood Smith, conductor; Roosevelt University Chorus, Anne Harrington-Heider, conductor; and the Eureka College Chorale, Lane Galloway, conductor. The festival concluded with the combined choirs singing the "Gloria in excelsis" movement from the Pinkham *Christmas Cantata* conducted by Amy Goodman from De Paul University.

Those choirs participating at Illinois Wesleyan were Illinois Wesleyan Collegiate Choir, David Nott, conductor; the Illinois State University Concert Choir, Michael Schwartzkopf, conductor; the Greenville College Choir, James E. Wilson, conductor; MacMurray College Choir, Dick Hanson, conductor; the Quincy College Choir, Valerie Temple Thompson, conductor; and the University of Illinois Concert Choir, Chester L. Alwes, conductor. The festival concluded with the combined choirs singing "The Heavens are Telling" from *The Creation* by Haydn, conducted by David Nott.

The tradition that has been established over the years calls for one statewide festival to be held during the next school year. I will presume, unless I hear otherwise, that this tradition should be continued. The remaining factor to be determined is where and when. Knowing that the date of the festival is a very controversial subject, I will designate Saturday, February 16, 1991 as the date for next year's event. I would like to invite anyone in the state to host the event and ask that you please call or write me at your earliest convenience if you wish to do so.

Central Division Collegiate Honors Festival

You should have received information and registration information by now regarding the Second Central Division Collegiate Honors Festival. If you have not received this information, please contact me and I will have the materials sent to you. The festival will be held on October 26-27 at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana with Dr. Charles Smith from Michigan State University as the guest conductor. It will begin at 4 p.m. on Friday and end at 5 p.m. on Saturday. Dr. Donald Armstrong at Illinois State University is the Division Chair of College/University Choirs and the organizational person for the festival.

Children's Choir Directory

The National Committee on Children's Choirs will publish a DIRECTORY OF CHILDREN'S CHOIRS IN THE UNITED STATES. If you would like to have your choir listed, please send the information below to Barbara Tagg, Chair, ACDA National Committee on Children's Choirs, 215 Crouse College, Syracuse

University, Syracuse, New York 13244-1010.

Name of Choir

Name of Director

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Phone number (daytime and evening)

Age of members of the choir

Brief description and type of choir (School, church, and community-based choirs will be included.)

Junior High School Choirs to be Highlighted at October Convention

by Dennis Morrissey

Interest Chair for

Junior High School Choirs

"Ain't-a that good news" for junior high school singers and teachers!

The state executive board decided at its January meeting to spotlight the junior high area at our 1990 state convention, to be held on October 19 and 20 at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.

The board felt that the format of featuring two high school festival choirs—one male and one female—at the 1989 convention was quite successful, so it decided to use the same format again this fall, except with junior high singers.

I am pleased to announce that our guest conductors will be Sandra Chapman and Henry Leck. Sandra Chapman, who will conduct the girls' choir, is a junior high school teacher from Fort Madison, Iowa, and is associate editor of *The Choral Journal*. She has done many workshops and clinics with junior high school students. Henry Leck, who will work with the boys, is Central Division Chair for both Boy's and Children's Choirs. He teaches at Butler University in Indianapolis and is director of the Indianapolis Children's Choir. More information on both guest conductors and on the entire convention will appear in the August issue of the *Podium*.

A mailing will be sent to all junior high teachers in the state before the end of this school year. It will contain information pertinent to the festival choirs: application procedures, repertoire, rehearsals, etc. If you do not receive a mailing by May 15, please contact me at the address and phone number on the back page.

Plan to participate! Your students will thank you for the opportunity.

Application for Performance
ILLINOIS ACDA STATE CONVENTION

October 19-20, 1990, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL
(Please type or print.)

Name of Ensemble _____
Size _____ Additional Instruments _____
Voicing: SSA ___ TTB ___ SATB ___ Other _____
Type and/or level _____
(University, community college, church, jr.
high, high school, children, jazz/show,
treble, male, etc.)
Name of institution _____
Mailing address _____
_____ ZIP _____
Institution phone (____) _____
Home address _____
_____ ZIP _____
Home phone (____) _____
Member ACDA? Yes ___ Expiration date _____
No _____

ELIGIBILITY: Conductors must be current,
paid members of ACDA. Conductors must have
been employed in the same position for the
past two years.

It is understood that ACDA will not assume
any financial responsibility for travel,
food, or lodging for the performance groups.
This application implies that the above
mentioned group is prepared to travel to and
perform at the convention if accepted.

Director signature _____
Administrator signature _____

Proposed program for performance
Total time may not exceed 25 minutes.
If lecture/demo, give topic and works used.
Title/Composer _____ Time (min and sec) _____

TAPE SPECIFICATIONS

A. Performance applications should be prepared on superior quality tape, reel or cassette. The recording should be 10-15 minutes in length, and should include two selections from each of the previous years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

B. Vocal jazz and show choir applications may include a video cassette, Beta format, in addition to the required audio tape.

RECORDED SELECTIONS SUBMITTED ON THIS TAPE:

1. Title _____
Composer _____
Year recorded _____
2. Title _____
Composer _____
Year recorded _____
3. Title _____
Composer _____
Year recorded _____

(Continue on back)

PROGRAMS

All applicants must submit one program (or photocopy) for each of the two previous years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

Mail this completed form, together with your audition tape and programs, to the address below. Applications with tapes must be received no later than June 1, 1990.

Notification will be made by June 30, 1990.

Include return postage and an addressed or labeled container if you wish to have your materials returned.

Mail to: Chester Alwes
University of Illinois
School of Music
1114 W. Nevada
Urbana, IL 61801

IL-ACDA Announces 1990 Choral Composition Competition

by Dennis Schafer

Illinois is one of few states (in fact, it is the only state I know of) that sponsors an annual competition for new choral works. You who are members of ACDA can do a great deal to promote the competition and the search for new

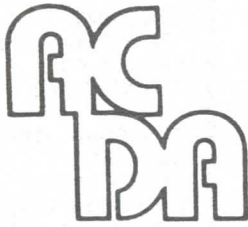
music by encouraging composers to submit works for this year's competition.

This year we are searching for compositions for the non-select high school choir. Any appropriate voicing and accompaniment are acceptable: SA, TB, SSA, TTB, SAB, or SACB. A submitted work should be a maximum of ten minute's duration, and must have a text that is either in the public domain or for which copyright permission has

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been attained. It must be an unpublished piece and may not have won any precious awards.

The deadline for submissions is June 15, 1990. The winning composer will win a \$300 prize and a possible performance of the piece at this fall's convention.

For application information, write to me at the address on the back page.



AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

APPLICATION for MEMBERSHIP in the AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION Please Fill Out Completely

Please accept my application for membership in ACDA as indicated below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Active \$35.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional \$75.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate \$35.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$10.00 | FOREIGN ACTIVE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retired \$10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Airmail \$70.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life \$1,000.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Surface mail \$80.00 |

Life membership payable in annual installments of \$100.00 or more. Canada same as U.S. Please remit in U.S. funds only.

Make check or money order payable to:
American Choral Directors Association

Name
Mr. Ms. Mrs. _____
Send ACDA publications to:

c/o _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Phone (____) _____ Zip+4 _____

Alternate Address:
c/o _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Phone (____) _____ Zip+4 _____

IMPORTANT — Please Complete This Section

Please check areas of activity:

- 1 Elementary School
- 2 Junior H.S.
- 3 Senior H.S.
- 5 ACDA Student Chapter
- 6 Jr./Community College
- 7 College/University
- 8 Community Choir
- 9 Church Choir
- P Professional Choir
- S Supervisor/Administrator

Please check classification of choirs directed:

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Boy | <input type="checkbox"/> Girl | <input type="checkbox"/> Men |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women | <input type="checkbox"/> SATB/Mixed | <input type="checkbox"/> Jazz/Showchoir | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic/Minority | | | |

Place of Employment _____
Title and/or Position _____

1991
**ACDA NATIONAL
CONVENTION**
Phoenix, Arizona
March 13-17

Mail to:
Gene Brooks
Executive Director, ACDA
P.O. Box 6310
Lawton, OK 73508-0310

ACDA is a founding member of the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM).
If you need additional information about IFCM, please check box.

- The American Choral Directors Association, founded in 1959, is a non-profit professional organizations whose active membership is composed of choral musicians from schools, colleges and universities, community, industrial organizations, churches, and professional groups.
- ACDA is one of the largest professional organizations for choral directors in the world with a membership of approximately 15,000 conductors representing one million singers.
- ACDA has as its highest purpose to encourage the finest in choral music and to promote its development in all ways, including performance, composition, publication, and research.
- ACDA is organized in the United States into seven geographical divisions, each with its own activities. In addition, each of the 50 states has its own officers, thereby making it possible for members to be in close proximity to persons actively involved in choral music and ACDA.
- ACDA has numerous national committees engaged in exploring materials, techniques, and standards. Among these are committees representing children's, junior and senior high school, college and university choirs; choral music in the community and in the church; vocal jazz groups; ethnic music; male and female chorus; and activities for students.
- ACDA sponsors festivals, clinics, and workshops on the state level as well as division and national conventions where ideas are shared and explored, problems discussed, and music is heard. Industry representatives frequently exhibit material at these conventions; members have the opportunity to examine first-hand the latest publications and music-related supplies.
- ACDA publications include **The Choral Journal**, published ten months per year, which contains important articles, reviews of books, records, music, and general information about choral music and musicians throughout the world.
- ACDA has student chapters in many high schools, colleges, and universities whose members are contributing fresh ideas to the thrust of the national organization.

OFFICERS**President**

Chester Alwes
University of Illinois
School of Music
1114 W. Nevada
Urbana, IL 61801
217-333-3206 (w)
217-398-5093 (h)

Vice-President

Walter Lamble
870 Old Willow Road
Prospect Heights, IL 60070
312-729-2000 (w)
312-541-4508 (h)

President Elect

Ramona Quinn
School of Music
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
815-753-1551 (w)
708-393-9258 (h)

Secretary/Treasurer

Marian Kuethe Wyatt
P.O. Box 6474
Champaign, IL 61826-6474
217-351-3864 (w)
217-398-2041 (h)

Editor

Lane Galloway
Eureka College
Eureka, IL 61530
309-467-6398 (w)
309-467-4235 (h)

DISTRICT CHAIRPERSONS**Chicago**

Lynne Aronson
2729 West Jerome
Chicago, IL 60645
312-743-5516 (h)

North Suburban

Jennie Saunders-Brown
Aurora West High School
Aurora, IL 60506
312-844-4602 (w)

South Suburban

Michael E. Rugen
Homewood-Flossmoor High School
999 Kedzie Avenue
Flossmoor, IL 60422
708-799-3000 (w)
708-799-4497 (h)

Northwest

Elwood Smith
200 W. Locust
DeKalb, IL 60115
815-753-1841 (w)

North Central

Carolyn Paulin
Music Department
Knox College
Galesburg, IL 61401
309-343-0112, ext. 411 (w)
309-343-5611 (h)
217-359-0988 (h)

East Central

John Kelleher

South Central

Kari Knudtson
1111 W. Morton, Apt. D
Jacksonville, IL 62650
217-243-4384 (w)
217-245-0498 (h)

South

James Wilson
Greenville College
Greenville, IL 62246
618-664-1840 (w)
618-664-1045 (h)

STATE INTEREST CHAIRPERSONS**Higher Education**

Mike Schwartzkopf
Illinois State University
Department of Music
Bloomington, IL 61701
309-438-2012 (w)
309-452-2761 (h)

Junior College

Thomas Stauch
1200 W. Algonquin Road
Palatine, IL 60067
312-397-3000 ext. 2566 (w)
312-742-5168 (h)

High School

Robert Drafall
1205 E. Florida, #21B
Urbana, IL 61801
217-367-7089 (h)

Junior High School

Dennis Morrissey
R.R. 1, Box 369
5 Woodland Trails
Bloomington, IL 61704
815-945-2361 (w)
309-663-1512 (h)

Children's Choir

Paula Bachman
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Monticello, IL 61856
217-762-9243 (h)

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Rockford, IL 61107
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815-633-5859 (h)

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Alice Brockway

Church/Synagogue

Steve Jobman
First Presbyterian Church
Prairie at Ferris Avenues
Galesburg, IL 61401
309-342-1871 (w)

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Bloomington, IL 60108
708-307-7374 (h)

Lynn Drafall

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Urbana, IL 61801
217-367-7089 (h)

Jazz/Show Choir

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7597 Churchill
Hanover Park, IL 60103
708-887-1730 ext. 310
708-213-3827 (h)

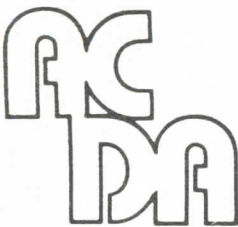
Choral Composition Competition

Fr. Dennis Schafer
1107 E. Florida, #22B
Urbana, IL 61801
217-328-2866 (h)

Ethnic and Minority Concerns

Janet Underwood
8316 South Ada
Chicago, IL 60620
312-962-4700 (w)
312-723-0263 (h)

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**THE CONDUCTOR'S PODIUM**

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Lane Galloway, Editor
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31715 070 7000 9999/99
Walter S Collins
College of Music, CB 301
University of Colorado
Boulder CO 80309