

PODIUM

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE CHORAL 'CIRCLE OF LIFE' – PART 2

Jeffrey S. Wilson

As I write I am sitting in a mall food court with a few free minutes away from my university choir tour duties. This year we are traveling in the Midwest: enjoying the early signs of spring, reveling in lovely performance venues, savoring good fellowship with high school vocalists and church folks, and reaping the musical benefits of singing a concert program multiple times.

Over the past two decades I have grown accustomed to being 'on the road' for 7-10 days at this time of the year. But again, as I experience this annual ritual, I continue to be amazed at how choral music-making brings people together, oftentimes leading to healing and wholeness in deeply personal and spiritual ways. As usual, I also find myself stretched beyond my own personal resources and physical limits.

Like me, you may find yourself reaping the rewards of your commitments to training and caring for your choirs, while also experiencing the fatigue and disappointments that come with

our vocation. Let me encourage you to persist in your pursuit of musical excellence and community building, and remind you of the need for times of rest and refreshment.

IL-ACDA serves choral conductors and singers from around the state in both of these endeavors by offering a number of workshops, festivals, and networking opportunities throughout the year. Our signature event for many years has been our annual Summer ReTreat. ***But this year, due to the coronavirus situation, our ReTreat is being postponed until June, 2021. In its place, IL-ACDA will be hosting a 'virtual choral conference' on June 24-25, 2020.*** We are excited about this new venture and are making plans to offer a variety of professional development opportunities online at minimal cost. ***Details about sessions and registration for the 'virtual conference' will be posted at www.il-acda.org.***

Read on to learn more about the 2021 Summer ReTreat...

The 2021 Summer ReTreat, titled 'Celebrate Illinois', will take place on June 23-24 at Illinois State University. We are hoping to have the three headliners previously scheduled for 2020 join us next summer. All of them have close ties with our state and are

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nationally recognized leaders in their fields.

Eugene Rogers (Director of Choral Activities at University of Michigan and Co-Chair of the National ACDA Diversity Committee) will conduct the Directors' Chorus and lead a special session titled "Programming with Awareness: Choral Music and Cultural Appropriation."

Jill Trinka (internationally acknowledged Master Teacher in the Kodály philosophy of music education and widely-known performer, teacher, and arranger of American folk music) will present sessions on "Favorites and Canons and Rounds for Classrooms and Choir" and "Let's Dance! Favorite American Singing Games and Play Party Games."

Robert W. Bastian, M.D. (internationally-known ENT-Otolaryngologist) will teach us the important principles of vocal health with sessions on "What Really Matters?" and "When Things Go Wrong."

Additional choral reading and interest sessions will be offered, as well as IL-MEA Professional Development Credits and ISU Graduate Credits. The Harold Decker Award will be presented during the Wednesday evening banquet. And, as always, there will be abundant opportunities for professional networking and personal refreshment.

We anticipate that heavily discounted student and first-year attendee rates will again be available! Registration information and other conference details will be posted at www.IL-ACDA.org. Save the dates for "Celebrate Illinois" on your calendars now—June 23-24, 2021!

Best wishes this spring! I hope to see many of you online at the 2020 IL-ACDA 'virtual choral conference' on June 24-25!

Jeff Wilson
President, Illinois ACDA

Underrepresented Eight-Part Choral Works for Community Choirs

R & R Community Choirs
Dr. Eric Esparza, Chair

Many community choruses enjoy the benefits of having a large membership. One such benefit is the ability to perform eight-part music, either in double-choir voicing (SATB-SATB) or in songs with divisi (SSAATTBB). Frequently programmed staples such as *I Was Glad* (Parry), *Singet dem Herrn* (Bach), and *Te Deum* (Verdi), just to name a few, deserve to remain popular, but the aim of this article will be to highlight some lesser-known works for eight voices that may diversify programming by touching on a variety of

time/style periods as well as different regions of the world. In most cases, these songs can work with chamber choirs as well as large choruses.

Beginning with the Renaissance Period, the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina* by Giovanni Palestrina provides nice interplay between two a cappella SATB choirs while maintaining the long, expressive phrases typical of Palestrina's writing. The voice ranges are set comfortably. From Spain, *Veni Sancte Spiritus* by Tomás Luis de Victoria is an a cappella sequence hymn for Pentecost. Victoria varies the piece with several changes in meter, and creates drama by beginning each section with the

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two SATB choirs singing antiphonally, but eventually bringing them together to finish tutti.

The Baroque Period offers choirs the opportunity to collaborate affordably with a handful of instrumentalists by programming pieces written in the *concertato* idiom (alternating sections between choir, instruments, and combinations of soli). *Laudate Dominum* by Francesco Cavalli is a handsome example of this. Scored for two SATB choirs, eight soloists, 2 violins, and basso continuo, this Vesper psalm varies the performing forces with each new line of text and gives soloists an opportunity to shine with virtuosic lines. The same can be said for Cavalli's *Lauda Jerusalem*. In both cases, the instrumental lines can be shared by multiple instruments (brass and strings), and vocal lines can be doubled by instruments if desired. Such was the flexibility of the performing forces of the time. The madrigal *Ardo, Avvampo* by Claudio Monteverdi for eight voices, two violins, and continuo offers choirs an opportunity to sing a secular, dramatic, Italian text. The opening triple-time section layers voices before a large climax, contrasting nicely with the following duple section in which pairs of voices tackle short 16th-note melismas. *Salve Regina* by the Spanish composer José de Nebra is also scored for two violins, basso continuo, and 8 voices, however, the voicing is SSAT-SATB (a voicing utilized frequently in the *villancicos* of the time). Modern choirs will have no problem fitting into this voice spread. If anything, this voicing can be useful for choirs that have more treble voices than basso voices. This motet creates interest via the use of echoing, a change of

meter halfway through the piece, and the creative use of suspensions.

From the Classical Period, Luigi Cherubini provides works to program alongside Mozart and Haydn. His *Credo a Otto Voci* is scored for two SATB choirs and Hugo Ulrich has created a keyboard-accompaniment that will work effectively on piano or organ. Being a substantial text, the piece is considerable in length. Cherubini breaks up this stand-alone mass movement into sections of different meter, tempo, and tonal center, and he concludes with a lengthy fugue making this piece a good match for a choir ready to tackle a challenge.

Choirs looking for repertoire from the Romantic Period by a female composer should consider *Nachtreigen* by Fanny Hensel (Mendelssohn). This a cappella secular work divides its eight voices SSAA-TTBB, working antiphonally for most of the song until voices join near the end. Shifts in tonal center, extremes of range and dynamics, and a nimble text setting provide variety throughout this challenging work. Another secular offering is *D'un Coeur Qui T'aime* by Charles Gounod. The 'tranquillissimo' setting of mostly quarter-note and half-note rhythms finds interest in the harmonies created by the two a cappella SATB choirs for which it is scored. Heavy repetition of text helps make the French lyrics more accessible for learning. *Unsere Väter* by Johannes Brahms is a compact eight-voice a cappella setting of portions of Psalm 22 and 29. The German text about hope and deliverance is set in traditional Brahms harmonic style as the choirs sing antiphonally, first alternating SATB-SATB, then finish-

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ing with TTBB phrases joined by SSAA for a tutti finish.

20th-century double choir writing can be found in many British Evening Services (typically setting the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis*). One such service is Charles Wood's *Evening Service in F-major*, scored for two SATB choirs and organ. These two short canticles are largely set homorhythmically with typical antiphony and varying vocal textures. There are two andante sections amid the other allegro sections that can highlight soloists from each choir. Both choirs and organ end with a robust forte "Amen". *Missa Brevis* by Judith Bingham provides another opportunity to feature a female composer in a modern compositional setting for two SATB choirs and organ. This twelve-minute work provides a concise setting of the *missa brevis* texts with vocal interplay that is more line-to-line than choir-to-choir.

From the 21st-century, *Salve Regina* by Michael Joncas is a contemplative setting of the antiphon based on a chant motive for two SATB choirs a cappella. Creative color chords provide the interest in this piece. It is worth noting that there is divisi within several of the voice parts from each choir. *Hodie Christus Natus Est* by Argentine composer Ariel Quintana is an energetic setting of this Christmas text, scored for double choir a cappella. In modern fashion,

the number of treble and basso voices within each choir alternates between one and four according to the needs of the harmony. This short motet uses antiphonal singing and unexpected harmonic progressions to create interest. *Dumbele* by Rodolpho Delarmente comes from the Philippines and is scored for SSAATTBB, claves, and tenor drum. There are few words in the song, and they are repeated by various textures of voices in long and short rhythms to create interesting harmonies. *Small Sky* by the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu is a lovely secular song set homorhythmically and varying from four to eight voices in texture. It is tonal with approachable dissonances to provide harmonic color. *Yamko Rambe Yamko* arranged by Agustinus Bambang Jusana is a lively a cappella folk song arrangement from Indonesia built upon recurring rhythmic motives, juxtaposing phrases in long and short note values, spoken text, and an intermittent tenor solo. It is tonal and can be enhanced by the inclusion of improvised percussion and dancing.

Any of the aforementioned songs would make an interesting choice for programming and will excite audiences by the expansion of the choral canon to include lesser-known songs by well-known composers as well as the wonderful music of composers from underrepresented communities.



Tenor & Bass Repertoire and Resources Chair
Andy Jeffrey

Music, now more than ever, is a tool that can be used to bring us together. With all of the talk of COVID-19 virus, political rhetoric, shuttering of schools, churches, mosques, synagogues and other social institutions, we are living in unprecedented and trying times to say the least. Many people are finding themselves isolated from their families, friends, neighbors, students, and fellow musicians. We are all being asked to give up some of the comforts that we are unaccustomed to living without.

Music has the ability to bring us together and lift our spirits in trying times. As we look at the coming weeks ahead and wonder how it will impact our musical en-

semble activities, we must be creative and find ways to connect with people in spite of the circumstances. I was moved by the video from Siena Italy of people spontaneously singing in their doorways during mandatory isolation. You can view the link [here](#). How can we ourselves make music and encourage others to do the same? How can we use the incredible tools of the digital age to help us combat the isolation that is created in the midst of this pandemic threat?

I am sure that I do not have the answers to all of these questions. I know that as I look to the reality of beginning e-learning in the coming days, I have anxiety and trepidation over what it will look like. We are an organization of professionals with great ideas and great capacity for problem solving. I am confident that in the future we will all look back at this experience and find



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Audition Dates

- Saturday, December 7, 2019
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Dr. Brian Winnie,
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that we have grown and created new means of connecting and making music collaboratively.

Sometimes unexpected bumps in the road can turn to be a blessing in disguise if we choose to look at them as an opportunity to rethink and grow. I have already found the extra time with my family to be a huge source of joy. We have found people in our community and circle making time to check in on each other and help each other. We have a forced opportunity to step back and reevaluate how we do things and I for one am looking forward to the opportunity to grow. I hope you will reach out with me to

others in our field as we navigate these uncharted waters together, so we can emerge at the farther shore with a renewed commitment to our craft and with new ideas that will benefit our students and colleagues for years to come.

If I can be of any assistance to anyone as we move ahead, please do not hesitate to contact me. There will be more information coming soon about the status of our upcoming TB Festival at Western Illinois University. Until then, be well and make beautiful music, alone and with others, in any way possible!

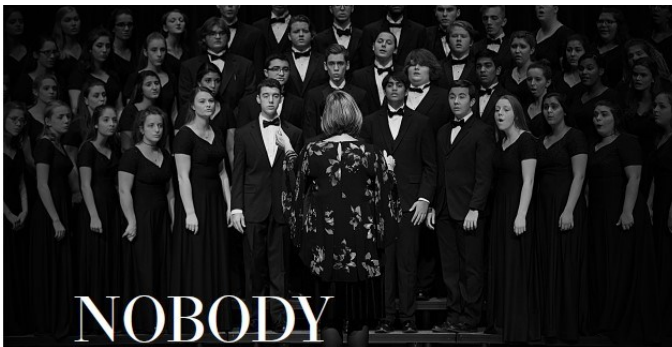
Mindfulness in the Music Classroom

District 3
Katie Bruton

Mindfulness is a series of personal practices that are proven to reduce stress, enhance focus, increase working memory, and support social and emotional development. With just one to two minutes of mindfulness per day, it is possible to help students feel less stressed and more focused over time. In my own classroom, mindfulness has helped my students to become more invested in our music, stay focused in rehearsals, and bolstered their ability to stay centered and present on performance days.

Before jumping in with the practices and benefits of mindfulness, it is important to understand why we need it. Students are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress from school. In a 2013 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association, 83% of teenagers surveyed stated that school was a significant or somewhat significant source of their stress (American Psychological Association, 2019). As a teacher, this statistic doesn't surprise me. Teachers themselves are particularly prone to stress from the demands of the job. According to Gallup's 2012 daily tracking research, 46% of K-12 teachers report experiencing high daily stress (Gallup, 2014). You may be familiar with the saying that "stress brains can't learn," and in my experience, it is true. Now

more than ever teachers and students need to invest in their wellness. I have chosen to implement mindfulness practices in my classroom and for my own personal use because research has proven it to be effective in enhancing mental and physical health.



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This practice does not require copious amounts of training or class time. Mindful.org describes mindfulness as “...the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us. Mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses, it’s not something you have to conjure up, you just have to learn how to access it.” Some research indicates that we spend a large portion of our time daydreaming or mind wandering. One study showed that our minds can wander up to 46.9% of the time (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). This means it is possible that our students can spend nearly half of our class and rehearsal time thinking about something other than the material in front of them. When put into perspective this way, one to two minutes of mindful practice seems like a small concession to make, given its potential to reduce mind wandering.

It is important to practice mindfulness yourself before introducing it to your students. You should start small, and be kind to yourself in your practice, remembering it truly is a “practice” and will take time to develop. In fact, you can try mindful breathing right now! Bring yourself into a comfortable position and set a timer on your phone (I suggest two minutes to start). Begin to pay attention to your normal breathing and focus on some component of your breath. This could be thinking as simply as “inhale, exhale,” or you could focus on the cool air coming in, warm air going out, or even the rise and fall of your lungs. Once you are focused on your normal breathing, make a conscious effort to think only about your breathing. As other thoughts come to mind, simply acknowledge the thought, then dismiss it. If a distraction should occur in your practice (a dog barking, for example) observe it for a moment, then return to your breathing. So if you did it, how many times did your mind wander? Most likely several, and that is okay.

While mindful practices may leave you more relaxed, that is not the ultimate goal. The goal of long term practice is to develop a focused state of aware-

ness of thoughts and sensations without judgement and to have the ability to stay focused on the present moment without distraction. A phrase that comes to mind that I tell students is “feelings are not facts” or “thoughts are not facts.” Students (and teachers) can get swept up in an emotional moment and react based on how they feel. Mindful practice gives students the tools to be in control of their thoughts and feelings and allows them to process thoughts before reacting.

When creating music, we have to be fully present in the moment. If a student’s mind wanders while sight reading, they may easily lose their place and have to take several moments to find their spot again, or they may even give up completely. When a director conducts a piece but starts to think about that email they forget to send, they may miss a cue, or miss out on the musical connection they could have had with their musicians. When engaging in active listening and writing, a student whose mind is wandering may miss the purpose of the listening example. Educator and psychologist Thomas Armstrong makes the argument that no other subject in school is more accessible for mindfulness than the arts, because the act of creating art is one in the same as a mindful mindset (Armstrong, 2019).

A few weeks ago I brought four junior high performing ensembles to the Illinois Grade School Music Association Organization Contest. I had to pull dozens of kids out of their classes to meet in my choir room to take attendance before loading the bus. Before I introduced students to mindfulness, I would have witnessed them chatting as they entered the room, saying hello to friends, and many may have approached me with questions and concerns. Instead, my students were well equipped with mindful tools. I displayed a YouTube video that used a virtual hobberman sphere to simulate breathing, and my students knew exactly what to do. Without even a word from me, they entered the room and immediately understood they should take a mindful moment, if they chose to. They were silent and focused on their breathing, creating a

calm, focused environment. Before departing I reminded them that contest days can be hectic, and that they should take a mindful minute when they need it. The result was a calm group of adolescents who resiliently worked through a long day of traveling and performing, and responding to stressful and unexpected situations with clarity and focus.

When introducing mindfulness to your students, share the reasons how it improves overall wellness, why it works, and possibly include your own experience. I asked one of my seasoned mindfulness students to share their perspective on the practice:

“Mindfulness is probably the best habit I have. As an individual who struggles with both generalized and social anxiety, staying mindful of my thoughts and the situation around me helps to keep me calm and grounded when I need it most. Even if you don't struggle with anxiety or anything of the sort, it still helps to relieve stress from everyday life. When you don't feel like you need it, do it anyway! It'll make you happier, or at the very least calmer and level-headed.” (Amelia, 8th grade student)

Start small with practice times, and understand students may think it is weird or different at first. You should not force a student to participate in mindfulness if they don't want to, as that would go against the intention of the practice. Rather, students who wish not to participate should be asked to sit silently to not distract the others. Other mindful practices to try with students include mindful movement, stretching, and walking.

Hopefully you feel equipped to begin your mindfulness journey. For further reading on the subject, as well as descriptions of the practices, I have a few recommended resources below. Happy practicing!

Apps

Calm (Offers free subscriptions to teachers periodically)

<https://www.calm.com/schools>

Headspace

Books

Mindfulness in the Classroom: Strategies for Promoting Concentration, Compassion, and Calm by Thomas Armstrong

Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance by Patricia C. Broderick

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[science.1192439](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1192439)



Ethnic & Multicultural Choir
Darius Polikaitis

As I write this, the evening news is reporting on the latest government guidance regarding “social distancing” and preparations for combating the coronavirus are in full swing. The markets are undergoing precipitous drops, events are being cancelled left and right, some grocery staples are sold-out, and many of us are feeling apprehensive, or at the very least, uneasy.

Yet even in these unsettling times people are finding innovative ways to share the gift of music with each other. Probably most of you have seen the Youtube videos of quarantined Italians and Spaniards singing together from their balconies. If you have not, please click on the following link to hear an example - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q734VN0N7hw>

At this moment, as evening falls, I can hear my daughter (who is home from college on spring break and will subsequently be doing coursework on-line for the remainder of the semester) and my wife sitting at the piano downstairs singing songs from an old Lithuanian songbook to pass the time and lift their spirits. As the sound of their voices and their laughter drift upstairs, they lift my spirits as well. I refrain from heading downstairs to join them, so as not to ruin this beautiful moment, this beautiful gift they have unknowingly given me ...

Recently an overseas colleague, Valerija Skapienė, artistic director of the Ugnelė (Little Flame) Children’s Choir in Vilnius, Lithuania, shared her initial experiences with running a “virtual choir rehearsal” on Facebook. Having received her permission, I’ve translated excerpts from her post and present them to you here ... “We decided to use the Zoom platform to run

virtual rehearsals for our children’s chorus. The basic principle is that one person creates a virtual meeting and invites others to join by sending a link via email. All participants can see and hear each other (more on the nuances of that in a bit) ... We prepared for our first rehearsal by sending an email to all choir parents with detailed instructions on how to download Zoom, as well as a link and ID for the meeting. We also sent a link to the music online so the children could print it out at home or read from their computers, tablets, or smartphones ... We started the virtual rehearsal with an explanation of how the rehearsal will proceed, did some warmups and then spent the rest of the rehearsal learning parts for new or nearly new pieces. We knew in advance that we would experience problems with sound latency, so we asked the children to mute their computer microphones. This meant that each child heard only themselves and the choir director. Certainly this type of rehearsal is dramatically different from a “real” rehearsal - we obviously cannot work on issues of intonation, balance, blend, etc. Also we cannot provide feedback to the choristers. So we only plan to use these rehearsals for part learning purposes. But even just that is something, especially considering that the alternative would be to completely stop our work for an indefinite period of time! After some minutes of rehearsing in this way, the children were instructed to unmute their microphones to ask questions, to share their impressions, and most importantly – to feel that although they cannot physically be together, they are still a team!”

Let’s all reach out to our singers and to each other in these trying times and find new and unexpected ways to share the gift of music with each other! Stay well and be safe, friends!



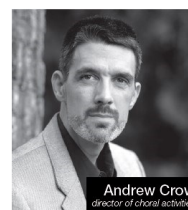
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Andrew Crow
director of choral activities



Kerry Glann
associate director of choral activities

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Summer ReTreat has been postponed until June 23-24, 2021.

We are in contact with the headliners previously scheduled for this summer's ReTreat and hopeful that they will be able to join us in the future.

A new 'Virtual Choral Conference', which will include a variety of online networking and professional development opportunities, is being planned to take place this summer on June 24-25, 2020.

It is our hope that this online conference will be free, and will benefit both IL-ACDA members and other choral directors beyond our membership.

We are excited about this new venture and hope that you will join us! Watch for details on the IL-ACDA website (www.il-acda.org).

