

Melisma

Official publication of the North Central Division—American Choral Directors Association

Fall, 2015 • Vol. XXXV, No. 1



In This Issue:

Recruiting & Retention in Choral Ensembles, Part 1
NC Conference Update



Melisma

Fall, 2015

Vol. XXXV, No. 1

Melisma, the official newsletter of the North Central Division of the American Choral Directors Association, has been published twice this year: fall and spring, while preparing for our new web format for fall, 2015.

The North Central Division comprises over 2,500 members in its six-state area, including Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

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Welcome to the fall issue of *Melisma*! *Melisma* is now part of the North Central division's **Serve. Connect. Celebrate.** initiative, which is designed to make the division more relevant, valuable, and useful in all of our lives as choral conductors in the upper Midwest. Elsewhere in the issue, you will find the latest update on the activities of Serve. Connect. Celebrate. It is an exciting read!

This issue of *Melisma* focuses on the ever-present challenge of recruitment, zeroing in on recruitment strategies for the R&S areas of Boychoirs, Community Choirs, Women's Choirs, and College & University Choirs. This is such an important topic for everyone, and *Melisma* will return to it again in order to hear from each R&S chair. In this issue, you will also find new recurring features, such as [State-by-State News](#). This column, headed up by Celebrate's **Phil Hesterman**, will keep you in the know about important events happening in each of the division's states. Another recurring column is the Youth & Student Activities [College Quarterly](#), headed by R&S chair **Brandon Dean**, which will provide interesting features from student ACDA chapters in our region. Finally, check out the list of upcoming R&S [Google Hangouts](#), coordinated by **Shannon Gravelle**, interim director of choral activities at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. These social media events promise to be incredibly informative and helpful. I owe Shannon a big thank you for taking on this important new task.

A look ahead to the year reveals that this issue of *Melisma* is the first of **four** issues for the year, one more than in the past. We want *Melisma* to be timelier and more relevant to everyone in the division, and increasing the frequency with which it appears is a logical step in that direction. Future issues this year will focus on the upcoming [division conference in Sioux Falls](#), and will feature a number of interviews with the conference headliners and clinicians. The spring issue will focus on contemporary trends in choral music—in particular, show choir, vocal jazz, and ethnic/multicultural perspectives.

This is, admittedly, a chunk of work, particularly with the addition of my work on Serve in the “Serve. Connect. Celebrate.” initiative. To help out, **John Hughes**, director of choral activities at Ripon College (WI) has been named associate editor of *Melisma*. Without John and Shannon, this brave new world of content and communication within the division would be much harder to pull off, and I am thankful for their presence and expertise. Thanks, too, to the *Melisma* editorial board (**Erin Kaufman**, **Lynn Seidl**, **Clark Roush**, and **Todd O'Connor**) for their continued service. Finally, thanks to all of you, our readership, for taking interest in the activities of our division. As always, if you have any suggestions for making *Melisma* better and more valuable to your life, do not hesitate to contact me.

Happy autumn! ■

Editor's Corner



David Puderbaugh

*Check it out...
R&S chairs share
recruiting strategies
for Boychoirs,
Community, Women's,
College & University
Choirs,
plus an interview
with Bob Anderson
for the inaugural
“College Quarterly.”*

*John Hughes is
Melisma's new
Associate Editor and
Shannon Gravelle
leads the new R&S
Google Hangout
initiative.*

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Bob Demaree

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Bob Demaree

• *There are a number of new initiatives—programs, projects, and governance—changes that are going to mark a new dawn for our organization.*

The Changing Face of ACDA

It was 1985 when I first joined ACDA—thirty years goes by in a flash, I tell you! It is my privilege to represent our division now at national board meetings. Our last meetings took place in early June, and now, six weeks later, *I reflect with wonder upon the significant and enormous changes in ACDA* now compared to then.

This set of meetings marked the end of a multiple-year process of strategic planning and discussion in many ways. While there are still a host of initiatives on the table for the future, the brainstorming that started before the Dallas conference two years ago is starting to coalesce into action and forward motion, and I couldn't be more excited to see tangible growth and change. **In this article, I want to outline some of these new initiatives—programs, projects, and governance—changes that are going to mark a new dawn for our organization!**

International activities are near the top of this list:

- In August 2016, **ACDA will host the 8th America Cantat in Nassau, Bahamas.** Over the course of the last three decades, there have been triennial Cantats across the western hemisphere, where singers from all over these lands convene to learn about choral music in other countries and share the true fellowship of song. This will be the first time that the U.S. has sponsored the event, and notable musicians like Alberto Grau, Oscar Escalada, Maria Guinand, and others will be on hand to bring together the Americas in music. The fabulous Atlantis Resort will be the host for the event, and a couple willing to share a room for seven nights with another couple can make the entire excursion for about \$1000 per person, **INCLUDING** plane transportation from Chicago. This is going to be a spectacular way for ACDA to connect with our American neighbors;

- After having asked about the possibility of being admitted as a new chapter, **Puerto Rico is being formally invited by ACDA to become our fifty-first chapter**, a "Chapter of the Americas." Other countries like Venezuela, Argentina, and the Bahamas have already inquired about becoming chapters as well, and we hope that there will be other countries that will wish to join us. These new chapters will have their own financial statuses separate from ACDA, but will have access to all of our intellectual property.

New programs related to seeking out and serving new members are also coming, and you should know that our national membership has exceeded 20,000 for the first time in over a decade!

- **The new national mentorship program is blooming.** Over 100 mentees have now registered for the program, and over 125 mentors have made themselves available to support these mentees. Matches are being made and are showing real signs of success! The process is impressive and quite professional. Both potential mentors and mentees fill out informational forms online that are anonymized so that the mentees see only

general information about potential mentors. When a mentee finds someone who seems to fit their areas of interest, they reach out to the mentor, who is then provided with information about their potential match. Either person can choose not to accept the pairing at any time. The national office is doing a terrific job of following up on the process by reaching out to both the mentor and mentee of a match periodically to see what contact is ongoing. I signed on and received a mentee about two months ago, and it has been an absolutely fabulously rewarding experience! I heartily encourage you all to consider signing on to this project!

- The national office wants to spur new initiatives to encourage more growth of choral singing, especially among children and young adults. To that end, the **ACDA Fund for Tomorrow has been established** and seeded with over \$100,000 ready to be spent on worthy new programs that can show innovation and a child or youth focus. Already there have been a couple of new initiatives funded, and the money is NOT intended to be held and turned into a form of endowment. ACDA wants to spend the money and then raise more! All of us should consider how we might apply for funding of this type!

And in the area of governance:

- This fall, look for a roll-out of “**ChoralNet 2.0.**” Our current ChoralNet will always be accessible online, but the reality is that technology now exists that could make it more dynamic and vital. Instead of trying to recreate or shove all of the existing ChoralNet over to a new platform, the plan is to start a new ChoralNet site. ChorTeach is also being expanded so that it’s less difficult to find and the hope is that all of us who teach will become more aware of the great information that it hosts. There is a new publication coming soon that is geared primarily toward those who work in sacred music. Finally, look for a newly updated ACDA website! It’s being developed and should hit the web by September.

- Also this fall, be on the lookout for a **referendum ballot** that will ask you to vote on some big changes to our national structure. Among other proposals, the national standing committees would change and would have specific members of the national staff assigned to their oversight. Most notable among these changes would be a renaming of R&S to R&R—**Repertoire and RESOURCES**. The notion here is that the current focus of R&S has subtly shifted over time to that of providing support (as opposed to creating standards) for our various types of ensembles. There will also be some specific changes to the nomenclature and assignation of some of the areas proposed as well, and more information will be forthcoming on the specifics of this from the national leadership. But I think you will find these suggested changes to be quite positive and forward-thinking!

As we move from summer to fall, I hope that you will all have a terrific new season of choral music-making. Please don’t forget to put FEBRUARY 17–20 on your calendar for a trip to Sioux Falls for our conference, “**The Conductor as Servant-Leader!**” *It’s going to be terrific!* ■

- *The new national mentorship program is blooming; I heartily encourage you all to consider signing on to this project.*

- *The focus of R&S (Repertoire & Standards) has subtly shifted over time to that of support, causing National to consider changing the name to R&R (Repertoire & Resources).*



Brandon Dean

**Mark Your
Calendars—
Sioux Falls,
South Dakota!**

IMMERSION DAY:
February 17, 2016
*Small Schools
Sessions with Barbara
Brinson plus HS
Men's Festival Choir
with Jefferson
Johnson, for schools
with fewer than 500
students, grades 9–12.*

**NC-ACDA
CONFERENCE:**
February 18–20, 2016
*Highlights
Hotel information
Invited guests
Honor Choirs—
(Apply NOW, until
October 1!)*

Division Conference Update!

—Brandon Dean
bdean@gustavus.edu

On behalf of conference chair **Bob Demaree**, program co-chairs **Mary Kay Geston** and **Laura Diddle**, and our entire planning committee, it is my pleasure to give you a brief overview of the exciting things in store for you at the North Central ACDA conference this February!

Over the past eighteen months, the team has worked hard to secure renowned conductors, clinicians, and performers who will inspire us to serve our music, serve our students, and serve our community. This central theme of servant leadership will be woven seamlessly into the conference events and has served as a catalyst for conference planning. Outstanding musical performances will once again highlight our time together as we collectively seek new ways to serve our music. Interest sessions centered on best practices within the field will help us better serve our students. And, special invited guests will challenge us to reimagine how choral music can serve our community. Of course, social opportunities to make personal and professional connections will be plentiful as we descend on Sioux Falls this winter!

HOST CITY AND VENUES:

Sioux Falls, South Dakota is a vibrant Midwestern city gaining national attention for its emerging food scene and booming healthcare industry. And, it also happens to be the geographic center of North Central ACDA! Forbes recently named Sioux Falls the #1 city in the country for recent college graduates and #5 for families based on a wide range of factors including safety, education, attractions and affordability.



*Did you know?
Sioux Falls is the
geographic center
of North Central
ACDA!*



Washington Pavilion

In the heart of downtown Sioux Falls lies the **Washington Pavilion**, the cultural center of the city and home to the **Mary W. Sommervold Hall**. This 1,800-seat concert hall has superior acoustics and regularly draws the finest performing ensembles. Interest and reading sessions will be held at **First Lutheran Church** and **First Congregational Church**, both of which are located directly across the street from the Washington Pavilion. “This We Pray” will take place in the newly restored and reverberant **Cathedral of St. Joseph**.

We strongly encourage you to book your room at one of three conference hotels, as a portion of the fees will be returned to NC-ACDA in the form of a rebate. These hotels also offer the most convenience for their close proximity to the conference.

Be sure to let them know you are with North Central ACDA at the time of booking!



First Lutheran Church, First Congregational Church, Cathedral of St. Joseph

- **Country Inn and Suites** / 200 E. 8th St. / 605-373-0153
Contact: Joshua Allen
- **Holiday Inn City Centre** / 100 W. 8th St. / 605-339-2000
Contact: Melany Pravecek
- **Sheraton Sioux Falls Hotel** / 1211 West Ave. N. / 605-331-0100
Contact: Darla Tuch

FEATURED PERFORMERS AND SPECIAL EVENTS:

The keynote speaker for the conference is **Ramona Wis**, author of *The Conductor As Leader: Principles of Leadership Applied to Life on the Podium* (GIA Publications). We are delighted to have Ramona set the tone for the conference with the opening address and she will lead an interest session that addresses the marriage of servant leadership and the choral art.



Ramona Wis,
conference Keynote Speaker

The CONDUCTOR as
SERVANT-LEADER

Thursday, February 18

V O C E S 8

We have a star-studded performance planned for Thursday evening as internationally renowned British vocal ensemble **VOCES8** joins forces with highly acclaimed composer **Ola Gjeilo**. The concert will include the Raymond W. Brock Memorial Composition composed by Gjeilo.



Ola Gjeilo

Friday, February 19

On Friday evening the **South Dakota Symphony Orchestra** and selected North Central ACDA choirs will collaborate to perform Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*. The opera-inspired drama and soaring symphonic writing of this masterpiece will surely ignite Sommervold Hall; you will not want to miss it!



South Dakota Symphony Orchestra

Saturday, February 20

Join us Saturday morning at the Cathedral of St. Joseph for “**This We Pray**,” a concert of sacred music and spoken word coordinated by **Stephen Sieck** featuring selected North Central ACDA choirs. This prayer event was inspired by the universal and ecumenical notion of prayer as a form of service—we pray “for” others and in doing so, provide service to our fellow human beings.

Also on Saturday, the collegiate repertoire choir, **Collegiate ENGAGE** (Equip, Nurture, Guide, Aspire, Grow, Empower), is back with some exciting new features! **Phillip Swan** has invited four outstanding conductors from our division to participate in this engaging day focused on effective rehearsal techniques and repertoire selection.



Cathedral of St. Joseph

Andrea Haines

Barnaby Smith

Chris Wardle

Dingle Yandell

Emily Dickens

Oliver Vincent

Paul Smith

Sam Dressel



“The central theme of servant leadership will be woven seamlessly into the conference events and has served as a catalyst for conference planning.”

INVITED GUESTS:

As we seek to dive deeply into the topic of servant leadership, we turn to our colleagues who have firsthand experience serving their communities. Prepare yourself to be truly inspired by our invited guests:

- **Rhonda Fuelberth**, who founded the i2 Choir that provides a musical voice for the physically and mentally disabled and their caregivers
- **Jonathan Palant**, who founded the Dallas Street Choir for homeless individuals
- **Raymond Roberts**, who will share his thoughts on building a successful choral program in urban settings
- **Mary Lenard and Marge Ostroushko**, who founded the Giving Voice Chorus for Alzheimer’s patients and their caregivers

These amazing stories will challenge us to consider the innumerable ways that choral music serves our communities!



HONOR CHOIRS:

A great way to become directly involved in the conference and serve the students is to encourage them to audition for the outstanding NC-ACDA Honor Choirs. These auditioned ensembles are a wonderful opportunity for students throughout the division to make music together with leading conductors in our field. Each honor choir will also have the special opportunity to premiere a commissioned composition! New works by **Elizabeth Alexander**, **Daniel Kallman**, **Vijay Singh**, and **Deanna Wehrspann** are being composed specifically for the Honor Choirs. Please visit www.ncacda.org for more information on the audition process.

Deadline for applications is OCTOBER 5.

- **Paul Head** will conduct the High School Honor Choir (grades 10–12; SATB)
- **Vijay Singh** will conduct the Middle-Level Girls (grades 7–9; SSAA)
- **Jeffery Redding** will conduct the Middle-Level Boys (grades 7–9; unchanged and changed voices)
- **Lynnel Jenkins** will conduct the Elementary Honor Choir (grades 5–6; unchanged voices)



From left:
Paul Head, Jeffery Redding, Lynnel Jenkins



Rhonda Fuelberth



Jonathan Palant



Raymond Roberts



Giving Voice Chorus



Elizabeth Alexander



Daniel Kallman



Vijay Singh



Deanna Wehrspann



Barbara Brinson



Jefferson Johnson

IMMERSION DAY: FOCUSING ON SMALL SCHOOLS –SESSIONS AND THE HIGH SCHOOL MEN’S FESTIVAL CHOIR:

Immersion Day aims to support and inspire choral teachers and students in the small schools of North Central ACDA. **NEW! Immersion Day is open to both ACDA members and non-ACDA members**, so please seek out your non-member colleagues and invite them to attend with you!

- **Teacher Enrichment Sessions** targeting choral directors in schools with 500 or fewer students (K–12) will be presented throughout the day by **Barbara Brinson**, professor emeritus at State University of New York at Fredonia and author of the excellent textbook Choral Music Methods and Materials: Developing Successful Choral Programs (Grades 5 to 12) (Schirmer).
- The inaugural **High School Men’s Festival Choir** for male singers from schools with 500 or fewer students (grades 9–12) will run concurrently under the direction of nationally recognized conductor **Jefferson Johnson**, director of choral activities at the University of Kentucky. Continuing education credit will be available through North Dakota State University.

AUDITIONED CHOIRS:

Many of the most memorable experiences of past conferences are those special moments when music makes a deeply personal impact. Sommervold Hall will play host to fifteen auditioned choirs throughout the duration of the conference. In addition, the performance of Verdi’s *Requiem* will include five ensembles, “**This We Pray**” will feature three more, and a demonstration choir will be featured in an interest session. In total, we will have twenty-four outstanding choirs appearing at the conference, including choirs from every state in the division!

Mainstage Performances

- 9th Grade Men’s Choir, Prairie Point Middle School and 9th Grade Academy, IA, **Kelly Truax**, conductor
- 9th Grade Women's Choir, South View Middle School, SD, **Amy Jo Cherner**, conductor
- The Augustana Choir, SD, **Paul Nesheim**, conductor
- Hopkins High School Concert Choir, MN, **Philip Brown**, conductor
- Luther College Collegiate Chorale, IA, **Andrew Last**, conductor
- Macalester College Concert Choir, MN, **Michael McGaghie**, conductor
- Mason City High School Concert Choir, IA, **Joel Everist**, conductor
- North Dakota State University Concert Choir, ND, **Jo Ann Miller**, conductor

- Partners in Praise Girls Choir, MN, **Julia Fahey**, SD
- Plymouth Choir, First-Plymouth Church, NE, **Tom Trenney**, conductor
- Roosevelt High School Concert Choir, SD, **Robyn Starks Holcomb**, conductor
- Twin Ports Choral Project, MN, **Bret Amundson**, conductor
- University of South Dakota Chamber Singers, SD, **David Holdhusen**, conductor
- Urbandale Singers, Urbandale High School, IA, **Theodore “Ted” Brimeyer**, conductor
- Valley Singers, Valley High School, IA, **Ryan Deignan**, conductor

VERDI REQUIEM

- Ames Chamber Artists, IA, **James Rodde**, conductor
- Black Hills State University Choir, SD, **Jonathan Nero**, conductor
- South Dakota State University Concert Choir, SD, **Laura Diddle**, conductor
- University of South Dakota Concert Choir, SD, **Timothy Campbell**, conductor

Photos and bios of our Auditioned Choirs will be posted on our website soon. Check the site for more conference information over the next few weeks!

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“THIS WE PRAY”

- Chorale Midwest Chamber Singers, IA, **Bradley Barrett**, conductor
- Carthage College Women’s Ensemble, WI, **Peter Dennee**, conductor
- Cedar Falls High School Concert Choir, IA, **Elliott Kranz**, conductor

Demonstration Choir:

Lincoln High School Chamber Singers, SD, **Linda Conrad**, conductor

INTEREST SESSIONS:

The interest sessions selected for this conference will help us serve the music and our singers by engaging us as learners and sharing valuable techniques to hone our craft. The broad range of topics presented by our outstanding colleagues will encompass many areas of the choral program.

- **Richard Robbins**, University of Wisconsin-Superior, WI
“Analyze This! Empowering Your Choir to Become Critical, Creative Musicians”
- **Jerry Rubino**, Voice 360, MN
“Creating Singers That Are Musicians”
- **Jill Wilson**, Luther College, IA
“Creativity in the Choral Classroom”
- **André Heywood**, The St. John’s Boys’ Choir, MN
“Changing Voices Anonymous: Creating a Successful Learning Environment for Adolescent Male Singers”
- **Zachary Durlam**, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WI
“Four Scores and Seven Minutes to Go: Score Study for the Time Challenged Choral Conductor”
- **Jennaya Robison**, Luther College, IA & Brett Robison, Waldorf College, IA
“The Highs and Lows of a Choir: The Service of Treble and Bass Clef Ensembles within a Thriving Choral Organization”
- **Joshua Bronfman**, University of North Dakota, ND
“Putting Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again: Rebuilding Choral Programs”
- **Fred Ritter**, Columbus High School, NE
“Using Vocal Jazz Techniques to Improve Your Choir”
- **Thomas Holm**, Northwestern College, IA
“Vocal Warm-ups That Serve Both the Singers and the Music”

Make plans NOW to attend! February 17–20, 2016. See you in Sioux Falls! ■

The interest sessions selected for this conference will help us serve the music and our singers by engaging us as learners and sharing valuable techniques to hone our craft.

Recruitment: making connections

Recruitment is an ongoing project that revitalizes the lifeblood of our organizations. Our ensembles are living, dynamic groups that require constant care and attention. A big challenge is maintaining numbers in this ever-changing environment. Consequently, we often focus on those “numbers” in the recruiting process. However, we must remember we are dealing with real human beings, not just statistics or percentages. So, we must not become obsessed with numbers at the moment, but rather, focus on individuals. Recruitment is all about making connections with students—*connections that are real, transparent, sincere, and tangible*. I've learned that students want to engage in a supportive community and feel valued.

One important way to show support for your students is spending time with them outside the classroom. Some particular strategies I have used are:

- Eat lunch or dinner with a group of students
- Attend plays and recitals
- Attend sporting events and cheer on your students
- Invite students to eat lunch in the choir room
- *Princess Bride* movie night
- Spa day
- Choir retreat (either off campus or an extended day on campus)

I had an interesting discussion with a business friend about recruitment whose ideas resonated with me. Recruitment is a universal issue. The basic principles are the same, but tailored or tweaked to each particular situation, whether it be for tenth-grade women, elementary choir, middle school men, or a high school mixed ensemble.

A friend shared these ideas that he shares with prospective candidates during interviews:

- Be yourself
- Be honest
- Be down to earth
- We care about you
- You are important to us
- We invest in each other
- We will hold each other accountable
- We will build strong connections

The bottom line is that we must be caring communicators that manufacture a quality product. Our quality product will attract recruits. Our task will be to dig deeper and go beyond the music to create an environment that addresses the group, yet provides warmth and attention to the individual. ■



Phillip A. Swan

Recruitment is all about making connections to students—connections that are real, transparent, sincere, and tangible.

Our task will be to dig deeper and go beyond the music to create an environment... that provides warmth and attention to the individual.

Serve. Connect. Celebrate.

Updates on the division's latest initiative

—David Puderbaugh
david-puderbaugh@uiowa.edu



David Puderbaugh

A year ago, President Bob Demaree inaugurated a new comprehensive program designed to make the North Central division of ACDA a more valuable part of our everyday work. You can read more about the intent and inner workings of Serve. Connect. Celebrate in the spring 2015 *Melisma*. A year later, the various parts of the initiative are taking shape. Below is the latest on what is in store:

SERVE: David Puderbaugh, chair

A major innovation taking place under the auspices of Serve is **R&S Google Hangouts**, live social media events featuring your division R&S chairs talking about important facets of their areas. Anyone is welcome to join and talk about such items as Veteran's Day repertory for children's choirs, quality repertory for middle school men, choral/orchestral works on a limited budget, and many others! **Google Hangouts** will be taking place each month throughout the year. Thank you to Shannon Gravelle, interim director of choral activities at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, for organizing the R&S Google Hangouts! See "["Serve" Initiative: Google Hangouts!](#)" in this issue for more information.

We all are constantly searching for programming ideas. A project still in the works is a dynamic **Repertory Bank** on the NC-ACDA website that is easy to find, organized by R&S area, constantly growing, and searchable. We'll keep you posted on its progress.

Through the enhanced communications of Amy Kotsonis's "Connect" work, the membership will receive frequent notifications and reminders of upcoming events in a variety of forms (email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Keep your ear to the ground (or wireless network!) for these important announcements.

CONNECT: Amy Kotsonis, chair

As the new Connect initiative has officially kicked off, we have created a new **Facebook** page—[North Central American Choral Directors Association](#)—that you can "like" to receive the most up to date information for our division and upcoming conference. We also have a new Twitter handle—[NCentralACDA](#)—that you can follow! We will be highlighting conference events and participants, state highlights and our individual members as well as keeping you abreast of all important deadlines, such as the upcoming Honor Choir audition deadline. We are very excited for this conference, and hope that you feel connected before you even arrive in Sioux Falls!



Amy Kotsonis

The R&S Google Hangout, a live social media event featuring your division R&S chairs, is coming this fall.



Phil Hesterman

CELEBRATE: Phil Hesterman, chair

To help us celebrate the great people and activities in the North Central division, and to help us get to know each other, **the Celebrate portion of the new initiative will emphasize individuals and programs that have been set forth as exemplars in the choral music field in our division.** At minimum, the information will be disseminated using various social media and the North Central ACDA website, with the assistance of the Connect chair, Amy Kotsonis. The Celebrate chair, Phil Hesterman, will garner information from contacts in the six states of the division, including, but not limited to, state social media chairs and newsletter editors.

An important aspect of the work of Celebrate will be to highlight the many successes that are achieved in our division on a regular basis, while underscoring and illuminating the various choral cultures and traditions within NC-ACDA. To that end, *the Celebrate area will strive to bring notoriety on a regular basis to each state and its contributions to our division, including the following highlighted areas:*

Highlight State and Division Award Winners

Most states in the division have some kind of lifetime achievement award for an outstanding choral director, along with various other noteworthy awards. These awards are presented in the states throughout the calendar year and will be highlighted soon after the awards are presented.

Feature outstanding programs and individuals

Celebrate will seek to link with outstanding programs and individuals in the division, with the idea that a new group or individual would be featured each month.

State-by-state news will become a regular feature in *Melisma*. Under such headings as “Wisconsin in brief,” “North Dakota in brief,” etc., terse one-sentence notes will inform readers of events that will take place in each state in the coming weeks. The assistance of David Puderbaugh (Serve) and state newsletter editors will be essential to this component.

The various state conferences will be highlighted

In coordination with the Serve and Connect chairs, information will be disseminated about upcoming state conferences. The idea is to be forward-looking, featuring what will be happening within each state’s conference.

Celebrating NC-ACDA will be a multi-faceted project

Part of the Celebrate initiative will eventually focus on the NC-ACDA website, ensuring that all contact information, personnel, and so forth, is current.

See [“Celebrate” Initiative: State-By-State News](#) in this issue for the current information. ■

We have a new Facebook page—North Central American Choral Directors Association—and a new Twitter handle: NCentralACDA—make sure to check out both!

Celebrate will highlight the many successes that are achieved in our division, and illuminate the various choral cultures and divisions within NC-ACDA.

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Shannon Gravelle

“Serve” Initiative: *Google Hangouts!*

–Shannon Gravelle
shannonmgravelle@gmail.com

Over the next school year, your NC-ACDA R&S Chairs are planning **Google Video Hangout** sessions. *What is a Video Hangout?* It’s a way to talk in real-time using Google. If you have a **computer** and a **Google ID**, you can join any of these sessions.

The R&S Chairs will present on a wide range of topics. **The links to join these Hangouts will be shared through social media and email as the dates approach.**

To facilitate joining the Google Hangout, do ONE of the following:

- 1) Add NCACDAHangouts@gmail.com to your Google+ circle *if you have Google+*.
- 2) Make sure you have a Google ID and you know your log-in information to join.
Note: A Google ID does not necessarily have to be a Google account
- 3) If you have a Google ID, you can email NCACDAHangouts@gmail.com and ask to be added to the event ahead of time.
- 4) Use the link you will receive via email and/or social media.
(Link will change for each Hangout.)
- 5) If you haven’t added NCACDAHangouts@gmail.com to your Google+ circle, wait for the link to appear in social media *as the event is starting*. Then, join the event!

Note: If the event is “full” (meaning there are already 10 people using video), you can join, watch, and use the chat function!

**Below is a list of the upcoming topics, as well as their dates and times.
Be sure to check them out!**

September 20, 2015 at 3:30 PM

with Senior High School Choirs R&S Chair **Chris Fettig**

Topic: *Top Treble Chorus Pieces for High School*

September 27, 2015 at 3:00 PM

with Boychoirs R&S Chair **Marco Melendez**

Topic: *Veterans Day Repertoire for Treble Choirs*

October 18, 2015 at 3:30 PM

with Male Choir R&S Chair **Andrew Robinette**

Topic: *Keeping Middle School Boys Singing: Approaches and Repertoire for Male Choirs with special guest Timothy Takach*

COMING SOON
to a COMPUTER
NEAR YOU!

!

September 20, 3:30 PM
High School R&S Chair
Chris Fettig

September 27, 3:00 PM
Boychoirs R&S Chair
Marco Melendez

October 18, 3:30 PM
with Male Choir
R&S Chair
Andrew Robinette
with special guest
Timothy Takach

November 17, 2015 at 9:30 PM

with Youth & Student Activities R&S Chair **Brandon Dean**

Topic: *Student Activity Planning Ideas*

November 22, 2015 at 2:00 PM

with Children's & Community Youth R&S Chair **Pam Burns**

Topic: *Interview with NC-ACDA Children's Honor Choir Director, Lynnel Jenkins*

Questions for Ms. Jenkins can be sent to Pam Burns by November 8 at this email address: pca@puch@msn.com

December 13, 2015 at 2:30 PM

with Junior High/Middle School R&S Chair **Desiree Bondley**

Topic: *National Standards for Middle School Choir*

January 24, 2016 (TBD)

with Community Choirs R&S Chair **Jonathan Nero**

Topic: *Sharing Repertoire Ideas for Choral/Orchestral Works on a Limited Budget*

February 2, 2016 at 8:00 PM

with College & University Choirs Chair **Lee Nelson**

Topic: *Interview with Eriks Esenvalds*

May 1, 2016 tentatively at 3:30 PM

with Music in Worship R&S Chair **Tom Trenney**

Topic: *May God Give Us Faith to Sing*

Watch your email Inbox for announcements of upcoming Hangouts! ■



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*Celebrate the
special events in
your state!*

Contact
Phil Hesterman
philhest@gmail.com

“Celebrate” Initiative: State-by-State News

September–November, 2015

–Phil Hesterman
philhest@gmail.com

IOWA

September 19

Pre-All State Workshops

Eight sites around Iowa

<http://www.iowachoral.org>

A morning event to help those
auditioning for the Iowa All State
Chorus

October 13

Simpson College Fall Choral Festival

<http://simpson.edu/music/music-festivals-and-camps/>

A day-long event for high school singers

October 17

Wartburg College Real Men Sing

<http://www.wartburg.edu/music/fest.aspx>

A day-long event for MS/HS men

October 21

Luther College Community College
Choral Invitational

<http://www.luther.edu/music/dorian>

A choir invitational festival featuring
community colleges

October 24

Iowa All State Chorus Auditions at
various sites throughout the state

MINNESOTA

October 24

Men's/Women's Choir Festival

St. John's University

<http://www.acda-mn.org/menswomens-choir-festival>

November 20–21

State Conference

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

Mahtomedi, MN

<http://www.stateconference.acda-mn.org/>

November 21, 5:30 PM

State 7–8 Boys' and Girls'

Honor Choir Concerts

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

Mahtomedi, MN

<http://www.mnhonorchoirs.org/>

NEBRASKA

September 9

Choral Leadership Workshop
Grand Island Northwest High School
Grand Island, Nebraska
Contact David Sackschewsky,
shack@ginorthwest.org

An event that will focus on student leadership in the high school choral program

September 10

Choral Leadership Workshop
Norfolk High School
Norfolk, Nebraska
Contact David Sackschewsky,
shack@ginorthwest.org

An event that will focus on student leadership in the high school choral program

October 5

University of Nebraska
Men's Choral Festival
University of Nebraska—Lincoln
<http://music.unl.edu/choir/unl-mens-choral-festival>

A day-long event open to high school male singers

October 25

Intercollegiate Choral Festival
First Plymouth Congregational Church
Lincoln, Nebraska
Contact Dr. Bill Wyman,
waw@nebrwesleyan.edu

An opportunity for college choirs across the state to gather for a day and share music

NORTH DAKOTA

October 10

“Surround the State in Song”
<http://www.ndacda.com/id19.html>
Elementary choral festival held simultaneously in 6 cities around the state

October 25–30

University of North Dakota
Honor Choir Auditions
<http://arts-sciences.und.edu/music/hbc-festival/>

Auditions for the highly select UND Honor Choir for 10th–12th-grade singers

October 22–24

North Dakota State University
Choral Symposium:
Contemporary Composition in America
https://www.ndsu.edu/performingarts/choralsymposium/Contemporary_Composition/index.html
Featuring Eric Whitacre, Cantus, Abbie Betinis, Jocelyn Hagen, Steven Sametz, & more

SOUTH DAKOTA

November 5

South Dakota Vocal Arts Festival
University of South Dakota
Solo Competition, Mass Choir, Workshops, and more
Contact Dr. Tracelyn Gesteland,
Tracelyn.Gesteland@usd.edu

WISCONSIN

November 14

“Singing In Wisconsin”
www.wischoral.org
A day-long festival welcoming singers in grades 5–12 to four sites around the state: Chilton, Chippewa Falls, Wausau, West Milwaukee ■



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Marco Antonio Melendez

NC-ACDA Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair
Milwaukee Children's Choir, Milwaukee, WI
mmelendez@milwaukeechildrenschoir.org



Marco Antonio Melendez

“How Do I Get More Kids into My Choir?” “AHH!”

Now that the summer months are coming to a close, choral directors everywhere are scrambling to make their final plans, musical selections, calendar updates, and figure out the biggest question of them all: “How in the world do I get more kids into my choir!?” This typically is followed by a loud scream, “AHH!”

We all come from different backgrounds, with many life experiences and ideas on how to encourage new students to join our groups. This article will feature some of the ways I have found successful with a general recruitment plan. Throughout the course of the past year, the Milwaukee Children's Choir (MCC) Marketing & Recruitment Committee has met once per month to brainstorm and plan ways we can welcome new members to our organization. Here are some ways we are recruiting:

IN-SCHOOL RECRUITING

Working cooperatively with schools is paramount in recruiting for a community children's choral ensemble. The schools and music educators must be able to trust that your organization will truly offer their students a viable option for receiving an advanced-level choral music education that will equally support their school music program just as much as your own organization. At MCC, we require that all students who participate in our choirs must also be active members, in good standing, with their own school's music program/choir. Students must prove this by having a document signed by the head of their school's music program.

Offering for Schools: Each September, January, and May, all schools in the surrounding area are contacted via snail mail, email, and by phone (a third-party vendor provides us with a list of all music teachers in the area). This is a tedious process that is completed with the assistance of trained volunteers and interns. Our offerings to the schools include the following:

For Students

- A recruitment speech for students in grades 3–12, lasting no more than 15–20 minutes, which will outline the various opportunities students would have as members of the choir, including Q & A. This is a high-energy presentation involving kids in the speech and rallying them to your cause.
- Describe audition process (see below).
- Hand out a recruitment flyer for students to share and have filled out by their parents, should they like to audition, listing information about the choir and the date of the audition at their school.

Working cooperatively with schools is paramount in recruiting for a community children's choral ensemble.

- Return to the school to administer student auditions.
- 5–8 students at a time would audition together (this limits the time each student is out of their class).
- Sing Happy Birthday accompanied and unaccompanied in Bb major (focusing on the octave leap – listening for ability to sing in head voice and for general intonation). For a full description of our in-school audition, please contact me via email: MMelendez@MilwaukeeChildrensChoir.org. [hyperlink this address]
- Give students a time frame for when they will receive the results of their audition.
- Contact students and their teachers with audition results via snail mail.

For Teachers / Administrators

- If teachers are not amenable to an in-school audition, MCC will provide flyers for distribution to the entire student body of each school. This may be done electronically or by hard copy. If by hard copy, MCC offers to pre-bundle the flyers in accordance with the music educator’s instruction. **MAKE IT EASY FOR THE TEACHERS.** They have enough to worry about as it is!
- Offer a free choral workshop/clinic with the Artistic Director.
- Teacher Workshop: the Milwaukee Children’s Choir hosts an annual choral conference designed to provide an intensive choral workshop for professional and aspiring choral musicians. It spurs conversations among school, religious, and community chorus conductors that explore solutions for promoting and preserving the choral arts of present and future generations. Internationally renowned clinicians are present each year.

RECRUITMENT/SUSTAINMENT THROUGH PERFORMANCE

There is no better way to prove the viability of your organization than to have others see and hear your group perform. Repertoire, while it need not be “dumbed down,” should be engaging and have variety. Remember: in your audience of students, there will be learned musicians and novice musicians. Some WILL want to hear Haydn while others will want to hear the music of Broadway. If it is a recruitment-based performance, the music should be engaging; don’t be afraid to have your choristers **MOVE!!!** I believe that the days of an entire concert of standing still on stage while singing are a thing of the past. Generally speaking, children want to be entertained and want to move. Bite the bullet and hire a choreographer and let them move! It doesn’t mean that your group will become a show choir. It just means that they will have a couple of longer pieces that have choreography. It shouldn’t be every piece! Here are some ideas on performance opportunities that will encourage recruitment or can be entirely for the purposes of recruitment.

Offer a festival to encourage community singers to come together for a single day or afternoon of singing.

“For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.”

— T.S. Eliot

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“How Do I Get More Kids into My Choir?” Continued

- School Tours: Once or twice a year, take the children out of school to spend a day traveling to other schools to present a short performance.
- Festivals: Offer a small (or however large you dare to create) festival to encourage community singers to come together for a single day or afternoon of singing.
- Boys/Men’s Day of Singing
- Girls/Women’s Day of Singing
- COLLABORATE! COLLABORATE! COLLABORATE!
- Nutcracker performances with local ballet
- Symphonic performances – especially pops concerts! (Negotiate room in the concert program for a recruitment advertisement.)
- Performances that engage ethnic dance groups
- Performances/open rehearsals that engage other youth-based organizations (i.e., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Youth Groups, etc.)
- Perform at local religious services – there’s an automatic audience and they’re all listening!!
- National Anthem performances
- Summer Camp: Parents WANT something for their kids to do during the summer! Make all plans and go public with those plans no later than January of each year. (Even that may be too late! Yikes!)
- TOUR!! This is the absolute highlight of the year!

RECRUITMENT THROUGH MEMBERSHIP

- Bring-A-Friend Days: Encourage students to bring a friend(s) to rehearsal with them.
- Reduction in Tuition: If a friend signs up for choir, offer their original inviter a discount.
- Open Rehearsals: For teachers, parents, and other students
- Parent Dinner Dialogue: Opportunity for parents to present their ideas and opinions to directors/board members/etc.
- Parents’ Association: Opportunity for a more permanent parent feedback group to assist with recruitment, fund raising, etc.

RECRUITMENT THROUGH ADVERTISEMENT

Note: As a church musician, I heard a quote that has stuck with me over the years, “80% of church growth is due to a personal one-on-one invitation, not by advertisements.” That being said, I always encourage others to spend more time on Recruitment through Membership and Life than anything else. Advertisement, however, keeps your group’s name in people’s thoughts long after they have spoken with you or anyone else affiliated with your choir.

- General Publicity: Posters, postcards, emails, etc.
- Directed Advertisement: Purchasing of specialized lists from third-party vendors (Lists: people who have moved to this community in the last three years, people with children in their homes, etc.)
- Parade Fans: Join a community-based parade and pass out fans with your recruitment information on them. 4th of July parades!
- Social Media: Ask your choristers—they’ll know what to do! (Facebook, iTunes, YouTube, Instagram, etc.)
- Parent-centered Publications
- Child-centered Productions: Hand out flyers at the entrance of the buildings/between parking lots and the concert hall / etc.

RECRUITMENT THROUGH LIFE

- Elevator Speech: Have an “elevator speech” ready for when you meet a parent at the store, in the elevator, gas station, etc. that can briefly describe your program.
- Business Cards: ALWAYS CARRY THEM WITH YOU!

Should you have any questions about Milwaukee Children’s Choir or about our recruitment initiatives, please feel free to contact me at any time. I wish you all the best of luck in your upcoming seasons and remember: “For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.” (T.S. Eliot) ■

“80% of church growth is due to a personal one-on-one invitation, not by advertisements.” That being said, I always encourage others to spend more time on Recruitment through Membership and Life than anything else. Advertisement, however, keeps your group’s name in people’s thoughts long after they have spoken with you or anyone else affiliated with your choir.

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Jonathan Nero

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Jonathan Nero

Hold open rehearsals or organize a “Bring a Friend” rehearsal a few times each season.

Attracting singers with children is a challenge. Find a way to make childcare during rehearsal an option.

Provide incentives for your current ensemble members to recruit.

Recruitment Strategies

An active recruitment campaign is essential to the continued success of the volunteer community chorus. It seems that time continues to become scarcer for all of us, and finding singers who can commit to a weekly rehearsal is becoming more difficult. To keep our numbers from dwindling, we must always be looking for new singers. Below are a few recruitment strategies for you and your chorus members to consider.

GET HELP. You wear many hats as the artistic director and conductor of your ensemble. In addition to choosing, rehearsing, and performing high quality literature, you are often scheduling rehearsal and performance spaces, designing posters and programs, hiring instrumentalists, moving risers and chairs, and taking care of a number of other responsibilities. Ask for help from your board members and from your singers. Put someone in charge of organizing recruitment materials and events.

OPEN REHEARSALS. Many singers are hesitant to commit to participating in a group until they get a chance to meet people and experience the style of the conductor. Hold open rehearsals or organize a “Bring a Friend” rehearsal a few times each season. Follow these rehearsals with some type of social event. This will not only attract new singers, but it can help your current singers become closer as a singing community.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA. Don’t forget to utilize traditional media outlets. Place notices in your local newspapers, radio stations, and community and regional arts publications. Be brief but specific. Include your choir’s name, audition requirements, rehearsal times and places, and performance details. Advertise the work or concert theme you’ll be performing. Singers will sometimes choose to participate because of a specific piece that is of interest to them. You will see your numbers rise for a concert season that includes Handel’s Messiah or another popular work and hopefully you can retain those singers for future seasons.

SOCIAL MEDIA. It is very important for your group to have some kind of online presence. Most people get the majority of their information online. Google and Facebook ads can be effective, but they cost money and require knowledge of keyword optimization. Most of your singers will already be using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Ask your singers to make use of social media to invite singers to audition or attend choir events. It is not uncommon to reach hundreds of people by sharing posts on Facebook.

ATTRACT YOUNG SINGERS. Attracting young singers, especially singers with children, is a challenge. Finding childcare comes with expenses and liability issues, but many choirs have found ways to make childcare an option. If you rehearse at a church or a school, you may be able to contract with their childcare services. You might consider partnering with a children’s chorus. If you rehearse concurrently, both ensembles could benefit. Consider waiving dues and other fees for singers under thirty.

Program joint concerts with youth choirs, high school choirs, and university ensembles. The singers in these ensembles are often unaware that your group exists.

PROVIDE RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES. Provide incentives for your current ensemble members to recruit. You can make it a friendly competition with prizes or waived dues for members who recruit new singers. Make your singers aware that they are the best recruiters and that their help is needed.

PERSONAL CONTACT. Some of the most effective recruiting happens by making personal contact with potential singers. An invitation by the conductor or an ensemble member is much more effective than any advertisement in the paper or online announcement. Make sure that your ensemble is a visible part of the larger community and is represented at community events. Print informational business cards that can be handed out by your members.

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS. The very best recruiting happens by continuing to do great work with your ensemble each season. If they are performing great literature with a high level of musicianship, word will spread. If the choir members enjoy the process of rehearsing and performing, they will tell their friends, family, and acquaintances about it and will encourage them to join, too. ■



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Brandon Dean

NC-ACDA Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair
Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN
bdean@gustavus.edu

College Quarterly

Connecting collegiate students with professionals in the choral field.



Brandon Dean

The recruitment and retention of singers plays a pivotal role in the development and sustained quality of all choral programs. In this first installment of *College Quarterly*, I am joined by **Bob Anderson** to discuss the importance of recruitment and shed light on key strategies for building a successful choral program.

This fall Bob will begin his fortieth year of teaching school choral music in Iowa. He will begin his twenty-first year at Linn-Mar High School, having previously held positions at Mt. Pleasant High School and North Cedar Schools. Bob has given significant time and energy to professional service over the years, including serving as the president of North Central ACDA (2002–2004) and president of the Iowa Choral Directors Association (early 1990s). He has also chaired professional conferences for both NC-ACDA and ICDA. The Mt. Pleasant Concert Chorale appeared on the 1992 NC-ACDA Convention in Des Moines, and the Linn-Mar Chorale appeared on the 2000 NC-ACDA Convention in Madison and as a clinic choir at the 2005 National ACDA Convention in Los Angeles.

CQ: What role has recruitment played in the development and continued success of the choral program at Linn-Mar?

Bob: Recruitment is the essence of any successful choral program, and that has been no exception at Linn-Mar. In the beginning of building this program the focus was largely on getting bodies in the door of the choir room. Of course recruiting men was important, but simply getting students to commit to singing in a choir and understanding the value of that was the first step.

There was not a culture to truly commit to excellent singing before the point that June Schmidt and I arrived at Linn-Mar. As the program has progressed in numbers and quality, more emphasis has been placed on identifying good musicians at an earlier age and developing their skills in middle school, as well as continuing to identify students entering the high school that would do well in our program.

The best recruiters in this situation are the students already in the program. They talk with potential students and help us promote the reasons for getting involved in an exciting program. The biggest challenge for us, and nearly every high school choral program, is the recruiting of males. In the early part of our development that meant many hours of meeting with guys, showing interest in who they are and their other activities, and helping them see the need to sing. Again, as the program has developed, we still need to do this, but the best recruiters are other males already in the program. Still, the best recruiting tool is performance. Finding as many ways as possible for students and the community to hear the excellence and experience the excitement of involvement in our program.



Bob Anderson

CQ: What strategies have you found most effective when recruiting singers?

Bob: Recruitment is a constant process. Be creative and develop some ideas that will work in your situation and then hone those over time to reach students that need to become singers in your program. Always look for new ways to approach potential singers, encourage their involvement, and enjoy getting to know them, whether they sing or not.

- Performance for the schools and community. These are events and groups beyond the concerts. Forming small ensembles, mixed, male and female, that can go to elementary and middle schools, community events, and any activity where people can hear great singing and sense the excitement of involvement in a program.
- Getting high school singers into the middle school choirs to talk with and sing with the kids already in a choir at that age level. We set these up with the middle school directors just prior to 8th grade registration for high school.
- Invite elementary and middle school choirs into high school rehearsals to share. Have the younger groups sing, followed by the high school choir. Then offer a question-and-answer session for the younger kids to ask about high school and let the high school kids talk about why their involvement in choir is so important to them.
- Getting small performing ensembles out in the community to perform for civic groups, churches, etc. It is critical to get parents sensing the excitement and value of being involved in choral music in high school. Parents encourage their students once they understand.
- Over time develop a culture of excellence in the choral program that the entire community is aware of, so that it becomes an integral and natural part of a student's involvement in high school. This is where the longevity of a program is found. Creating a culture of singing and an expectation of excellence for the community to know and recognize.

CQ: An important but often overlooked aspect of recruitment is the retention of singers already in the program. What impact has retention had at Linn-Mar?

Bob: Retaining singers is the way a culture of great singing is developed as one attempts to build and maintain a strong choral program. Retention is where excellence happens, as you develop the skills of choral singing and the level of accomplishment for the individual singer. It is in approximately the third year of developing a program that you begin to see the results of your work. It is the students learning in an atmosphere of excellence for multiple years that develops the standards you want to achieve: the goals of greatness, if you will. A quality choral program takes years of hard work, commitment, and patience. Without retaining students in that system, the excellence cannot happen. Retention is where the quality of the Linn-Mar program lies. ■

This fall, Bob Anderson begins his fortieth year of teaching school choral music in Iowa.

Quotes from Bob:

“Showing interest in male singers— who they are and their other activities, and helping them see the need to sing— is key to recruiting.”

“Over time, develop a culture of excellence in the choral program that the entire community is aware of. This is where the longevity of a program is found.”

Lee Nelson

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It's more fun to be good— **Recruiting for Success**

—Jamie Spillane

Editor's Note: Guest author Jamie Spillane is director of choral studies at the University of Connecticut. For many years, Dr. Spillane worked in the North Central division as director of choral activities at Iowa Wesleyan College and as music director of the Mt. Pleasant Chorale. He can be reached at jamie.spillane@uconn.edu

We often look to ACDA for insight into new choral music, historical performance practice, motivation in rehearsal, or suggestions of recordings that should be on our listening lists. Preparing for the new school year, we'll spend countless hours poring through piles of new choral works. We'll probably attend our state's summer conference or even take a refresher class in conducting or some other aspect of choral pedagogy. As we work towards improving our choral programs and preparing for the year ahead, we must remember: *If they are not in our ensembles, we can't make them better.* No matter how outstanding the literature we choose, how insightful the curriculum we create, how precise our conducting, or how vast our knowledge of singing technique, if our programs don't have enough singers, our choirs will never reach their full potentials. To move our programs forward and continually strive for success, everything we do must be with an eye toward recruiting and retaining singers. Even in the largest and strongest of choral programs, the task is never-ending, and this need for continuing work has rung true in my past choirs including high school, church, community choirs, and my current university choirs.

1. It's more fun to be good

The first rule in Spillane's Six Rules for Choral Success was and remains: "It's More Fun To Be Good." Long ago, when I inherited a very small high school choral program with only four percent of the student body singing, I created a brief list of rules to help students and parents know my program's mission and to share some guidelines for building success. Strong programs are happy programs where singers are empowered to work each day because of the excellence that comes from hard work. Success breeds success and this positive energy brings in new singers. No matter the size of your current choir, you can create excellence. By working hard, setting goals, and being successful in performance everyone one involved will have more fun.

2. Repertoire

Even though selecting repertoire comes after recruiting in importance, directors of successful choral programs choose music wisely. Challenge yourself to select music that is appropriate, educational, meaningful, and engaging. Work to find a good balance between all these aspects of choral music. Be especially careful to choose music that is not too difficult for your choir. It is easy to pull out each year's All-State



Lee Nelson

If they [potential singers] are not in our ensembles, we can't make them better.

Strong programs are happy programs where singers are empowered to work each day because of the excellence that comes from hard work.

Take time to be visible throughout your school, campus, or community.

music and think that this can be the annual diet for your own choir, but if you are in a small school this is rarely a good idea. The small choir often struggles with music selected for a few hundred highly select singers. Conversely, music that is easy to perform, but not educational and meaningful, will not challenge your singers to grow musically. Performing only masterworks might be educationally sound but may not engage your students or audience. If you are a young teacher, take time to study the music performed by the most successful choirs of similar size throughout the state. Engaging and powerful programming is possible with choirs of any size or ability. One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was to invite the most successful veteran teachers to lunch and hear their stories and listen closely for how they feel they became successful. Most often these master teachers are the kindest people and happy to share the secrets of their success.

3. Attitude is everything

Successful programs draw in singers because the director instills in them a cooperative atmosphere of making music together. In strong programs, singers work together to create excellence and actively engage in all aspects of the process. This includes recruiting as much as singing. From the first day of school, strive to make each student feel that they are an important part of the choral machine. Work hard to learn each singer's name before school starts. If you are a high school teacher, get the middle school yearbook and learn faces and names over the summer. You will be amazed how powerful it is to a new freshman to have his or her choir director know his or her name on the first day of school. Create an atmosphere in the rehearsal room where everyone supports each other.

4. Get out of the choir room

Take time to be visible throughout your school, campus, or community. Learn the names of students/people not in your choir so you can be seen as an ally throughout the larger organization. Anyone whose name you know can be a link to a new singer. Schedule Bring a Friend rehearsals; encourage your singers to actively ask their friends who sing to join choir. Create choir t-shirts for all choir members and encourage them to wear them once a week. Use social media: create choir pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and create Facebook Event Pages for every concert and activity. Try to post something to the choir pages at least once a week. Photos and videos are especially effective. Encourage each current member to “like” or comment on all ensemble posts and to actively invite their friends through the event pages. This will generate positive energy around the choral program and its activities. Tap your budding student filmmakers to create a recruiting video for your program. You can easily find fun and effective examples of these on YouTube for inspiration. The amazing thing about social media is that it is free. We have never before had such easy access to connecting with prospective singers and audience members.



It's more fun to be good—

Recruiting for Success, Continued



New York



Chicago



London



Vienna

5. *Get out of the building*

All choirs can benefit from travel and there is no better way to attract the attention of those not already singing than well-publicized travel. If you direct a church or community choir, start by scheduling an exchange with another choir or participating in a regional choral festival. As a pinnacle experience, organize a trip to a destination like New York or Chicago and perform in a famous performance space like Carnegie Hall or even travel overseas and sing in one of the great cathedrals. Performing at any major world venue always brings great publicity and benefit to recruiting, but maybe more importantly, it will be one of the most powerful musical and life experiences many singers will ever have. If you have a school choir and your school has only traveled locally to show choir competitions, take time to travel further. Compete on a national level if you can. Even a young program can have success in a national competition and it is great for your choir to hear other choirs from throughout the country. The travel alone will be a great recruiting tool, but prospective singers will be drawn to the possibility of being on a winning team. In one of my first years as a young high school teacher, I took three small choirs to Canada to compete in a national festival. The twelve-member chamber choir somehow took overall first place. This was a game changer for us and helped jumpstart the program's success. Within a few years, the choral program had grown from 40 to over 400 singers and we included yearly travel. Later came performance tours to Europe, more national competition success, and regional conference performances provided continuing goals, opportunities for more visibility, and much easier recruiting.

There are no perfect answers to choir building, but creating joy, striving for excellence, and letting people know about it will go a long way toward bringing new singers to your door.



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