

# Tactus

American Choral Directors Association  
Western Region Newsletter  
Summer 2018



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# Urban Voices Project

## The Rest of the Story...

**Travis Rogers**  
*President*



In the middle of the craziness that was a part of the planning for the western region ACDA conference, I spent twelve days in Delhi, India, assisting my wife, Sharon, with rehearsals for her final show (the junior version of *Shrek* with her 6-8 grade theater students) before her retirement from the American Embassy School at the end of this school year.

Sitting at Sharon's apartment kitchen table very early on an early February Monday morning working on the conference, literally at the very same time that the Super Bowl was being played in the states (Delhi is 13½ hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time), I received a very interesting unsolicited email from somebody I had never heard of before.

**Leeav Sofer**, the email's author, had sent a long message telling me about the **Urban Voices Project**, a homeless choir, with a request that, though our conference at that point was only 6½ weeks away from happening, would there be any way that the group could be involved as part of our ACDA conference in Pasadena?

The email was very well written. I was intrigued, to say the least. After showing the email to my wife and contacting Julie Dana, our conference chair (who had heard about the group last summer while attending the Chorus America conference in Los Angeles last summer), I phoned Leeav to find out more about him and his choir.

What ensued over the next two hours was a series of calls and emails with Leeav and several conference planning team members that resulted in scheduling the Urban Voices for both a 15-minute performance set on the Thursday morning concert session in the Methodist Church and an interest session immediately afterwards in the Pasadena Convention Center.

I've got to admit, I woke up the next morning with what could best be described as a bit of buyer's remorse—had we moved on this too quickly? Was our conference really an appropriate place and means of

presenting the unique mission of this choir? Frankly, was this going to bomb?

The Thursday morning of the conference, I was quite nervous after we heard two fantastic choirs that opened the concert session and then saw the Urban Voices Project Choir start to set up their equipment on the church platform. The moment of truth was quickly approaching. The group then began to sing. Now there was no turning back.

For those of us who were there and witnessed the sheer joy, passion and commitment the Urban Voices of Los Angeles brought to our gathering for fifteen minutes that morning, I think I speak for many when I write that **we will not soon forget when this group of singers blessed our ears and touched our hearts and became the talk of the conference.**

Thank you to Leeav for having the talent, gift and vision for reaching out to those literally living on the streets of Los Angeles and inspiring them to sing. Thank Leeav too for having the courage to expose his singers to ACDA. Thanks to Julie Dana and several others who said, "Let's go for this and make it work," so that the ACDA Western conference participants could be given a new and exciting perspective on the power of choral singing.

This is just one of the MANY great stories that were a part of the Western ACDA Conference this year.

My thanks to a passionately dedicated and extremely hard-working WACDA Board and Conference planning team, to the Interest Session presenters, Roundtable presenters, session presidors, Workout Choir conductors and clinicians, exhibitors, Honor Choir conductors, managers, and accompanists and performing choir conductors and singers for all the many months of preparation that resulted in four days of choral bliss in Pasadena!

**Mark your calendars now for the next Western ACDA Region Conference in Salt Lake City, March 4-7, 2020!**

**Had we moved on this too quickly?**

**Now there was no turning back.**

# Summer: Rest, Reboot, Re-energize

**Kimberly Barclay Ritzer**  
*President-Elect*



Our school district changed our schedule last year, so we started 2 weeks earlier than we ever have before. The justification was to be able to administer first-semester exams before Winter Break.

The beginning of the year was fine and it seemed like I had more time to teach concepts than in years past. The first semester ended on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and went off without a hitch.

Second semester... that was a different story. **We hit the ground running and never stopped.** It seemed that there were so many deadlines and things that had to get done before we got out of school two weeks earlier than usual. In 28 years, I have never been this run-down and tired.

Two weeks doesn't seem like a lot of time, but when you lose it during summer break—your time to recover from the last school year and renew for the next school year, it IS a lot of time—very important time.

We as choral music educators give so much

time and energy throughout the school year that we need to have some quality time to relax and prepare ourselves for the next school year. We will all attend or present workshops this summer.

We will hopefully spend well-deserved time with our families and friends, and hopefully have some stress-free travel time. We will also plan our literature, travel and lesson plans for the upcoming school year. Our life as educators never really stops—it just slows down a bit during our summer break.

I am challenging myself to take two weeks for myself and my family this summer without any distractions from my professional life. I hope you will take that challenge as well.

I love our chosen profession and I love that what we do changes lives for the better every day. We cannot do these amazing things for others if we don't take time to rest and reboot. **It is time to get healthy, energized and ready to face the challenges of the upcoming school year.** I hope you all take time this summer to "do you."

Have a wonderful break!!!!

**Two weeks doesn't seem like a lot of time, but when you lose it during summer, it IS a lot of very important time.**

**I am challenging myself to take two weeks for myself and my family this summer without any distractions from my professional life.**

**We cannot do these amazing things for others if we don't take time to rest and reboot.**



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**Jayne E. Campbell**

## *The Journey to Pitch Perfect*

# **Do-it-yourself Grassroots Strategies for Singers and Conductors**

Jayne Campbell is a music educator, choral director, voice teacher, and classical performer. She holds a B.M. in Voice (cum laude), an M.M. in Voice Performance, and a D.M.A. in Music Education from the USC Thornton School of Music. Her award-winning choirs have toured locally and abroad, and been featured performers at CMEA and ACDA. Her teaching experience includes both secondary and collegiate levels. She is retired from her position as associate professor of music at Glendale Community College, where she founded the Chamber Singers and opera workshop. **This article is adapted from her presentation at the Western Region ACDA conference in Pasadena.**

### **Time management: we all deal with this issue as choral conductors, voice teachers and singers.**

During the course of my teaching career, I was tasked with creating or building six different school choirs ranging from 7<sup>th</sup> grade through community college. Many of the singers had no previous choral experience or prior vocal training, so voice building became an inherent part of the rehearsal.

But it was teaching multi-level voice classes at Glendale College with an average enrollment of 25 students with only two one-hour class sessions per week that compelled me to explore and research methodology that encouraged more efficient results. Keep in mind that the ideas presented here are task-specific and although there are many variations possible for each segment, the hierarchy of each activity is design-specific. That said, it is important to note that every warm-up has integrity as long as it is used in hierarchy and context.

## **The Breath**

Teaching the fundamentals of the breath is actually fairly simple and can be accomplished rather quickly. The primary muscles of inhalation are the diaphragm (entirely passive during inhalation) assisted by the external intercostal muscles (voluntary). The intercostals act to enlarge the thorax, a requirement to induce inhalation. Scott McCoy suggests that “most people are quickly able to learn direct control [of the external intercostals] independent of the breathing process simply by deliberately expanding the circumference of the rib cage.” These primary muscles in turn have a universal effect on all or most of the thorax or abdomen. [McCoy 2004, 89-90 (See References, p. 12)]

**The practice: Place the back of your hands at the upper part of the sides of your ribcage and breathe into your hands to feel this expansion created by the external intercostal muscles.** Using imagery such as inhaling a favorite scent is a useful organic practice that relies on muscle memory. Initiating the breath in this manner will allow the engagement of other muscles in the thorax and abdomen to follow.

**The singer may say “I ran out of breath.” This is physically impossible.**

Once this fundamental process of the breath is learned we are able to address accessing the breath. The singer may say “I ran out of breath” when in actuality, this is physically impossible. There is an amount of air that remains in the lungs after maximum exhalation (about one liter) known as residual volume. This prevents the lungs from collapsing. [\[biologydictionary.net/residual-volume/\]](http://biologydictionary.net/residual-volume/)

More often the problem stems from body alignment issues. Just as a kink in a garden hose restricts water pressure and flow, likewise an overcompensating muscle may restrict access to the airflow.

**It is important to begin with a balanced body. One of the fastest ways to achieve this is to ask your singers to march in place.** The body has a fundamental way of aligning in order to march forward and not stumble or lose balance. When the singers stop, the body alignment generally is in place for singing. Also, this activity involves muscle memory—performing an act without conscious effort.



Muscle memory is *reactive* and does not involve cognitive decision or a learning curve. It is also a faster and more reliable process and there is less of a chance for wrong muscle compensation. For example, body alignment instruction might include: place your feet apart about the width of your hips, draw up your posture imagining a string attached to your head, and so forth. These instructions require cognitive thinking and time to assimilate correctly into the muscle memory. Whenever possible, try to find an instruction that derives from a muscle memory. [Santiago 2010]

**Another posture assist is using the wall as a guide. Stand against a wall, place heels against wall or slightly away.** The gluteus maximus and possibly the scapula will touch the wall. Do not flatten the back against the wall. The head will likewise be free of touching the wall. Sing an exercise in this manner and then take a slight step forward and repeat the exercise using an imaginary wall image to assist.

Many breath access issues can be found in the neck and the head. It is important to observe and take note of even very small issues that may be present in these two anatomies.

Freedom in the neck is sometimes restricted by tension in the atlanto-axial joint. The practice: Ask your students to “just say no” (a muscle memory activity) resulting in the head turning from left to right. Sing a vocal exercise while rotating the head in this manner. Additionally, have the students lift both arms straight over their heads. This should result in extending the neck and thoracic region in an upward manner. Repeat the “just say no” exercise and often the student will experience more ease in turning the neck and by reference, the freedom of the sound.

Sing a five-note descending scale on /vah/, rearticulating the consonant on every note while simultaneously moving both arms slowly in an ascending manner until the arms are completely stretched straight overhead. The arms should still be in an upward motion

**Many breath access issues can be found in the neck and the head.**

while sustaining the final note of the exercise. Be careful of the tendency to run out of space to keep the arms ascending for the final note. Encourage your singers to estimate the distance with the timing of the exercise. The exercise should result in improved tuning, particularly for the last sustained note, due in large part to the extended thoracic cavity enabling better breath access.

There are acupressure points in the back of the head that are also useful for creating freedom in the neck and spinal column. One such pressure point is located a half inch below the base of the skull, on the ropey muscles half an inch out from the spine. Massaging this area while singing may also improve access to the air and consequently, freedom in the sound.

Another acupressure point may be found just below the base of the skull. Place your thumbs 2-3 inches apart and drop down until you feel two hollow spaces. Massage while singing a vocal exercise. [www.acupressure.com.au/wprss/?tag=heavenly-pillar] [acupressurepointsguide.com/acupressure-points-for-neck-pain-relief/]

Suboccipital trigger points are other advantageous areas for self-massage while vocalizing. The suboccipital muscles are responsible for rocking and tilting the head into extension. Self-massage in this area is useful for relieving compression in the spinal column area that may inhibit the flow of breath and cause unwanted muscle compensation.

**There is no one ideal mouth position for singing.**

The upper trapezius also plays a role in the flexion and extension of the neck. The insertion of this muscle is at the base of the skull and it covers the shoulder areas and extends down the back. The root of shoulder tension may also involve the upper trapezius, so by using self-neck massage, the potential for this tension may also be minimized.

[<http://optimumsportsperformance.com/blog/suboccipitals-small-but-important/>]

[www.innerbody.com/image\_musfov/musc28-new.html]

## The Jaw: One Size Does Not Fit All

Richard Miller recommends mobility of the jaw, as opposed to a fixed jaw, and reminds us that there is no one ideal mouth position for singing. Emphasizing lateral/circular loose movements of the jaw is a more efficient solution to jaw tension. [Miller 1986, 29-30]

Two movements occur when the jaw is dropped: rotation and translation. Rotation involves the opening and closing movements while the jaw is further back.

Translation is movement of the jaw forward. When the rotation is too extreme (i.e. the jaw is dropped too far), the muscles that inform the soft palate may actually exert a downward pull causing a low soft palate.

Place the thumbs in the synovial joint (hollow space) above the zygomatic arch and just in front of the insertion of the top part of the ear with fingers resting on top of the skull. Massage gently with an upward motion.

This activity may encourage a more balanced interaction between the jaw and soft palate. Perform a simple vocal exercise with the hands in this position. This also

encourages an elevated thoracic cavity and more freedom in the access to the breath.

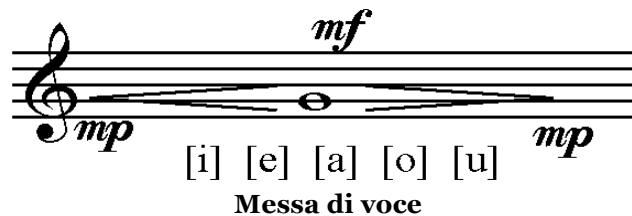
## Vocal Function Warm-ups

Vocal function warm-ups promote a response to the fundamental function requirements of a specific exercise. These exercises focus on the optimal use of the intrinsic muscles of the laryngeal mechanism, aided by the respirator without interference from complex articulation issues. Studies have found statistically significant results when the warm-up begins with isometric and isotonic vocal function exercises.

**Isometric exercises** are single contractions of muscle groups, devoid of motion. Examples are the *messia di voce* and consonant pedagogy. **Isotonic exercises** permit the muscle to slowly vary its length and include vocal glide at a medium dynamic and humming in a limited range. The purpose is to allow the intrinsic muscles of

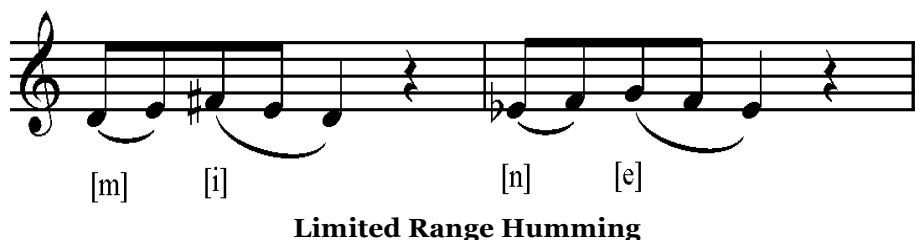
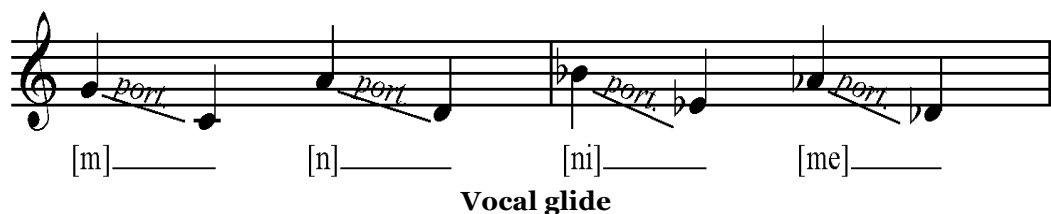
the larynx to move through a full range of motion, resulting in more flexibility.

The *messia di voce* (placing of the voice) is still considered a benchmark of vocal technique for 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>-century standard choral repertoire. Ingo Titze observes, however, that it may be viewed as tedious or benign in today's rapidly paced world. The original *messia di voce* requires great technical stability and much practice time to execute correctly. The recommendation is to use the exercise in a more modified form with a softer dynamic and shorter duration. In either case, the exercise encourages dynamic rather than static singing. [Titze 1996, 31-32; Miller 1996, 175]



Consonant pedagogy may include: nasal consonants /m/ /n/ /ng/; saying um-hum (as in the affirmative) with conviction; fricative consonants beginning with unpitched /f/ /s/ /sh/ /th/ followed by each consonant's pitched partner /v/ /z/ /zh/ /th/; and the bilabial fricative (vibrating lips as though sustaining /v/ with rounded lips similar to a kazoo or blowing into a glass bottle). **Be sure the singers are using pure consonant sound.** Follow this activity with vocal exercises pairing a fricative with a vowel.

Vocal glides may be sung at a medium dynamic and any nasal consonant is appropriate for humming in a limited range. Singers may also sing the nasal consonant of choice: it is not necessary to have the choir all on the same nasal consonant, and preferences and abilities sometimes vary greatly. Use a slower tempo and a medium dynamic.



**Calisthenic exercises**—requiring multiple short muscle contractions—may then be added after the isometric/isotonic regimen. These include arpeggiated

exercises, scalar passages, and staccato drills, and are usually sung at a fast tempo, developing vocal flexibility.

Statistically significant results for vocal function exercises reported by Sabol et al indicate an increase in phonation flow or phrase duration. Maximum phonation time increased 22-31 seconds at a comfortable pitch, 15-26 seconds at a high pitch and 22-31 seconds at a low pitch. Airflow rate decreased indicating improved functional efficiency of the laryngeal system (relating to subglottic pressure). Additionally, subjective singer questionnaires indicated a significant preference for incorporating the vocal function exercises and a commensurate faster discovery of authentic vocal resonance. [Sabol, Lee, and Stemple 1995, 27-35]

**Singers reported lessening of vocal strain for the vocal function warm-up regimen and an increase in vocal strain following the routine calisthenic warm-up procedure.**

In my doctoral dissertation study, subjects performed two different warm-up regimens (a hierarchical vocal function warm-up regimen and a routine calisthenic warm-up procedure) on two separate occasions. The subjects were asked to respond to a Likert-scale questionnaire, and the study revealed two statistically significant results as follows. Singers reported lessening of vocal strain for the vocal function warm-up regimen and an increase in vocal strain following the routine calisthenic warm-up procedure. Singers reported feeling warmed up following the vocal function regimen. Singers did not report feeling warmed up following the calisthenic procedure. [Campbell 2008]

## Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract (SOVT) Exercises

SOVT exercises involve narrowing at any supraglottic point along the vocal tract. This narrowing facilitates interaction between sound origin (vocal folds) and the sound filter (vocal tract), creating and enhancing resonant voice. [\[www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589942600&section=Treatment\]](http://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589942600&section=Treatment)

Examples of SOVT exercises include lip or tongue trill, raspberries, humming, voiced fricative consonants /v/ /z/ /th/, bilabial fricatives, puffed out cheeks (imitating a trumpet sound) and phonation into narrow tubes such as a straw. In recent years, there have been numerous studies that have demonstrated the benefits of semi-occluded vocal tract exercises as they relate to efficiency in the warm-up regimen. In the vernacular, the SOVT phenomenon results in more bang (acoustic output) for fewer bucks (low effort and reduced risk of tissue damage). Vocal fold vibration amplitude is relatively low as the vocal folds cut off air flow very quickly for each vibration cycle, exciting higher frequencies. The glottal flow reduction from high value to low value occurs in a short time interval (maximum flow declination rate) resulting in an acoustically strong voice. Breath management improves as a result of engaging greater thoracic and abdominal support without pressed phonation, effectively taking the stress off of the vocal folds. [Titze 12/2001, 519-528; Titze 1-2/2001, 51-52]

Nix and Simpson reported that SOVT postures may aid in the production of the singer's formant cluster and

found the most tangible aspect of the study results to be encouragement of the head voice sensation. Other findings revealed a lowered phonation threshold pressure (what is needed to initiate and sustain phonation) corroborating Titze's breath management findings. [Nix and Simpson 2008, 339-342]

Phonating into an extension tube (for practical purposes, use a straw) produces flow resistance at the mouth, but at the same time maintains airflow. Moreover, the sound at the larynx is not masked by lip vibration and is therefore easier to monitor. Straw diameter preferences may vary, but potentially optimize resistance for each individual. While the bilabial fricative also has the effect of lowering the first-formant frequency and increasing low-frequency impedance (lowest formants are primary interest contributing the

**SOVT exercises include lip or tongue trill, raspberries, humming, voiced fricative consonants, bilabial fricatives, puffed out cheeks (imitating a trumpet) and phonation into narrow tubes such as a straw.**

most to the overall sound level), studies demonstrate that the extension tube is more effective.

Study results indicate that the vocal folds are not taxed as in open-mouth phonation, minimizing the occurrence of larger collision forces and pressed voice. The exercise seems to spread vocal folds and promote small-amplitude vibration.

At the same time, respiratory muscles appear to be exercised maximally and vocal folds are able to stretch maximally for high pitches during the warm-up. Overall, this is healthier for tissues while the abdominal muscles work out. [Titze 2000, 27-28; Titze et al 2002, 329-338]



The beauty of the system is that it self-regulates. Higher lung pressure produces larger vibrational amplitude and more vocal fold separation. More lung pressure (support) may then be added to increase amplitude without creating collision. These combined actions leave contact stress regulated as a low value. [Titze 2018, 311]

The practice:

1. Place your lips around the end of the straw.
2. Expand the thoracic cavity as you breathe and make a sound into the straw.

3. Start with a lower pitch and glide seamlessly to the top of your range. Then descend to the bottom of your range.
4. Next employ a shorter glide both ascending and descending (remove the straw) and segue into a three note ascending and descending pattern on /vee/. Repeat the /vee/ every two notes. Change vowels as necessary. Make sure to use a seamless segue. There should be no space between the shorter straw glide and the three note ascending and descending vocal pattern.

## Proprioception

*Proprioception* is the awareness of one's body, regarding position, motion and equilibrium. There are peripheral receptors (somatic sensory system) that carry information from the spinal cord up to the cortex. There are parallel pathways for conscious proprioception and subconscious proprioception.

[[www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6393](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6393)] [Dorland 1951, 1222.]

Noted voice pedagogue Oren Brown observed that proprioception may be considered the sixth sense of singing as it recognizes the general feeling of consciousness of the entire body.

Awareness of proprioception encourages sensation as a result of action as opposed to producing an action by attempting to create a sensation (i.e. place the voice in the mask). [Brown 2002, 229-231]

Oliver Sacks describes a case study of a woman who suddenly and unexplainably lost all sense of her body (proprioception). As a result, she could not move her body and had to relearn how to recognize body position and equilibrium. And at the same time, she was mute, leading Sacks to hypothesize that voice modulation is primarily proprioceptive. [Sacks 1985]

There are actually two categories of proprioception, *pallesthetic* (vibratory) and *kinesthetic* (muscular). Pallesthetic proprioception would explain why the woman described by Sacks could not speak or sing.

How does this relate to singers? While instrumentalists rely on external auditory feedback to monitor performance, singers have a choice of external auditory feedback or proprioceptive internal feedback sensitivities. As external auditory feedback relies on the acoustics of the environment, internal voice sensitivities are considered to be more reliable. Research suggests with an increase in training, a singer's reliance on external auditory feedback decreases. [Helding 2017, 89-93; Bottalico et al 2016, 434-442]

Here is an exercise to encourage proprioceptive acuity and audiation. The practice:

1. Sing the first eight bars of the chorus of a familiar song such as "Over the Rainbow," unaccompanied.
2. Repeat the eight bars using gestures to indicate pitch level (lower position for lower notes, etc.) in a proprioceptive manner.
3. Silent sing the eight bars continuing to use gestures as in #2.
4. Sing the first eight bars using gestures. Anticipate the singing of each note with the proprioceptive gesture.
5. Sing the first eight bars without proprioceptive gestures. Compare #1 and #5. You may notice improvements in pitch accuracy, onset coordination and general confidence of the singers as they learn to audiate.

**While instrumentalists rely on external auditory feedback, singers have a choice of external auditory feedback or proprioceptive internal feedback sensitivities.**

## The Earbud Enigma

Our students spend a great deal of their music listening time using earbuds or earphones. What effect might this have on the skill set that they bring to the choral rehearsal? First, audio compression often affects frequency (pitch) content and by inference perception of harmonic context. Singing along using earphones may encourage following rather than leading the music and the possibility of using a delayed singing onset. There

may be a tendency to create acoustic vocal sound that emulates electronically amplified sound. This may lead to singing with vocal tension or pushing the sound rather than relying on resonant voice. There may be a general lack of acoustic listening skills and an inability to audiate.

One of the key components of Edwin Gordon's model research on musical aptitude is audiation. He

offers, “[W]hen you are audiating as you listen to music, you are summarizing and generalizing from the specific music patterns you have just heard and are momentarily hearing as a way of anticipating or predicting what will follow....[W]hat you are audiating depends on what you have already audiated.” [Gordon 2003, 3-4]

**We hope that our music students will develop the ability to hear what they intend to notate or perform**

## Pitch Perfect and Harmonic Context

There are various components that contribute to accurate pitch singing. Some of the most important include audiation, proprioception (previously discussed), formants, fundamental frequency and overtones, resonance, singer’s perception of being in-tune, and harmonic context.

### What happens when we create resonant voice?

- The vocal folds generate the fundamental frequency (and overtones).
- The glottis (the space between the folds) opens and closes.
- The laryngeal vestibule (the airway passage just above the larynx) acts like a trumpet mouthpiece to couple the sound to the vocal tract (the remaining part of the resonator).
- The lips radiate outward similar to the bell on a trumpet.

Titze explains, “In analogy to pushing someone on a playground swing, this cyclic kick resembles a carefully timed push to boost the amplitude (travel distance) of the swing’s oscillations.” Feeling these sensations in the face confirms the effective conversion of aerodynamic energy to acoustic energy, rather than actual sound resonance in the sinuses or nasal airways. [Titze 2008, 94-101]

The vibrancy and ease of resonant voice directly correlates to hearing as well as feeling sound. Interviews with professional singers reveal that perception of pitch accuracy is frequently connected to how the singer perceives the feeling of the sound, rather than how the singer hears the sound.

Bone conduction also plays a large part in the singer’s individual sound perception. Furthermore, sensory experience of feeling the sound in facial tissues is essential to economic voice production—and, by inference, pitch accuracy. And hearkening back to the discussion on SOVT exercises, the semi-occluded vocal tract provides ample pressures in the oral tract (behind the occlusion) for resonant sensations to occur. [Verdolini 2000, 46-61; Titze 2006, 448-459]

Resonance actually depends more on lowering the

**before they notate or perform it.** Using earbuds or earphones tends to encourage rote learning instead of developing the ability to audiate. The practice above addresses both proprioception and audiation skills and provides a visual way to assess if students are actually audiating. [Gordon 2011, 15]

phonation threshold pressure (PTP) than on tissue or air resonance in or around the face. The sensation felt in the face is an indication of the conversion of aerodynamic energy to acoustic energy (perceived as resonance). [Titze 2001, 519-528]

And finally, the singer’s perception of “in-tune” is perceived more by timbre (directly related to resonance) than by pitch accuracy. [Mathieu 1997]

A formant is a peak in the curve of the vocal tract filter, or the frequency-amplitude plane. Harmonics are generated by the vocal folds. Changing the shape of the vocal folds will alter the harmonics present in the sound resulting in changes to the pitch. Formants are generated in the vocal tract. Changing the size and shape of the vocal tract will change the formants. Formants filter the original sound source. After harmonics pass through the vocal tract some become louder and some become softer. Lowest formants make the largest contribution to the overall sound level. The singer’s perception of sound level is one component of resonant voice and pitch accuracy. [www.voicescienceworks.org/harmonics-vs-formants.html] [Titze et al 2002, 329-338]

Harmonic context may be the most expedient way to assist in the journey to pitch perfect. While solo singers are generally limited to interaction with some variety of accompaniment such as a keyboard or chamber group, choral singers have multiple options for enhanced pitch

accuracy. Repositioning singers within their sections or the choir itself can change the individual perception of sound due to the altered acoustic space around each singer. We have all watched these demonstrations at choral events that result in dramatic differences in the overall sound.

Choral singing is never without harmonic context whether provided by accompaniment or created through a cappella part-singing. Even Gregorian chant has harmonic context within a resonant church space for which this music was originally intended. Similarly, the efficacy of choral warm-ups is also enhanced by harmonic context.

While there is a point to be made for technically advanced singers to vocalize without accompaniment, provided the warm-up space is resonant and would

**Perception of pitch accuracy is connected to how the singer perceives the feeling of the sound, rather than how the singer hears the sound.**

provide harmonic context, the inexperienced or remedial singer often does not have the audiation skills necessary to succeed without some sort of harmonic assist. William Finn (founder of the Chicago and New York Paulist Choristers in 1904) suggests using a skeletal harmonic accompaniment as “inexperienced singers require aid from the piano...much time is lost in the useless effort of teaching the vocal exercises without instrumental delineation.” [Finn 1939]

It is interesting to note that at the time Finn was writing, equal-tempered keyboard tuning was moving toward more standardization. Noted historical temperament authority Owen

Jorgensen regards 1917 as a turning point. After 1917, equal tempered tuning of keyboard instruments was accomplished using a universally accepted mathematical set of principles, resulting in more consistency but less individuality. Prior to 1917, color awareness for each interval and chord on the piano formed the basis for equal tempered tuning gleaned from listening to tunings and piano music during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, allowing expanded aesthetic choice. [Jorgensen 1991, 3]

William Finn’s skeletal accompaniment observations to aid in a faster vocal warm-up may be derived from the post-1917 shift away from the color-aware equal-tempered tuning that had probably been more vocally user-friendly.

The equal tempered scale consists of twelve notes divided into twelve equal semitones. To accomplish this, fifths are made smaller by two cents. By modifying all fifths by 1/12 of the comma (discrepancy), the ending and starting note agree. This does not present a tuning issue for the voice. However, as Ross Duffin observes, there may be an invisible elephant in the room regarding the interval of a third. Equal-tempered thirds are wider than their acoustically pure ratio, sounding 1/7 of a semitone higher, or 14 cents sharp. This may result in an unnatural adjustment for the voice—which is primarily a just-tuned instrument—and may affect resonance and frequency. Voilà, the invisible elephant.

Duffin explains, “Harmonically pure intervals of Just Intonation require that notes have the flexibility to vary in pitch according to the needs of the harmony at any given moment, and thus is only possible with voice or on instruments with the capacity to make real-time adjustments as the music is being performed.” [Duffin 2007, 27-30, 33]

So the question remains, how to facilitate this flexibility with choral warm-ups?

W. A. Mathieu suggests that singers experience singing in tune as “ultimately a state of resonance” rather than singing sharp or flat. Omitting the third from the piano accompaniment for vocal warm-ups encourages the voice to use the fifth partial (or the fourth overtone) to create a more resonant third that is ultimately closer to the natural harmonics of the vocal instrument and as a result, easier to sing. [Mathieu 1997]

Using this fifth-based piano accompaniment encourages *pentamorous* tuning—that is, relating to the third partial. This may facilitate a more dynamic vocal balance and assist in finding resonant voice, especially as the vocal exercise becomes familiar.

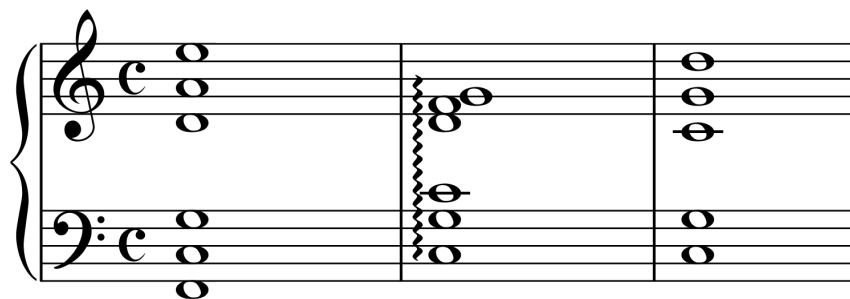


If the melodic portion of the vocal exercise must be played for guidance, emphasize the open position in the bass line. For those with limited keyboard skills, playing fifths in the bass clef area (below middle C) may be just as effective.

Ascending and descending while varying the pattern of half and whole steps (similar to an octatonic scale but in a more random fashion) contributes to a more flexible muscle balance than the habitual muscle response generated by customary semitone movement.







Allowing the singers to begin the onset with the aid of a rolled piano accompaniment may result in more ease at the moment of vocal onset.

The balanced onset is the key to preventing other vocal problems in whatever follows in the exercise or music selection.

## Conclusion

**The journey to pitch perfect is complex and requires numerous vocal skills.** Many of these skills may be learned or improved in the context of the choral rehearsal:

- muscle memory instruction;
- teaching breathing through deliberate expansion of the circumference of the ribcage;
- SOVT and vocal function exercises for a faster warm-up;
- keyboard assist emphasizing 5ths and minimizing 3rds;
- encouraging pentamorous tuning;
- and addressing body alignment issues by releasing neck and jaw tension.

Learning to audiate through the use of proprioceptive gesture is also a key component to improving pitch aptitude. And finally, all of these skills will contribute to the finding of resonant voice and the ultimate ability to self-guide to a more pitch perfect performance.

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# Hardester Scholar Report

**Laura Huizenga**

***K-12 Music Teacher, North Valley Christian Academy***



Jane Skinner Hardester (1922-2006), a founding member of ACDA, had a long and distinguished career as a choral educator in Western Division. After earning her B.A. from the College of the Pacific (1944), Hardester taught in the El Monte School District, earned her M.M. in Music Education from USC in 1959, and taught at El Camino College from 1962 to 1990, completing her D.M.A. in Choral Music from USC in 1976. She founded the Jane Hardester Singers (1978-1992) and the Lyric Singers (1991-1999), co-founded the South Bay Children's Choir (1996- ), served as the second president of Western Division ACDA (1971-73), was named an Honorary Life Member of the Southern California Vocal Association in 1973, and won the Howard Swan Award from California ACDA in 1993.

The Jane Skinner Hardester Memorial Award has been presented each year since 2006 to ACDA members in their first seven years of full-time pre-collegiate choral teaching, to support their attendance at a workshop or conference that will assist them in their professional development as a choral musician.

When I applied for the Jane Skinner Hardester Memorial Award last fall, I did so in hopes of being able to go to the conference and hear three of my students performing in the Junior High and High School honor choirs. I knew that every time I have attended an ACDA conference, I have come away with more "tools for my tool belt," and have also experienced hours of sublime music.

I did, in fact, find those tools. One of the most practical and useful sessions I attended was the pair of Choir Workout sessions conducted by Herbert Washington with a local middle school choir. It was instructive to watch Herbert using a variety of class management skills, vocal pedagogy techniques, and music-teaching approaches, and to hear him verbalize how he prioritized objectives on the fly. I hope these Choir Workouts become a standard part of our conventions, because I found them incredibly valuable.

One of the highlights for me was listening to the Los Angeles Urban Voices Project, a group founded and directed by Leav

Sofer to give a voice to people affected by homelessness. The group is comprised of singers of widely varying experience and skill level, who were less perfectly polished than some of the other groups. But the thing that struck me was that this group embodies what is (what *should be*) one of the prime directives for every choral director, and that is leading people into a love of singing, giving voice to the truest things of life.

When I was a graduate student several lifetimes ago,

I took part in a regional ACDA convention, and was completely obnoxious in my opinionated and highly critical assessments of every single group that performed. I was a cranky, ungracious snob, finding fault wherever possible. This spring, thanks to a few decades of life, and six years of real-world teaching and directing my own imperfect groups, I had the refreshing and lovely experience of genuinely enjoying every performance at the convention. Why? I think it's because I've learned what is important.

A keynote speaker at a music educators conference I attended a few years ago, I think it might have been Galen Darrough, said that "every student deserves to experience a moment of beauty

every day." That idea stuck with me, and has shaped how I set rehearsal goals. If they walk out of a rehearsal still singing, or end a piece with the shivery joy of a well-tuned chord, that is far more important to me than if they got every detail perfect. Are they learning to love singing? Are they learning to love? Do they know that I love them? These are the important things in my job, and it was encouraging, in the midst of a difficult year, to realize that I am getting those things right.

**I found the Choir Workouts incredibly valuable.**

**If they end a piece with the shivery joy of a well-tuned chord, that is more important than if they got every detail perfect.**



# Building A Lasting Program A-Z

**Laurel Farmer**  
*R&R Chair, Middle School/Junior High*



The days can be long and the work demanding when building a choir program, but the payoff for both the chorister and director far exceeds the struggle. But when the day comes when it's time to hang up the baton, how can you be sure that the program will live on? **Programs aren't built in a day, a year, or even a decade, and yet they are built moment by moment, day by day, choice by choice.** Having recently stepped into a new role, I have spent some time reflecting on the "recipe" I used to build the program I left. A program, like a fine diamond, consists of many facets. The following is my attempt to boil it down to its most basic parts—the ABCs of a successful program.

- A**
  - **Attitude** • your attitude sets the bar and expectation
  - **Act-as-if** • treat your students as if they are already the best version of themselves, and that is what they will become
  - **Atmosphere** • a positive, engaging environment is a must
- B**
  - **Beauty** • always seek the beauty—even in warm-ups
  - **Belonging** • students need a place where they aren't on the "outs"—choir is a team, each member dependent on all the others
- C**
  - **Character** • the point is to mold good humans first; music is just the vehicle
  - **Celebration** • every choir should have their own traditions, their own way of celebrating accomplishments at the end of a quarter/trimester/semester
  - **Community** • the mantra that was written on my board was "Building community through choral excellence"
- D**
  - **Determination** • you set the expectation—if you are determined to be successful, the students will eventually follow
  - **Decisions** • whether it is choosing repertoire, a soloist, or the 100s of musical decisions you make regarding the performance itself, forethought and wisdom are required
- E**
  - **Energy** • always bring your best, and expect the same from the students
  - **Engaging** • creating a flow that leaves them wondering how rehearsal can be over already
- F**
  - **Family** • always stress that choir is a family, whether slightly dysfunctional or not, and that is the expectation of how we will treat each other
- G**
  - **Grace** • extending grace when mistakes are made, and meeting students where they are at—fair treatment isn't equal treatment

**Fair treatment isn't  
equal treatment.**

# H

- **Humor** • laughter really does do a body good, and it also creates a bond between director and choristers

# I

- **Integrity** • to the music, and to the promises you make to your students
- **Inside jokes** • these help to build the family atmosphere; it was always music to my ears when I heard a choir kid tell another student, “You wouldn’t understand—it’s a choir thing”

# J

- **Juggle** • the best laid plans sometimes need to be set aside to accommodate something in the moment; never be afraid to juggle plans

**It was always music to my ears when I heard a choir kid tell another student, “You wouldn’t understand—it’s a choir thing.”**

# K

- **Keen** • a.k.a., passionate, enthusiastic, committed—and teach your students to be the same

# L

- **Life-long learner** • if you ever think you have “arrived,” it’s time to retire
- **Listening** • to things sung/spoken and unspoken; listen more than you talk; trust your ears

# M

- **Moments** • recognize and celebrate when you and the choir have a “moment” together—when you have been moved by their singing
- **Memories** • find creative traditions, trips, etc. that will build life-long memories

# N

- **Nurturing** • always strive to encourage the students’ growth as humans first and musicians second

# O

- **Outreach** • find people in the community that you can serve as a choir—like performing at a retirement center, food drives, etc.
- **Optimism** • make this your default response when you or the choir come up against hurdles
- **Open-minded** • be willing to get enable students to make suggestions whenever possible—they have a fresh perspective; be willing to change what needs changing if something isn’t working

# P

- **Preparation** • a well-laid plan sets the tone for each rehearsal—know what you want to accomplish

# Q

- **Quotes** • from time to time, give the students a poignant quote to chew on and discuss

# R

- **Reflection** • have the students practice this skill as well
- **Responsibility** for/to others • teach the students that choir is different from math—their actions or lack of actions directly affect the rest of the choir; it is a shared responsibility in the room to tutor students who are struggling with a particular concept or part
- **Risk** • foster an atmosphere where taking risks is not only okay, but valued and celebrated

- S**
- **Sight singing** • we are training up vocal musicians, not just copy-cat singers
  - **Systematic** • don't be haphazard in how you present materials and build their skills—scaffold the learning
- T**
- **Trust** • this is something that is integral to the success of any choir—in order to sing with confidence, students must learn to rely on each other and their director; without trust, there is no risk-taking
- U**
- **Understanding** • for every bad attitude or bad day, there may be a back story of which you may be unaware
- V**
- **Vulnerability** • be willing to be transparent, emotionally exposed, and open with the students, and help them learn to do the same
  - **Visuals** • some abstract concepts are best achieved by providing a “visual” anchor—for example, instead of saying, “Darken your vowels,” you could say, “Visualize a large stone cathedral, and sing as if you are in that setting...”, etc.
- W**
- **Wisdom** • knowing what battles to fight, and what to let go of; having the insight to make informed decisions
- X**
- **X-factor** • okay, so that is a little bit of a cheat, but there are 100s of intangibles and variables that create an atmosphere that is engaging and self-sustaining; keep searching for those things
- Y**
- **Young** at heart • go out of your way to keep up on current lingo and trends, not to be “cool” but to keep a fresh perspective on what is important to the young lives that enter your room each day
  - **Yield** • let go of pre-conceived notions; surrender to where the creative process leads
- Z**
- **Zeal** • energy and enthusiasm are contagious; you must bring these to the table each day

**We are training up  
vocal musicians, not  
just copy-cat singers.**

Building a lasting program can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Remembering your **ABCs** can do more than lead to a solid program and strong musicians; it can help to create good human beings—those who make the search for excellence and beauty a part of their everyday lives. The reward in the end far outweighs the struggle of the pursuit.



# No Man is an Island

**Michael D. Huff**  
*R&R Chair, Collegiate*



As I type, I'm just returning from a weekend spent helping to organize the Interest Sessions for the upcoming National Conference in Kansas City. Don't miss it!

Whenever I spend time with choral colleagues, I'm reminded that we all stand on the shoulders of giants. And in this profession, the giants are all around us. I once gave a talk at a Utah ACDA Conference that I titled "No Man is an Island," wherein I traced my own Choral Music Family Tree. I was amazed to re-discover how closely related I am, thanks to the immediate influences in my own life (Ed Thompson, Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Jerold Ottley chief among them) to Frank Pooler, Charles Hirt, Robert Shaw, and the grand-daddy of us all, F. Melius Christiansen. It's not that I really think I can hold a candle to them—their shadows are HUGE. But

their influence, filtered through generations of kind, giving, sharing colleagues has seeped into my own music-making. And that's no small thing.

You see, I'm convinced that I have never had an original musical idea in all my days. In rehearsal and lessons I find myself constantly channeling, even quoting word-for-word something a mentor, a mentor's mentor, or any host of prominent conductors and teachers have said that gets stuck in my overcrowded mind just waiting for needed, opportunistic retrieval. These drops of wisdom have accumulated over years of exposure. And I can't help but gaze heavenward to offer a silent prayer of thanks for yet another "save" from any number of musical godparents!

**I offer a silent prayer of thanks for yet another "save" from any number of musical godparents.**

It wouldn't take any of us very long to draw lines from today's rehearsal to yesterday's choral music pioneers. And I still derive inspiration when reviewing in my mind the great teachers who continue to shape my own journey from ambitious pretender to grateful practitioner. I offer this brief tribute to my music-teaching ancestors. THANKS!!!

- Dr. Edgar Thompson, my friend and mentor at the University of Utah
- Dr. David Stocker, my friend and mentor at Arizona State University
- Stephen Richins and J. Evan Bean, my high school music teachers
- Yvonne Yeager and Russell Smith, my junior high school music teachers
- Doris Cross, who led our wonderful community choir in Frankfurt, Germany
- Lennox Larson, Lenora Brown, Gladys Gladstone, Lowell Farr, Karen Fagin, Herbert Burtis, and Evelyn Callister, my piano teachers

Time and space do not permit me to list the countless friends and colleagues, some of whom are to so many of us "*the LeBron James's*" of choral music, whose examples of excellence, kindness, and amazingness make me try to follow and teach this mantra:

- **Love the singers**
- **Love the work**
- **Love the music**

Thank heaven for our musical ancestors! And HAPPY SUMMER!

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## Report from Paris Duruflé Choral Festival

**Mitchell Covington**  
*R&R Chair, Lifelong/Community*

On May 6, 80 select singers from the U.S., Canada, and Taiwan met in Paris to rehearse and perform Maurice Duruflé's Requiem, Op. 9, and Quatre Motets, Op. 10, with a local orchestra and organist Thomas Kientz.

I had the honor of directing these amazing musicians in rehearsals and 3 public performances with a combined audience of over 2,200 attending in Chartres Cathedral, Notre-Dame, and Duruflé's own church, St. Etienne-du-Mont.

Selected through an online audition process, each musician prepared the music on their own and arrived in Paris with a good command of their part. Performance logistics, venues, promotion, hotel, and ground transportation were handled by performance tour company ACFEA.

Rehearsals were held in Saint-Étienne-du-Mont. Our first performance was a Sunday morning Mass participation at Notre-Dame Cathedral where we sang two of the Op. 10 motets along with two



**Saint-Etienne-du-Mont**



movements of Hassler's Missa Secunda and the Sanctus from Fauré's Messe Basse.

Our first performance of the Requiem with orchestra and the Quatre Motets took place at Chartres Cathedral, about a 90-minute bus ride northwest of Paris. Chartres is an inspiring architectural marvel of medieval cathedral design.

Our culminating event was a second performance of the Requiem back in Paris in Duruflé's church, with the orchestra and Mr. Kientz playing Duruflé's organ. This was an emotional experience for musicians and audience alike. Duruflé's nephew Jean-Martin attended the concert along with his wife, Katja, and Jean-Martin's mother, Ingrid. They stayed to congratulate the choir after the performance and expressed their profound happiness that Duruflé's music is still being performed in the U.S. and elsewhere.

This was a unique choral celebration, and we are already talking about another festival featuring the work of another composer in another city, possibly in 2021.



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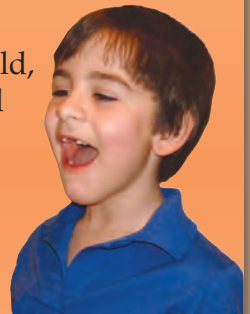
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# #DidYourAllStateFestivalLearnAHula

## Hawai'i State Report

**Alec Schumacker**  
*HI-ACDA President*



In addition to monthly meetings of an energetic and dedicated state board and executive committee, HI-ACDA is privileged to run three annual R&R events in our community:

- Nā Leo Hou: Hawai'i's All-State Choral Festival (NLH),
- E Hīmeni Kākou: O'ahu's Collegiate Choral Festival
- Professional Development Day.

**Nā Leo Hou** brought together four hundred high school singers from public and private schools from O'ahu, Maui, the Big Island, and Kaua'i. The students spent a weekend working with this year's fabulous featured clinician – Susanna Saw of the University of Malay. They completed adjudicated sightreading, learned a hula, had the option of performing for adjudication as an individual school choir, and performed six mass numbers in a filled-to-capacity weekend concert.

**E Hīmeni Kākou** brought together two hundred singers from the University of Hawai'i system, Hawai'i

Pacific University, and Brigham Young University-Hawai'i. Dr. Jeb Mueller was our clinician this year, and he led our collegiate students in a spirited day of singing.

**400 high school students completed adjudicated sightreading and learned a hula.**

Our **Professional Development Day** enjoyed its third annual iteration in late August. A panel of educators and conductors delivered outstanding presentations on the subject of Rehearsal

Techniques and Methods, highlighted by Dr. David Means' conducting masterclass.

## Note From the Editor



**Nina Gilbert**  
*TACTUS Editor*

This is my last issue as editor of TACTUS. It has truly been a delight and an honor to produce our Western Region ACDA newsletter, and I am especially grateful to Past President Anna Hamre for tapping me for the position. I love communication obsessively—whether as a conductor/teacher or writer/editor—and TACTUS has given me the opportunity to combine several skills in the service of conveying information.

My schedule has gotten too full for me to continue with TACTUS. I look forward to passing my collection of headshots and templates to a new editor.

# Western Region Leadership Roster July 2017-2019

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## State Presidents

<b>Arizona ACDA President</b> <b>Ryan Holder</b> ryan.holder@nau.edu <i>Associate Director of Choral Activities, Northern Arizona U.</i> <i>Director of Music, Church of the Red Rocks</i> cell 928-637-6030 office 928-523-2748	<b>California Choral Directors Association President</b> <b>Robert Istad</b> ristad@fullerton.edu <i>Artistic Director, Pacific Chorale</i> <i>Director of Choral Studies, CSU Fullerton</i>	<b>Hawai'i ACDA President</b> <b>Alec Schumacker</b> aschumacker@hpu.edu <i>Director of Choral Activities, Hawai'i Pacific U.</i> office 808-544-0887
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## Repertoire and Resources

<b>R&amp;R Student Activities</b> <b>Cheryl Anderson</b> cranders@cabrillo.edu <i>Director of Choral Activities,</i> <i>Cabrillo College</i>	<b>R&amp;R Youth/Junior High/Middle School</b> <b>Laurel Farmer</b> twobsmom@gmail.com <i>Fine Arts Academic Coach,</i> <i>Alhambra Elementary District</i> cell 623-293-0193	<b>R&amp;R Men's Choirs</b> <b>Jeff Brookey</b> jbrookey@lcusd.net <i>Choral Director, La Cañada HS</i> cell 559-361-0845
<b>R&amp;R Collegiate</b> <b>Michael Huff</b> michael.huff@snow.edu MichaelHuff15@gmail.com <i>Director of Choral Activities and</i> <i>Head of the Piano Area,</i> <i>Snow College, Utah</i> office 435-283-7469	<b>R&amp;R Youth/Children</b> <b>Peggy Spool</b> peggy@vivaceyouthchorus.org <i>Artistic Director,</i> <i>Vivace Youth Chorus of San Jose</i> <i>Children's Music Program Leader,</i> <i>Stone Church</i> office 408-979-9997	<b>R&amp;R Lifelong/Community</b> <b>Mitchell Covington</b> music@mitchellcovington.com <i>Artistic Director,</i> <i>Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble,</i> <i>Berkeley</i> www.mitchellcovington.com cell 925-979-8663
<b>R&amp;R Lifelong/Worship</b> <b>Nick Strimple</b> nickstrimple@gmail.com <i>Professor,</i> <i>USC Thornton School of Music</i> <i>Music Director,</i> <i>Los Angeles Zimriyah Chorale</i> office 559-278-2402 office 213-821-5756	<b>R&amp;R Vocal Jazz</b> <b>Christine Guter</b> christine251@hotmail.com <i>Director of Vocal Jazz, CSU Long Beach</i> <i>Singers Committee, SAG-AFTRA</i> office 562-985-8138 cell 562-572-2652	<b>R&amp;R Women's Choirs</b> <b>Jennifer Tibben</b> jennifertibben@gmail.com <i>Director of Choirs,</i> <i>Damonte Ranch HS</i> <i>Conductor,</i> <i>Reno Philharmonic Chorus</i> <i>Artistic Director,</i> <i>Bella Voce Women's Ensemble</i>
<b>R&amp;R Repertoire Specific</b> <b>Cari Earnhart</b> cearnhart@csufresno.edu <i>Director of Choral Activities,</i> <i>Cal State Fresno</i> office 559-278-2402 cell 832-918-7778	<b>R&amp;R Ethnic</b> <b>Cristian Grases</b> grases@usc.edu <i>Associate Professor,</i> <i>Thornton School of Music, USC</i> <i>Artistic Director,</i> <i>Heritage Vocal Arts Ensemble</i>	<b>R&amp;R High School</b> <b>Ken Abrams</b> kena@pacbell.net <i>Choral Director,</i> <i>San Ramon Valley HS</i> <i>Artistic Director,</i> <i>Danville Girls Chorus</i>