

Tactus

American Choral Directors Association
Western Region Newsletter
Winter 2018
PRE-CONFERENCE ISSUE

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Let Our Songs Be Heard!

Last-Minute Conference Exhortations

Travis Rogers
President



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ENDS MARCH 7**

Our first planning meeting for Pasadena 2018 was on the closing night of Pasadena 2016. Our goal is to present a meaningful conference now in 2018 that will build on the strong foundation and legacy of previous gatherings. That endeavor has occupied the collective brains and hearts of our Western Region Board of Directors and Conference Planning Team. Thousands of hours of collaboration, negotiation and, inspiration have been expended in preparation for—now!—*this!*—the 2018 Pasadena Conference.

A colleague recently wrote to me: “Just finished a gut-wrenching, soul-exalting rehearsal with my Concert Choir. Sharing wonderful music and life with young people is indescribable. It’s not easy work, but it fills my heart with joy!”

My sincere hope is that the final product of all the work that has preceded our upcoming conference by the planners, board members, interest session and reading session presenters, directors, singers, accompanists, exhibitors, and all others who have a part will truly fill *your* hearts with joy as we experience together the fruits of this region’s labor and efforts in Pasadena very soon.

Let Our Songs Be Heard...with joy!

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30+ Conferences and Counting

Kimberly Barclay Ritzer
President-Elect



My first ACDA conference was in 1985, the National in Salt Lake City. I was eighteen years old and performing with the Southern Nevada Musical Arts Singers in the Tabernacle. I was in my second semester of my freshman year of college. I had never attended an ACDA conference before, so I wasn't sure what to expect. Little did I know that my life would be changed in such a positive way from what I observed and learned at that conference.

Since 2nd grade, I wanted to be a teacher—in 5th grade when my elementary music teacher asked me

conduct the choir on the Spring Concert, I was hooked. I just had to teach choir! I was blessed with many wonderful music teachers along the way who influenced my life and always encouraged me to follow my dream.

My first ACDA Conference did not disappoint. It was such a rush to attend the conference surrounded by thousands of people who loved choral music as much as I did. The performances were outstanding and so inspiring from Children's Choirs to professional ensembles—including the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. I was even able to see the King's Singers live for the first time!

I attended every workshop and performance available, immersing myself in the Choral Art. I watched as the leaders of ACDA worked tirelessly to provide an incredible experience for each attendee. It was four days of my life that began to shape

my ACDA journey. I promised myself as I left Salt Lake that I would never miss another ACDA conference

during my career. It is such an important event for choral educators—a time for renewal, a time to continue to learn, a time to meet up with colleagues and share ideas. It isn't always easy to follow through with the promise I made to myself, but for every year since then (except when I was expecting my daughter), I

have made the financial and time commitment, even when it was very tough to do so, to attend every National and Regional Conference. The investment is worth its weight in gold.

I encourage all of you to attend our National and Regional Conferences—you won't be disappointed. In 2019, ACDA will celebrate the 60th Jubilee in Kansas City. The following year (2020), I am proud to announce that the Western Region will be holding our conference in beautiful Salt Lake City. Make it a priority

in your life to attend both conferences to refresh, renew, celebrate and learn!! **See you there!!!**

In 5th grade when my elementary music teacher asked me to conduct the choir on the Spring Concert, I was hooked.

My first ACDA conference was four days of my life that began to shape my ACDA journey.



**Conference Opening Session
Wednesday Night, 7:30
First Presbyterian Church**

Behold, a New Thing!

Nick Strimple

R&R Chair, Lifelong/Worship

Our opening night session of music for worship is predicated on the reaction of many ACDA members to the “Unity” concert at last year’s national conference. That concert,

besides being perceived as a misuse of the Collegiate Honor Choir (in terms of repertoire), was also seen as an unabashed presentation of the belief that evangelical Protestantism is the only path to unity. In addition, some of the visual images—Holocaust photos followed by the image of a cross, for example—were offensive to some ACDA members, including those who are Jews. After all, we are not, and never have been, a “Christian” nation. And the ACDA is, or at any rate is supposed to be, a non-sectarian organization.

The strength—especially the moral strength and the creative strength—of the USA is grounded in our diversity. Our national motto, *E pluribus unum* (“Out of many, one”) is a reflection of this reality. The motto certainly doesn’t mean that everyone thinks and believes alike. In fact, countries that insist on unification of thought and belief – Iran, Saudi Arabia, the old Soviet Union, Nazi Germany for example – are anathema to most Americans.

Therefore, our program celebrates diversity and is based on an 1862 statement of Abraham Lincoln, who said “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

In pursuing this goal, our program will consist of music presenting several views of Creation, as expressed in different cultures and religions, and look more pointedly at two biblical accounts of new beginnings (one in Ezekiel and one in the Gospel of Luke). We will be assisted by choirs from Pasadena Presbyterian Church (Dr. Timothy Howard, Director), Beverly Hills High School (Stacey Kikkawa, Director) and California State University, Fullerton (Dr. Robert Istad, Director); as well as dancers and brass players from USC.

Our program celebrates diversity and is based on an 1862 statement of Abraham Lincoln, who said, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

Handbell Conference

July 22-26, 2018

Each summer the beautiful sound of handbells rings out over Lake Tahoe.



Come join old friends and make new ones while learning new skills. Ensembles are led by our exceptional leadership, a skilled team of handbell directors and composers. Bell ringers at every level of experience are invited. Come with a group, or by yourself. Bring your gloves and a happy smile and be part of a choir making music fit for the angels!

Guest Faculty:

William Kyle Dean

Sandra Eithun Featured Clinician

Sue Coddington-Allen Clinician

Tessique Houston Clinician

Barbara Walsh Clinician

Shosh Meyer Clinician

Summer Sing

July 26-29, 2018

Bring your voice and love for singing up to the shores of Lake Tahoe this summer.



Summer Sing offers time to grow within your faith both as an individual and as a part of our community. Singers of all ability levels are welcome and encouraged to grow within this positive and nurturing environment. Come participate in concentrated rehearsals and worship times led by our gifted guest faculty, leading up to a worship service celebrating the joy of singing with others.

Guest Faculty:

Dr. Brandon Boyd Featured Clinician

Dr. Jennaya Robison Conductor

Allan Petker Dean, Conductor

*PAM members receive a 5% discount on registration fees

Tuning @ Tahoe

July 29-Aug 3, 2018

Tuning @ Tahoe is a conference for traditional church choral professionals.



Individuals from all denominations and church sizes are welcome. Through seminars, classes, and workshops we focus on conducting skills, vocal pedagogy, worship design, rehearsal techniques, and 10 reading sessions featuring more than 20 publishers. You will be spiritually and musically rejuvenated while selecting music to cover the entirety of next year!

Guest Faculty:

Dr. Brandon Boyd Featured Clinician

Dr. Katharin Rundus Vocal Track

Allan Petker Dean

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Conference ESSENTIALS for Students

Cheryl Anderson
R&R Chair, Student Activities



I am so looking forward to our Western ACDA Conference! There will be so many fantastic choirs, interest sessions, special offerings, and you'll leave with a tremendous amount of valuable information. Because of the membership in ACDA that my teacher from college gifted me, I was able to keep my head above water my first years of teaching. I never miss a Regional or National or State Conference. It is a great time to meet people in your area, connect with your good friends, be inspired by the best people in our profession, network for jobs, and find new goals for yourself. ACDA is absolutely the best resource you could have.

Specific things for YOU at this conference begin with S.M.A.R.T. TALKS. Three of our profession's highest authorities in their fields will be talking with you on particular topics. The acronym translates to Seminars on Music, the Arts, and Related Topics. Based on the model of the TED Talks, I searched for a way for my own students at Cabrillo to hear stories from leaders in our community, Santa Cruz. It was such a great experience that we translated it into sessions for Western ACDA. Our three guests will be addressing ideas from different parts of being a professional. Here's who they are and what they'll be talking about:

I. Dr. Tim Sharp
Executive Director
American Choral Directors Association
"The Myriad Faces of Leadership"
Thursday, March 15
11-12:15
Room 208

Tim Sharp (BM, MCM, DMA) is the head of the national professional association for choral conductors, educators, scholars, students, and choral music industry representatives in the United States. He represents choral activity in the United States to the International Federation for Choral Music and serves as Vice-

President. He is Artistic Director for the 2020 World Choral Music Symposium in Auckland, New Zealand. He is an active choral director, researcher, and writer and has varied his career with executive positions in higher education, recording, and publishing. He also plays banjo. Do NOT miss this session.

II. Dr. Joan Catoni Conlon
Professor and Director of Graduate Choral Research Emerita
University of Colorado at Boulder
"Living, Dying, or Really Dead"
Friday, March 16
10:30-11:45
Room 211

I was privileged to be at a series of workshops Dr. Conlon gave at the National Collegiate Choral Organization Conference highlighting the Madrigals of Monteverdi. She discussed the expressive language choirs too often miss in interpretation of the great madrigalist Claudio Monteverdi, and demonstrated the enormous change in vocal expressiveness when we address the way the composer used text painting. Dr. Conlon will be joined by Bruce Rogers and members of the Mt. San Antonio

College Chamber Singers and soloists to demonstrate her ideas.

Dr. Conlon was also Professor of Choral Music and Conducting at University of Washington. She chaired the Research and Publications Committee of ACDA. She published *Performing Monteverdi: A Conductor's Guide*. She has also studied the Hindustani classical vocal music of India.

III. Professor James Haffner
Professor of Opera
University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music
**"What's the Big Picture?
What's My Role in that Picture?
Your Students Owning the Music"**
Thursday, March 15
1:30-2:45
Room 211

Professor Haffner is the Producing Artistic Director of the Stockton Opera Company and works with Bay View and Bear Valley Music Festivals. He is a certified teacher of the Michael Chekhov acting technique and an Artistic Associate with the Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium. He has taught at the Technische Universität Berlin and universities around the U.S. At UOP Conservatory he teaches Opera Theatre Workshop, Lyric

Diction, Opera Literature, and Opera Production. He also produces and directs the Pacific Opera Theatre productions. Professor Haffner's coaching sessions are electrifying. His methods are clear and produce instant results with singers. All one needs is a fertile imagination and a willingness to explore the possibilities inherent within the music.

What an exciting line-up of clinicians to leave us with life-long ideas and principles for teaching and music-making!

ALSO

You do not want to miss **ROUND TABLE #6: YOUTH/STUDENT ACTIVITIES**, Friday, March 16, 3-4:15, C208. Our topic is:

"IRREPLACEABLE YOU: Traits to Help You Achieve Success"

The panel of administrators and proven excellent teachers will discuss with you teaching skills, music competency, personal musical growth, collegiality, back-pocket skills, and getting involved in music organizations. Who else will be there? People just like you with questions, aspirations, and hopes for job prospects. Don't miss this one!

So, I look forward to meeting and seeing you there. Of the many things I cherish about what I get to do as my profession, honoring my mentors and my students is highest on the list.

Round Table #6
Youth/Student Activities
**IRREPLACEABLE YOU:
Traits to Help You Achieve Success**
Friday, March 16
3:00-4:15
C208

Poetry and Song

Peggy Spool
R&R Chair, Youth/Children



It is always a wonderful experience for young singers to meet with, or work with, a living composer. If your choir has had this opportunity I'm sure you would agree. Children who get a first-hand look into the creative process have a deeper appreciation for the music they sing, and it may even inspire them to compose music themselves.

My choir has sponsored two Poetry/Song Projects to commemorate important anniversaries. This year we are in the midst of the second project to celebrate our 15th year.

Our first Poetry/Song project was a partnership with an elementary school. Children wrote poetry during the year as part of their English assignments. We connected them with four area composers, the idea being to have a new piece for every level of our choir, from six-years olds through Teen Singers. This produced some lovely pieces, and generated a lot of discussion about how music is written. It also brought the poems and the poets into focus in a new way for the singers.

For the second project, we solicited poetry from our own singers to be set by area composers. One of our composers this year is an alumnus of the choir, so that is doubly special for us.

If you have the opportunity to work with an elementary school teacher, it can be a cross-disciplinary project and a chance for both singers and writers to make the connections inherent in song and poetry.

How does one go about connecting to composers? Local colleges and universities are good places to start. Colleagues who have commissioned pieces are also good resources. We have been lucky in that the San Francisco Bay Area happens to have a wealth of local composers. The local chapter of NACUSA (National Association of Composers/USA) is very active. If you're in a less composer-populated area, NACUSA is a good resource nationwide.

The Western ACDA conference, coming up March 14- 18 in Pasadena is sponsoring a series, **Chat with a Composer**, where you can sign up to talk directly with a composer. It's a great chance to ask questions, and make some connections.

Underwriting a project is one of the challenges of such an undertaking. We wrote a grant proposal to fund our project. Consider pairing with another choir and possibly singing the premiere of the new compositions jointly to share the costs.

I encourage you to connect with composers and if possible, commission a piece for your choir, or as a cooperative venture with another ensemble. Not only will it add to the children's repertoire, but you can give your singers a rich experience in the process.

Children who get a first-hand look into the creative process have a deeper appreciation for the music they sing, and it may even inspire them to compose music themselves.

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*(Must have attended Bodymind & Voice - formerly Impact Course)

St. John's University, Collegeville, MN • July 22-27, 2018

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- Discover how to sing for a lifetime and teach others to do the same.
- Invite freedom in yourself and others to produce rich, effortless, and expressive sound.
- Experience how freedom in Personal Voice enhances choral sound and expression (*Bodymind & Voice*).



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for more information and complete course details
or contact us by phone: (320) 363-3374
or e-mail: info@voicecarenetwork.org

The *VoiceCare Network* is affiliated with the National Center for Voice and Speech. Endorsed by the National Association of Teachers of Singing and the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota.



Elizabeth Grefsheim



André Heywood



Carol Klitzke



Babette Lightner



Axel Theimer



Leon Thurman

Outside the Scheduling Box

Jeff Brookey
R&R Chair, Men's Choirs



Recruiting young men is a common concern of junior high and high school choir directors. Male choir recruitment has been a hot topic for decades, and it is still a yearly challenge for many choral music teachers.

I have found that *just getting male students in the door* has led to the majority of students realizing that **group singing is fun**, and that it provides a wonderful experience for all. But it seems that students who are unsure are hesitant to commit to signing up for a regular school period just to see if they like it or not.

In my early years of teaching, I was acquainted with choir directors who had a men's choir that met before school, during lunch, or after school. For many of them, this proved to be successful and led to an increase in enrollment in the male singers' program. I had also struggled with male recruitment in my own school but did not see the true benefit of trying to start a men's choir that met outside of the regular school day. My view of alternative scheduling changed when I began teaching at La Cañada High School, in La Cañada, California.

La Cañada Unified School District has one junior high school and one high school; both schools meet on the same campus. Currently the choral music program at LCHS consists of six choirs ranging from seventh through twelfth grades. When I started working at the school in 2008, I was surprised that a men's choir class met zero period, an hour before the regular school day. I had attended schools and had taught in Central California, where traditionally zero period offerings were reserved for advanced groups, such as a chamber choir or an advanced women's choir. Upon my arrival at La Cañada, I did not recognize the value of offering a non-auditioned men's choir so early in the morning. I was concerned about the hour of the day and about the group dynamics of a class that comprised seventh through twelfth grades. But now—in my tenth year at LCHS—I can unequivocally say that the zero period men's choir is a great success. Not only does it provide scheduling options for students, but it has served as a catalyst for

Not only does it provide scheduling options for students, but it has served as a catalyst for male recruitment of the mixed choirs that meet during the regular school day.

male recruitment of the mixed choirs that meet during the regular school day.

The LCHS formula of male recruitment by offering a men's choir outside of regular school hours was the brainchild of Lori Marie Rios, La Cañada's former choral music teacher. She started meeting before school with the chamber singer men who wanted to sing men's music. Eventually the students asked if they could bring some of their friends to sing, and those friends invited others. Her men's choir that initially began with a

few dedicated young men grew impressively in a few short years.

Today the LCHS Men's Ensemble does not include all the chamber singer men, although several male singers from choirs that meet during the regular school day participate in the zero period choir. These more experienced male singers help serve as mentors for the younger, less experienced students. In fact, some of these students have sung in the men's choir for several years. They keep coming back because they remember being inspired by the older role models when they started out and want to "pay it forward." In addition, there is a unique camaraderie that develops in this type of ensemble. This is one major benefit for having a men's choir meet outside of the regular school day—it provides the opportunity for older male students to help nurture and to support younger students, new students, and especially those who are unsure about **this whole singing thing** in the first place. The dedication and support of the choir that is a mixture of beginning and advanced singers enhance the choir's musical output.

Several current and former students of the LCHS Men's Ensemble expressed the benefits of meeting before school in a zero period class. A few of their responses are as follows:



La Cañada HS Men's Ensemble rehearses Chesnokov's *Spaseniye sodelal* ("Salvation is Created") at 7:30am. Photo by choir member Alec Tujian.

- *Choir before school provides a great opportunity to see if a student enjoys the class (or not) before making the decision to fully commit to a regular school period.*
- *It allows students to have room in their schedule to take other electives during regular school hours.*
- *Zero period choir makes singing much more accessible to those students with a heavy course load.*
- *It is inspiring to be in a class with older students who are both talented and supportive. Men's Ensemble is a great brotherhood where everyone is welcomed and encouraged.*
- *Singing in choir during zero period is a great way to begin the day—it helps students become more prepared and relaxed going into their core classes.*

Student affirmations of having a zero period men's choir make a strong case, but do these benefits really matter in regards to recruitment and retention of male singers? In my experience and research, it most definitely does. I surveyed three separate groups of current and former students of the LCHS Men's Ensemble. I was surprised to find that only 6% of the male students surveyed first joined the zero period choir because of a recruitment effort or because they needed fine arts credit. Most students enrolled in the choir for other reasons: 40% joined because they had an interest in music, and 55% joined because their friends were in the choir. I found that the program's reputation and success (including the success of performance tours) and the positive impact of group singing only really factored in the *retention* of male singers, not in the initial enrollment. The most remarkable statistic of the male singers' survey was that 60% said they would not have initially joined choir in junior high or high school if their only option was enrolling in a class that met during regular school hours. The key word is *initially*—**getting them in the door**.

Many junior high and high school choral music programs have been successful in recruiting male singers in choirs that meet during the traditional school hours. Offering alternative scheduling for men's choirs—such as zero period—is also effective. Providing options beyond the regular school day can both benefit students and improve the choral music program.

State Report: California

Rob Istad
President, CCDA



California Choral Directors Association has officially become our own 501(c)(3) organization, and has installed our inaugural board of directors! I thank Lou De La Rosa, Lori Marie Rios, Jeffrey Benson, Kathleen Preston and the board of directors (past and present) for their fantastic work laying the foundation of our new organization. Thanks to the efforts of these wonderful people, CCDA has approved bylaws, legal counsel, professional accounting services, localized insurance, and a solid organizational structure. We've created a new budgeting process based on the fiscal year, and have implemented a series of checks and balances to make sure we are annually accountable and on track. I commit to maintain our strong financial foundation, and will continue to clarify our financial budgeting procedures to ensure future success and stability.

Our board of directors has spent many hours visioning and working diligently to bring the finest in choral music to our great state. I am currently leading our colleagues in a strategic planning process designed to both clarify our organizational intentions and shape our dreams for the future. This summer, we collaborated to write CCDA's first mission statement, and in January we established CCDA's core values and vision statement. Beginning a strategic planning process is delicate, and requires clear consensus. Establishing core values, vision and mission is essential. A shared mission and vision grounds our organizational priorities and stimulates focused strategies to improve and grow. These statements communicate "what we do" and "what sets us apart" from other organizations. They tell us HOW we will get where we want to be, and guide our shared purpose and primary objectives. A mission deals with the present and leads to the future. Our collaborative exercise instigated very thoughtful conversation, spirited debate, and ultimately brought us all together around a shared dream. Herewith, I am thrilled to reveal CCDA's mission, vision and core values:

VISION STATEMENT: Connecting and enriching all Californians through choral music.

MISSION STATEMENT: California Choral Directors Association empowers choral musicians to create transformative experiences for California's diverse communities.

CORE VALUES: Music Education, Inclusivity & Diversity, Professional Development & Lifelong Learning, Connectedness, Advocacy, Artistry

If you focus on the surface of these statements, they may seem slightly banal. However, when you closely examine its rhetoric, you will see the powerful words we intentionally inserted: "empowers," "create," "transformative," "connecting," "enriching," "diverse," and "communities." When viewed in context, the language begins to take on more significance; especially when you apply the essence to your own life and career. You see, CCDA's board believes all members of CCDA have a responsibility to empower one another to transcend the boundaries of modern society to bring truly transformative, endlessly creative, musical experiences to all of California's communities. This powerful language emboldens us to think expansively about diversity, and challenges us to create open spaces for all people, especially those often left out of our communities. The members of your board will strive to do this in every decision we make, every budget line-item we approve, and every program we support. We hope that it will also inspire you to do the same.

We are having an incredible year of professional development events, honor choirs, and networking opportunities together! Dr. Jerry Blackstone headlined our annual Summer Conference at ECCO, and he was fantastically inspiring! We departed his sessions with renewed passion for our students, singers, and our craft. We also hosted superbly attended regional conferences in September headlined by Craig Hella Johnson at Cal State Fullerton and Judy Bowers at CSU East Bay. In addition to the headliner sessions, we offered numerous reading sessions focused on a variety of repertoire and resource areas. We partnered with SCVA to bring our life-changing Regional Honor Choir programs to California middle and high school students this fall, and selected outstanding students from these ensembles to sing in our All-State Honor Choir experience in February. We were thrilled to present our CMEA/CCDA State Conference at CASMEC in February, and hope to see many of you during the ACDA Western Division Conference in Pasadena in March. I am proud to see so many diverse ensembles and presenters from California on the Western Division schedule! Connecting with your colleagues, learning with friends, and experiencing the inspiring performances with others will feed your soul. I promise! Don't miss out on ECCO 2018, headlined by the incomparable Betsy Cook Weber: July 22–25, 2018!

CCDA has a strong vision for the future. I will work with our leadership to create a strategic plan to guide the board during my tenure and provide a roadmap to success for the next five years. We will evaluate every program CCDA offers, and will creatively find ways to make them more engaging, successful and affordable for all. We will exercise financial responsibility, and we will guarantee that we use CCDA's precious resources to their fullest potential. CCDA is on a roll, and we look forward to becoming the finest choral organization of our kind possible! See you in Pasadena!

Western Region Leadership Roster July 2017-2019

Regional Officers

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| President Travis Rogers trogers777@comcast.net <i>Choir Director, retired, Napa HS</i> | President-Elect Kimberly Barclay Ritzer Ritzek@nv.ccsd.net <i>Choir Director, Green Valley HS</i> cell 702-528-1941 work 702-799-0950, ext. 4050 | Vice President Anna Hamre ahamre@mail.fresnostate.edu <i>Prof. Emerita, Cal State Fresno</i> <i>Artistic Director, Fresno Master Chorale</i> |
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Repertoire and Resources

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