

BULLETIN OF THE OHIO CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Fall 2013: Volume 33, Issue 1

From Your President

SING UP! EVERYBODY'S DOING IT!

Fall is here and many of us are headed back to school or preparing for new seasons with our church or community choirs. If you work in an academic setting, this is the time of year when students are joining new clubs, rushing fraternities or sororities or deciding to try new activities. This is the time of year that many of our favorite



OCDA President Dara Gillis

television shows come out of re-runs and begin airing new episodes. College and professional football have returned and fantasy football leagues are quickly forming (I may have just divulged a little too much about myself).

With all of that in mind, I would like to share exciting news with you of a wonderful movement that is taking place in our organization. ACDA is launching its first ever membership drive titled appropriately: Sing Up! I would like to encourage you to offer other choral music professionals what you were once offered, a chance to join the coolest club there is: ACDA! Why is it the coolest club? No, it is not just because you are already a member! ACDA is the coolest club because of all the wonderful tools and opportunities it affords us as professional choral conductors and educators.

The state of Ohio has been given the opportunity to participate in the National ACDA Sing Up! Membership Drive. With the packet of materials I was mailed as state president came a list of the benefits included in our ACDA membership. I was reminded of several important benefits of which young teachers or non-ACDA members may not be aware. I urge you to share these benefits with every non-ACDA member you know.

For example, *ChorTeach* is an online magazine for choral conductors and educators who are looking for ideas and solutions to meet practical needs and it is available to us simply by joining ACDA. ACDA Radio and the *Choral Journal* as well provide marvelous resources for choral conductors at all levels. Most importantly, educational experiences such as conferences and seminars provide invaluable opportunities to network with other professionals and to learn from the top experts in our field.

As ACDA members, how can we not wish to share these benefits with every choral director we know? Do we not wish to foster the utmost in excitement, enthusiasm, and professionalism in our craft? Should we not be ambassadors for our art and leaders to young choral directors everywhere?

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If you believe, as I do, that the answers to these questions are an emphatic "yes," then I urge you to visit our web site at ohiocda.org for details on our new refer-a-friend program. I encourage you to seek friends and colleagues who do not yet know what ACDA has to offer and share all the benefits you glean from ACDA with each of them. If you find yourself wondering "what do I get from encouraging others to join our ranks?" you can read about the great giveaway items which can be yours by referring friends. But more importantly, you can take tremendous satisfaction in knowing that you helped foster the growth of another musician.

Encourage every choral director you know to become a member of ACDA today! It's the coolest club there is. Sing up! Everybody's doing it! \diamond



In the Spotlight

An interview with John Drotleff by John Long, Historian

"We study the past to understand the present; we understand the present to guide the future." —William Lund

This statement is true when applied to any historical event or organization and verified further when thinking of the Ohio Choral Director's Association (OCDA). When given the opportunity to serve as the historian, I stopped to ponder how music educators of today could understand where the association began and how it evolved into the force in music education that it is today. My goal, in the next few years, is to interview several of the past presidents of this organization and current influential members, in hopes of uncovering their leadership abilities and accomplishments in their specialty areas. Our membership can learn from those who have laid the foundation and continue to build upon this groundwork in order to keep music alive and thriving in our schools today and in the future.

John Drotleff, with his substantial contributions in choral music, was the obvious choice to interview first. His leadership helped make the Ohio Choral Director's Association into one of the most respected state choral organizations in the country. I feel honored and privileged to have had this opportunity to interview such a fine man and choral director.

What years were you President of OCDA?

Actually I was president for two terms, from 1981 to 1985. The person who was President-Elect left Ohio and so I added another term. All together I was on the Board for 18 years.

Why did you get involved with OCDA? Did someone encourage you to join?

I got involved because a person I worked with "sponsored" me. In the beginning of ACDA you had to





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have two people sponsor you. You couldn't just join. That was in 1968. Yikes, that's 45 years ago!

What were your biggest challenges during your term as President?

There were several challenges while I was president: Trying to increase membership and attendance at conferences was the most important. Communications among our membership. And financial concerns. Ohio has a special status with ACDA and we received a portion of dues from membership fees, but we discovered the national organization was not always forwarding the proper amount of money. The national office is much better organized now.

What were your biggest accomplishments during your term as **President?**

We made strides in all the challenges. We had the first conference to have more than 100 members attend (that was a big breakthrough), we started publishing a supplement to the Ohio News that came out every month so the membership would know what was going on, and we solved the financial hassle and actually established a contingency fund for emergencies. But the best thing that happened while I was president is that we established additional programing. In addition to our summer conference we held one day conferences throughout the state focusing on one subject, like middle school music or church music. They were very popular. Regional chairmen also sponsored short conferences or reading sessions. I'm sorry to see that we haven't had anything like that for a long time.

Where do you see OCDA going in the future? What is your best advice to a young, beginning choral music educator?

ACDA has made great strides and is a wonderful organization. I've brought many students to our summer conferences and would urge others to do the same. Don't just tell people about the organization. Bring them. Divisional and national conferences are incredible experiences. Members should do whatever it takes to attend. Some people will come to one conference and not get much out of it. That shouldn't deter anyone from attending again. When I started attending 45 years ago I was one of only a handful of middle school teachers attending. There were virtually no elementary teachers. The organization was almost entirely male and made up of university,



college, and the "big" high school programs in the state. There was not much on the program for me but I gained so much in indirect ways from attending those conferences. Forty-five years later our conferences are heavy on middle school and elementary music and I'm only interested in large choral/orchestral works; but I still get all kinds of useful information at these events. OCDA is definitely on the right track and it should be every member's responsibility to encourage new directors to join this wonderful organization. We currently have excellent leadership and we need to keep searching for ways to enhance the choral art.

I want to thank John Drotleff for this interview, but more importantly, his service to our organization. John helped to build OCDA in to what we know today. You can still find John at summer conferences, concerts, and festivals. Because of his efforts there will always be a song in the hearts of children and adults sharing in the joys of the choral art. John Drotleff, conductor of the West Shore Chorale and Orchestra since 1984, lives in Lakewood with his wife of thirty-nine years, Judy. Their son, Stefan; daughter-in-law, Misty; and grandson, Maxwell, live nearby. His first music teachers were Christine Knuth and James Ramsey. He studied music at Dana School of Music, part of Youngstown State University, and Columbia University, and has attended courses, clinics, and master classes given by Robert Shaw, Alice Parker, Wilhelm Ehman, Jean Berger, Daniel Moe, Howard Swan, Robert DeCormier, Robert Wagner, Paul Salamonivich, Greg Smith, Paul Christiansen, Eric Whitacre, Moses Hogan, William Dawson, Jester Hairston, Don Neuen, Westin Noble, Henry Leck, Simon Carrington, Robert Page, and many others. Mr. Drotleff has directed choirs and taught music in northeastern Ohio since 1961, serving four public schools, three colleges, seven churches, and three

high schools and colleges has included appearances at state adjudicated events, professional music conferences, and tours throughout the East and Midwestern parts of the country, including venues in New York City, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Indianapolis, and Washington, D.C., at the Kennedy Center and The National Cathedral. Mr. Drotleff has been the conductor of the Youngstown Symphony Chorus and has served as a guest conductor and workshop clinician for many musical groups and professional organizations in the Northeastern part of the United States. His repertoire with the West Shore Chorale includes more than 200 compositions, including 55 major choral/orchestral works representing 146 composers. He has been a member of several professional organizations, but his main interest has centered upon the Ohio Choral Directors Association, which he twice served as President; he has also been the recipient of that organization's Distinguished Service Award. 🗇

Summer Musings

Robert J. Ward, Men's Chorus R&S Chair

Summer affords me the luxury of flextime: I can work when I want, play when I want, and rest when I feel weary. When school is in session I feel as though I have time to do everything but no time to prepare for anything (I say this with all due respect to public-school teachers who have less free time than I). The summer affords me balance more time for play, less time for work, and an opportunity to think. The words that follow are ideas borne of summertime reflection.

community choruses. His work in

On being the best

I spent many hours over the past two months thinking about something that was said at a recent music conference. The exact quote was, "it's not good enough to do your best; you simply have to *be* the best, because the profession has become too competitive to accept anything less."

I am certain that the clinician meant to inspire, but that comment



made me feel excluded. I knew in my head that I should have felt empowered, but instead I felt unsure of my place. The question upon hearing such a comment is: if I don't conduct a Brahms *Requiem* and I don't conduct four All-State choirs then is there no place for me? Have we as a profession decided, consciously or unconsciously, that this is the model for ultimate success? It is my hope that as an academy of professional teachers and musicians we can view success through a broader lens.

Several years ago I had the good fortune to serve as a clinician at a summer conference. On the final day a woman asked me a question about what she could do to be more effective in the classroom. She described her position as an inner-city music teacher with lessthan-adequate resources and a schedule that those of us several years her junior would have difficulty meeting. Her question caught me off guard and fortunately came just as we were about to break for lunch. The convention schedule afforded me a grace period of ninety minutes to formulate an answer.

For me the lunch break was one of soul-searching unsettledness. What could I offer to this woman that would have any potency or applicability to her situation? What I finally realized, and what I said in the next general session, was that I had no answer for her—because she was already living the answer. She elected to stay in a job many would have forsaken, and she dedicated her teaching career to students who brought little to the table. Her lesson plans were very different from mine but equally important. Here she was, attending yet another summer convention, gathering bits of wisdom and ideas. Her question and her willingness to make herself vulnerable taught all of us in the room a valuable lesson: go to school every day with the belief that you are someone who makes a difference, always accepting the fact that you may not realize how or why.

Upon his retirement, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall stated that his most profound accomplishment was that "he did the best with what he had." He did not



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worry about being in competition with other judges, and he was not concerned with how history might judge him. Like the inner-cityschool music teacher, he simply did his job as well as he could with what he had. The inner-city-school music teacher looked to me for an answer, but instead she offered me an opportunity to learn. She taught me that the answer to the question, "how can I become a more effective classroom teacher?" is simply to show up everyday and make the most of what you have.

The possibility for change

Professional conferences afford us opportunities to learn, study, and be inspired. Hired clinicians have much to offer, and getting a perspective from someone who is outside of one's regular circle of operation is helpful. But in our admiration of the headliners let's not forget where the magic of NAfME and ACDA truly resides.

Consider the following parable: A monastery had fallen on hard times. It was once part of a great order, which, as a result of religious persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lost all its branches. It was decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the motherhouse: the Abbot and four others, all of whom were over seventy. Clearly it was a dying order.

Deep in the woods surrounding the monastery was a little hut that the Rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. One day, it occurred to the Abbot to visit the hermitage to see if the Rabbi could offer any advice that might save the monastery. The Rabbi welcomed the Abbot and commiserated. "I know how hard it is," he said, "the spirit has gone out of people. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the old Rabbi and the Abbot wept together, and they read parts of the Torah and spoke quietly of deep things.

The time came when the Abbot had to leave. They embraced. "It has been wonderful being with you," said the Abbot, "but I have failed in my purpose for coming. Have you no piece of advice that might save the monastery?"

"No, I am sorry," the Rabbi responded, "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."¹

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The spirit of the monastery began to change. Believing that one of them might be the Messiah, the monks changed in their daily countenance and in their attitude towards each other. Their energy became one of hope versus despair, and their vision for the future was contagious to those visitors who came to the monastery to picnic and visit. Word quickly spread about this special place and more visitors came to the monastery. The monks began visiting with people, and after several years a few men asked if they could join.

The moral to this story is that the Abbot came to the Rabbi seeking advice, a clear set of objectives that would set the monastery on a course of prosperity. What the Rabbi offered was not an easy answer but rather wisdom. He gave the Abbot permission and encouragement to believe that the power to change the situation was alive in each of them. And when each of the monks began to think that they themselves might be the Messiah, they changed who they were, how they interacted, and how they looked at the future.

ACDA and NAfME: the power of these organizations to impact the future does not reside in the hired clinicians. The magic of these organizations is in the teacher who sits next to you at the convention; the teacher who shares your dayto-day mission, your daily challenges, and your ongoing frustrations. The wise Rabbi shared the belief that the Messiah is one of us—the teacher who enters the classroom or rehearsal room every day filled with light, hopeful energy, and a belief that we can make the world a better place, one day and one rehearsal at a time.

Thinking outside of the box

There are many choral technique books, but one of the best I have seen is unfortunately out of print. *Choral Techniques*² by Charles Heffernan, was a wonderful book published by Prentice-Hall. If you can find that book in the library or at a used bookstore I encourage you to spend some time reading what Dr. Heffernan has to say.

In his first chapter Dr. Heffernan asks these questions: "With the many opportunities that choral directors have to witness fine conductors, or to attend workshops or master classes in conducting, or to have their choirs adjudicated by some of these same conductors, would it not be reasonable to expect that a superior level of choral performance would exist throughout this continent? That this is not the case is a regrettable fact. Why are so many choral conductors unable to profit from the excellent instruction they receive? Why do countless school, church, and community choirs continue to sound so poor year after year? In the midst of all this inspired instruction, is there a missing Rosetta stone, whose absence reduces all this valuable information to a disjointed mass of technical devices?"3

Many of you, no doubt, have seen the following puzzle:

• • •

The instruction is to connect all the dots with four straight lines without removing your pencil from the paper. The challenge is to envision a solution that releases the diagram from its square, to put motion or flight into the design.

My point in using this familiar puzzle is to point out that part of what I think Dr. Heffernan is saying is that we spend too much of our time re-hashing a solution that confines us, and our singers, into a hackneyed interpretation, one devoid of soulful energy and playful flight. Members of our profession have become adept at the mechanics of choral music but we are not proficient in our ability to ignite the creative imagination of the singers. This issue is not particular to musicians; it is also a challenge in many other fields. Physicians, for example, have become impressive medical engineers but many have lost touch with the concept of healer, the personal something that inspires hope.

Convention after convention is filled with sessions that teach vowel unity, rhythmic alignment, sight reading, and phrasing. Infrequently I see sessions devoted to developing the creative potential of the conductor or nurturing the soulful self. Part of me applauds that, because we shy away from jumping on the pop-psychology bandwagon. Maybe what I'm discussing is not something that can be taught, but only encouraged. But, taught or encouraged, we as a profession need to be sensitive to the reality that taking care of one's internal self is part of what leads to





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Creative combinations

I enjoy National Public Radio and one of my favorite programs is "The Splendid Table," hosted by Lynne Rossetto Kasper. In one of the segments on that program, callers tell Ms. Rossetto Kasper and her invited guest what is in their refrigerators. The show's host and guest are then challenged to create a tasty dish from the hodgepodge of ingredients that has been provided them.

A small percentage of American choral directors know before the first rehearsal what singers will be in the chairs. Those directors can spend the summer selecting music, studying scores, and planning a year's worth of concert programs. The largest percentage of us get our class rolls a day or two before classes begin, and we see if what we expected is what we get. With the start of school we take the "Splendid Table" challenge: here are your singers for the year; see what you can make out of this!

In selecting repertoire we have to be certain that we let the ingredients dictate the menu. The singers we are presented, the amount of rehearsal time we are allotted, and the circumstances we encounter all dictate what literature we can select. Too often I hear choirs singing music that does not match the talent or the rehearsal time or maybe even the interest level. To be successful, choral directors must not choose repertoire based on ego ("I want to conduct this piece"). Our most respected colleagues choose repertoire not to aggrandize themselves but rather to celebrate the ensemble. Lynne Rossetto Kasper's message is that the menu must be decided based upon what ingredients are present.

Michelangelo is often quoted as



having said, "Inside every stone dwells a beautiful statue. The job of the artist is to remove the excess material in order that the art within might be revealed." The parallel for choral directors is that within each group of singers resides the potential for artistic expression. Our responsibility is to choose repertoire that is sufficiently matched to the ensemble that the choir's potential is given its best opportunity to reveal itself.

And so it goes

September 2013 marked the start of my thirty-second year of teaching. I have learned many lessons in those years; not all of them were positive but they were all valuable. How to stay engaged and hopeful is a question we must face each year. We are older and wiser, but the students who enter our classrooms come in at the same level and seem to require more. Fortunately for me I know more now than I did then so my capacity for giving more is larger because my personal well is deeper. When I think of teaching yet another year I am reminded of the conversation between Tom Hanks and Geena Davis in the movie A League of Their Own. Davis' character, star catcher Dottie Hinson, decides not to continue with the team because, in her words, "it just got too hard." Tom Hanks (dysfunctional coach Jimmy Dugan) responds, "It's supposed to

be hard. If it weren't hard everyone would do it. The 'hard' is what makes it great."

To all of you who will inspire singers for yet another year, I encourage you accept that it is hard and to not be deflected from your course. \diamond

¹ Rosamund Zander and Benjamin Zander. The Art of Possibility. (New York: Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2000), 52.

² Charles Heffernan. Choral Music: Technique and Artistry. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 3.

³ Ibid.

Summer Conference Reflection

Brandon Moss, Conference Committee Chair

By this point in the year, the 2013 **OCDA Summer Conference seems** very long ago. On the other hand, it's hard for me to believe that I have already served a two-year term as Summer Conference Coordinator. I attended my very first Summer Conference—as a college student at Otterbein serving as one of Gayle Walker's student workers—11 or 12 years ago, and I kept coming because of the amazing clinicians our conference attracts and because of the incredibly talented and kind choral directors that reside within this state. If the Summer Conference under my chairmanship is at all successful-and I believe it has been-it is for those

same two reasons that keep us all coming back year after year.

The 2013 Summer Conference. held June 17-19 on the campus of Otterbein University, featured headliner clinicians Bruce Chamberlain, University of Arizona; Jody Kerchner, Oberlin Conservatory of Music; and Jefferson Johnson, University of Kentucky. We were very grateful that Bruce was able to step in at the last minute, when Eph Ehly had to cancel for family reasons. Bruce made a huge contribution to the already stellar line-up, and was one of the great successes of the conference. (He will be in our part of the country again in February, when he conducts the

Central Division High School Mixed

Honor Choir in Cincinnati.) Jody and Jeff also led outstanding sessions that allowed us to take a look at what we do from both pedagogical and practical mindsets, and I know I came home with more than a few new ideas to try out on my choirs, school, church, and community alike!

The conference was highlighted also by performances from several choirs new to our conference, including the Lakota West High School Chamber Ensemble (Tony Nims, director), The Broadstreet Choir from Broad Street Presbyte-





rian Church in Columbus (Christopher Dent, director), and the Ohio Northern University National Tour Choir (Ben Ayling, director), which wrapped up its cross-country tour (30 cities in a little over a month!) at our conference. Also new this year were the High School Honor Men's and Women's Choruses, directed by James Gallagher and Richard Mathey. (We look forward to having them return to conduct the choirs again next summer, this time directing the opposite choir.) And of course, the Children's Honor Choir, under the direction of Fernando Malvar-Ruiz, Director of The American Boychoir, provided a great closing to the conference, joined this year by the Strausser Elementary School Choir (Suzanne Walters, director).

Attendance at this year's conference was up from last year, with 179 registrants from all over the state, as well as Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Most attendees were actively directing in schools, colleges, churches, and in the community, but we also had over 25 each of retired members and student members, and nearly 20 newmember attendees! This also marked the first year of OCDA's collegiate chapter scholarship program, with Baldwin-Wallace, Bowling Green, Case Western, and Miami each sending students.

As exciting as this year's conference was, I am already looking ahead to next year's conference, when we'll host Rene Clausen as our headliner. With all of the exciting membership and mentorship initiatives happening within OCDA, I think this might just be the best attended and most exciting conference yet! Mark your calendars NOW, as June 16–18, 2014, will be here before we know it! As always, please feel free to contact me at ocdaconference@gmail.com or brandonlmoss@gmail.com if

Help the Historian JOHN S. LONG, HISTORIAN

I am trying to collect data for our historical archives. If you have any type of concert programs, newsletters, conference programs, or pictures that you feel would be of value to the Ohio Choral Directors Association, please contact me. In fact, if you simply have a great story or remembrance about the Ohio Choral Directors Association and would be willing to share it, that would be great, too. Please e-mail me at jslong @inbox.com. Thanks so much!

you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions. It is my great pleasure to serve you as the Summer Conference Coordinator, and I look forward to seeing all of you next June! \diamond

OCDA News, the official publication of the Ohio Choral Directors Association, is published three times annually and is distributed without charge to members of the Association as well as to selected members and officers of the American Choral Directors Association. Distribution is by PDF file that is emailed and posted at ohiocda.org. OCDA reserves the right to determine inclusion of materials submitted and to edit all materials proposed for distribution. *Copy and Ad Submission Deadlines:* September 15 for the Fall Issue, January 15 for the Winter Issue, and April 15 for the Spring Issue.

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Kent Vandock, Treasurer

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Summer Conference Income	27,275.52
TOTAL INCOME	76,424.07
XPENSES	
ACDA Membership Dues Transfer	1,810.00
Awards	504.70
Bank Charge	53.99
Board Meetings	607.00
Children's Choir Expenses	22,933.73
Elections	192.50
Elementary Choir Festival Expenses	2,938.93
Fees	50.00
High School Honors Choir Expense	5,627.40
Membership	540.35
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OMEA	3,710.11
Sponsorships	840.00
Summer Conference Expenses	28,375.27
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Website expenses	501.13
TOTAL EXPENSES	71,048.33





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