

From Your President

Summer Is upon Us!

A QUICK LOOK at the schedule for our exciting upcoming Summer Conference will assure every OCDA member of the conference's benefits! Held June 17–19 at Otterbein University, this conference will provide professional growth for directors of all choirs, and a wonderful opportunity to network and reconnect with colleagues from across the state in this intimate conference environment.

We are thrilled to be welcoming Abbie Betinis and Jerry Blackstone as this year's conference headliners. Abbie's music has been called "inventive and richly melodic" by the *New York Times* and "superb, whirling, and soaring" by the *Tacoma News Tribune*. She has written over 60 commissioned pieces and is listed as one of NPR Music's "100 Composers Under 40." Abbie will share her music, her personal experiences as a composer, and her work with the Justice Choir Songbook project with our attendees. She will also provide important practical information pertaining to copyright, licensing, and self-publishing.

Grammy Award–winning conductor Dr. Jerry Blackstone recently retired from his position as Director of Choirs at the University of Michigan, and he is well known for his expertise in conducting and rehearsal pedagogy as well as for his work with male voices. Dr. Blackstone will present practical sessions on these topics, he'll lead a conducting masterclass, and he'll share thoughts about the importance of our work in this profession.

In addition to our fabulous headliners, OCDA member and Kodaly expert Jeanne Wohlgamuth will present a session on teaching musicianship skills through choral literature, and the conference will also feature several wonderful performing choirs. Our opening session will begin with a joint concert by the Logan High School Chamber Singers (John McClain) and the Bexley High School Vocal Ensemble (Amy Blosser). On Monday evening, we'll hear the Grandview Singers (Andrew Grega), followed by our OCDA Women's and Men's Honor Choirs. The Men's Honor Choir will be conducted by Dr. Robert Ward of Ohio State, and the Women's Honor Choir will be led by Sarah Baker of Little Miami High School. On Tuesday afternoon, we will hear from Cincinnati's Young Professionals Choral Collective Chamber Choir (Dr. Megan Boyd). On Wednesday afternoon, we'll



OCDA President
Richard Schnipke

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be treated to a performance by the OCDA Children's Honor Choir, led by Dr. Barbara Lamont. The Stow-Munroe Falls High School Women's Chorus (Nicholas Campaigna) will open that Wednesday afternoon concert.

As is our tradition, reading sessions for all types of choirs, selected by our OCDA Repertoire and Resources Chairs, will take place throughout the conference. Music for high school, junior high/middle school, elementary, church, community, college/university, and single gender choirs will be provided to all conference attendees through the generous support of J.W. Pepper. Dr. Ron Blackley of Ashland University will also present a session of "Choral Gems," fo-

ocusing on wonderful, standard choral repertoire that should be part of everyone's choral library. A reading session/clinic will also be presented this year by OCDA R&R Chairs Brody McDonald, Chris Venesile, and Jeff Clark, pertaining to special considerations for performing music from the contemporary a cappella, vocal jazz, and show choir idioms.

Luncheon roundtable discussions, organized by R&R area, will bring together conductors of similar choirs to discuss challenges, successes, and future OCDA initiatives. All registrants are also invited to the Conference Luncheon and Business Meeting, where members of your OCDA board and executive committee will provide

an overview of workings of the organization. And, a Monday afternoon Ice Cream Social (sponsored by Beyond the Classroom Tour and Travel), our Monday evening Gemütlichkeit, and the Tuesday All-Conference Party (sponsored by Bob Rogers Travel) will give participants an opportunity to connect and network in more relaxed, informal settings.

As you can see, the 2019 OCDA Summer Conference is going to be a wonderful event, not to be missed. If you have not already registered, I highly encourage you to do so. All my best wishes for a wonderful summer, full of time to recharge, relax, and plan for an incredible 2019–2020 season. I hope to see you at Otterbein, June 17–19! ♦

In Memoriam: Joseph Flummerfelt



Tim Cloeter, OCDA News Editor

ON FRIDAY, MAY 3, I participated in an extraordinary event: the memorial service for Joseph Flummerfelt at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Indianapolis. Dr. Flummerfelt was an icon of choral music, a teacher and conductor at Westminster Choir College for 33 years, the director of choral activities at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston for 36 years, and the chorus master for the New York Philharmonic for 44 years. He prepared choruses for hundreds of performances with prestigious orchestras and notable conductors including Claudio Abbado, Leonard Bernstein, Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Alan Gilbert, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Seiji Ozawa, Wolfgang Sawallisch, and Robert Shaw. Joe was also the principal teacher in my master's degree 28 years ago, and the most influential teacher in my career.

It was an extraordinary event in

part because it was entirely planned by Joe himself; in the few weeks between the discovery of his brain tumor and the unexpected stroke that ended his life on March 1, he chose every piece of music, each organist and conductor, each Bible reading and liturgical word, and even the eulogists: a niece, a former Westminster colleague, and a former student. Like so much of his work, the service designed by Joe was brilliant—remarkably beautiful and expressive music for organ and choir and congregation, performed by exceptionally capable musicians, presented in just the right order. For us alumni who formed the 100-voice choir, the anthems, nearly all of which I had sung under Joe's direction, were both a celebration of his life and a grieving remembrance. (There was literally a case of tissue boxes distributed among the choir, and I must have used half a box myself.)

I remember many admirable things about Joe, but two stood out to me even at the time: first, I found it entirely uncanny how in conducting class, without even looking at the student who was conducting and while somewhat boisterously singing along, Joe could pinpoint almost immediately and with unerring accuracy the root issue that ought to be addressed with that student to make the most significant improvement. After only a couple of phrases he'd know that this student needed to conduct the piece with her eyes closed to foster greater trust on her part, or this student needed to stand on a piano bench to counteract a latent feeling of unworthiness to lead, or this student needed to prioritize showing line over showing meter. Second, I appreciated how even when he was preparing the Westminster Symphonic Choir for a performance with a famous conductor, Joe was always creating art, not just making sure the choir knew the pitches and rhythms. He was truly an equal collaborator with the conductor who would stand before us in the performance, and his dedication to an artful and meaningful performance was part of the reason those conductors sought him and his choirs.

At the memorial service, I was reminded of three deeply significant truths about conducting



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choral music—truths that are central to the work I do and to which I felt moved by the service to rededicate myself. The first concerns trust. One of the eulogists reminded us that Joe considered the relationship of conductor to singers to be “circular,” not “over-under,” and that trusting himself and his singers was crucial for music-making. This is why he was opposed to showing subdivision of the beat as a conductor (through some rhythmic gesture or tic): it was evidence that the conductor did not trust the inner motors of his singers. Joe explained in Donald Nally’s book *Conversations with Joseph Flummerfelt* that “at a certain point, you have to let go and trust that the technical aspects will hold. You need to just let it sing and, in a very real sense, to let the performance evolve organically and spontaneously.” This was beautifully demonstrated by one of the conductors at the service, Andrew Megill, a friend of mine and a fellow Westminster alumnus, when in a soft phrase from the Brahms *Re-*

quiem he stood before the choir completely and deeply letting go of the music while remaining completely and deeply with us singers in that moment.

The second truth has to do with breath. Understanding the important function of breath in choral conducting is unique to Joe’s pedagogy. There is so much that is influenced by the conductor’s preparatory breath: tempo, dynamic, color, vowel shape, character, even vocal technique. But perhaps more than everything else, a preparatory breath properly taken establishes and offers a vulnerability that invites singers to be honestly and genuinely expressive. In Joe’s words (again from Nally’s book), it’s the “breath that breaks through the fears that our ego always tries to impose on us, and allows us to have the courage to become vulnerable.” Singing is the most personal and vulnerable kind of music-making because our instrument is within us, so it’s especially important that we all breathe in a way that softens our defenses and

sheds our fears. And every time we all breathe simultaneously in that way, the world is transformed.

Perhaps the most striking truth on display at the service, however, was that choral music truly does connect lives. There we were, that large chorus of generations of alumni connected to Joe and to each other by past profound choral experiences; and even in those present moments of singing, that music and what we believe about it was at work connecting our voices and hearts and spirits and lives, and it was at work connecting us to the congregation and Joe’s family in ways that mere words of condolence, regardless of how heartfelt, simply could not. This connection holds across time as well; Andrew remarked that the students of our students’ students will be affected by what we learned from Joe Flummerfelt, and that the world will be more beautiful because of it.

May we all have authentic and artful experiences with our choirs that connect lives in beautiful and meaningful ways. ♦

Yes, Your Choir Can (and Should) Sing Renaissance Music!

Brandon L. Moss, President-Elect

The content of this article was originally presented at the 2019 OMEA Professional Development Conference in Cleveland.

I HAVE LONG suspected that the performance of Renaissance choral music is declining, based solely on

observations of performances I have attended over the last fifteen years. A cursory examination of material related to this topic confirms my suspicions. In a 2001 survey published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Rebecca

Reames found that Renaissance music made up 20% or more of the choral programming at only 4.5% of Virginia high schools.¹ And a 2017 *Choral Journal* article by Robert J. Ward and Leila Heil





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illustrated that the percentage of Renaissance music performed at national ACDA conferences has decreased by over half in just 30 years.² I also combed through lists of pieces performed by high school choirs at Ohio Music Education Association Large Group adjudicated events from 2016–2018,

specifically at the South Central region state-level event. Of 436 pieces performed across those three years, only 22 dated back to the Renaissance era (5%).

With data in hand, I wanted to find out why choral directors were programming less Renaissance music, so I created a survey and sent it out to as many directors as I could. Though I did not receive a tremendous response, the answers were consistent. The chief reasons that directors did not program music from this era included: they perceived the music as difficult for both singers and directors, they found that maintaining singer interest in this music was challenging, they didn't know enough attainable repertoire of this period, they found that the voicings did not fit their choirs, and they had issues with the texts. Many of these directors, however, also acknowledged that Renaissance repertoire offers an exceptional opportunity to teach fundamental choral skills such as rhythm, independent part-singing, phrase shaping, intonation, and balance, and that music from this period was important for exposing singers to all genres and eras. So how do we bridge the gap?

Though I have no formal training specific to the performance practices of Renaissance music, I have programmed and researched enough of it to be able to cull together some tips and resources that might alleviate the concerns directors expressed in the survey.

Learning the Notes

Teaching a piece from the Renaissance period often requires that

the conductor decide in which tonality the singers should learn the pitches. Many Renaissance works were written in modes, with key signatures that don't match how you and your singers perceive the piece. I use solfège with the high school students I teach, and we decide together on the tonality we hear and feel before identifying which syllables to use. If you are using an older or more scholarly edition, you will want to look for *musica ficta* (accidentals that the editor believes were observed in performance but not written on the score) and make educated decisions about which you will use (many published editions just incorporate the accidentals onto the staff).

If there is a distinct melodic line in an imitative piece, have all singers learn it together on one voice part first. Sometimes I have singers then go through and only sing the melodic line when they have it (or when it is transposed), and I fill in the rest on the piano until they are comfortable with these notes.

Interpretation and Style

Even as singers begin to learn their notes, I ask them to think of their lines horizontally, rather than vertically. This gets them thinking about phrase shaping right away. As the notes are learned, I always give singers a concise list of considerations that are appropriate to the piece. Some instructions I often give are: bring out entrances, crescendo tied/long notes, bring out duets, and sing into dissonances. I explain early on that bar



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lines were not present in the original scores but were added later by editors, so we shouldn't reflexively use metric stresses.

Regarding text, I ask singers to underline the stressed syllable in every word (even when we are still using solfège) and sing toward and away from those syllables. Additionally, we decide as a group what the most important words are in each phrase and shape accordingly. Look for text painting—there is often a lot of this in Renaissance music.

Unless you are using an edited score, your music may have no dynamics marked. You will need to plan them out, perhaps with your singers. I like to give singers the

option of suggesting dynamics, trying them out, and deciding as a group what works and what does not. This allows them to give input, and it helps to maintain interest.

Conducting

When I begin teaching a Renaissance piece, I often do not conduct at all. Instead, I use a metronome and ask students to show their own shaping with their arms while they sing. Eventually, as I begin conducting, I decide what beat to use as a pulse. Most scholars of this era recognize that the modern half note is usually the intended beat (sometimes called “tactus” or “takt”). You will need to practice this a lot with your singers, as

many (especially younger singers) struggle to subdivide on their own. Keep at it, though, as too short a beat can leave the piece feeling choppy and undermine its overall shape. As a conductor, your job is to keep the pulse, yes, but also to show the phrase shaping. If you have done your job in rehearsal, you can get out of the singers' way and let them move through the piece on their own, only acting as their guide.

Other Considerations

If possible, encourage singers to memorize the piece early on, so they can respond to your shaping gestures, listen to how their parts interact with others, and sing more



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independently. I have found that placing singers into quartets or mixed formation for Renaissance music helps with intonation, as does asking for less vibrato at cadences.

I also strive to make singers aware of the function of the piece in its historical context. Was it part of a church service, sung at a certain time of day or on a particular feast day? Would it have been sung at court? Was it published as part of a set? For something different, if the piece was based on chant, try to find the chant line and teach it to students. A few years ago, I programmed Palestrina's "Sicut Cervus." I found the chant in the *Liber Usualis* and taught it to my students, and then at the performance I had a soloist intone the

chant in a key that ended on the dominant, allowing us to move right into Palestrina's setting. Since Palestrina had based his motet on the chant itself, this was a great way for both singers and audience to learn about how music in this era was often conceived.

Manipulating Renaissance Music to Fit Your Choir

Our training may have inclined us to be snobby about music, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. Understanding that arranged music sometimes diminishes an original composition helps us to maintain a high standard of quality in choosing choral literature. However, what if you direct a women's chorus or an SAB choir and struggle to find enough repertoire from this

era to fit your choir's needs? If you took arrangements off the table, you would be left with very little. There are some excellent arrangements of Renaissance pieces for different voicings; just do your homework. Compare the score with the original or listen to a recording of both pieces. Does the arrangement take away from the integrity of the piece? Is it too simple? If so, then don't use it. But if the arrangement works well for your ensemble and stays true to the sound of the original, then program the piece.

You may need to change the key of a piece of music from this era. There was no common pitch system during this time, and scholars have determined that singers would often start on any pitch that



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worked for their ensemble. I take this as permission to alter keys as needed for the singers I direct as long as it does not detract from the piece.

What if you want to program a piece that has more voice parts than your ensemble can cover? Find a talented instrumentalist or two to take the additional part(s) instead, playing in place of or even doubling a choral part. This was actually common practice during this era and in early Baroque music.

The bottom line is: if it comes down to you not doing the piece or doing the piece but needing to manipulate it, do whatever it takes to make music from this era come alive for your singers and your audiences!

Other Resources

When I presented this topic at OMEA, I included a packet of pieces that are attainable for many choirs. Below is a very short list of repertoire that works well for choirs.

Sacred:

Angelus ad pastores ait (Hassler)—SATB

Ave verum (Josquin)—3-part

Ave verum corpus (Byrd)—SATB

Call to Remembrance (Farrant)—SATB

Cantate Domino (Croce)—SATB

Cantate Domino (Hassler)—SATB

Dixit Maria (Hassler)—SATB

Ego sum panis vivus (Palestrina)—SATB

Gloria ad modum tubae (Dufay)—2-part canon

If Ye Love Me (Tallis)—SATB

Jesu dulcis memoria (attr. Victoria)—SATB

Jubilate Deo (di Lasso)—SATB

Non nobis Domine (attr. Byrd)—3-part canon

O magnum mysterium (Victoria)—SATB

Regina coeli (Palestrina)—SATB

Sicut cervus (Palestrina)—SATB

Secular:

April is in My Mistress' Face (Morley)—SATB

Bonzorno madonna (Scandello)—SATB

Fa una canzona (Vecchi)—SATB

Fair Phyllis I Saw (Farmer)—SATB

Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen (Isaac)—SATB

Je le vous dirai! (Certon)—SATB

Lautrier priay de danser (Costeley)—SATB

Matona, mia cara (di Lasso)—SATB

Mon coeur se recommande à vous (Lassus)—SATB

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Musica est Dei donum optimi (di Lasso)—SATB canon
 Music, Most Wondrous Lovely Art (Jeep)—SATB
 O occhi, manza mia (di Lasso)—SATB
 Weep, O Mine Eyes (Bennet)—SATB

Finally, here is a short list of further reading on Renaissance rehearsal and performance tips and techniques:

Butler, Abby, and Vicki Lind. "Renaissance Repertoire for Middle School Choirs." *Choral Journal* 46,

no. 1 (July 2005): 36-41.
 Cash, Stefanie L. "Score Preparation for Sacred Renaissance Choral Music." *ChorTeach* 10, no. 3 (Spring 2018): https://acda.org/files/Choral_Journals/CashCT10-3.pdf

Garretson, R.L. *Choral Music: History, Style, and Performance Practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993.

Kennedy, Mary. "Yesterday's Music for Today's Teens: Contextualizing Renaissance Music for High School Choral Classes." *Choral Journal* 40, no. 9 (April 2000): 23-30.

Shrock, Dennis. *Performing Renaissance Music*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2018.

Summer, Robert J. *Renaissance Music for the Choral Conductor*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013. ♦

¹ Reames, Rebecca. "High School Choral Directors' Description of Appropriate Literature for Beginning High School Choirs." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 49, no. 2 (2001): 122-135.

² Ward, Robert J., and Leila Heil. "Repertoire at ACDA National Conference 1960-2017." *Choral Journal* 57, no. 10 (May 2017): 36-42.

Reflections, Past and Future

Ben Ayling, Retired Directors Chair

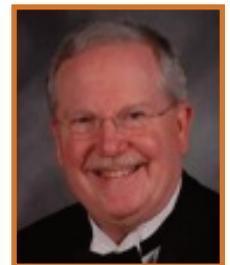
LIFE IS SO GOOD! After 36 years of active music teaching, retirement is feeling normal, my first granddaughter is due any day, and we are financially comfortable. All the hard work and planning has paid off... We are "living the dream"!

As I sit here reflecting on my forty-five plus years of OCDA/ACDA membership, I'm humbled by the immense influence OCDA

has had in my life both professionally and personally. As an undergraduate, membership was "encouraged" by the choral department at my university. Virtually all of us were members. Some continued while others dropped away, new friends were made by those of us who continued, and the true impact of OCDA became apparent: relationships.

As a student of meager means, I entered the choral profession with eyes wide open and with little experience.

My professors opened the door to this world through OCDA. Meeting world class conductors, both on stage and at our social gatherings, allowed me to learn of the possibilities that ex-



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The cost for this event is only **\$60 per golfer**. This price includes range balls, 18 holes of golf, riding cart, lunch, and various awards. There will be an awards presentation and lunch directly after golf at the club house.

To help properly plan for this event, you must register by completing the short form below and mailing a check for \$60 payable to Ben Ayling to: Ayling Open, 3820 Forest Trail, Findlay, OH 45840. Checks must be received by July 30, 2019. All profits will be donated to the Ohio Choral Directors Association Scholarship Fund.

Golf attire is required. Collared shirts and slacks/shorts. No steel spikes are allowed.

Rated #1 in Ohio and #33 in the U.S. for 2016, Red Hawk Run Golf Club is known for being a championship golf course in Northwest Ohio. Water is a prominent feature on the course with two lakes coming into play. There are also six holes that play across Sand Run Creek. In addition to the water, strategically placed bunkers lurk along the green sides.

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isted in the choral world. Experiential learning is a powerful tool that OCDA provides for the budding choral conductor—it is our calling.

Nothing is forever. I believe this in that all good things need to be cultivated in order to survive and flourish. It is important to nurture prospective choral conductors, and I can think of no better way than through OCDA. Consequently, as the Retired Directors Chair, I have proposed a scholarship fund to aid prospective and new choral directors in their participation in OCDA events. This can include financial help to attend conferences sponsored by OCDA and ACDA at the pleasure of the board. Need and talent are to be weighed in awarding these funds to worthy recipi-

ents. There are many ways that you can “pay it forward” and help.

All of us can make a donation to the OCDA Scholarship Fund. Any amount is helpful and can make a difference for our budding colleagues. I know, for example, that I contribute to NPR each year without reservation. I’m sure many of you do as well. Wouldn’t a regular contribution to our specific profession also be worthwhile? As I am making annual donations to the fund, I invite you to join me. Your donation can be sent to:

Kent VanDock,
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Delta, OH 43515

Another meaningful way to help is through end-of-life contributions.

Please consider adding the OCDA Scholarship Fund to your will. Any donation, large or small, will help to ensure our support of future choral directors.

One other way to help is to participate in or promote the Third Annual Ayling Open Golf Outing, the fundraiser for the scholarships. This year’s event is on August 2 and will once again be at Red Hawk Run near Findlay, Ohio. For just \$60 you get 18 holes, a cart, lunch, range balls, and a donation to OCDA. Details on the event are in this edition of the OCDA News.

I look forward to seeing many of you at this year’s Summer Conference and hope you will take a moment to join us in supporting the future of OCDA! ♦

We teach skills for a lifetime of musical enjoyment: a thought and an invitation

Frank Bianchi, Northeast Region Chair

AT A 3-DAY choral festival I was conducting recently, I was asked by one of the students, “what are some of your most memorable or most exciting musical experiences or memories?” I had to stop and think for a second. Hmm, I’ve had some incredible musical moments at concerts in some pretty impressive concert halls and with some amazingly talented people. However, it didn’t take long for me to reply “my most memorable experiences will always have to be when one student got *that look* in their eyes. The moment I was able to fi-

nally let go and know that someone’s life would be forever changed because they understood my world. They got it. They were able to go out into the world and ‘own’ their musicianship and have it for a lifetime to bring that same *look* and smile to their face time and time again.”

I don’t believe that any concert, any performance, or any grand stage or audience could ever replace that *look* and my knowing that that student would go on for the rest of his or her life seeking those musical moments that would

bring them incredible joy, comfort, hope, healing, love, and pleasure. Isn’t that *really* why we do what we do? I guess I’ve never had aspirations of being the “great maestro.” I’ve always felt more like a musical geologist roaming the hillsides for that untapped gem and then mining it until it was a priceless specimen.

After 43 years of doing this, the fact that that thrill still brings me great joy is the reason I formed the Baldwin Wallace University Men’s Chorus. Working with 100 guys





2019 SUMMER CONFERENCE

June 17-19, 2019
Otterbein University
Westerville, Ohio

FEATURING · Performances by outstanding choirs from throughout Ohio · Reading sessions offering music selected by Ohio Repertoire and Resources · Opportunities to watch conductors/clinicians work with the High School and Children's Honor Choirs · Opportunities for early-career choral conductors to chat with veteran conductors in one-on-one or small group "brainpicking" sessions.

Registration materials online beginning in February:

www.ohiocda.org

Graduate Credit Available – Reduced Student Registration Rate

Questions? Contact: Christopher Dent, Conference Chair
ocdaconference@gmail.com • 614.208.6778

CLINICIANS INCLUDE:



Dr. Jerry Blackstone,
Professor Emeritus of Music
University of Michigan



Abbie Betinis,
Composer

Children's Honor Choir Conductor:



Dr. Barbara Lamont,
Director of Choral Activities
Southeast Missouri State University

who all share the same work ethic, have passed the same audition requirements, have all committed to the expectations of our members and whose ages span over seven decades is one of the greatest thrills of my career. This year our endowment allows us to implement a new initiative: students who just graduated from college may participate in the Chorus at no cost until they turn 30. In addition, we've set up a CEU credit (1 semester hour per semester available through Baldwin Wallace University) for music educators participating in the Chorus.

Sometimes I think it's easy to get so lost in the hectic schedule and concert rigor and requirements that we lose sight of the fact that we are preparing our humans for the next chapter in their musical lives.

For the past three years, in an effort to keep guys singing together, I've hosted a Summer Sing on the first Tuesday of August at Baldwin Wallace. Each year we've had over 150 singers come together to experience brotherhood through music and music-making, and to experience the joy of making the world a better place with our

voices. The event is free and open to all male singers who have had college experience in choir or glee club, and who read music well. Musically advanced high school singers are also welcome. Pre-registration is required (use <http://tinyurl.com/BWSummerSing>).

Please consider joining us and please share this with your musical friends and alumni. Thank you for what each of you do to make the world a better place through the gift of music, and thank you for encouraging your singers to seek opportunities beyond their school years. ♦

Upcoming Events

OCDA Summer Conference

June 17–19, 2019, Columbus, OH

ohiocda.org

Baldwin Wallace Summer Glee Club Sing

August 6, 2019, Berea, OH

<http://tinyurl.com/BWSummerSing>

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