OCDANEWS

BULLETIN OF THE OHIO CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

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MARCH 1998

FROM THE OCDA PRESIDENT

I hope you all are enjoying a good choral season, and that you are finding inspiration in the music you sing with your choirs, and in the singers under your direction. I had the marvelous experience of touring to England and France with the Otterbein College Concert Choir in early December, and was reminded of the powerful musical message we choral musicians can deliver.

I would like to encourage as many of you as possible to consider bringing your musical message to the OCDA Summer Conference at Otterbein, June 29-July 1, 1998, by submitting a performance tape for consideration by the conference committee (the form was enclosed in the fall newsletter). This is the first year OCDA has asked for tapes, and we hope to get a good response: we have moved the conference closer to the end of the school year in hopes that directors will consider keeping their ensembles going for an extra couple of weeks and then bringing them to the conference. We want to hear your choirs!

In going through some papers at my mother's house two summers ago, I discovered a letter from Randall Thompson...my mother had written to him as part of a project in a choral methods class at the University of Minnesota in the late 1940s. She had a list of questions for him, and I believe his responses are fascinating (these are excerpts from the letter):

I love to write for voices—especially those of young and interested amateurs. I don't carry this theory to extremes, but what is singable by ordinary human beings is perhaps more apt to be more closely related to the hearts of ordinary human beings. This is why choral music and choral style are so important to all composers; and most of the good ones and all of the best ones have been pretty expert in writing for chorus.

Here are a few random ideas you might like to play with:

- 1) Good prosody follows a natural declamation of the text and is therefore no credit to any literate composer.
- 2) To underline the meaning—rhetorical or otherwise—by corresponding musical meaning is a much more difficult job.

- 3) In other words, proper "word rhythm" is a purely negative virtue; proper "harmonic rhythm" is where the art lies.
- 4) I rarely ask for high notes *pp*, or for low notes *forte* or *fortissimo*.
- 5) A distortion of natural word accentuation often throws light on the word itself.
- 6) The "Alleluia" is very sad. Note the date when it was written (1940). "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."
- 7) Crossing voices often makes an easy passage out of an otherwise difficult one.
- 8) The easier a piece is the better it is performed—and therefore, the more it will be enjoyed.

Best wishes to you on your voyage through choral music, which I hope will extend way beyond my little corner of the ocean.

Sincerely, Randall Thompson

Randall Thompson's letter prompted me to program "Alleluia." I was reminded again of his powerful musical message.

—Craig Johnson OCDA President

MISA CRIOLLA: A GEM

Over the years, I have become aware that far too many choral conductors and, therefore, audiences as well, are unacquainted with MISA CRIOLLA (Folk Mass), by Ariel Ramirez, Barnirez, born in Santa Fe, Argentina in 1921, has specialized in the folklore of his native country, and has made extensive studies of its origins and background. Written in 1963, this 19-minute gem is a setting of the Mass Ordinary, with text in Spanish and music based on the melodic and rhythmic traditions of Hispanic America--Argentina in particular.

My first experience with this piece took place in the mid 1970s. My assignment was to sing first tenor in the vocal duo. The performers and audiences loved the work. I have loved it ever since.

MISA CRIOLLA is composed for soloist or vocal duo, mixed chorus, harpsichord or piano, guitar, double bass, and various percussion instruments requiring (for best results) three players. I have, however, grudgingly performed it without guitar. The piece is, in the words of its composer, "...a synthesis of popular and liturgical styles." Each of the five movements is set to a different folk rhythm.

Conducting problems are minimal. Both the "Credo" and "Sanctus" sections appear to be in either 3/4 or 6/8 meter (both meters are, in fact, indicated in the score). One should experiment to find out which is best for him or her. In any event, I have found these two sections to be particularly challenging, at times exasperating, but always exhilarating.

Capturing the folk flavor of this Mass is, in my opinion, the most challenging aspect of all. During my first rehearsal those many years ago, we, the soloists and chorus, were instructed to sing not as we would

sing *MESSIAH*, but rather in the "mariachi" style...with plenty of appropriate body movement.

I know of only two commercial recording--the 1964 LP (Philips PCC 619), recorded in Buenos Aires, and featuring the popular Argentinian folk group, Los Fronterizos, and the 1987 CD (Philips 420 955-2) recorded in Spain and featuring the celebrated Spanish tenor Jose Carreras as soloist. I prefer the former recording for three reasons: 1) I believe it to be slightly better as an example of the folk flavor mentioned earlier. An extremely attractive earthiness exists in the sound of the duo as well as that of the chorus. 2) I prefer the duo over the soloist, possibly because that was the version used when I first performed the work. Then again, the lovely harmony found in the duo version which, for me, works better antiphonally with the chorus, is lost when only one voice is employed. 3) Although recorded thirty-four years ago on LP, the clarity and urgency of the instruments seem more pronounced. Unfortunately, the LP would be virtually impossible to secure these days. I am fortunate to have a friend from whom I may borrow this recording from time to time (at peril of my life, were I ever to damage it!). I am in the process of ascertaining whether or not this earlier recording has even been reproduced on tape or CD. At this point I do not have an answer. I obtained the Philips CD through my BMG subscription and, although | prefer the LP (others certainly may not). this CD is a strong rendition of the work. I can heartily recommend it. When listening to these recordings, it is obvious that there are several folk instruments present which are not listed in the score. Many of these instruments would be difficult, if not impossible, to acquire. In addition, many of the recorded orchestrations differ from those found in the score. These in no way detract from, but rather add to the effect of this work. The piano/vocal score (which includes

the instrumental scores) is published by Lawson-Gould (L.G. CO. 51362).

If you are into gems, give this one a look and a listen. I believe you will enjoy having *MISA CRIOLLA* in your collection.

-Robert Owen Jones

Robert Owen Jones is Professor of Music and Coordinator of Choirs and Applied Voice at Muskingum College in New Concord. He is currently serving as the OCDA East Central Region Chair.

OCDA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCDA SUMMER CONFERENCE

Otterbein College Westerville, Ohio Monday - Wednesday, June 29 - July 1, 1998

CLINICIANS:

•Sigrid Johnson,
St. Olaf College
•Kenneth Phillips,
University of Iowa
•James Gallagher,
The Ohio State University
•Other Outstanding
Clinicians
•Reading Sessions
•Performing Ensembles
•Exhibits

ACDA NATIONAL CONVENTION

Chicago February 24-27, 1999

HE NEVER FAILED ME YET: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL STYLE

Have you wanted to introduce your choir members to gospel music but felt intimidated because you were not sure of the correct style? Have you avoided gospel music because your accompanist does not impro-If you've answered yes to either or both of these questions, this article is for you. There are increasing numbers of gospel songs which are accessible for directors who have not been immersed in the style. In this article, I will walk you through one of these octavos, section by section, giving some of my own "tried and true" performance suggestions. I have personally directed this song with a church choir, my university gospel choir, at the Pennsylvania Music Educators Conference with a group of 140 high school students and at a workshop with nearly 200 junior high, high school, and college students. It is a crowd-pleaser!

He Never Failed Me Yet was written by Robert Ray and is published by Jensen Publications, Inc. The octavo, number 447-08014, costs \$1.25 per copy and is scored for SATB. However, this song can be done by a girls chorus or a SAB choir, eliminating the bass part. Jensen offers an instrumental pack (44708015) as well as a performance accompaniment cassette (44708016). However, the choral octavo already has parts supplied for guitar, piano, bass and drums. If you use your own accompaniment, you have a greater opportunity to create authentic gospel. Because Robert Ray has done such a great job of capturing the gospel sound, you can sing the song just as written and have a good performance. However, you can really spice up your performance by taking advantage of some of the suggestions offered in this article. Grab a score and let's make music!

The tempo marking indicates that the quarter note should equal 104. That is really too fast and feels more authentic if it is taken at about 60. The accompaniment should be very marked with the quarter notes feeling shorter than full value. Throughout the song, think marcato rather than legato. Nothing kills a traditional gospel song quicker than singing the lines too legato. Each word should be sung rhythmically and slightly shorter than the indicated rhythm. In measure four, instead of singing "mercy" on beats one and two as written, change the rhythm so that beat one becomes a quarter-eighth note triplet. Anticipate the second chord on the eighth note and repeat on beat two. In this way it will sound "mer-ercy" (matching the rhythm in the accompaniment). Use this same technique in measure 14 for "serve him." Similarly, instead of pronouncing "every" in three syllables, make it two (e -e-'vry). One word about text: if you are in a school situation where singing "Jesus" may cause problems, simply substitute "God" and alter the rhythm.

There are two solo sections. If your singers are not experienced in improvisation, they can simply sing what Ray has written. You can have an entire section sing the solo part if that would work best for your ensemble. However, if you want to broaden the experience, choose a singer with a good ear and a willing attitude and try these few simple techniques. First, fill in any skips in the melody with step-wise movement (example m., 23 "able", sing D-C-Bb, in m.. 27 "keep you," sing G-A-Bb etc.). Second, play with the tonality. Sing either the D or Db at measure 22. Likewise, sing either the A or Ab in measure 29. Third, use the written rhythms merely as a guide. Sing the indicated words within the measure. but freely interpret the rhythms. Fourth, play with tonal color. Unlike classical singing which strives for

consistency throughout the vocal range, gospel thrives on differing colors, often within phrases! Therefore, when the notes dip into the chest voice, really darken it.

The vamp (coda) is one of the most important parts of a gospel song. This is where you can really have some fun. It is normal to invert the chords, often starting in the lowest position and moving upward. The first few times you sing measures 55-56, have the sopranos sing the alto line, the altos sing the tenor line, and the tenors sing the soprano line an octave lower. If you're using basses, they will keep the same line. Maintain the rhythms indicated in the score except sing "yet" on beat 3 (instead of as a syncopation). After a few times, sing the parts as written in the score.

You can also isolate the sections, having each section sing its line alone. (This is a good time for choristers to "encourage" the other choir members for singing their line enthusiastically.) Conclude with all voices singing together. Have the instrumentalists take a "break" while the choir sings the vamp a capella at a forte! I have each section sing the line alone, then when all voices sing together again, I cut the instruments for a couple of repetitions. Create a second, minivamp by repeating measures 57-58 three times. There are two fermatas and a molto rit, indicated in measure 59. Observe these directions and sing the words as emphatically as possible (loud with power!). Have the choir sing the final word without the instruments. Bring the instruments in for a big "hit" as the final sound.

> ----Dr. Donna Cox Repertoire and Standards Chair for Ethnic/Multicultural Music

Dr. Donna Cox is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Dayton, where she teaches aural skills, African American Sacred Music and directs two choral ensembles.



Mentoring Program New Teachers

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THE POWER OF THE CHORAL EXPERIENCE

Often in the midst of recruiting singers, learning music, planning and running rehearsals, and rushing to meet printing deadlines, we forget to remind ourselves and our singers just why the choral art remains such a powerful force in our lives, in the lives of those who sing in our choirs, and in the lives of millions of singers around the world. Several years ago there appeared an attempt at defining "the choral experience" in an issue of the *Choral Journal*.

I have long since lost that issue, nor do I remember who was responsible for the article—but I have included the following (freely paraphrased) version in letters to my own choir on more than one occasion. It has quite often been helpful in reminding me of the 'up side' of what we are all about—and I offer it today as a word of encouragement to all of us who direct not only community choirs, but singers of any ensemble who look to music as one of the stabilizing forces in their lives. Enjoy.

We as choral singers hold a powerful gift in our hands. We can literally articulate the aspirations of humanity in a language that transcends logic and rationality to reach eternal and classic truths. We can model the power of spiritual, social, and cultural diversity; and we can instruct those who hear our music on the effectiveness of a bonded experience in growth and learning.

We come from many different backgrounds and experiences. We are quite diverse in race, creed, and religion. Our ages (in the case of our community choir here in Akron) span six decades! We really do not know one another very well since our time together is mostly spent rehearsing. Our spiritual journeys are as diverse

as we are. There are among us agnostics, pessimists and optimists mingled with fundamentalists, traditionalists, and mystics. There are perhaps times we cannot even speak to one another about certain subjects because the breadth of opinion that we hold (arising from our histories, experience and uniqueness) creates virtually non-negotiable barriers.

However, when we sing... when we study, rehearse, and perform music... there are no barriers, no political agendas, no polarization. For a few brief moments we are brought together—our humanity alone allowing fears to be allayed, prayers to be freely elevated, and lives transformed.

We walk away . . new people, eternally bound to one another. In some mysterious way this thing called music has literally connected us to each other forever.

I challenge you to regularly reflect on why you love to sing, why you have become a member of the Masterworks Chorale (or any ensemble), and why you commit so much of your time and energy to the choral art.

May we constantly strive to walk away . . . a new people, eternally bound to each other through music!

-Frank Jacobs

Frank Jacobs is musical director of the Summit Choral Society in Akron, and OCDA Repertoire and Standards Chair for Community Choirs.

Materials for the June issue of OCDA NEWS should be submitted by May 15 to:

Ronald Morgan, editor 2306 Delaware Drive Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44106

(H): 216/229-0457 (W): 216/295-4219 Fax: 216/295-4277 email: rgm524@aol.com

OCDA INITIATES AWARDS PROGRAM

Beginning with the 1999 Summer Conference, a program to recognize individuals for achievement in and service to choral music and OCDA or ACDA will be initiated.

The Distinguished Service Award will be presented to one OCDA member annually for significant service to OCDA/ACDA. Service criteria include the following: (a.) state, division, or national elected office; (b.) state division, or national board, (c.) state division or national convention chair. clinician or official; (d.) OCDA/ACDA division or national workshop sponsor or clinician; (e.) other activity which furthered organizational objectives. Nominations specifying the qualifications of the nominee should be submitted to the OCDA President by December 15. Nominees not selected in a given year may be reconsidered in the subsequent year without additional nomination. Previous recipients of this award and active holders of elected office are ineligible.

The Outstanding Achievement Award will recognize specific achievements during the calendar year preceding the Summer Conference. There are two levels of recognition: 1. state or division, 2. national or international. The citation will recognize: (a.) a recipient of a major award for personal achievement in choral music from a recognized state, national or international source; (b.) recipient of a grand, first second or third prize, at a noncommercial regional, national, or international festival or competition, when only ONE group is chosen from a significant number of competitors; (c.) recognition for a significant activity or achievement which brings positive recognition to OCDA, ACDA or choral music at the state, national, or international level. Nominations specifying the qualifying achievement must be received by the OCDA secretary by April 1. Nominees are not required to be OCDA or ACDA members. While only one award will be given to a recipient in a given year, more than one achievement may be cited in the presentation.

-Submitted by James Myers

CHORAL PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BUCKEYE STATE

March 1

A Festival of African-American Choral Music, Otterbein Concert Choir, Kinderchor and Gospel Choir, Craig Johnson, Amy Chivington, and LaJoyce Daniel-Cain, 7:00 p.m.

March 7

An Evening of Vocal Chamber Music, Otterbein College Vocal Ensemble, Craig Johnson, conductor, 8:00 p.m.

March 8

Wright State University Madrigal Singers, Women's Chorale and Chamber Players, Hank Dahlman, conductor. WSU Creative Arts Center Concert Hall, 4:00 p.m.

March 10

TUNE-UP CONCERT, Winton Woods High School Choirs, 7:30 p.m.

March 12

J. S. Bach's *St. John Passion*, The Masterworks Chorale, Donna Tozer Wipfli, conductor, with the Toledo Symphony, 7:30 p.m.

March 14

The Masterworks Concert, The Choirs of Lorain County Community College, Nancy Davis, conductor, 7:30 p.m.

Otterbein College Men's and Women's Choruses, David Monseur, conductor, 8:00 p.m.

March 19

Pre-Contest Concert, Thomas Worthington High School, Jerry Parsons, conductor, 7:30 p.m.

March 22

The Hiram College Choir, Ronald Morgan, conductor; the Hiram Men's Chorus, Tina Dreisbach, director.

Celebrating Brahms and Mendelssohn, The Singers' Club of Cleveland, Thomas Shellhammer, conductor, Cleveland State University, 5:00 p.m.

March 28

The Artistic Preparation of Select Treble Choral Literature in the Children's Choir, Jean Ashworth Bartle with the Otterbein College Kinderchor.

March 29

Mendelssohn *ELIJAH*, Dayton Philharmonic Chorus, Hank Dahlman, conductor. Westminster Presbyterian Church, Dayton, 7:30 p.m.

Ashland Symphonic Youth Chorus, Sandra B. Brown conductor at Zion Lutheran Church, Canton, 3:00 p.m.

April 2

Pieces of 8, A Vocal Jazz Ensemble Otterbein College, 7:30 p.m.

April 3

BGSU Jazz Ensemble, Paul Hunt, conductor, 8:00 p.m.

April 5

BGSU Men's Chorus and OSU Men's Glee Club, Richard Mathey and James Gallagher, conductors, Kobacker Hall, 4:00 and 8:00 p.m.

Mount Union Alliance Chorale, Scott Dorsey, conductor, Music of Schubert and Stainer, Alliance High School, 3:00 p.m.

April 7

Show Choir Night, Chaney High School, George Hughes, vocal director, Youngstown, 7:00 p.m.

April 10

Hale's AN AMERICAN REQUIEM, The combined choirs of Epiphany Lutheran Church, Hank Dahlman, conductor. Centerville, 7:30 p.m.

April 13

Mount Union College Choral Chamber Ensembles Concert, Scott Dorsey, conductor, Presser Recital Hall, 8:00 p.m.

April 19

BGSU Collegiate Chorale, Mark Munson, conductor, Kobacker Hall, 3:00 p.m.

An Evening with Amadeus, The Denison University Concert Choir and Orchestra, William Osborne conductor, 7:30 p.m.

April 21

Deja Vu, Grove City High School, 7:00 p.m.

April 24

The Denison Singers, William Osborne, conductor, at Grace Lutheran Church, Westerville, 7:30 p.m.

Mount Union College Choir Concert, Scott Dorsey, conductor, Presser Recital Hall, 8:00 p.m.

April 25

BGSU A Cappella Choir and University Women's Chorus, Edward Maclary, conductor, Kobacker Hall, 8:00 p.m.

The Denison Singers at First Baptist Church of Shaker Heights, William Osborne, conductor, 7:30 p.m.

April 26

West Shore Chorale and Orchestra, John Drotleff, conductor. *Lord Nelson Mass*; Mendelssohn, *Hear My Prayer*; Handel, *Zadok the Priest*, Rocky River Methodist Church, 7:30 p.m.

Lift High the Cross: A Choral Tribute to the Life and Work of Paul Christiansen, Coshocton Community

CHORAL PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BUCKEYE STATE

Choir and Children's Choir, Charles R. Snyder, conductor. 3:00 -7:30 p.m.

Antico to Moderno: Italian Music from the 16th and 17th Centuries, The Denison Singers with The Early Interval, William Osborne, conductor. Burke Recital Hall, 3:00 p.m.

Otterbein Kinderchor, Amy Chivington, conductor, Otterbein College, Battelle Fine Arts Center, 3:00 and 7:00 p.m.

May 3

Bowling Green Children's Chorus, Isabel Barbara O'Hagin, Mark Munson, conductors, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 4:00 p.m.

Chamber Singers of the Ashland Symphonic Youth Chorus, Sandra B. Brown, conductor with Oberlin Choral Spectrum.

Choralfest '98, Ashtabula County Choral Music Society, James Gallagher, guest conductor, Edgewood High School, Ashtabula, 7:30 p.m.

May 7

SENIOR RECOGNITION CON-CERT, featuring commissioned work by David Brunner, Winton Woods High School, Forest Park, 7:30 p.m.

May 8

Spring Concert, Ashland Symphonic Youth Chorus, Sandra B. Brown, conductor, Ashland, 7:30 p.m.

May 8-9

Psalms and Songs, Cincinnati Boychoir, Randall Wolfe, conductor, Trinity Episcopal Church, Covington KY, 8:00 p.m.

May 9

Presidential Commencement Concert, Mount Union College Choir and

Wind Ensemble, Rodman Theatre, 8:00 p.m.

May 10

Schubert *Mass in A-Flat*, Yellow Springs Community Chorus, Ruth Bent, conductor.

May 16

Spring Concert, the Masterworks Chorale, Donna Tozer Wipfli, conductor, Collingwood Presbyterian Church, Toledo, 8:00 p.m.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Otterbein College Choirs, the Westerville Civic Symphony, Cowan Hall, 8:00 p.m.

Spring Concert, Shawnee High School Choirs, Carol J. Todd, conductor, Springfield, 7:00 p.m.

May 17

Otterbein Vocal Ensemble, Craig Johnson, conductor, Church of the Master, Westerville, 7:00 p.m.

Spring Concert, Riverside Children's Choirs, Sevilla B. Morse, conductor, Rocky River United Methodist Church, 3:00 P.M.

May 19

Winton Woods High School Varsity Ensemble and Stage Band Variety Show, Forest Park, 7:30 p.m.

May 21

Spring Choral Concert, William Zurkey, conductor, Avon Lake High School.

Spring Concert, Grove City High School, Peg Weber and Stephen Caracciolo, conductors, 7:30 p.m.

May 22

Romeo and Juliet Revisited, The Singers' Club of Cleveland, Thomas

Shellhammer, conductor, Cleveland State University, 8:00 p.m.

May 27

Spring Choral Concert, Learwood Middle School (Avon Lake), Michael Lisi, conductor.

May 28

SHOWTIME 98, Thomas Worthington High School, Jerry Parsons, conductor, 7:30 p.m.

Spring Concert, Chaney High School Choirs, George A. Hughes, conductor, Youngstown, 7:30 p.m.

May 29-31

SING CINCINNAT!! Featured performers/performances include: David Hykes and the Harmonic Choir, the 45th Annual Ohio BoyChoir Festival, Parachute Express, a Gospel Showcase, and more.

May 30

Spring Pops Concert, Lorain County Community College, Nancy Davis, conductor. Stocker Center, 7:30 p.m.

Knox Choraliers Spring Concert, Diane Reiss, conductor, Mount Vernon High school, 7:30 p.m.

Opus One, David Monseur, conductor, Otterbein College, Battelle Fine Arts Center, 4:30 p.m.

May 31

Spring Concert of the University of Cincinnati Choruses, Robert Lamb and Jonathan Talberg, conductors, Patricia Corbett Theater, 4:00 p.m.

March 6, 1999

20th Annual Coshocton Show Choir Invitational. Openings for 15 choirs in two divisions. Contact Thomas E. Havelka, Coshocton High School, 740-622-7861; Fax: 740-623-0774; Email: thavelka@coshocton.com

\mathcal{OCDA} officers and repertoire & standards chairs

PRESIDENT:	CRAIG JOHNSON	SOUTH CENTRAL REGION:	JERRY PARSONS	COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY:	HANK DAHLMAN
556 Cresswood Place	Westerville, 43081	6590 Steitz Road	Powell, 43065	4968 Harwich Court	Kettering, 45440
(H): 614/898-9595	(O): 614/823-1558	(H): 614/881-4193	(O): 614/431-6565	(H): 937/433-9529	(O): 937-775-3721
Fax: 614/823-1118			76747.1252@compuserv.com	Fax: 937/775-3786	hdahlman@wright.edu
VICE-PRESIDENT:	PETER JARJISIAN	SOUTHWEST REGION:	RICHARD WESP	COMMUNITY CHOIR:	FRANK JACOBS
P.O. Box 1260	Athens, 45701	7972 Stonegate Drive	Cincinnati, 45255-3166	2444 Shadow Ridge Lane	Fairlawn, 44333
(H): 614/593-0263	(O): 614/593-4231	(H): 513/474-4106	(O): 513/232-2772, ext. 52	(H): 330/666-8175	(O): 330/434-7464
Fax: 614/593-1429	jarjisia@oak.cats.ohiou.edu	Fax: 513/232-3146		Fax: 330-434-8564	summitchoral@juno.com
PRESIDENT-ELECT:	DAVID BELL	OCDA NEWS EDITOR:	RONALD MORGAN	MUSIC & WORSHIP:	JUDITH HIGBEE
2065 Resor Road	Fairfield, 45014	2306 Delaware Drive	Cleveland Heights, 44106-3116	19770 Upper Valley Drive	Euclid, 44117
(H): 513/829-4813	(O): 513/825-7840, ext. 27	(H): 216/229-0457	(O): 216/295-4219	(H): 216/481-4548 judithhigb	@aol.com 216/321-8880
Fax: 513/825-7990	bell_d@hcca.ohio.gov	Fax: 216/295-4277	RGM524@aol.com	ETHNIC/MULTICULTURAL:	DONNA COX
TREASURER:	ROBERT M. HARTIGAN	TWO-YEAR COLLEGES:	NANCY L. DAVIS	1124 Harvard Blvd.	Dayton, 45406
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(H): 513/683-8524	(O): 513/825-7840	(H): 216-647-6379	(O): 216/365-5222		cox@yar.udayton.edu
Fax: 513/825-7990	e-mail: mhartigan@aol.com		ndavis@lorainccc.edu	FEMALE CHOIRS:	LUCINDA HOUCK
SECRETARY:	JILL PRIEST	BOYCHOIRS:	DANIEL GREENE	193 Fairfax Road	Marion, 43302
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(H): 614/967-0420	(O): 614/927-3846	614/890-9127	greene114@osu.edu	Fax: 614/387-0227	lkhouck@zero-1.com
Fax: 614/964-0088		CHILDREN'S CHOIRS:	SANDRA BROWN	MALE CHORUS:	JAMES MYERS
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144 Duff Drive	Avon Lake, 44012	(H): 419/289-1597	(O): 419/289-2487	(H): 614/888-3259	jcmyers@infinet.com
(H): 216/930-2863	(O): 216/933-8142	Fax: 419/289-2487		JAZZ/SHOW CHOIRS:	BARBARA STERBANK
	mlisi@erienet.net	JR. HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL:	ANN USHER	4875 Fairlawn Road	Lyndhurst, 44124
NORTHWEST REGION:	JANINE BAUGHMAN	2201 Lincoln Avenue	Parma, 44134	(H): 216/381-1613	(O): 216/691-2088
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(H): 419/352-1042	Fax: 419-823-4381	Fax 216/249-8034	smsstom@en.com	YOUTH/STUDENT:	BETSY BURLEIGH
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(H): 614/826-7393	(O): 614/826-8103	(H): 614/798-0394	(O): 614/487-5274	Fax: 216-687-9279	bburleigh@mail.asic.csuohio.edu
Fax: 614/826-8404	rjones@muskingum.edu	HISTORIAN:	JOHN DROTLEFF	RETIRED MEMBERS:	B. NEIL DAVIS
		12700 Lake Avenue, #2607	Lakewood, 44107	1510 Lewis Drive	Lakewood, 44107
		216/226-7659	drotlef@en.com	(H): 216/521-2284	(O): 216/687-3959

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Ronald Morgan, editor 2306 Delaware Drive Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44106-3116

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