

From Your President

Conferences, Conferences, Conferences

IN THIS SEASON OF CONFERENCES, I enjoyed seeing many of you at the OMEA Professional Development Conference in Columbus, and I look forward to seeing more of you at the ACDA Central and North Central Divisional Conference in Chicago! While these winter months in Ohio can be challenging in terms of our local climate and the busyness that adjudicated events, festivals, concerts, competitions, musicals, tours, etc. bring, I always look forward to reconnecting with friends and colleagues, and finding inspiration at these meetings. Congratulations to all of our OCDA members who performed with their choirs and/or served as clinicians at OMEA conference! Also, know that Ohio is well represented at the ACDA divisional conference by event co-chair and ACDA Central Division President Mark Munson (Bowling Green State University) and performances by The Capital University Chapel Choir (Lynda Haseler), the Miami University Men's Glee Club (Jeremy Jones), and the Columbus International Children's Choir (Tatiana Kats).

At this point, the warmth of summer probably seems like a lifetime away for most of us, but I encourage you to mark your calendars and reserve June 18–20, 2018, for the OCDA Summer Conference at Otterbein University! I'm thrilled to announce that our headliners for this year will be Hilary Apfelstadt and Jake Runestad. Many of us know and love Hilary from her 17 years on the faculty at The Ohio State University and her fairly recent term as ACDA National President. Currently, she serves as Elmer Isler Chair of Conducting at the University of Toronto. Dr. Apfelstadt is a renowned conductor and author with special expertise in conducting pedagogy, rehearsal techniques, professional leadership, and Canadian repertoire. I'm glad that we in the OCDA will have the opportunity to reconnect with her this summer and benefit from her wealth of knowledge and practical experience.

Jake Runestad is one of the most widely performed and commissioned living choral composers in the United States. He has been dubbed a "choral rock star" by American Public Media and his music has been called "highly imaginative" by the *Baltimore Sun* and "stirring and uplifting" by the *Miami Herald*. Here in Ohio, several of our colleges and universities recently had



*OCDA President
Richard Schnipke*

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the opportunity to work with Jake through our OCDA College and University Commissioning Consortium, from which Jake’s “Please Stay” was conceived. In addition to his accolades as a composer, Runestad is also an accomplished conductor, with engagements including Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles’ Disney Hall, and the Sydney Opera House, as well as residencies at multiple universities across the U.S. I look forward to Jake sharing his music, his compositional techniques, and his insight as a composer/conductor with our OCDA Summer Conference attendees!

The Summer Conference also will feature performances by our OCDA Women’s, Men’s, and Children’s Honor Choirs. Gayle Walker (Otterbein University) will conduct the men, Peter Jarjisian (Ohio University, emeritus) will conduct the women, and Kristina MacMullen (The Ohio State University) will serve as the Children’s Honor Choir conductor. I hope you will encourage your students to take advantage of the opportunity to work with these wonderful people! Evaluation of applications for Ohio performing ensembles is currently in process and we look forward to

hearing several of our state’s finest ensembles perform at the conference. As always, the conference will feature several reading sessions lead by our OCDA Repertoire and Resources Chairs, as well as roundtable discussions, exhibitors, and our annual conference party, sponsored by Bob Rogers Travel.

More information pertaining to the 2018 Summer Conference, including a registration form, is included in this newsletter. I look forward to connecting personally with you in Columbus and Chicago this month and at Otterbein in June. Happy conferencing! ♦

The Changing Female Voice (Yes—Female!)

Kristina MacMullen, R&R Chair for Women’s Choirs

IN MY THIRD YEAR of teaching, I attended Dr. Lynne Gackle’s interest session addressing the female voice change. Remarkably, this was uncharted territory to me. In my undergraduate methods class, we spent the majority of our “voice change” discussion dealing with the *male* voice change. We reviewed

the most well-known resources, divergent philosophies on the matter, and pedagogic considerations, and then moved on to the next topic.

Gackle’s session was revolutionary to me. Her research was revolutionary to our field. She acknowledged the importance of tending to the female voice change. She of-

fered a codified structure in understanding the stages, and also provided a framework for diagnosing and distinguishing the various phases. I can say that her session proved to be the single most valuable session I have ever attended in my sixteen



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years of teaching. I still use principles of her work at Ohio State. Although largely settled in their voice change, many of our first-year students still present changing voice characteristics. I would like to speak to the importance of voice testing *all* of your students, and to the importance of *teaching* them the technical changes that they can expect as they walk through this unstable time.

Much like external maturation in the adolescent, the invisible and audible changes only heighten a student's self-consciousness. Often, a student experiencing the normal symptoms of a healthy voice change can mistake these challenges for lack of ability. If students are armed with information, they can anticipate the inevitable bumps

in the road, and will be more likely to sing through the voice change. I recommend that, at the middle school level, teachers take the time to individually voice test every student. I understand that you may feel reluctant to spend a hefty portion of time on this activity, but I encourage you to consider it an investment in your program that will yield longitudinal dividends. In my final year as a middle school teacher, I faithfully voice tested every single one of my 350 students. Once your students know the drill, it will move *very* quickly. With continued practice, you will become fluent and able to distinguish particular stages efficiently. This will, however, only come with practice.

In my experience, the majority

of choristers in most public-school choral programs are sopranos and altos. Consequently, many of us find ourselves recruiting tenors and basses every year. For various reasons, this is a perennial consideration. We are all very familiar with the attention paid to this topic at most conventions—sessions related to recruiting young men are almost certain to be included on the schedule. In contrast, have you ever seen a session offering recruitment strategies for young women? Similarly, we also see much attention paid to the male voice change, and far less time attending to the female voice change. If the majority of our constituents are female, shouldn't we be all the more mindful of the experience through one of their most vulnerable and unstable

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times of life as a singer? In my experience, doing so normalizes vocal “issues” (breathiness, loss of accuracy, instability) associated with voice change, and gives the young singer hope that they have much to which they can look forward as a vocalist. Yes, they are indeed a work in progress!

Getting Started

Begin by educating yourself. If you are not familiar with Gackle’s work, there is a terrific [video](#) on YouTube that offers the entire session. (You may also find this video by searching “Understanding the Adolescent Voice Lynne Gackle.”) It is a distillation of her work, and also features recordings of the various stages. For a more in-depth study, consider Gackle’s book, *Finding Ophelia’s Voice, Opening Ophelia’s Heart*, published by Heritage Music Press. You can also find various articles relating to the topic authored by Gackle with a simple Google search. I suggest Gackle’s article, “The Adolescent Female Voice: Characteristics of Change and Stages of Development,” featured in the 1991 March issue of the *Choral Journal*, as a terrific resource including useful charts and diagrams.

Educating Your Singers

This is a critical step. Take time in your regular rehearsal to address the entire ensemble regarding voice change. I assure you that your students will be rapt! This is relevant and meaningful information that brings some sense to their day-to-day experience. Talk them through the physiological changes. Describe the various stages. Predict the symptoms. Imitate the sounds. They will relate! Finally, create a card/sheet with the various stages associated with their gender, and ask them to participate in diagnosing their stages of development.

Voice Testing

Gackle offers a framework to achieve accurate identification of

the various stages. She begins by asking students to sing “My Country ’Tis of Thee,” noting their navigation of the leap of a fifth. This begins your work as a detective. While this step is very useful, I eventually elected to begin at step two simply to save time. Certainly, I could only afford to do this as I became more adept at recognizing the signs of vocal mutation.

Step two involves identifying a student’s “Speaking Fundamental Frequency” (SFF). This is achieved by having students speak from one side of the room to the other. You can have them use the alphabet or count. They simply need to raise their voice. Often, when speaking quietly students will use a pitch that is lower than their true SFF. By requiring a student to speak more loudly, one is able to more accurately assess the student’s SFF. Correlate the determined SFF with the stage to which it corresponds.

Next you must determine whether or not the student has developed a passaggio (or passagios), also referred to as register break(s)/lifting point(s). When fully mature, the female voice will have two register breaks. The first appears between G4 and B4, and indicates that a student is in Stage IIA. The second appears between D5 and F#5, and indicates that a student is in Stage IIB of their voice change. The lower passaggio is most apparent. The second is less extreme. Begin by asking a student to sing a scale in C major on the vowel “ah.” Note the characteristics (clarity, breathiness, resonance, presence of vibrato). If you hear the development of the first register

shift, move to the key of G major, and repeat the exercise. One lift indicates Stage IIA. Two indicate Stage IIB.

Other Considerations

It is important that we also utilize other clues in the process of identification. Does the student more closely resemble a child physically? Do they more closely resemble an adult? Evaluation of external appearance is not a foolproof method, yet it can substantiate a suspicion. Bear in mind, however, that each student is entirely unique, and, in my experience, ca-

pable of defying the norm.

Certainly, any time that we address gender-specific issues in the classroom, we must be considerate and aware of our students who do not identify as binary. The field of transgender vocal development is new and uncharted. I believe that we will see continued development in understanding the longitudinal results of gender transition. Until we have more established outcomes and expectations regarding the result of hormone treatments, compassion and a thoughtful approach will go far in caring for all of your students, regardless of gen-

der expression and identification.

A little encouragement will always go far with your students. Teach them to embrace the beauty and instability of their own personal evolution. Allow individuals to elect a different voice part if they deem it necessary. Ask that they see you when they perceive a change in their instrument. Quickly voice test them again, and confirm/negate their suspicions. It is always a wonderful experience to hear each of your students individually. Enjoy the process and the honor of walking through this pivotal experience with them. ♦

HELP! I Have 5 Choirs of Varying Abilities and I'm Losing My Mind Planning for Them

Frank Bianchi, Northeast Region Chair

I HAVE BEEN OUT OF A public school classroom for almost 12 years now, but I've been fortunate over the years to still work with high school students. I do miss the daily challenge of teaching musical skills to students of all abilities and learning levels. For a good part of my career I was teaching seven choirs of various abilities at the high school level—at times almost 500 students a day. There were days I thought I would lose my mind trying to keep up with all the ensembles and make sure each ensemble could advance (if they chose) to the next level of proficiency. Here are some tips that helped me keep my sanity while maintaining a comprehensive

course of study for my students and program.

1. First and foremost, plan ahead. Set realistic goals based on the ability of each group you have. Meet them where they are musically and take them to the next level. I would have goals for each of my choirs as to what I wanted them to know at the end of a quarter, semester, and year. I would test them often to make sure they achieved those goals.
2. Make sure your students all understand musical language. Teach them to read both treble and bass clefs. Test them often. When you direct them, talk music to them.

For example, “We’re begin-

ning on page three, second system, beat three—on the G.” Or better yet, ask them what the letter name of the note is where you want to begin. How many counts does that note get? And so forth.

3. Set a sequential plan of what you want each ensemble to learn and know by the end of the quarter, semester, and year. I would have a big annual chart on my wall, color-coded for each choir. At the beginning of each week I'd list what skills we would cover, which included intervallic and rhythmic skills. This way I could track the work and





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progress of each ensemble. We'd have an 'interval du jour' for each class. I'd write that interval on the board. We'd sing it as part of our warm-ups and I'd ask the students to circle it every time it occurred in their scores as we were working.

4. Make sight-reading a part of your everyday rehearsal—not just something you address two weeks before contest. Use the repertoire you're teaching and incorporate it into your lesson. It doesn't really take up that much time and the return on the investment is monumental. Long before OMEA required sight-reading as part of the adjudication process I was teaching reading skills to all of my students and testing them often. It just was part of what we did.

5. Check the progress of your students often. This can be as simple as a quick five-question quiz on a half sheet of paper given as soon as the bell rings and addressing whatever concept you're working on. I didn't wait for them to get settled at the start of class. My class started the second the bell rang and my students knew that if they were handed a piece of paper with 5 questions (answer spots) on it when they walked in the room, they'd better be in their seats, name on the paper and ready for the first question when that bell rang. This quiz could be as simple as: M3 or m3, P4 or A4, major or minor triad, minor or diminished triad, root position or first inversion. One concept at a time, one week at a time.

6. Write out your warm-ups for every class and vary them every day, week, and month. Keep a record of them. There are literally hundreds of ways to say the same thing. Find them. Write them down and keep track of what you've taught. I have kept a book of warm-ups I've used and have separated them into categories to teach specific concepts. Often, I would use the same warm-ups for all of the groups and just modify their difficulty based on the level of the ensemble. The warm-ups were geared specifically to teach sequential vocal techniques.

7. Take the time to choose repertoire that helps reinforce the concepts you are teaching. Teach age- and skill-appropriate literature.



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Keep a filing cabinet of music labeled as to class (AA, A, B, C), level, and skill(s) that each piece can be used to teach.

These are just a few of the things that worked for me during the 30 years I taught high school. I was al-

ways mindful of the fact that I was one of the only teachers in the building that got to see my students for more than one or two years, and I would always remind myself of the fact that I was teaching my students life-long skills and a love of music that would allow them to make

music for the rest of their lives. My greatest joys in teaching came in my classroom—not on a stage—when that one student’s face lit up with the “I got it” look.

Enjoy the journey with your students. It’s one that I’ve cherished for a lifetime. ♦

Recruiting the Male (Non-)Singer

Jason Falkofsky, R&R Chair for Men’s Choirs

THE RECRUITMENT OF MALES to choral ensembles garners attention and generates discussion among choral directors of all levels. At any given music conference, clinics and workshops dedicated to this topic typically fill rooms at or past capacity with ensemble directors eager to hear the newest breakthrough strategy or sales pitch to employ so that they may better persuade more males to join their choruses. Likewise, trade journals regularly feature articles devoted to this issue, with most focusing on younger singers at the junior high and high school levels. Touted recruitment strategies typically encompass repertoire choices, rehearsal techniques, doing everything in your power to make choral singing appear more stereotypically masculine, and—especially for the mixed ensemble director—the use of female members of the chorus as leverage. While the latter two strategies are questionable, they are nonetheless frequently recommended, especially for the school

choral program. However, these strategies neglect an important factor in the choice to join an ensemble: the perspective and intention of the potential male recruit.

Research suggests that males who choose to participate in a chorus do so because they enjoy singing and perceive themselves to be good singers. Traditional recruitment strategies, therefore, may only be effective with those males who possess a preexisting interest in singing. In my experience, these males are few and are likely already in your ensemble. But what about those males who have no self-perception (or worse, a negative self-perception) of their musical ability or have never considered joining a chorus? This is a much larger pool of potential choral singers. How can we better encourage them to join and find success in a choral ensemble?

Throughout my career, the choirs I have directed (including high school, collegiate, and church choirs) have all contained a rela-

tively high percentage of members who had little to no background or interest in singing or in music prior to joining the choir. Such situations, as you can imagine, come with a unique set of challenges. The rewards, however, are tremendous for all involved, especially for the individual who has newly discovered the contribution he can make with his voice.

Here are some recruitment do’s and don’ts, based on my experience in recruiting males who may have never considered joining a chorus, or are reluctant to do so.

First, don’t ask a potential recruit, “Do you sing?” The typical answer is a definitive “no.” This shuts down the conversation and negates future consideration by the individual. Instead ask, “What activities are you participating in now?” This shifts the focus from what the individual thinks he is capable of to what he is participating and interested in. During the course of the



conversation you can then begin to ask about musical interests and ask if he has ever sung in a choir before.

Do acknowledge and anticipate the challenges recruits may experience. No one wants to feel inadequate, unprepared, or caught by surprise. Throughout the rehearsal process the more you can explain the difficulties they may experience the less apprehensive they will feel. For adolescent males, this may mean acknowledging their changing voices and the sounds they may or may not be able to make. For the older male singer, this may be acknowledging the confusion they may experience with music reading. Consistently reassure them

they will be given the tools to be successful.

Do help new singers to feel successful early on. Even if they only sing one correct note or if they only clap two out of four quarter notes accurately during that first rehearsal, their accomplishment needs to be recognized and lauded.

Don't talk sports. Well, don't talk sports exclusively. Not all males are sports fanatics. Ask your potential recruits about their interests first, or maybe what their favorite classes are, where they may work, where they like to go on vacation, et cetera, and continue your conversation from there. As choral directors, we should be interested in

the whole person and how he will uniquely contribute to the ensemble, rather than stereotyping. (As a bonus, the more you know about your ensemble members the better you can relate and adapt rehearsal techniques and strategies to their previous experiences.)

Do assign each new chorister to a choir mentor who will be able to help him navigate his first few weeks in chorus and answer his questions.

Don't underestimate the power of free donuts or pizza. Host open rehearsals or have current members invite friends to sit in on rehearsals. End those rehearsals with a quick social with donuts, pizza,

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or some other snack. This allows potential recruits to experience what a rehearsal is like and afterward interact with you and the other members of the ensemble. Even if they don't join, you can at least use the opportunity to introduce yourself and invite them to attend a future performance.

Finally, do recruit constantly. It's not just a beginning- or end-of-the-year activity. It is an ongoing process. Sometimes it can even be an ongoing process to recruit one individual. I have had a number of students who joined a choral ensemble in their junior or senior year

but my recruiting efforts with them started when they were freshmen.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but I hope that it has given you some food for thought. Happy recruiting! ♦

Upcoming Events

February 2018

ACDA Central & North Central Division Conference

February 14–17, 2018, Chicago, IL

acdacentral.org

June 2018

OCDA Summer Conference

June 18–20, Columbus, OH

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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 e-mailed 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.

Advertising Rates: a full-page ad is \$135 per issue, a half-page ad is \$80 per issue, and a quarter-page ad is \$45 per issue. A 15% discount is offered on the purchase of three consecutive ads; other discounts are available. Please contact the editor for exact ad sizes and other specifications.

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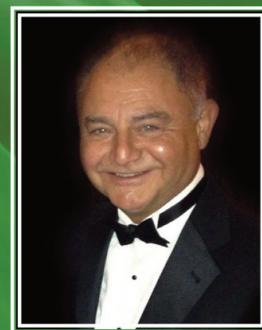
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Ohio Choral Directors Association

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Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt,
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Jake Runestad,
composer and conductor

Children's Honor Choir Conductor:



Kristina Caswell MacMullen,
Associate Director
of Choral Activities
The Ohio State University

2018 OCDA SUMMER CONFERENCE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration fees include parking, the Tuesday business luncheon, the Tuesday evening social event, and reading session music (guaranteed only for workshop participants registering by June 1, 2018).

Fill out the registration form and return as indicated below. The registration must be postmarked by June 1, 2018, in order for the pre-registration fees to apply. After June 1, a higher fee structure is in place (see below). Reading session packets cannot be guaranteed for those who do not pre-register by the June 1 deadline. A refund will be made if a written cancellation is received by June 1, 2018. After that date a deduction of \$80.00 will be made.

The option to earn graduate credit through Otterbein University is available **for pre-registrants only**. If you would like to receive graduate credit information, please indicate this in the appropriate space on the registration form below. A current copy of your teaching license must be either mailed in with your registration form or brought with you to the conference.

Mail payment and Registration Form to: Christopher Dent, OCDA Summer Conference Coordinator, 4503 Edgerton Drive, Grove City, OH 43123. E-mail or call Christopher with questions: ocdaconference@gmail.com, 614-208-6778. Make checks payable to the **Ohio Choral Directors Association**.

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_____ \$184 ACDA member
_____ \$288 non-member (includes membership)
_____ \$104 retired member
_____ \$149 retired non-member (includes membership)
_____ \$119 non-member spouse (does not include membership)
_____ \$84 student member/1st year teacher
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_____ *Website*

_____ *OMEA Conference*

_____ *Referred by current OCDA member* _____ *(member name)*

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