



Georgia Sings! Volume 9, Issue 2

Fall 2010

A Message from GA-ACDA President Alicia Walker:

Greetings!



As the fall season moves rapidly on to the year's first concerts, season openings, weekly worship services, Honor Choirs, and All-State auditions, I hope you will take a moment to appreciate the opportunity that is ours to make music in the choral idiom. As we encounter more and more people who are experiencing uncertainty or discouragement due to the economy or war or life

circumstances, it is truly a gift to be able to sing of hope and peace. The choral art gives us a beautiful picture of humankind drawing together and creating more than we were as individuals alone. I encourage you to be intentional about programming music that sends messages of encouragement to your audience, and remind your singers that their purpose as artists is not just one of self-gratification, but of service to the larger world community.

Georgia ACDA has benefitted from numerous people who serve our organization, and through it the choral art. My thanks go to the board members, R&S Chairs, Honor Choir Coordinators, Interest Session presenters, and conductors who made our summer conference this past June so successful. Every conference takes a great deal of work and preparation, and we are fortunate to have strong leadership and enthusiasm from the ACDA membership in Georgia.

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I am pleased to announce the newest member of our board, President-elect Mary Busman. The election was held at the summer conference – a departure from normal procedure for us – because of a vacancy in the position. We were fortunate to have two very fine candidates in Mary Busman and Paul Neal. I was very confident that we would have fine leadership from either of them, and am very grateful that they made themselves available. Paul will continue to be our R&S for College & University choirs. Mary is already hard at work preparing for the 2011 conference to be held July 7-9, 2011. Please be aware that we will return to our normal election schedule in 2011, holding an election for President-elect for 2011-2013 (president from 2013-2015).

In this fall newsletter, you will find preliminary information about the summer conference. **Forms for interest**

GA-ACDA Summer Conference

Spivey Hall

July 7-9, 2011.

sessions and performing choirs are available on the gaacda.org web site.

We were very pleased to have three performing choirs this past summer! I hope that you will make that extra effort to bring your choir to Spivey Hall in July.

In the meantime, there are several GA ACDA events to put on your calendars:

The GA ACDA Luncheon will take place at GMEA in Savannah on Friday, Jan. 28th. To attend, include the choral luncheon in your GMEA registration. We are pleased to once again co-sponsor the choral clinician at GMEA. This year, Dr. Judy Bowers will share her wisdom and enthusiasm with the choral directors in our state. In addition, GA ACDA has been invited to lead reading sessions in Savannah. Several of our outstanding R&S Chairs will bring great music to your attention, continuing our mission of promoting excellence in the choral art. Our thanks go to Robin Yackley, GMEA

GA-ACDA luncheon at GMEA conference January 28 in Savannah!

Choral Chair, for facilitating the growing partnership between GA ACDA and GMEA.

There will also be a GA ACDA reading session at All-State on Feb. 25th. If you are looking for great repertoire ideas, ACDA is your best resource!

I would like to encourage all our college and university members to take note of the emphasis we are placing this year on student chapters. Many of us came to ACDA through one of these, and we learned early on through our professors and mentors what a significant role ACDA plays in our professional life. Take the initiative to be that kind of mentor for your own choral students! Drew Bowers, our membership chair, and Alison Mann,

at Kennesaw State, are helping us raise the profile of student chapters in Georgia. Please be reminded that full-time choral students attend our summer conference for free each year!

Finally, March 9-12 is the ACDA National Conference in Chicago. All the indicators point to this being a truly great event. If you have never been to a national conference, I encourage you to make this your first. Visit acda.org to find out more. Registration opened Oct. 1.

***ACDA National
Conference in
Chicago***

March 9-12, 2011.

I wish the best for you and your choral programs in the coming year.

See you in Savannah, or Chicago, and then at Spivey Hall!

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Some Thoughts from President-elect Mary Busman

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This fall I have had the pleasure of mentoring a young college student who is thinking about teaching. He loves music, was active in the school choral program all through middle school and high school, and is seriously considering choral music as his course of study. Every Friday afternoon, when my energies are nearly depleted, this energetic young man bounds into my classroom to help me teach sixth grade chorus. The students love him and so do I. His energy is infectious and with it we all rally for the final minutes of the school day.

Today my mentee asked me about my career. It seems his father is concerned about the state of music education and this young man's ability to

find employment. I share this father's concern. These are difficult times for the arts, yet I feel comfortable encouraging this student. Because of my involvement

in choral music, I have been richly blessed. Moments in the classroom, interaction with dear colleagues, lively students, special concert moments, fabulous venues, painfully beautiful music, and the luxury of an afternoon of concerts at an ACDA convention have enriched my life. To not wish this upon my young friend would be selfish.

I am very humbled to serve as ACDA president-elect for Georgia. This state is rich with talented choral musicians who apply themselves at all

levels. I am awestruck when thinking of the hours of volunteer time individuals have given towards maintaining and building our organization. There is a strong legacy of choral music in Georgia, and the urgency of maintaining and building upon it is evident.

Georgia ACDA is in competent hands under the leadership of Alicia Walker. I am honored to work alongside her this year in preparation for the July 2011 convention and look forward to serving as president in the future.

Meet our new President-elect:

Mary Busman is a middle grades choral teacher in Fulton County Schools. She has taught middle school chorus for over 20 years and has enjoyed the general music classroom at the elementary and middle school levels. Mrs. Busman holds music degrees from Central Michigan University and Georgia State University with Kodaly Certification from the Kodaly Center of America. Most recently, she received an Educational Specialist in

applied neuroscience from Nova Southeastern University.

Mrs. Busman has served as a choral clinician in Georgia and Tennessee. She has served as the Repertoire and Standards Chairperson for the Georgia chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. Mrs. Busman has also served the Georgia Music Educators Association as Chairperson for the General Music Division. During the spring of 2009, Mrs. Busman helped write the middle grade music standards for the state of Georgia.

Men's and Women's Choirs: How Different are They?

By Amy Hughley, R&S Chair for Men's Choirs

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One doesn't have to be a choral director to understand the differences between a male choir and a female choir. Aside from the obvious gender

and vocal range differences, there are emotional and developmental discrepancies as well. It is our duty as directors to overcome the idiosyncratic challenges that choirs of a single gender propose and create beautiful choral music. But how can we do this? Can a woman successfully direct a male choir without a personal understanding of the voice change process and without the ability to model in the appropriate range? Can a man successfully direct a women's choir without a complete understanding female emotional complexities?

The answer, of course, is yes; however we must continually be cognizant of the differences.

Teams work together toward a common goal, just as tenors must work together, baritones must work together, and our basses must work together to achieve the goal of beautiful balance and blend.

Sorority versus Fraternity

The social components of women's choirs and men's choirs are different. One can observe this even before the choral rehearsal begins. Members of my women's choir, for example, enter the choir room, gather their music, find their seats, and then immediately begin to converse in small groups: gossiping, laughing, catching one another up on their day, putting on one last coating of lip gloss or mascara, and telling a few secrets. Then it's time to warm up.

Members of my men's choir enter the rehearsal room, joke with one another, slap one another on the backs, gather their music, find their seats, and meld into one amoeba of social fraternizing. Then it's time to warm up.

As different as they are, there is a strong sense of unity within both choirs, and determined support of one another. I am particularly impressed by the behaviors in the men's choir. While they may be a bit more physical and boisterous, and while they openly tease one another about trivial matters, they are a united brotherhood. The accept every member of the group as a "brother", regardless of varying interests, personalities, peer groups, and sexual preference.

These young men are brought together by their common love of singing. They each have a sense of belonging and commitment to the group. Thus, they have a sense of pride and ownership, two important aspects of building a musical ensemble. We as directors must not allow the social components of the men's choir compensate the focus of the choral rehearsal. Each ensemble member's etiquette should reflect pride and ownership, respect for one another, and a commitment to making beautiful music.

Knitting Club versus the Football Team

Choral directors don't usually like to think of the word "competition" when it comes to directing a choir. Our duty as directors is to work for unity, blending many different voices together as one, where no one person is more important than another and all are equally important. This may work in a women's choir, but the idea of "competition" may be healthy, and useful, in the men's choir.

One can compare a women's choir to a knitting club: each member of the club works together, side by side, supporting one another equally with the final goal of creating beautiful and meaningful art. Some members of the club may secretly be competing with others, perhaps trying to finish first, or working on a tighter stitch, but they are openly supportive.

While all members of a men's choir are part of a unified group, there is often an open competition between the tenors and baritones, the baritones and basses. Each group strives for a more beautiful and refined sound in his section, hoping to be noticed by the director. They often joke aloud that one section is more unified than another, or that the tone color of one section outshines another.

I'm not suggesting that we turn our men's choir rehearsals into a fierce competition, but I do think our awareness of section unity (similar to team unity) can further encourage members of a male choir to stay on task, work together, and be conscientious of the role of each section within the ensemble as a whole. Teams work together toward a common goal, just as tenors must work together, baritones must work together, and our basses must work together to achieve the goal of beautiful balance and blend.

Vocal Range – a Similarity?

One of the most common vocal problems found in young men is tension in the upper range, caused by the high larynx (Miller, 1993; Roe, 1983). The tension particularly occurs near the break in passagio between chest voice and falsetto range. Consequently, lack of breath support can also occur in these areas of the voice, which in turn affects intonation and tone quality. Choral directors can offer exercises that may help these issues, and, ironically, they are nearly identical to proper warm up techniques used with female choirs.

I find my most successful warm ups for my female choirs are descending scale passages beginning in mid range, transposed downward by half step. (Example: G major descending 5-tone scale, beginning on D, transpose to G flat major, beginning on D flat, etc.) Ironically, I find the most successful warm up for my men's choir is the identical descending scale figure – in the identical range.

They each have a sense of belonging and commitment to the group.

Both my women's and men's choirs begin on C or D above middle C and descend in 5 tone major scales on a closed vowel [du] or [di]. I find men beginning in this range have less vocal tension during rehearsal when nearing the register shift between modal voice and falsetto.

Directing single gender choirs is a rewarding experience, and knowledge of their similarities and differences can aid directors. While both men's choirs and women's choirs possess sincere determination, dedication, pride and unity, these character traits manifest themselves in different ways. Awareness of these differences can support our direction of mixed ensembles as well.

Would you like to contact an R&S Chair?

Do you want to know more about GA-ACDA activities?

Explore the wealth of information available at www.gaacda.org

For information regarding ACDA national events, go to www.acda.org

The Big Squeeze

By Franklin Green, R&S Chair for Women's Choirs

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Hello everyone. I hope your women's choirs are singing beautifully this year.

This is the 40th year that I have studied vocal technique: my own technique, the technique of the world's best singers, and the technique of my students. It can be confusing.

*The enemy . . . has been
"the big squeeze."*

I've read and taught from Richard Miller (*The Structure of Singing*), and studied William Vennard (*Singing the Mechanism and the Technic*), Johan Sundberg (*The Science of the Singing Voice*), and Russel Hammar (*Singing, an Extension of Speech*). I'll have to say that what has taught me the most has been listening to my own voice students as they improved from struggling beginners to singers. They made the words that I

have read in the textbooks become real. The enemy for them all has been "the big squeeze." Because singers can adjust pitch upward by squeezing the vocal channel, pulling the tongue back and up, pressing the soft palate down, and raising the larynx, they fall into the trap of singing muscularly instead of depending on the breath for those pitch changes. When that happens, what little space there was for resonance is lost.

Both conductors and voice teachers work to produce a ringing tone by encouraging high soft palate singing, but often the singers who are able to raise the soft palate also raise everything else. What I don't hear enough from coaches and conductors is an emphasis on letting the larynx float low, keeping tension out of the back of the tongue, thus keeping the tongue forward, while keeping that soft palate high. There are so many junior and senior recitals that feature ringing tones that just have no low space for true resonance.

The common symptoms of the big squeeze are: a small sound (open sounds are big sounds), the inability to sing long phrases (no amount of breath support can get through the squeeze), a tone that decreases in dynamic as the pitch rises,

cloudy, dark, or breathy sounds, the head and neck jutting forward from the shoulders (to make room for the raised larynx). One of my pet peeves is how the squeeze moves vowels away from their true low-tongue and low-larynx selves to shallow pretenders. Thus “led” becomes “lad” and “amen, aman.”

*Step one for my singers is to
“make a low space.”*

The solution? It’s simple. Remind singers to let the larynx float low, as it does every time they inhale, and to keep it there while singing. Then remind them to paralyze the back of the tongue and never let it help in making a vowel sound. Then repeat these reminders for the rest of your life. Of course the soft palate will have to be raised, breathing low, and other tensions kept to a minimum, but I think people are already working on those things. I find that making the low space is transforming for young singers. It is only a piece of the puzzle, but is often

a missing piece. Step one for my singers is “make low space.”

I hope that if you have a gem of a new piece of choral lit for women’s voices that you will pass it along to me so I can share it with others. I’d love to hear from you. My email address is georgiasingers@gmail.com. I’ve recently been excited to hear three duets by Antonin Dvořák that are published by Alliance Publications, Inc. (Not to be confused with Alliance Music Publishers. Alliance Publications is operated out of Wisconsin and specializes in Czech music). Hraj, muziko, hraj AP-1287, A já ti uplynu AP-1288, and Zelenaj se, Zelenaj AP-1289, are all exciting duets with fabulous accompaniments by the young Antonin Dvořák. They are simply brilliant pieces. Okay the Czech is a bit of a challenge, but there are transliterations included in each piece and you may purchase a diction CD and recording of each piece from the publisher, for only \$5 per song. I promise the songs will be a delightful change from the “same old same old.” If the Czech will totally keep you away, there are English language versions available also, but honestly, the Czech language is part of the color and texture of these pieces.

Five on Five:

5 Directors, 5 Essential Pieces, Numerous Bits of Wisdom

By Paige Mathis, R&S Chair for Children's Choirs

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Recently I had the opportunity to ask five Community Children's and Youth Choir Directors from around the state to identify five pieces of music that proved to be essential for their organizations. I then asked them to choose one piece and talk about why it is essential. But, while what pieces the Directors choose is certainly intriguing, why certain pieces are important and often perennially revisited is even more illuminating. Their choices reflect many of the core values of the individual organizations, and also shed light on some key elements of programming for Community Children's and Youth Choirs.



Georgia Regional Girl's Choir (GRGC) ~ Jennifer Rawson, Music Director

1. *Irish Blessing*, by Katie Moran Bart
2. *Las Amarillas*, arranged by Stephen Hatfield
3. *Os Justi*, by Eleanor Daley
4. *Psalm 23*, by Z. Randall Stroope
5. *Holly and the Ivy*, arranged by Kirby Shaw

Based in Roswell, GA, the GRGC serves girls in grades 5-12 and Jenny Rawson has been their Music Director for 12 years. When asked to elaborate on the importance of one of her choices, she talked about Katie Moran Bart's *Irish Blessing* and its contribution to the identity of the Georgia Regional Girls Choir. The piece is "...all heart, marked by

simplicity, and accessible to all levels of the choir," says Ms. Rawson. Sung encircling the audience at the conclusion of the last concert each year, it is all at once a goodbye and "rite of passage" for GRGC Seniors and a homecoming for its alumni.

Savannah Children’s Choir ~ Roger Moss, Co-founder and Music Director

Cuffy Sullivan, Co-founder and Executive Director

1. *Keep Your Lamps* , African American Spiritual, arranged by John Helgen
2. *Bist du Bei Mir*, by J.S. Bach
3. *Danny Boy*, arranged by Mark Patterson
4. *Like A Tree*, by Margaret Douroux and Lon Beery
5. *Somewhere in my Memory*, by John Williams, arranged by Terre McPheeters

The Savannah Children’s Choir serves children grades 2-8, and Roger Moss notes that the choir was formed five years ago with the idea of bringing kids together that are not normally together. He chose to explain more about *Keep Your Lamps*, saying, “First of all, the kids connect to it right off the bat...The piece is simple, yet so poignant”. He points out how important the text has become for

SCC singers: “Don’t ya get weary” is a signpost for perseverance both in and out of the choir setting. The demands are high at SCC and they will confront difficulty, but they will always see the pay-off of hard work,” says Mr. Moss. The piece also connects the kids to the African American tradition that is a treasure of the Georgia coast.

Jasper Young Singers ~ Thelma Cagle and Suzanne, Music Directors

1. *Al Shlosa D’Varim*, by Allan Naplan
2. *Do di li*, by Nira Chen and Doreen Rao
3. *Niska Banja*, by Nick Page
4. *Dormi, Dormi*, by Mary Goetze
5. *Pie Jesu*, by Gabriel Fauré

The Jasper Young Singers is a five year old organization serving children ages 7-16 and is the children’s choir in residence at the new Creative and

Performing Arts Center Format in Jasper, GA. Their rehearsal time is divided evenly between educational elements—sight-singing and musicianship training--and

repertoire. Co-Director and Founder Suzanne Shull talked about how each of the pieces addressed crucial elements in the children's development, but also pointed out an important similarity between all of the pieces: "Every piece on

the list is in a foreign language. Pure, unified vowels are so often harder to get when singing in English, but foreign language allows us focused attention on the formation of the pure vowel sound."

Spivey Hall Children's Choir ~ Dr. Martha Shaw, Music Director

1. *No Time*, by Susan Brumfield
2. *The World is Full of Poetry*, by David Brunner
3. *The Turtle Dove*, arranged by Earlene Rentz
4. *Georgia on My Mind*, arranged by Randall Reese
5. *Las Amarillas*, by Stephen Hatfield

The Spivey Hall Children's Choir based in Morrow Georgia, serves children and youth ages 10-18 from the metropolitan Atlanta area. When speaking about the music on her list, Dr. Shaw turned to *Turtle Dove* without hesitation. She explained that through its elegant unison line, the piece creates so many of what she referred to as "beautiful building blocks": clarity of tone,

expression, tuning at cadence points. This piece along with *No Time* also create opportunities for singers to explore and reach a "depth of soul" that is central to the expressive capability of the choir. She also elaborated on *Las Amarillas*, saying that if they learn to count it and break through the difficulty of it, a piece like this helps young singers not to be intimidated by rhythms throughout life.

Gwinnett Young Singers ~ Lynn Urda, Founder and Music Director

1. *Barter*, by René Clausen
2. *Each Child*, by Eleanor Daley
3. *The Angel Choir and the Trumpeter*, by Chris Dedrick
4. *This Shall be for Music*, by Mark Patterson

5. *Cedar Swamp*, by Jay Broecker

The Gwinnett Young Singers is the resident choir of the Jacqueline Casey Hudgens Center for the Arts in Duluth, Georgia and serves grades 2-12 from the metropolitan Atlanta area. Ms. Urda expressed her affinity for Eleanor Daley's work in general, but said that "...René Clausen's *Barter* is my favorite because of the Sara Teasdale poem *Life Has Loveliness to Sell...*" At the heart of the poem is the idea that we barter lots of things in life—give one thing in order to get another. The one thing that is worth trading everything in your being is beauty. Ms Urda went on to add, "If we

can teach this philosophy of living to the children whose lives we touch, we have accomplished much."

The central idea to the Teasdale poem also hits on an idea that all of these Directors have in common. All of them are passionate about the power of choral music to create meaning in the lives of children and audiences. They choose music not for its "wow" factor but for its ability to truly communicate. Pure simplicity over superficial complexity. Music that demands our all, but is gratefully given. What could be more beautiful?

Thanks to Cuffy Sullivan, Executive Director, Savannah Children's Choir.

Thanks to Executive Director, Catherine Sandhage.

Would you like to
present an Interest
Session or bring a
Performing Choir to
GA-ACDA Summer
Conference?
Download
application forms
from our web site:
www.gaacda.org.

The Importance of Vocal Production in Choral Music

By Jeff Bauman, R&S Chair for 2-Year Colleges



Last summer at the ACDA conference in Atlanta, clinician Kevin Fenton mentioned in one of his sessions that choral tone was at the root of many problems he hears when listening to choral groups. I believe he was referencing his experience judging choral festivals, and many adjudicators have had similar encounters through the years. As choral music educators, we assume the role of voice teacher for the majority of our students. Happily, the development of vocal technique in young singers and the creation of an inspiring choral performance rely on many of the same

factors. In fact, the majority of the categories on the GMEA Large Group Performance Evaluation judging sheet are directly connected to vocal production.

Proper vocal technique allows singers to produce a warm, rich sound that is conducive to achieving a good choral blend. A well-trained singer has a greater dynamic range, can sing pitches more accurately, energize the sound with proper breath support, modify vowels in a uniform manner, and sing more expressively in terms of tone color and musical line.

Good vocal technique is, first and foremost, relaxed and tension free. As choral conductors we must differentiate between the proper use of the vocal mechanism which allows beautiful singing with full tone in the upper register, and the types of tension that inhibit vocal production throughout the range, increasing exponentially as the pitch level rises. This type of tension causes flattening, improper vowel formation, poor choral blend, and generally poor tone quality.

Warm-ups are an excellent time to address vocal technique. Dr. Fenton made an extremely important point

Good vocal technique is, first and foremost, relaxed and tension free.

regarding vocal pedagogy in a group environment at the summer session. We need to be specific in our direction. In dealing with singers in their applied voice lessons at the college level, it is not uncommon to hear muddy, over-modified vowel sounds rather than a brighter, more natural, Bel Canto technique. This may be the result of singers with strong aptitude taking to heart comments that were meant for their neighbors in choir. Telling the whole choir that the [a] vowel is too bright when in reality it is two of the sopranos, probably does more harm than good. It solves the immediate problem, but leaves you dealing with a slightly muddy choral sound somewhere down the line. When necessary, we can be specific without getting too personal by using language such as “front row ladies”, or “freshman sopranos”.

It is important to remember that the majority of choral students have voice

We owe these students a strong foundation of vocal technique

as their primary instrument in college. They take the same type of applied voice lessons as vocal performance majors, and at many institutions they are required to sing recitals. We owe these students a strong foundation of vocal technique which will serve them in the future as they pursue their vocal studies.

Carol Benton edits *Georgia Sings!*, the newsletter for the Georgia chapter of American Choral Directors Association. Each year, Fall and Spring issues are posted online at www.gaacda.org. If you would like to receive a notice via email each time a new issue is posted online, please send a request to Carol at carol.benton@armstrong.edu

