

GEORGIA

American Choral Directors Association

APRIL/MAY 1982

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Remember:

NATIONAL CONVENTION:

The 1983 National Convention of the ACDA will be held March 10-12, 1983

The official opening of the 1983 convention is Thursday, March 10 at 8:30 a.m. and the closing concert will be on Saturday, March 12 at 8:00 p.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT...

I recently was an adjudicator at Lander College in Greenwood, South Carolina for a High School Choral Festival. Comments made to me indicate that there has not been the active approach to Choral Festivals in this area like we know in the state of Georgia. This festival was developed and financed in part by a student M.E.N.C. chapter. I was very impressed with the leadership abilities of those students. Maybe some of our student chapters can get more involved with these kind of activities. "Food for thought".

We will begin to form committees for the 1984 Southern Division ACDA Convention in Atlanta, very soon. If you would like to help, please contact John Haberlen.

The membership of the Georgia ACDA has elected Michael a Anderson for a three year term as President-Elect. Congrats!

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Anyone interested in applying for the Editor's position of our state newsletter should contact John Haberlen immediately.

The duties of the Editor are as follows:

1. Compile all information from each of the officers and committee chairpeople for each issue.
2. Collect articles from submitting writers and edit as necessary.
3. Design letterhead in connection with the President.
4. Type newsletter and add any necessary accents in material.
5. Copy the newsletter either using facilities at hand as has been done in the past or send to the National Office for distribution.
6. Arrange with President for postage.
7. Arrange with the National office for mailing labels for everyone in Georgia and the National offices.
8. Fold, staple, stamp, mail.

Fun...huh! and necessary. Lots of responsibility but absolutely vital to the existence of a quality chapter in our state.

FROM COLLEEN J. KIRK, NATIONAL PRESIDENT...

Without doubt, ours is a fellowship with a purpose. Together we can make a difference in the quality of the musical life in our nation. If we dare to believe, to dream, and to work together, we can bring to realization the vision of those who founded ACDA just twenty-three years ago.

To be sure, there are times during which we lapse into complacency. We are not always as vigilant and perceptive as we should be in the choices of repertoire through which our highest goals can be obtained. We sometimes confuse performance of music with entertainment. We live in an age when this may even be tempting to some, but as leaders in the American Choral Directors Association we have accepted a mandate. We must not lose sight of our highest purpose, that of encouraging the finest in choral music and promoting its development in all ways including performance, composition, publication and research.

To attain these goals, we exercise judgment in discrimination and guidance. We are eternally vigilant for there are those who would subvert our effort in the name of self-interest. If choral music is to reach its maximal effectiveness in human life, three basic conditions must obtain:

1. the repertoire must have within it the relationships and possibilities for nuance which permit and encourage aesthetic responsiveness;
2. the conductor must be an artist who has both interpretation and communication skills;
3. the director must "care to share" his/her understanding of expressive singing and to encourage musical development in as many singers as he/she can reach. He/she must teach with the expectation that singers will continue their musical growth as music becomes increasingly meaningful in their lives.

FROM DR. SYLVIA ROSS, CHAIRPERSON; WOMEN'S CHOIRS...

For a year I have been asking myself how the committee on Women's Choirs can be useful to the Georgia ACDA members. Acknowledging that the conductors themselves should be heard concerning their needs and interests, I submit to you some ideas on program planning in the hope that it will start a dialogue among members. You are invited to set me straight, add ideas or request areas in which you would like help.

Selecting repertoire for a satisfying program by a female choir presents most of the same problems with which every choral director is concerned, but it also presents some additional ones. As a director of a women's glee club I consciously deal with the following problems: 1) compensation for the lack of lower frequencies in women's voices. (What is refreshing for one work can become monotonous for a whole program unless special care is given.) 2) repertoire that has a vitality and boldness to contrast with the ethereal or angelic sound in much of the repertoire. In other words, masculine vigor as well as feminine grace can be appropriate in music for females. The second of these concerns can be solved by awareness and a diligent search for exciting repertoire. The first, however, deserves more extensive discussion. Both concerns are, of course, part of the more general problem of providing sufficient contrast to keep the listeners' attention. Recognizing these problems as a part of a larger concern points to at least one approach to a solution.

I. If there is sufficient contrast in the other elements of the music, the listener will less likely miss the absence of lower tones. In much of our music a balance is maintained between rhythmic, harmonic and melodic elements. On the other hand, there are numerous examples of successful and exciting music in which one element dominates the interest and compensates for less interesting elements. In a

similar way a good program can achieve interest by making the most of the contrasts available.

Our general awareness of possibilities of contrast can be more clearly focused by creating a list of contrasts against which tentative programs may be checked. Such a list can be derived by observation of extended works by competent composers and could include such items as:

- 1) solo sections contrasting with ensemble or chorus
- 2) unison works contrasting with two, three, and four part writing
- 3) limited ranges contrasting with occasional use of extreme ranges
- 4) spatial effects created by split choirs, singing in the round, use of processionals and recessionals and/or singing from various places in the hall
- 5) tempi contrasts
- 6) use of simple meters, irregular meters, polymeters and non-metric music
- 7) dynamic contrasts
- 8) use of varied keys
- 9) tonal music contrasting with modal, polytonal and atonal music
- 10) contrasting styles and periods
- 11) accompanied and unaccompanied works
- 12) contrasting styles and periods
- 13) varied timbres of accompanying instruments

II. Another way to compensate for the lack of lower notes in women's voices is to supply these tones with accompanying instruments. Beyond the obvious works which call for keyboard accompaniment, additional repertoire could benefit from the judicious use of instrumental accompaniments. For example:

- 1) allowing the suggestions of Praetorius in his Syntagma Musicum, Volume III. use an instrumental consort as one of the opposing choirs in a Renaissance polychoral work from the Venetian school. This works particular well if one of the choirs is for high voices and one is for low voices. If the work calls for choirs of equal ranges instruments can double all the voices while the female voices sing only the top parts of each choir, or the instruments can supply only the missing parts. Although we do not readily have available such old instruments as krummhorns, shawms, theorbos, pandoras, orpheons, cithers and lyres suggested by Praetorius, we can still create interesting consorts from available instruments. Choirs of recorders, strings, brass, woodwinds and/or mixtures of these families offer interesting variety for performers and listeners.
- 2) Secular works of the Renaissance, those with dance origins such as the Italian baletto or the English ballet, fare well with improvised percussion accompaniments with tambourine, finger cymbals or other appropriate instrument.
- 3) Since so many of the secular English collections of the Renaissance bear the words "apt for viols," try using strings for the lower parts, or for all the parts. If good string players are not available use a harpsichord on the bass line supported by a chordal accompaniment. This works best on the lighter forms that are chordal with the top line carrying a dominating melody.
- 4) In music of the Baroque Period, a satisfying effect can be achieved by adding a cello or bassoon to the accompanying keyboard instrument even when resources do not allow the use of an entire orchestra. If the score is an orchestral reduction, a part should be available for this added instrument. If not, a part can be derived in much of the repertoire from the Venetian conservatories by doubling the alto part of the chorus at the octave below. However, in works intended as a solo or duet, the instrument can probably double the bass line of the keyboard part.
- 5) Do not overlook choral gems that have unorthodox accompaniments such as Brahms Opus 17 written for women's choir, harp and horns. (Is there a volunteer to make a list of such works?)

6) Avant garde choral music performed with tapes of electronic sounds is another important resource for contrasting timbre and frequency variation.

III. A final consideration is to make the most of the sound available by finding a sympathetic environment in which to sing. Anyone who has toured should be aware that some rooms are much more acoustically satisfying than others. The length of reverberation is quite important, but our acoustical awareness should not stop there. According to the materials which surround us, certain frequencies will have more reverberation than others. This can affect balance and either rob or enhance overtones. In the ideal environment, a very low note that is barely whispered can give the illusion of being much richer. In addition a well-tuned chord that is rich in overtones can create the illusion of choristers singing notes that are phenomenally high when in actuality they are merely overtones. The occasional use of such effects can be sensational without harming young singers. Furthermore, an ideal amount of reverberation can increase the singers' awareness of good intonation. It is wonderful to see the look of revelation in the eyes of singers who perform a work which was intended for a resonant hall in its proper environment.

Granted that most of us inherit less than ideal halls for performance, it is nevertheless our responsibility to look for other possibilities. to take note of places such as local churches, stairwells, halls in our building, or other unorthodox places and consider their possible uses. If we find rewarding alternatives, changing the location of a concert, or changing the location of the choir within the concert hall may be a factor in the success of a well planned program.

Sylvia L. Ross



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