



Georgia Newsletter

VOL.10 NO.2

AUGUST 1992

From the President

Roger Waters

Upon receipt of this newsletter many of you will be preparing to return to choral classrooms and rehearsal halls to begin the arduous task of rehearsing and programming; many of you will be scheduling choral programs for worship; perhaps others will be planning tours or other special events in which you and your singers will participate. I wish for you success in all endeavors during the upcoming school year and/or concert season. I trust you have had a restful summer and your energies have been restored in order to accomplish your goals.

Our resourcefulness can be renewed in various ways, not the least of which is taking advantage of opportunities for professional growth through attendance at conventions, workshops, and meetings. Over one-third of our state membership was in attendance at the Southern Division Convention in March. I wish to commend those of you who attended. The interest sessions were helpful and the choral performances were indeed inspiring. I must admit, however, that exchange of ideas and

information among colleagues proved to be the most beneficial to me. I want to encourage your active participation at ACDA sponsored events. Whether it be an event sponsored by an R & S chairperson, a state-wide workshop or convention, a division or national convention, please consider participating so that you can share some of your expertise with fellow teachers and conductors.

The national convention of ACDA will be March 3-6, 1993 in San Antonio, Texas. It is not too early to begin planning to attend. If you have never attended a national convention, you owe it to yourself to do so. If you have, you understand the importance of the convention to our professional and personal development. I hope to see many of you in San Antonio in March.

Our state organization is in need of a Junior College Chair and a Community College Chair. If you are interested in either of these areas and would like to become involved in your state dialogue, please contact me at (404) 482-9470 (h) or (404) 957-4543 (o).

***Congratulations,
Kathy Chandler.
We look forward
to hearing the Newnan
Womens Ensemble in
San Antonio!***

The Future of Choral Music

by Don V. Moses

(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

During this century we have been influenced, almost exclusively, by two traditional vocal genres, opera and historical choral music. An enormous amount of distinguished, profound music has been written for the opera stage and for the choir, and much of it is appreciated by the public. This is the music that we have held in lofty esteem for hundreds of years. Rightfully, we pay homage to Lassus, Victoria, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and others.

If we were to describe our lives as choral musicians during the last twenty or thirty years, we could say we have been learning about the choral music of these past masters. We have striven to discover the "right" way to perform renaissance, baroque and classical music and the music we perform on our concerts reflects this emphasis. The quest for correct performance practice is due primarily to how we ourselves were educated. It has determined, to a large extent, how we educate our students.

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Future of Choral Music

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As much as we venerate the music of the past, the composers to whom we refer today as renaissance, baroque or classical, were substantially more concerned with how their music touched the lives of their own contemporaries. I believe that we must, as these composers did in their time, search for ways to infuse new blood into choral music and, thus, new life into students of choral music. We must, as other disciplines have done, take account of where we are in the history of our field and advance into fresh, challenging, and perhaps even frightening new paths. To ensure the future of choral music and to enhance it, we **must** make a change.

Our audiences and the general public are listening to more music now than ever before in history. They are, however, **participating** less and less in choral ensembles which perform music by the aforementioned masters of the choral medium. I believe the public is sending us a very clear message. It is imperative that we learn from this phenomenon and, just as our musical forbearers did, spend more of our time and effort with the music of our own generation.

Do not misunderstand. I am not saying that we should be studying the music of Madonna or Gloria Estefan or any other "popular" singer. Music written for mass consumption is seldom the best product of our age. All of us who have studied music seriously know the difference between popular music and high art. It is the responsibility of those who know this difference to guide our students and our public, through sound educational philosophy and performance practice, to a new level of discernment between the best of our contemporary art and that which is designed solely for commercial use. Popular music does have its place. However, it should occupy a position beside, rather than above, the best that our culture has to offer.

Because it is our responsibility not to "bury our heads in the sands of the

past," we must explore ways to help lead our students into an exciting future in choral music. How can this be achieved?

1. By supporting contemporary composers through commissions of new works;
2. By programming new music;
3. By challenging ourselves to "know the unknown;"
4. By bringing composers into our rehearsals;
5. By venturing into new performance possibilities;
6. By encouraging our young composers to experiment with new compositional techniques, thus expanding their own horizons as well as our own.

As choral musicians, we are dreadfully behind our colleagues conducting orchestras and wind ensembles who have taken the steps outlined above. As a result, art music composers of our own age have nearly **stopped** composing music for choral ensembles. I am speaking about music that should be coming from our **best** and **most talented** contemporary composer-artists. Try to plan a concert with a choral/orchestral piece written in the last ten years. There are, unfortunately, very few choices. Why? The reason is painfully evident; our best composers are now writing for instrumental groups rather than choral ensembles. Realistically, who can blame them? They are writing for those who are actually **performing** their music and expressing their talents where they will be heard. If more evidence is required, peruse the output of composers who have achieved success through promotion by major publishers. Their catalogues are embarrassingly overbalanced with instrumental works in comparison to their choral output.

My greatest worry is that, due to our fear of the unknown and our performances emphasizing the work of the past, music written for the voice, the chamber choir, and the large choir will eventually become a lost art. Without a "present" there can be no future. How can we work together to prevent this?

First, we must engage the best of our composers to write choral music for our ensembles. This is the only choice we have if we are to save choral music for the next generation. We must protect our own organizations and our chosen field of art by changing what is happening all over the world with young composers and artists.

Secondly, we must consider the singers in our choirs. Currently, most vocalists concentrate on art songs, oratorio literature, and opera repertoire in their vocal training. We can begin, along with our colleagues in the vocal studios, to investigate alternatives to this traditional method of preparation. There are some composers, singers, educators, and conductors who believe we can generate new ways of developing singers. They believe that we have only begun to tap the resources of the human voice and they are opening new doors and avenues of exploration that are exciting and exhilarating. By doing this, they are pumping "new blood" into our traditionally prepared performers and providing the technical and musical freedom they need to approach wider varieties of music.

Last and most importantly, we must be willing to make a personal and professional commitment to the future of choral music. During the past ten years, we have been fortunate to witness the emergence of groups such as the **King's Singers, Electric Phoenix, Western Wind, Chanticleer, and Take Six**. These ensembles may be labelled "crossover" ensembles as they perform a mixture of choral repertoire including the best music of our past as well as new and accessible music being written today. These ensembles have won an audience which is, in some cases, listening to choral music for virtually the first time. Just as these ensembles are "crossovers," be a bridge, a "crossover conductor." Commit yourselves to the cause of choral music for the future. The greatest help you can give our profession and art is to allow the newest voices to be heard.

(reprinted from Illinois ACDA, Spring 1992
Conductor's Podium, Lynn Drafal, Ed.)

We wish to congratulate our colleagues whose groups participated admirably at the Southern Division Convention.
Bill Caldwell
Kathy Chandler
Alan McClung
Maggie Miller
Mille Turek



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Mark Your Calendar Today!



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 When a mutual and sympathetic understanding of the human spirit is built, people finally become persons.
 Howard Swan

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17375 20000 7900 1993/01
 Kevin R Hibbard
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