



# Tools for Success



By Drew Bowers, GA-ACDA Membership Chair  
Director of Choral Activities at Milton High School in Milton, GA

- 🎵 What are the critical tools for a choral director's success?
- 🎵 How often should we be adding new ideas to our teaching techniques?
- 🎵 How can ACDA help to determine and support these tools?

If you know the answers to the questions above, then we need you at ACDA conventions meeting and mentoring young/new conductors. If you do not know the answers to questions above, then you need to be at ACDA conventions meeting master conductors/teachers and learning all you can.

Each and every choral director has to determine what is needed for their success. We also have to understand that each and every year these tools may change based on who is singing or the challenges presented. The hope is that we as conductors have some constants that we can refer to often for guidance and answers. Hopefully, for all of us, ACDA is on that list. ACDA is constantly working to provide these items to our members. As members, it should be a goal of ours to share these ideas with other choral conductors and make them aware of what ACDA has to offer for all. Without attending our conventions, it is hard to know what is offered. The more people that are in attendance at

state, divisional, and national conventions will give more ideas to what works and what doesn't work. It also can create an open dialogue on how to make things better for all.

I hear frequently that money is one issue in getting to the conferences. This is certainly a concern in this economy, but there are multiple ways to look at it. I once heard our Past President Jerry McCoy speak of this in the following way. "If you a plumber or any tradesman and there was a new tool that was needed for your success on the job, generally it is your responsibility to purchase that tool for use. If a tool were lost or needed to be updated, it would be your responsibility as well to get it corrected or replaced." He went on to state that as choral directors we are offered the opportunity to attend these incredible conventions which allow us to add more tools to our teaching repertoire. I agree with Jerry. It does present challenges from a financial and time commitment but when you look at it this way: can we really afford to NOT be in attendance at these events?

We know that our students are pulled in so many directions these days. Anything that we can do to keep up with modern practices and techniques is only going to help us when we are in front of our choirs; plus it gives some great opportunities for your singers as well. I hope that you will plan ahead so that we can have the experience of a lifetime together through ACDA. Bring a friend/colleague and show them as well where to find some tools for our success.

Best wishes on a great year.

Drew

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Mark your calendars for these upcoming conferences.

- 🎵 ACDA National Convention, Dallas, TX – March 13-16, 2013
- 🎵 GA ACDA State Convention, Spivey Hall – June 27-29, 2013
- 🎵 Southern Division ACDA, Jacksonville, FL – March 5-8, 2014

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# A Few Words from Our President

**By Mary Busman**

**Georgia ACDA President**

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During the past two years it has been my honor to serve as Georgia ACDA president. With the position, has come the joy of witnessing the fruits of past state and national leaders' efforts. The National ACDA Leadership Conference held June 2012 in Dallas, offered a glimpse into the time, expertise, and dedication past leaders generously shared to get ACDA "right". Those efforts continue under the current national and state leadership as they plan for ACDA in the future.

Much of the Leadership Conference meeting time was spent discussing ACDA's identity as reflected through the results of the National Strategic Planning Survey. There is a genuine concern that ACDA should reach out to new members of all ethnicity, age, and tradition in order to best represent choral directors of the United States. This interest in membership is vital to the organization's energy and growth.

In keeping with this membership focus, Georgia ACDA is encouraging collegiate students to become involved in ACDA. The energy and enthusiasm of new choral directors is a positive force in the organization and the potential for mentorship connections is invaluable. As encouragement, several financial incentives are available to college students for reduced membership and conference fees. Those interested should contact Deanne Joseph, Georgia chairperson of Youth and Student Activities through the [gaacda.org](http://gaacda.org) website.

Each summer, Georgia ACDA sponsors a summer conference. This summer's Georgia ACDA conference was aptly led by headliner, Joe Miller from Westminster Choir College. I believe I speak for everyone who attended in saying he was a warm, knowledgeable, and passionate leader who inspired us to be fully human in our pursuit of the choral art. Dr. Miller's leadership was enhanced by several fine interest sessions with Shannon Jeffreys, Tim Kintzinger, Jeffrey Benson, and Troy Robertson all sharing their expertise. Reading sessions representing Music in Worship, Women's Choirs, Elementary Choirs, Ethnic and Multicultural Perspectives, and College and University Choirs were presented by Alicia Walker, Alison Mann, Paige Mathis, Drew Bower, and Paul Neal respectively.

Spivey Hall welcomed several fine groups to the beautiful hall during the conference. Coro Vocati, Our Song, The Cecilia Ensemble, Dutchtown High School Select Women's Chorus, Georgia Singers Summer Festival Choir, and the Atlanta Young Singers of Callanwolde were part of the evening concerts. Completing the evening concert session was the Georgia ACDA High School and Collegiate Honor Chorus under the direction of Kenneth Fulton. The conference was adjourned with a performance by the Lifetime Singers Lifetime Learners Choir under the capable leadership of Kevin Hibbard. A special thank you goes to members and friends of the Georgia ACDA board who worked diligently to make this conference run smoothly!

Following the 2012 Georgia summer conference in June, the board met to discuss the presence of Georgia ACDA in the state. Much concern was expressed regarding the expense of the luncheon during the GMEA conference in January. In response to this conversation, there will not be a Georgia ACDA luncheon this year during the GMEA conference. Instead, during the January conference, Georgia ACDA will offer a more extensive ACDA exhibit booth with an informal chance for the membership to meet. Look for your Georgia ACDA booth in the exhibit hall!

If you have not had the opportunity to attend an ACDA conference, I would strongly encourage your participation. This year, the National ACDA conference will be held in Dallas, Texas. The national conference committee has wonderful plans for the conference with many venues within walking distance of each other, as well as great regional food conveniently provided by food trucks. Save March 13-16, 2013 for this occasion and check the national site at [www.acda.org](http://www.acda.org) for housing and performance offerings!

This May marked the end of my public school choral teaching career. Happy and passionate in my chosen profession, it was admittedly a bittersweet time. A colleague from another discipline asked me how I had avoided burnout over the years. It was poignant to reflect on friends, students, professional affiliations, and professional colleagues as I searched for a response. Answering my associate, I simply stated that music offered the opportunity to keep learning. Advanced study, professional organizations, fresh repertoire, personal performing opportunities, and eager students all served to freshen each working day. I am confident that ACDA membership strengthened this quest for learning by encouraging, as stated in its mission statement “excellence in choral music through education, performance, composition, and advocacy”. As you travel along your career, I wish for you the same vocational fulfillment. I am confident that throughout, it will be richly enhanced with ACDA involvement.



Mary Busman

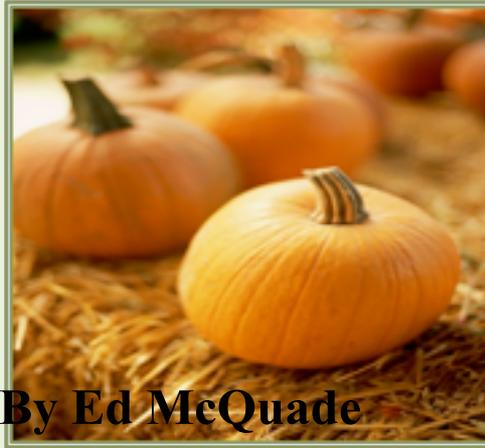
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# EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN



**By Ed McQuade**

**R&S Chair for Middle School Choirs**

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If you were to ask my two adult-aged children when autumn officially begins for them, they would tell you it is whenever Starbucks starts selling their line of pumpkin spice products. Whether it's warm drinks, cool nights, or Friday night football; autumn stirs feelings in all of us to some extent or another. For choral directors, however, with autumn also comes that first big concert of the year: the "Fall Concert."

When I think back to my early teaching years in the 90's, students arrived for the first day of school one week before Labor Day, and, boy, did we ever look forward to that three-day weekend after that first week of school! Now, most of us teach a full month or longer before the "unofficial start of fall" finally rolls around.



Despite the feeling that we now start school in the middle of summer, if you are like me, the fall concert season seems to arrive quicker than in the past. Part of this is because our all-state audition schedule changed, and we now have less time to prepare students for that all-important first audition. For most of us, class periods are shorter, too. For me, each of my class periods has shrunk from 55 minutes to 37 minutes per day since I first started teaching. Eighteen minutes per class is a lot of lost instructional time that we will probably never recover. Throw in a week of ITBS diagnostic

testing that never used to occur in the fall, and many of us feel like we are behind before we've really even gotten started.

Whether you are an experienced teacher or new to the profession, one of the most time consuming tasks in preparation for the fall concert is programming. If you want to get a head start on concert planning during the summer, as middle school directors, we always face the task of trying to plan for a chorus of which at least 1/3 of the students will be totally new to our school. Factor in the added burden of trying to guess how much our students' young voices will have changed over the summer months (not to mention how their hormonal changes are going to affect their enthusiasm and effort!!), and it's extremely hard to fully plan that first performance until you've had a chance to get to know the kids and learn what they are capable of handling.

Putting time, schedules, interruptions, and all other variables aside, one of the largest obstacles standing in the way for many teachers as they try to program music for upcoming performances is money. When I started teaching in 1989, the BOE provided middle school choral directors in our system with a budget of \$500 for music regardless of the size the enrollment. Even back then, \$500 didn't get you a lot of music. It's scary to think that in many school systems today, teachers are trying to put together quality concert programs for their students with even less, or in some cases, no money from their BOE.

At the conclusion of the Georgia ACDA summer conference back in June, all of the current R & S chairs met together to discuss the obstacles facing choral directors in our state, and shared ideas on how we as an organization can help. One of the facts that we kept coming back to is that many teachers, especially new teachers, have old copies of quality choral music collecting dust in their music libraries. With reading sessions and free packets of music being so popular at conferences, we sometimes get caught up in always trying to find new and better music. Sometimes the piece that might be most perfect for our students is sitting in our music library just waiting to be rediscovered.

I'll admit—I'm bad about this. One of the things I like about my job is programming new music, and I find myself getting bored quicker when I'm re-teaching a

piece I've used in the past. There really is no need for me to purchase all new music for every concert when I have seven full filing cabinets of quality music already.

One of the thoughts that came out of our summer meeting was that many of our new choral directors might not be familiar with some of the older titles of great choral music that could be hidden within their music library. I know when I took my first job, it was a bit overwhelming to try and find the time to go through all of the old music that was already in the music library at my new school, especially since the school had been opened for almost 20 years. How helpful it would have been if an experienced teacher had gone through it with me and pulled out single copies of all of the best music in those cabinets for me to preview.

Although we can't sit down with every teacher, Georgia ACDA would like to help new teachers discover some of those "tried-and-true" pieces from the past that they already own, but haven't yet discovered. Copyright dates can be deceiving—sometimes the students love music printed in the 70's and 80's as much or more than anything being published today.

Therefore, Georgia ACDA would like to compile a new list—of old titles. We need the help of all of our experienced and retired teachers to make this happen. What are (or were) the titles of some of your favorite pieces that you could go back to again and again with successful results every time? What were those pieces that "everyone sang" 10 or 20 years ago that might still be in filing cabinets in many of our older schools around the state?

Let's help our newer teachers save money while discovering some of the "classics" from the past. As the R & S chair for middle school, it is my responsibility to compile a list of those titles that would most benefit our newer middle school directors, but I am happy to hear back from directors at any level if you are willing to share some of your favorite titles. Here's how you can help—simply e-mail me a list of your favorite pieces at:

[ed.mcquade@bufordcityschools.org](mailto:ed.mcquade@bufordcityschools.org)

Let me know the title, composer, voicing, and the appropriate level (elementary, middle, or high) for each piece. Send me as many titles as you can think of, but even one title is helpful. Georgia ACDA plans to compile these lists and have them ready for distribution at our booth at the GMEA conference in January.

I've decided to "practice what I preach," so I programmed a number of older pieces for my fall concert along with a few new titles as well. As far as my students are concerned, they're all new—and they are enjoying the old classics just as much as the students who sang them years ago. I know we are all busy, but I encourage you to take five minutes and submit a list of titles. Our new teachers will thank you!



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# Collaboration!

By Dr. Stephen J. Mulder

R & S Chair for Community Choirs

We as choral directors understand clearly the age-old maxim often attributed to Aristotle: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” We observe in our rehearsals and concerts every day how our individual singers “feed off each other” and the result is a product that surpasses even the best effort of the most talented singer we have. The modern term “synergy” is sometimes used to describe this phenomenon. The individual singers that form a choir are a textbook example of this concept in action.



Beyond this, however, the concept can also apply to combining our performing groups with other groups (performing groups or otherwise). Collaboration--to work jointly with or willingly assist another individual or group--can magnify our effectiveness and provide a new level of synergy. My community choir has collaborated frequently in our five years of existence. These endeavors often become season highlights for our audience or “mountaintop” experiences for our singers.

Some collaboration projects can provide a lift for your ensemble. We hire professional instrumentalists and occasionally vocal soloists for our Masterworks concerts. We have brought in guest conductors to rehearse with us or provide a clinic experience. We have worked with other arts organizations such as the local ballet company and local school visual arts programs. We have brought in literary specialists to read poetry or narrate. Each time we combine our efforts and open up to new relationships, our choir feels a lift and performs at an enhanced level.

Other collaborations provide a way for our choir to serve the performing arts in our area. This concept was introduced to me when I was in graduate school at Florida State University. I directed a local senior adult choir, and one spring the FSU Women's Glee Chorus "adopted" our choir. We rehearsed and performed a concert together. It was a tremendous experience for my senior adults, musically and socially. The collegiate singers also experienced something positive and made a generational connection through music. Our community choir adopted a middle school chorus a few years ago, and we are currently collaborating with a local high school choir for a fall concert. The benefits are numerous. Beyond the musical synergy, we are excited to share our audience populations, expose the adults to the school fine arts facilities, and learn about the challenges and successes of the school music programs (and where we might be able to make a difference). The school-aged singers are seeing that singing is an activity that can be enjoyed for a lifetime, even beyond high school and college years.



I highly recommend regular collaboration for directors of community choirs as a way to better your ensemble and to serve the region where your group performs. As you begin thinking of ways to collaborate, it is helpful to keep an open mind and to think "outside the box." Think about reaching out to other choirs and performing artists, but also consider crossing disciplines and collaborating with seemingly unrelated groups:

local businesses, boy scouts, military organizations, sports teams, local celebrities, or service organizations. As you make friends and gain colleagues through attendance at conferences and conventions, and as you mentor younger musicians and teachers, keep the idea of collaboration in your mind. Building bridges in this manner may provide the opportunity to take our art form beyond where we can go alone.

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# Suggestions for Selecting Repertoire



By Kathy Wright

R&S Chair for Senior High Choirs

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Choosing music is definitely one of the hardest, if not THE hardest and most challenging aspects of a choir director's job. The music needs to be: age appropriate, text appropriate, have educational merit, - well, the list can become lengthy quickly.

Here are a few ideas meant to be helpful in the process:

1. HOURS should be spent looking for appropriate literature. Going through piles of music, listening (thank goodness it's a little easier with all the networking available). Please do not settle for the "top sellers."
2. The literature selected needs to coincide with the skills being taught – rhythm, altered tones, range, harmony – especially in the younger grades.



3. Music should be chosen to represent the students and what they need to be learning – not the director's preferences. An aside: I was probably at an advantage that my high school choir experience was not very strong. Meaning that I didn't just want to sing "what I sang in high school." The students come first.
4. Conventions and summer workshops always offer music reading sessions. I have always been told that if you find ONE (yes, one!)

in a session, that's success. (Thank you Bill Caldwell!)

5. Always remember to include a "War Horse" or two. (a Bach chorale, *He Watching*

*Over Israel* by Mendelssohn, *Hark, I Hear* by Shaw-Parker, to name a few).

6. Be willing to do the unfamiliar. Most publishers offer recordings and will help with languages. Composers are usually willing to help also.
7. Convention performances – take good notes. ACDA conventions always offer a plethora of literature.
8. Conversations with successful choir directors. I couldn't tell you how many wonderful repertoire suggestions I have gotten from dinner conversations at conventions— most of which were written on napkins. Be willing to ask.
9. Be willing to borrow or trade from a colleague. In the days of tight budgets, be resourceful.
10. Be sure to evaluate your list for each choir: Variety of styles, tempi, languages, texts, etc.
11. Check out successful college directors' programming: Brad Holmes and Anton Armstrong come to mind, not for the difficulty but for the purpose of each piece selected.
12. Strive to challenge yourself as well as your students. Get out of your comfort zone (whatever that is!)

**PLEASE be encouraged to spend the time and effort necessary to choose music. You and your students will be rewarded in more ways than you can count!**



Kathy Wright

High School R &S Chair

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## Advertisement

After 40 years of teaching private voice and church music, I am retiring and wish to sell my remaining music library. I believe these materials would be most appealing to ACDA members.

***Music for Sale:** Retiring voice teacher and church choir director selling personal library. Vast collection of Sacred Vocal and Art Song Collections & Single Titles; Single copies of major and minor Choral Works; Resources for Choirs and Congregations; Worship; Drama; Iona Community; Teaching and Methods. Materials offered at deep discount and in very good or new condition. Will sell all or specific titles. Email for complete listing at:*

*[music4urlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:music4urlibrary@gmail.com).*

Submitted by Emily Moon

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