

GEORGIA ACDA

Affiliate Association of the American Choral Directors Association

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Words of Reflection and Thanks from Outgoing President Mary Busman

The March weather, with its sunshine and breezes, speaks of seasons passing and a new beginning for nature. So it is with Georgia ACDA. The two year term of office has quickly passed, and a new slate of officers is eager to begin their work. Before this transition takes place, we must first reflect on the last two years and show our appreciation for the hard work of the most recent Georgia ACDA board!

Under their guidance GA ACDA has continued offering the statewide summer conference at the beautiful Spivey Hall. There, in an intimate setting, members have met to share ideas with outstanding clinicians, read through music packets, enjoy concerts and interest sessions, and recharge for the coming season.

In addition to the summer conference GA ACDA has been an integral part of GMEA activities in Savannah. Contributing financially to the sponsorship of Jeffery Redding in 2012 and in 2013, Auburn University's William and Rosephanye Powell, GA ACDA demonstrated its support of continuing education. Understanding that fellowship is an important aspect of the profession, GA ACDA sponsored a successful reception in 2013 following the evening concert series. A GA ACDA booth at the trade show provided materials and a point of contact throughout the conference. Finally, reading packets were presented and provided to teachers attending the GMEA All State event.

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I thank the board members for their hard work, creativity, and energy. The above listed events rested on their very capable shoulders! I am proud to have served with this talented group.

As I write my final GA ACDA newsletter contribution, I must reflect on my first year of teacher retirement. As with every stage in life, retirement has offered some surprises. Assuming that student involvement would be minimal in my part time job, and not anticipating an interim church choir director position, I scheduled a water-color class. Since choral music had consumed most free time over the last 40 years, there was much to learn.

What fun it was to be a student again! The art teacher was excited about her craft and skillfully shared her expertise. In the company of another retired choral director, learning to paint was a joy. Prompted by the instructor to practice, we two retired educators rolled out painting after painting; some quite hilarious and others almost wonderful.

As we painted, several comparisons between music and visual art became evident; practice was necessary for any amount of success, the process was as

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important as the result, value and the necessary three contrasting levels in art parallel dynamics and musical elements of expression, and skilled instruction led to positive results.

Participating in another art form served to refine my approach to choral music and brought new appreciation for the choral director's influence. Choral directors have an incredible opportunity to positively impact the artistic development of singers. We must continue to sharpen our artistic selves, both for the betterment of our singers and to satisfy the artistic spirit which lives within us. ACDA provides the tools with which to sharpen our skills.

ACDA is thriving in Georgia. Creative and energetic leaders both at the state and national level are looking towards the future during the planning process. They are actively working at involving choral directors of all levels of experience by offering membership incentives, collegiate incentives, affordable gatherings, and informative websites and conferences. Please check out the many available resources and broaden your exposure to your musical art form. You owe it to your singers and to your artistic self!

--President [Mary Busman](#)



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Looking Into the Future: News From Incoming President Amy Hughley

I am looking forward to serving you as Georgia ACDA President beginning this summer. It is my hope that we will continue to serve one another by sharing wisdom in all areas of choral music, whether it be by directing choral music in our churches and synagogues, teaching in schools and universities, or leading community choirs of all ages.

This past January, over one hundred directors from across the state met together at Churchill's Pub in Savannah for a state ACDA reception. There is such a wealth of knowledge and support in the colleagues across our state, and the importance of having time to spend with one another is crucial for our personal growth as directors. Only those who were members of the Georgia Music Educators Association were in attendance last January, and while it was an extremely successful evening, we need to continue to foster choral directors of all Repertoire and Standards genres in order to continue building our strong organization.

This summer, from **June 27 through June 29** at **Clayton State University in Morrow**, ACDA members from across the state will gather for the **2013 Georgia ACDA Conference**. ACDA members should make it a priority to attend, as the wealth of knowledge and support you receive is overwhelming, and at an unbelievably **low fee of \$75** for those who preregister before June 10th. [Registration can be completed online.](#)

Here are a few highlights from the upcoming Summer Conference 2013:

--[Jerry Blackstone](#), director of choirs at University of Michigan, will present six informative sessions, covering a variety of choral topics.

--Kennesaw State University Men's Ensemble will serve as the demonstration choir for one of Dr. Blackstone's sessions.

--[Paul Head](#), Director of Choirs at the University of Delaware, will conduct a collegiate honor choir. Applications for collegiate performers are [available online](#) and will be due May 20th.

--Phillip Shoultz, director of choirs at Druid Hills Presbyterian Church and director of voice education Men's Choirs for the Gwinnett Young Singers, will conduct our Lifetime Learners' Choir. Applications for performers to participate in the Lifetime Learners Choir are [available online](#) and will be due May 20th.

--Charles Claiborne will present an interest session that offers valuable warm-ups for all ages.

--Beth Wilson will present a session on fresh ideas for concert programming.

--Five Repertoire and Standards Chairs will present reading sessions with a variety of quality repertoire for a range of abilities and voicings.

--Four choirs from across the state will be chosen to perform at Spivey Hall as part of the evening concert series during the convention. [Applications for performing groups are available online.](#)

And, perhaps most importantly, you will have time with your colleagues from across the state to gather and share ideas.

I look forward to seeing you this summer.

--President-elect [Amy Hughley](#)



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Teach a Man to Fish --Dr. Paul Neal

This past fall, I took an assessment of my choirs' sight-reading ability. Over the past few years, I had been frustrated with their inability to read simple passages. I felt that they were learning with their ears and not with their brains. So, this past fall, I decided to begin a sight-reading regimen for all of the choirs at my university. I began with simpler melodies for my beginner choirs and more difficult for my advanced choir. I was amazed at how quickly the students began to respond to it.

We had a few problems at the beginning. The most important problem we had to resolve was, "solfeggio or numbers?" I chose to use solfeggio only because that is what is taught in our college sight-reading classes and I felt the syllables are more easily sung. This was a challenge for some of students who had learned on numbers in high school. We literally start each rehearsal with a short sight-reading. I only allow for 5 minutes of my rehearsal, as we are always strapped for rehearsal time. In my choir room, I have an overhead that I can display for the students. We do a shortened version similar to any large group evaluation – we present the example, they are given the key, and I give them one minute to review the example. We read through it twice and move on to our regular rehearsal. I have found that it has done wonders for my choir, in the following ways:

1. Intonation – through their sight-reading, they are learning about the intervallic relationships and how those relate to each other. They have discovered tuning a third in the bass part is more difficult than if it's in the soprano.
2. Overall confidence – When we learn a new piece, I often introduce it in the same way as a basic sight-reading example, giving them time to review their part before we begin work as a whole. I had found that before, when we would begin to learn a new composition, many of my singers would retreat vocally, waiting for the better readers to sing their part before learning it by ear. Now, I have more leaders and fewer followers.
3. Blend – each section must work as a team to sing their portion of the example as one, so the blend has improved tremendously.
4. Rhythm – This is always an issue with singers, and many of the rhythmic issues that they have overcome in sight-reading have translated over into their basic rehearsal. I plan on studying this further, giving my choirs more rhythmic examples next year to build upon what they have learned this year.

Of course, we directors all know how to sight-read and we know how to teach sight-reading, but I would encourage you to explore it with your singers on the collegiate level, even in your top group. Find a book of Bach chorales and pass them out to your singers. I know we all do not have enough rehearsal time in our schedule to learn what we need. Perhaps learn one less song next semester to give the 5-minutes in each rehearsal for sight-reading. Perhaps your singers will improve their sight-

reading with those 5 minutes and it will allow you to learn more music the next semester? You will be surprised, if you do it regularly, that they actually look forward to the challenge and then look at learning music in a new light. Since college choirs are made of singers from different high schools that taught many different methods, it is important to continue this important aspect of the choir rehearsal. This will improve your singers and make for a more pleasurable rehearsal experience.

--[Dr. Paul Neal](#)

R&S Chair for College & University Choirs



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