

The Status of Choral Music in Alabama's Secondary Schools

Clarence H. Janes, Jr., R&S Chair for Male Choirs
Choir Director, Huffman High School

132 public school systems within the state have websites that give information concerning their schools and the courses offered in each. I used this information to determine how many school systems offer choral music education. Many of our smaller, more rural systems have K-12 or 6-12 schools. Also, many only have one high school in the county.



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The Problem

Secondary school choral directors have always had to fight for their existence within the school day. *Alabama 2020* is a new initiative in the state of Alabama that will only make the situation more difficult for choral music education to exist in Alabama schools. Once systems are allowed to drop the Fine Arts credit from the mandatory curriculum, Career Tech classes will replace many fine arts courses. Often, when choral directors retire, they are not replaced at their school, and career tech or other electives fill their spot in the matrix.

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Spring 2013 Reprise

The Alabama Choral Directors
Association Newsletter

From the President

Jessica Kaufhold, President Alabama ACDA
Choir Director, Jefferson State Community College

Today marks 10 years for me as a choral director. 10 years ago today I began my position at Jefferson State, fresh out of grad school and barely older than my students. And in that 10 years I have worked to teach my students to find pride in learning, joy in life, and passion in music. This milestone, however, has really made me think of the things I have learned in the past 10 years.

This job is better than I ever expected. I get to go to work every day and make music! I get to work with others as we find joy, pride, solace and sorrow in the music, and learn to express it. I get to help students learn to work together toward a common goal—one that they can't reach alone. And I get to experience music everyday—sing, dance, listen, lead. What fun!

This job is harder than I ever expected. Music is an academic subject with many intricacies that require time, intensive study, and planning to be able to teach adequately. I basically select an entirely new textbook each semester when selecting literature for my choirs. (What other discipline does that?) There is the student that took music because they needed an "easy A." There is the administrator that asks on Tuesday if the choir will sing (insert random song here) on Friday at a major school function because don't we just show up and sing? (We don't actually have to work at that stuff, do we?) There are those students that I love so dearly, but that break my heart with troubled stories, poor decisions, and sometimes just life. I wear multiple hats: I direct 3 choirs, teach 3 classes, build this budget, run this festival, lead this fundraising event, perform this community service, etc. I work extra hours that I will never "get credit" for. And I stay passionately committed through it all.

Professional development matters. Professional development is so much more than stuff to put on my resume or to add to an evaluation I turn into my supervisor each year. I will never forget Gary Packwood finding me at my first Summer Conference after

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July 15-16, 2013; The University of Alabama



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Out Here on my Own: Collaboration Within the Arts

Tiffany Richter, R&S Chair for Vocal Jazz Choirs
Choir Director, Wallace State Community College

Last month, the Wallace State Vocal Jazz and the Wallace State Theater presented Broadway Night. Now, I will admit, as a vocal jazz artist and educator, the title made me roll my eyes (right before I quickly thanked my theatre instructor for working with me on yet another performance, that is!)

You see, there is an intrinsic relationship between theatre and music at Wallace State. We share the students, collaborate on the musical and the Singers' Spring Sing and generally do a lot of team-teaching. So when I wanted to have another venue for my vocal jazz group, the natural response was to go to Lauren and ask if we could share a performance night. The fact that we jazz singers hate to "share" our standards with over-singing Broadway performers, or that singers for the theater feel the need to teach us how to BELT EVERYTHING, well, we needed to put those stereotypes to rest and work together.

And this approach worked splendidly. People who love jazz came and were surprised to find that many of the songs they love are actually in a Broadway show. And those who enjoy the theater came to an appreciation for vocal jazz. And BOTH of our individual programs were enhanced by working together.

We are all working feverishly at our respective schools and churches. It's so easy to get into "tunnel-vision mode," and try to keep all of the "plates spinning" in our own programs—trying to make them as excellent as possible, and feeling like a one-person show most of the time. But let me encourage you to stop, take a breath and look around. What about the instrumental program at your school? Theatre? Visual Art? Literature? How can you develop a relationship between colleagues in order to collaborate?

Can you write a themed performance that utilizes literature? What about combining your vocal and instrumental ensembles for a performance? Or even just do a huge rehearsal and switch conductors? How enlightening for your students! And for YOU!

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From the President

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I started teaching and telling me to GET INVOLVED. I started actively participating in ACDA events and then began serving on the Alabama ACDA board. My involvement with ACDA has provided invaluable opportunities for personal and professional growth. And I found that the more I put into the organization, the more I got out of it—way more than a line item on my resume.

"Choir director friends" are important. I need those people who understand the reason for the joy (or disappointment) of my day. I need those people that will listen as I neurotically analyze a concert, and provide their own useful insight. I need those people with whom to share ideas about rehearsal/classroom activities. It's just important to have those people who really understand what I do.

Literature will make you or break you. It is all about the music. It all comes down to the literature I choose for my choirs. At the end of the day, it's not about whether or not my best soprano gets mono or stays healthy: it's about whether I choose literature that is appropriate, educational, engaging and worthwhile for my choirs and for me. Reading sessions: eat them up! Tried and True lists: check them out! Attend other concerts and make notes on the program! I have to find music that works for my groups, including "new to me" music.

Choir uniforms stink. The girls don't like them. The boys don't wash them. And yet they are a necessary evil. Come concert time, there they are: appropriately dressed and looking good! But why is it that there are always two boys who—regardless of how I instruct, tease, cajole, or threaten—seem incapable of returning a freshly laundered uniform? Maybe I will learn the answer to that question in my next 10 years.

I am a part of the best profession I can imagine. And with only 10 years in the field, I have so much yet to learn and experience. I can't wait to see what happens next!! It has been an honor to serve as the president of Alabama ACDA. I am excited to see where our organization will go under the upcoming leadership of Marvin Latimer and Megan Rudolph. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you!

The Status of Choral Music in Alabama's Secondary Schools

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The Current Situation

The following shows that more than half of Alabama's systems do not offer any type of choral music education within their secondary schools.

60 High Schools with Choral Programs

69 High Schools with No Choral Programs

1 Part Time

2 Undetermined

132 Total Systems Viewed

Upon review, virtually every single high school in the state has an instrumental program. No matter how small or rural the school, they have hired a full-time band director. I do not think that I am going out on a limb by suggesting that, if bands were not so closely related to athletics, they would be in our same situation. Secondly, the vast majority of Alabama high schools employ full-time visual and/or dramatic arts instructors.

Why is this allowed to happen? Choral classes are not as expensive to maintain as instrumental music courses. A choir class requires fewer supplies than visual or dramatic arts courses. Could the reason be apathy? Is it that the majority of citizens in the state simply do not view the choral art as an essential component of their child's education? If citizens regarded choral music as important, then, our state would not allow this to occur within our schools. Many of the websites list choir and the arts as "extracurricular" even though these courses are offered during the regular school day. When the state removes fine arts from the mandatory requirements needed for graduation, we will have fewer and fewer choirs in our state.

Solutions

Greater Visibility: Choral programs cannot simply sit back and allow the citizens of its county to think that they do not exist. Perform at every "dog and pony" show that occurs within your municipality. Perform at city council and board of education meetings. Perform at municipal gatherings and athletic events. Literally make your voices heard!

Advocacy: Call local, state, and national representatives and explain the merit of choral music education in the school. Do not rely simply upon the merit of music for music's sake. Citizens must realize that students who are enrolled in choral music courses score higher on standardized tests than students who have never taken choir. Citizens must understand that choral music students are more aware of the human condition simply because we deal with it daily in the music we sing.

Extracurricular: Do not ever call your course "extracurricular" or "non-core" nor allow others to say that about what we do. "Extracurricular" makes what we do sound like an optional activity and not a vital course. Having extra activities for students (show choir, select ensembles, etc.) is a wonderful thing for a choral program. Hopefully, those choral directors are receiving compensation for this extra work, because most of our band directors are receiving stipends.

AVA: I realize that this article is written for *Reprise* and not *Ala Breve*; however, AVA membership is so important to saving choral programs in our schools. To our ACDA members who do not teach choral music in schools: encourage your school's choral director to not only join AVA and ACDA but to be active and maintain a voice in the organization.

Given the current political climate of our state, it is not going to get better before serious damage is done to choral music education in Alabama. Choral musicians in the state—school teachers, college instructors, and church musicians—cannot sit by and watch our school's choral organizations die. We all must become vocal. As AVA has proclaimed: "Don't Silence Our Voices"

Assessment Reflections from a Sight-singing Adjudicator

Ken Berg, R&S Chair for Boy Choirs
Choral Director, Birmingham Boys Choir; Bella Voce Press, LLC

This past week it was my privilege to “adjudicate” the Sight-Singing portion of what is now cryptically known as “State Choral Assessment” (whatever the heck that means!). This was my second or third time to serve in this capacity. Once again, it was amazing how much excellent teaching is going on in our fair state! You should all know this, and be congratulated.

With some very few exceptions, it was a delightful (if exhausting) experience. While it is nice to hear “prepared pieces” on the concert stage, it is in the “sight-singing room” that one gets to observe how a music teacher actually teaches their class. To me, this is very cool and often exciting. One can actually tell within moments of the choir entering the room how this is going to go. Regardless of how well they perform on stage, sight-singing is where the “discipline” shows up! (Or not!)

Without exception, the choirs who were the most successful in the “sight-singing room” had these things in common:

- They were respectful of the experience. (The choristers clearly understood the value of music literacy.)
- They were prepared for the experience. (The choristers had practiced sight-singing, probably daily. This was NOT a new experience for them.)
- They were attentive and reactive to their instructor. (The choristers listened to their instructions and responded appropriately.)

This kind of preparation does not happen accidentally or unintentionally. Successful choirs, almost by definition, have successful teachers. These teachers appeared to have these things in common:

- They clearly love their art. (This showed in their careful attention to their music example and their clear instructions to their choristers.)

- They clearly love to teach. (This showed in their concise identification of the “helps” and “hindrances” in the musical exercises.)
- They clearly love their students. (Who else would work this hard on something as esoteric as “singing” with middle/high school kids?)

It was thrilling to watch the creativity and effectiveness of these teachers. The solfege was glorious! I cannot tell you how exciting it was to



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see a room full of sixth graders silently reading an exercise with their solfege hand signs all in the right place and at the right time. (Quick aside; not everyone uses solfege; I understand that, and it’s fine, though I do tend to whine about it (he he!). Numbers *do* work, although not everyone sings them in tune ... the “reading” is the thing, and if that is being accomplished, then kudos to whichever system works for you!)

The bottom line is this; there is some truly outstanding music teaching going on in our fair state! It is an honor to be associated with you all. Keep up the great work. Love your kids, love your art, and love your calling. We live in an increasingly dark and difficult world. Thank you for bringing light and joy and singing into the lives of your students and those of us who have the pleasure of hearing them!

Ken Berg Receives Alabama ACDA Award

Following the statewide call for nominations, and the consideration of all nominations received, Ken Berg was named by the Alabama ACDA Board as the 2013 recipient of the **THOMAS R. SMITH AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE**. This honor, initiated in 2008, is intended to recognize those who, like Dr. Smith, have positively impacted the field of choral music in Alabama, and Ken certainly meets that description.

Ken has long been active with ACDA, serving as an officer on State and Southern Division Boards, including serving as president of the Alabama chapter of ACDA. Ken was the Director of Choirs and Fine Arts Chairman at John Carroll Catholic High School for 28 years. After retiring from teaching high school in 2005, he served for 6 years as the full-time



Ken Berg, 2013 Thomas R. Smith Award Recipient

Music Minister and Composer in Residence at Mountain Brook Baptist Church. And, for

the past 35 years, he has been the director of the Birmingham Boys Choir. He is currently

their full-time director and resident composer. Ken is a frequent adjudicator and clinician

throughout the US, and choirs under his direction have performed for OAKE, MENC (now NAfME) and ACDA State, Division and National conventions. His years of work helping singers – young and old – learn to perform beautifully together, develop musicianship qualities and consistently pursue excellence continue to be inspirational to colleagues, current and former students. And Ken’s willingness to share his time, talents and leadership with ACDA has made an incalculable impact on our organization.

This award will be presented at our 2013 Summer Conference, being held July 15 and 16 at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. The presentation will take place during the Monday evening concert. Previous winners of this award include Diana Mayhall, Milburn Price, Glinda

Blackshear and Robert Wright.

ALABAMA STATE REPERTOIRE AND STANDARDS CHAIRS

Boychoirs	Ken Berg	Birmingham Boys Choir	ken@birminghamboyschoir.com
Children's Choirs	Jeffrey Caulk	Hueytown Middle School	jcaulk@jefcoed.com
College and University Choirs	Patricia Corbin	Jacksonville State University	pcorbin@jsu.edu
Community Choirs	Erin Colwitz	University of Alabama at Huntsville	erin.colwitz@uah.edu
Junior High / Middle School Choirs	Kristi Bowers	Mountain Gap Middle School	khbowers@hughes.net
Male Choirs	Chipper Janes	Huffman High School	chipsinger@att.net
Multicultural Music & Perspectives	Jason Max Ferdinand	Oakwood University	jmferdinand@oakwood.edu
Music in Worship	James Seay	First United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa	james@fumct.org
Senior High School Choirs	Damion Womack	Montgomery Academy	womack.d@montgomeryacademy.org
Show Choirs	Claudia Bryan	Wallace Community College	cbryan@wallace.edu
Vocal Jazz Choirs	Tiffany Richter	Wallace State Community College	tiffany.richter@wallacestate.edu
Women's Choirs	Jennifer Canfield	Huntingdon College	jcanfield@huntingdon.edu
Youth & Student Activities	Brian Kittredge	University of Alabama at Birmingham	briank@uab.edu

A Commentary

Jennifer Canfield, R&S Chair for Women's Choirs
Professor of Choral Music Education, Huntingdon College

This commentary is not about vocal technique, choral rehearsals, or managing your choirs. It is simply an extension of a Facebook posting I made after hearing of Van Cliburn's recent passing. I wrote:

On March 6, 1967, a young, impressionable, and passionate piano student attended a Panama City Music Association performance at the huge municipal auditorium. Van Cliburn presented a program of Brahms, Beethoven, Prokofieff, and Chopin. He also opened the program by playing the National Anthem, to "get the standing ovation out of the way." I sat on the front row in full view of his hands and watched in awe as he played that night. My piano teacher was hosting a party in his honor, and I was allowed to meet him backstage. I will never forget how tall he was, and how gracious. He took my hands in his and asked how many hours a day I practiced the piano. I told him at least 30 minutes to 1 hour a day. He shook his head and said, "You must practice a minimum of 3 hours a day if you want to be a

pianist." After that, you could not pry me from the piano. For several years I would practice before school, after school, while my mother cooked dinner, and before bed. I wanted to play just like Van Cliburn. Life took over, and the practicing diminished, but I followed my dream of a career in music. I want to thank Mrs. Hercules Pettis for my early training, and Van Cliburn, for lighting a fire under me. I will always remember you.

The written comments from friends, family, peers, and former students was a gift I did not expect. A student from my early teaching career, now grown and working in church music, wrote, "Thank you for being such a wonderful influence on me and so many of your other students at St. Paul's! I have so many fond memories and remember and use so much of what you imparted!!" The former choral director at my high school (Bay High School, Panama City, FL), Dr. Richard Snyder, wrote, "A dedication to music is not something with which we are naturally endowed. We must discover and learn to love

the art that is within us. Most have had the light turned on by someone special, though not always as special as Van Cliburn. What I find particularly rewarding is that you chose a way of passing along your inspiration to your many thousands of students. One day we must sit together and compare where our careers have led us. Thank you for sharing this brilliant moment."

The thought that I had influenced thousands of students through my years of teaching really touched home. For some reason, I never thought of my career that way. But thinking back, I have taught (and hopefully, inspired) thousands of students from different states, countries, schools, and churches. As musicians, teachers, and performers we have the opportunity to touch the lives of people, whether we work with them daily or for just a moment. We must continue to find time to encourage, guide, develop, and educate those around us, for we never know when we may be the one to "turn the light on" and be an inspiration to others.

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Our Responsibility for the Next Generation of Sacred Musicians

James Seay, R&S Chair for Music in Worship
Director of Music and Worship, First United Methodist Church of Tuscaloosa

A couple of months ago, I was having a conversation with a friend and fellow church musician about the fact that the number of quality, well-trained church musicians had seemed to lessen the past few years. At the same time, many college sacred music programs were closing or no longer offering degrees in organ or sacred music. During the conversation, we agreed that the only thing that could be more detrimental to traditional church music programs (other than the rise of contemporary Christian music) would be the scarcity of quality leadership. What, then, is the Church to do to solve this issue?

During my undergraduate years at Birmingham-Southern College in a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, I was sure that I wanted to be the next Placido Domingo, or somewhere close to it. Like most of my fellow voice, piano, composition, and instrumental majors, church music wasn't anywhere on my radar. I was lucky enough to get an intern position at a large Methodist church in the area under the direction of Dr. Lester Seigel. The choir sang good music and sang it with excellence. During my years of singing with the Adult Choir at Canterbury UMC, I began to pick up on important aspects of church music that didn't have much to do with music. I learned about liturgical seasons, how to plan for special feasts days, intricacies of ritual and liturgy, and began to get a glimpse of how a church music program might be run. As my education continued, Dr. Seigel even let me conduct the choir, which is where I first figured out that I really enjoyed being a choral conductor. It was this experience that nudged me into church music in my graduate years

and, finally, in a full-time Director of Music position. Had it not been for that initial internship, I don't know that I would have ended up in the same field that I so enjoy now.

And I know that I am not unique in my experience with a church music intern program. I know of quite a few professional church musicians who are serving large programs who did not get their start with a college sacred music or organ performance degree, but a similar internship gave them practical experience and unearthed the desire to dedicate their professional lives to sacred music in part- or full-time positions.

What does this mean for your church? Churches differ in size of congregation and make-up of music ministry. For that reason, an intern program should never look the same from church to church. An intern program should be developed to fit the needs of the church, and (just as importantly) the abilities and potential of a worthy candidate. If you are a large church with several paid section leader positions, consider elevating some of those

to include more responsibility and cater it to both your needs and the strengths of the candidate. Consider assistants in the adult, children, or youth music areas, a music librarian, a worship assistant, or instrumental assistant. Don't just put them to work, but also develop responsibilities that help them learn the "business" of church music.

If your church music budget can't accommodate a year-round intern, or if you are in a city that does not have a college nearby, then identify a worthy high school student who shows promise in church music. Develop a program for them for the summer that can include Vacation Bible School music responsibilities, organizing a music library, or assisting in a music and arts camp week at your church. The key is to be willing to include younger, aspiring musicians who show aptitude and desire to learn more about church music. That said, if we value the quality sacred music programs that we have enjoyed for generations, then it is our responsibility to do what we can to promote the next generation of church music leadership.



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The 2020 Plan and the Implications for Music Educators

Megan Rudolph, Membership Chair
 Director of Choral Activities, Vestavia Hills High School

Hopefully you all have been made aware of the new statewide graduation requirements that are being implemented for next year. Incoming freshmen will be on the new diploma, while sophomores, juniors and seniors will be on the old diplomas. The State ad-

opted a one-diploma system, but school systems are able to create a “tiered diploma” if they wish as long as they meet the minimum guidelines of the State’s diploma. Listed below are the requirements for the new diploma:

NEW ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA THE 2020 PLAN

Areas of Study	Requirements	Credits
English Language Arts	English 9, 10, 11, and 12 or any IP/IB/Postsecondary equivalent option of these courses.	4
Mathematics	Alg. I, geometry, and Alg. II w/trig. or Alg. II, or their equivalent. Additional course(s) to complete the four credits in mathematics must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study: Mathematics</i> or CTE/AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses.	4
Science	Biology and a physical science. The third and fourth science credits may be used to meet both the science and CTE course requirement and must be chosen from the <i>Alabama Course of Study: Science</i> or CTE/AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses.	4
Social Studies	World History, U.S. History x 2, and Government/Economics or AP/IB/postsecondary equivalent courses.	4
Physical Education	LIFE (Personal Fitness). One JROTC credit may be used to meet this requirement.	1
Health Education	<i>Alabama Course of Study: Health Education</i>	0.5
Career Preparedness	Career Preparedness Course (Career and Academic Planning, Computer Applications, Financial Literacy).	1
CTE and/OR Foreign Language and/OR Arts Education	Students choosing CTE, Arts Education, and/or Foreign Language are encouraged to complete two courses in sequence.	3
Electives		2.5
Total Credits Required for Graduation		24

Hopefully you noticed the column that indicated the *option* of Arts Education. I am sure that you also noticed the verbiage “and/or.” You did not read this wrong, and this is not a misprint! Students can go through their entire high school career with no fine arts credit. (The old diploma requirements mandated a half credit of fine arts for every student.) The only way around this is for individual systems to require students in their district to have a fine art credit requirement. I am excited to say that many of them already do have

a fine arts requirement. The scary thing is that systems looking to make cuts (which system *isn't* looking to make cuts?) have every reason to cut their fine arts teachers.

We as music educators need to be very concerned about this! Even though this is a done deal at the State level, it is important to still be a local advocate for the arts. We should all be speaking with our adminis-

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trators, school boards, city council members, and superintendents about this issue. Make sure that your system has a fine arts credit, and if not call in the troops and get that ball rolling!

“Tried and True”

An annotated list of great choral music from our Board!

From Ken Berg

- *Peace on Earth ... and lots of little crickets*, by Paul Carey; 2-part any combination chorus and percussion (HL08501658). Our boys LOVE working on this piece! That covers a lot of territory. Great text, cool sounds, excellent teaching tool. Excellent concert piece. The Alabama ACDA Young Voices Boychoir will be singing it this May!

From Jennifer Canfield

- *La Lluvia (The Rain)*, by Stephen Hatfield (Boosey & Hawkes 48004688). This is a delightful song based on an Ecuadorian pan-pipe melody. It is not a difficult number, and very easy to teach. The treble arrangement divides into four parts, notated as Treble I, II, and III with a descant. This allows you to use different combinations of voices within each part. In addition, there are percussion parts for shakers and vibraslap. The overall performance sounds much more difficult than the piece actually is. “La Lluvia” has been featured in concert with many different honor choirs and is a wonderful multi-cultural addition to your choral library.
- *“We Hasten, O Jesu”* from *Cantata No. 78*, by J.S. Bach, arr. Laurence H. Davies; treble voices (Oxford University Press A234). A nice choral work for treble voices. Any treble choir (children, 2 sopranos, and women’s group) can sing this piece. It is a wonderful introduction to Baroque musical style, and features challenging articulation.

From Melinda Doyle

- *Psalm 24*, by Lili Boulanger (ed. Lester Ray Miller III); SATB div., (Santa Barbara Music). Boulanger wrote the piece for mixed choir, the treble voices entering at measure 128 where they double the men an octave higher. As demonstrated by other performances of

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Next spring, the Arts Division at Wallace will bring a collaborative effort to our community. We are in the process of creating a performance that will incorporate vocal and instrumental music, theatre, and visual art. We are having such a great time writing together, brainstorming, piggy-backing off of each other’s ideas. It’s refreshing and challenging to build something together.

Don’t be so engrossed in the work you are doing that you miss the passionate work of others. Combined, you might build a new paradigm at your workplace, and your students will benefit.

this piece, one could eliminate the treble parts to work very well as a men’s piece. The original accompaniment was scored for 4 trumpets, 4 horns, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, organ, and harp. The arranger has scored the accompaniment for more limited forces: one piano, 4 hands (as notated in the octavo). Original text written in French. (@3:22, Moderate to Difficult)

From Jason Max Ferdinand

- *Lead Me, Guide Me*, arr. Robert Morris, SSA (Novello and Company 160075). Robert Morris is noted for his settings of traditional church gems. This particular song is a favorite in many churches that are steeped in the African-American tradition. In essence, Robert Morris has taken this Akers tune from the “church to Carnegie Hall.” The lush harmonies will be a thrilling challenge for any choir, as they strive to make it all a seamless, easy-on-the-ear offering. The text, birthed by Doris Akers is a telling testament and encouragement to all who will be basking in the reverberations of the sounds. When done right, audiences will be left spellbound. I highly recommend this piece. Enjoy!

From Jessica Kaufhold

- *I Will Keep Still*, by Michael John Trotta; SATB a cappella (Alliance AMP 0892). This beautiful piece has an evocative text set to beautiful music; we enjoyed exploring different vocal colors and finding ways to express the meaning and “mood” of the work. Appropriate vocal range; lots of teaching opportunities.

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From Brian Kittredge

- *Tykus, Tykus*, by Vaclovas Augustinas; SATB/SATB a cappella (Alliance AMP 0877). This beautiful piece has an evocative text set to beautiful music; we enjoyed exploring different vocal colors and finding ways to express the meaning and “mood” of the work. Appropriate vocal range; lots of teaching opportunities.

From Clarence Janes, Jr.

Consider some of these wonderful pieces when choosing music for your Male Choir next year. Several of these pieces have been performed by our state’s TTBB All State choir in years past. (*Editor’s note: many of these are also available in unison, 2-part, SATB, and other variants*):

- *Abide With Me*, by Moses Hogan (HL 875367). No one composed traditional spirituals with rich sonorities better than Moses Hogan. This hymn arrangement uses that same style. His powerful suspensions and thick harmonies make the listener tremble when hearing this familiar hymn.
- *The Awakening*, by Joseph Martin (Shawnee 35001491). I trust that most are familiar with the music of Joseph Martin. He composes exciting works that are accessible for younger choirs and powerfully performed by advanced groups. *The Awakening* is a wonderful opening piece for any concert.
- *He Never Failed Me Yet*, by Robert Ray (Jenson 08745113). Robert Ray’s piece harkens back to the old swing gospel style that many of us grew up singing. Choirs will enjoy performing this wonderful, homophonic piece.
- *Praise His Holy Name*, by Keith Hampton (Earthsongs S-85). I perform this gospel-style piece every couple of years. Keith Hampton’s music is uplifting and always has an amazing accompaniment. This piece is no exception. Your male choir will thoroughly enjoy singing this at any concert. It works very well as an ending piece or the end of a section.
- *Prayer of the Children*, by Kurt Bestor (Alfred CH 96165). I was first introduced to this piece when it was an All-State piece conducted by Joseph Martin. The last performance that I heard was by the famed Concordia College choir. Their performance included interpretive dance and American Sign Language making the piece even more powerful. The piece is a cappella and far from easy. If you have the singers, it will enhance any performance.

From Laura M. Moore

- “Ye Shall Have a Song” and “Have Ye Not Known?” from *The Peaceable Kingdom*, by Randall Thompson; SATB with piano (E.C. Schirmer 1753). Wonderful piece for unaccompanied double chorus. Challenges and learning opportunities in terms of dynamic control, changes in articulation, long legato phrases, and consistency of vowels. Full harmonies, but straightforward to hear and learn.

From John Ratledge

- *Hymn to St. Cecilia* (Op. 27), by Benjamin Britten; SATB a cappella. Written on board ship while returning to England during World War Two, *Hymn to St. Cecilia* (the patron Saint of music) is set for five-part, a cappella chorus. The complexity of the harmonic vocabulary, rhythmic constructs, the extreme range and tessitura, and the sophisticated formal structure makes the work extremely challenging for any chorus. The twelve-minute work is based on three poems that are linked by the refrain, “Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions to all musicians, appear and inspire.” Solo cadenzas suggest instrumental origins, with: the violin (the melody is based on the open strings of the violin), flute (lyrical lines soaring to a high Bb), timpani (with repeated one-note configurations), and the trumpet (in a high, fanfare-like construct). The work was premiered on St. Cecilia’s Day, November 22, which was also Britten’s birthday. Britten states in the score: “The soloists should be taken from the ranks of the chorus and be placed in the middle of the other singers in order to give a suggestion of remoteness.” Despite the difficulty, *Hymn to St. Cecilia* warrants the journey. **RATING: EXTREMELY DIFFICULT** (suitable for university, exceptional community choirs, or professional choirs)

From Megan Rudolph

- *The Snow* (Op. 26, No. 1), by Edward Elgar, SSA (Novello and Company 160075). The Snow is a wonderful piece for SSA that uses two violins. The piece is available on CPDL. Unfortunately I could not find the violin parts on any of the free resources, so those will have to be purchased (\$3.95 a piece). This is a beautifully lyrical piece that will really showcase your women’s chorus or mixed children’s chorus. The tessitura is low for the altos, so I would not do this with beginning singers. The piece is mostly homophonic with a few sections of staggered entrances or the lower two voices accompanying the soprano melody. The staggered entrances are very melodic and have wonderful shape to each of the phrases. *The Snow* is a won-

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Two-Time Grammy Nominee to Visit UAH

Composer Tarik O'Regan, 2013 Eminent Scholar in the Humanities, will visit UAH April 8-13, 2013. Mr. O'Regan, a two-time Grammy nominee in classical music, will serve as Composer-in-Residence at UAH where he will teach and coach performances of his music with the UAHuntsville Choirs and Wind Ensemble, Dr. Erin Colwitz and Dr. David Ragsdale, conductors.

Mr. O'Regan's music, along with music by Maslanka, Laurdisen,

and many others will be offered at 2 joint performances of the UAH Choirs and Wind Ensemble on April 12 (First Baptist Church of Huntsville) and April 13 (Asbury United Methodist Church of Madison) at 7:30 PM, with a pre-concert lecture by Mr. O'Regan at 7:00 PM each evening.

The concert performances are free and open to the public; donations gratefully accepted.

Alabama Choral Directors Association Summer Conference The University of Alabama | Tuscaloosa, AL

Our Alabama Choral Directors Association Summer Conference will take place on Monday and Tuesday, July 15-16, 2013. Please mark your calendars to reflect these dates. We have invited Kevin Fenton, director of University Singers at The Florida State University, and Tom T. Shelton, Jr., Assistant Professor of Sacred Music at Westminster College, as headliner clinicians.

Kevin Fenton is professor of choral conducting and ensembles, and the director of University Singers at The Florida State University. Choirs under Dr. Fenton's direction have been invited to perform for regional and national conventions of ACDA, CMS and MENC on ten occasions, including the Festival Singers of Florida performance at the convention of the Southern Division of ACDA in 2012 and the University Singers performance at the National Convention in 2013. A champion

of new music, Dr. Fenton has conducted over twenty premiere performances, including Jason McCoy's *Santo* in 2012; Jeffrey Ames' *I Can Feel the Spirit* in 2011; Eric Barnum's *In Paradisum* in 2010; Sydney Guillaume's *Au-Déla du Chagrin* in 2010; Clifton Callender's *Reasons*

to Learn to Sing in 2010; Troy Robertson's *American Echoes* in 2010 and Dominick DiOrio's *The Soul's Passing* in 2008. He also teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in choral conducting and choral literature and directs the FSU Vocal Jazz Ensemble. Dr. Fenton is an

active member of the American Choral Directors Association, currently serving as president of the Southern Division and is looking forward to the 2014 Southern Division Convention that will take place in the stunning Jacoby Music Hall in Jacksonville Florida.



Kevin Fenton

Dr. Fenton will present three interest sessions. *Developing the Conductor's Ear* will suggest that priorities and parameters are the keys for developing the ability to listen, diagnose, and become a proactive conductor. Nine elements of successful rehearsals will also be discussed. *Relating Metaphor, Imagery, and Descriptive Language to Gesture; Rethinking the Fundamentals of Conducting*, which will include a reading packet of music, will connect conducting gesture to all of the components of the teaching process. The final session will be *Working Hard and Sounding Great!* Robert Shaw said, "Before the dove will descend, you have to clean out the birdcage." This quote is the inspiration for this last session, which will focus on celebrating hard work on the part of the singer and conductor.

The magic of music can only happen when singers have done the necessary work. This session will focus on how conductors can make work fun and make the rehearsal process intrinsically rewarding!

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derful way to introduce your young ladies or children's choir to the music of Edward Elgar.

From Jim Schaeffer

- *Famine Song*, VIDA arr. Michael Culloton; SATB divisi, a cappella (SBMP575). Written by a quartet of women named VIDA, *Famine Song* requires singers to assume the roles of Sudanese basket weavers who express pain and hope experienced by those in the famine of the 1980s. Snaps are used during the final chorus to emulate raindrops. This piece will work very nicely with any high school chorus and will surely be one to remember for your audience!
- *Come to the Music*, Joseph M. Martin; SATB (Shawnee Press 35004454). Give your singers the opportunity to sing about the joys of music making through this exuberant concert opener by Joseph

Martin. Driving rhythms, mixed meter, and optional drum and piccolo combine to create this memorable number.

From James Seay

- *Mary at the Tomb*, by Bradley Ellingboe, SATB and piano (Augsburg Publishing Co.). This is a useful piece for Eastertide when you don't have much time to prepare, like that first Sunday after Easter. The beautifully written melodic passages are appropriate for any size SATB choir and are fun to sing (@3:30, Moderately easy).
- *When Jesus Wept*, by Eleanor Daley, SATB and organ (Alliance Music). This is an excellent setting of this text with a rich a cappella opening that is typical of Daley's style. When the organ enters, the voices combine for a simple, but haunting sound. This piece has some challenges, but is appropriate for any size SATB church choir.

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Tom T. Shelton, Jr. is a native of Greensboro, N.C. and a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with both a Bachelor of Music Education Degree and Master of Music in Choral Conducting. He recently joined the faculty of Westminster Choir College as Assistant Professor of Sacred Music, teaching classes in Sacred Music, Conducting, and Music Education. Prior to his appointment at Westminster Choir College, Mr. Shelton served as the Associate Director of the Music Ministry for Children and Youth at First Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC. Mr. Shelton taught middle school choral music in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County for eighteen years. During this time he was selected "Teacher of the Year" for both Atkins Middle School and Kernersville Middle School, and in 1999 was presented the North Carolina Middle School Music "Teacher of the Year" award by the NC Music Educators Association. Mr. Shelton is active in the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), where he served as the President for the Southern Division (2011-2012), National Repertoire and Standards Chair for Junior High/Middle School Choirs (2007-2009), and President for North Carolina ACDA (2005-2007). He currently serves as the NJ ACDA R&S Chair for Youth & Student Activities.

Mr. Shelton's first session, *Everything Is Connected...It's All About the Warm-Up*, will suggest that as Choral Directors, we feel constant

performance pressure that has a direct impact on our teaching process in the rehearsal. This session will offer ideas on how to structure the warm-up and sight-reading sequences to save valuable rehearsal



Tom T. Shelton, Jr.

time and strengthen the music learning process. This session is planned for Children and Youth Choirs, and will include a packet of 6 teaching octavos. His second session, *Working with Boys in the Middle School Choral Setting*, will offer strategies for working with the male changing voice. Topics will include vocal range, appropriate warm-ups, repertoire suggestions, and "decomposing." Tom's last session will be a Music Reading Session for Children and Youth Choirs. This session will include octavos for School, Community, and Church.

The conference will include much of what we return for year after year: interest sessions by Alabama choral directors, reading sessions that encompass all ACDA R&S areas, food, fellowship, and fun.