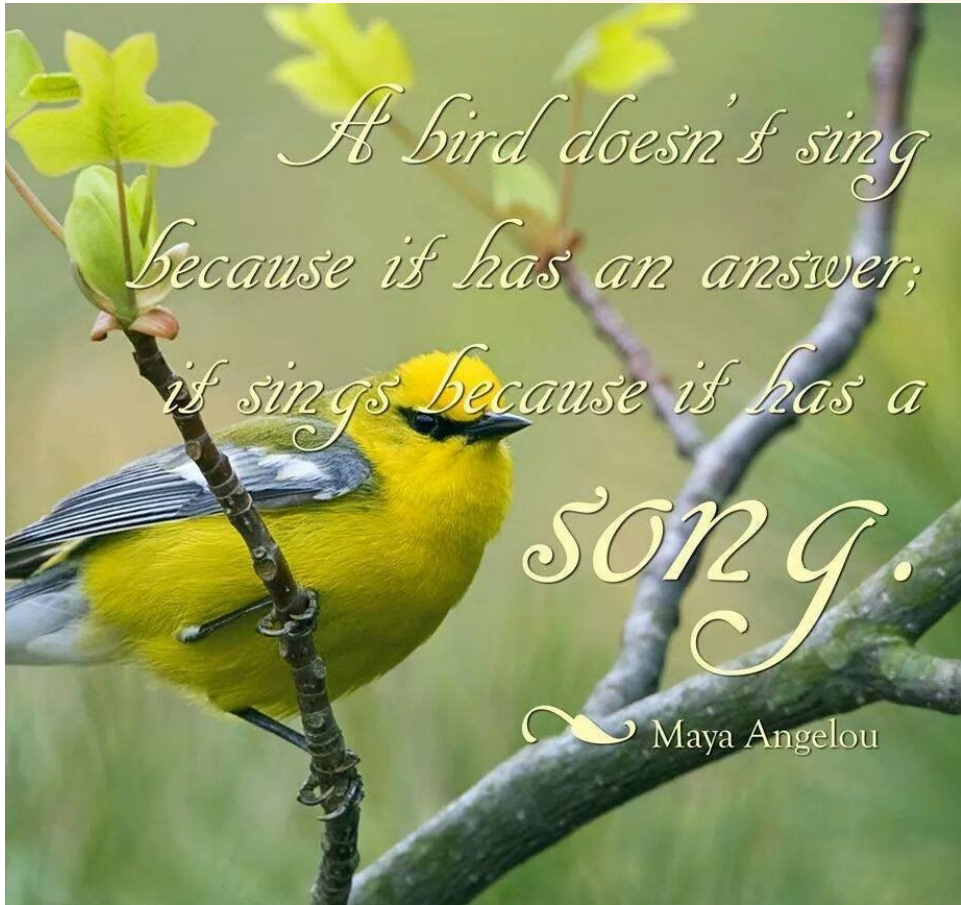


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Virginia Harmony



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President's Message: Choral enCOURAGEMENT!!! — Amy Moir



Dear Virginia ACDA,

In these unprecedented times, it is difficult to think past the immediate. Every day can feel like an overwhelming conundrum of what action to take first on the too-large-list of things-to-do. Prioritizing some items and simply letting go of others is an hourly decision-making process of which I am sure many can relate.

While living in the moment is essential, unavoidable, and valuable, it is important we start looking ahead at what is to be. How can we do that when we do not even know what next week will bring? It is true we cannot predict the future, but we must begin pondering what the future might hold. What lessons from this pandemic will we take with us? What transitions in the industry will stay? What traditions will return?

There are some transitions I feel have had some very positive benefits. For example, when we transitioned to a virtual Voices United Conference this summer, we had over 200 people subscribe to the YouTube page and watch sessions being aired live. The conference was able to reach a broader, more geographically diverse group of humans. It was also able to reach people who may not have attended in the past due to financial or work constraints. While I missed seeing people in person, I was thankful the presentations were reaching a broader audience. Most of those presentations are still available online, providing valuable professional development in real-time for our choral community.

Looking at our music programs through an essential lens will help us move forward as well. Take time to reflect on what is truly important for the singers in our ensembles, what sustains them, and what makes them return. Ponder what strategies have worked that you would like to see continue. What changes have been beneficial for you and your members? Even if they are simple changes, they can have lasting impacts. For example, our choral booster meetings moved online. As a result, they are shorter, more efficient, have higher attendance, can be recorded for people to view later, and I no longer need to take my daughter to them. She can get ready for bed while I attend our booster meeting. This is a small change, but a huge win!

Like many, I too grieve for what we have lost. I know many who have lost jobs. Enrollments in singing programs nationwide are down. Most importantly, we have lost friends, family, loved ones, and community members due to this illness. I believe thoughts and actions that are forward looking will be what saves us emotionally and physically. Think about what you can do in the here and now for your ensemble members, but also think about what it could look like in the next six, eight, ten months ahead. Think about what the first live performance of a large choir will sound and feel like. Allow that hope, faith, and resiliency to guide you forward into the next steps you take as a musician and a leader. When it is safe and we do return, we can be even better than we were if we allow ourselves to grow and learn in the process. We cannot replace all that we have lost, but we can envision what our future might be and the ways in which we can shape it to benefit all our members.

Yours in service,

Amy

Meet the Candidates for VA-ACDA President Elect:

Meredith Bowen and Bryson Mortensen



Meredith Bowen's CV: [[linked here](#)]

Meredith Bowen's position statement:

In addition to my role as Director of Choral Activities at Radford University, I have held a number of leadership positions including Artistic Director for four community choruses, Administrative Assistant for *mirabai* - a professional women's ensemble, Vocal/Choral coordinator for the summer residential Governor's School for the Visual and Performing Arts and Humanities, and Student Activities Repertoire and Resource chair for ACDA Virginia. These experiences have taught me lessons about listening to the wants, needs, and ideas of those whom I serve, creating a vision of where we can go, and building a structure that will move us forward. I lean on those who volunteer to help, work to empower their voices, and amplify their good work.

ACDA Virginia has an opportunity and a duty to educate, inspire, and empower choral musicians around the Commonwealth and beyond in forging a new model of what choral music can be in a post-pandemic world. The 2020 collective lifequake has many of us questioning systems of oppression, how that plays out in our own communities and classrooms, and how we can do our part to combat these systems and work toward a more humane world. I am not an expert in Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, but I am educating myself and want to be an ally with those whose voices are marginalized. To that end, I intend to surround myself with representative leaders from across the commonwealth, listen to needs, wants, and ideas, and work to provide a vision and framework to take a step forward, together.



Bryson Mortensen's CV: [[linked here](#)]

Bryson Mortensen's position statement:

I am beyond excited to be considered for the position of President-Elect of Virginia ACDA. During my first years as a choral conductor in Wisconsin, I quickly realized the value of the state branches of ACDA as a means for support to choral musicians across the commonwealth and as a force for good. I never realized until I attended my first state conference in Wisconsin how much I needed the time to interact with my colleagues and to tap into the collective knowledge of the choral conductors across the state. Upon moving to Virginia, I worked to quickly become engaged at the state level here and have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know each of you and learn what you bring to our collective choral experience. Since 2018, I have served on the planning committee of ACDA Voices United and have worked with interest sessions and with the Voices United Honors Chorus for the past few years. In 2019, I worked with several of you to launch the first Virginia edition of Next Direction, an ACDA initiative for high school and college students who are interested in music education and choral conducting.

I know that one of the biggest challenges we face in Virginia is finding ways to support and connect with choral conductors across the commonwealth. During my time as President-Elect and President, I hope to work with you to find and develop the programs and events that will best support you in your music making. I hope to identify and work with leaders on a regional level who can work to find ways for each of us to connect with like-minded and local conductors so that we can all find a way to tap into the ACDA network, both to draw support and to support our colleagues. Most importantly, I want to serve you, I want to hear from you and develop the programming that you need. I look forward to serving you!

From your Diversity Initiatives Chair: Daniel Jackson

The Diversity Coalition: Unity Through Diversity

It is 7:45AM, on November 4th, 2020. It is the morning after a complex and confusing first night of Presidential election results. This is a re-write: this article was completed 12 hours prior to this moment, but I could not submit it. Although I worry about speaking of politics in this message, I feel that by the time you read this we ALL will still be speaking of this election, and possibly its results. But those are not the results that I am referring to. The results I am referring to were clear and decisive the evening of December 3rd: we are a divided nation and have been so for a long time.

As some of you may know, I am from Central Florida. I started my teaching career in my hometown, Orlando, FL. Although choral music education is very important in Florida, there is one aspect of the field that was imperative in that area: diversity. Orlando is a minority-majority city. White Americans (Caucasian/European descent) make up 37% of the population, with 31% of the population being Latinx and 25% being Black or African American. To add to this melting pot of culture, Latinx and Blacks are general terms used to group a multitude of cultures. A similar grouping was used for cultures representing Asia, which also had a prominent population in the area. But that melting pot came with its own set of complications. Orlando has at least 5 high schools that are predominantly Black or Latinx schools, which means it has several middle and elementary schools that have similar racial demographics.

Teachers had to prepare for a multi-cultural classroom, and that preparation can be more complicated than preparing to teach in a culturally homogenous environment. I assumed a reason why choral music education seemed important in Florida was to offer a diverse population a way to experience and celebrate a small fragment of many cultures, creating opportunities for growth and understanding. Furthermore, due to the increasing number of students who spoke English as a second language, vocal music was a wonderful way of allowing them to participate in a class which worked on pronunciation and phonemic awareness, and it might encourage them to celebrate their native language if the music presented that opportunity. The “moments of transfer” seemed ENDLESS, but teachers and schools had to be tireless in their pursuit of creating meaningful and authentic moments of cultural enrichment.

So, as I sit in my children’s playroom (which I use as my distance learning office), I am wondering about something more important than leaders of our government. I am wondering what type of country we are creating for my bi-racial daughters. Will it be a country that respects their Black American and White American heritage? Will it be a country that allows them to feel pride in who they are, while showing respect for others?

The importance of being culturally sensitive and diverse has been magnified by the social justice movement which preaches equity and equality as well as the awareness of cultural representation and appropriation. To some, our people are more divided than ever. In my opinion, we are simply more aware of the ignorance, arrogance, prejudices, and biases that have plagued this country for generations. Choral music education offers the same problems. Many of us, including myself, have moments of arrogance and ignorance in our teaching; moments where our comfort zones, cultural norms, and educational backgrounds play a role in how we approach the teaching of our students.

For this reason, I and several of our colleagues have come together to facilitate the VA-ACDA Chapter's Diversity Coalition. Our mission is to foster diversity, inclusion, and awareness in choral music's leadership, membership, and ensembles through meaningful education and engagement with underrepresented members of the choral world. In the months to come we will offer resources to all choral music educators and conductors who are interested in gaining more insight and tools to apply to their classrooms, community ensembles, or professional groups. We will strive to provide a means for all choral music educators, regardless of race, religion, gender, or beliefs to connect and network with each other as often our greatest resource is each other. We have begun formulating initiatives that will involve providing a spotlight for professional organizations or universities that are working with underrepresented cultures and communities so that we may learn from them. We also want to foster discussions on performance authenticity and the use of World Musics. We would like to assist in motivating an increase in chapter membership and encouraging the participation of educators of underrepresented cultures or educators teaching in underrepresented communities.

That leads me to my next point: many music educators would like to offer a diverse repertoire of music but lack the funding to purchase new repertoire. If you are a teacher who is in need of financial assistance to purchase music, your VA-ACDA is here to help. **The Library Diversification Scholarship** is an opportunity provided by the chapter to help educators diversify their choral libraries and allow for more equity in their repertoire selections. You must be an ACDA member to apply. The following link will take you to a google form with more details and directions to apply:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1eh3HN5f5l1BxO1HrsZd8RkeG-dKWlzVLE0011SmEwTU/edit>

The state of Virginia is growing more diverse. This is an opportunity for us to thrive, shine, and persevere through the division that characterizes our country. I ask you to join me and my colleagues in helping to foster a more inclusive, equitable, and exciting future in our Choral music community. We are a part of a global society, and unity by assimilation is not a formula that works. Together, let us promote unity through celebrating diversity. If you are interested in knowing more about the committee, feel free to reach out to me: daniel.jackson@lcps.org



Understanding Kenyan Choral Music: Spotlight on *Kaung'a Yachee* arranged by Boniface Mganga (1954-2011)

Leonard Wekesa: *M.A Choral Conducting student, Radford University*

I have interacted with a lot of literature which tends to portray African choral music as homogenous. It will be of worth to note that the African continent is inhabited by 1.3 billion people living in 54 independent countries. Each of these countries have multiple ethnic groups with diverse cultural expressions in terms of their art, music, religion, food, cultural practices, and languages.

Kenya can be found in East Africa and is considered the cradle land of mankind with humanity's oldest fossils having been found here. The country has three main ethnic groups: the Bantu (largest), Nilo-Saharan (Nilotic), and Afro-Asiatics (Cushitic). There are forty-three tribes in Kenya including Arabs, Europeans, and Americans. Kenya has over sixty languages that are spoken. Swahili and English are the official languages. Kenya is majority Christian with a minority of Muslims, Traditional African Religions, Hindus, and Buddhists.

Kenyan art choral music is rich and extensive and buys a lot into this diversity. There are numerous cultural identities in a backdrop of ethnic multiplicities. Its choral music has largely not been made accessible to the rest of the world compared to music from other parts of Africa, notably South and West Africa. It borrows a lot from Western European art music introduced in Kenya by the European colonial apparatus in the 19th-Century.

Kenyan art choral music is an integral part of the community fabric. It is performed for entertainment in churches, schools, colleges, and universities. Choral festivals are a key feature of choral ensembles' calendars in most church and educational institutions. These festivals are held at local, national, and regional and/or international levels. It is also commonplace to find staff and community choirs in government ministries, parastatals, and private companies.

Kenyan art choral music is functional and is usually composed and arranged for specific occasions or festivals. Some composers or arrangers will arrange the whole song before teaching it to the choir. Others compose or arrange with the choir and thereafter notate/transcribe the music as a score. A lot of Kenyan choral music remain unpublished.

Composer Biography

Boniface Mganga is one of Kenya's most celebrated choral composers, arrangers, and choral directors. Born on June 5th, 1954 in Taita Taveta County in Kenya, he attended Mkwachunyi Primary School and received early music training from his uncle who was a choir director. He also played *zeze*, a fiddle from the Taita people. Mganga assisted his uncle in directing the choir and, in no time, formed his own.

He went to Shimo la Tewa High School in Mombasa County where a British music teacher introduced him to choral skills. In his final year of high school, he met and worked with Graham Hyslop, an acclaimed British musician, educator, historian, and researcher, who had visited Mombasa. Mganga also studied at the University of Nairobi and later at Dar es Salaam University in Tanzania.

Mganga was a choir director at St. John's Pumwani in Nairobi. He came to the limelight on August 31st, 1978 when he conducted a mass choir during the state funeral of Kenya's founding president Jomo Kenyatta. It was from here that he was tasked to form Muungano National Choir of Kenya that assisted him in reaching international fame. He arranged tours and performed in international festivals in Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Spain, Finland, Italy, Germany, Canada, the United States, and Israel. In 1988, the choir recorded *Missa Luba* (Luba Mass) and Ten Kenyan Folk Melodies on the Phillips Classics label. He adjudicated the Des Moines International Children Choir Festival in 1993 and was a choral clinician at the University of Illinois and the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley. They also performed in the North Central Regional Convention of ACDA in 1996 and at the International Federation on Choral Music (IFCM) World Symposium on Choral Music in 1999.

He served in the Kenyan government as Undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Roads and Public Works, Deputy Secretary in the Educational Commission, Director of Culture in the Ministry of Culture, Member of Parliament, and as the Chairman of Kenya Utalii College board of directors. He died in 2011 following a tragic road accident.

Kaung'a Yachee

Kaung'a yachee was arranged for Muungano National Choir of Kenya as part of their North American tour in 1988. It was recorded in *Missa Luba* (Luba Mass) and Ten Kenyan Folk Melodies on the Phillips Classics label. The song was published and copyrighted in 1996 by earthsongs. It is an SATB arrangement for a cappella chorus based on a traditional melody from the Taita people of Kenya. The song is arranged in Bb Major to portray a prayerful mood and eventual realization of joy in the hope for salvation.

Textual Translation

Kaung'a Yachee text is a prayer in Taita language. The following is its translation.

Kaung'a Yachee

Mkiri odu Jesu dakuvoya
Iside wanyonge ngolo redu
darifunya kwako
Dakulomba kuditesie
Dakulomba kudihoreshe

Kaung'a yachee, Kaung'a yachee
Kaung'a yachee wurumwengunyi
Yadiredia makongo

Kaung'a ya diinjira sere
Kaung'a ya diinjira ndigi
Ya diredia kifwa na wasi
Kaung'a yaditanya na Mlungu

Na mfwano dichamneka
Choka kukaku kuseibarie chongo
Yadaredilwa malemba ni bmao
Naiyaoata mruke na kwenda

Dagenda kwa waganga,
Dafunya mafungu malazi
Darigitwa na kuchunga ngoru
Daliwa mganga ni Jesu.

Sin has come

Our savior Jesus we pray unto You
 For we are weak
 We give our hearts unto You
 We pray You heal us

Sin came, sin came
 Sin came into the world
 And brought us diseases

Sin has taken our peace
 Sin has taken our strength
 And it has brought death and trouble
 Sin has separated us from God

We shall give an example
 If you do not strike the serpent's head
 Will be assisted by helper/friend
 He is restored and leaves.

We've turned to witchcraft
 And have parted with a lot of money
 We are cut and given remedies
 Forgetting that Jesus is the real healer.

The text in this song is set syllabically in most of the piece. This a common feature in Kenyan vocal music.

Formal Structure

Table 1: Formal structure of *Kaung'a yachee*

SECTION	Intro	Refrains		Strophe 1&2	Refrain		CODA
SUB-SECTIONS	A	B	C	D	C	C	
INDICATIONS	$\frac{6}{8}$ $\downarrow = 40$	$\frac{3}{4}$ Repeat $\downarrow = 108$	Repeat (2 nd time sing through include a fermata (\frown)	Repeat each strophe <i>meno mosso</i> <i>espressivo, poco</i> <i>accel. et cresc.,</i> <i>piu accel. et cresc</i> and <i>commodo</i> <i>rall. et dim</i> (After D.C. sing strophe two twice then go to mm. 49)	D.C. and sing strophe 2	Repeat <i>a tempo</i>	<i>poco rall.</i>
MEASURE	1-16	17-24	25-32	33-40	41-48	49-57	58-61

From Table 1 above, we can determine that the form is a modified strophic form that combines two similar strophes and two varied refrains. Mm. 1-16 is a slow and prolonged, solemn introduction sung by the sopranos and altos in compound duple time. It is marked forty-two quarter notes per minute. The text *Mkiri odu Jesu dakuwoya* portrays a prayerful mood. The first refrain in mm. 17-24 has more motion and character depicted through a changed meter; simple triple time and increased tempo (one hundred and eight quarter notes a minute). The refrain is repeated twice. The second refrain mm. 25-32 is a variation of the first refrain with its starting note on D, a sixth above the first note of the first refrain. At the end of its repeat, it is indicated with a fermata.


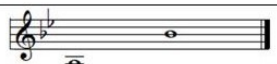
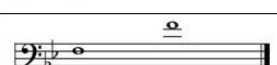

Two strophes follow the two refrains in mm. 33-40. The text of both refrains is set on the same music. They are marked *meno mosso espressivo* and are performed at various specified tempo and dynamic levels. The first strophe is sung twice. Then the second strophe is sung again twice at mm. 41-48.

The song then starts all over again from the beginning, this time singing of the second refrain. At m. 40 there is an indication to sing the second strophe at mm. 49-56 twice. The song then heads to a repetitive coda at mm. 57-61. The coda is punctuated with a non-lexical vocable—*woi*--by a few sopranos. *Woi* as a vocal ornament is commonly associated with a feeling of pain or hurt in the traditional idiom.

Melodic Range

The voice ranges in *Kaung'a Yachee* is shown in Table 2.4 below:

Table 2: Voice ranges *Kaung'a Yachee*

Voice	Range	On the staff
Soprano	D4-D5	
Alto	A3-Bb4	
Tenor	F3-F4	
Bass	Bb3-G3	

Melodic Structure

We can divide this introductory melody (mm. 1-16) into five asymmetrical phrases punctuated by cadences. The first phrase encompasses the first motif at mm. 1-3. The second phrase is a shorter motif in mm. 4-5 and is a modified sequence of the first motif. The third phrase is a third motif in mm. 6-8 that is a melodic variation. The fourth phrase is mm. 9-12 and is also the fourth motif. It is repeated with a variation at the end at the fifth phrase, mm. 13-16. This is summarized in the Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Modified sequence and repeat

Excerpt from *Kaung'a yachee* arranged by Boniface Mganga used by permission, earthsongs ©1996

The musical score is for the song 'Kaung'a yachee'. It features four vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The tempo is marked 'Solemnly' with a metronome marking of 42. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1-16, and the second system covers measures 17-24. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The score highlights five melodic motifs: 1st Motif (measures 1-3), 2nd Motif (measures 4-5), 3rd Motif (measures 6-8), 4th Motif (measures 9-12), and 5th Motif (measures 13-16), which is a modified repeat of the 4th motif. The tempo changes to 108 in the second system.

System 1 (Measures 1-16):

- 1st Motif (measures 1-3):** Mki-ri o - du Je - su da - ku - vo - ya,
- 2nd Motif (measures 4-5):** i - si - de wa - nyo - nge
- 3rd Motif (measures 6-8):** ngo - lo re - du da - ri - fu - nya kwa - ko,
- 4th Motif (measures 9-12):** da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - te - si - e
- 5th Motif (measures 13-16):** da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - ho - re - she.

System 2 (Measures 17-24):

- 4th Motif (measures 17-20):** da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - te - si - e
- 5th Motif (measures 21-24):** da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - ho - re - she. Ka - u - ng' a ya che - e

The lyrics for the Soprano part in the second system are: da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - te - si - e da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - ho - re - she. Ka - u - ng' a ya che - e. The Alto part has: da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - te - si - e da - ku - lo - mba ku - di - ho - re - she. Ka - u - ng' a ya che - e. The Tenor part has: Ya - che - e. The Bass part has: Ka - u - ng' a ya che -

The first strophe in mm. 17-24 is more joyful and has a faster tempo in simple triple time. The soprano melody is developed through a rising sequence which peaks at mm. 21-22. It gets resolved in mm. 23-24. This resolving melodic idea at mm. 23-24 is a characteristic ending in all the main sections of this song. It helps to tie the whole song's character together. The strophe is set in a call response format between the treble voices and tenor and bass. This is reminiscent of the African folk song style of solo-response style. This is shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: First strophe (mm.17-34)

Excerpt from *Kaung'a yachee* arranged by Boniface Mganga used by permission, earthsongs ©1996

The second strophe in mm. 25-32 is a variation of the first strophe beginning at an interval of a major sixth higher than the beginning of the first strophe. The melody in this strophe can be divided into four motifs that are each two measures long. The first measure of the first motif in mm 25-26 is inverted to create the beginning measure for the second motif in mm. 27-28. The third motif (mm. 29-30) is a rhythmically modified sequence of the first motif. The fourth motif (mm. 31-32) is the same resolving motif ending like all other section endings. Refer to Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Melodic organization of the 2nd Strophe mm. 25-32

Excerpt from *Kaung'a yachee* arranged by Boniface Mganga used by permission, earthsongs ©1996

The two refrains in mm. 33-40 are slower and are a highly expressive part of this song to be performed *meno mosso espressivo*. The refrain's text is set to the same melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and expressive elements. The melody is made up of two measure phrases that build to a melodic climax on the third phrase, ending on a perfect cadence. Voices are set vertically to relate with the soprano melody in tonal harmonies.

Figure 4: Refrain (mm.33-40)

Excerpt from *Kaung'a yachee* arranged by Boniface Mganga used by permission, earthsongs ©1996

Musical score for the refrain of *Kaung'a yachee*, measures 33-40. The score is for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). It features two vocal parts (1. and 2.) and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is *Meno mosso, espressivo* and the dynamics are *poco accel. et cresc.* for the first system and *ritu accel. et cresc.* and *con moto rall. et dim.* for the second system. The lyrics are in Swahili. A red box highlights the first system of the vocal parts. A note at the bottom indicates that the melody is modified from the first strophe in mm. 17-24.

1. Na mfwa - no di - cham - ne - ka, cho - ka ku - ka - ka ku - sie - ba - rie cho - ngo
 2. Da - ge - nda kwa wa - ga - nga, da - fu - nya ma - fu - ngu ma - la - zi

ya - da - re - de - lwa ma - le - mba ni bma - o na - iya - oa - ta mru - ke na kwe - nda
 da - ri - gi - twa na ku - chu - ngwa ngo - ru, da - li - wa mga - nga ni Je - su. go to Chorus 2 (m.49)

Modified melody from the 1st strophe in mm. 17-24

Texture

The texture of *Kaung'a Yachee* is set homophonically with soprano melody accompanied by alto, tenor, and bass. The introductory section (mm.1-16) has a light homophonic texture with the soprano singing the melody while the alto line provides harmonic support at an interval mostly a third lower. At mm. 17 to the end of the piece, the song can be described as heavily homophonic with full ATB choral accompaniment.

Terms and Signs

Terms and signs in the piece are summarized in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Terms and signs

Term or sign	Measure	Meaning
<i>Solemnly</i>	1	Solemn
$\text{♩} = 42$	1	Forty-two quarter notes a minute
$\text{♩} = 108$	17	One hundred and eight quarter notes a minute
<i>meno mosso, espressivo</i>	33	Perform less quickly and expressively
<i>poco accel. et cresc</i>	35	Little increase in tempo with increasing volume
<i>piu accel. et cresc</i>	37	With less increase in tempo with increase in volume
<i>commodo rall. et dim</i>	39	Comfortably and gradually reduce tempo
\frown	32,61	Fermata/Long pause
<i>A tempo</i>	49	Back to original tempo
<i>Poco rall</i>	60	Gradually slowing down tempo

Rhythmic Structure

The following are the main rhythmic motifs in the piece.



The song has straight-forward rhythmic patterns throughout. There are a few syncopated entries in the alto, tenor, and bass in three instances of the second strophe (mm. 25-32, 41-48. and 49-56).

Harmonic Language

Kaung'a yachee has a tonal harmonic language that predominantly applies primary triads. This ensures a tendency toward a Bb (B-flat) tonal center. There is also use of secondary chords and nonchordal notes to create harmonic tension. Mganga uses passing notes and chromatic passages to enhance harmonic motion. He uses the Western European harmonic rules of resolution by creating cadences mostly in root position. The song is composed with smooth voice leading in all the voices.

The harmony also exploits rules of motion where the bass is always moving in contrary motion to the soprano while the inner voices maintain a smooth voice leading. Figure 5 below shows harmonic progressions at cadential points in the second strophe.

Figure 5: Harmonic progressions at 2nd strophe

Excerpt from *Kaung'a yachee* arranged by Boniface Mganga ©1996

The musical score shows four vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The lyrics are in Taita. The harmonic progressions are indicated by Roman numerals below the bass line. A 'Chromatic passage' is marked in the Alto part.

Lyrics: *Ka-u - ng'aya di-i - nji-ra se-re. Ka-u - ng'aya di-i - nji-ra-ndi-gi ya-di-re-di-a ki-fwana wa-si. Kau-ng'a ra di-ta-nya na Mlu-ngu.*

Harmonic progressions: **I ii Ib Ic vi7 I I IVc I iib V V vi ii iii IV iib VI**

Cadence types: Perfect Cadence, Interrupted Cadence, Perfect cadence

Teaching and Performance of this Song

This song is appropriate for a high school auditioned mixed choir or a university choir. Introduce the piece by sharing the meaning of the song to the singers. Provide a brief historical, religious, and geographical setting of the song. Second, make sure the choir learns the correct pronunciation of the Taita language text.

All words end with vowels *a e i o u*. These must be pronounced correctly because any change of vowel color will change the meaning of the words. Beware of words with double consonants like *kaung'a*, *kifwa*, and *diinjira* that are featured in the Bantu languages of Africa. To better learn the song, the singers should speak the text in rhythm.

Teach each section well enough to ensure the learners can sing it from memory. This will allow them to incorporate other aspects of performance like dance.

You can add conga drums and *kayamba* or maracas for percussive effect. Choose an applicable rhythmic pattern from the ones indicated on the score. Add meaningful body movement or hand gestures while performing the arrangement to maintain authenticity of the song's idiom.

From your Tenor/Bass R&R Chair: Kerry Wilkerson

Sing for Virginia: Meet the Composer ***A conversation between Kerry Wilkerson and Christopher Hoh***

This is the first of a series of 'Meet the Composer' conversations intended to introduce all of you to the wealth of talent in our state. Kerry recently had the opportunity to chat with Christopher Hoh, an Arlington, VA-based composer:



KW: When did you start composing?

CH: I got serious in 1985. I was directing a small church choir with a big library but few tenors or basses. So, after re-arranging pieces, I started writing original settings; first for responses, then whole anthems. Finally, one singer — an alto, you might guess — figured it out and asked in front of everybody, “You composed this, didn’t you?” I overcame my fear and owned up; that was my rubicon, and I never looked back.

KW: What’s your primary instrument?

CH: Piano is what I grew up with, although I tried other instruments along the way and was always in choruses. I wish I’d had exposure as a child to excellent singing and/or strings. I came late to the concepts of sight-singing and tuning, and they intimidated me. But, when you start little kids on these concepts it’s just the next new thing for them to learn, and they develop a foundation that lasts lifelong.

KW: What’s your favorite subject matter for choral works?

CH: It’s a cliché, but whatever I’m working on at the moment. I think you just have to be all in. But fine poetry excites me; that is, image-rich texts with rhythm, cool sounds, wordplay, structure, whether or not it rhymes. And I’ll wrestle a text to bring out the poetry. I’ve done that with singing advice, a sermon on music, Thoreau, and multicultural devotions, and with translations from psalms to drinking songs. I’ve been so bold as to tweak or expand Teasdale, Luther, and Shakespeare. To go back to your question, praise, nature, love, and music are recurring themes in my work.

KW: What’s your favorite choral ensemble? SSAA, TTBB, SATB??

CH: SATB because it offers more variety in sounds to work with. I like doing sets that start and end SATB and have SSA(A) and T(T)BB sections in between.

KW: Do you like to include instruments/instrumentation with choral compositions?

CH: Yes, in short. Now, I love a cappella and have written many motets and part-songs. So, I don’t find unaccompanied music constraining and that’s what I’ve often been asked to compose. That said, instruments in the mix allows for introductions, interludes, and punctuation in addition to tone color and vocal support. They can also nicely set off a high- or low-voice ensemble. So, I welcome the opportunity to write for voices with instruments.

KW: Do you compose exclusively for choruses or do you have other works you would like for us to know about?

CH: While most of what I've composed is choral — and almost all my commissions have been choral — I've written some organ and chamber music (wind quintet, string quartet), as well as works for orchestra and vocal forces. Currently, I'm working on a flute & guitar suite with extended techniques, which is fun. ACDA readers may be interested in my vocal solos.

KW: Where can we listen to your works? YouTube? Pro webpage? etc.

CH: www.HohMadeMusic.com has over 200 pieces and almost all have a complete sound files of some kind. There's a selection at [J.W. Pepper MyScore](#), and they also have audio and video links as well as full scores to see online. I think conductors need to see the whole piece when deciding what to order. [My YouTube channel](#) has twenty-some videos from performances to slide shows to score videos.

KW: Are you available for commissions?

CH: You betcha, as my Montana friends say! Writing music is so much better when it's a collaboration with specific performers and real-time feedback. Most composers welcome contact and we don't bite, so I encourage directors simply to ask a composer they like about the possibility. Even if it doesn't go forward, the conversation may lead to something else that's great like an unpublished piece that's perfect for your group.

KW: How much time do you need for a commission?

CH: It depends on how long and involved the piece will be. I think six months is a good ballpark estimate for a 4 - 6-minute, SATB & piano piece of moderate complexity. That seems like a lot, but first for me comes text and structure. That often takes a few months and several conversations to arrive at something inspiring and then to internalize it. Alice Parker told me she always memorized the text and lived with it for a while before starting the music. I think that's the way to go. (She also said she would write her piece in her head while doing laundry or making dinner for her children and only write it out when she was done and could find a quiet moment to sit at a desk. I can't imagine trying to do that!) Back to timetable, I like to have the piece done and set aside to come back to after a couple weeks, when I can hear it fresh and improve it. Usually that's a process of simplifying. And then I seek to give the director time to review it and provide feedback so we can revise further and still have enough time to proofread and prepare for the first rehearsal.

KW: What else would you like to say to the choral directors reading this?

CH: First, please let living composers know when you are performing our work! For K-12 schools and worship services, you don't have to pay a performance fee. But if we can document these performances, we may qualify for extra royalties (in my case, from ASCAP) at no cost to you. We'll be grateful! While I have called Arlington, VA my home for many years, I spent 30-some years in the U.S. Foreign Service and lived in several countries. I've always composed, but my music career has been unconventional. Everywhere I went, however, music proved a universal language that reached across cultures. Without traveling anywhere, we can use music to open our minds and those of our singers--building understanding, bridging divides, and affirming our common humanity. I think that's a terrific vocation.



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From your Community Choir R&R Chair: Michael Slon

Talking with Alice

On a conversation with Alice Parker and filmmaker Eduardo Montes-Bradley

Most of you reading this will need no introduction to Alice Parker, the legendary choral arranger, composer, conductor, and teacher who celebrates her 95th birthday this year. Many will have sung her arrangements (“Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal,” “Fum, Fum, Fum,” and numerous other folk songs, spirituals, and Christmas carols – the list goes on for several hundred titles, many co-arranged with Robert Shaw). Others may know her own choral works, operas, and songs, or simply have been in the room with her for a memorable conference session. But if she needs no introduction, she may yet deserve a deeper look past the preface into the full volume of her life. I had such a chance recently, thanks to a new film simply titled *Alice*.

Award-winning filmmaker Eduardo Montes-Bradley just released this new biographic work, which looks at Parker’s life, her work as a choral music pioneer, and her unique perspective from a small village in western Massachusetts. In every scene her easy eloquence, her graceful joy, and her conviction in the fundamental value of singing shine through. The film premiered virtually through Chorus America on October 8th and two weeks later played here at the Virginia Film Festival, where I was invited to moderate a post-film conversation with Alice and Eduardo. (Links for the videos are below.)

Preparing for the interview, I noticed Alice shares her famous bread recipe in the film – and it struck me as an apt metaphor. Her approach to music is very much that of daily bread, drawing from the organic, everyday materials of folk songs and hymns which seem to come out of the land itself. I opened the interview with this perspective, and she replied: “I have such gratitude that I met Robert Shaw when I did. ...What I was doing with him was researching folk songs, what I call ‘small songs’ – songs that are maybe 8 measures long, or 12, or 16 – they’re just tiny. But, actually, they’re the seed of the whole thing... And I got deeper and deeper into these tiny melodies, and I realized over and over again how everything else grows from that. That you have to start with the bread, you start with the thing that is everyday.”

Beautiful ideas seem to spin out from her naturally, and so I wanted to share with you a few other excerpts from the film and our conversation. First, on the theme of the musical score as a representation (or not) of actual music, she relates in the film:

What are we really communicating? ...When people perform, they are so concerned with getting it exactly right with what it is on the page, they don’t stop to think that the page is a perversion itself of the sound, because the page doesn’t have any sound.... So that means that any sound that I’m going to draw off of this page, I bring to it.

Following up on this topic in the interview, she offered:

The page looks as if it’s captured the music; but I have this feeling that there’s about 5% of the music that is capturable on the page. There’s no markings for the mood, ...for all of the things that make the music speak to us. Another way of proving that is the way a computer will play back a page of music... All I can think is, “that’s not what I meant at all.” ...So, the real music is un-notable. Music is that which cannot be notated. Notation should be at best like a little memo page that reminds me what I want to get [at] the store. But I knew already what I want, and I know already how that recipe is going to taste when I make it. I do not eat the recipe. I have to make the food, and then I get the benefit.

On the related topic of music-making, she explains her teaching of song, melody, and poetry saying, “the way you read the words is the way you sing the song, and if you read the words in a dull fashion, you’re going to be singing the song in a dull fashion. And so much of what we hear... is dull because they’ve learned the notes without the words, and then they jam the words into the note.” (She follows up in the film with an unmusical rendition of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” to make the point – have a look.)

Finally, after declaring she is absolutely an optimist, she nevertheless offers in both the film and the interview some reflections on and critiques of contemporary life:

I don’t think there really is such a thing as progress, or at least we’ve never found moral progress. We’ve found progress in all kinds of material things, but not with things that matter.

[And in the interview:] I think the one thing that is really different about our century, from any others before, is the whole social media thing. This fact that anybody can stand up in front of a microphone and a camera and proclaim their views. And with equal access, there’s this leveling out of expectation, and whatever they say gets accepted at the level of what anybody else says... And in that environment, the ones that stand out are the loud ones, the emotional ones, the catastrophic ones, mostly the least thinking ones. So that the culture does go down and down and down...

We have to find a way to tame this, in order to live with it, to get ahead of it... So that we have voices that think, and we have silence. Silence has turned into, you know, something’s not working if it’s silent, instead of a time to contemplate, and a time to think. So, we need the small voices, we need the small songs...

And in this time right now where there's no singing in the traditional sense... We have to keep singing. We can sing when we're by ourselves... We can certainly sing with the voices that are right next to us... We need to sing with our families, the way people always had to do before.

Eduardo Montes-Bradley asks her at the outset of the film, "Why do we sing?" And she responds, "'Cause we have to... it's built into us, it's a fundamental part of our anatomy. Why do we not sing is the terrible question now." In truth, I could listen to her talk all day. I hope you will take a minute to listen to Alice as well.

Alice – A film by Eduardo Montes-Bradley (hosted at Chorus America site)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxo9vuuOlcE>

Virginia Film Festival post-film conversation with Alice Parker and Eduardo Montes-Bradley, moderated by Michael Slon
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hu-ZkmsvKaY&t=2s>

From your Music and Worship R&R Chair: Jessica Irish

Building Confidence for Virtual Choir Participation

If you are like me, you may have spent the last several months during the pandemic acquiring new technical skills so that you can still "sing" with your people--whether they are students at the school where you teach or 60-year-old church choir members. In my case, it is the latter. While the mission of our music ministry has not changed during the pandemic, our ways of accomplishing it have changed drastically. Aside from teaching an online Bible study class and meeting weekly with my singers over Zoom, I spend most of my time planning and executing the creation of music segments for online worship. I have worked hard to quickly acquire the skills to do so. I have learned how to record using professional microphones, edit sound using software, record professional-looking videos with video editing software, and I have learned how to digitally combine voices and images. This process, as many of you have also experienced, was a steep learning curve and involved long hours, watching countless tutorials, conferencing with friends who know more than me, trial and error, frustration, and sometimes tears. After months of "making it work," I now consider myself capable and able to meet our needs at the church in this virtual worship environment. I even do fancy things sometimes that are moderately impressive.

Early on, I started creating virtual ensembles. The first projects were basic but grew more complex as my skills increased. As I was able to do more, I involved more musicians and singers in the virtual projects. In late September I was ready to do a full virtual choir. I direct over 50 singers at Messiah UMC in Springfield, VA, and had high hopes that regular virtual choir opportunities would help keep us motivated and working on music together. My plan was to always be working on the next virtual choir with my folks. For the first project, I had Facebook Live "sectionals," where I would go over each individual voice part. Then the video would post to our private Virtual Choir Family group for anyone who was not able to join us live to watch it later. Everyone seemed to enjoy the sectionals, and interest in the project seemed strong. I was excited and could not wait until people started submitting videos for our first big virtual choir.

Except, they did not. At least not very many. As the deadline approached, I decided to open this opportunity up to all my friends on Facebook since so many of them are singers, and I was able to recruit more people that way. The September project ended up being about 32 singers, 16 of which were my own people at Messiah. (The result of that project can be found here: <https://youtu.be/w0O08LAVmK4>.) I was pleased with the outcome but felt defeated that not as many of my own singers participated as I had hoped after all the time I spent learning how to create a virtual choir. I began some soul-searching.

My first thought was that the technical aspects of completing this task were probably overwhelming for people. Since I had anticipated that from the beginning, I had tried to make all my instructions as straightforward as possible. I even had some people read them before I published them to let me know if any of the instructions were confusing or not detailed enough. We were using Dropbox to access the guide videos, score and other supplementary materials for the project, and a separate Dropbox file request link for when people were ready to upload. The directions were specific to that process, along with how to physically film yourself, dos and don'ts, what to wear, etc. I made myself available as Tech Support on an as needed basis. Most people who participated did not have any problems completing the tasks, but I suspected that for those who chose not to participate, it was probably the Great Technological Divide (my invented terminology, "GTD") that was keeping them from doing so.

In the next project, I offered one-on-one Zoom appointments for people to conference with me so that I could talk them through the process. Only one person took me up on the offer. I also offered in-person assistance if someone wanted to come masked to the choir room; I would show them how to set up and record, step out of the room while they were singing, wait for them to come out when they were done, and then help them upload. Only one person took me up on that offer. I started to get the feeling that it was not so much the GTD keeping people from participating—although that was definitely a factor for some—but may have something to do with the vulnerability of recording yourself sing and then sharing it with others. It finally hit me when I received this email from a choir member the day after the deadline for another project:

Subject: My apologies....

Well, Jessica -- I tried to do the Gaelic Alleluia! I was especially determined after I saw how much work you put into that package -- which was SO helpful!

*I did rehearse, and practiced flipping my Rs, but I didn't have enough time to spend on it. and
the recording I did was AWFUL! I realized I need to really get my voice back in shape.*

*But. the bright spot is, you inspired me to at least try, and I'm definitely going
to get a finished product next time that I won't be embarrassed about.*

I hope there were lots of people who submitted recordings, and again, I'm really, really sorry!

You are so awesome, and every single one of us should be participating in these things!

Here was a singer with a willing spirit who simply lacked confidence in her ability to perform the music in a way that she felt honored the ensemble. I realized that I had not been giving enough attention to helping my singers overcome their doubts and insecurities. I had been assuming that the GTD was the main factor in whether they participated or not. But, as I began to ask more probing questions and talk to people one-on-one, I discovered that my singers at Messiah are actually much more intimidated by performing what feels like a solo (even when singing along with a guide voice) than by any issue involving technology.

As I write this, we are about to start another virtual choir project for Christmas Eve, and I am focusing much more on building confidence in my singers. I still want to help those who need tech support, of course, but the larger issue is helping them to feel good about participating.

Here are some things I am doing to encourage them and reassure them that their efforts are valued and that they are contributing positively to our virtual choir:

SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

It seems my singers did not fully grasp that we have the wonders of technology on our side. When I edit, I can fix out of tune notes, and I can even correct rhythms. When all else fails, I can mute someone for a note or even a measure if necessary. That cut-off that was late or early? Yep, I can fix that digitally. I spent some time screen-sharing in one of our Zoom choir meetings to show them how I edit my own voice for some of our projects, and they were fascinated. They had no idea of the amount of editing that I do and that they do not actually have to be “perfect.” This helped them to be at ease. I told them that I want them to do their best and then let it go. I also shared with them my own experience of doing a recording over and over and how at a certain point it just gets worse, not better. There will always be something you do not like. I told them to “Let go and let God!”

EMBEDDING PRACTICING INTO THE PROCESS

I am providing practice videos for each voice part, which are basically like me leading a sectional. I film myself from the keyboard as I play through and sing through each voice part, going over all critical elements such as phrasing and diction. I anticipate rhythms or intervals that may be tricky, and I review those. I discuss all the nuances of which I want them to be aware. I also include a vocal warm-up specific to that voice part at the beginning. After so many months of not singing regularly, many of my singers do not feel great about their voices, so these videos are important. I remind my singers that we lose flexibility when we stop singing, and our breath support and resonance may suffer, but we can get it back—we just need to sing regularly! Since we cannot meet in person to do that, our singers need to have the necessary tools to vocalize in an efficient and guided way on their own.

GIVING PLENTY OF LEAD TIME

I am allowing about 3-4 weeks between the time I first share all the details of a virtual choir project with my singers and the time that their videos are due. This gives them a week to ignore me, a week or two to practice, and another week to hustle to get their video recorded and uploaded. Then the next project begins. I have found that time less than 3 weeks is only appropriate for advanced singers who may be called upon for a select project. Everyone else needs more time. I also frequently send email and Facebook reminders about upcoming deadlines.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

I have started emailing people to thank them individually for their videos, and to provide feedback. I keep it very positive, pointing out something they did well, which can be just about anything from something musical to how well they framed themselves in their camera shot. I can tell this really has a huge positive impact on how they perceive their contribution to the project, and I truly cannot overstate how important this has become. They almost always respond back to me, and sometimes they ask me specific questions about areas in which they might improve. I respond with honesty and love, and they appreciate it.

PRAYING

I have started praying for empathy and wisdom to see things from the perspective of my singers, and I try to keep that in mind in all of my communications and everything having to do with the management of a virtual choir project.

One day virtual choirs will not be a necessity, and we will be able to sing in person again— what a joyous day that will be (I nearly cry when I think about it)! But in the meantime, it is worth acknowledging the unique positives about this medium. First, I have gotten to know my individual singers' voices better than I ever did before. Second, once they gain confidence, the quality of what they are submitting keeps getting better and better with each project. They are learning things about how they sing as they listen to themselves, many of them for the first time ever. It is truly helping them to improve their own singing. Most importantly, it is a shared journey which is bringing us into community, even at a distance. It is a unifying force during a time when unity is so desperately needed.

I wish you the best on your virtual choir journey! If you need help or support as you work on these projects, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at jjrjsh@messiahumc.org.

From your High School R&R Chair: Megan Cartwright

Virtual Happy Hour

One of the unexpected pleasures of this COVID season has been a bi-monthly Virtual Happy Hour with my choral colleagues. It has allowed me to share ideas, talk through challenges, and discuss philosophy and teaching practice. In those conversations, we have seen some themes emerge again and again. I thought it might be helpful to hear some thoughts from your colleagues. I hope you can find things here that encourage you and that resonate with your experience. I cannot encourage you enough to spend time with other choral directors in pursuit of professional growth and edification. Please consider joining our Happy Hour every other Monday night. See our Virginia ACDA Facebook page for details. We would love to have you.

Whether you are teaching all your classes virtually, in a hybrid format, or in person socially distanced, there is no doubt that your teaching experience has been a new one this year. Choral directors share frustration over a format that requires more “assignments” rather than the informal assessment we would normally use to measure growth. Singers do not experience immediate feedback from their choral directors, nor can the directors make quick and effective corrections in a rehearsal context. We are asking singers to be more self-aware and intrinsically motivated. They need to be more mindful of their weaknesses and mistakes. All of this leads to a slower pace in rehearsal. Many of us are doing five times the work for one fifth of the product. It can all be exhausting.

I recently found myself in a few conversations about singers who are struggling or refusing to engage in an online format. Directors are frustrated by singers who are not taking advantage of opportunities for music-making, for ensemble skills, or for musical growth. The benefit of these discussions has been an ongoing dialogue about what makes this format difficult for some of our singers. We all have singers in our ensembles that are followers rather than leaders, and for those singers, the perceived expectation is higher now. It is not because our goals have changed, but that areas of weakness are now more exposed. For less confident singers, being asked to sing alone can be overwhelming and, at times, even debilitating. As choral directors, we need to consider the abrupt change in the experience of those singers.

Directors who are finding success in this new format talk about finding ways to continue doing the things that worked well in pre-pandemic choir. They are using breakout rooms to create connections in ensembles and within sections. They are looking for ways to engage in heart to heart conversations with their students so they can connect on a personal level. One director pointed out that before COVID, singers would rarely be expected to sing through an entire song perfectly by themselves. He is reminding himself that he values learning over product and is adjusting. As a result, he is giving virtual performance assignments in chunks that are more appropriate for the age and level of his singers.

Choral directors are finding that their ensemble expectations are evolving as we move through this fall. Some are finding themselves taking a stance of participation over quality. They are extending deadlines or accepting incomplete work as a means of encouraging singers to reengage. There is now a greater focus on practicing skills rather than preparing a product. Many school choral directors are realizing that students are overwhelmed with their workload and are reimagining ways that assignments can be completed during class time rather than being added to a list for later. Directors are giving continued opportunities for students to show learning in smaller chunks. They are realizing that the way singers have learned music in the past has completely changed and so we must also change our approach.

Directors are sharing that an unexpected benefit of virtual and hybrid teaching is the ability to focus on fundamentals and music literacy. One teacher shared that she can more effectively differentiate in an online format because she can assign leveled theory, sightreading, and performance assessments. Teachers report that their students are feeling a sense of accomplishment when it comes to music literacy, and shy students are beginning to feel empowered because they don't experience the same social pressures as they did in face to face learning. Teachers are also benefitting from hearing their students sing individually more often. Another teacher shared that he can more effectively shape vocal lessons. Yet another teacher pointed out that with the expectation of more solo singing, she is looking forward to a stronger program in the long run.

While things are far from our ideal in choral rehearsals and classrooms, it is so encouraging to hear the many ways teachers are adapting and growing during this time. It is reassuring to know that we have a community of other choral directors with an interest in the success of choirs in our state. Thank you so much to the choral directors who shared their ideas here. Dustin Brant, Jacob Devol, Joel Shapiro, Lydia Fisher-Lasky, Laura Lazaravich, Bryan Case, Amy El-Khoury, and Carol Ann Dickerson, I appreciate your candor and your perspective!

***From your Middle School Honor Chair: Tim Drummond
with Juliana Woodill***

Hosting Pre-Service Teachers During COVID-19

Since March, we have all been learning how to make and teach music all over again. New software, new protocols, new class structures, endless asking "did you still have a question, or did you forget to lower your hand?" etc. This has been a school year unlike any we've seen, which makes it quite interesting when you receive the request to host a pre-service teacher! We mentor future teachers nearly every year, and we love it: the fresh energy they bring, the new ideas, the ways that they expose our students to different ways of learning and keep us on our toes and remind us to bring our best selves to work every day. But when Juliana accepted a high school student teacher, and Tim took on two middle school practicum students, we both knew that it would be something different.

Here's what we have to say about it:

Initial Contact and Establishing Connections

Tim: As soon as I had contact information for my practicum students, I arranged a virtual meeting. VCU, the university they attend, usually sends practicum students out in pairs so that they have a colleague who's in their same situation. So, I met with them together in order to ease their comfort level. I typically work on a first-name basis with practicum students, but since I have also been working from home, I wanted to maintain professional separation between myself and those I'm teaching--even if they are college students. From my initial meeting, I made sure that my physical surroundings were as they would be in class, that I'm dressed in the manner I would be for class, and that the overall tone of my conversation is more or less the same as it would be in a face-to-face setting. I gave an overview of what my choir program looks like in a "normal" year, as well as a rundown of the school's plan for distance learning and how they would be able to engage with my classes.

I tried to get my practicum students access to our Learning Management System, Schoology, but was never successful in that process. After a series of frustrating attempts, they were finally able to attend my virtual class meetings through Microsoft Teams. This meant that they were unable to see many of the assignments, discussion posts, and links that I shared with the class, though I often sent them links separately whenever possible. This was a significant barrier in their observation experience, and both students expressed that they felt disconnected from the planning process and from what to expect in class each day because of not being able to access Schoology.

Juliana: Plan early with your school system, school, and technology personnel to be sure there is a way to provide your student teacher with ALL necessary technology. This is not a year where they can just look over your shoulder in your office when you want to show them something. Every part of the teaching experience is immersed in technology, and, if you cannot access it together, they will not be able to be their best teaching self. Without the basics in place, planning together becomes nearly impossible.

My student teacher and I were both teaching from home this fall. Three weeks in (two weeks of teacher planning together) we finally obtained a laptop for my student teacher and access to our school google accounts. This allowed her to learn google classroom as a teacher, create assignments for students, and share planning materials with me. If your school system will allow it, try and get your student teacher access as early as possible to give them a chance to become familiar with the teaching technology before they even begin teaching with you! There are many tutorial programs and YouTube videos that can teach them the basics.

Planning & Working Together

Juliana: Finding a system for "planning" and "reflecting" together was our biggest challenge. After some trial and error, and once she had access to our google drive network, we used the following framework:

- We created a google meet just for us. Each day, when not in class, we both signed in and used it to plan, check in, and discuss the day--what was upcoming, what happened, what worked, and what didn't. Then we could create our to-do list. Once it was time for us to work individually, we just left the google meet open with the ability to mute and turn off video sharing. This allowed both of us some privacy while keeping each other close by, especially for the moments when I DID want to show her something I was working on or when she was ready to show me the lesson she built. Screen sharing at that point was perfect!

- Google drive gave us a platform to build and share our resources. Regardless of the “creator,” we both had access and could see one another’s work by opening files or by screen sharing in google meet.
- Google sheets and a lesson planning template gave us a place to build our lessons within a structure. We could both open the spreadsheet and fill in the different components for each lesson. Then it was easy to see who was working on particular items and what the flow of the lesson would be.
- Google slides were the foundation of every class. By “copying” each slide deck between classes and from one day to the next, our framework could remain constant but our details each day could be quickly adjusted. We both had access to every lesson for every class; that way, when either of us encountered internet issues, it was (almost) seamless for the other to start projecting the lesson and take over.

Tim: I felt that it was important that we find time to talk about “real choir” even though they would not be able to observe it in my classes. This turned out to be the most time-consuming part of the experience. In a normal class, it’s so much easier to model fundamental principles of good teaching and even have real-time asides with the practicum students about why I’m doing something in a certain way. When they are in front of the students and I am in the class, I can easily ask guiding questions. This semester, I wasn’t able to do any of those things. I sincerely hope that they won’t end up using the teaching strategies that I have had to use right now, but it’s also important to me that we take the time to talk about middle school choir as it is intended to look. And, since that’s not the experience we are encountering right now, that conversation has had to happen outside of class time. This has taken up planning periods, post-class time, and the occasional Sunday afternoon. It required me to make what amounted to whole new lesson plans, to be able to discuss theoretical rehearsals, imagined concert programs, and hypothetical vocal development issues. We were able to have some limited in-person meetings at my school. Overall, it’s been beneficial and refreshing to be able to demonstrate and discuss things that simply don’t transfer well in a virtual environment.

Challenges & Silver Linings

Juliana: My student teacher and I had to acknowledge early on that this was not the choral experience she deserved. Almost every element of “rehearsing” was missing from her student teaching experience. My favorite parts of working with young teachers are helping them to develop effective rehearsals, learning to listen, analyzing and providing feedback in the moment, and truly beginning to understand the way in which their conducting gesture impacts every part of the sound they receive from students. With muted students who cannot provide that sort of real-time experience, some of whom may not give any sign of engaging at all during a lesson... What was missing? All of it.

Related to that, it was also very difficult to assess my student teacher’s skills and growth, given the limited environment we were working in. To that end, I recommend you communicate with the university/college they attend early on about what areas you will/will not be able to teach and assess. Filling in the final evaluation was so difficult as it was nearly impossible to provide any feedback on the musicianship section: aural skills, sight reading skills, piano skills, ability to listen, and provide clear and direct feedback, etc.

Tim: Since middle school is these practicum students’ first classroom placement, they are mainly there to observe and are only required to lead one, 5–10-minute lesson over the course of their 30 hours in my classroom. However, most years I can quickly identify small things that they can do to get more face time in front of students, and they end up with a very involved practicum experience. This year, that has not been possible for a variety of reasons, and I had to start with acknowledging that and working out how to give my practicum students the best experience I could in the situation we were in.

Given my technology constraints, this has meant they have mostly been back to observation only. Both practicum students lamented the fact that, in addition to the disconnect from the planning process, they felt they had limited opportunities to connect with my students. We have had some lovely, unexpected moments of connection with students, but for the most part, I think they were feeling what most of us feel like when we are teaching to a series of circles with initials in them.

One great example of an exception: they put together a funny and helpful video, showing places in one's house that might be conducive to singing and modeling conversations with family members about how to support them while singing from home. It was silly and helpful and exactly what my students needed to see!

Juliana: While this was a challenging experience, there were definitely some silver linings:

- *Learning to plan for trouble spots.* We had many conversations during our planning about learning to predict what the challenges of a piece would be. She had to plan into her lesson how she would address the issues that we both knew would arise, even without hearing students! While this was occasionally an area I worked on with my student teachers in the past, I usually focused instead on them hearing and adjusting in real time during rehearsals. She absolutely grew through this kind of planning.
- *Student driven feedback.* This year it has become a norm during our lessons to ask students 10-15 times "how did that go?" We used two systems: either having students show us on hands (or in the chat) from 5 to 1 where they are at (5 being perfect, and 1 struggling), or we used a thumb spectrum (up, down, sideways.) Both of these gave us a chance to see where students are at-- or at least where they think they are at! While it is absolutely not always accurate, we have never relied so heavily on students to tell us where they are at, and where they need work. I think this is a strategy that both my student teacher and I will use even when we return to normal rehearsals.
- *Someone to bounce ideas off of.* So much of our teaching practice is being re-invented every day. While our colleagues in core classes have many teachers in the building to share lesson planning and exchange ideas with, we are often isolated in the choral world. I cannot tell you how much sanity I gained simply by having another person to be creative with. Since everything was new and different for me, I had much less of a "this is how I always do things" mindset and was able to remain more open to new and different ways to do things. My student teacher undoubtedly benefited from that in unique ways.

In summary, we are glad this happened, though it's been difficult and at times unfulfilling--kind of like teaching choir right now! Tim's practicum students had excellent thoughts upon which to close, though: they are getting training on a teaching style none of us were trained to utilize, and they're also getting to watch teachers and students alike learn how to be flexible. For us, it's been a unique and challenging way to mentor those who will soon become our colleagues. Is this difficult? You bet! Is it rewarding and important work? Absolutely. We recommend it.



From your Northern Region Coordinator: Jane Waldrop

“Pro Tips” for Teaching from Home

Many of us have found ourselves in a new workspace for the start of this school year: our homes! We have created corners in our bedrooms, spread out on the dining room table, and taken up residence in our basements, garages, guest rooms, and kitchens! The diversity of our spaces is evident in our many staff meetings and zoom calls, right? Some of us have taken out closet shelves and crammed ourselves inside a tiny space just to get some privacy! Others have a whole family reunion happening in the background of our calls. As varied as our locations can be, we need to find a spot that makes us comfortable, gives us privacy, and fills us with joy. If you are struggling to find the best place to work from home, here are some tips I have learned since moving myself 4 times in the past 8 weeks.

Temperature Check!

I started out my teaching-from-home journey in our newly finished basement. It is so lovely down there in the extra bedroom that I decorated in teal and grey colors. It has a day bed for planning period naps, a window for natural light, and is away from the hustle and bustle of a house full of my own children that can't seem to regulate their own volume settings. I set it all up and after 2 days realized the sad reality of basement dwelling: the temperature. On a good day, the temperature may rise above 64 degrees down there. So, after the second day of shivering under a huge quilt and attempting to type in gloves, I decided to move everything up to the top floor where it's warm.

Pro Tip: *Make sure you choose somewhere you can survive the cold and heat! Space heaters and fans can help. We're at home so "they" can't tell us we aren't allowed to plug them in right under our desk! (And plug in that cup warmer, too!)*

Get Checked by a Doctor, not by Students

Moving my desk, bookshelf, portable keyboard, office chair, room divider, and all the accoutrement 2 flights upstairs was not a fun task. But I did it and settled into a corner of my master bedroom. I positioned the desk so I could see out of our window, watch passersby, and feel the sun on my face! It was lovely! I settled into my seat and started my class. The second I turned on my camera to teach I realized that my wonderful students were staring directly at my unmade bed and into my closet (which you have to walk through to go to the bathroom where my husband was currently showering!) I stashed the bras and quickly made my bed, but this location would not work either – the risk of nudity was too high.

Pro Tip: *Make sure you aren't showing more of yourself or your family than you want!*

Wear a mask, but not if you are Blocking the Internet

After the messy bed and bathroom foreshadowing, I decided to just rotate my workspace a bit so that I could stay in my warm bedroom but not have a graphic scene behind me. I rotated everything around the room, adjusting ALL the furniture to help me fit, changed out my family pictures for some of my music art behind me, set up my room divider to split the room, and began teaching. My husband now had approximately 4 inches between his side of the bed and the bathroom, but who cares, right? Sacrifices must be made in this new world. For whatever reason, I quickly realized I had moved myself into a zone of internet unreliability and my internet began dropping out multiple times a day. I would have to log back into my classes more than once, leaving them to fend for themselves. I couldn't stream videos, and I would constantly have students saying, "You're glitching" (or, more accurately, "UR

GLTCHY"). We called the internet provider, we got those pods to boost the signal, and yes, I restarted my computer. (Thanks for the suggestion, IT Department!!!) So, again, after a few days, I decided to pack up this location as well.

Pro Tip: *Make sure the internet works in the workspace you choose!*

Stay 6 feet away. From me.

After I accepted the fact that the only place to go was the main level, I carried all my junk down to the living room. I set up a desk by the window, and I set up a second computer to use as my "piano cam." (Every time I turn my chair around to use it, I belt out, "Sing me a song you're the piano cam!" Every. Time. They love it. Right?) I set up my tripod lights, laptop stand, second monitor, notebook shelf, daily affirmation calendar, blank notebook, pens, planners, blue light glasses, headphones, secret chocolate stash, and acetaminophen. I now spend my time planning, teaching, and yelling at my own family in the background. Sometimes I forget to turn off my mic.

Sometimes my teenagers wander in slamming dishes and doors and dropping things. (Why are they so clumsy?) And my husband then decides to do a minor kitchen renovation in the middle of class. The dogs constantly want to be let outside, then back inside, and they whine and bark all the time causing my students to type "AHHHH THAT SCARED ME" in the chat box. My mailman sometimes rings the doorbell for a delivery, and he can see me sitting there so I *have* to get up and go the door. My daughter talks to me all the time, so I am muting my microphone and shouting "What?" to hear her reply, "Never mind" 50 times a day. It's fun.

Pro Tip: *There is no perfect spot to work when you are trapped in your own home. But, the fridge is 20 steps away, the Keurig is 15 steps away, and I have 3-8 candles lit during class time. I use the microwave without waiting, I go to the bathroom anytime I want, and I can wear pajama bottoms every single day. We've got to look on the bright side if we want to make it to the other side.*



Preparing for a New Tomorrow

Online Conference: Saturday August 7, 2021 with Michael John Trotta and Ysaye Barnwell

- \$35 Registration fee for ACDA members, who can also register their friends for the same fee
- Additional asynchronous content will be free and available to all at the ACDA Voices United YouTube Channel
- Coming Soon: opportunities to register for seminar sessions with Michael John Trotta

What has worked for you? Are you willing to share your work with others? Calls for participation will be coming soon--short interest sessions, repertoire "Top Five" sessions, concert recordings, teaching tips... if you have something that could inspire or empower others, please consider presenting at Voices United! Also, consider submitting your proposals [HERE](#) !!!

Contact Pam McDermott at pmcdermott@aacda.org or see the Voices United website at acdavoicesunited.org if you have ideas or questions.

From your Newsletter Editor: Matthew Russell

Virginia Harmony



June 2021 Edition

The VA-ACDA leadership team and I would like to invite all of you to contribute your articles and ideas for OUR May 2021 Edition of *Virginia Harmony*. ALL Virginia ACDA members and R&R chairs are enCOURAGED to contribute submissions. TOGETHER, we are ALL made better by sharing our GROUP GENIUS!!!

Article due date: May 15, 2021 Publication date: June 1, 2021

Send to: mnr10707@gmail.com

Virginia ACDA 2020-2021 Calendar

August 6-7, 2020	Voices United Virtual Conference, VA ACDA membership meeting - 8/6 - 5-6 PM via Zoom
All Year	<i>Sing for Virginia</i> composer advocacy initiative #sing4va
September 1, 2020	Newsletter Publication: Voices United Wrap-up, Leadership Team highlights, membership drive information
Sept. 15 - Nov. 15, 2020	ACDA membership drive - encourage someone to join!
November 1, 2020	Newsletter: articles from membership, membership drive updates
November 8, 2020	Executive Board Virtual Meeting @ 7:30 PM
November 19-21, 2020	VMEA Virtual Conference: VA-ACDA state virtual meeting
January 2021	Recruitment for R&R chair positions
February 1, 2021	Newsletter: Voices United Conference information, membership articles
February 28, 2021	Full VA Leadership virtual meeting - 3 - 5 PM
March 28, 2021	Executive Board virtual meeting - 7 - 8:30 PM
March 17-20, 2021	ACDA National Conference - Dallas, TX
June 1, 2021	Newsletter: Voices United Conference information, state leadership information
August 5-7, 2021	Voices United Conference - Fairfax, VA www.acdavoicesunited.org

Voices United committee planning meetings: September, October, November, January, March, & May. Interested in being part of the planning committee? Please email Dr. Pamela McDermott at pmcdermott@vaacda.org

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