

June 1, 2021
Volume 3, Issue 3



Virginia Harmony



August 7, 2021 Online

Hosted by the ACDA Chapters of VA ,MD/DC and DE
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President's Message: Recharge and Reset! — Amy Moir



Dear Virginia ACDA,

Throughout the past fifteen months, I have been continually in awe of the resilience, creativity, and dedication of the choral musicians in Virginia. You have tirelessly worked to create musical miracles this year. We have all learned skills we never dreamed of needing to know and problem solved sometimes on an hourly basis.

The continual need to pivot has been exhausting. Oftentimes, it has seemed every plan made has been altered ten different times with more last-minute changes than a type-A personality can reasonably take. This has all been on top of the exhaustion faced in the leadership roles we carry as ensemble directors. People look to us for answers. Many of us have had to be the source of comfort for our ensembles all while we were also managing so many different situations a global pandemic demands that we juggle.

Well, it is time to recharge Virginia! For many, our batteries are emotionally and physically empty. We need to allow ourselves time to relax and rest. Most importantly, we need to let our guard down and grieve for all we have lost in the past year. Many of us have stretched ourselves to the emotional and physical limit beyond what we thought possible. Our bodies are our instruments, and they need some rest. We need time to heal and refuel.

Taking the time to recharge will allow a reset. We need to get ourselves ready to effectively enter *The Golden Age of Chorus*. This is the choral community's era of recovery and renewal! What we have waiting for us is concerts with a live audience! We have choristers smiling faces which will be fully viewable within the next year! (Just think, we will be able to see vowel shapes.) We have people needing us to reassure them that it is going to be ok to sing together. We have choristers that will also need time to grieve and heal. Music and their choral family will be the conduit for them, and we need to be ready to provide.

Our annual conference in conjunction with the MD/DC and DE chapters of ACDA will be there to help you reset for the 2021-2022 year. Join us online August 7, 2021, for *Voices United: Preparing for a New Tomorrow*. You can find information on our website. <http://acdavoicesunited.org/>

Never have I been so proud to be a member of a group. Virginia choral directors, you are amazing! You are inspirational! You are creative! You are resilient! You so very much deserve some rest and the space to really feel and process the last year. I am so incredibly thankful for all of you and the work you have done for choral music.

Yours in service,

Amy

Meet VA-ACDA President Elect (2023):

Meredith Bowen



Meredith Bowen biographical sketch:

Meredith Bowen is the Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Choral Music Education at Radford University in Radford, VA, where she conducts three ensembles and teaches undergraduate and graduate classes in choral conducting, vocal pedagogy, choral methods, choral literature, and supervises student teachers. She serves as R & R Chair for Youth and Student Activities on the VA-ACDA board, is an inaugural member of and Artistic Administrator for *mirabai*, a professional women's ensemble, and is on faculty for the Choral Music Experience Institute and the Virginia Governor's School for the Visual and Performing Arts and Humanities.

Bowen is an active guest conductor, clinician, and presenter. Her recent conducting invitations include all-state honor choirs in Michigan, Virginia, and Kansas; and honor choirs in Alaska, Alabama, Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. She was one of six conductors selected to represent the United States by the American Choral Directors Association International Exchange Program in Nairobi, Kenya. Bowen's two current scholarship interests are restoring, publishing, and performing music written by 17th-century women and the impact of socially-conscious programming. She presented her research on restoring convent music at the National American Choral Directors Association Conference and contributed an article on the same subject in the *Choral Journal*. Four of her restored editions are published by Boosey & Hawkes and two editions appear on the *mirabai*'s inaugural recording, "ecstatic songs." She is slated to conduct the Illinois Music Educators Association All-State Treble Honor Choir and co-conduct an honor treble ensemble at Carnegie Hall with National Concerts.

Previous to her appointment at Radford, Bowen taught K-12 general music, choir, and band in Lansing, MI, and was the Artistic Director of multiple ensembles in Michigan including: Sistrum - Lansing Women's Chorus, Holland Chorale, and the Battle Creek Girls Chorus. Bowen holds a B.S. in Music Education from West Chester University, an M.M. and a D.M.A. in Choral Conducting from Michigan State University.

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

Sing for Virginia: Meet the Composer ***A conversation between Kerry Wilkerson and Henry Dehlinger***

This is the second 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 Henry Dehlinger, an Oakton, VA-based composer:

KW: Where are you based?

HD: My wife Lauren and I live in Oakton, Virginia, just outside Washington, DC. We also spend part of the year in California, where we both grew up.

KW: When did you start composing?

HD: I started composing in earnest in 2015. Prior to that, I was arranging. I often quip that arranging was my gateway drug to composing.

KW: What is your primary instrument?

HD: The piano is my primary instrument, always has been, although I came to my love for the human voice quite honestly. During my formative years, I sang with the San Francisco Boys Chorus. Now that I am a choral composer, I have come full circle, and I am grateful for that.

KW: What is your favorite subject matter for choral works?

HD: I am often asked, "What inspires you?" I derive my inspiration from a wide range of subjects, both secular and sacred.

That said, most of my catalog is secular, and poetry inspires most of these works. My favorites include *Night Piece* with text by James Joyce. The poetry is replete with ecclesiastical imagery. My treatment of it starts as a subdued choral meditation that swells with colorful harmonies to give it the sense of celebrating the night sky.

Bahnhofstrasse, also a poem by James Joyce, underscores the fleeting nature of youth. It focuses on a moment in time when the poet experienced debilitating pain while walking down the street. It stopped him cold. The musical language is minimalist and meditative, with repeating cycles of broken chords in the accompaniment that reiterate a simple, eerie motif while the melody floats wistfully above. It's mournful and plaintive and one of my most popular works.

It's not all doom and gloom, though. I also enjoy writing choral settings of love poems. My latest is *Images*, an a cappella setting of Richard Aldington's modernist love poem, where I've combined precise images of longing with soaring melodies and seductive harmonic progressions.

Poems such as these draw their inspirations from the inner depths of our psyches. The musical setting should sweep audiences – and interpreters - from understanding the text with the head to feeling the combined music and text with the heart.

The only way to do that well is to select texts with which I, as a composer, can be truly in love. I think Poulenc said it best: "The musical transposition of a poem must be an act of love, not a marriage of convenience."

Works by other composers can also be sources of inspiration. A friend of mine once quipped that *Kohelet*, my cantata in five movements premiering this coming season, is the love child of Leonard Bernstein and Carl Orff. There is really something to that, though. In *Kohelet*, which is a sacred work, I combined Biblical Hebrew text and lush, modal melodies (think Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*) with colorful harmonic textures and energetic meters (think Orff's *Carmina Burana*). I think everyone should also know that I composed the bass-baritone solo in *Kohelet* especially for your voice, Kerry.

My current project is also sacred - a *Requiem* for SATB chorus, soloists, and orchestra in memory of a recently departed friend, Neil Dellar, who was very active in the choral community here in the Washington metro area.

Regardless of inspiration, once I start putting notes on staves, it is musical ideas that inform my creative decisions.

A musical idea can be a lyrical melody or a theme. It can be a leitmotif. I'll create a leitmotif to serve as a distinct musical "voice" for each major character or idea in a choral work. It can be adapted in many ways to complement the evolving story, regardless of whether I am scoring for a small ensemble or large chorus and orchestra. It can also be a simple chord progression or a richly textured opening chord full of impressionistic colors and gorgeous dissonances.

I then weave these fragments into meaningful musical experiences, my own vernacular, if you will. The result is a sound that is unique and recognizable in all my choral compositions. It reflects the present yet harkens to the past. It is evocative but also familiar, universal but also personal.

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

HD: I write mostly for SATB chorus, but I have also written TTBB arrangements of my more popular choral works. One that I composed specifically for TTBB chorus is *Memorial Day*. It is a tribute to the fallen men and women of the U.S. armed forces with text by Joyce Kilmer, an American poet and fallen hero, who was killed by an enemy sniper's bullet during World War I.

Someday, I would love to compose works for boys or girls chorus.

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

HD: Absolutely. My settings with accompaniment run the gamut - piano, chamber ensemble, orchestra. The initial treatment depends on where I think the piece is headed first in terms of performance - a small chorale, a large chorale, a chamber group, or a larger instrumental group. Quite a number of my works have several instrumentations available as I see how the interest is developing and who's interested in performing them. I will say, though, there's nothing like being able to write for a large chorus and orchestra because it gives me an opportunity to add interesting colors and dramatic weight.

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

HD: One of my major works is a setting of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot for orchestra and solo soprano. It's premiering this fall with the National Philharmonic. I also love composing for chamber ensembles. I recently completed two works for cello and piano. The first is *Fantasia in Groove*, a concert suite of urban impressions, which evokes the fast-paced, stop-and-go groove of big-city life. The second is my Cello Sonata in C Minor.

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

HD: I invite everyone to visit my website at <https://HenryDehlinger.com>. All of my works are there, along with accompanying audio, program notes, and links to purchase scores and choral octavos. I suppose this is a good time to mention that I just released a new album with you and your lovely wife, soprano Danielle Talamantes. It's called *At That Hour*, and it features my art songs based on some of the pieces we've talked about here. As you know, we've gotten a great response and Spotify has it on its *High Notes* playlist, representing "the best new releases in opera and vocal music." You can also hear my works on all of the widely available channels - Apple Music, Amazon, YouTube, Pandora, Tidal, Deezer, Idagio, and Primephonic.

KW: Are you available for commissions?

HD: Absolutely!

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

HD: For a short, four-part choral work under five minutes with piano accompaniment or unaccompanied, you should give me two to four weeks to complete. Perhaps, one to four months for a twenty-minute choral work accompanied by a chamber ensemble. You need to give at least six months, perhaps longer, for large-scale choral works over thirty minutes with orchestral accompaniment. Keep in mind that a composer is likely working on multiple projects at the same time.

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

HD: I suppose the thing that's under wraps is that I'm working on a body of Christmas music. My latest offering is *Ring Out, Ye Bells*, a joyous and accessible choral setting of African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar's reverent Christmas hymn. There's also *Hodie!* - a new setting of the joyous Latin text. Also check out *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*, a new choral setting of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem, and *Mistletoe*, a lively setting of Walter de la Mare's much-loved Christmas poem, sung in two- and four-part round. At some point, I'll get these recorded, too. For now, I'm just having a ball reimagining holiday music the way I want to hear it.



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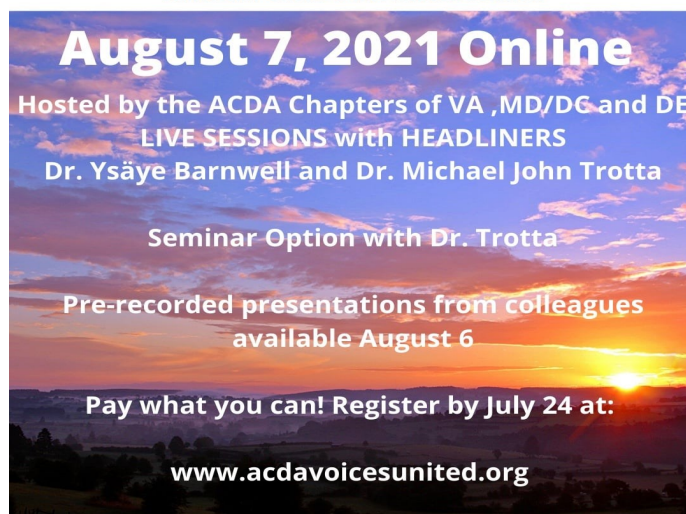


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updates about conferences,
opportunities and more.





Dear members of ACDA's Voices United community,

For 22 years, ACDA chapters from VA, MD/DC, and DE have been gathering to conference together, bridging the Southern and Eastern Region divide. During this unimaginably difficult pandemic, ACDA continues to offer hope in the form of research, networking, brainstorming, and conversation.

I invite you to join us for [Voices United '21: Preparing for a New Tomorrow](#). Headliners Michael John Trotta and Ysaye Barnwell lead the way with sessions that will inspire, empower, and equip. They will be surrounded by sessions on the most relevant topics in our field today, all addressed by panelists who lead by example, offer insight, and continue to refine best practices for you to succeed.

We will be online – with multiple ways for you to engage. Conference day is Saturday, August 7, but ACDA members also have the option to register for a link that will allow you to view these sessions asynchronously for a short period after our live conference. Members AND non-members are invited to view a raft of interest sessions FREE on our [YouTube channel](#) beginning Friday, August 6. You can also register for masterclasses with Michael John Trotta on Friday, August 6, where you will interact with a small group of participants around a specific topic.

This has been a tremendously difficult year. I invite you to invest in inspiration. Join in the rejuvenating experience of conference from your own home. As you prepare to build a new season for your singers, take with you the resources ACDA has to offer. Be reminded that you are not alone – that you walk with an army of choral professionals committed to bringing out the song in every voice – to unite voices in singing.

Registration for Voices United '21 is open now through July 24. Please join us.

Pam McDermott
Chair, Voices United Planning Committee

From your Jr. High/Middle School R&R Chair: Susan Dommer

Sight Reading Factory: A Love Story with Zoom and Canvas

Confession. This is the first year I've used Sight Reading Factory as a tool to help my students grow individually! Using the examples for daily sight reading on the Smart Board has been a practice for years. I like being able to use my handy yardstick to help singers learn to track the notes on the staff, and I have been making paper copies for those with vision issues. Using Sight Reading Factory this way has worked well.

In the new online teaching format, with a sizeable discount for the county-wide purchase, I have used this tool with my middle school singers this year. And I will not go back! I may have to beg for the money, but I feel that this is a great way to help my singers grow!

I can share my screen in Zoom with the zoomies and the roomies. No vision issues with everyone on their own laptops. It is great to have the curser on to help them keep track of the notes – less problems with getting lost (if they are watching the screen).

I can do online ear and eye training with annotations. I sing the example and make a mistake (or two). The kids can use the annotation tool to circle the incorrect note. Easy ear training, and it blew my administrator's mind when I did it during an observation! I am going to work on using this with individual singers as a quick exit or quiz. I think I can make it into a racing game – who can find the wrong note first. Since Zoom has their name attached to anything they write, I can see which kid got it first.

Sight Reading Factory is integrated into Canvas – hopefully, your learning platform has a place for comments. I like seeing the exact example performed, and the singer can go back to see and hear their own work, using my comments to help them work on areas of weakness.

This is so much better than asking them to sing for me in person – they can take their time and work on doing their best without any peer pressure in the room. Of course, I have offered private Zooms and breakout rooms for those who are having problems. That is even better! It's a winning combination for this choral director!

From your Newsletter Editor: Matthew Russell

Virginia Harmony



September 2021 *Edition*

The VA-ACDA leadership team and I would like to invite all of you to contribute your articles and ideas for OUR September 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: August 15, 2021 Publication date: September 1, 2021

Send to: mnr10707@gmail.com

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