



Virginia Harmony

President's Message:

Why We Sing — Amy Moir



Recent research reinforces what we as choral directors already know: singing is good for us. Daniel Pink's recent book, *When: The Scientific Secrets of Timing*, cites research published in *Evolution and Human Behavior* that shows singing improves your mood, your outlook, and alleviates anxiety and depression. Pink also writes that "choral singing calms the heart and boosts endorphin levels." Charlotte Wilson and Julie Lynch of Trinity College Dublin documented strong correlations between choral singing and improved mindfulness. Psychologist Nick Stewart of Bath University performed research concluding that people who sang in a choir reported a greater feeling of togetherness than those in other groups or solo activities.

It is great to have our own personal experiences validated through research. In the last newsletter, I asked for input as to why you personally sing in a choir. Responses that came back included that participating in a choir made singers feel happy and successful. Singers reported a strong connection to a collective group. One anonymous person said, "I think it's a powerful experience that has an exponential effect." Virginia's responses seem to support the research that singing in a choir makes us feel good and improves our mental well-being for various reasons.

My next step would then be to find specific reasons that keep singers coming back to choral ensembles over other groups. What are the attributes that allow someone to continually choose staying with a choir? It might be worth asking the singers in your ensemble what keeps them coming back for more and more rehearsals. When they choose to leave, what causes them to not return that might be in your control as a director to help alter?

When I think about why I sing, I constantly hear the following tune: "I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free." I sing because I can and am constantly thankful that I have a voice in my life. Where would we be if we couldn't sing during times of joy to celebrate, times of sadness to mourn, and times of togetherness to feel like we are part of something greater than ourselves?



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Virginia ACDA 2019-2020 Calendar

July 31, 2019	Leadership Team meeting
August 1-3, 2019	Voices United Conference, State Luncheon Meeting Honors Choirs: Children's, Intergenerational, Conductor's
All Year	<i>Sing for Virginia</i> composer advocacy initiative: #sing4va
September 1, 2019	Newsletter #1: Voices United Wrap-up, Leadership Team highlights, membership drive information
Sept. 15 - Nov. 15, 2019	ACDA SING UP membership drive
November 1, 2019	Newsletter #2: articles from membership, All Virginia Middle School Information, SING UP membership drive updates
November 10, 2019	Executive Board meeting (7:30PM Conference Call)
November 20-21, 2019	VMEA Conference: VA-ACDA state reception and meeting
January 2020	Recruitment for R&R chair position openings
January 2020 (TBD)	Full Leadership Team meeting
February 1, 2020	Newsletter #3: Voices United Conference information, All Virginia Chorus information, membership articles
March 2020 (TBD)	Executive Board meeting
March 11-14, 2020	Southern Region Conference, Mobile, AL
April 23-25, 2020	All Virginia Honor Choirs, free professional development workshops, state breakfast/lunch/dinner TBD
May 15, 2020	Newsletter #4: All Virginia Middle School highlights, Voices United Conference information, state leadership information

Voices United planning committee meetings: September, October, November, January, March, & May



LIFT EVERY VOICE

MOBILE, AL | MARCH 11-14, 2020
AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN REGION CONFERENCE

Register here: <http://acdasonthern.org>

**Lift Every Voice!
2020 ACDA
Southern Region
Conference**

**Make plans now to join
us March 11-14, 2020 in
Mobile, Alabama for the
next Southern Region ACDA
Conference!**

***From your Vice President and Voices United Conference Chair:
Pamela McDermott***

Living Out Your Philosophy

Are you investing your energy into our profession as well as into your job? Have you been teaching/directing long enough so that you can begin to think about becoming a mentor and advocate?

Or, are you feeling over-stretched? Too many activities on your calendar? Burning out?

A wise friend once said to me, “Only do what you WANT to do.” It seems simple; it seems somewhat absurd. But, the more I thought about it, the more ownership I took over my own schedule.

My career is not a competition; my profession is my passion. Only do as many concerts as I want. Only have as many rehearsals as I want to make the performance as good as I want. Only program music I want that allows me to build the rest of the schedule I want, and to build the singers I want. Make time for the difficult parts of the job, show up every day, but where I have control, do what I want. Spend my money the way I want and save so that I can attend a conference, buy my singers pocket squares or pizza or host a picnic. It’s about balancing my investment in others with investment in myself.

So, I encourage you to do what you want. Teach and direct your singers and invest in them as your humans. Mentor a new member of your community; learn what gifts they bring to our field. Go with a friend or two to a conference so you can share expenses and experiences. Give to the Becky Tyree Memorial Fund so that someone new can attend Voices United and experience the richness of our work. Prepare a presentation, sing in a choir, go hear a concert.

Advocate. Donate. Mentor others. Keep learning. Live your philosophy and learn to live it better and better, with as much of your day as you can spare. This is the kind of investment that reaps untold rewards—for you, and for your singers.

Happy singing!

Join us in 2020!



Voices United
American Choral Directors Association

**The annual collaborative summer conference
presented by the Delaware, Maryland/DC,
and Virginia chapters of ACDA**

Sponsored by The Musical Source



Michael John Trotta
Seminar Track
Conductor's Chorus



Ysaye Barnwell
Voices United Honor Chorus
(ages 15-adult)



Janet Hostetter
Children's Honor Chorus
(age 9-15)

Save The Date! Invite a Friend! Sponsor Singers!
Join us as we celebrate 22 years of Voices United!

August 6-8, 2020
George Mason University • Fairfax, Virginia
www.acdavoicesunited.org

REBECCA TYREE "BRING A FRIEND" MEMORIAL FUND



Becky Tyree, past VA-ACDA President and Voices United Chair passed away unexpectedly on May 24, 2018. Becky had a huge heart and positive spirit. She was a constant presence at Voices United, Southern Region, and National ACDA conferences as a presenter and participant. She led an active student chapter at VCU and worked to bring young educators into ACDA.

Becky regularly reached out to friends to share rooms and meals at conferences. The Rebecca Tyree "Bring a Friend" Memorial Fund has been established to continue Becky's work and inspiration among us. Members and friends are encouraged to make donations to honor Becky, or to remember/honor others who have guided and inspired.

Recipients of this award will be nominated by a current member of ACDA. Scholarship winners will receive conference registration fees and hotel expenses for two nights. If the recipient has not already joined ACDA, they will also receive a complimentary membership from their home state during the National ACDA fall membership drive. Awards will be announced before the Early Bird registration deadline for Voices United.

Donations may be made through the Voices United website, www.acdavoicesunited.org, or by visiting the Virginia ACDA page (www.vaacda.org) or the Delaware ACDA page (www.deacda.org). Or, contact Voices United conference chair, Pam McDermott at pmcdermott@vaacda.org for information on how to mail a check.

A list of those honored through a donation to the Rebecca Tyree "Bring a Friend" Memorial Fund will be printed in Voices United Conference Brochure and Concert Program each year. Thank you for helping us continue Becky's legacy and for supporting choral excellence through Voices United!



www.acdavoicesunited.org

From your High School R&R Chair: Megan Cartwright

Your Calendar Is Too Full

We all do it. We give many more hours than are required by our contracts. We work into the evenings and weekends. We add new things to our department calendars each year without removing something else. It's all with good intentions. We want thriving programs where our students are having meaningful musical experiences. We are all too aware that it's up to us to make our programs more and more attractive when there are new academic programs each year that pull our potential students away.

Those who know me know that I am passionate about the life changing nature of choral music in our students' lives. One of the greatest things about our job is that we get to be on the front lines of seeing music impact members of our choirs. As a result, we pursue more and more experiences for them. And all this is good. Well, mostly.

I am in the unique position this year of taking a little time off from full-time teaching. My family moved this summer, and I shockingly did not apply for any jobs. This small break is giving me some time to reflect on the space that teaching choir has taken up in my life. While I am spending about ten hours a week teaching lessons and working for a local theater, I am obviously finding much more time to be with my family.

I want to challenge you, the reader, to step back and reflect on whether you need more time for personal or family time. Are there things on your professional calendar that belong on the chopping block? Can you leave thirty minutes earlier so you can be at home? Can you reclaim a weekend? The reality is that very few of us have administrators or parents of students that will tell us we are doing too much. But you probably are. We aren't machines, but we fill our calendars like we are. Choral music creates space for emotion. For joy and sadness, for love and loss. Take time for yourself to actually experience those things. You deserve it, and your choirs just might thrive as a result.



From your Instrumental to Vocal R&R Chair: Harlan Zackery

Hello, Virginia ACDA!

I am Harlan Zackery, Jr., your new Repertoire and Resource Chair for Instrumental to Vocal Transitions. Currently, I am Director of Choral Activities at Norfolk State University where I conduct the Concert Choir and teach courses in theory and sight-singing/ear training. I arrived at this post after several years as Director of Orchestras and Assistant Director of Choral Activities at Jackson State University. I began my career as a middle school band and orchestra director. Yes, in those days, I had no idea that choral music would ever be my primary focus. Yet, one day, my principal asked me to take over our chorus classes, and I was naive enough to say yes. Lucky for me, that “yes” unlocked my passion for working with choirs of all types. Although, I may sometimes look back at those years through “rose colored glasses,” I must admit, in the beginning I was quite nervous with my first choir. Each day I went to school with the fear that I would destroy some young singer’s voice. Although I’d taken the required choral courses as an undergrad, and accompanied thousands of hours of voice lessons, choir rehearsals, and performance, I still felt woefully inadequate. As I reflect on those days, I want to share with you a few tips that helped me to gain my footing.

1. Get an ACDA Membership.

Chances are, if you’re reading this article, you already have an ACDA membership. Make the most of your member benefits, and the tools available on the ACDA website. Search back issues of the *Choral Journal*, sign up for mentoring opportunities, participate in the national, regional, and state events.

2. Get a NAFME Membership.

In subsequent articles, I will highlight a few of the targeted resources and articles NAFME has published for the novice choir director. *Teaching Music* also has several great resources for anyone new to teaching choir. You will also find their national, regional, and state events to be invaluable resources.

3. Call upon your choral/vocal colleagues in the community.

I have found the choral community in every state and community I’ve worked to be a friendly bunch, eager to share resources, give advice, and help each other out. The help and support are there. Keep in mind, also, if you’ve been teaching instrumental music for years, there is much wisdom you, too, can share in the choral community.

4. Trust your instincts: good teaching is just good teaching.

Much of what you already know about breathing, producing proper tone, supporting the tone, phrasing, intonation, and expression will directly translate into your choral work. It’s not as foreign as it seems.

5. Sign-up for voice lessons.

I have found that many instrumentalists who work with vocalists for the first time are quite self-conscious of their own vocal ability. Voice lessons will help you overcome this fear, as well as give you with each lesson, more vocabulary, techniques, and confidence to work with your own ensemble.

6. Join a community/church/professional chorus (or at least observe others' rehearsals).

It will be tremendously helpful for you to see how others structure their choral rehearsals. The rehearsal setting is also a great place to steal warm-up ideas, rehearsal techniques, useful imagery, and new repertoire.

7. Audit/sign-up for a diction class.

This will be quite helpful in helping you to learn IPA, proper vowel sounds, correcting vowel production/formation, etc.

8. Listen, listen, listen!

Ask your choral colleagues for their suggestions of choral recordings. I cannot over-emphasize how helpful this will be for developing your ear for healthy choral tone. Listen to ensembles of differing sizes, age groups, and regions. Go to choral concerts, sit-in on rehearsals.

In coming articles, I will highlight specific resources that will aid the new choral director or the instrumentalist transitioning into choral music. Remember, you are not alone! We all are a resource for each other. If I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at hzackery@nsu.edu. I am happy to help in any way I can.



From your Vocal Jazz R&R Chair: Darden Purcell

Swingin' Into the Season

The holidays are right around the corner and if you are like me, requests are coming in for festive repertoire. After concentrating all semester on school concerts, I find there is a not much time to research and pull together new material. Below is a list of songs that might "fit your bill." All examples below have recordings to listen to before you purchase.

Swingin' at Santa's Place, arr. Kirby Shaw

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Swingin%27-at-Santa%27s-Place/3296914.item#/submit>

A fun, swingin' piece that features the "Count Basie" sound. SATB, SAB, SSA with P/C CD and instrumental parts. Level medium easy. Hard copies mailed from JW Pepper.

Holiday Road, arr. Roger Emerson

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Holiday-Road/10603571.item#/submit> Taken from the 1983 National Lampoon's vacation, this Lindsey Buckingham hit makes a great opener or closer and gets your audience rockin'! SATB, SAB, with P/A CD and MP3 and instrumental parts. All parts available in e-print format.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, arr. Roger Emerson

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Merry-Christmas%2C-Happy-Holidays/10760325.item#.XbXCajNKgWo> From the 2016 Pentatonix album, this version is a cappella with vocal percussion. SATB, SAB, SSA, with P/A CD and MP3. Level medium with lead solo line. Vocal parts available in e-print format.

A Christmas Jazz Trio, arr. Michelle Weir

<https://www.jwpepper.com/A-Christmas-Jazz-Trio/10047405.item#/> Santa Claus is Comin to Town, O Christmas Tree, and Winter Wonderland arranged in an a cappella vocal jazz style. SATB, SSA, level medium and works for a variety of abilities. Available in e-print format.

Up on the Housetop, arr. Kirby Shaw

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Up-on-the-Housetop/10093032.item#/submit> Updated a cappella version with a technology "spin." SATB, SSA with performance MP3. Available in e-print format.

S'vivon (Dreidel Spin), arr. Roger Emerson

<https://www.jwpepper.com/S%27Vivon/10567893.item#/submit> This energetic version can include hand percussion and works well with younger choirs. SAB, SSA with P/A CD. All parts available in e-print format.

S'vivon (The Dreidl), arr. Darmon Meader

<https://www.jwpepper.com/S%27vivon/10192393.item#myratebox2> Beautiful a cappella version, SATB. Level 3 and roughly 2 minutes long. Hard copies mailed from JW Pepper.

I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm, arr. Greg Jasperse

<https://www.jwpepper.com/I%27ve-Got-My-Love-to-Keep-Me-Warm/10595163.item#/submit>

Sweet, gentle ballad setting of this holiday classic. SATB, SAB, SSA with P/A CD and instrumental parts. All parts available in e-print format.

God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman, arr. Dave Barduhn

<https://smpjazz.com/store/product/god-rest-ye-merry-gentlemen/> Hard driving, $\frac{3}{4}$ feel with room for solos. SATB with piano and bass parts included. Level 3. Mailed from SMP for you to make your own copies.

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year, arr. Jennifer Barnes

<https://smpjazz.com/store/product/the-most-wonderful-time-of-the-year/> Jazz waltz that moves into a swing section. SAB, SSA with no solos. Level 3. Mailed from SMP for you to make your own copies. Recording is a finale file, but still gives the idea of the piece.

Do You Hear What I Hear, arr. Michelle Weir

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/216006/do-you-hear-what-i-hear?subsiteid=5> Funk/rock SATB a cappella version with optional vocal percussion. Level 2. Mailed from Hal Leonard, minimum of 5 copy purchase.

Christmastime is Here, arr. Michelle Weir

<https://www.halleonard.com/product/8749917/christmas-time-is-here?subsiteid=5> Gorgeous SATB a cappella version of this Charlie Brown classic. Level 3. Mailed from Hal Leonard, minimum of 5 copy purchase.

Happy programming and best wishes for a wonderful winter concert season!

From your Student Activity R&R Chair: Meredith Bowen

Programming with Social Consciousness

As conductor-teachers, I believe our most important task is choosing curriculum. It sets the stage for teaching people how to read a different language, to work as a team, to be an artist, and most importantly, to be a thoughtful human in our world that is increasingly disconnected. It is a very daunting responsibility if you believe what Lao Tzu said: "Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny." In other words, the literature we choose can shape the thoughts, words, and actions of people.

I believe we should choose literature not only for the musical elements we wish to teach or for grade level, but also for text, representation, and story. I was twenty years old before I knew women could write music, and I had to take a "women in music" elective class to find that out. I also didn't know that people of color could write music, and we never talked about someone's sexuality when discussing a composer. I also didn't know that there were styles of music outside of the Western art music canon. We owe it to our female students, our students of color, our students from cultures other than our own, and our LGBTQ+ students to have people like them represented in the curriculum because you can't be what you can't see. Moreover, our straight, white, American students also need to see and experience diversity in our current political and social climate.

For the last twenty years, I have programmed with a theme or storyline. It began when I worked for multiple non-profit community choirs in Michigan. It was a way to sell tickets to concerts, and so I programmed with the ensemble and the audience in mind. Over the last four years, I've continued with the same programming strategy but increased my in-class work of facilitating discussions about texts and current events and trying to draw ideas from students about how music can be a vehicle for change. We've tackled current events and social issues such as climate change, suicide awareness and prevention, the #MeToo movement, and refugees. This choice has been rich with conversations in class. I've observed students reaching out to their friends on social media about these topics, and I've noted newly minted teachers continuing the work in their own communities. I believe our students want to discuss big issues and they simply need a platform through which to explore.

What does socially conscious programming look like? I'd like to share with you two programs on the subject of refugees. Did you know that by the end of 2017, there were 65.8 million refugees in the world? The term "refugee" is defined as a person who is forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, or violence. How do we talk about our displaced humans? Can we give a voice to them? Can we amplify their story and, in the meantime, bring awareness to those of us who are unaware? How can we help those in need?

In December 2018, a colleague and I created a concert entitled: "Journey and Refuge: We Can Mend the Sky." We partnered with the Blacksburg Refugee Project to bring awareness to the singers and audience about the 29 children and 11 adults in Blacksburg and Roanoke from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Burundi that the non-profit supports. We passed the basket and raised \$1000 for the non-profit, but more importantly, we brought the awareness that the news of refugees wasn't just happening in far away places, but that we are living right next door to folks who have been forced to leave their homes for safer environments. I always begin the concert with a welcome and an overview of the topic in which I tell a personal story related to the theme. I happened to talk about my extensive travel that year and an awful experience I had in Kenya when I was without a guide, transportation, or food for an entire day. I longed for the comforts of home: where everything was familiar, where I knew exactly where to find things to make me feel better, where I could get food, where I could communicate, and where people cared for me. I know that my story does not compare in the slightest to how I imagine refugees feel, but perhaps those awful 10 hours of panic could help me see a glimpse. The choirs then performed *Wayfaring Stranger* (arr. Michael Englehardt), *The Road Home* (Stephen Paulus), *Keep Your Lamps* (arr. Andre Thomas), *Would You Harbor Me?* (Ysaye Barnwell), *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (arr. Dan Forrest), *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Gian Carlo Menotti), and *We Can Mend the Sky* (Jake Runestad). As connective tissue between sets of music when folks were walking on and off stage, the students recited poems that spoke to the theme.

Similarly, this past October, we presented a concert entitled "What is Home?" where we explored what it means to have a home. We sang songs about home as a place, community, or finding home within oneself. The selections sung include: *Wangol* (traditional Haitian, arr. Sten Kallman), *The Roof* (Andrea Ramsey), *I Will Arise and Go* (Shawn Kirchner), *Koowu* (Maryam Khoury), *Stars in Your Bones* (Joan Szymko), *Sing Wearing the Sky* (Jake Runestad), *Journey Home* (Abbie Betinis), *Refugee* (Moirá Smiley), *I'm Building me a Home* (traditional spiritual, arr. Anthony Trecek-King), and *Homeland* (Gustav Holst, arr. Z. Randall Stroope). Poems interspersed throughout included Emily Dickinson's "The Props assist the House," Warsan Shire's "Home," and Mahmoud Darwish's "We Journey Towards a Home." The impetus for this concert was the treble chorus commission I am spearheading with composer Andrea Clearfield. It will be an accessible work for SSA(A) choirs, piano, and percussion. If you'd like to join the commission and/or sing the premiere of a movement at Carnegie Hall, please email me for more information.

I find that choosing a theme helps me narrow down the vast amount of literature in the world and helps me discover music I might never have happened upon. I also find that the narrower the focus, the more creative I am. This is not an easy task, takes a lot of work, research, and time. And, it can be scary to tackle particular "hot button" issues. However, I believe the work is all worth it for our students and our world.



From your Multicultural/Ethnic Music R&R Chair:

Daniel Jackson

My recent desire to research music from various cultures reminded me of a discussion in my graduate-level conducting course regarding the piece *Daa Naa Se* (Hinshaw Music, Andre Thomas Choral Series) arranged by Raymond Wise, Professor of African American and African Diaspora Studies at University of Indiana-Bloomington. The piece is a Ghanaian folk song in an instrumental musical style that we would consider to be in the gospel style, complementing one of Ghana's official languages called "Twi." Although Dr. Wise clearly explained the reason for this marriage of two styles on the inside, front cover—explaining that a singer from Ghana taught them the song and that he had arranged it as a processional for his African American choir—one of my colleagues was intrigued by the fact that the translation of the text was solely Christian. This led this colleague to exclaim, "Obviously, it is written from someone in America. I just wouldn't see them singing about Christianity in Ghanaian folk music." This led to an intriguing stare from our professor, recognizing my colleague's ignorance. Over 70 percent of this nation's people follow the Christian faith, but I suspect that the ignorance of African choral music goes well beyond the lack of understanding of beliefs and creeds. There may also be a general lack of knowledge regarding the diversity and depth of its tradition. I am not an ethnomusicologist and my research of Africa's choral traditions hasn't even broken the surface tension of a massive ocean; however, based on my discoveries thus far, I wanted to offer a few insights that may help you in your search for African choral/vocal music.

Africa is a Continent

This may seem obvious, but I believe that some people consider Africa to be a country, or maybe even two (South Africa, and then everyone else). Africa contains 55 countries, the most of any continent. Although many of the countries may be similar, they all have different customs and traditions. Honestly, I think we create the same subconscious generalization for all continents, and, the less we know about a continent, the more profound the generalizations. Take a moment to imagine the different genres of music you may hear in Asia. Whether it be strictly traditional or more modern, it is a vast array of musical colors (India, Russia, Japan, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, etc...) It is important to remember that Africa has a wide variety of cultures, beliefs, sounds, and influences that has helped to shape its music. It would be wise to not musically "pigeon-hole" its diversity.

A Unification of Cultures

The colonization of Africa has created a convergence of Western European-based classical music and African traditional folk music, reminiscent of the African American spiritual in the United States. African composers like Fela Sowande, Mzilikhazi Khumalo, Joshua Mohapeloa, and their contemporaries were trained in Western classical music forms, structures, and techniques. This convergence also applies to teaching methods and vocal production. (Check out this link of Khumalo's *UShaka* by Khumalo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZijXoMwFaE>). No appreciated artistic style or genre is immune to imitation, enculturation, or acculturation.

Look Deeper. Do the Research.

Central and South America has several Spanish-speaking countries, but the dialect and pronunciation of certain sounds may be different based upon the region of its origin. The same applies to the Middle East and Southwest Asian countries. Doing research on a song's origin may help you avoid making a mistake in

pronunciation, but it may also provide you insight on aspects of vocal timbre, rhythm, and performance etiquette. For example, a performance of any of Michael Barrett's arrangements from South Africa may employ a different timbre and dialect than Ghanaian composer James Varrick Armaah's works. (Armaah's *Oye*, from the "Harmonious Chorale": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A3rYoE42r8>).

Do Not Assume.

We should not assume that African Choral music is going to sound or feel just like the beloved _____ arrangement we did in _____ choir. I took students to a concert for a band from the Ivory Coast when I worked in Central Florida. After the concert, many of the students were surprised that a lot of the music "sounded Caribbean or Latin American" to them. Some people may be surprised that many choral works that originate from regions in Africa do not call for a higher laryngeal placement during phonation, utilizing a more Bel Canto oriented technique. Does that mean it is "less African"? Absolutely, not. But, it could mean that we need to be "more informed" about African choral/vocal music.

From your Soprano/Alto Choir R&R Chair: Sherlee Glomb

Quick "5" Reboot and Recharge

This year I have the privilege and honor of doing a few professional development sessions for high school and middle school choral directors on choral methodologies and strategies in Virginia. I thought this would be a good time to visit some quick ideas to help "reboot and recharge" your daily rehearsals in the classroom with a few ideas.

In my opinion, the most difficult job to teach teachers is how to meet the choir where they are musically and then to determine what steps to take to actualize what you desire of them. After 20 years of teaching both middle and high school choir, I feel like it's important to always keep a plethora of ideas in my toolbox to help the choir actualize their full potential. This article shares just a few quick ideas that you may or may not have already thought of doing in your classes. The effectiveness of new ideas is always based on the delivery and application.

1. Building Tone: When asking students to do any of these, the director should mention the basics of breathing which includes really low and expansive breaths. Bring attention to the abdominal muscles and what they feel like while performing any of these. You can use these exercises in a variety of ways, including your warm-ups or passages in your repertoire. I like to take sections of my repertoire and make a few measures of it a warm-up that I teach pedagogically.

—**Lip trills:** Tell students to pretend they are blowing bubbles in the water. Use this in warm-ups (scales, arpeggios, thirds) or passages in repertoire that sound airy.

—**Raspberries:** This is a little harder but has no laryngeal pressure and actually attacks the abdominal muscles even more than a lip trill. Have students stick their tongues out and blow. Tell students to think like they are making a "farting" sound.

—**Instrumental/Vocal breathing phonation:** Have students hold up a finger and tell them to blow it pretend the top of it is the eye of a small needle. This helps focus their exhalation. When they do this with an

even stream of air, add pitch. You can start by stepwise motion on a five-note scale “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1” or move to passages in your song. Students should still feel their breath blowing on the finger continuously while phonating pitches.

— **Angry Seals:** Sing staccato on a neutral vowel. Continue to remind students to abdominally attack throughout the exercise. To increase intensity, I also use the “finger point,” like they are poking a friend annoyingly. This helps engage the abdominals. Tell students to modify as they sing higher notes. **This also helps with pitch accuracy.**

— **Legato:** Once you’ve done “angry seals,” move to singing legato on a neutral vowel while getting in text and syllabic stresses.

2. Keep Choirs Engaged: Many times I find that when I stop to work with a section, the other students stop focusing. Here are some ideas to keep students engaged while others are working a through a section:

- Write in the solfège to that section or the whole piece.
- Write the vowels in and then mouth it as you rehearse the other section.
- Solfège your vocal part while the other section is singing theirs.
- Mouth your words and memorize while the other section is singing.
- Conduct the phrase while the other section is singing.
- Underline all of the operative words in the phrase or syllabic stresses.
- Sing the same vocal part in your own voice range.

3. Physicalize! Physicalize! Physicalize! We know that singing is a physical activity of the whole body that needs to be trained. For instance, Kodály solfège combined with Curwen hand signs provides a visualization in kinesthetic space of the “low—high” relationship for the notes being sung with more security and accuracy. By applying gestural technique, singers use their hands to make the imagery into a kind of picture for the process of developing their musical memory while also improving their singing ability. Also, we know the use of Dalcroze is a playful, experiential approach to teaching and learning music. It is a process for awakening, developing, and refining innate musicality through rhythmic movement (often called eurythmics), ear-training, and improvisation. Here are a few ideas to help energize your sound through physicalizing:

- For a “no breath” or legato line, draw an arc in the air.
- Conduct the phrase as you imagine it.
- Squatting to standing position for dynamic variation (a squat being softest and standing position being loudest).
- Poking annoyingly: helps with abdominal connection, accents.

Experiment with these gestures: Pushing out or up (dynamics or breath), pointing up (to think pitches going up on descending lines), swaying/swinging side to side (to energize breath for higher notes), squatting (to engage abdominals for higher notes), or flicking (for staccatos or for diction clarity).

Experiment with these gestures for vowels: circles around the mouth; lifting soft palate with cupped hand and palm down by the cheek; vertical hand for a dropped jaw; pulling spaghetti noodles out of lips to help pull lips forward; put an orange slice in your mouth to lift upper lip; and/or use dime or quarter shape in your hand and place lips over hand.

NOTE: Vowels are unique to the color of the literature, so you may want to have students help you come up with a different gesture to color the vowel for the specific song or style. Speak vowels and then sing them. Also, have students write the vowels in their scores and practice vowel to vowel singing whenever you can while talking tongue placement and mouth space.

4. Facial Expression

- Come up with 1 or 2 words that describe the intention behind your music. It could be for the full piece or different sections of the piece. Have students share their feelings of what these words should be and come to a consensus with the same words.
- Have students find a personal connection to the words your class describes. Use what is happening with current events or in the lives of the students to draw inspiration.
- Use “substitution” for the words to help ignite some of the facial expressions organically. Experiment with saying these phrases: “I love you,” “I hate you,” “I miss you,” “Get out of bed,” “I long for you,” “No I won’t,” or “I am so excited.” Have students say it 3 to 4 different ways and see what facial expressions come out of them to capture the essence of the piece.
- Have students mouth the words with a focus on exaggerating their text and faces. Tell them to pretend the audience is deaf and can only tell what they are saying by reading their lips, face, and body language. Video record your choirs and play it back with them pointing out students that you feel are capturing the feeling of the piece.
- Practice making “surprise” and “angry” faces in warm-ups. Use the total body with perhaps jazz hands and fists to increase intensity level.

5. Effective Rehearsal Process: Many times, we have our own agendas as directors, but kids come in with their own baggage. As much as I would like to say, “kids can leave their baggage at the door,” sometimes that just isn’t the case, and this affects rehearsal process. Here are a few things to consider:

- Take a temperature check of your class during warmups and as they are walking in. (Testing, personal problems, end of quarter, and/or spirit week can all affect their focus level.)
- Create a culture where there are routines.
- Create expectations and accountability for students.
- Be clear in your communication.
- Have clear goals and communicate them often.
- Be specific when giving corrections. (Say: “Open up space in the “ah” vowel sopranos at measure 19,” not “Sopranos, fix the vowel at measure 19.”)
- Pitches are non-negotiable. Pitches are non-negotiable. Pitches are non-negotiable.
- Tone matters. Tone matters. Tone matters.
- Shape phrases and physicalize text where appropriate.
- Be careful not to skip steps before students are ready. For example, don’t go into mixed formation if students don’t have correct notes and rhythms first.
- Be real and transparent. Be honest and passionate and compassionate. Be firm and fair.

***From both your Treasurer and Children's and Community
Youth R&R Chair: Margie Woods & Leslie Dripps***

**THE JAW and Other Terrifying Tales from Female Vocal
Development: Practical Applications for the Choral Rehearsal
(PART 2 of a two-part series)**

BRING THE DRAMA!

The majority of choirs across the US consist of people with female vocal anatomy. However, because the development of the male voice tends to be obvious and even traumatic, it is easy to overlook the drama of female vocal development. The female voice experiences a *significant* shift during the adolescent years, with the first of these phases occurring in middle school. Whether middle school chorus is providing a first taste of singing—or singing has been practiced throughout childhood—the voice begins to change just as the singer is getting more interested and experienced, and this change can devastate even the most confident singer. Armed with a bit of knowledge and a great choir director, however, female singers can navigate vocal development with power and positivity.

In **PART 1** of this series in the September issue, we provided some practical details of these changes and what they mean for the individual singer. Here, in **PART 2**, we'll provide tools for the choral classroom which support both the development of healthy vocal technique in each singer and, ultimately, a stronger choral program.

HEALTHY NAVIGATION OF THE FEMALE VOICE CHANGE

School choir directors are usually the primary voice instructors for their students—even those taking private lessons—because of the time spent together. However, the focus of choir rehearsal can't solely be on solo vocal technique. So, what does one do? Here are some suggestions:

- Build your “Limited Vocal Pedagogy Narrative” and refer to it regularly. Information overload can be counterproductive for singers, but a little anatomy goes a long way.
- Select music that is pedagogically appropriate for your stage/phase of developing voices.
- Develop your own voice using healthy technique so that you can provide your students with an exemplary vocal model.

In addition to the general recommendations above, here are some specific tools which are helpful for establishing foundations of healthy vocal technique in the choral classroom:

- Post a **Vocal Process Flow Chart** in the classroom and refer to it often (everything you do fits it already!)
[alignment—>breath—>phonation—>resonance—>articulation]
- Use solfège syllables in warm-ups, sight singing, and repertoire learning! The power of solfège cannot be overstated, but we'll try. **Solfège: *improving vocal technique since 1010 AD!***
- “Limited Vocal Pedagogy Narrative” examples: encourage singers NOT to *squeeze the mouse* when accessing upper notes, but instead try to use a *river of air*. This encourages phonation based on breath support and also encourages healthy breathiness. If you encounter resistance with these techniques, remind singers that in the choral rehearsal we aren't just singing for now, but “*We are building the house of your adult voice, and these are the foundation.*”
- Use **lip trills, raspberries, buzzy Vs/Zs**, and other semi-occluded vocal tract exercises (SOVT) in warm-ups and repertoire learning.
- Use slides and glides in un-pitched warmups (essential to connecting the breath to phonation).

- Develop your **Vowel Shape Goals!** by insisting on energized, “tall” vowels in sight singing and warmups. Habits are built that support healthy vocal technique. Sample illustrative language: *Dump your diet cola* (hold imaginary soda can upwards, then dump it out—illustrates a lazy vowel becoming a tall vowel by raising the soft palate); *Floating Frankenstein* (sing on a loose, tall “ahh” holding arms in front like Frankenstein’s monster and raise droopy hands up to encourage free tone production in the upper range); *experiment with closed “oo” and closed “ee” in 1st Passagio* (F4 to C5).
- Mythbust!** Train all treble singers to sing both alto and soprano parts. There is no such thing as a treble voiced “alto”.

Sample of “Healthy Techniques” in the Choral Warm-up

Here are a few elements of healthy vocal technique taught in conjunction with ear training, sight singing, and rhythm skills roughly following the elements of the **Vocal Process Flow Chart**:

[alignment—>breath—>phonation—>resonance—>articulation]

Breath: “Goal is to incrementally establish breath control that will evolve into adulthood.” (Brunssen)

- Lie flat on the floor: lip trills on **d r m r d**, then sliding “whee/wah”
- Stand and use percussive noises for additional breath training and awareness

Alignment: *Teach sensations of proper alignment and balance along with steady pulse.*

- The “Rag Doll”/Spine “Roll-Up”
- Standing: “feet under the hips, flexible ankles, flexible knees, (hips bob to one side) hit the apple, (bob the other side) hit the orange, find the middle, bobble your head “yes,” bobble your head no”
- Pelvis/Arm positions: “The Waiter” (hands clasped in front), “The Duck” (hand clasped in back), “Just Right” (arms resting at sides)

COMBO Breath/Alignment/Pulse:

- Silent inhalation (combo exercises for Alignment/Breath/Pulse)
 Silent in for 4, suspend, sss out for 4. Silent in for 5, suspend, sss out for 5, etc. . . . :
 “in 2 3 4 suspend 2 3 4 out 2 3 4”
- Finger on your belly button”: ff ss sh ff ss sh | ff ha ha ff ha ha

Phonation/Body Pulse: *Train healthy phonation; explore vocal range, color, & registers; and practice movement.*

- Unpitched humming & rhythmic movement
- Unpitched exploratory noises—puppy whine, laugh, cry, grunt, trill, nasal—be creative!
- Pitched lip trills and other SOVT exercises with movement
- Staccato & onset exercises—ah, ah, ah, and hah, hah, hah and (h)ah, (h)ah, (h)ah
- Exercises from *Cantabile* (K. Rundus)

Resonance/Ear Training: *Train vowel shapes and build mental interval library.*

- Solfège & Vowels: Craft your Vowel Goals!
 oo—pointer finger circles the lips
 oh—pointer finger circles the face
 ah—vertical hand in front of mouth
 eh—thumb and index finger at corners of mouth
 ee—two index fingers at sides of mouth (like goal posts)
 Exercises from *Cantabile* (K. Rundus)
- Solfège echo: each vowel shape and work intervals and intonation
- Sight Singing: wherever it is placed in the rehearsal, insist on vowel shape, alignment, & showing steady pulse

Articulation/Ear Training/Rhythm: *Teach formation of consonants and build mental rhythm library.*

- Rah Pah Tee Kah (Gackle, p.58)
- Echo beat boxing
- Alphabet exercises
- Rhythm syllable pattern canon—use your rhythm syllable system or make up your own! (i.e., Ta ta ta ta | goy-ti goy-ti | taya taya | ti-ti-ti-ti ti-ti-ti-ti | dum-ka dum-ka dum-ka dum-ka | toy-oh-ro-loh)

Sitting in rehearsal

- Teach how to sit in the chair
- Teach how to hold music
- Built in “standing time,” by section, every rehearsal

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING:

Finding Ophelia’s Voice, Lynn Gackle

Working with Adolescent Voices, John Cooksey

Cantabile: A Manual About Beautiful Singing, Katharin Rundus

The Evolving Singing Voice: Changes Across the Lifespan, Karen Brunssen

Teaching Kids to Sing, Kenneth Phillips



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AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
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In Memoriam...



Walter Edward Krushinski

February 23, 1978-October 27, 2019

A note from *Virginia Harmony* editor, Matthew Russell:

Dear choral colleagues,

"We are more alike than we are unlike." And, "it's our stories that ultimately save us." Please consider writing an article related to a story about repertoire, resources, models of practice, or ideas that have worked for you and for your choral communities. ALL VA-ACDA members are invited to write and to share with our membership so that we can connect, encourage both community & diversity, and build a stronger *Virginia Harmony*, together. The February newsletter deadline is Friday, January 24, 2020 by COB. Please email articles to me, Matthew Russell, at (mnr10707@gmail.com) copying the rest of the *Virginia Harmony* Editorial Team: Brandy Baxter (brandy.buckles@gmail.com), Amy Moir (alsmoir@gmail.com), Bonny Tynch (bonny.tynch@gmail.com), and Pamela McDermott (pmcdermott@vaacda.org).

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU!!!

As you consider writing your article for the *Virginia Harmony* Newsletter, just a few pre-editing suggestions...

1. Please keep your articles to between 500 and 700 words. Remember less is always more; "simple and direct" and the people will read.
2. Please send the text of your article via a Word.doc. We can work with a PDF file, but a Word.doc makes things so much easier to edit and format.
3. Please make sure that any images you wish to include with your article are in JPG or PNG format.
4. Most articles for publication are solicited by the *Virginia Harmony* editorial board. **However, ALL Virginia ACDA members are most welcome to submit items of interest.** The President, President-Elect, Vice President, Communications Director, and Newsletter Editor will review all submissions prior to acceptance for publication.



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