

ANTIPHON



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of the AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

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From the President:



Aimee Stewart
AzACDA President
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Dear Arizona Choral Colleagues,,

As I was preparing for my choir's season (virtual) kickoff this week, I made the mistake of pulling up my presentation and calendar from last year. It was truly shocking to be thrown back to when things were so different not too long ago! I had to remind myself (again) that this is a different world, to be patient and kind to myself, and that this won't last forever. As you are starting your seasons and school years, I hope you are finding a rhythm to your new teaching, conducting and making music.

I want you to know there is support and inspiration available to you through AzACDA. While every situation is unique, remember that you are not alone in your challenges. We want our resources to be available to you, in spite of your personal circumstances. For our Student members, I am happy to announce that this year, ALL students (new and renewing) will pay just \$5 for an annual membership. For our Active Members, if you are experiencing hardship in the financial ability to renew your membership, please email me directly about available complimentary memberships: president@azacda.org.

We will get through this with creativity, adaptability, and patience with ourselves! I know we will be stronger for it; this won't last forever, and at the end of it, we will realize that we have actually gained a lot. People young and old will keep singing, because singing together is part of the human experience. They need us choral directors to help them see that in new ways. So keep that glimmer of hope growing brightly as we continue to support and inspire one another, starting with this fantastic issue of Antiphon! 🎵

Sincerely,
Aimee Stewart
President, Arizona Choral Directors Association

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FROM THE

EDITOR



Dr. Angelica Dunsavage
Artistic Director, Tucson
Masterworks Chorale
AzACDA Antiphon Editor
antiphon@azacda.org

Fellow AzACDA Members,

This is certainly not the way we anticipated our fall season to begin. Many of us are beginning virtual community, church, and school choirs. Some are doing this for the very first time, with the additional budget and time constraints that our current environment entails. We are comforted, however, by the words of an internet Dr. Seuss parody:



**I will teach you in a room.
I will teach you now on Zoom.
I will teach you in your house.
I will teach you with a mouse.
I will teach you here and there.
I will teach you because I care.
So just do your very best.
And do not worry about the rest.**

In all the difficult choices, Antiphon is here to help! This edition offers repertoire and resources for virtual teaching and learning, along with practices to help keep your students (and yourself) calm and focused. Erik Peregrine's article on mindful breathing can be incorporated along with virtual warmups. For information on how to relieve body tension over Zoom, see my article on Alexander Technique for the Virtual Classroom. In repertoire, Alyssa Cossey's review highlights several pieces which are voicing- and budget-friendly and features the works of women people of color.

AzACDA would like to feature more news and announcements of choral events occurring in our state in Antiphon. We invite you to share photos, videos and sound clips: you can send them to antiphon@azacda.org. Thank you for your leadership efforts to promote the choral art in Arizona! ☰

Sincerely,
Angelica Dunsavage
Editor, Antiphon

Three Mindfulness Practices to Support Singers' Wellbeing

Erik Peregrine

Director, University of
Arizona Collegium Musicum

Artistic Director, Ensemble
Companio

Written by Erik Peregrine

Many mindfulness techniques are naturally complementary to choral/vocal pedagogy, incorporating breath, body awareness, and the release of muscle tension to promote stress relief and an overall sense of wellbeing. The following three commonly-used mindfulness practices can easily be integrated into both virtual and live rehearsal settings and may benefit singers' mental health during this exceptionally challenging time.

1. Intentional Breath

Although virtual platforms do not yet support synchronous singing, breathing together is still a powerful way to foster connection and presence. One simple breath-based mindfulness practice is to focus on an intention while inhaling and on a second intention while exhaling. These intentions could be the same, complementary, or opposed to one another, centered on the individual or on a sense of community connection. For example:

- "Breathe in hope; breathe out stress."
- "Breathe in joy; exhale into confidence."
- "Breathe in love; breathe out love to everyone in the room."
- "Breathe in something that you need today; breathe out something that you have to offer."

Single breaths can also be used to guide singers' awareness to particular areas or sensations in their bodies. Some examples of this might include:

- "Breathe deeply into your feet; exhale and feel yourself sink into a balanced, grounded stance."
- "Breathe in deeply, noticing the temperature of the air as it enters your body; exhale slowly, focusing on the sound of the breath as it leaves your body."
- "Allow this breath to expand your lower back."
- "Breathe in to any tension you may be holding; breathe out and allow it to release."

2. Box Breathing

Box breathing is a rhythmic pattern of inhalation, holding, and exhalation. Each step is equally timed, creating a square pattern or "box". This technique calms the nervous system, reducing stress and anxiety while enhancing mental clarity. Box breathing has four steps:

- Inhale slowly for four counts
- Hold breath for four counts
- Exhale slowly for four counts
- Hold emptiness for four counts

Encourage singers to keep a gently open, expansive feeling while holding each inhale and exhale. If singers are new to breath-based meditation, they may feel dizzy after only a few rounds. Start with 2-4 repetitions and consider adding additional cycles as the technique becomes more familiar.

3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a sequential tensing and releasing of major muscle groups to promote body awareness, stress relief, and relaxation. This practice can be coordinated with breath if desired, inhaling as muscles are tensed and exhaling as muscles are released. Typically, progressive muscle relaxation begins at the feet and works gradually upward to the face. An example sequence could use the following steps:

- Bring your awareness to your **feet**. Breathe in and tense all of the muscles in your feet for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **legs**. Breathe in and tense all of the muscles in your legs for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **hips and lower back**. Breathe in and tense for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **abdominal muscles**. Breathe in and tense your abdominal muscles for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.

- Bring your awareness to your **upper back and shoulder blades**. Breathe in and tense all of the muscles in your upper back and shoulder blades for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **arms**. Breathe in and tense all of the muscles in your arms for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **hands**. Breathe in and tense your hands into fists for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **face** and all of the muscles in your **head and neck**. Breathe in and tense all of these muscles, scrunching your face as small as possible for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.
- Bring your awareness to your **whole body**. Breathe in and tense all of your muscles for four counts, release and breathe out for four counts.

Encourage singers to adapt each of these practices to their own abilities/comfort levels and to maintain a nonjudgmental awareness of what they are experiencing from moment to moment. Nonjudgmental awareness is a simply state of noticing without making a positive or negative judgement about that which is noticed; when we are nonjudgmentally aware, we are able to acknowledge physical tension without attaching meaning to what we are experiencing (i.e. “my shoulders are never going to relax,” “I can’t even meditate right because I’m too stressed,” “shouldn’t I be able to get my tension under control already?”). Nonjudgmental awareness allows us to be calmly present with our bodies and our thoughts—a presence which is at the heart of mindfulness.

Good luck to all this year, and happy breathing! ☰

Alexander Technique for the Virtual Classroom: Helpful Practices for Teachers and Students



Written by Dr. Angelica Dunsavage

Choral educators and singers have always taken an interest in alignment, body awareness, and mindfulness and their application to ensemble singing. The connection between mind and body is the foundation of the choral art, as what we visualize on a page of sheet music is physicalized in breath and movement. In the era of Zoom rehearsals, virtual choir, and untold hours of screen time on the part of ourselves and our students, choral musicians are facing endless challenges which affect this mind/body connection. Singers and teachers of every level are “choiring” in their bedrooms, living rooms, and kitchen tables, with the added eye, ear, and neck strain that comes with virtual learning. As we navigate how to maintain our ensemble’s engagement, we must also consider how the physical demands of this time can manifest in habits and pain in the short and long term. We must find balance between our minds and our bodies. This is where Alexander Technique can help.

Dr. Angelica Dunsavage
Artistic Director, Tucson
Masterworks Chorale
AzACDA Antiphon Editor

Alexander Technique for Virtual Teaching/Learning

In *Moving Meditation*, author and teacher Ellen Melamed writes this of the Alexander Technique (referred to as AT for the remainder of the article):

“When we learn the AT, we: change habits of a lifetime that may have helped us survive in our past, but no longer serve us; become happier and more easeful, less fatigued and less anxious, and, as a result, more productive; experience greater satisfaction in our relationship to ourselves and to others; and learn that certain aspects of life are about conscious choice.”

Many of us, whether teachers, singers, or students, may feel our lives are startlingly devoid of conscious choice. AT practice allows us to reflect on how the emotions of uncertainty and stress, along with changes to environment and routine, manifest in physical tension and pain. While we know this is a temporary time in our lives, the habits teachers and students form now can negatively affect our music-making in person as well as virtually. Adding a series of mindful body awareness to your virtual rehearsals, studio lessons, or personal “down time” can add a greater sense of ease and ownership to your daily routine.

10 to 15-Minute Guided AT Practice for Zoom Rehearsals

To set the environment for an intentional practice:

Instruct the students/singers to sit in a position where they can be upright, with their feet flat on the floor and their knees in a 90-degree angle

- If students/singers are in a bedroom without a chair, sitting upright with legs crossed is a modification.
- Play calming music: nature sounds or yoga playlist on Youtube.
 - While this is not a normal part of AT practice, the presence of ambient sound can help induce a sense of calm and personal focus, and distinguish the practice from a lecture.
- Allow students/singers to close their eyes and/or turn their cameras off.
 - This is a personal pedagogical choice, but students may be distracted by seeing everyone on the screen, and may exhibit less self-consciousness and more awareness by turning inward.

Guided Sequence: pause between each prompt and adjust as needed to fit the needs of your students. This sequence can be used on its own or included within a virtual warmup routine.

- "Let's begin by taking three slow, steady breaths. As you breathe, become aware of your body. Notice any areas of tightness or fatigue, without worry or the need to adjust them."
- "Become aware of your hip/pelvic bones... is your weight distributed evenly on your right and left side? Are both sit bones connected to your chair? If you can't feel them, perhaps sit on your hands and notice where those bones are located."
- "Become aware of your spine... as your legs and hips are grounded down, take a breath in, and slowly visualize your spine extending and aligning up from your pelvis through your neck, into your skull and out the crown of your head. Imagine yourself lengthening and widening in the front and the back."
- "Go back to the bottom of the spine and work your way up again, pausing at the shoulders... extend out through the shoulders as your shoulder blades drop down and away from your ears. Lift the shoulders up toward the ears once again... squeeze... and release back down. Allow your shoulders to melt down your back."
- "Return to your breathing... notice any additional sources of tension that have arisen while you were releasing your shoulders... release any tension between your eyes... release your jaw, allowing the tongue to lower behind your bottom teeth."
- "As you begin your next breath, take a final visualization from the bottom of your spine to the top, through your skull and out the crown of your head... does anything feel differently than it did at the beginning of the practice? Are there other spots of your body that you can consciously lengthen, widen, or release?"
- "Allow yourself a few final breaths before opening your eyes and turning your awareness outward. Breathe into your back, feeling your ribcage expand and contract... when you are comfortable, open your eyes and turn your camera on if it has been off."

After doing this exercise for the first time, have a conversation with your singers, allowing them to share their experience and awareness. This may be an opportunity for a written reflection or exit ticket. Reminders throughout rehearsal to "lengthen," "widen," or "release" can be reminders throughout rehearsal, avoiding tension in their practice as well as your own. As we navigate the new environment of digital learning, let us use our training to be kind to our ourselves: mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Personal Journey and Disclaimer

My personal journey with AT began with the Westminster Choir College Summer Conducting Institute and continues with individualized weekly study for the past three years. While it is my intention to become certified in AT instruction at some point, I do not claim to be a certified AT instructor. All suggestions in this article are based on my experience as a student of AT, and the application of that experience on my teaching. For more in-depth information on the application of Alexander Technique for artists and performers, I recommend *Moving Meditation: The Alexander Technique for Performing Arts Students... and the Rest of Us!* by Arizona-based AT instructor Ellen Melamed. For those more interested in private study of AT with Ellen, you may contact her at ellensalexandertechnique@gmail.com.

Resources

Ellen Melamed, *Moving Meditation: the Alexander Technique for Performing Arts Students... and the Rest of Us!* (San Diego: Cognella, 2020) 

The Sum of Our Choral Parts: Building a Stronger Collaboration with Accompanists



Herbert Washington
Phoenix Boys Choir
AzCDA Boyschoir R & R
Chair

Written by Herbert Washington

The choral music making process, at its very essence, is truly a collaborative exploration between conductor, chorister, and instrumentalists; namely accompanists. To ensure a higher percentage of success, a conductor's role is to study the score, rally the troops with order and inspiration, and bring to life a beautiful musical interpretation, which represents a fragment of a composer's soul aspiring to touch all who experience the piece. Our choristers often lean on the collaborative effort and relationship between conductor and accompanist, but how is synergy created between the two? During much of my choral conducting career I was not fortunate to lead in autonomous or high budget positions, which included a full-time or part-time accompanist for rehearsals and concerts. Nor did I have the skill or confidence to lead an ensemble engagingly from behind the piano. The process of securing a skilled accompanist is somewhat cumbersome and slightly daunting as the decision impacts the quality of a conductor's work and prepared level of the ensemble. Even when I secured an accompanist for just one rehearsal prior to a performance, it was difficult for me to trust my new collaborative partner. I did not understand how to provide clear guidance in order to translate my vision for a profound concert experience for the audience and choristers alike.

This article features my conversation with two accomplished collaborative accompanists at the Phoenix Boys Choir. They possess a combined 50+ years working as music educators, accompanists, and competitive solo pianists. Ms. Mary Price, Principal Accompanist, and Mr. Miloy Canete, Associate Accompanist shared their perspectives on how music educators utilizing accompanists can create a positive, symbiotic environment, and concurrently escape pitfalls during collaboration.

Question: How can conductors improve the collaborative process with accompanists?

Mary Price: "Preparation is vital to the success of each rehearsal and ultimately the performance. In an ideal world, an accompanist would love to have their music and markings 1-2 months ahead for practice, but we all know that circumstances and certain performances are unexpected. If the accompanist is highly trained with years of experience, they are most likely comfortable to sight-read the piece on call, which is common in many musical situations, especially in a school setting. Secondly taking the time to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses will help build an instantaneous rapport and efficiency during rehearsals."

Miloy Canete: "Number one for me is the clarity of commands. There are many moving parts and issues that can happen before, during, and after a rehearsal or concert. I have been in new environments and situations where the conductor enters a space without instructions and begins rehearsing. In my experience this leads to frantic conducting commands during the middle of a piece, which can cause major tension that is felt in real time by the choristers. I believe a minimum discussion of 10-15 minutes with your accompanist before each rehearsal begins will exponentially increase chances for a successful rehearsal. Also, as an accompanist it is engaging for me to understand the reasoning behind repetition versus solely hearing 'let's sing it again!' When I understand the goals set forth, I can perform at a higher level and break the cycle of monotony on the bench. During a performance the accompanist should expect to see consistency in expression, articulation, and gesture demonstrated in rehearsals."

Mary: "If the piece is brand new it is nice to have a conversation about it before we begin. The goal is to be successful and not embarrassed. There are conductors who will provide music on the spot, ask you to sight-read, and proceed to reprimand your work and mistakes in front of choristers. Many years of experience at the piano has taught us to be mind-readers, but we can't guarantee our best selves without strong leadership and positive relationships."

Herbert Washington: "This is understandable because as conductors on many occasions, we fall victim to the 'race against the down-beat'. Before a rehearsal, during the 1-2 hours of preparation, many

permutations of distractions begin to take shape—printer errors, extra music needed, setup space, personal issues, students and families with questions. We know all too well that these familiar issues are sometimes unavoidable, but can be managed better. To combat a few of these issues and create an efficient rehearsal environment I try to meet with my accompanist 20-30 minutes before and very briefly after every rehearsal to discuss the musical and rehearsal expectations, changes, notes, schedule, roles needed, and issues post practice. Usually we will play through several sections that I found challenging in voice or gesture. As many of us do, I also provide a measure specific objective agenda on the board for choristers and accompanists to follow, which assists in alleviating unnecessary questions such as “What are we doing next?” In regard to maintaining musical consistency from rehearsal to performance, conductors achieve this through major preparation of the score, diving into the historical context, clear communication, and many hours of practicing gestures that will maximize the desired tonal tapestry.”

Question: What are some successful ways conductors have provided clear commands for collaborative pianists during rehearsals?

Herbert: “My focus in rehearsal is to empower excellence, control the pacing of musical or historical information, engage the participants, and educate my choristers on my process as a conductor. In turn, the commands I provide for choristers are also indirectly clear for my accompanist. For example, announcing a piece and starting point for everyone has a specific hierarchical system in this order (Title, Page, System, Measure, Beat/Count, Voice Part(s), Pitch order). As we dive into the piece more through repetition, my system decreases, but order of instructions remains the same. Upon count in I usually provide two beats to establish tempo, dynamics, tone, and character.”

Mary: “Every conductor is different in style, gesture, pace, personality, and skill level. Therefore, we have learned to follow whatever is provided, and in some cases, lead what is not. I personally prefer a very clear upbeat gesture and breath in tempo leading to the downbeat to begin a piece, especially if it is a piece we have rehearsed many times. Providing clear entrances on where to begin is very helpful. Conductors sometimes will ask an accompanist to look for and start on a specific word and in some cases a lone syllable, which can be impossible to find since we are focused on the accompaniment.”

Miloy: “I enjoy when conductors wait until the music stops before providing feedback or changes instead of yelling over the music. Ultimately, I have learned that following a conductor is an art form in itself. It is important to follow the style that is comfortable for the conductor as long as you are together. For accompanists early in their career, I would suggest asking questions, recognizing the nuances and attitude of the conductor, and understanding the culture they create. Eventually, if consistent, the environment will become predictable and allow for greater anticipation. Experienced accompanists should be more than ready to support and go with the flow of the rehearsal.”

Question: How far in advance should repertoire be provided for an accompanist?

Miloy: “It depends on the difficulty of music and the skill level of sight-reading for the pianist. As you know some pieces are simple to sight-read, but there are many pieces that take work. The key of the piece will speak volumes to prep time. More accidentals and especially chromatic passages would be helpful to mentally prepare in the fingers such as the *Vierne Messe Solennelle*. When practicing new pieces, I try to play through it 3-4 times before a rehearsal to minimize mistakes as we know a barrage of instructions will follow during a rehearsal. The goal is to not blindly search for answers!”

Mary: “Specific key signatures with many sharps or flats represented are definitely red flags to prepare for, but more importantly rhythm and meter changes can prove to be a major detriment to the success of the rehearsal. Multicultural, Broadway, and pop rhythms can always use an early glance. Conductors would benefit from anticipating the skill level of the accompanist and ranking the level of difficulty of each piece. Receiving music at the last minute should not bother an experienced accompanist as long as conductors are also mindful of the lack of preparation due to circumstance. When I receive a new piece of music, I spend many hours to familiarize myself with the piece, study the open score parts, and dissect or create markings.”

Herbert: “Each year at the Phoenix Boys Choir, we can have upwards of 30+ concerts. Often these performances feature new pieces that must be learned in a short window of time. As soon as I know the repertoire, I attempt to provide the music and markings ahead of time for efficiency. Ultimately it is extremely important to view music as far in advance as possible for a stronger collaborative connection and display of musicianship with your team of choristers. Understanding the personnel on the instrument is important whether it be a parent volunteer, high school student, piano major, or professional pianist. They all require a different level of attention, but the planning process for success remains consistent. Therefore, the work you complete ahead of time is imperative for the success of a piece.”

Here is a suggested chart that may guide you in repertoire distribution for your highly skilled collaborative instrumentalists based on their grade level:

- Elementary & Junior High Students (3-6 months)
- High School Students (2-4 months)
- Collegiate Students (1 month)
- Professional (2-3 weeks)

Question: Have you ever felt under or over utilized by conductors?

Miloy: "I think the question becomes does the conductor define my job as a pianist versus the collaborative pianist? A pianist has wide ranging gifts to share beyond the bench as many are conductors, music educators, and leaders in different capacities. This question really depends on the status of your relationship with the conductor and the understanding of your role(s) and utilization of your gifts upon request. In my opinion, the conductor is the authority at that time in that environment. Pianists should not expect to provide their feedback or extra set of skills during rehearsal unless asked or the relationship was clearly defined as equal partners. I believe it is important to be open minded to what is asked or expected because that is how you develop long-term relationships."

Mary: "Clear expectations of an accompanist's role need to be defined from the beginning. In order for this to happen the conductor has to establish an open relationship and environment that allows me to share my gifts and support the program to the fullest degree. Each conductor has their own personality and idea of assistance. Some want your opinion, leadership via sectionals, warm-ups, to choreography. I see the accompanist as a major support for the conductor to do their job and whatever is needed to be done or accomplished, I am more than willing to dive in so that the conductor can stay focused on the bigger picture of providing a rewarding choral education experience."

Herbert: "Although I am 'moderately type-A', I believe that we are the sum of our parts and everyone in the choir family has an important role for the success of the program. Therefore, accompanists that have worked with me play many roles during a rehearsal, performance, or bonding activity. Conductors can be disciplinarians, authoritarians, musical leaders, counselors, educators, and much more to choristers. However, at some point, it is more than acceptable to relinquish control and offset some of the work in rehearsals to your collaborative accompanists based on their artistic or administrative skill set. Accompanists are well versed in the arts and can lead sectionals, sight-reading class, choreography, take attendance, or perform light administrative work. I have worked with accompanists who were accomplished choreographers, graphic designers, and with strong technological skill sets. I've even struggled with accompanists who did not exhibit great accompanying skills, which afforded me the opportunity to learn how to educate and foster a greater collaborative environment. Some love to stay behind the piano and just play, but there are those that want to feel as an outspoken participant to the music making process. We should welcome another voice, as they may see what we have missed due to rehearsal immersion."

Question: What should the average pay be for a collaborative accompanist?

Miloy: "Ten years ago the pay was \$25 an hour and double the pay for a performance, but now the pay has increased by \$5-10. Of course it also depends on your educational degree level completed, expectations, preparation time, and tasks required. For substitute situations I believe that 2-4 absences a year should be allowed and paid for by the organization especially if you work in a consistent work environment. In many cases, I am able to ask Mary to sub for me, which could be an in-kind service or I pay her my hourly wage for the rehearsal or performance."

Question: What are positive ways to correct your collaborative accompanist during a rehearsal?

Mary: "I am personally not offended by on the spot fixes when done respectfully. If I miss a rhythm or pitch issue more than once I would rather hear it at time of infraction to minimize future mistakes. Conductors utilizing their utmost professionalism is key, especially in front of choristers!"

Miloy: "In my opinion, minor missed notes by the pianist should not warrant an opportunity to express the obvious during a rehearsal especially if music was recently received. However, use the time during the rehearsal to provide your interpretation of musical expression, dynamics, conducting cues, tempo changes, and gestures with the accompanist."

Herbert: "How we work together as a unit is important and yes there are mistakes being made by all parties involved during a rehearsal. The only time I focus on correcting pitch issues with an accompanist is if the particular note missing or incorrect is crucial to the chord, melodic line, or the lack of leadership at the piano becomes a detriment to the efficiency and tonal quality of the choristers. Instead of shaming the accompanist, I will ask he/she to perform a particular passage solo and the choristers to listen, write in solfege, or be ready to describe the character of what they hear, or process used to fix the problem. Choristers understand when mistakes are being made. Therefore, let's educate them on how to encourage and support one another."

Question: Finally, how do you see your role as a collaborative accompanist?

Mary: "I am a strong support system from the piano, who constantly watches, and am ready to anticipate a conductor's directions. Great accompanists will study the director, mannerisms, and offer services when needed. Personally, I do not feel as if the collaborative pianist and conductor are equal partners as our role is to lean on your leadership. However, I do appreciate being engaged and involved in the rehearsal, which also educates me on how to be a stronger musical leader. Choir is about working together and learning from each other!"

Miloy: "A conductor needs to establish a great relationship outside and inside rehearsals to create a connection where singers would be the focus of the rehearsal. This is an opportunity to channel that energy towards giving the choir all the attention they need to succeed and not so much on ourselves as leaders. Sometimes, the challenges and difficult experiences can cause a

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Joint Concert with
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Latino music and Popular Hispanic tunes
with 70 singers and orchestra
Saturday, March 6, 2021 • 7 p.m.
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Sunday, May 2, 2021 • 3:00 p.m.

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Cadet Choir joint performance Director, Herbert Washington

Donor reception following



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www.CESingers.com or call 480-591-7000

professional disconnect between pianist and conductor, which eats away at the choir's excellence. Again, my focus is on following the conductor's direction and trusting in their leadership."

Herbert: "Musicians go through a life of building relationships and each one of them are symbiotic. Purposely, I have not focused on or discussed much regarding our choristers because just like a marriage, the parents (musical leaders) must be a well-connected unit for their kids (choristers), in order for the family (choir) to thrive. I agree that collaborative does not mean equal leaders as it is the role of the conductor to intellectually and positively connect our different worlds to achieve choral excellence. However, I whole-heartedly appreciate accompanists who give their all to the process and in many cases exponentially increase a choral program due to the unique gifts and knowledge they share. I am truly grateful for the accompanists and directors on our Phoenix Boys Choir artistic team. Together, conductors and accompanists alike will continue to reach new heights in order to provide a fruitful choral music education experience." ≡



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Choral Reviews

Choral Reviews for Vocal Jazz



Written by Lindsay Decoste
Red Mountain HS, Mesa, Arizona
AzACDA Vocal Jazz R & R Chair

“Garby the Great”

Rosana Eckert, arr. Jeremy Fox

<http://www.jeremyfox.net/score-store/new-garby-the-great>
SATB w/rhythm section

Bluesy, laid back and fun, Garby the Great is an arrangement of one of Rosana Eckert’s solo songs off her newest album. Fairly straightforward chord changes for working on improvisation and great tempo for working on laying back without rushing. Level III or IV with some tricky close voicings and an intricate soli section.

“Do You Wanna Do Nothing With Me”

Clyde Lawrence, arr. Kerry Marsh

<https://kerrymarshvocaljazz.myshopify.com/products/do-you-wanna-do-nothing-with-me-ssatb-l3-5>
SSATB w/rhythm section

Though it was originally performed by Lawrence in 2016, this party of a chart could be called the anthem of 2020. Funky and fun with a killer tenor solo and some challenging splits in both the treble and bass parts, this is a great pick for an intermediate to advanced group. Kerry Marsh also provides his own version of practice tracks, which include the ability to mix different parts in or out as needed for your own group. Great for learning at home!

“In the Early Morning Stillness”

Sarah Tolar, arr. Rosana Eckert

Sound Music Publications
SMP12-047 (Level II version); SMP12-041 (Level III version)
SSAA with piano

A beautiful feature for your women’s jazz (or classical wanting to get into jazz) group, this tune is available in two difficulty levels for groups of varying abilities. It emulates a folk song with jazz inspired harmonies, with some more complicated inner rhythms in the Level III version. Also features a great solo at the beginning that can be split if needed between multiple singers. Overall just a gorgeous piece. 🎵

Choral Reviews for All Choirs: Repertoire for Virtual/Hybrid Instruction



Written by Dr. Alyssa Cossey
University of Arizona
AzACDA Collegiate R & R Coordinator

As we face what could easily be considered the most challenging year of teaching any of us have ever encountered, repertoire seems simultaneously irrelevant and more important than ever. Not only must we try to select repertoire that will challenge and engage our students, but we must do so in new rehearsal platforms, either masked and twelve feet apart or online over Zoom or Google Meet. Additionally, we must acknowledge and reckon with the inequity and injustice that abounds in our country and provide our students with a safe space to process the world around them.

The list below is an attempt to curate relevant, meaningful, accessible, and flexible repertoire that can be learned and performed in a variety of settings. These pieces don’t require “balanced” ensembles and can easily be learned and taught online. Many of the pieces have suggested performance or discussion topics included and highlight the voices of marginalized populations, including BIPOC, Womxn, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Though I know nothing about this year will be easy for any of us, I hope that each of you finds something in this list you can use in your classrooms.

“Alchemy”

Music by Andrea Ramsey

Poetry by Sara Teasdale

Flexible Voicing–Unaccompanied (up to 4 parts)

Music Spoke: <https://musicspoke.com/downloads/alchemy/>
Virtual Choir Demonstration: <https://www.facebook.com/interlochenchoirs/videos/911155679327992/>

Andrea Ramsey’s new piece set to Sara Teasdale’s, *“Alchemy,”* is a traditional canon that can be learned and performed with a variety of ensembles and voicings. The melody of a ninth would be comfortable for most treble voices and more developed tenor/bass singers. Originally commissioned by John Bragle (Director of Choirs at Interlochen) shortly after COVID-19 began impacting musical communities, the piece which Andrea describes in the video (link above) is *“a beautiful take on turning grief and trial into something of beauty.”*

“Come In”

Abbie Betinis

Flexible Voicing—Unaccompanied (up to 4 parts)

Self-published: http://abbiebetinis.com/works/come_in_come_in.html

Performance Demonstration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13bxkHxxv8M>

“Though our ‘Winter’ concerts may look a little different this year, one way to keep the tradition alive could be to program and record a piece from the ‘Burt Family Carol Series.’ The most famous American Christmas carol family is indisputably the Burt family. The carols of Bates and Alfred Burt and the Christmas carol cards they sent are now part of our hymnody and folklore. Composer Abbie Burt Betinis is the great granddaughter of Bates and grand-niece of Alfred and is continuing the tradition with freshness and craftsmanship. A noted and often commissioned composer in her own right, she brings skill and talent to this unique genre in a way no one else could. The verse and chorus form reminds us of an English carol, but the text, taken most often from other Burt family members, are very American.

– Fred Bock Publications

“Come In,” premiered in 2011 is a four-part “looping” canon, that provides extra musical interest for singers. While the piece can be performed as a traditional canon, Betinis also provides optional “extension” measures that allow individual parts to “loop” and eventually end the piece in unison. Teachers can easily introduce and teach this piece in unison (even over Zoom) and then turn it over to the students for a group project, allowing each small group to create their own “arrangement” of the piece, record them, and share them with the class.

“I Hope You’re Doing Well & A Way to Be With You”

Dale Trumbore

Flexible Voicing

Available for download: <https://www.daletrumbore.com/doingwell>

Zoom Performance Demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=28&v=pa-daBXsrxw&feature=emb_logo

Composer Dale Trumbore wrote these two short works specifically for rehearsal and performance on Zoom. The aleatoric pieces capitalize on the latency issues in the online platform and could provide some levity during a stressful virtual rehearsal, as well as an opportunity to introduce both chant and chant notation, and build rhythmic improvisational skills in your singers.

“I Will Be the Change”

Troy Robertson

Flexible Voicing—Unaccompanied (include optional solo)

ChorAmor: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Hhfq5QFaT6fZ9v3ZUVkv4-J-UHffIN7>

Virtual Choir Demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs3tQCjGRcE&feature=emb_logo

Troy Robertson, founder of ChorAmor, has created a:

“coalition of conductors, teachers, and singers who sing for love of choral music, for the community and beauty choral music brings to our lives. ChorAmor was founded in the opening days of the 2020 COVID 19 epidemic in order to continue rehearsing and performing together, provide resources and training for choral conductors, and provide advocacy for choral music. This coalition opens the door to singing in the midst of difficult circumstances and provides resources for conductors, teachers, and students who need help finding their way in this new and challenging environment.”

– from ChorAmor.com

In addition to collecting, curating, and sharing resources, Troy also composed and created rehearsal guide tracks for a free piece that can easily be learned and put together as a virtual choir. Troy paraphrased the texts of Mahatma Gandhi and R. Gatsnahos in this creative, uplifting, and flexible setting which includes simple choral parts and extended solos. These short excerpts can be recorded by individual singers and then looped and layered together to transform the unison lines into a multi-part, virtual choir. Use the link above to download the tracks and the sheet music for free, and make sure to check out www.choramor.com for more free resources.

“Hope”

Ysaye M. Barnwell

Musical Source YMB121

SAATTB Unaccompanied

If you have the budget to purchase new music this fall, I encourage you to consider this lesser known work by Ysaye M. Barnwell. Though the work has a lot of divisi, it is still very accessible for developing mixed choirs and may provide a unique opportunity to combine multiple choirs (mixed and treble) to cover all of the parts. Though the divisi may seem intimidating at first, each voice part is simple, repetitive, and covers a limited range. The text (included below) is particularly topical and could provide your students an opportunity to discuss issues of equity inside and outside of the classroom. It might also spark conversations about **“Hope”** and what actionable steps we can take to help create a safer, more equitable, and better world. *“If we want hope to survive in this world today, then everyday we’ve got to pray on, walk on, work on, move on, march on, teach on, and sing on.”*

“Justice Choir Songbook”

Many of us are familiar with Justice Choir, and the movement and events surrounding it. But, for those who are less familiar or for those who haven’t revisited the music in awhile, this invaluable resource for choral educators deserves another look. Not only does the songbook represent a diverse body of composers, tackling timely and relevant topics, the pieces are also flexible, accessible, and free to share with students and reproduce even in the virtual choir format. I have selected a handful of pieces that I recommend teaching and sharing with students during this time of hybrid/online instruction, but I

encourage you to download the songbook and check out all 43 selections as well as the many resources provided by the Justice Choir Songbook organizers. The songbook is available for free download at: <https://www.justicechoir.org/songbook/>

*Remember: These terms are for non-commercial use only. For any commercial use (e.g. selling audio or video recordings), you must request permission from the songwriter. You can find their preferred contact information at the bottom of each song.

#14 "Liberty And Justice For All"

Brandon Williams

Unison Call & Response

Sing-a-long Demonstration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCr739Ja36E>

Brandon Williams originally wrote this piece almost four years ago, and, in a recent conversation, we discussed our concerns that so many of the issues that we were trying to address then (or even before) are still prevalent—if not worse—today. Brandon included this note when the piece was originally released: *"The recent demonstrations and marches taking place throughout the country led me to the phrase 'liberty and justice for all.' Many steadfastly recite this line in the Pledge of Allegiance, but those words ring hollow for many Americans who find their civil liberties under attack, and the scales of justice tipped in favor of the wealthy and powerful. Protests are a small portion of what we must do in order to work toward a nation that truly provides liberty and justice FOR ALL."*

Brandon's intention with this piece perhaps is even more relevant today than when he originally wrote it. Consider using it to discuss the history of voting rights in our country, the work and life of Rep. John Lewis, or to encourage voter registration among your collegiate/community/professional-level ensembles. This call and response work lends itself to Zoom or other distance learning platforms. You might invite individuals to unmute for the response (or, for another moment of levity, unmute all).

#18 "Love is Love"

Abbie Betinis

Flexible Voicing (2-4 parts)

May be accompanied by Pachelbel's Canon in D

Virtual Choir Demonstration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Aj95ISurxE>

Sing-a-long Demonstration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EozLcYHGwRA>

Perhaps the most well-known and oft performed piece from the Justice Choir Songbook, *"Love is Love is Love is Love"* not only speaks to the power and universality of love, but it also provides an opportunity for an in-depth look at current events and how music can influence and be influenced by them. The piece was originally written in response to the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, on June 12, 2016. The shooting, at the time, was the largest mass shooting by an

individual in U.S. history. Later that evening, Lin Manuel Miranda accepted the Tony Award for Best Score, and the text from his speech became the inspiration for this work. (To view the speech click on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3frkqULr008>) Abbie also samples the Beatles', *"All You Need is Love,"* providing us with an opportunity to not only learn and perform this meaningful piece, but also a rare opportunity to discuss the intersection of music and current events.

#19 "¡No nos moverán! (We Shall Not Be Moved)"

African-American Spiritual

Transc. Justice Choir, 2017

Words from Agustín Lira, Luis Valdez, and traditional Spanish

Unison Call & Response

Sing-a-long Demonstration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbvqC-1XZJ0>

"Originally from the African-American spiritual tradition, it was in the 1930s that 'We Shall Not Be Moved' and its Spanish version '¡No nos moverán!' both became rallying cries for solidarity in U.S. labor and civil rights movements, often deployed by singers arm-in-arm in the face of repression. '¡No nos moverán!' would go on to become an important part of the Chicano movement of the 1960s as well as of the social justice and revolutionary movements across Spain and Latin America. It is sung all throughout the Spanish-speaking world in this version; it's the one I grew up with."

– Ahmed Anzaldúa, Justice Choir Songbook co-editor

This piece not only provides singers with an opportunity to perform in Spanish but to engage in historically and culturally relevant conversations surrounding the Latinx community and students' lived experiences. In addition to inviting students to help with language and pronunciation, this might be an opportunity to discuss issues of equity, especially living in a border state. You may consider juxtaposing this piece with a discussion and performance of Woody Guthrie's *"This Land is Your Land,"* examining all of the lines of text and engaging students in a conversation about whether or not they feel that *"this land was made for you and me."*

#24 "Resilience"

Abbie Betinis

Flexible Voicing (3 parts)

Virtual Choir Demonstration:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLug1maEKaeSlrE2zltWVcjbZHcOEjJjNv&v=mimM4uxjE-Y&feature=emb_logo

Sing-a-long Demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iF1e6R2_sis

Abbie Betinis wrote in 2017: *"Resilience is a mindset born in the hardest days, when you're scared or sad or tired, when progress toward your goal is slow, and the barriers seem impenetrable... and yet you keep going, because somewhere deep down you know that what you're fighting for will be so much better. As a three-time cancer survivor, I continue to learn about resilience."*

Abbie personifies optimism in the face of adversity, and this piece could be the choral anthem for 2020. The setting has a great deal of flexibility (something we all are demonstrating on a day-to-day basis) and can be performed as a call and response (one part at a time), can be sung as a canon, or all three parts can be sung simultaneously as they appear in the score. For different ideas on how to teach and perform this piece, make sure to check out the recording examples provided above.

A note about Virtual Choirs and Synchronization Licenses: I have reached out to the composers regarding their works and have been advised that they are flexible in regard to synchronization licensing. For more information about how to obtain a synchronization license for Virtual Choir performances please contact the composers or publishers directly. (No Synchronization License is necessary for the Justice Choir Songbook. However, please refer to the website for information on how to share, perform, and properly credit the individual composers.)

For additional "free" and accessible pieces see the CPDL rounds found at: <http://www1.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Category:Canons> ☰

Choral Reviews for SATB Divisi



Written by Dr. Adam Stitch
Scottsdale Community College
AzACDA Repertoire Specific R & R Chair

"Common Threads"

Bobby McFerrin, arr. Kerry Marsh
KerryMarsh.com
SSATB

This is an intermediate difficulty piece, perfect for introducing choirs to a jazz driven sound. Utilizes mostly long note chords in the S2ATB parts, with S1 and a soloist handling the melody. This piece is wordless utilizing "nuh, nuh" and "yeah" in some sections. The hypnotic chords and groove are really enhanced by using the vibraphone parts, and/or the warm synth patch. It would make a nice change of timbre for a performance. Lots of options for part learning are also available through kerrymarsh.com, which can make teaching the tough harmonies easier.

"It Is Not Always May"

Dennis Tobenski
Musicspoke.com
SATB (limited divisi)

This work uses the magnificent poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow by the same title. It is an admonishment to enjoy the day and not take things for granted for time marches steadily on. The choral parts are mostly homophonic with beautiful uses of chromaticism to increase harmonic tension. The real glue that makes this piece stand out is the ever-flowing and expansive piano part. The performance notes even state that it can be played four-hands if needed. A good choice for a somber moment, or to highlight your pianist(s).

"Slumber On"

Christopher Harris
Musicspoke.com
SATB divisi with piano

"Slumber On", set to the words of Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Music, When Soft Voices Die". Utilizing a flowing piano and lush harmonic structures, without being needlessly difficult. The parts are at times calm and at times dramatic. A nice setting of this famous text that works well for more advanced choirs. Several effective modulations move the text forward. The work has a nice arc and symmetry with subtle beginning and ending, and more elaborate and dramatic rise to the climactic moments. ☰



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CHORAL NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

AzACDA Choral Director of the Year Award



Antiphon and the AzACDA Board congratulate Dr. Ryan Holder on receiving the Choral Director of the Year Award given annually by the Arizona chapter of American Choral Directors Association. Dr. Holder received multiple nominations for the award honoring an individual who has contributed in an extraordinary way to the advancement of choral music in our state. Nominators included students, fellow teachers and professional colleagues.

Ryan Holder is the Associate Director of Choral Studies at Northern Arizona University, where he directs the Women's Chorale, Northern Voices and High Altitude vocal jazz ensembles, teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting and choral methods, supervises choral student teachers, and serves as the adviser for the NAU student chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. Dr. Holder has given lectures and presentations at local, state, and regional American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and the National Music Educators Association conventions. He has conducted honor choirs in Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Montana, and Hawaii. His ensembles have been invited to perform throughout the Southwest, including performances at state and regional ACDA conferences. Dr. Holder serves as the Arizona State ACDA Past President. ☰

One Voice Arizona Project: Virtual Choir Resources



AzACDA's One Voice Arizona project has released its two repertoire pieces for the 2020/2021 year: "*Haida*" and "*America the Beautiful*". In addition to score resources, One Voice Arizona founder, Dr. Elizabeth Schauer, and students from University of Arizona have made free recording resources for use in virtual ensembles. One Voice Arizona is collecting submissions for "*America the Beautiful*" for combination in a mass virtual choir. To learn more about the project and gain resources for your singers, visit:

<https://www.azacda.org/one-voice-arizona/>. ☰

Southern Arizona Virtual Choir

Tucson Girls Chorus is hosting the Southern AZ Virtual Choir Festival this Fall! Boys and girls in grades 2-12 (and teachers!) throughout Tucson and surrounding areas are invited to join us in singing *"Begin"*, a piece by Matt Carlson written specifically for the unique time we find ourselves in. The final video will be sent to all participating schools to use in any first-semester concerts. Please contact TGC if you would like to participate! jedelbrock@tucsongirlschorus.org ☰

AzACDA's Diamondbacks Night

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Diamondbacks Choir Nights have been cancelled for the fall 2020 season. ☰

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Inspire.**

 **Az
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American Choral Directors Association

**summer
conference
2020**

AzACDA is grateful for the presenters, board members, and attendees of the 2020 summer conference, held virtually. This year's theme was **Adapt. Innovate. Inspire.** with 25 different sessions, including two each from special guests [Rollo Dilworth](#), [Amanda Quist](#), and [Ingo Titze](#), and many other presenters. Topics included DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), non-idiomatic Black music (with more special guests), community engagement, voice science, resonance, technology for remote teaching, virtual performances (not the same thing as virtual choirs), amplifying women's contributions, and a session on *"Copyright and Virtual Performance"* by Roger Emerson! For more information on how to access these resources now, visit <https://www.azacda.org/events/2020-summer-conference/>. ☰



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