

OHODA NEWS

SUMMER ISSUE 1985



President's Letter Summer 1985

This is my last President's letter. It's my sixteenth. I've used this space to acknowledge OCDA members for their various contributions to our organization, to make announcements and to encourage, urge, nudge and plead with OCDA members to take advantage of what OCDA/ACDA has to offer.

I've also used this column to encourage those of you who are music educators to examine what you are teaching your students. My views on this subject have received both positive and negative responses. I'm happy to report that the positive far out numbers the negative. Basically, I have encouraged music educators to use quality literature, idiomatic to the chorus which represents the entire history of choral music and to avoid using large quantities of "fad culture" music. I've said that music educators ought to educate and not try to be entertainers.

Those who have criticized my position usually say my views are idealistic and that today's students and audiences do not "like" the kind of music generally thought to be of high quality by choral musicians.

The problem is not with students or audiences but with music educators. The philosophy of any school music program comes directly from the choral director/music educator in charge. To blame an inadequate choral program on the students or the audience is only an excuse. Good choral programs come from good musicians. The social, economical, racial and musical background of students and audience is of little consequence. There are excellent programs in all types of school situations which can prove this.

It is arrogant to assume that students will not appreciate quality. Students like only what they know. It's your job to get them to "know" quality choral literature. Of course students like popular fad music. That's because they know it. There's nothing wrong with that. It's only wrong if you, as a music educator, don't take them beyond this current level of taste. In any other subject area the "teaching" of material already assimilated by the students would be suspect.

Music is not a frill. In schools, we are not entertainers. Don't underestimate your students. Don't cheat your students. Don't be deterred by those who don't understand the significance of music education. Keep trying. If you say you can't, you won't. If you think you can, perhaps you will.

Calendar

JULY 11 - 13, 1985 - OCDA Summer Convention
Capital Univ., Columbus, Oh., Richard Shoup
Chairman. Featuring Luboff, Fleming, and
Hinshaw.

NOV. 1 - 2, 1985 - OCDA Fall Conference, Salt
Fork State Park, Cambridge, Oh. Mary Fran
McClintock, and Neil Davis, chairpersons.

APRIL 3 - 5, 1986 - Central Division Convention,
Indianapolis, Indiana, Hyatt Hotel.

*The Ohio News is published four times a year:
Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer*

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September 10

Beverlie Mayer, Editor

Mildred McCrystal, Assistant Editor

1625 Columbus Ave., Sandusky, OH 44870

Continued from column 1

Having been President of the Ohio Choral Directors Association has been an honor for me. I thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

John Drotleff

Election Results

Bill Hamilton reports the following officers have been elected and will take office at the summer convention, Capital University. OCDA thanks all members who agreed to run for office and congratulates the winners of the election.

Automatically B. Neil Davis, Lakewood, moves into the Presidency and John Drotleff, outgoing president, becomes the Vice President. The other officers are:

Robert Mix - President Elect

Nancy Davis - Secretary

Joel Mathias - South Central Chairperson

Jeanette Hummel - South West Chairperson

Frank Bianchi - North East Chairperson

The combined boards will meet during the Summer Convention and the new Board will be presented at the OCDA membership meeting.

John Drotleff, chairman of the constitution revision, reports that all constitutional changes were approved. This should put our organization in good shape for several years. A hearty thank-you to the committee.

Have You Heard Kahmann?

Directing a weekly rehearsal for 17 singers in a kitchen may seem unusual to you, but it has been a common occurrence in the Summit, N.J. home of Chesley Kahmann, composer, pianist, teacher and director of the Interludes, a womens' chorus that has performed throughout New Jersey and in neighboring states during the past fourteen years.

Since 1971, Kahmann has spent enough time at her kitchen piano to write the words and music to over 60 choral pieces, sacred and secular, many for performance by the Interludes, and later adopted by school, community and church groups. In addition, she has composed numerous instrumental pieces for piano, brass, woodwinds and strings and/or for full orchestra.

Her *Five Dances for Flute, Oboe and Piano*, was performed by the Rosewood Chamber Consort at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and was highly acclaimed by the critics. Thereafter, this group commissioned Kahmann to write another piece for them which they premiered in Washington, D.C. in 1984. An all-Kahmann reading session led by the composer was part of experience '84, Wittenberg Univ.

Chesley Kahmann was born and lived in New York City until she was 10 when she moved with her parents, both writers, to a farm in Great Meadows, New Jersey. She grew up playing and singing and writing as if that were what everyone did. She supposes that she will always do so. While attending Moravian Seminary Prep School, she studied music at Moravian College and then took her B.A. degree from the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Rochester with her music major from the Eastman School of Music. She later studied composition with Bernard Rogers at Eastman and with Louis Cheslock at Peabody Conservatory. She taught music at Oldfields School in Glencoe, Maryland where she wrote and directed six musical plays for her students and at Brooklyn Friends School, Brooklyn, New York. She currently resides in Summit with her husband and two trumpet playing sons.

Although CK has written for many musical forms and combinations of instruments from full orchestra to chamber works, none have received more of her attention than the Song and the Piano.

Her music was selected for reading sessions this past summer at church music workshops and choral meetings in Oregon, California, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Kansas, New York, and Tennessee.

Reviewing a recording of Kahmann's music in *The American Organist*, Vernon Gotwals stated that "This music comes as a breath of Spring Air...always sure to please the singers and the listeners...inspired musical offerings...uncommonly fresh and optimistic".

In December, her arrangement of *Angels We Have Heard On High*, was presented by The Chicago Symphony Chorus at their annual Christmas concerts. A free brochure and a soundsheet can be obtained by writing to Orbiting Clef Productions, Inc., 436 Springfield Ave., Summit, N.J. 07901.

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Bev's Briefs

Dear One and All:

We had an excellent meeting of Editors of various state papers in Salt Lake City. We are now identified well at the national office and are exchanging papers or newsletters. John Van Nice of Findlay has done a great service by scheduling meetings at the last two National Conventions where we discussed all the problems of editing a newspaper. We all agreed the biggest problem is getting our readers to turn into writers on occasion and send us information about what they are doing or thinking or even fuming about. We are trying to correct bad addresses. Help us by notifying Wade Raridon, Treasurer, if you are not receiving the NEWS.

John Drotleff's editorial about repertoire has given me (and John) more good contributions. I now know people are reading the *OCDA News*. Thank you. I have started a READER'S COLUMN, only this month it is a page. If someone else has a pet subject he'd like to discuss, I'll continue the "column".

Bill Hamilton has a gripe but he hasn't figured out a solution. He spent \$125.00 or more on first class mail out of ballots for election of officers. The response was better than last year, but he still did not get votes from 50 per cent of the membership. We don't have that much money to throw away. What are YOU going to do about it? Suggestions will be gratefully received by Bill, John, B. Neil, and Bev.

I'll see you at the Summer Convention, Capital U., Columbus. Yes? Where can you get so much for such a small expenditure?

Bev

CHURCH MUSIC CLINIC

August 12-13, 1985

Worthington United Methodist Church
600 High Street, Worthington, Ohio

ORGAN AND CHORAL

Clinicians:

Jane Marshall, Michael Jothen
Ann Labounsky, Don Bogaards

For more information call Don Bogaards

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Readers's Column

The Masters As A Method: Idealism Can Become Realism

Dear John,

I read your article concerning the choice of choral ensemble literature and, I must say, I was highly impressed. I also read the letter that was presented by Constance Mehrling in the Spring Issue of *Ohio ACDA News* concerning her need to present "pop" music as the standard level of literature. I can relate quite well to her job insecurity because, I too, have been a subject of teacher cut-backs due to school levy failures. However, even though we share similar experiences, our philosophies dealing with literature choices are totally opposite. I feel a need to respond and share my experiences with your readers and hopefully a more significant musical experience will result.

I have been a high school choral conductor for fifteen years and have taught in three Ohio public school systems. All of my experience has been in school districts that initially considered music as being unimportant, extra curricular and as Ms. Mehrling says a "Frill".

The first ten days of my teaching career were spent on a picket line. The district had gone on strike due to numerous problems caused by levy defeats. When classes began I was faced with my first choir. There were a total of twenty students (17 girls, 3 boys) enrolled in my one choral ensemble. Out of a school of 1100 students, the ratio of choral music students was less than adequate. Five years later our membership had grown to four choirs totaling 275 singers.

There were many reasons why choir became "the thing to do". The primary reason, as stated by my former students, was the choice of literature. My repertoire focused on music of the masters. The lightest concert choir music performed was Spirituals. My students, at first, had no idea who Palestrina, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Debussy or Pinkham was and furthermore could care less. They initially wanted to sing what they were used to and comfortable with, "pop" music. Their attitudes soon became altered and their educational experiences expanded with great depth.

My second position took me to a more established choral program. There were two choirs totaling 60 singers. The high school population numbered at 1000 students. Five years later I was conducting seven choirs with a total membership of 300 singers. Still focusing on a high level of repertoire my choice of literature became expanded and more involved. Our choirs became able and enthusiastic about performing major works [*Mass in G* - Schubert, *Gloria* - Vivaldi, Etc.). Our choral department had an identity within the school as being a prestigious organization and it was a great honor to become a member.

My third position led me to an enormous challenge. A high school of 1600 students had one choir of 12 singers (11 girls, 1 boy). Three years later our choral department consisted of 200 singers in five choirs. This school, similar to the other two schools in which I taught, focused much attention on athletics. I must say, it was a great joy to incorporate these athletes into our department and to watch them, along with my other students, become positively involved and enthusiastic with music from the Renaissance to Twentieth Century avant garde.

At the end of my third year I was rified. Several levies had failed and 80 teachers (from all academic disciplines) were layed off. My program, along with the Mathematics, Science, English and History programs were devastated. One year later I was called back to rebuild the program. No levies had passed but through my administration and the communities persistence I was able to return and continue my work. Six months later I, along with several other academic teachers were again layed off due to levy failures. Presently I am a PH. D. student at Kent State University but have maintained communication with my former high school students. They tell me that there is a considerable amount of choral student unrest due to the choice of literature currently being rehearsed. The present emphasis is "pop" music.

I'm sure that it has become obvious by now that our choral departments have received an enormous amount of student support. Choir was attracting students from all walks of life. There were absolutely no problems in recruiting students, especially men. Many times I would have as many men in my mixed ensemble as women. Student choral offerings included a Concert Choir, Mens Choir, Womens Choir, Chorale, Chamber Choir, Freshman Chorus, Madrigal Ensemble and a Show Choir. All ensembles focused on a high quality of choral literature ranging from all periods of music history. Even my Show Choir performed madrigals, motets, and contemporary literature.

The three administrations that I have worked with throughout my teaching career have overwhelmingly supported my program and have become active participants in promoting our choral discipline (all three administrations consisted of ex-athletes). My administrators associate my teaching Mozart with the English instructor teaching Shakespeare. There is no difference and therefore now can choir be a "Frill"?

The three communities in which I have worked rallied in great support of their child's choral education. Parent booster organizations were formed and aided our department in all financial obligations (i.e. paying for professional orchestra accompaniments to our major works.) The community enjoys entertainment but values education. Through the choral educational process our community audience has become entertained, and it is the educational process in which they will ultimately support.

I focus my attention on high quality choral literature because I believe in it and I see the intrinsic, musical value that it offers. I need not teach the sounds that are heard on everyday commercial radio because the students are quite familiar with those already. I feel a greater dedication to my art and to my students than to inhibit them by not expanding their musical insights. One of my philosophical goals is to expose my students to quality repertoire that has changed lives for centuries and to let them experience the musical joy that this literature offers.

I guess I attach a different meaning to the word "popular". My students and I feel that it is "popular" to be in a choral ensemble that rehearses and performs literature that has become "popular" throughout the periods of music history. I feel that my responsibility as an educator of human beings is to teach them NOT entertain them. If I must "sell" this type of repertoire to my students then I will be more than happy to do so. The alternative is to do what is comfortable and ignore the educational welfare of my students. I am a professional educator not a stand-up entertainer. I teach human beings and my responsibility to mankind is to further their awareness, appreciation, and development through high quality music education that involves legitimate choral repertoire.

James Cox
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio
April, 1985

Dear Editor,

I would like to respond to the letter from Constance Mehrling to John Drotleff in the Spring, 1985 *ACDA News*. Unfortunately, I believe it represents the philosophy of many practicing music educators, and I am disturbed by the line of thinking and rationale it presents. As a former music educator at the secondary level, I cannot accept the assertions contained in her letter.

Ms. Mehrling proposes that we as music educators are, in fact, "entertaining". Undeniably, one aspect of all facets of the music profession is entertainment. However, in her case, she is entertaining as opposed to educating. I submit she is in the wrong profession. Webster defines "educate" as "...the process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind, and character, especially by formal schooling; teaching; training". If we as educators take our professional responsibility seriously, we have a moral obligation to offer students in our choirs only the finest choral literature we have been trained to select. Bowing to the pressure of administrators, parents, and students in the selection of literature is akin to giving a two-year old ice cream every meal because he or she likes it more than vegetables.

My high school students were average choral singers. Annually, they were only allowed to select their choice of music for the baccalaureate service, picked from repertoire which spanned a variety of styles, eras, and composers. Among their choices were Byrd, Bruckner, Durufle', and Britten.

You ask, "How many students would join choir if I passed out solely Bach and Handel?" With a variety of fine choral literature chosen from several style eras, appropriately suited to the performing ability of your chorus, more will join and remain in choir than with a steady diet of sentimental lyrics and trite, popular melodies.

Ours is to aspire, not reflect society. Do we provide the lowest cultural common denominator as an easy method of "Success", or are we constantly striving to raise musical awareness and standards? In short, Ms. Mehrling, who determines your musical integrity; you or your students? Ours is also a never ending task.

If is the same task Bach faced at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Distler faced at St. Jakobi church in Lübeck, and countless other musicians battle on a day-to-day basis.

The great choirs; whether childrens', high school, college, church, or professional, don't consider choral music a "frill". They never have, including the past three generations you described in your letter. The choral art exists, and will continue to exist in this country due to those choral directors who accept and adhere to only the highest standards of literature and performance. These are the principles on which our profession and indeed our art are built.

Jerry Ulrich
Ashland, Ohio



Donald G. Hinshaw



Norman Luboff



Rhonda Fleming

Where Are The Community Choruses

Thank you John Drotleff, Marguerite Bowden, and William Bigger for identifying yourselves as directors of community choruses. Those of you who misplaced the last form, here is another opportunity to make yourselves known.

Please forward to Mary Fran McClintock
835 North 13th St.
Cambridge, Oh 43725

Director's Name and Address _____

Type: Male _____ Female _____ Mixed _____

Name _____

Number of Members _____

Auditioned: Yes _____ No _____

Kinds of Music Performed: Secular _____ Sacred _____

Pop/Show _____ Barbershop _____ Other _____

Number of Concerts per Year _____

Memorized: Yes _____ No _____

Do you do any touring? _____

Would you like to meet during conventions to exchange ideas? _____

Beverlie B. Mayer
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