

ICDA Notations

A Publication of the Indiana Choral Directors Association

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A Lesson from Dwight D. Eisenhower

Dennis Malfatti
President



I don't remember much of my first day as a freshman music major, but one thing that has remained etched in my memory was a phrase from the Dean of the Conservatory of Music's opening address to the freshman: "Practice only on the days that you eat, and never let the urgent get in the way of the important." I think what he meant by combining these two adages, was that the urgency of an exam or paper deadline for a course should not supersede the importance of daily practicing. More broadly, the idea of not allowing the urgent to get in the way of the important is a maxim that can be applied to just about any element of life beyond merely its implications for practice habits.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was quoted as saying, "What is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom important." There even exists a chart called the "Eisenhower Decision Matrix" which is a tool for helping one to differentiate between urgency and importance in decision making. The matrix shows that when the two converge, the decision on what deserves our attention is easy. When they diverge, however we often are beholden to what is urgent at the expense of what is important.

As choral conductors, we are regularly teetering between these two poles of urgency and importance. We want to make sure we are including sight-singing and general music literacy as part of our daily rehearsal regimen, but we have a concert or festival that is imminent or that at least feels imminent. We know that we owe our students a comprehensive and varied palette of repertoire, but the expediency of sticking with "safe" and fun repertoire that isn't too hard to learn and won't overly tax the aesthetic capacity of parents and administrators wins out over the long

term and often slow development of our students' sensitivity to refined literature. Young teachers/conductors in particular struggle with balancing short term goals and objectives with long term ones.

Recently I perused through several past editions of *Resound*, the quarterly publication of ACDA Central Region. As President of ICDA, I was very proud to see articles from our Indiana choral colleagues that address the conundrum I describe. In the Spring 2016 edition of *Resound* (p. 5) Rick Gamble, Choral Director at Avon High School and Vice President of ICDA wrote about his approach to having a daily sight-singing regimen with his choirs, concluding that even with the pressures of getting ready for a concert, "it is extremely rewarding for students to read music, and satisfying for the teacher to know that they have produced a musician and a singer."

On the importance of challenging our students by providing a variety of styles of music Pat Wiehe, now retired Choral Director at North Central High School in Indianapolis wrote in the Spring 2011 edition of *Resound* (p. 10): "What concerns me is a trend in which show choir music and the emphasis on a choreographed

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Amy Hughley, Editor

presentation seem to be pushing the exposure to and training in the concert repertoire out of some high school programs....As choral music teachers, we are charged with teaching our students to appreciate and enjoy a range of repertoire while teaching them the technical skills (vocal production, sight reading, etc.) that better enable them to sing in choral ensembles.” This takes time, since when we introduce a style of music that is new to our singers, it takes more explanation, more contextualizing, more pedagogical tools for us to teach it, and more effort from our students to make it expressive. Summing up the importance of focusing on cultivating educational and artistic values over the long term versus focusing on urgent annoyances, Wishart Bell, founding Artistic Director of the Vesper Chorale, Inc., wrote in the Winter 2011 edition of *Resound* (p. 14): “Art can be frustrating and disappointing. Art confronts us with our own inadequacies. Art takes time. The greater the art, the more it requires in preparation, diligence, and seasoning... However, art is worth the trouble.”

We all need to be continually reminded of the importance of prioritizing so as avoid urgent matters eclipsing important ones. When we emphasize music literacy, solfege, and sight-singing, knowing the benefit may only be felt in the long term, when we incorporate a wide breadth of repertoire in our programs, (as I argued for in my Fall 2017 *Notations* article) even though it may take time for our singers to buy into it fully, and when we are responsive to immediate needs within the context of broader goals and philosophies, we may be unwittingly teaching our singers crucial life lessons. In the most general sense, we have the opportunity to teach our singers how to identify and cultivate that which is important while blocking out the noise from that which only seems urgent but is ultimately inconsequential. When we do this repeatedly, we remind ourselves of this lesson too.

Dennis Malfatti is Director of Choral Activities at the University of Evansville.

The Transformative Power of Classical Music

Amy Hughley
Notations Editor



Like many of you, I enjoy listening to a good TED talk on my commute. Just last month, I heard Benjamin Zander, director of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, give his twenty-minute presentation titled “The Transformative Power of Classical Music.”

Zander states that roughly three percent of the general population truly enjoy classical music. He also mentions that a larger percentage of people “tolerate” it at a concert here and there, or as background music. He presents the argument that the majority of the population actually loves classical music, but that they are just unaware of its transformative possibilities. He performs Chopin’s Prelude in E Minor, Opus 28, No. 4 twice. The first time, he includes unmusical impulses in the melodic line and gives the audience no mental preparation in advance. Before his second performance, he explains the beauty of the compositional structure, asks each member of the audience to think of a person in their life whom he or she has lost, and performs the piece with attention to tension, release, and forward motion.

The entire audience is captivated, despite the fact that very

few of them are musicians. He goes on to explain that he has done this same experiment with young people all over the world, many of whom live difficult lives and have no exposure to classical music, with similar results.

Our job as directors, as Zander has mentioned, is to awaken the possibility in others. We make no sound, but we must enable our singers to be transformed from within. Music is a vehicle of transformation not only for our audience, but also for each of our singers. To do this, we must stay present, breathe with them, show them the musical line, and connect with each choir member in a performance.

How do we know if music is transforming the lives of our singers? Zander says that it has to do with their eyes. If their eyes are “shining,” he knows that the transformation is happening. If his instrumentalists’ eyes are not shining in a performance, he asks himself, “Who am I being that my players’ eyes are not shining?”

As educators, we have the opportunity to inspire our singers every chance we get. If you have twenty minutes of free time this winter, take that to listen to Zander’s TED talk. Search for the title on www.ted.com.

Amy Hughley is the Associate Artistic Director of the Indianapolis Children’s Choir.



*Top: AU Chorale, Bottom: Chorale Members on Scandinavian Tour

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As a teacher, Dr. Mehaffey is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Minnesota, where he conducts the University Singers and Men’s Chorus, teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in conducting and music literature, and is the 2015 recipient of the Arthur “Red” Motley Exemplary Teaching Award. At the university, Mehaffey and his colleague Kathy Saltzman Romey oversee a choral program of 6 graduate students, 7 choirs, and over 300 singers. Graduate conducting students under the tutelage of Romey and Mehaffey have achieved considerable success in a variety of venues, including: the ACDA National Choral Conducting Competition (2015 winner); prestigious conducting masterclasses offered by ACDA, Chorus America, National Collegiate Choral Organization, and the Oregon Bach Festival; presentations at College Music Society and NAFME symposia; and by serving as choral leaders in academic institutions and civic ensembles around the country. He has served on the faculties of The George Washington University, Macalester College, and the summer faculties of Westminster Choir College, and University of St. Thomas.

He is the co-author of *Choral Ensemble Intonation: Methods, Procedures, and Exercises* and the co-editor of three volumes of *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir* – all for GIA Publications. He is also co-author of the chapter “A Multiplicity of Voices: Choral Music in the United States,” for the internationally released volume, *The Cambridge Companion to Choral Music*.

More details at: Conference.IMEAMusic.org



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Go All In

David Stone
Youth Coordinator



Colleagues frequently ask me about my students and sight-reading. I respond that when I started teaching, I struggled to find an approach which would help my students to become better sight readers. I tried all kinds of books, activities, and exercises. I also isolated this activity from their daily choral singing. This was the wrong approach.

I learned that the best way to sight read with students was to do it daily and to not make it a separate activity. Using their literature is the best and most practical way to help them to learn pitch patterns and to train aural skills.

When learning new music, my students begin by determining where *do* is and finding the starting pitch in relation to that. Since I have them in grades five through eight, I allow them to write in pencil in their music when beginning the process. Later, they only write in anchor notes at the beginning of each piece.

Sight reading eventually becomes a normal part of the daily rehearsal and it becomes habit for the students to find *do* and to recognize anchor pitches. They get themselves ready for the process and now are pretty successful at sight reading. It didn't happen overnight but is a daily process.

If you teach middle school, go all in and teach them to sight read! The high school teachers who inherit these students will love you for it! If you teach high school, by all means do it, if for no other reason than you and your students will be much happier at ISSMA organizational time.

So, should you go all in? YES!! You won't regret it!!

David Stone is the choral director at Highland Hills Middle School in Georgetown, Indiana.

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2018 All-State Honor Choir Update

Preparations have been under way for the 2018 Indiana All-State Honor Choir since the spring of 2017. Many thanks to the area chairs across the state for their help in organizing auditions, paperwork, monies and planning rehearsals. Thank you to the volunteering directors at the local level for preparing the 260 students statewide during their rehearsals before the All-State weekend in January. This event could not happen without your time, talent and dedication.

Our guest conductor is Dr. Janet Galván, Director of Choral Activities at Ithaca College in New York. Students will have a remarkable experience under her direction. Our event is held in conjunction with the annual conference of the Indiana Music Education Association in downtown Fort Wayne.

The dates are January 12-13, 2018. Rehearsals, meals, and lodging will take place at the former Hotel Fort Wayne, now renamed the Ramada Plaza Fort Wayne Hotel and Conference Center. Students will be transported to the majestic and historic Embassy Theatre for the final Saturday performance at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. In addition to the choir's busy rehearsal schedule, we welcome back The Indiana University Singing Hoosiers, who will give a private performance for the ASHC students.

Directors, please pass on these reminders to your participating students:

- 1) All measures in the music should be numbered. Please bring a pencil to all rehearsals.
- 2) Students should be making use of the learning tools under the All-State tab of the ICDA website at www.in-acda.org.
- 3) Through their area chair or school director, students should secure a black folder and choir robe of any color for the final performance. All students should wear dress clothes and comfortable dress shoes for the performance under their robes.
- 4) Students are encouraged to wear their medal(s) if they have been in all-state previously.

Please contact Anissa Bradley, Brian Adcock or your area chair with any questions.

For the 2019 All-State Honor Choir, Tesfa Wondemagegnehu, Director of Choral Ministries at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, has graciously accepted the invitation to be our guest conductor.

Anissa Bradley
All-State Honor Choir Chair

Brian Adcock
All-State Honor Choir Assistant Chair



Janet Galván is Director of Choral Activities at Ithaca College and is Artistic Director for the Ithaca Children's Choir. She is a recipient of the ACDA New York Outstanding Choral Director Award. In demand as a guest conductor, Galván has conducted national, regional, and all-state choruses throughout the United States. She has conducted in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, and Avery Fisher Hall, as well as in Ireland, Italy, the Czech Republic, Austria, Canada, and Spain. Her ensembles have also appeared at national, regional, and state music conferences. Galván has been a guest conductor and clinician in the United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, and Brazil, as well as for national and regional choral and music education conferences. Her conducting students have received first place awards and have been finalists in both the graduate and undergraduate divisions of the American Choral Directors biennial National Choral Conducting Competition.

2018 Indiana All-State Jazz Choir News

Brenda Buchanan
All-State Jazz Choir Coordinator



What a fabulous 2017 All-State Jazz Choir we had, under the direction of Dr. Brian Lanier. A **HUGE** thank you to Dr. Lanier and all of the fantastic high school directors who are presenting this opportunity to their students! This was the sixth year that ICDA has sponsored the event and we were very proud to have thirty-four very talented singers from around the state (some with vocal jazz experience and some who have never sung in a jazz choir before!) spend two days in late June singing and learning the art of vocal jazz. Because of the growing success over these last six summers, the excitement and anticipation for the 2018 All-State Jazz Choir experience is already building. We are very excited to announce our Guest All-State Jazz Choir Director for 2018 will be Michelle Mailot.

The 2018 All-State Jazz Choir experience will take place on the campus of University of Indianapolis on Monday, June 25 through Tuesday evening, June 26 during the Indiana Choral Directors Association summer conference. **Make**

sure to check out the ICDA web page at www.in-acda.org and click on the “All-State Vocal Jazz” link for information on upcoming audition procedures, application forms. If you need more information, please don’t hesitate to e-mail Brenda Buchanan (Indiana All-State Vocal Jazz Coordinator) at buchananbr@clay.k12.in.us or call (812) 448-2661, ext. 1256. Let’s give our talented Indiana choir students the opportunity to experience **vocal jazz** like never before.

Below are two of many testimonials about the All-State Jazz Choir experience:

Indiana All-State Jazz Choir is one of the most eye-opening and fun experiences a high school student could be part of. I personally many so many friends and new memories that will stick with me forever."

Emily Barsch, Terre Haute South H.S.

As with any all state experience, I felt like it was really great for the students involved to get a chance to work with other students who are willing to work hard to make great music. I think it was nice for them to see other talented students and realize that they are just as capable. They really enjoyed the guest conductor and still talk about how much they enjoyed the different songs that were performed. I was proud to get to see them up on stage performing as well!

Dan Borns, Director at Greenwood Community High School



Michelle Mailot has performed with Bobby McFerrin, Billy Taylor, Mel Tormé, Max Roach, Sheila Jordan, Sandy Patti, Chita Rivera, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and many others. She has had the pleasure of singing both with the Orlando Philharmonic as well as the Dr. Phillips Jazz Orchestra. Other recent highlights include sold-out audiences at Orlando’s Mad Cow Cabaret and being on guest artist series with the Central Florida Jazz Society and the Spacecoast Jazz Society.

Mailot tours and performs with the Drama Desk Award winning group *Vox Audio* and is a sought after jazz artist and session singer. She studied extensively with both Phil Mattson and Dr. Stephen Zegree, receiving her Bachelor of Music degree from Western Michigan University and her Master’s degree from the University of Central Florida. Michelle’s vocal arrangements are performed by high school, college and professional ensembles throughout the world.

As an educator, Michelle is on faculty at Rollins College in Florida as a private voice instructor as well as the director of the Women’s Vocal Jazz Ensemble. She is also a member of the faculty at Valencia College, where she specializes in jazz instruction. She has taught at the *International Music Camp*, the *Phil Mattson Choral Workshops*, the *Disney Sings Workshops*, and the *Steve Zegree Vocal Jazz Camps*. She has been an adjudicator for Showstoppers, Orlando Fest, and many other choral festivals throughout the country and the world, taking her to Singapore and Japan. She has also been a casting director at the American Idol Experience at Walt Disney World. Michelle has performed extensively at Walt Disney World and has also been featured on several Walt Disney recordings.

She can be heard most recently on her own solo release “Happy Madness” as well as Bobby McFerrin’s latest CD release, “Vocabularies”.

Money Matters

Paula Alles
ICDA Treasurer



Paula Alles is Minister of Music at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Jasper, Indiana.

At the time of this writing, I am working with Anissa Bradley and Brian Adcock to pay All-State Honor Choir bills in advance of the event and depositing the last of the student fees. Thanks to all of you for providing one school check to cover your students' fees.

We currently have \$4,690.66 in our ICDA checking account and \$61,659.67 in savings. These amounts are fairly similar to last year's amounts at this time. Much of this will be used to pay All-State Honor Choir 2018 expenses. Yes, we are a non-profit organization, but with the large expenses involved in our two largest events each year, All-State Honor Choir and the Summer Conference, it is a good idea to have a cushion to cover unforeseen expenses. I am happy to report that the ICDA Summer Conference this past June did show a profit after all, due to some late school payments recently received. We cleared \$187.32 over expenses, so far, and one more school check is still expected. Congratulations to Dennis Malfatti, and thank you for your careful planning.

If your school or church secretary pays your dues for you, ask that the membership renewal card and check be sent directly to the ACDA national office in Oklahoma City. You may also renew your membership online with a credit card. The ACDA website is www.acda.org. This will renew your national ACDA membership as well as your Indiana membership.

If you are wondering why you haven't received recent mailings, it could be that you have forgotten to update your change of address. You may do this online also. If you've never logged on to the national website, you should take a bit of time to do so. Choral Net is very interesting and helps you realize that other colleagues across the country have the same difficulties that you do, and they can provide lots of interesting and practical solutions.

If you have any questions about your membership, please feel free to contact me. My home e-mail is best: alles.paula@gmail.com. If you prefer to phone, my cell number is 812-631-2625. You may also contact the national office at membership@acda.org.

Save the date:

ICDA Summer Conference

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Photo by Sawyer Bengtson

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The logo features the words "UNITE in SONG" in a white, sans-serif font. "UNITE" and "SONG" are in all caps, while "in" is in a smaller, lowercase, cursive font. The text is set against a dark grey background with a white, brush-stroke-like arc above and below the text.

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