

# R&S Commitment to Excellence: Standards of Rehearsal

—Karen L. Bruno, R&S State Chair  
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*In the last issue of "Soundings," I presented a WCDA document entitled "Commitment to Excellence: Defining Standards for the Choral Director," adopted in March of 1999. In this column, I will focus on the "Standards of Rehearsal" that appear in that document and share a few of my thoughts.*

## Standards of Rehearsal

The Wisconsin Choral Directors Association encourages in its members:

\* COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN VOCAL PRODUCTION, MUSICIANSHIP, AND MUSICAL EXPRESSION.

Have you thought about how we can achieve an appropriate balance in our classrooms between what we "give" our students versus what we expect them to contribute? How much do you model as a singer? Do you have a variety of recordings of the work you are preparing that you could share and discuss with your singers? How often do you tell your students what to do with a particular line, dynamic level, etc. versus allowing the ensemble to discover what makes the most musical sense? Sometimes an activity that takes a long time at the beginning (allowing the ensemble to make its own musical decisions) pays dividends later on; the singers made the decision - with your guidance - and will remember it and you won't have to remind them what to do.

\* COMMITMENT TO HAVING SINGERS INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AT EACH REHEARSAL.

Have you looked to the national standards for music education for ideas regarding classroom strategies? We know that students are supposed to be able to sing, but how about playing instruments? Composing? Improvising? Can you think of ways to incorporate these into your rehearsal process that will not take a lot of time, and are directly related to the music you are teaching? How many different types of activities - kinesthetic, visual, aural, etc - have you used in your rehearsal recently? I find myself naturally

drawn to teach the way I learn, but that isn't helpful to singers who don't share my strengths. Pick one type of "new" strategy to focus on every day, and see where that takes the rehearsal process.

\* COMMITMENT TO TRAINING SINGERS TO BE INDEPENDENT MUSICIANS.

I believe that one thing we share as choral musicians is the desire to have our students become life-long singers. We want to prepare them to sing in community choirs, church choirs, and to sing to their children. So how are we preparing them? Are we focused primarily on "preparing for the concert" or are we teaching them valuable skills along the way? Can they sight-read? Do they have a working vocabulary of musical terms? One participant in a CMP workshop two years ago decided that he would institute "Sight-Reading Wednesdays" to help him stay focused on this important task. In a way, this standard ties into the first on this list - are we telling our singers what to do, or are we encouraging their musical independence?

\* COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING A POSITIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ENSEMBLE MEMBERS.

I believe that there are both musical and non-musical ways to achieve this standard. Delving into a text, the story of a composer's life, a period of music history, or even talking about the emotions evoked by a particular musical example allows a class of singers to share personal stories, discuss ideas, or make connections to their own lives. Another classroom-related idea is to have choir representatives serve in different ways. Yes, it's wonderful to have choir reps to help you distribute and collect music or handouts, but it's even more fun to have a social committee to develop choir-only outings, or to have a student willing to make an e-mail list of class members used to support one another in their musical ventures. For instance, use the e-mail list to encourage attendance at musical events choir members are involved in - musical



Karen Bruno

*"The man who disparages music as a luxury and non-essential is doing the nation an injury. Music now, more than ever, is a national need."*

—Woodrow Wilson

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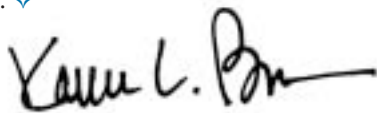
theatre productions, youth symphony concerts, private recitals, or even coffee house performances. My high school choir’s social committee has encouraged pizza get-togethers, laser tag outings, dress-up days for rehearsal, and pushed me to put together a field trip to Chicago to hear Cecilia Bartoli in recital. These out-of-class gatherings invariably foster a strong sense of community, which allows them the freedom to take more musical and personal risks in rehearsal.

\* COMMITMENT TO REHEARSAL SCHEDULES THAT PLACE REASONABLE DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS.

Most of us have our rehearsal schedules dictated to us - we see our singers during the school day for 45 or 50 minutes. How are you using that time? How do you program literature? Are you keeping in

mind the vocal development of your singers? Do you have them singing, but allow for sufficient vocal rest during rehearsal (focusing on a musical activity that isn’t singing)?

I’m sure that many of you do most - or all! - of these things on a regular basis. We all have days when we feel overcommitted, the pressure of an upcoming performance, or just plain tired. Even then, I know that the road to a successful rehearsal is remaining intentional and maintaining standards. ✧



## University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

# Choir Camp



Middle Level Division:  
Entering Grades 6–8  
June 18–22, 2006

High School Division:  
Entering Grades 9–12  
June 18–23, 2006

### For Further Information Contact:

Carl Chapman, UW Oshkosh Department of Music, (920) 424–2272 or the Division of Continuing Education & Extension, UW Oshkosh, 800 Algoma Boulevard, Oshkosh WI 54901–8623 or call (920) 424–1129; toll-free (800) 633–1442

Choir camp website:  
[www.uwosh.edu/departments/music/community/choir.html](http://www.uwosh.edu/departments/music/community/choir.html)



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## *An Arts Advocacy Resolution*

*Whereas* the human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself through the study and performance of the aesthetic arts; and

*whereas* serious cutbacks in funding and support have steadily eroded arts institutions and their programs throughout the country;

*be it resolved* that all citizens of the United States actively voice their affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government, to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations.

American Choral Directors Assoc.,  
*approved February, 1994*

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# Repertoire & Standards

*“It is better to make a piece of music than to perform one, better to perform one than to listen to one, better to listen to one than to misuse it as a means of distraction, entertainment, or acquisition of ‘culture.’”*

—John Cage

## MEN’S CHOIR REPERTOIRE

Submitted by Dan Wolfgram, Waupaca, R&S Chair; Dwolfgram@wsd.waupaca.k12.wi.us

1. *Somagwaza*, A Spirited Ceremonial Song from South Africa arr. Joseph Maselwa & Pete Seeger. A CAPPELLA, TB, WITH PERCUSSION; WORLD MUSIC PRESS VTS#07.

“Somagwaza” is a ceremonial song of young men into adults standing in their community in South Africa. The song is commonly sung at the beginning and end of a ritual that marks the young men as adults in society. It is one of the best-known initiation songs from South Africa. The range is very accommodating. The piece lends itself to large or small ensembles. The added percussion and staging of this piece combine to make it a very crowd-pleasing experience. Works as a middle school or high school piece.

2. *Now Is The Time (to Cross Over Jordan)*, music by Lon Berry. TTBB, ACCOMPANIED; BRILEE MUSIC BL489

This work is up-tempo and exciting. The octavo is very tonal in nature with accessible ranges for all voices. The piece allows director discretion for optional repeats as well as an “ad-lib” solo section to round out the contemporary gospel style. Repetitiveness breeds familiarity with the audience and may provide an opportunity for audience participation. The addition of handclaps and movement are definitely appropriate in this work. This work is a must for a developing men’s choir that wants a show stopping performance.

3. *Courage Lives!*, music by Mark Patterson. TTBB, ACCOMPANIED; HERITAGE MUSIC PRESS 15/2089H-2

This bold selection is reflective of many of the “chestnuts” in the men’s choral repertoire, such as *Stouthearted Men*. Once again the tessitura for all voices lends itself to high school voices, with the exception of some first tenor passages. The resultant harmonies consist of first inversion chords. The text which stresses courage, sacrifice, and integrity is appropriate for any type of concert but works particularly well for Veteran’s Day or some other sort of patriotic theme.

4. *Libertatum* (Freedom), music by Jim Papoulis. TBB, A CAPPELLA; BOOSEY AND HAWKES M-051-47503-2.

*Libertatum* begins like a soft chant. The consistent phrases flow gently like water. Contrasting rhythms increase. While each voice is independent, the overall sound of the piece is defined by how the individual parts connect to make a lyrical call for freedom. *Libertatum* combines a traditional Latin motet style with contemporary rhythms and harmonies. Syllabic text gives way to English as the motives intertwine. Hand claps, movements, and vocal percussion are elements that make this piece even more intriguing. This piece is definitely for the more advanced men’s choir.

5. *Ad Te, Domine (To Thee O Lord)*, music by Allen Koepke. TTBB, A CAPPELLA; SANTA BARBARA MUSIC PUBLISHING SBMP 159.

*Ad Te, Domine* is written in a Neo-Romantic style, reflecting many of the characteristics found in late 19th century works. Although there are five different key signatures, the tonality (or modality) never settles. The keys merely provide a momentary reference point and convenience for note reading. Great attention has been given to voice leading in each part and singers will rarely have difficulty finding their next note. First tenors are encouraged to use falsetto as needed. The range in this piece is fairly extensive. Once again, this is a quality piece from the pen of Allen Koepke, but should only be attempted by an advanced high school men’s ensemble or collegiate men’s choir.

## ETHNIC/MULTICULTURAL REPERTOIRE

Submitted by Christopher Peterson, Milwaukee, R&S Chair; Chrisp@uwm.edu

Over Labor Day I had the pleasure of traveling to Costa Rica for a choral workshop and seminar. While I was there I heard native music performed by Costa Rican choirs. One of the things that intrigued me about the performances was how much of the music was not notated on the page. The performers brought many aspects to the performance that couldn’t be communicated using notation. This was especially true for aspects of

# “HIGH FIVES”

rhythm, as singers performed with real (or imagined) percussive patterns as a basis for the “groove.” I brought back a few unpublished SATB choral arrangements that I have permission to use and distribute, if anyone is interested. Just drop me an email at <peters1965@aol.com>.

1. *Mi ymaleil* (from *Three Israeli Songs*),

Israeli Song, arr. Bob Chilcott. SATB, PIANO;  
OXFORD #95.217.

This is the first of a three-song set, and can serve as a short but driving opener or closer on your concert program. The voice parts are homophonic and primarily in A<sup>b</sup> major, with occasional chromatic passages. An intermediate to advanced high school choir would find this work accessible, though the men’s parts are scored in a higher tessitura with basses singing only down to E<sup>b</sup> below middle C and the tenors singing up to high A<sup>b</sup>. The women’s ranges are moderate, and meter changes to 7/8 help create interest. The accompaniment is independent yet supportive of the voices, and the edition includes a very good translation of the Hebrew text and a guide to pronunciation.

2. *San Pedro Troto Cien Anos* (A Satire from Chile),

Chilean Song, arr. Franklin Thon Núñez (1937-2002). SATB, A CAPPELLA; TWIN ELM PUB., (303) 356-2172.

This delightful short piece tells the satirical story of St. Peter jumping for one hundred years and finding his way to Carnival. It is playful and rhythmic, with four verses in strophic form. All ranges are moderate and an advanced middle school or beginning high school choir could sing this piece well. One caveat, however. The text, sung in Spanish, has a translation that some of the most conservative parents may object to, such as angels drinking liquor. The song was composed in fun, and it would be fun to sing and present it to an audience...as long as you handle the translation carefully and with a sense of humor.

3. *Cantos del Agua*, Spanish/Argentinian, Dante

Andreo. SATB, A CAPPELLA; SANTA BARBARA #SBMP 261.

This five-minute, three-song set uses poems by legendary Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca. The editorial introduction describes the moods of the set quite well: “*Cantos del Agua* is a work of great lyricism with expressive melodic lines emulating the flow of the taciturn water near the bird-covered quaking poplars, the naked water near trees cut down at dawn, and the undulatory water scented by the orange and olive trees from the Andalusian rivers.” The scoring is primarily homophonic and ranges are moderate. The first movement is firmly in F-major while the second and third movements center around D-minor; the whole of the work is diatonic. The second piece includes spoken choir sections to create the mood of flowing water. A translation guide is included.

4. *Three Latvian Carols*, Christmas Carols from

Latvia, Andrejs Jansons. SATB, A CAPPELLA;  
EARTHSONGS (541) 758-5760.

This three-song set is a low-maintenance way to have your choirs sing in Latvian. A phonetic text rendition is set near the notes, and a singable English transliteration is also included. The set is in D-major, A-minor, and A-major, with occasional shifts of tempo and meter. The work is not hard, but divisi sections in the last movement may make it a challenge for a beginning high school choir. The major drawback to this edition is the absence of a literal translation or pronunciation guide. However, it would still be a great addition to any holiday or Christmas program in need of a fresh set of carols that sound pleasing to the listener, yet are educationally sound for the singer.

5. *Rouxinol do Pico Preto* (from *Cradle Songs*),

Brazilian Lullaby, music by Steven Stucky.  
SSAATTBB, A CAPPELLA; MERION MUSIC  
(PRESSER) #342-40181.

Looking for a piece to challenge your top group? This four and a half minute work is worth the effort you will put into it. The song set was commissioned by Chanticleer, the Dale Warland Singers, the Phoenix Bach Choir, and La Vie. The Portuguese text is well set, and the edition includes a translation and pronunciation guide. The writing is contrapuntal and chromatic, yet the piece retains

“*Music, when soft  
voices die,*

*Vibrates on the  
memory;*

*Odours, when sweet  
violets sicken,*

*Live within the  
sense they quicken.”*

—Shelley

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## ETHNIC/MULTICULTURAL REPERTOIRE

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a pleasing flow and texture. The strata created by stagger breathing and an eight-part texture serves well to establish the mood of a lullaby. One aspect of the writing that helps make this work more accessible is a return to a unison D at various times throughout the rendition. This note acts as the glue cementing the form together, and gives the performance a dream-like quality. If you like the piece, there are two more in the set, one in Polish and the other in Tobagoan. Look for these in an upcoming edition of the “High Fives.”

## COLLEGIATE CHOIR REPERTOIRE

Lucinda Thayer, Stevens Point, R&S Chair  
Lthayer@uwsp.edu

During the past summer I did quite a bit of digging around, using various resources, to come up with some repertoire from Wales, Scotland, and Ireland to complete a program of Christmas music from the British Isles. I am indebted to Carl Chapman, UW-Oshkosh, for performing an Irish piece that sparked my interest in Celtic choral music. Thanks also to Nina Nash-Robertson, a native Dubliner and Director of Choral Activities at the University of Central Michigan, for providing additional suggestions for resources.

1. *Dulaman*, arr. David Mooney. SATB, A CAPPELLA; ECS PUBLISHING, #5925.

This first of the “High Five” isn’t for Christmas, but is the piece that Carl Chapman performed that piqued my interest in Celtic choral music. The language is the Irish Gaelic and the editor provides both IPA and a phonetic pronunciation. It is a lively working song which celebrates the humble seaweed which was used to fertilize the poor soil in the west of Ireland.

2. *Wexford Carol*, arr. David Mooney. SOPRANO SOLO, SATB, A CAPPELLA; ECS PUBLISHING #5936.

This is an arrangement of the most well-known Irish carol. Both the melody and the text are of traditional Irish origin. The soprano solo could easily be sung by a mezzo-soprano or alto as the highest note is only E<sup>b</sup>. It’s a beautiful arrangement

that contains some surprises in the form of close and colorful harmony, but nothing really extreme.

3. *Suantrai na Maighdine*, arr. David Mooney. SATB CHORUS AND HARP OR KEYBOARD; ECS PUBLISHING #5930.

The title of this work translates as “The Virgin Mary’s Lullaby.” Again, the words and melody are traditional Irish. The singing text is Gaelic only, but the editor provides an English translation, along with both an IPA and phonetic pronunciation guide. The melody is hauntingly beautiful and simple. The arrangement is straightforward, with no real challenges.

[Note: all three of the following pieces can be heard on a CD called “COR”, featuring Celtic Ayres and Cor Na Nog RTE, on the ARSIS label]

4. *Baloo Lammy, a cappella*

For Christmas repertoire from Scotland, I was able to come up with two selections. The first is a 17th century Scottish tune, arranged by Gerald Moore, called ‘Baloo Lammy,’ and published by Susato Press Edition MTC99. It is a very short, simple chordal arrangement in F-major. If you want to find the same melody in a more readily available published version, an arrangement by Norman Luboff is available, published by Walton.

5. *Leanabh an aigh*, arr. George McPhee. A CAPPELLA; CARUS VERLAG, STUTTGART, #2.090.

I was surprised to learn that the melody of a hymn many know as “Morning has Broken” is of Scottish origin. The traditional Scottish melody is known as “Bunessan” and the text is by Mary Macdougall Macdonald. The singing text is provided both in Scottish Gaelic and in English. The arrangement is not too challenging, but imaginative.

At press time, I am awaiting the arrival of four Christmas pieces from Wales that I ordered, sight-unseen, from a Welsh vendor who was kind enough to make some suggestions when I e-mailed him and said that I was looking for some traditional Welsh Christmas music. If you’d like to do some exploring on your own, I recommend this website: <<http://www.curiad.co.uk/>>. ✧

*“Unperformed music is like a cake in the oven—not fully baked.”*

—Isaac Stern