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Choral Experiences: Progressions and Transitions [From the Guest Editor]

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Recommended Citation

Freer, Patrick K., "Choral Experiences: Progressions and Transitions [From the Guest Editor]" (2012). *Music Faculty Publications*. 3.

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In This Issue
MAY 2012

Guest Editor: Patrick K. Freer, Georgia State University

The Male Choral Singer – from Adolescence to College
Part Two: From Adolescent to Young Adult

CHORAL EXPERIENCES: PROGRESSIONS AND TRANSITIONS

“But how do we lead our male chorus to success? How can we reach our technical and artistic goals as an ensemble? More specifically, how do we turn their tone into a thing of beauty? How do we create a sound that will become self-motivating? And how do we teach them to sing in tune so that others will want to hear them?”

With every set of great questions comes—if we’re lucky—an equally great set of answers. The five questions above are included in Jefferson Johnson’s article about working with male choirs, and he follows with detailed descriptions of how he answers these questions with his choirs. Johnson’s choirs are among the most lauded in the world (ask anyone who saw his University of Kentucky Men’s Chorus concert at the 2011 national ACDA conference!), and we are fortunate to have him share his wisdom as our special focus on male voices continues with this issue.

The previous issue of *Choral Journal* contained detailed information about the young male singer as he develops through the voice change into high school choral experiences. This issue continues by following the boy’s progression into high school and toward the early adult years. A host of recent research has recently become available concerning males and singing. This research, related pedagogical information, and considerations of philosophy and ethics are explored in the first article, “The Successful Transition and Retention of Boys from Middle School to High School Choral Music.”

In our second article, Jana Williams notes that most teachers of middle and high school choruses are female, and she presents the unique problems and possibilities of female teachers who work with boys emerging from the peak of voice change. I know Jana through her extraordinary work leading a huge choral program in suburban Atlanta, and I am so pleased that she agreed to contribute to this focus issue. In addition to presenting solid research and pedagogical information, Williams' article includes some pieces of advice contributed by high school boys. My favorite: "Don't try to be one of the guys. They need to respect you. And provide plenty of food."

Concluding the issue is Colin Durrant's examination of some of the sociological considerations and motivations behind the singing of males during early collegiate years. Durrant's varied experiences allow him to compare and contrast differences of culture and nationality, affording us a glimpse into the central role that choral singing can play in the lives of young men moving into adulthood.

And, that brings us full circle. We began by looking at the male changing voice with the goal of keeping boys within the choral experience, as members of our musical family at the most vocally vulnerable point in their lives. And, we conclude by focusing on the importance of musical skill, artistic success, and community support as young adult men begin to form their own familial relationships. As I am fond of saying, we are always building not just for the next concert, but for the one twenty years from now—one that we will likely not attend. Will the boys singing in our choirs today be the men singing twenty years from now because of something we do in tomorrow's rehearsal? I hope that these articles have provoked you to consider some new ideas, try some new techniques, and seek some new resources. Thank you

for guiding our young male singers through their journey from middle school to young adulthood.