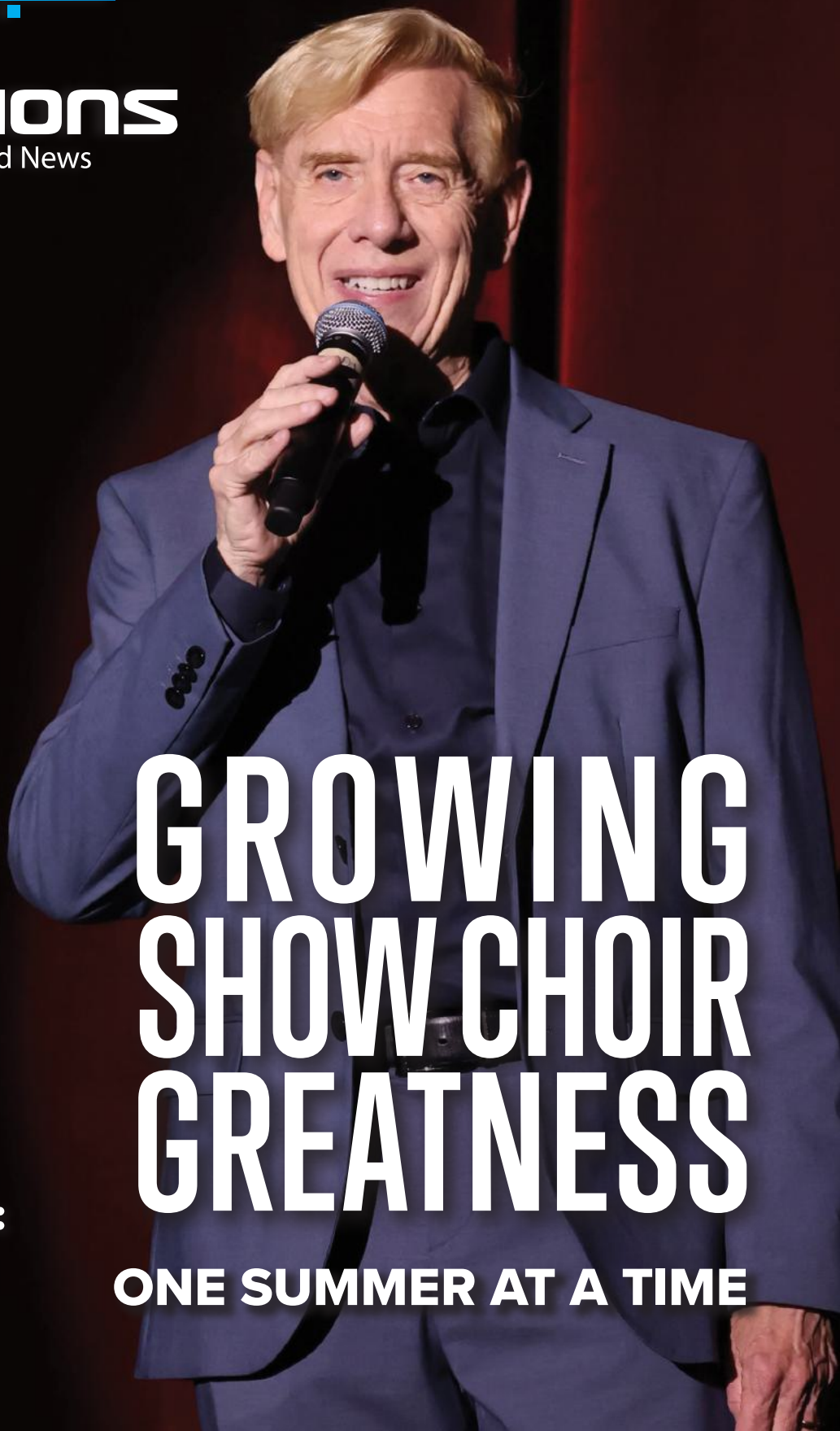


APRIL 2024



**ADVOCATE,
EDUCATE, AND
INSPIRE:**
AN INTERVIEW WITH
NASC FOUNDER
PATRICK McCORMICK

**OPTIMIZING
ACOUSTICS FOR
SHOW CHOIR
PERFORMANCES:**
A TECHNICAL GUIDE
FOR DIRECTORS

GROWING SHOW CHOIR GREATNESS

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GROWING SHOW CHOIR GREATNESS, ONE SUMMER AT A TIME

Dwight Jordan, the co-founder of Showchoir Camps of America, started out as a band director at a school that just happened to have launched its first-ever show choir. He offered a few suggestions, and one thing led to another. The story behind Jordan's rise from band director to show choir legend.

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ADVOCATE, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE: AN INTERVIEW WITH NASC FOUNDER PATRICK MCCORMICK

Dr. Patrick McCormick, choral director at Prattville High School in Prattville, Alabama and founder of the National Association for Show Choir (NASC), loves what he does—inspiring students to be better, build confidence, and find themselves through show choir. Now he's inspiring others to love it, too.



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OPTIMIZING ACOUSTICS FOR SHOW CHOIR PERFORMANCES: A TECHNICAL GUIDE FOR DIRECTORS

Among all the moving parts that come together to create an electrifying show choir performance, the importance of acoustics cannot be overstated. We took a closer look at some of the key factors that contribute to showtime acoustics that are so perfect, the audience will never know the effort your team put into making it happen.

editor's letter

Dear Show Choir Enthusiasts,

As another exhilarating competition season draws to a close, I am filled with a bittersweet mix of emotions. The joy and camaraderie this past year brought us are immeasurable, yet the anticipation of what lies ahead fills me with excitement.

In this issue, we celebrate the heroes of show choir whose passion and dedication have elevated the art form to new heights. Gail McGinnis and Dwight Jordan, two luminaries whose tireless efforts have shaped the landscape of show choir, grace our pages with their inspiring stories. Their unwavering commitment to excellence serves as a beacon for all of us in the show choir community.

I am thrilled to talk about the formation of the National Association of Show Choir, a testament to the growing influence and significance of our beloved art form. This organization promises to be a catalyst for collaboration, innovation, and the continued advancement of show choir on a national scale. Our coverage of this historic development offers a glimpse into the exciting future that awaits us.

As we bid farewell to another unforgettable season, our attention turns to the opportunities that lie ahead. Summer camps beckon, offering a chance for performers to hone their skills, forge new friendships, and ignite their passion for the stage. The planning of new shows for next year is already underway, and the anticipation of seeing the creative process come to fruition is palpable. From selecting repertoire to choreographing intricate routines, every step of the journey is infused with excitement and possibility.

As we reflect on the triumphs and challenges of the past season, let us carry forward the lessons learned and the memories shared. Let us continue to support and uplift one another as we strive for excellence in every performance. And let us never lose sight of the magic that happens when voices unite in harmony and hearts beat as one.

To all the show choir enthusiasts who make this community so vibrant and dynamic, I extend my deepest gratitude. Your passion, dedication, and unwavering spirit are the driving force behind everything we do, and we are honored to be a part of this extraordinary journey with you.

Here's to the memories we've made, the heroes we've celebrated, and the endless possibilities that lie ahead. Until we meet again, keep singing, keep dancing, and keep shining brightly.

With warmest regards,

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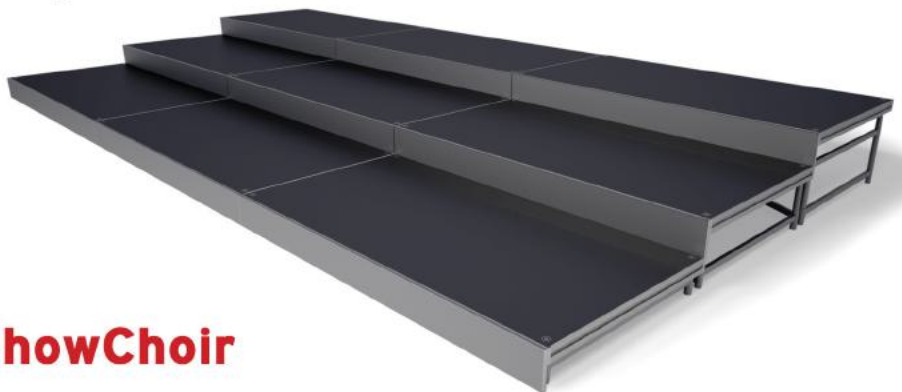


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GROWING SHOW CHOIR GREATNESS ONE SUMMER AT A TIME

by Rosalind Fournier



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Dwight Jordan, co-founder of Showchoir Camps of America—which this year celebrates its 45th anniversary—was in the right place at the right time as a fresh college graduate. Not only had he landed a job as band director at Mt. Zion High School in Mt. Zion, Illinois, but it also happened to be the inaugural year of Mt. Zion’s show choir (at the time called “swing choir,” a nod to the days when swing was king).



PHOTO COURTESY SHOW CHOIR CAMPS AMERICA

with the choir rehearsing just outside his office and Jordan having become friends with the choir’s director, Roberta Vest, he felt comfortable making suggestions from time to time. “It was the first show choir I had ever seen, but somehow it made sense to me,” he says. “Toward the end of that year, my suggestions on the staging and choreography had become more prevalent, and I had traveled with the group to their very first competition (they came in 4th), so I had a better understanding of the animal.”

That’s when Vest offered him a challenge: If you’re so smart, why don’t you choreograph a song? “Being young and up for a challenge, I thought, how hard can it be? I stayed up late for a couple of nights working to get it done, and maybe to everyone’s surprise, it went pretty well. By the next year I was doing all their choreography (they

won the competition that year) and was choreographing the high school musical.”

It was an unlikely—or at least unplanned—turn of events for Jordan, whose college career at Millikin University was focused on saxophone, though he also studied flute, clarinet, and voice. He played in the Millikin Jazz Lab Band, the wind ensemble, concert and marching bands, orchestra, and other smaller instrumental and choral groups. On top of all that, “I found time to be in one musical, ‘Promises, Promises,’ which is where it was discovered that I could dance,” Jordan remembers. “Who knew? I was also the lead singer for a cover band. I’m assuming I also went to classes (ha).” Used to crazy schedules, Jordan spent his four years at Mt. Zion directing the band and choreographing for the show choir while also accepting requests

for help from community theaters and other groups. He watched every tape of every musical production he could get his hands on to keep learning.

At the end of those four years, he left his position at Mt. Zion and became a full-time freelance choreographer and show director. Six Flags St. Louis hired him to direct and choreograph shows. Six Flags Great America hired him, too, as did Silver Dollar City and other venues in Branson, Missouri.

His horizons were quickly expanding, but he hadn't forgotten the thrill of working with students—seeing them discover a passion for the stage and grow into seasoned, talented performers. So in 1978, when Sue Moninger, a fellow alum from Milliken, took him along to a workshop for choral directors, the two made a proposal to Jim Kimmel, the choral editor for music-publishing company Jenson Publications: what about a summer program for students in show choir to come together and learn from award-winning choreographers and choral directors?

“He loved the idea,” Jordan says. “The next thing we knew we were organizing a camp for the next summer.” They brought in well-known composers like Kirby Shaw, Roger Emerson, and Mac Huff. They reserved space at their alma mater, Millikin University. They planned workshops for participants to study even most nuanced aspects of choreography, vocals, and production. They advertised like crazy.

Still, a week before the deadline for registration, the dream of SCA almost died as quickly as it had begun. “We didn't think we had enough participants to pull it off, so we were ready to cancel,” Jordan says. “Then on the deadline day, about 150 more people signed up.” That brought the total for that first year to 260—a combination

of students as well as teachers looking for professional development.

“It went great. We learned a lot that first year. People had a tremendous time, and it just kept going.” Around the fifth season, SCA added a second camp at Heidelberg University in Ohio. They have also hosted camps in Texas, Indiana, and for 10 years at Walt Disney

What about a summer program for students in show choir to come together and learn from award-winning choreographers and choral directors?

World Resort, where SCA was the first outside group allowed to perform on the Castle Stage. As SCA has grown, it has hosted upwards of 600 to 700 kids at each camp and 100 to 120 teachers and choir directors.

Jordan credits the support of Kimmel and the many others who've signed on since. “We have been lucky to have a tremendous support team,” he says. “My wife, Kari, maintains the year-round operation of the camp and wears many hats. Our vocal and choreography clinicians are the best in the country and create the incredible shows the campers come to learn. Our invaluable and trusted executive staff



PHOTO COURTESY SHOW CHOIR CAMPS AMERICA

manage the many aspects of the camp week required when you have such a large camp of participants. Our SCA counselors are almost all past campers and do a remarkable job. It really has become a family.”

Jordan says the students range from kids new to the show choir experience to those who have participated in the camp before and return to continue honing their skills. “It’s a little like a high-school athlete,” he says. “Even though a player is getting great training during the school year, every summer most are also going to a training camp or two just to get that extra experience. For kids in show choir, it’s the same. They come to SCA and have the chance to work with the different professionals and gain insights and experience as performers.

He continues: “If they are new to show choir, the opportunity is there to learn the basics and be prepared for the upcoming season. If they are more advanced, they may have the opportunity to be in the dance ensemble that continues to push them as dancers or the experience of a special vocal ensemble or the talent showcase. They learn a full show choir show in one week, take workshops, enjoy nightly performances including a Broadway star, and then go back home with a new confidence that will be reflected in their performance with their own show choir.”

Including training for show choir directors and teachers was always part of the plan, he adds. “Our teacher camp is a seminar for choral directors and choreographers offering a wide range of workshops, reading sessions, and performance opportunities. These teachers put on their own show at camp like the kids do. It’s pretty impressive what they do and a lot of fun for them. It’s their opportunity to hang out with friends old and new who get what they do and to get pumped up for the upcoming year.”

Jordan says camaraderie has always been a defining aspect of the SCA experience. “They love getting a chance to do this with new people from all over the country,” he says. “It sounds cliché,



but they make lifelong friends with people they never would have met.”

Outside of SCA, Jordan continues working to learn and grow as a choreographer and show designer. He has received many awards for his work in outstanding choreography in show choir, is an internationally sought after consultant and clinician, and has guest conducted at international festivals in the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Estonia.

Jordan also took a moment to share what he personally aspires to when choreographing a new show. “I try to make certain there’s something memorable in every song I do,” he says, “something that’s going to stick in people’s minds after they’ve seen it. It’s not just dance steps but something that has a purpose and a flow. My other goal is always to make

sure I’m giving these young performers material that is fun to perform. They work so hard, I want the final product to be something that makes sense to them, something they are proud of and something that shows off their personality. When it’s fun and makes sense, it’s easy to be genuine on stage, and then everyone has a great time.”

More information about SCA and how to register can be found at showchoircamps.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Rosalind Fournier is copy-editor for Productions and a freelance writer for a number of publications. She lives in Homewood, Ala. with her husband, three kids, a goldendoodle and Siamese cat.



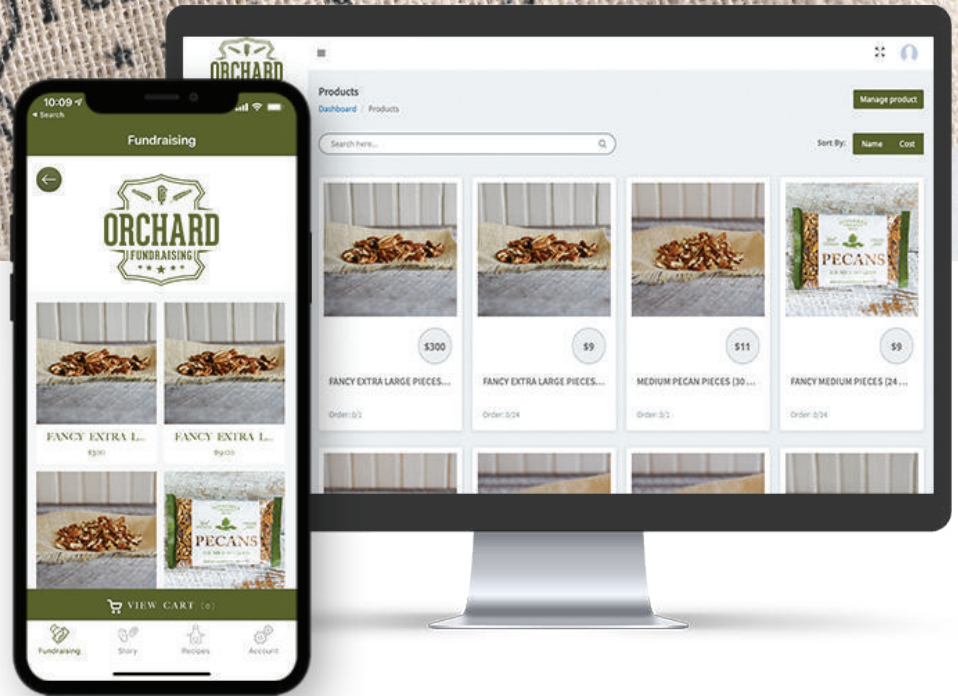
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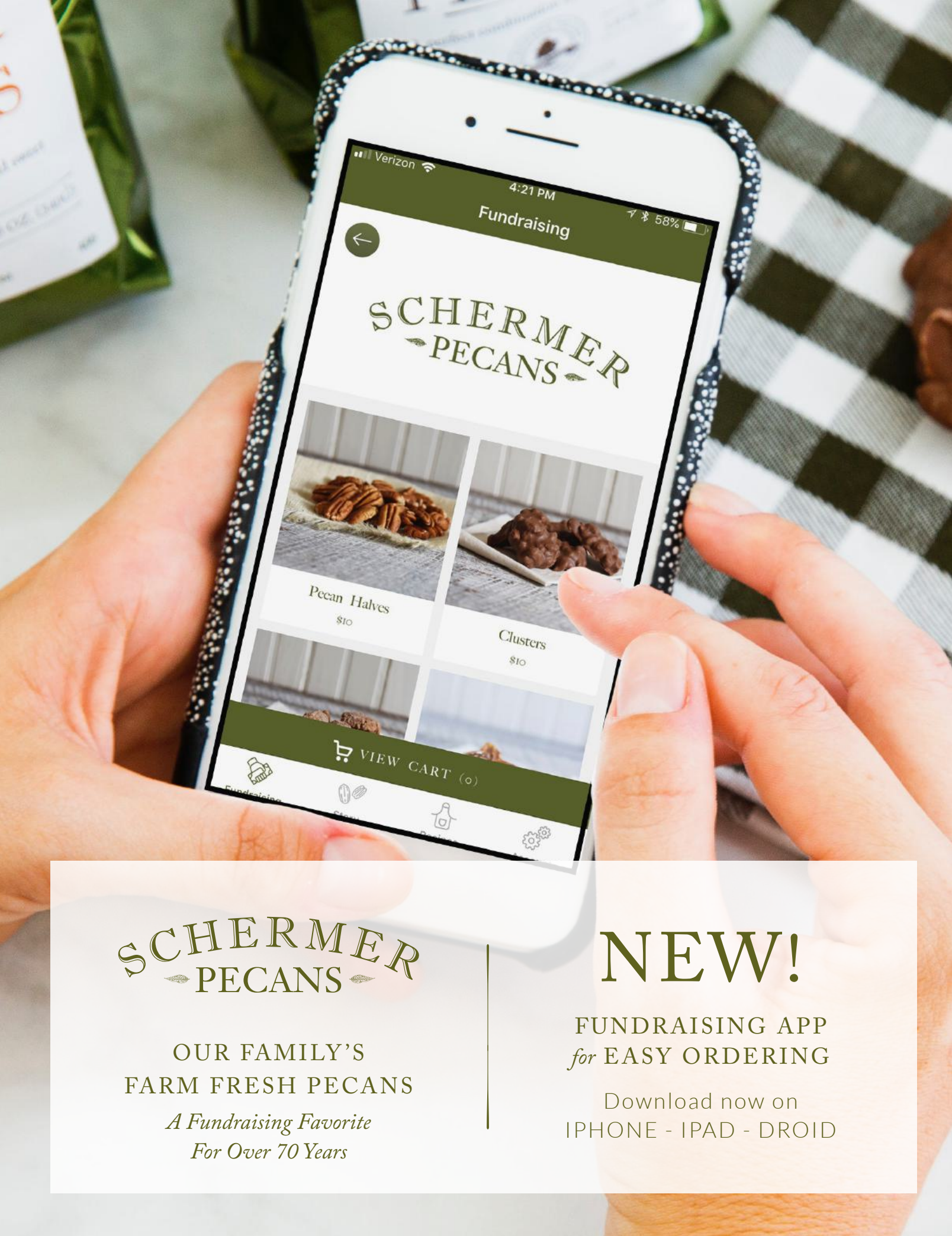
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ADVOCATE, EDUCATE, AND INSPIRE

AN INTERVIEW WITH NASC FOUNDER PATRICK MCCORMICK

by Lisa Gibbs



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SHOW CHOIR

“Up! Up with people! You meet ‘em wherever you go.
Up! Up with People! They’re the best kind of folks we know.
If more people were for people, all people ev’rywhere,
There’d be a lot less people to worry about and a lot more
people who care.”

These lyrics are a major part of my childhood and are happily ingrained in me, ever since my mother took me to see the musical performing group Up With People in the '70s. The words are so uplifting, positive, and truthful. I'm sure I wore out the vinyl LP singing and dancing along at home. No wonder I got into choir in eighth grade and then show choir in high school!

What a surprise it was while talking with Dr. Patrick McCormick to learn that his mother had been a cast member. McCormick, choral director at Prattville High School in Prattville, Alabama, spoke with me about becoming a show choir director and about the reasons he founded the National Association for Show Choir (NASC) dedicated to music educators.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SHOW CHOIR

Gibbs: I'm a curious person and I enjoy hearing from people how they came to be doing work they truly love. How did you get into show choir?

McCormick: Looking back at my mother's life, she was in Up With People, which was kind of the first well-known show choir.

Gibbs: Oh my gosh, my mom took me to see them and I said, 'I want to do that!'

McCormick: Yes! My journey really began with her love of music, learning of her experiences with that group. My first time in choir was seventh grade, then as a freshman in high school I was in the show choir, which was more like a 'swing choir' than a show choir. We

would perform at the Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, do singing Valentines, stuff like that. We wore the same outfit to everything. Looking back, it's nothing like I know of now.

Gibbs: It certainly has evolved. You founded a group named National Association for Show Choir (NASC). How did NASC come about as something that you feel could be of service to the field?

McCormick: I've been going to Showchoir Camps of America (SCA) the past few years, and in 2023, I began to wonder—what would it look like if we had some sort of formal organization that could connect us, and what if we met on a more regular basis, more than once a year? I noticed a lot of the directors are

getting older and it seems like there's not a whole lot of younger students coming out of undergrad wanting to be a show choir director, or maybe they simply don't know how to be a show choir director.

Gibbs: According to the organization's Facebook page, "the mission of NASC is to advocate, educate, and inspire current and future music educators for the purpose of progressing show choir throughout the United States." Why those particular activities—advocate, educate, and inspire?

McCormick: When I came to Prattville, no one really knew what we were doing at the school regarding show choir. I've had to advocate and advocate for this

The mission to educate is because I feel like there are a lot of misconceptions about show choir. I think everyone thinks you come out of the gate and you have to be a big program... I think that scares a lot of people.

program. Finally just now, I don't know if [it's] because we made Show Choir Nationals, or because I am consistently advocating, [but] people are coming around to support us. It takes a lot of time to advocate for your program, if it's not already established. It's huge when communities can get behind a show choir.

The mission to educate is because I feel like there are a lot of misconceptions about show choir. I think everyone thinks you come out of the gate and you have to be a big program, like an Oak Mountain or Homewood High School (larger high schools near Prattville). I think that scares a lot of people. At least that's what I've heard from colleagues.

Also, I think we also have to inspire that next generation. A lot of my mentors are starting to retire. They are in their 50s and 60s and have been directing for 25 or so years. The 20 year olds coming out of undergraduate, they may just not know. The idea is to inspire them, encourage them, let them know it's possible. Show

choir is attainable.

It's going to take a lot of work. I would like to travel to schools that don't have show choir and be the outsider coming in to talk to the administration, be a bridge. The music educator in the school may have a want but is scared to go to their administrators and ask to start a show choir program. I can talk with them about how I did it. When I was teaching in Florence, Alabama, my sixth grade show choir started with nothing. We built sets and learned choreography. We took a bus to watch Nationals in Nashville. Even if it's something as simple as that, the kids get involved and invested.

Gibbs: Do you think one of the things that holds people back is there are more resources that go into a show choir production versus a choir where you can have one outfit and one piano player?

McCormick: For sure.

Gibbs: Where are they going to get the money?

McCormick: That's another thing I can talk about. My group now with the band is 20 students. The school gives us nothing. We raised over \$42,000. I pick fundraisers worth our time. It can be done.

It's a matter of understanding you are not alone. That's what NASC is all about. Connecting people. I want you to be able to reach out to someone who knows someone who can get you connected to what you need. I want it geared to music educators who are asking "how do I" with show choir. In the end I want us connected and know we can lean on each other.

I want it to start at the local and state level, then become a regional and national organization. I really like the

template that the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) has, so I used that model for how to structure the groups. ACDA started with around 35 people who met and decided to create ACDA and now it's an international organization.

I had no idea how to be a show choir director until I worked in Albertville, Alabama. For a year I struggled with the idea of show choir, figuring out how to produce good sound and dance at the same time. Some of that is because of my training as an opera singer.

Gibbs: Is there a degree program in show choir?

McCormick: No. For my dissertation, I interviewed 10 directors from across the U.S. to get a consensus on whether or not show choir incorporates choral fundamentals in what they do. James Madison University was the only institution that was mentioned during interviews to have a show choir methods course (MUED 471: School Musical, Jazz and Show Choir Procedures). Since becoming director of choral activities at my school, I've had to be an accountant, learn the ins and outs of getting costumes and arrangements, and be a mentor to my students. I had to learn to run a soundboard for my group. I would have loved to have taken a lighting course, but if you don't know that you are going into this field, you don't know to take that course.

There's a lot of things we can change. On a higher education level it may take an increase in show choir in schools before a degree program would be in demand. That could happen.

Gibbs: It does take time to develop a program, unless it's already well established.

McCormick: And a problem with that is directors who leave after only a few years. The kids don't have consistency. I plan to be here at Prattville and grow this program. Ninth through 12th graders are my mission field.

Gibbs: What is it about show choir that students get out of participating versus regular choir?

McCormick: Show choir allows students to break out of their shell, do something they may not have imagined they could do. It's the confidence that they gain. It's a journey. To see my group at the beginning of the year and to see them now, it's a night and day difference. You see them pick up confidence along the way. It allows the students to tap into so many different elements. It allows them to grow in all facets of the fine arts. I hope my seniors will be better adults as they go into undergrad.

On a personal level, creating a show and watching it come to life is a beautiful thing to see, as a teacher and creative minded person. You don't always know how the show will turn out, lights, etc. but to see it come together is beautiful.

I love what I do. I want others to love it too. We are trying to achieve the same goal with our students—to inspire them to be better, give them confidence, and find themselves. The emotions I encounter every day, especially post pandemic, the students need something to tap into. I think show choir gives them the opportunity to do that. Every school should have show choir.

Gibbs: Advocate, educate, and inspire—"If more people were for people, all people ev'rywhere, there'd be a lot less people to worry about and a lot more people who care."
Thank you, Dr. McCormick!

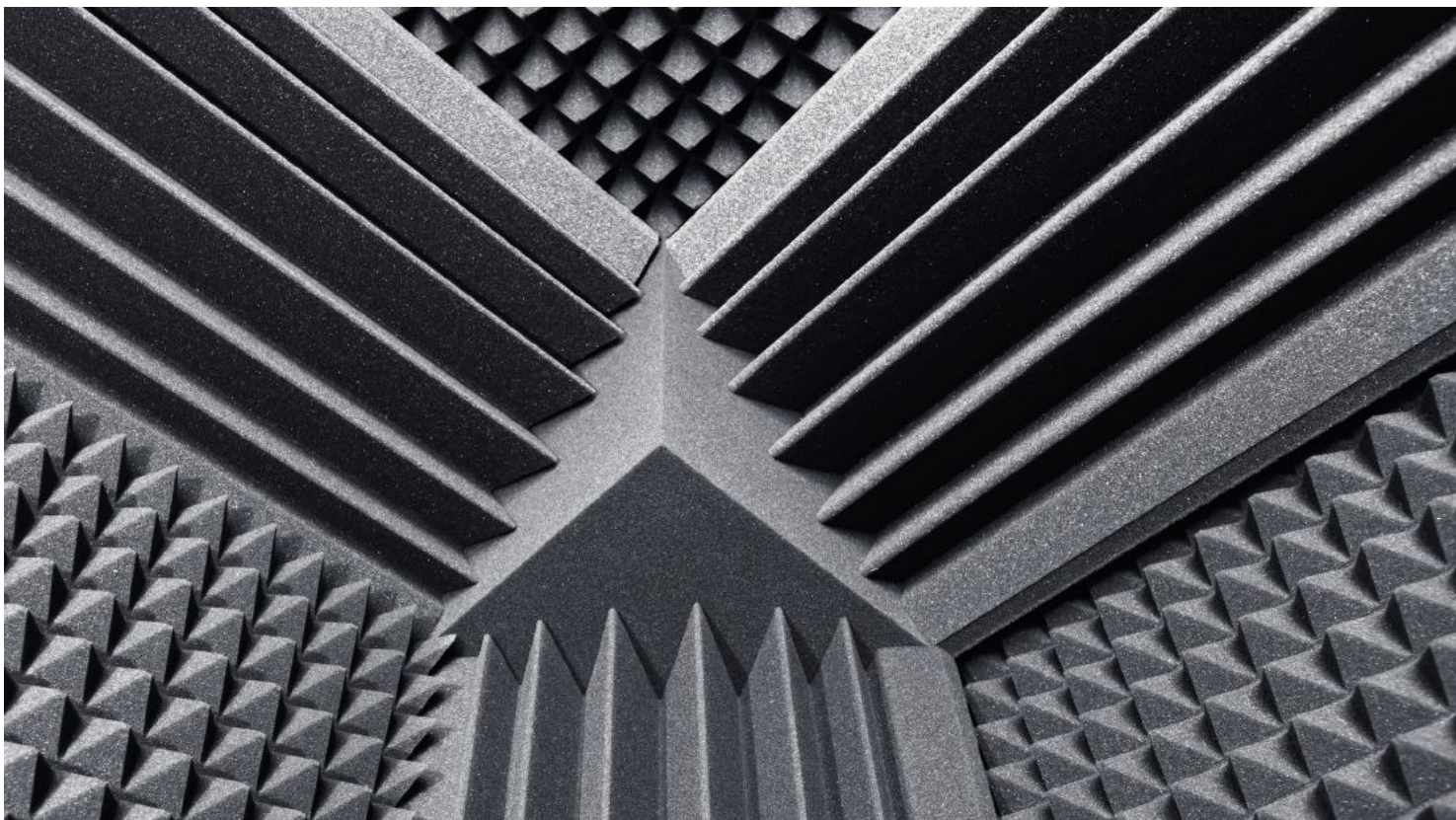
Search National Association for Show Choir on Facebook to learn more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Productions* staff writer Lisa Gibbs earned her EdD in Higher Education Administration in 2018. She is an advocate for arts, particularly dance, in education and for increasing the financial well-being of artists through financial education.



**OPTIMIZING ACOUSTICS FOR
SHOW CHOIR PERFORMANCES:**
A TECHNICAL GUIDE FOR DIRECTORS

by Ed Bauer



Among all the moving parts that come together to create an electrifying show choir performance, the importance of acoustics cannot be overstated. A well-optimized acoustic environment can enhance the clarity, richness, and overall impact of a show. Directors must understand the technical nuances of acoustics, including the principles of sound propagation, acoustic treatments, and optimal microphone placement to ensure their choir's talent shines through with every note and movement. We took a closer look at some of the key factors that contribute to showtime acoustics that are so perfect, the audience will never know the effort your team put into making it happen.

Before delving into the specifics of acoustics for show choir performances, it's crucial to grasp the foundational principles of sound propagation. Sound behaves differently in various environments, influenced by factors such as room size, shape, surface materials, and audience presence. Show choir directors must carefully consider these

factors to create an acoustically favorable environment.

Acoustic Treatments

Acoustic treatments play a pivotal role in shaping the sound of a performance venue. These treatments are designed to mitigate unwanted acoustic anomalies such as reverberation, echoes, and frequency imbalances. Directors should work closely with venue managers or sound engineers to implement the following acoustic treatments:

1. **Absorption Panels.** Strategically placing absorption panels on walls and ceilings can reduce reverberation and control unwanted reflections. Panels should be positioned in areas where sound energy is likely to bounce off surfaces, such as behind the choir and along the sidewalls of the performance space.
2. **Diffusers.** Diffusers scatter sound waves in multiple directions, promoting a more uniform distribution of sound energy throughout the venue.

Incorporating diffusers into the design of the performance space can help minimize the perception of “hot spots” or areas with excessive sound intensity.

3. **Bass Traps.** Low-frequency sounds, particularly from bass instruments and vocalists, can accumulate in corners and create acoustic problems. Bass traps, typically made of dense materials such as fiberglass or foam, absorb low-frequency energy and prevent it from building up in specific areas.

4. **Ceiling Clouds.** Suspended acoustic panels, known as ceiling clouds, can be installed above the performance area to further improve sound diffusion and absorption. Ceiling clouds are particularly effective in venues with high ceilings, where sound reflections can be more pronounced.

5. **Floor Coverings.** Choosing appropriate floor coverings, such as carpets or rugs, can help reduce floor reflections and improve overall acoustics. Additionally, carpets can minimize



footstep noise during performances, enhancing the audience's listening experience.

Optimal Microphone Placement

In a show choir performance, microphone placement is a critical aspect of achieving balanced sound reinforcement without compromising the natural acoustics of the venue. Directors should collaborate with sound engineers or audio technicians to determine the most suitable microphone placement for the choir members and accompanying musicians. Here are some key considerations for microphone placement:

- 1. Choir Microphones:** When micing a show choir, consider using a combination of individual microphones for soloists or small vocal sections and overhead microphones to capture the entire ensemble. Overhead microphones, such as condenser microphones or shotgun microphones, should be positioned at an appropriate height above the choir to capture a balanced blend of voices without obstructing sightlines or choreography.
- 2. Directionality:** Choose microphones with appropriate directional characteristics to minimize feedback and unwanted noise. Cardioid or supercardioid microphones are commonly

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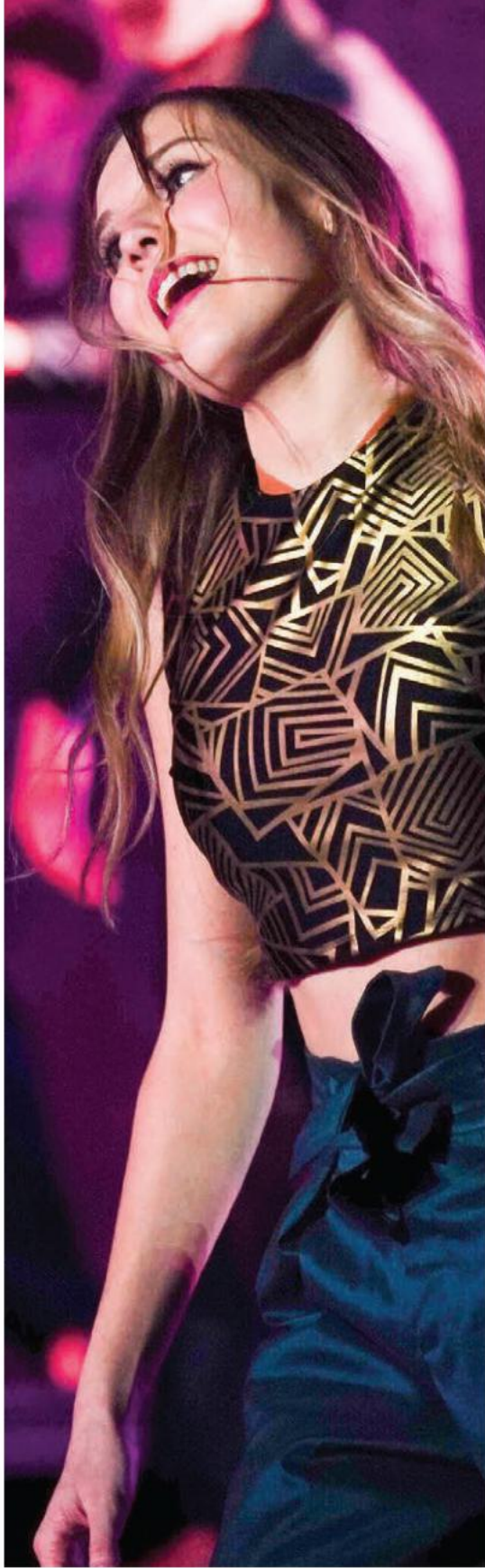
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He was introduced to Show Choir by his daughter and he is forever grateful to her for this wonderful gift.



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