



Southern California Vocal Association

AUGUST 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Ushino

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the most exciting school year yet! There's nothing like the optimism and anxiety that comes from the unknown of a new school year, regardless of how many years you've been in the profession. With our unique position as music teachers, we have the opportunity to forge bonds with a whole new group of students that will impact our programs and lives for many years to come. That group of students has no idea about the types of traditions your program has, personalities that they will come in contact with, or the experiences that they will enjoy while being in your program. It is a clean slate that you can mold and shape to whatever image you'd like. That is always what excites me most about the new year.

Just because you've done something one way forever, doesn't mean you have to keep doing it. Feel free to be creative and try something new this semester. Keep your own creativity and curiosity fresh. I always try to add a major wrinkle or change to my program each year so even the returning students have something new to experience. It could be as simple as changing which direction your classroom faces or how your set seating arrangements. Or you might want to go extreme and restructure your entire rehearsal process and lesson plans. I've experimented with all of these things and you would be shocked what those changes can do for you and your students.

Be daring. Be brave. Have fun!

Michael Ushino
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Tammi Alderman
Past President

Bethany Encina
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VP - Vocal Solo Competition

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VP II - Vocal Solo Competition

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VP I - Festivals

Trevor Torres
VP II - Festivals

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VP - Festival Adjudication

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Jr High/Middle School Honor Choir

Brandon Harris
VP - Show Choir

Brittney Wescamillo
VP - Jazz/Contemporary A Cappella
Honor Choir

Kaitlin Pi
VP - Jazz Festival

Sarah Flores
Elementary Activities

Marco Rodriguez
VP - Close Harmony Festival

FALL IN - SERVICE

FRIDAY, SEPT. 19 | 9:00-3:30

[INFO & REGISTRATION HERE](#)



**STUDENT LEADERSHIP
BETHANY ENCINA**



**HEADLINER
DR. LYNN ATKINS**



**ELEMENTARY ED
ANNA SANTIAGO**



**SIGHT READING
DON CRAFTON**

Sessions Include:

Inclusive Classroom
Developmentally Appropriate Repertoire
Crafting a Meaningful Program
Elementary Musicianship
Student Leadership
Sight Reading Made Simple
SCVA General Meeting
Lunch Included in Registration Fee

ST. MARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | NEWPORT BEACH

HIGH SCHOOL HONOR CHOIR

Important Dates and Info



Adjudicators Needed!



HONOR CHOIR WEEKEND NOVEMBER 6-8, 2025 AT UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

We hope you are all having a fantastic start to your year and that your students are excited for the opportunity to audition for the SCVA High School Honor Choir. Audition sign ups will be open at the end of this month with auditions taking place September 20th and September 27th.

We wanted to take a moment to clarify information regarding our audition process as CCDA has made several changes to the audition processes for the Central and Northern regions. SCVA **will not** be implementing these changes for the 2025 Honor Choir season and our audition process will remain the same as last year. More information on what is required for the audition can be found on our website. Maintaining our previous auditions requirements will not negatively impact your students' abilities to participate in the All-State Honor Choir.

**We need
your help!**

Audition
adjudicators
needed for
September 20th
and 27th. Earn a
\$150 stipend!

Contact
scvahonorchoir@gmail.com
for more info.

HIGH SCHOOL HONOR CHOIRS

FEE WAIVERS

The Southern California Vocal Association is offering full and partial fee waivers to students who demonstrate financial need and who have been accepted into any of the 2025 SCVA High School Honor Choirs (SSAA, TTBB, SATB, Vocal Jazz).

General Information

- Teacher Nomination

The student's nominating high school music teacher must fill out the confidential information form and submit the [Teacher Nomination](#) on or before October 18, 2025.

- Student Application

The applicant must complete an application and write an essay of 200 words or less describing financial need what honor choir participation would mean to them. The [Student Application](#) must be submitted on or before October 18, 2025

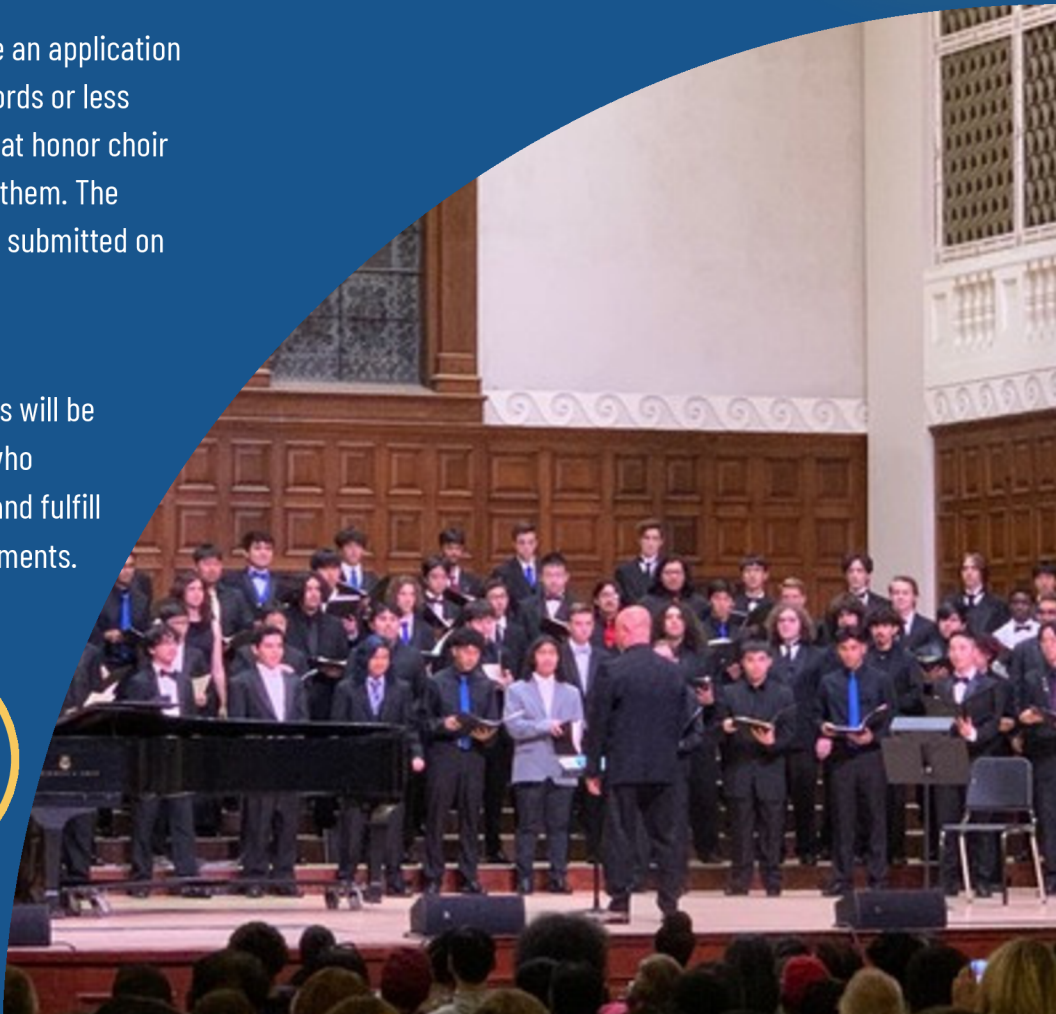
- Financial Need

Full and/or partial fee waivers will be awarded to select students who demonstrate financial need and fulfill the other application requirements.

Apply by Oct. 18, 2025

- Complete [Student Application](#) and Essay
- Complete [Teacher Nomination Form](#)
- Due on or before October 18, 2025
- Recipients will be notified on October 27, 2025

Application
Opens Oct. 06





Introducing our 2025 Vocal Jazz/A Cappella Honor Choir Director, John Knutson!

Auditions Go Live:
August 18th

Audition Deadline:
September 14th
11:59pm



VJCA Honor Choir Weekend:
November 13th/14th, 2025
Valencia High School
Santa Clarita, CA

John Knutson is Director of Choral Studies at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, CA. He is a former member of the professional vocal jazz ensemble Vocalogy, formed by Phil Mattson in 1998.

John holds a Masters in Conducting degree from Northern Arizona University and a Bachelors in Piano Performance from the University of Minnesota.

John has served as a clinician at jazz and choral festivals in 18 states, and in five Canadian provinces. John has numerous choral compositions; his vocal jazz arrangements are available through UNC Jazz Press and Anchor Music Publications.

Visit scvachoral.org/vocal_jazz_honor_choir.php
for audition instructions
Questions?
Email brittney@wescamillo.com

SCVA

FESTIVAL HOST

Registration Open

CLOSES OCT. 1ST

Why
HOST?



- ☑ Choose your festival date!
- ☑ No transportation costs!
- ☑ One free ensemble registration!
- ☑ Full adjudication team provided!



VOCAL JAZZ & CONTEMPORARY
A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL

Save the date!

Saturday, February 7th, 2026

Saugus High School

Santa Clarita, CA

Registration opens October 15th, 2025

www.scvachoral.org/jazz_festival.php

LIMITED SPACE!!

With Clinicians

Rob Dietz & Sean Fitzpatrick

Afternoon Concert TBA





SCVA ***SHOW CHOIR SPECTACULAR***

Save the Date

MAY 16TH 2026



RUSD PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

2000 Otterbein Ave.
Rowland Heights CA 91748



REGISTRATION
NOV 17TH 2025



MIDDLE SCHOOL/9TH GRADE

HONOR CHOIR

2025-2026

**AUDITION
HOSTS NEEDED!!**

Ruth Morris Gray
Conductor



Important Dates

Saturday January 31st

Audition Weekend #1

Saturday February 7th

Audition Weekend #2

Saturday March 14th

Regional Rehearsal

San Juan Hills High School

San Juan Capistrano

Saturday May 2nd

Rehearsal Day and Final Concert

Portola High School ~ Irvine

**AUDITION
SIGN UPS OPEN IN
JANUARY!**

**OPEN TO ALL
6TH-9TH
GRADERS!**

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA VOCAL ASSOCIATION

CLOSE HARMONY FESTIVAL UPDATE

TBD 2027



CLOSE HARMONY

Due to ongoing organizational restructuring, the Close Harmony Festival has been postponed until 2027.



WILL RETURN 2027

We appreciate your continued support and understanding during this time of transition. Our team is working to bring you an even more vibrant and inspiring festival experience when we return.

WWW.SCVACHORAL.ORG/CLOSEHARMONY

SCVA Vocal Solo Festival 2025

Congratulations to our 2025 winners!

CLASSICAL

First place: Frances Salata, Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual & Performing Arts

Second place: Jozen Wynter, Trabuco Hills High School

Third place: Sawyer Damron, Tesoro High School

COMMERCIAL/JAZZ

First place: Kristy Centeno, Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual & Performing Arts

Second place: Audra Cockrum, Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual & Performing Arts

Third place: Alex Santos, Tesoro High School

MUSICAL THEATRE

First place: Morgan Abalos, Heritage Schools

Second Place (tie): Itxmara Zepeda, Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual & Performing Arts

Second Place (tie): Alana Merritt, Yvette Itano Voice Studio

MIDDLE SCHOOL

First place: Molly McClure, Top Billing Entertainment

Be on the lookout for information on the 2026 Vocal Solo Festival.

Submissions will be open in January 2026 for this year's festival



Questions:

Drew Lewis at drewlewis1977@gmail.com or

Monica Benson at monicatbenson@gmail.com





2026 CMEA STATE CHORAL FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY WORLD PROJECTS

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026

GREEN MUSIC CENTER, SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY



SELECTION PROCESS

In 200 words or less, please write a short paragraph describing your school and choral program. Include anything interesting or unique about your area, program, or your students. This narrative will be submitted to the committee for consideration, so anonymity is essential. The intent of this festival is to showcase outstanding choral ensembles that represent the diversity of our great state.

FESTIVAL PERFORMANCE ADJUDICATION

Each ensemble participating in the California State Choir Festival will receive recorded comments from a panel of three prominent clinicians and receive a clinic with one of the clinicians immediately following the performance. You must provide three original scores for each piece your ensemble will perform.

PARTICIPANT FEE

The festival participation fee is \$450. The application and recordings are due Sept. 15, 2025. The participant fee is due immediately upon notification of acceptance but no later than November 30, 2025. All accepted schools will be invoiced with options for paying by credit card or check.

After December 1, 2025 refunds will only be given if the event is canceled due to State or local travel restrictions.

FUTURE YEARS FESTIVALS

We plan to return to Southern California in Spring 2027 and continue this pattern into the future.

PREREQUISITES

Participating groups must have received a Superior rating or have participated in a Comments Only CMEA sanctioned festival during Spring Semester of 2025. CMEA sanctioned festivals include festivals hosted by CMEA Sections and also the Southern California Vocal Association (SCVA). Applications include a recording of the ensemble performing approximately 15 minutes of music with at least two works that best demonstrate the group's abilities. All recordings will be uploaded with the online application which will be emailed to all members in May and available on the CMEA website.

DATE & LOCATION

The California State Choral Festival, presented by World Projects, will be held on Friday, April 24, 2026 at the Green Music Center on the campus of Sonoma State University.



QUESTIONS?

Contact Kenneth Haro, CMEA State Choir Festival Coordinator, at choralfestival@calmusiced.com.



WEBSITE UPDATE

Mark Freedkin, SCVA Webmaster

Your E-mail Address Matters SCVA

When you registered or renewed your annual SCVA Membership, you specified your work or personal e-mail address, both of which are unique to you. In some cases, you might have multiple e-mail address aliases for your school, but you must always standardize on the one that you used for your SCVA Membership.

When your students register to participate in an SCVA event, they should use the same e-mail address that you used when you created or renewed your Annual SCVA Membership. The system validates your e-mail address and verifies that your SCVA Membership Dues have been paid. Our systems will reject any student applications (such as Honor Choirs or Vocal Solo Competition) that don't use your primary e-mail address.

When that happens, the application is discarded and there is nothing that we can do to recover it. Instead, it is your responsibility to ensure that your singers use ONLY your primary e-mail address that is associated with your SCVA membership. In addition, when we have application deadlines, we cannot accept a claim that a student used the wrong e-mail address or if they had some Internet connectivity problems. It is as if they had not submitted any application at all. This is another great reason to teach your students that waiting until the last minute to submit their applications is not a very good idea.

On a related note, when your students use that primary email address for their audition applications, you can view all of the applications for your students by logging in to the Members-Only area of the website. You can also view all of your Festival Registrations on that page once we open the Festival Registration process.

Hints for using PayPal and How to Save Some Money

When using **PayPal** to pay the application or participation fees for multiple students, you can minimize the processing fees by adding the desired item to your Shopping Cart once, then specify a quantity for that one item. You should not add that item to your Shopping Cart multiple times, since that will result in a larger processing fee being added to your total transaction amount.

Similarly, you can use a single PayPal transaction to pay the application fees, registration fees or participation fees for multiple events (such as multiple Festival Registration fees), rather than checking-out after every individual item. Simply add each item to the Shopping Cart, and then click on the "Continue Shopping" button to return to the SCVA website. After you have completed adding all of the items you wish to purchase, you can then proceed to the check-out page to complete the payment for everything, and you can receive a single invoice for all items you purchased.

Comments, Questions, Suggestions or Complants

If you ever need help with anything related to our website, please contact Mark Freedkin at (714) 357-1187 or "mfreedkin@yahoo.com", and we'll be happy to assist you.

Important Dates & Deadlines

Event

VJCA Honor Choir Auditions Deadline to Apply
Fall In-Service
HS Honor Choir Auditions
Festival Host Registration Closes
Festival Registration opens
VJCA Festival Registration Opens
HS Honor Choir Fee Waiver Deadline to Apply
High School Honor Choir Weekend
VJCA Honor Choir Weekend
Show Choir Spectacular Registration Opens

Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Auditions
VJCA Festival
Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Regional Rehearsal
Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Concert
Show Choir Spectacular

2025

Sep 14
Sept 19
Sept 20 & 27
Oct 1
Oct 15
Oct 15
Oct 18
Nov 6-8
Nov 11-13
Nov 17

2026

Jan 31 & Feb 7
Feb 7
March 14
May 2
May 16

MEMBER *Spotlight*

Tell us about your teaching career so far:

I am in my twelfth year as Vocal Music Director and AP Music Theory teacher at Troy HS in Fullerton. Previously, I served ten years at Segerstrom HS in Santa Ana, and thirteen years at Brea Olinda HS in Brea. Through the years I have also held adjunct positions at Fullerton College, Riverside College, and Mt. San Antonio College.

What is your history working with SCVA?

I have been an SCVA member since 1992, and have held many positions on the Executive Board including two terms as President.

What do you find yourself looking forward to every year?

The beginning of the school year is always a favorite time of year for me. I really enjoy the excitement of beginning the journey together, and the opportunity to see the dynamics of a group as the singers begin to bond and enjoy making music together.

Which piece have you most recently been excited about?

I love discovering a piece that is new to me and ends up becoming a favorite. "Parce Domine" by Feliks Nowowiejski is a beautiful piece with stunning harmonies and gorgeous dynamic contrasts. It contains an Anglican style choral chant section that is hauntingly beautiful and teaches several useful choral techniques. The singers absolutely loved rehearsing and performing the piece.

What is a skill you now consider yourself accomplished in, that was not a strength when you began teaching?

I find that I tend to be much more "process oriented" now than I was when I began my teaching career. Reflecting on my first years, I focused too much on getting to the performance product, but have since then developed rehearsal and teaching techniques that serve the singers well and have also resulted in an improved result. I love being in the classroom!

What word of advice would you have for a brand new teacher this year?

If we offer singers quality instruction in a place where they feel safe and loved, they will flourish! I've had the privilege of teaching in schools with vastly different demographics and in each setting the students achieved a high level of musicianship and success. No matter the context, I have consistently found that students are drawn to the powerful community and artistic fulfillment that choral singing offers.



MARK HENSON