



Southern California Vocal Association

MAY 2026

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Ushino

Dear Colleagues,

The end of the school year is near! And with it is my last months of serving you all as your President of this organization. It has been such a pleasure to continue the work that we do and fighting the good fight.

As I transition into the roles of Past-President and Vice President of High School Honor Choir next year, I am thrilled that Bethany Encina will be serving you all as President for the next two years. She is everything that this organization needs to usher in a new generation of choral directors entering the field and supporting choral directors of all experience levels to continue to reach new heights.

I've been fortunate to be part of the leadership of SCVA from 2018 ("the Pre-Covid Days"), through the isolation of virtual online teaching, and the new normal of Post-Covid education. Many things have changed for both better and worse. What hasn't changed is our mission to provide the best possible music education that our students deserve. Our mission at SCVA hasn't changed with our mission to support all of you in providing professional development opportunities, networking opportunities, honor choirs, festivals, vocal competitions, and much more. With your support, this mission will continue long into the future.

We are also continually looking for any of you who might be interested in helping out at our events or even joining the leadership board in future years. Let us continue to help our students and our colleagues to move the field forward.

Bravi Tutti!

Michael Ushino
President

Tammi Alderman
Past President

Bethany Encina
President Elect

Carolyn Kelley
Treasurer

Bekka Knauer
Secretary

Dora Ridgeway
Membership

Karen Bluel
Newsletter Editor

Mark Freedkin
Web Communications

Kristen Walton
VPI - High School Honor Choir

Drew Lewis
VP - Vocal Solo Competition

Monica Benson
VP II - Vocal Solo Competition

Ken Haro
VP I - Festivals

Trevor Torres
VP II - Festivals

Daniel Alvarez
VP - Festival Adjudication

Sammy Salvador
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

FUTURE CHORAL EDUCATOR SCHOLARSHIPS

The Southern California Vocal Association is offering scholarships to graduating 12th grade music students who show exceptional promise and achievement in the field of music and will be majoring in music in college with the intent to teach vocal music.

General Information

- Teacher Nomination

The student's nominating high school music teacher must fill out the confidential information form and submit the [Teacher Nomination](#) by May 29, 2026.

- Student Essay

The applicant must complete an application and write an essay of 300 words or less describing why they want to be a music major and submit the [Student Application](#) by May 29, 2026.

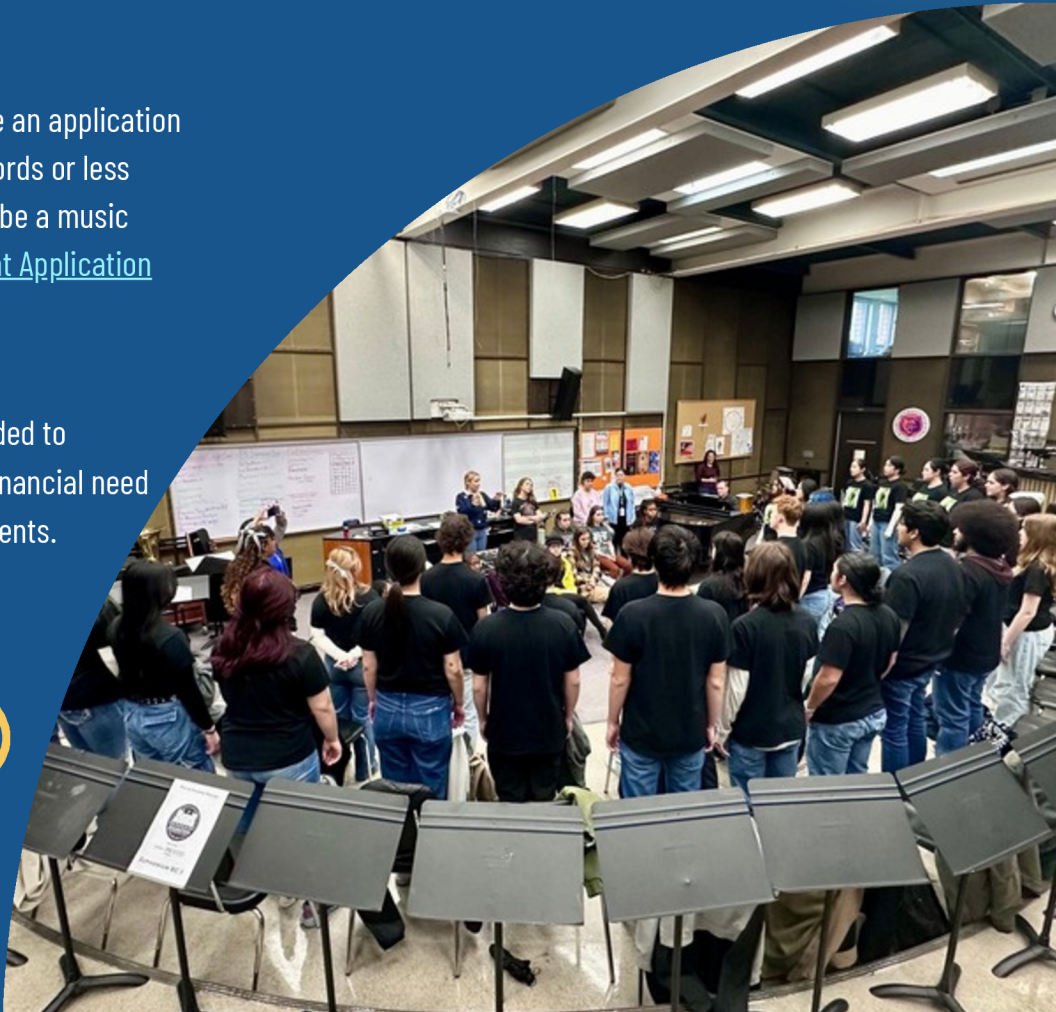
- Financial Need

The scholarship will be awarded to students who demonstrate financial need and fulfill the other requirements.

Apply by May 29 2026

- Complete [Student Application](#) and Essay
- Complete [Teacher Nomination Form](#)
- Due on or before May 17, 2026
- Recipients will be notified on or before June 05.

Apply Now!



JOIN US FOR OUR **SUMMER CHATS**

***MEMBER HOSTED!**

JUNE CHATS

JUNE 17TH, 4:30 PM
THE HIDDEN VINE, MISSION VIEJO
HOST: MICHAEL USHINO
27772 VISTA DEL LAGO SUITE B-15, MISSION VIEJO, CA 92691

JUNE 18TH, 11 AM
P.F. CHANG'S, RANCHO CUCAMONGA
HOST: DONALD BRINEGAR
7870 MONTICELLO AVE RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA 91739

JUNE 25TH, 4 PM
ESCENA BAR & GRILL, PALM SPRINGS
HOST: JEFF KOPASZ
1100 CLUBHOUSE VIEW DR, PALM SPRINGS CA 92262

JULY CHATS

JULY 9TH, 5 PM
UNION ON YALE, CLAREMONT
HOST: JARED PUGH
232 YALE AVE, CLAREMONT, CA 91711

JULY 24TH, 2 PM
WILSON CREEK WINERY, TEMECULA
HOST: DORA RIDGEWAY
35960 RANCHO CALIFORNIA RD, TEMECULA, CA 92591

AUGUST CHATS

AUGUST 4TH, 3 PM
BLIND COYOTE CANTINA, YORBA LINDA
HOST: ALAN GARCIA
4975 LAKEVIEW AVE, YORBA LINDA, CA 92886

AUGUST 15TH, 11 AM
CALIFORNIA PIZZA KITCHEN, HUNTINGTON BEACH
HOST: NEIL REYES
7851 EDINGER AVE, HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA 92647

RSVP HERE!



SCVA 2026

SHOW CHOIR SPECTACULAR COMPETITION RESULTS

Middle School A

- 1st - Ethel Dwyer Middle School "Rising Waves"
- 2nd - Carden Arbor View School "Carden Choir"
- 3rd - Valadez Middle School "Estrellas"

Middle School B

- 1st - Temecula Valley Charter School "Roaring Harmony"
- 2nd - Beattie Middle School "Musique du Coeur"
- 3rd - Walker Junior High School "Legacy"

High School Mixed Novice A

- 1st - Riverside Poly High School "Sound Check"
- 2nd - John W. North High School "Show Choir"
- 3rd - Dana Hills High School "Golden Lantern"

High School Mixed Novice B

- 1st - Robert F. Kennedy High School "Thundertones"
- 2nd - South High School "Crescendos"
- 3rd - Warren High School "Show Choir"

High School Mixed Intermediate

- 1st - Martin Luther King High School "Legacy"
- 2nd - North High School "Nothern Lights"

High School Tenor/Bass

- 1st - John F. Kennedy High School "Secret Service"

SEVA VOCAL SOLO FESTIVAL 2026

Congratulations to all our finalists who performed in the final concert on May 17th at Vallejo Drive Church in Glendale. Their dedication, artistry, and passion for vocal music made the evening a truly memorable celebration. We are proud to recognize these outstanding students and look forward to their continued success in music and beyond.



The following students earned top honors at the concert and were awarded cash prizes for their outstanding performances.

Middle School Overall

First place: Elodie Barker
Second Place: Ellie Liu
Third Place: Maya Kotschedoff

High School Musical Theatre

First place: Arianna Estada
Second Place: Bejay Villanueva
Third Place: Charli Stone

High School Classical

First place: Laura Lo
Second Place: Olivia Song
Third Place: Arturo Cabrera Balguera

High School Commercial/Jazz

First place: Aviva Wrosch
Second Place: Lucie Conlan
Third Place: Saraya Chigoji



Middle School / 9th Grade Honor Choir



On Saturday, May 2nd, 2026, **103 students** performed a beautiful concert program at Portola High School under the direction of **Mrs. Ruth Morris Gray**. The students had a wonderful time through an engaging and thought-provoking rehearsal experience! This program also featured the incredible **Portola Singers**, under the direction of **Mr. Adrian Rangel-Sanchez**.

This transformative experience could not have been possible without the help of several people! I would like to thank all the directors that encouraged and prepared their students to audition and helped them throughout the learning process. I'd also like to thank **Kevin Jeffries-Phan, Catherine Croisette, Joe Buzzelli, and Jocelyn Crecia** for their work on Piano, Cello, Violin, and Drums, respectively. Thank you to the volunteers who graciously gave of their time to help at both the regional rehearsal and concert. This event would also not be possible without the incredible generosity of **Mr. Adrian Rangel-Sanchez** and Portola High School for offering their beautiful venue. I also want to thank **Mrs. Ruth Morris Gray** for sharing her compositions with our students. Each student sang at such a high caliber that was only possible under your artistic direction.

Thank you so much!

Sammy Salvador
Middle School / 9th Grade Honor Choir Chair



INTRODUCING YOUR 2026

SCVA VOCAL JAZZ/CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA HONOR CHOIR DIRECTOR!



**Honor Choir Dates:
November 4th-6th**

**Location:
University of
Redlands**



**Audition portal opens:
August 17th
Audition Deadline:
September 13th**

Rob Dietz is a leading voice in contemporary vocal music, known for his award-winning work as an arranger, composer, conductor, educator, and vocal percussionist. Over the past two decades, he has directed acclaimed vocal ensembles, developed innovative music education programs, and championed a modern approach to choral music that blends traditional technique with contemporary pop sensibility.

Dietz's arranging and vocal percussion work has been featured across film, television, and live performance, including *The Sing-Off*, *America's Got Talent*, *Glee*, *Pitch Perfect 3*, and *To All the Boys: P.S. I Still Love You*. His arrangements have been performed by top-tier vocal acts, including Grammy-winning groups Pentatonix and The Swingles, as well as VoicePlay, Kings Return, and artists such as Smokey Robinson, Sara Bareilles, Pat Benatar, David Archuleta, and Flo Rida. He has also performed on *The Late Late Show* with James Corden (CBS), and is a longtime member of the L.A. Choral Lab, with whom he has appeared as both a featured soloist and conductor. A sought-after clinician, he has presented for major organizations and conventions nationwide and currently serves as the National Repertoire & Resources Chair for Contemporary A Cappella for the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). Since fall 2025, he has also served as a lecturer at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, where he directs the Chorale and teaches choral pedagogy.

Visit scvachoral.org/vocal_jazz_honor_choir.php
for audition instructions



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

SCVA Regional High School Honor Choir 2026

Auditions: **September 19 & 26, 2026**

Audition Locations: TBD

Online Application & Application Fee Due by **September 5, 2026**

Honor Choir Weekend: **November 5-7, 2026**

Honor Choir Weekend Location: **University of Redlands**

SCVA Fall In-Service 2026

Date: **Friday, September 25, 2026**

Location: **Fullerton Free Church**

\$80 Early Registration/\$90 Late Registration/\$20 Student Registration

Note: Early Registration Ends **September 1, 2026**

New! Conducting Masterclass Session

By popular demand, we will have a **Conducting Master Class** session at the **SCVA Fall In-Service!**

Prospective conductors will submit a **video audition** of a conducting performance:

Recording must be 10 minutes or less

Video must be taken with the camera facing the conductor

Recording can be from a rehearsal or performance

Consideration given to conductors with varying experience levels in the field.

Videos must be sent to Michael Ushino at **michaelushino@gmail.com**

Deadline by **September 1/Notification by September 7**



CELEBRATING RETIREEES

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The Southern California Vocal Association
would like to formally congratulate our
member

JOHN SARGENT

on his retirement. After 27 years of service,
John is retiring from Newbury Park High
School in the Conejo Valley Unified School
District. Thank you for all you have done
for your students, and we wish you a happy
retirement!

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REMEMBERING John Byun

With great sorrow and sympathy, we mourn the loss of John Byun. SCVA wishes to honor the memory of our colleague whose life and legacy have forever impacted the lives of countless members of our choral community.

SCVA was incredibly fortunate to have John serve as a guest conductor for several of our high school honor choirs over the years. He inspired our young singers through his heartfelt storytelling and deep emotional connection to the music. Many students have shared that those three days with him were "life-changing" and remain "forever imprinted in their memories."

Our hearts and thoughts are with John's family, the students and faculty of RCC, and all those who count themselves among John's great circle of friends, colleagues, and students.



The Byun family has indicated that a student travel fund in John's name will be set up to help future generations of RCC students experience the magic of our world through music. Details to follow when available.

The votes are in!
Congrats to the
SCVA
2026-2028
Executive Board



Bethany Encina,
President



Michael Ushino,
Past President,
HS Honor Choir I



Bekka Knauer,
Secretary



Carolyn Kelley,
Treasurer



Dora Ridgeway,
Membership



Karen Bluel,
Newsletter



Kristen Walton,
Social Media



Mark Freedkin,
Webmaster



Trevor Torres,
HS Honor Choir II



Sammy Salvador,
JH Honor Choir



Brandon Harris,
Show Choir



Monica Benson,
Vocal Solo



Kaitlin Pi,
Vocal Jazz Fest



Jacqueline Reeff,
Festivals I



Greta Davis,
Festivals II



Connie Tu,
Festival Adjudication

Thank you for entrusting us with this worthwhile work! We look forward to serving you and your students in the coming years.

*We are still seeking a **President Elect** and **VP of Elementary Activities**.
If you're interested, please reach out to [**bethanyencina@gmail.com**](mailto:bethanyencina@gmail.com).*

Important Dates & Deadlines

Event

Future Choral Educator Scholarship Application Deadline
Summer Chats in Various Locations
SVJC Honor Choir Audition Portal Opens
Master Conducting Class Videos Due
High School Honor Choir Applications Due
Master Conducting Class Notification
SVJC Audition Deadline
High School Honor Choir Auditions
Fall In-Service
High School Honor Choir Weekend
SVJC Honor Choir Weekend

Date

May 29
June 17–August 15
August 17
September 1
September 5
September 7
September 13
September 19 & 26
September 25
November 5–7
November 5–7

MEMBER

SPOTLIGHT

KIMBERLY ANAYA

Tell us about your teaching career so far.

I have my degree in Vocal Performance. I wanted to be an opera singer...but I started teaching on an emergency credential in 2006 for some income as an Elementary band and choir teacher. I did not want to teach! But after that year, I went back to school and got my teaching credential, and I landed a job in Redlands teaching choir at a middle school. I took over a well-established middle school program and continued to expand. I left that job after three years to take the high school job at Citrus Valley High School, and have been there since 2011. My job assignment has changed throughout the years, but right now I teach 4 choirs and musical theater after school. We do two musical theater shows a year, and I team-teach with the theater teacher.

What piece have you recently been most excited about?

I am always excited about songs that start with a bang in the classical choral world!

What piece of advice do you have for other choral professionals right now?

My advice is to find the joy every day. Try to pick music that students will enjoy, which will bring them joy, and then bring you joy. Try to create relationships with colleagues that matter, and that can hold you accountable for your work and save you on a bad day. Make sure that the students are having a good time in class....it's ok to be silly.

What is your history working with SCVA?

My history with SCVA started when I was in high school and sang with the honor choir. When I got into my high school position, I made sure to be a part of the organization and have judged for honor choir, hosted honor choir auditions, and have had many of my choir participate in festivals.

What is one thing you plan to do differently, or something you are excited to bring into choir for next year?

I am always doing something different every year. There is always room for improvement. But I will bring a well-rested teacher from summer break next year. I make sure to spend time with my family and recharge, so I am ready to go for the next school year.

