



Southern California Vocal Association

October 2026

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bethany Encina

There's something a little Wednesday-ish about October, in my opinion. The bright, shininess of the new school year has worn off a bit and Thanksgiving Break feels so far away... But just like on Wednesdays, the meaty work of the semester is happening in October - Fall Concerts, big fundraisers and Honor Choir auditions! The machine is in motion, and it can feel like there's no time to stop and reflect; certainly no time for "self care," whatever that means.

But at our recent Fall Inservice, our keynote speaker Dr. Gene Peterson called us out - "Exhaustion is not a credential." There is no prize for running oneself ragged in the pursuit of good music. And our students absolutely deserve the most well-rested, fully-functioning versions of their teachers.

So I want to encourage us all to make choices this October which will result in just that: a version of ourselves which has the mental bandwidth to reflect after an event, to plan ahead for the season to come, and to handle a behavior issue with grace and compassion in combination with our high expectations.

What are the choices which that version of you makes?

Most likely, they don't choose to stay in the classroom until 7 or 8pm making copies of worksheets. They probably don't check their school emails on their phone at all hours of the day and night, just in case of some catastrophic, choir-related emergency... And most likely they don't run all day on Diet Coke and sunshine.

If we can pick even just **one** boundary to set or one choice to make to move a little more towards that person this month, our students will reap the benefits - and our careers will become a little more sustainable.

Bethany Encina
President

Michael Ushino
Past President
High School Honor Choir I

Carolyn Kelley
Treasurer

Bekka Knauer
Secretary

Dora Ridgeway
Membership

Karen Bluel
Newsletter Editor

Mark Freedkin
Web Communications

Trevor Torres
High School Honor Choir II

Monica Benson
Vocal Solo Competition

Jacqueline Reef
Festivals I

Greta Davis
Festivals II

Connie Tu
Festival Adjudication

Sammy Salvador
Jr High Honor Choir

Brandon Harris
Show Choir

Kaitlin Pi
Jazz Festival

Kristen Walton
Social Media

SCVA High School Honor Choir

The Results Are In!

By the Numbers:

Audition Score Cutoffs (Highest Since the Pandemic!)

Sopranos 88/100

Altos 84/100

Tenors 74/100

Basses 67/100

276 accepted students out of 586 applicants (511 auditioned).
Roughly 2/3 accepted students received a score of 90 or more!

Honor Choir Weekend

November 5th to November 7th

Rehearsals at University of Redlands

Honor Choir Performance at Redlands High School - Clock Auditorium (Nov 7th at 6pm)

Tickets on Sale at www.scvachoral.org (Directors receive a complimentary ticket!)

Meet Your Honor Choir Conductors!



Dr. Jeffrey Benson
SSAA Honor Choir



Lori Marie Rios
SATB Honor Choir



Sydney Guillaume
TTBB Honor Choir

SPRING FESTIVALS

High School

Registration opens
October 15th at 8am

Day	Date	Time	Site	City	Level	Type	Sight Reading	Host
Thursday	2/11/27	6:00pm	Grand Terrace High School	Grand Terrace	Class III	Mixed	Y	Raul Valdez-Perea
Tuesday	2/23/27	10:00am	Hacienda Heights Community Center	Hacienda Heights	Open	Open	N	Jeffrey Fahey
Tuesday	3/2/27	10:00am	Cal State San Bernardino	San Bernardino	Open	Clinic	N	Lesley Leighton
Thursday	3/4/27	9:30am	Bishop Amat Memorial High School	La Puente	Class I	Open	Y	Jennifer Escovar
Thursday	3/4/27	2:00pm	Bishop Amat Memorial High School	La Puente	Open	Open	Y	Jennifer Escovar
Friday	3/5/27	10:00am	Rubidoux High School	Jurupa Valley	Open	Open	N	Jeff Lin
Friday	3/5/27	10:00am	Newport Harbor High School	Newport Beach	Open	Open	Y	Andrew Hernandez
Monday	3/8/27	7:00pm	Cal Lutheran University	Thousand Oaks	Open	Open	N	Janna Santangelo
Tuesday	3/9/27	9:30am	Bonita Center for the Arts	La Verne	Open	Women/Men	N	Ryan Yoder
Tuesday	3/9/27	1:00pm	Marshall Auditorium	Pasadena	Open	Open	Y	Michelle Espinosa
Tuesday	3/9/27	1:30pm	Bonita Center for the Arts	La Verne	Open	Mixed	N	Ryan Yoder
Tuesday	3/9/27	7:00pm	Cal Lutheran University	Simi Valley	Open	Open	N	Amy Rolniak
Wednesday	3/10/27	10:00am	Loara High School	Anaheim	Open	Open	N	Katherine Keilty
Wednesday	3/10/27	1:00pm	Bloomington High School	San Bernardino	Open	Open	N	Ryan Duckworth
Thursday	3/11/27	10:00am	Silverado High School	Victorville	Open	Open	N	Jackie Reeffer
Thursday	3/11/27	2:00pm	Silverado High School	Victorville	Class III	Open	N	Jackie Reeffer
Friday	3/12/27	7:00pm	Pasadena City College	Pasadena	Class I	Mixed	N	Rodger Guerrero
Tuesday	3/16/27	10:00am	Fontana High School	Fontana	Open	Open	N	Andrew Salas
Tuesday	3/16/27	10:00am	Anaheim High School Cook Auditorium	Anaheim	AUHSD ONLY	Open	Y	Alan Garcia

SPRING FESTIVALS

High School

Registration opens
October 15th at 8am

Day	Date	Time	Site	City	Level	Type	Sight Reading	Host
Tuesday	3/16/27	10:00am	Herbert Hoover High School	Glendale	Open	Open	N	Amy Estep
Tuesday	3/16/27	11:00am	Temecula Valley High School	Temecula	Open	Open	N	Sang Park
Wednesday	3/17/27	9:00am	Santiago High School	Corona	Class I	Open	Y	Rachelle Randeem
Wednesday	3/17/27	10:00am	Anaheim High School Cook Auditorium	Anaheim	AUHSD ONLY	Open	Y	Jacqueline Cisneros
Wednesday	3/17/27	1:00pm	Santiago High School	Corona	Open	Open	Y	Rachelle Randeem
Wednesday	3/17/27	2:00pm	Murrieta Mesa High School	Riverside	Open	Open	Y	Dora Ridgeway
Thursday	3/18/27	1:00pm	Murrieta Mesa High School PAC	Murrieta	Open	Mixed	N	Bradley Allen
Thursday	3/18/27	6:00pm	Santa Paula High School Eakin Auditorium	Santa Paula	Open	Open	N	Jerry Cruz
Tuesday	3/23/27	9:00am	Sunny Hills High School Performing Arts Center	Fullerton	Class III	Mixed	N	Aaron Duncan-Schwartz
Wednesday	3/24/27	9:00am	Sunny Hills High School Performing Arts Center	Fullerton	Class I	Mixed	N	Aaron Duncan-Schwartz
Wednesday	3/24/27	10:00am	El Monte High School Auditorium	El Monte	Open	Open	N	Joel Whisler
Wednesday	3/24/27	2:00pm	Arlington High School	Riverside	Open	Open	Y	Tyler Hays
Thursday	3/25/27	10:00am	CdM Sea King Theater	Newport Beach	Class I	Open	Y	Andrew Ball
Friday	3/26/27	8:00am	Arcadia High School	Arcadia	Open	Open	Y	Hillary Ngo
Tuesday	4/20/27	7:00pm	The Thacher School	Ojai	Open	Open	Y	Bill Wagner
Tuesday	4/27/27	8:30am	Ramon C. Cortines School for the Visual and Performing Arts	Los Angeles	Open	Open	Y	Drew Lewis
Wednesday	5/12/27	7:00pm	Mira Costa High School	Manhattan Beach	Open	Open	Y	Kate Crellin

SPRING FESTIVALS

Middle School

Registration opens
October 15th at 8am

Day	Date	Time	Site	City	Level	Type	Sight Reading	Host
Thursday	3/4/27	10:00am	Beacon Park School	Irvine	Open	Open	Y	Miguel Chicas
Thursday	3/4/27	10:00am	Moreno Valley High School	Moreno Valley	MVUSD ONLY	Open	N	Trevor Torres
Thursday	3/4/27	10:30am	Ladera Vista Junior High School of the Arts	Fullerton	Open	Open	N	Andrea Calvo
Friday	3/5/27	10:00am	Los Cerritos Middle School	Thousand Oaks	Open	Open	N	Grant Goldstein
Monday	3/8/27	10:00am	Bonita Center for the Arts	La Verne	Open	Open	Y	Caitlin Shaw
Wednesday	3/10/27	1:00pm	Marshall Auditorium	Pasadena	Open	Open	Y	Michelle Espinos
Friday	3/12/27	10:00am	Los Cerritos Middle School	Thousand Oaks	Open	Open	N	Grant Goldstein
Friday	3/12/27	10:00am	Bonita Center for the Arts	La Verne	Open	Open	N	Caitlin Shaw
Friday	3/12/27	1:00pm	Bonita Center for the Arts	San Dimas	Open	Open	N	Jared Pugh
Tuesday	3/16/27	10:00am	Roosevelt Middle School	Oceanside	Open	Open	Y	Dawn Inouye
Tuesday	3/16/27	1:00pm	Herbert Hoover High School	Glendale	Open	Open	N	Amy Estep
Wednesday	3/17/27	10:00am	Murrieta Mesa High School	Murrieta	Open	Open	Y	Dora Ridgeway
Thursday	3/18/27	10:00am	Ladera Ranch Middle School	Ladera Ranch	Open	Open	N	Nancy Enriquez
Thursday	3/18/27	10:30am	La Flores K8	Las Flores	Open	Open	N	Elena Mariano-Benefield
Tuesday	3/23/27	10:00am	Los Osos High School	Rancho Cucamonga	Open	Open	Y	Stevie Leyton
Tuesday	3/23/27	2:00pm	Los Osos High School	Rancho Cucamonga	Open	Open	Y	Stevie Leyton
Wednesday	3/24/27	10:00am	Arlington High School	Riverside	Open	Open	N	Tyler Hays
Thursday	3/25/27	1:30pm	CdM Sea King Theater	Newport Beach	Open	Open	Y	Andrew Ball
Friday	4/9/27	9:00am	Norco Intermediate School	Norco	Open	Open	Y	Kyle Betts
Friday	4/9/27	1:00pm	Norco Intermediate School	Norco	Open	Open	Y	Kyle Betts
Thursday	4/22/27	2:00pm	Ethel Dwyer Middle School	Huntington Beach	Open	Open	Y	Neil Reyes
Tuesday	4/27/27	1:00pm	Ramon C. Cortines School for the Visual and Performing Arts	Los Angeles	Open	Open	N	Drew Lewis
Friday	5/7/27	1:00pm	Manhattan Beach Middle School	Manhattan Beach	Open	Open	Y	Kate Crellin

SCUA VOCAL SOLO FESTIVAL IS PROUD TO PRESENT OUR SPRING 2027 ADJUDICATORS!



Harlee Castro Balajadia is a Long Beach-based conductor, music educator, tenor vocalist, and arts administrator whose work bridges performance, education, and community engagement. He serves as CAMP Director at Charles Evans Hughes Middle School (LBUSD), overseeing Choir, Appreciation, Musical Theatre, and Production programming, and as Artistic Director of the Long Beach Youth Chorus. His students have performed at Carnegie Hall, including Hughes Middle School in June 2025 and the Long Beach Youth Chorus in June 2026, with plans to take Hughes Middle School internationally in 2028. An active and versatile performer, Harlee has sung with the Long Beach Camerata Singers, Choral Arts Initiative, The Filharmonic, and other professional and community ensembles, with experience spanning classical choral music, vocal jazz, contemporary a cappella, and commercial performance. He earned his Master of Music Education from Boston University, graduating summa cum laude, and is currently preparing for doctoral study centered on culturally responsive pedagogy, student belonging, and equitable access to music education.



Bryce Rivera (BA in Choral Music Education) is a Choral Conductor with a bachelor's in Choral Music Education and a minor in Adolescent Development. He currently sings tenor in the acclaimed Pacific Chorale under the direction of Grammy-Award-winning Dr. Robert Istad and has studied undergraduate Music Education with Dr. Christopher Peterson. Bryce Rivera attended California State University, Fullerton, and was an integral part of his ACDA Chapter, holding the positions of President, Secretary, and Diversity Education Board; he studied private voice with James Martin Schaefer (LA Opera) and Dr. Kerry Jennings (International Lyric Academy). He is currently the Choral and Piano Studies Teacher at Fullerton Union High School, where he hopes to inspire his students through his dedication to diverse education and music.

**WHILE DATES ARE BEING FINALIZED, ALL PERTINENT
INFORMATION REGARDING THE EVENT IS AVAILABLE ONLINE!
FOR FURTHER INFO, PLEASE REACH OUT TO MONICA BENSON
OR SEE**

[HTTPS://SCUACHORAL.ORG/VOCAL_SOLO_COMPETITION.PHP](https://scuachoral.org/vocal_solo_competition.php)

SCVA Fall In-Service 2026



Thank you to everyone who joined us for this beautiful day of collaboration and learning!

We hope that you will join us at In-Service next Fall!



In-Service Board Q&A

Thank you for submitting your questions during our Fall In-Service! Below are some of the questions we ran out of time to answer during our General Membership Meeting, answered by our current president, Bethany Encina.

How much time does it take to be on the board?

The answer to this question really depends on which board position you hold! The short answer is that we meet 6-8 times per year, usually on a Saturday morning for 3-4 hours. Some of our events are quite complex and require many hours of organizational work, emailing, planning and executing, while others are less time-consuming. If you're interested in a specific aspect of board service, reach out to that board member and get their take!

What is your favorite aspect of being on the board?

I love the collegial relationships I've been able to form with other directors. We have wonderful conversations about our field, swap best practices, envision positive change for our students, and create a community of support for one another. I feel so grateful and honored to be part of a team which gets to work toward making a positive impact on our choral community.

Can the consequence for a student dropping honor choir be changed to a ban on the individual student, rather than the entire school's program?

In cases where students have dropped out of participating in honor choir, the consequence is always voted on by the full board. While the official policy is that the student's school will be banned for one year from the event (which is in place to encourage teachers to impress upon their students the importance of following through with their commitments, and upholds an excellent experience for all of the students involved), the board also understands that this rule does not fit EVERY situation. Typically the VPs in charge of Honor Choir will make a recommendation to the board, but it must always be approved by board vote. If you have concerns about any of SCVA's event policies and procedures, we want to know! Please be sure to participate in post-event feedback forms, and make use of our board emails to let your voice be heard in board meetings!

Why is the audition criteria more stringent here than national honor choir?

SCVA has high standards for our High School Honor Choir auditionees, and as a result, we have one of the best regional honor choirs around. That being said, SCVA's audition requirements do have to align with CCDA requirements, since our students feed into the All-State Honor Choir pool. There are a couple different National Honor Choirs, but none of them is directly linked to our organization, so we're not tied to their set of standards.

How do I become an adjudicator for SCVA Festivals?

Our Festivals Team is in the process of revamping our Adjudicator application process! If you are interested in becoming a Festival Adjudicator, please reach out to festivals@scvachoral.org.

We want to hear from you! We welcome your questions and feedback.

Our Board Members can be reached at the contacts below:

president@scvachoral.org
membership@scvachoral.org
treasurer@scvachoral.org
secretary@scvachoral.org

newsletter@scvachoral.org
webmaster@scvachoral.org
socialmedia@scvachoral.org
highschoolhonorchoir@scvachoral.org

jrhonorchoir@scvachoral.org
vocaljazzfestival@scvachoral.org
vocalsolo@scvachoral.org
showchoir@scvachoral.org



MIDDLE SCHOOL/9TH GRADE
HONOR CHOIR
2026-2027

**AUDITION
HOSTS NEEDED!!**

Dr. Lynn Atkins
Conductor

Important Dates

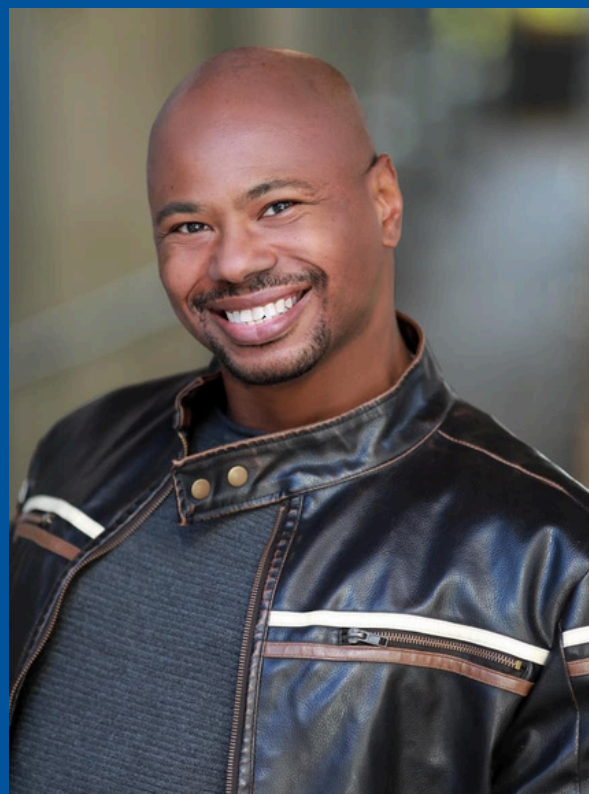
✦ **Saturday January 30th**
Audition Weekend #1

✦ **Saturday February 6th**
Audition Weekend #2

✦ **Saturday March 13th**
Regional Rehearsal
Ramirez Intermediate School
Eastvale

✦ **Saturday May 1st**
Rehearsal Day and Final Concert
Portola High School ~ Irvine

**AUDITION
SIGN UPS OPEN IN
JANUARY!**



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

SCVA SPRING 2027

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL

VOCAL JAZZ & ACAPPELLA FESTIVAL



Featured clinicians &
performance

THE
Tilharmonie



FEB 5TH & 6TH

REGISTRATION
FEE

\$275

REGISTER AT

**SCVACHORAL.ORG
/FESTIVALS**

REGISTRATION
OPENS OCT. 15, 2026
SPACE IS LIMITED!

LOCATION

SAUGUS HS

21900 CENTURION
WAY, SANTA CLARITA,
CA 91350

MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES for All Musicianship Levels!

by Monica Benson, VP of Solo Vocal Festival

I don't know about you but this is about the time of year where my students have started getting comfortable and routines can begin to feel a bit stale. Shake things up with some basic activities during warm up or during your instructional time!

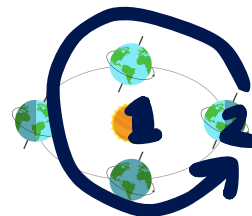
No matter which activity you choose, the first step is **STAND UP AND STRETCH!** Remind our students that we are fully physically engaged as singers!

Option 1: Have students move in the tempo/articulations of your warm up (longer, slower strides for legato articulations)

LEVEL UP: switch between major and minor keys, forcing students to reverse their directions

Option 2: I like to call this game sun and moon. First, circle up! Have students face one way and count off only up to 2. Using either scales, your favorite warm up, or even a piece of rep, have 1s walk to the pulse. Have 2s practice subdividing by needing to simultaneously rotate around the 1 in front of them while the piece goes on.

LEVEL UP: Change up the roles and/or subdivision!



Option 3: Dynamic/expressive articulation interpretive dance challenge! Using any song (even your rep), challenge your students to demonstrate only gesturally their own interpretation of the piece! This is a great opportunity to get students in their body and a little silly as they understand their voice's relationship to the interpretation of the piece!

SAVE THE DATE

SCVA SHOW CHOIR SPECTACULAR



MAY | 15TH | 2026

JOHN A. ROWLAND HIGH SCHOOL
2000 OTTERBEIN AVE ROWLAND HEIGHTS CA 91748

Registration opens November 2nd!



NEW TEACHER

Virtual MEET-UPS



Join a Community

Meet other first year or early educators!



Positive Environment

Find solutions to problems or new ideas for your classroom!



Make Connections

Connect with professionals all over Southern California!

**EVERY SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH,
STARTING 12 PM!**

CHECK EMAIL FOR ZOOM LINKS!

Important Dates & Deadlines

Event

Festival Registration Opens
High School Honor Choir Weekend
SVJC Honor Choir Weekend

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

Date

October 16
November 5-7
November 5-7
2027
January 30 & February 6
February 5 & 6
March 13
May 1
May 15

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

CAROLYN MIRALLES

Tell us about your choral career so far.

I've been a choral director for 21 years. I've taught all grade levels...TK-12, and I have worked at a variety of schools, both private and public in that time. I'm in my 4th year at my current school and am rebuilding a choral program there.

What piece have you recently been most excited about?

One piece we are working on right now that I'm very excited about is "Apple Tree", arr. by Katerina Gimon. My students are so excited for this one and the unique challenges it brings them!

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

My best piece of advice is...to pace yourself! It's so easy to get excited about all of the amazing things we can be a part of and offer our students. It's very easy to commit to too much. Make time for balance and rest in your life!

What is your history working with SCVA?

I have very much enjoyed my SCVA experiences. The community of choir directors is such a supportive and exciting environment. The festivals are always a highlight of my students' choral experiences each year. We greatly look forward to hearing other outstanding choirs and receiving valuable feedback from adjudicators!

What is one thing you are really proud of in your classroom?

I'm really proud of the community and feeling of "home" that my classes bring to my students. I try to create a safe, loving, and respectful environment where students can be free to explore new and exciting things while also being challenged to grow.

