

CULTURAL ENLIGHTENMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

EDDIE JONES

In recent years I have spent more time looking at the culture of Europeans and Africans. This undertaking was prompted by my desire to find answers to curious questions I had about my own musical preferences. For example, I worship in a church where the worship service usually ends in about an hour and a half. When living in Houston we had worship at a large church where the worship service ended in about an hour and fifteen minutes. In both places I felt and feel greatly rewarded spiritually, emotionally, and musically and in no way feel cheated because the service did not last for two or three hours. My taste in music sometimes leans more toward European than African and sometimes my musical taste is much more informed by the African influence.

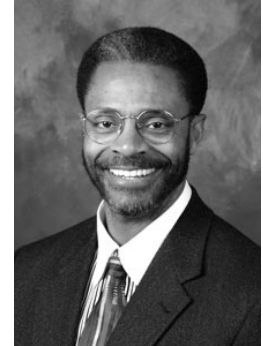
While conducting some research for a current book on gospel music I was reminded of the numerous differences in African and European cultural aesthetics. For example, Africans depend upon and look out for the group; Europeans emphasize the survival of the individual. Africans see the sacred and the secular as one; Europeans see them as different. Africans rely on their intuition and on the Spirit; Europeans rely on reason. Africans are often loud; Europeans are most often soft. Africans are constantly moving; Europeans are more still and quiet. Africans are more affected by their emotions; Europeans are more affected by the cognition. So, what effect does this have on African Americans and European Americans?

The trans-Atlantic slave trade saw the introduction of two opposite cultures: European and African. Africans had enjoyed the richness of their own culture and heritage where they had, according to

historian John G. Jackson, developed great cultures and great universities and were the progenitors of human kind. Indeed, scientists seem to agree that Africa was the origin of man. Archeological discoveries and historical documents seem also to confirm Africa's place as one of the early leaders in scholarship.

So, imagine how Africans felt as they were taken from their continent and brought to the Americas and told in essence, "Don't speak your language, and your thinking will be done for you." One cannot imagine Africans accepting that mandate and choosing to live with it. The long and short of it is they did not, and this is evident in the music they produced.

The marriage of African and European elements in music has produced what we now call African American music. It resulted in the earliest form of American music referred to as the Negro Spiritual. To understand African American music one has to be aware that two different aesthetics are involved: European and African. Europeans brought the diatonic scale to the marriage. Africans brought the pentatonic and other gapped scales to the relationship. Europeans brought the major modes and Africans brought an emphasis on minor tonality. Europeans brought dynamic variation and Africans brought varying degrees of loudness. Europeans brought written music and Africans brought improvisation. Europeans brought strong beat emphasis and Africans brought rhythmic syncopation. Europeans conceived of music where the musician dominated the music. Africans conception was that the song leader was the most important person during music making. Europeans expected audience members to



Eddie W. Jones is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Arkansas. His duties include teaching private voice, conducting large ensembles, and teaching Music Education courses.

observe the performers as they performed. Africans expected the audience members to participate in the performance. Finally, Europeans brought structured repetition and Africans brought repetition.

Let us explore the final point a bit more. When working with my choirs on a gospel song I am often asked how many times we will repeat a certain section of the song? My reply is that it depends on the soloist. Of course, they would like a three and done or five and done answer. However, it is not that simple if we are going to be true to the genre. The soloist may have just found out that a loved one is desperately ill prior to singing. If he is singing a song like "I Know The Lord Will Make A Way" and goes into a repeat section which employs the words "he'll make a way," the soloist may not at that moment be truly convinced of his own words. However, calling on his own memory of how he has been delivered and drawing on the experiences of those he has read about in the Bible, the

soloist becomes more and more convinced that deliverance will come. He therefore moves from simply singing words to being overcome with emotion and perhaps spirit possession as he leads the audience to a new level of belief.

The casual observer may not have an appreciation for such a journey. Indeed, if one looks through the eyes of the European aesthetic he will miss this important point.

As a boy I was raised on a farm in a rural community. On a few occasions we had to leave the car or truck at home and walk the three or four miles to church because the dirt roads were impassable. We would arrive to church, usually on time or nearly so. Although the service was programmed to begin at 11:00 it may not start until 11:15. The services usually lasted until 2:30 or 3:00. I recall many testimonies of folk during those services. When I think of them now they were indeed deeply personal. It was not something I gave any thought to during that time. For example, one person would stand and sing a song of praise and greet the congregation prior to saying how happy she was to be present. Indeed, the

Lord had wrought a miracle because her husband had been out drinking the night before and, thankfully, he was asleep when she left walking on this particular morning. He has been known to stand in the doorway to prevent her from coming to church and had also beaten her to make her stay home. Those of us in the audience were naturally excited for her and that she had indeed been able to come to church. There were numerous other very personal testimonies of children gone astray, spousal infidelity, etc.

Though this was deeply personal the church was viewed as a community (family), not as a strangely uncaring community. The church was the place where these thoughts could be aired and support was provided. If one looks through the lenses of the European aesthetic one will misunderstand this practice and dismiss it as unnecessary folly or indulgence.

When the European aesthetic and the African aesthetic came together they produced the African American aesthetic. So, black Americans can be at any end of the European/African continuum and it is

okay. There are black folk who have never had an experience as mentioned earlier and there are many who have. They both may be at a point in their lives where they detest having such an experience. However, that is okay as long as they don't make a judgment through the wrong aesthetic lens. There were many black churches which did not embrace the African aesthetic after emancipation. However, there were some that did, and many of those were the holiness churches. They welcomed these newly freed men and women, and they embraced the music and pathos they brought to that community. This became the ripe atmosphere for the development of what we now know as gospel music.

As stated earlier, I attend a church today where the services are quite timely and I don't feel cheated because I don't get to hear the numerous testimonies, or hear the numerous announcements, or sit through the fifteen or twenty minute taking of the offering. However, when I visit church congregations where this is a common practice I can appreciate where they are and I don't have to watch through the wrong aesthetic lens

RULES FOR BETTER WRITING

For those interested in submitting articles for publication in *accent*, the following suggestions are offered

1. Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
4. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
5. Avoid clichés like the plague. (They're old hat)
6. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
7. Be more or less specific.
8. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
9. No sentence fragments.
10. Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.
11. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
12. Do not be redundant or repetitive; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
13. One should NEVER generalize.
14. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
15. Don't use no double negatives.
16. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
18. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
18. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
19. The passive voice is to be avoided.
20. Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary
21. Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
22. Avoid exclamation points!!!
23. Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
24. Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth shaking ideas.
25. Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not needed.
26. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
27. If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times: Resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.
28. Puns are for children, not groan readers.
29. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
30. Even IF a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
31. Who needs rhetorical questions?
32. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG OF TRICKS?

Is your "bag of tricks" old and worn-out? Have you used the same materials, manipulatives and warm-ups for years? In an effort to help those of us whose bags have seen better days, the Central Region held an inservice called "Bag of Tricks". The following are just a few of the submissions from directors.

COMPILED BY AMBER HOLDEN

With regards to...

Warm-ups

Breathing- I have found the use of the \$1 pinwheels to be quite effective when working on breathing techniques at the beginning of the year. We have contests to see who can keep the wheel moving the longest and they love to try and beat the director's highest number. Who doesn't love to watch something shiny spin round and round?

(Amber Holden - Northwood Middle School)

Have you ever considered translating some of your classes favorite warm-ups to another language? Try it to keep things interesting and challenging.

Are you stuck using numbers and interested in moving with the trend? Try taking your wordy warm-ups to numbers, then to solfege. When sightreading, offer extra credit to those who use solfege instead of numbers.

(Mary Shollmier- Parkview Magnet)

"Manly Warm-up" -
Do Ti La Sol
Do Do Sol-Sol Do
"Men, Men, Men, Men
We Are Migh-ty Men"

(Karen Harris - Sylvan Hills Middle School)

Physical- Body Alignment

1. Stand straight- place weight evenly on both legs.
2. Extend arms overhead while inhaling air like sucking through a straw.
3. Lower arms while exhaling.
4. Relax back and neck.
5. Bend at the waist and shake out arms.
6. Move back to an erect position with your head level.

You're now ready to warm-up!

(Ron Selby - Fuller MS/Mills University Studies HS)



Rhythm

Update your old, worn-out flash cards with rhythms that designate using hands, feet or both. For an added challenge, increase and decrease the tempo, use cards of various time signatures and pit sections against each other. When semi-mastered, have vocal sections try and maintain flashcards of different time signatures at the same time.

(Anonymous)

Classroom Management

Students love competitions! In our boys choir we have a weekly contest to see which section can earn the most points. Voice sections can earn points by singing a portion of selected music the best, having the best posture or answering a question correctly. They can also have points deducted for not following directions or talking while I'm working with another section. Prizes are given at the end of the week.

(Amber Holden)

Instruments

Drums are expensive! Have you ever thought about asking restaurants or bakeries for their five-gallon buckets? They make fabulous drums!

(Carol Woodruff- Forest Heights Middle School)

Literature

I've had great success with the book *Pop Warm-ups for Men* (by Roger Emerson, Hal Leonard). It has an accompaniment CD and features several fun pop tunes.

(Karen Harris- Sylvan Hill Middle School)

Technology

Most teachers only use their Smart boards as a glorified projector. There are so many wonderful tools to use in the classroom. There's more than just a staff and notes for the Smart board. There are prepared lessons by certified teachers can be found at smartech.com under SMART EXCHANGE. Plus, there are a lot of wonderful bell-work items or end of class reviews already created.

(Marissa Arnold- White County Central)

Choose something to add to your "Bag of Tricks" to make this a fun and exciting year!

A Christmas Tune

Dong dong ding dong

SOPRANO
ALTO

Christ - mas eve is com - ing soon
Christ-mas trees, can-dy canes, jin-gle bells too

TENOR
BASS

San - ta Claus is on his way

Start with Basses, then add tenors, altos, and then sopranos. After singing a few times through with all parts, delete the soprano part, then the altos, and then the tenors. After the basses sing by themselves the last time, everyone yells "Boo!"

(Robert Craig - North Pulaski High School)

OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS, AND THE BENEFITS THEREOF

SUZANNE CALLAHAN

This year I started a new job.

Yes, at 52 years young I decided to change school districts. What was I thinking? Although working conditions, class schedule, salary and proximity to my front door are all vastly improved, I'm discovering new challenges.

First of all, where did my reputation go? Do these kids not know with whom they are dealing? Do they not understand the "Callahan" way? (*Umm, they are junior high students, Suzanne, they don't care.*) Secondly, doesn't this faculty understand that I'm a hard worker, a team player and actually a pretty decent person? (*These people have met and worked with five different choral directors in six years; they are understandably skeptical.*) Finally, do these parents know that I care about their students? Are they ready to "buy in" to my program? (*Which really means can and will they sell candles and Boston butts and volunteer at all-region tryouts, drive a bus, or hem a dress?*)

Seriously, can the benefits of teaching an old dog new tricks triumph over the challenges of those tricks?

As Sarah Palin would say, "you betcha!"

(*Please understand that this is the only time you'll hear me quote Sarah P.*)

Let's explore these benefits.

Benefit #1: Technology

Jonesboro is the largest district in which I have worked. They believe strongly in technology. Every form, request, lesson plan, grade, transportation request, purchase order, and substitute request must be filled out online. I love it. Seriously, I love it. I never have to call, wait in line or find a file. Although I have not achieved perfection in my online skills, they are vastly improved. With the help of wonderful tech instructors half my age, I get better every

day! I am **expected** to use technology in my classroom everyday and am given the necessary equipment with which to do it!

Our Superintendent challenged the JPS faculty to find creative ways to use everything from iPads to cell phones in our classrooms. Consequently, my rotation class this week studied Baroque composers while listening to compositions on Pandora. They also viewed images and listened to sound files of Baroque instruments on both Google and YouTube. Male chorus students are learning to play guitar, percussion, and Bebot on iPads and iPhones while assisting in my appreciation of the T-Pain App. Yes, you heard me—the T-Pain App.

This week my choir students evaluated both superior and dreadful performances of choral music on YouTube...and were rewarded on Friday with YouTube performances of both *Eric Whitaker's virtual choir* and this week's episode of NBC's "*The Sing Off*."

Although I'm not quite up to "let Suzanne present a workshop" status, I am without a doubt being motivated to move in the right direction.

Benefit #2: Lock and Re-Load (is this Sarah P. again?)

I have 33 junior high boys. I have not experienced the true joy of having this many boys in class at one time prior to this fall. These are rowdy, football playin', teasin', can't-wait-to-go-to-lunch boys that I **ADORE**. However my discipline methods and tactics are currently in great need of, shall we say, renewal. Thanks to my good friend, Mark Langley, I now have a greater repertoire/arsenal of junior high male chorus discipline tricks, games, and rewards. I have learned that pacing my rehearsal is more essential than ever before in order to keep the guys engaged. This class requires a balance involving serious and fun, routine and variety, along with activity and written work.

They appreciate a good slapstick video (have you seen the lady stomping grapes who falls off the platform and groans? Or the talking bacon dog? ...) a good joke and a little sports-related conversation.

They need to know that I'll be at their football game cheering them on (or talking to their mothers). They need chocolate when they win a game, and so do I, darn it.

I am reminded that age never means knowing it all. Wisdom is often acknowledging and appreciating what you don't know. I have to continually seek the advice and suggestions of other educators I respect—even if it comes in a younger package. Somebody once said that when a rose stops blooming it dies. And since I prefer to stay around a while longer, I believe blooming is what I'll choose to do.

Benefit #3: Open my eyes

There is a popular Contemporary Christian song that says, "*Give me your eyes for just one second, give me your eyes so I can see.*" Do you have a class that really pushes your buttons, makes you crazy mad, raises your blood pressure? Well, this year I have a doozy. During the first week of my non-select girls 8/9 chorus I sent several to ISS, struggled to be heard above the noise, and felt completely overwhelmed. Then it dawned on me. These girls aren't angry with me, they are angry with the world. And I'm reasonably sure most of them have a right to be. Nobody really cares if this class sings, performs or competes. Needless to say, I will never be held accountable for their CPA scores.

After a week of not knowing exactly how to proceed with these girls, I stopped. I stopped yelling, I stopped trying to teach them lines and spaces and sight-reading and Ubi Caritas and breath support and tall vowels and yada, yada, yada.

“Give me your eyes for just one second, give me your eyes so I can see”

And then I looked at them. I tried to look at them with different eyes, with His eyes, and I quietly told them that I cared. I told them that they could hate on me all they needed to. I told them that I was a grown up and that I could absorb all the hurtful comments and angry voices they could throw at me. I told them if they needed a target I would volunteer—but that I wasn’t going to stop caring. I told them I was going to love them and teach them anyway. I told them I was going to teach with the same energy and the passion usually reserved for honors choir. When I was

finished preaching (I’m Baptist so that’s kinda frowned upon), they sat in stunned silence and listened to me. Some of them for the first time.

I would love to wrap this point up with a beautiful bow and tell you that these girls have morphed into the San Francisco Girls Chorus. But, alas, they have not. What I will tell you is that 13 of the 30 are trying out for all-region and that yesterday they begged to sing “Ubi caritas.” I was so happy I wanted to cry. Each day, at the end of this class, I find myself more fulfilled, more satisfied and more proud of my work than ever before. I’m finding joy in knowing that I can be a person they trust

and respect simply because I care. Teaching them to love the music is my goal. Their performance is secondary.

Benefit #4

My day ends at 1:50 pm. Be jealous.

Suzanne Callahan is the choral director at Douglas MacArthur Junior High in Jonesboro.

QUESTIONS WE ALL SHOULD ASK —AND ANSWER

How do you make it easy for your administrators to work with you?

Rhonda Hawley (Springdale High School) - Administrators are extremely busy. They don’t want to be bothered by the trivial. If at all possible, I try to make sure I do everything that is expected of me as a teacher, and only consult an administrator for the BIG stuff.

I once had an administrator tell me “I don’t like surprises,” meaning that he never wanted to be blind-sided. If you think a parent may call to complain, then give a heads-up.

I have learned to keep my administrators informed well in advance about upcoming concert dates, events, and any changes that need to occur in the calendar. It is also important to give them advance warning when auditions for choir, musicals, solos or select groups are taking place. This helps our administrators be prepared to take any parent calls/complaints about a student not getting the choir, role, or solo they wanted.

Also, if your principal or superintendant asks the choir to perform for an event, if at all possible ALWAYS say Yes!!

Craig Jones (Harding Academy) - Open and honest communication, and performing with my groups to promote the school, such as civic groups and public performances, with the integrity of a good performance (that is, I don’t embarrass them).

What is one piece of music that you and your students really liked last year? And what piece do you really want to add to your repertoire?

Rhonda Hawley - We were very fortunate last year to perform the “Gloria” from the *Misa Criolla* by Ariel Ramirez. We have been trying to reach out to our Latino community, and this piece was very well received. Both the students and the Springdale audience really connected with this piece. Through the resources of some leaders in our Latino community we were able to locate a charongo player who was willing to write out the part and a Latin percussionist who improvised the rhythms to help make our performance more authentic.

The piece I would like to add to my repertoire is perhaps Charles Ives’ “Psalm 67” or Francis Poulenc’s “Hodie Christus Natus Est.” These are two great twentieth century composers whose music is not being performed often enough. We tend to get all excited about the “composer d’jour” and we are neglecting to educate our students about the more classic composers.

Craig Jones - “Earth Song.” This Frank Tichelli piece reminded me and my students of why we love this art, that God gave us music as the expression of our hearts as well as a place of refuge and a central point of communicating with Him.

“Os justi.” Anton Bruckner’s work is always very pious, deeply rooted in a committed faith. To me this opus seems very personal, like a private devotional to God.

What is one thing you learned in the last five years that you wish you had known earlier?

Rhonda Hawley - I wish I had recognized earlier that it is always, always about the students first. It is about the music second. It is never about us as a director or conductor. What we do is not about competition or winning. It is about changing the lives of young people through the tool of music. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes not. But, we are challenged to come to school every day with the idea that we can make a difference. Weston Noble summed it up best when he spoke at National ACDA this past Spring. He basically said (paraphrased), “As a director you are to leave your baggage and ego outside of the rehearsal.”

I have also just recently come to the realization that my job is “what I do,” it is not “who I am.” It is so very important to be able to leave the job behind when I leave the choir room. Everyone needs to take the necessary time to take care of their health and spirit, and to make time for family and friends.

ENJOY THE SEASON—NO, REALLY!

CARRIE TAYLOR

My warmest regards to all of you and hopes that this week, for even a moment or two, you can take a moment to relax and look around at the beautiful Arkansas autumn that has suddenly appeared everywhere!! It seems like a good time to take a deep breath and look back on the accomplishments from the first part of the school year and look forward to the next craziness: The Holiday Season!! On the junior and senior high school level we are completing fall concerts and all region auditions. (And don't forget the first fundraiser of the year!) Our college/university colleagues are busy with mid term concerts, travel, and full scale musical productions! Church musicians are working to bring beautiful, worshipful music to congregations of every denomination. We are such a diverse group and yet we can all relate on many levels but most especially the making of beautiful music with the members of our choirs! What a great privilege—and great responsibility—we all have!



Carrie Taylor
ArAMEA President

Next up is my one of my favorite times of the musical year—Christmas. Yes, even with all its chaos and stress I really do enjoy the music of the season! Of course, in the choral world our season will begin very soon. Some have already begun preparing concert music, great seasonal programs, and holiday music to be shared in auditoriums, in classrooms, in nursing homes, and even at the mall!! Early holiday advertisements and decorations in the stores have nothing on choir directors! By the time the actual season gets here we have been listening to the music of the season for several weeks...even months!

Beware! Many years ago I found that by the time December the 25th rolled around I was totally and completely feeling the “Bah, Humbug” of Christmas. If I heard “Little Drummer Boy” sung one more time I would explode and just forget the enjoying the latest version of “Jingle Bells”! I really didn't want to hear even my favorite carols and songs! Then I decided to do something that has become a tradition in my celebrations: I decided to attend a wonderful concert or sacred celebration or something grand that I personally didn't have any part of creating, directing, choreographing, or singing! I made a conscious effort NOT to think how MY choirs would do on this or that number or how differently I would have performed it (Now fess up, we all do this!). Instead, I simply enjoyed the gift of music that was being offered! This little act has made such a difference in my demeanor!

What do you do to make sure you don't become the musical Grinch of the season? I would encourage all choral musicians in our wonderful state to be wary and diligent in the upcoming season of special music and music making! Have fun! Be moved! Allow yourself to enjoy the gifts (yes, they are gifts) of music that your students and others will give to you! Don't get so caught up in the perfecting of the music that you miss out on what the season is truly all about! JOY!!

Hope to see you at the all-state convention in February and then in Dallas for SWACDA!! Put these special events on your calendar NOW!!

Carrie Taylor
President, Arkansas ACDA

WHAT CAN ACDA DO FOR YOU?

THESE ARE RECENT ARTICLES FROM CHORTEACH, ACDA'S ON-LINE JOURNAL

Vol. 4, Issue 1 - Fall 2011

Preparing High School Musicals - A Beginning by Jacob Narverud
Educating Contemporary Audiences - Times Have Changed by Scott Buchanan
Preparing High School Singers for College/University Auditions by MB Krueger
Using Tuning Forks to Empower Your Church Choir - Excellence at the Basics
by Julie Ford
To Jazz or Not to Jazz by James McCullough

Vol. 3, Issue 4 - Summer 2011

Recruiting Singers With No Feeder Program? Yes, You Can by Dana Alexander
Extraordinary Elementary Singing on a Shoestring Budget by Christy Elsner
Working with Honor/Festival Choirs: One Conductor's Perspective by Terry J. Barham
Community Choirs—Mission Impossible? by Rick Bjella
Transformative Collaborations with Other Choirs by Thomas Lloyd

ARACDA SCHOLARSHIP FOR GRADUATE CHORAL STUDIES

ArACDA is awarding a \$500 scholarship for graduate study in choral music. Applicants must be members of ArACDA (with at least 12 months of past membership), have served as a choral teacher in an Arkansas church or school, have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 system, and be enrolled in an Arkansas college or university pursuing a degree in music.

APPLICATION FORM

Full name _____

e-mail address _____ phone _____

Home address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

School in which you are enrolled or enrolling _____

Degree you are seeking _____

Please enclosed the following items with this application form:

1. A letter of application (typed or printed) describing your qualifications and personal goals
2. Two sealed letters of recommendation, one from an administrator and one from an active ArACDA member
3. A copy of your current transcript
4. A summary of your professional experience.

Please submit by December 15 to
Carrie Taylor, ArACDA President
Dover High School
101 Pirates Loop
Dover, AR 72837

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Searcy High School
tinan@searcyschools.org

Junior High/Middle School

Amber Holden
Northwood Middle School, Jacksonville
amberstrick@hotmail.com

Male Chorus

Ken Griggs
Bentonville High School
jgriggsiii@bentonville.k12.ar.us

Show Choir

Retha Kilmer
Malvern High School
rkilmer@malvernleopards.org

Two-Year Colleges

Keith Hearnberger
Arkansas Northeastern College
khearnberger@smail.anc.edu

Women's Chorus

Leanne Girshner
Woodland Jr. High/Fayetteville High
leann.girshner@fayar.net

Youth and Student Activities

Mikael Lindström
University of the Ozarks
mlindstr@ozarks.edu

Executive Director of ArkCDA

Thomas D. Street
tomstreet@arkcda.org

Newsletter Editor

Cliff Ganus

For you, in this issue of **Arkansas accent**:

Practical classroom suggestions

Observations regarding African American musical styles

Ideas regarding renewal and reinvigoration

An application form for a \$500 scholarship for graduate studies (see page 7)

And here's what we ask from you

Consider making a contribution to the ArACDA scholarship fund.

Please make suggestions regarding interest sessions and topics for the Hot Springs Conference.

And if you have ideas for **accent** articles, please let us know.

Contact any ArACDA board member or R&S chair with your ideas, suggestions, contributions, or stories. We want to hear from you!

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American Choral Directors Association
Arkansas Chapter
Cliff Ganus, Newsletter Editor
ACDA
545 Couch Dr.
Oklahoma City, OK 73102-2270