



2026 Madrigal & Chamber Choir Festival
February 20 & 21, 2026
Messiah Lutheran Church
Plano, TX



ADJUDICATORS



Francis Cathlina is a distinguished Vietnamese-American conductor and educator, known for his innovative programming that seamlessly weaves choral music with narrative. His transformative concert experiences invite audiences into a world where choral artistry becomes a powerful storytelling medium. He is currently the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Memphis Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music. He oversees the Choral Area, leads the M.M. and D.M.A. Choral Conducting program, and conducts the University Singers. A two-time GRAMMY-nominated educator, Dr. Cathlina's work with choirs has garnered international recognition. 2025 engagements include working with choral directors in Brazil and the Philippines and serving as the Headliner for the Alabama Music Educators Association conference. His UofM University Singers have been invited to perform for national and state conferences. Dr. Cathlina's Eastern heritage shapes his dedication to collaboration and excellence. He has made 60+ presentations across the globe, published articles in international journals, and he maintains a robust guest conducting schedule. He holds a D.M.A. in conducting with a vocal pedagogy cognate from the University of North Texas, an M.M. from Michigan State University, and a B.M.E. from Baylor University. Before earning his doctorate, he taught in Texas public schools.



Eduardo García-Novelli, born in Argentina, held posts at Belgrano Day School in Buenos Aires and with the National Youth Choir. In Texas, Assistant Director, Houston Symphony Chorus, and Director, Symphony of Southeast Texas Chorus, and recipient of the Faculty Merit Award for distinguished teaching at Lamar University. Two undergraduate degrees from Argentina conservatories; MM: Westminster Choir College; DMA: University of Houston. His choirs performed for TMEA, WMEA, KMEA, WCDA, NCCO National Conference, the International Choral Festival in Panama City, Panama, and on several National, European, and South American tours. Conducting at Carnegie Hall in 2011, 2015, and 2017, in 2016 he was in residence at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Other international engagements include MidAm Festival, Vienna's Peterskirche, Coro Nacional de Jóvenes (in residence), Madryn Canta Festival (clinician), Tous Ensemble (guest conductor) in Argentina, Tamara Brooks summer course in Galicia, Spain, and leading Carthage Choir to win First Prize at the Spittal International Choir Competition in Austria in 2019. In 2023 the University of Kansas Chamber Choir won First Prize at the Preveza International Competition in Greece, where he also received the best program award and the best conductor award. He had the honor of serving as conductor of the Texas Small School All-State Choir in 2024.



Benjamin Hawkinson is Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Music at Millikin University. There he conducts numerous ensembles including the University Choir Millikin's flagship touring ensemble, and Millikin's premiere vocal jazz ensemble OneVoice. Additional teaching responsibilities include courses in Conducting and Choral Rehearsal Techniques. Ensembles under his direction tour annually throughout the region. The Millikin University Choir has just returned from a performance tour to Belgium and France. OneVoice's recent conference performance invitations include the 2022 Jazz Educators Network in Dallas, TX and the Illinois Music Educator's Convention in January of 2023. OneVoice was the recipient of two DownBeat Student Music Awards in 2024. Dr. Hawkinson is in demand as a conductor, clinician, and presenter with recent credits including Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms with the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra, numerous honor choirs in both traditional choir and vocal jazz areas and presenting lectures at conferences and universities that focus on music educator mental health entitled "Beating the Burnout: Time Management for Teachers". This topic was recently featured on the podcast Choir Fam. Dr. Hawkinson is Director of Music at Central Christian Church in Decatur, IL.

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Stephanie Council has a multifaceted career as a conductor, singer, and educator. She is Associate Director of Choral Studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where she conducts the University Chorale, Chamber Choir, and Argenta. She maintains a private conducting studio of graduates and undergraduates, and teaches Advanced Choral Conducting, Choral Literature, and Choral Methods. Additionally, Council is the founder and artistic director of Desert Singers Las Vegas, a professional-level community women's choir, and she has served as chorus master for the Las Vegas Philharmonic and Opera Las Vegas. She previously led the choral programs at Simpson College and Mount Holyoke College. Sought-after as a guest conductor, Council has conducted clinics and honor choirs in Oklahoma, Texas, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Iowa, Nevada, and Michigan, and she was a graduate finalist in the American Choral Directors Association National Conducting Competition. She sings professionally with mirabai and the San Antonio Chamber Choir. Council earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting from Texas Tech University. She holds a Master of Music with distinction in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College and Bachelor of Music degrees in music education and vocal music performance from Oklahoma State University.



Lynne Gackle is Professor Emeritus of Music at Baylor University where she served as the Director of Choral Activities and Chair of the Ensemble Division. Dr. Gackle previously taught at the University of South Florida, the University of Mississippi, and the University of Miami (FL). Lynne is an active choral clinician/conductor, nationally and internationally. She has held various positions within the American Choral Directors Association, including National President, President, Southern Region, President, ACDA-Florida, and was VP of College/Community Choirs for TCDA. Gackle is the editor of Choral Artistry for the Singer (Walton Music) and the Lynne Gackle Choral Series (Colla Voce). Internationally recognized for her research on the female adolescent voice, Lynne is the author of Finding Ophelia's Voice, Opening Ophelia's Heart. She is a contributing author for other books published by GIA, Oxford, Hal Leonard/McGraw Hill including the Oxford Handbook for Singing (2019), and Choral Reflections: Insights from American Choral Conductor/Teachers (2022). Gackle was awarded ACDA-FL's Wayne Hugoboom Distinguished Service Award, Baylor's Outstanding Faculty Award in Research (2012), the Texas Choir Masters Award (2021), the MacPherson Prize (2023) and most recently, the 2023 Frost Centennial Medal from the University of Miami. She holds memberships in ACDA, TMEA, TCDA, and NATS.



Anthony Trecek-King is a distinguished conductor, scholar, and media personality with a career spanning over two decades. He is renowned for his ability to create moving performances that seamlessly blend artistry with humanity. Dr. Trecek-King's collaborative rehearsal style has earned him praise for his capacity to mentor vocal and instrumental musicians across all skill levels. His performances grace prestigious venues worldwide, and his contributions extend to hosting radio shows and appearing on the Emmy Award-winning television series, "Sing That Thing." He serves as a Resident Conductor of Choirs with the Handel and Haydn Society, Artistic Director of the Berkshire Choral International, and a Creative Advisor for the Voces8 US Foundation.

