



Southern California Vocal Association

MARCH 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Ushino

Dear Colleagues,

Happy March Madness! In our tireless work throughout the year to make our students into the best musicians they can possibly be, the Spring season is the time where we get to celebrate the hard work that we've done. These celebrations are in the form of festivals, sight-reading festivals, concerts, and tours. It is a labor of love that we put ourselves and students through year in and year out. Each year presents new challenges and we always rise to them, and we hope surpass what we set out to achieve.

In my early career, I used to think festivals were a competition of some type where we had to come out on stage and take it by storm every time. That is not the case. We are all trying to perform our repertoire with the highest level of technical excellence, musicality, and giving each piece the respect that it deserves. In addition, we get the opportunity to learn from our colleagues who are also doing fantastic work with their students. It's a learning opportunity for us as much as it is for our students. I believe a rising tide lifts all ships and what we have here in Southern California is very special.

This is also a time to think about our colleagues, friends, and loved ones who have lost so much since the start of 2025. Many in our membership are still recovering from the devastating wildfires that consumed the lives of so many and have left many of our own without homes. Choral music is the last thing on their minds. Our hearts and minds are with our friends and I hope we as a community can help our own the best that we can.

If you have not already, please reach out to your friends and colleagues that have been affected by these fires. If you are able, please give to your local charitable organizations that can help our friends through this difficult time.

I've told my students that in this Spring season that we need to sing, not for ourselves, but for every person who is not able to and do our community proud. Let's unite together as Southern California to make beautiful music in the face of tragedy and help our friends back on our feet.

Michael Ushino
President

Tammi Alderman
Past President

Bethany Encina
President Elect

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VP - Vocal Solo Competition

Monica Benson
VP II - Vocal Solo Competition

Ken Haro
VP I - Festivals

Jared Pugh
VP II - Festivals

Zachary Krug
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

Erika Jackson
Membership

SCVA Vocal Solo Festival 2025

Thank you to all students who submitted for this year's Vocal Solo & Small Ensemble festival! You made the adjudicators' lives difficult with the caliber of musicianship that you shared this year. We are proud to invite the following students to attend an in-person masterclass.

Classical Solo Semi- Finalists:

Sawyer Damron
Summer Deng
Joelle Kim

Jintian Ma
Frances Salata
Olivia Song
Jozen Wynter

Musical Theatre Semi- Finalists:

Morgan Abalos
Luna Brutocao
Kristy Centeno
Sofia Crawford
Laysha Ibarra
Madison Leiva
Mackenzie Lingle
Ellie Liu
Mila Llerenas
Molly McClure

Isaiah Medina
Alana Merritt
Sophia Peabody
Lily Pourtabib
Caydence Renneker
Kamryn Valenzuela
Akemi Wong
Penelope Yalamanchi
Itxmara Zepeda

Commercial Music/Jazz Semi - Finalists:

Kristy Centeno
Audra Cockrum
Montgomery Kanda-Gleeson
Coco Kliman
Grace Melgoza
Sarah Mooney
Dylan Kate Muller

Lily Pourtabib
Keyonna Ross
Alex Santos
Elise Tsai
Itxmara Zepeda
Claire Ziebart

Questions:

Drew Lewis at drewlewis1977@gmail.com or

Monica Benson at monicatbenson@gmail.com



SCVA VOCAL JAZZ & CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL



**THANKS FOR COMING!
SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!**





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



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.

*Stay tuned for audition instructions this Fall!



MIDDLE SCHOOL/9TH GRADE

HONOR CHOIR

2024-2025

Important Dates

✦ Saturday March 15th

Regional Rehearsal
San Juan Hills High School
San Juan Capistrano
9am-1pm

✦ Saturday May 3rd

Rehearsal Day and Final
Concert
Portola High School ~
Irvine
9am-4pm
6pm Concert
\$10 Cash, or pay on
SCVA Website

Kim Nason
Conductor



Close Harmony Festival

New Date and Location! **NOW APRIL 5**, 2025

WESTMINSTER CHORUS &

MASTERS OF HARMONY



Guest conductor
ALAN GORDON

DIRECTOR OF
**MASTERS OF
HARMONY**



**Close Harmony Festival will
be at Jordan High School**

Address

6500 Atlantic Avenue,
Long Beach, CA, 90805

Registration ends Friday, March 28, 2025



We look forward to spending a full day learning some amazing music from two of the best barbershop choruses in the world

closeharmonyfest@gmail.com

more info at: https://scvachoral.org/close_harmony_festival.php

SHOW CHOIR SPECTACULAR

MAY 17TH 2025

CATEGORIES:

MIDDLE SCHOOL

HS NOVICE:
Mixed
Treble

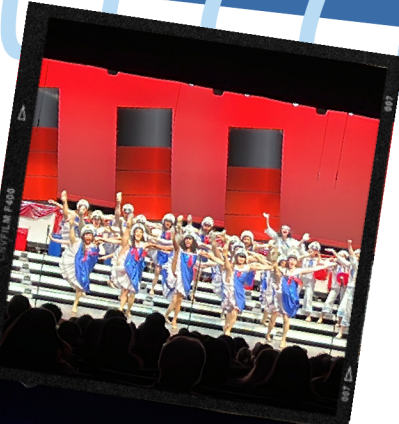
HS INTERMEDIATE:
Mixed
Treble

HS ADVANCED:
Mixed
Treble

HS TENOR/BASS

REGISTRATION OPENS

OCTOBER
14TH





OC KIDS ALL SING

New Date!

Join us April 26, 2025
at **Lincoln
Elementary School!**

Open to any child age 8-12

No experience or audition required!

Come enjoy a day of singing, performing,
and making new friends!

Vocal Workshop 8:30-3:30pm

Celebration Concert 3:30-4:00pm

Free concert open to families and friends!

Registration is open!

Participation fee is \$25 per student and
includes all activities, an event t-shirt, and
folder with sheet music. Sign up at
scvachoral.org

**Want to bring your choir?
Interested in volunteering?
Need more information?**

Email sflores@nmusd.us

**Lincoln Elementary School
3101 Pacific View Drive
Corona del Mar, CA 92625**

**Dr. Kristen
Simpson**

Guest Conductor
Principal Conductor,
National Children's
Chorus



Dr. Kristen Simpson was originally trained as a licensed civil engineer before pursuing advanced music degrees in choral music to facilitate a career change to music. Simpson served as assistant conductor for Tonality, a professional choral ensemble based in Los Angeles that focuses on using music to encourage conversations on social justice topics. Most recently, she prepared singers for collaborations with the Kronos Quartet for Michael Abels' *At War With Ourselves*, and participated in a private performance for the Second Gentleman of the United States as well as administrators of the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. Simpson holds a Master of Music degree in choral conducting from Texas State University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral music from the University of Southern California.

Important Dates & Deadlines

Event

2025

Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Rehearsal
Close Harmony Festival
OC Kids All Sing
Middle School/9th Grade Honor Choir Concert
Show Choir Spectacular

March 15
April 5
April 26
May 3
May 17

Scarlet Smith teaches at **Canyon Springs High School** in Moreno Valley. She is currently in her 10th year of teaching. Canyon Springs is where I started teaching and I plan to stay. I love this school and my students.

Describe the structure of your program: (size, schedule, ensemble voicing):

- Barbershop Choir (TB Ensemble)
- Concert Choir (Beginning Mixed)
- Show Choir (Treble Voices)
- Cougar Cadences (Treble Ensemble)
- Madrigals (Mixed)

* This year we started a new choir, Jazz ensemble (SATB). This group meets during lunch/after school. I have a total of 124 students in my program.

What about your program are you most proud of:

I am going to get sentimental here. My students are what I am so proud of. I am proud of their drive and love of music. Even when my students are done with their years here at Canyon Springs, it is wonderful to see them continue with music. I always want them to remember that music is what brings people together.

Favorite repertoire you have recently programmed:

1. Veni Veni Emmanuel by Michael John Trotta
2. I'm Going Up A Yonder by Walter Hawkins arranged by Martin Sirvatka
3. Earth Song and There will be rest by Frank Ticheli

Tell us about your life outside the classroom:

My husband and I just bought our first house at the beginning of this current school year. We are so excited to be in our new home and putting down roots. We are currently working on the backyard. I am putting in a bunch of raised beds so we can have a large veggie/fruit garden. I love spending time with my two nieces, Clementine 3 and Lavendar 1. I have two dogs, a Bassett hound named Ellie and a golden retriever named Libby Tea Biscuit.

MEMBER
Spotlight



SCARLET SMITH

