



# Southern California Vocal Association

**MARCH 2026**

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

*Michael Ushino*

Dear Colleagues,

Happy March (aka choir festival season)! Festival season is a beautiful time for all of us where we can showcase all of the wonderful work that our students have been doing throughout the year. Festival adjudications are not the end-all-be-all as we all know but it is important that we frame this exciting time of music for our students as an opportunity to sing in front of new audiences and receive valuable feedback to grow even further.

Most of us don't have the opportunities to secure release days to go observe other music educators like we did in our undergraduate days so festivals are that opportunity to see our colleagues at work. Take full advantage of whatever resources you have and make the most of your opportunity to improve your own skills. The beneficiaries are the students who sit in front of us every day.

If you are one of the lucky ones who can attend a conference or are able to secure a release day to go observe colleagues during their rehearsals, take full advantage of every one of those opportunities to observe, connect, network, and steal a concept or technique. We are a community. A rising tide lifts all ships.

Let us all, regardless of how many years of experience in the field, continue to learn and grow. Our students will continue to change and evolve with time and we need to stay ahead of them to guide them into the future.

Let's get through this festival season and look forward to the well-deserved breaks ahead of us!

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

# SEVA VOCAL SOLO FESTIVAL 2026

**THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL CONSISTS OF THREE ROUNDS:**

**PRELIMINARY, SEMI-FINALS, AND FINALS.**

**AFTER THEIR PRELIMINARY SUBMISSIONS, SINGERS WILL RECEIVE AN ADJUDICATED SCORE AND RANKING. OUR TOP 10 IN EACH CATEGORY WILL ADVANCE TO SEMIFINALS.**

**FROM THERE, THE TOP 5 IN EACH CATEGORY WILL BE INVITED TO PERFORM AT FINALS.**

**STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES (AND CAN SUBMIT IN MULTIPLE CATEGORIES):**

**CLASSICAL VOICE, COMMERCIAL MUSIC/JAZZ, AND MUSICAL THEATRE.**



## **KEY DATES:**

First round:

Virtual Video submissions

due by Jan 24

Feedback delivered by Feb 15

Semi finals: In Person Masterclass

Hosted in regional areas BETWEEN Mar 15-Apr 11

Finals: In Person May 17th from 3:00-5:00 PM

Glendale City Church

610 E California Ave, Glendale, CA 91206

**\$40 SOLO ENTRY**

**\$45 DUO/TRIO/SMALL ENSEMBLE**

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## **QUESTIONS?**

Drew Lewis at [drewlewis1977@gmail.com](mailto:drewlewis1977@gmail.com) or  
Monica Benson at [monicatbenson@gmail.com](mailto:monicatbenson@gmail.com)

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# 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 April 24, 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 April 24, 2026.

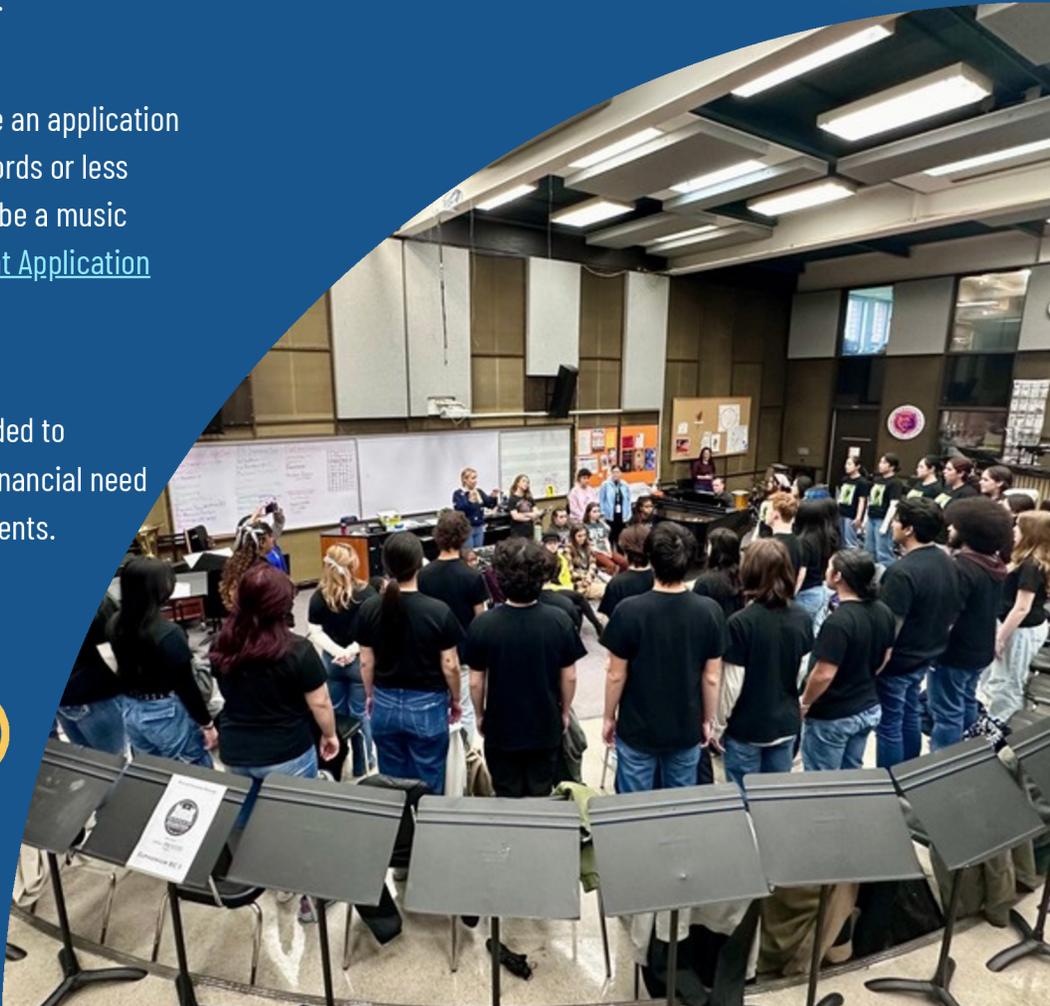
- Financial Need

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

## Apply by April 24, 2026

- Complete [Student Application](#) and Essay
- Complete [Teacher Nomination Form](#)
- Due on or before April 24, 2026
- Recipients will be notified on or before May 17

Apply Now!





**MIDDLE SCHOOL/9TH GRADE  
HONOR CHOIR  
2025-2026**

**Important Dates**

**Ruth Morris Gray**  
*Conductor*

✦ **Saturday March 14th**

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

✦ **Saturday May 2nd**

Final Rehearsals and Concert  
9am-7pm  
Portola High School  
Irvine

✦ Tickets are \$10 at the  
door or online at  
[scvachoral.org/payments.php](https://scvachoral.org/payments.php)



# SCVA

## *SHOW CHOIR SPECTACULAR*

# MAY 16<sup>TH</sup> 2020



**RUSD PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

2000 Otterbein Ave.  
Rowland Heights CA 91748

# **REGISTRATION**

## ***NOW OPEN!***



**ALL DIVISIONS OPEN**

***Middle School/Intermediate School***  
***High School Novice (Mixed & Treble)***  
***High School Intermediate (Mixed & Treble)***  
***High School Advanced (Mixed & Treble)***  
***Tenor/Bass***





# SCVA



VOCAL JAZZ & CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA FESTIVAL

Thank you for a great festival,  
See you next year (date TBA)!



**SCVA**

# **SUMMER CHATS**

**CALL FOR HOSTS**



Want to host a summer chat to  
meet new colleagues, or catch up  
with old friends?

**SCAN ME!**

# **GET READY FOR...**

## **SCVA VOCAL JAZZ/CONTEMPORARY**

### **A CAPPELLA HONOR CHOIR 2026 !**



***Dates: November 4th–6th***

***Location: University of Redlands***

***Audition portal opens: August 17th***

***Audition Deadline: September 13th***

**How to Prepare:**

- 1) Practice singing major and minor triads**
- 2) Practice singing the chromatic scale and the blues scale**
- 3) Choose a jazz standard that suits your voice and practice singing it a cappella**
- 4) Check the VJCA Honor Choir page on [scvachoral.org](http://scvachoral.org) for more updates and 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 4 - 6, 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**



Southern California Vocal Association

# CELEBRATING RETIREEES

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Help us celebrate with  
you, or celebrate a  
retiring friend!

Fill out this form to  
notify us of retirement,  
all names will be  
published and  
celebrated at the end  
of the year.



## Important Dates & Deadlines

### Events

Middle School/9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Honor Choir Regional Rehearsal	March 14
Vocal Solo Master SemiFinals	March 15 - April 11
Future Choral Educator Scholarship Application Deadline	April 24
Middle School/9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Honor Choir Concert	May 2
Vocal Solo Finals	May 17
Show Choir Spectacular	May 18
High School Honor Choir Applications Due	September 5
High School Honor Choir Auditions	September 19 & 26
Fall In-Service	September 25
High School Honor Choir Weekend	November 4-6
SVJC Honor Choir Weekend	November 4-6

MEMBER

# SPOTLIGHT

## MICHELLE RISLING



### Tell us about your teaching career so far.

I was fortunate to start directing a youth choir with the North Coast Singers nonprofit organization while I was still an undergraduate Music Education major, which gave me invaluable experience as I moved into public schools. I have remained with the North Coast Singers since 2008, and recently became the Interim Artistic Director. I'm also privileged to lead Sorelle San Diego, the adult women's choir program of the North Coast Singers. I'm currently in my 13th year as the Upper School Music Teacher at Temecula Preparatory School, where I direct several curricular choirs and a guitar orchestra. I am also currently earning an MM in Conducting from SDSU.

### What piece have you recently been most excited about?

In my second semester of the MM program at San Diego State University, I had the privilege of conducting Nicola Porpora's Magnificat as it was originally intended - with an all-female orchestra and choir. We performed it in the incredible St. Paul's Cathedral. The whole rehearsal process was electric, as all the musicians dove into the history and embodied the spirit in which the women of the Pietà approached this work.

### What is one thing you wish you could tell your past self in her first year?

Implement routines and set boundaries. I suppose that's really two things, but they go hand in hand. When you have well-established routines in your life and work, it's easier to say no to things that would disrupt the balance you have created. Only do the things that feel rewarding. It's ok to do fewer things to maintain higher quality, and your own sanity.

### What is your history working with SCVA?

When I was in high school, I remember participating in SCVA events as a voice student. When I became a director, SCVA offered wonderfully organized, affordable festivals for my choirs to participate in. I have had choirs participating in SCVA festivals every year that I've been a teacher. I've also enjoyed adjudicating for Honor Choir auditions, and am proud to have had several students participate in Honor Choir events over the years.

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

Music is an essential part of the human experience, and whether you are a teacher or singer, your job is to help other humans feel. Whether they need to feel joy, or sorrow, or strength, you can help them find it during those moments when they are in your audience. Keep true emotion at the heart of your approach to music, and don't sweat the imperfections.