



Southern California Vocal Association

MAY 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Ushino

Dear Colleagues,

Happy Almost-Summer Break! Amongst colleagues and on social media, we always see one or two narratives about Summer Break. The first is the stereotypical, "We made it" or "You survived!" The second is, "Wow, it must be so nice to be a teacher to get summer break. You all are you so lucky." I truly believe that the truth is somewhere in between but it is mostly a feeling of relief. Relief that the students made it out of our classrooms alive and relief that we made it through somehow.

I always say that no one fully understands what we feel trying to bridge the performing arts into an academic institution. We are constantly feeling devalued and we're fighting all school year to validate our existence while motivating our students to perform at the highest level of excellence. It is draining and somehow a fulfilling experience that we repeat year in and year out.

The relief and the fulfillment comes from seeing our students grow and thrive. The success is seeing our students being better human beings and musicians at the end of the year compared to where they started in the Fall. We are doing this for all of them and they are worth it.

So as you step away and recharge during this well-deserved break, focus on yourself, family, and all of the other things in your life that make you happy. If we are not happy, our future students will not be happy. Take care of yourself first before taking care of others.

Wishing you all the best finishes to your school year. Make this summer break the best it can be and let's come back ready to change the world, again.

Michael Ushino
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Tammi Alderman
Past President

Bethany Encina
President Elect

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VP II - Vocal Solo Competition

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VP I - Festivals

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VP II - Festivals

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VP - Festival Adjudication

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Jr High/Middle School Honor Choir

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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

Summer Chats

HOSTS NEEDED!

Sign up to host a great time of reflection and community-building with other directors in your area.

Hosts choose their own dates, times and locations, and are NOT expected to pay for attendees' food/drinks – simply show up and have a good conversation!



bit.ly/scvahost

**Sign up to
Host!**



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 May 20, 2025.

- 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 May 20, 2025

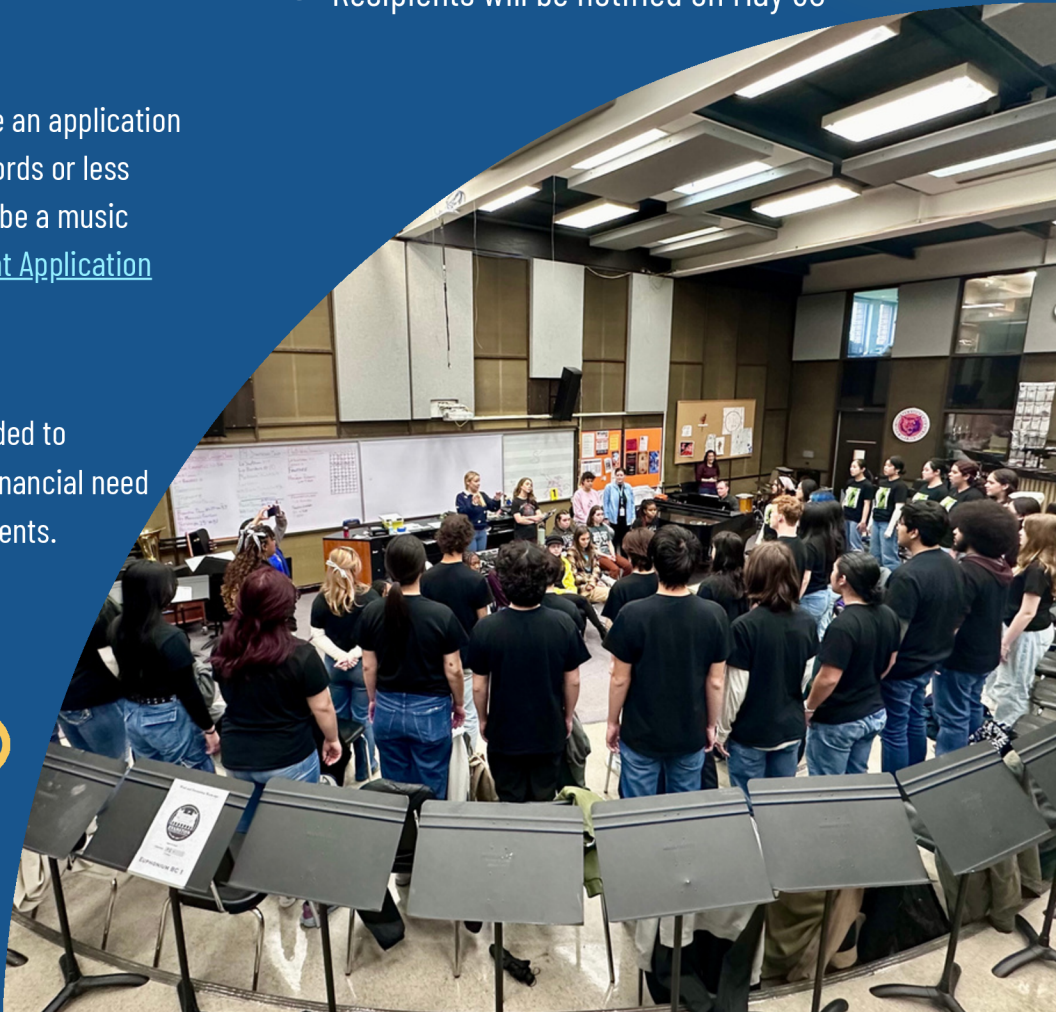
- Financial Need

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

Apply by May 20, 2025

- Complete [Student Application](#) and Essay
- Complete [Teacher Nomination Form](#)
- Due on or before May 20, 2025
- Recipients will be notified on May 30

Apply Now!



Tips for Auditioning for SCVA VocalJazz/Contemporary A Cappella Honor Choir 2025

- 1. Practice singing major and minor triads**
- 2. Practice singing the chromatic scale and the blues scale.**
- 3. Select a Jazz Standard that best showcases your voice and practice singing it a cappella.**
- 4. Learn your designated voice part for the "Sing, Sing, Sing" excerpt on the SCVA website.**



Audition portal opens: Monday, August 18th
Audition Deadline: Sunday, Sept. 14th 11:59pm
VJCA Honor Choir Dates: November 13th & 14th
at Valencia High School,
Santa Clarita, CA

***All Updated Audition Information can be found at our website:**
scvachoral.org/vocal_jazz_honor_choir.php

SAVE THE DATE

FALL

I N - S E R V I C E



HEADLINER
DR. LYNN ATKINS

**FRIDAY,
SEPT. 19
9:00-3:30**



**EXPAND YOUR
TOOLKIT!**

Sessions On:
Inclusive Classroom
Elementary Music
The First 5 Years
SCVA General Meeting

ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH
NEWPORT BEACH

Sight Reading Under Pressure

Bethany Encina, President-Elect

When I was a sophomore in High School I tested level 8 of Certificate of Merit through the Music Teachers' Association of California. At this point in my musical development, I had not fully grasped the concept of audiating, and really struggled with sight reading anything which included leaps of any kind. Halfway through my melodic sight reading, as I was engaged in a staring contest with a perfect fourth, my adjudicator interjected "You're really not prepared, are you?"

I was crushed. I had practiced for weeks, but no amount of *Here Comes the Bride* could get me to sing Do-Fa that day (stay tuned for related tonal function epiphanies in my next article). Since then I have always had a soft, proud spot in my heart for students who struggle with sight reading but continue to audition for honor choirs and similar events. What courage. I will always smile at them, and tell them to take a deep breath and keep trying.

Solfege-related trauma aside, as an adjudicator over the past ten years I have noticed some patterns among auditioning singers, and I'd love to see our membership pass along a few tips to their students for avoiding sightreading stress and putting their best foot forward in the audition room - for next year's Honor Choir, or any of their future musical endeavors:

1. When you get stuck during rehearsal, **DON'T START OVER**. Stop at the trouble spot, and walk from the pitch you know to the pitch you don't know. Use hand signs. Point at the lines and spaces. Do whatever you can. If you still can't hear it, find the next nearest DO and walk backwards. So many singers waste the rehearsal time re-singing the easy parts of the exercise (usually the first three measures) in a panic, and never make it past whatever leap or accidental was challenging them.

2. **Rehearse out loud**. Fight that embarrassed inner voice and just do it. I even love to hear a singer's inner monologue set free during rehearsal time with a "no, that's not it," or "Dang it, where is DO?!" When you rehearse out loud, your actual sight reading becomes the second attempt, not the first.

3. **Start SLOWLY**. Don't sing your first two notes any faster than you can sing the fastest portion of the example.

4. If all else fails and you can't hear the correct pitches, at least **sing the rhythms**. Salvage whatever points you can get by not giving up completely. Sometimes our brains just have lapses in audiating ability or forget solfege syllables - try not to let that derail your work. Get back to DO at the end if you can, and just finish it.

Ultimately, reading music at sight should be such an empowering skill for us as singers. When we really get it, we are unstoppable! Let's give our students the tools they need so that, rather than just a painful moment to get through as quickly as possible, auditions become a true reflection of their growth and success in their music literacy journey.

Show Choir Spectacular

Meet the Judges



Jamond McCoy

Jamond is a dynamic and accomplished musician hailing from Long Beach, CA, known for his versatility as a vocalist and keyboardist. With deep roots in Gospel and Jazz, he has built a reputation for excellence in both performance and education. His impact extends beyond the classroom, with many of his private students going on to become successful educators, full-time musicians, and even contestants on high-profile shows like **The Voice**, **America's Got Talent**, and **The Four**.

Camal Pugh

Camal Pugh a native of Washington, DC and is a graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County. A professional dancer, choreographer, teacher, and mentor for 15+ years, his credits include Nike, Pepsi, The Music Man, Gatsby in Gatsby Redux (Mixed Emotions Theatrix), Nao, Finneas, Carly Rae Jepsen, Deadpool x Wolverine at Comic Con, and Lion King at Disneyland. Repped by MSA Agency, Camal is a 2024 BoradwayWorld Award nominee for Best Choreography of a musical and Best Dance Production. Instagram @cnote_moves



Marqell Edward Clayton

Marqell Edward Clayton is an African American professional Actor, Singer, Dancer, and Teaching Artist who currently resides in Los Angeles. Marqell has performed in various musical productions including the Broadway tour of "A'nt too Proud to Beg" as Berry Gordy, "Tale of the Lion King" as Simba, "Once on this Island" as Armand and many more! Professionally, Marqell has a hunger and passion for projects that "artfully depict the rawness and depth of the human experience," and a desire to share his experiences in today's industry with the next generation of artists.

Middle School 9th Grade Honor Choir



ON SATURDAY, MAY 3RD, 2025, 100 STUDENTS PERFORMED A BEAUTIFUL CONCERT PROGRAM AT PORTOLA HIGH SCHOOL UNDER THE DIRECTION OF PROFESSOR KIM NASON. THE STUDENTS HAD A WONDERFUL TIME THROUGH AN ENGAGING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING REHEARSAL EXPERIENCE! THIS PROGRAM ALSO FEATURED THE INCREDIBLE PORTOLA SINGERS, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. ADRIAN RANGEL-SANCHEZ

I would like to thank all the directors that encouraged and prepared their students to audition and helped them throughout the learning process. I'd also like to thank Kevin Jeffries-Phan, Margaret Wu, and Jocelyn Crecia for their work on Piano, Violin, and Cajon. Thank you the volunteers who graciously gave their time to help at the regional rehearsal and concert. This event would also not be possible without the incredible generosity of Mr. Adrian Rangel-Sanchez and Portola High School for offering their beautiful venue. I also want to thank Professor Kim Nason for sharing her gifts with our students. Each student sang at such a high caliber that was only possible under your artistic direction. Thank you so much!





Congratulations to the 2024 SCVA VJCA Honor Choir Downbeat Award Winners:

*Outstanding Performance
Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble
High School Honors*



Special thanks to our director, Jamie Shew, and
our SCVA VJCA Honor Choir VP, Brittney
Wescamillo, for making this possible for our
singers!

OC KIDS SING 2025

● LET'S SING ●

We had a wonderful time learning new music! The students worked hard learning the Papaya Song, Pirate Story, Tongo, and Why We Sing in just one day!

Dr. Simpson taught the kids so much about performing and their concert is one to be remembered!

Keep an eye out for more elementary events next year!



HIGH SCHOOL HONOR CHOIR

Important Dates and Info



**HONOR CHOIR WEEKEND
NOVEMBER 6-8, 2025 AT UNIVERSITY OF
REDLANDS**

**CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING TO HOST
AUDITIONS! RECEIVE A SITE HOST STIPEND.
EMAIL SCVAHONORCHOIR@GMAIL.COM TO
SIGN UP!**

**AUDITIONS HELD SEPTEMBER 20TH AND
SEPTEMBER 27TH**



Important Dates & Deadlines

Event

2025

Show Choir Spectacular

May 17

Future Educator Scholarship Deadline

May 20

Summer Chats

Dates Vary

Vocal Jazz Honor Choir Auditions

Aug 18–Sept 14

Fall In-Service (Newport Beach)

Sept 19

HS Honor Choir Auditions

Sept 20 & 27

High School Honor Choir (Redlands)

Nov 6–8

Nina Crecia teaches at **Jeffrey Trail Middle School**. She is currently in her 3rd year of teaching and her 1st at Jeffrey Trail.

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

I am currently hired on a 80% contract, and I teach chorus, drama, and two sections of musical theater (and I teach a home room and offer Advantage classes on Wednesdays). My choir currently has 22 students. We are performing in three parts, with a few changed and changing voices singing the tenor/bass part. My drama class has 24 students, and we are preparing for our spring play, a murder mystery! My musical theater classes have 34 and 39 students respectively, and we are preparing separate performances for both classes of the musical The Lion King Jr.

What about your program are you most proud of:

As the new teacher this year for our program, I am especially proud of the community I am building with my students. My goal as a teacher is to make every student feel like they belong, and I have been working hard on creating a space in which students feel safe to explore and express themselves creatively.

Favorite repertoire you have recently programed:

This year, Chorus sang two pieces that mean a lot to me: 'Vois sur ton chemin' from the movie Les Choristes, and 'The Road Not Taken' by Ruth Elaine Schram. We are currently working on 'Hold On' by Victor C. Johnson, which I have been excited to program as well! I was also a theater kid, so I love that I get to do musicals in my musical theater classes as well! In our Winter concert, we did medleys from Wicked, Into the Woods, Dear Evan Hansen, and In the Heights!

Tell us about your life outside the classroom:

In my personal life, I am very much a homebody! 😊 I love movie nights with the family, going for walks or hikes together, and having a cup of coffee while reading a good book. Once I am a bit more settled in my new position, I would love to go back to performing myself – either in a choir, or in musical theater shows!

MEMBER
Spotlight



NINA CRECIA

