



UMFCNAFME

Newsletter

Edited by Kara Iwanowski

Fall 2021

**Welcome to the
culmination of a
semester's work,
dedication, and
education!**

FROST | SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

Inside You'll Find:

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The Fall 2021 E-Board

(From left to right)

Benjamin Gonczi - Treasurer

Jose Prieto - President-Elect

Kara Iwanowski - Secretary

Mia Laping - President

Emma Gladden - Historian

A Presidential Address & Farewell

Dear NAFME Family,

Congratulations on making it to the end of the semester! It was so great getting to see everyone back on campus and watching all of the work you put in for your classes and the chapter. Special congratulations to Aly Carminati on finishing her student teaching internship this Fall! We're very proud of you! I look forward to watching everyone's continued growth next semester and beyond, and good luck to my fellow Seniors with student teaching.

This semester as an organization, we were able to hold a variety of events and fundraisers to get back into the swing of (safe) in-person engagement. We had two successful scrunchie/bracelet sales (Thanks Wendy and company!!) and an exciting Halloween costume contest to raise funds going towards our grant and reducing the cost of FMEA for those attending! Special thanks to Ben Gonczi and the FUNdraising committee for streamlining the financial/tabulating process for our fundraisers, and to Emma Gladden and the social media committee for fostering so much community engagement with the chapter!

On the topic of the grant, many of you might be unfamiliar with this project, but for several years the chapter has raised money for an annual grant to be donated to a local music program. We have alternated each year between an elementary and a secondary program in the past, and since we did not do the grant last year (due to the pandemic) and the most recent grant was to an elementary program, we will be offering a slightly larger grant to a secondary music program this spring! The application will open over the winter break and

any MDCPS secondary school is eligible to apply. Following the application period, we will redact identifying information on the applications and select the recipient school. More news about this to come in the New Year!

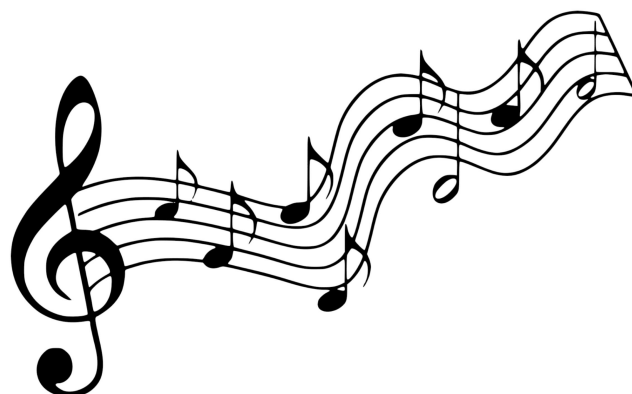
This semester we were also able to hold a variety of social and professional development events in our community; thank you to the event planning and outreach committees for your creativity and hard work to make these happen! It was awesome that we all got to know each other better this semester and I look forward to having more events in the future. It was also great to see so many of you seeking out additional opportunities to teach and engage with the greater Miami community as educators this Fall! There's no better way to get your feet wet with teaching and I hope you all will continue to make these opportunities for yourselves. In addition, we continued honing our podium skills with Conducting Club this semester, which wouldn't be possible without our fantastic wind conducting TA's, Roy and Jack! Be sure to give them your thanks if you see them around Frost sometime. Thank you so much to those of you who were able to make it out to our meetings and continue what will hopefully become a longstanding tradition of professional development and camaraderie for our chapter.

As the semester draws to a close, so does my time with you all as President of the chapter. It was truly an honor and a privilege to serve in this role for you all and I'm so thankful for the time I got to spend with each of you. I hope you will continue your involvement with the organization and with each other, as this is such a special community of some of the best people I've met in my time here at UM. I'm very excited to see where Jose and the rest of the E-Board take the chapter next semester and beyond and have full confidence that they will continue to do amazing things. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything at all! I'm always just a phone call or text away :). I hope you all have a wonderful rest of the semester and winter break and I'll see you in the New Year!

Sincerely,

Mia Laping

President, UMFC NAFME



Composition and Emotional Expression

Written by Gregory C. Phifer, '23

It should be noted that the content of this article should not be taken as professional advice.

Music composition is a daunting and sometimes stressful element of art that we often associate with professionalism; the first thing that comes to mind are people that shaped classical music - Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart... masters of musical craft, per se. But at the base level, composition is more than a certain status granted to you based on your contributions to music. It can relate to any organized combination of ingredients and constituents found in nature; the way a whole or mixture is actually combined. In a way, we, as human beings, are compositions. The total population of the world and how we interact with other people and objects around us is, in fact, an ever-developing composition. So many elements of life line up in such a way that, by the time we've expired, our life will be a musical work of sorts. It's the parts of that personal life composition, though, that make it unique and worth capturing.

When we dig deep, the mind is the core of our creativity. Our thoughts, our imagination, our memories, and sensational faculties help us experience different mental phenomena, our perception of the world, the pain we feel, our beliefs, our desires, our intentions, and, of course, emotions. The concepts behind emotional states are often misunderstood; many people don't know exactly why they're experiencing a certain psychological state. More often than not, these psychological states are created through yet another composition of feelings, thoughts, pleasure, displeasure, and behavioral response. As a music educator in training, I understand that there's always some way to unlock reasoning behind a certain action or response. If you've ever talked to a therapist, you'll recall that, more often than not, they recommend writing in a journal; they remind you that anything you write there is hidden from everyone but yourself, and anything you need to write is confidential. Personally, that tactic never worked for me; I've tried writing in journals, scheduling a time during the day to write, and it never really did what my therapist said it would do for me. The point is, writing in a journal (which I'd argue, despite my experience, is a very valid way of expressing deeper thoughts and feelings), doesn't always work for everyone.

Turning the table a bit, I look toward music education and the reason I've dedicated my future to teaching. Early on in my elementary and secondary education, I found that my music teachers were never the end-all be-all reason I became a musician. Music education in many of the public school systems throughout the United States isn't exactly a breeding ground for kids looking to find joy in music. I had to find extracurricular activities, private lessons, and external ensembles that weren't run by Chicago Public Schools to find my true passion. As I look back, I never saw great personal value in musical performance; granted, I enjoyed being a performer and running around for gigs and concerts, but that wasn't the most meaningful part for me. Essentially, I found more joy in knowing that, because of another non-school teacher and/or director, I was able to succeed and reach the level I'm at now. I constantly thought, and still think, about how humbled and important those teachers and directors are, and if there was one thing I wanted to do with my life, it was to give people the same experience I had with art. I should clarify that I wasn't inspired to be a private ensemble instructor; I was inspired to bring that experience into the public school music classroom – I was inspired to give children a reason to be excited for music, and possibly, a new creative outlet.

So, with that in mind, I move back to the ideas surrounding composition. To recap, I mentioned that journal writing isn't always the most effective way for expressing music. But what if we had another way to do the same thing?

I believe everyone could agree on the fact that, more often than not, we listen to music that reflects our moods and, with connection to earlier points, our psychological states; we listen to Lo-Fi because of its simplicity, and the calming effect it has on us when we need to focus. We listen to Jazz for its often soothing nature, or alternatively, its catchy grooves. We listen to EDM for a boost in energy, for that final push to the finish line on a run or a bike ride. For some people, making playlists is easy, and finding the songs they need to express their emotions is no more difficult than brushing their teeth. But others, like myself, never truly found a genre or specific song that resonates with their personal background. While this is a very specific case, I can say with regret that I never fully connected to my family culture, and I never had too much to be proud of other than my musical accomplishments. How did I move past that? Well, we can go back to composing.

Often, when I should've been practicing my repertoire for an upcoming concert, I'd hide away and listen to the sounds I had access to through Linux Multi-Media Studio, a free, open-source DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) I discovered through my older sibling. I found things I liked, and tried my hand at making music – something, I should mention, I never did before, and had absolutely no experience with. I made several songs and, as bad as they are to me now, I was incredibly proud of them because of how much time I spent and how much of my personal feelings I put into them. To this day, composing and producing music is still my main creative outlet, due to several factors. Firstly, it's surprisingly easy to pair a sound you hear to an emotion you may have felt, or an emotion that comes about from the sound you're hearing. Most of my personal compositional process involves listening to sounds at my disposal, identifying which ones match closest to the emotions I'm feeling that words can't otherwise describe. Secondly, composing is one of the only ways we can express ourselves without limitations; if we put music theory aside, we can do just about anything with a new piece of music. As long as one has an underlying understanding of musical elements and a way to pair those elements to emotional states, they can make music that reflects exactly how they may be feeling. Finally, my favorite factor – music tells a story. The main idea here is that we can take a written piece of literature, a fictional story, a journal entry, and turn it into a piece of music; we can capture all of those emotional elements, those thoughts and feelings, and translate them into a piece of art that other people can listen to and understand.

So, in conclusion, I'd like to encourage everyone, no matter what level of music you may understand, to try their hand at composing music. It can be a daunting task, but we know that the mind in itself is a composition; in a way, you've already started the process of expressing emotions you otherwise couldn't express through other means – now you just need to translate it into a language that other people can hear and understand. If you can't find music that reflects you as a person, take a leap and try making your own.

If you have any questions about this article, feel free to reach Greg via email – gcp50@miami.edu (If you may be considering composition, Greg offers virtual private lessons for people of all levels. Feel free to ask about them should you reach out to the above email address!)

About Dr. Mark Hardy



Dr. Mark Hardy is the director of choral activities at the nationally acclaimed Baltimore School for the Arts. Under his direction the choir maintains an active performance calendar throughout the Baltimore Washington area with frequent appearances with the Baltimore Symphony, the Hopkins Symphony, Shriver Hall, the Spire series, Bach in Baltimore, The Kennedy Center Millennium stage, and Music at Grace. Since arriving in Baltimore in 1999, he has served as conductor of the Johns Hopkins Choral Society, the Baltimore Masterworks Chorale, chorus master for the Annapolis Opera, and music director of Epiphany Episcopal Church. Dr. Hardy has served as guest conductor at the Pennsylvania Arts Institute, Eastern Music Camp, Hopkins Symphony and The Lyric Opera Summer program. Recent projects include leading the Johns Hopkins and Baltimore School for the Arts chamber choirs in the world premier recording of *Lo Sguardo Svelato* by composer

Elena Maiullari, slated for release in early 2022. In addition to his performing and teaching Dr. Hardy remains active as a composer and arranger of choral, solo, chamber, and orchestral works. His works are published by Cantate Press.

Choir rehearsal as the training ground: an approach to promoting musical literacy through the rehearsal process.

Written by Dr. Mark Hardy, coordinator of vocal music at the Baltimore School for the Arts

There is a widely circulated quote attributed to Robert F. Kennedy from a speech given in 1966 that he frames as a Chinese curse. “May he live in interesting times” is perhaps an understatement of the world we all live in as we contemplate what normal may look like for the immediate future of choral singing. The pandemic has left all of us pondering questions about aerosols, the best singing masks, air filtration systems, and a host of other concerns that place our art form squarely in the category of less-than-ideal circumstances. Like many of my colleagues, I have gamely attempted to learn a host of skills including video and audio production, how to conduct remote rehearsals, and how to make our way back into the world of live singing. I have tried to embrace the opportunity to consider what it is about the daily process of teaching and rehearsing choirs that has been the foundation of my professional life for the past 23 years. I am honored to have been invited to share some of my thoughts about that practice here.

I began teaching at a public fine-arts high school in 1999 as choral director. I quickly came to appreciate the opportunity to work with students in a demanding curriculum that offered music theory, private lessons, music literature, keyboard, diction classes and ensembles for instrumental and vocal majors. The curriculum offered much of what would be available in an undergraduate music program with some unforeseen advantages. All students sang in the chorus, regardless of instrument which became the basis for how I developed my approach to teaching chorus. In addition to my choral ensembles, I also taught music theory which combined aural skills and written theory into one class offered across all four years of the program. As I became more involved in the development of the theory

curriculum and eventually co-wrote the textbooks used for all four years of the theory classes I began to consider chorus as the “lab” for the practical application of skills presented in theory and ear training. While this is certainly an unusual opportunity at the high school level, I do think it helpful to consider some of what might be applicable to teaching at the college level or any choir you might find yourself in front of. Please take these observations in the spirit they are offered; I hope you will find something of use in the approach I have come to apply over the past twenty years.

The basis for teaching musical literacy both in smaller theory classes and in a choral ensemble of 120 students is predicated on giving students the tools to comprehend the sounds around them and to interpret written music on the page. I think it was very important to consider that my primary responsibility in this circumstance was teaching musicians first and vocalists second. Much of the success of the program was built on having students sing together every day so that the older students could model the use of solfege, count singing, and other technical approaches to the younger students in real time. Think of choir as the place where everyone puts down their instrument and makes music in a direct way from the ear to the voice. Foster an enthusiasm for precision, both in execution and in the way you guide an ensemble to think about how they approach the music. Solfege serves as the basis for how to encourage careful listening and place notes into a harmonic or melodic framework. If it is introduced and reinforced early enough in a musicians’ training, solfege can become a powerful tool for bridging the gap between aural and written fluency.

A typical 90-minute rehearsal, especially early in the semester might involve 10-15 minutes of warm-ups. I consider this to be a space to allow the choir to find their sound without the distraction of reading a score. Building fluency with solfege through singing scale patterns, arpeggiated figures and simple 5 note exercises where they sing back what is played using solfege is an enormously helpful skill to foster and pays big dividends when you call upon those skills to address an issue in the repertoire. Warm-ups are also a great place to expand the listening skills of the ensemble. After the familiar exercise of singing a major scale as a round beginning every third note, take time to explore parallel fourths, fifths, or stagger entries to create less familiar chord structures. Move through minor scale forms into the chromatic scale to expand the possibilities and orient the ensemble to the harmonic and melodic aspects of each scale. Sing intervals and name them, sing triad and seventh chord patterns and name them. Try at every opportunity to connect the sound of a gesture with a concept that can be explained so that students can gain confidence in what a written passage will sound like. Take the time in rehearsal to involve the ensemble in recognition of the harmonic and melodic language of the work being rehearsed.

Think about warming up the ear and the mind as much as the voice. Some exercises for this can include playing a sequence of pairs of notes and asking the group to sing only the bottom note or top note. Expand to triads and sing only the third, naming it as augmented, major, minor or diminished based on the solfege. Encourage independence of parts by having each section of the choir sing a major scale starting on pitches a fourth apart. Work on maintaining focus and pitch center during rests by having each section alternate singing the notes of a scale so they must imagine the notes they are not singing aloud. This technique is particularly helpful to apply to repertoire where clarity of a harmonic sequence (and the tuning) is sometimes obscured by active melismatic gestures. Develop analytical listening by playing short melodies and ask the group to sing ‘do’ at the end and then go back to identify which note a phrase begins on. A particularly helpful exercise to increase fluency is to sing familiar tunes such as *twinkle, twinkle little star* or *Somewhere over the rainbow* using solfege to navigate the understanding of what the notes are in the song. Be patient but insistent with the approach and gradually expand the exercises over time. Once a singer has memorized the solfege for a simple pattern, for example a major scale, change it up. Sing scales in thirds, make up sequential patterns or take them from the repertoire you are

programming. Constantly move the expectations forward so that the group develops the use of solfege as a tool to locate pitches within the context of what they hear and sing, and not just as a lyric without any connection to the purpose. Encourage your ensemble to think of solfege as a language on its own, capable of clearly expressing characteristics of the architecture of melodic and harmonic gestures that make up the music they deal with daily.

Within the theory and aural skills classes I found it helpful to replicate some of the same exercises presented as warm-ups. All theory faculty are using the same text and materials and the same approach in terms of solfege, so students are exposed to the method in multiple ways over the course of the week. By the third year of the program, students are singing chord progressions, reading from figured bass and managing all chromatic vocabulary such as secondary dominant chords, augmented sixth chords and even modulating progressions. I understand that not all choirs will afford the rehearsal time needed to implement all these ideas but even with a once-a-week community chorus I have found benefits in doing some of this work as a regular part of the rehearsal process. Finding entrance pitches is a particularly useful application by taking a bit of time to understand where the note fits into the tonality of a passage and having the whole group sing from end of a previous phrase directly to the next entrance, skipping any intervening music.

When it comes to the application of this approach to the rehearsal process, I find it helpful to sing with less piano support early in the process. Give the ensemble a harmonic context but foster rhythmic independence through count singing or pulsing solfege at some level of subdivision depending on the tempo. Keep everyone engaged through having all parts rehearse a problematic passage for one voice part as a group. I admit to using solfege with the zeal of a prophet at times, but it has yielded very fruitful results in understanding changes of tonality within a phrase or pivoting to a new key at different times for each part. I would also strongly advocate for standing and swaying or stepping a pulse to put the emphasis of responsibility for the rhythmic accuracy on every member of the ensemble. If the group cannot maintain a pulse without piano support or wildly gesticulating conducting, take the time to foster awareness of this element. Count singing while stepping a pulse will require more energy and engagement from the ensemble, but it will also instill a sense of responsibility for rhythmic awareness that will serve them in all musical situations. In a somewhat simplistic way, there are two problems to fix at any given moment in a rehearsal, pitch or rhythm; and five million ways to get to the heart of the issue. Find your own way into the music through the text, harmony, gesture, counterpoint, or anything that allows you to frame the understanding of that moment in the music.

As far as considerations of repertoire, I would simply offer some very valuable advice given to me when I was a student. If you can't get excited about the music you are working on preparing, leave it for someone else who will and do the music that you feel passionate about. I have long standing affairs with the music of Brahms, Stravinsky, Bach, and Britten but I also have learned just as much about how to work with ensembles through preparing Musical Theater Pops concerts, arranging Stevie Wonder songs for Jazz choir and preparing premieres of new works for the various choirs I work with. At times I have felt reluctant to tackle larger works like Verdi Requiem only because I felt apprehension about whether it was too much for the choir. In almost every case, the students have risen to the occasion and felt a real sense of accomplishment through engaging with the demands of the music. Believe in the transforming power of the music you program to impact your student's relationship to music making. Treat all the music you rehearse as worthy of the same attention to detail regardless of style or genre. In closing, perhaps the most immediate advice I can offer is when you have the chance to return to a community of singers where everyone is there ready to go, appreciate the simple amazing quality of collective human voices to thrill and soothe and be grateful that we get to do this again in person.

The Life of UMFCNAfME

Photos by Emma Gladden, captions by Kara Iwanowski



Some of our NAFME members are also a part of Frost Band of the Hour! Go 'Canes!

Our members are all smiles when we spend time together on campus!



Catch some of our upperclassmen posing for the last day of classes!



UMFCNAfME hosted a Halloween Costume Contest this year - can you spot some of our members?



We <3 our conducting classes!

Music-making looks a little different in our Elementary General Music Class!



find these photos and more on our instagram, @umfcnafme