



2027 MADRIGAL & CHAMBER CHOIR FESTIVAL

MARCH 6, 2027
THE FOUNDRY CHURCH
HOUSTON, TX

ADJUDICATORS



Dr. John Ratledge is Professor Emeritus of the University of Alabama, where he was the conductor of University Singers, Area Coordinator of Graduate Choral Conducting, Director of Choral Activities, and also taught graduate conducting, literature, and pedagogy. Ratledge made his European orchestral conducting debut in 1996 with the Filharmonia Sudecka of Walbryzychu, Poland, and since that time, he has conducted orchestras in France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Spain, and South Korea. Under his leadership, the Shorter Chorale gave the premiere of the full orchestral version of the Duruflé Requiem in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Greece, the organ version premiere of same in Bulgaria, Bernstein's Chichester Psalms premiere in Poland, and St. Petersburg, Russia's premiere of Handel's Messiah in English. Ratledge has conducted at Carnegie Hall seven times, and for 12 sold-out performances at Atlanta's Spivey Hall. Ratledge's compositions are published by Alliance Music Publications and Carl Fischer Music Publishers.



Jo-Michael Scheibe chaired the Department of Choral and Sacred Music at the USC Thornton School of Music from 2008 to 2020 and holds the title Professor Emeritus of Choral Music. Professional Service includes National President of the American Choral Directors Association (2011-2013), Western Division President (1991-1993), National R & S Chair for Community Colleges (1980-1989, and Board Member, International Federation for Choral Music (2020-2023). His ensembles performed at seven national ACDA conventions, twice for the National Association for Music Education, the National Conference of the National Collegiate Choral Organization, and the World Choral Symposium in South Korea. He remains professionally active as a conductor and teacher with 2025 engagements in Taiwan, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Austria, and the U. S. Scheibe collaborated with Luciano Pavarotti, José Carreras, the Rolling Stones, Sir Elton John, the Eagles, and Kenny Loggins and prepared choruses for Helmuth Rilling, Sir Colin Davis, Michael Tilson Thomas, James Conlin, Carl St. Clair, Jeffrey Kahane, and Jamie Martin. Music publishers Walton, Colla Voce, Hal Leonard, Santa Barbara Music, and Pavane distribute the Jo-Michael Scheibe Choral Series internationally. Scheibe was one of fourteen US Fulbright Scholars in Ireland for 2023-2024, active throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland, working with ensembles, lecturing, and visiting choirs.



Tony Thornton is an award-winning educator, conductor, and author. He holds degrees from Westminster Choir College (B.M. in Music Education and Voice), Louisiana State University (M.M. in Choral Conducting), and the University of Arizona (D.M.A. in Choral Conducting and Historical Musicology). His principal mentors include Bruce Chamberlain, Joseph Flummerfelt, Kenneth Fulton, Frauke Haasemann, Margaret Hillis, and Donald Neuen. As a guest conductor and clinician, Thornton has led workshops and conducted more than 400 mixed, treble, and tenor/bass choirs across public and private schools, universities, churches, community organizations, and professional ensembles. His international career spans 25 states, Japan, and multiple European countries. He currently serves as President and CEO of Choral Planet and Artistic Director of the Sarteano Choral Workshop in Italy. Rooted in his early career as a singer, Thornton has performed as a tenor soloist in the United States, Europe, and Asia. He sang with the Westminster Choir at major international festivals, including the Spoleto Festival in Italy and the United States. His voice is featured on recordings with Leonard Bernstein, Riccardo Muti, Robert Shaw, Claudio Abbado, and Zubin Mehta. He performed as a member of the Grammy Award-winning Robert Shaw Festival Singers for six years.

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Richard Bjella is a distinguished conductor, clinician, and choral pedagogue. Artistic Director for the San Antonio Chamber Choir since 2014, he retired from Texas Tech University in 2017. Prior to TTU, Bjella spent 25 years as Director of Choral Studies at the Lawrence Conservatory of Music, known for the acclaimed performance at the 2009 National ACDA Convention. The Texas Tech University Choir has been celebrated for its excellence in Carnegie Hall, Orchestra Hall, at TMEA conventions, and at the 2013 ACDA Convention. Bjella has conducted and presented at ACDA national and regional conventions, at over 400 festivals and workshops in 34 states, including several appearances at Lincoln Center, Orchestra Hall, and Carnegie Hall and in SOUTH KOREA, ENGLAND, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, COLUMBIA, HAITI, ESTONIA, AUSTRIA, CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, and ITALY. University residencies include the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, the University of Central Oklahoma, Gordon College, Louisiana State University, the Lawrence University Conservatory, UW-Madison, Iowa State University, Baylor University, Abilene Christian University, and Wartburg College. Bjella conducted the 2025 Texas All-State Large School Mixed Choir at TMEA and the National ACDA Convention. Choral editor for the Hal Leonard Publications Richard Bjella Choral Series, he is renowned for sessions on programming for teachers.



Joey M. Martin is Professor of Music at Texas State University where he serves as the Director of Choral Activities and Associate Dean for the College of Fine Arts and Communication. He served as the National ACDA Repertoire and Resources Chair for College and University Choirs for seven years and continues his professional service with the National Collegiate Choral Organization. Dr. Martin has conducted numerous honor choirs and has presented master classes and clinics in seventeen countries, on six continents and throughout the United States. Under his direction, Texas State Chorale has toured internationally including much of Europe, South Africa, and China with performances for prestigious conferences such as TMEA, SWACDA, ACDA, and the International Kodály Festival. For over 35 years, Dr. Martin has been engaged in music ministry and is currently the director of music/organist at New Braunfels Presbyterian Church. He is a graduate of the Harvard University Management Development Program and the Texas Academic Leadership Academy. Honors include appointment to the Fulbright Specialist roster to represent the United States throughout the world and receiving the TCDA Award for Choral Advocacy. In his spare time, he dreams of culinary school.



Richard W. Robbins is Director of Choral Activities at Shenandoah University and Chorus Director and James Erb Choral Chair of the Richmond Symphony Chorus. Praised for performances of “moving tenacity” (Houston Chronicle) and “powerful” choral work (Duluth News Tribune), he is an active clinician, adjudicator, and festival conductor whose ensembles have appeared on television and American Public Media’s Pipedreams. He made his Richmond Symphony Orchestra conducting debut in 2024 and became Chorus Master for the Opera Festival of Chicago in 2025, earning acclaim from Chicago critics and internationally by Opera News. International work includes residencies and performances at Warsaw’s Chopin Conservatory, Krakow’s Academy of Music, the John Paul II Liturgical Institute, collaborations with Lebanon’s Fayha National Choir, and recent features in Portugal and Spain. A published scholar and music editor, Robbins has presented for ACDA, CMS, and NCEA. He previously taught at the University of Minnesota Duluth, the University of Wisconsin–Superior, and the University of Houston. His choirs have performed at ACDA conferences and been finalists for the American Prize. A native Texan and former Teacher of the Year at Houston’s High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, he continues to mentor student conductors and champion choral artistry.

