

April 15, 2000

## *It really is a celebration!*

by Pat Patton, President WY-ACDA



When choosing literature, one must constantly strive for “balance” in a variety of areas---sacred to secular, classical to popular, practical to impractical, music that educates, to “crowd pleaser” music. And then of course, the nomenclature is never right. For example, some of us study “serious” music. That would be fun to tell someone at a state reception over a glass of wine. “I do serious music – what do you do?”

Or another of my favorite Wyoming nomenclature examples is “jazz festival” versus “legit festival.”

Apparently, there are some “illegitimate” festivals going on in our region! We are funny people, aren’t we?

Perhaps one of the main points of choral music’s draw is it’s “celebration.” Among the three major ensembles (band, orchestra, and choir), the choral tradition carries as much, if not more, opportunity to explore the reaches of both “serious” music and whatever its counterpart is than any of the other organizations. Our musical history goes as far back as medieval times to give us a colorful variety of performance opportunity that none of us will be able to fully explore in our lifetimes. This “celebration” of choral music is the single element that has kept me fresh and actively involved for the past 20-plus years.

The year 2000 marks the celebration of one of the world’s most influential composers, Johann Sebastian Bach. The 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death (1750) has sparked choral music concerts across the world that will feature this amazing composer’s works. Anyone on “choralist” can see it happening just among those members, let alone what may be happening worldwide both chorally and instrumentally. The question of “authenticity” is always a factor regarding the preparation and presentation of choral music. Since the Baroque era allows us opportunity to “improvise” and “interpret” within accepted boundaries, this music becomes creative and vital in our students and audiences.

Yes, Casper College is preparing Bach’s “Christ Lag” ...Cantata No.. 4 for its “Music of the Master’s Concert” which will have been completed by the time you read this article. It’s chances of success are very high...not because it will be authentically or musically perfect. Rather, it is music that will be “celebrated.” Fun to teach? You bet! Having members stand when their “theme”

or “motive” shows up is a kick! Especially when the above lasts for only a measure or 4-5 notes! The choir looks like an engine with all the pistons going off at different times to keep the motor running smoothly and with great energy. Besides, everybody is laughing because somebody is slow to stand or they knock a chair over or some other dumb thing! And shouldn't we all be laughing and enjoying the preparation, presentation, and “celebration” of music---“serious” or otherwise---whatever that means! This writer thinks we should.

As the year winds down, our state celebrates it's festivals---“legit” and “other” -- -final concerts, graduation ceremonies, filing of this year's music, cleaning of our offices, and preparations for next year. I shall be anxious to report the success of the upcoming All-State Children's Choir hosted by Kari Pinney in Powell, Wyoming this year. I am please to report the wonderful success of the first “Director's Chorus” at our annual All-State Celebration in January. Evaluation forms indicate an excitement to continue our efforts in that area. Instrumental directors have expressed an interest in becoming involved. Look for a report in the future that may include a “work of significance” with orchestral involvement presented by the Director's Chorus at the Wyoming All-State. It's great to be in a large state with a small population that volunteers to help each other celebrate our art!

And speaking of celebrations, kudos to you, Connie Branton, and all your chums who organized and presented a wonderful Northwest celebration of choral music in Seattle! Concerts were inspiring as were presentations and workshops. And sailing around the harbor listening to vocal jazz was a neat experience for this land-locked Wyomingite! Too many good restaurants though---we all pay---all in all a great celebration, of course.

And perhaps a final encouragement to all of us in this art. We get to “celebrate” every day. Lots of folks don't. They actually work for a living. Not us! We truly hold the key to the success of life:

- #1. Find out what it is that you like to do.
- #2. Try to get somebody to pay you to do that!

If we can do these two things we'll never “work” a day in our lives. Enjoy your celebration!