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University of Dayton Chorale Selected for Virtual Performance at 2022 Ohio Music Education Association Professional Development Concert

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By Bridgett Dillenburger '23

The University of Dayton Chorale will perform virtually at the 2022 Ohio Music Education Association's Professional Development Conference, the third largest musical conference in the nation.

"The recognition of being peer-reviewed and selected helps to put UD on the map," said Steven Hankle, University Chorale director and assistant professor of choral music and music education, who has led the group of 33 students through this new world of virtual choir performance.

The Chorale is one of 30 applicants offered the opportunity to share a recording for the conference after a blind review of its application. The review process is highly competitive and this is the first time the University Chorale was selected to perform under Hankle's leadership.

“The one word that comes to mind when thinking of Dr. Hankle’s leadership is persistence,” said Angelo Knight, a music education major from Dayton and a member of the University Chorale. “Every year he pushed our musicianship more and more, resulting in our performance in this year’s conference.”

Hankle said groups typically have until spring semester to refine their pieces, however the pandemic-related demand for virtual performances required the work to be finalized sooner. He praised his students for their perseverance and ability to adapt to the many changes.

“We have had to shorten rehearsals, lower the gathering size, rehearse over Zoom and have virtual concerts with singer’s masks,” Knight said. “However, thankfully this year, we had an in-person masked concert for the public.”

The Chorale’s fall concert, Nov. 12, 2021, in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, was recorded and edited to be submitted for the conference under Hankle’s creative direction. He collaborated with videographers to finalize the graphics and audio of the recording to ensure the virtual translation of the students’ talents.

During the 2020-21 academic year, the Chorale was unable to meet in person as a group. Hankle said his students could only work in groups of less than 10, while others would have to observe on Zoom. Students were required to record and submit their own audio to Hankle during the 2020 fall semester to be edited into a single, collaborative group performance. Hankle learned perseverance himself, as he adapted to the unpredictability of Zoom, as well as singers wearing masks.

Hankle said the design of most masks does not allow for vocalists to maximize breath or enunciation. Fortunately, the Department of Music was able to purchase masks made specifically for ensemble members, enabling in-person rehearsals during the 2021 spring semester.

Julia Randel, associate professor and Department of Music chair, praised Hankle for his energized vision as a conductor and musician.

“He sets a high standard with the students and pushes them to work really hard, but I think they are really feeling the rewards of that,” she said.

Randel said events like the OMEA conference showcase the talent of the Chorale to music educators and high school students in the state, helping to interest potential students in the University’s music degree programs. Students from all academic majors are eligible to audition for ensembles.

“For the non-majors who participate, these are all transferable skills,” Randel said. “We hear a lot from employers about wanting graduates who know how to think creatively, work collaboratively with attention to detail and carry something through the end of a process to

create a polished product.”

Hankle hopes that performing at OMEA will build the University Chorale’s reputation and gain the attention of prospective students. This conference is a step that he has been building up to since his first day as director in August 2018. The American Choral Directors Association Central/Midwest regional conference is the next goal for Hankle, as he hopes for the University Chorale to reach national levels of recognition.

“When I first got here almost four years ago, my goal was to get UD on the map as far as choral programs,” Hankle said. “In order for that to happen we have to first get recognized within the state, that’s what is happening now.”

This year’s OMEA conference is Feb. 3-5 at the Huntington Convention Center in Cleveland.

For more information, visit the [Department of Music](#) and [University Chorale](#) websites.