



FOUNDATIONS

ICDA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2026

Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
8:30 AM	n/a	Registration Opens		Graham Conference Center
9:30 AM	Roger Emerson	Welcome-Keynote	Join us for the conference centerpiece as our keynote speaker shares an inspiring vision for our collective future. This session sets the tone for our time together, blending high-level insights with the foundational values that drive our work.	Graham Hall
10:30 AM	District Chairs	District Meetings	This dedicated session is your time to connect directly with your District Representative and fellow regional members. We'll focus on building local connections, clarifying upcoming schedules, and confirming key project dates for the year ahead.	Various
11:00 AM		All-State Show Choir Performance	Experience the energy and precision of the All-State Show Choir as they take the stage for their premier performance. This showcase celebrates the culmination of intense rehearsals, featuring a high-impact program of choreography and choral excellence.	Douwstra
11:30-12:30 PM	n/a	Lunch	We eat.	Central Market
1:00 PM	Dr. John Flannery	Missouri River Choral Society Performance	The Missouri River Choral Society is a select group of singers from the Sioux City area that was formed in 2018. The performance for the Iowa Choral Director's Association will feature "The Requiem of the Living" by Dan Forrest accompanied by chamber orchestra.	St. Mary's Catholic Church 726 218th Place Pella
2:00 PM	Jeremy Fox	Literature Considerations for the New(er) or Emerging Vocal Jazz Ensemble	Grammy-nominated vocal arranger Dr. Jeremy Fox will lead participants through all you might consider in picking literature for your new(er) or emerging vocal jazz ensemble.	Cox Snow Recital
2:00 PM	Jennifer Walker	"Let's Start At the Very Beginning" (Building Choral Skills in the Primary Years)	Through the lens of a primary level general music class we will explore how important foundational choral skills are built in the early years. Choral skills will be fostered in a play-based, reflective and supportive learning environment.	Graham Annex
2:00 PM	Opus Committee	Inside the Opus Audition	Join the Opus Committee for an overview of the 2026 Opus audition materials. Participants will gain practical tips and strategies for successful auditions and observe a mock audition to better understand the process and expectations.	Maytag Boat
3:00 PM	Chase Shoemaker	Self-Published Reading Session	Step outside the traditional catalog and discover the vibrant world of self-published choral music. This session highlights innovative, high-quality works that are often overlooked by major publishing houses, offering fresh perspectives and unique musical voices for your ensemble. Many of these composers offer flexible licensing and direct collaboration opportunities that can transform your rehearsal process.	Maytag Boat
3:00 PM	Dr. Michael Krueger	The Rhythm Is Gonna Get You!	Creating good rhythm with a choral ensemble is no easy task. The voice doesn't always lend itself to singing rhythmically the way instruments can. Many of our challenges as conductors are tied to rhythmic comprehension and accuracy problems within our singing ranks. In this session we will re-visit and re-establish the foundational concepts and techniques of rhythmic performance and interpretation as they relate to singers and singing. Attendees will develop new rehearsal techniques to help their singers – and themselves – become better rhythmicians.	Cox Snow Recital



MONDAY, JULY 20

FOUNDATIONS

ICDA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2026

Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
3:00 PM	Thad Driskell	Choir, Copies, and Compliance	What Choral Directors Need to Know About Copyright	Maytag Weller
4:00 PM		All-State Jazz Choir Performance	Experience the sophisticated harmonies and rhythmic precision of the All-State Jazz Choir. This performance showcases the state's premier vocalists as they navigate the complexities of jazz standards and contemporary arrangements with skill and soul.	Douwstra
4:30 PM	Dr. Jeremy Fox	Drummers are from Venus, Bassists are from Mars – how to speak the same language as your combo	In this session, vocal jazz arranger and educator Dr. Jeremy Fox will help you speak the same language as your drummer, bassist, and pianist!	Cox Snow Recital
4:30 PM	Roger Emerson	Middle School Magic (There's No Such Thing!)	Resources and Repertoire to help tame the wild beast of the middle school mixed choir. Emphasis on changing voice literature and motivational songs. A packet (book) of music will be included.	Maytag Boat
4:30 PM	Peter Grau	Community Choirs Reading Session	Celebrate the vital role of the auditioned, non-auditioned and civic ensemble in this reading session dedicated to Community Choirs. We will explore a range of repertoire that balances artistic challenge with accessibility, focusing on music that fosters social connection and musical growth. We hope one of these pieces will be perfect for your next concert season.	Graham Hall
4:30-6:00 PM	Dr. Michael Krueger	Director's Choir Rehearsal	Director's Choir Rehearsal #1	Chapel
5:30-6:30 PM	n/a	Dinner	We eat.	
7:30 PM	Jason Heitland	Home Free Performance	Experience the genre-defying artistry of the world-renowned vocal band Home Free. Known for their seamless harmonies and high-energy stage presence, this performance showcases their signature blend of country-pop and incredible vocal percussion—proving that the human voice is the most versatile instrument of all.	Douwstra

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TUESDAY, JULY 21

FOUNDATIONS

ICDA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2026

Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
8:30 AM	Jason Enke	Show Me the Money!	Have you ever wondered how school finance works in Iowa? This session will cover the basics of school finance including how schools are funded, what those funds can be used for and how educators are able to negotiate their wages, hours and working conditions. There will be time for question and answer	Maytag Boat
8:30 AM	Dr. Emilie Bertram	Shoulder Health and Injury Prevention for Conductors	Shoulder injury, and often surgery, is far too common among conductors. This session will discuss basic shoulder anatomy and the aspects of conducting that can lead to injury. We will explore ways to minimize injury risk through preventative exercises and the conducting gesture itself. Session attendees will actively practice exercises they can immediately implement into their routine.	Maytag Weller
8:30 AM	Julie Thomas	Working with Composers to Commission a New Work	Julie will discuss her experiences from the past several years as a freelance composer and how you, as a choir director, can work with composers to commission new works.	Graham Annex
9:30 AM	Mr. Michael Krueger	Style Is Substance: Techniques of Historically Informed Performance Practice	We all remember our music history survey classes with semesters broken down by musical era: Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th Century, etc. In our rehearsals, we lead our singers on musical journeys with compositions from the time periods listed above (and others), guided [hopefully] by our knowledge of the unique style of each period and the musical forces for which were in play. Leonard Bernstein wrote: The measure of success of any great work of art is "the extent to which it invites you in and lets you breathe its strange, special air." As conductors, how can our various decisions about a piece of music invite our singers in, to breathe its "strange, special air?" Hint: techniques of historically informed performance practice play a part. Come to this session and find out more!	Maytag Boat
9:30 AM	Dr. Justin Binek	Scat Singing	Building on concepts from his featured Choral Journal article, Justin Binek delivers a practical, accessible toolkit designed to take the fear out of vocal jazz improvisation.	Cox Snow Recital
9:30 AM	Dr. Sarah Wigley	Fine-Tuning the Choir: Estill Voice Techniques for Ensemble Singing	This session explores how Estill Voice Training provides an anatomy-based framework for navigating the diverse technical demands of today's choral repertoire—from Renaissance polyphony to contemporary commercial music. Participants will gain practical, health-conscious tools to help singers and conductors achieve stylistic authenticity and vocal freedom across contrasting genres. By mastering these specific vocal coordinations, educators and performers can ensure a smooth, flexible transition between styles while maintaining consistent tone and long-term vocal health.	Chapel
10:30 AM	Jessica Dunnick	Movement Beginnings for Musical Outcomes	Ever wonder why students look confused or uninterested when you teach movement? In this session, you will learn how to skillfully instruct movement lessons for students of any age or prior experience. Through games, frequent practice, and careful instructional scaffolding, students will build confidence and positive experiences with movement, all while displaying musical knowledge through their bodies. We will consider social and psycho-motor readiness to prepare students to perform folk dances, creative movement, and active listening activities. Examples of SEL application through movement and instrument play will help provide a safe and inviting environment for creative outcomes in your classroom!	Cox Snow Recital



TUESDAY, JULY 21

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Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
10:30 AM	Abby Shepard	Pop, Power, and Pedagogy: The Treble Show Choir Sound	Achieving a vibrant show choir tone without sacrificing vocal health is a balancing act. Give your treble section the power, brilliance, and stamina they need to dominate the stage. This session offers a functional toolkit for building a unified, healthy show choir tone.	Maytag Weller
10:30 AM	Heather Nail	Vocal Jazz Roundtable	Join fellow high school vocal jazz directors for an interactive roundtable focused on the specific demands of the secondary-level jazz ensemble. This collaborative session addresses the unique balance of teaching swing feel, microphone technique, and introductory improvisation within the constraints of a busy school schedule. Whether you are building a new program or refining a competitive group, come prepared to share "best practices" and troubleshoot common hurdles with peers who understand the high school landscape.	Maytag Boat
10:30-12:00 PM	Dr. Michael Krueger	Director's Choir Rehearsal	Director's Choir Rehearsal	Chapel
11:30-12:30 PM	Lunch	Lunch	We eat.	Central Market
1:00 PM	Dr. David Haas	Vocal Artists of Iowa Performance	Experience an extraordinary performance by the Vocal Artists of Iowa, a premier semi-professional choir drawing from the finest musical talent in the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City regions. Directed by Dr. David Haas, this project-based ensemble brings together passionate community musicians, local music professionals, and area music educators.	Douwstra
2:00 PM	Jessica Dunnick	The S of SEL	All students hold varied levels of social anxiety. Ever wonder how to acknowledge and help your students through this challenge? The Orff Schulwerk frequently utilizes creating collaboratively; this session helps teachers create a scaffold into their own existing lessons that helps assist students that may be introverted or shy away from collaboration. We will also learn a year-long scaffolded approach to move from individual music making to daily collaborations in the music room.	Maytag Weller
2:00 PM	Dr. Sarah Wigley	From Palestrina to Pop Training Versatile Voices for Today's Choral Repertoire	This dynamic, interactive workshop provides voice teachers and choral directors with practical, anatomy-based tools to help singers navigate diverse styles—from classical and gospel to musical theatre and pop—with greater power and ease. Through engaging demonstrations and easy-to-apply exercises, participants will learn healthy belting techniques, strategies for expanding resonance, and methods for shifting confidently between contrasting vocal coordinations. You will leave with rehearsal-ready strategies to unlock expressive range and maintain long-term vocal health across any repertoire.	Maytag Boat
2:00 PM	Dr. Jennaya Robison	Creating Belonging through Diverse Programming	What does our repertoire communicate about who belongs? This session explores how intentional programming can reflect both the current and aspirational identities of our ensembles. When our choirs include singers of varied genders, cultures, and backgrounds, our repertoire choices should mirror that reality. Doing so sends a quiet but powerful message about who is seen, valued, and invited into the choral art.	Cox Snow Recital
3:00 PM	Tom Gerking & Hannah Lambert	Making It Happen at the Middle School Level	This session provides a comprehensive guide for educators on establishing and maintaining a thriving middle school vocal music program. We will explore key strategies across three critical areas: Setting the Foundation, Recruitment, and Striving for Excellence.	Maytag Boat



TUESDAY, JULY 21

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Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
3:00 PM	Dr. Emilie Bertram	4 Year College Reading Session	4-year college and university choral programs include a varied spectrum of ensemble sizes, demographics, ability levels, purpose, and traditions. This reading session is curated with that fact in mind. Together we will explore repertoire that meets a variety of needs, including technical challenges and quick learns; sacred and secular texts; contemporary and historic time periods; and various cultural traditions. Whether you lead a large or small ensemble, developing or advanced, you will find music designed to fit the artistic and educational needs of your students.	Cox Snow Recital
3:00 PM	Eric Wyler	The Lost Voices: Elementary Boys' Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Toward Singing	Across the United States, music educators continue to observe the "missing males" phenomenon in choral programs, often tracing disengagement back to the elementary years. This session shares findings from a study of first-fifth grade boys in Bellevue Public Schools in Bellevue, Nebraska, examining shifts in attitudes toward singing, the relationship between singing self-efficacy and enjoyment, and the factors influencing boys' decisions to sing or withdraw. Results indicate that attitudes begin to change earlier than many educators might expect, and that confidence plays a pivotal role in shaping students' engagement. Grounded in historical and societal context, this presentation offers practical, research-based strategies for early intervention, building self-efficacy, engaging families, and creating classroom environments where every boy feels safe, capable, and proud to sing.	Maytag Weller
4:00 PM	Dr. Christopher Mitchell	The Choir Director as Voice Teacher: Technical Fundamentals for Choral Singers	The choir director is often a singer's first or only voice teacher. This session will focus on technical fundamentals through the lens of a voice teacher who also directs choirs. Areas of focus will be Alignment/Body usage, Breath Coordination, and Vowel production/Resonance.	Maytag Boat
4:00 PM	Meg Byrne	High School Reading Session	We all have ensembles in our program where we deal with an unequal balance of voices, whether a non-auditioned ensemble, a ninth grade mixed choir, or a "Frankenstein" small ensemble for Solo & Ensemble. This session is dedicated to the high school choral director seeking repertoire that challenges and inspires while serving those ensembles. We will read through a diverse range of literature, focusing on some gems from the SAB and SSAB repertoire. While suggesting programming for various concerts and occasions, these selections focus on building vocal maturity and expressive depth.	Cox Snow Recital
4:00 PM	Roger Emerson	50 Years of Favorites	Roger will present a packet of his favorite arrangements and compositions from his first 50 years (1976) to the present with stories and motivation behind each.	Maytag Weller
4:00 PM	Dr. Michael Krueger	Director's Choir Rehearsal	Director's Choir rehearsal #3	Chapel
5:00 PM	Adam Orban	Director's Choir Performance	Experience a unique performance as colleagues from across the state step out from behind the podium and onto the risers for the Director's Choir. This showcase celebrates the collective artistry of our choral leaders, proving that the heart of our profession is rooted in the joy of ensemble singing.	Chapel
5:30-6:30 PM	Dinner	Dinner	We eat.	Central Market
7:00 PM	Nick Oswald	ICDA Honors Initiative Awards Presentation	Presentation of the 5th Annual ICDA Honors Initiative Awards	Douwstra



TUESDAY, JULY 21

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Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
7:30 PM	Adam Orban	National Lutheran Choir Performance	Join the National Lutheran Choir, led by Artistic Director Dr. Jennaya Robison, for a performance that celebrates their milestone 40th "Ruby Jubilee" season. Renowned for their artistry and commitment to expanding the sacred choral tradition, the ensemble will present a program that bridges the gap between historical masterworks and contemporary voices. From the stillness of winter to the "Rooted and Rising" promise of spring, this showcase demonstrates the choir's unique ability to unite diverse faith traditions through high-level choral excellence.	Douwstra
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WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

FOUNDATIONS

ICDA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2026

Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
8:30 AM	The Surf Ballroom	Music History of the Surf Ballroom	Music History of the Surf Ballroom	Graham Annex
8:30 AM	Dr. Christopher Mitchell	Fresh Solo Repertoire for Contest and College Auditions	If your copies of the 26 Italian Songs and Arias and the First Book of Soprano Solos are getting worn out, it may be time to explore some new repertoire for your students! This session will focus on classical repertoire choices of varying levels of difficulty from a variety of sources and include some music of living composers that is accessible to young singers.	Maytag Boat
8:30 AM	Joel Everist	Two-year College Reading Session	This reading session is specifically tailored to the unique needs of Two-Year and Community College Choral Programs. We will focus on repertoire that meets the artistic maturity of collegiate singers while addressing the specific challenges of shorter student cycles and varying levels of prior vocal training. Discover a curated selection of literature—ranging from cornerstone SATB works to high-impact chamber pieces—that ensures a high-level musical experience and prepares students for a successful transition to four-year institutions.	Cox Snow Recital
9:30 AM	Dr. Michael Krueger	Rediscovering the Renaissance	With an incredibly large array of compositions – both sacred and secular – the Renaissance in music (approximately 1450-1600) is often called the “Golden Age of Vocal Music.” Many of us had some of our first important and foundational musical experiences singing Renaissance motets and madrigals in high school or junior high. But the reality is, that at large group contest and most ACDA and MENC conventions, music of the Renaissance is rarely performed, and that is unfortunate. This session will give attendees the opportunity to reconnect with lost Renaissance classics and to discover new repertoire from the period that is engaging, beautiful and performable.	Maytag Boat
9:30 AM	Josh Moser	Understanding the BOEE	Keep your credentials current and your career on track. This session demystifies the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) regulations, providing essential updates on practitioner licensure, conversions, and endorsements and what NOT to do.	Maytag Weller
9:30 AM	Jon Edgeton & Heidi Fehlhafer	Treble & Bass Clef Reading Session	This combined session explores the distinct beauty and technical requirements of gender-specific ensembles. We will read through a balanced program of Treble and Bass repertoire, highlighting music that addresses range, resonance, and the unique community-building aspects of these choirs. It's an essential session for directors looking to expand their sectional library with high-impact literature.	Cox Snow Recital
10:30 AM	Adam Orban & Chris Johnson	Worship Service	<i>Sacred Song: A Look at Sacred Music Through the Ages</i> Join us in a collaborative service where the congregation is the choir and we sing literature that has been “foundational” to the art of choral music from the church.	Douwstra
11:30-1:15 PM	Nick Oswald	ICDA Annual Meeting and Luncheon	We eat and listen.	
1:15 PM	Dr. Christopher Mitchell	Developing Musical Independence in Singers	Do your singers leave your program able to stand on their own as independent musicians? If lifelong learning is our goal, music educators need to provide our students the tools that allow them to continue to sing and make music once they leave our choirs. This session will focus on the concept of audiation and how it is the key to unlocking musical independence.	Maytag Boat



WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

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ICDA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2026

Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
1:15 PM	Christopher Ellerston	Music & Worship Reading Session	Explore a thoughtful selection of choral music designed to enhance the liturgical and worship experience. This reading session features works ranging from traditional hymn arrangements to contemporary sacred anthems, with a focus on accessibility for volunteer ensembles and theological resonance. Discover new ways to invigorate your congregation's musical life while maintaining a high standard of choral excellence.	Cox Snow Recital
1:15 PM	The Surf Ballroom	Exploring the Surf Ballroom: Opportunities for Young Musicians	Exploring the Surf Ballroom: Opportunities for Young Musicians	Graham Annex
2:15 PM	Dr. John Wiles	The Music We Keep, the Voices We Add: Pairing Time-Tested Repertoire with Expanding Choral Voices	This session revisits cornerstone works of the choral repertoire not as artifacts, but as living teaching tools. Each piece is paired with a more recent work that reinforces similar musical and pedagogical concepts. By connecting familiar literature to newer repertoire, we can continue to teach the fundamentals of ensemble musicianship while offering students a broader sense of who participates in the choral tradition.	Maytag Boat
2:15 PM	Jolene Shaefer & Amanda Stevenson	Middle School & Children's Choir Reading Session	Join us for a collaborative reading session focused on the unique artistry of the developing singer. We will explore a curated selection of literature that balances pedagogical growth with high-level musicality, specifically chosen for the changing voice and young treble ensembles. This is the perfect opportunity to find repertoire that is both "singable" and sophisticated for your upcoming festival season.	Cox Snow Recital
2:15 PM	All-State Conductor TBA	The Rehearsal: A Positive Approach	Summertime is the season for programming and planning! As we plan our season, how do we set our students up for success in every rehearsal? How do we minimize correction and maximize direction? How do we 'catch' them being good? This session will explore philosophical and practical ways to create a rehearsal environment that sets up our students for success.	Maytag Weller
2:15 PM	Nick Oswald	Past Presidents Meeting	Past Presidents Meeting	Graham Annex
3:15 PM	Tapestry (barbershop)	Incorporating Barbershop	Barbershop isn't just a genre; it's a powerful tool for teaching vocal production, active ear training, and close-interval tuning. We will unpack the anatomy of a barbershop arrangement and discuss strategies to engage singers of all skill levels (especially those hard-to-recruit changing voices!). Walk away with ready-to-use warm-ups, a clear understanding of the style's unique tuning mechanics, and actionable ideas to implement barbershop harmony in your classrooms!	Cox Snow Recital
3:15 PM	Kevin Palu	Show Choir Round Table Discussion	Join fellow directors and choreographers for an open, interactive Show Choir Roundtable designed to tackle the unique challenges of the modern competitive circuit. This session provides a collaborative space to share "best practices" on everything from show design and vocal health to budgeting and student leadership.	Graham Annex
3:15 PM	All-State Conductor TBA	Getting the Most Out of Them & The Best Out of You	One of the biggest challenges in education today is that "There's never enough _____!" Time. Resources. Space. This session will focus on maximizing instructional/rehearsal time with practices intended to inspire effective and expressive gestures and excellent verbal interactions.	Maytag Boat



WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

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ICDA SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2026

Session Time	Session Presenter	Session Title	Session Description	Session Location
4:15 PM		McCowen Award Presentation & Retired Choir Performance	We will celebrate a lifetime of musical leadership as our esteemed retired colleagues return to the risers for the Retired Directors' Choir. This performance honors the enduring passion and vocal artistry of those who have shaped our choral landscape, demonstrating that the joy of ensemble singing is a lifelong pursuit. Following their performance, we will transition to the presentation of our annual Robert McCowen Award and other acknowledgements.	Douwstra
5:15 PM	Thad Wilkins	All-State Reading Session	All-State Reading Session	Douwstra
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