

2011 Tennessee ACDA State Choir Festival JUDGES INFORMATION



Fonda Lofton (Jonesboro, Arkansas) has served 32 years in choral music education, of which 24 years have been in the Jonesboro School District. Honors include Annie Camp Teacher of the Year, Jonesboro School District Teacher of the Year, Choral Director of the Year by the Arkansas Choral Directors Association, Northeast Arkansas Choral Director of the Year in 1992 and 2005. Her previous teaching assignments include Stoneham High School and Whidden Memorial College, Boston, Mass., Parkview High School, Little Rock, and Nettleton High School. She is currently teaching at MacArthur Junior High School and will retire this spring.

Ms. Lofton was appointed to the committee for standards for secondary choral music under the guidance of Hillary Clinton for the state of Arkansas. This committee was composed of five members and was responsible to write standards for Arkansas choral music educators to use as a platform for accountability. She has served as the Arkansas Repertoire and Standards Chair for Children's Choruses for South West American Choral Directors Association, and served the Northeast Region in each office of their organization and held a seat on the ARKCDCA board of directors.

Ms. Lofton is a graduate of Arkansas State University holding a BME, MME, and MSE in psychology. She has done post graduate studies at VanderCook School Music, Chicago; Emory University, Atlanta (under Robert Shaw); San Jose State University, California, University of Illinois, Evansville; and Tufts University, Boston. Her professional affiliations are Sigma Alpha Iota, Tau Beta Sigma, Texas Choral Directors Association, Music Educators National Conference, Arkansas Choral Directors Association, and American Choral Directors Association. Ms. Lofton founded and conducts the Northeast Arkansas Master Chorale, a professional chorus of music educators and business men and women with high school and college choral experience. She maintains a private studio of piano and voice students, accompanies the Arkansas All State Choir, freelance vocal coaches and prepares students for auditions for NATS, colleges, and regional musical theatre. She currently serves as organist for First Baptist Church Jonesboro and maintains a private studio of voice and piano students.



Dr. Brian T. Russell (Bloomington, Illinois) is Assistant Professor of Music at Illinois Wesleyan University, where his responsibilities include directing the University Choir, teaching Conducting and courses in Music Education, supervising student teachers, and teaching a freshmen seminar course entitled "Music and Western Society." Prior to his appointment at Illinois Wesleyan, he was on the choral faculty at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and was a high school music teacher in Tennessee, where his instrumental and vocal ensembles at Riverdale High School and White House High School constantly gained recognition at state and regional festivals. Under Dr. Russell's direction, the Illinois Wesleyan University Choir has received critical acclaim for recent concerts featuring the works of Telemann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and American composers. He is also conductor for Cantus Novus, an auditioned, semi-professional vocal ensemble based in Bloomington, and is music director of First Federated Church in Peoria, IL. Dr. Russell's research interests surround the choral music of Telemann; his 2009 dissertation on the Psalms of Telemann recently won the Julius Herford Prize from the American Choral Directors Association.

Dr. Russell holds his Masters and Doctor of Musical Arts Degrees in Choral Conducting from the Eastman School of Music. Russell's professional affiliations include Chorus America, Music Educator's National Conference, and the American Choral Directors Association, where he served as the Tennessee High School Repertoire and Standards chair from 2005-2007. An active clinician, guest conductor, and adjudicator, he has had an extraordinary host of teachers, including Raphael Bundage, Mark Scatterday, Neil Varon, and William Weinert.



Robert E. Wright (Montevallo, Alabama) is in his twelfth year as Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Music at the University of Montevallo. He is currently serving as chair of the Music Department. His responsibilities at UM include conducting the Concert and Chamber Choirs, teaching conducting, coordinating the vocal/choral area. In his 32-year college career, he has served in similar positions at Tennessee Technological University, South Dakota State University and Dakota State College. In April, 2004, Dr. Wright was selected for the Distinguished Teacher Award in the University of Montevallo College of Fine Arts. Choirs under his direction have sung at state, regional and national conventions as well as to acclaim in Western Europe and throughout the Midwest and Southern United States.

In the Birmingham musical community, his activities are many and varied. He is a regular guest conductor for the Red Mountain Chamber Orchestra and is active as a singer, conductor and clinician in the area. He was also a member of the chorus for the Robert Shaw Workshops at Carnegie Hall for a number of years. A life-member of ACDA, Dr. Wright was president-elect in South Dakota and president of both the Tennessee and Alabama chapters. He has served as Program Chair for Southern Division conventions in Savannah, GA and most recently for "Southern Harmony" in Nashville, TN in 2004. He is also active in MENC and the Alabama Vocal Association.

A native of Bessemer, AL, Dr. Wright holds degrees from Samford University in Birmingham, the University of South Florida in Tampa and the Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting and Literature from the University of Miami in Coral Gables, FL..