

A Legacy Continues

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The NCCO has recently taken up the mantle of an important project: carrying on the work begun by Dr. Margaret Hillis and Dr. Alfred Mann. NCCO will be making available two choral research publications developed by both Hillis and Mann, during the formative years of the choral profession. *The American Choral Review* and *Research Memorandum Series* were first created by the renowned conductor and Founder/Director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, Margaret Hillis. Less well known about Margaret Hillis was her establishment of the American Choral Foundation in 1954, an organization whose mission it was to promote quality choral performances throughout the United States. The American Choral Foundation (1954) predated the American Choral Directors Association (1959) and was in fact the first organization of its kind to foster support during the nascent period of the choral profession. Hillis understood, through her own struggles as a young choral conductor during the 1950s, the challenges one faced in accessing quality repertoire and support materials. Through the establishment of her Foundation, Hillis aimed to resolve these issues. In 1956, under the auspices of the Foundation, Hillis formed an Association of Choral Conductors as a result of thousands of requests the Foundation had received from choral conductors nationwide for advice, assistance, and guidance on an array of subjects within the choral field.

Hillis developed three divisions within her Foundation, one of which included a Research and Publications Division, established in 1956. This division was designed to provide Association members access to information on performance practice and scholarly guidance in pedagogical, historical, and analytical approaches to choral repertoire. One of several ways Hillis advanced this information was through a quarterly publication, known then as the *Bulletin of the American Concert Choir and Choral Foundation Inc*, first distributed in June, 1958. An additional publication, entitled *Research Memorandum Series*, was launched in January, 1959.

Topics of early *Bulletin* publications included articles such as “The Choirmaster and the Renaissance Choral Repertory” by Noah Greenberg, Music Director of Pro Musica, (October 1959), “Music and Worship in the Liberal Church,” by Robert Shaw (June 1961), “Recollections of Paul Hindemith,” by Bernard Heiden, Indiana University, (April 1964), “A Preface to Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*,” by Denis Stevens, Columbia University, (Summer 1967), along with interviews, book reviews, special issue collections, composer monographs, studies of music periods, studies in choral techniques, essays, and many other features remaining relevant and valuable today. The *Memorandum Series* provided members with information on recommended editions,

selective listings of various choral works by genre, composer, or era, guides to recordings, and other helpful lists. Examples of topics covered in the *Research Memoranda* included listings of “Choral Music of Beethoven,” by Elliot Forbes (January 1962), “Recommended Editions of Choral Works,” by Alice Parker (December 1959), “Music for Chorus Without Tenors,” by Richard McChesney (October 1968), “Bibliography of Choral Music for Three-part Male Chorus,” by Leonard Van Camp, and “Writings on the Choral Music of Johannes Brahms” (September 1985), among many other topics remaining timely today.

The strength of these publications rested upon the quality of the editorial staff. After several years of oversight by the Foundation’s first administrative director Milton Goldin, who served as editor of the *Bulletin*, it was taken over by esteemed musicologist Dr. Alfred Mann in 1961. Shortly thereafter, the name of the *Bulletin* was changed to the *American Choral Review* and remained under Mann’s brilliant guidance for 37 years. Unfortunately, maintaining and distributing the beautifully bound Review on a quarterly basis, along with six yearly publications of the *Memorandum Series* became financially prohibitive for Hillis’s American Choral Foundation to sustain.

In 1985, Hillis passed the Service Division (including the Research and Publications of the Foundation) on to the Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles, which would soon become Chorus America.

By 1991, both publications appeared as part of *The Voice of Chorus America*. For many years thereafter, Chorus America has made back issues of the publications available upon request of choral researchers, who have continued to take advantage of this superb scholarly collection. Recently, Chorus America decided to discontinue oversight of the *American Choral Review* and *Memorandum Series*, and now NCCO has stepped forward to assume this task. These invaluable resources provide a glimpse into the history and development of the choral profession. NCCO will be providing a searchable Digital Archive of this treasured collection, a tremendous resource for our scholarly work. These materials will be accessible in the months to come, thanks to those at NCCO who stepped forward to carry on the legacy set forth by Margaret Hillis and Alfred Mann, both of whom devoted their lives to these scholarly contributions, along with those editors of both publications who continued their work. It is fitting that NCCO has taken up this cause!