



No Man is an Island

by Randall Hooper, VP College/Community

Do you remember circa 1970 editions of choral music with colored ink? I remember, as a high school student, singing the Joan Baez song, “No Man is an Island” printed in orange or green ink. Where I currently teach, we are at the culmination of a large collaboration project and this has caused me to reflect on all I have gained from the many opportunities for collaboration. The first two lines of this song, “No man is an island, No man stands alone, Each man's joy is joy to me”, expresses the experiences I’ve been afforded through many years of collaboration.

I’ve been very fortunate in my career to be placed in jobs beside excellent musicians and teachers with this ideal at the center of their teaching philosophy. These opportunities have lead me to grow as a musician and teacher as well as enhance the educational and performance experience of my students.

As a rookie teacher, I worked with a veteran orchestra director who suggested it would be a good experience for our students to sing *the Vivaldi “Gloria”* together. We split the conducting responsibilities and performed the piece on two occasions. This was my first opportunity to conduct a string ensemble and to learn about the challenges of choral orchestral literature. Over my career I have had many opportunities to collaborate with theatre teachers and band and orchestra directors on musical productions, and each production had its own unique challenges and lessons to be learned. Later in my high school teaching experience, we collaborated yearly with the band and orchestra programs on concerts. My conducting gesture and teaching improved with each opportunity. At A&M-Commerce we are putting the final touches on a concert to premiere a newly commissioned extended piece for choir and wind ensemble by James Syler, composer and adjunct faculty member at UTSA. The collaboration with Mr. Syler as well as the conductor of the wind ensemble, has been an enriching musical experience and a growth experience for me and for my students.

We are so fortunate to work in a profession where collaboration is not just merely common procedure, but almost expected. Our lives and our jobs would be much easier if we didn’t bother, but what a boring and lonely life and career it would be on that “island” all alone.

As you begin making plans for your next concert season, be the initiator of the next collaboration project.