

***BEDR Sessions for the New York State School Music Association
(NYSSMA®) 89th Annual Winter Conference, December 4-7, 2025,
Rochester, New York***

BEDR Choral Rethinking Voice Classification: Presenter Mr. Carl Ferrara

In the 21st Century, with our ever-shifting concepts of gender and sexual identity, we need to redefine our definition of Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass. In this workshop Mr. Ferrara suggests an approach to ground signing which eliminates labels of voice type, and disregards gender, and instead focuses on comfort and ability, and frees every human to participate in signing.

Thursday 3:30 PM Highland Convention Center EF

***BEDR Affinity Space: Setting Intentions and Planning for the Conference Ahead: Facilitator
Gina Costanza***

This affinity space will be an opportunity for folks from historically marginalized communities to connect at the beginning of the conference. This time will be used to create fellowship, to help participants set their intentions for their time, and for participants to create a plan for them to rest and recharge over the course of the conference.

Thursday 4:45 PM Hilton Garden Inn Ridder Room

Unsung Heroines: Celebrating Historical Women Composers: Presenter Susan Davis

Although living women composers are programmed more frequently, there are many historical women composers whose work remains less familiar. This session will explore the instrumental works of brilliant unsung heroines like Martines, Gonzaga, Andree, Farrenc, Chaminade, and more. Recordings, score excerpts, and socio-historical context will be explored, along with repertoire recommended for MS/HS.

Thursday: 7:00 PM Frederick Douglass

[BEDR Affinity Space Breakfast Convos with Coffee & Pastries: Facilitators Frankie Dascola, Nucteo Vega, Avid Williams](#)

This space is designed to be welcoming and affirming for diverse educators at the NYSSMA conference, specifically for individuals from historically marginalized and underrepresented identities to form connections with each other.

This session will consider how our diverse identities shape the experiences we have in the music classroom. By building this intentional community, we hope to strengthen our collective approach to our shared and unique struggles.

Friday 8:15 PM Eastman Board Room

[Teaching popular music using a real-world approach: Presenter Dr. Amy Spears](#)

Playing popular music may be typical for many music educators. However, teaching it utilizing methods that popular musicians use may not be something we all know how to do or be aware of. In this session, I discuss how and why informal music learning feels different than running a typical rehearsal, share how it can motivate students, give examples of classroom use, and provide helpful resources.

Friday, 10:45 AM Frederick Douglass

[BEDR Strings: Bornoff for All: Differentiation & Equity in Orchestra: Presenter Margaret Chan](#)

School orchestra students often fall behind those who can access private lessons, and that gap has only widened since the pandemic. This inequity is exactly what George Bornoff aimed to solve in his group strings approach. Learn how his methods can support orchestras at all levels by embedding differentiation, promoting deeper understanding, and fostering student choice. Bring your instrument!

Friday 1:15 PM Regency Ballroom C

[BEDR Affinity Space - Urban Focus - Facilitator Jasmine Britt, NYSSMA Urban Schools Chair](#)

In addition to providing a concentrated networking opportunity for teachers in urban schools, this session will host discussion about specific realities of teaching in large city districts within New York state (such as New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo, Albany and Yonkers) and how NYSSMA could offer further support of teachers and students in our city districts.

Friday 2:30 PM Hilton Garden Inn Ridder Room

[BEDR Band Diversity in Wind Band Repertoire: Presenter Greg Sisco](#)

An exploration of how to expand the variety and diversity in programming for your ensembles. Theoretical programming ideas will be compared to real life programs. Attendees will leave with methods for diversification, tools to use, and resources to find new repertoire.

Friday 7:00 PM Frederick Douglass

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Saturday 8:15 PM Eastman Board Room

[Creating an Inclusive Culture for Recruitment and Retention: Presenter Andrea Perdicho](#)

This session's aim is to improve the culturally responsive teaching practices of music directors' grades 4 – 12. Educators will learn strategies of recruitment and retention to both attract and retain ALL students to performing ensembles, particularly students of color, and to ensure that those same students have access to the most advanced performance opportunities each district has to offer.

Saturday 10:45 AM Frederick Douglass

[BEDR Choral Emergent Sound Aesthetics in Traditional Choirs: Presenter Megan Dissinger](#)

In this discussion, participants will explore approaches that create space for emergent sounds and emergent beings. We will deconstruct four pillars of a choral music program: Repertoire, Rehearsal, Vocal Pedagogy, and Conducting. Within each pillar, I will share in-practice examples grounded by philosophical perspectives about choir and the position of the voice in identifying development.

Saturday 1:15 PM Regency Ballroom A

[BEDR Affinity Space - Facilitator Margaret Chan](#)
[Navigating Identity & Imposter Syndrome: A Roundtable Discussion](#)

For Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian (BBIA) music educators—especially those in the early stages of their careers—entering and remaining in the profession often comes with distinct challenges. This panel will explore personal stories and offer research-backed strategies for navigating imposter syndrome, building supportive communities, and affirming cultural identity within the teaching profession.

Saturday 2:30 PM Hilton Garden Inn Ridder
