

2014

## 2014 Research at Andrews

Andrews University

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# Opera for Everyone

**On the stage of the Howard Performing Arts Center on the campus of Andrews University, the story of the Passion is narrated by a tenor Evangelist as part of a performance of Bach's "The Passion According to Matthew." A choir plays both the part of the mocking crowd and the sympathetic followers, loudly calling for his crucifixion in one moment and mourning his impending death the next. The props are sparse: only one wooden beam is used as the cross. Jesus is dressed in pants and the Evangelist is wearing jeans. The choir members are likewise dressed in 21st century garb.**

Charles Reid, associate professor of voice, coordinator for voice studies in the Department of Music, and artist-in-residence, directed the production. Reid, who joined the Andrews faculty after many years of experience on the stage, translated the Passion from the original German into common American English with help from undergraduate Aleks Kravig in an effort to make the piece more accessible. "We wanted this story to be as relatable as possible. Jesus didn't get dressed up to be Jesus," he said in a pre-performance roundtable.

For his part, Reid is very aware of the relevance and relatability of oratorio and opera. His career includes performances ranging from the sacred to secular at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Theater an der Wien, and the Frankfurt Opera ([www.charles-reid.com/](http://www.charles-reid.com/)).

Reid began his formal music education at Houston Baptist University as a college student where he fell in love with "classical" music, particularly art song and the music of Benjamin Britten. After college, Reid attended

the University of Maryland for graduate studies in opera performance.

For Reid, opera is unique as a live art form. "Hearing the human voice exposed without amplification, accompanied

by a huge orchestra and performed on stage with beautiful sets is a new experience for someone who has never been to an opera before," he says animatedly. "It's theater without mics."

Besides his vocal capabilities, Reid is an excellent actor. That's a good thing, since staging is an important part of opera. Each opera requires several weeks of rehearsals just for staging purposes in addition to the many weeks spent memorizing parts. If the opera is a historical piece, extra time may be required for research since, as Reid exclaims, "you would be a fool not to research about the real guy!"

Reid takes the characters he plays very seriously. "I have to be able to feel like I can be honest in the role," he says. He has no problems with the characters having flaws

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or imperfections. "All characters are flawed," he says, "including biblical characters." The larger question for Reid is whether or not he can walk in the shoes of a character with integrity. "There are some roles that I have tried where I spent the whole time feeling like an imposter," he admits.

While the music and the stories of opera are a natural draw for Reid, the production aspect of opera seems to be a particular source of excitement. Opera "requires a huge number of people," he says. "Behind the scenes you have set builders, designers, costumers, lighting engineers, makeup people and directors, in addition to the people you see on the set." The audience never sees most of the 500–600 people required to put on an opera.

Reid recognizes that people might feel that opera is intimidating, so in 2011 he started his own podcast, "This Opera Life" (<http://thisoperalife.charles-reid.com/>), in which he interviews internationally recognized musicians and conductors. The podcast helps to demystify opera, and those who perform it, and serves as an excellent resource for up-and-coming musicians.

Since coming to Andrews, Reid has expanded his list of skills to include director and teacher. He directed his first opera, "The Bremen Town Musicians," last year and the oratorio, "The Passion According to Matthew," this past spring. For advice, he turned to some of the directors he had worked



Charles Reid



Reid performs in the opera, "Catone in Uttica"

with in the past. “They said follow your instincts. Be organized. If you call a rehearsal, actually use the people you called. Tell them in advance what they are going to rehearse so they can be prepared,” he remembers. “And those tips worked out really well.”

As a teacher, Reid uses his own experience in the field to help his students understand the joys and challenges of being a musician. “I think that my being active in the performance field makes me a much more valuable addition to the faculty,” he says enthusiastically. “It is a constant source of inspiration in my teaching.” Reid also has contacts in most of the major opera companies and when his students go to a performance, they are often able to meet the cast backstage.

Reid plans to scale back from working with opera and focus on doing concert work, which involves less rehearsal time. This will enable him to spend more time on campus and at home with his wife, Julie, and their children. Julie is a mezzo-soprano and has performed on numerous occasions with her husband. They have already performed once together since moving to Andrews in an evening celebrating the centennial of Benjamin Britten’s birth.

Reid is now gearing up for a busy year at Andrews. In addition to performing “love songs” with his wife, he will prepare a fall Christmas concert and direct “An Evening at the Opera,” which will include a selection of opera scenes performed by his students. Reid’s goal is to encourage students to discover their vocal talents and to mentor them, whether they decide to pursue a career in voice or not. He also hopes to broaden his students’ understanding of God in relationship to the art of music. For Reid, the amazing compositions that he performs and directs are “God-breathed” and should not be dismissed solely as “secular works” just because they were composed for a concert hall or theater. “I see art as art, whether it’s oratorio or opera,” he says. “And I hope that the generations of students who work with me will leave with a broader understanding of God and music.”

## Response to Intervention in Elementary Schools

The kindergartners sat at their desks, writing as many lowercase letters of the alphabet as they could in one minute without erasing. This was not a contest. When the students were finished, researchers took their work and coded it.

This is an example of one of the many assessments administered by Luana Greulich, her lead professor, Stephanie Al Otaiba, and a group of other researchers from Florida State University (FSU)/Florida Center for Reading Research. Their research was part of a five-year Response to Intervention (RtI) project funded by a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Development that began at Kindergarten and followed students into third grade.

The grant was given to five different research centers throughout the United States and funded projects in Response to Intervention, twin studies, dyslexia, learning disabilities and other areas of education. Greulich, who has since moved to Andrews University and is now associate professor in the Department of Graduate Psychology & Counseling and the Special Education program director, worked at the Florida Center for Reading Research along with other graduate researchers in the area of reading.

RtI is a fluid model in which public school children who are doing poorly in reading or math are moved from the basic tier of general instruction to higher tiers of additional instruction, or intervention. Students in Tier 2, for example, receive 90 minutes of basic instruction (at Tier 1) with the rest of their classmates and an additional 30-45 minutes of tailored instruction twice a week (Tier 2). If students continue to struggle they are moved to Tier 3, in which they receive 45 minutes of additional instruction four–five times a week.

Children who do not respond to intervention are called “non-responders” and are considered to be “at-risk.” “By the time they reach 3rd or 4th grade, they feel like they have already been unsuccessful for two



years. So we were anxious to see whether we could identify at-risk students as early as first grade, and intervene with positive results (growth).”

In the model that Greulich and her associates used, students who were assessed as having made sufficient progress were moved down a tier while students who were not making progress moved up. “You are always moving students in and out of the different tiers, which is a nightmare for the schools, but it is good for the students,” she says. Typically, students are required to go sequentially through Tier 1 and Tier 2 in order to reach Tier 3. This can take some time, and students who would have benefited from Tier 3 instruction in August may not reach Tier 3 until April. The purpose of this study was to identify the non-responders and see how they performed if they were placed directly into the indicated tier in August and moved either up or down the tiers during the school year as necessary, versus the typical RtI model of moving sequentially through the tiers.

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The study performed a randomized controlled trial in which two groups of students received intervention: the regular treatment group, who went through the typical 1-2-3 model; and the dynamic group, who went directly into the indicated tier. The study followed more than 500 children in 34 classes across ten schools in Florida. The 90-minute Language Arts instruction was videotaped and coded for quality and the amounts of instruction that each child received in each area of reading. The types of instruction received (code-focused instruction and meaning-focused instruction