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Choir encourages eclectic voices, talents

By: [Cait Maxhimer](#) Issue date: 2/23/06 Section: [Intermission](#)

The SCSU choir has recently become prominent around campus and the community under the direction of Lee Nelson. Professor Nelson came to SCSU in fall 2005 to take on the role of director of all choral activities. Before stepping into his role as a music director at SCSU, Nelson had experience in directing high school students in nearby Blaine for seven years. He received his masters and doctorate as assistant conductor at Arizona State. Nelson came from a small town in North Dakota where he first started his career in his high school honors choir. "The experience was life changing," Nelson said. "I knew this is what I wanted to do."

Now, as the director of SCSU's choir, he has his work cut out for him. The concert choir has four major performances each year and one major tour. The choir is made up of 65 members. The choir sings anything from Renaissance to new pieces written by one of their own composers. At times, they can even be found singing songs from famous groups like U2. "We really do a wide variety," Nelson said. In an upcoming performance, the choir will be doing a set of pieces from Mozart in recognition of his 250th birthday. The pieces included will be some of Mozart's most famous.

One of their performances will be 7:30 p.m. Sunday at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Following that will be their tour, which kicks off March 29 and goes through April 6. The tour is in the Midwest and consists of seven days and 11 to 12 concerts. The final show will be at SCSU's Ritsche Auditorium on April 6 and is free with an SCSU ID. The tour is free to all students participating in it. SCSU has given a large budget to the choir so no fundraising is needed. "Everything is paid for, right down to lunch, dinner and the hotel," Nelson said. Still, there is a lot of work put into a tour.

Nelson said the choir has to learn 18 pieces of music, practice and perform at a skilled level. There are also logistical things that need to be thought of, such as when to stop and eat and where they will sleep. There are many opportunities for new members. The women's choir, which has more than doubled in size and ability, does not require anyone to audition to be a part of it. The choir has been a part of the SCSU choral program for many years, but was cut due to budgets in the mid 90s, only to make a strong return in the late 90s. Nelson said he is hoping for as many men as they can get for the new men's choir that will be starting next fall. There was also a men's choir years ago, but budget cuts also interfered. The men's choir would be performing at events such as concerts, football and basketball games. This choir is also not auditioned, and they are always looking for new singers. Nelson said when it comes to choir, he is looking for things like a student's love of music and singing, their vocal ability, how in tune they are, how they match a pitch and if they can read music. There are all different types of people in the choir. Choral music is putting together people with different backgrounds and majors and making music. The one thing they all have in common is a love of music.



Lee Nelson, director of SCSU's choral activities, conducts the concert choir during their Tuesday afternoon rehearsal. The choir is preparing for an upcoming tour and a performance Sunday at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Media Credit: [Tessa Brend](#)