

Meet our Music Director



Ernest L. Johnson A man with a diverse range of talents, Mr. Johnson received his Bachelor of Music degree from Kent State University in Ohio, and a Master of Music degree from Ithaca College in New York. He is also certified in Dalcroze Eurhythmics, a philosophy of music education which employs movement (eurhythmics), singing (solfege), and improvisation.

He has taught choral music at all levels, from elementary to adult. His high school teaching credits include schools in Cleveland, Ohio; Mamaroneck, New York; Merrick (Long Island) New York, and private schools in Manhattan. His conducting credits include study with Vance George (San Francisco Symphony Chorus), Gregg Smith (Gregg Smith Singers), Dale Warland (Dale Warland Singers), Dennis Keene (Ascension Singers, NYC), Weston Noble (Luther College) and James Jordan (Westminster Choir College). His past conducting positions have included the Fairfax Chorale, Maryland Choral Society, and the Heritage Presbyterian Church chancel choir.

Mr. Johnson is beginning his 22nd year at West Potomac, and his 35rd season of teaching and conducting. He has a passion for teaching, has an eclectic taste in music, and still loves to dance. He was lead writer for FCPS Secondary Choral Program of Studies (POS) which outlines objectives, goals and teaching strategies for all of Fairfax County's middle and high school choral directors. In 1993 and 2010 he was West Potomac's *Teacher of the Year*; he is listed in five editions of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*. In the summer of 2000, the West Potomac PTSA nominated him for the prestigious Robert Spillane (former FCPS Superintendent of Schools) Leadership Award, given to innovative FCPS teachers who have made a significant impact on student achievement. He has served two terms as the Virginia Music Educators Assoc (VMEA) District 10 Chairperson, and was twice nominated for president of the Virginia Choral Directors Association. (VCDA)



From New York...For twelve years, Mr. Johnson lived and worked in New York City. During this period he immersed himself in the artistic life of the city. He studied voice, conducting, piano, acting, and dance; performed with various choral chamber ensembles and professional church choirs. For a few years he presented arts-in-education assembly programs and workshops to thousands of elementary children and their teachers throughout the tri-state region of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He was musical director/arranger/ accompanist for an Off-Broadway show; coached professional singers; traveled with classical music humorist Peter Shickele and company (PDQ Bach) as an assistant stage manager; and worked at Carl Fischer Music Publishers. He and a partner also sang and danced on Broadway, literally, as a street performer in the Times Square area.



To West Potomac...Under his direction, West Potomac ensembles have performed at the National Cathedral, Maryland Renaissance Festival, Kennedy Center, US Capitol, White House for President and Mrs. Clinton; and at the State Department for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The *Colonial Singers*, unique only to West Potomac, annually perform at Washington's Mt. Vernon, Woodlawn Plantation, Gadsby's Tavern Museum, Gunston Hall Plantation, and at historic Bruton Parish in Colonial

Williamsburg. They were also selected to perform at the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, and the 350th anniversary of Williamsburg.

Internationally, our choirs have given stunning performances at Gloucester Cathedral in England, and at the Tuscany International Choral Festival in Italy. They have also performed in NYC at Lincoln Center.

WPHS choirs have also been chosen by audition on five occasions to perform at the Virginia Music Educators Conferences for an audience of choral directors and music educators from around the state. They have consistently received superior (I) ratings at VMEA evaluation festivals.

It is because of the strong educational process in the music classroom, administrative and parent support, and the countless musical performances at West Potomac the many outreach performances throughout community, the DC area, the state – and Europe -that have given the West Potomac Choirs a proud tradition of excellence.