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Dear singers,

First, let me extend my heartfelt congratulations to you for being chosen to sing in the 2020 Connecticut All-State Mixed Choir! This is one of the highest honors a high school singer in our state can achieve, and it is a testament not only to your musicianship and artistry, but also (and most importantly) to your hard work and perseverance.

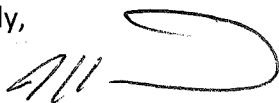
I could not be more excited to meet you all in April, when we will have the chance to work together to create something beautiful. Our world needs things that bring us joy and demonstrate our shared humanity. As I'm sure each of you has already experienced in your lives, the arts do this, and I believe that choral singing – an art form in which the means of expression is literally ourselves – does this in a uniquely powerful and direct way.

I'm also excited because we have some amazing music to explore. We will perform pieces by two recent graduates of the Yale School of Music, Caroline Shaw and Reena Esmail, who have emerged as two of the most exciting voices in the world of new music. Caroline became the youngest person ever to win the Pulitzer Prize in music in 2013; she composed the piece we will sing, *and the swallow*, three years ago in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Reena's music often ingeniously combines elements of Western classical music with elements of Hindustani classical music from northern India, and *Tuttarana* is a particularly fresh and energetic example (my most important homework assignment for you is to search "Tuttana Supplementary Materials" on YouTube and watch the 20-minute video Reena made explaining the origins of her piece and how to execute its text).

We will also sing a beautiful piece by my first conducting teacher, René Clausen. René composed *Prayer*, a setting of words by Mother Teresa, for one of my choirs ten years ago, and it has become a favorite of high school and college choirs all over the US. We'll round out our program with the virtuosic *Gloria* from Dominick Argento's opera *The Masque of Angels*, and my own choral arrangement of a poignant and timely song called *I Ain't Got No Home* by Woody Guthrie, one of the most important American songwriters.

Please come to our first rehearsal with all notes learned so that we can begin making music and refining our sense of ensemble from the first downbeat. I can't wait to hear what you can do!

Warmly,



Dr. Jeffrey Douma