

Gabe Lewis-O'Connor - Extended Biography

Gabe Lewis-O'Connor balances a busy schedule as conductor, professional soloist and choral performer, daily meditator, amateur woodworker, father and husband. Striving to bring humor, authenticity and emotion to all these passions is a lifelong pursuit.

Originally from Lawrence, Kansas Mr. Lewis-O'Connor received a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance, with honors, from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. During his time at Lawrence University he performed leading roles in fully staged opera and musical theatre productions, sang in the University's vocal jazz ensemble and taught voice lessons to students and faculty.

Six months after graduating Gabe began singing with the Kansas City Chorale, a GRAMMY Award-winning choral ensemble directed by Charles Bruffy. In the fall of 2005 Gabe began his studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music, working towards a Masters of Music in Vocal Performance. There he performed the title role in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, while still concertizing and recording with the Kansas City Chorale. After auditioning for the GRAMMY Award-winning vocal ensemble Chanticleer in the middle of his first year of graduate study Gabe was offered a position with the group, moving to San Francisco in the summer of 2006.

During Gabe's four years with the group he sang almost five hundred concerts in 43 of the United States, 13 European countries and China. Gabe has performed with such artists as Frederica von Stade, René Pape, Bobby McFerrin, Garrison Keillor, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares and Sweet Honey in the Rock, and sang for an estimated combined audience of over 200,000 people. During Gabe's four year tenure Chanticleer was inducted into the Classical Music Hall of Fame in Cincinnati, Ohio, was named the Musical Ensemble of the Year by Musical America, and received Chorus America's prestigious Award for Education and Outreach. Gabe can be heard on eight Chanticleer recordings and is featured in the DVD documentary "The Singing Life", which explores Chanticleer's work with young singers. Gabe has recorded at such notable recording studios as Skywalker Sound at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch and Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California. He has been able to perform in some of the world's most stunning concert spaces, including Vienna's Musikverein, the Rudolfinum in Prague, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Los Angeles' Walt Disney Hall, Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco, and The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

After moving from San Francisco to Kansas City Gabe returned to the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), where he studied with Dr. Robert Bode and received a master's degree in Choral Conducting. During his time at the UMKC Conservatory Gabe was one of two graduate teaching assistants for the choral conducting department, and in his second year led the university's largest choir, University Singers. Gabe also sang for the university's graduate chamber choir, Conservatory Singers, and was featured as Pontius Pilate in the group's period performance of Bach's *St. John Passion*.

Concurrent to his graduate studies Gabe was co-owner, Director of Marketing and Director of Product Development for Choral Tracks, an online business that provides professionally-recorded rehearsal tracks for a huge swath of both the standard choral canon and newly composed works. Gabe also served as the production manager for the creation of *The Deepness of the Blue*, a recording by the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory's Conservatory Singers. This CD was the first complete recording of William Averitt's three

choral cycles for mixed chorus and piano four-hands that set the poetry of Langston Hughes. A recording *Gramophone* said "...conjure[d] up complex, conflicted emotional experiences over which the choral lines lay[ed] out like in a dream...", Gabe secured a professional recording label contract for the recording, coordinated the creation and formatting of all elements of the physical CD, and aided in post-production marketing and distribution.

Gabe and his family moved to Seattle, Washington in 2014, where he balanced supporting his wife (in medical residency at Seattle Children's Hospital), caring for their two young children, and immersing himself in the rich culture of music in the Northwest. During their four years in Seattle Gabe was a board member, choir manager and singer for Choral Arts Northwest, a volunteer-based professional level choir led by Dr. Robert Bode. Gabe also sang in Seattle with the Emerald Ensemble, the Byrd Ensemble, and performed Dieterich Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* with Intimate Baroque, featuring a professional period orchestra and five solo singers. Also in demand as a clinician and adjudicator, Gabe connected with hundreds of young singers in the Northwest through workshops, weekend-long choral retreats and regional choral festivals, using humor and personal emotional connection to facilitate immediate growth.

Gabe can be heard on three recent recordings by Seattle's Choral Arts Northwest, was a rehearsal conductor for the group's preparation of David Lang's *the little match girl passion*, and served as the diction teacher of Church Slavonic for the group's performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Vespers*. Gabe can also be heard on the Grammy award-winning recording *Life and Breath* by the Kansas City Chorale, featuring the music of René Clausen, as well as *Eternal Rest*, a recording featuring Frank Martin's *Mass for Double Choir*. Recent solo engagements include both the bass solos and Pontius Pilate in J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City. In 2018 Gabe was invited to Ottawa, Canada as part of the 40th anniversary celebration for Les chanteurs Stairwell (The Stairwell Carollers). There Gabe led choral workshops, interest sessions and was the soloist for a premiere of an a cappella arrangement of "Hostias" from Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*. In 2019 Les chanteurs Stairwell hosted Gabe again, this time to lead a community-wide day-long choral workshop and performance.

After a return to the Midwest in 2019, Gabe pursued doctoral studies in Choral Conducting at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, studying conducting with Dr. Robert Bode, Dr. Eph Ehly, Professor Steven D. Davis and Dr. Jennaya Robison. During this time Gabe held a teaching assistantship, was the recipient of both the Dr. Eugene Butler and Dr. Eph Ehly Scholarships, and conducted both University Singers (the Conservatory's largest choral ensemble) and Conservatory Singers (the Conservatory's most select ensemble). Gabe was instrumental in the planning and execution of the Conservatory's spotlight performance at the 2019 National Convention of the American Choral Directors Association, and prepared a select group of singers for the concert's uncondacted opening piece, Chen Yi's *Spring Dreams*.

Gabe has developed a complete curriculum for a Masters of Music in Choral Performance, designed to prepare singers for a career in professional choral singing, and integrates mindfulness and meditation into the rehearsal process for choirs of all levels. Above all else Gabe is passionate about the relationships between musicians that grow inspired and authentic music.

Gabe lives in a 104 year-old house in Lawrence, Kansas with his wife Lauren, their feisty son Eamon and fierce daughter Celia.