John M. McClain

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John M. McClain is the Director of Worship and Music at First Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Ohio. His work as a conductor and educator has spanned school, church, community, and professional settings, united by a commitment to helping people experience the joy and belonging that come through singing together. After several years teaching high school choir, John expanded his vocational work into full-time church music and ministry, where he continues to advocate for meaningful musical opportunities across the lifespan, from children experiencing ensemble singing for the first time to adults continuing to sing throughout their lives. At First Presbyterian, he recently reestablished the church's children's choir program while also directing and developing choral opportunities for singers of multiple generations.

John believes strongly in creating environments in which singers of all backgrounds and experience levels can grow, contribute, and develop a lifelong relationship with communal song. He currently serves on the Ohio Choral Directors Association Board as the Lifelong Singing Repertoire and Resources Chair, supporting and advocating for choral experiences in adult, community, intergenerational, and worship settings. He is also an active professional singer, conductor, and clinician for soloists in pop, musical theatre, and classical styles, as well as for choral ensembles.

A proud graduate of the Capital University Conservatory of Music, John sang in the Capital University Chapel Choir and Philomel under the direction of Dr. Lynda Hasseler and Chordsmen under the direction of Craig Courtney, serving as a tenor section leader and soloist in those ensembles. To deepen his musical education and vocational work in the church, he recently earned a Master of Music in Sacred Music with an emphasis in choral conducting from Westminster Choir College, studying with Dr. Donald Nally, Tom Shelton, and Dr. Steve Pilkington.

Choirs under John's direction have toured domestically, performed at state professional development conferences and Carnegie Hall, and presented major works with orchestra. Under his leadership, ensembles have premiered new

works by sacred music composers including Marianne Forman and Craig Courtney, including the commissioning ensemble premiere of Forman's Trinity. John also serves annually as a guest conductor for the Westerville Symphony Orchestra's Messiah Community Sing-Along, an event drawing more than 900 participants and audience members each year.

Passionate about high-quality musical theatre as another important avenue for developing young performers and building community through music, John has produced, music directed, and conducted productions including Gypsy, Mary Poppins, Into the Woods, Next to Normal, Shrek, Footloose, and Grease. John regularly sings on professional choral recordings for Beckenhorst Press produced by Aire Born Studios and performs with ensembles including The Columbus Choral Artists, Abendmusik of Lincoln, Nebraska with Tom Trenney, Deo Cantamus of Minneapolis as a soloist and choral scholar, and the Choral Union at Capital University. Highlights of his solo work include performing the national anthem for President Barack Obama and singing as a soloist in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, as well as in venues throughout Europe. As an educator, he was recognized with the Ohio Music Education Association Outstanding Young Music Educator Award in 2022.

Drawing inspiration from Psalm 100, John finds purpose in building community through music and helping others discover that singing can remain a meaningful part of life at every age. Whether working with children taking their first steps into ensemble singing, developing young musicians, or creating opportunities for adults to continue singing throughout their lives, he seeks to cultivate joy, artistry, connection, and belonging through communal song. For John, strong youth music programs are not only about developing excellent young singers, but about nurturing people who understand that music and singing can change lives and that it can remain part of who they are for a lifetime.