Dr. Marcel Ramalho is currently Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Voice in the Department of Music at Augusta University. Before joining the faculty at AU, Dr. Ramalho held teaching positions at Earlham College and Ball State University, both in Indiana. As a conductor, Dr. Ramalho has led performances of works such as Handel's Messiah, José Mauricio Nunes Garcia's Requiem and Missa pastoral para a noite de Natal, Thompson's Frostiana, Britten's Rejoice in the Lamb, Vivaldi's Gloria, Fauré's Requiem, and Nathaniel Dett's A Chariot Jubilee. As an opera singer, Dr. Ramalho has sung Thomas Putnam in The Crucible (Robert Ward), the titles roles in Mozart's Don Giovanni, Le Nozze di Figaro, and Puccini's Gianni Schicchi, Peter in Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck), Captain Corcoran in H.M.S. Pinafore (Gilbert and Sullivan), and Don Pedro in Béatrice et Bénédict (Berlioz). Concert appearances include the bass solos in J. S. Bach's cantatas Ich habe genug (BWV 82), Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir (BWV 38), Christ lag in Todesbanden (BWV 4), and Weinen, klagen, sorgen, zagen (BWV 12), Mozart's Freimaurerkantante, and Fauré's Requiem. A recipient of several academic awards, scholarships, and grants, Dr. Ramalho's research focus on the music of Brazilian composer José Siqueira (1907-1985). Dr. Ramalho has published articles in Opus, The Choral Scholar, Journal of Singing, Per Musi and Revista da ABEM, and has presented research at Source Song Festival, the National Conference of the Brazilian Association for Graduate Studies in Music, the Southeastern Region NATS conference, Southern ACDA Conference, and College Music Society.
Dr. Ramalho holds a Doctor of Arts degree from Ball State University with emphasis in Vocal Performance and Choral Conducting, a Master of Music in Voice Performance from Indiana State University and a Bachelor of Music Education from Universidade Federal da Paraíba (Brazil).

Please describe how you got started in music, and how you decided to become a music educator. I started studying music (initially voice lessons) because I actually wanted to sing rock n' roll! But in high school I was introduced to classical and choral music, and that had a huge impact on my life! I decided to be a music educator (at the college level) because of the influence my first voice teacher and choir director, Dr. Lemuel Guerra, had on me. He is also a university professor.

What made you decide to become a choral conductor? My love for choral music. Really, one of the things that I love the most about being an ensemble director is that the rehearsal process is already music making.

Please tell us about your time in Brazil and how you decided to come to the United States. I started my musical studies there, graduating with a bachelor of vocal music education from Universidade Federal da Paraíba. I moved to the United States to pursue graduate studies because I really wanted to study abroad. Luckily, I was awarded full rides for both my master's and doctoral degrees.

What are some of your favorite works for choir?
Tough question. I'd say Britten's "Rejoice in the Lamb", Nathaniel Dett's "The Chariot Jubilee", any and all of Monteverdi's madrigal, Martin Palmeri's Misatango, Runestad's "Let my love be heard", Villa-Lobos "Pica-pau", Paulo Veneziani's arrangements of "Bom dia" and "Asa Branca", and Liliana Cangiano's arrangement of "Te quiero".

What is the most challenging part of being a college professor? Because I teach at an institution with students from very varied choral experiences, I'd say it's balancing repertoire that's doable, but also beautiful, but also challenging, but also very expressive.

What advice do you have for college vocal students and early career educators? Make sure you work to develop your fundamental skills (vocal technique, piano, music theory and history, aural skills) while still in school. You won't have much time for that after you graduate. Also, be a part of every single musical experience your schedule allows. Be in every choir, every opera production, maybe sing with the jazz ensemble too.

What would your dream choral concert be? Location? Repertoire? Choir? In my hometown (Campina Grande, Paraíba, Brazil), with my family and friends in the audience. The repertoire would go from Renaissance through Contemporary music, in several languages.

What can communities do to support choirs and their directors? It's simple: go to the concerts! Many are free, and most have very cheap admission tickets.

In what ways can choral educators continue to get better and hone their craft? I'd say going to conferences, networking, and not being afraid to ask questions. One of the beautiful things about being a musician is that you're always a student!

Any educators you'd like to thank or highlight? I've been lucky to have learned from many fantastic educators. If I'm to highlight a couple of them: My first voice teacher and choir director, Dr. Lemuel Guerra, from Universidade Federal de Campina Grande. He's the one who's responsible for my being a musician today. From Ball State University, Dr Jon Truitt, who really taught me vocal technique, and Dr. Andrew Crow, who's not only one of the best choir directors, but also one of the best musicians I have ever learned from and worked with.