CHORAL JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2021

A Focus On Pedagogy

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From the INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hilary Apfelstadt

Giving Voice …

One of the reasons singing is so important to us is that it *is* us, literally; we are the instruments. This makes singing an intensely personal experience, an individual expression of who we are. In a group, we combine our individual voices into one, bringing our own contribution to the whole.

Choral conductors need to know about the voice and to be comfortable enough with our own instruments that we can demonstrate vocally in our teaching. We are not all "solo" singers, meaning that we do not necessarily all specialize in voice studies at university and therefore would not be prepared to give a solo recital, for example. Some of us come from keyboard backgrounds and have sung in choirs for years, gaining vocal knowledge and experience in that context. One of the best alliances we have formed in recent years, I think, is with the National Association for Teachers of Singing (NATS), a professional organization with whom we have collaborated in conferences and are now jointly helping sponsor research studies about the effects of Covid-19 on singing.

Regardless of our preparation to do so, we are all teaching singing in rehearsal. If you conduct a group in a worship context, you are likely the only source of vocal education the singers have. Likewise, a community choir of amateurs is probably getting their only voice instruction from you. When we work with children's choirs, we are providing the foundations of their vocal study. School choirs comprise young musicians who are learning how to sing from us. My first voice teacher was the lady who came into my kindergarten class once a week and taught us songs, as well as to sing with solfa syllables. That was the foundation for sight-singing, which she went on to teach us as we got older. She also had community choral groups meeting after school, and it was there that we learned to sing in small ensembles, duets and trios, and to tackle solo singing. It was all presented in the context of enjoyment and encouragement with no accomplishment unrecognized. I sang with her until I was almost fifteen years old and then moved from Nova Scotia to Ontario, where the foundation she provided continued to serve me well. I imagine she was basing her pedagogy on instinct and experience. She would not have had the opportunity to study vocal pedagogy, but she had good ears, was a fine singer herself, and communicated effectively with young singers.
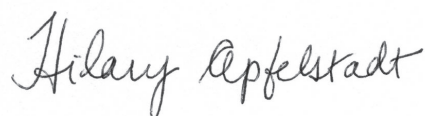
This month's *Choral Journal* focus on vocal pedagogy reinforces the importance of our understanding of voice science. We have come far in the decades since I was in children's choirs. As someone who spent most of my career in higher education, I learned early on that collaboration with

the voice faculty benefited everyone, most of all the students. Consistency of language, value for the individual contribution to the ensemble while honing listening skills, and asking for help when needed are important elements in our choral community. As one of those choral conductors from a keyboard background, I found it very helpful to have a voice teacher's input on any number of choral challenges, whether it was vowel modification (my colleague at the Ohio State University, Loretta Robinson, introduced me to Burton Coffin's work), or diction (singer Nathalie Paulin at the University of Toronto coached our French, even though I have studied French diction), or style (a then-graduate student at the Ohio State University, Natasa Kaurin-Karacas, demonstrated healthy heavy mechanism singing for a piece we were preparing).

As our repertoire broadens to keep pace with needs for greater diversity and inclusion, we may need assistance from any number of vocal experts. If these people are not available in our own region, we can often access their skills through YouTube or Zoom. I want to explore various styles with integrity and to give them their due, but lacking in knowledge myself, I need the experts to help. My personal concern is always whether or not we can match the color of a particular style and do it in a way that will do no harm. With the help of vocal pedagogues and resources, yes, we can. "Always look for the helpers," Mr. Rogers tells us. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/198594-when-i-was-a-boy-and-i-would-see-scary (accessed on 12/08/2020.)

Giving voice by singing and by teaching singing in a way that does no harm are only two of the ways we "give voice" to people in the choral world. Recently we received the results of our Diversity Study, investigating ACDA's track record in supporting accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI). Our Standing Committee on Diversity Initiatives will look in detail at your narrative responses from the survey. Consultant Dr. Antonio Cuyler, from Florida State University, gave ACDA leadership a helpful summary of his data interpretation so we can use this information to plan for the future. To date, a number of state chapters have set up committees and working groups, hosted webinars, and offered other initiatives on the topic of diversity; we have devoted two *Choral Journal* issues to the topic (November and December 2020); our national virtual conference is built around the theme of Diversity in choral music. We will continue our efforts.

ACDA wants to give voice to all its members, to be a welcoming place where people are comfortable, feel supported, can find resources, be part of a professional network, and join in community to foster the choral art in multiple ways. The invitation is always open for you to contact state, region, and national officers and staff members whose contact information is on the website: www.acda.org. We know some of you have experienced frustration as you try to renew membership online and we assure you, we are working hard to sort out the issues that our new data management system poses as we learn its intricacies. Call the office or email membership@acda.org if you are one of those. Do not give up! We will help.

Hilary Apfelstadt

From the
PRESIDENT

Lynne Gackle

Very early in my career, I realized the importance of more fully understanding the human voice through voice science. As a choral director, we are the only "voice teachers" that many singers will ever encounter. Therefore, understanding how the voice works, how it develops, and the various techniques that are associated with vocal pedagogy are key for not only the development of choral tone but for encouraging healthy, lifelong singing. Once again, this issue of the *Choral Journal* focuses upon our instrument—the voice. Often, our conferences have offered interest sessions on vocal pedagogy, and the upcoming National Conference in March is no exception. This virtual conference will allow us to watch and learn in real time as well as for months after the conference. Indeed, because of the virtual nature of the conference, interest sessions on this topic as well as plethora of other pertinent subjects will be available to registrants and will serve as valuable resources for each of us in the coming months. I encourage you not to miss this unprecedented National ACDA Conference!

At the heart of ACDA's mission is the desire to inspire, to train, and to mentor those dedicated to teaching, singing, and serving the choral art. In the process, and through the power of choral music, we provide opportunities to create a welcoming community that values each voice and the human connection that can be found within the choral ensemble. The very nature of what we do as choral musicians serves to provide a place for each voice to be heard, and inspires a sense of unity and harmony of both sound and spirit.

I once heard it said that "it is not by chance that the human voice (the larynx) lies between the head and the heart." Ours is a unique instrument—each composed of the same elements, but yet, completely different. It cannot be touched nor seen, yet it can express thoughts and ideas within the mind as well as emotions and feelings deep within the soul.

Within the choir, there is no doubt that there is power when we "lift every voice and sing." It is our choirs and our music making that offer opportunities for human connection and fulfilment. Choral music can provide an opportunity to find peace and understanding among people within our country and our world, and perhaps, it can also allow us to better understand ourselves and our daily need for each other as we walk this journey of life together. I look forward to "seeing" each of you at the National Conference!

Lynne Gackle

From the EDITOR

Amanda Bumgarner

Alicia W. Walker

Early in the spring of 2020, Alicia Walker and I discussed the idea of a *Choral Journal* focus issue on pedagogy. She has put together a wonderful lineup of articles that will hopefully be of interest and use both now—during our current circumstances surrounding virtual teaching during a pandemic—and in the future. This issue also includes recorded sound reviews, a research report article on mindset, and an article specific to teaching during COVID.

From the Guest Editor

Of the many roles filled by choral conductors, the most vital, to my mind, is that of pedagogue. When we teach, we bring to bear our best as artists, scholars, and leaders. The circumstances of the last year have required us to think carefully about the "how" of our teaching art, and the innovation and creativity I have seen from colleagues has been truly inspiring. Answering the "why" and "what" questions are thoughtful processes that inform the methods and modalities we use, and these questions provide the framework for this focus issue on choral pedagogy. The primary opportunities we have for pedagogy are found in our repertoire choices, in the ways that we rehearse, and in the way we bring the teaching process to fruition in performance. Further, we deepen these pedagogical opportunities by cultivating a learning environment that also considers culture and context.

I am delighted to have feature articles that address these pedagogical opportunities with excellent information and insight. Simon Hill provides a variety of ways to apply critical pedagogy in the choral setting. His application of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* encourages us to move beyond the hierarchical structure to an environment that empowers singers and facilitates thoughtful engagement with music and culture. Jabarie Glass addresses conductors of secondary choirs, offering a framework for intentional pedagogy applied to repertoire selection. Drawing from an extensive knowledge of diverse repertoire, and his own experience, Dr. Glass discusses the extensive benefits of choosing repertoire with a pedagogical priority.

To address pedagogy in rehearsal, Amanda Quist's article explains the significance of the singer's formant and the impact on choral tone. Speaking from the singers' perspective of experiencing sound, Dr. Quist provides thorough explanations and methods to provide an optimal music-making experience. The process of concert programming is often as individual as the conductor. With that in mind, James Meaders interviewed six creative conductors from across the US, gathering inspiring perspective into the pedagogy of programming. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with these fine conductors/writers to contribute to the art of choral pedagogy.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE CHOIR

SIMON HILL

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What is critical pedagogy? Since the release of Paulo Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a singular definition and application of critical pedagogy has been elusive. Broadly speaking, critical pedagogy may be summed up in Freire's original term *conscientização,* which roughly translates as conscientization. Conscientization refers to the process by which the unjust workings of a society are realized by the oppressed. The oppressed are then able to reclaim their right to speak as liberated persons, thereby transforming both themselves as individuals and the societies in which they live.[1] Freire's pedagogy stems from his work in educating the illiterate peasant population of Brazil in the mid twentieth century. However, when Freire speaks of the oppressed and the oppressor, he is not just speaking to Brazilians of the time. Freire's critical pedagogy may be applied in any context and across disciplines.

As choral conductors and educators, where in our field can we find the oppressed and oppressors? How can we transform our practices? How can we facilitate the process of conscientization among our singers? Using strong words such as oppressed and oppressor to describe the choral field might seem jarring, but by using these terms, we are not defining choral music as an innately unjust or oppressive art form. Instead, we are acknowledging the hierarchical nature of our field. Since the relationship between conductor and choir naturally lends itself to a system of hierarchy (oppressor and oppressed), we can ask how critical pedagogy can guide us to a more liberated system. In this new mode, conductor and ensemble can work together dialogically to transform themselves and the world in which

they live.

Critical pedagogy does not begin with predetermined answers; it begins with a problem. Through problem-posing, "People develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation."[2] Critical pedagogy for choir could invite dialogue around a problem which exists in the world outside of the rehearsal space. It could also present a problem found within the confines of the choral classroom. It is essential that the unveiling of the world comes from within—the choristers—rather than from the conductor telling them what the world is and how they exist within it. Critical pedagogy is a collective process of both discovering and engaging with the world.

Critical pedagogy is not a sequential process to be applied to any situation. It is a way of engaging with the world in any given context through praxis (reflection and action), solidarity, and dialogue. Praxis is formed by both reflection and action. Through praxis, we as human beings can examine the world in which we live, understand it, and work to change it.[3] Freire stresses the importance of both reflection and action, positing that without reflection one is left with activism, and without action one is left with armchair philosophy, neither of which is sufficient.[4] Where praxis is existing within and changing the world, solidarity is entering into the lived reality of another. It is more than passing charity. It is an act of communion and trust, which can in turn inform praxis. Interwoven throughout the entire process of critical pedagogy is dialogue.[5] How might praxis, solidarity, and dialogue inform our choral practice? What problems in our field or in

our world might we work to transform?

The following problems serve as broad examples that may be encountered by most choirs. Each problem will be viewed through the primary lens of a key component of critical pedagogy to examine in greater detail how each component can be applied. Because the components work together and not sequentially, they will inevitably intertwine in each problem.

Problem: Repertoire & Programming
Lens: Praxis

For those conductors or ensembles who are engaging with critical pedagogy for the first time, repertoire is an accessible point of entry, as it is something all choirs regularly encounter. Repertoire could be problematized in a variety of ways including culturally, socially, and historically. How could praxis (action and reflection) lead to a transformed understanding of repertoire? Julia Shaw, writing as a culturally responsive pedagogue, offers a culturally responsive approach to repertoire that also invites critical pedagogy.[6] Reflection upon meaningful dialogue with students may lead to the act of programming culturally diverse repertoire reflective of the students in the ensemble. Conversely, it could lead a conductor to program repertoire outside of the everyday lived experience of their students.

Or perhaps the students are part of the programming process and programming becomes part of the students' praxis. The process of selecting repertoire is abundant with opportunities for reflection as an individual or as a group. Reflecting upon repertoire selection, or repertoire left unselected, may reveal hidden biases or silenced voices. When it comes to programming culturally responsive repertoire, it is important that dialogue informs praxis. It should never be assumed that a person of a certain demographic will feel seen or heard by singing a piece of music from that demographic. Praxis—in this case the choice to program music from a particular demographic within the choir—should always be informed by meaningful dialogue.

Praxis and repertoire go beyond programming. Repertoire may also be used to develop an awareness of contemporary issues of injustice. Shaw suggests choral directors can do this by purposefully choosing reper-

toire that invites dialogue, thus encouraging students to "discuss, interrogate, and delve deeply into related sociopolitical issues."[7] From dialogue, students may find opportunities for praxis, enacting social change, or participate in social critique.[8] Patricia Campbell also notes that issues of injustice can be made into opportunities for learning and affirms Shaw's stance that students should be encouraged to critically engage with present social injustices.[9] This could also be expanded to include musical injustices. Shaw suggests how a culturally stereotypical piece could be part of an ensemble's praxis.[10] An ensemble might analyze the work, discuss why the repertoire is problematic, and consider appropriate solutions or alternatives.

Problem: Going Beyond the Building
Lens: Solidarity

Shaw's approach places repertoire as a *means* of furthering dialogue and action, not an end. It is not enough for a choir to sing diverse repertoire, they need to find a way to go beyond repertoire. Similarly, critical pedagogue Jan McArthur succinctly states that, "Critical pedagogy seeks not just to observe society, but to change it."[11] For example, a choir could present a concert program that chooses to address a social issue (e.g., homelessness). But, according to McArthur's statement, it is not enough for a choir to observe the issue of homelessness and to sing about it. Rather, the participants of a critical choir must engage and work to transform the injustice at hand. How can choirs engage deeply? They could begin by engaging with people.

Choral music inevitably involves people. There is no way around it. Our art requires the human voice. Because of this, choral music is inescapably relational. How do we form relationships through choral music? Through critical pedagogy, one might work toward being in solidarity. Solidarity requires us to leave our own lived experience and enter into the lived experience of others. Solidarity with others outside of the rehearsal hall requires commitment and is a process, which takes time. While solidarity can be difficult to achieve, working toward solidarity in the choral classroom is not impossible. As a critical pedagogue, Frank Abrahams uses critical pedagogy to "break down the barriers that

exist between the music students hear and love outside the classroom and the music their teachers want them to learn."[12] Entering into the music and music making of another person is an act of musical solidarity. In critically engaging with music from a culture that is outside of the culture represented in the classroom, Abrahams argues that students can connect with people without ever meeting them.[13] This makes the challenge of engaging with the world practical and accessible, especially for a K-12 setting where physically going beyond the walls of the school is not always feasible.

On the other end of the solidarity spectrum, history professor Anne Rapp seeks to encourage student participation in societal change by "extending sites of learning to the real world and opening up the intersections between lived experience and new knowledge."[14] For Rapp, critical pedagogy physically travels beyond the classroom. She achieves this by employing Community-based Service Learning (CbSL) in her teaching, which invites students to go beyond the classroom and experience the realities of the other (or sometimes their own background) in solidarity with, rather than token charity for, members of oppressed communities. Rapp, echoing Freire, acknowledges the potential danger of such activity arousing paternalistic charity rather than an awareness of systemic oppression.[15]

This notion of going beyond the physical barriers of an educational institution is not unfounded in the choral world. For choirs, this dismantling of physical barriers most frequently occurs through musical outreach, concerts outside of the school/traditional venue, or bringing our music to those with limited access to live music performances. While these activities go beyond the halls of education, are we simply observing society or are we seeking to change it?

How many times are these events an act of paternalistic charity and how many times does it, at the very least, spark curiosity about systems of oppression and injustice? When a choir goes out to sing for what is deemed an underprivileged population in their community or while on a choir tour, what is achieved? How is dialogue a part of the process? Is praxis present? Was a stance of solidarity made, or was it passing charity? How is a transformation of the individual self or system encouraged? Is musical outreach a form of soli-

darity, or is it an exercise in false charity to calm our minds? To be clear, it is not being suggested that every instance of musical outreach plays into the hand of systems of oppression or that every activity outside of school must make shockwaves in society. What is being suggested is that solidarity is more than passing outreach; it is relational.

Problem: The Hierarchical Structure
of Conductor and Singer
Lens: Dialogue

Conductors and choirs make music together. The choral structure is inherently hierarchical, however. Because of this, it is easy for some conductors to act as the only voice in the room. As the only voice the conductor tells the choir what to do (verbally or non-verbally) and the choir responds. The conductor listens to determine whether or not the response is satisfactory to their vision and the cycle repeats. In this case, the conductor acts as the giver and the choir as the receiver, yet music is made under the guise of "together." Not only is this approach hierarchical and representative of false solidarity, it also adheres to a banking model of education that stands in stark contradiction to critical pedagogy.[16] The banking model assumes the teacher is in charge of all knowledge and students are receptacles waiting to receive knowledge. It is a hierarchical and passive model. Music educator Randy Allsup criticizes this model stating, "This [receive, memorize, repeat information] is nothing more than mere enactment if initiates aren't trusted—at all stages of the learning process—with the creative capacity to make the work they do personally meaningful in concrete ways."[17]

How can conductors show they trust their choirs? How can they facilitate choral music making that is more than mere enactment? Dismantling this hierarchical banking structure requires the conductor to let go of some speaking power and make room for dialogue. Rather than tell the choir how to be musical, ask them what they might do during a particular phrase. Give them time to think about it. Sing it. Then ask what musical choices were made. Get multiple ideas going and talk about them. Allow the singers to experiment as individuals and talk about musical decisions as

a community. Let their work be independent of what you tell them or do nonverbally from the podium.

Abrahams references a curriculum by Miles in which dialogue among ensemble members, inviting a community member to come speak, and allowing ensemble members to have the opportunity to experiment and perform their own ideas as one example of a music classroom influenced by critical pedagogy.[18] In this form, the role of the conductor is minimized, and ensemble members dialogue with each other to explore and present musical possibilities. How does this play out in a rehearsal? Perhaps a choir could be divided into small groups, given a simple piece of music, a melody, void of any markings or instruction, and then the groups prepare their own renditions of the melody. Explore musical possibilities, and after sharing their performance discuss why they chose to make the musical decisions they did.

Conductors can also make use of dialogue when coaching choirs on issues related to voice pedagogy. The conductor may dialogue with a chorister during rehearsal, working with the singer in what is essentially a mini voice lesson. Ensemble members should be encouraged to listen and share what they heard. Likewise, the student demonstrating should share what they did, what they changed, what they felt. This dialogue works to effect transformation in technique. No matter how dialogue is involved in the rehearsal process, continue to invite the singers to participate. Ask questions and allow them to ask questions.

Repertoire itself is filled with opportunities for dialogue, as already evidenced by the above discussion on praxis and repertoire. When used to transform the hierarchical choral model, it is necessary that this dialogue is not simply the conductor talking to the singers about the music. That resorts to the banking method and does not foster dialogue.

How can conductors foster dialogue while not acting as the sole keepers of knowledge? It could be possible to bring in other voices from outside of the choir. Perhaps another ensemble or an individual with different insights or experiences to share as they relate to the music, the history, the culture, etc. If there are no voices to bring in, allow the voices in the choir to speak to the music. Students could take charge of writing program

notes or could share their process of encountering the music at a concert, thereby extending the dialogue to another group of people.

Each choir exists within a particular context, and every conductor in theirs. How one choir practices critical pedagogy may not look the same as another choir. The problems a collegiate choir faces are different from a middle school choir. The possibilities of social engagement beyond the school building will look different for urban and rural choirs. This is the beauty of critical pedagogy. It is responsive to people. When writing about dialogue, Freire states that "Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love."[19]

Critical pedagogy, with its language of the oppressed, oppressor, and injustice, is about love. It is a love of liberation, of transformation, and of people. Critical pedagogy offers choral musicians opportunities to transform every aspect of our music making through conscientization, putting our love into critical choral action. CJ

NOTES

[1] Donaldo Macedo, introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition,* by Paulo Freire (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018): 16.

[2] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition,* trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018): 83.

[3] Ibid., 127.

[4] Ibid., 87.

[5] Ibid., 65.

[6] Julia Shaw, "The Skin That We Sing: Culturally Responsive Choral Music Education" in *Music Educators Journal* 98, no. 4 (2012): 76, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41692642.

[7] Ibid., 78.

[8] Ibid., 79.

[9] Patricia Shehan Campbell, *Music, Education, and Diversity: Building Cultures and Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018): 75.

[10] Shaw, "The Skin That We Sing," 79.

[11] Jan McArthur, "Time to Look Anew: Critical Pedagogy and Disciplines within Higher Education" in *Studies in Higher Education* 35, no. 3 (2010): 304, doi: 10.1080/03075070903062856.

[12] Frank Abrahams, "Musicing Paulo Freire: A Critical Pedagogy for Music Education" in *Counterpoints* (2007): 225, https://www.jstor.org/stable/42979408.

[13] Frank Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," in *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 23, no. 2 (2005): 18, https://doi.org/10.1177/87551233050230020103.

[14] Anne Rapp, "On the Emancipatory Thought of Bell Hooks: Translating Critical Pedagogy into Action" in *The CLR James Journal* 17, no. 1 (2011): 38.

[15] Ibid., 40.

[16] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy,* 72.

[17] Randall E. Allsup, *Remixing the Classroom: Toward an Open Philosophy of Music Education* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016): 85.

[18] Frank Abrahams, "A Literature Review," 15.

[19] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy,* 89.

Nothing can dim the light
that shines from within.

—Maya Angelou

Our own voice is likely the first sound we hear when we enter the world. Long before language develops, it is our essential tool for expression. A voice teacher of mine rightly designated the larynx our "emotional barometer." Imagine how it feels when we laugh, are about to cry, or take a deep breath after a long day. Our voice illuminates what is inside our mind. The potential colors of a voice or group of voices carries this expressive impact into singing and the choral realm. When I sing with other people, I feel the resonance of their voices with mine and savor the way a group of voices creates a sense of electricity in the room. This vocal resonance seems to beget a resonance beyond sound—a spiritual one. I believe this is why I, and many others, love to sing in a choir.

Imagine if we could see the overtones swirling over us like light as we sing, and what it sounds like when we maximize our vocal potential to create a powerful sound that shines. The more we know and understand the inner workings of the voice, the more potential we have to make those sonic and spiritual connections. As choral conductors, we often serve as the initial voice teacher for many of our singers, whether in church, school, or community settings. Conductors and choruses of every level can benefit from an increased understanding of the principles of vocal pedagogy and resonance in a group setting. The scope of this article is limited to sound building, but I recommend that suggestions found here be married with textual and musical expressive pursuits, which also play an important role in encouraging our singers and ourselves to continually fall in love with the sound of a group of voices.
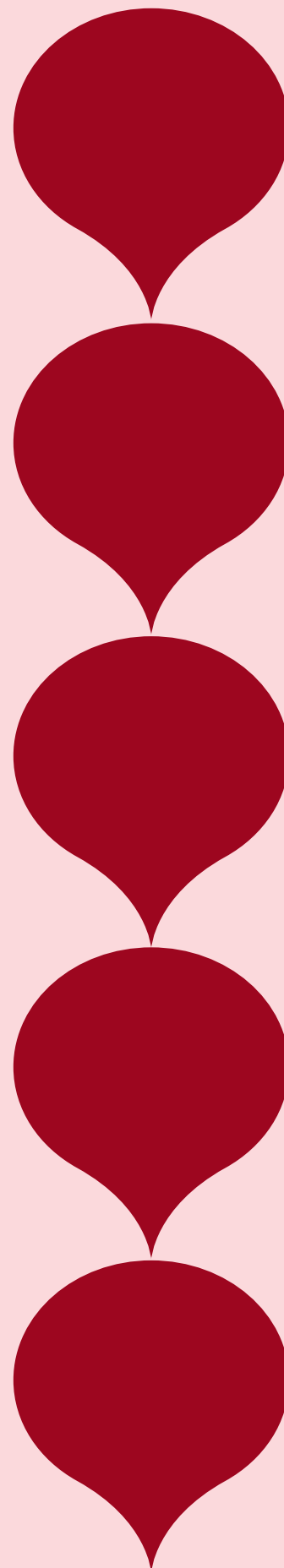
Pedagogy of Choral Sound and Spirit

Amanda Quist

Amanda Quist
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In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, many choral music educators are searching for solutions to engage their ensembles. The teaching tips and technology platforms in this article present opportunities to pair visual learning with vocal development with both in-person and online applications. I am using the software Vocevista Video in some images featured throughout, with my own voice. This software is available to download online for both PC and Mac users. More information can be found at www.vocevista.com. The sound generating these images was captured with a built-in computer microphone. An external microphone will improve the depth of sonic information you can capture and provide the best possible results, but a variety of microphones will produce clear enough results for teaching and explanation/comparative purposes.

Formants and Vowels: It Takes Two

All vocal sound comprises a fundamental pitch plus its overtones. While the overtone series of intervals is invariable regardless of gender or age, the emphasis of specific overtones in the series is highly variable. Our ability to perceive vowel and timbre arises from varying acoustical emphases among the fundamental pitch and its overtones. Another way to consider this is to understand that when you produce a sound that is breathy, shiny, loud, or soft, it always has a fundamental plus overtones, but there are variations of volume from one overtone (or group of overtones) to the next, and this affects our perception of vowel and timbre.

See Figure 1. On the left side of the image (spectrogram), the vertical numbers represent Hz, the cycles per second that represent pitch, or frequency. Those numbers are more spread out at the bottom and get closer toward the top near 3000 Hz (the area of the singer's formant), but that is simply so we can see all of the information on the screen; in reality, those numbers would be equally spaced, but the default setting of the software is designed to see the whole picture in one screen. You can see a strong red line near 260Hz, then another line at 520Hz, a softer color at 780Hz, etc. The first line is the fundamental pitch, and the other lines are overtones; the brightness and color of the lines

represents the volume of those overtones. Red is the loudest, and it fades to blue. The reason the first line is so strong and then the overtones fade until around 3000 Hz is largely due to this being the image of an [i] vowel. As a reminder, the lines (overtones) appear thinner and closer together near the 3000Hz mark, but that is just due to the software and imaging, not due to volume; volume is represented by color rather than the size of the line.

Two formants must be present for us to perceive a vowel. A formant is not an overtone but an area of potential acoustic energy created by the shape of the vocal tract. Trained singers learn to align the fundamental or its overtones with formants to achieve clarity of vowel and maximize resonance. Resonance, according to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary for our purposes here, states that it is *the intensification and enriching of a musical tone by supplementary vibration*. A sound becomes

Figure 1. [i] sung on Vocevista Video
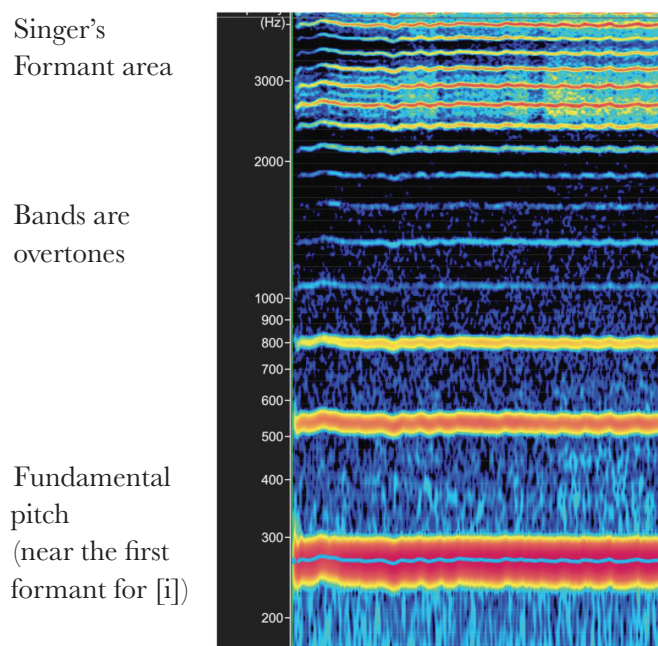
The scale on the vertical axis is frequency (pitch, in Hz) and the horizontal axis represents the passage of time.

more intense and colorful when it vibrates something beyond its original sound source. Scott McCoy, author of *Your Voice: An Inside View,* describes the resonance phenomenon with an example of a child on a swing. When the person pushing synchronizes their action with the swinging child, the system becomes efficient and the required energy input can be very small. The same is true in a system with vocal resonance. "Small vibrations (the gentle pushing of the helper) induce large vibrations (the swinging child)."[1] This concept is further explained in the book in reference to how the vocal tract interacts with the column of air generated by our breath and the vibrating vocal folds to create resonance, the resulting sound of which is further aided by vowel modification, or formant tuning. There are many crucial events happening at the level of the larynx in relation to formant tuning, but our main focus will be on the impact of resonance for this article.

Figure 2. [a] sung on VoceVista Video

First formant for [a]
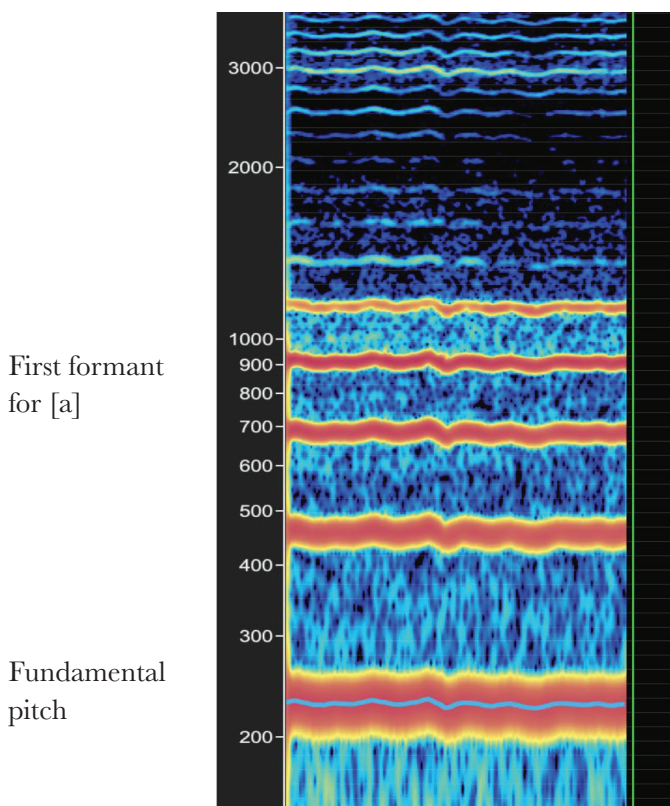
Fundamental pitch

When the vocal tract is shaped to produce an [i] vowel, the first formant (F1) naturally occurs around 300Hz (D4), and the second formant (F2) around 2800Hz. If the fundamental pitch and one or more of its overtones align with those two formants, we will perceive the vowel [i] and the resonance will be boosted. Thus, [i] is naturally resonant for many because the location of F1 (~D4) often falls near the fundamental pitch in choral singing for several of the voice parts (or is near the first overtone for basses), but more importantly, F2 falls near the singer's formant, which will be explained below. As we ascend in pitch, increasing our mouth opening allows the first formant (F1) to rise; this is why, as we sing an [i] vowel, we must begin to modify toward [a] as we ascend to keep F1 within range of the fundamental pitch or one of the first few overtones.

In contrast to [i], F1 for [a] is around 820Hz (G5), so it is difficult to align the fundamental to the F1 unless singing a pitch near G5. To have the vowel perceived as [a] while singing in the staff, we must align one of the overtones with F1 if the fundamental is far below it, as it often is in choral repertoire. Without our resonator (vocal tract), volume naturally decreases from the fundamental pitch through the overtone series. This is why some singers find [a] difficult to resonate in the midrange of the voice. Please see Figure 2 for an image of [a]. You will notice that the third overtone (fourth band) is the brightest in red color, because it is closest to F1 for this vowel (near 820Hz) and is therefore boosted.

Another way to think of formants is to take an object, such as a tube, and place one end to your lips. If you sing through it sliding the pitch of your voice up and down, you will likely find a pitch that makes the sound coming through the tube suddenly seem louder, and you may feel the tube vibrate. This is because you have introduced a pitch into the tube that matches its formant frequency, so the tube seems to resonate (but it is actually the column of air that makes this happen). A full discussion of how resonance in a closed-open tube works (i.e., the vocal tract) is beyond the scope of this article, but there are several great books on these topics, which are included in a list of suggestions for further reading at the end.

Singers' Formant and Resonance

To review, formants move depending on the shape of the vocal tract, so if you change the vowel, you change where the formant sits. Trained singers make miniscule adjustments of the vocal tract to better align the fundamental or its overtones to formants. This process, called formant tuning, allows maximum resonance on a fixed pitch by modifying toward a vowel whose formants are closer to the fundamental or overtones of the pitch one is singing. In a treble voice, when lower in range, this might entail modifying toward a more closed vowel with a lower first formant ([i] or [u]), or, when singing higher, modifying toward a more open vowel with a higher first formant ([a]). See Table 1 for a vowel chart that shows the approximate pitches for the formants for the five principle vowels.

While many of us make vowel adjustments instinctively with our ears, having these numbers to reference aids our understanding, and can inform our choices when seeking for sound solutions for spread or out of tune singing, for example. Whether or not you want to share the numbers with the singers is certainly up to the individual. In my own teaching, I have had more durable success using the vowel chart (without numbers) to quickly clarify and make adjustments that can be re-employed through remembered sensation.

As mentioned earlier, there are formants beyond the first two. The phenomenon called the "Singer's Formant" occurs near 3000Hz and can be heard in a trained singing voice. Some discrepancy still exists as to how exactly this phenomenon is produced, but it may be a result of the clustering together of formants three through five (F3-F5). The presence of this formant area creates the very intense "ring" that allows a singer to be heard over an orchestra because most orchestral formants peak at lower pitch levels. When treble voices are singing in their lower range, they may also have need to tap into this formant, but when they are singing at a higher fundamental frequency, it becomes unnecessary and at some point impossible to produce. The higher the fundamental, the more efficient the resonator becomes, and the louder the volume of the voice, thus reducing the need of the singer's formant for sopranos singing in the upper range. The singer's formant tends to occur

Table 1. Vowel Chart with Formant Frequencies

OPEN

F1~ 820 HZ (G$_5$) [a] F2~ 1200 HZ (D$_6$)

F2~ 2300 HZ (D$_7$) [e]
F1~ 580 HZ (D$_5$)

[o] F2~ 880 HZ (A$_5$)
F1~ 580 HZ (D$_5$)

F2~ 2800 HZ (F$_7$) [i]
F1~ 300 HZ (D$_4$)

[u] F2~ 870 HZ (A$_5$)
F1~ 300 HZ (D$_4$)

CLOSED
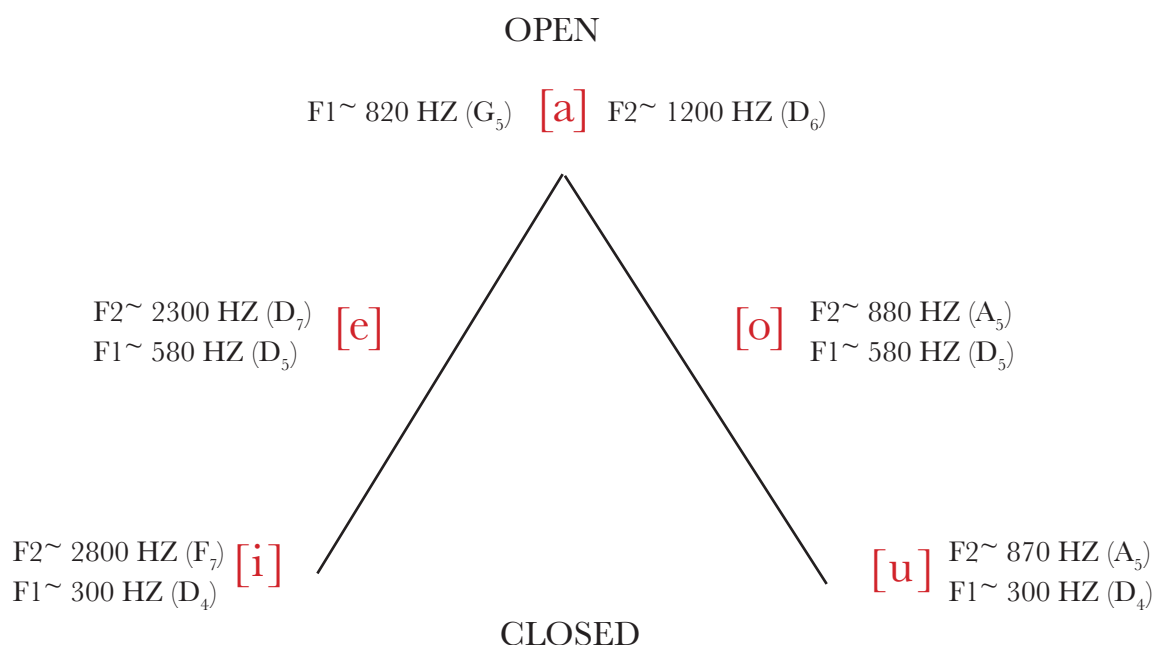
with a comfortably low laryngeal position and firm glottal closure.

Choral Resonance and Group Sound

There is no reason to have a Stradivarius sound like a cigar-box violin so that both will sound the same. Instead of removing the resonance from the voices that have it, one should try to establish the formant in all voices of the choir in which it is lacking.[2]

—*Berton Coffin*

The fundamental pitch plus overtones creates the "vocal picture." When choristers create similar vocal pictures while singing, they may hear and feel a sense of resonating into one another, creating a collective "choral resonance." This can increase comfort for individuals to sing within an ensemble and enhances somatic sensations. This is not a matter of singing precisely the same vowel, but instead relies on each individual singer's use of formant tuning to produce their best alignment of formants and overtones. This informs our "vocal picture" and creates a "unity in the sound." This unity can be far more effective than one made by reducing the color in the most resonant voices to that of the least, but of course, choral repertoire requires a great variety of color choices, so there is no one "best" color; the goal is to encourage each singer's best sound and to place it into the sleeve of the whole.

Pitch and vibrato must be addressed, because if we are not singing exactly the same pitch or the vibrato rates are widely different, the result can create a sound that, while it may produce a similar vocal picture, will not sound cohesive or in tune. Clarity of pitch and individual resonance are essential to choral resonance; strong overtone presence aids the tuning of octaves, fifths, and other chord tones. Vibrato is separate and apart from resonance; it is possible to access the singer's formant both with and without vibrato. The human voice is never entirely without vibrato, but the amplitude of pitch oscillation can vary widely based on vocal production. "Healthy vocal production perceived as straight tone is still, to some degree, vibrating. Even when vibrato is minimized in straight tone, the carrying power and ring of the voice associated with the singer's formant can still be present."[3] The RIAS Kammerchor, a German choir, received the following comments in a review: "There are dynamic extremes, too: extraordinary chords hit with a force that seemed doubly overwhelming Thursday because of the palpably dead-on accuracy of the tuning. The volume was almost physically intimidating. It seemed impossible that so much sound could come out of such a small group of people and yet not sound in the least like shouting."[4]

See Figure 3. You will notice that while the overtones become easier to see as they become wider/wavy lines vs. more straight lines, the actual color intensity of the lines is the same, which is the indication of the volume of the resonance. In thinking of intonation, if vibrato rates among singers in a group are similar, then lining

Figure 3. Singer's Formant with and without vibrato on [i]

Area of Singer's Formant
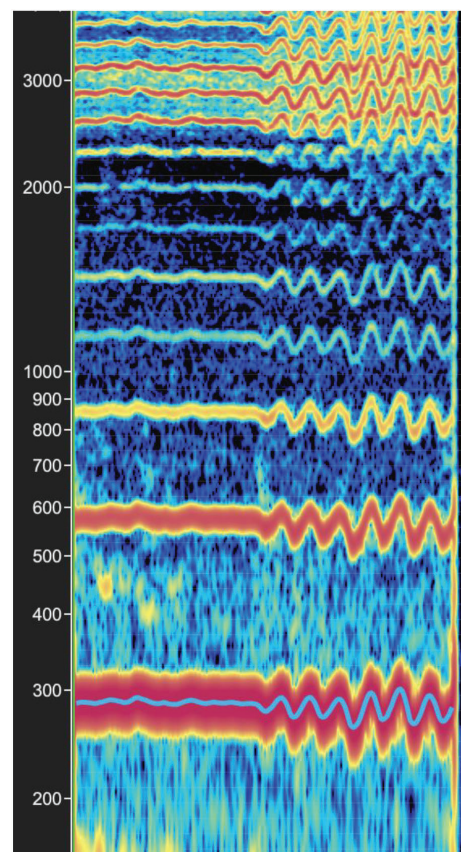
up overtones is easier. When vibrato rates differ greatly from one singer to the next, the vocal picture does not have an opportunity to find an alignment because it is a moving target; the overtones move up and down in lock-step ratios with the fundamental pitch. This does not imply that vibrato is bad or good, simply that the choices of the director or ensemble members should be clarified regarding the approach to vibrato. Most important in this discussion is the health or efficiency of the vocal technique itself. While there are a wide variety of vocal color choices possible in choral singing, sound that is supported by breath and body with efficient vocal fold closure and tonal clarity is a step in the right direction.

It is possible to use Vocevista Video with choirs. However, keep in mind that if you are working with repertoire, it will likely yield better results to work with a single section when trying to teach formant tuning,

since adding fundamental pitches means adding overtones, and this adds much more visual information to the screen. You can run choral recordings through Vocevista Video as well, and while it is not possible to see individual overtones very easily, you can see clusters of information, especially in the comparative presence of the area of the singer's formant. For example, below is an image of two choirs singing the exact same passage from Rachmaninoff's *Vespers*. Notice that you can see general clustering near the fundamental pitches and nearby overtones, and then again around 3000 Hz. There is a considerable difference in the area of the singer's formant from one choir to the next. This result can be affected by several things, however, including the types and proximity of recording microphones, and other acoustic factors in the space that cannot be ignored. However, the resulting recording, and the resulting sonic product, are what we can compare. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Spectrogram of two choirs
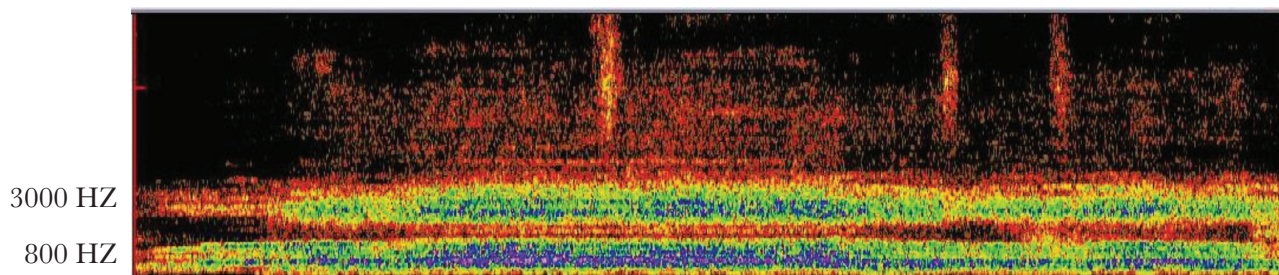
Choir 1, above, shows considerably more acoustic presence near the range
of the singer's formant than Choir 2, show below.
Note this is a different software program, and the color blue represents the greatest volume.
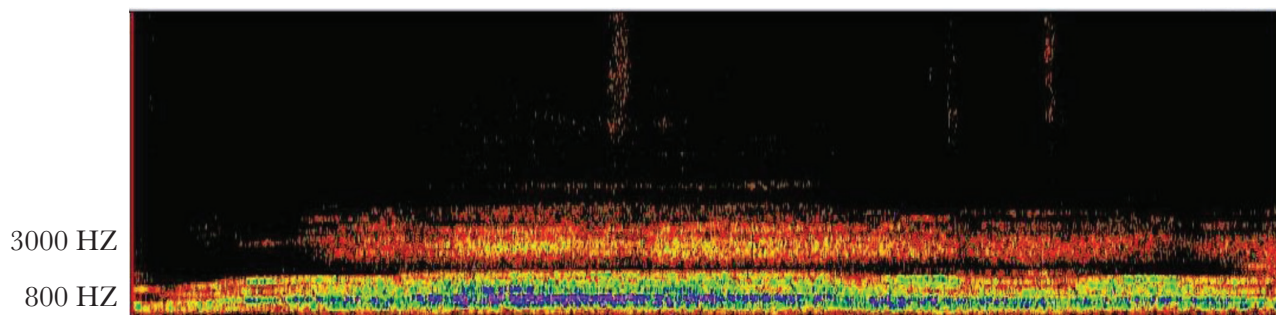
Choral Pedagogy and Tips

Warm-ups should set up success, not struggle. Incorporating descending vocalises based on [i] and [u], starting within the staff (suggested five-notes, beginning in C-major [c3/c4]), optimize singer success at the outset of rehearsal. Generally, [i] has a first formant close to the fundamental pitch when in the staff and a second formant near the Singer's Formant, making it valuable for training formant tuning and creating easy resonance when singing in the mid-voice. [u] shares a first formant similar to [i], and can also facilitate the engagement of head register. When we perceive that our ensemble needs more space in their sound, we often go to an [a] vowel. This may seem like an obvious solution, but [a] can create fatigue, especially in the mid-voice if one is not aware of how formants work. As stated earlier, the first formant for [a] is near g5, and does not always yield successful results at the outset of a vocal warm-up especially in mid to lower ranges. It is helpful to start where singers can succeed and find efficient collective resonance before exploring the more extreme parts of the range.

Another aspect of resonance is the use of chest register, or belting. A discussion of register exceeds the scope of this article, but it is important to understand how registers work, as the use of vowel modification alone will not solve all vocal faults. In styles that require more chest or belt in the sound, formant tuning is still relevant, but the crucial part is to sing with one's own most efficient and healthy vocal picture. In a belt, the picture will look different than with mixed or head voice, and you may hear a strong prominence of the first overtone in the sound (an octave).

As trained singers are aware, all singing styles and sounds that are successful tend to be rooted in excellent breath support. The topic of breath support is enormous and foundational for singing. For more resources on breath support and technique, please see the end of the article. For beginning vowels in teaching formant tuning, here are some suggestions:

1. Start in the mid-range of the ensemble, with no more than five-note, top-down exercises.

2. Choose repertoire that introduces a helpful vowel stream. Singing in English for American choirs can be difficult due to the great variety of pronunciation tendencies and habits formed through speech. Latin can provide a more helpful stream; consider texts such as Kyrie, Miserere, Os Justi, and others. The mixed vowel [y] found in German and French can also be a wonderful way to aid formant tuning, since it is a combination of [i] with [u], two vowels who share the same first formant range.

3. Working with unison and two-part repertoire can be a wonderful teaching tool. Pieces like Italian art songs are a must for training sound as well as artistry, and all of the other elements that come into play in choral performance.

4. If you have an SATB choir, repertoire that is written with fifths and octaves in the tenor and bass parts can be very useful for formant tuning and building choral intonation, since this follows the pattern of the overtone series.

5. I have found that solfège is a wonderful tool not only for literacy but for sound building if you help the choir unify the vowels. I generally teach solfège pronunciation exactly as written as if it were IPA, so the vowels are closed. Recall that the word *closed* in reference to a vowel is just an indication that the front of the mouth (lips or tongue) is creating a closed space, but there is space in the back of the throat. Notice, also, that roots and fifths share the same vowels [do] and [so], and leading tones in the scale use [i].

6. After solfège, we often work with neutral vowels, either [i] or [u] (modifying for ascending passages, especially for sopranos) to establish successful formant tuning in the choir. We play games where we number off every other singer, and the first group sings on the neutral vowel while the second group sing the text; this way, we always relate it back to the successful vowel stream we need. It is crucial to adjust the vowels as you go according to the range, tessitura, and registration shifts in each passage.

7. Here are suggestions for specific vowel usage:

[i] as in week
- builds resonance due to the location of first and second formants
- clarifies intonation
- creates freedom in the sound when supported by breath
- maintains placement in the mid to low voice

[u] as in boot
- engages head register
- creates clarity in the sound by aligning the first formant to the fundamental, and actually has a lower second formant, so we often perceive more of the fundamental pitch, helpful for tuning
- can aid in relaxation of the larynx (think "sigh on [u]")

[y] as in the German word grün
- can aid in bringing the positives of both of the above vowels together

[o] as in Minnesota
- a closed [o] is not a sound we find in most American English pronunciation, but we do find in other languages
- modify toward this vowel if [a] feels breathy or stuck, as this brings the first formant down from [a], which may help align the formant to the fundamental or one of the first overtones

[e] as in chaos
- a closed [e] is also not a sound we find in most American English pronunciation, but we do find in other languages
- modify toward this vowel if [ɛ] feels spread or out of tune
- building sound on [e] before moving to [ɛ] can be helpful, especially when singing in Latin

[a] as in father
- helpful for treble voices as they ascend in pitch toward the top and above the staff
- can be useful if working to build chest register in descending passages

Figure 5 shows suggested warm-ups for building resonance in choral sound. The first, 5a, which employs [miŋ] (or ming), borrows from a few principles. First, the idea that vocal play can be very helpful for singers to explore their vocal production and sound possibilities. This may feel more like a noise than a sung sound, and this can be helpful for breaking through potential tension habits that inhibit vocal growth. The key is ensuring the sound is supported by the breath and engaged in the body. While in general conductors might prefer to avoid nasality in the sound, coupling vowels with nasal consonants can be a helpful step in finding resonance. This is because when we produce a nasal sound, we light up the

Figure 5a. Vocal play, finding ring
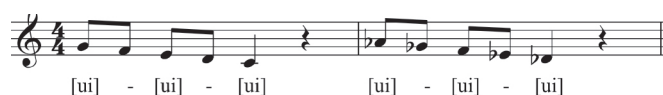
Figure 5b.

Figure 5c. Hum into vowel around the chart

Figure 5d. Intonation exercise

Start with intervals natural to the overtone series: fifths and octaves.

part of the vocal picture (spectrum) related to the singer's formant. Remembered sensation is one of the best tools for voice teaching since we cannot physically manipulate the larynx with our hands, so finding a sound that begins in the right "spot" and then moves to the desired sound can be a helpful tool.

Conclusions

Singers who learn to resonate together tap into the beauty and power of their ensemble's sound, its collective resonance. This encourages individual vocal development, addresses the technical demands of most choral repertoire, and helps us to feel sonically and spiritually connected to one another. When the ensemble members begin to find the ring in their own voices, they will find it much easier to unify the tone as they learn to sing into the resonance of those around them. The choir can sing with more ease and less fatigue, and the collective blend will become aurally apparent because the sound is vibrant and rich, its whole greater than the sum of its parts. Teaching this concept in the choral rehearsal requires time and study on the part of the choral conductor, but the results are compelling. When increased resonance broadens the color palate, a choir can approach choral music of almost any era and style, with greater confidence that their performance will reach the soul of the listener. CJ

NOTES

[1] Scott McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View* (Princeton: Inside View Press, 2004), 28.

[2] Stephen C. Bolster, "The Fixed Formant Theory and Its Implications for Choral Blend and Choral Diction," *Choral Journal* 23, no. 6 (1983): 31.

[3] Sten Ternström, *Acoustical Aspects of Choir Singing* (Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology, 1989), 12.

[4] Michelle Dulak Thompson, "Polished and Powerful Debut," review of the Rias Kammerchor, *San Francisco Classical Voice,* 16 November 2006, visited June 15, 2008. http://www.sfcv.org/arts_revs/rias_11_21_06.php

Further Reading

Bozeman, Kenneth. *Practical Vocal Acoustics: Pedagogic Applications for Teachers and Singers.* Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2013.

Emmons, Shirlee and Constance Chase. *Prescriptions for Choral Excellence: Tone, Text, Dynamic Leadership.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

McCoy, Scott. *Your Voice: An Inside View.* Princeton, NJ: Inside View Press, 2004.

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Music Matters:
A Pedagogical Framework
for Literature Selection

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A perpetual conversation among choral conductors has existed concerning the selection of literature. Choral professionals have written about this topic from varying viewpoints, including examinations of literature quality; literature selection practices based on historical, aesthetic, and pedagogical evaluation; literature appropriateness and accessibility; and issues related to diversity and inclusion.[1] Discussion has been robust because we understand the numerous influences literature selection has on the success of choral organizations—among these are singer engagement, member recruitment and retention, rehearsal and performance quality, personal musical development, and the musical tastes of both ensemble members and the communities in which choral organizations function. Added to this list is the profound impact that repertoire choices have on choral singers' musical growth. Through literature study, singers gain an understanding of musical concepts, establish and continue to develop their musicianship skills and vocal abilities, and engage in historical and cultural discourse.

Literature choices should facilitate the acquisition and development of specific musical knowledge and skills. The music we study and perform with our ensembles should be chosen with the pedagogical intent to introduce, develop, and reinforce the musical concepts and skill sets we deem essential for an adept choral musician. Through literature study, singers develop skills related to part independence, phrasing, articulation, rhythmic precision, diction, intonation, listening, literacy, improvisation, tone development, and genre- and style-specific musical elements. Furthermore, singers develop an understanding of compositional construction (e.g., style and form, notational devices, the fusion of text and sound, and harmony constructs) through engaging with specific literature.

Also, the literature we choose for studying and performing creates opportunities for singers to become conversant with the complex connections between music and the cultural and societal contexts in which it was created; the historical and social influences on musical development; and how music has shaped and continues to impact our views of self, others, and the society in which we live. Engaging with literature from this perspective—in tandem with intentional performative skill development—makes content relevant to singers, broadens their world perspective, and deepens their appreciation for the diverse styles and genres they encounter.

Choral professionals routinely spend hours, days, even months listening to and examining scores to select literature that meets both aesthetic and pedagogical goals. To further assist in this process, this article offers a pedagogical framework for literature selection. Specifically, this writing will examine the educational benefits of exposing singers to a broad range of musical styles, sequencing repertoire to build on singers' competencies, and the influence of diverse literature choices on choral pedagogy. Though the following discussion is intended for conductors practicing or intending to practice at the secondary level, the ideas discussed here also have implications with choral ensembles comprised of adults, particularly those with amateur singers.

Selecting Literature to Build on Singers' Competencies

A breadth of quality repertoire is available for conductors to engage singers with regard to developing the knowledge and skills mentioned above. Singers stand to benefit from the entirety of this extensive repertory through exposure to varied textures, tonal colors, languages, and musical styles requiring distinct technical and stylistic demands. By exposing singers to a broad selection of repertoire, we create a rich choral experience that expands singers' musical knowledge and develops a comprehensive musical skill set.

Singers *should* experience a comprehensive and balanced curriculum with respect to the choral literature studied and performed. Repertoire study at the secondary level, however, is often skewed toward contemporary literature.[2] Furthermore, Robert Ward and Leila

Heil's examination of the choral literature performed at ACDA national conferences reveals that over the past six decades, there has been a decrease in the programming of works from the Medieval, Renaissance, Classical, Romantic, and early Modern eras among choirs of all levels.[3]

I must admit that as an early career teacher, my programming was not comprehensive. My ensembles were capable of singing a variety of styles and levels of difficulty; however, my singers' exposure to these styles was limited for several reasons: 1) I was not yet familiar with the breadth of accessible literature across historical style periods; 2) I mistakenly assumed my singers would not enjoy singing early works, and thus would not fully commit to the learning process; 3) I did not yet understand the pedagogical benefit of exposing singers to a variety of styles.

Fortunately, I had a colleague who often pressed me on this issue, and I eventually decided to study an early work with my advanced ensemble. The first early piece we explored was William Byrd's *Ave verum corpus,* which ended up being the singers' favorite work we studied that year. Besides learning that the singers of this ensemble did connect with and would fully invest in learning this literature, I also noticed their vocal and musicianship growth as they worked through the piece's unique challenges. Their breath management improved due to the longer phrase lengths. They learned to shape phrases independent of other vocal parts. They grasped the novel challenges associated with singing polyphonic textures and modal harmony.

These revelations encouraged me to study other historical compositions with this ensemble. Works that followed included *Ploratae fili Israel* (Carissimi), *Ave verum corpus,* K. 618 (Mozart), excerpts from *Zigeunerlieder,* Op. 103 (Brahms), and *Verlieh uns Frieden* (Mendelssohn), among others. I also began to program accessible historical literature with my developmental ensembles. With every new style the singers encountered, their skill level expanded to meet each work's distinct challenges. Furthermore, I saw progress in my teaching and conducting as I learned to effectively prepare works with varied stylistic and vocal demands.

A significant benefit of comprehensive and balanced literature study, which includes works from all historical

periods as well as various contemporary styles and musical idioms, is the skill development our singers experience from this practice. All choral literature study can contribute to advancing singers' abilities with respect to aural skills development, tone production, rhythmic and pitch integrity, breath management, listening (e.g., blend and balance), diction (e.g., vowel consistency and uniformity, proper pronunciation, and the effects consonants have on rhythmic precision, among other elements of lyric diction), and the execution of the expressive elements of music. We can also look to specific genres and styles to help develop and refine singers' musical and technical abilities.

An examination of each musical style's unique characteristics will uncover opportunities for the educator to nurture a broad range of musical abilities with their singers. The melismatic text settings of Renaissance and Baroque works can be the vehicle through which the teacher-conductor develops consistency in vowel production. Singers can learn about formal design when studying music from the Classical and Romantic eras. Works from the Modern era will allow singers to master advanced rhythmic constructs, including asymmetrical meters, mixed meters, syncopation, and challenging rhythmic combinations. The study of music from the Gospel tradition and other contemporary styles presents opportunities to develop improvisational skills and tonal concepts different from those of the Eurocentric ideal.

Table 1 on pages 26 and 27 details specific musical concepts and skills that can be introduced and developed through singers engaging with works from the various musical eras. This list is by no means exhaustive; rather, it highlights the teachable musical elements and technical demands characteristic of each period. The table also provides literature examples of varying levels of difficulty that are representative of the listed musical concepts. For this writing, the selected works are limited to those appropriate for high school mixed choruses, though there are works for soprano-alto choruses, tenor-bass choruses, and choruses with younger voices that can be studied to explore these musical skills. The works are ordered by increasing level of difficulty.

Sequencing Literature to Build on Singers' Competencies

The teacher-conductor should determine a trajectory of educational growth predicated on the singers' existing knowledge and skill level. Dennis Schrock recommends that "the conductor develop a multi-year, long-range plan, with specified short-term goals that are cumulative and that serve as steppingstones toward the accomplishment of the long-term objective."[4] We want our singers to sing with better intonation and a more beautiful and vibrant tone. We want literate musicians who can capably approach more challenging literature. The feasibility of these desires increases with clearly defined learning objectives, carefully curated musical content, and well-sequenced instructional activities.

Like other learned behaviors, musical competencies are developed through instruction that introduces skills at the elemental level. Instruction is then sequenced in a fashion that will allow the musician to engage with the skill at increasingly more sophisticated levels. Every new level of engagement presents opportunities for the musician to increase their proficiency through instruction that 1) introduces new knowledge or skills, 2) provides a more advanced application of previously learned knowledge or skills, or 3) combines previously learned skills with other skills.

This method of musical skill development is predicated on the cognitive learning theory espoused by Jerome Bruner.[5] Bruner theorized that learners of all ages could acquire knowledge, even complex material, if instruction is structured and appropriately ordered. From this theory, Bruner developed the notion of the *spiral curriculum*, a learning model in which students are introduced to content at a basic level and revisit the tenets of that content in structured intervals with increasing detail, effectively cultivating their command of the material upon each return. To further understand how this construct applies to choral music learning, consider the following explanation:

> The curriculum of a choral program includes both the content of the instruction and its sequencing…. A spiral curriculum presents similar skills and knowledge at various stages…and each time around they are revisited at a higher,

Table 1. Style-Specific Musical Concepts/Skills & Representative Works

Renaissance Style		

Musical Concepts/Skills: imitative textures, sustaining vowel purity through melismatic passages, aural training in church modes, part independence through polyphonic textures, text-driven phrasing

Title	Composer/Arranger	Publisher
Je le vous dirai!	Pierre Certon	Bourne Co.
O grief, e'en on the bud	Thomas Morley, ed. Carrington	GIA Publications
Tria sunt munera	Juan Esquivel	J&W Chester, Ltd.
Exsultate justi	Lodovico Viadana	J&W Chester, Ltd.
Chantez á Dieu chanson nouvelle (Psalm 96)	Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck	Theodore Presser

Baroque Style		

Musical Concepts/Skills: vocal agility through the execution of melismatic passages, elements of fugue, terraced dynamics, articulations, rhythmic precision, ornamentation

"Praise the Lord" from Judas Maccabeus, HWV 63	George Frideric Handel, arr. Hopson	Shawnee Press
"Dara la notte il sol" from Lagrime d'amante, SV 111	Claudio Monteverdi, ed. Dehning	Alliance Music Publications
"Sicut locutus est" from Magnificat, BWV 243	Johann Sebastain Bach, ed. Leavitt	Hal Leonard, Inc.
Exsultate Deo	Alessandro Scarlatti	Theodore Presser
Magnificat, RV 610	Antonio Vivaldi	Carus-Verlag

Classical Style		

Musical Concepts/Skills: phrasal contrast, understanding of form, progressive dynamics, textural clarity, functional harmony, fuging tunes

Der Greis, Hob. XXVc:5	Franz Joseph Haydn	Carus-Verlag
Missa brevis Sancti Joannis de Deo, Hob. XXII:7	Franz Joseph Haydn	Baerenreiter-Verlag
I am the Rose of Sharon	William Billings, ed. Daniel	G. Schirmer, Inc.
Mass in C major, K. 220	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Baerenreiter-Verlag
Veni sancte spiritus, K. 47	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Baerenreiter-Verlag

Romantic Style

Musical Concepts/Skills: extremes of vocal and dynamic ranges, harmonic complexity, understanding the amalgamation of text and musical expression, extended harmony, chromaticism, warmth and fullness of tone

Two Short Anthems (Peace I leave unto you)	Amy Beach/ed. Brunelle	Boosey & Hawkes
Lebenslust, D. 609	Franz Schubert, ed. Gordon	Tetra Music
As torrents in summer	Edward Elgar	Novello & Company Limited
Locus iste, WAB 23	Anton Bruckner	Carus-Verlag
Madrigal á 4 voix, Op. 35	Gabriel Fauré	Broude Brothers

Modern Style

Musical Concepts/Skills: tonal clusters, rhythmic complexity, tonal complexity, aleatoric elements, articulations, advanced constructs of tonality and meter, varied concepts of vocal colors, exposure to diverse choral idioms, extended vocal techniques

Song for Snow	Florence Price	Carl Fischer
Bogoroditse Djévo	Arvo Pärt	Universal Edition
Pater noster	Igor Stravinksy	Boosey & Hawkes
Ave Maria No. 17	Heitor Villa-Lobos	Durand S.A. Editions
Suite de Lorca	Einojuhani Rautavaara	Walton

more complex level. In this way, skills and techniques will be extended and refined, and students' knowledge will grow cumulatively.[6]

In the choral setting, instructional content is often inextricably linked with the literature chosen for study and performance. Voice building, aural skills training, literacy development, and theory instruction are all immediately informed by the repertoire the ensemble will study and perform. These learning goals must be developed from a sequential process; therefore, literature must be chosen for its appropriateness to that sequence. Sequencing literature first requires the teacher-conductor to determine the competencies to be developed over the course of the term, year, or even the singer's tenure with the program. Once learning objectives have been established, the teacher-conductor may then codify a series of learning targets intended to move singers from introductory skills to more demanding skills. In the final step of the sequencing process, literature is chosen to facilitate teaching the defined learning goals. Repertoire sequencing should take into account multiple factors that contribute to a work's appropriateness for the ensemble's development level. Elements that should be considered include the range and tessitura of each vocal line, voicing density, harmonic and rhythmic complexity, phrase lengths, voice leading, and tempi, among others.

To illuminate the process of sequencing, consider how learning might be structured when the long-term goal is to build the ensemble's competency to sing polyphonic textures. Performing polyphony requires singers to be proficient at singing vocal lines independently. The progression of this skill engagement might be ordered as detailed in Table 2.

Two critical components of competency-based literature sequencing are 1) new concepts or skills are always related to previous learning, and 2) learners engage with various concepts simultaneously, often making connections between and/or layering skills and concepts. In the case of learning polyphony, singers should have prior experiences with singing canonic textures, which is a fundamental skill in demonstrating part independence.

Singers unfamiliar with polyphonic music of the Renaissance period will initially struggle with the part-independence demanded by the style, the construct of modal harmony, and the melismatic text settings of works from this era. Properly sequencing each of these elements will allow singers to engage with polyphonic works successfully at their initial exposure, which will motivate them to meet more of the style's musical chal-

Table 2. Competency-Based Repertoire Sequencing

Level	Learning Objective	Example Literature
Introductory	Demonstrate the ability to sing works with homophonic textures briefly disrupted by polyphonic textures.	Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen (Heinrich Isaac)
Emerging	Demonstrate the ability to sing works with imitative polyphonic textures.	Weep, O mine eyes (John Bennet)
Intermediate	Demonstrate the ability to sing works with non-imitative polyphonic textures.	Sicut cervus (Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina)
Advanced	Demonstrate the ability to sing works with juxtaposed polyphonic and homophonic textures and increased rhythmic complexity.	Ave Maria...virgo serena [á 4] (Josquin des Prez)

lenges.

The teacher-conductor might consider Heinrich Isaac's *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen* as an appropriate introductory work. This work opens with a brief polyphonic section; however, the prevailing texture here is homophonic. Subsequent polyphonic moments are brief. Also, the work is set syllabically, save a few transitory moments of melismatic passages. The rhythmic demands and voice leading are appropriate for developing singers, allowing them to focus on tuning issues in a modal tonality.

The next level of the sequence would require singers to study works more pervasively polyphonic. Singers will likely be more successful starting with imitative polyphonic textures due to the shared melodic content between the vocal lines. John Bennet's *Weep, O mine eyes* could be considered to facilitate skill development at this level. Here, the connective element to previous skill development is the vocal independence gained from singing canonic textures. Singers will also make connections between the combination of homophonic and polyphonic textures, as well as the syllabic text setting experienced at the previous level. The increased challenges singers will experience with this setting are aural and vocal in nature, including increased harmonic complexity, wider melodic leaps, and extended phrase lengths.

The next level of engagement with polyphonic styles might be to study a work in which the vocal lines interact with increasing independence, both melodically and rhythmically. Palestrina's *Sicut cervus* satisfies the criteria for this next step. Modal harmony has become increasingly intuitive at this stage, and students will have gained sufficient experience shaping independent melodic lines. Singers can now give added attention to the rhythmic challenges of this work and the melismatic text setting.

As an increased challenge, singers might then study Josquin's *Ave Maria…virgo serena* [á 4]. This setting combines elements introduced at previous levels (e.g., the juxtaposition of imitative counterpoint with homophonic textures) with compositional features new to this level of study, including pervasive imitation and duetting textures between vocal lines, dense rhythmic syncopation, metric shifts, and expanded vocal demands.

This sequencing of literature to develop the competency of singing polyphonic music will prepare singers to effectively engage with more advanced works from the Renaissance era. Furthermore, singers will be able to transfer the part independence skills developed through this sequence to works from other style periods that demand this competency, such as Grzegorz Gorczycki's *In virtute tua* (fugue); Johannes Brahm's *Geistliches Lied,* Op. 30 (double canon); and Adolphus Hailstork's *Nocturne* (aleatoric elements).

Being mindful of sequencing will allow the teacher-conductor to avoid situations in which the musical demands of a work are above the ensemble's skill level while also being proactive about preparing singers for added musical challenges. Committing to such a system requires the teacher-conductor to understand the indicators of singers' readiness to engage with a skill at a more complex level. To this intent, consider the following indicators:

- Singers display mastery of a specific musical skill or concept, determined by established learning indicators;

- Singers can transfer the developed skill or knowledge to different musical contexts; and

- Singers can engage with the content independent of the teacher-conductor's guidance.

If chosen methodically, with specific pedagogical intent, the repertoire we study and perform with our ensembles can be a vehicle for musical and personal growth for our singers and ourselves. The benefits of such considerations are abundant:

Positive and Productive Rehearsal Environment. We create enjoyable and productive rehearsals when the ensemble studies literature that both compliments their current abilities and pushes them toward growth. Novice conductors often give ensembles literature that is beyond what the singers can perform well. In doing so, rehearsals will likely be unsatisfying to all involved. The conductor will be frustrated because the singers' performance is not up to their expectations, and the singers will be discouraged because they are not experiencing success. Under these circumstances, rehearsals

are prone to be arduous, and the teacher-conductor will likely resort to rote-drilling of pitches and rhythms. Two unfortunate consequences of this rehearsal model are 1) the music will likely never get to a point where artistic elements are being addressed, and 2) the singers' musicianship development is sacrificed because they become increasingly dependent on the teacher-conductor for guidance, as opposed to a model in which singers can approach learning experiences independently because the content is connected to skills they already possess.

Reinforcement of Good Singing Habits. By introducing singers to literature appropriate to their current skill set and level of vocal development, they will be able to focus on good singing habits. Repertoire above the singers' abilities will undoubtedly encode undesirable singing behaviors into their muscle memory. Rehearsals will then focus on eliminating bad habits rather than building upon good singing behaviors. At every stage of development, singers should study and perform literature they can sing with good technique.

Musical Growth of Singers. Thoughtful repertoire selection, through the lens of pedagogical goals and proper sequencing, will allow the teacher-conductor to develop the skill level of their ensemble over time—moving the ensemble's repertoire accessibility from introductory works to more complex works. Furthermore, students will develop a diverse skill set through the depth and variety of their literature experience, preparing them for a broad range of musical settings beyond the secondary level.

Increased Motivation of Singers. In his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us,* Daniel Pink proposes that one of three motivators toward increased performance is one's intrinsic resolve to achieve mastery.[7] As singers get better at a skill, they will yearn to engage with the activity more frequently to see themselves operate at increasingly higher levels. Appropriate literature sequencing facilitates this drive toward proficiency by establishing a learning environment that requires singers to master progressively challenging yet achievable goals. Singers *will* perceive their progress and *will* more fully commit to the developmental process as they see themselves accomplishing set goals.

Transfer of Knowledge and Skills. As singers get better each year, they become peer teachers and models for the new members of the ensemble. New members will quickly assimilate by looking to returning singers for cues on the ensemble's musical (and social/behavioral) standards. Furthermore, we can create learning environments in which returning singers can mentor new singers, thus expediting the time needed for new members to rise to those standards.

Personal Growth. Our singers' musical experiences should not be predicated on our limitations. We must have the same expectations for ourselves that we have for our singers. If we expect growth from them, we must also expect growth from ourselves. We see improvements in our abilities as we figure out how to convey concepts and teach specific skills and styles to our ensembles, as we grapple with a work that has numerous conducting challenges, and as we work through a piece that challenges our existing skill set. *Docendo discimus* (By teaching, we learn).

Repertoire Diversity and Inclusivity as Pedagogy

Selecting repertoire within a pedagogical framework requires one to consider how each work will contribute to the long-term goal of singer development. Often, we see non-Eurocentric literature programmed as novelty pieces, token works, or merely for entertainment purposes. These practices depreciate the inherent musical and pedagogical merits of this literature. By critically examining our literature selection practices, we can ensure a more inclusive pedagogy in which a variety of genres and styles are considered and used to achieve pedagogical goals.

Take, for example, the following compositions: "Sing unto God" from *Judas Maccabaeus,* HWV 63 (George Frideric Handel), *Alles hat seine Zeit,* Hob XXVc:3 (Franz Joseph Haydn), and *I'm gonna sing 'til the spirit moves in my heart* (arr. Moses Hogan). These works span almost 250 years of musical development, represent three musical periods, were composed under disparate personal and sociopolitical circumstances, and have distinctive stylistic demands. Nevertheless, all three works could be effectively used to develop vocal agility at an advanced

level.

To further illuminate this notion of competency development across genres and styles, consider what one might program to allow each voice part the chance to develop skills related to lyrical phrasing. Opportunities to develop these facilities are infrequent for alto and bass voices due to the supportive role these parts play in many choral textures. Singers could study the vocal chamber music of Argentinian composer Carlos Guastavino (e.g., *Indianas*), the quartets of Johannes Brahms (e.g., *O schöne Nacht*, Op. 92, No. 1), and select choral settings of Morten Lauridsen (e.g., *Sure on this shining night* or *Dirait-on*) for this pedagogical purpose. Also, consider the broad possibilities of articulation studies when using as source material a late Baroque work, a spiritual (the settings of William Dawson are excellent for this purpose), and a Gospel setting. We should strive to meet our singers' development goals through the broadest scope of musical content.

Inclusive pedagogy from the viewpoint of repertoire selection also requires one to approach the preparation of non-Western choral literature with the same critical analysis and intentionality as works from the European tradition. When programming such works, we must diligently investigate the music's use and its meaning in the cultural context from which it originates. We must understand proper performance practice, study the language for lyric diction proficiency, and be prepared to teach musical skills and tonal concepts different from those present in and espoused by Eurocentric choral literature. I recently programmed a traditional *Xhosa* song with an ensemble I conduct. I spent a significant amount of time with a native speaker learning the nuance of the language, particularly the click consonants, to address diction issues with the ensemble adequately. With much non-Western choral literature, published resources to inform practice may be limited. However, we must find knowledgeable people and reliable sources to perform these works authentically and with integrity.

Finally, as we broaden the scope of literature studied and performed with our ensembles, we must strive to find balance with respect to musical styles *and* cultural perspectives. Performative objectives are only a fraction of a comprehensive musical education. Through literature study, we must also provide opportunities for singers to learn about the musical heritage of various cultures and ethnicities in honest, authentic, and meaningful ways. The music of a culture is representative of its history, beliefs, and values. This auditory legacy is expressed through a variety of musical idioms. Our educational goals should seek to find commonalities between the musical expressions of various cultures while also acknowledging each culture's unique lived experiences and its distinctive musical contributions. A genuinely diverse choral curriculum highlights these unique histories and musical attributes without one culture dominating the narrative. The many singing cultures around the world and their contributions are essential threads in the tapestry of human existence, both past and present; thus, their musical heritage should be studied, heard, and celebrated in the global choral community.

Suggested Repertoire Resources

As choral professionals committed to providing comprehensive, appropriately sequenced, and inclusive musical content to our singers, we should strive to continually build our knowledge of quality literature, both historical and contemporary, that serves our pedagogical and aesthetic goals. Several resources are available to facilitate finding literature that is appropriate for adolescent voices. State music associations have curated repertoire lists containing compositions of vetted quality that are appropriate for secondary-level ensembles. These lists are often organized by voicing and provide indications of the relative difficulty of each work.

The most comprehensive of these are the music lists published by the University Interscholastic League (Texas), the Florida Vocal Association, and the Indiana State School Music Association. Jim Watson's article detailing the choral works appearing most frequently across twenty state music lists is helpful with becoming acquainted with benchmark composers and their works.[8] Furthermore, a list of publications that are valuable resources in discovering quality literature for a variety of voicings and levels of difficulty is detailed below.

Abrahams, Frank and Paul D. Head. *Teaching Music through Performance in Middle School Choir* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011).

Anderson, Linda A. *The Foundation of Artistry: An Annotated Bibliography of Distinctive Choral Literature for High School Mixed Choirs* (Lawton, OK: American Choral Directors Association, 2002).

Apfelstadt, Hilary and Jo-Michael Scheibe, eds. *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir,* Vol. 5. (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2019).

Barnum, Terry J. *Strategies for Teaching Junior High & Middle School Male Voices.* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Music Press, 2001).

Buchanan, Heather J. and Matthew W. Mehaffey, eds. *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir,* Vol. 1 (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005).

Buchanan, Heather J. and Matthew W. Mehaffey, eds. *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir,* Vol. 2 (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2007).

Buchanan, Heather J. and Matthew W. Mehaffey, eds. *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir,* Vol. 3 (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2011).

Gackle, Lynne. *Finding Ophelia's Voice, Opening Ophelia's Heart: Nurturing the Adolescent Female Voice* (Dayton, OH: Heritage Music Press, 2011).

Scheibe, Jo-Michael, ed. *Teaching Music through Performance in Choir,* Vol. 4 (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2017).

Spurgeon, Debra, ed. *Conducting Women's Choirs: Strategies for Success* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012).

Tiemstra, Suzanne S. *The Choral Music of Latin America: A Guide to Compositions and Research* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1992).

Trott, Donald L., ed. *Conducting Men's Choirs* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2020).

White, Evelyn D. *Choral Music by African American Composers: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography, Second Edition* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996). CJ

NOTES

[1] Examples include: John W. Richmond, "Selecting Choral Repertoire as Pre-Curriculum: 'Planned Serendipity,'" *Choral Journal* 30, no. 10 (1990): 23-30; David L. Brunner, "Choral Repertoire: A Director's Checklist," *Music Educators Journal* 79, no. 1 (1992): 29-32, doi: 10.2307/3398573; Brandon L. Dean, "A repertoire selection rubric for preservice and beginning choral conductors based on criteria of aesthetic and pedagogical merit" (DMA diss, University of Cincinnati, 2011), ProQuest (3475145); Stephen Sieck, *Teaching with Respect: Inclusive Pedagogy for Choral Directors* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2017).

[2] Guy W. Forbes, "The Repertoire Selection Practices of High School Choral Directors," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 49, no. 2 (2001): 102-121, doi: 10.2307/3345863; Rebecca R. Reames, "High School Choral Directors' Description of Appropriate Literature for Beginning High School Choirs," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 49, no. 2 (2001): 122-135, doi: 10.2307/3345864.

[3] Robert J. Ward and Leila Heil, "Repertoire at ACDA National Conferences: 1960-2017" *Choral Journal* 57, no. 10 (2017): 36-42.

[4] Dennis Schrock, "Choral Repertoire as Pedagogy: Western Art Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199373369.013.17.

[5] Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education: A Landmark Education Theory, Second Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

[6] Barbara A. Brinson and Steven M. Demorest, *Choral Music: Methods and Materials, Second Edition* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer, 2014): 74.

[7] Daniel Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009).

[8] Jim Watson, "Most Recommended Choral Music from 20 State Music Lists" *Choral Journal* 58, no. 2 (2017): 8-23.

Julius Herford Prize

2019

**Congratulations to Lindsay Pope
Winner of the 2019 Julius Herford Dissertation Prize for
"Beyond the Binary: The Intersection of Gender and Cross-Cultural Identity
in Reena Esmail's Life and Choral Works"**

Committee members' comments include:

"This is a remarkable story, so needed by musicians and all of society…. I loved this paper and want to know Esmail's music. Exceedingly well-done. Wildly enthusiastic kudos to author and composer alike….. well executed, using very current methodology and theory…. Brilliant treatment of a most complex situation and a great musical talent, poetically written. The music is powerful, and the author's analysis and discussion of each work was mesmerizing… the confluence of cultures is a vital message to be heard today."

Prize Description Each year the Julius Herford Prize Subcommittee accepts nominations for the outstanding doctoral terminal research project in choral music. Projects are eligible if they comprise the principal research component of the degree requirements, whether the institution defines the project as a "dissertation," "document," "thesis," or "treatise."

Evaluation The submitted projects are evaluated entirely blind with regard to dissertator, assisting faculty, institution, and any other identifying material, by an unpaid panel of choral conductor-scholars.

The Award The winner will receive a $1,000 cash prize and a commemorative plaque. The prize will be presented at the upcoming national ACDA conference.

Lindsay Pope completed her doctorate at the University of North Texas and served as assistant conductor of the Dallas Symphony Chorus. Lindsay has directed the choral programs at Williams College and Mount Holyoke College. As Director of Choral Ensembles at Mount Holyoke, her ensembles participated in tours across the Northeast, New Orleans, and Ireland, released a commercial CD, and performed at ACDA's 2016 Eastern Division conference. Lindsay has led district choirs in New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. She also sings with Santa Fe Desert Chorale, True Concord Voices, and Handel + Haydn Society. Lindsay holds an MM from Westminster Choir College and a BA from Mount Holyoke. In addition to music, Lindsay loves creative writing, yoga, hiking with her dogs and husband, and eating good food.

PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAMMING PEDAGOGY

JAMES M. MEADERS

I s there ever a time that choral conductors are not thinking about programming? Whether perusing composer websites, combing through the publishers' stalls at a conference, chatting with colleagues, or attending reading sessions, the programming search is unending and can be daunting, invigorating, frustrating, and enlivening all at once. We are continually challenging ourselves to increase the breadth of our singers' experience—to find pieces that are age-appropriate, pedagogically sound and well-crafted, socially enlightening, and enjoyable to sing. We consider our audiences, acoustic environments, strength of sections within the ensemble, and overarching educational value. The task is always in front of us.

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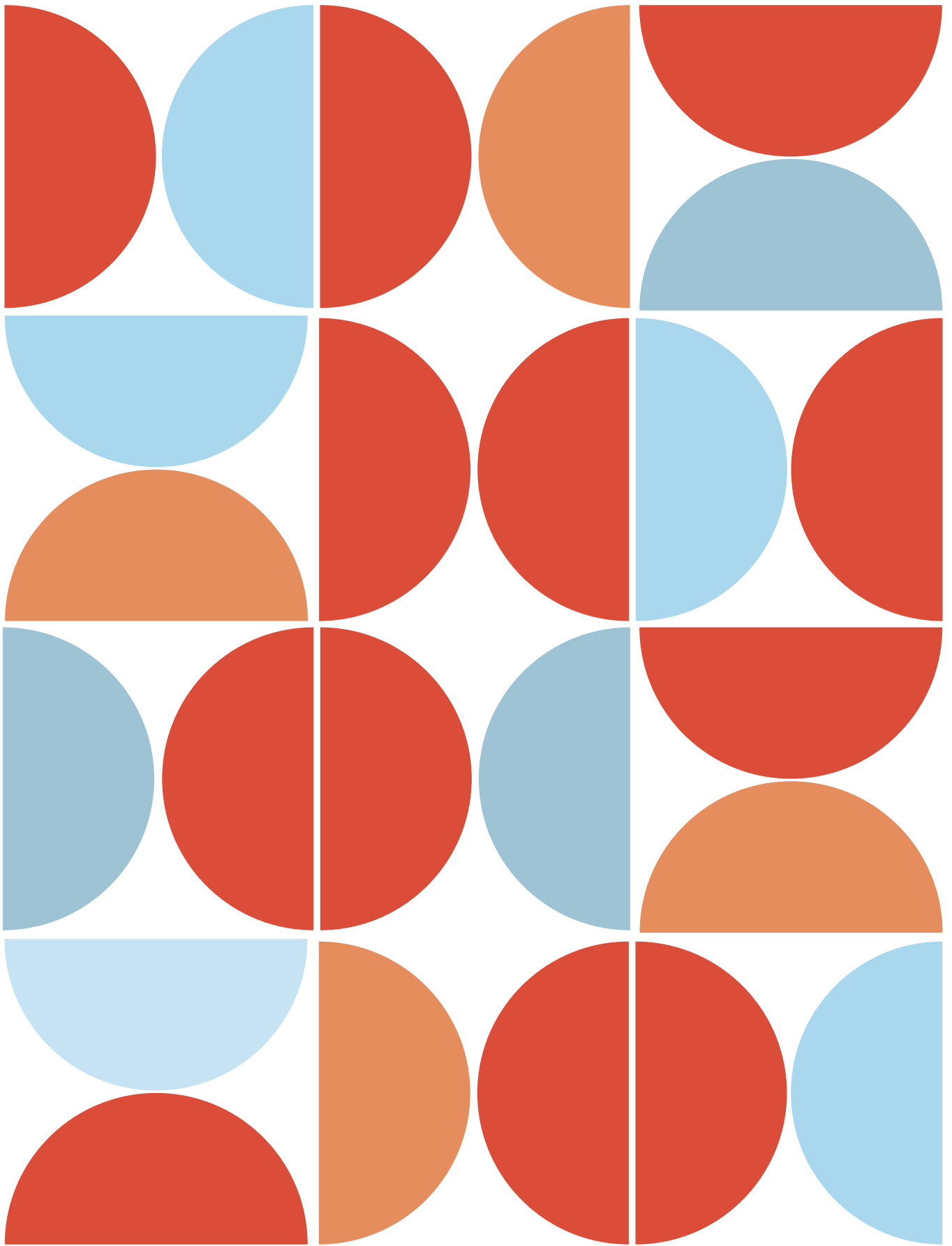
The following article contains perspectives on the pedagogy of programming from several colleagues across the country who represent varied regions of the United States and choose repertoire for a broad spectrum of performing ensembles—from young singers to professional, from church to community to university. Each interviewee received the same four questions to answer, and then each received three additional questions and were asked to choose only one to answer. Their responses were insightful and inspiring.

What is your process of designing a concert program, and what do you believe are the essential elements of an ideal program?

BOYD: I view programming much like a preacher prepares a sermon, a scholar researches for a lecture, or how a politician would approach preparing for a debate, and that is by choosing a subject or theme that is relatable, inspiring, and challenging for all who will experience the process (the singer) and product (the singers and audience). As a person who enjoys options and variety, I try to cover as many styles as possible when choosing literature, unless the program focuses on an upcoming significant historical anniversary or time period.

DUFFY: The lure of a strong, live choral concert arc is the siren song of the conductor's pandemic. Programming ideas came to me like a tease during quarantine, lingering promises of concerts to come. The ideal concert program launches the audience to a hidden world, filled with multi-layered meanings, chameleon tone colors, human urgency, and the beauty of new understanding.

One of the many things I learned from my teacher, Jo-Michael Scheibe, is how much the technical considerations of the jigsaw puzzle program pieces can dictate overall success. For example, opening with a melodic selection with long lines builds the choir's confidence and relaxation. Key relationships, and the way we navigate between them in our program order, strengthen the weave between works. My teacher, Nick Strimple, suggests avoiding strict adherence to a monolithic concert "theme" when it causes more constraints than creativity.

Concepts like "themes" are malleable: they can pres-ent in pairs or groups or cycles. One thematic idea or subject can lead to another, telling a story, or multiple stories, or just painting soundscapes before veering into a song with purpose or protest or promise. The concert program is not just for an audience, but for the choir, as well, which has journeyed through time to culminate the rehearsal arc. We create the program-world that we want to live and breathe with our ensemble. Our job as conductor-creators is to reveal that world, first to the choir, and then to the audience, in the most vibrant way possible.

FOSTER: I work to balance numerous pedagogical considerations with repertoire that will also inspire my students and listeners/audience and get them excited about our program. My ideal program would include songs from multiple eras and genres, using multiple languages, and including songs from non-western composers that use non-traditional techniques. I also try to order the concert with contrasting pieces that will keep the audience engaged. I give special consideration to the sets that open and close the concert. Lastly, I try to make sure there are no abrupt or dissonant key shifts from one selection to the next (I rarely organize the music for a concert in "date of origin order").

OWENS: Designing a concert program is a three-step process for me. First, I consider my choir's ability and limitations. Second, I consider my audience that will be hearing this concert. I choose differently for a TMEA performance than I do the fall concert at Martin High School. Third, I consider how I want to musically "stretch" my students.

RINSEMA: Designing a concert program is an endless pursuit of the "perfect" arc. Within that "macro arc," the repertoire creates ebbs and flows to help create an effective programmatic flow. I decide early on how I want the audience to be welcomed to the experience and how I want them to feel at the end of the experience, and use these two points to devise the macro of the program. I always want to engage the listener from the very first note. That can be accomplished with something big and boisterous, or close and intimate. It can be a procession or a solo voice, but it has to be something that earns their

attention from the very beginning.

Likewise, sometimes I want the listener to jump to their feet and other times leave in contemplation. So I usually decide on my opening and closing pieces of the concert and also of each half of the concert if there is an intermission. Once I have the "bookends" programmed, I take all of the elements that make up each individual piece into consideration (key, meter, tempo, rhythmic and harmonic complexity, text, language, style, genre), and I consider how these elements of each individual piece relate to all of the other works on the program and how it contributes to the overall flow and arc. I will often play around with the placement of each piece until it finds its "place." Sometimes this involves putting all of the octavos on the ground and moving them around.

WYERS: I enjoy working thematically. Choral music utilizing imaginative poetic texts is ideally positioned to tell stories from across the human experience. If I can also create a feeling of progression or "plot" throughout the program, all the better. Some themes make that easier than others. Over the years, some of my favorite concert titles have been "The Explorers Edge" (songs of exploration across the ages—choristers wore head lamps in complete blackness for part of the concert!), "Burning the Bridge" (music about building and breaking bridges in relationships, with some choreographed numbers), "Fur, Felt and Feather" (a concert exploring the trials and celebrations of American pioneers), and "The Unbreakable Mirror" (songs about water, including Dominic Argento's enigmatic *Walden Pond*).

I believe variety is essential but can be achieved in many ways—tempo, texture, key, language, country of origin, instrumental accompaniment/a cappella, as well as standing position for the chorus (on stage, in the audience, balcony, etc.) or use of lighting, narration, or surprise additions of recorded sounds in the hall. I have learned so much from other conductors who have taken risks with their programming and created fascinating, provocative program realizations.

Do you work with stylistic ratios in mind? In essence, music from the canon in relation to new music?

BOYD: The concert theme, choir's ability, and the overall goal of the concert always determine my choice in literature. More importantly, as a conductor-teacher, I believe it is important to program music of many time periods to show that contemporary writers have been influenced by the masters. Of course, I promise diversity in our literature, but I will be the first person to admit that it amazes me that composers could be as creative as they were without access to music resources such as Apple music or YouTube. I also feel that contemporary and living composers deserve to see their music performed. There is no greater reward than hearing your musical thoughts carried out by an orchestra, chamber group, choir, or soloist.

DUFFY: A "canon" is always a work in progress. The best choral news of 2020, in my opinion, is that the Euro-centric, white-male-Christian-composer-based canon long imposed on us is bursting open, making space for composers and musics past and present that have been considered outliers—or, more bluntly, *outcasts*—from the canon. This expansion has been developing for some time, gingerly, tactfully, and slowly. The movement for racial equity in 2020 ripped the band-aid off the process and gave the choral community the ignition we needed to do the job now. Time will tell how well we reinvent the canon today—which musics we will include; which we will reclaim from the past; and which we will inadvertently exclude, leaving a treasure for a future advocate.

In terms of programming works from the aforementioned historic canon, I like to prioritize connections, contrasts, and access points. For example, I introduced the University of Montana Chamber Chorale to Marques Garrett's setting of "Done Made My Vow to the Lord" together with Arcadelt's *Il bianco e dolce cigno* to discuss the concept of code switching and hidden messages. We addressed how the performers of the Renaissance madrigal luxuriated in double entendre for sport—or rather, for art—whereas the original creators of the Negro Spiritual obfuscated the meaning, the oppression, the secrets, and the interpretations under the surface of the songs by absolute necessity. Finding a way into the music—establishing a degree of awareness of the position of the original artists, composers, creators, and performers—builds our choristers' empathic librar-

ies. It enables them to approach the next piece with a critical mind and open heart.

FOSTER: I am a strong advocate of performing new works by living composers. The collaboration between my students and the composer can be of immense pedagogic value; plus, it is great for PR and recruitment of new singers. My normal ratio is probably 70-80% works from the canon and 20-30% new works.

RINSEMA: Because championing new works and commissioning works has been an important part of Kantorei's history, and because I, too, am committed to creating new art, much of our repertoire is contemporary. But I am always looking to bring to the singers and our audiences some of the canons in the choral repertoire. It's been fun to program some staples of the choral repertoire that Kantorei hasn't performed in the past because of their focus on new music. I've been able to introduce them to some of the music of Brahms, Mendelssohn, Britten, Hindemith, as well as some earlier music by Josquin, Schütz, Tallis, Palestrina, Byrd, etc. they'd never performed previously, so that has been a nice surprise. If you looked at a full season, I would say that probably a quarter of my annual programming has been devoted to the canon/major composers.

WYERS: I think so. It's fair to say that conductors today are challenged to reflect the issues of our time, especially offering support to living composers, while also finding ways to advocate for canonic works of the past that are still relevant to modern audiences. There was a trend awhile back where all pieces performed at conferences seemed to be new, and yet we don't want to swing too far on the other side of the pendulum and only "preserve museum music" rather than "curate new music."

In that way, a stylistic ratio approach could be useful at least some of the time. Most importantly, committing to regularly program women composers, BIPOC composers, and celebrating indigenous musics from across the globe is essential to moving our choral culture forward into the next decades.

Have you ever made a programming mistake? If so, how did you deal with it? Are there pitfalls to which we should all be more attentive, and do you have any biases that you embrace or avoid as you make program decisions?

BOYD: One of my biggest mistakes was programming a concert titled, "O, for a Thousand Tongues," of twelve pieces in twelve different languages. You can only imagine how that went—not so well! I did not estimate the time it would take to teach the text and meaning. It dawned on me at the dress rehearsal that the singers learned the texts' pronunciation but had no emotional connection to its meaning or purpose. From experience, I now create a chart to show the level of difficulty in all the components or concepts to learning a piece that we sometimes think aren't as important (i.e., understanding translation, historical relevance, meaning behind the physical movement, etc.) to help guide my teaching process and the message I hope to pass along to those who attend the performance.

DUFFY: I am a people pleaser, which gets me into trouble, especially when I say, "yes," to extra things that overload the choir. Many of my mistakes involve over-programming or selecting repertoire that is too difficult or time-consuming for the choir. These decisions entangle the singers in the resulting stress of trying to deliver our best product on less-than-ideal repertoire under pressure-cooker circumstances. No one enjoys that sort of choral experience. One gift of directing modified in-person choirs during COVID-19 is the release from the spinning wheel of urgency to produce and program too much music for too many projects. Rehearsals become glorious sanctuaries from expectation. It's jaw-dropping to see how much we can accomplish when the only vehicle driving our intensity is our imagination.

FOSTER: My usual programming mistake is to over-program or plan for too much music. As we near the final stretch before our annual spring break choir tour, I inevitably have to remove selections from the program. Because my Chamber Singers perform so frequently during the year for a variety of events that

require unique repertoire, we end up with a folder that is way too fat. So, I have to make decisions about what should stay and what should go—truly one of my least favorite disciplines.

If I have an unhealthy bias, it would probably be to lean more toward the challenging repertoire and away from easier rep. I think my singers could benefit from easier rep that would enhance their phrasing, intonation, ensemble blend, etc. Besides, in a program that is 1.5 hours in length, having some music that gives the voice a rest can be helpful. I have definitely been guilty of creating a program that is taxing on the voice, if not also the listener.

OWENS: If I realize in the early stages of teaching a piece that I have made a mistake, I have the students return it and change the piece. If it takes me longer to realize that the mistake has been made by me (which most are) then I just deal with it and go forward. Example: One of the pieces I chose for my 2008 TMEA Women's Choir program was not working. Programs were printed, we had rehearsed it, and it was three weeks until performance. A colleague came to listen to the choir and literally said, "Don't do that piece." My response was, "It's already in the program." His response, "People will remember a bad performance much longer than if the selection was in the program and not done."

RINSEMA: I'd like to think that I've caught my programming mistakes prior to standing on the stage! Yes, I would say that some of my mistakes have been in over programming concerts, especially with thematic programs. When I've worked to develop a good theme, I find that there seems to be a never-ending flow of repertoire, and just when I think the program has settled, I come across something new I'd like to add. Unfortunately, it is often only when we get into rehearsing the repertoire that I realize there is far too much music. I try to aim for a little less than sixty minutes of music. Most of the time I program in an intermission, but there have been times that we have done the hour without pause. I find that fifty-six minutes of music is about the perfect length for the audience and the performers alike.

I have also been known to choose too much slow, pretty music. I don't think I'm the only one out there

who has made this mistake. This should be in the chapter "How to keep your sopranos happy." DON'T program too much slow, pretty music especially high in the tessitura. In our dress rehearsals, I try to get through as much of the repertoire in concert order as possible. Sometimes it has only been in the dress rehearsals that I have realized my mistakes.

I have changed concert order even after going to print if I feel it is necessary to preserve the integrity of the program or to be conscientious to the singers. Sometimes you just don't know for sure until you are close to show time. I've not looked back on changes I've made with regret.

WYERS: In my first year of a tenure track position, I can still remember a painfully long holiday choral concert, which included lengthy sets of music from many choirs—as well as narration interspersed throughout—and an eleven-minute finale. My heart was in the right place, but I was programming with too much passion and too little practicality. My first big college job, and I was determined to conduct every piece that I had ever loved! My dear colleagues from the voice department stuck it out for the whole show, and then kindly pulled me aside and suggested that I pre-plan timings for concerts in the future. I am a big believer now in "leaving the audience wanting more." Even as a committed concert goer, I get squirmy in my seat after a couple of hours.

Everyone probably has unique style they prefer, and therefore unique pitfalls to avoid. I do believe we must try harder to notice that our choral music is telling a story, even if it's just a simple folksong arrangement or a motet from the sixteenth century. We must ask ourselves sincerely with every piece: are these stories we need to hear now? We must also look for the neglected stories that are too often left off of programs altogether. In the United States today, we are lucky to have many earnest, insightful composers looking closely at our society and offering works that tackle some of the hardest stories head-on, whether they be about gun violence, climate change, youth suicide, homelessness, or other social justice issues. My favorite recent books that discuss programming are Tim Sharp's *Relevance in the Choral Art* and Stephen Sieck's *Teaching with Respect.*

How important is the listener in your program creation process? How does your approach/methodology to programming intentionally (or not) teach or inform the singers and listeners?

BOYD: The listener is absolutely important in creating a concert program. At some point in your concert, the audience should experience the impact of music, especially in a live performance. Why not? If people want to hear "canned" music, they could easily say, "Hey, Alexa (or Siri), play some music," without lifting a finger. Instead, they have come to hear from young, brilliant, and talented students who have been preparing a special presentation for ten to twelve weeks for a live audience, which in my view, should present a living experience. I think it is important that audiences experience something familiar, which could be a new arrangement of a standard tune or a choral arrangement of a contemporary popular song. In essence, I want audiences to walk away from the concert humming a tune, to be spiritually moved by the text, or inspired to mimic a "choralography" movement. Music should move people from one space to another, and this can be done if we are intentional about the pieces we choose to perform.

DUFFY: Conductors present repertoire to two audiences: the ensemble and the concert-going public, who either watches in person or in one of a variety of broadcast formats. Another of my biggest mistakes has always been in leaving the primary audience—the choir—out of the enrichment and education elements that I painstakingly package in slick sentences for concert delivery. My performance presentation usually involves a combination of incidental and musical jokes (I swear I would have slayed in stand-up) and contextual/historical/interpersonal/social-action-related lecture blasts about the repertoire in bite-sized "edutainment" chunks. Countless times, singers have approached me after a performance to say how much they learned about the repertoire *during the concert,* thus exposing my neglect of these concerns throughout the rehearsal process. The reduction in volume of repertoire that I can produce with modified choirs during this pandemic period has inspired me to spend more "rehearsal" time on critical elements such as: textual interpretation; relevance of the repertoire in the context of societal equity, particularly in terms of race, but pertinent to all areas of historic and contemporary persecution; study of form and harmony; and contextualization of the music in the life of the composer, its geographical placement, its genre, and its relevance to today's ensemble.

FOSTER: The consideration of the listener in choosing a program is of immeasurable importance. I get to see my choir every day for seventy minutes per day (pre-Covid 19). I will only be able to be in front of the audience for the length of the concert. So, considering the listener's experience of and ability to comprehend the music and text is of paramount importance. Through the years I have adapted my concert programs to include the texts of every song, not just a translation of the foreign language rep. Additionally, I will usually give a short talk about each set before we sing it, to help amplify for the listener what they are about to hear and to draw special attention to specific texts or unique/unusual musical or vocal elements. One danger is to talk too much in the middle of a concert, but the other danger is to talk too little. Generally, I find audiences appreciative of the explanations and narratives and that it enhances their experience of the concert.

RINSEMA: For us, the audience/listener is of major importance. Because we are a publicly funded entity, we can't just perform music that is only fulfilling for the artists (me included); it has to appeal to the general public. This may be different in the academic or professional choir settings, but it is necessary in our situation. This does not cheapen or water down what I program, but I certainly must take the audiences' perspective into consideration when premiering a new commission or bringing a challenging piece to them for the first time. Our audiences in Denver are quite sophisticated, and much of that is because of the adventurous programming that Kantorei has done over the years. But they still appreciate some simpler music sung extremely well.

Likewise, because I work with volunteers, every single piece I program cannot be a technically challenging piece. There needs to be balance in the programming for the singers too. They are giving up their talent, time, and energy, and I certainly can't do what I do with-

out them, so their input is welcomed and appreciated. Sometimes I have to be reminded that Kantorei cannot be a priority for them at all times. I have to have their "buy in" as well, and if I am only programming difficult music, or not taking the singers' feedback and ideas into my programming consideration, they will not feel a connection to the music and ultimately the audience will know.

I think this is one of the main reasons the choral art form has (or should have) much more appeal to the general population than some of the other classical art-forms. Within a sixty-minute program, the listener can be exposed to such a wide variety of repertoire. Rarely (with Kantorei) are our audiences listening to the same genre, style, colors, texture, language, tempi, for more than five or so minutes. If you don't like a piece of music, just wait and you'll probably like the next one! This gives us as programmers so much freedom to explore the ever-growing repertoire while finding ways to make it fit with our programming. I see some orchestras experimenting with this concept more and more—pairing pieces in the canon with new commissions and playing movements of symphonies instead of entire works. Modern dance probably is most similar to the choral genre when it comes to programming.

WYERS: If I am honest, as a college professor, the first "listeners" I consider are always my students. The audience becomes afterthought, since I hope and assume they are somehow connected to the performers. The music I love reflects how I feel about my students—they inspire me, provoke emotion in my work, stimulate my imagination, and bring rich contrasts of background and perspectives. Recently, I have made a pledge to choose music that always reflects some part of my direct choral community. Often, I will consider students' place of origin and program works that allow us to explore their "home base" (examples include China, Sweden, Russia, and Latin America).

Sometimes I'm driven by an issue that I know deeply impacts my students, and we'll program a concert around it (such as our recent benefit concert for the Matthew Shepard Foundation). I know many of my students are non-music majors and enjoy the vitality of a fast-paced, pop-infused piece such as *Pakkanen* (from

the phenomenal Finnish group Rajaton). Other times, my colleagues and I will tackle a large work, but put it in modern context (Verdi's *Defiant Requiem*, Britten *War Requiem*). Part of programming intentionally is telling a story in a new way—that's where relevance kicks in, even with older music.

What is the best advice you would offer less-experienced conductors about programming for their ensembles?

BOYD: My best advice to any less-experienced conductor is not to be afraid of foreign languages. If you fear or feel unprepared to teach a language, do as many of us do in fitness: find a language trainer or coach to help you and your students reach success. Also, keep in mind that music learning and language learning both rely on the ability to detect differences in pitch, meter, rhythm, phrasing, interpretation, tonal memory, and more. As I tell my students, conquer all fear with preparation and resilience.

DUFFY: Keep looking under rocks. Find more that's new, or new to you. I need to remind myself of this advice every day, because once we become complacent in the repertoire we know, we become irrelevant, regardless of age or stage in our careers. I have seen the predisposition of complacency in surprising places in the context of my work in promoting Jewish choral literature to the American secular choral community. Conductors eager to diversify their repertoire reject opportunities to consider gems of Jewish composition that have been excluded from the historic canon and locked away from all but the few dedicated Jewish-literature ensembles. Why the reluctance to explore this rich, varied, underrepresented, and mostly insular tradition? I have heard various responses, many of them variations on a theme of "I already know a lot of Jewish repertoire, and I program it for Chanukah"—a position that is indefensible considering that musicologists and ethnomusicologists continue to uncover "new" works all the time, that Chanukah is often reduced to caricature in holiday music concerts, and that the vast majority of repertoire is unknown outside Jewish art music circles.

Whenever I find myself hesitant to consider pro-

gramming something unfamiliar, I interrogate my process to find out why. Is it lack of confidence in the language? Fear that I won't present it in the right context or honor the origins of the music? Is it about me? Am I considering the best thing for the ensemble? And here's the most important, and difficult, question: do I harbor an underlying prejudice that influences my rejection of this music? My advice to new conductors—and to myself—is this: if the answer to that last question is in any way a "yes," do everything you can to immerse yourself in the music and eradicate that attitude. Our choral world is in the performing arts, and yet true allyship is not performative. To reconcile this discrepancy, our programming process must avoid performance affectation and embrace equity.

FOSTER: My best advice for less-experienced conductors about programming is to have high expectations of your ensembles and to couple that with the necessary strategies to ensure their success. Challenge yourself to choose repertoire that frightens you. Lean toward the dissonance, not away! Dig deep into the score and create strategies for how you are going to equip your ensemble to be successful. Do not be afraid to try rehearsal pedagogies that are outside the parameters of your own choral experiences. Cultivate an atmosphere within your ensemble that derives pleasure from the rehearsal process and gets excited about stupidly difficult pieces. Feel comfortable expressing to your ensemble your excitement *and* fear about approaching a particular piece of music. Let them know that you are working just as hard (if not harder) than they are, and that you are in this together. You *will* nail this piece, but that success will come through hard work and solid pedagogy. If they want to be the best choral program in the area, then they're going to have to work harder than everyone else, and that means not shying away from challenging repertoire.

OWENS: Know your choir! Don't over-program, and don't program a piece just because you like it. You must match the repertoire with the ability of your singers. The most common mistake that I see each year in new teachers is the selection of repertoire that is beyond a choir's capability.

WYERS: Less—in terms of length, difficulty, and divisi—is often more. Have fun with your programming. Let it be an ongoing process throughout the year. Have a constant curiosity about what is working and what needs to be put back on the shelf for another year. As your students sense your confidence with the process, they will be more inquisitive, too, and less "locked into" what they "like and don't like." Bring in "culture bearers" to team teach a few rehearsals if you are timid about programming music from outside the Western European canon.

Usually the music you sang while a music ed major in college might not be the first thing to program with a high school or middle school ensemble. Learn some basic arranging skills (William Ades *Choral Arranging* is a classic) so you can be flexible and work with the singers in front of you, instead of trying to figure out how to "fit them into the music." Visit composer websites and CPDL/IMSLP as often as you search commercial publishing websites. There are so many "hidden gems" that can emerge with some extra detective work. Finally, love and comfort your accompanist, if you are lucky to have one. They often have a lot of experience accompanying other choirs and can offer some fantastic ideas for works that are specific to the needs of your chorus.

What do you see as primary challenges to programming?

RINSEMA: A major challenge for me programming in the future is the plethora of great music that is at our fingertips. There are so many people composing these days, and access to their music is overwhelming. No longer are we (corporately) reliant on publishers sending out/recommending music, but so many composers are self-publishing (and promoting), that there just isn't enough time in the day to consider everything that ends up in my inbox. I will say that I probably spend more time listening to choral music than ever before (frequently in my car!), so if you want to get my attention as a programmer, send me a good audio file in a portable format that I can listen to on the go! CJ

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1:30-2:30pm: Student Leadership in Choir Part 1 with Kelly Miller
4:30-5:30pm: S/A & T/B Workshops with Lynne Gackle & Anton Armstrong

Friday, March 19th, 2021
10:30-11:30am: An Hour with Eric Whitacre
1:30-2:30pm: Student Leadership in Choir Part 2 with Kelly Miller
4:30-5:30pm: Audition Preparation in High School, panel discussion
Preparing College Auditions, panel discussion

Saturday, March 20th, 2021
10:30-11:30am: Careers in Music, panel discussion
Managing Performance Anxiety with Ingela Onstad
1:30-2:30pm: Singing for Justice with Tesfa Wondemagegnehu
4:15-5:15pm: Inspiration Hour with The ACDA National Honor Choir Conductors

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COVID and the Choral Educator: Preparedness, Perceptions, Attitudes, and a Way Forward

SCOTT RIEKER AND IRENE APANOVITCH-LEITES
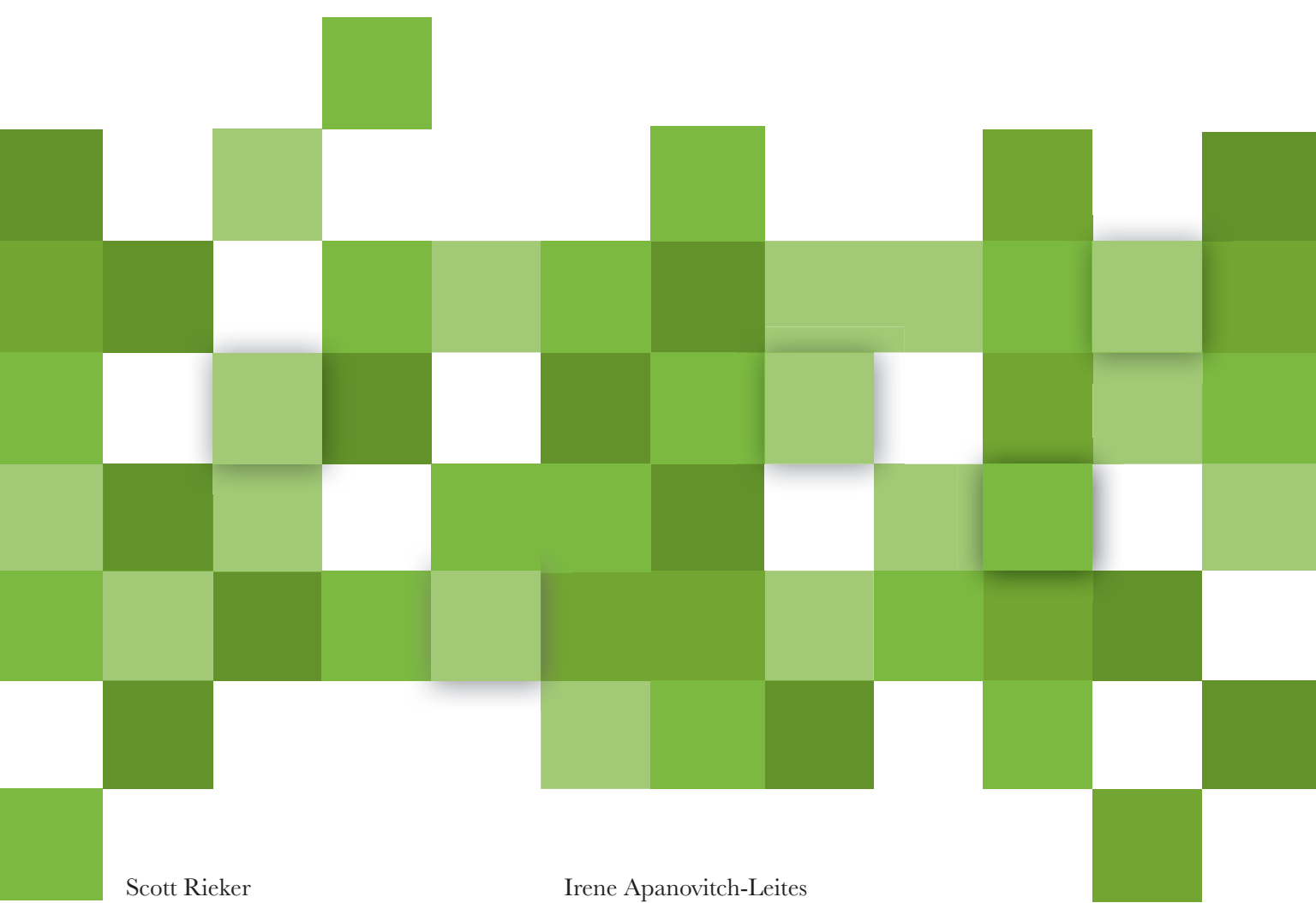
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Until recently, integrating technology into choral education has been—at best—supplemental to day-to-day instruction. Due to the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in the spring semester of 2020, however, choral education had to move from its traditional, in-person modality, to a form of information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled distance learning. To fully understand the impact of moving from in-person to online instruction in a choral setting, we must consider teachers' feelings of preparedness before the pandemic, the adaptations teachers made during the pandemic, and any shifts in perceptions and attitude regarding their experience. Using the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK, later TPACK) framework for professional development as a theoretical lens, this mixed-methods study aimed to answer the following research questions:

(1) Given the sudden shift to online learning in the spring semester of 2020, to what extent do choral music educators feel their past training has prepared them for teaching in a post-COVID-19 environment?

(2) In the online or blended instructional environment of COVID-19-impacted education, what skills, abilities, and resources did choral educators employ, and how were these acquired?

(3) How did the experience of instruction during COVID-19 shift the perceptions and attitudes of choral music educators?

(4) What conclusions can be drawn from the data about the professional development needed for choral music educators in online or blended instructional environments?

The purpose of this study was to provide a snapshot of choral educators' attitudes and perceptions at this moment in history, reveal the extent to which music educators feel their current training can serve them in a post-COVID teaching environment, and inform future professional development and teacher training programs on what is needed to prepare educators to adapt, should another pandemic occur.

Existing research on the intersection of technology and music education is already fairly extensive. Consequently, for this study, we limited our review of literature to three main topics: the roles technology plays and could play in choral music education, the impact of digital literacy—of both students and teachers—on effective implementation of technology, and on avenues to professional development that are authentic and effective for choral music educators. Obviously, inquiry into any sort of technology is fast-moving, and we hope our study will be a meaningful contribution. A list of the resources we drew upon is provided at the conclusion of the article.

STUDY OVERVIEW

To better understand the impact of moving from in-person to online instruction in a choral setting, our study sought to explore teachers' feelings of preparedness before the pandemic, the adaptations teachers made during the pandemic, and any shifts in perceptions and attitude regarding their experience through the use of a robust and wide-ranging survey. The first section of the survey explored choral educator perceptions of preparedness in thirty different technological areas, both before the pandemic and on the day participants completed the survey, by asking them to rate the amount of training they had on each item on a scale from 1–5, where

1 indicated "No Training At All" and 5 indicated "All the Training I Needed." Respondents were then asked to classify whether the majority of training for each item was formal or informal. For this study, formal training was considered training that a person received as part of their schooling or employment, and informal training was training that they sought out themselves, delivered in a non-traditional manner. The second section of the survey contained twenty-seven questions gauging choral educators' attitudes and perceptions on a variety of topics related to online education, and that section concluded with respondents being asked to select from a list the two or three items they felt were the biggest challenges to online choral instruction. The third section consisted of two open-ended questions, asking what skills/abilities/etc. they wished that they had gained for online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for whatever other information they thought we should know. Data derived from this section constituted the qualitative component of our mixed-methods study. The final section consisted of demographics.

We recruited via announcements in music-, choral-, and higher-ed-centric Facebook groups to which we belong, as well as announcements on our personal Facebook pages and personal emails, to create a hybrid convenience and snowball sample.[1] We analyzed the survey data using a combination of descriptive processes and statistical tests to determine trends and the statistical significance of findings.[2] These results are discussed in-depth below.

FINDINGS

In this study, 432 people began the survey, and 115 people completed it, for a 27% completion rate. The final sample was primarily female (77%), white (82%), predominantly working in suburban settings (43%), and employed at only one job (74%) in the realm of K-12 education (71%). It is important to acknowledge that this sample represents a very narrow population of choral educators. Open-ended comments made by survey respondents suggest that educators who work in schools with traditionally underserved demographic profiles faced even greater challenges. However, there were not enough respondents from these demographics to deliver

findings that were statistically significant (Table 1).

Changes in Preparedness

To investigate teachers' feelings of preparedness before and during the pandemic, participants were asked to rate the training they had received on thirty technologies and applications used for teaching choir online, and to indicate what type of training they have received in each: Formal, Informal, or No Training. Table 2 summarizes our findings, illustrating substantial changes in teachers' feelings of preparedness since the pandemic.

Interestingly, in this particular subset of data, adaptation of lessons for an online environment was a task that teachers rated as one that they are least prepared to do. Our qualitative data supported this finding, with teachers frequently commenting on a need for "step-by-step" instruction on how lead a rehearsal online. While teachers felt less prepared to adapt their lessons, they felt more comfortable adjusting learning objectives. As mentioned above, since investigating how educators acquired these skills was central to our inquiry, we created composite scores for each training category, which can be seen in Table 3 on page 50. The data illustrated that teachers' formal training increasing by a marginal 1.4% since the pandemic started. This supports our hypothesis that teachers were less likely to receive necessary formal training during the already taxing experience of transitioning to online learning. Meanwhile, teachers' informal training increased by 8.4%, indicating that teachers were proactively searching online to find solutions to the difficulties they encountered. One study participant shared:

> "I have completed over 200 hours of training videos, webinars, online slide share/PowerPoint presentations."

Many others stated that they have spent hours on YouTube and Google, learning how to create multi-track editing and virtual choir videos. Not surprisingly, as teachers sought out more informal training, the numbers in the No Training category decreased by 11.3%. This suggests that all of the study participants engaged in either formal or informal training to some extent. When

Table 1. Employment Categories

63 respondents reported 2 or more jobs.
37 of those reported 3 or more jobs

Category	Value
K-12	85
Community College	13
University	23
Professional Choir	23
Non-Professional Choir	37
Religious	43
Student	9
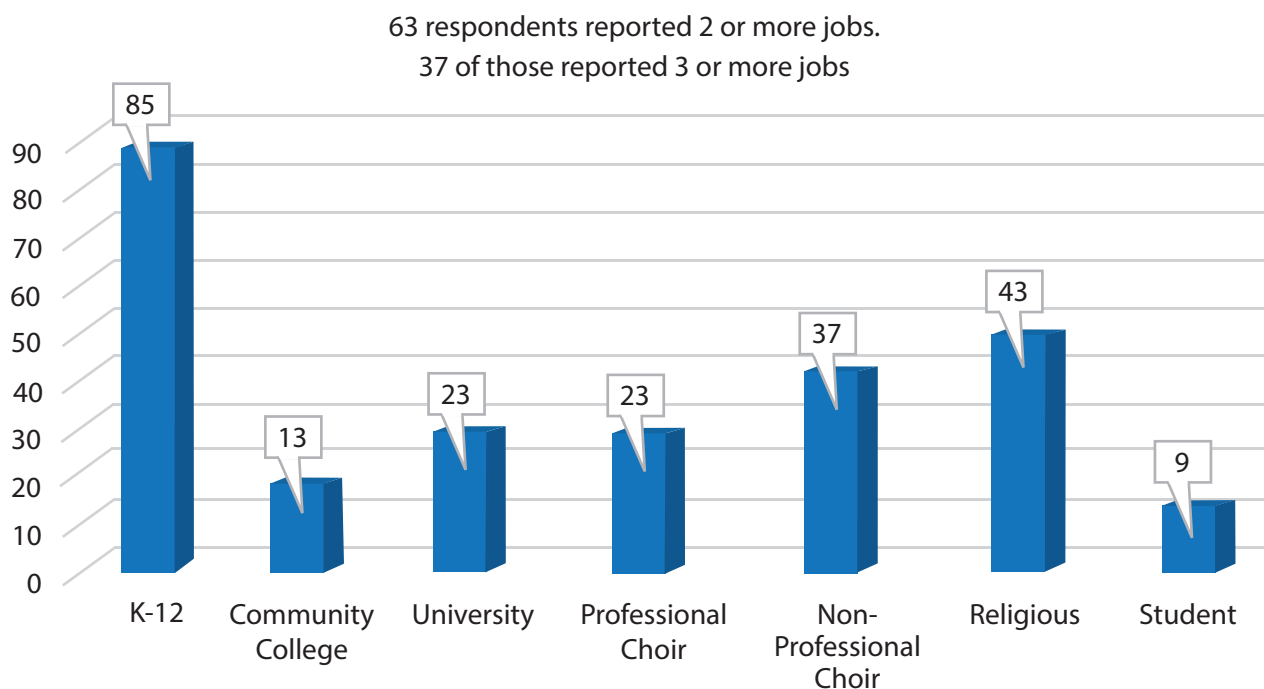
Table 2. Changes in Teacher Preparedness since COVID-19

Less Prepared

Category	Value
Copyright	-0.43
Adapting Lessons to Online Learning	-0.31
LMS (e.g. Blackboard)	-0.19
Purchasing Tech	-0.14
PowerPoint	-0.10
Graphic Design	-0.03
Learning Objectives	0.54
Video Conferencing	0.60
Virtual Choir	0.61
Messaging	0.71
Screen Sharing	0.80
IT Help Desk	1.06
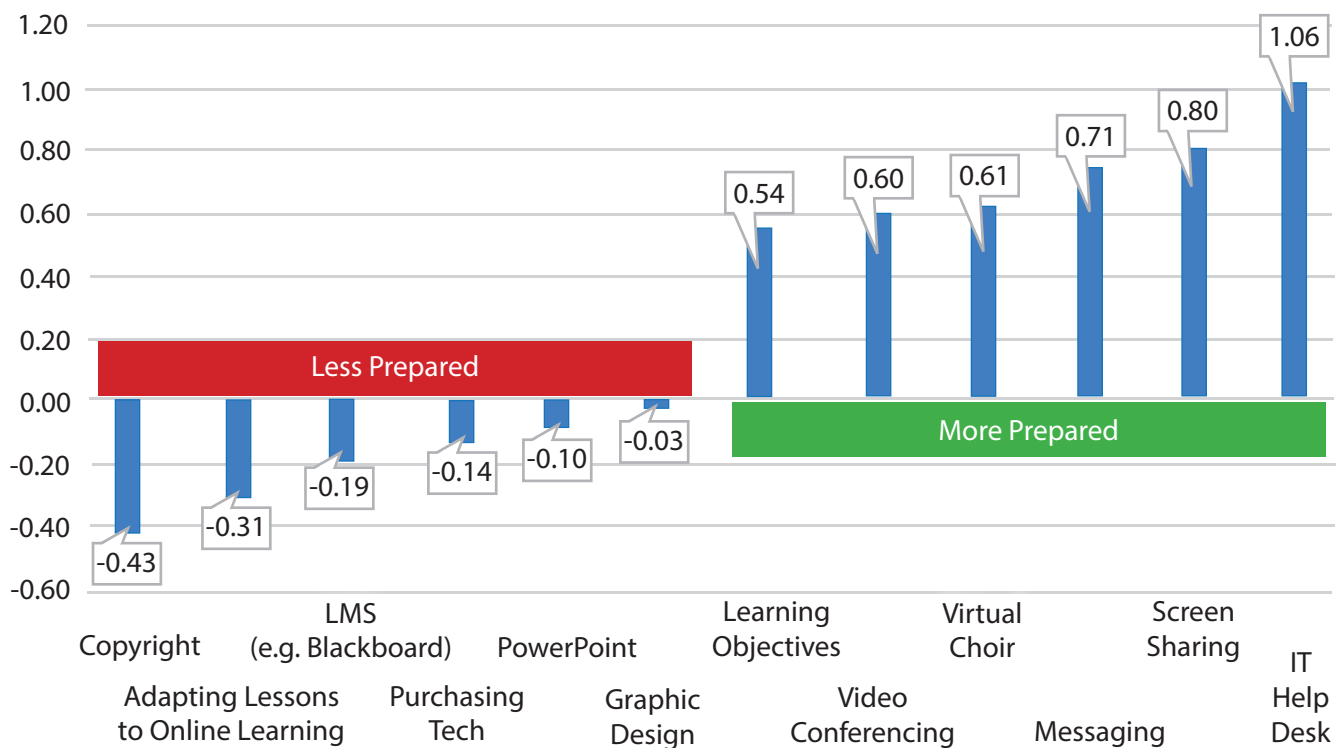
More Prepared

asked about their perceptions of preparedness, teachers' responses illustrated the lack of formal training and the predominance of informal training, as shown in Table 4 (page 50) and Table 5 (page 51).

Biggest Challenges

In order to better understand teachers' perceptions of their online teaching experience, we asked them to select what they thought were the biggest challenges with online instruction (see Table 6 on page 51). Unlike previous sections, this portion of the survey addressed the societal and environmental factors that affected online teaching. Teachers ranked lack of community, latency (the "lag" between when a person on one end creates a sound and the person on the other end hears and responds), and technological "haves" and "have nots" as the top three challenges in switching to online choral education. These three challenges account for more than half of people's overall perceptions of the biggest challenges. And, when Student Preparation and Faculty Training are added, these concerns constituted over three quarters of the perceived biggest challenges (see Table 7 on page 51).

Attitudes and Perceptions of Online Teaching

As an additional line of inquiry, we wanted to find out how the experience of instruction during COVID-19 shifted our study participants' perceptions and attitudes toward online choral education. Within our investigation into perceptions, we considered two avenues: teachers' perceptions of their students, and teachers' perceptions of their own experience and abilities in an online environment.

Teachers' Perception of Students

Teachers believed that their students had a negative
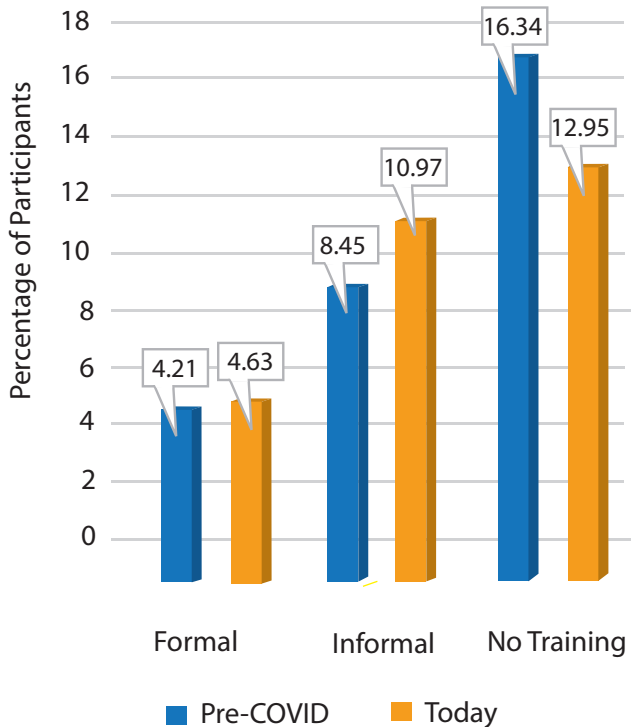
Table 3. Type of Training

Table 4. Percentage of Respondents Who Believe Their Formal Education Has Prepared Them to Teach Choir Online
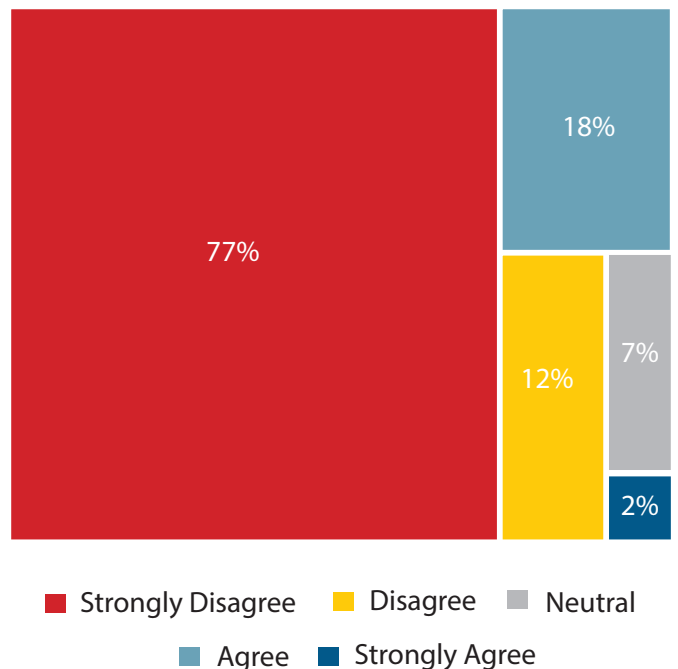
Table 5. Percentage of Respondents Who Believe They Have Learned Most of What They Know About Teaching Choir Online from Informal Sources (e.g., internet)
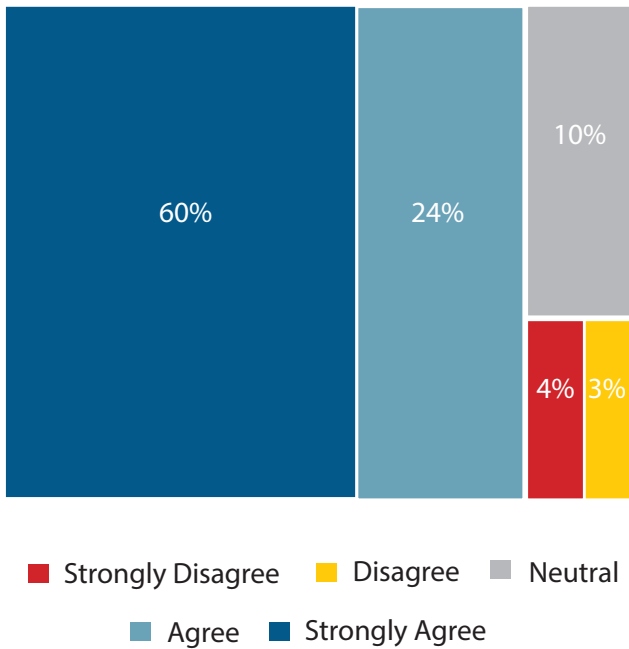

- ■ Strongly Disagree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Neutral
- ■ Agree
- ■ Strongly Agree

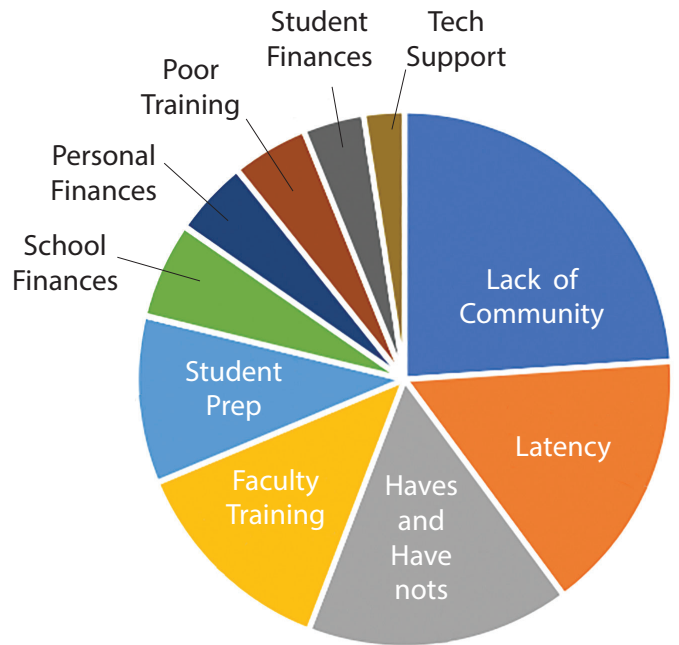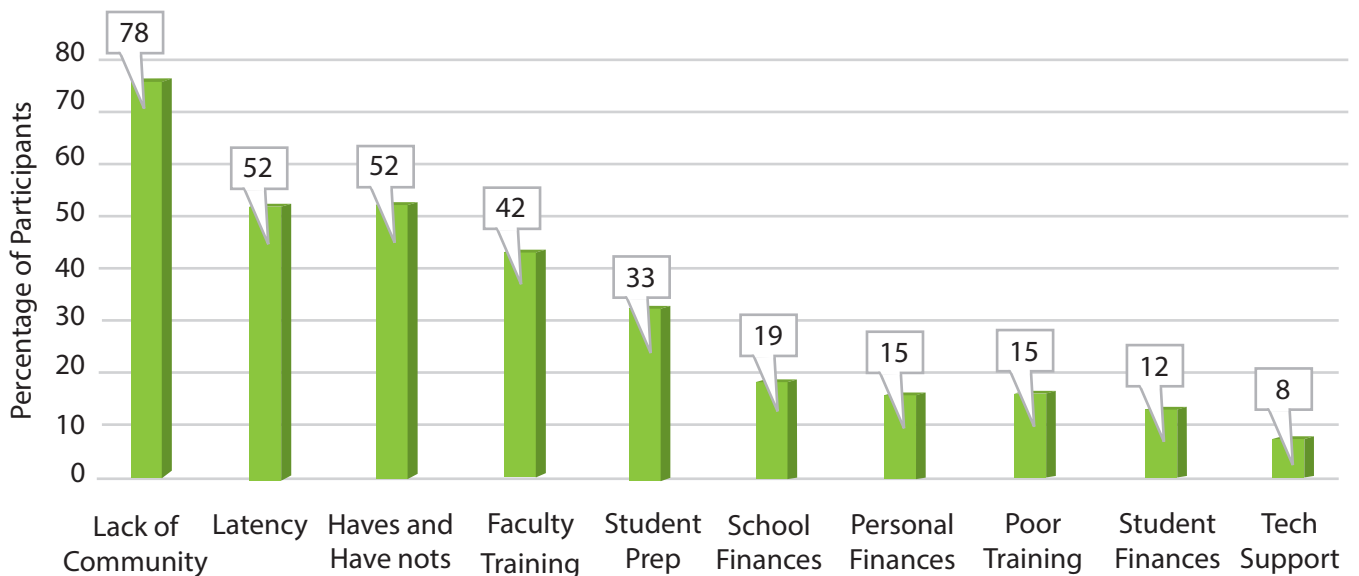**Table 7. Biggest Challenges to Online Choral Instruction**

**Table 6. Biggest Challenges to Online Choral Instruction**

experience (3.62 on a 1–5 scale) with online learning during the pandemic and were unsuccessful transitioning to online learning (see Table 8). While reflecting on conducting a virtual choir with students, one teacher shared:

> "I find that whole virtual choir experience to be extremely unsatisfactory. My choristers are not getting a proper session, and I am not getting the feedback from my choir that lets me know how well the session is going. I would rather not do virtual sessions."

Students who were not able to switch to online learning were 'left behind' in the learning process. One educator's remarks reflected the views of many:

> "My biggest challenge was the number of students who never enrolled in eLearning in order to participate. Approximately 20-30% of my students never participated in any of the eLearning opportunities for choir."

Table 8. Percentage of Respondents Who Believed Their Students Were Highly Successful in the Transition to Online Learning
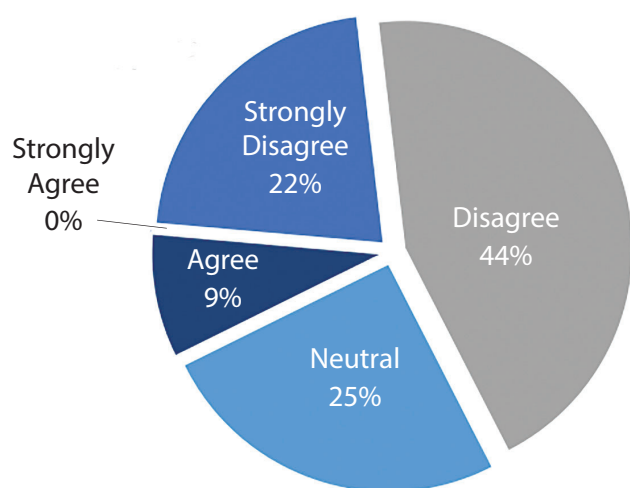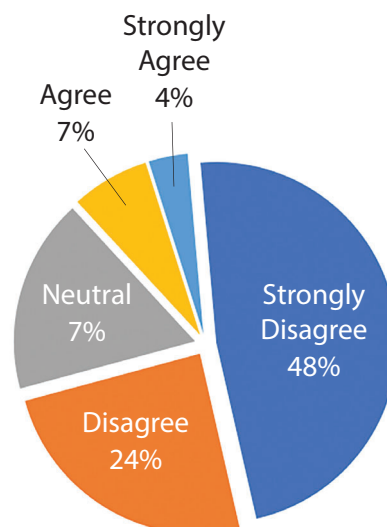

Teachers' Perceptions of Themselves

Similar to their perceptions of their students, teachers did not feel that they themselves were effective in the online environment (see Table 9). One key factor in predicting a teacher's perception of success teaching online was their confidence in using technology. We used the IBM SPSS software to perform a linear regression statistical test to understand the effect of confidence using technology on effectiveness teaching online. We found that teachers' sense of confidence with using technology had a direct link to their perceptions of themselves as effective instructors online (see Table 10 on page 53).[3]

We also wanted to uncover whether teachers felt connected to a support network of colleagues during the pandemic. In our inquiry, we used an ANOVA statistical test to determine if a respondent's employment category was correlated to their connection to a support network of colleagues.[4] Our analysis revealed a statistically significant difference for feeling connected to a support network of colleagues between different employment categories.[5] Interestingly, those employed in the Full Time, One Job category were the least likely to be able to access a support network of other colleagues (see Table 11 on page 53). This lack of connectedness would seem to have

Table 9. Percentage of Respondents Who Believed They Teach as Effectively Online as in Person

Table 10. Online Effectiveness and Confidence with Technology

Y-axis: Respondents Who Are Confident in Their Ability to Utilize Technology to Teach Choir and Singing Online (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

X-axis: Respondents Who Believe They Teach as Effectively Online as in Person (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Strongly Agree		1	3	4	2
Agree	3	6	6	2	1
Neutral	12	11	3	2	1
Disagree	23	8	5		
Strongly Disagree	15	2	2		

Table 11. Employment and Support Network

Y-axis: Prefer not to answer, Not Able to Work, Retired, Not Employed, Not Looking, Not Employed, Looking, Part-Time, Multiple Jobs, Part-Time, One Job, Full-Time, Multiple Jobs, Full-Time, One Job

X-axis: Respondents Who Feel Connected to a Support Network of Colleagues (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Prefer not to answer	1%				
Not Able to Work	1%	1%			
Retired					1%
Not Employed, Not Looking					1%
Not Employed, Looking		1%			
Part-Time, Multiple Jobs	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Part-Time, One Job			2%	4%	
Full-Time, Multiple Jobs	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Full-Time, One Job	6%	19%	23%	14%	10%

the potential for serious reduction in teacher effectiveness as online and hybrid instruction continues.

DISCUSSION

It seems to us like we are in the middle of an inflection point in choral music education. When we look back upon this moment, it will be important to have a record of what choral educators were thinking and feeling during this time, which we have provided above. When we look ahead from the midst of this pandemic, it is equally as important to suggest paths forward, so that all of this experience can be transformed into constructive activity. Hopefully by the time of printing, the promise we see today of widespread vaccination curbing COVID-19 will be coming to fruition. Nevertheless, experts believe that the reality of pandemic is unavoidable, and we consider our findings as applicable today as to any future pandemic.

Professional Development

One of the overwhelming themes that our participants reported was feeling unprepared for the shift to online choral education. We believe that one crucial way to address this is to provide quality professional development that supplies choral educators with what they need for them and their students to be successful. The TPACK model (Technology, Pedagogy, And Content Knowledge) proposed by Mishra and Koehler, among others, provides an effective lens to guide our discussion.

First, it is important to understand that TPACK focuses on the creation of individualized knowledge and understandings at the intersection of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (see Table 12). In this way, training in technology is authentically situated within the content and pedagogy of a given discipline, rather than being an "add-on." For this study, we assumed that working choral directors already possess the content knowledge required to do their job and would not need much professional development in this arena. However, our data shows that teachers perceive that they are somewhat unready to engage in online pedagogy. When we asked teachers how prepared they were for online pedagogy today, the average score was 2.06 on a 1–5

scale, though this perception was slightly higher (8%) than their self-perception before COVID-19, which was at 1.67. Similarly, teachers perceive themselves as somewhat unready to employ the technology necessary to engage in online choral music education. When we asked about their readiness surrounding technology, teachers averaged 2.09 on a 1–5 scale, which is only a 4% increase from their perception before the pandemic (1.91). Both of these findings indicate that the professional development choral music educators need will focus on concepts of online music education pedagogy and the implementation of technology in music education.

Regarding TPACK's consideration of "pedagogy," our data found that choral educators have profound concerns about the legitimacy of online choral education, and a self-perception that they are ineffective at adapting lessons for online teaching and creating learning objectives that are appropriate for an online learning modality. We believe that professional development must help

Table 12. The TPACK Model[6]
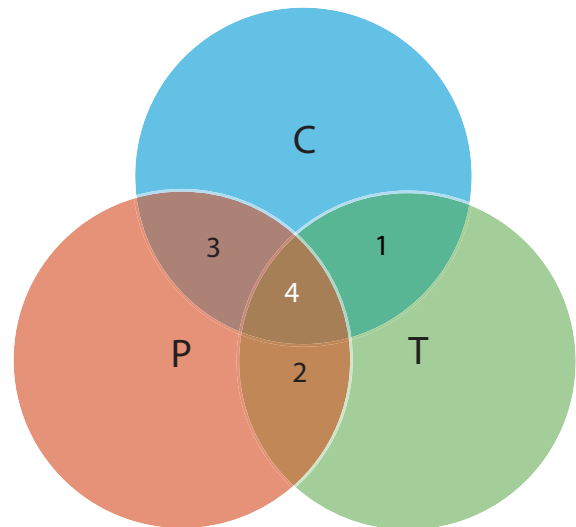
1. Technological Content Knowledge
2. Technological Pedagogical Knowledge
3. Pedagogical Content Knowledge
4. TPACK

teachers adapt lessons and learning objectives to online learning, and that it must do so by helping choral educators explore options for effective technology-enabled choral education. These could range from building a greater understanding of the benefits of asynchronous vs. synchronous teaching to the implementation of technologies that support online music-making.

With regard to professional development in the "technology" arena, we sought to uncover what choral educators were already doing well and what they were struggling with. Our data bears out prior research that music teachers primarily use technology for administrative tasks and largely do not use music-specific technology. However, our data also showed some increase in choral educators using other kinds of technology, such as Zoom, to teach music. Professional development that focuses on non-music-specific technologies, like Zoom, PowerPoint, or a learning management system (e.g. Canvas or Blackboard), should be offered to those educators who indicate a need for greater skills in these areas, but—in general—these seem to be strengths our community already possesses to some degree.

We believe that our data indicates that professional development should focus on using music-specific technologies in online music education, particularly selecting appropriate technology for a given learning objective. Other music-specific training could focus on skills such as learning audio mixing programs, creating resources for asynchronous learning, and understanding copyright issues online. Of particular concern among choral educators was the impact of latency on the online choral education experience. Prior research has shown that real-time online music-making is currently virtually impossible without substantial investments in specific technologies, and—even then—the results are less than satisfying. However, programs like Jamulus (http://llcon.sourceforge.net) show promise in addressing the issue of latency. Professional development in the authentic deployment of technology that minimizes latency for teachers and students should be priority.

Digital Literacy

The other pillar of implementing technology is digital literacy, which encompasses every aspect of effectively communicating, creating meaning and knowledge, understanding complex systems of graphics, videos, speech, gesture, text, and sound, and then combining these understandings in the multifaceted contexts of a well-rounded education. Our data showed that choral educators do not feel that their students are digitally literate (2.80 on a 1–5 scale) and are concerned about their own digital literacy. For teachers, a key distinction to make in professional development lies between teaching choir online (e.g. rehearsing) and some sort of public product (e.g. virtual choir). This strikes at that fundamental conundrum: how important is the performance in the overall picture of choral education. We will not enter this fracas, but rather share the results of our research.

Choral educators do not feel digitally literate, either in terms of teaching choir online or producing a public product. They feel that they are lacking the understanding of ways to authentically use technology in choral education, and they express real reservations about the role virtual choirs are playing and will play in the future. One study participant shared:

> "I firmly believe that the greatest strengths, positives, musical and learning outcomes of choral music education cannot (yet) be met by available technologies. I think many people are settling for 'positive outcomes,' which are not truly central to the authentic ensemble experience. Furthermore, the positive social and spiritual outcomes of choral singing are negated by current forms of online instruction."

This sentiment was reflected in several open responses, with the common theme being:

> "There is no effective way to teach and rehearse choral music through technology."

The majority of choral educators felt that virtual choirs were unavoidable in the future (3.31 on a 1–5 scale) but expressed a stunning lack of training on how to create

them (1.58 on a 1–5 scale), as this was something that many were being asked to do. We feel that these data indicate that professional development needs to focus on both teaching choir online and on putting together a virtual choir or other type of "performance."

Equity

Digital literacy for students, combined with concepts of student engagement and the issue of technological "haves" and "have nots" were of major concern for the participants in our study, and these concerns lie at the intersection of TPACK's consideration of technology and pedagogy. Professional development to help teachers train their students to be more digitally literate is of great importance. Professional development to help teachers keep their students engaged online is also of great importance. While these definitely resonate in terms of pedagogy, we believe that there is an underlying, more fundamental, issue of equity here.

Latency, student engagement, and digital literacy all trace back in some way to the simple fact that some students' families are sufficiently affluent to provide high-speed internet, times and spaces conducive to online learning, and the time and resources for their students to gain digital literacy, and some are not. No amount of a teacher's professional development can provide a household where a student is not afraid to sing for fear of waking up a parent who works nights, or of being mocked by family or neighbors. One educator wrote that their students' "singing online was hampered by technology and [their] environments; some did not feel comfortable singing in their situations with their families nearby." Several responders indicated that they are seeking "strategies to engage students who lack the confidence in to sing alone at home," and that they would benefit from "knowing what would be practical and yet useful [strategies] for students who are at greatly varying abilities and access to online instruction."

Working with younger, less experienced singers presented an additional layer of complexity. As one participant wrote:

"Most of my middle school students were too scared to submit a recording of themselves for

the virtual choir. Many of those who did had major pitch issues. They were not able to sing along with just an accompaniment track. This surprised me. They developmentally need the support of the group singing."

Professional development must focus on ways teachers can make allowances for equity issues in ways that do not further disadvantage those who lack the fundamental supports needed for effective online learning, especially with younger and less-trained singers. It must help choral educators address students' confidence and environmental factors in constructive ways. And it must support a pedagogy that creates a sense of community and belonging for everyone involved.

Creating a Sense of Community

Educators identified "lack of a sense of community and in-person connection" as the "number one" challenge to online instruction during the pandemic. Analysis of qualitative data revealed that learning to foster a sense of community in online teaching was very important to educators. As one participant shared:

"I'm trying to be positive about COVID by learning as much as I can about various applications. The process is slow, but I've learned that the most important thing for my ensemble is maintaining the sense of community, and I've succeeded in doing that—thank goodness. When the time for us to sing in the same room happens, we'll be ready to learn how to sing again, because we will have grown closer together through the pandemic."

Another participant expressed that:

"Yes, singing is important, but it is also about the relationships and connections that we were able to continue with our students in this environment. These students were going through many different homelife situations on any given day, and our class was the ONLY good

thing they had to look forward to. We laughed together and cried together. We were there for each other when they were feeling alone."

In theory, effective use of technology can yield the platform for communities to emerge. Yet as prior research has shown, it is empathy and the ability to retain human-ness that is needed in any environment—online or in-person.

Advocacy

Perhaps controversially, we believe that there is an advocacy component to legitimate professional development growing out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our data indicates that choral music educators felt largely connected to a support network of colleagues, but qualitative data suggests that they did not perceive this same level of support from administrators. Three themes emerged from the analysis of qualitative data: restrictions on what can be taught, lack of financial support, and shortage of subject-specific professional development. Participants employed in the K-12 system indicated that they were limited in the type of technologies that they were permitted to use, or restricted to district-approved resources only. One participant shared:

> "I already had an educational technology endorsement completed well before this virus occurred, so I was very confident in my abilities to work online. I had already incorporated many things into my previous classes and had written an online course for a district. This new district [I had recently joined] had such restrictions on what we could do and use it was defeating for everyone, even students."

Teachers experienced additional layers of restriction when districts mandated that students attend to tested curricular areas, or "core subjects," before fine arts classes. This often meant that choral educators were instructed to give very little work to their students in order to accommodate the added workload students experienced with their other, "core" classes online. One participant shared:

> "In my district, a lot of arts educators were told to do less, and that we did not matter. I was one of those teachers, and I am still struggling with how I feel about it all."

Coupled with feelings of futility and discouragement, educators expressed anxiety surrounding the topic of financial support from their district. At the time when educators switched to online teaching, many had to pay out of pocket for technology that was required to do their job. Although several companies offered free services during the peak of the pandemic, one educator noted:

> "I utilized [a] free trial on my own, but when the 90-day trial is over, I don't know if our county will pay for this resource. It was vital to me, so [I] may have to pay out of pocket to continue."

The issue of financial support emerged in rural settings, where educators expressed additional anxiety due to having a smaller budget. Upgrading technology that one currently owns at home added to the financial burden and the overall confusion of who pays for the expense.

Finally, choral educators noted that while their districts have offered professional development training in technology applications, it is not subject-specific and thus does not benefit them as much as it could. Currently, choral educators must seek out subject-specific training, resulting in the spike in informal training during COVID-19 that emerged in our quantitative analysis. For professional development to be successful, during the training process, teachers need to first see experts modeling and then be involved with the technology in a learner-centered, interactive way. This yields a specific approach to addressing subject-specific professional development for choral educators, and the results of this research can demonstrate to administrators that subject-specific professional development is essential.

Autonomy

Prior research has highlighted the importance of risk-taking and a certain playfulness in effective learning, as well as the crucial requirement of educator autonomy in selecting professional development that is relevant

to their situation. Empowering choral educators to take risks as they explore the professional development that they perceive they need will lead to new, individualized knowledge that can be more powerful than a standardized, top-down model. We believe that our data supports this. Participants in our study spent enormous amounts of their own personal time seeking out informal training to accomplish the transition to online music education as well as possible. For many, this was required by administrators, though it was also required to be done outside of school time (i.e. unpaid), and often required in spite of the fact that much or most of the administrators' focus was on tested curricular areas rather than music. To the degree that choral educators were largely successful, we believe that this legitimizes informal training. We advocate for a formal model that has sufficient breadth to allow individual teachers to seek out their own informal training and receive due credit. We also believe that our data demonstrates that informal training is legitimate professional development, and that teachers must be compensated appropriately.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted complex, and often painful, issues in many facets of society. We sought to capture how choral educators were perceiving the pandemic and choral education during this time. We also hope to provide pathways for progress as choral education adapts to the ever-changing reality of pandemic. Consequently, we discovered a complex ecosystem of perceptions and attitudes among the participants in our study. Teachers perceive themselves as unprepared in terms of online music education pedagogy and implementing technology to teach music online, yet they also feel that the experience of teaching during the pandemic has value, and that they are part of a supportive network of colleagues. Teachers perceive themselves as much less effective teaching online than in person, yet they are steadily gaining confidence in their abilities. Teachers perceive that their students are not digitally literate, did not transition to online learning well, and have an unfavorable opinion of online learning. Yet, teachers believe that teaching choir online is far superior than not teaching choir at all. Teachers are being asked to do an extraordinary amount of learning and adapting, yet

they are also willing to spend tremendous amounts of their own, unpaid time to benefit their students. Teachers were essentially unprepared by their formal training (both their own education and training they might have received through their employer), yet they successfully employed informal training at an astounding rate.

All of these factors lead us to conclude that professional development must focus on pedagogy, technology, and equity. It must legitimize informal avenues of training and have educator autonomy as its bedrock principle. It must focus on music-specific pedagogy and music-specific technology with opportunities to remediate skills of a non-musical nature. And, teachers must be compensated fairly for their time.

Just as with anything related to the choral classroom, this research cannot be applied as a "one-size-fits-all" approach to best practice amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Our study addressed many areas of potential concern for choral educators, and individual educators are encouraged to borrow the findings that apply in their situation. Teachers searching for strategies could consider connecting with colleagues through Zoom, advocating for subject-specific professional development, seeking out relevant information from professional organizations, and more. By recognizing the importance of this moment, seeking to understand choral educators' perceptions and attitudes, and implementing these suggestions as fully as possible, choral music education could well be on a sustainable path into a post-COVID-19 reality. CJ

RELATED RESOURCES

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NOTES

[1] Snowball sampling recruits survey participants through current participants inviting their friends and acquaintances, so that the sample grows like a rolling snowball.

[2] As a refresher, results of a given question that achieve statistical significance are mathematically unlikely to be due to random chance, and therefore could be more generalizable.

[3] We found that confidence using technology statistically significantly predicted perceived effectiveness teaching online, $F(1, 105) = 27.24$, $p < .0005$, which accounted for 45.4% of the variation in online effectiveness with adjusted $R2 = 19.8\%$, a medium size effect according to Cohen (1988).

[4] Our findings indicated that the feeling of being able to connect to a support network of colleagues increased from the Full Time, One Job (n = 79, 3.0 ± 1.2), to Full Time, Multiple Jobs (n = 9, 3.3 ± 1.4), to Part Time, Multiple Jobs (n = 8, 3.4 ± 1.6) to Part Time, One Job (n = 6, 3.7 ± 0.5) employment categories, in that order. We omitted categories of Not Employed, Looking; Not Employed, Not Looking; Retired; Not Able To Work; and Prefer Not To Answer; as the sample sizes were too small.

[5] $F(8, 100) = 2.210$, $p = .033$.

[6] Punya Mishra and Matthew Koehler, "Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge: A Framework for Integrating Technology in Teacher Knowledge" *Teachers College Record* 108, no. 6 (2006), 1025.

Come and Sing with Bob Chilcott!

Be a part of this year's ACDA Raymond W. Brock Memorial Composition première through virtual informative chats, dialogue (Q&A), and rehearsals led by 2021 Brock composer, Bob Chilcott!

The acclaimed composer, conductor, and former King's Singer is joined by poet Delphine Chalmers to introduce and rehearse movements from this year's Brock commission, *Songs my heart has taught me,* in three interactive workshops in February. On Saturday, March 20, 2021, workshop participants may simply enjoy listening or may participate in the privacy of their home. **ACDA is delighted to offer these workshops free of charge. Space is limited so sign up now. Online hour-long workshops will take place on the following dates:**

<div align="center">

SA/Treble voices: Sunday, February 7, 2021; 2:00 p.m. CST

TB/Lower voices: Sunday, February 21, 2021; 2:00 p.m. CST

SATB/All voices: Sunday, February 28, 2021; 2:00 p.m. CST

</div>

To participate in a workshop, please visit acda.org/bob-chilcott-workshops/ and click the workshop in which you want to participate. We anticipate each registrant will want to participate in EITHER the SA or TB workshop PLUS the final SATB workshop. You will need to register for EACH workshop separately.

The workshop music to *Songs my heart has taught me* will include only the first and last movements titled "Unison" and "Resolution." They will be available to view only in a digital format through J.W. Pepper's ePrintGO app. As we get closer to the workshop dates, a link to access the digital file will be sent to those who have registered.

The complete score to *Songs my heart has taught me* (Oxford University Press) will be available for sale beginning February 1, 2021, through all of Oxford's digital dealers including J.W. Pepper, Sheet Music Plus, Stanton's, and Pender's Music.

Photo by John Bellars

Research Report

Bryan E. Nichols, editor

Mindset, Self-Concept, and Long-Term Musical Engagement

by Kari Adams

Student motivation is often a chief concern among choral music educators. There are many factors that influence student motivation, and among those factors are the beliefs students hold about their musical abilities. Two important beliefs that influence motivation are self-concept and mindset. Students form these self-theories during adolescence based on experiences and interactions with others, which means the strategies conductors use in rehearsal can influence these developing theories.

Mindset

The term mindset, from the work of psychologist Carol Dweck, refers to the way people view the nature and source of their abilities. A student who holds a *fixed mindset* about their musical ability believes that musical skills are in-born traits. If they have the talent, they can improve their skill, but without natural talent they cannot improve. A stu-

dent with a *growth mindset* believes that musical skills are malleable and that their ability can improve with deliberate practice.

Researchers examining mindset in academic domains have found that individuals who hold a fixed mindset are likely to set performance goals (i.e., goals designed to prove talent), ignore corrective feedback, and give up in challenging situations. Those who hold a growth mindset are likely to set learning goals (i.e., goals designed to bring about growth), use corrective feedback for improvement, and persevere in the face of challenges. These mindset characteristics appear to transfer across a wide variety of subjects including math, science, visual arts, sports, and music.

Educational researchers have consistently discovered strong correlations between mindset and goal orientation. Bret P. Smith discovered that undergraduate instrumental music majors who held a fixed mindset were more likely to endorse

performance goals, and those with a growth mindset were more likely to set learning goals. Although fewer music education researchers have examined the construct of mindset, several have studied the role of achievement goal construct in music, especially its role in self-regulated practice, commitment to musical activities, and task persistence. Additionally, practitioners have written about the value of mindset in the music classroom and provided strategies for promoting a growth mindset specific to the choral rehearsal.

The strategies conductors use in rehearsal—including feedback style, instructional approaches, and rehearsal structure—can influence students' developing mindsets. In their seminal study, Claudia Mueller and Carol Dweck's fifth-grade participants who received praise for their ability when completing math problems were more likely to display behaviors associated with a fixed mindset, including low task

persistence, reduced enjoyment, and decreased performance following a failure. Those who received praise for effort instead did not display any of these maladaptive behaviors. Kevin Droe replicated this study with fourth-grade students completing rhythm-reading tasks and had similar results: participants praised for effort were more likely to select learning goals and exhibit increased task persistence, but the talent-praise group was more likely to select performance goals and exhibited low task persistence.

Self-Concept

Another meaning system that can impact student motivation and behavior is musical self-concept. Self-concept describes a complex, multi-faceted, hierarchical view of the self, but many use the term to describe the evaluative portion of the self-concept. Although not synonymous, self-concept is often used interchangeably with self-worth and self-esteem. Musical self-concept most often refers to the views individuals hold regarding the quality of their musical skills.

Like mindset, most people de-velop their self-concept during childhood and adolescence based on experiences and interactions with others. Self-concept during adolescence is especially vulnerable to challenges or failures in highly valued domains as well as negative interactions with significant others. Researchers in music education have found that musical self-concept plays a role in student decisions about whether or not they will enroll in elective music activities.

As children enter adolescence, they begin to devalue effort. If they try and fail, they experience a loss in self-concept, but if they fail without any effort expenditure their self-concept is protected. Maladaptive behaviors such as lack of effort, procrastination, or self-destructive tendencies are especially salient when the environment encourages comparison rather than self-referential judgments. In competitive environments, especially during adolescence, students are likely to shift toward performance goals and make self-concept judgments based on their ability to outperform others.

Sandra Simpkins and colleagues observed that students generally experienced a loss in musical self-concept over time. They posited that this decline may be due to increased competitiveness and emphasis on ability as students progress through school. Other researchers have indicated that negative social interactions with peers or conductors may decrease musical self-concept during adolescence. These findings are important to choral music educators concerned with retaining

students in choral programs, because researchers have found relationships between self-concept and involvement with musical activities at all levels.

Self-concept and Mindset

Although mindset and self-concept are not related, there are striking resemblances between the maladaptive behaviors designed to guard self-concept and the behaviors associated with a fixed mindset. Perhaps because of these similarities, mindset can predict changes to self-concept. For example, a student entering middle school with a growth mindset is less likely to experience a downward trajectory of self-concept over time than a student who enters with a fixed mindset. Students who encounter challenges and failures with a growth mindset view those experiences as learning opportunities, but those who hold a fixed mindset view the same experiences as evidence of their lack of ability.

In addition to predicting changes to self-concept, mindset may have some influence over the decisions students make regarding their elective activities. Researchers have identified mindset as a salient factor in students' decisions to remain active in elective sports activities. Although music education researchers have not yet examined the connection between mindset and enrollment decisions in the domain of music, it seems possible that mindset, along with self-concept and perceived value of musical activities, could predict future music participation.

Based on the characteristics associated with mindset and self-concept, a student with a high self-concept and a fixed mindset would be likely to continue in musical activi-

ties as long as their self-theories are reinforced. In the face of failure or challenge, students with a high self-concept but a fixed mindset are likely to quit. Students with a fixed mindset and a low self-concept may view themselves as incapable of improvement and therefore hold a very low value for music making. Students with these characteristics often experience low levels of self-efficacy toward musical tasks and will be unlikely to enroll in musical activities by choice. However, students who hold a growth mindset and value music are likely to see musical activities as worthy of their time and effort regardless of their self-concept. These students are more likely to welcome challenges and continue enrolling in elective musical activities.

Previous researchers have indicated that self-concept is important in enrollment and retention in ensembles. Although researchers have not examined the role of mindset in enrollment decisions, mindset's mediating effect on self-concept lends credence to the idea that the two self-theories may work together in students' decisions about elective musical activities. Consider two hypothetical students who both have a low self-concept toward musical ability but differ in their mindset.

The student with a low self-concept and a growth mindset is theoretically more likely to continue elective singing than a student who has a low self-concept and a fixed mindset, regardless of the value they might place on the activity. When a student believes they are not good at something and cannot

get any better at it, it is highly unlikely that they will be motivated to continue to work on that skill—especially during adolescence when others' views of the self are so salient and proving competence is a primary goal. If educators want to improve the chances of students electing to continue involvement in musical and singing activities, it may be advantageous to work to promote a growth mindset toward singing ability.

Promoting a Growth Mindset

With the goal in mind of promoting a growth mindset toward singing ability, choral music educators might consider the pedagogical practices in place in the choral rehearsal and how those strategies may influence students' developing mindsets. When strategies promote or actively teach a growth mindset, students are more likely to adopt it and its associated behaviors. Strategies that promote competition or emphasize ability over effort and growth may inadvertently promote a fixed mindset among students and lead to maladaptive behaviors, lack of motivation, and loss of self-worth.

Feedback

Researchers have consistently found across a variety of domains that the feedback students receive can quickly alter their behaviors. Students who receive effort- or strategy-related feedback exhibit the behaviors of a growth mindset, and those who receive ability-related praise exhibit the maladaptive

behaviors of a fixed mindset. These effects are temporary, but consistency of growth-related feedback over time can increase the chances of students adopting a growth mindset. Choral music educators might consider shifting positive feedback away from ability-based praise (i.e., "You are so smart/talented/ such a great singer!") and toward effort-based praise (i.e., "You have worked really hard on this concept today, and it is sounding better because of it!"). It may also be advantageous, both pedagogically and in the development of mindset, to limit praise and instead focus feedback on strategy use (i.e., "This wasn't quite right. Here's a strategy we can use to fix it."). Feedback can also focus on acknowledging growth over time, helping students focus on evidence of their own growth and thereby reinforcing the idea that musical abilities can improve with effort and appropriate strategy use.

Approaching Mistakes

The way in which leaders approach mistakes can have a serious impact on organizational culture as well as students' forming self-views. When educators react with frustration or anger at mistakes, students can become fearful and avoid challenges that might result in failure. One of Carlos Abril's participants stopped singing entirely for fear of her choral director's wrath at mistakes made in the ensemble. However, when conductors approach mistakes as opportunities for growth, or even celebrate mistakes as evidence of effort, students will quickly learn to take risks, accept

challenges, and not allow mistakes and failures to negatively influence their mindset or their self-concept. Choral music educators might consider celebrating mistakes, communicating with students that a rehearsal without mistakes is a failed rehearsal, or even instituting a motto or catch phrase to encourage students to embrace errors. For example, one of the foundational principles of improvisational comedy is, "There are no mistakes, only gifts." Discussing this concept with students and referring to mistakes throughout the year as "gifts" allows the ensemble to move forward and address the mistakes in a productive manner.

Assessments

The ways in which we choose to assess our students can influence their developing self-views. Working to instill a growth mindset means choosing to emphasize growth and process rather than ability and product. It is vital that we assess students, help them reach benchmarks, and hold them to certain standards, but high-stakes assessments (i.e., one-shot assessments that carry a high point value) can actually discourage a growth mindset. If a choral music educator works in rehearsal to teach a growth mindset but then assigns a high-stakes assessment, students will understand that perfection is valued above growth.

Similarly, assessments that measure students based on their relative ability compared to peers (i.e., normative assessments) may cause students to judge their ability in relation to others and encourage both a competitive culture and a fixed mindset. Alternatively, assessments that allow for students to demonstrate growth over time communicate that effort and effective

strategy use are highly valued and promote self-referential judgments rather than comparison. Educators might consider allowing students to retake assessments or explore assessment options that take growth into account as well as reaching standards. Such assessments may have the added benefit of pushing advanced students to move beyond the standard rather than coasting through the course on assessments that never challenge them.

Ability Grouping

Many choral music educators create ability-grouped ensembles, which form a choral hierarchy. Although this practice emerged to improve contest performances, many educators now maintain it in the hopes of placing students in the ensemble in which they will experience the most success. However, research indicates that ability-grouped classes at the secondary level may negatively impact students' self-theories, including self-concept and mindset and may be a barrier to developing healthy rehearsal culture. If it is necessary to use ability-grouped ensembles, choral music educators might consider ways to handle auditions, student relationships, ensemble culture, and movement between ensembles so as to avoid detrimental effects on students' self-views and long-term participation in music.

Instructional Strategies

Direct instruction is a commonly used instructional strategy for many choral music educators. A typical rehearsal often relies heavily on conductors telling students what to do and how to do it or modeling the way they would like a piece to be performed. Direct instruction is a useful pedagogical tool, but alternating it with more cognitively engaging processes may help improve students' self-efficacy, a self-view that is closely tied to both mindset and self-concept. One excellent pedagogical tool which has the potential to improve self-efficacy, increase self-concept, and encourage a growth mindset is cognitive apprenticeship. With cognitive apprenticeship, the conductor models their cognitive process for students, coaches students as they learn to think through those processes, and fades as students take ownership of their own learning and run rehearsals or sectionals independently. Through cognitive apprenticeship, students learn valuable musicianship skills and that they are capable of learning and growing on their own.

Conclusion

The theories students hold about their singing abilities can influence their behavior, motivation, and desire to continue participating in elective musical activities. Researchers believe that musical self-concept is a factor in ensemble enrollment decisions, but it is important to note that mindset plays an important role in students' developing self-concept. By examining current practices and implementing strategies that promote a growth mindset, choral music educators can help students buttress their self-concept against challenges and failures and increase the likelihood that they will remain active music-makers for years to come. CJ

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SANCTUARY ROAD

Laquita Mitchell; Raehann Bryce Davis; Joshua Blue; Malcolm J. Merriweather;
Dashon Burton; Oratorio Society of New York Chorus

The GRAMMY nominated *Sanctuary Road* draws on the astonishing stories to be found in William Still's book *The Underground Railroad*, which documents the network of secret routes and safe houses used by African American slaves to escape into free states and Canada during the early to mid 1800s. The epic nature of these stories of courage, perseverance and sacrifice is transformed into an enthralling saga.
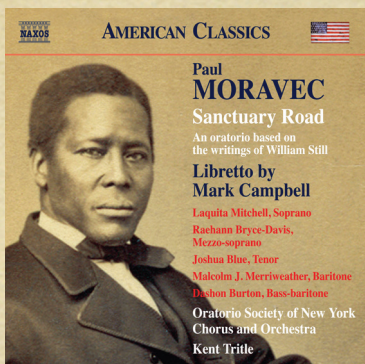
THE PASSION OF YESHUA

James K. Bass; J'Nai Bridges; Timothy Fallon;
Kenneth Overton; Hila Plitmann Matthew Worth;
UCLA Chamber Singers; Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus
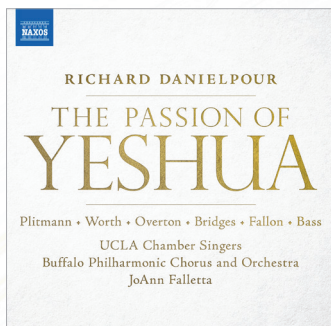
Richard Danielpour's dramatic oratorio *The Passion of Yeshua*, a GRAMMY nominated work which has evolved over the last 25 years, is an intensely personal telling of the final hours of Christ on Earth. It incorporates texts from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian gospels inspiring extraordinarily beautiful music that stresses the need for human compassion and forgiveness.

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## WILLIAM V. MALPEDE

Sound Over All Waters

- SATB, incidental divisi; piano; English (John Greenleaf Whittier)
- 3′ 45″. Text by a 19th century, influential Quaker poet and avid abolitionist, and founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Spirit of unity, love, freedom, celebration. This piece has it all! - driving rhythms (A section); building rhythmc ostinato (B); stunning a cappella (C). A show stopper for an accomplished choir! ProjectEncore.org/william-v-malpede

CAROLINE MALLONEE

Come to Me in Dreams

- SATB, incidental divisi; a cappella; English (Christina Rossetti)
- 6′ 00″. Rossetti poem is dedicated to the memory of a dear friend - also a lyricist and composer - who died young. A meditation on life and death. Three-note motive sets a gentle context of longing. Beautiful melodic statements carry the text, both intimate and expansive, on hope and love. Stunning, for a capable choir. ProjectEncore.org/caroline-mallonee
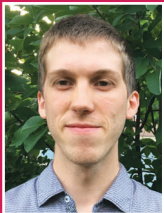
MICHAEL MAIORANA

Blocks

- Unison/2/3-part; piano, hand perc, recorders; English (Robert Louis Stevenson)
- 3′ 00″. For young singers, about the adventure of building things with imagination. The music builds as in blocks, with instruments added in layers. Instruments written for children to play, except piano which is the glue and the musical interest. Very easy and fun. Elementary classrooms will delight in this charming piece! ProjectEncore.org/michael-maiorana
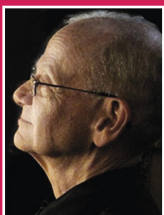
GORDON KING (NEW to PROJECT : ENCORE)

Christ Our Passover

- SATB; organ (optional organ and brass); English (traditional liturgical)
- 3′ 00″. Sparkling Easter introit or anthem; works equally well with Easter brass, or just organ during the Easter season. Alternation of chanted portions and choral response. Concludes with an energetic alleluia chorale. Lots of bang for the buck! Solid church choir and above.
  ProjectEncore.org/gordon-king

Four times each year, P:E adds newly accepted scores to its catalog. Score submission deadlines are the 15th of January, April, July, and October.

CLIFFORD W. KING

Let This Be Heaven

- SATB, incidental divisi; solo yodel; piano, tree branches; English (Harrison B. Merrill)
- 6' 00". Captures the hard work, the beauty, the serenity of climbing a mountain, and the exhileration in reaching its summit. Percussive sounds are specifically designated motions made with tree branches played by the first row of singers. Sweeping lines tell a story of striving and achievement. Moderate but solid skill level needed. ProjectEncore.org/clifford-w-king

CHRIS HUTCHINGS

Where Are My Unnumbered Days?

- SSATB, indicental divisi; S solo; opt piano accomp; English (Mohamed Assaf)
- 5' 00". Text written by a Syrian refugee shortly after his arrival in England at the age of 12. A child's impassioned outcry of loss - of home, of garden, of self. Sense of anonymity is most poignant in two-note, half-step ostinato, "I am a number," that becomes improvisatory. Powerful for a secure choir of moderate skill level. ProjectEncore.org/chris-hutchings

BRIAN HOLMES

Ilentsay Ightnay

- SATB; a cappella; Pig Latin (Joseph Mohr)
- 1' 50". This one comes with a guarantee of audience delight! It's not the well-known melody (which might just cross into sacriledge!); but it is the traditional "Silent Night" text - in Pig Latin. Must be done well if to be effective, of course; but it is not difficult for moderate skill levels. Except for keeping a straight face while singing! Enjoy! ProjectEncore.org/brian-holmes

## PETER FROST (NEW to PROJECT : ENCORE)

The Rainy Day

- SSATB; a cappella; English (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)
- 4' 40". "Pointalistic" is the composer's description of the ostinato vocal writing in the 'sad and dreary' portions of Longfellow's poem; challenging vocal accompaniment to lyrical poetic lines. The third, "cease repining" section is a complete contrast: warm chordal writing. Difficult to perform; exquisite and compelling for a pro ensemble! ProjectEncore.org/peter-frost

DEBORAH SIMPKIN KING, PHD.
Conductor
P:E Director and Founder
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In Memoriam

Bruce Browne
1941–2020
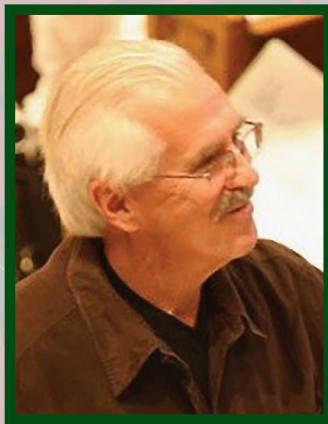
Dr. Bruce Browne passed away this past November 23. Collaboration and collegiality were hallmarks of his teaching career.

In 1969 Bruce's Chorale from Montana State appeared at the Northwest MENC in Eugene, Oregon, two years before the American Choral Director's Association established its independence. In June of that year, he co-chaired a Montana State/ACDA event featuring clinicians Jean Berger and Harold Decker.

From those days onward Bruce would nurture ACDA student involvement. He instituted the first student ACDA conducting master class at the St. Louis National in 1975, with his Master Chorale from Mount Union College in Ohio as demonstration choir.

From his position at Portland State University in Oregon, Bruce initiated the Collegiate Choral Festival, an annual, non-competitive opportunity for students from diverse campuses to perform for and learn from each other. He broadened his students' opportunities, inviting renowned choral conductors and colleagues whose work he admired to share the podium at PSU. He was always one of the most excited "students" at these events.

The Portland State University Chamber Choirs were honored to sing at several NW ACDA Conferences and three ACDA National Conventions. Portland Symphonic Choir also performed in 1987 in San Antonio.

Art, world history, Shakespeare, National Parks, cinema, theater, bridge, golf. He was an enthusiast. Voracious.

In his retirement he founded Choro in Schola, whose sole purpose is to bring quality choral music and mentoring to area school choral programs which need it most. Most of the mentor/singers are his former students.

Bruce Browne was a life-long learner, a life-long teacher. That is the accolade he cherished above all.

Submitted by the family of Bruce Browne with thanks to ACDA.

Recorded Sound Reviews

Laura Wiebe, editor laurawiebe@gmail.com

A New England Requiem: Sacred Choral Music by Scott Perkins
Da Capo Players & Choir
Brett Alan Judson, conductor
Gothic Records G-49322 (2020; 74:47)

This CD aims to, according to its liner notes, "bring joy, peace, hope, and comfort." To that end, the album largely succeeds: each of Perkins's pieces in this collection is tuneful, accessible, and well performed by choir, orchestra, and organ alike. Lovers of Duruflé, Rutter, or Copland will hear nods to a familiar musical language in the works presented, while also experiencing the novelty to be found in the composer's own unique voice and perspective.

The eponymous *Requiem* opens the album, a work comprising a mix of traditional liturgical texts with poems reflecting on death, such as Emily Dickinson's famous "Because I could not stop for Death." The work is tightly composed; motivic material is heard throughout its seven movements, tying the piece together as a whole. Tonally, it is reminiscent of both Copland in its quartal melodies, and John Williams in its lush orchestration and harmonies, plac-

ing it in a decidedly American landscape. It carefully toes the line of sentimentality, and while it certainly flirts with a Kinkade-like nostalgia, it manages to stay itself from careening into the saccharine. The setting of Hawthorne's "Go the Grave" is particularly lovely and would worthily stand as an excerpt.

The other pieces on the disk are a mix of sacred works, the standouts being Perkins's unaccompanied settings of the Lord's Prayer and "O Sacred Banquet" (a translation of the Latin, *O sacrum convivium*). It is in these pieces we hear his true skill in painting with voices: the harmonies are often unexpected but never foreign, and always with a beauty that draws the ear along. These works, in addition to the settings of the *Magnificat, Nunc dimittis,* and *Phos hilaron* (set in English as "O Gracious Light"), deserve to become part of the canon of choral music wherever Eucharists and Evensongs are sung.

The drawback of the album is that in this collection of works, we hear much of the same. This is certainly true of the four anthems that follow the *Requiem* on the disk. Each treads a similar emotional and compositional arc, which, if listened to from Track 1, presents itself as less-

than-novel. These are also the pieces that most closely approach cloying, and won't be to everyone's taste.

If you are in the mood to be charmed, moved, or simply taken on a picturesque walk down a path carpeted with fiery-colored leaves, you will not be disappointed to have this recording as your companion.

Gabriel Fanelli
San Francisco, California

J. S Bach: Johannes-Passion, BWV 245
Gaechinger Cantorey
Hans-Christoph Rademann, Conductor
Carus 83.313 (2019; 108'03")

With Hans-Christoph Rademann's recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Johannes-Passion* BWV 245, Carus-Verlag has again provided listeners with a recording of high musical excellence in alignment with the publisher's commitment to scholarship. Like Rademann's past recordings of Bach's oeuvre using Carus's scores, this recording is of the publisher's edition of the 1749 version of Bach's *Johannes-Passion.*

Conductors familiar with Ba-

roque compositions know the difficulty posed when determining a work's "authentic" version. Reworkings of movements, altered instrumentation, deletion of sections, and inconsistencies between performing parts with composing scores are obstacles faced by modern scholars when examining Baroque scores, leading to numerous versions of a composition.

Bach's *Johannes-Passion* is such an example. First composed in 1724 (version I), Bach would return to this passion setting three more times. Bach performed it in 1725 with substantial alterations (version II),

replacing the opening and closing chorus and adding several recitatives and arias. He returned to it around 1732 with even more alterations (version III), having restored the opening chorus, arias, and recitatives from version I (albeit with instrumentation changes), and removed the closing chorale. His last revision was in 1749 (version IV) and is the focus of this recording. In many ways, version IV resembles version I. However, Bach retained a few additions from version II, expanded the continuo group with the addition harpsichords and a *bassono grosso* (i.e., contrabassoon), and tempered much

of the libretto's Baroque imagery.

An informative analysis of Bach's revisions is found in Daniel R. Melamed's indispensable book *Hearing Bach's Passions* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Melamed successfully argues that changes in version IV represent not only a variation of the Passion but create a new setting. With the chorus substitutions and, moreover, the libretto's alteration, version IV differs in theological tone and creates a different perception of the passion story. Because of this, Rademann's recording is not simply another recording of Bach's *Johannes-Passion*, but rather, a new setting guided by meticulous research and superb musicianship.

Rademann highlights these differences immediately with the opening chorus "Herr, unser Herrscher." The ever-present pulsating continuo line is made even more insistent with Bach's expanded continuo group. The chorus sings with a tone that is disciplined with regard to articulation, yet is colored appropriately based on the text's message. Moreover, their attention to the polyphonic nature of each passage is commendable: listeners clearly hear the cries of "Herr" throughout the melismatic texture.

In addition to the "commentary" choruses, Rademann understands the theological message behind the critically interspersed chorales. Musical phrasings and dynamics correspond to the chorale's rhetorical message as well as its place within the overall passion story. In addition, the *turba* choruses are delivered with mocking ridicule (e.g., "Bist du nicht seiner Jünger einer?" "Art thou not

one of his disciples?" and unbridled fury (e.g., "Kreuzige, kreuzige!" "Crucify, crucify!").

Of special note are the soloists. Soprano Elizabeth Watts's vocal color and articulation in "Ich folge dir gleichfalls" partners well with the flute obbligato. Peter Harvey's portrayal of Jesus is both comforting and heart wrenching ("Es ist vollbracht!"). Alto Benno Schachtner possesses a clear tone that embodies the pathos and dramatic rage needed for the aria "Es ist vollbracht." Finally, Patrick Grahl presents an evangelist who with his timbre and delivery captures the listener's attention throughout the narrative.

The instrumentalists of the Gaechinger Cantorey do not disappoint in their precision and phrasing. As discussed, Bach greatly expanded his continuo group for this version. Those accustomed to solely hearing an organ during recitatives will likely find the harpsichord's colorful tone and creative embellishments to be a noticeable enhancement of the libretto's dramatic prose.

With multiple recordings of masterworks from the Western choral canon, it is often asked, "Do we really need another recording of…?" In the case of Rademann's recording of Bach's *Johannes-Passion* (1749), the answer is yes. With each version,

Bach created a different experience of the passion story. Through the insightful scholarship of Carus-Verlag, in collaboration with the musicianship of Hans-Christoph Rademann and the Gaechinger Cantorey, modern audiences can experience a unique performance of a work Bach returned to frequently throughout his life.

C. Michael Porter
Boise, Idaho

Peter-Anthony Togni:
Sea Dreams
Luminous Voices
Timothy Shantz, conductor
Leaf Music: LM236 (2020; 61:37)

Sea Dreams is a beautiful, contemplative collection of choral music by Canadian composer Peter-Anthony Togni, well known to many in his multifaceted music career as pianist, composer, organist, and broadcaster for CBC Radio 2 Canada. The poetry set on this new CD reflects on the Virgin Mary and the Creator, and therefore on the meaning of life and death. The melodic and harmonic language in this music is inspired by nature, with fifth, octave, and unison intervals forming a solid harmonic basis. Dissonance, passing and resolved, is a reflection of the passage of life itself. The general mood of the music is calming and reassuring.

The two opening works—a gentle, mostly consonant *a cappella* Totus Tuus, and a Requiem et Lux—prepare the listener for the three-movement title track, *Sea Dreams.* As Togni explains, this work speaks to his relationship with the ocean, grappling with questions of "fears, longing, hopes, dreams and the gifts of disappointment." Using the sea as a central image and as a metaphor for life, this work is a prayer for those at sea, and for those who will never return—the "perpetual angels." The outer movements draw on T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages," while the central movement's text is the Marian hymn *Alma Redemptoris Mater.* The two choirs represent ships passing in the night, and the two flutes are the seagulls that follow each ship, a metaphor for the "passage of time, angels, flowing thoughts, emptiness, ghost, hope, and the Holy Spirit."

Earth Voices (to a text by Bliss Carman) features the composer's search for answers about the beginning and the end of things, summarized at its close by the text "whisper-breath of being-whisper." The supporting hand drum and percussion sustain an earth-borne rhythm.

The final two compositions, for choir and bass clarinet, are peaceful and calming. The meditative *Responsorio Introit* is built on the incipit of the Ave Maria responsory, with an opening solo on bass clarinet soon joined by a solo soprano. This slow prayer paints an image of timelessness, even of sadness. The bass clarinet, solo voices, and choir are well balanced here. Flowing instrumental passages from high to low register bring images of waterfalls, and a sense of stillness.

Silentio concludes the CD. The choir's chanting now blends with another bass clarinet solo; its lilting and tender melody branches out gently from the choir and melts into the air. Multiple repeats of the word "silentio" slowly dissolve into silence. This track presents a striking timbral blend between voices and bass clarinet, played expressively by Jeff Reilly.

Led by Timothy Shantz, Luminous Voices sings with a sound that is refined and elegant, yet emotional; rich, but sophisticated. The guest artists, flutists Sara Hahn Scinocco, Sarah MacDonald, and clarinetist Jeff Reilly, blend perfectly with the voices, creating an almost dreamy and surreal atmosphere.

Listeners will not find strong dynamic or textural contrasts, or aggressive dissonances here. There is instead an enticing smoothness of musical lines and harmonic progressions that is seductive in its purity.

If you are looking for some meditative music, these calming and peaceful reflections on life will balance your senses and bring hope for the future. In a world of contradictions and uncertainty, human ambitions and aggression, this CD brings with it the reassurance of timeless nature represented in sound. The stylish singing emphasizes the interwoven melodic lines, relaxing and recharging at the same time. While performed here by a professional choir and instrumentalists, some of the scores could certainly be successfully learned by an advanced amateur choir. Singers and audiences alike should enjoy these pieces, and this highly inspiring recording will be a welcome addition to a home or institutional library.

Nelly Matova
Champaign, IL

Sleeper's Prayer: Choral Music from North America
Choir of Merton College, Oxford
Benjamin Nicholas, conductor

The Choir of Merton College, Oxford is a relatively new addition to the storied ranks of stipended chapel choirs that thrive at so many of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge Universities (as well as plenty of others throughout the United Kingdom). Despite having been in existence in its current form only since 2008, the choir has released nine critically acclaimed albums, premiered a host of new works by a range of major composers, and toured extensively throughout Europe and beyond.

Under the astute direction of Benjamin Nicholas, the choir sings with impressive clarity and ensemble gesture. Much of the repertoire could lend itself to a mechanical approach to phrasing, but the singers never seem to lose sight of the necessity of creating a sense of line and direction on both a small and large scale. The apparent lack of male-identifying altos and sopranos gives the ensemble a somewhat richer and more varied tone quality than a traditional British "choir of men and boys." This slightly reduced timbral uniformity, far from being a drawback, imbues the sound with a captivating flexibility of color.

Of the disc's twelve choral works, three are by David Lang, and five by Nico Muhly. The choir offers interpretations of these post-minimalist composers' works that capture their subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) emotional and theatrical undercurrents. Lang's *sleeper's prayer,* recorded here for the first time in its revised version for choir and organ, offers passages of notable lushness and lyricism alongside moments of intense agitation, as the choir pleads for a peace that seems just out of reach. Nico Muhly's *A Song of Ephrem the Syrian,* a commission and another world premiere recording, includes the Merton College Choristers, which, in 2016, was founded as the first girls' chorister program at an Oxford University college. These combined forces deliver a beautiful, powerful performance of a Christmas piece with far more fire and rapture than your average carol.

The predominance of music by Lang and Muhly exemplifies the one significant flaw in this collection of wonderful recordings. The album's title promises "Choral Music from North America," and while the disc does, indeed, include only music by North Americans (though there's nary a Canadian or Mexican composer in sight), it is rather as if an American choir made an album of pieces by Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams, with one Britten arrangement of an Irish folksong, and called it "Music of the British Isles."

What we have here is eight pieces by two prominent U.S.-born and -based composers who, while each possessed of a unique and wonderful compositional voice, occupy adjacent offices in the School of Philip Glass. Both claim the great American composer as a seminal influence, and Muhly worked for him for nearly ten years. The album includes a lengthy organ work by Glass, an arrangement of the end of the third act of his *Satyagraha,* in a fine performance by Benjamin Nicholas. This leaves pieces by Abbie Betinis, Libby Larsen, and Stephen Paulus feeling like throwaways, even though the performances thereof are outstanding. Including Gerre Hancock's arrangement of *Deep River* seems unnecessary for a number of reasons. The album as it stands is very much worth hearing, and with a more coherent concept and program, it would be essential.

David Rentz
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