

IJRCS International Journal of Research in Choral Singing

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The *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* is a publication of the American Choral Directors Association. This journal welcomes studies that apply rigorous, systematically-grounded methodologies, either quantitative or qualitative, to investigate phenomena of potential interest to all who sing in, work with, or are otherwise interested in choral ensembles. The *IJRCS* was founded in 2002 by editor James Daugherty and an international interest group composed of choral conductor-teachers and voice scientists, each of whom was an established researcher and an active choral musician. The Journal publishes one volume annually, with articles added as they are accepted throughout the year. The editorial board welcomes manuscripts that reflect well executed research employing quantitative, philosophical, historical, or qualitative methodologies. Reviews of empirical research, meta-analyses, etc. will also be considered for publication. Score studies, choral literature reviews, composer biographies, or purely anecdotal speculations will not be considered.

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Melodic Recall: Qualitative Insights on Singers' Strategies for Memorizing Scores of Simple Songs

Maria Timoshenko-Nilsson

Volume 13, pages 1–30

In a choral setting, memorizing multiple choral scores and maintaining the stability of recall can be a challenge. This study investigates strategies for memorizing scores of simple songs. Music college students with extensive choral experience memorized three unfamiliar songs and recalled them after brief one minute practice. A mixed-methods research design facilitated the integration of multiple types of data, including performance accuracy, self-ratings of sight-singing strategies, and descriptive statistics of eye movements. Results, based on Mishra's (2005) theoretical model of memorization, indicated that students employed Holistic (singing the whole song) and Segmented (singing phrases) memorization approaches more frequently than Additive or Serial approaches. During memorization, students relied on the conceptual, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic components of memory. Good skills in sight-reading, chunking, and the use of structural cues played a key role in facilitating successful melodic recall. The pedagogical implications of the findings and directions for future research are discussed.

Sacred Concert and Spirituals Selections in a 2021-2022 School Choral Catalog

Andrew Trites

Volume 13, pages 31–53

Sacred music from Christian perspectives has been sung in public schools since the inception of music programs, but students would benefit from singing sacred music from a broad spectrum of religious traditions. Music vendors, key stakeholders in marketing and sell-

ing music selections to United States music educators and their students, commonly use the term sacred in categorizing music to promote sales. The purpose of this content analysis was to investigate the language editors of a prominent choral-music retailer used to market sacred music selections to school choral educators. Four questions guided my research of the 2021-2022 J. W. Pepper school choral catalog: (1) how did editors use religious language, (2) how did editors describe styles, periods, and the printed language(s) of the text, (3) how

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did editors indicate educational use, and (4) what might be learned from editors' descriptions? I coded all 356 selections and descriptions categorized by the editors in the subcategory Sacred Concert & Spirituals. Across non-exhaustive categories, editors used religious language in 90 descriptions, specified style in 183, specified a historical period in 46, specified the language(s) of the text in 84, and invoked educational language in 112. Findings reinforced Christianity as a dominant religion in United States public school choral music. Choral educators and music vendors should reflect on whose religious beliefs are reflected in school concerts and published sacred music categories, broadening sacred music to be more inclusive.

Online Social Comparison and Impostor Phenomenon Among Choral Music Educators

Thomas J. Rinn

Volume 13, pages 54–74

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which selected demographic variables and online social comparison predict Impostor Phenomenon (IP) among choral music educators. Participants ($N = 143$) provided demographic information and completed an adapted version of the Iowa Netherlands Social Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) and the Clance Impostor Scale (CIPS). IP was prevalent among participants with 62.3% experiencing frequent to intense IP symptoms. Participants reported engaging in online social comparison on multiple social media platforms and most frequently experienced upward comparison. Upward and non-directional online social comparison were significant predictors of IP and accounted for 30.8% of the variance in IP scores. There was a significant, negative correlation ($r = -.36, p < .001$) between downward social comparison and CIPS scores. Implications for music educators are discussed, emphasizing the need for strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of online social comparison and foster supportive, authentic interactions among colleagues.

Essence of Joy: Empathy in an Afrocentric Collegiate Choral Ensemble at a Predominately White Institution

Austin Norrid

Volume 13, pages 75–100

Researchers (e.g., Watts & Piña, 2023) have demonstrated that World Music Pedagogy might promote students' empathy towards members of other cultures. In choral ensembles, however, researchers have yet to study whether or how transcultural musicking, or engaging with music and/or musicians from cultures other than one's own (Sánchez-Gatt et al., 2025, pp. 56–57), promotes experiences of empathy. The purpose of this phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994) was to explore the oft repeated claim in World Music Pedagogy that transcultural musicking supports students' experiences of empathy by examining the experiences of participants in *Essence of Joy*, an Afrocentric choir at The Pennsylvania State University, a Predominately White Institution (i.e., a post-secondary institution in the U.S. with a majority of white students). Additional goals of this research were to examine how participants' experiences of empathy were mediated by whether they belonged to the cultural or racial group whose music was performed by the ensemble and to examine in what ways experiences of empathy were supported by the choir's repertoire, the conductor's pedagogical choices, or both. Data included eight semi-structured interviews, field notes, and participant-observation. I identified three textural themes, "connections to others," "connections to self," and "multifaceted definitions of empathy." I also developed a structural analysis represented in a graphic model of the participants' experiences and synthesized the textural themes and structural analysis into a phenomenological essence statement. The essence of participants' experiences of empathy in *Essence of Joy* was transformational connections to others and to themselves. For Black participants, singing in *Essence of Joy* also provided an opportunity to explore their ethnic identity. Based on the findings, I suggest implications for practice and future research.

The Effects of Computerized Feedback on Sight-Singing Achievement

Adam G. White

Volume 13, pages 101–124

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the effects of computerized visual feedback provided by the SmartMusic interface on the sight-singing achievement of choristers ($n = 77$) from two suburban high schools. Using a matched group design, participants were assigned one of three groups: those who viewed feedback following their initial attempt, those who viewed feedback following their follow-up attempt, and those who did not view any feedback. Over a period of five weeks, choristers engaged in weekly sight-singing assessment sessions where they sight-sang a melody, reviewed that melody for 90 seconds, then

sang that melody again. Results determined that while students made significant improvements on a melody following a sight-singing attempt, those improvements were not affected by feedback condition. These findings suggest that though feedback may be an important component in the development of sight-singing skills, the computerized feedback provided in this study was no more effective than receiving no feedback at improving sight singing achievement. Furthermore, students were unable to transfer learning from practice with a click track and note indicator to performance without these features so teachers should design summative assessments to match the task presented during formative assessments. This technology may be best utilized to supplement sight-singing instruction but is unlikely to supplant the work of a quality teacher.



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Singers' Responses to Congruent and Incongruent Verbal and Nonverbal Instructions

Melissa Grady, Jeremy Manternach, Melissa Brunkan, and Jessica Napoles

Volume 13, pages 125–137

The purpose of this study was to examine collegiate singers' sung responses to and perceptions of congruent and incongruent verbal and nonverbal instructions. Research questions included: (1) To what extent do singers perform dynamics differently when provided with verbal instructions or conducting gestures?, (2) When presented with incongruent messages, will singers respond better to verbal instructions or conducting gestures?, and (3) What do participant comments reveal about their perceptions of the task? Four choirs sang while watching a stimulus video of a conductor showing two different conducting gestures (crescendo for the first four measures followed by a decrescendo for the last four measures, or the reverse) while singing a familiar tune ("Long, Long Ago"). In one condition, videos included written/spoken instructions for singers to crescendo then decrescendo at the same time as the conductor (a congruent message). In the other condition, written/spoken instructions were the opposite (an incongruent message). We subsequently analyzed the sound pressure level (dB SPL) at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the sung excerpt. Results indicated that the choirs tended to follow the verbal instructions, getting louder when instructed to crescendo and getting quieter when instructed to decrescendo. Additionally, the average dynamic contrast was significantly greater during the congruent conditions compared to the incongruent conditions (7.32 dB SPL and 4.71 dB SPL, respectively). This finding provides evidence that when nonverbal cues (conducting gestures) are aligned with verbal instructions, choirs show more of the requested dynamic level. □

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