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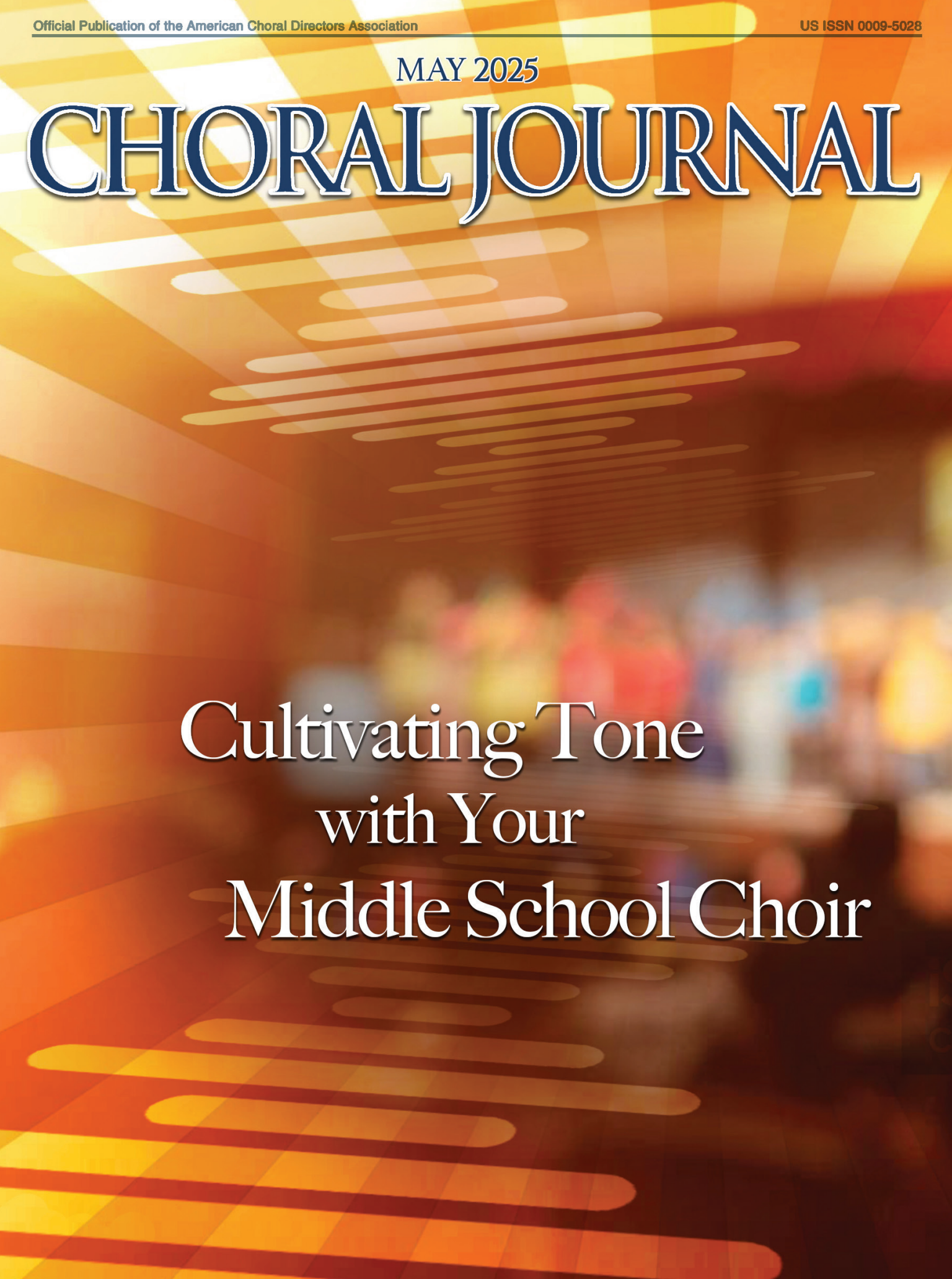

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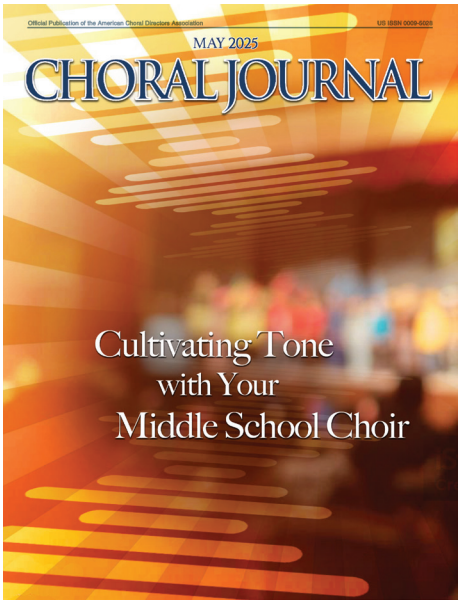

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ADVOCACY STATEMENT

The human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself and its place in the world through the study of and participation in choral music. Singing in a choir produces more active and involved citizens. It affects self-worth in youth and adults. It builds connectivity throughout communities. Society benefits from the aesthetic beauty and community of singers created by choral programs within schools, houses of worship, and community organizations through involved citizenry, connectivity throughout communities, and feelings of personal self-worth. The American Choral Directors Association and its membership resolve to ensure the survival of choral programs for this and future generations by:

Actively voicing support for funding at local, state, and national levels of education and government; collaborating with local and national organizations to ensure the distribution of arts funding data and arts-related activism opportunities; advocating for full access to choral singing and inclusion of all singers in a choral program; and ensuring the distribution of advocacy statements and data regarding choral programs.

From the **Executive Director**

Robyn Hilger

Finding Our Voice in Uncertain Times

Who would have thought that after enduring the COVID-19 pandemic we might find ourselves in a world that feels more uncertain than ever? Just as things were starting to stabilize and return more to normal, the future, personally and professionally, is elusive for many in our choral community. Regardless of our personal political views, we all must recognize that we are in a time of deep change in our country, and we would be foolish to think that our special choral world will be untouched. Rather than being overwhelmed by these changes, we also must remember something fundamental: choral music has always been a source of strength, resilience, and unity. Nothing has or is changing about these fundamental things.

Throughout history, choral music has endured, transcending borders, political turmoil, and societal upheaval. We have a very recent example with COVID-19 that shows us our power to persevere, pivot, endure, and succeed! Quite frankly, we know how to do this work under massive pressure and against all odds.

The essence of choral singing is in the act of listening. We listen to each other, adjusting and adapting, ensuring that every voice has a place. In a time when so many feel unheard, our ability to model collaboration, respect, and shared purpose is more vital than ever. This is not just about music—it is about community, about finding common ground through harmony, about reminding people that even in discord, resolution is possible. Choral music has been a refuge in times of crisis, a rallying cry for justice, and a balm for the soul in moments of loss. It is an art form that brings diverse voices together—not to compete, but to collaborate, to create something greater than any single individual can achieve alone.

Our association remains steadfast in our mission to serve and uplift through choral music. We are committed to providing spaces for singers of all backgrounds and abilities, ensuring that choral music remains accessible, relevant, and powerful. We will continue to support our members, advocate for the arts, and celebrate the transformative power of song.

To our choral community: You are not alone. The music we make together has endured for centuries, and it will continue to thrive, no matter the challenges ahead. As long as there are voices willing to sing, there will be hope, there will be connection, and there will be a future where harmony prevails.

Let us keep singing.

Robyn Hilger

From the **President**

David Fryling

Choral conducting can be a profoundly fulfilling pursuit—but it can also be an isolating one. Whether we lead large community choirs, school ensembles, or faith-based groups, much of our work happens in rehearsal rooms, where we are looked to as the singular musical leader. We pour our energy into crafting meaningful musical experiences for others, yet we often navigate the challenges of leadership, sustainability, and creative inspiration on our own.

On top of this inherent isolation, many of us face increasing challenges in sustaining our organizations. Funding, recruitment, and audience engagement require more than just musical expertise—they demand strategic vision, collaboration, and resilience. The good news? We don't have to do this alone.

This month features two articles from our Repertoire & Resources chairs in Lifelong Singing (Jack Cleghorn) and Community Choirs (Matt Hill) that address these issues head on. Matt reminds us that building meaningful connections—both with fellow conductors and with professionals outside our immediate field—can be a game-changer for our longevity and success. Collegial relationships provide not only emotional support but also fresh ideas, collaborative opportunities, and a broader perspective on our shared mission. Jack reminds us that by forging partnerships within our community, we amplify our impact and create stronger, more sustainable artistic communities.

One of the best ways to cultivate these connections is through the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). With state, regional, and national events, ACDA provides numerous opportunities to meet like-minded professionals who understand both the joys and the struggles of choral leadership. Check the March/April issue of the *Choral Journal* for a listing of summer programs—some of which may speak directly to your current needs. Attending these programs not only fosters professional growth but also reinforces the sense of community that sustains us.

Another way to engage with your choral network is to contribute your own insights. Calls for sessions for the 2026 regional conferences are available on region conference websites—why not submit a proposal? Your experiences, solutions, and challenges could be invaluable to others in our field. Sharing knowledge strengthens our collective wisdom and ensures that we continue growing together. It all (once again) comes back to Community. The road of a choral conductor need not be a solitary one. By prioritizing connection, we create a network of support that enriches both our music and our lives and elevates our impact as musicians, organizational leaders, and mentors to each next generation.

From the **Editor**

Amanda Bumgarner

Judging from the posts I see on social media, middle school choir directors have some of the funniest student stories and quotes. They also have the seemingly monumental task of teaching and conducting middle school singers. This month's cover article by Karen Graffius explores the topic of cultivating tone with a middle school choir. She shares the results of a survey with choral adjudicators "regarding their opinion of the importance of criteria for judging the quality of a choral performance … in order of most to least important: diction, ensemble, interpretation, other factors, pitch, rhythm, and tone." A sample evaluation rubric for use with students is also provided.

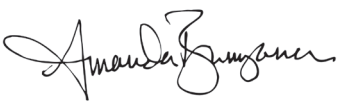
Next, Katie Gardiner's article, "A Conductor's Guide to the Music of Hildegard von Bingen," is adapted from her dissertation on the same topic, which won ACDA's Julius Herford Dissertation Prize in 2021. The article "surveys the current types of notation and editions available for the music of Hildegard von Bingen, describes the challenges and benefits associated with each resource, and provides information on performance practice."

Co-authors Kyra Stahr and McKenna Stenson write about the challenges that face women choral conductors and focus on two research questions: 1) What barriers currently prevent women from opportunities in choral conducting? and 2) How can we develop systems and communities of support to help women choose a career in choral music and stay in the field?

This issue also includes articles from the Repertoire & Resources chairs for lifelong choirs and community choirs. Read abstracts from Volume 12 of *The International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* and find the entire archive online at acda.org/ijrcs. Finally, there is a book review column, and Jeffery Wall shares connections between Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and choral music.

In association news, don't miss information on the next International Conductors Exchange Program (ICEP), which will be taking place with Portugal in 2026, and a call for nominations for this year's Julius Herford Dissertation Prize. There is also a call for members for ACDA's Standing Committee for Research & Publications.

The 2025 editorial calendar is filling up, and I invite you to consider an article submission. If you have feedback on these or any other articles in *Choral Journal*, send a Letter to the Editor to: abumgarner@acda.org.



2024 JULIUS HERFORD PRIZE

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Each year the Julius Herford Prize Subcommittee of the Research and Publications Committee 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," etc. The submitted projects are evaluated entirely blind with regard to dissertator, assisting faculty, institution, or any other identifying material, by an unpaid panel of choral conductor-scholars.

When a dissertation may be nominated: The year 2024 indicates the year in which the relevant doctoral degree was conferred. Dissertations must be nominated in the calendar year following the year in which the degree was conferred. The prize is awarded in the calendar year following the year of nomination. Thus, the dissertation of a student with a 2024 degree can be nominated through June 10, 2025; the prize will be awarded at a 2026 ACDA regional conference.

The award: The winner will receive a $1000 cash prize and a plaque. The committee reserves the right to award two prizes or no prizes in any given year.

Nomination Requirements and Procedure:

1. An institution may submit only one document for that year's prize. In the event that there are two nominations of equal merit from one school, the letter from the Dean, Director, or Chair of the music school (described below) must justify the additional nomination. The submitting faculty member, institution, and/or the writer must be currently a member of ACDA in good standing.

2. Links to the nomination form and instructions for uploading the dissertation are found on the prize webpage: visit acda.org; under "About," select "Award & Competitions." OR, visit https://forms.gle/2MUmUmCxuRw7a3J7A.

The nomination form will require the following uploads:

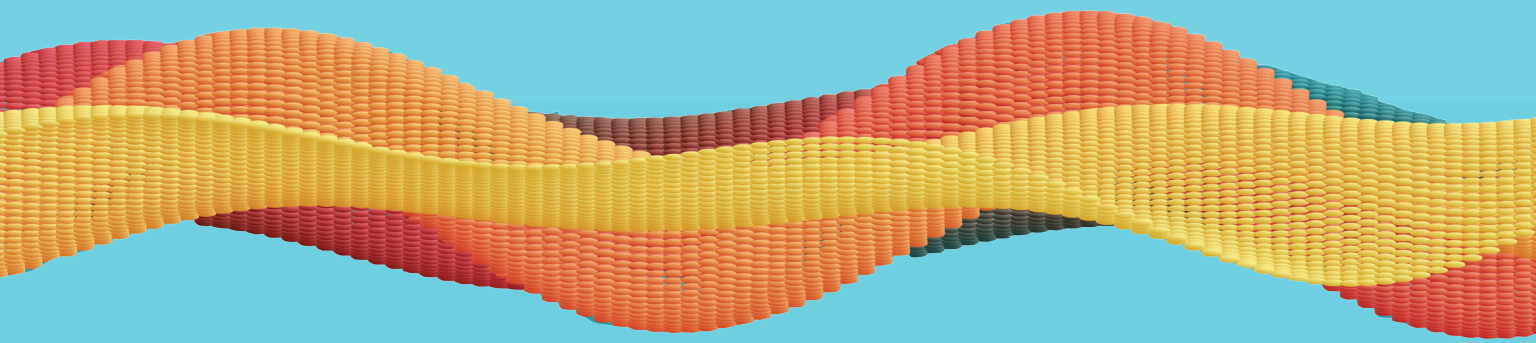
- PDF abstract of the dissertation WITHOUT any material identifying the student, faculty, or institution.
- PDF title page of the dissertation WITH identifying information, including the dissertator's name and institution.
- PDF of a signed letter from the dean, director, or chair of the music school of recommendation. Letters from the chair of the choral area are not acceptable. The letter must include the following: (1) the full name of the student, (2) the year in which that student's degree was granted, and (3) the full title of the dissertation.
- PDF page with contact information (full name, title, mailing address, email address, telephone number) for (1) the faculty member making the submission and (2) the dissertation author.
- PDF of the complete dissertation WITHOUT any material identifying the student, faculty, or institution. The information can be removed or blacked out.

3. **The dissertation and all accompanying materials must be uploaded by June 10, 2025, noon CST. If one or more of these requirements is not met, the dissertation will be eliminated from consideration.**

Questions? Amanda Bumgarner, Publications Editor, abumgarner@acda.org

Cultivating Tone with Your Middle School Choir

KAREN GRAFFIUS



Karen Graffius, PhD
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Listening to a choir sing with a beautiful tone can be an extremely satisfying and aesthetically rewarding experience. A strong choral program consisting of high-quality performances can contribute to community and administrative support and serves as advocacy for the choral program. Achieving a good choral tone, however, can be challenging. Especially with middle school choirs, it can be easy to make excuses and give in to the rationalization of "well, that's just how they sound." Helping your middle school

choir develop a good tone can be a daunting task, but it is a challenge well worth the time and effort needed to be successful.

Every choral director has their own idea and philosophy about what constitutes a "good" choral tone or sound. There is variance among choral directors about vocal color, bright versus dark, and straight tone versus vibrato. Additionally, many directors will have their choirs alter or modify their tone based on the performance practice or style of the song being performed. In *Teaching Choral Music*, Don Collins writes, "On several aspects of choral sound, however, most directors agree. Directors want to avoid a breathy sound. They want the pitches to be in tune, the tone to be free, vital (at least to some degree), and supported, and the words to be uniformly pronounced."[1] This article will address several strategies for helping your middle school choir develop a healthy and pleasing choral tone. While the middle school choir is the intended focus as the author's area of experience and expertise, these strategies may also be useful for conductors of elementary and high school choirs.

Choral Tone as a Priority for Performance

In the fall of 2023, I surveyed Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) choral adjudicators regarding their opinion of the importance of criteria for judging the quality of a choral performance. The survey asked respondents to rank seven criteria from the GMEA Choral Large Group Evaluation form in order of most to least important: diction, ensemble, interpretation, other factors, pitch, rhythm, and tone.[2]

Forty-one participants were first asked if they give all seven criteria the same weight when adjudicating a choral ensemble. (This question was necessary due to the design of the adjudication instrument, which gives each criteria the same weight.) Sixteen responded "no" and were then asked to submit their rankings. Eight (50 percent) of the respondents marked tone as the most important criteria for evaluating choral performances, and five respondents (31.25 percent) marked tone as the second most important criteria for evaluating a choral performance (Table 1).

The twenty-five participants who indicated that they did give all seven criteria the same weight were asked to indicate which element should receive the most weight if the instrument was redesigned to give more weight to certain elements (Table 2 on the next page). Tone was selected as the element that should get the most weight by sixteen respondents (64 percent) and as the second most important element by five respondents (20 percent). When combining the results of both questions, twenty-four (58 percent) ranked tone as the most important criteria for evaluating choral performances and ten (24 percent) ranked tone as the second most important component for evaluating choral performances. These results seem to support the importance

Table 1. Element rankings for adjudicators who do not give equal weight to all elements

You indicated that you **do not** give all 7 elements of the performance criteria the same weight in the overall score. Please rank the performance criteria with 1 being the element you think should get the most weight in the overall score and 7 being the element you think should get the least weight in the overall score.

Field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Diction	3	2	1	6	3	1	0	16
Ensemble	0	0	3	3	6	4	0	16
Interpretation	0	0	1	2	3	10	0	16
Other Factors	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	16
Pitch	5	7	1	1	2	0	0	16
Rhythm	0	2	8	3	2	1	0	16
Tone	8	5	2	1	0	0	0	16

of developing good choral tone as a priority for choral performances, specifically when considering choirs who may be judged at festivals or other music association performances.

When I began my career as a middle school choral director, I knew that middle school choirs could achieve a beautiful tone, but I wasn't sure how to make that happen. After attending workshops and conferences and working with veteran directors, I soon found improvement in the choirs' tone by focusing my instruction in a few areas. Integrating these strategies into your teaching may help your choir as well. The following eight strategies are discussed along with suggestions for implementation into lessons and rehearsals:

- Warm up your singers every day.
- Insist on good posture.
- Practice breathing exercises.
- Work on resonance and placement.
- Give significant attention to uniform vowel shape.
- Incorporate consistent sight-reading and ear-training practice.
- Avoid overuse of the chest or belt voice.
- Provide good choral models.

Table 2. Adjudicator element rankings if the scoring instrument included variable weights assigned to elements

You indicated that you **do** give all seven elements of the performance criteria the same weight in the overall score. If the scoring instrument was designed to give more weight to certain elements, please rank the performance criteria with 1 being the element you think should get the most weight in the overall score and 7 being the element you think should get the least weight in the overall score.

Field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Diction	2	3	5	10	1	4	0	25
Ensemble	2	1	3	6	8	5	0	25
Interpretation	1	1	2	2	7	12	0	25
Other Factors	0	0	0	0	0	1	24	25
Pitch	4	13	5	3	0	0	0	25
Rhythm	0	2	8	3	8	3	1	25
Tone	16	5	2	1	1	0	0	25

One.
Warm Up Your Singers Every Day

As singers enter the chorus room each day, they are coming from a variety of activities. Most have been using their speaking voice, and some may be coming from physical education classes or recess where they were using their "outside" voices or even yelling. According to Michele Holt and James Jordan, "The primary role of the warm-up is to provide a transition from vocalism for speaking to vocalism for singing."[3] Additionally, most adolescent students do not take private voice lessons. The choral director serves as the director of choirs and the voice coach, and teaching healthy vocal technique is an important part of the warm-up. The warm-up also helps singers find the mental focus needed to contribute to a successful rehearsal.

In *Choral Music Methods and Materials*, Barbara Brinson and Steven Demorest explain, "The entire sequence of warm-ups should take from eight to twelve minutes."[4] Adherence to a warm-up sequence—which could include relaxation through stretching, posture, breathing, and resonance and placement exercises—will ease the burden of planning the warm-up and ensure that important vocal concepts are being taught.[5] There are many excellent sources for warm-up exercises, and several are discussed later, in addition to a section of "Suggested Resources" at the conclusion of this article.

It is also important to customize warm-up exercises to address specific problem areas in the repertoire being rehearsed. For example, extract the rhythm of a particularly challenging phrase and have the singers speak, clap, or perform the rhythm on a unison repeated pitch before encountering it in the score. If the soprano section has to sing a difficult interval in a high tessitura in one of the selections being rehearsed, create an exercise based on that interval beginning on a lower pitch level and moving gradually up to the pitches in the selection.

Initial exercises should begin in a comfortable key. Tonalities beginning on e, e♭, or f work well for middle school students. (These exercises can be sung an octave apart: e3 or 4, e♭3 or 4, or f3 or 4.) I found the beginning pitches e4, e♭4, and f4 to be especially appropriate for male singers moving through the voice change who have begun singing down the octave. Treble voices may immediately engage the chest or belt voice when beginning on lower pitches such as c4 or d4. They may then carry the weight of the chest voice to the higher registers, causing vocal strain and bad intonation. Take care to warm up the mid-range of the voice first before moving to the extreme high and low ranges. It is important that directors listen carefully to their choirs as they move through the warm-up exercises and correct any issues that arise, such as vocal strain or incorrect vowel formation.

Two.
Insist on Good Posture

Good singing posture does not come naturally to most singers, and this can be especially true for adolescents, who often develop slumped posture with the heavy use of electronic devices. Citing Brinson and Demorest again, "Good posture is the most basic tool for correct singing. Because the body serves as a musical instrument, students should be taught that the way they hold their bodies will affect the sound they can produce."[6] Directors must teach their singers the most physically efficient way to stand and sit for singing.

When standing, the body should be aligned with a raised rib cage and lifted sternum, and the shoulders down and relaxed. The head should be relaxed with the chin parallel to the floor. The feet should be about shoulder-width apart, and some singers may prefer having one foot in front of the other to help with balance. When sitting, singers should be reminded to keep the rib cage raised with their backs away from the chair. Legs should not be crossed; feet should be flat on the floor. The music should be held in front of the body without the elbows or arms touching the legs.

Incorporate strategies and cues to help remind your singers about posture. This can be verbal, such as simply saying, "Posture check!" A nonverbal cue could be holding up two fingers and pointing them down in the palm of the other hand (sitting) or next to the palm of the other hand (standing). Posture assessments can help develop good posture habits. Incorporate posture observation quizzes. Keep a seating chart at the podium

or piano and place tally marks next to singers' names when you see them with incorrect posture. Each tally mark or collection of marks could be a certain number of points off their grade. These assessments can be announced or unannounced, with unannounced assessments being especially effective. If students are unaware of which day (or week) you are observing their posture for a grade, they may be more inclined to consistently exhibit correct posture, which may in turn promote good posture habits. Posture observation quizzes are standard-based and are an alternative assessment to participation-based grades prohibited in some school systems.

Three. Practice Breathing Exercises

Establishing correct breathing habits should occur immediately after establishing an efficient singing posture. As Robert Garretson says, "[Correct breathing] is necessary to ensure the steady flow of the breath to the vocal cords and is fundamental to both tone quality and tone control."[7] As with posture, good breathing techniques are not natural for most singers, so it is important to include at least one breathing exercise in the daily warm-up routine. There are many excellent sources for breathing exercises, including *The Breathing Gym* by Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan. Of particular note are the exercises that mirror phrasing used in singing. It is also helpful to have your singers phonate (produce vocal sounds) while practicing breathing. Lip trills can be a helpful way to begin phonation in the warm-up process, and the gradual release of air while performing the trills helps to develop good breath support.

Other beneficial exercises include instructing singers to inhale for a slow count to four, then count sing to eight on a unison pitch or chord without taking a breath. The count singing can be increased to twelve, sixteen, or twenty. Adolescent singers will enjoy singing patterns or short songs on one breath such as the exercise in Figure 1. Have singers sing the exercise as written then add a repetition of measure two each subsequent time it is sung. As with the count singing exercise, it is important to encourage singers to not "squeeze" out the tone if they begin running out of breath. Lack of airflow during phonation will cause the vocal cords to close. Trying to phonate with closed vocal folds may result in vocal cord strain.

Four. Work on Vocal Resonance and Placement

Resonance can be difficult to define and understand. Brenda Smith and Robert Thayer Sataloff describe it in this way:

> Resonance for singing occurs when the sound waves produced in the vocal mechanism travel through the high structures of the vocal tract. The resonators (the pharynx, the oral cavity, and the nasal cavities) work together to shape the acoustical properties from the frequencies set forth by the vocal folds (voice source signal).[8]

Simply put, resonance is an amplification of the sound as it moves from the larynx into the throat and mouth area (Figure 2 on the next page). Middle school students might understand resonance as "a way to be heard clearly without trying to sing louder." Two focal areas when working toward more resonance are creat-

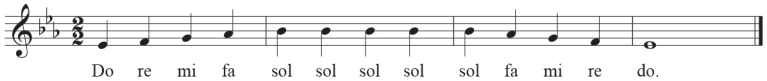

Figure 1

ing space within the soft palate area and placement of the sound to create a "buzz." The roof of the mouth consists of both the hard and soft palates. The soft palate can be found by running the tongue along the roof of the mouth toward the back of the oral cavity until it reaches the softer tissue. This might be an effective way for singers to find their soft palates.

One mistake that many choral directors make is to ask students to "drop your jaw" or "open your mouth wider" in order to create more space. Try it yourself. Drop your jaw by placing two fingers between your teeth. You will easily observe that this causes jaw tension, restricts the pharyngeal area, and does not create the desired space in the soft palate area. A better strategy for creating more space might be to ask singers to feel as if they are about to yawn or experience a "happy surprise." Caution singers to refrain from pulling their tongues back and down when raising the soft palate. Have them imitate you as you speak "aw" in the upper register and then slide down. Speak using your "queen" or "Mrs. Doubtfire" voice and have singers imitate as you say, "Oh my, what a lovely day," "Helloooo," or "How are you today?" Transfer this to singing using a simple melodic pattern such as the one indicated in Figure 3. Have students use movement, such as arching their hands near the eyes and moving them downward or placing their cupped hands near their waists and raising and lowering their hand following the contour of the exercise.

Vocal exercises using "ming," "zing," "meow," "nyah," and "hmm" will help singers learn to feel the "buzz." These can all be sung on descending patterns, stepwise sol to do (5 to 1), or by skips sol-mi-do (5-3-1). A variation is included in Figure 4. Add movement to help students feel the buoyancy of the exercises and to engage the body. Have them pantomime tossing a ball from hand to hand or ringing a doorbell using alternating index fingers.

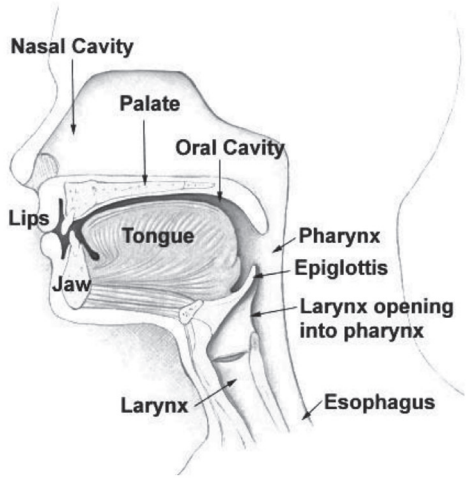

Figure 2. Head & Neck Overview. National Cancer Institute. SEER Training Modules. https://training.seer.cancer.gov/head-neck/anatomy/overview.html

Five. Give Significant Attention to Uniform Vowel Shapes

Uniform vowels that are tall and spacious lead to optimal tone and a unified and blended sound. It is important for singers to "buy in" to the effort needed to create beautiful vowels. Ask for two volunteers. On a unison pitch, have one singer sing an "ah" vowel that sounds more like "uh," and have the other sing an elongated "ah" vowel moving toward "aw." Ask the class

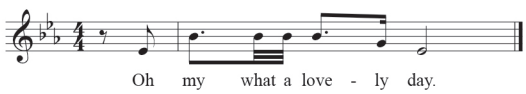

Figure 3

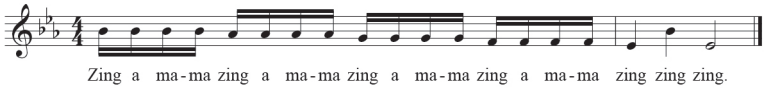

Figure 4

to listen. Have the volunteers sing again, both demonstrating the "uh" and "ah" vowels. This should help students hear and understand the importance of uniform and elongated vowels.

Use the warm-up to begin teaching correct vowel shapes. There are five basic vowels that should be practiced daily, and a commonly used sequence is "ee" /i/, "eh" /ɛ/, "ah" /ɑ/, "oh" /ɔ/, and "oo" /u/. This sequence moves the vowels from the most forward in the mouth to those that are in the back toward the throat. Use the hands and fingers to help reinforce the correct vowel shape. The /i/ and /ɛ/ vowels can be sung with the index fingers touching the corner of the mouth. This will help singers round the lips and helps prevent those vowels from becoming too strident or spread. Have singers touch the back of their hands to their cheekbones for the /ɑ/ vowel. This should help keep the sound more resonant as it is moving toward the middle of the mouth, and this movement also mimics the raised soft palate.

When singing /ɑ/, encourage singers to keep their tongues flat or relaxed, ensuring that the sides of the tongue are not touching the top teeth. For the /ɔ/ vowel, it might be helpful to have students use an index finger and make small circles in front of the lips. This will help to keep the lips rounded. Creating even more rounded lips for the /u/ vowel can be achieved by having singers pantomime pulling a piece of spaghetti out of their mouths. Remind everyone to keep the soft palate raised especially when singing the /i/ and /u/ vowels. Singers tend to equate more closed lips with less internal mouth space, and that dampens their sound. Figure 5 includes examples of typical vowel exercises.

Extract words from songs being rehearsed and create exercises for use in the warm-up. Daily practice of these words out of the context of the song will help create good habits that should transfer to the song. The exercise in Figure 6 incorporates words extracted from Laura Farnell's *Sing with the Lark*. The exercise is written in the key of A♭ to conform to the key of the song. Ask students to sing the exercise (or one you create from current literature) and instruct them on the proper vowel shape. Record the class and have them evaluate. You can also have sections sing alone and let the other sections evaluate.

Six.
Consistent Ear Training and Sight-Reading Practice

Intonation affects tone, so consistent work on developing pitch accuracy will certainly help to improve tone. Teaching the choir to sight-read helps them learn repertoire quicker and will give the director even more time to work on tone within the rehearsal. Many directors prefer to place ear training and sight-reading work at the beginning of the rehearsal and include it as part of the warm-up routine. Another suggestion is to relate these exercises to the repertoire being rehearsed and place them before the rehearsed song.

My middle-school colleagues and I had many discussions about the advantages of one method of sight-reading over another. Most of us used either movable "do" or numbers. In moveable "do," the scale degrees from 1 to 8 are assigned the pitch syllables "do,"

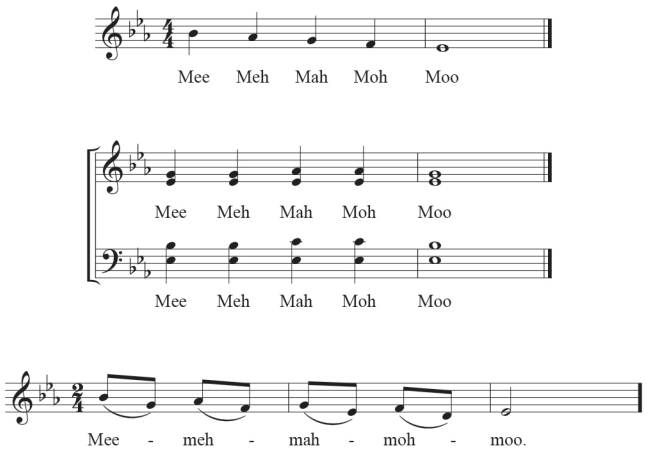

Figure 5

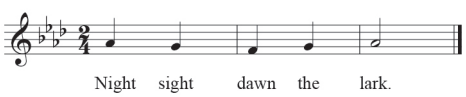

Figure 6

"re," "mi," "fa," "sol," "la," "ti," and "do," referred to as "solfège." "Do" is the tonic, or first scale degree for the key represented by the key signature. The number system is similar but with the use of numbers for the scale degrees rather than syllables. Steven Demorest explains:

> The primary criticism of numbers as compared to moveable "do" is singability. While numbers represent the same relationships as solfège syllables, the vowel-consonant combinations are harder to sing; three instead of mi, four and five instead of fa-sol, and the most difficult, se-ven—two syllables for a single note.[9]

When surveying choral directors about their preferred method of teaching pitch reading, two studies found that movable "do" was the most used system.[10]

Very few students will enter the chorus room with perfect pitch. Before beginning any sight-reading activities from notation, it is important to spend time helping students hear pitch and solidifying their intonation. With inexperienced singers, start with portions of the diatonic scale and have students echo sing three- to five-note melodic idioms. Introduce the Curwen hand signs and have students echo sing and sign simultaneously. Incorporate exercises such as "Follow the Hand" in which students sing the pitches you sign. Continue this process until the entire scale can be sung in tune and a cappella. Next, have students sing from a pitch ladder (Figure 7) as you point to notes of the scale. Continue encouraging everyone to sign as they sing. Begin with stepwise movement only and gradually remove the solfège "words" or numbers from the visual. When the singers have mastered singing the scale using solfège (or numbers) without the written words, transfer the scale to standard notation (Figure 8). Point to pitches from the notated scale, have students sing using numbers or solfège, and then add short sight-reading exercises, such as those in Figure 9.

Over time, add longer and more challenging exercises in various keys, transferring to standard rhythmic notation. Before beginning any new melodic concept (such as singing skips), revert to echo singing, singing from the pitch ladder or notated scale, and playing "Follow the Hand" before introducing the new concept into sight-reading exercises. The introduction of singing the natural minor and chromatic scales should come when students have mastered the diatonic scale. Daily singing of the scales will greatly improve intonation. Directors uncomfortable with teaching sight-singing might find published sequential methods helpful, and several are included in "Suggested Resources."

Seven.
Avoid Overuse of the Chest or Belt Voice

In unchanged voices,[11] the chest voice is the lower range of the voice and typically the voice used when

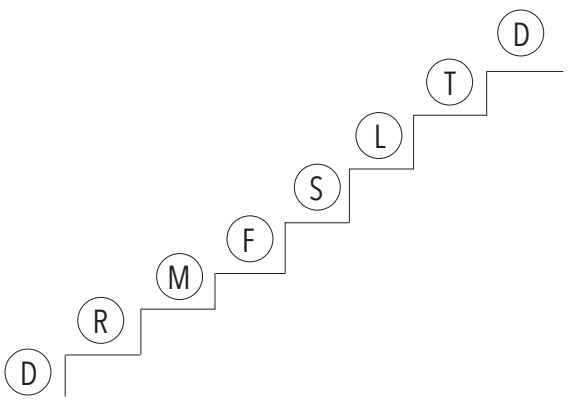

Figure 7

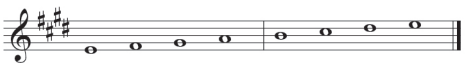

Figure 8

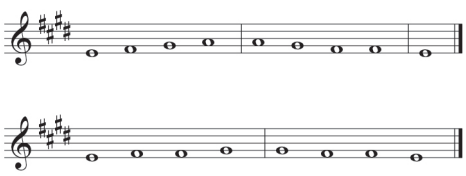

Figure 9

speaking. In changed male voices, the chest voice is the typical singing voice. One common habit among unchanged adolescent singers is to extend the chest voice into the range of the head voice. This is referred to as "belting" and may be a result of the vocal style heard in popular music. According to Kenneth Sipley, "Adopting popular singers as vocal models can have serious consequences for the young singer. It will have the immediate effect of limiting vocal range and the types of music the student can sing."[12] Although some young adolescents can belt with a healthy technique, the louder tones associated with chest/belt voice singing usually do not blend well in choral singing. Helping students develop their head voice using straw phonation (closing the lips around a straw while humming or performing an /u/), lip trills, and the above-mentioned resonance-building exercises will aid young singers in connecting the chest voice to the head voice and developing a more mixed vocal tone.

Straw phonation and lip trills are semi-occluded vocal tract exercises. According to Jeremy Manternach, Lynn Maxfield, and Matthew Schloneger, "All of these exercises create a narrowing and/or lengthening in the vocal tract—the space between the vocal folds (a.k.a. vocal cords) and the exit of the mouth or nose. That narrowing creates an increase in pressure in the vocal tract."[13] This increased pressure helps the vocal cords function more efficiently and can benefit the entire range of the voice. Additionally, have singers perform vocal slides or glissandos beginning in the upper range, encouraging them to ease into their chest voice. Changed-voice singers or those working through the change will benefit from these exercises as well. Encourage them to begin the higher exercises in their falsetto, easing into their chest voice.

Those singers who come from a heavy background in theater or pop singing may have trouble making the transition to a lighter vocal sound or may resist making any vocal technique changes. Educating students about the voice, the benefits of efficient, healthy singing, and providing them with good choral models (discussed in number eight) should help. Proper voice placement of these singers in the choir may also help with choral blend and tone. Rather than having them sing alto, which is a typical placement for belt singers, experiment with soprano. This may prevent them from engaging the belt voice and may help develop their head voices. If these singers resist singing soprano, be sure to include a lot of vocal exercises for the whole choir that extend the upper range. Choose at least one selection per concert in which the altos and sopranos switch parts and/or have them switch parts frequently when sight-reading. Make certain not to place belt voice singers next to each other in the rehearsal/performance arrangement. These singers, who likely do not blend well, may be best placed toward the back of the choir. To help mask their tone quality, put singers who have a more lyrical sound in front of them.

Eight. Provide Positive Choral Models

For young singers to fully understand good choral tone, they need to hear it. It can also be beneficial to have students listen to choirs whose tone is not optimal. Playing only the audio of these examples will prevent students from ridiculing other choirs and will ensure they are listening to the singing and not evaluating what they see. Have students complete an evaluation as they are listening. An example rubric is included in Table 3 on the next page. The use of a three-level rating will be easier for beginner singers and will help them stay focused. Extend the rubric to five levels for more advanced singers. If you choose to show videos, adding "Posture" as one of the criteria might be helpful. Before asking singers to individually evaluate choirs, they should have experience listening followed by group discussions and evaluations. Recording your choirs and having singers evaluate their own singing is certainly beneficial and will help them in their quest to develop a beautiful tone quality.

Closing

Educating and training students to sing with a beautiful tone quality is challenging. It will take encouragement from you and time! In my years as a middle school choral director, I found it important to constantly review and re-teach all music concepts including vocal development and tone building. Bridget Sweet, in her book *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music in Middle School*

and Beyond, discusses the development of the adolescent brain and its retention of information:

> As musical ideas and concepts are introduced to our adolescent students, remember that the adolescent brain protects specific established neuronal connections that are accessed often and perceived as valuable. On the flipside, connections made but rarely accessed will most likely be pruned away by the brain to make room for more important neuronal connections. Again, if you don't use it, you lose it.[14]

Be firm and insist that students use solid posture, employ good breathing techniques, and form vowels correctly. Be persistent and continue using all these strategies consistently. Record a rehearsal at the beginning of the year and the end. This will validate what you are doing, and students will enjoy hearing their progress. CJ

Table 3. Choral Tone Evaluation Rubric

	Superior - 3	Good - 2	Poor - 1
Overall Beauty	The tone quality is beautiful throughout the entire performance.	The tone is generally good, but there are instances of a harsh, pushed, or strident tone quality throughout the entire performance.	There seems to be a lack of understanding of good choral tone, creating an unpleasant sound throughout the entire performance.
Intonation	The choir performs in tune throughout the entire performance.	The choir performs mostly in tune, but there are many instances in which good intonation suffers.	There is a complete lack of a tonal center throughout the performance.
Breath Support	The choir sings with appropriate phrasing throughout the entire performance, demonstrating superior breath support.	There are some instances in which the phrasing is inappropriate, indicating a lapse in good breath support.	There are numerous instances in which the phrasing is inappropriate, indicating major lapses in good breath support.
Vowels	The choir sings with elongated and consistent vowels throughout the entire performance.	There are some instances of incorrect vowel shapes in the performance.	There seems to be no evidence of attention to appropriate and uniform vowel shapes.
Choral Blend	The choir sings with a beautiful blend with no individual voices heard throughout the entire performance.	There are some instances in which individual voices can be heard above others.	There seems to be no evidence of attention to choral blend, as many individual voices can be heard throughout the performance.

Suggested Resources

Albrecht, Sally K. *The Choral Warm-Up Collection: A Sourcebook of 167 Choral Warm-Ups Contributed by 51 Choral Directors* (Alfred Publishing, Co., Inc.), 2003.

Anderson, Dan. *Warm-ups for Changing Voices* (Hal Leonard, 2017).

Bauguess, David. *The Jenson Sight Reading Course* (Hal Leonard, 1984.).

Crocker, Emily. *Voice Builders for Better Choirs: A Complete Resource for Choral Directors* (Hal Leonard, 2002).

Dilworth, Rollo. *Choir Builders: Fundamental Vocal Techniques for Classroom and General Use* (Hal Leonard, 2006).

Duncan, Dale. *S-Cubed: Successful Sight Singing for Middle School Teachers.* https://inthemiddlewithmrd1.blogspot.com/.

Freer, Patrick K. *Getting Started with Middle School Chorus*, 2nd ed. (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2009).

Masterworks Press: Your Sight-Singing Solution (Masterworks Press, 1993).

Pilafian, Sam, and Patrick Sheridan. *The Breathing Gym* (Focus on Music, 2002).

Robinson, Russell, and Jay Althouse. *The Complete Choral Warm-Up Book: A Sourcebook for Choral Directors* (Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1998).

NOTES

[1] Don L. Collins, *Teaching Choral Music*, 2nd ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1999), 304.

[2] The survey was distributed to GMEA choral adjudicators in October and November 2023 to support the content of this article.

[3] Michele Holt and James Jordan, *The School Choral Program* (GIA Publications, Inc., 2008), 186.

[4] Barbara A. Brinson and Steven M. Demorest, *Choral Music Methods and Materials* (Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2014), 257.

[5] Brenda Smith and Robert Thayer Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy* (Singular Publishing Group, 2000), 109.

[6] Brinson and Demorest, *Choral Music Methods and Materials*, 144.

[7] Robert L. Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music.* 8th ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1998), 72.

[8] Smith and Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy*, 120.

[9] Steven M. Demorest, *Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

[10] Steven M. Demorest, "Choral Sight-Singing Practices: Revisiting a Web-Based Survey" *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* 2, no. 1 (2004): 5; Jane M. Kuehne, "A Survey of Sight-Singing Instructional Practices in Florida Middle School Choral Programs" *Journal of Research in Music Education* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 125.

[11] A full discussion of the adolescent changing voice is beyond the scope of this article. Readers interested in more information about the changing voice and working with middle school students in particular are encouraged to seek out resources such as: Patrick K. Freer, *Getting Started with Middle School Chorus* (Oxford University Press, 2009) or Don Collins, "The Cambiata Concept—More Than Just About Changing Voices" *Choral Journal* 23, no. 4 (1982).

[12] Kenneth Sipley, "Improving Vocal Self-Image and Tone Quality in Adolescent Girls: A Study" *Choral Journal* 35, no. 3 (October 1994): 35.

[13] Jeremy N. Manternach, Lynn Maxfield, and Matthew Schloneger, "Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract Exercises in the Choral Rehearsal: What's the Deal with the Straw?," *Choral Journal* 60, no. 4 (November 2019): 47.

[14] Bridget Sweet, *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music in Middle School and Beyond* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 14.

This image is an illumination from a transcription of Hildegard's *Liber Divinorum Operum*, one of her three extant theological works. The page shown here is from a manuscript that dates from 1210 to 1230 (restored in 1936); it is the only surviving transcription that contains illuminations. Image 252 of *The Book of Divine Works*, Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668244/), ms 1942, fol. 121v.

A Conductor's Guide to the Music of Hildegard von Bingen

KATIE GARDINER

Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) is a behemoth figure in the history of medieval Germany for her roles as seer, scientist, religious leader, writer, preacher, exorcist, playwright, naturalist, poet, and composer. She is extraordinary for the spiritual guidance she was able to provide to powerful religious and political leaders, as well as for her prolific creative, scientific, musical, and theological output. Preparing and performing Hildegard's music provides an ensemble with the opportunity to sing substantive, vocally demanding repertoire that has a unique texture and style and belongs to a different tradition than much of the repertoire performed by ensembles today. For the contemporary conductor, one of the primary challenges associated with this repertoire is deciding which notation and edition to use. This article surveys the current types of notation and editions available for the music of Hildegard von Bingen, describes the challenges and benefits associated with each resource, and provides information on performance practice with the aim of equipping ensemble leaders and singers with the tools to bring this repertoire to life.

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Hildegard and Her Music

Hildegard was the youngest of ten children, and at the age of eight she was promised as a tithe to God. She was chosen to serve as companion to Jutta von Sponheim (1092-1136), an ascetic woman who had resolved to live as an anchoress at the monastery of Disibodenberg. As anchoresses, the women vowed to withdraw from society to devote their lives to religious pursuits from within the confines of their affiliated community. The women were enclosed at Disibodenberg on November 1, 1112, at which point Hildegard was committed to a life of spiritual devotion.[1] After Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard, then thirty-eight years old, was unanimously elected to lead the growing community of women.

Hildegard's literary, artistic, and preaching work began once she was called to lead the nuns. During her lifetime she was highly respected and influential as a prolific writer and visionary. Remarkably, during a time when it was illegal for women to sermonize publicly, she led a series of preaching tours well into the final decade of her life. Hildegard died on September 17, 1179, at the age of eighty-two. After hundreds of years' worth of attempts, she was canonized on May 10, 2012, and made Doctor of the Church on October 7, 2012, being one of only four women to receive this distinction.

Hildegard's extant musical output comprises seventy-seven musical works (all but two with original poetry) and music for the spiritual drama *Ordo Virtutum*, amounting to the largest collection attributed to any single composer in the twelfth century.[2] Preparing and performing Hildegard's music is challenging yet deeply rewarding. Monophonic plainchant is an exciting and refreshing addition to a choral program in that it provides singers with the opportunity to perform music that is a different texture and style than much of the repertoire performed in high school, university, and community settings.

Hildegard's music is deeply expressive and thrilling to sing as an ensemble, particularly in regard to modality, technically demanding monophonic singing, and a vivid text/music connection. Contemporary musicians do not often have the opportunity to perform modal music, which has its own unique musical affects that are visceral for a singer to experience, ranging from devastatingly sad, to profoundly mystical, to exhilaratingly joyful. Unison singing is also important work for an ensemble. As William Mahrt asserts in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, "in unison, the singers can perfect elements of tuning, timbre, diction, rhythm, and expression in common."[3] In contrast to many chants in the Gregorian repertory, Hildegard's melodies exhibit a wide vocal range, sometimes spanning up to two octaves plus a fourth. The connection between text and music is an important feature of Hildegard's music. The *Symphonia* songs comprise Hildegard's own newly composed religious poetry, with the exceptions of the Kyrie and Alleluia. Hildegard's music, images, and poetry are interconnected in a holistic representation of the visions she experienced.[4] The act of singing was central to the lives of the monks and nuns practicing the Benedictine Rule, and Hildegard's music and texts were intended to be experienced by the singers with the intention of elevating one's own morality and experiencing the harmony of the universe.[5]

Three common notational possibilities exist for Hildegard's *Symphonia*: (1) the original twelfth-century Rhineland neumes, (2) Solesmes-style square-notation neumes, and (3) a modern transcription using some form of noteheads on a five-line staff. Each notational possibility involves positive elements as well as challenges. The manuscript sources have the benefit of being closest to the original creation but require a specialist's knowledge in reading the symbols. Standardized square-notation neumes can contain a wealth of performing practice information and may be more accessible to read than the manuscripts, but it may also be uncomfortable for those who do not consistently spend time in this notational world. Modern staff transcriptions are appealing in the clarity of pitch content, yet nuances of the neumes and the physical shape of the phrases that are inherent in neumatic notation, particularly in the expressive shapes of ornamental and compound neumes, can be lost in a modern transcription. A richer understanding of each resource and elements of performing practice of medieval plainchant may be helpful in assisting the director in learning and teaching this repertoire.

Twelfth-Century Rhineland Neumes[6]: Dendermonde and Riesencodex

Hildegard's *Symphonia* exists in two primary sources that include text and music known as the Dendermonde and Riesencodex.[7] The Dendermonde Codex was a gift to the monks of Villers from around 1175 and may have been copied under Hildegard's supervision.[8] Riesencodex is a large volume of Hildegard's collected works, likely produced in the scriptorium of the Rupertsberg cloister and presumably completed in the decades following her death.[9] Scholars have had access to high-quality digital images of the manuscripts since the 1990s.

The manuscripts are preserved in such excellent condition that images of the original notation constitute performable editions for those who read or are willing to learn how to interpret the notation and the text. Diastematic or "heightened" neumes (those written on a staff) indicate intervallic precision on a four-line staff that includes movable C-clef with a yellow line to mark the C line and a red line to mark the F line. An example of the clarity of image and notation in Riesencodex is provided in Figure 1. The Latin text often includes abbreviations and contractions that can be a challenge to one unfamiliar with the paleography of twelfth-century script.[10]

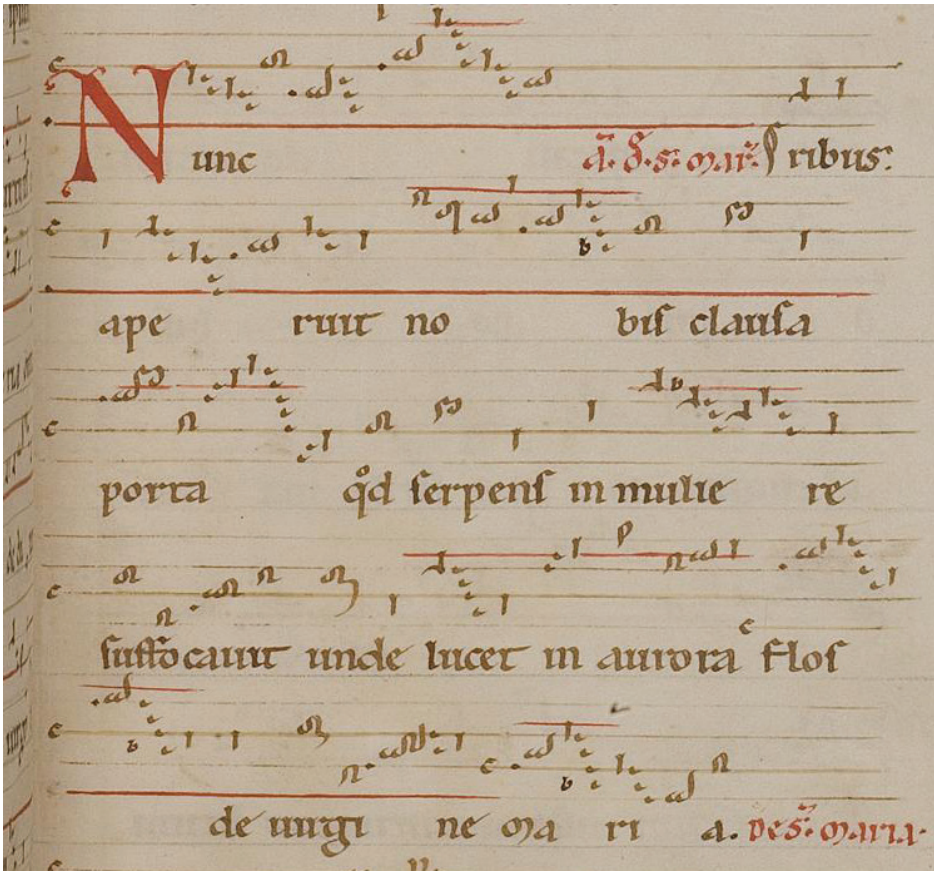


Figure 1. Hodie (Nunc) Aperuit, 476ra from Riesencodex. In Dendermonde and other sources, the first word is Hodie. Here in Riesencodex, the piece begins with the word Nunc. The text is below the staff and does not include hyphens between syllables of the same word. Note C-lines indicated with a letter and yellow line, F-lines with a red line, as well as the inclusion of a flat sign midway in the second system and at the beginning and middle of the last system. The smaller red text is an abbreviation indicating this is an antiphon to Mary. The text "-ribus" and rubric in the top right belong to the preceding piece.
Image used with permission, RheinMain University and State Library, ms. 2.

Square Chant Notation: Barth, Ritscher, and Schmidt-Görg's *Lieder*

Square-notation neumes represent a compilation of various medieval neumes standardized at the end of the nineteenth century through the work of monks at the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes in France. In 1969, two nuns from Eibingen Abbey in Rüdesheim am Rhein, Germany—Sister Pudentiana Barth and Sister M. Immaculata Ritscher—along with musicologist Dr. Joseph Schmidt-Görg transcribed Hildegard's *Symphonia* and her liturgical play, *Ordo virtutum,* into square notation. There is a beautiful 2012 publication by musicologist and Hildegard scholar Dr. Barbara Stühlmeyer based on the 1969 *Lieder* edition, which is an excellent resource for musicians (Figure 2).[11] Stühlmeyer's *Lieder* is a logical, organized, economical, and accessible printed work that would be a practical and highly recommended resource for those familiar with or interested in learning standard square notation.

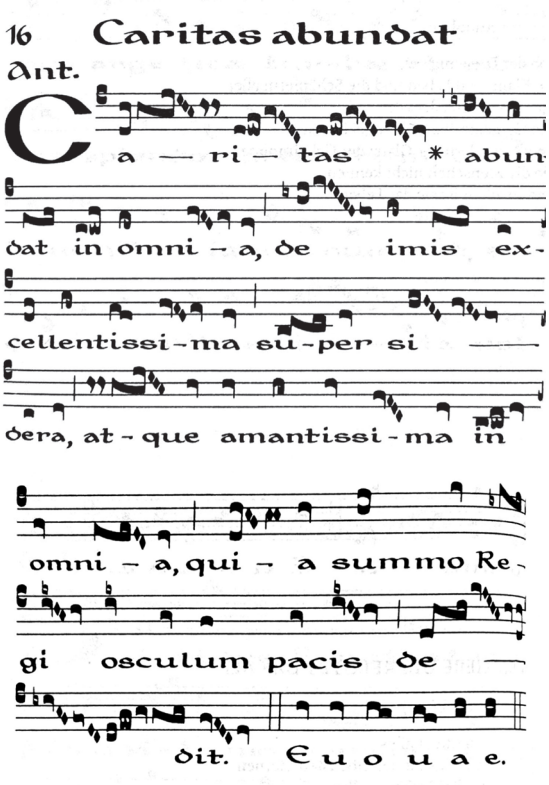


Figure 2. No. 16 *Caritas Abundat*, from Stühlmeyer's edition of Hildegard *Lieder* pp. 59–60. Used with kind permission.

In the *Lieder* editions, the neumatic notation is preserved and clearly legible, the use of standardized neumes may be more easily decipherable than the handwritten Rhineland neumes, and the pitches are printed clearly on the staff. The archaic script in the manuscript sources is replaced by traditional Latin spelling in a simple font. The use of standardized neumes maintains neume groupings, compound neumes, and ornamental neumes. Movable C and F clefs mark where the solfège syllables "doh" and "fah" occur and are used to indicate the mode the piece is in (based on final, range, and pitch organization) and may be moved on the staff to avoid extensive ledger lines. Other advantages to working with a *Lieder* edition includes the correction of suspected scribal errors in the manuscript[12] and the addition of breath marks, suggested ficta, and custodes (a little note at the end of a line indicating the next pitch) to aid the performer.

One challenge for non-German speakers is that the commentary and translations in both *Lieder* editions are in German. The most notable challenge in working with a *Lieder* edition is that it presumes an ability to read square notation. While this may be a deterrent to those who do not have training in this type of literacy, chant notation can be extremely accessible to a musician literate in modern notation. The preface to the *Liber Usualis* is still used in educational settings as a tool to learn to read chant notation.[13]

Modernized Transcription

Free editions of selections from *Symphonia* are available online. The International Studies of Hildegard von Bingen Website is a rich resource and, in addition to a wealth of information about Hildegard's works, includes pitch content, recordings, translations, and scholarly commentary on the poetry and music (for a musical example, see Figure 3 on the next page).[14] The complete *Symphonia* transcribed in modern notation by Dr. Marianne Richert Pfau is available through Hildegard Publishing. This collection comprises eight volumes and derivative octavos of selected sets and pieces. Each volume includes a transcription guide with a ta-

ble that provides the common name of the neume, the symbol in twelfth-century Rhineland neume notation on a four-line staff, and Pfau's corresponding transcription in modern notation on a five-line staff, as well as an introduction with commentary on the context and musical aspects of the individual pieces included in the set. The manuscript folio numbers for the music and the text are included within the collection below the title of the piece. Hildegard scholar Dr. Honey Meconi notes that Pfau's collection, while wonderfully accessible to modern musicians, does contain errors and transcribal inconsistencies.[15]

While a modern musician may feel more comfortable looking at familiar notation, modern transcriptions still present challenges to the performer. Whether using a free version online or purchasing the small volumes or individual octavos, the ensemble leader will have to communicate information regarding ornamental neumes and their execution to the ensemble. For this information, the ensemble leader may refer to the manuscripts or *Lieder* to easily identify the ornamental neumes. The front matter commentary prefacing the first and second volumes of Pfau's *Symphonia* collection provide rationalization for the symbols used in transcription and discuss the importance of the nuanced musical information the original neumes can provide.

Performance

There is frustratingly little primary source material available on the performance of medieval music in comparison to the treatises, testimonies, and artifacts available from other time periods. Scholars and performers can often only make informed guesses based on the limited information available about what the musical traditions occurring in a given geographical location were during a particular time throughout the roughly one thousand years that define what we describe as the medieval musical era. While many concrete answers are simply unavailable for vocal music of the Middle Ages, the following sections present some considerations for performance regarding medieval theory, rhythm, and ornamental neumes.

Medieval Theory for Performers

Medieval plainchant is based on a system of modality, which is defined by the final (generally the first or last note and resting tone in the piece) of a melody, the range of the music, and the patterns of tones and semitones within the collection. Medieval theoretical treatises classify modes by the name of the ordinal Greek number and are referred to as *protus* (D), *deuterus* (E), *tritus* (F) and *tetrardus* (G), sometimes without the clarification of authentic (generally final to final) or plagal (generally a fourth below to a fifth above the final), as we classify Renaissance music.[16] Modal identification not only signified to the performer the classification of final and range, but also melodic formulae that recur in pieces that share the same mode.[17] The extensive range involved in much of Hildegard's music and the use of finals other than D, E, F, and G (namely, a and c) can obfuscate modal classification within the system.

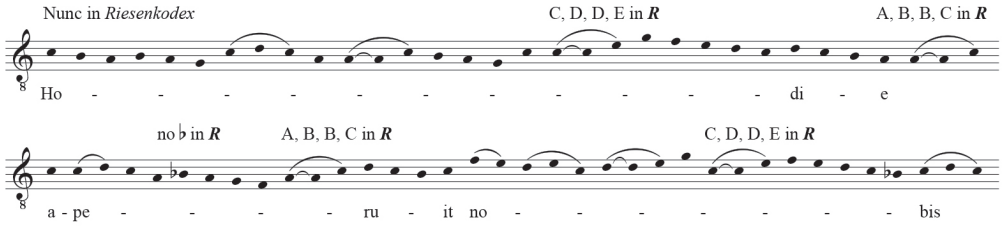


Figure 3. Hildegard of Bingen, *Hodie aperuit*, Antiphon, D. 154 v, R 467ra
from the International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies.
Transcription by Beverly R. Lomer

One of the challenges encountered in Hildegard's music as well as with other plainchant throughout the medieval era involves the use of either the pitch B♮ or B♭ when it is not clearly notated in a source.[18] There are some discrepancies between Dendermonde and Riesencodex where a flat sign is included in one manuscript and not with the corresponding pitch in the other source. The decision to include the B♭ where it is not notated but may possibly be included in practice can be based on the mode of the piece, comparison with other sources, and if a following B in question might be part of the same word, phrase, or musical gesture. If a flat sign occurs near a B, it may be applied at least to the closest B after it, and likely to any other B occurring on the same word, possibly the same stave, or within a similar melodic gesture.[19] The *Lieder* and Pfau editions include suggested *ficta* (an un-notated pitch that is not included in the manuscript but possibly included in performance based on the mode) above the staff.

Rhythm

The study of rhythm in plainchant presents complex issues for the performer. There is no medieval treatise that explicitly describes a discernible rhythmic system that would correspond with the clear system that defines pitch in treatises pertaining to chant notation.[20] There are generally two schools of thought in regard to interpretations of rhythm in the notation of chant, with a variety of gradations represented in derivative theories.[21] One philosophical school of plainchant rhythm is the "Equalist" style, also called the Solesmes style, which generally involves every pitch receiving a pulse. The second school of rhythmic theory, often referred to as "Mensurists," encompasses a spectrum of theories that map various mensural or fixed time values onto the neumatic notation.[22] Within the wide range of theories, there is some practical information that may be considered in application to Hildegard's music.

Eugène Cardine, a French plainchant scholar and one of the most important figures in the study of the Gregorian chant tradition, suggests approaching plainchant with a nuanced rhythmic interpretation based on text stress, with the first note of a neume group receiving stress in melismatic passages.[23] While Hildegard's plainchant is not a part of the Gregorian chant repertory, it is part of the same tradition of musical characteristics and notational practices. Willi Apel, author of the monumental text *Gregorian Chant*, recommends the performer consider deriving musical rhythm based on textual accent and a stress on the first note of each neume group, with subtle variations in speed based on the number of pitches in a neume grouping.[24] Apel explicitly states that he would not advocate for a strictly equalist performance of chant, which could sound unnatural, mechanical, and counterintuitive to the text.[25]

If one begins by interpreting each individual pitch as generally representing an eighth-note, as suggested in the *Liber Usualis*, the performer can then lengthen or shorten notes or syllables based on either the agogic accent or the neumatic symbol.[26] Cardine, Apel, and their fellow chant scholars David Hiley and Georges Houdard all indicate rhythmic differentiation between individual neumes and neumes that are grouped together. [27] Neume groupings that are distinct from the individual virga and puncta (discussed in the next section) may be performed with slightly faster motion through the grouping. Two-note constructions could also imply a strong-weak execution.[28]

It may be practical to pursue a musical rendering of Hildegard's chants through subtle rhythmic inflection derived from the text and neumes. Inflection and nuance may also be performed by variations in weight through dynamic gradations, tone color, or durational value given to a particular vowel, consonant, or syllable in order to follow the accent and rhythm naturally inherent in the words. The performer may additionally wish to add emphasis to the first note of each neume grouping, particularly in melismatic passages.[29] These subtle variations in rhythm and stress can facilitate a dynamic and interesting performance and are generally natural and intuitive nuances that derive from an exploration of the connection between the text, the musical line, and the notation.

Basic and Ornamental Neumes[30]

Basic neume shapes that appear in the *Symphonia* are listed in the bulleted list on the next page. Figure 4 shows examples of these neumes in the Riesencodex.

- Virga and puncta, each representing a single pitch
- Pes, which indicates a pitch followed by a note above
- Clivis or flexa, which represents a pitch followed by a lower pitch
- Climacus, a series of descending pitches
- Scandicus, a series of ascending pitches
- Torculus or pes flexus, a series of three pitches that ascend and then descend
- Porrectus or flexa resupina, a three-note neume complex that descends and then ascends

Ornamental neumes usually involve some type of graphic signifier indicating the incorporation of a special or ornamented type of performing execution and generally fall into the categories of either liquescent or repercussive.[31] Liquescent neumes involve the modification of a pitch to reflect the sound of a word by indicating when to sing through a voiced consonant or give emphasis to a vowel. The repercussive neumes include the apostropha, bistropha, and tristropha, and indicate a pulse or rearticulation of the pitch with a descending and decaying slide.[32] There are additionally specific neumes that have their own independent ornamental significance, including the quilisma, oriscus, and pressus. There is conjecture as to how the specific ornamental neumes are supposed to be performed, and an exact interpretation of these neumes is unknown.

Liquescence

Liquescent neumes involve an ornamental neume that has implications as to how the word should sound. The performance of this neume generally involves a consonant or vowel receiving rhythmic duration. As the name of the neume implies, the syllable should become "liquid" and flow seamlessly from one pitch to the next.[33] This type of neume, characterized by a rounded off, lighter stroke, often occurs on a voiced consonant, such as in the letters *m*, *n*, or *l*. Liquescence is not limited to voiced consonants and may also appear on diphthong syllables, double consonants, or consonants that may be reflective of the pronunciation of the time.[34] In regard to diphthongs or liquescence occurring on a vowel, the execution of the word might involve a darkening of the vowel, a sliding transition between pitches, or a sliding transition and rearticulation of the next pitch.[35] On syllables that might appear ambiguous as to how to perform the liquescence, the symbol might imply the insertion of a shadow vowel.[36]

Oriscus and Pressus

The oriscus is a small note, similar to a punctum or apostropha, that has a wavy component. The oriscus usually does not stand alone but is part of a compound neume construction. The information surrounding this neume, its significance, and style of performance, is generally conjecture based on the shape of the neume. This neume could imply a "tension" toward the next note that could be executed through a microtonal inflection of the voice.[37] There may be melodic implications involving alternation between the note and a note less than a half-step above, similar to a mordent[38]—it may demonstrate rhythmic significance or could possibly imply liquescence at the unison.[39]

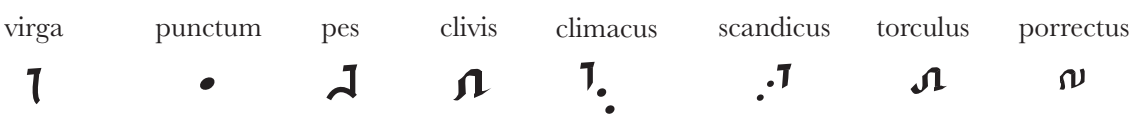


Figure 4. Images of basic neumes from Riesencodex, f. 470[r]

The oriscus is a component of a pressus construction, which appears in the notation of Hildegard's manuscripts in the form of a vertical line attached to a short undulating line. The *Liber Usualis* suggests that the pressus be performed as an intensification, requiring a strengthening of sound.[40] Intensification could be achieved with vibrato, pitch fluctuation, acceleration, dynamics, or a combination of these musical devices. If the construction includes non-ligated (unattached) notes, it is likely this neume might also have articulative significance involving the repercussion of a note.[41]

Quilisma -

The quilisma is a symbol frequently found in Hildegard's *Symphonia* and is often an important musical feature in Hildegard's expansive melodies. This neume has a distinctive shape that looks like two small jagged-looking waves with a gracefully curved line ascending the distance of a second, third, or fourth. The jagged part of the neume is the quilisma, which can appear as part of compound neume constructions and is often preceded by a punctum. In the manuscript sources, the symbol has a distinctive quality in that the quilisma itself usually occurs on a line or in a space and is connected to a smooth upward ascending stroke. In contemporary transcriptions of Hildegard's music, some editors represent the quilisma with a symbol that looks like a mordent sign (jagged dark line) turned diagonally to show the ascending gesture, although some modern transcriptions do not use a corresponding symbol.[42]

There are several different theories that are applied to the performance of this neume, and among them there seems to be agreement in that it involves some sort of trembling or trill and an ascending rise. The *Liber Usualis* describes the quilisma as a "tremolo" note that appears like a "melodic blossom" that involves a trill and an ascending line.[43] The note preceding the quilisma is likely to be lengthened, with the quilisma performed as a light, quicker note, possibly like a trillo or gruppetto.[44]

Depending upon the tempo and character of the selection, one option for performance would be to lengthen the first note, as if it were a dotted rhythm, and then move quickly through the quilisma in a light ascending gesture up to the third or fourth as indicated by the notation, either in the style of a light portamento, or gently articulating the diatonic pitches to fill in the interval. Another option is to lengthen the first note, perform a quick, light mordent (alternation between two adjacent pitches, which could involve a microtonal pitch), and either sing a light portamento or ascend by filling in the interval with the intervening diatonic pitches. The three primary components to the ornament involve the lengthening of the first note, something special that likely has some musical aspect related to the jagged, wavy shape of the neume, followed by a light ascent.

Vocal Technique

There are some concepts we may consider that can facilitate a healthful, beautiful vocal production that will serve this repertoire. The monophonic songs in *Symphonia* require the ability to sing legato phrases that are often very long, as well as the ability to sing a melisma (sustaining a vowel through multiple notes). The potential for a spectrum of vocal colors in this music can be exceptionally beautiful and demanding, with high and low sounds on vowels that range from dark to bright at both ends of a singer's range. The text, and the ability to communicate the expression and affect inherent in the poetry, is of fundamental importance to singing this repertoire.

There is some information in medieval musical treatises that might inspire the singer's imagination toward a healthy, expressive, organic vocal production. One comment in *Instituta Patrum de modo psallendi* (ca. 1200), an anonymous treatise associated with the abbey of St. Gall on the singing of psalms and chants, indicates that flexibility and the ability to perform the nuances of the neumes were lauded as valuable skills.[45] A twelfth-century comment from Bernard of Clairvaux indicates the voice should be "sweet, but not light."[46] Another treatise that is often referenced in conjunction with singing medieval music is the phrase from the seventh-century scholar and clergyman Isidore of Seville, who used the words "loud, sweet, and clear" to describe the "perfect" voice.[47]

Hildegard's spiritual writings indicate that she valued a voice that had a "sweet, clear, and ringing tone."[48] In addition to agility, expression, and subtlety; clarity of

pitch, accuracy, and a refined vocal quality seemed to all be priorities of medieval vocal production.[49] For the modern ensemble director, prioritizing text expression, vocal flexibility, clear and focused pitches, a spectrum of vowel colors, and a full sound riding on breath would serve both the singers and the music.

Performing Hildegard

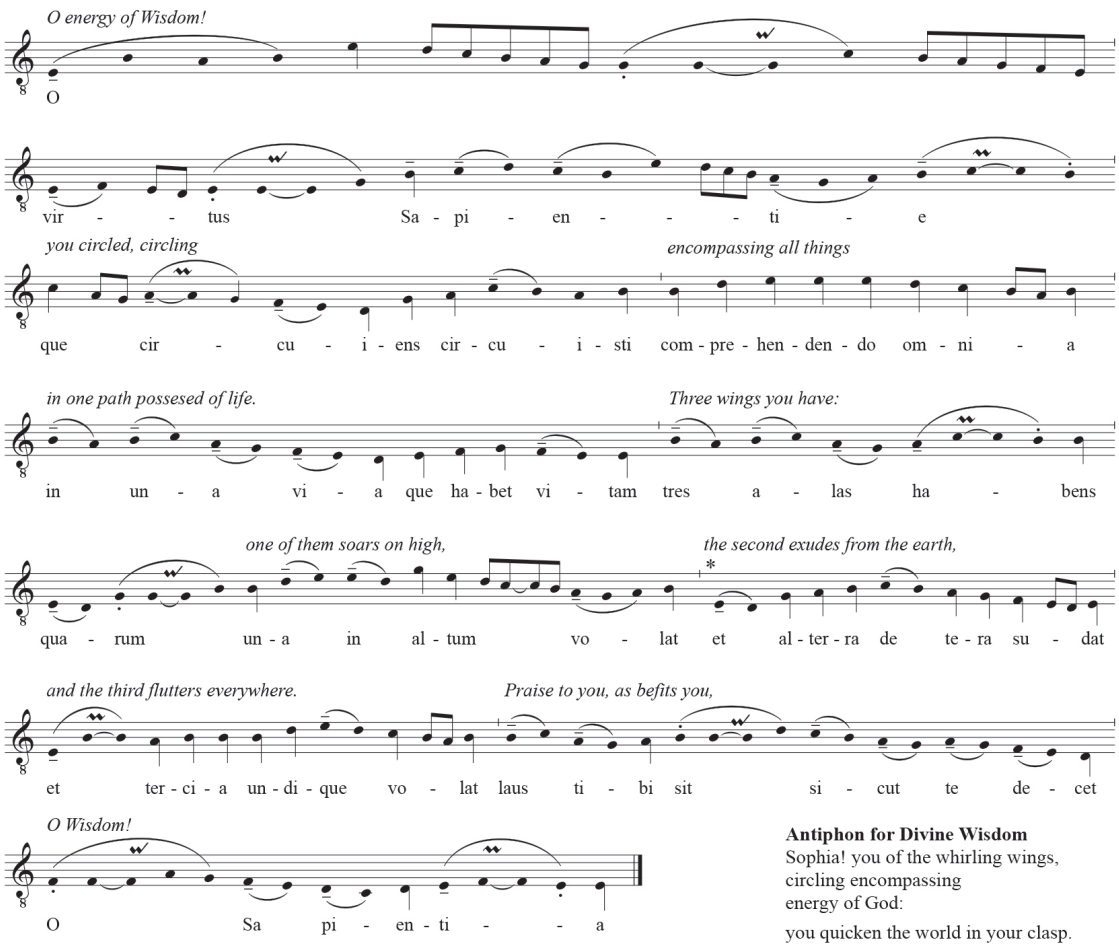
While the manuscript and *Lieder* editions can be excellent performing or reference resources, for many ensembles, a modern transcription will likely be the most practical means of sharing the musical material with the singers. The ensemble director can cross-reference a modern transcription against a manuscript source or *Lieder* and write some of the neume information into the score. See Figure 5 on the next page for an example. The liturgical function (antiphon) and the corresponding folios in the manuscripts (R = Riesencodex) are next to the title in Figure 5. Stemmed notes represent virga; unstemmed, puncta; small notes represent liquesence. Slur groupings (representing compound neume constructions) and beamed notes (representing cascading puncta) are considered a single rhythmic gesture and are grouped together for clarity and do not imply a proportional relationship to another note value. The mordent symbol represents quilismata, and the trill symbol, pressis.[50] In the medieval era, there was no standardized pitch as we know it today, and it is completely reasonable, and sometimes necessary, to transpose the piece to suit your ensemble. To develop phrase shape and pacing, it is helpful to intone the chant by singing the text on one pitch. Teaching by rote or leading from within the ensemble without the assistance of a piano doubling the vocal line will facilitate musicality and expressivity and develop in singers an awareness of unified sound and tuning.

Experimenting with drones and organum can be a valuable exercise for the ensemble to experience singing within a mode. One effective technique is to have one section of the ensemble maintain the resting tone (or added octaves/fifths) on a hum or a vowel while the rest of the ensemble sings the chant. In extant letters, Hildegard references the practice of organum (not in connection to the music she and her nuns were making, however), which involves an added voice to the plainchant that sings the text parallel to the original voice by remaining on the final or singing at a parallel fourth, fifth, or octave, with both voices moving at the same speed.[51] Instruments can also be used to provide a foundation and variety. There are some general references to instruments and harmonic simultaneities recorded in Hildegard's extant letters and treatises.[52] Medieval instruments that existed during Hildegard's life include the vielle, harp, portative organ, drums, wind instruments, and drone instruments such as the symphonia or bagpipes. Hildegard's own words are tantalizing in their reference to instruments:

> And so the holy prophets, inspired by the spirits which they had received were called for this purpose: not only to compose songs and canticles (by which the hearts of the listeners would be inflamed) but also to construct various kinds of musical instruments to enhance these songs of praise with melodic strains. Thereby, both through the form and quality of the instruments, as well as through the meaning of the words which accompany them, those who hear might be taught, as we said above, about inward things, since they have been admonished and aroused by outward things[.] They accompanied their singing with instruments played with the flexing of the fingers, recalling in this way Adam, who was formed by God's finger, which is the holy spirit.[53]

This passage is part of an elaborate metaphor about the importance of music in the lives of Hildegard and her nuns. In her spiritual text *Scivias*, Hildegard describes another vision involving female figures, one outfitted as a warrior, with people playing instruments all around them.[54] In an image from *Liber Divinorum Operum* (see the opening page of this article, page 18) depicting the "City of God in Salvation History," various instruments can be seen in the heavenly cloud, as well as the trumpet representing the prophets sharing the word of God with the city. The allusion to instruments in her writing does not imply the explicit use of instruments in practice; it does, however, indicate that Hildegard had an understanding of musical instruments that went beyond biblical schol-

arship, and that she envisioned them as part of the divine music of the universe as she experienced in her vivid visions. In bringing this music to life today, it can be a useful pedagogical tool as well as a rewarding musical experience to incorporate instruments or multiple vocal parts into performance.



*D, C in *Riesenkodex*, possible scribal error, corrected in Stühlmeyer

Small note = *liquescence*
= *quilisma*
= *pressus*

Antiphon for Divine Wisdom
Sophia! you of the whirling wings,
circling encompassing
energy of God:

you quicken the world in your clasp.

One wing soars in heaven
one wing sweeps the earth
and the third flies all around us.

Praise to Sophia!
Let all the earth praise her!

– *Poetic translation*
by Barbara Newman

Figure 5. Hildegard of Bingen, *O virtus Sapientie*, Antiphon, R 466rb,
Translation from *Hildegard of Bingen Symphonia:*
A Critical Edition of the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum,
with introduction, translations, and commentary by Barbara Newman, translator and editor.

Transcription by Katie Gardiner, with reference to Barbara Stühlmeyer Lieder

The connection between text and melody is vital to Hildegard's music. To express the complex and sensuous poetry, it might be helpful to think of one's own language and consider what about it we find beautiful, persuasive, sensual, agitated, heartbreaking. Details of language that convey emotions or tone and feeling can be communicated through syllabic duration and stress, the length or shortness of articulation, pitch inflection, dynamic level, vocal rhythm, and vocal quality.[55] Character of expression is imparted through the degree of harshness or gentleness in the vocal quality; the degree to which our sounds are intimate or exclamatory; how words or syllables are clipped and distinct or run together smoothly; the high and low inflection that can impart the function of a phrase. If the singer understands the text they are trying to communicate, they can imagine the details of the language that might help them convey the meaning.

Conclusion

Even with the best transcriptions, engaging with this notation through the mediator of the modern editor can feel as if we are experiencing the music "through a glass, darkly."[56] There is information in the neumes that can aid the singer in developing an interpretation that simply does not translate in any modern transcription. The twelfth-century neumes are not a primitive precursor to our contemporary notation; rather, they are a system designed to provide the singer with the information they needed to remember—a word which, to the medieval musician, involved "imaginative reconstruction."[57] The neumes are the singer's closest connection to the sound world of Hildegard and her nuns, and are the gateway into a living creative musical process.

While it may at first seem daunting to approach this repertoire, time spent with this music will reap great rewards. Foremost, these chants constitute high-quality, substantive literature. This music is of great emotional, spiritual, and intellectual depth. There is a visceral joy in singing soaring consecutive leaps and endless melismas, and profound returns for those who spend time interpreting the layers of connection between the deeply expressive texts and architected melodies. It is rewarding for any singer to have an opportunity to explore range, vowel color, legato singing, technical challenges involving leaps and melismata, special ornamental techniques, and to experience the innate expressivity of singing modal music.

As with much early music, there are elements of performance practice that are integral to the musical execution that may be new to those who do not specialize in medieval music. Even for specialists in repertoire from the medieval era, the process of inspiring this music still involves a degree of creative and informed guesswork. To follow Hildegard's own words and example, "Do not, in your weariness, keep silent, but let your voice ring forth like a trumpet…"[58] Go forth with this repertoire as Hildegard lived her life: humbly, boldly, and eternally seeking illumination. CJ

Author's Note: This article was derived from the author's dissertation, "A Conductor's Guide to the Music of Hildegard von Bingen" (Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, 2021).

NOTES

[1] Fiona Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age* (Doubleday, 2001), 22. Maddocks notes other sources indicate Hildegard taking the veil possibly earlier in 1106.

[2] Margot Fassler, "Composer and Dramatist: 'Melodious Singing and the Freshness of Remorse," in *Voice of the Living Light*, ed. Newman (University of California Press, 1998), 150.

[3] William P. Mahrt, "Sacred Music: Chant," in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music* (Indiana University Press, 2000), 2.

[4] Marianne Pfau, "Music and Text in Hildegard's Antiphons," in *Hildegard, Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the Symphonia Armonie Celestium Revelationum* [Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations], ed. and trans. Barbara Newman (Cornell University Press, 1988), 75.

[5] Marianne Pfau, "Hildegard Von Bingen's Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum: An Analysis of Musical Process, Modality, and Text-Music Relations" (PhD diss. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1990), 38–41. Pfau references philosophical theories on music by Cassiodorus and St. Augustine.

[6] David Hiley, *Western Plainchant: A Handbook* (Clarendon Press, 1993), 345–46. In medieval treatises, the term "neume" referred to the melody, not the written notation; however, as Hiley notes: "The term neume, meaning a notational sign, has become so embedded in the musical literature that it would be pointless to try to restrict its meaning to the other medieval sense of the word" (346). In *Western Plainchant*, Hiley avoids using the term neume when referring to notation. This paper will use the term neume as it is used in contemporary literature—in reference to the notational signs and symbols that represent the melody.

[7] Hildegard, *Symphonia: A Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. Newman, "List of Manuscripts," 64: Dendermonde, Belgium, St.-Pieters&-Paulusabdij Cod. 9 (Rupertsberg, c. 1175); Wiesbaden, Landesbibliothek Hs. 2, "Reisencodex" (Rupertsberg, 1180–1190); Stuttgart, Landesbibliothek Cod. Theol. Phil. 253 (Rupertsberg, St. Disibod and Zwiefalten, Ms. S, 1154–1170); Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Cod. 881 (Rupertsberg, 1164–1170), V^1; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Cod. 963 (St. Maria in Rommersdorf, 13th century), V^2; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Cod. 1016 (13th century), V^3.

[8] Peter van Poucke, introduction to *Hildegard, Symphonia Harmoniae Caelestium Revelationum: Dendermonde, St.-Pieters & Paulusabdij, Ms. Cod. 9*, ed. Peter van Poucke (Peer, Belgium: Alamire, 1991), 6. Van Poucke notes that it is unlikely that the manuscript was copied by Hildegard herself, but it was likely copied "under her supervision."

[9] Hildegard, Lorenz Welker, and Michael Klaper, *Lieder: Faksimile Riesencodex* (hs. 2) *Der Hessischen Landesbibliothek Wiesbaden*, ff. 466–81v (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert Verlag, 1998), 23.

[10] Peter van Poucke, introduction to Hildegard, *Symphonia*, 11. The text used in these manuscripts is referred to as "Carolingian miniscule."

[11] Hildegard von Bingen, *Lieder: Symphoniae*, translated by Barbara Stühlmeyer, Beuroner Kunstverlag, 2012.

[12] Honey Meconi, "The Unknown Hildegard: Editing, Performance, and Reception (An Ordo Virtutum in Five Acts)" in *Music in Print and Beyond: Hildegard Von Bingen to The Beatles*, ed. Craig A. Monson and Roberta M. Montemorra, 258–306 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 281.

[13] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Liber usualis," accessed 20 Jan. 2001.

[14] Nathaniel Campbell, Beverly Lomer, and Xenia Sandstrom-McGuire, "Music: The Symphonia and Ordo Virtutum of Hildegard von Bingen," International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies (1983, 2008, 2014), http://www.hildegard-society.org/p/music.html. The Hildegard Society website is an amazing resource that includes translations, pitch content, discrepancies between manuscript sources, recordings, analysis, and hyperlinks directly to the manuscript pages.

[15] Honey Meconi, "The Unknown Hildegard," 286–87. Meconi specifically cites errors in Pfau's edition of *O Virga ac Diadema* but also notes that any of Pfau's editions contain a similar number of errors.

[16] Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), 135, and Mahrt, "Essential Theory for Performers," 486. Students in Renaissance music courses are typically taught the Greek modal names dorian, phrygian, lydian, and mixolydian, with finals on D, E, F, and G, respectively. Their hypo- (plagal) counterparts share the same final but encompass a range a fourth below to a fifth above the final. The mode numbers, which have been in use since the 10th century, are classified as follows: Mode 1, dorian (general range of D-D, D final); Mode 2, hypodorian (A-A, D final); Mode 3, phrygian (E-E, E final); Mode 4, hypophrygian (B-B, E final); Mode 5, lydian (F-F, F final); Mode 6, hypolydian (C-C, F final); Mode 7, mixolydian (G-G, G final); Mode 8, hypomixolydian (D-D, G final).

[17] Willi Apel, Gregorian Chant,136. For melodic analysis of Hildegard's *Symphonia* by mode, see Pfau's dissertation, *Hildegard von Bingen's Symphonia: Armonie Celestium Revelationum*, 128–212.

[18] For further reading on ficta, see Margaret Bent, "Musica Recta and Musica Ficta," *Musica Disciplina* 26 (1972): 73–100. http://www.jstor.org.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/stable/20532145; Nicholas Routley, "A Practical Guide to 'Musica Ficta'." *Early Music* 13, no. 1 (1985): 59-71, www.jstor.org.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/stable/3127407. While these articles present discussion of 15th-century repertoire, the authors provide unique insight into decisions regarding ficta the modern editor of early music must confront.

[19] Marianne Pfau, "Hildegard von Bingen's *Symphonia*," 177–78. Pfau describes the instances in her transcriptions where she has added an editorial flat sign.

[20] Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant*, 126.

[21] Ibid., 127.

[22] Lance W. Brunner, "The Performance of Plainchant: Some Preliminary Observations of the New Era," *Early Music* 10, no. 3 (1982): 318–19, http://www.jstor.org.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/stable/3126197. Brunner makes a distinction between the "Equalist" style of the 1904 Vatican Council and the later "Solesmes" style that additionally allowed for longer and shorter note values, with the musical pulse being grouped into two or three pitches independent of the syllabic stress of the text, with the "Equalist" style being more text-driven.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant*, 130–31. Apel's summary is based on the work of Solesmes Monk and Gregorian chant scholar Dom Joseph Pothier.

[25] Ibid., 130.

[26] *Liber Usualis*, xx.

[27] David Hiley, *Western Plainchant*, 373. The other scholars referenced in this sentence include a similar indication of rhythmic differentiation between individual neumes and neume groups.

[28] Timothy McGee, "Medieval Performance Practice" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge University Press: 2018), 585.

[29] *Liber Usualis*, xiv.

[30] Timothy J. McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song: Ornamentation and Vocal Style According to the Treatises* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 43. The term "ornamental" is to be understood as "something added to the musical phrase in order to grace it," not something "additional."

[31] Timothy J. McGee, "'Ornamental' Neumes and Early Notation," *Performance Practice Review* 9, no. 1, article 5 (1996): 41. DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199609.01.05

[32] Ibid., 53. An example of bistropha from Riesencodex: 𝅘𝅥𝅮𝅘𝅥𝅮

[33] *Liber Usualis*, summarizing Guido d'Arezzo, xij.

[34] David Hiley, *Western Plainchant*, 357.

[35] Timothy McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song*, 48.

[36] Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant*, 104.

[37] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Oriscus," (2001).

[38] Timothy McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song*, 55-56 and McGee, "'Ornamental' Neumes and Early Notation," 56.

[39] David Hiley, *Western Plainchant*, 359–60.

[40] Liber Usualis, xij. A similar description is found in William P. Mahrt, "Sacred Music: Chant," in *A Performer's Guide to Singing Early Music*, 17.

[41] Timothy McGee, "'Ornamental' Neumes and Early Notation," 56.

[42] The quilisma is represented by some editors, such as Pfau, as a repeated pitch and the higher note occurring together under a slur without a graphic symbol to indicate a special performance element.

[43] *Liber Usualis*, (1962), xij.

[44] Willi Apel, Gregorian Chant, 115; William P. Mahrt, "Chant," in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music* ed. Ross Duffin (Indiana University Press 2000), 17; David Hiley, *Western Plainchant*, 358. *Trillo* here referring to the seventeenth-century definition of a rearticulated note that increases in rapidity; *gruppetto* implying a four-note turn including the pitch above and below the primary note.

[45] Timothy McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song*, 18.

[46] Ibid., 22.

[47] Ibid., 20.

[48] Newman, introduction to *Symphonia*, 30.

[49] Mahrt, "Sacred Music: Chant," 16-17; McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song*, 20.

[50] Special thanks to Dr. David MacNeil for the inspiration he provided in score markings.

[51] Barbara Newman, introduction to Hildegard, *Symphonia*, 31-32.

[52] Ibid., 31.

[53] Hildegard, *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. Joseph L. Baird, and Radd K. Ehrman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) vol. I, Letter 23, 78.

[54] John D. White, "The Musical World of Hildegard of Bingen," 13. White describes a vision in *Scivias* entitled "The Vision of the Virtues."

[55] Mark D. Pell, Laura Monetta, Silke Paulmann, and Sonja A. Kotz, "Recognizing Emotions in a Foreign Language," *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 33 (2009): 107–108, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-008-0065-7.

[56] 1 Corinthians 13:12.

[57] Frederick C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge University Press,1964), 213 in Treitler, "The 'Unwritten' and 'Written Transmission.'"

[58] Hildegard, *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, vol. I, Letter 32r, 100.

A CALL TO ACTION:

Promoting and Preserving Women in the Field of Choral Conducting

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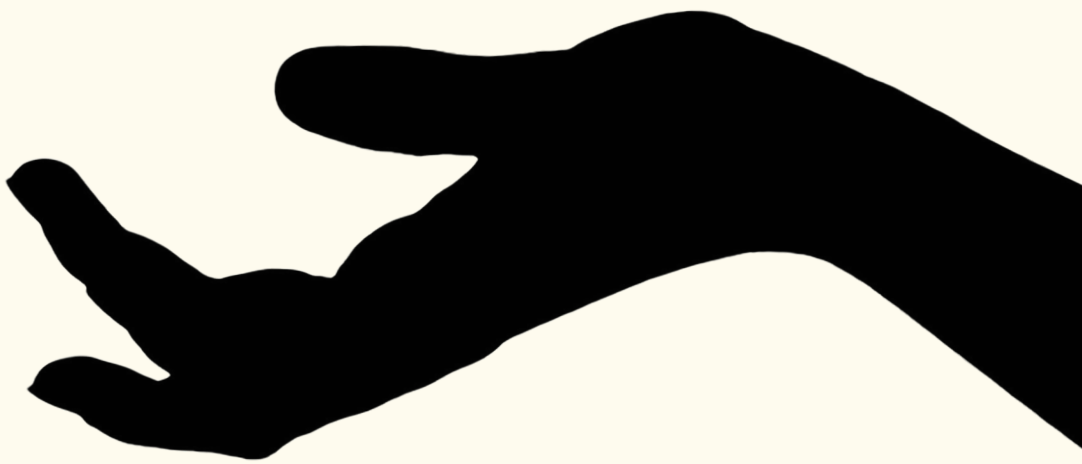
Women choral conductors[1] are an integral part of the musical community, but despite society's current emphasis on uplifting marginalized voices, the number of women conductors in the United States continues to decline.[2] The purpose of this article is to illuminate the existing challenges of the gender equity gap and consider solutions. As of 2024, fewer than 10% of orchestral conductors around the world were women.[3] In the United States, twenty-five professional choral ensembles have budgets exceeding $1,000,000, and of those, 80% are conducted by males[4] (Table 1 on the next page). In her 2019 dissertation, "'You Just Gotta Be Great': Narratives of Experience from Two Women Conducting in the Lutheran Collegiate Choral Context," Elisabeth Rogers Cherland found that in college music programs in the United States, women comprised just 32% of faculty[5] (Table 2 on the next page). This disparity is vast, especially considering 48% of doctoral music graduates in the United States are female-identifying.[6] The percentage of collegiate women conductors of all ensembles is only 8% higher than in 1976[7] (Table 2); and according to the College Music Society, the number of women conductors of all ensembles at the collegiate level dropped by 7.05% between 2006 and 2020.[8]



In a 2022 interview on the *conduct(her)* podcast, Sierra Farquhar-Wulff discussed her master's thesis research regarding the current state of gender inequity in the choral profession, concluding, "I take from [these] data that we have not made any progress."[9] Farquhar-Wulff also spoke of her dreams to conduct a professional ensemble: "It's just really discouraging as a woman trying to reach that level to see that the glass ceiling is still there."[10] Women choral conductors continue to be hired less frequently and receive lower pay than their male colleagues.[11] From her research, Farquhar-Wulff concluded:

> 1) Nearly half of the women participants believed that they should be further along in their careers, 2) A majority of women have experienced gender bias in their career pursuits, and 3) 57% of study participants cite compensation practices as having a negative effect on their careers in the workplace environment.[12]

In her 1998 *Choral Journal* article, "A Missing Chapter from Choral Methods Books," Patricia O'Toole addressed the education of girls and women in choral programs and how gender roles affect teachers' expectations and subsequent interactions with students.[13] Although the article is nearly three decades old, much of the content still resonates in 2025: 1) In primary school, male students are encouraged to be active, while female students are encouraged to be passive; 2) In middle school, expectations related to gender impact the singers' needs and impact time and attention in rehearsal; 3) In high school, the male voices often determine the difficulty of repertoire.[14]

From primary education through professional ensemble experiences, we have a responsibility to reimagine choral structures with a shift toward equity-driven rehearsing and teaching. In her article, O'Toole described a teacher who attempted to promote a gender-fair classroom by calling on boys and girls alternately from her attendance roster. After two days, the boys were outraged, claiming she was unfair. The teacher explained, "Equity was hard to get used to;

Table 1. Women in Professional Conducting Positions (Instrumental & Choral)

	Worldwide*	United States, Top 25 Choirs**	United Kingdom***
Women Conductors	<10%	20%	11.2% (of conductors represented by an agent)

* https://takialsop.org/about-tacf/the-challenge/

** Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues."

*** https://royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk/performers/women-conductors

Table 2. Women in Collegiate Music Faculties

	1976 (Renton/Block)	1986 (Renton/Block)	2019 (Cherland)
All ranks (includes part-time and adjunct faculty)	24%	31%	32%

they perceived it as a loss."[15] Changing habits with long historical roots is difficult at best. We do, however, have the opportunity to enact behavioral changes that will support the next generation of developing musicians.

Research Questions

This article is focused on raising awareness of the significant gender equity gap in the field of choral music *and* presenting practical solutions, skills, and tactics aimed at reversing the decline. For change to occur, there is a need to invest in data-driven and honest conversations regarding family planning, work-life balance, task division, mental load, pay disparity, continuing education, and the interdisciplinary nature of succeeding in music. In her 2016 doctoral dissertation, Claudia Bryan wrote: "Understanding how successful women conductors overcome challenges and achieve a balance between home and work life may offer valuable insight to the next generation of women conductors."[16] By identifying key areas of concern, we can take result-oriented steps toward sustainability and longevity for women in the field. The current data partnered with responses from the *conduct(her)* podcast interviewees led to two seminal research questions:

1) What barriers currently prevent women from employment advancement and musical opportunities in choral conducting?

2) How can we develop systems and communities of support to help women choose a career in choral music and stay in the field?

Research Question #1:
What barriers currently prevent women from opportunities in choral conducting?

To help raise awareness of the gender equity gap, the authors of this article (Kyra Stahr and McKenna Stenson) created the *conduct(her)* podcast and choral community in 2021. *conduct(her)* amplifies women's voices on the podium by sharing the stories of trailblazers in the field. The first season focused on choral conductors in collegiate leadership. Season two expanded to feature composers, instrumental conductors, and arts administrators. Season three includes panels on specific topics such as trans singers, prison choirs, and entrepreneurship, as well as episodes highlighting K-12 educators.[17] The interviews spark honest conversations on navigating the many obstacles that women face in the choral conducting profession.

Through three seasons of interviews, we have come to recognize that change is critical to sustaining the health, development, and long-term success of women in the field. We created and sent a research survey to *conduct(her)* interviewees, listeners, and industry conference attendees to examine the current climate for women in choral conducting. Questions included basic demographic information, summation of longevity in the field, access to mentors and support or lack thereof, leave policies, acts of exclusion and/or discrimination, and additional career challenges. The results revealed four common barriers discouraging women from a career in choral music. We summarize these four barriers below and include supporting data from additional sources.

1) Lack of representation

2) Unsupportive family leave policies

3) Fatigue from self-advocacy

4) Discrimination based on gender

1) Lack of Representation

The indisputable data shows there are not enough women on the podium, particularly evident looking at conductors in higher education, community organizations, and professional choral ensembles. Dr. Mary Murphy, a professor at Indiana University and best-selling author of the book *Cultures of Growth*, has founded her research on shifting cultures of genius to cultures of growth. She has explored why messages about brilliance often undermine women's interest in certain fields, among them music and academia:

> One of the biggest problems that we see with cultures of genius is that we have a specific prototype of who is a genius, a prototype of who's going to be successful in these different environments. What we've seen across decades of our work now is that while these prototypes can vary by industry, we find that most people, when you put in the word *genius* into Google images, the images that come to mind are people like Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison … Bill Gates, right? This is a pretty homogenous group. When we're in these cultures of genius, we look for people who are going to match our genius prototypes, and these are the people who we seek out, who we hire, and who we promote in different organizations. It's really why cultures of genius often overlook and miss out on identifying and recruiting people from diverse groups.[18]

Murphy's "culture of genius" can be applied to our choral community when considering prominent choral icons (e.g., Robert Shaw, Weston Noble, and Joseph Flummerfelt) and looking at our history of guest clinicians. In addition to advocating for women conductors in higher education, community, and professional arenas, it is important to consider who we are bringing in as guest clinicians for local, regional, and national events and what type of ensembles these clinicians are conducting.

William McLean studied all-state conductors for SATB ensembles from all fifty states between 2000 and 2020 and found that women represented only 23.2% of guest conductors for these high-profile events. Of the repertoire programmed, only 7.3% were composed or arranged by women.[19] McLean also discovered that women conductors were 35.24% more likely to program works by women composers than their male counterparts, stating, "the results regarding gender are a sobering indicator that continued inquiry and advocacy are necessary."[20] To change these statistics, administrators, event facilitators, and selection committees must collectively advocate for gender equity.

Action Item

In your community, advocate for equal representation by ensuring women are considered as guest clinicians at the same rate as their male counterparts. If you're unable to accept an engagement, recommend a qualified woman conductor. Allyship for women on the podium at the local, regional, and national levels are some of the most effective ways to drive lasting change.

2) Family Leave Policies

In 2021, *The Washington Post* compared paid family leave in the United States to that of other countries. Although the United States is one of the richest countries in the world, "it is one of the few countries to not offer some form of paid family leave for new parents."[21] In addition to the lack of government support for new families, pregnancy places a significant physical and emotional toll on a woman's body. In the field of choral conducting, sustaining traditional workloads and rehearsal hours can be particularly challenging throughout family planning, pregnancy, and caregiving responsibilities. For women seeking tenure or working with organizations that do not offer maternity leave packages, they are often forced to take unpaid time off and/or return directly to work.

It is also important to assess the quality of advocacy for and communal support for maternity leave. A 2023 study on women professors' experience with maternity leave revealed that "women continued to undertake core academic work duties during maternity leave such as writing grant applications and journal articles, supervising doctoral students, teaching, and responding to emails."[22] The authors emphasized that many women relinquish their rights to maternity leave to sustain their academic productivity.[23] For women who are caregivers, these issues may be compounded by the added challenge of balancing family expectations with professional demands, reinforcing the stereotype that women must choose between their careers and family.[24] In her 2021 book, *Fair Play*, author Eve Rodsky emphasized the negative impact of women leaving the workforce due to the challenges of balancing a career and family:

> Consider the cost to our society, robbed of

> valuable productivity and top female leadership and talent, as 43% of highly qualified women with children take a career detour. This includes college-educated women who invested in an education and who presumably never planned to exit the workforce…but many do so anyway, feeling they grossly underestimated the demands and difficulty of combining work and parenting.[25]

An updated 2024 study found that of the fifty-two institutions in the United States that grant a doctorate of musical arts degree, only twelve have women leading programs.[26] Said differently, those seeking to study with a woman conductor at the doctoral level will find that only 23% of institutions currently meet this criterion.

Action Item

If you have a colleague on maternity leave, consider offering to take on additional responsibilities in her absence. This includes not only completing tasks but also ensuring that others in the workplace recognize that you were able to step into this role due to the preparation and groundwork laid by your colleague before her leave.

If you are a dean or administrator, implement policies that ensure women on maternity leave can maintain the same career advancement opportunities and promotion timelines as their male counterparts. Additionally, supporting paternity and family leave policies that enable both parents to share caregiving responsibilities fosters a more equitable work environment. Policies that benefit all employees promote work-life balance, enhance job satisfaction, and support long-term productivity.

3) Fatigue from Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is critical to career success; however, a study by the Indeed employment website showed that "73% of women surveyed expressed fear over how women are perceived when self-promoting."[27] Traits such as passive behavior, not claiming recognition for work, and seeking to stay away from the public spotlight can be detrimental to career advancement. For women to speak up in the workforce, they need to feel safe to self-advocate.[28] We know from cultivating a positive classroom culture that when our students feel safe and valued, they are more likely to take personal and musical risks. The same is true for women in the choral profession.

Women experience fatigue from the mental load of persistent self-advocacy needed in their work, including loss of identity, taxing mental load, underutilized education, and few women role models in leadership positions.[29] These barriers often lead many women to feel isolated, developing resentment toward their careers and ultimately resulting in their departure from the workforce.[30] As conductor-teachers, we have the responsibility of advocating for students, colleagues, and programs, in addition to ourselves, which often leads to emotional fatigue. The support and development of more equitable avenues where women are seen, understood, and supported will reduce frustration, anxiety, and stress.

> **"Women experience fatigue from the mental load of persistent self-advocacy needed in their work.**

Action Item

Advocate for the best workplace practices to ensure that all employees feel valued. Recognize and support your women colleagues who may be engaging in self-abandonment behaviors, such as downplaying their achievements, invalidating their contributions, taking on excess responsibility, or apologizing unnecessarily. Be a considerate colleague by completing your tasks on time, recognizing the work of others, and continually assessing if the workload is equitable. Avoid assuming that you are already doing enough. Ask how you can continue to improve and make a greater impact.

4) Discrimination based on gender

At the end of each *conduct(her)* podcast episode, guest speakers are asked if they are willing to share a time when they faced discrimination based on their gender. For the majority of guests, it takes time to narrow down a specific incident they will speak about because

many come to mind. One of the most common forms of discrimination identified by podcast interviewees and *conduct(her)* survey participants is a buildup of microaggressions. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a microaggression as a "statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group."[31] Some of the microaggressions described in our podcast included being interrupted while speaking, assigned tasks based on gender, having competence questioned, and the use of sexist language in the workplace. In a study by the American Psychology Association, professionals who experienced consistent microaggressions were more likely to internalize problems, resulting in depression, anxiety, and negative affect,[32] which correlates with career burnout.[33]

Action Item

Observe how women are engaged in workplace conversations and meetings. If you notice colleagues being interrupted, acknowledge they were interrupted, invite them back into the conversation, and proceed to model active listening. If a colleague is overlooked, prompt them to participate in the conversation. Gender stereotypes often place the majority of the administrative and organizational load on women.[34] Assess how tasks are distributed in your workplace to ensure that both logistical and artistic responsibilities are shared equitably. Speak to colleagues with professionalism, avoiding nicknames or other casual language. Use formal titles and then ask how they prefer to be addressed.

Research Question #2:
How can we develop systems and communities of support to help women choose a career in choral music and stay in the field?

Analysis of past data and the current state of the choral field reveals that while women are entering the profession of choral conducting, they are not remaining over time.[35] This trend highlights the significant lack of support systems to help women sustain long-term careers in the choral arts. Furthermore, women are not being promoted to leadership positions at the same rate as their male counterparts, particularly in higher education and professional choral settings.[36] As a choral community, we have a responsibility not only to understand the reasons behind gender disparity but also to develop resources and foster behavioral shifts that can lead to lasting change.

Kimberly VanWeelden analyzed the gender composition of music educators related to grade level, revealing how gender-based perceptions influence career choices in the field:

> Sex-type attitudes have also seemingly impacted the gender make-up of our music education teachers. … These occupational gender trends have been theorized to take place because while music teaching is generally perceived as a feminine occupation, perceptions based upon the gender appropriateness of the musical task, such as type of instruction and/or level of the students, may consciously or subconsciously dictate music teachers' occupational choice.[37]

As discussed, there is a decline in the number of women in choral conducting, yet there is a widespread misconception that our field is more oriented toward women than men. One example comes from Dr. Renee Wilson's 2014 article, "Batons and Babies: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study of Mothers Who Are Band Directors."[38] Wilson underscores how gender biases shape perceptions of competence and suitability for specific roles in professions where *skill* and *experience* should be the determining factors. She recounts a story from one interviewee who shared that upon applying for a full-time middle school band position, the assistant superintendent and principal remarked that the part-time choral position would be better suited for them.[39] This incident reflects deeply ingrained stereotypes about the roles of women in musical leadership.

At the time of VanWeelden's research in 2003, women in choral music outnumbered men by a ratio of 2:1. Interestingly, gender disparity was significantly higherat secondary education levels: the majority of pre-school (85%), elementary (79%), junior high/

middle (66%), and secondary (56%) teachers were females, while male teachers were most prominent in post-secondary grades (55%).[40] These statistics do not reflect the entirety of gender inequity in choral music. They do, however, provide a snapshot of the broader trend of women being underrepresented in conducting roles in high school, collegiate, and professional organizations, underscoring the need for a more nuanced understanding of how gender perceptions continue to shape career trajectories and demographics at various educational levels. As Cherland noted, "There remains a significant gap between the number of qualified women candidates and the number of women faculty."[41] Similarly, Dr. Zhen Zeng, a professor in the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, states that while there are enough qualified women for leadership positions, their representation in faculty roles remains disproportionately low, especially in the humanities, psychology, and fine arts.[42]

> **"The impact of gender stereotypes—whether overt or covert—continues to limit opportunities for recognition and advancement of women.**

These findings highlight a significant gap in the systems and community support needed to help women begin and subsequently sustain long-term careers in music. Addressing these inequities requires greater awareness and institutional change. For instance, schools and music organizations should actively work to challenge gendered assumptions by creating more inclusive and equitable environments for all musicians, regardless of gender. The impact of gender stereotypes—whether overt or covert—continues to limit opportunities for recognition and advancement of women. Gender discrimination affects the professional psyche of all women in music. Internalized bias, exacerbated by persistent marginalization, can lead to self-doubt, impostor syndrome,[43] or even a decision to leave the field entirely.

Community as Catalyst

> "I realized that being kind, community-oriented, and supportive of your colleagues is not the short game, but it's the best game."
>
> —Carrie Tennant[44]

A strong sense of community in the workplace is essential for everyone, but especially for women, as it fosters confidence, expands networking and mentorship opportunities, and helps to challenge historic gender stereotypes. Within your own community, ask if you are practicing inclusive leadership by providing opportunities for women to collaborate, lead, and build camaraderie. In her *conduct(her)* interview, Amelia Nagoski addressed the importance of developing community in the workplace:

> We're meant to thrive in communities. We're not built to do big things, or accomplish great things, alone. We're meant to do them together. The only way we maintain well-being is by having a community that supports everyone's well-being, by turning toward each other with kindness and compassion, and a sense of moral obligation to care for everyone else.[45]

Fostering collaboration, improving employee well-being, and driving long-term sustainability by creating a supportive environment helps individuals feel valued and motivated to contribute to shared goals. If you are in a position of leadership, reflect on your current practices: Have you assessed your system of organization and leadership? How frequently does your team meet and have the opportunity to evaluate and survey their work environment anonymously?

Tucson Girls Chorus (TGC) artistic director, Marcela Molina, and Jess Edelbrock, director of operations, discussed how the organization created a maternity leave policy when one of their employees became pregnant.[46] TGC worked to develop best practices to support this employee, creating a parental leave policy that allowed the employee to remain with the organization. An action developed for one person benefits all. This is a model that all arts organizations can and should consider,

regardless of the gender of the policymakers. Workplace communities that prioritize flexibility, inclusivity, mutual respect, and support are key to fostering environments where women can thrive personally and professionally.

Moreover, developing a network exclusively for women is essential for fostering a supportive environment. Forums where women can share experiences, empower one another, and address challenges unique to their gender are integral. In season three of *conduct(her)*, Andrea Ramsey shared, "Tend and befriend, seek out a cohort of women who will be a true support. We will go further together."[47] This quote encapsulates a recurring theme among our podcast guests and listeners: we need a network where women celebrate and uplift one another, creating a sense of community previously missing in the choral world. Other support networks for women include the organization Women in Choral Higher Education (WiCHEd), and Jocelyn Hagen's podcast and composition series, *Compose Like a Girl*.

Historically, the misconception that only one woman can succeed at the top has led to competition rather than collaboration.[48] This stereotype has, unfortunately, perpetuated cycles where women have been discouraged from lifting each other up. Wilson reported a conversation in her article between two female friends where one remarked, "You can't be a good band director and a good mom."[49] Wilson noted that to the director, the comment was unfounded but still hurtful, and another respondent reported getting more "backlash" from women than men in the field.[50] Research from the National Institute of Health,[51] Forbes,[52] and the Harvard Business Review[53] validates the power of women supporting each other in the workplace. While both men and women benefit from a network of peers, women experience significantly higher rates of success and career longevity when a network of close female friends is present.

> Women trying to rise up into leadership face cultural and systemic hurdles that make it harder for them to advance, such as unconscious bias. The study suggests that a way to overcome some of these hurdles is to form close connections with other women, who can share experiences from women who have been there, done that—from how to ask for what you're worth to bringing your unique talents to leadership.[54]

Bonding over shared experiences and creating an environment for open dialogue helps improve individual well-being and strengthens our connections with each other. By addressing issues such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, pay gaps, and the challenges of balancing family and work, we can overcome these cultural hurdles. As Marin Alsop says, "I have never ascribed to the philosophy that it was tough for me so it will be tough for you. My philosophy is, 'It was tough for me so that I could make it easier for you.'"[55] Conversations about the sustainability of women in the choral arts are necessary yet lacking. Leaders, particularly our male colleagues, must take action to create an environment where women can thrive long term in choral music, making the path easier for all who follow.

Develop Best Practices and Create Resources

In addition to fostering community, it is essential to develop best practices and create resources that support the long-term success of women in choral conducting. As discussed earlier, one significant barrier to women's longevity in the field is an ongoing lack of representation. It is crucial to actively listen to the women in your space and ask how you can support them with task management, mental load, and workplace environment. Consider the following questions: Are you part of a committee, an event organizer, or the leader of a student club or chapter? When was the last time you assessed gender representation in your organization? How often do you program music by women composers? Small, deliberate actions to enhance representation—whether through inclusive programming, equitable task distribution, or supporting women in leadership—have the power to drive lasting change. By consistently making space for women in these roles, we enable them to see themselves in positions of influence and ensure their perspectives are valued and their contributions are recognized.

To truly increase the representation of women in choral conducting, the field must take concrete steps to

make the hiring process more equitable. One successful model comes from professional orchestras, where blind auditions—musicians perform from behind a screen—help ensure that the best candidate is selected based solely on their skill without the influence of implicit bias. While it may not be possible to fully replicate this process in choral conducting, there are ways to adapt it to reduce bias in the selection process. For example, one approach could be to redact personal identifiers (such as name, gender, institution, or city) during the initial stages of job interviews or when reviewing curricula vitae and biographies of potential candidates. This would allow decision-makers to focus entirely on qualifications, experience, and expertise rather than being unconsciously swayed by gender or other personal characteristics.

Music, as a field driven by empirical knowledge, often lacks archived resources that support the next generation. Resources are essential tools to foster growth, provide support, and create lasting change. If you see a need for a new resource, create it. The *conduct(her)* podcast began as a platform to share insights from accomplished leaders in the field, evolving into an organization that amplifies the voices of women from the present, past, and future. The podcast offers a growing collection of professional development resources including books, articles, fellow podcasts, and databases to support personal growth.[56] Ask yourself what you might contribute to the creation of resources in the future, build partnerships with colleagues, and remember that your experiences are unique and valued.

A Call to Action

> "The data all point to persistent gender inequity in the choral conducting profession that has not been adequately addressed in any meaningful way."[57]

This is a call to action for all of us but especially those with the influence and resources to actively empower and champion women. Women will not have the opportunity to serve as long-term stakeholders until there is a meaningful shift in the status quo. The data are clear: change is needed.

Be the advocate for others that you wish to have for yourself. Apply for jobs even if you do not meet all the requirements. Recognize that rejection is part of the process. Be confident in your worth and expertise and develop a strong network of support. If there is not a community in your workplace, find one online, attend conferences, or reach out to any of the organizations mentioned in this article. Ask questions of yourself and assess situations around you. Is discrimination impacting your career goals and trajectory? Have you seen positive shifts implemented in other organizations that couldapply to your current workplace? If an opportunity is lacking, can you be an advocate for inclusivity and diversity on the podium? Educate yourself on your institution's policies and determine areas where you can be a potential catalyst for change. Oftentimes language has not been changed because there has not been anyone to suggest an edit. Let us unite in our efforts to foster an environment that celebrates and champions the contributions of women in leadership, transforming our industry and ensuring that future generations of women in choral conducting can thrive without barriers.

"Women will not have the opportunity to serve as long-term stakeholders until there is a meaningful shift in the status quo.

Now is the time for change and the time to engage in meaningful conversations about women in the field of choral music. It is easy to assume that what is being done is enough, but it is not. Assess your workplace climate, workload, and the distribution of tasks. Examine company hiring practices, compensation structures, and family leave policies. Use this feedback to adapt and create new policies that provide equitable opportunities for all. CJ

NOTES

[1] For the purposes of this article, the term *women* refers to anyone who identifies as a woman. In order to advance all women's equity, we must ensure that the needs, expertise, and rights of trans women, non-binary, and gender-diverse communities are reflected in our work. However, some of the studies cited in this article use the terms "male" and "female" in their data and do not mention the gender identity of participants.

[2] See: Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues: Gender Inequity in the Choral Conducting Profession," *Choral Journal* 63, no. 8 (2023): 8–21.

[3] Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship, https://takialsop.org/.

[4] Chorus America Member Directory, quoted in Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues."

[5] Elisabeth Rogers Cherland, "You Just Gotta Be Great: Narratives of Experience from Two Women Conducting in the Lutheran Collegiate Choral Context (Doctoral diss., University of Washington, 2019), iii.

[6] Ibid., 31.

[7] Barbara Hampton Renton and Adrienne Fried Block, *The Status of Women in College Music, 1976-77 : A Statistical Study* (College Music Society, 1980), x.

[8] Joan Cantoni Conlon, ed., *Wisdom, Wit, and Will: Women Choral Conductors on Their Art* (GIA, 2009), 206. Data provided by the national College Music Society office, September 30, 2020. As quoted in Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues: Gender Inequity in the Choral Conducting Profession," *Choral Journal* 63, no. 8 (2023): 8–21.

[9] Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, interview by Kyra Stahr and McKenna Stenson, *conduct(her)*, podcast audio, May 13, 2022. "While great strides have been made for women on the podium, quantitative data and anecdotal evidence clearly show that movement toward equity has been at a standstill for the past decade and a half," Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues," 19.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Roland J. Kushner, *Choral Conductors Today: An Updated Report, a Comparison of 2017 and 2005 Findings* (Chorus America, 2017). Accessed Dec. 11, 2020.

[12] Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues," 9.

[13] Patricia O'Toole, "A Missing Chapter from Choral Methods Books: How Choirs Neglect Girls," *Choral Journal* 39, no. 5 (December 1, 1998): 8–20.

[14] Ibid., 8.

[15] Ibid., 13.

[16] Claudia Bryan, "Women choral conductors in the academy: A case study" (Doctoral diss., Auburn University, 2016), 45.

[17] Season one guests were selected by the co-hosts. Listeners can submit suggestions for future guests on the *conduct(her)* website.

[18] Mary Murphy, interview by Shankar Vedantam, *Hidden Brain,* podcast audio, "Innovation 2.0: Multiplying the Growth Mindset," May 6, 2024.

[19] William McLean, "Representation in Choral Music: An Examination of Choral Literature Performed by All-State Mixed Choirs 2000-2020," *Choral Journal* 63, no. 8 (2023): 22–38.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ellen Francis, Helier Cheung, and Miriam Berger, "How does the U.S. Compare to Other Countries on Paid Parental Leave?," *Washington Post*, November 11, 2021, accessed August 1, 2024.

[22] Karen Jones and Alan Floyd, "Women academics experiences of maternity leave in the neoliberal university: Unmasking governmentality," *Gender, Work & Organization 31*, no. 1 (2023): 92–114, doi: 10.1111/gwao.13059

[23] Ibid.

[24] Renee L. Wilson, "Batons and Babies: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study of Mothers Who Are Band Directors," Texas Music Education Research Association (2014): 52.

[25] Eve Rodsky, *Fair Play: A Game-Changing Solution for When You Have Too Much to Do* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2021), 35.

[26] Updated 2024 statistic from the ChoralPlanet website by Kyra Stahr and McKenna Stenson: 1. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Andrea Solya; 2. Michigan State University, Sandra Snow; 3. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mariana Farah; 4. Louisiana State University, Alissa Rowe; 5. University of South Carolina, Alicia Walker; 6. James Madison University, Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy; 7. West Virginia University, Kym Scott; 8. George Mason University, Lisa Billingham; 9. University of Colorado Boulder, Coreen Duffy; 10. University of Missouri-Kansas City, Jennifer Sengin; 11. University of Arizona, Elizabeth Schauer; 12. University of Southern California, Tram Sparks.

[27] Jocelyne Gafner, "The Self-Advocacy Gap for Women (Plus How to Overcome It)," Indeed.com, May 31, 2024, https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/women-self-advocacy.

[28] Caroline Castrillon, "How Women Can Embrace Self-Advocacy at Work," Forbes, June 21, 2023.

[29] Eve Rodsky, *Fair Play*, 36.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "microagression (n.)," in Oxford English Dictionary, 2023.

[32] P. Priscilla Lui and Lucia Quezada, "Associations Between Microaggression and Adjustment Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review," *Psychological Bulletin* 145, no. 1 (2019): 45–78, doi: 10.1037/bul0000172.

[33] For more on burnout, see: Amelia Nagoski and Emily Nagoski, *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* (Ballantine Books, 2019).

[34] Naznin Tabassum and Bhabani Shankar Nayak, "Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on Women's Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective," *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review* 10, no. 2 (2021): 192–208.

[35] Sierra Farquhar-Wulff, "Discounting Our Colleagues."

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AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

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Lifelong Singing

Jack Cleghorn
National Lifelong Choir Coordinator
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Building Resilience: Sustainability Considerations for Nonprofit Music Organizations

by Jack A. Cleghorn

Sustainability for nonprofit arts organizations has changed significantly over the years. Much of this change has been influenced by cultural shifts, economics, and an ever-evolving regulatory landscape. The origins of our modern nonprofit started to evolve in the mid-twentieth century as arts organizations began to foster artistic expression and community engagement through the arts. *Performing Arts—The Economic Dilemma* (William G. Baumol and William J. Bown) highlighted many of the challenges we face. Though published in 1968, the book remains relevant, as it addresses the economic challenges faced by performing arts and our need as artists and organizations to adapt to evolving audience preferences, engagement, and, of course, funding sources.

Many of us, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, were already navigating a complex environment. Leaders of the sector have never been shy about expressing the importance of maintaining artistic quality and cultural contributions as being central to their mission. I suspect that we—whether participants, members, board members, or curators of such organizations—strive for these ideals too. During the pandemic, there began a growing recognition that there were diverse needs for smaller and mid-sized organizations in comparison to their larger counterparts with robust funding.[1]

The Funding Landscape

As the Wallace Foundation reported in October 2021, funding for nonprofits, music or otherwise, has been competitive and fragmented.[2] In this landscape, we find there is a mix of government grants, private foundational support, corporate sponsorship, and direct patron support. The foundation argues that "sustainability for nonprofit arts organizations should not be an end itself but rather a means for pursuing mission-related goals according to this brief."[3] The challenges in securing adequate funding have prompted organizations to diversify their funding streams by exploring alternatives such as crowdfunding and corporate partnerships to build a more resilient foundation. Furthermore, the evolution of the regulatory landscape has pressured many organizations to develop new agility when navigating compliance requirements and changing donor expectations.

We have, to some extent, all witnessed this shift. Most notably, we see this in how audiences engage with arts organizations. Research has indicated that atten-

dance at various arts and culture events has declined or stagnated, with audiences increasingly seeking more immersive experiences rather than merely attending events.[4] This evolving demand has necessitated a re-evaluation of traditional organizational practices to innovate in order to attract and retain audiences. The confluence of these factors illustrates the ongoing challenges and adaptations that nonprofit music organizations must navigate to ensure their long-term viability and relevance in a rapidly changing ecosystem.

But what to do about it? Financial sustainability is a cornerstone for nonprofit music organizations, enabling them to deliver programs and services without interruption. This requires a multifaceted approach that includes diversifying funding sources, managing expenses, and developing robust financial strategies. By adopting innovative funding models such as social enterprises and earned income initiatives, organizations can reduce their dependence on traditional donations such as grants and ticket sales, thereby minimizing financial risk.[5] In 2025, it is expected that nonprofits will increasingly need to explore non-traditional revenue streams to ensure continuity and resilience [6]

Sustainability involves the ability to maintain an organization's artistic and operational mission over the long term. While finances are a consideration, the capacity to adapt and thrive amidst changing cultural and economic landscapes is paramount. Key aspects of sustainability encompass strategic planning, resource diversification, and strong stakeholder engagement. These ensure that organizations can continue to serve their communities effectively.[7] A clear and concise mission is vital for guiding all aspects of a nonprofit's work. Ensuring mission clarity can help align staff and board efforts while promoting a focused approach to achieving long-term goals. Investing in capacity building and staff development is crucial for maintaining a skilled workforce capable of meeting the challenges. Additionally, effective volunteer management should be implemented to maximize community engagement and support. By actively engaging our volunteers, we ensure that our organizations can leverage the unique skills and perspectives our volunteers bring to the table.[8]

Beyond our in-house operations, building strong partnerships and engaging with the community are fundamental to the sustainability of nonprofits. Collaborative efforts amplify our reach and effectiveness. Collaborative efforts also foster trust and credibility among stakeholders. Advocacy and public awareness initiatives are vital for promoting the organization's mission, thereby gaining additional support from the community and policy makers.[9] It is also crucial to engage with the community regarding their needs. No one appreciates being told what they need or should like. Rather, engage in a dialogue to produce a result that will be beneficial to all concerned.

Challenges of Sustainability

The challenges we are up against mainly take four forms: funding instability, shifting donor demographics, operation costs and resource allocation, and a changing regulatory environment. Regarding funding instability, a study produced by *Pancouver* revealed that nearly 90 percent of the nonprofits surveyed relied on a single dominant revenue stream,[10] thus making them vulnerable to financial instability. Uncertainty surrounds investment income; foundation support, endowment withdrawals, and market downturns add to the already precarious financial landscape as donors reassess their giving based on investment performance.

As for shifting donor demographics, younger generations, including Millennials and Gen Z, are becoming influential in philanthropic endeavors but are very often prioritizing social justice, environmental sustainability, and giving transparency. This has and will create a shift in our organizations as we adapt to the changing preferences that emphasize authentic communication about mission and impact. *We must re-evaluate engagement strategies to attract and retain these emerging donor segments.*

Have you been to the grocery store lately? We can all see the increase in operational costs. Insurance and staffing have placed a further strain on the financial resources of nonprofits. Increased premiums and costs associated with recruitment and retention add another layer of complexity that further highlights the need for strategic financial planning and resources allocation. Perhaps trickiest of all is the regulatory landscape that is in constant flux with new laws and regulations that affect compliance requirements and fundraising practices. We must remain vigilant and adaptable to these

changes to ensure we operate and align with legal expectations all while maintaining our mission and focus. Issues such as tax reform and reporting requirements can significantly influence how we engage with donors and manage their finances. If you have a board of directors, it would be wise to consider recruiting a practicing lawyer.

Strategies Toward Sustainability

Strategies for achieving sustainability are numerous but require us to think outside of the box. What once worked (donations and grants) is no longer a guarantee. Diversifying revenue streams is a critical strategy. We should consider exploring innovative income-generating avenues that include social enterprise ventures, cause-related marketing, and fee-for-service models. The Anne Napolitano Consulting firm offers some suggestions. They argue for ventures that generate revenue while supporting your mission: merchandise, training programs, membership tiers that offer exclusive benefits in exchange for a recurring fee, and social enterprises where profits are reinvested into your mission. They suggest, "Think of coffee shops, artisanal products, or workshops that align with your organization's value."[11]

Training Programs

From a personal perspective, I have found training programs exceedingly valuable. Plant the seed. At the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas (SoNA), we have implemented a "SoNA Mentors" program where our symphonic musicians spend time in the orchestral and band classrooms across the area. Many professional choirs do this. We have found that this mentor program facilitates one-on-one tutelage from professional musicians in our community and takes us beyond the walls of the concert hall to engage youth in a way that is not possible in the concert setting. In addition, we bring

talented young artists to give pre-concert "concerts" in the lobby before the performance. Subsequently, attendance from our youngest musicians (and their families) has increased significantly.

Ethical Practices

We must also integrate eco-friendly and ethical practices into operations. Perhaps this means energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction, and sustainable purchasing. By aligning our missions with environmentally conscious principles, we can enhance operation effectiveness while positively contributing to the environment. Consider a comprehensive sustainability assessment to help identify areas for improvement. Doing so will enable you to set measurable goals and actionable plans to minimize ecological footprints. Though we could simply eliminate paper programs, perhaps we take a more aggressive approach and look at our investments and their guidelines.

Though we at St. Paul's have reduced the bulletin size to minimize our paper consumption, we have also made strategic investment decisions. We have asked our investment managers to avoid holding stocks in tobacco companies, private prisons, military contractors, and companies that derive more than ten percent of their revenue from fossil fuels. There are exceptions that arise from broad-market investments that may have some exposure in those areas, but our endowment holds no concentrated positions in them. Ultimately, we must be good stewards of our resources, those less fortunate and marginalized, and this fragile earth, our island home.

Building Community

Community is also key. I have found that direct asks (be that time, talent, or funds) and local partnerships can be a game changer. An African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." Collaborating with other organizations and local businesses amplifies the impact of our own operations. Finding potential partners that share similar missions and values is essential for building mutually beneficial relationships. Through joint projects and resource-sharing initiatives, our organizations can enhance outreach and effectiveness while fostering a culture of collaboration.

As the ACDA Lifelong Choirs Chair, building community is a passion of mine. For those in the Music and Worship side of ACDA, I encourage you to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, source of the Nicene Creed. I am looking forward to the opportunity to make music with my neighbors-in-faith and producing an event bigger than any of us could pull off singlehandedly.

In-house culture and community should also be a priority. Investing in our people, both staff and volunteer, to build a skilled force capable of driving the organization forward is worth the effort on the front end. Ultimately, we want to attract individuals who are passionate about the organization's goals and who can effectively contribute to its longevity.[12] Also related to housekeeping is a constant assessment of the goals and mission. Having a plan with clear financial goals and strategies to achieve them should be also be regularly assessed and adapted to changing circumstances. This ensures relevance and effectiveness in the mission.[13]

Case Studies

Where else can we go for guidance and understanding on the impact and effectiveness of sustainability initiatives within nonprofit music organizations? Case studies. Case studies uncover detailed narratives and insights regarding the changes brought about by specific programs. For instance, an instrumental case study focusing on the defunding of music education in a community revealed the crucial roles played by local anchor institutions, such as Oklahoma City University and St. Luke's United Methodist church, in addressing these challenges. This study highlighted the sociopolitical dynamics at play and the lived experiences of the founders involved in music education initiatives, demonstrating how personal relationships and community engagement can drive sustainability efforts.[14]

The Wallace Foundation's Building Audiences for Sustainability initiative[15] investigated the audience-building strategies of various nonprofit performing arts organizations, including prominent orchestras such as the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The findings emphasized

that while diversifying audiences is essential, it does not singularly address the fiscal challenges faced by these organizations, indicating a need for ongoing dialogue with community interests and increased philanthropic support.

In addition to audience engagement, case studies also examine the utilization of qualitative metrics to capture the human side of program impact. These metrics provide context, nuance, and personal perspectives that complement quantitative measures, helping nonprofits articulate the transformative changes their programs foster. For example, feedback and testimonials from participants in music programs can provide subjective evidence of impact, enriching the understanding of how these initiatives resonate within the community and contribute to the broader goals of sustainability.[16]

Emerging Trends

As the landscape of nonprofit music organizations evolves, several key trends are emerging that will shape our approach to longevity. One of the most significant trends is the increasing reliance on technology. Nonprofits are adopting digital fundraising tools and social media platforms to enhance operations, engage donors, and communicate more effectively.[17] The ability to host virtual events, such as galas and art auctions, expands outreach beyond local communities, allowing organizations to connect with a broader audience and generate funds while maintaining social distancing. This technological adoption not only facilitates fundraising but also helps in building a loyal support base by improving engagement and awareness.

Beyond technological integrations is the necessity for organizations to align their programs with the evolving needs of the community. Adapting our initiatives to remain relevant and impactful resonates with those we serve. Therein, ethical considerations and a focus on diversity are paramount for sustainability in nonprofit music organizations. There is a growing awareness of the importance of incorporating diverse voices and perspectives within organizations, both in staffing and programming. Emphasizing equity and inclusivity will strengthen community ties while enhancing the overall impact of your nonprofit's work.

The landscape of nonprofit arts organizations continues to evolve, with sustainability emerging as a multifaceted challenge that demands innovation, flexibility, and strategic planning. As organizations adapt to shifting cultural, economic, and regulatory pressures, they must diversify revenue streams, foster community partnerships, and embrace new technologies to ensure long-term viability. By focusing on mission-driven goals, maintaining financial resilience, and integrating inclusive, eco-friendly practices, nonprofits can thrive despite ongoing challenges. Ultimately, sustainability is not just about surviving; it's about positioning these organizations to fulfill their artistic missions and strengthen their connections with the communities they serve for years to come.

Jack A. Cleghorn is the choirmaster and organist and St. Paul's Episcopal Church and ACDA national R&R coordinator for lifelong choirs.

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Community Choirs

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Choral Connections: Building Community Among Conductors

By Matt Hill

One of the most compelling benefits of participating in choir is the sense of belonging it fosters. In a world where social isolation and loneliness are increasing, and where screentime is increasing among all demographics in the U.S. population, the act of singing together in a choir is almost countercultural. Choir members work collaboratively toward shared goals, such as preparing for concerts or improving vocal techniques, which cultivates a sense of camaraderie and teamwork, and creates a final product that is greater than the sum of the individual contributions.

As choral conductors, we are intimately familiar with the values and benefits associated with participating in a choir. We've given our professional lives (and some of our personal lives) to maintaining and perpetuating the choral art and the communities that surround it. This profession, however, is by its nature isolated and isolating. The responsibilities go well beyond rehearsing and concertizing, and in most cases we are the lone captains of our respective programs, be they scholastic, parochial, or community ensembles. While many of us have learned to work and thrive in this environment, we too should remember the value of community and connection for ourselves. This is not to say that we can't or shouldn't build and maintain relationships with our choristers—of course we do that by the very nature of our work. But the need to maintain at least some layer of separation from our singers (even in the case of adult ensembles) creates limitations on the level of connectedness we can experience.

This is where ACDA and its state chapters have been an invaluable asset to me. When I began attending the

Nebraska chapter's summer conference in 2007, I was a twenty-five-year-old church and community choir director, a college dropout (temporarily), and felt underqualified and completely on my own. It was at that summer conference that I began a journey of fellowship with colleagues that has become one of the pillars of my professional work for the past eighteen years.

The Importance of Community, Networking, and Relationships for Choral Directors

Given the amount of time we spend by ourselves listening to music, programming repertoire, studying scores, preparing concert programs, emailing the piano tuner, etc., it is crucial for our longevity in the field (and for our continued growth and enjoyment) to find ways to meaningfully connect with other people who understand the full breadth and depth of our work.

The significance of community, networking, and relationships among choral directors cannot be overstated. Outside of my family, my two closest relationships are with choral conductors in my state. This is no accident. I am fortunate to have two like-minded choral professionals—both of whom work at the highest levels of their respective niches in the profession—with whom I can share ideas, concerns, dreams, plans, and strategies for my ensembles in full confidence that they not only comprehend the nuances of the conversation, but also that they have me and my ensembles' best interests in mind when they offer opinions and guidance. They are also fully confident in my reciprocal investment into the lives of their choirs, and our triumvirate is built on a foundation of mutual respect and love for one another.

Further, because of the time we spend connecting, be it via our group chat or over a late dinner after our

respective evening rehearsals or a shared NCDA board meeting, we have also grown to know one another outside of our professional roles. We discuss family matters; we know each other's spouses and children and have a general sense of the things that are going on in each other's lives. This depth of relationship with peer colleagues has become an oasis for me in a sea of tasks and deadlines. Even if the connection point is simply shared memes or baseball trivia, a daily touchpoint with these friends provides levity and freshness to the otherwise narrowly focused work of the day and deepens the relationships, which allows for more serious conversations as the need for them arises.

I am also fortunate to have to colleagues in the Fine and Performing Arts Department at Creighton University with whom I connect daily. The first is a colleague in the music area, our band director, and the other is the head of our dance program. While we do not share discipline-specific challenges, we are all performing artists and performing arts educators with shared professional values and expectations. Every profession brings its unique set of challenges, but finding solutions is easier with trusted confidants to help navigate the path. A quick visit to one of their offices or a lunch "meeting" to discuss departmental business always leads to other conversation, be it about family, future artistic projects, or other tangentially related topics. Similar to my choral connections, these university colleagues and I know about each other's families and the general goings on in each other's lives. These friendships make coming to work easier and more enjoyable, and I suspect results in better job performance for us all as well.

To expand out one layer, service on the state choral director board has afforded me opportunities to get to know many of the active members around the state as we share time together in meetings and at conferences. These relationships have led to a network of shared music libraries, have opened the door for guest conducting opportunities, and in many cases have built up to collaborative opportunities in shared performances with guest artists. We can consult each other for repertoire ideas, rehearsal techniques, guest-artist referrals, successful fundraising approaches, touring guidance, and any other musical or non-musical element of our work. Who better to consult than those who are also actively engaged in the activities before us?

ACDA Is This Network

As choral conductors, we all find ourselves focused on the betterment of the singers and audiences in our charge, and we accept that responsibility happily. I encourage you to either build or deepen your relationships with other choral conductors with whom you are philosophically and/or otherwise aligned, and to make regular contact with that person or those people. ACDA provides an incredible foundation for those kinds of connections.

The relationships we build with fellow choral conductors foster a supportive environment where peer review, constructive criticism, and encouragement are the norms. Directors can celebrate one another's successes, encourage one another in down times, and share in the ebbs and flows of life as a choral professional. These connections also provide advocates and allies. Strong colleagues can serve as job references and can open doors to new and exciting professional opportunities.

The choral directing profession is at its best when it is collaborative, and when directors see each other not as competitors but as colleagues. The importance of community, networking, and relationships lies in their capacity to enrich both the music and the musicians. Meaningful relationships with peer colleagues provide a platform for continuous learning, mutual support, and collective joy in the art of choral music. All of this is available to us through our membership in ACDA at the state, regional, and national levels. I encourage you to reach out to someone today, whether that's a colleague in your school or district, or perhaps a connection from a past conference event. If no one comes to mind, reach out to your local ACDA state or region chapter president or R&R chair to see how you can get involved and connect with others in your area. Remember, we are better together! CJ

Matt Hill is the director of choral activities at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and the founding artistic and executive director of Sing Omaha. He is executive director of the Nebraska Choral Directors Association. matt@singomaha.org

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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. View submission guidelines and the full archives at acda.org/ijrcs. For more information or to submit an article, email ijrcs@acda.org. ACDA thanks Patrick Freer for his years of service. Bryan E. Nichols began his term as IJRCS editor as of January 2025.

Making space for inclusive approaches: A review of adolescent gender identity in high school choirs

Anthony Young and Jason Goopy

Volume 12, pages 1-22

Gender identity has received significant attention in choral music education, perhaps more than any other field of music education research. Issues concerning gender in choirs continue to prove challenging for adolescents and secondary school teachers. This article synthesizes a narrative literature review on gender identity research in high school choirs, offers suggestions for inclusive choral practices, and raises possibilities for future research. Gender research in Western cultural school choral contexts over the last century focused on a preoccupation with the shortage of male singers. Female participation in choir was considered commonplace and taken for granted, resulting in females being neglected in research until recently. Early material on male adolescent choral involvement tended to make very broad generalizations situated in hegemonic masculinity. By the 1990s, writers such as Koza were noting that these approaches to the issue had been unsuccessful, and recent writers have exposed the rich personal and contextual aspects of singers and their approaches to singing. Research in the past decade has attempted

to demystify and empower transgender singers, though there is still much to learn in this area. Common inclusive approaches for diverse gender identities emerged from the literature. These include gender inclusive language, a welcoming environment and supportive mentors, considered and contextualized repertoire choices, and whole group vocal pedagogy sensitive to individual needs. Future research is recommended to investigate the evolving relationship of contemporary gender identities with other components of the self, how multiple gender identities can be supported and positively co-exist, and the possible contributions of choral music education to gender identity development in a greater range of contexts, cultures, and traditions.

Women Conductors of College Men's Choirs – Redefining the "Brotherhood"
Meg Stohlmann
Volume 12, pages 23-42

Collegiate men's choirs have unique and storied traditions dating back to the Civil War and the founding of many prominent colleges in the United States (Albinder & Jones, 2008). Historically, these ensembles created a place for fraternity, brotherhood, and social outlets for young men (Jones, 2010). Consequently, there are few documented instances of women conducting collegiate men's choirs (VanWeelden, 2003). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women conductors of college men's choirs. This research was guided by the following questions: 1. How did women choral conductors describe their motivations for working with college men's choirs? 2. How did these conductors describe the rehearsal environment in their college men's choir? 3. And finally, how did these conductors define the challenges of working with male singers? The following areas provided focus for themes that emerged from the conductor interviews: their motivations, the rehearsal environment, and the challenges associated with a lack of opportunity and quality literature.

Embodying the Music: A Survey of Choral Music Educators on Conducting Injury and Wellness Techniques
Ryan W. Sullivan, Colleen McNickle, Brianne Wehner, and Stephanie Li
Volume 12, pages 43-67

The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify the most common choral conducting-related injuries, and determine the ways conductors completing the survey have adapted their physical gesture to accommodate or avoid pain and discomfort. Utilizing a researcher-designed online survey, we asked choral music educators to identify and describe musculoskeletal and vocal injuries sustained throughout their careers, and the effects of these injuries on their conducting and teaching practices. Results from respondents (N = 75) indicated a high prevalence of upper-body repetitive stress injuries amongst participants caused by classroom ergonomics, misuse and overuse, poor technique, and tension. In response to their injury or injuries, participants reported altering alignment, change of technique, rest, and avoidance. Preventative responses included classroom modifications and therapy and/or treatment. We discussed the workplace culture of the typical American choir conductor, the state of wellness education in pre-service teacher training, and considerations for future research. Such findings could help inform conductors, teachers of conducting, and medical providers to understand more about injury prevention and management for conductors.

Scoping the Literature of Transgender Singing: Experiences and Pedagogical Insights in Choral Contexts
Naomi Cooper, Nadine Manion, and Scott Harrison
Volume 12, pages 68-87

Choral conductors have expressed interest in working with transgender singers more effectively, however, opportunities for professional development and resources in this area have been limited. This article reports a scoping review designed to explore the experi-

ences of transgender singers in choral settings. Results offer insights for choral conductors seeking to enhance their support for this group. In this study we reviewed literature from 2013 to 2022. Of the 221 relevant studies included in the scoping review, 15 studies discussed choral contexts. These studies stressed the importance of (a) creating gender-inclusive and culturally responsive choral environments, (b) addressing concerns such as gendered language, concert attire, and voice part labeling, and (c) the impact of gender dysphoria on choral singing experiences. The search returned limited research on non-binary singers. Few studies disclosed the involvement of transgender researchers. Environmental factors such as gendered norms in choirs and the role of choral conductors functioned as both barriers and facilitators for transgender singers in choral contexts. Choral conductors can play a pivotal role in creating trans-inclusive environments by using gender-neutral language and fostering allyship for transgender individuals. The studies reviewed also addressed the vocal effects of gender-affirming hormone therapy, vocal exercises, binding practices, and vocal health while emphasizing the psychological and emotional aspects of voice and gender identity. While progress has been made in recognizing and accommodating transgender singers in choral settings, further research is needed to address the pedagogical implications of trans-specific vocal considerations, including gender-affirming hormone therapy and surgical interventions.

Validating and Piloting a Choral Educator Questionnaire: The Use of Culture Bearers and Pedagogical Implications of Singing in Multiple Timbres

Andrew P. Schmidt

Volume 12, pages 88-110

Many educators strive to enact culturally relevant practices by introducing repertoire of various cultures and genres. One major barrier to this implementation includes the variety of vocal sounds inherent in traditions outside those generally presented in choral environments within the United States of America. In this study, I validated and piloted a choral educator questionnaire. I designed the survey to solicit information about the use of vocal pedagogy in the ensemble classroom. In the survey, I also asked about educators' use of vocal pedagogy as related to issues of vocal health and teaching non-Classical repertoire. After reviewing methodologies used in prior choral education survey studies, I chose to validate the questionnaire through a cognitive interview process. This process yielded a revised questionnaire that a small sample of choral educators piloted. Results of these two phases culminated in a final questionnaire for use with a larger sample.

Music Teachers' Perceptions of Nonverbal Conducting Technique Items in Teaching Choir in the Classroom

Ji-Eun Kim

Volume 12, pages 111-131

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine music teachers' perceptions of nonverbal conducting technique items based on their classroom choral teaching experiences. One hundred and fifty classroom choral music educators (N = 150) participated in this study. I employed two procedures. First, using a seven-point Likert-type scale, participants rated 15 nonverbal conducting technique items in their importance to directing choral ensembles. I then arranged participants' mean ratings of the 15 items in order of importance. The three most participant-rated important items were providing right-hand indications for tempo changes, providing left-hand indications for crescendos and diminuendos, and providing right-hand indications for attacks and releases. Then, participants selected their three most important nonverbal conducting technique items using the same 15 items. There was a tie for the rank of the third most important item, resulting in four items as most important. The four most participant-selected important items were providing right-hand indications for tempo changes, providing facial/body indications for style emphases and changes (legato, staccato, etc.), providing left-hand indications for crescendos and diminuendos, and providing left-hand

indications for attacks and releases. The choir teachers' responses gathered in this study can be beneficial in understanding which specific conducting technique components are viewed as important when developing successful conducting techniques to be used in choral classroom teaching.

"Sing, sit, and leave": Engagement and Disillusionment in a High School Chorus
Frank Martignetti
Volume 12, pages 132-152

This study provides insight into why students leave voluntary school choral experiences, through an analysis of interviews with four high school students at a single New York City high school who left, or were considering leaving, their high school choral program. This study provides a voice often unheard in the research literature, since many research subjects are people who have had positive feelings about their ensemble experience. Analysis through a lens of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and student engagement theory (Deakin Crick, 2012; Reeve & Tseng, 2011) revealed strong feelings of engagement and disillusionment, providing insight into individuals' choices and motives. Principal themes included the perceived quality of the subject's relationship with the teacher/conductor and with other students; subject's perceptions regarding the focus and commitment level of the other students; and subjects' perceptions of rigor and the value gained from participation. These align with two of the elements of self-determination theory: belonging and competence. Implications for practitioners and for future research are suggested.

Self-Efficacy and Achievement among Secondary School Vocalists: An Exploratory Study
Thomas J. Rinn
Volume 12, pages 153-169

The purpose of this study was to investigate music performance self-efficacy and achievement among secondary school choral music students. I specifically examined the relationships between the four sources of self-efficacy (enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal/social persuasion, and physiological and affective state) and the composite construct, as well as years of private lessons and practice time. In addition, I compared self-efficacy beliefs by grade, school, voice part, camp attendance, and voice lessons. Participants (N = 42) completed the Music Performance Self-Efficacy Scale (Zelenak, 2011), provided demographic data, and reported average weekly practice time in preparation for a competitive choral event. Results indicated a significant negative correlation between Verbal/social persuasion and competitive ranking ($r_s = -.36$, $p = .02$). Those with higher scores on the verbal/social persuasion subscale were ranked higher (received a lower number ranking) than those with lower scores. I found no significant differences in composite self-efficacy beliefs among voice parts, grade levels, or those engaged in private vocal instruction. The results contribute to the literature linking musical self-efficacy and achievement and replicate previous findings of the relationship between the verbal/social persuasion factor of musical self-efficacy and achievement. CJ


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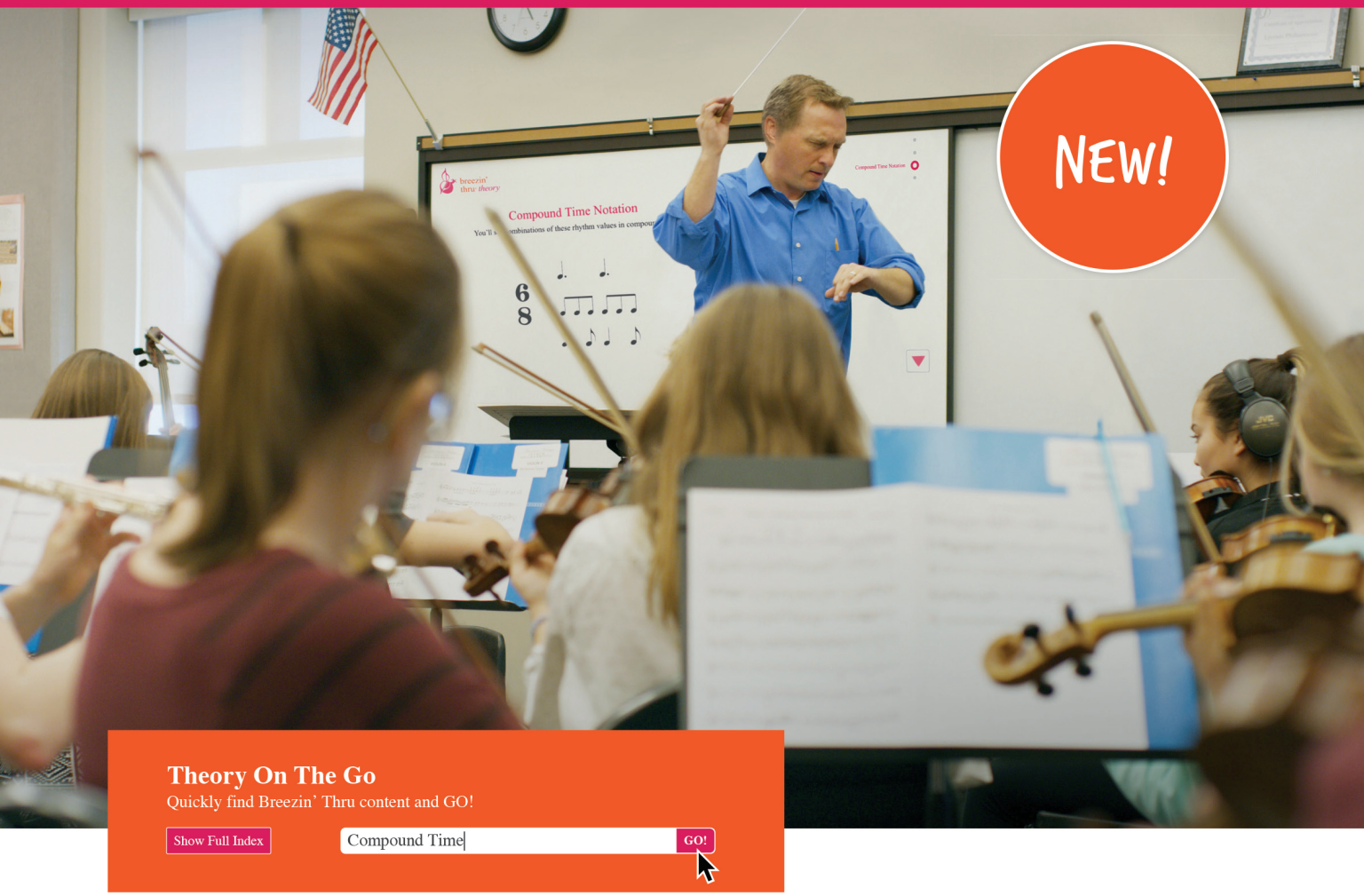

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Developing Black-Belt Choral Musicians: Transferable Lessons and Methods from Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

JEFFERY WALL

Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the February 2024 issue of the ArkMEA Journal (Arkansas Music Educators Association). It has been slightly updated by the author and is reprinted with permission. The content is based on the author's interest session at the 2024 Southwestern ACDA Region Conference.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) is a grappling martial art that is often used as a vehicle to impact practitioners positively, building resilience, patience, confidence, and discipline through terraced skill-building in a community of individuals from all walks of life. A form of submission grappling, it has been described as having many of the mental challenges of chess with physical consequences via pins, joint manipulation, and strangulation holds. It is an effective method of self-defense, a competitive sport, a hobby, and a lifestyle for many. The physical and mental benefits of this art form deserve our attention in the choral world. In this article, we will explore the unexpected lessons and methods from the jiu-jitsu mats and how they can be effectively transferred to the rehearsal room. As a black belt with over thirty years of martial arts experience, some of these concepts come from the author's own experiences, and others have been adapted from a book by Rener Gracie titled, *The 32 Principles: Harnessing the Power of Jiu-Jitsu to Succeed in Business, Relationships, and Life*.[1]

Connection

In order to effectively control an opponent, one must control distance. BJJ players must physically connect to their opponent and leave no space for movement or counter-attack until they are ready to move or elicit an expected movement from their opponent. It is also true that BJJ players often share a connected camaraderie. Having traversed through difficult training together, they share a bond with their training partners and mutually share aspects of their lives. Connection allows the "ability to communicate, listen, negotiate, observe, problem solve, escalate, deescalate, empathize, pacify, praise, embrace, or perhaps totally avoid [to help] maintain control in everyday social situations."[2]

Connection is the catalyst principle upon which all ensemble music learning occurs. After all, musicians must connect with each other first to effectively communicate with an audience. Additionally, think about how

important connection is for recruiting and retention of singer-musicians in ensembles. It is paramount to foster an environment that prioritizes connection. After all, ensemble members who are connected often play or sing much better together because they experience a form of creative symbiosis.

Detachment

The principle of detachment conversely allows deliberate disconnection from an opponent. Even if momentarily, detachment creates opportunities to avoid stagnation, maintain advantage, or perhaps elicit a desired movement from an opponent toward attack or submission. This principle is applicable to rehearsals in knowing when to push musicians further and when to allow them to work independent of the director. It is important for singer-musicians to be equipped with skills, and then be given the latitude to develop independent and collective musicianship.

The jiu-jitsu mats are a place where mistakes are welcomed. The entire art form is built upon the premise of making mistakes. The "tap" is the BJJ player's way of saying "I surrender." Then, the two opponents slap hands to indicate readiness again, and they continue the roll (sparring). Afterward, they exchange ideas and ask questions, trying to discern their own mistakes or draw upon the knowledge of their opponent. Failure breeds success and falling short is an opportunity for growth. These are the lessons that BJJ teaches.

Choral directors sometimes default to minimizing mistakes. Allow singers space to make mistakes in a forgiving environment and identify the mistakes themselves whenever possible. Instead of telling them that they missed a rhythm, detach and ask leading questions that provide direction for ensemble members to discern their own mistakes. Experience is the greatest teacher, and directors must gently correct while not robbing singers of the opportunity to self-correct. Finally, detachment is relevant to letting go of the disciplined monotony related to musical skill building in rehearsals toward expressive communication in performance. Detachment is often called the flow-state in other realms and is important for internalization and ultimate enjoyment.

Stability

A tripod always has a stable foundation with at least three points of contact. This principle is valuable in a fighting or combat scenario for balance while standing or while trying to maintain a dominant position once the fight progresses to the ground. This lesson transfers to the rehearsal room as directors attempt to equip singer-musicians with facility with their respective voices, music literacy, and repetitive intentional practice of literature. These three points of contact allow for stability amidst performance anxiety, distractions in concert, and the inevitability of something eventually going awry musically. Imagine the two sides of the ensemble somehow realize they are a measure apart momentarily because they misread a gesture or counted incorrectly. How will they react? With a stable foundation, they can rely on their practiced skills to quickly realize the error and take steps to rectify without the audience ever knowing.

Method of Instruction

With few exceptions, jiu-jitsu academies across the world employ a similar approach to delivering instruction: learn it, drill it, troubleshoot it, apply it, repeat.

• *Learn it*: Players form a circle around the instructor, who will demonstrate the technique from the center of the mat.

• *Drill it*: Players break into pairs (upper belt with a lower belt) to drill the technique. The upper belt goes first to demonstrate proper execution. Then, assists the lower belt with terminology, positioning, body mechanics, and details. The instructor walks around to help individuals struggling with the technique.

• *Troubleshoot it*: Based on feedback and what the instructor saw while walking around during the drilling portion, the instructor re-circles the group oriented to the center mat and cleans up common mistakes and answers questions.

• *Apply it*: The latter half of the class is usually spent attempting to integrate techniques learned that day with

other known techniques in a live "roll" (sparring session), making synaptic connections, and chaining larger contextual movements with the "move of the day."

• *Repeat*: Each technique is usually taught throughout the week at each training session. Purposeful repetition is imperative. The curriculum is cyclical, returning to key foundational concepts throughout the year and connecting to new concepts.

In the choral rehearsal room, this method is transferable by giving instruction and reading an initial pass as a group. Then, singers work independently or in small groups by section. The director keeps a watchful eye and walks around to see how they are doing, troubleshooting with them and making small adjustments. After a few minutes, singers reorient to the podium as they rehearse as a full ensemble again. Directors can provide feedback and allow opportunity to apply the techniques in a larger context by reconnecting the concepts to the repertoire. This allows ensemble musicians to connect the theoretical to the practical and apply it in rehearsal with stream of consciousness within a larger section or the whole piece. Returning to the independent/small group drilling portion may be necessary. Concepts can be repeated in new ways each day but with mindful return to the passage or piece of music.

Ratcheting

Whether in BJJ, fitness, a novel reading challenge, developing a savings account, or in the music rehearsal room, the ratchet principle applies. As Rener Gracie and Paul Volponi say, "Small, persistent advancements will add up to significant gains over time."[3] BJJ can be very dynamic and fast moving. However, it is also said that BJJ is an art of inches. This applies to the techniques themselves—by advancing superior positioning little bits at a time to place oneself in an advantageous scenario to pursue submission from the opponent. It also is relevant to the advancement in rank, which is discussed in a later section of this article. High-level musicianship, building large programs with multiple ensembles, or achieving superior ratings at festival does not happen overnight.

Macro advancements do not occur without the necessary daily, persistent, disciplined micro advancements. Therefore, be certain to allot a few minutes of time in every rehearsal for sight-reading, music literacy, and pedagogy. It only takes the short, focused effort in each rehearsal to yield grand results in the long term. Additionally, encourage musicians to embrace short-term discomfort in digestible bits toward security and ease in performance. No growth occurs without challenge and adversity. If progress stagnates, return to a previous stage of the music-learning hierarchy and ratchet back up. Repetitive daily actions ratcheted means freedom to enjoy performances without stress. Singers have prepared with intention repetitively so that the performance is just a display of their small, but meaningful, progress.

Cross-Training and Seminars

In BJJ, each person has a uniquely different training style and a different "game" that they are developing. Dropping in at different academies intentionally at the local level or while traveling allows the BJJ player to absorb a different methodology or teaching style, and the opportunity to meld it with their own style. Even if there is only a single take-away, it is valuable to the journey, as it provides context and another tool for the "bag of tricks." Directors should actively seek opportunities to drop into other rehearsal rooms to source new teachers, veteran teachers, large ensembles, small ensembles, and groups with completely different cultures.

Exposing the entire ensemble to another ensemble's rehearsal lends additional perspective. Learning concepts from other musical or performance areas (band, orchestra, music theater, dance, etc.) will equip the ensemble with new and innovative techniques for immediate implementation. Likewise, seminars from experts brought in to lead instruction are valuable. Exposing singer-musicians to alternative methods of instructional delivery at all levels of preparation can often shorten the learning curve.

The Grandmaster Principle

The journey in jiu-jitsu is a long one. On average, it takes a BJJ player ten years to achieve the rank of black belt—much longer than most traditional martial arts. All associations have slightly different criteria, but there is a standard from the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation. It is usually predicated on time in rank, proficient display of skills/technique, and character with possession of a moral compass. The adult belt ranks in BJJ are white, blue, purple, brown, and black. Each belt has the opportunity to earn four stripes at every rank until black belt as a way to measure progress through the rank. At black belt, there are six degrees. These benchmarks provide a support system with those to look up to and those to bring up in their own respective journey, easily identifiable by the belts. It also provides teaching opportunities.

After skills are acquired, upper belts are often offered opportunities to pass on knowledge to lower belts (perhaps with some far-away oversight). It develops resilience and patience. Ranking up in BJJ is not guaranteed. It is only through persistence and recognized self-improvement that one is considered for a level change. It is always amazing to see grown adults get excited over a little piece of white tape placed on the black bar of their belt for the stripe. Even adults are not so different from kindergartners. Everyone likes that "gold star" of recognition that signifies progress in effort and goals.

Many choral directors employ a council of ensemble officers or chair positions, but that usually only accounts for a small portion of the roster. Directors should consider a ranking system for the entirety of their ensembles. Perhaps it is simply pairing mentors with mentees or perhaps it is a visible sticker on their folders. It can identify higher ranking individuals as someone to approach for help and direction.

White belts training with other white belts is where most injuries occur in jiu-jitsu. Pairing upper belts with lower belts allows for learning to occur proficiently and efficiently. The same can be true in choral ensembles. When done properly, the ranking system develops a strong sense of community with encouragement across the ranks. Students who level up to the next rank are applauded by their classmates, moving up in formation for commencement and conclusion of class. It creates a healthy sense of camaraderie and competition, inculcating a "never give up" attitude. Advancement in rank also comes with added responsibility, so it is important to hold upper levels to a standard of expectation commensurate with the rank.

Once one achieves the rank of black belt, the journey is not over. It is just the beginning. This is the point where one realizes that there is always more to learn by utilizing the grandmaster principle—i.e., "living with the confidence of a black belt, while learning with the humility of a white belt."

Conclusion

In the end, the two art forms of jiu-jitsu and choral music making are not too far apart. Both develop creativity, community, and focused skill-building—all basic tenets of prosperous humanity. There are valuable cross-discipline lessons in instructional delivery, but also anecdotal reminders of connection, detachment, stability, advancement, and motivation present in both art forms. Lastly, it is important to keep the play in the work and make it enjoyable for directors and singers. Both jiu-jitsu players and musicians typically come to their respective art forms because it is fun, and it should be. Play on, sing on. CT

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NOTES

[1] Rener Gracie and Paul Volponi, *The 32 Principles: Harnessing the Power of Jiu-Jitsu to Succeed in Business, Relationships, and Life* (BenBella Books, Inc., 2023), eBook.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

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Book Reviews

Gregory Pysh, editor
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William L. Dawson
Gwynne Kuhner Brown
University of Illinois Press, 2024. pp. 152
Cloth, $110; paper, $24.95; ebook, $14.95

Note: A version of this review originally appeared in Pennsylvania History, A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies (Fall 2024).

As the editor of the recently published new edition of William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony,* Gwynne Kuhner Brown's *William L. Dawson* adds to the recent flourishing of scholarship and recordings of Dawson's work, most notably Mark Hugh Malone's biography, *William Levi Dawson: American Music Educator* (University Press of Mississippi, 2023) and the September 2024 issue of the *Choral Journal* devoted entirely to Dawson, with contributions from both Brown and Malone.

As a conductor and teacher, William Dawson first drew national attention through his 110-voice Tuskegee Institute Choir, beginning with its 1932 performance at the opening of Radio City Music Hall in New York only two years after his arrival. After twenty-five years at Tuskegee, he went on to become one of the leading guest conductors and clinicians throughout the United States at a time when the presence of Black performers of any kind at national choral conferences was exceedingly rare.

Beginning with his running away from home in Anniston, Alabama, at age thirteen to study music at the Tuskegee Institute 100 miles south, Dawson followed an insatiable curiosity about the craft of composition, orchestration, and the origins of the Spirituals. He moved on from Tuskegee to Kansas City and Chicago, continuing to study composition while working as a band director, trombonist, and music editor, until an invitation came to return to Tuskegee as director of a new school of music at the Institute. Though the funding for this program would soon fall through, Dawson devoted himself to developing the choir, even with no music majors left to draw on. Through his arrangements of the Spirituals, he "gave students who were two or more generations removed from slavery a way of engaging positively with their ancestors' experiences, spirituality, and artistry" (p. 34).

Soon after his return to Tuskegee, Dawson's newly expanded choir had gained enough attention to be invited to become part of a variety show concert at the December 1932 opening of Radio City Music Hall. While this opportunity brought his choir national prominence, it also brought him in contact with the eminent conductor Leopold Stokowski, with whom he shared the score of a new symphony. The symphony's premiere in November 1934 received universal high praise, but follow-up performances were few. A trip to Africa in 1952-53 inspired Dawson to revise the symphony. After reviewing the revised score, Stokows-

ki decided to record it with his newly founded American Symphony Orchestra in 1963. The symphony fell largely dormant again until the 2023 publication of a newly edited set of score and parts by Brown led to another landmark performance and recording, again with the Philadelphia Orchestra, this time under the direction of Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Brown makes the case that this work is far more than a compilation of folk song harmonizations; the themes are fully integrated into the brilliant and varied orchestral texture, as are the compelling rhythmic ideas inspired by Dawson's trip to Africa. Dawson's arrangements of the Spirituals have had a much more continuous influence in the choral world. In the postwar era, several of his arrangements became essential elements of the choral repertoire, and for many singers were their first exposure to the Spirituals in any form.

Like his symphony, these arrangements are remarkable in their formal originality, going well beyond the straightforward harmonizations most common at that time. In this area, a little broader context would have been welcome in Brown's monograph. In the 1930s, Dawson was building up the sound and repertoire of a large, one hundred-voice university chorus singing arrangements with more dynamism than known heretofore. At the same time, Hall Johnson was composing arrangements for his 100+-voice Hall Johnson Choir, comprising professionally trained singers performing for a broader audience through the growing media of Hollywood films and television. Both composers created more freely composed choral settings for large choirs, bringing listeners closer to the heterophony and intensity of the ring-shouts and sorrow songs as they would have been heard on antebellum plantations. Brown does make a passing reference to Johnson, but it would be interesting to explore how their work in two parallel, but very different, worlds may have intersected.

Brown delves extensively into Dawson's principled insistence on vernacular diction and his unusually disciplined approach to rehearsing a choir. Dawson obtained a level of dynamic range and ensemble unity that was ahead of his time, an important reason for the success of his national role as an "Itinerant Master" in his long post-Tuskegee career. Brown poses the question at the outset of why such a gifted and remarkably original composer would produce such a limited number of works, instead devoting himself primarily to conducting and teaching. She proposes that "although anti-Black racism and his response to it unquestionably shaped his professional trajectory," his career as a deeply committed and passionate teacher "was not a fallback plan… Dawson was both ambitious and intentional, an artist and educator who made considered decisions about how and where to direct his gifts, and whose legacy is rendered no less momentous by the indifference of the White musical elite" (p. 4).

Thomas Lloyd
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A Quick Start Guide to Choral Singing
Matthew Bumbach and Dean Luethi
GIA Publications, 2022
92 pages

The authors have written this handbook for neophyte choral singers as well as experienced conductors and long-time choristers to gain new perspectives on choral singing. The Introduction gives the reader the

essential focus of the text:

> What you see here is not an academic textbook. It is meant for someone with little to no experience in choir. We will share some of the things we have learned through our experiences as singers and conductors… Our intention is to help make choral singing more accessible to new singers. We hope the content we share will help you on your choral journey. (pp. 11-12)

Bumbach and Luethi have crafted an eleven-chapter sequential "toolbox" that takes the reader on a comprehensive walk through the life of a chorister, from equipment (including a cell phone policy), to reading pitches and rhythms, score markings, body alignment, a rehearsal guide (a walk-through of a "normal" rehearsal), breathing for singing, auditions and solos, concert preparations, and the creatively titled ninth chapter, "Vowels Are Weird." Each chapter ends with a summary titled "Key Tips," which can serve as a reminder of essentials for optimal choral participation for the more experienced conductor and singer. Of special note is the chapter "Breathing for Life, Breathing for Singing."

A Quick Start Guide to Choral Singing is an ideal primer for singers new to the choral art and can serve as a resource for conductors of all ensembles.

Gregory M. Pysh
Van Wert, OH

Hearts All Whole, Reflections on (Life and) Twelve Choral Gems
Robert Bode
GIA Publications, Inc., 2023
171 pages

In describing this book (and its author) to the reader, *Seattle Times* Classical Music Critic Melinda Bargreen writes precisely in the forward:

> Inside the (singer's) head is exactly where this memorable book goes. Bode's witty, personal, thought-provoking chapters each focus on a specific choral work that has meant something important to him over the course of (his) career… His chapters chronicle his own experiences… It is revealing that the book is organized around great choral works and his experiences with them, rather than around episodes of Bode's own achievements and successes. (pp. 9-10)

In this delightful, engaging, heartfelt memoir, conductor and poet Robert Bode writes of his life and professional journey through twelve compositions that have been especially meaningful to him as a conductor and teacher. They range from Josquin (*Ave Maria*) and Palestrina (*Ave Redemptoris Mater)*, to Mozart (*Ave Verum)*, Brahms (*O schöne Nacht!*), Finzi (*My Spirit Sang All Day*), Duruflé (*Ubi caritas*), and Lauridsen (*Sure on This Shining Night*).

What makes this book such an engaging read are the stories that complement each masterwork, including leading music for his first funeral at a major church in Austin, Texas; his commentary on the length and crafting of concerts; stories of his students and their first experiences selecting and using a baton; the "curse" of the Rachmaninoff *Vespers*; a performance at the White House for President and Mrs. Obama; and a fabulous recipe for pumpkin spice muffins. Of special note are the five principles Bode developed for his choirs after singing an inspiring performance of the Brahms *A German Requiem* in Carnegie Hall under the baton of Robert Shaw.

The true beauty of this publication is the reader is professionally informed while enjoying the life and musical experiences of the author. For those who find personal reading a guilty pleasure or a distraction from your own personal study and growth as a conductor, *Hearts All Whole* will feed your spirit while rekindling your love for the choral art.

Gregory M. Pysh
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