(Trans)itioning Voices: Inclusivity through Line Recombination

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In recent years, the inclusion of transgender and gender expansive (TGE) individuals has become a more visible and increasingly discussed topic in both national and regional conferences of the various professional choral organizations. These have featured interest sessions on terminology, vocal changes due to hormone replacement therapy (HRT) along with the related vocal pedagogy, and some logistical accommodations that choral directors can employ in their classrooms such as inclusive choral attire and identity-affirming choral placement.[1] The 2021 book titled *Honoring Trans and Gender Expansive Students in Music Education,* written by TGE allies Drs. Joshua Palkki and Matthew Garrett, contains discussions on several such accommodations.[2] However, apart from these worthy topics of discussion, there is a lack of actionable, research-informed tools developed by TGE communities themselves that address the vocal needs of TGE singers in choral ensembles.

As a member of the TGE community, I am presenting a codified methodology called "line recombination" to supplement the efforts of those who have come before me in order to further the goal of a more inclusive choral environment. Through the recombination of vocal lines in their repertoire, choral directors can repurpose similar principles employed for cambiata voices in middle school classrooms—and other such situations that involve revoicing an existing vocal line—in order to meet the vocal needs of transgender and gender-expansive singers in their ensembles who may be exploring a vocal transition, all without compromising the singer's vocal health or musical integrity.

Normalizing the use of line recombination to help TGE singers can provide actionable alternatives for singers who may be transitioning between voice parts in order to align better with their gender identity. First, a brief exploration of trans-related terminology and potential vocal issues that TGE singers may face is necessary in order to lay the foundation for understanding the methodology behind line recombination. After which, the examination of five contrasting "classics" from standard choral repertoire helps determine a set of parameters that can assist directors in creating their own recombined lines for singers in need.

Terminology

In order to use inclusive language when discussing this topic, it is important to establish a few key terms.[3] The concepts discussed here are those that are relevant to the discussion of line recombination, and it is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to TGE-inclusive terminology, as that is not the goal of this article. The acronyms AMAB and AFAB mean "Assigned-Male-At-Birth" and "Assigned-Female-At-Birth," rather than using "male" or "female," respectively.[4] This delineation is important to note because the sex assigned to an individual at birth does not necessarily coincide with their gender identity. An individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth is known as "cisgender," while an individual whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth is known as "transgender." When abbreviated to "trans," this can be used as an all-encompassing term for any individuals who are not cisgender. However, individuals who are not cisgender may prefer a term other than "trans." It is always better to ask and never to assume. "Gender expansive" is another phrase that is becoming more common and is used as an umbrella term for individuals who broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms.[5] Therefore, the acronym TGE is applied to the entire phrase "Transgender and Gender Expansive" in order to represent as many individuals' identities as possible.

When referring to a woman who was assigned male at birth, the term trans woman is typically applied, and a man who was assigned female at birth is referred to as a trans man. These terms used to be (and unfortunately still are in some cases) referred to as "male-to-female" and "female-to-male," or MTF and FTM, respectively. However, these phrases are now considered insensitive, over-medicalized, and outdated, and they should not be used.[6] In the case of individuals who are not within the traditional gender binary of "male" or "female," often the term "non-binary" is used. Non-binary individuals can be AMAB or AFAB and may be another gender that is not male or female, have no gender at all, or are a combination of genders.

Before one can empathize with a TGE individual's perspective, the concept of dysphoria must first be considered. "Gender dysphoria" is a persistent dissatisfaction with or distress related to one's inner sense of self (gender identity) not aligning with their sex-assigned-at-birth, their physical appearance, and/or how their gender is perceived by others.[7] One potential manifestation of dysphoria that choir directors may observe is vocal dysphoria, which means that the individual experiences distress related to their speaking or singing voice not aligning with what is expected of their gender identity.[8] For example, a trans woman may experience distress because they are assigned to sing in the baritone section, which is not a voice part that is traditionally perceived as feminine. However, while many TGE individuals do experience some form of gender dysphoria, not all do, and as such, the presence of gender dysphoria is not necessary prior to validating a TGE individual's identity.[9]

Lastly, if an individual takes steps to present themselves or to experience the world in a manner more closely related to their gender identity, this is known as "transitioning." Generally, there are three different categories of transitioning that individuals may choose to undergo: social, legal, and medical. Social transition refers to things such as changing the name or pronouns they use, how they dress or act, or their living circumstances. A legal transition refers to changing one's name or gender marker on legal identification and any other necessary documents, and a medical transition refers to individuals who undergo hormone therapy or other medical procedures to alter their body physically to align with their gender identity. It is important to note that not all individuals who are TGE undergo any form of transition, often due to a lack of qualifying medical insurance or financial resources rather than a lack of desire. Regardless, transitioning (whether social, legal, or medical) is not essential in order for someone's gender identity to be valid. It is simply through the individual's self-identification with their identity that it becomes valid.[10]

TGE-Related Vocal Transitions[11]

There are several common misconceptions or misunderstandings about TGE singers that may lead a choir director to be unsure about how to proceed if they have a TGE singer in their ensemble. For instance, some may believe that if a singer is undergoing hormone therapy, they will be unable to sing well enough to be able to continue singing in an ensemble because they can negatively impact the corporate sound if they are allowed to sing in a section that is different than one would expect of their sex assigned at birth (e.g., someone who was previously singing baritone and wants to sing in the alto section).

One of the more incorrect beliefs about HRT's effects on the voice is that a TGE singer taking testosterone would never be able to sing like someone who is cisgender. While these perceptions are not of malicious intent, they are not accurate representations of the experiences of TGE individuals. To address some of these misconceptions and to illustrate line recombination's usefulness in assisting individuals seeking a vocal transition, a brief introduction into medical transition's actual impact on the voice is essential, but an in-depth discussion of its effects on the voice is not included here, as that is not the focus of this article.

Introduction to Medical Transition's Impact on the Voice

First, there are little to no discernable side effects to the anatomy of the larynx of an AMAB individual undergoing feminizing hormone therapy post-puberty, which includes the reduction of testosterone and the addition of estrogen in the body. Some anti-androgens (testosterone blockers) can have a dehydrating effect on the individual, but conscientious hydration can abate any concerns in that area.[12] However, there are phonolaryngeal surgical options that some TGE individuals choose to undergo in order to raise the natural speaking pitch of their voice, and if they do, their range will be impacted significantly. If this is the case, any singing should be cleared through vocal health professionals before resuming choral activities. Because HRT has limited effects on the voice and surgical options are incredibly risky, trans women who are singers may undergo voice therapy to feminize their speaking voice and/or learn to sing in a soprano or alto register in a manner similar to a countertenor.[13]

In contrast to feminizing hormone therapy, masculinizing hormone therapy does have a significant impact on vocal production. The primary hormone prescribed for these individuals is testosterone, and the extent of the impact of testosterone depends greatly on the age and vocal development of the individual when they begin hormone therapy.[14] However, regardless of age, changes can be observed rather quickly, and the effects are analogous to a cisgender AMAB individual's changing voice during puberty.[15] Similar to a middle school-aged AMAB person, individuals taking testosterone can still sing throughout their voice change, but the amount of time it can take for the voice to stabilize fully can vary from two to six years.[16]

On the whole, the extent of the effects of hormone replacement therapy on an individual is largely contingent upon the age at which they begin treatment. It is extremely rare to encounter a teenager who is undergoing HRT, whether masculinizing or feminizing. Instead, the use of puberty blockers may be employed to delay

the onset of puberty until the family decides whether to proceed with HRT along with a team of medical professionals.[17] Because puberty blockers postpone the onset of hormonal effects on the body, resonance may be impacted due to the delayed initiation of development of the ribcage and skull. Despite this, it is important to note that teenagers looking to transition socially or to sing in a different section, even if they are not on HRT, can still benefit from line recombination because it can provide a healthy, gender-affirming vocal line that may ease vocal dysphoria.

Line Recombination

Line recombination is a codified methodology of creating a new, intermediate vocal line by combining portions of the existing alto and tenor lines in a composition in order to provide an accessible vocal line that can be sung by individuals seeking to perform a voice part that traditionally corresponds to their affirmed gender identity. It is important to note that line recombination is not the creation of new material. Instead, through notating a hybrid line that consists only of notes from the alto and tenor lines, line recombination does not change the musical content of a selection. It can provide a healthy, gender-affirming alternative to singers who are transitioning between voice parts, or those who are unable or do not want to sing in their current section due to vocal constraints or their gender identity, all while eliminating the need for the singer to jump between staves to accomplish a similar result.

When recombining lines, the most important consideration is the range of the new voice part. Generally, recombined lines should stay within an overlapped tessitura of the AFAB lower register and the AMAB upper register. This allows for the line to encompass a range that can be sung by most individuals, regardless of sex-assigned-at-birth. Because range varies widely from person to person, even within the same fach, registration events serve as a better starting point when determining the range for recombined lines. This is because the locations of registration events are more consistent within voice classifications, which would imply that there is some degree of range overlap at those pitch levels.

As discussed in Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing*, all voices have at least one registration event between G3-A4, as shown in Table 1 on page 11.[18] Using that information and the "chest voice" ranges that Miller indicates for upper voices, one can extrapolate that—on average—most voices have an overlap in range around G3-A4 as well, with the possible exception of basso profundos who do not have a developed upper register that enables them to sing above their secondo passaggio. To allow for some margin of error, I narrowed this range even further to try to avoid reaching the extremes of those individuals' ranges. As a result, I recommend the range of A3-F♯4 for recombined lines with some flexibility for brief deviations outside of that tessitura—as long as the line does not stay beyond this limit for extended periods of time or go higher than A4 or lower than F♯3, if possible. Of course, one must take into account the difficulty of navigating the passaggi in this range—particularly for tenors, baritones, and basses—due to potential fatigue and audible registration shifts. Recombined lines can, however, be used as an opportunity to develop a lighter vocal mechanism that will allow them to navigate this challenging tessitura as they work toward their desired voice part.

The second consideration in line recombination is "singability." An effort to avoid extremely disjunct lines should be made, thus creating the smoothest recombination possible—unless the character of the music calls for a more disjunct approach. Lastly, one should try to utilize material primarily from the voice part that the singer desires to perform. If that is not possible due to the nature of the music, a neutral line can be created.

Hypothetical Examples

To visualize some potential circumstances in which the method of line recombination can be applied, five hypothetical singers of collegiate age or older are discussed here for consideration, but again, these principles can be applied in teenagers as well as adults, regardless of HRT status.

Sally

First is Sally (she/her), a thirty-year-old trans woman who has been on feminizing hormone therapy for five

years. She is a former baritone, has been training as a countertenor for five years, and currently sings alto I and soprano II. Because Sally already has training in safely utilizing her upper register to sing in her desired voice part, there are not any vocal accommodations needed from the choir director to help her participate in choir apart from awareness of the blending of timbres—which is the case for any section in a choral ensemble, regardless of whether or not its members are TGE.

Sam

Sam (they/them) is a twenty-two-year-old, AMAB, non-binary singer who has not undergone any hormone therapy. Sam currently sings baritone, but they want to sing alto because singing in the baritone section causes them dysphoria. For them, line recombination is a potential solution in order to provide Sam with an inclusive, alto-dominant option while they learn to navigate their upper register in a manageable range. It is worth noting that using the term countertenor or falsetto can potentially cause dysphoria because of the connotation that those terms are male-based. Instead, using "upper register" is more appropriate.

Tom

Tom (he/him) is a twenty-six-year-old trans man who does not plan to undergo masculinizing hormone therapy, but he does experience vocal dysphoria and would like to sing tenor in his natural lower register.

Jake

Contrastingly, Jake (he/him) is an eighteen-year-old trans man who has been on masculinizing hormone therapy for six months and was not on hormone blockers prior to beginning HRT. He used to sing soprano, but his voice is already changing, and he has dysphoria when singing in his upper register. Similar to Sam, both

Table 1. Registration Events Across Voice Types

Voice Part	Range of Primo Passaggio	Range of Secondo Passaggio	Chest Voice Range (if relevant)
Soprano	E♭4	F♯5	G3-E♭4
Mezzo Soprano	E4-F4	E5-F5	E3-F4
Contralto	A♭4-G4	D5	D3-A♭4
Tenor	C4-F4	F4-B♭4	Not discussed
Baritone	B♭3-B3	E♭4-E4	Not discussed
Bass	G3-A3	C4-D4	Not discussed

Consolidation of registration events' locations as discussed in Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer, 1996), 117, 134-135. Miller does not discuss ranges for lower voices, but he does include "chest" voice range extensions for the upper voices.

Tom and Jake can benefit from line recombination to serve as a safe, comfortable vocal option, but in this instance, one would seek to create a tenor-dominant line instead of an alto-dominant one. This can provide a comfortable, affirming option for Tom if the tenor line becomes too low, and it can serve as a temporary middle ground for Jake while he navigates his voice change as the effects of the hormones progress and his register lowers.

Jodie

Lastly, Jodie (she/her) is a twenty-five-year-old trans woman. She has been on feminizing hormone therapy for a year and a half and is happy singing tenor. Because Jodie does not experience vocal dysphoria, she can continue to sing tenor in choir, and there are no vocal accommodations needed.

Repertoire Examples

When considering repertoire for this project, it was important to include works that are well known and frequently performed in the choral community.[19] The selections discussed here encompass a wide range of styles and composers varying from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, featuring differences in range, texture, voice leading, and harmonic and rhythmic content in order to provide a thorough test of the methodology of line recombination. First to be examined is *Sicut Cervus* by Palestrina; followed by *Ave verum corpus,* K. 618 by Mozart; "Warum," Op. 92, No. 4, by Brahms; *Gloria*, No. II, "Laudamus Te" by Poulenc; and *The Seal Lullaby* by Eric Whitacre. For clarity of notation and discussion, all excerpts of the recombined lines provided here are color coded with alto-line material in red and tenor-line material in blue, but that is not a necessary part of the methodology.

Sicut Cervus

Originally published in the *Motectorum liber secundus, 4vv* (Second Book of Motets for Four Voices) in 1584, *Sicut Cervus* has become one of Palestrina's most frequently performed motets.[20] The work is scored for SATB a cappella voices, originally in F major. Today's performances are often in G major, but the key is flexible as is common with much Renaissance music. The two- to three-minute motet is through-composed and features points of imitation that are exemplary of Renaissance style with entrances overlapping one another and melismas used to emphasize certain words.[21] Each phrase of text changes thematically, but the next section typically begins as the previous is ending. It also contains frequent voice crossings between the inner voices, which poses unique choices with regard to line recombination.

The recombined line discussed here is alto-dominant, which tests the process of line recombination and would make the line ideal for the hypothetical singer, Sam. To remain congruent with Sam's desired voice part, the line has been notated on the treble clef just like the original alto line. The part could also be notated on the tenor treble clef if desired, but because of the methodology's determined range, recombined lines can only have a maximum of three ledger lines when notated on a traditional treble clef (down to F♯3). This line, in its entirety, contains material from the tenor line in only twenty-two out of fifty-eight measures, and as mentioned previously, the voice crossings in the inner voices pose some interesting opportunities for line recombination.

For instance, in mm. 13-18 (See Figure 1 on page 13), the alto and tenor line frequently overlap, and the majority of both lines fall within the designated tessitura of A3-F#4, with only a few outliers. Because of this, these six measures could be combined in a variety of ways, but this particular recombined line illustrates Sam's preference to sing the alto line, which happens to remain within the confines of the prescribed range for the duration of this excerpt. As such, the recombined line stays on the alto line for the entirety of this example. Had this been a recombined line intended for an individual who wants to sing tenor, it could remain on the tenor line here instead. In contrast, a balanced line that favored neither part over the other would require creative decisions regarding text setting—as illustrated in the example seen in Figure 2 on page 13, but the actual notes themselves provide great flexibility for any number of melodic variations.

As seen in m. 20 of Figure 2, I switched to the tenor line on the downbeat to avoid sustaining the G4 that appears in the alto line for such a long period of time.

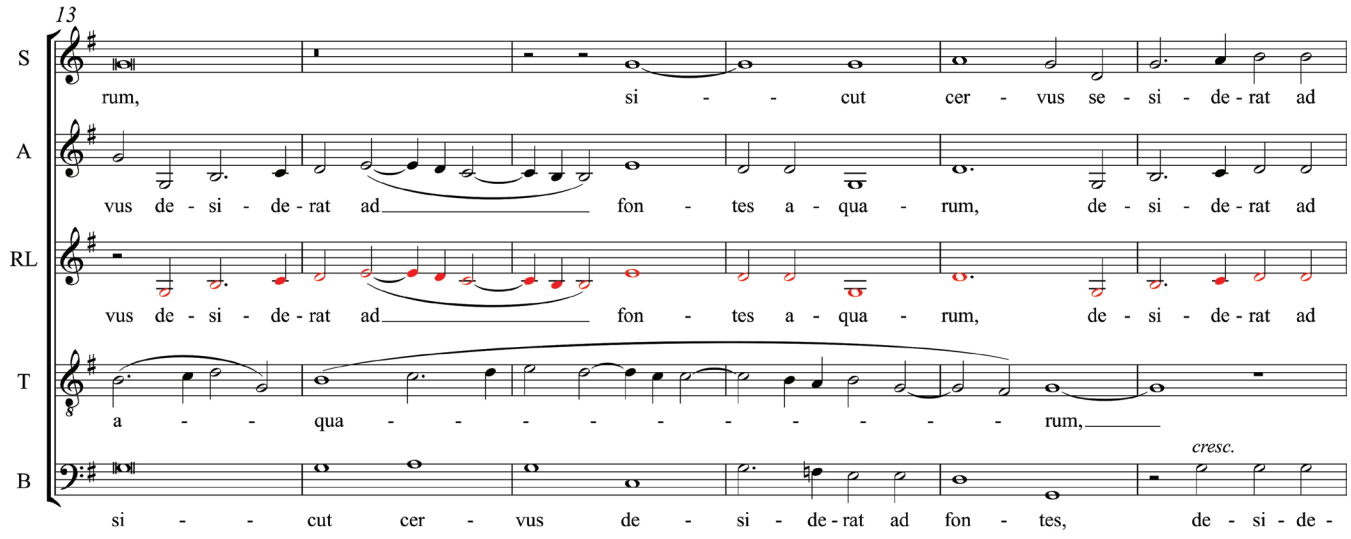

Figure 1. Giovanni Palestrina, *Sicut Cervus,* mm. 13–18.
Alto-dominant recombined line included
ed. James Gibb, 2017. *Choral Public Domain Library.*

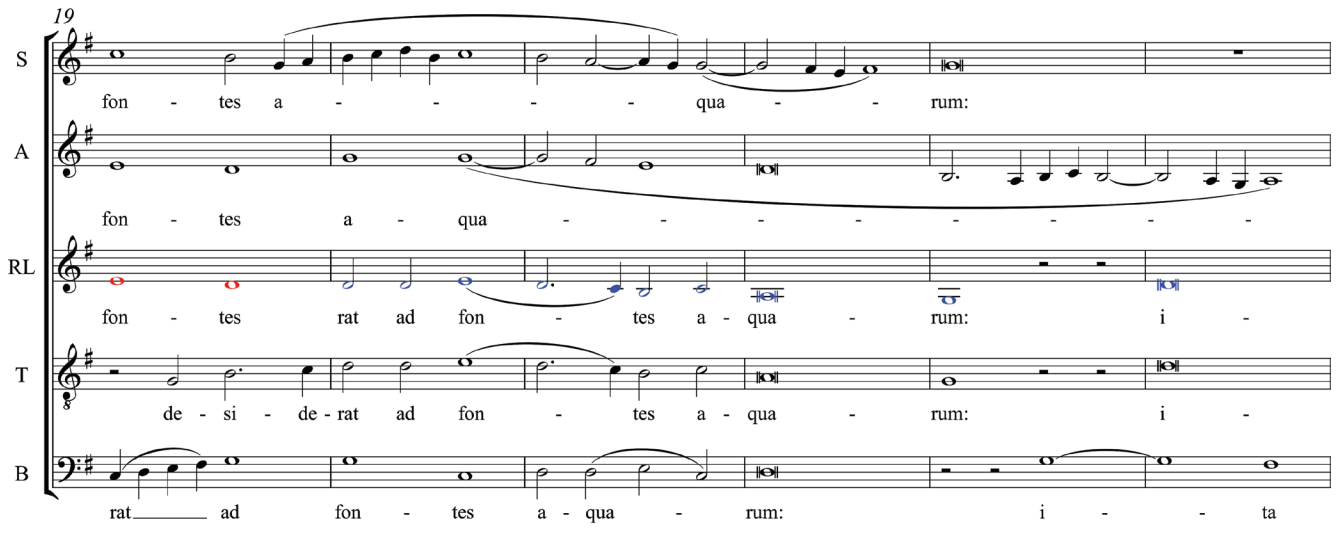

Figure 2. Giovanni Palestrina, *Sicut Cervus,* mm. 19–24.
Alto-dominant recombined line included with lyric adjustment when switching to tenor
ed. James Gibb, 2017. *Choral Public Domain Library.*

Exactly when to switch to the tenor line, though, is at the discretion of the conductor. For instance, I have chosen to switch directly to the tenor line on the downbeat of measure 20, on the final syllable of the word "desiderat." However, some directors or singers might find this to be an awkward solution due to splitting up the word. So, another potential route one could take in a situation such as this would be replacing the D4 on the downbeat with a half rest, and then continuing with the alto line on beat two: the D4 with the word "ad." In either case, the importance of maintaining a singable, satisfying line that is helpful to the singer is paramount. In all, this selection exemplifies the versatility of early music with regard to recombination because of the flexibility of performance key and the similar ranges of the inner voices.

Ave verum corpus, K. 618

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) wrote his *Ave verum corpus,* K. 618, in the summer before his death, almost eight years after his last religious composition. Composed for Anton Stoll (1747-1805), the choirmaster in the small town of Baden, its simplistic texture and singable lines are ideal for the amateur ensemble for which it was intended.[22] Because of this, it is one of Mozart's most frequently performed choral works. Originally scored in D major for SATB chorus, strings, and organ, there are countless modern arrangements of the three-minute, through-composed tune varying in voicing and performance forces. In its original form, however, the composition maintains its relatively static vocal lines and primarily homophonic texture throughout its three distinct sections, which lends itself to limited ranges of the voice parts, especially for the inner voices.

Because of the nature of the limited ranges of the vocal lines in this work, *Ave verum corpus* further demonstrates flexibility of line recombination to fit almost any circumstances for TGE singers. This malleability can be easily observed through examining measures 1-18 of the work in Figures 3, 4 on page 15, and 5 on page 15. Figure 3 shows these measures with an alto-dom-

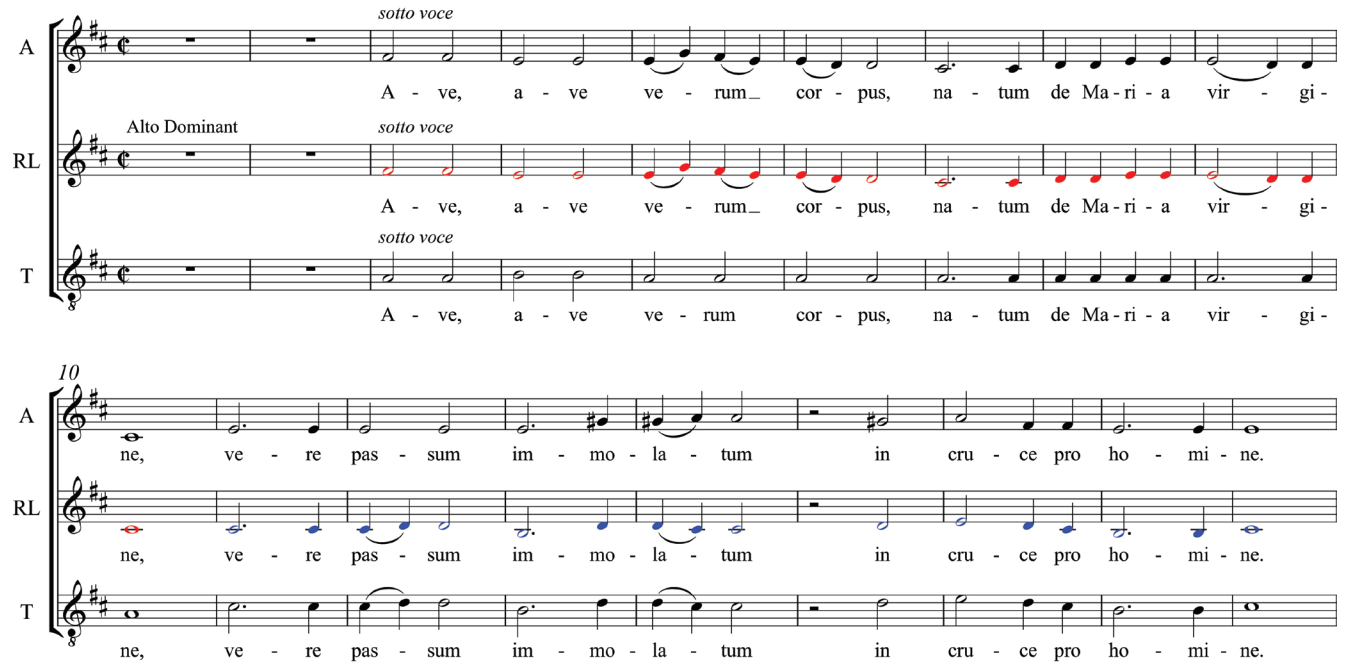

Figure 3. W. A. Mozart, *Ave verum corpus für gemischten Chor, Orchester, und Orgel,* KV 618, mm. 1–18. Alto-dominant recombined line included
(Neue Mozart-Ausgabe)

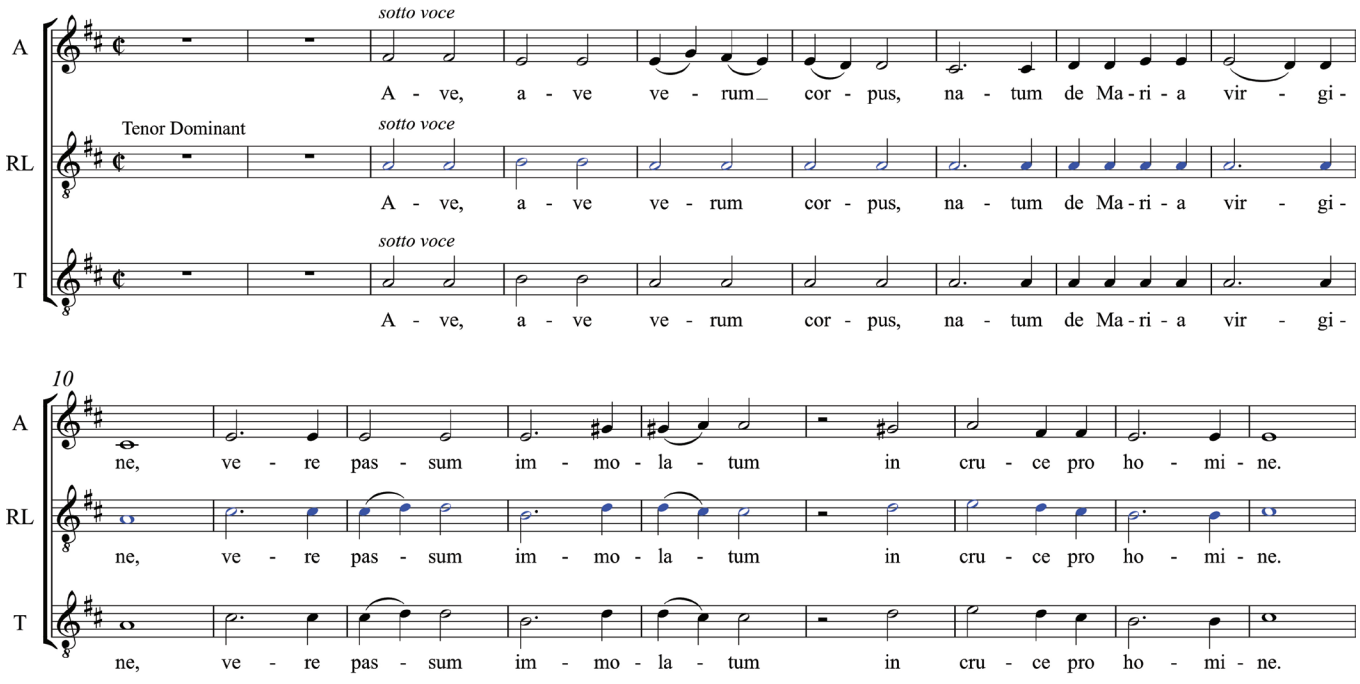

Figure 4. W. A. Mozart, *Ave verum corpus für gemischten Chor, Orchester, und Orgel,* KV 618, mm. 1–18.
Tenor-dominant recombined line included
(Neue Mozart-Ausgabe)

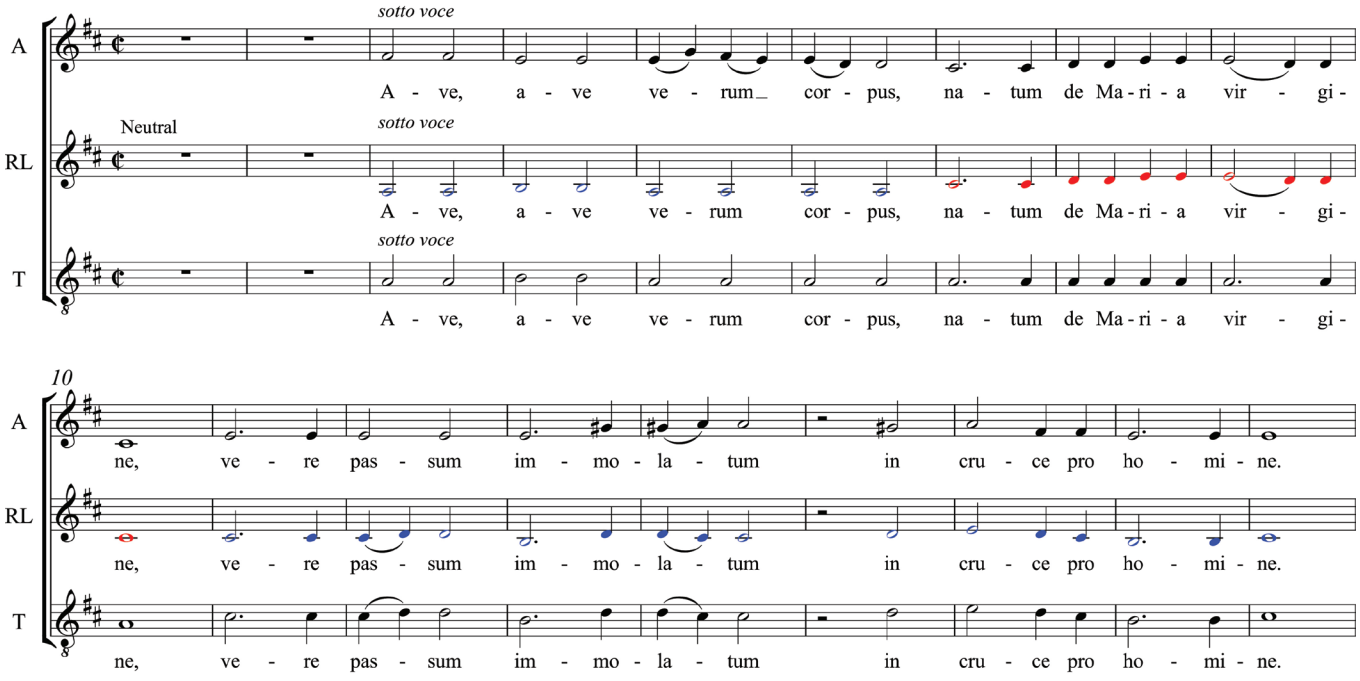

Figure 5. Mozart, *Ave verum corpus für gemischten Chor, Orchester, und Orgel,* KV 618, mm. 1–18.
Neutral recombined line included
(Neue Mozart-Ausgabe)

inant line, in which the total measures for the whole piece borrowed from the tenor line in fourteen out of forty-six measures. The recommended deviations to the tenor line create a singable line that remains within the prescribed tessitura. The line deviates from the alto line in measures 11-18 because the original alto line goes beyond the ideal tessitura of A3-F#4 for extended periods of time. Contrastingly, the tenor-dominant line shown in Figure 4, which contains only seven measures of material from the alto line in the entire piece, does not borrow from the alto line at all in measures 1-18 because the original tenor line is extremely favorable for the recombined tessitura. Then, Figure 5 shows a neutral version, in which the total recombined line contains eighteen measures from the tenor line and twenty measures from the alto. This neutral recombined line was created to test the flexibility of this methodology in order to create as many options for transitioning singers as possible and to demonstrate the plethora of creative decisions that can be made. All three of these versions are manageable, singable, and adhere to the guidelines for recombination, which further illustrates that line recombination can be a meaningful contribution toward inclusivity in choral ensembles.

"Warum," op. 92, no. 4

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) wrote two compositions titled "Warum." The first, his op. 74, an a cappella motet scored for SSATB is perhaps performed more frequently than his op. 92, no. 4, which is discussed here. The latter is scored for SATB chorus and piano and was published in a group of four quartets, *Vier Quartette,* in 1884. As is typical of Brahms's music, "Warum," op. 94, no. 4, is harmonically explorative, featuring frequent chromaticism as well as asymmetrical phrases. Because of the extensive ranges (alto: A♭3-E♭5; tenor: D3-G4) and disjunct vocal lines, this two-minute selection poses a particular challenge as it relates to line recombination. In this through-composed work with distinct A and B sections, Brahms also employs contrasting meters and tempi as well as changes in texture, voice groupings, and homophony versus polyphony.

When creating a recombined line in this work, the voice leading presents challenging decision making because of the ranges and disjunct nature of the lines. As a result, line recombination may require moments where only one or two notes are taken from a different voice part in the context of the phrase or text may be repeated or left incomplete, similar to the previously discussed *Sicut Cervus.* This can be seen in mm. 8-12 of Figure 6 on page 17, which features a neutral recombined line, or in mm. 24-25 shown in Figure 7 on page 18 where only one note out of a measure is borrowed to make the line more singable.

In the effort to create two separate recombined lines—both a tenor and an alto-dominant line—it becomes clear that some recombined lines may yield more balanced results than others. For instance, when creating a tenor-dominant line, I only deviated to the alto line in five out of fifty-six measures, but when trying to create an alto-dominant line, the result was a line in which thirty-two out of fifty-six measures contain borrowed material from the tenor line, thus creating a more neutral line than a part-dominant one and certainly not an alto-dominant line. This leads one to conclude that the more extensive the ranges of the voice parts or disjunct the melodies are, the more likely it is to require the creation of a neutral line instead of a part-dominant one, and this idea is explored further in the next selection from Poulenc's *Gloria.*

Gloria, No. II, "Laudamus Te"

Gloria by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) was written in 1959-1960, and is a unique and arguably irreverent take on the traditional Catholic text, but it has still become a notable standard in choral repertoire.[23] Scored for soprano solo, SATB chorus, and orchestra, the composition represents Poulenc's playful melodic and rhythmic style with unexpected text emphasis, mixed meter, and regular chromatic alterations. The short, cellular phrases of the three-and-a-half-minute "Laudamus Te" often feature voice pairings of alto and bass or soprano and tenor across its three sections and coda, and the extensive ranges, particularly for the alto, pose unique challenges.

When recombining the tenor and alto lines, it becomes evident that a part-focused recombination is not achievable. Instead, it is more important to create a singable line, and the result is a neutral recom-

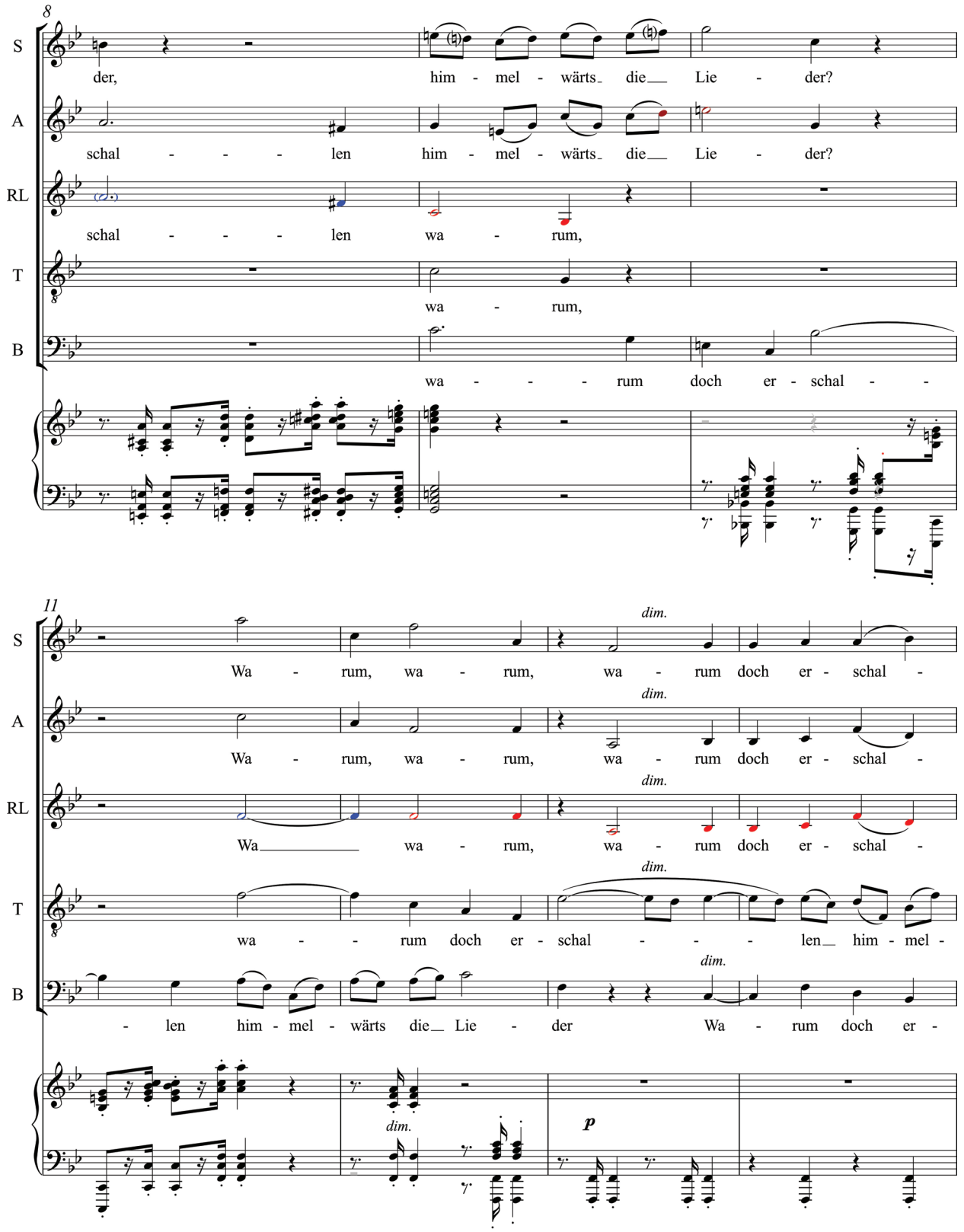

Figure 6. Johannes Brahms, *Vier Quartette,* "Warum," Op. 92, No. 4, mm. 8–14.
Neutral recombined line included

ed. Rafael Ornes, 2000. *Choral Public Domain Library.*

bined line, containing thirty measures of material from the alto line and thirty-three measures from the tenor. When dealing with music of this complexity, similar to the Brahms "Warum," the versatility of a neutral line cannot be denied. This flexible solution puts vocal health at the forefront of the decision-making process while still providing an inclusive alternative for TGE singers. That said, in measures where multiple viable options exist, another possible solution would be to notate both parts on the recombined line, especially in homophonic texture, thus allowing the singer to take their most gender-affirming solution where possible, as seen in Figure 8 on page 19, measures 77-85.

The Seal Lullaby

When discussing contemporary choral music, the influence of Eric Whitacre (b. 1970) cannot be denied.[24] The four-minute composition, *The Seal Lullaby*, is scored for SATB chorus and piano, and the composition is characterized by wave-like motion with emphasis on downbeats, and the application of disjunct, parabolic lines to create "waves" throughout the four sections of through-composed music. Although still containing disjunct lines, the ranges of the voices are far less challenging than Poulenc's *Gloria,* which provides more flexibility when creating the recombined line, because, while voice crossing does not occur, there is a regular overlap between the ranges of the inner voices for the majority of the work (alto: A♭3-B♭4; tenor: C3-E♭4).

Building off the lessons learned from the Brahms and the Poulenc recombined lines, I opted to create a neutral line rather than focusing on a part-specific recombined line as an example of the flexibility of expression and musicality that line recombination affords. A work such as this allows for a variety of creative possibilities as exemplified in mm. 23-27 of Figure 9 on page 19. In these

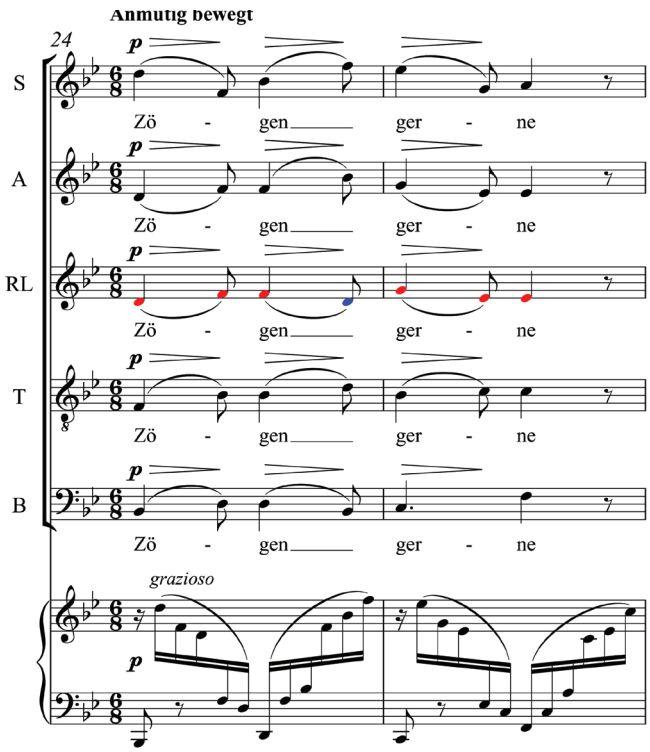

Figure 7. Johannes Brahms, *Vier Quartette,* "Warum," Op. 92, No. 4, mm. 24–25. Neutral recombined line included

ed. Rafael Ornes, 2000. *Choral Public Domain Library.*

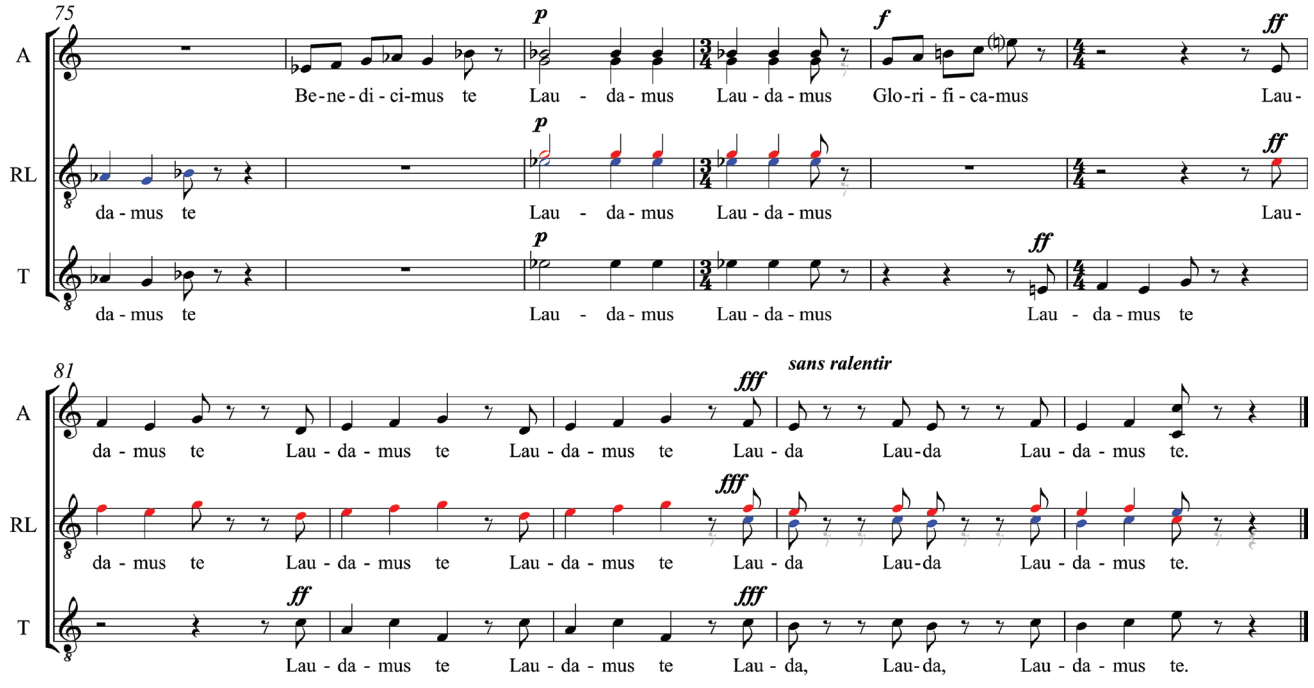

Figure 8. Francis Poulenc, *Gloria,* "II. Laudamus Te*,"* mm. 75–85.
Neutral recombined line included

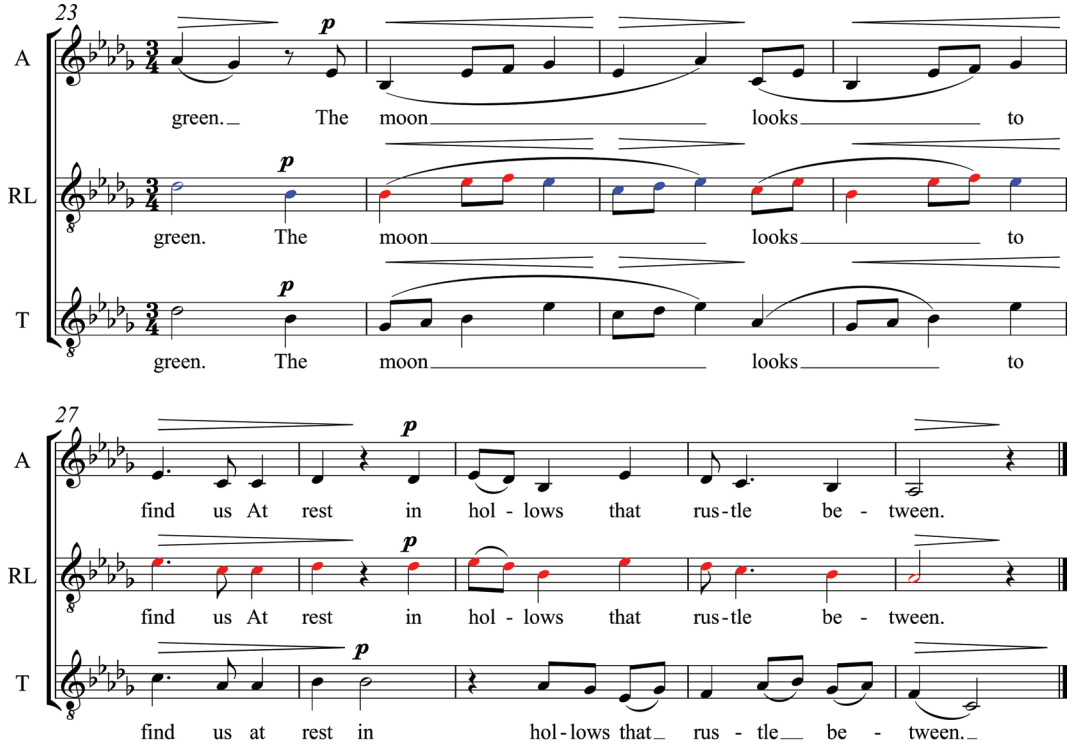

Figure 9. Eric Whitacre, *The Seal Lullaby,* mm. 23–31.
Neutral recombined line included

measures, the ranges of the alto and tenor lines overlap almost entirely, and when combined with the disjunct, wave-like melodic shape, the parts allow for any number of decisions when creating the recombined line. In cases like this, the final iteration may come down to the directors' or the singers' preference, as there are countless possible solutions. This flexibility provides an opportunity to stray away from phrase-focused recombination, as seen in Mozart's *Ave verum corpus,* thus creating a line that can change note to note rather than using whole phrases or complete measures if one so chooses. In this version, forty-one out of seventy-seven measures contain material from the alto line, thirty-one from the tenor, and eight measures contain material from both lines interchangeably, still leaving room for further possible recombinations.

Discussion

When considering the method of line recombination, some conductors may be concerned with the musical integrity of the composer's original intent or even potential copyright issues in non-public domain works, but one could argue that adjustments similar to line recombination are already made by choral directors on a regular basis without changing intent or raising copyright concerns. For instance, rewriting or adapting vocal lines is commonplace for middle school teachers to adjust for their singers' needs without ill-effect on the music, and accommodating the vocal needs of TGE singers can be very similar.[25] Also, renowned conductors such as Robert Shaw would have altos join tenors or utilize other such doublings to meet the demands of countless choral masterworks, and this has now become standard practice.

It is important to note that, because line recombination is essentially creating an alternative roadmap through a piece by moving between the inner voices, copyrighted material is not being altered in any way because no music is added or changed. If the line is intended for someone who is comfortable jumping between staves, no engraving would be needed because the roadmap can simply be marked in the score; but if engraving the line is preferred by the director and the singer for ease of reading, it would not be necessary to include the alto and tenor lines in addition to the recombined line, which may further alleviate copyright concerns.

In the event a conductor is concerned about copyright, contacting the composer or the publisher directly to receive permission is not out of the question. In time, it is my hope that line recombination will become such a norm that publishers and composers will be aware of and openly support its application to copyrighted works, especially in academic environments—perhaps even to the point where composers will begin including recombined lines in their published works prior to distribution, which would alleviate copyright concerns entirely.

Until that is the case, however, the thought of choral directors engraving lines themselves and having to contact publishers is likely daunting, particularly as it relates to the time required to do so. To address this potential hurdle, I have created a free, crowdsourced database of recombined lines that can be accessed and contributed to by anyone in the field. This *Recombined Choral Library* (RCL), which already contains the recombined lines discussed in this article, can be found at www.TransitioningVoices.org. The goal of the project is to provide an easily accessible resource where choir directors can go to download a part for their singers that has already been created if they do not feel comfortable and/or have time to create their own recombined lines. If the desired piece is not present in the library, one can request a recombined line, and the team will create the requested line for them, even contacting publishers if necessary. I hope that the RCL and (Trans)itioning Voices will be able to remove as many potential hurdles to utilizing this methodology and its recombined lines as possible.

After its introduction at the Western ACDA Conference in Long Beach in March of 2022, the project and the number of volunteers are already growing exponentially, and through the inclusion of additional contributors in the coming months and years, it will continue to do so. Anyone who would like to get involved can reach out through the contact form at www.TransitioningVoices.org. The more contributors the project gains, the more accessible this resource will be to the choral field.

Regarding the repertoire itself, the lessons learned through the selections here serve as valuable insight regarding the practicality of the method of line recombination as it relates to various repertoire. Early music is easily adapted because choice of key is flexible, and the inner voices often overlap, as seen in Palestrina's *Sicut Cervus.* Static vocal lines, like in the discussed composition by Mozart, provide the opportunity to create unique, part-specific recombined lines. However, when the lines become more disjunct or harmonically explorative, a neutral line may be the best solution, as in the Brahms and the Poulenc selections.

Lastly, the example by Whitacre demonstrates that there is no "correct" answer, and the efficacy of the recombined line is only limited by the director's creativity. Another factor for consideration is that compositions with extensive divisi may actually make line recombination easier because divisi typically reduces the range of each voice part, thus creating more static lines. When commissioning works, one could request a recombined line, either consisting of material from the alto and tenor, or perhaps the creation of a unique, inclusive part, similar to a cambiata line.

Through line recombination, TGE singers can be shown acceptance and active support of their identity that may alleviate any apprehension they have about being able to sing in a choral ensemble. When combined with thoughtful choral positioning and inclusive uniforms, this empathetic approach can provide a safe, validating alternative for these singers that is fulfilling and meaningful as they transition between voice parts.[26] That said, line recombination is not a perfect solution to the growing challenges that choral directors are facing, but it is a viable stopgap when working toward inclusivity. As such, providing an inclusive, supportive environment for all singers is a goal worthy of pursuit, and educators can do so by remaining open to learning about differing perspectives or experiences and by being mindful of ways they can incorporate new methodologies.

A potential concern that directors may have regarding ensembles with high performance expectations is that including line recombination may result in a singer being unable to perform at the same level on a recombined line that they might have been able to on their previous voice part. For instance, there may be a singer who can meet expectations as a tenor but is not proficient enough with their upper register to meet the expectations as an alto or through a recombined line. This is the reality of being a musician, and it would depend on the comfortability of the singer whether they are willing to compromise in order to be in that ensemble.

Through line recombination, TGE singers can be shown acceptance and active support of their identity that may alleviate any apprehension they have about being able to sing in a choral ensemble.

As a member of the USC Thornton Chamber Singers at the University of Southern California, I approached Dr. Jo-Michael Scheibe about singing recombined lines in the spring of 2022 after singing tenor in the ensemble for a year and a half. He was open to giving it a try, but added the understandable disclaimer of, "I need to hear it in the sound of the ensemble first." Fortunately, I was able to maintain the high performance standard of that ensemble, but had I not been able to, I would have had to decide if I was okay with only singing tenor or if I would rather sing a recombined line in another ensemble. When directors are faced with a circumstance such as this, it is important to consider whether the singer has not qualified for an ensemble because all avenues (including line recombination) have been explored and they are found not to be capable, or whether it is because of a hesitancy caused by misunderstanding or the fear that it would be too much work to provide the singer with accommodations.

In the event that a singer approaches a conductor with a request to sing in another section, the director should be careful to respond with empathy and to begin a dialogue with the singer without being immediately dismissive, as it may not be clear why the singer is asking to change parts. Through careful conversation

and consideration, the director and the singer can work together to develop a plan that is specific to that individual. Conductors should be aware of singers' identities and their abilities as best they can and strive to be as empathetic as possible, allowing their creativity and musicianship to create the best experience for their singers, but at no point should a director require a singer to "come out" in order for their request to sing in another section to be considered.

In some instances when there is a desire not to draw unnecessary attention to the TGE singer while using recombined lines, a more discreet approach may be appropriate. Depending on the comfortability level and musical independence of the TGE singer, more individuals could perform the recombined line along with them, thus allowing a degree of anonymity for them while also normalizing the practice and providing musical support through the added singers. The success of any implementation of this methodology hinges greatly on the director's relationship with their singers and the inclusive environment that they have fostered in their classrooms and ensemble spaces.

Directors and educators have a significant responsibility to create a meaningful, comfortable experience for all singers in their ensembles. This means that gatekeeping and decision making based on false preconceptions must be avoided through consciously committing to learning to understand others' identities. Directors can utilize the accommodations discussed here, while trying not to limit their perceptions of what line a singer is capable of performing without considering a recombined line as a possibility to help them feel welcome and validated. Inclusion such as this can significantly reduce stress and anxiety for TGE singers, and it can provide an overall feeling of acceptance, which may be lacking in many TGE individuals' lives. Above all, this practice is borne out of a desire to promote inclusivity and empathy, which should always be the goal, not just as choral directors, but as human beings. CJ

Suggested Reading in ACDA Publications

Blaisdell, Gayla, "Fostering Inclusion: Unpacking Choral Dress Codes." *Choral Journal* 59, no. 1 (August 2018): 59–66.

Cates, Dustin, "Key Changes: Choral Directors' Experiences with Gender-Inclusive Teaching," *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* 10 (2022): 242-271.

Palkki, Joshua, "Inclusivity in Action: Transgender Students in the Choral Classroom," *Choral Journal* 57, no. 11 (June/July 2017): 20-35.

Ramseyer Miller, Jane "Creating Choirs that Welcome Transgender Singers." *Choral Journal* 57, No. 4 (November 2016): 61-63.

NOTES

[1] While these topics are not the primary focus of this discussion, they are worthy of further exploration. See the following references: Christopher Cayari, "Demystifying Trans*+ Voice Education: The Transgender Singing Voice Conference," *International Journal of Music Education* 37, no. 1 (December 2, 2018): pp. 118-131, doi: 10.1177/0255761418814577; Joshua Palkki, "Inclusivity in Action: Transgender Students in the Choral Classroom," *Choral Journal* 57, no. 11 (2017): 20-35; Jason M. Silveira, "Perspectives of a Transgender Music Education Student," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 66, no. 4 (October 4, 2018): pp. 428-448, doi: 10.1177/0022429418800467.

[2] Matthew L. Garrett and Joshua Palkki, *Honoring Trans and Gender-Expansive Students in Music Education* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[3] Definitions discussed here are found in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* unless otherwise indicated. Oxford English Dictionary: The Definitive Record of the English Language, (2020).

[4] "PFLAG National Glossary of Terms." (PFLAG, July 2019): https://pflag.org/glossary

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Jack Turban, "What Is Gender Dysphoria?," American Psychiatric Association, November 2020, https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/gender-dysphoria/what-is-gender-dysphoria.

[8] For examples, see: Joshua Palkki, "My Voice Speaks for Itself: The Experiences of Three Transgender Students in American Secondary School Choral Programs," *International Journal of Music Education,* 38(1), (2020), 126–146. https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761419890946

[9] Jack Turban, "What Is Gender Dysphoria?"

[10] "PFLAG National Glossary of Terms." (PFLAG, July 2019): https://pflag.org/glossary

[11] This is not a comprehensive list of potential medical transitions and their side effects, as that is not the primary focus of this article. Topics discussed here are to provide context for accommodations one might make to the vocal lines in their repertoire.

[12] "Spironolactone (Oral Route) Side Effects." (Mayo Clinic. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, October 1, 2020), https://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements/spironolactone-oral-route/side-effects/drg-20071534?p=1.

[13] For more discussion regarding vocal pedagogy in TGE singers, see: William Sauerland, *Queering Vocal Pedagogy: A Handbook for Teaching Trans and Genderqueer Singers and Fostering Gender-Affirming Spaces* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022); William Sauerland, "Legitimate Voices: A Multi-Case Study of Trans and Non-Binary Singers in the Applied Voice Studio. (Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 2018).

[14] Tessa Romano, "The Singing Voice During the First Two Years of Testosterone Therapy: Working with Trans or Gender Queer Voice," (diss., University of Colorado Boulder, 2018).

[15] "Hormone Therapy." (Hormone Therapy | Transgender Care, 2019), https://transcare.ucsf.edu/hormone-therapy.

[16] Romano, "The Singing Voice," 33.

[17] Jack Turban, "What Is Gender Dysphoria?"

[18] Richard Miller's *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer, 1996), 117, 134-135.

[19] These selections were chosen, in part, through consulting J. B. Watson's dissertation on highly-recommended repertoire. J. B. Watson, *Most Recommended Choral Music: A Survey of High School State Choral Festival Repertoire Lists.* (Dissertation, 2016), 49.

[20] Lewis Lockwood, Noel O'Regan and Jessie Ann Owens, 2001. "Palestrina [Prenestino, etc.], Giovanni Pierluigi da ['Giannetto']." (*Grove Music Online,* 2001), doi: 10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.20749

[21] Dennis Shrock, *Choral Repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 63.

[22] Betsy Schwarm, "Ave Verum Corpus, K 618," Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ave-Verum-Corpus-K-618.

[23] Huscher, Phillip. "Program Notes: Francis Poulenc, Gloria." (Chicago Symphony Orchestra), https://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1_Tickets_and_Events/Program_Notes/ProgramNotes_ Poulenc_Gloria.pdf.

[24] Shrock, *Choral Repertoire,* 760.

[25] For additional information on adolescent changing voices, see Rollo Dilworth, "Working with Male Adolescent Voices in the Choral Rehearsal: A Survey of Research-Based Strategies," *Choral Journal* 52, no. 9 (2012): 22–33.

[26] For insights and resources regarding inclusive choral environments in addition to those already discussed, the following resources are helpful places to start:

Ari Agha, "Making Your Chorus Welcoming for Transgender Singers." Making Your Chorus Welcoming for Transgender Singers | Chorus America (December 30, 2017). https://www.chorusamerica.org/conducting-performing/making-your-chorus-welcoming-transgender-singers.

Gayla Blaisdell, "Rehearsal Break: Fostering Inclusion: Unpacking Choral Dress Codes." *Choral Journal* 59, no. 1 (2018): 59–66.

"FAQ/Other." *Queering Choir.* http://www.queeringchoir.com/faqother.html.

"Teaching Transgender Students in the Music Classroom." Blurring the Binary. https://blurringthebinary.com/uniforms.