CHORTEACH

Volume 13 Issue 3

Practical Teaching Ideas
for Today's Music Educator

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welcome

Welcome to ACDA's online magazine for choral director/music educators. The articles in this issue have been gleaned from state and division online and paper ACDA newsletters around the United States and from submissions by seasoned choral directors with topics germane to the profession.

ChorTeach, our name, is derived from the German word for chorus, chor. It is pronounced, as many of you know, like the word *core*. We hope *ChorTeach*'s articles will be a breath of fresh air for you, provide you with new ideas or techniques that give you a lift, and help your singers reach the goals you and they have set. *ChorTeach* is designed for those who work with amateur singers at all levels.

If you have written an article and believe it would be of interest to *ChorTeach* readers, send it to Terry Barham, barhamte@gmail.com, in .doc format. If you have read an article from an ACDA newsletter or website you think would be beneficial to *ChorTeach* readers, send it to barhamte@gmail.com or abumgarner@acda.org.

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Sharing through Song: Resources for Singing Migration Stories

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The 2020 NWACDA conference title was "Sharing our Story." I love it when my students are able to tell their own stories through song. My problem, though, is that I teach in a school where the stories aren't that diverse. How, then, can we use song to tell someone else's story? Ignoring migration narratives is not an option in 2021 if we are to be relevant. In this article, I will provide resources for teachers and directors interested in using music to teach choirs and audiences about immigration.

I came to this project by accident. Every other year, I commission a local rock musician to write a concert-length program for my students to perform alongside a rock band and then take the show on tour. I use this material to teach my students about the business of music from local industry professionals, and the students end up writing press releases and booking the opening acts for the show. This year, we worked with Luz Elena Mendoza from the band, Y La Bamba. Mendoza wrote an incredible piece titled "El Agua De Mi Ser" centered on the story of her parents' immigration from Mexico. Upon delivering the score, Mendoza urged me to teach my students to understand the truth of immigration stories rather than the political narratives they may have been more familiar with.

As you already know, immigration is a huge topic! Fortunately, so is love, beauty, hope, music, or any of the other topics that we tackle on a regular basis in our choirs. If I want to center a concert on love, I would much rather engage with a first-person text in which my students are singing love songs rather than singing about love. This is the magic of choir. Our choristers get to try on emotions rather than just describing them. To teach about immigration, then, I sought out first-person narratives of the immigrant experience, in story and song, with musical textures that matched the emotions of the text. At the end of this article, I will include a list of music that meets these criteria, including all voicings and levels of difficulty.

My primary source for this project was *The Immigrant Story* (www.theimmigrantstory.org). Sankar Raman runs this incredible project, which publishes short immigrant biographies online and hosts live storytelling events. The mission is to expand Americans' understanding of the stories of immigrants.

The Immigrant Story has begun developing a curriculum

for teachers to engage students in oral history and journalism to tell the story of immigrants in their own communities. They are offering tremendous assistance to schools and teachers who would like to use the curricula, including months of lesson plans and editorial assistance. Though my school is in a predominantly conservative community, my students were eager to explore the stories of their neighbors who have immigration stories to tell.

Strategies and Resources

• We began the semester with Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror,* an excellent book (and corresponding young person's edition) that tells a comprehensive story of America through the eyes of each group of immigrants throughout history.

• I partnered with six teachers at my school from a variety of subject areas to offer *The Immigrant Story* curriculum to a broad swath of our student body. Several classes succeeded in conducting interviews with immigrants in our school community and writing their stories for publication. Our journalism program produced a full-length special magazine issue on the subject.

• I brought in performers from our community whose immigration stories inform the music they perform.

• I partnered with the English Language Learners program at our local community college to bring an adult English discussion group to my school. Together, we facilitated an intercultural discussion that also served as an English language practice session for some students.

• I put together an Immigrant Story Panel featuring immigrants in our community from every continent and generation. Each panelist told his or her story. Students were able to ask questions to deepen their understanding and gain empathy.

• We used role-playing games from *The Line Between Us* by Bill Bigelow. It was a curriculum guide for teaching about the US/Mexico border. There are powerful activities in this set that really helped my students understand their roles in the forces that drive immigration.

• Finally, we held many sessions with Luz Elena Mendoza, our featured composer, in which she told her stories and her parents' stories that inspired the work.

• Before the pandemic canceled everything, we were planning on performing "El Agua De Mi Ser" for several majority-Hispanic populations plus conducting dialogues with the audience on what we had learned and how the music resonated.

My students gained a tremendous amount of empathy for everyone they encountered and an appreciation of the breadth and depth of the immigrant stories they don't regularly hear on the news. This was an incredibly gratifying project that I imagine will continue to be relevant in the foreseeable future!

Many other choirs have undertaken similar projects. I put together repertoire and curricula by researching the groundbreaking work of other choirs. Here are just a few:

https://www.vocalessence.org/what-we-do/learning-and-engagement-programs/cantare/

https://www.resonancechoral.org/safe-harbor

https://ourtonality.org/borderline/

https://bordercrossingmn.org/

http://www.melissadunphy.com/composition.php?id=72

https://carolineshaw.com/tothehands/

One notable example of a project with similar goals was a performance of Caroline Shaw's magnificent work, "To the Hands," by Cleveland and Grant High School Choirs in Portland, OR in the spring of 2020. These choirs were also fortunate to have worked with the Pulitzer prize-winning composer in preparation for a performance and tour. Here are a few of the resources those schools used to understand the topic:

https://theconversation.com/us/topics/displaced-people-35687

https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/refugees-and-displaced-people

https://www.internal-displacement.org/

https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/colossus.htm

Repertoire & Resources

Here are a few of the resources I might explore if I had more time or was working with a different ensemble:

- Children's books on immigration such as *The Matchbox Diary* by Paul Fleischman or *I'm New Here* by Anne O'Brien
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie TED Talk titled *The Danger of a Single Story* https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en
- Vortex Magazine article on undocumented musicians—https://medium.com/@PoorforaMinute/building-a-bridge-over-troubled-waters-da832ecca2ad
- *Rethinking Globalization* by Bill Bigelow
- *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn
- *A People's History for the Classroom* by Bill Bigelow
- *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James Loewen
- *Harvest of Empire* by Juan Gonzalez
- *Nosotros: The Hispanic People of Oregon* edited by Erasmo Gamboa
- *Troublesome Border* by Oscar Martinez
- *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* by Erasmo Gamboa
- *Mexicanos in Oregon* by Erlinda V. Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza
- Claudio Castro Luna – WA poet laureate speaks at schools. http://www.castroluna.com/
- Teaching Tolerance curricula. https://www.tolerance.org/search?query=mexican&f%5B0%5D=facet_content_type%3Alesson
- Oregon Multicultural Archives: Latino People and Culture. https://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/oma/latino-a
- 5 Books for High School Mexican-American Studies Class. https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/5-books-for-high-school-mexican-american-studies-class/

Below is a list of music I selected for the NWACDA Repertoire Spotlight Session on the Music of Migration:

Children/Youth Choirs

Laura Hawley – *Vivre, Aimer, Partager*

Michael Bussewitz-Quarm – *Lamiya's Song*

Francisco J. Nuńez – *De Colores*

Diana Sáez – *Vidalita*

SAB/Middle School

Miriam Sonstenes – *I Am Leaving*

Treble

Carlos Guastavino – *Pueblito, Mi Pueblo*

Lee Kesselman – *Skye Boat Song*

Cristian Grases – *La Paloma*

Bass/Tenor

Francisco J. Nuńez – *El Aire Lloro*

Stephen Smith – *Chi Mi Na Mor-Bheanna*

Fenno Heath – *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*

Derek Myler – *Three Polish War Songs*

Jackson Berkey – *Cibola*

Jorge Cózatl – *Luz y Sombra*

John Leavitt – *Bashana Haba'ah*

SATB

Kathleen Allan – *Distancia*

Abbie Betinis – *Journey Home*

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco – *Romancero Gitano*

Estanislau Gubiotti – *Immigrant Son*

Mark Sirett – *Cliffs of Dooneen*

Mack Wilberg – *Ah el novio no quiere dinero*

Here is some reasonably topical, seldom-performed music I encourage you to check out. Many of these works can be found online. If you need any help, I have perusal copies for most works.

Caroline Shaw – *To the Hands*

Theresa Koon – *Mother of Exiles*

Allan – *Tu Voz*

Calixto Alvarez – *Lacrimosa*

Carlos Chavez – *Llamadas*

Nicholas Cline – *She Took His Hands*

Jorge Cózatl – *Pasar La Vida*

Jorge Cózatl – *Xtoles*

Jesús Echevarría – *Cantare!*

Gaspar Fernandez – *Xicochi*

Dessa and Jocelyn Hagen – *Look Out Above*

Chris Hutchings – *The Wall*

Heinrich Isaac – *Innsbruck, Ich muss dich lassen*

Lilia Vázquez Kuntze – *Nido de Amor*

Julio Morales – *Dos Cuerpos*

Jesús López Moreno – *Barquito de Papel*

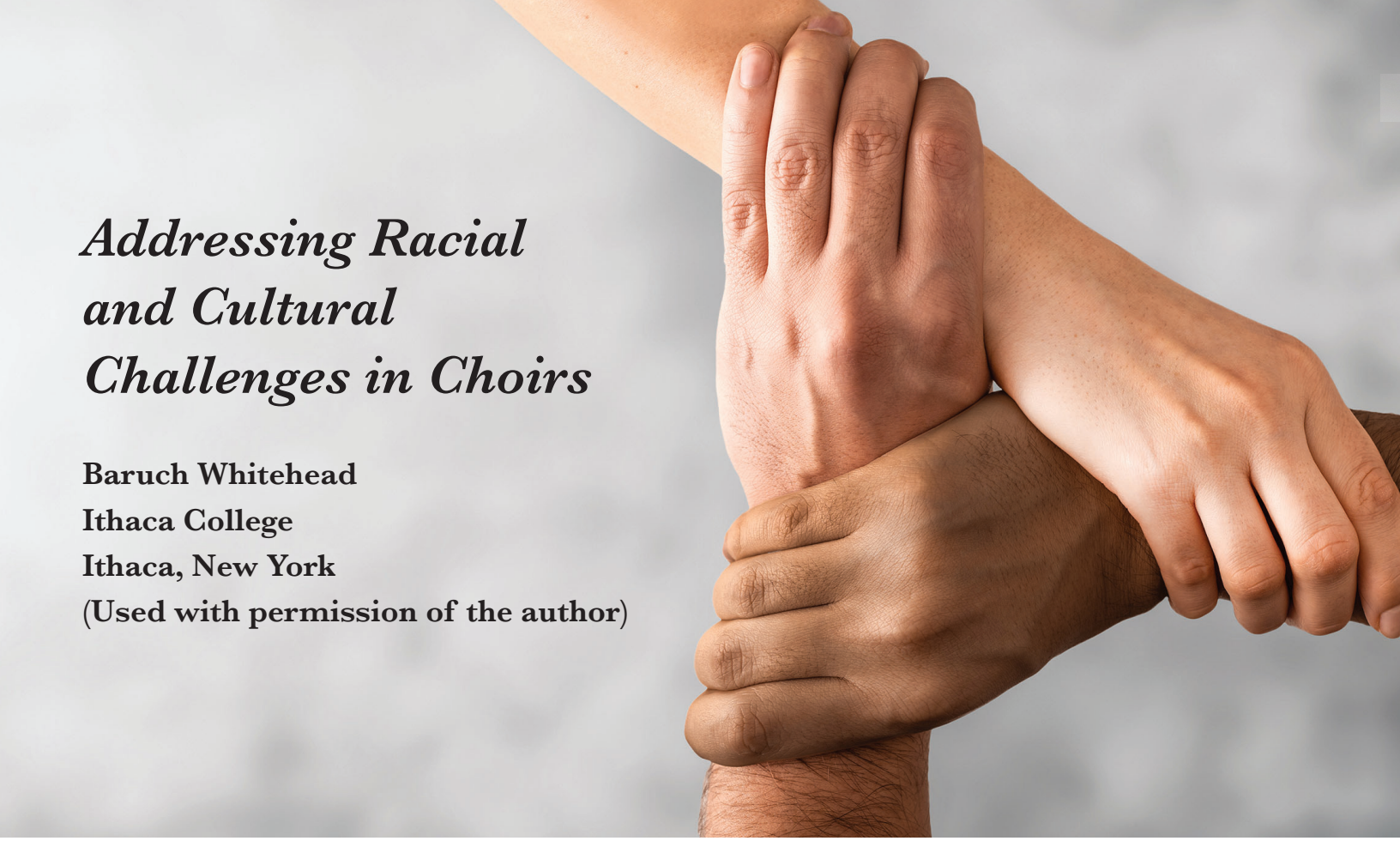
Jesús López Moreno – *En Paz*

Jesús López Moreno – *Velero de Papel*

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina – *Super Flumina Babylonis*

Stephen 0Smith – *Skye Boat Song*

Finally, please contact me if you are thinking of taking on a project like this one! I would love to help with advice or information I might be able to provide. CT



Addressing Racial and Cultural Challenges in Choirs

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As the director of a community chorus, I recently had the pleasure of collaborating with a local high school choir. Those young singers joined with the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers, a multiracial, intergenerational choir of college and community singers that I direct. Our mission is to preserve Negro spirituals and build bridges for social justice through the performance of African American sacred music.

Our namesake, Dorothy Cotton, was an icon in the civil rights movement, a person who worked directly with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a member of his executive staff and entourage who had traveled to Oslo, Norway, where he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. She served as the vice president of field operations for the Dr. M.L.K. Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta. I was honored to name the group after her in 2010, the same year that she was recognized nationally for her life's work by the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. She passed away in June 2018, but the legacy of her work will live on for generations to come.

The director of the high school choir and I spoke about the music we should program for our virtual performance in early October 2020. I was excited to share that I had just commissioned a work by Stan Spottswood, an African American composer and colleague. Spottswood's "Good Trouble" pays homage to civil rights icons Rosa Parks and John Lewis. My choir, which is predominantly white, had been learning the music and recording the piece for several weeks. Our plan was to have the high school choir members join with the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers for a virtual celebration during Martin Luther King Jr. Week. Later, the director contacted me to say that some of her students did not want to sing the work because of its use of first-person pronouns like "our" and "I." The predominantly white high school choir did not believe that it was their place to tell the story of Rosa Parks. Several of them took issue with the following line in the music:

> Our mistreatment is just not right and I got tried.
> No more sittin' in the back of the bus,
> It's time to rise up and make a fuss,
> Get in trouble, good trouble.

We quickly had a conversation about how to best handle this situation and arranged for certain Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers and composer Stan Spottswood to help the students through their difficulties. I explained to the students that the black soloist would be telling the story of Rosa Parks, and the choir was backing her up, much like the call-and-response often heard in music of the African diaspora.

Mr. Spottswood also told the students how he had always

envisioned a large group of singers for his song, regardless of race. However, some of the more vocal students still resisted, saying, "This isn't our story to tell." One student of color in the choir spoke up to share her discomfort about her white peers singing the pronouns. I asked her if she would feel the same way if the majority of the choir was black, to which she replied "no." I then asked if she would discourage the minority of white students from singing with the majority of black singers, and she answered "no" once more.

This conversation prompted me to reflect on whether the students were misguided and wanted to be good "woke" allies or if I was just not understanding their generation. Why would they have a problem with singing first-person pronouns in a civil rights song because they were white? For years, the same students had been singing songs from the classical canon that tell the stories of many ethnic groups in Europe. Are only Germans allowed to sing Bach? I think most people would find that absurd.

I reflected on my research over the years in the book, *Music and Conflict Transformation Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics.* In the chapter, "We Shall Overcome: The Role of Music in the US Civil Rights Movement" (Urbain, 2007, pp. 78-100), I discussed how music was used in the civil rights movements to bring people together and to unite all races. I intentionally mentioned the Highlander Folk School founded in 1932 by Myles and Zillphia Horton, a white couple who were musicians and community organizers in Monteage, Tennessee.

Many believe that Mr. Horton was the father of the civil rights movement because of his leadership and influence on civil rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Rosa Parks (who attended a workshop at the school), and John Lewis. One student of the Highlander Folk School was a white folk singer named Guy Carawan, who was instrumental in teaching other white musicians (e.g., Peter Seeger) protest songs for the civil rights movement that they spread throughout the country. The most famous song was "We Shall Overcome," which became a rallying cry for all kinds of protesters. Mr. Carawan wrote a book describing the plight of black lives on Johns Island, South Carolina, titled *Ain't You Got the Right to the Tree of Life?* In the preface, Charles Joyner commented:

> In the 1960s, Guy and his wife Candie lived and worked among black people on Johns Island for two years. They wrote a book about the people of Johns Island. But they are more than just the chroniclers of the story. They are part of the story, too. They came to learn about Gullah culture, but they also made a great contribution to the people of Johns Island, and, through them, to the civil rights movement and to all of us. (Carawan, 1966 pp. 7)

I believe that these musicians and community organizers helped tell the story of black oppression through songs and action.

I also reflected on John Lewis's life and legacy as I was reading Jon Meacham's book titled *His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and The Power of Hope.* Here it was, in plain view, a white man literally telling the story of black oppression with the blessings of the Congressman Lewis. When he was asked to reflect on the civil rights movement, Congressman Lewis stated:

> The way of the civil rights movement was the way of love, of respect, of the dignity of every person. Not just black, not just white, not just male, not just female, but of every person. (Meacham, 2020, p. 252)

Mr. Lewis also articulated a national call to action for all people in the afterward of the book. Like past leaders such as Dr. King and Gandhi, he stated that he too could "get in trouble for the greater good" (Lewis, 2020, p. 248).

I had a realization that Mr. Meacham, a white man, could tell the story of this great American hero as I continued to reflect on the students' concerns about white people singing about black oppression. I noted how Rep. Lewis illuminated the nature of the struggle being for all people, not just those who experienced black oppression. How else could one explain his collaboration with a white author? I believe that Mr. Meacham wrote the book from a place of solidarity and knew what it meant to be an ally to people of color. Meacham described the tragedies and victories of this great civil rights icon (Lewis) with honor and dignity.

I have searched the recesses of my mind to find ways to help white students be allies of their black peers. This conflict is nothing new; people have been questioning who has the right to express certain ideas for a long time, especially due to the cross-pollination of musical cultures. In "Race, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing the Blues?" Joel Rudinow explores the complexity of whites

singing black music without having an authentic black cultural experience. Although the article uses examples from blues singers, I think students can still benefit from reading it.

When Professor Rudinow posed the question of whites singing the blues, most of his students expressed no concern because they already knew many white artists who sang the blues. Rudinow stated the following:

> In an age of renewed and heightened racial and cultural sensitivity, the critical stance [of white artists singing the blues] seems paradoxically to be both progressive and reactionary and to stand in need of both clarification and critique. It seems to embody, as well as any, the problem of political correctness. (1994, p. 127)

Professor Rudinow wrote this article over twenty years ago, and the racial divide in this country has grown exponentially, with tribalism at its peak. One can understand why the notion of offending black musicians might give students pause. However, if white students continue to abstain from performing black music, Eurocentric music education will lack composers of color who tell stories of black oppression. They will remain the norm.

It is my opinion that one must seek out the greater good to educate and be educated by others. I believe the students are coming from a good place, but perhaps they can consider another perspective. I recalled that my choir performed *Rent* a few years ago, and none of the students said that only a gay person should sing "Will I Lose My Dignity?" (a song sung in the musical as a support group for people living with HIV/AIDS). One does not have to be a member of the LGBTQIA community to tell this important story; we all need allies.

I believe it will take time and energy to work through the students' concerns. As a black man in a predominantly white city and workplace, I often call upon my white colleagues to help me tell stories of the black experience and become allies.

One such ally has been Dr. Janet Galván. We have worked together for many years to program music of black composers. As a white woman, Dr. Galván understands the difficulties that white allies must navigate to avoid being dismissive. In recent times, Emily Preston, a white music educator and associate director of the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers, has also answered the call to collaboration and is a strong ally in the preparation of negro spirituals and other African-American sacred music for the group.

I started to do more research on the topic of whether one should sing about another person's experience (outside of his or her culture) and discovered some very helpful resources. One was an article from *The New Yorker* titled "The Politics of Fiction: Who Gave You the Right to Tell that Story?" Ten individuals describe how they came to write from other perspectives—e.g., the voice of someone from a different race or culture (Shapiro, 2019).

However, the one source that aligned the most with my thinking was a 2019 article titled "Singing Down the Barriers: Encouraging Singers of All Racial Backgrounds to Perform Music" by African American composers Caroline Helton and Emery Stephens. They took a deep dive into the question of white singers singing black music. Based on insights from the majority of students they surveyed, they raised the following point:

> Singers of all racial backgrounds must actively work to connect to the literature they sing. They said that it may be easier for some African American singers who have had certain experiences to connect to the repertoire, but that does not rule out the responsibility borne by any singer to create an authentic and committed performance. (Stephens, 2019, p. 76)

Importantly, they also stressed the fact that it is the singer's responsibility to pursue proper research to understand songs in their cultural context. I believe music educators should prepare students to sing outside their comfort zones by becoming culturally aware in cultures that are not their own. A person's race does not automatically give him or her the proper tools to sing with authenticity. One must work to understand and appreciate the cultural framework of the music. Said one African American student in Helton and Stephens' survey:

> It is my duty, and the duty of other African Americans, to continue performing the songs of our past for others. I believe that that is very important; however, when people of other races sing these wonderful songs, the message of continuing the story is extended to a greater family of people, be-

> yond race. I do not believe that music has a soul, but it does leave the imprints of peoples' spirit and communicates on a deeper level than our verbal language can ever begin to communicate. (p. 76)

This takes me back to the original question: should white students sing stories about black oppression? My answer is a resounding yes, but as educators, we must do the work and help students understand why and how to sing these songs in a respectful manner. Educators must be willing to have difficult conversations with their students, I believe.

As a conductor, I was once asked to participate in a Holocaust remembrance ceremony. I gladly accepted the invitation and asked my Jewish choir members what we should sing. One person suggested "Ani Ma' a Min," which translates into "I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah." When I prepared the choir to sing this work, I asked one Jewish person to speak about the song and what it meant to her to have Jews and Gentiles sing it in solidarity. After she finished speaking, I could see tears running down the faces of many choir members. In that moment, we understand how music afforded us the opportunity to be allies. An ally is able to commiserate with one's neighbors regardless of skin color.

I applaud the high school teacher with whom I started this collaboration. I hope our journey will help her students find ways to perform songs that recount black oppression so that they too can empathize with their black peers and sing with pride, conviction, and joy in solidarity with all people. CT

NOTES

[1] Guy Carawan, *Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life? The People of Johns Island, South Carolina—Their Faces, Their Words and Their Songs* (Brown Thrasher Books, 1966).

[2] Caroline Helton and Emery Stephens, "Singing down the barriers: encouraging singers of all racial backgrounds to perform music" by African American composers. *Scholarship of Multicultural Teaching and Learning,* 111 (2007): 73-80.

[3] John Meacham and John Lewis, *His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope* (Random House 2020).

[4] Joel Rudinow, "Race, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing the Blues?" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 52 (1) (1994): 127-137.

[5] L. Shapiro, "The Politics of Fiction: Who Gave you the Right to Tell the Story?" in *The New Yorker* (October 2019): 59-62.

[6] Olivier Urbain, *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics* (I.B. Tauris, 2007).

A Delicate Balance—Caring for the Music and the Singers

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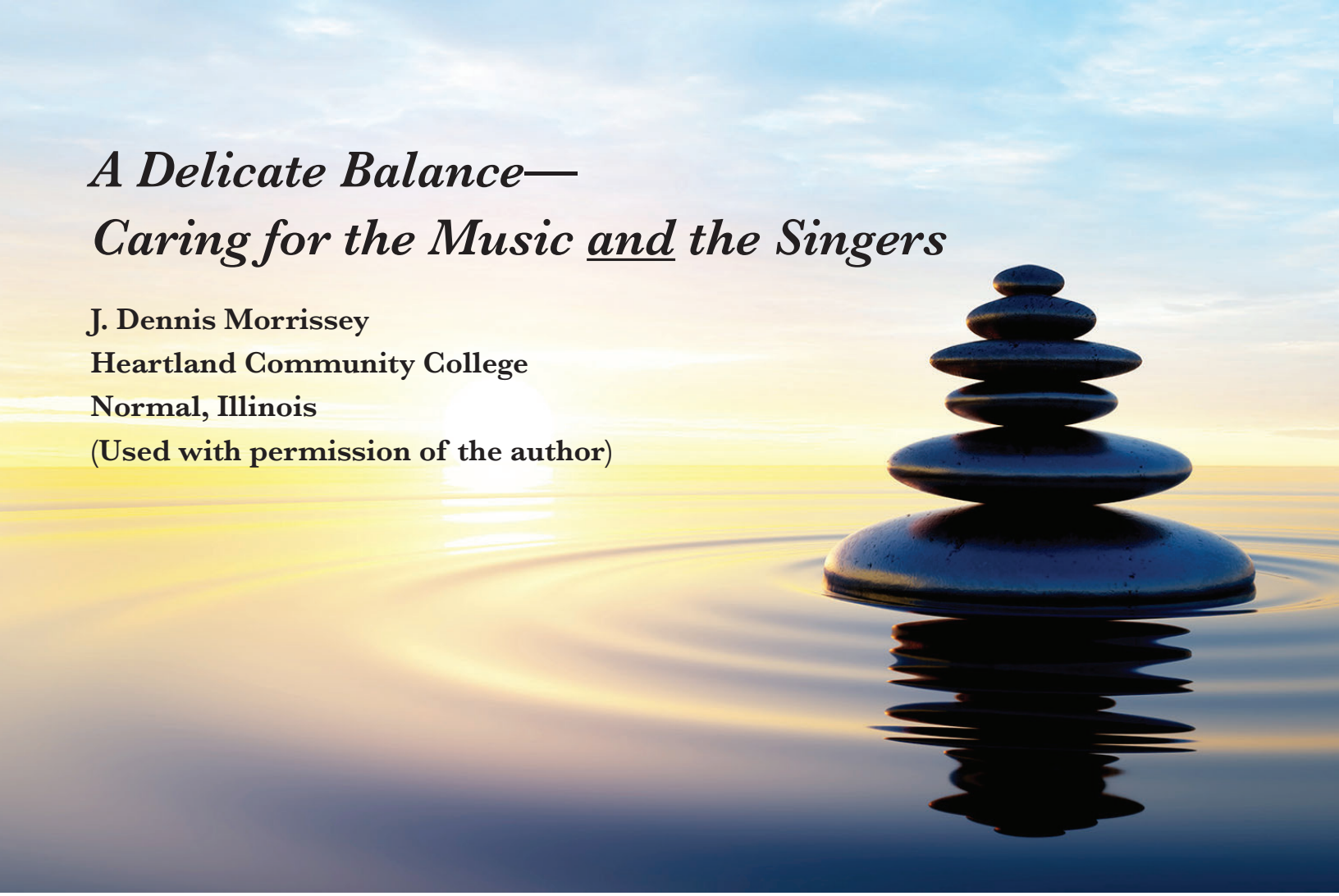
(Used with permission of the author)



I've often marveled that some choral conductors can consistently and even aggressively strive for choral excellence in rehearsals and performance but without undermining or damaging the relationship with their singers. These conductors have achieved what I call a delicate balance—caring for both the music *and* the singers. This balance would seem particularly challenging to maintain at the college/university level, considering the attendant pressures that likely accompany frequent and musically demanding public performances. In an effort to glean some insights, I decided to undertake a study.

My purpose was to explore the ways in which successful college/university choral conductors work to establish and maintain a balance between striving for musical excellence (*caring for the music*) and valuing their choristers as human beings (*caring for the singers*), particularly in the context of the choral rehearsal.

I conducted in-person interviews with twelve successful college/university choral conductors from my state of Illinois, all of whom, as I will explain, care for both the music and the singers. I use the word *successful* to describe choral directors who have made at least one appearance at a national or regional ACDA conference, conducting a choir she or he rehearsed on a regular basis. Clearly, these conductors could not be successful without caring for the music. That they also care for the singers is evident both from the reputation each conductor has established for respecting the humanity of his or her singers and from my personal observation(s) of each person in rehearsal.

I am indebted to the conductors who supported this study by graciously consenting to be interviewed: Karyl Carlson, Illinois State University; Scott Ferguson, Illinois Wesleyan University; Joe Grant, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (retired); Brad Holmes, Millikin University; Mary Hopper, Wheaton College; Jon Hurty, Augustana College; Eric Johnson, Northern Illinois University; John Jost, Bradley University (retired); Lee Kesselman, College of DuPage; James Stegall, Western Illinois University (retired); Jeff Wilson, Greenville University (retired); and Ramona Wis, North Central College.

1. Is caring for the music and the singers a necessity for a choral conductor's success?

Ferguson: Absolutely! I believe that you *must* value the person and the music. Especially in an educational institution, our job is to help students grow. We must pay attention to the individual growth of our choristers as well as the growth of the choir as a whole. If you don't value them, they're not going to want to sing! Tone comes from your inner spirit, I believe. And if their spirit is not well, if their well-being is not at peace, the color and the vibrancy is not going to be in the sound! So, I think the sound of the choir directly depends on how well you value all of the individuals in it.

Wilson: For me, excellence in music and caring for my singers are not mutually exclusive ideas. They come together and are essential in a choir.

Wis: It is not an either/or, but rather, a both/and mindset that we need to have as conductors. But this can be difficult to develop when we consider our undergrad, and even graduate, education and training. The discussion or study of the singer as a being is minimal, at best. It's usually about what they can do. But at some point, for most conductors, we start to realize that what we are doing is engaging with people at a very deep level, and in order for this to happen, it has to be built on something that's really powerful. Music is very powerful, but there has to be a relational connection. And there has to be buy-in. There has to be an investment. There has to be a payoff.

Hurty: The old school was "it is my way or the highway" and I think directors who use that method probably would not be successful these days since we are working with a different kind of singer. Unfortunately, it does seem like the old school to not care so much for the person and just care for the music or the product more than anything else.

Holmes: There are probably examples of successful choirs under a conductor who has a poor relationship with the singers. But I'd like to think that the best music is made with the best human situation.

Hopper: I believe a conductor should balance the quality of the music, the quality of texts, and your obligation to the singers. So, even through your programming, you're thinking about how you're caring for the singers, not just doing all the music that you like but what they need.

Wis: At North Central College, we always frame their learning and experience within this larger context of leadership, and we help them understand how to balance musical excellence with the needs of the people they are given to lead.

Carlson: One of the first things is that you have to love what you do. I still try to maintain that idealistic, happy ignorance that I had when I first walked into my elementary school, as a new teacher, and I was so excited. I don't ever want to lose that.

2. How do you envision the ideal balance in the choral rehearsal between caring for the music and caring for the singers?

Stegall: Caring for the music and the singers are one and the same. Choosing high quality repertoire with profoundly communicative texts makes it possible to simultaneously inspire singers and enhance their performance.

Hurty: For me, it's not as much a balance between those two things as if you were to use 75% to 25% or fifty-fifty. But rather, pushing for the limits of both of those things is what I view as being the ultimate way to achieve excellence while caring for your students—simultaneously. I don't think excellence in approaching the music is in any sense exclusive of caring for the people. You will actually get a more excellent level of musical accomplishment by caring for your choir. You have to completely commit yourself to both of those things.

Carlson: In my rehearsals I generally try to set up the atmosphere and mind-set that rehearsals are for learning the music and related issues. There has to be a modicum of professional distance, even though I like them very much. But when we're rehearsing, it's about the music. It's not about me, and it's not about them.

Johnson: It's not about me! That's the biggest thing we have to learn as conductors.

Jost: I don't know if there is an ideal balance. In the rehearsal, I feel like I'm really working on the music and not thinking necessarily about the singers except in the sense that I think there are some givens in terms of respect that need to be part of it. I'm not thinking, "Oh, this tenor prob-

ably had a rough day today" or that sort of thing. I think we need to let go of those things and just go to work.

Hopper: I think the repertoire you choose for your singers is really key in caring for them. One thing I think about a lot is the texts that we're giving them. We're giving them texts that are going to encourage them, to feed their souls, to do something, convey a message because that's something they take with them for the rest of their lives sometimes. There's a great story I use often about a woman who sang in the women's choir here before my time as the conductor. She was kidnapped when she was a missionary in Africa in the '60s. She wrote a book about it. She writes in the book that, for that amount of time she was held hostage, it was the songs she sang in the women's choir at Wheaton College that were in her mind that came back to her and gave her encouragement during the time of captivity, especially a Kodaly piece called *Cease Your Bitter Weeping* that she quotes. And so that has always struck me how important it is what we're putting in the minds of our students.

Wis: I would start by saying that caring for the singers and caring for the music are not mutually exclusive. Is it process or product? Of course, we can't have one without the other. To function at our best and for the singers to reap the most benefits, we need to have process and product in front of us at all times, working toward our immediate goal of a great performance as well as our long-term goal of wonderful creative work and the development of people as musicians and collaborators.

Holmes: In some ways, a choir is the last bastion of you-ness, not me-ness, in artistic expression. It's a lot about the 'you' and a lot less about the 'me.' It's about a 'we' coming together. If it is all about the conductor, then the sense of other-ness is lost. The concept of otherness is crucial to the whole thing that I'm trying to build. In that sense, it is always about building up the individual through the community endeavor. Otherness is so key. In the Millikin University Choir, or 'U Choir' as we call it, one of our ongoing mottos is, "Not Me Choir—U. Choir!" And I think that takes us very far. That isn't to say that individuals aren't important. In fact, they're so much more important in that context—where their individual strengths are given to each other. The conductor does the same thing. He gives himself to the ensemble. The individual is absolutely vital, but the submission of individuals to one another makes for an amazing experience.

Jost: It is going to be a much richer experience if I can call upon their experience and not just feel that everything has to be coming from me. Over the years I've come to realize that there are ways to use the experience of the group. What you want to do is increase the ownership of the group over the music and the music-making process, and you can't do that by constantly being the only source of wisdom and knowledge and truth yourself.

Grant: The experiences I had within my groups taught me that these two things can go hand-in-hand. I think if you're a conductor at the professional level and the primary emphasis is on the performance alone, then you can really dial it toward that, just taking care of the music. If you're in a school situation, a college situation, it seems to me that that balance has to come more to neutral—that is, at least an equal emphasis on student growth and musical performance. But you have to be intentional. I don't think it can happen by circumstance.

Hurty: When I started, I think I was probably more rigid in my approach to people because I was more concerned about me rather than about them. And the more experience I've gotten, the more I realize that it truly is about the music itself—what the music or the composer or the poet has to say. Learning to get me out of the way and make the music be more important has been the best developing experience that I've had.

Johnson: If I start with the perspective that creating music and performing music all circles back to a profoundly human experience, things get a lot easier to keep in balance. How can you ignore the needs and experiences of the people in front of you if what you are about is a fundamental expression of humanity?

Kesselman: I am troubled by the idea that there is some sort of dichotomy. I don't think I have to choose between caring for the music, striving for musical excellence, and caring for the singers. I think if you care for the music and the singers, and if you make choices based on something that involves both, you'll be more successful. In fact, the joy of choral music is that people, often with very modest skills and training, achieve great things, greater things than they could achieve on their own.

Hopper: Because I direct two single-sex choirs, there's more of a sense of community expected in these groups. For the men, it's a lot easier. They have a little more of a fraternal feel. With the women, we have to work at it, at helping individuals to feel part of the group without becoming like a sorority. The men are just up almost all the time. They're enthusiastic and hitting each other and a lot of physical stuff. But the girls need to be encouraged and looked out for a little more. And because we are a place of faith, we have that opportunity to pray for each other and share needs. I believe that contributes to the development of the human being. In both groups I have to emphasize that music is still our primary thing and at the same time emphasize that there is a way of belonging to this organization—that we're all in it together.

Jost: We talk about the things we've learned as conductors from the great conductors who've inspired us, but maybe we've learned just as much from the people we don't want to imitate. When I was in high school, one year we had—we went through four conductors in three years, and they were mostly inexperienced first-job people. But this one conductor (it must have happened eight or nine times) his office was just off the choir room. He left rehearsal with the choir still standing there and slammed the door. I did not see that as appropriate or something to imitate.

Johnson: Remember, we are all dealing with people, not sound machines. We are human organisms interacting with the body-brain experience where the brain exists to discover. The brain does not exist to recite. If you engage the singers in a process of discovery, then the rehearsal experience is much more organic and, as the conductor, you become the leader/facilitator rather than, say, dictator.

Wis: If I stop and say, "Fix that vowel," singers don't really have to invest; they just have to respond. But if I say, "Fix that vowel because it's going to make you tune better," now I've respected the singers as people, as artists, and I've given them the ability to fix their own musical problem. They're truly learning and they're more invested in the process. So what's really great about that is that while this collaboration approach helps them to be more invested, it requires them to be more responsible.

Holmes: Earlier, we were talking about the church choir that I direct and I learned how to love what they achieve. I've been moved deeply by seeing what my church choir has done, even though it's never at the level of the Millikin University Choir. You have to figure out what those levels of ability are and what is exciting for them at their level of expertise. Music is layered, and there's great achievement at every level.

Kesselman: I think if your singers feel cared for and feel respected and feel as though they're part of a reflective practicum in their rehearsals, they will produce better music to the best of their abilities. They'll give you everything they have. I don't think they will do it if they're angry or hurt or feel as though they're pawns in somebody else's world.

Johnson: You don't have to put the students down to be uncompromisingly better. If you're yelling at them or intimidating, that's power! That's a power trip. That has nothing to do with music. It has everything to do with you! You don't have to compromise. It's not an either/or. It's a this/and.

Carlson: Caring for young singers is much different. I think the light bulb came on when I was a student. When I was doing my undergrad degree, I had food poisoning, so I wasn't able to go to class for a couple of days. My music ed professor called me, which was a little bit unusual in those days. She called me and wanted to know if I needed anything, if she could bring me anything. And I said, "Yeah, some ginger ale or something." So she came over. She came to my apartment, which was crazy! And then she said, "But I want you to know that your assignment is still due." And so it registered with me like, here's a person who is still holding me accountable, but I know that she cares. So I'm still accountable for what I need to do. I always remember that. Here, I'm helping you and I care for you, but you still have to do the work.

Wis: The difference between a really effective conductor who's going to build musicians for the long term and one who just gets the right pedagogy for the moment is enormous. The one who gets the right pedagogy can, every time they stop, say, "No, it's this vowel. No, round your lips. No, listen and match," and so forth. But there has to be a reason for the singer to want to do these things. That's the people part.

Holmes: If you love them [your own children or your

choir], then how can you not show them some possibilities and then help them achieve them, or even demand that they achieve them? It shows a lack of care and a lack of love for the choir if you don't help them to their highest potential. I hope that I've left the choir with a sense of what it means to envision, pursue and achieve—to be a growing person.

3. How do you establish and maintain the ideal balance in rehearsal, especially in the face of mounting rehearsal pressures?

Hurty: For me, it's a matter of just being honest, just trying to be what I think is right. Respect people, respect the music, strive for excellence both in your relationships as well as in the work that you do. And if we do that, the outcome is going to be more positive for everybody.

Wis: Honesty is a powerful tool. And we can be honest without being mean. Let the students know that your job as the conductor/leader is to be honest and give feedback. It's not a reflection on the singers as people.

Kesselman: I think when it's a struggle, it's because we think we've done everything we can do and now it's their fault. Honestly, nobody shows up on Monday nights to sing just to torment me. Nobody's trying to do badly. They all want to do well. I'm really convinced of that. Rarely does one encounter a singer who says, "Let's see what happens if we just screw up a little bit more. Let's see how long it takes to get his goat!" Nobody says that. What does that mean? What that means is, they're trying to do well and, if they can't do well yet, it's my job to get that to happen. I think a big part of it is engaging and giving to the choir, or reminding the choir of their ownership in this process. It's their choir. In my experience, choirs really respond to ownership. And they become more than just cannon fodder. They're not just making the sounds. They're really thinking about what they're singing. And then they've got questions.

Stegall: This was a struggle for me as a young conductor. Now, as a seasoned (another word for old) conductor, I have found two things that have a profound impact on supporting this balance: scheduling and programming.

Jost: To me, it has to do with planning. Usually, the idea that pressure's building, and they're not ready, I take that back to my lack of planning.

Johnson: I try to select repertoire that inspires, informs, and teaches.

Carlson: I think the first step is picking out repertoire that is appropriate for the group. Music that they can do, and my caring for the students on that journey.

Hurty: I don't view myself as being hugely talented. I view myself as having lots of perseverance. And I realize that through my own life, part of being successful is just keeping at it, just keeping on with the process that you've established. It's more about persevering than it is about something you're doing that's so wonderful or your talent that makes things work.

Wis: We get into the "do I care more about the singers or the music today?" There may be pressure close to performances because we sometimes don't make the right decisions in advance, early in the learning process. I really believe in planning and using our foresight, making decisions early and assuming there's going to be something unpredictable that will happen. I really think that if we make the right decision based on people, the music will be there. I've never been burned by making a decision to honor somebody.

Grant: You have to plan your rehearsal around the activities that the students are going to take part in. If all they do is open their music and rehearse and rehearse and rehearse, there's not going to be time for them to reflect on what they're doing, on the music that they're performing, on the texts that they're dealing with, and so forth. You have to be intentional about including things like having them discuss or write in class about the text and what it might mean to them and how it might help them grow personally. But finding that balance is a challenge.

Holmes: You can't drive the wagon train across the prairie and not let the people stop for food every once in a while. It's good to allow them to sit around the campfire at night and reflect on the journey. The students also must have goals along the way. I think you're trying to set up these moments of feasting along the way, and that fuels the rest of the journey. I am very attuned to the emotional stability of the choir while in route. When they're starving, I know

it. When they're thirsty, I know it, and I know I've got to supply something at these times to get them to the next goal. Otherwise, they're going to lose their trust in me. We must truly pursue attainable goals.

Holmes: In the end, the singers have to have a desire to undertake the journey. Maybe the question is, "How do you get them to buy in?" The whole process must be about everybody wanting to attain some level of musical excellence. If that is not there, we have to build that into their psyche.

Ferguson: Maintaining balance is paying attention to the singers and listening to them, watching them, and taking their pulse in rehearsal all the time.

Hopper: I like to have opportunities to talk to my students outside of rehearsal. The men have tea time in my office before rehearsal one day a week. With the girls, especially in years when we don't tour, I will have Sunday night suppers at my house.

Carlson: I have everybody sing in octets. I don't grade them. They just come up and sing. They can tell where they are with the music, and they don't feel like I've called them out in front of everybody.

Carlson: I do ask a lot of questions in choir rehearsals. That also gives a little bit more ownership of the music. They're responsible for the music, not to me. It takes a collaborative effort.

Johnson: You get all wrapped up in something that went wrong in rehearsal, and then you just imagine a million things that don't exist. There are those voices in your head that scream, "Oh, they're all against me! They all hate me! Why do they hate me?" They don't even think about you outside of rehearsal. I just have to get over myself.

Ferguson: Not every rehearsal has to have pom-poms out and be fast paced. But urgency is great and the singers need to be constantly urged forward. The energy in rehearsal has to be there, but you've got to be bursting with energy and on fire at every rehearsal.

Holmes: More and more, I realize that my frustration is a sign that I am unable to communicate clearly. It's not as much about a choir being incapable of achieving; it's about my inability to push the right buttons to make it work. Everybody in the choir knows that. When I get really frustrated, they're usually sitting there with questioning faces. They're looking at me like, "We're waiting!" It's funny, too. I mean, they all sit there. I'll jump up and down and hit my head. "How do I get this right?" And they're all thinking, "Are you getting paid for this? Give us something!" So those are great moments when they're waiting on me to figure it out and make it work. That's a fun moment, but it can be very frustrating.

Wis: We have to process and reflect in between rehearsals, asking what singers need from us now and what they need going forward.

Carlson: Seek their anonymous feedback. Pick great repertoire. Don't make it about you.

Grant: So much of that goes back to literature selection. If you've had enough experience overall, then you select appropriate literature that doesn't drive you to the wall at the last moment, fighting for the last notes as you walk on stage.

Stegall: Our preparation is methodical and starts with clearly defined musical goals that are put on a calendar. Repertoire challenges must be significant, but not severe. I want to avoid at all costs white knuckle learning that takes all the joy out of the process and brings out everyone's worst behavior and attitude. We never focus on the concert; instead, we focus on having daily musical experiences. In this light, the concert takes care of itself.

Holmes: I think my biggest struggle in a rehearsal is to show singers what's possible in their product. What are they capable of creating? How do I communicate what's possible? Once they see what's possible then it's a call to their character and to mine also to consistently pursue the possible.

Johnson: For me, it was very important for my students to see balance in other parts of my life. For example, I have made it a priority throughout my career to model that family is very important to me. Making music is about expressing things to be human and you kind of need to be human to do that. The connection between the music we sing and our life experiences is so important. When I focus on that, I never compromise the balance you are asking about.

4. How do you regain the balance in rehearsal if it has been lost?

Hopper: "If"—you say. No, we all have.

Ferguson: Yes, I have lost balance during rehearsal. I have always found it very difficult to handle my own negative emotion in rehearsal. But I don't think I've ever said anything that I regretted. I can't stand sarcasm in rehearsal. And there's no place for gratuitous anger. Fear and intimidation may work for some people, but it doesn't work for me at all. The older I get, the better I am at being firmer earlier in the rehearsal process. But we have to figure this out; we have to realize that the choir's the "child" no matter how old they are. They know that we're the parent, and they expect us to be the parent.

Grant: When I started teaching in the public schools, I hadn't had a lot of experience with working on classroom management. And I was terrible at it. I mean, kids enjoyed being with me. I wanted them to like me and so, you know, I did all sorts of fun things with them. But when they started getting out of hand, how do you control the classroom climate? And I think too frequently, in those days, I resorted to anger, to yelling, and all of this kind of stuff and just being overly aggressive.

Carlson: Well, I have absolutely said things that I've regretted. But if that's the case, if I catch it right away, I will just apologize right away. Again, if it's not about me and it's not about them, then I can just turn it back to the music and say, "Okay, I stubbed my toe. Let's get back to work."

Kesselman: I think most people are pretty forgiving in this world, but you have to show a little contrition.

Hurty: A lot of times, when I get frustrated and they're frustrated, we do spend some time talking. If you bring them into the process and allow them to say, "Yeah, I'm frustrated and I feel like we're doing this," then I'll try to focus them back and say, "OK, let's try some of those things." And oftentimes just talking about it causes something. I don't know if it really solves the problem, what everyone says, but it releases the frustration. It makes people realize that we need to focus more on what we're doing.

Johnson: I had one experience with one of my very, very good choirs. We had a convention performance that didn't go well. We had given concerts in advance; they knew all of the music. There was no reason why it shouldn't go well. But it didn't. And we all knew it. And I later realized that, without being intentional about it, I had made the convention performance about me. I was nervous. I was anxious about performing in front of my peers. During our sound check and the time in our green room, I focused too much on fixing. Then as a group, we were anxious about who was in the audience to hear us. And that was the time when I realized that, in those situations, my responsibility is to make sure that they're ready emotionally as human beings.

Jost: It's not something that happens to me very often just because I have a pretty high level of patience. I do remember one time early in my time here. The students weren't paying attention, and I finally just walked out of the rehearsal and up to my office. I finally lost patience, and rather than blow up at them, I left the room. About five minutes later, one of the singers came in and apologized. So that would be a situation where I gave up on the singers, but I think the singers all decided it was their fault.

Wilson: Once, as a student in an honor band, I was working with a famous conductor. It was clear that he was an excellent musician, but the way he treated the group as people was very discouraging. I determined, that if I was ever in his position, I would to try to do things differently—in a way that would help build up people as well as lead them to make excellent music. It seemed to me that there must be a better way to do both!

Kesselman: I think our ability to listen deeply is certainly our teaching mechanism, and to hear what people are telling us in the rehearsal and outside of the rehearsal, to try to establish a relationship where people feel confident and comfortable coming to you. The goal is to make sure the people you're working with know how much you value and respect them.

Stegall: I work to avoid displaying or expressing anger so that there is nothing to regret or take back. As a less experienced conductor, I was prone to anger. I have found over the years that getting angry is only a temporary fix, and students will quickly grow immune to this type of motivation. I have also learned to avoid blaming students for their

poor performance or motivation and want to help them negotiate this part of their learning and maturing process. In the book, *Primal Leadership* by Daniel Goleman, it has been documented that motivating others with continual negative emotional episodes such as anger will sabotage a leader's relationships and hamper the group's work performance. I aspire to lead with true power, not the force of anger but power *with* others, not over others.

Grant: I think long-term—and I tried to teach this in my music ed classes—it's about taking time to reflect, not in the moment but after rehearsal to give myself time to think through it, what happened there, what might I have needed to make that a better situation both musically and in terms of classroom control.

Wis: Never, ever give up on the singers. That's easy to say, tough to do sometimes. But we can never give up on the singers. We might determine that the musical product "is what it is" at some point, but we continue to plan how to bring the singers forward in their development and our work together. If it does happen, you just have to fess up and apologize and move on and then just be sure you don't replay that scene again. Find out what caused it and get to the core of the problem; plan better for the future so you don't get into that situation.

Holmes: On occasion, I have also found myself apologizing to my students for violating their trust by not expecting enough from them. That's the most devastating situation.

5. How do you enhance your ability as a conductor to care for the singers?

The responses to this question fell into one of two categories: professional development and caring for yourself. A non-prioritized summary of the responses is provided here, some being mentioned more than once.

Professional development included attending conferences, talking with colleagues, developing a cohort of professional soul mates, evaluations from students and colleagues, and observing other conductors and choirs in rehearsals, clinics, festivals, and conferences.

Kesselman: A lot of caring for your singers is caring for yourself physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Caring for yourself included caring for family, resting, self-reflecting, living and exhibiting a balanced life, setting an example ethically and morally, attending to the climate and the singers in rehearsal, respecting the singers as human beings, plus developing as a person through exercise, church involvement, prayer, concerts/theatre/museums, Yoga, meditation, travel, and reading (self-empowerment, leadership, scripture, inspirational, poetry).

A Few Conclusions

1. Caring for the music and the singers is a necessity for choral success.

2. The conductor needs to develop a "both/and" mindset about caring for the music and the singers. They are not mutually exclusive or a dichotomy, but a singularity.

3. Rehearsals should be devoted to the music but underpined by respect for the singers.

4. Realistic planning eliminates mounting rehearsal pressures.

5. The choice of repertoire is the key to caring for the singers.

6. The choir needs to be challenged and "fed" in every rehearsal.

7. The conductor should be honest without being mean.

8. If the conductor has lost a sense of balance in rehearsal, he/she should apologize.

9. Reflection on the part of the conductor between rehearsals is critical for maintaining a balance in rehearsals.

10. Conductors can enhance their ability to care for the singers through continual professional development and through caring for themselves (physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally). CT

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Preserving the Choral Art in the Time of COVID—"How Can I Keep from Singing?"

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With 2020 in our rearview mirror, we take stock of the remarkable challenges that we faced. We pause with a sense of profound thankfulness for persevering as choral musicians. Although our orchestral and wind band friends endured the devastating effects of the coronavirus, to say nothing of our performing arts cousins, we as choral musicians saw the very essence of our art threatened to a deeper degree than any other.

Choral music is a *social* endeavor wherein humans come *together* to raise their voices, which are instruments of the deepest personal expression, to give utterance to the motions of the soul. These same voices, we are told, are capable of spreading a terrible virus. As we began to recognize the extent of the pandemic, the dreadful question began to creep into our hearts and minds, "Can we still sing?" We were forced to ponder the nature of our art and whether or not our work could continue. Such was the sad state of affairs in 2020 for the choral musician.

We are inspired by our choral peers who, with passion and zeal in the face of personal danger and the daunting obstacles placed by government officials and school administrators, created innovative and brilliant virtual experiences for singers. We are humbled at the resiliency of our colleagues and the ingenuity with which they met these challenges. We wish to share our experiences in the hope that doing so there will be encouragement.

Choir: Face to Face

Our institution, like so many schools, suspended in-person instruction in mid-March of 2020. As the fall semester approached, our administration implemented the now-standard measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.[1] While many courses were moved to online-only delivery, in-person instruction was preserved for many others.[2] To continue in-person classes, square footage was carefully calculated for all instructional spaces so as to determine the new socially distanced maximum occupancy. The choirs were especially hard hit since it was determined that the level of danger from singing was higher than that of playing an instrument or sitting in a class.

In the face of these restrictions, we firmly resolved that the very essence of the choral art is social interaction through physical connectedness. Considering the negative effects on students from isolation and "Zoom-weariness," we decided to continue face-to-face choral music making. We're glad that we did.

Three Choirs with Two Concerts and a Doctoral Conducting Recital[3]

Three choirs continued exclusively in-person rehearsals. The two largest major ensembles, each rehearsing twice weekly, continued face-to-face meetings until Thanksgiving, after which time the university suspended in-person instruction. The large choirs presented two concerts during the semester.[4] A third choir, a graduate conducting recital choir, met face-to-face for eight weeks, presenting a concert in mid-October.

As the fall semester approached, we could only speculate as to the potential impact that the coronavirus would have on enrollment. A sizable portion of each of the choirs in question is regularly composed of talented non-music majors whose degree programs do not require choir participation. Also, with the flexibility afforded students generally, the potential for a dramatically smaller pool of students was high. Our administration evidently believed that the participation rate for choir would be low. Late in the summer, our administration severely limited the capacity of the choral rehearsal hall and drastically lowered the enrollment cap. With a mix of hope and a desire to ameliorate the institutional limitations on class size, we made the decision to offer additional sections of the choirs, thus allowing, in theory, the usual volume of students to register for, and participate in, a choir. Our decision meant that we would effectively double our workload and increase our face-to-face interaction with students, but we felt that providing students with a real choral experience was well worth the increased workload and the potential personal risk.

Our annual fall choral auditions were offered like normal, with the option for virtual auditions as students desired. All but one student chose an in-person audition. At the conclusion of the auditions, we were gratified that the number of auditions and resulting registrations for the fall semester matched those of the previous two years. We were overwhelmed with the knowledge that, in spite of the risks related to coronavirus, and with the option not to participate in choir, our students nevertheless wanted to sing together. The clear message was, "How can we keep from singing?"

Keep Safe and Choir On

In our planning and teaching, we understood clearly the gravity of carrying forth with face-to-face music making. We wanted to keep all concerned safe and healthy, but we also wanted to show, for the sake of the choral field, that music could be performed safely. Because of this, we were keenly aware of the need to maintain safe rehearsals, not just for the sake of the students, but also because a failure to do so could have devastating ramifications for the choral area going forward. The dangers on all sides were ever on our minds.

Adjustments for the Situation

As a result of these concerns and in response to the restrictions placed upon us, we carefully selected repertoire that was substantial enough to promote student growth, but also accessible so that students would feel confident singing in a socially distanced setting. For the recital choir, we intentionally chose to limit the size of the group to accord with the rehearsal hall occupancy restriction, thereby affording the entire group the opportunity to rehearse together at every rehearsal. For the major ensembles, we secured the use of our large performance halls once weekly for rehearsals, thus allowing a once-a-week full rehearsal coupled with a once-a-week rotational schedule.[5]

In addition to the room limits/separation of singers, the second challenge was that our normal attendance policies could not be enforced. To preserve the safety of the rehearsal process, it was important to advise students who were feeling ill or who thought they could have been exposed to the coronavirus to stay away. Our efforts along these lines were in addition to the institution's mandatory screening, testing, and reporting protocols.[6]

From the beginning, this meant that attendance would fluctuate throughout the semester. In the case of the recital choir, there were occasions when all but one or two singers from a given semester were able to attend. In an effort to help the rehearsal process, we provided Zoom links to students who could not physically attend. We also provided practice tracks (many of our own making) and online scores. It became clear through the course of the semester that the practice tracks were a more effective solution than Zoom because virtual rehearsals are very difficult to follow.

Challenges to Rehearsing

Singing in masks and in a socially distanced formation presents several obvious challenges. Diction is the greatest of these challenges, because even the best masks will muffle sound to a certain degree. Since diction is muffled and the singers are separated, there is something of a negative feedback loop. A singers' diction does not project as effectively as

needed; thus, the singers cannot hear each other very well. Without the positive reinforcement of the surrounding choral singers, individuals become timid, and the choral sound begins to falter. Inducing singers—particularly young, inexperienced students—to perform with resonance and confidence is always a challenge, but in a distanced, masked condition, we found it critical to encourage the singers to trust themselves, sing out, overdo the diction, and to bear in mind that they are hearing far more of themselves than normal. We encouraged them not to worry about making mistakes.

Having Patience with the Process

Throughout the process, we believed it absolutely critical to maintain patience with the singers individually and with the rehearsal process *in toto,* and to foster a positive, supportive environment at all times. We did not always love the choral sound, we did not always love the "barrier" of teaching through a mask, and we never found it easy to "read" the eyes and foreheads of our students. The same was true for the students.

The learning process was much slower by far. Indeed, the first several weeks of the semester, we repeatedly rearranged the seating arrangement in an effort to improve the hearing by all concerned. Eventually we found a setup that most agreed was optimal.

Trusting the Singers

Since the traditional means of holding students accountable for attendance and participation were no longer tenable, we simply appealed to the students' sense of passion for music and delight in collective music making. From there, we seasoned our own outlook with trust and faith. As choral directors, we know that it can at times be hard to trust singers, but in all of our choirs, the students demonstrated that trust pays a more handsome reward than does control.

Did we have students who likely "gamed" the system, skipping rehearsals for the usual sophomoric reasons? Probably. Yet, we found that for both the concerts and the recital, over 98% of the students performed. Considering the obstacles and the opportunity, this figure is noteworthy.

Appreciating the Result

From the earliest rehearsal to the final concert, many students expressed gratitude for the opportunity to sing together after months of quarantine. After one of the first rehearsals in late August, one young man wrote to us that, "It has been almost half a year since I have sung in a choir. Today was liberating."

Although the rehearsal process was at times very slow, and even though our performances lacked live audiences, we were able to create safe face-to-face experiences, which students found alluring. The result was an effective socially distanced rehearsal sequence and performance experience live-streamed to family and friends.

As we all know, no new approach is without risk, especially in these times; however, we believe we were able to create an effective rehearsal process that minimized the health risk, thereby cultivating the choral art. While other strategies could potentially be even more effective than ours, this experience demonstrated that safe in-person choral singing can be achieved.

Conclusion

With the fall semester truly behind us, we are thankful that we sang together with our students. We take comfort in the remarkable fact that there is no evidence that the coronavirus was spread as a result of our choral activities. The choral art is perishable, as indeed are all the great artistic expressions of Western civilization. Every choral director well understands that the cultivation of choral music requires constant vigilance. As we ponder our art and as we face the coming months or year, we are encouraged that, through all the tumult and the strife, we hear the music ringing. It finds an echo in our soul. How can we keep from singing? CT

NOTES

[1] https://www.ou.edu/together/norman-phase-iii

[2] https://ou.edu/safeandresilient

[3] The writers only comment on the choirs over which they had the leadership.

[4] Per administration policy, all concerts and recitals were live-streamed only. Live audiences were prohibited.

[5] These included traditional sectional rehearsals of varying combinations and cross-sectional rehearsals of smaller groupings so as to preserve a "choral" aural for the singers.

[6] https://www.ou.edu/together/norman-phase-iii#II