



Knowing the Score: Where Pedagogy and Classroom Management Meet the Unexpected

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Knowing the choral score leads to a better understanding of vocal and choral pedagogy and a more student-centered approach to what is in the music. Knowing the score results in the teacher having to focus less on time-consuming and often energy-draining classroom management.

This article will share an approach to score study focusing on vocal and choral pedagogy for adolescent singers and how this focus can improve ones planning, teaching, and performance. Rehearsal strategies and an example of music from the Renaissance will be used as tools to assist in lesson design. This will result in a student-centered classroom environment with music at its center. A renewed appreciation for score study and its usefulness in applying pedagogical principles will lead to greater student engagement. Positive classroom management will more likely be achieved.

To set the stage, let's start with some terms that will serve as background to what we need for a clearer understanding of our need for detailed score study. The choral score is our musical textbook. So how should we view and approach the choral score? It is the source of our pedagogy and classroom focus and our source of inspiration. It is our guide.

It contains the musical elements of melody, harmony, form (architecture), rhythm, and timbre. It is our source for musical activities like describing, listening, creating, and performing. The score can also be an opportunity for student leaders to mentor other students and student-interns.

Pedagogy is the work—the obligation—of a choral teacher. The art of teaching meets the art of choral singing at the intersection of the choral score and pedagogy.¹ It is where we begin sharing the unexpected surprises, joys, and interesting features of music.

Classroom management refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class.² Our understanding of the score and the necessary vocal and choral pedagogy become our means of classroom management. It is how we keep our students focused, engaged, on task and musically productive. If our students are engaged in the musical experience, then the need for classroom management is reduced to the students making music. This becomes their expectation, their desire.

Classroom management can be thought of in terms of rehearsal planning, and when we consider the adolescent brain, a multiple intelligences approach,³ we have an opportunity to engage students in a multi-faceted approach to understanding the music. With the current educational focus on subjects like visual-thinking and deep-learning, the



work of Howard Gardner at Harvard's Project Zero⁴ and his theory of multiple intelligences comes to mind. A refined definition of intelligence, according to Gardner, is "a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture."⁵

Picture the choral score as an opportunity for our students to engage their bio-psychological potential for solving problems (understanding the score) or re-creating products (music performances) within a cultural context that are valuable to our diversity and culture. In the same book, Gardner shares this idea: "I much prefer occasions where students can perform their understandings publicly, receive relevant critiques, and go on to enhance their performances and their understandings."⁶ Our choral performances are an opportunity for students to perform their understandings publicly and then complete an evaluation or critique about the performance both as an ensemble member and as individual singer.

It is through planning and rehearsal that pedagogy becomes a tool for understanding the score. In Henry Leck's book, *Creating Artistry through Choral Excellence*, he outlines three principles that should be considered as our guide for score choices and how we may approach the score. He suggests that we must choose high-quality literature, teach an understanding of the music, and, most importantly, communicate the text.⁷

As choral directors, our leadership and guidance comes from knowing the score. We should look for questions in the score for our singers, unexpected musical surprises, joys, and other interesting issues.

In *The Art of Possibility*, Benjamin Zander describes how he came to see the importance for him as a professional conductor of enabling his players to "lead from any chair." Zander states:

I had been conducting for nearly twenty years when it suddenly dawned on me that the conductor of an orchestra does not make a sound. His picture may appear on the cover of the CD in various dramatic poses, but his true power derives from his ability to make other people powerful.⁸

Teaching our students to understand the score and how to gain their own musical knowledge from it is how we, as teachers, mentor our students to "lead from any chair."

Through score study and pedagogy, we are mentoring. Tim Sharp states in his book, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts*, that for the mentor, the desire to pass on information and life experiences is part of generativity—contributing to the good of the profession and to the good of another individual.⁹

The Score

For our musical example, I have selected Hans Leo Hassler's *Cantate Domino*,¹⁰ highlighting those questions, unexpected musical surprises, joys, and other interesting features. As we teach from the score, these are the things we can have students look for, make musical connections with, and hear and sing the surprises and joys. It can be found in the choral public domain library (CPDL). To find this work online, go to http://www3.cpdll.org/wiki/images/d/dc/Hassler_-_Cantate_Domino.pdf.

Editor's Note: This article continues with more on the score and a personal reflection. Read the full article in the Summer 2020 issue of ChorTeach at acda.org/chorteach.

NOTES

¹ <http://www.dictionary.com>

² www.edglossary.org

³ Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Basic Books, 1983, first edition).

⁴ <http://www.pz.harvard.edu>

⁵ Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (Basic Books, 2000): 33-34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 114

⁷ Henry Leck, *Creating Artistry through Choral Excellence* (Hal Leonard, 2010).

⁸ Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander, *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life* (Penguin Books, 2002).

⁹ Tim Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts: Helping Others Find Their Voice* (GIA, 2011).

¹⁰ http://www3.cpdll.org/wiki/images/d/dc/Hassler_-_Cantate_Domino.pdf