



EDITORIAL

On Pursuing Unusually Stubborn and Persisting Efforts to Think by the Intelligent Gathering and Use of Data

This issue of IJRCs contains articles that address several areas of continuing interest to choral musicians. Each article reflects this journal's mission to disseminate peer-reviewed research studies that venture beyond the score-centered and "this works for me" approaches characteristic of many choral director association journals. In so doing, the various modes of inquiry employed by contributors to this issue of IJRCs enhance in a systematic, disciplined manner an ongoing quest for credible knowledge of phenomena associated with choral singing in its many and varied manifestations.

Methods of teaching and learning sightsinging skills inevitably spur lively discussion among choral singers and teachers. From Guido d'Arezzo (995-1050) to John Tuff's *An Introduction to the Art of Singing Psalm-Tunes; in the Most Plain and Easy Method Ever Yet Made Known* (1721), and continuing through the efforts of John Curwen and Sarah Glover in the nineteenth century and Zoltan Kodaly in the twentieth century, this ongoing discussion is among the most historied dialogues associated with choral singing and its pedagogy. Steven Demorest, an expert in this field and author of *Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sightsinging in the Choral Rehearsal* (Oxford University Press, 2001), considers the status of sightsinging and its various methods today in North American school choruses. His IJRCs Spotlight Article provides a wealth of interesting data that simultaneously advances this continuing discussion and provides an impetus to further research.

Christopher Aspaas, Christopher R. McCrea, Richard J. Morris, and Linda Fowler contribute data relevant to choir formation. There are very few research investigations in this area, despite the nigh

ubiquitous inclusion of formation diagrams and recommendations regarding their efficacy in generations of choral methods and choral conducting texts. While previous studies consider the perceptions and preferences of auditors and choristers in this respect, Aspaas, McCrea, Morris, and Fowler examine measurements of long term average spectra (LTAS) as well. Their collaboration as colleagues in the School of Music and the Department of Speech and Hearing at Florida State University illustrates what promises to be an increasing trend: an interdisciplinary effort between choral conductor-teachers and researchers in the voice sciences. Their findings challenge to some extent widely held beliefs about the role of choir formation in choral sound. They thus provide a timely caution against premature cognitive commitments to cherished constructs.

Rhonda Fuelberth continues a line of investigation into the effects of left-hand conducting gestures on perceptions of inappropriate vocal tension in choral singers. Her study follows a pilot project reported in the last issue of IJRCs. Many conducting manuals treat gesture as a means to communicate score details and interpretation. Fuelberth's work, however, is among the first to consider empirically the compatibility of certain gestures with efficient vocal production. Although conducting is a central ingredient of many large ensemble experiences, there is a paucity of research with respect to conducting gestures. Professor Fuelberth's pioneering efforts to devise means of isolating and testing gestural variables, while in their beginning stages, offer promise for advancing and refining research efforts in this important area.

Community choir singing affords a context to consider issues of lifelong learning among adult singers. Cindy L. Bell examines existing research in this area, identifies some emergent issues, and proposes variables for future investigations. Her work will be a valuable resource for researchers and others interested in the status and future of community choral singing.

Barbershop quartet singing provides an intriguing, yet little explored, area of research. Benjamin C. Ayling, in an historical and descriptive study of the learning practices of early championship quartet singers, provides an interesting perspective on various themes arising from this unique style of singing. Both the Bell and Ayling studies underscore the fact that choral singing and its pedagogy are not limited solely to school and church contexts.

We at IJRCS are grateful for the interest and support of our readers. The distinguished members of our editorial board continue to give generously of their time to evaluate carefully all manuscripts submitted to the journal. While we cannot publish all manuscripts received, we encourage submissions that embody, in Hamblin's (1966) colorful definition of research, "an unusually stubborn and persisting effort to think straight, which involves the gathering and intelligent use of data" (p. 14).

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REFERENCES

- Hamblin, H. (1966). What is research? *American Vocational Journal*, 41 (6), 14-16.