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A Focus on Multigenerational Choral Singing

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On the Cover This month's cover features a graphical family tree with interlocking branches, symbolizing the 2017 conference theme: A Life of Song.

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ADVOCACY STATEMENT

Whereas the human spirit is elevated to a broader understanding of itself through study and performance in the aesthetic arts; and

Whereas serious cutbacks in funding and support have steadily eroded state institutions and their programs throughout the country;

Be it resolved that all citizens of the United States of America actively voice affirmative and collective support for necessary funding at the local, state, and national levels of education and government to ensure the survival of arts programs for this and future generations.

From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Tim Sharp

Why do we sing?

I maintain we sing because there is no better alternative. We breathe because we have to in order to supply oxygen to our body to live; we eat because we have to supply energy to our organs for them to continue to function; and we sing because we have a need to express and explore our feelings. For these things there is no alternative.

The emotional, physical, and psychological benefits of singing are now well documented. While we still have work to do to tap into the priorities and resources that will offer these benefits to more and more people, the science is clearly on our side as choral conductors and advocates for the community's song. In every area of ACDA's mission—inspiring excellence in choral music education, performance, composition, and advocacy—we are reaching into our communities in new and innovative ways to offer a lifetime of singing to our nation. I see a choral music tsunami rolling across the United States as our members go beyond the traditional rehearsal room, choir loft, stage, and auditorium to bring the better alternative of the artistic experience of singing to more and more people and communities.

As I outlined in my column in the January 2017 issue of *Choral Journal*, as an organization, ACDA has affirmed Lifelong Singing as one of three pillars of service for our organization: 1) Children and Youth, 2) Collegiate, 3) Lifelong Singing. If I were to put my academic robe back on for a minute, I would give our fifty-eight-year-old organization an "A" for what we have done for the first two pillars. We have established the gold standard in choral music education, and our members who serve our schools and universities continue to challenge us with the best thinking, research, and performance for choral music.

THE CONFERENCE STARTS

TUESDAY NIGHT MARCH 7TH

REGI-CEPTION 4PM - 7PM

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It is now time for us to work for that “A” in the area of community and lifelong singing. There is so much work to be done and exciting opportunities for us all. We have revised our ACDA Constitution and Bylaws to state that this is what we want to be about. As we look to our March 8-11, 2017, ACDA National Conference in Minneapolis, we will explore “A Life of Song” as our theme. Beyond Minneapolis, our new Standing Committees will lead us to programs that move us deeper and deeper into community singing. At the national level, I will continue to lead ACDA toward embracing new initiatives that connect us more closely with our communities through song. This is the next stage of ACDA’s progressive vision.

As we move forward into this vision for ACDA, and as we offer the better alternative of vocal singing to our communities, hear the words of McGill University professor Daniel Levitin in his June 3, 2013, interview with Ari Shapiro on NPR’s “Talk of the Nation”:

But the joy of singing...and the nonjudgmental aspect of it, the communal part of it, the part where differences are reconciled and we’re all just in it together, that’s the truly uplifting power of it. And I think that’s important to keep in mind. The history of music was always that it was that: it was communal.



 TimothySharp

 American Choral Directors Association

THE 12 PURPOSES OF ACDA

- To foster and promote choral singing, which will provide artistic, cultural, and spiritual experiences for the participants.
- To foster and promote the finest types of choral music to make these experiences possible.
- To foster and encourage rehearsal procedures conducive to attaining the highest possible level of musicianship and artistic performance.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral groups of all types in schools and colleges.
- To foster and promote the development of choral music in the church and synagogue.
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral societies in cities and communities.
- To foster and promote the understanding of choral music as an important medium of contemporary artistic expression.
- To foster and promote significant research in the field of choral music.
- To foster and encourage choral composition of superior quality.
- To cooperate with all organizations dedicated to the development of musical culture in America.
- To foster and promote international exchange programs involving performing groups, conductors, and composers.
- To disseminate professional news and information about choral music.

—ACDA Constitution and Bylaws

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- Feb 2-4 International Blues Challenge
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From the PRESIDENT



Mary Hopper

My mother was the choir director at our Presbyterian Church, so I grew up doing my homework at the back of choir rehearsal on Thursday nights. My mother was not a professionally trained musician, but she was a good singer and took great joy in preparing the choir to sing for services every week. In fifth grade I accompanied the junior choir for the first time, and when I was in high school I joined the senior choir and even had an opportunity to sing one of the solos in the Vivaldi *Gloria*. It's the memory of Orville, Bob, Evelyn, and others coming every week and faithfully joining in song that encouraged me to go into choral music. It was evident that the church choir was both a way they could serve and a place where they found community.

The idea of multigenerational singing is something we have lost in many of our church and community choirs. This last Christmas in my little church choir, three high school students joined with the others who included a man with dementia. He has sung in the choir for years and loves being there even though he usually sleeps through most of the rehearsal! Choral music is for everyone of any age and really any ability. It's our job to find places for all to participate.

A Life of Song is the theme for our 2017 National ACDA conference and a topic we cannot ignore in our profession. Last spring I had the opportunity to meet with leaders from many choral organizations. One of the major ideas discussed was how to keep singers involved as they passed from one life era to another. For example: how can high school teachers actively encourage their students to continue singing when they get to college? I encourage my college students to continue singing, and it brings me great satisfaction when I hear that they are participating in a church or community choir. Whatever aspect of choral music you are engaged in, I hope you will find this edition of the *Choral Journal* encouraging and thought provoking.

My mother, the amateur choir director, and my mother-in-law, a lifelong singer and pianist, both participated in a choir in the retirement home where they both lived in the last years of their lives. I am so fortunate to have had lifelong singing modeled for me, and I hope we can all model it for our families of singers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hopper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

From the EDITOR



Amanda Bumgarner

This special *Choral Journal* focus issue contains articles and columns that follow our national conference theme, “A Life of Song.” Carol Beynon, associate professor in music education at the University of Western Ontario, discusses three principles for establishing an intergenerational choir, sharing insight and research from the funded project Advanced Interdisciplinary Research in Singing (AIRS). From rationale for the program, curriculum, funding, participation, and lessons learned, readers will be inspired by the work of our colleagues in North America.

Victoria Meredith, also a professor of choral music from Canada, writes specifically about igniting senior voices in multigenerational choirs. This article contains information on multigenerational choral repertoire selection guidelines and rehearsal strategies, the impact of vocal changes on repertoire choices, and identifying musical traits that may present vocal challenges to senior singers. These two articles pair well with Karen Brunssen’s article “One Voice, One Life,” which is a reprint from *VOICEPrints*, the scholarly journal of the New York Singing Teachers’ Association, and has been revised for *Choral Journal*. As the introduction states, “This article will present a look at various age-related mutations of the evolving voice in relationship to respiration, vibration, and resonance.” The Student Times column features a helpful article on intonation, and the author includes a link to a YouTube video for readers to see and hear demonstrations of the phenomena described in the article.

Continuing on the topic of “A Life of Song,” John Hughes and Jon Hurty offer considerations for the collegiate-based “town and gown” choir. Readers will appreciate the author’s case study, in which five conductors of collegiate-based multigenerational choirs describe their respective ensembles. Finally, Ryan Luhrs shares his dissertation research on intergroup contact theory. This is essentially research behind the question: “Can bringing people together intentionally around song be an effective prescription in the effort to build bridges between people of social groups who don’t otherwise interact in meaningful ways?” Tim Sharp and Kevin Fenton include sections on two programs they are involved in—Conductors Without Borders and A Voice for Peace, respectively—that model the “science” Ryan writes about and are a practical testament to how intergroup contact theory can and does function in the twenty-first century. This month also includes the third installment of Hallelujah, Amen!, *Choral Journal*’s quarterly section for readers interested in sacred music. This section was highlighted in the June/July 2016 issue with a focus issue, and the second installment appeared in October 2016.

I hope that as you make plans to attend the 2017 National Conference, the articles and columns in this month’s issue inspire you to celebrate “A Life of Song” as we settle in to a new year.

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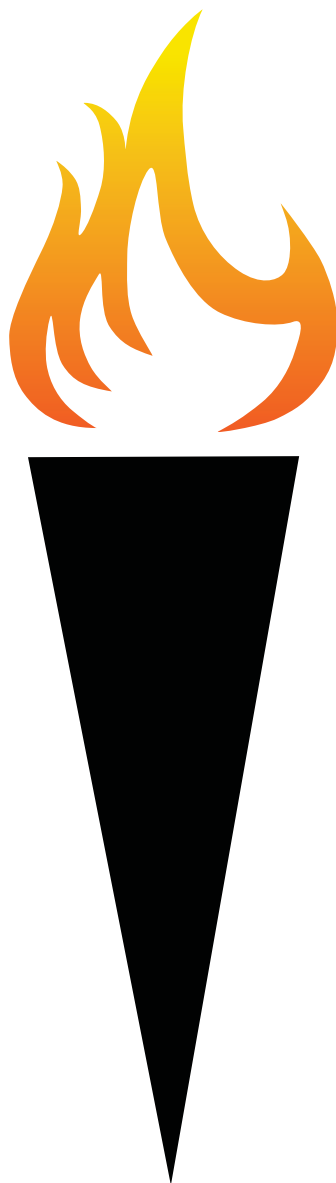
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PASSING THE TORCH

IGNITING SENIOR VOICES IN
MULTIGENERATIONAL CHOIRS

Victoria Meredith



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A multigenerational choir provides an opportunity for singers of all ages to learn with, from, and about each other as they make music together. Depending upon the ages of the members of the ensemble, increased challenges in repertoire selection and rehearsal techniques confront the conductor seeking to achieve musical satisfaction for all. The thrust of this article is to address the age group most prevalent in multigenerational and intergenerational choirs: seniors.

Many multigenerational choirs combine senior adults and younger singers of various ages. A brief survey of some typical types of choirs that incorporate seniors is presented below, followed by suggested guidelines for repertoire selection and related rehearsal techniques. There are several reasons for such a focus.

1) As adults mature, vocal changes often occur that make them uncomfortable singing in the choir or unsure that they are making a meaningful contribution to the group. This might be viewed as similar to what adolescents experience when their voices are changing.

2) Most formal training for conductors is focused on working with children and young adult to middle-aged singers. Normally, little attention is paid to vocal changes that aging adults might be experiencing.

3) There are many fine resources about working with children, adolescents, young adults, and beyond but few devoted specifically to conducting senior adults. At a time when the fastest-growing segment of the population consists of retired people, this is a gap that needs to be addressed for conductors working with that age group.

4) Repertoire selection guidelines and rehearsal suggestions that are essential for choral success with older singers can also benefit younger choir members.

There is usually a specific purpose for combining singers of various age demographics. Each ensemble has its own reasons for being formed and its own musical and non-musical goals to be met. Membership in multigenerational groups may be by audition or open to all and may include many styles of musical repertoire. One aspect they all have in common, however, is a wide age span, creating unique challenges for the conductor.

The conductor of a multigenerational choir must ask several questions. The answers will probably reveal both musical and non-musical facets that will have a direct impact on the music selected and on the approaches taken to working with the group.

What is the function of this choir?

Who are these different age groups of singers being combined?

Why are they being combined?

How can I best meet the individual and collective needs of the groups in this combination?

People sing in choirs for many reasons as they seek to achieve aesthetic, social, spiritual, psychological, and physical goals. When asked why they sing in a choir, individuals of all ages often reply that they “just love to sing” or that “singing makes me happy.” Why they sing in a specific choir is often related both to favorable personal interactions with that particular group of people and to the types of music that the group performs. While there is an ever-growing list of physical benefits to be gained through singing, from lowered blood pressure to a heightened immune system, for most singers these are not the primary reasons that they devote their time and energy to choral singing. In fact, most are not aware of these potential benefits. Commitment to a choir is more likely to be explained by a balance between the musical or social aspects of choral singing. An intergenerational or multigenerational choir offers the added dimension of experiencing the universality of singing by combining voices with people across the lifespan. It is the conductor’s responsibility to make the experience musically meaningful for singers of all ages.

Types of Multigenerational Choirs

Combining the Young and the Young at Heart

Since the 1980s, in both the United States and Canada, organized intergenerational choral programs such as Close Harmony and Interlink have connected senior adults and elementary-age students musically and socially. The social interaction through such initiatives is usually as important as the music for all participants. Frequently, the two age groups rehearse separately each week, working on the same music and led by the same director. The children and adults later combine, either periodically or for several rehearsals closer to performances. This simplifies the music learning process as the conductor tailors the rehearsals to the ages and learning styles of each group. Singing is the main vehicle through which choirs provide a connection between generations.

The Family Choir

For several years, I served as music director for a small church in London, Canada. With a congregation totaling only about 200 members, the number of children in the church was not large enough to sustain a children’s choir program. Still, there were about a half-dozen girls aged eight to twelve who wanted to sing. All of their parents sang in the twenty-five-member adult choir. So, in addition to being featured as a small ensemble a few times each year, these young singers joined their parents and the other adults in what came to be called a Family Choir.

There were several advantages to this arrangement for preparing weekly service music with such a disparate group. Rehearsals for upcoming music were held on Sundays right after the church service, eliminating the need for either young or aging singers to come out on a school night. This schedule also allowed the entire family to attend rehearsals without requiring one parent to stay home to look after the children. The children were all learning music in school and a few were taking piano lessons, so they possessed some music reading ability and were able to keep up with, and sometimes lead, the adults musically. The age range of the adults in the choir was between twenty-one and eighty-four. Having a front row of healthy young treble voices contributed

IN MULTIGENERATIONAL CHOIRS

to a fresh, youthful sound. Discipline was never an issue because parents were always nearby. This combination of ages was able to meet both the musical and social needs of the members of a particular congregation, and it allowed both the children involved and their parents to contribute to the worship service in a meaningful way, and to learn from each other while making music together.

Singing is the main vehicle through which choirs provide a connection between generations.

Health-focused Intergenerational Choirs

During the past twenty years or so, specialized choirs have emerged for people dealing with a variety of types of illnesses. Choirs specifically for cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's patients have sprung up in many communities. These types of health-focused ensembles frequently encourage participation by non-patients of various ages, providing an opportunity for family members, friends, and caregivers to add their voices to weekly choir rehearsals and regular public performances. Family members and friends also add psychological support and physical assistance as needed. Furthermore, such interactions can lead to improvement of the mental outlook of the patient and often to the disease symptoms themselves as all of the singers benefit from this choral experience.

Choirs such as these might be considered as much music therapy as artistic endeavor, with their focus on social interaction and the physical and psychological benefits gained from choral participation. However, determined and intentional rehearsing and performing of the choir's repertoire takes these ensembles legitimately into the intergenerational choral category. In many cases, the musical standards are very high. The stronger the vocal technique taught and applied, the greater the benefits to the singers—just as in any other choir. Beyond the

successful musical results of such health-based groups as the self-named Trembleclefs Parkinson's Choirs (www.trembleclefs.com), ensemble participation can make a significant difference in maintaining or even regaining the ability to communicate verbally. Pride of identity and a positive group attitude are obvious from their tongue-in-cheek choir name. In such ensembles, patients are usually seated with their caregivers and family members or partnered with a young singer during rehearsals and performances.

Adult Church and Community Choirs

Most church and community choral organizations are made up of singers spanning at least three generations, from their twenties to their eighties and beyond, even though they are all referred to as "adults." In a typical choir of this type, some singers will be in their vocal prime while others may well be experiencing signs of vocal decline. While not as obvious as combining children and adults, many adult choirs are truly intergenerational vocally. The conditioning needed to help the oldest singers maintain their vocal ability also benefits the younger singers in such a group as it helps them to retain a vocal condition that will serve them well for a lifetime of fulfilling choral singing.

Special Events that Combine Choirs of Various Ages

Throughout 2017, Canada will be celebrating the sesquicentennial of Confederation (1867-2017), so there will be many "Canada 150" choral festivals around the country. Some will undoubtedly feature any number of choirs, performing individually and also combining for a portion of the performance, or joining forces for a major work that calls for both adult and children's choirs. Special occasions such as these usually involve each group learning the music on its own and then combining for a few rehearsals and the performance. The focus of these initiatives is normally on the particular music to be performed together and also on offering the opportunity for singers to collaborate with other musicians and do something bigger than any single choir could accomplish. It would probably be more accurate to describe such in-

stances as intergenerational *events* than intergenerational choirs. Repertoire used for such festivals where choirs of different ages combine for performances might include Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Penderecki's *Credo*, Stroope's *Cantus Natalis*, Boito's *Prologue to Metistofeles*, Britten's *War Requiem*, or Rutter's *Mass of the Children*.

Who Are “Senior Adult” Singers?

We age continuously from the day we are born; there is no set point at which an individual becomes a “senior” singer. More significant than chronological age is a singer's physical and vocal fitness. A knowledgeable conductor can help to keep all choristers singing at a satisfying level through sensitivity to the types of challenges singers might be experiencing at different ages and the application of appropriate vocal techniques. This becomes particularly important to individuals for whom choral participation has long been a significant part of their lives, both musically and socially. When their vocal prowess begins to diminish, choristers frequently question whether or not they should continue to sing in the choir. It is not uncommon for this lack of confidence to coincide with other age-related concerns such as health problems or personal loss. It is at times like these that people need the continued support of the choir and the fulfillment that singing itself provides more than ever. This is when the conductor's job includes not only understanding the various challenges faced by adults but also applying encouragement and patience.

Many of the physical and vocal changes that aging singers experience result from sarcopenia (loss of muscle mass and strength). Fortunately, much of this lost strength can be regained through vocal and physical conditioning through targeted exercises. Aging or vocally underconditioned singers are likely to experience changes such as limited range, breathiness in the tone, loss of breath control, and some decrease in agility and dynamic scope. These and other potential challenges facing the senior adult singer are examined below in relation to consideration of repertoire selection and rehearsal techniques.

Multigenerational Choir Repertoire Selection Guidelines and Rehearsal Strategies

One key to successful repertoire selection for any choir is achieving the balance between challenge and mastery. For singers of any age to be able to fully contribute musically, the repertoire selected must match what they are able to produce vocally. For conductors of youth and adult choirs, understanding the changes that may be taking place in the vocal production of their singers can help to inform effective repertoire choices and rehearsal techniques used, resulting in a more satisfying musical experience. To engage adult singers, it is optimal for the music to stretch their ability in some way. Adults tend to value learning new things and to grasp what they are doing and why they are doing it. At the same time, for all ages of singers musical challenges must be achievable for the experience to be intellectually and musically fulfilling. Choristers need to be able to sing freely—going beyond the notes in their expression of the music.

In addition to determining if a piece is appropriate to a particular occasion or concert, the conductor is wise to ask:

- Is the music emotionally and intellectually appealing to the singers? Can all singers involved learn to relate to it?
- Is the music within the choir's vocal abilities to sing well? How can I help to expand their abilities to meet the challenges of the music?

Emotional and Intellectual Appeal

Singers of all ages are motivated by high-quality repertoire sung well. One of the most significant elements contributing to emotional and intellectual appeal of a piece is text. Is the text well written and approachable? Does it convey a message with which all ages in the choir can connect and become involved? It is worth remembering that children are capable of deep emotional musical engagement with both the music and the expression of complex texts. There is no need to “dumb down” textually or musically to accommodate either the very youngest or the very oldest singers. Focus on quality and integrity of both the text and the music and how they

IN MULTIGENERATIONAL CHOIRS

align with the singers' vocal capabilities. Topics such as nature, the universe, patriotism, and some humor transcend age.

Impact of Vocal Changes on Repertoire Choices

A conductor who is aware of potential changes in vocal production in all ages of singers has two primary tools available to guide successful repertoire decision making.

1. The conductor can assess the vocal demands of the music and select repertoire that is within the current technical ability and optimal ranges of the choir.
2. Knowing that singers are apt to have some difficulty with particular vocal or musical demands presented by a piece, the conductor can guide singers in vocal exercises and rehearsal techniques that will contribute to improving vocal ability, thus making the music more approachable through expanded vocal skill. This assumes knowledgeable use of vocal technique both in warm ups and throughout rehearsals.

Identifying Musical Traits that May Present Vocal Challenges to Senior Singers

Each of the musical and vocal traits discussed below should be considered within the context of potential vocal challenges that singers may be experiencing. It is important to keep in mind that aging is a highly individual matter and that the vocal and physical conditions of each singer will have an impact on their voice at any age. Even a short, well-structured warm-up at the beginning of each rehearsal is time well spent.

Range and Tessitura

For many adult singers, higher notes become more difficult with age. With a general loss of muscle mass experienced throughout the body frequently comes a loss of elasticity, including in the vocal folds. When this combines with stiffening of the cartilages that move to stretch the vocal folds for higher notes, upper-range singing can

become increasingly more challenging. Women's voices tend to become a little lower as they age, which makes them more comfortable singing music with a slightly lower tessitura. (On exceptional occasions, the opposite might occur, where a senior adult woman moves from alto to soprano.) Such range loss may be compounded by hormonal changes and edema that can develop within the vocal folds, making them thicker and a little more sluggish, reducing the elasticity and speed of vibration needed for the highest notes. Older men normally lose some of their upper range, and most basses eventually also lose their very lowest notes, although basses seem to show the least change over time. The conductor can encourage vocal comfort and tone quality by seeking to change such identity mind-sets as, "But I've always been a soprano!"

A knowledgeable conductor can help to keep all choristers singing at a satisfying level through sensitivity to the types of challenges singers might be experiencing at different ages.

A major concern for older singers is created by the notes in a piece staying too high for too long. Sometimes a song that does not seem to be improving with a choir with senior participants is simply in too high a key and the voices are becoming overtired. If coupled with a repetitive rehearsal approach, music that is too high not only increases fatigue but also can adversely affect tuning and tone quality. Conductors of senior adults may find that simply transposing a song down a step or two puts all voice categories into more comfortable ranges. At the same time, conductors can encourage healthy vocal production not only during the warm-up but throughout the rehearsal.

Range and tessitura become even more critical considerations when combining generations of singers. Children's voices tend to be higher than adult voices. Look for music that does not stay extremely high or low for extended periods of time in any voice part. The challenge

frequently lies in finding music that is high enough for young voices to sing with a healthy head tone and at the same time low enough for senior adults to sustain comfortably. Descants can afford wonderful opportunities for younger voices to have their own higher part while the adult singers cover the melody and harmony lines. While three-part SAB writing may work well for junior high school singers, combining all of the adult men on what is in essence a high baritone part tends not to work as well for adults because the writing is too low for the tenors and too high for the basses.

To help singers maintain their upper ranges the conductor can consciously warm up the middle of the voice first, gradually approaching the extremes and slowly working up to the highest notes. A series of descending exercises in which each successive pattern begins a step higher than the previous exercise is one way of gradually building up to the higher range while strengthening the foundation in the middle. Keep in mind that range is highly individual and that not everyone in any section will be comfortable on exactly the same pitches.

Tone Quality

Changes in tone quality tend to parallel changes in the condition of the body generally and within the vocal mechanism. If a voice is under-conditioned it is not unusual to hear a tone that is breathy, thin, a little rough, or hoarse. For example, older singers frequently experience both the feeling of having less air and of producing a breathier sound. This is partially the result of thinning tissue of the vocal folds, which can permit more excess air to escape as tone is produced. Couple this with weaker breath control as abdominal and rib muscles lose strength and elasticity, and it is no wonder that adult singers may feel that breathing has become a problem!

Look for repertoire that matches the best tone quality that your group is capable of producing. Ask yourself what music the choir sounds especially good singing. If the choir has a lovely, light tone on lyric repertoire but has difficulty on music with a grand, heroic sound, then focus more on music that suits their best sound. At the same time, the conductor can help them build the vocal skills needed to successfully expand their repertoire. This is musically and vocally preferable to selecting music for

which they do not yet have the skill to sing well. A poorly produced tone that helps neither their voices nor the end musical result ultimately diminishes everyone's musical experience.

To help singers sustain their best tone quality, it is useful to guide them in some comprehensive vocal conditioning. The tone is the result of the entire voice working well as a unit. Rehearsal time devoted to vocal conditioning pays off most obviously in the aspect of tone quality. Encouraging singers to spend about twenty minutes on at least two other days between weekly choir rehearsals working on the same vocal strengthening exercises will yield tremendous results with regard to building an ensemble tone that is even, free, and resonant.

Rhythmic Independence

Perhaps related to a lack of confidence in music reading skill, or to decreased hearing ability, many aging singers experience difficulty in independently sustaining their part, especially if it is rhythmically different from other parts. Chordal music with some rhythmic interest is usually more successful than music either with prolonged, sustained writing or with contrapuntal or rhythmically complex lines. Look for music that is predominantly homophonic or with obvious entrances if parts enter independently. Rhythmic activity is fine, but it is easier to learn and sing accurately if all parts have the same rhythms or if parts are paired rather than entirely rhythmically independent.

To help singers with rhythmic independence, make them aware of the difference between the rhythm and the beat and ask them to gently tap the beat as they sing. Speaking the text in *rhythm* while tapping the *beat* also helps to strengthen rhythmic control. Children are particularly quick to grasp this concept by maintaining the beat with one hand and tapping the rhythm of a song with the other hand while singing or speaking the text.

Extreme Dynamics

Extremely loud dynamics become more difficult as a result of the combined thinning vocal folds, diminished fine motor control, and decreased breath capacity that often occur with age. Soft singing on high notes can be

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difficult for singers of all ages. Encourage singers to use their best tone quality rather than worrying too much about how loudly they can sing. At the same time, singers can work to develop more vocal strength and dynamic control. Quality over quantity produces a more rewarding musical experience overall.

Look for music that does not call for continuous *forte* singing in any range and that avoids *piano* dynamics on the highest notes. Or, consider modifying the expressive markings to dynamic levels that can be produced with free tone. If a high *pianissimo* is essential to the music, consider having only part of the singers cover it, perhaps the more youthful members.

Helping singers build more dynamic control requires a combination of free tone and steady breath. These qualities can be addressed in a well-structured warm-up that includes some high, full, and free singing. The conductor can help singers transfer the healthy vocal tech-

nique developed in the warm-up to the music being rehearsed. Especially when working on loud passages, it is helpful to avoid words like “blend” and simply to direct their attention to how the vowel should be shaped, thus helping the singers create a unified sound while producing their own freest tone.

Fast-Moving Scales

Melismatic writing can present a challenge for aging voices when the cartilage of the larynx begins to ossify and the vocal mechanism loses some strength and flexibility, making it more difficult for the singer to move quickly and precisely. There is also a tendency for neurological rates to slow down throughout the body creating delayed reaction times and slower movement in general. Look for music that is not comprised predominantly of long, fast-moving scale passages. Still, the occasional



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short, quick scale should not keep you from selecting a piece, particularly if fast phrases are followed by slower moving lines to allow for recovery.

To help singers negotiate quick musical passages, develop vocal exercises in which patterns are first sung slowly then repeated at ever-increasing speeds. Within a warm-up it is also advantageous to increase the size and velocity of the intervals of the patterns. Keep in mind that as we age, various physical systems tend to become slower and less accurate as a result of neuromuscular changes. The good news is that this decline is far less associated with actual chronological age than it is with condition—something that can be improved.

Slow, Sustained Pitches

If a song is made up primarily of long notes in a slow tempo, singers often get lost rhythmically. In addition, sustaining an even tone on long held notes can be a challenge for aging voices that may be beginning to wobble a little. As muscles and ligaments lose tonicity with age or under-conditioning, the result will be a less satisfying tone. Look for music that is more syllabic than extremely sustained.

Help singers by having them tap the beat and count on long notes so that they do not get lost. In rehearsal it is sometimes useful to sing the number of beats on long notes. An even, sustained tone is the result of posture that supports the voice—steady breath coordinated with muscles that are toned. If their tone is beginning to waver, encourage singers to keep their air moving steadily and warmly, as opposed to trying to hold the sound steady in their throat.

Long Phrases and Recovery Time

Older singers often require longer for inhalation. Mechanical efficiency can decrease as the total lung volume and vital capacity lessen, making the recovery process take longer. Look for reasonable phrase lengths when considering music to be performed. If most of the phrases are long then it may be difficult for singers to perform the piece well. This is because of the need for the body to recover after a long phrase. Ideally, look for music in which a long phrase is followed by a few mea-

sures of rest or by shorter phrases.

To help singers perform music with long phrases well, first help them to increase their individual breath control through vocal exercises done on a regular basis. Encouraging singers to engage in active physical exercise such as brisk walking or swimming will also contribute to stronger breath control and better overall muscle tone.

Taking a few minutes of rehearsal time to bring the singers' attention to the phrasing requirements of the piece will help them to become aware of managing their breath and applying their own vocal technique to the music. Ask singers of all ages to mark breathing places in their music, which make musical sense and fit their own breath management rather than just singing for as long as they can and then refilling. Better to plan ahead so they aren't stranded mid-phrase when they run out of air!

Determine breathing places by discussing the phrasing as it relates to the expression of the text, perhaps by reading the text aloud together and discovering where breathing should ideally take place for the clearest communication of the meaning of the text. Decide whether it would be more effective to have the entire group break up some of the longer phrases by adding extra breaths or for the choir to use *staggered breathing*, with individual singers breathing in different places in a way that still projects the shape and direction of the entire phrase.

Pitch Accuracy on Large or Unexpected Leaps

Pitch accuracy is largely dependent upon first having the interval clearly in mind, coupled with the physical adjustments necessary to execute the move. Both aspects can become more challenging to singers as they age. Unusual intervals, such as tritones, chromatic passages, or augmented leaps, are more difficult than diatonic intervals because they are heard less precisely since they are not part of the predicted scale. Changes in the smoothness of the joints involved in moving the vocal mechanism can make it more difficult to position the vocal folds precisely for large intervals.

Look for music that does not have a lot of large or unusual leaps. Fourths, fifths, and octaves tend to be more easily sung than tritones, sevenths, or even sixths because they are easily heard within the major-minor tonality

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and because the vocal musculature has been trained to produce these intervals more easily through frequent, long-term use.

To help singers negotiate large or unusual leaps, use techniques such as playing the first note of a leap and having the choir sing the second note to train the ear. It is also useful to include some warm-up exercises with wider intervals or whole-tone scales, rather than just singing major scales and arpeggios.

Quick Text

As neuromuscular movements involved in clear diction become a little slower, it can become more difficult for singers to produce fast diction with facility. Singers may also be dealing with dental changes that impact both speech and singing. For these reasons, quick diction can present more of a challenge for older singers than it does for younger singers.

Look for music that can be successfully sung at a tempo your choir can project clearly. The conductor can determine the approachability of the text by speaking the words in the desired tempo while producing all of the sounds of all of the words, not just the words in general. Sounds that tend to cause the most difficulty are *s*, *r*, and *l*.

To help singers with quick, well-projected text, include diction exercises in the vocal conditioning/warm-up portion of the rehearsal. Tongue twisters such as “maybe my mommy may go to Miami, or maybe my mommy may not” and “a dozen daffy ducks did a dizzy dumb dance” that are sung first at a moderate tempo and then gradually increasing in speed allow singers to focus on the production and projection of consonants. Encourage singers of all ages to listen for all of the sounds of the words while at the same time maintaining a healthy singing tone. Resist the inclination to talk-sing diction exercises. Rehearse music with quick or challenging text at a slower tempo and gradually increase spoken and sung text.

Find Out the Type of Voices for which the Piece was Originally Composed


Adult female voices often sit about a minor third lower than children’s voices, meaning that if a work was originally written for a children’s or boy’s choir even though it is SSA, the ranges may or may not be suitable for a women’s ensemble. This is particularly important in Baroque music, for which soprano lines were normally sung by unchanged boys’ voices and the tessituras tend to be too high to be comfortably sustained by many adult female singers. This might be addressed in the multigenerational setting by having some adult sopranos sing second soprano and more of the younger voices sing first soprano, singing at “Baroque” pitch or transposing the music further down.

Summary of Repertoire Selection Guidelines

- Texts need to be emotionally and intellectually appealing to all ages involved.
- Study the range and tessitura of each voice part. Be sure that most of the notes are within the comfortable range for each part. Avoid music that stays in any extreme range. Keep in mind that children’s voices tend to be higher than adult voices.
- Homophonic music tends to be easier for adults to learn than music with rhythmically independent parts.
- Modify extreme dynamics, particularly for extended periods of time.
- Approach very fast and very slow writing with care, minimizing long, fast scale passages and extended slow, sustained pitches.
- Be aware of phrase lengths. Short phrases or long phrases followed by a period of rest work best.
- Stepwise movement is more easily managed than large leaps.

- Notice the tempo of the piece in relation to demands of the text. Fast consonants become more difficult for aging singers. Look for music that can be successfully sung at a tempo that your choir can project clearly.

Conclusion

Senior adult singers bring a lifetime of experience to the choir. What they might have lost in strength or stamina is made up for in long-term musical understanding, experience, expression, and love of singing. Those fortunate younger singers who combine with senior adults benefit musically, socially, and culturally from this experience. The successful lifelong participation of adult singers depends in part upon the conductor's working understanding of vocal and physical changes that seniors may be experiencing. This knowledge can influence successful repertoire selection and rehearsal decisions, contributing to an optimal musical environment within the intergenerational or multigenerational choir. In this way, the conductor can fan the flames of personal betterment and continued enthusiasm for singing by senior members, enabling them to pass the torch to the next generation of singers! 

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Intergenerational (IG) programming, and by extension intergenerational singing, involves scheduled and planned curricula that engage two different generations, usually elders and children/youth. Intergenerational programs are often confused with, or referred to as, multigenerational programs, but they are not the same and exhibit significantly different characteristics. Whereas multigenerational programs are valuable learning activities, they are usually designed for participants from across a wide span of generations and could include a combination of age groups such as children, youth, young adults, middle-aged adults, young seniors, and/or elders. Often the various generations are involved in simultaneous learning, side-by-side, with some interaction. The emphasis is on individual learning in the ensemble using more traditional, albeit differentiated, interactions by age, with peers. While multigenerational programming has its own benefits, IG programs, on the other hand, are specifically designed for two different generations and focus on individual and intentionally intensive, shared, reciprocal interaction and equal learning opportunity.¹

NEVER TOO OLD

Establishing an Intergenerational Choir for Transformational Learning through Singing

CAROL BEYNON



The Intergenerational Choir Project, London, Canada
Conductor, Kathy McNaughton, Medway High School

*Photos in this article courtesy of Bruce Wray
and the Alzheimer's Society of London & Middlesex.*

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Feliciano Villar explains the difference:

The term “Intergenerational” implies the involvement of members of two or more generations in activities that potentially can make them aware of different (generational) perspectives. It implies increasing interaction, cooperation to achieve common goals, a mutual influence, and the possibility of change (hopefully, a change that entails improvement). In contrast, “multi-generational” is usually used in a related but far broader sense: it means to share activities or characteristics among generations, but not necessarily an interaction nor an influence among them.²

With the increasing number of senior citizens seeking dynamic opportunities for lifelong learning, IG choral programs are an ideal learning component for music education programs in elementary or secondary schools because there is a fixed younger generation and an increasing number of elders enjoying good health in close proximity.

To be considered a viable learning experience, IG programs require planned but flexible curriculum with learning outcomes that suit and accommodate both generations and are monitored for learning achievement.³ The focus is on purposeful learning, and in the case of this article, using singing in an IG choir as the tool to introduce, reinforce, and value specific learnings, including improved singing through development of vocal techniques, posture, breathing, mastering new repertoire, memory and recall, and creating opportunities for learning about self, another generation, aging, socialization, and health and well-being.

In the traditional IG choral environment this is accomplished in a fairly normal, seated choir setting where youth and elders come to know each other and sing and learn together.⁴ Having been involved as a participant-observer and researcher in several IG programs of different kinds over the past several years, I can attest to the enduring and endearing learning that occurs. In my opinion, acknowledgement of the rich and deep learning *through* singing from the beginning to the end of life is the key foundational principle of an intergenerational

singing program.

Lifelong Learning

Recent medical advances have resulted in a dramatic improvement in health, well-being, and lifespan such that the percentage of senior citizens in Canada will increase to more than 25 percent of the total population in the next twenty-five years.⁵ Furthermore, if current population trends continue, Statistics Canada estimates that seniors will outnumber children in Canada by a factor of three to two in twenty years’ time. While experiencing a longer lifespan, seniors are also enjoying increased participation in life activities; some are choosing to continue working past the normal retirement age while others are involved in varied social and recreational pursuits that require active mental and/or physical participation. Canada is not unique; these statistics match findings in other similar countries, such as the United States.

The period of life between retirement and about eighty years of age is now referred to as the third age because of the improved quality of life that most elders experience. Maintaining mental acuity, memory, and an active quality of life after retirement is critical and has been recognized as a significant concern of seniors, family members, and health professionals. There is no doubt that as one ages, one experiences significant differences in physical, emotional, and indeed intellectual health. This is not a new phenomenon. In 2006, the Canadian Council on Learning noted:

As the population ages, finding ways to maintain quality of life well into the senior years is becoming increasingly urgent. Maintaining healthy mental faculties is a crucial challenge. Mental acuity can begin to deteriorate as a result of age-related physiological changes in the brain. According to brain research, age alters the structure of the brain: overall brain mass shrinks modestly in some people beginning around the age of 60 or 70. The cortex also undergoes modest thinning and the brain’s white matter decreases, influencing the transmission of signals between different regions of the brain. Neurotransmitters, the chemicals that relay messages from neu-

ron to neuron in the brain, become less available with age and this may play a role in declining memory among older adults.⁶

To be considered a viable learning experience, intergenerational programs require planned but flexible curriculum with learning outcomes that suit and accommodate both generations and are monitored for learning achievement.

What better way to promote mental acuity than through singing! While memory naturally declines with aging, there is no evidence that learning needs to slow down or stop. Engagement in activities that require frequent and deep mental stimulation helps reduce the impact of aging, not only in the brain, but also on one's psychological outlook on aging. Lifelong learning is much more than a buzzword; it is essential for life and quality of life because active learning influences not just brain stimulation and mental health but physical health and emotional health. Singing provides an excellent vehicle for stimulating the brain for all ages.

School-Community Learning

Third-agers as learners are an under-represented population. Schools, colleges, and universities are normally considered the primary site for formal learning and are typically associated with children and youth in the various subject disciplines. Older generations are primarily involved, not as co-learners, but as professional educators, facilitators, or volunteers supporting youth who are considered to be the "real learners." However, recent literature indicates a growing awareness of the significance of bringing the community into the school, and we have seen a significant increase in the number and types of intergenerational programs. At the early years' level in our region, the most common program

occurs when elders work with young children to support children's literacy and perceive their role as facilitators and guides to learning. However from a musical perspective, there are few IG learning experiences related to music or singing; rather, the norm is that children perform on special occasions for elders in seniors' homes⁷ or with a seniors' group for short periods of time rather than in ongoing, purposeful learning situations. In addition, there is little in the literature discussing IG singing programs specifically. However, one teacher involved in IG music educations notes that:

The programme itself is recognized as a course in which the seniors are registered as students in the same manner as adolescents and the members...form a community of practice, learning collaboratively as equals. Their many performances provide an added measure of authentic work with a very real and pertinent goal while the daily nature of their interaction changes their entire concepts of personal and social identity. This programme is one step towards an intergenerational education paradigm shift that is beginning to happen.⁸

Establishing an Intergenerational Choir Project

Many of the findings in this paper have been drawn from a local intergenerational choir established for high school students, persons with dementia, and their caregivers. I turn now to providing a description of the choir for conductors to consider in setting up such a program. (There is also a YouTube video describing the origin of the Intergenerational Choir Project that provides a richer description that can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5o3Nh6ydbo>, which would be a helpful resource to conductors setting up such a program.) This program began at the behest of a local non-profit supporting persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and their caregivers. The executive director of the support group approached the choral teacher of a high school to discuss a potential relationship. Planning began in earnest six months before the start-up and involved the teacher (who was the conduit to the principal



and music department), the executive director and her staff, and the head of the new Sisters of St Joseph's residence where the choir would be hosted. The planning phase took about six months before the program began and involved comprehensive discussion of the following principles.

Principle #1 Integrated Community-School Program Planning

Fully integrated planning is critical in implementing an IG program because in the initial stages, mutual planning between the youth instructors (school) and elder advocates (community) is essential to ultimate success. Once the willingness to develop a learning partnership is in place, concrete answers related to the why? what? how? where? and when? are essential.

Rationale for the Program:

- 1) What is the purpose of the IG choir? What learning outcomes should we expect for youth? For elders? For teachers/staff?
- 2) How will we know the program has been successful?
- 3) Who is responsible for the evaluation?

Location and Accessibility:

- 1) What is the best location?
- 2) Is the site physically accessible to both generations of learners?
- 3) Is transportation required and available for all singers to engage? Who will fund transportation?
- 4) Is there suitable and comfortable seating for all singers, taking into consideration various abilities and disabilities and size of younger and older singers?
- 5) What are the acoustics like for hearing instructions and also for singing? Is there a system available for the conductor to ensure those who have hearing loss are accommodated?

Participation:

- 1) Who will direct the choir? Who will accompany? Will we need to pay a pianist?
- 2) What singers (from the school and from the community) will participate?
- 3) Who will administer and oversee the program? (Pro-



motion and recruitment; attendance: follow-up with singers and guardians/trustees; procure scores; concert programs.)

- 4) How will the elders be recruited?
- 5) What commitment is expected from the director? Young singers? Elder singers?
- 6) Will choristers (younger and elder) receive any kind of credit for learning? In what form?

Curriculum Development:

- 1) Who has responsibility for developing the curriculum and anticipated learning outcomes?
- 2) How and when will the curriculum and the program be evaluated? How will we know that there is learning?
- 3) How can mutual learning and interactions between and amongst generations be ensured?
- 4) What will the format be for each session? (e.g., nametags; greeting & re-acquaintance time before rehearsal; length of rehearsal; social time after)

Funding:

- 1) What will the program cost? (e.g., venue, director/teacher; accompanist; sheet music, support persons)
- 2) Is there a way to offer the program at no charge to participants? Who will fund the program?

Time:

- 1) What time of day will the program be offered? For how long?
- 2) What is the frequency of rehearsals? Per week? Per term?
- 3) Will each term culminate in a concert? Location? When? Uniform?

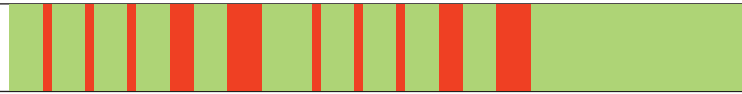
Principle #2 Governance

To ensure the sustainability of these programs, there needs to be an overt educational and financial commitment by the school, the school district, and the community that recognizes the importance of IG community-based learning. School personnel and community agencies need to be committed to lifelong and shared learning between generations for success. In one program we studied, the high school was registered with the Ministry to offer a specialized co-curricular vocal specialist certificate upon graduation to students who had completed extra requirements beyond normal participation in vocal classes and choirs. One such condition for students to receive the specialist certificate was involvement in the IG choir program.

Student participation and expectations included:

- 1) Working with the music teacher during spare hours or lunch break before the rehearsals began, and continuing once the rehearsals were in session to co-develop the curriculum and outline the learning outcomes
- 2) Attending a mandatory preparatory session with an expert gerontologist to prepare for dynamic and appropriate involvement
- 3) Attending and providing active leadership at all rehearsals and concerts, including helping with setup and cleanup
- 4) Preparing song repertoire booklets
- 5) Meeting one of the elders at the first session during the social time before rehearsal, having a conversation, and sitting with him/her during rehearsals and concerts to facilitate the partner's positive experience, etc.

We observed that while members from both generations were nervous in the beginning stages, they soon developed enduring friendships based on mutual trust and looked forward to seeing each other each week.⁹ As the program grew and developed, the local school district featured the program in various ways, such as at a board



meeting for trustees, and encouraged other schools to become involved. Such organizational governance opens the doors to authentic shared learning programs.

Principle #3 Ensuring Physical and Interpersonal Accessibility and Trust

Making IG programs accessible for elders and students with special abilities who need or want them must always be a significant consideration because of accessibility. With respect to the programs we have observed in our research, access can be the primary obstacle that keeps people away. Elders need straightforward access, not only to the building but also the ability to negotiate the physical structures outside and inside buildings. Such issues as nearby parking and how far into a building one has to travel to find the rehearsal room require consideration and assessment. Similarly, if the IG choir is offered after school in another location, consideration needs to be given to student access and transportation.

Advocating for the development of contiguous space for school and senior community spaces is critical. One idea we have floated to policy-makers is that just as many jurisdictions are including daycare space in new schools, so too should retirement residences and long-term care facilities be situated within or next to schools not only to provide accessibility but to capitalize on mutual learning opportunities.

Interpersonal accessibility is equally critical. Elders and youth need time and opportunity during the program to develop a relationship rather than just time to sing together. The real learning comes from the friendships developed when they have confident and shared access to the “other.” One highly successful program we are studying lasts 2 hours and is offered from 2:30 to 4:30 pm at the end of the high school day. The first thirty minutes is a welcoming time as students, elders, and caregivers arrive. During this time, the youth and elder partners greet each other like old friends, catch up on the latest happenings, and make their way together into the rehearsal room, often arm-in-arm. The carefully structured rehearsal lasts about an hour and is followed by thirty minutes of social time with cookies and juice. The indicators of success readily become the heightened

noise level of talking in the room during interactions, hearing laughter around the room, and seeing the smiles and hugs as they say goodbye until next week.

Elder singer participants also need access to staff and the choral director to share their ideas, to help revise the program and curriculum, and to share positive outcomes, questions, and concerns, all of which results in committed ownership of the program.

Lessons Learned in Intergenerational Choirs

1) Learning is enhanced for students, elders, caregivers, and music teachers when carefully planned, authentic, and safe IG choral learning opportunities are offered. Learning for both generations goes far beyond improvement in singing, learning, and performing new repertoire; it encompasses life lessons about acknowledging, understanding, and appreciating such significant aspects as chronic illness, aging, death and dying, developing communication skills, socialization, and caring, which in turn support the development of self-efficacy and renewed confidence. The IG choir provides an anodyne setting for the development of equality and equity, mutual respect, shared learning, and lifelong respect for aging.

2) As time progresses and longevity of the choir ensues, interactions and engagement increases between the generations even though membership changes as students graduate or some older partners become too ill to participate or pass away. As engagement increases, so too does evidence of joy in life and learning and confidence in individual learning that extends far beyond the stated outcomes.

3) Providing the IG choir experience for all at no cost in an easily accessible environment is not only appreciated but essential to ensure equal access.

4) Relationships between and among participants are enhanced when school-community partnerships are cultivated over time.

5) Through their connections and mutually negotiated

relationships, social capital is increased. Everyone gains some measure of confidence to model musically and socially for each other in very different ways. Due to mutuality and reciprocity, learners show a sense of belonging and importance to their choral community.

Best practices in IG programs include:

1) Success builds over time, so paying continuous attention to strengthening school-community partnerships is essential, keeping in mind there are numerous stakeholders, such as long-term care facilities, support groups for seniors, seniors' centers, retirement residences, and so on, with whom one may work to help both age groups to reach their full potential.

2) Ensuring a sense of belonging and being welcomed warmly to the IG choir is essential for all participants. The majority of third-agers have been away from school for a long time and attended schools very different from those today. While structure remains in the educational system, it looks quite different than it did some fifty years ago, and third-agers need time to assimilate into the new cultures and expectations. In addition, older people are anxious about youth perceptions' of them and need reassurances that they are not there to be judged. Similarly today's youth are equally apprehensive about engaging with older people and worry that their senior partners will perceive them negatively. Students also indicate their concerns about illness, aging, death, and dying and do not know how to react to (or may be reluctant to engage with) life's inevitabilities. In situations we have studied, establishing a solid relationship with an older partner helped to alleviate the high school students' anxieties as they came to know their partner not as simply "an old person" but as a friend and often confidante. In our programs, we have observed improved confidence and self-esteem, and learning about music and self in both generations as paired student and elder have become friends.

The Curriculum: Focus on Repertoire

Creating an appropriate and engaging curriculum for an IG choral program is complex and requires careful

thought. At the outset, we've found that consideration must be given to the participants, notably their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, their ages, and the outcomes each wishes to realize. Getting to know the elders and understanding their reasons for participating is critical; awareness of cumulative outcomes provides a foundation for developing shared outcomes for the program. Perhaps most critical is the repertoire chosen, because the repertoire is the primary vehicle to facilitate learning about vocal technique, breathing, and self.

While the concert performance is seen as the motivating accomplishment of the IG choir and an activity that every singer eagerly anticipates, it is the rehearsal process through which singers learn as they master and develop long-term recall of brand-new melodies, harmonic lines, phrasing, tuning, interpretation of style, and musicianship. As they work to master the repertoire, singers are incorporating the technical lessons of singing supported by the skills of social capital related to rehearsal deportment and socialization that they are inherently absorbing.

Older singers and physical conditions: We have found that older singers who come to IG choir have varied choral backgrounds. Many join the choir because they are experienced singers and are no longer able to participate in church or community choirs. They are anxious to learn how to sing with their new but older voice, which also may be impacted not just by aging but also infirmities, medications that dry the throat or cause hoarseness, thinning of vocal membranes, dry-mouth syndrome, shortness of breath, stooped posture, and so on.¹⁰ Their needs are different from some of their contemporaries who may never have sung at all—and truly believe they cannot sing—but want to join for the social benefits of learning alongside the younger generation. The choir can and must accommodate all singers regardless of background; some members may choose to sing a melody line, or a harmony line, while others may sit in but listen much of the time to those around them. For these latter individuals, it is the sense of belonging they are needing, and usually, before long, they too are singing a line here and there.

The elders in the choir may also suffer from one or more complex ailments such as weakness, shortness of



breath, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke recovery, dementia, hearing loss, runny eyes or poor eyesight, and dizziness, which creates additional complexities for the singer and attention by the conductor. For example, during some rehearsals we noticed that singers would develop a persistent and irritating cough often brought on as a result of dryness from medications or use of deeper breathing for singing. However, because the older generation has never had the habit of carrying a water bottle, and were either unable to get to a water fountain or reluctant to get up and get a drink so as not to draw attention to one's self or disrupt the rehearsal flow, we suggested having cups of water nearby that the student partner could pick up and deliver unobtrusively.

Finally, setting up the choral room in a semi-circle in voice parts (e.g., SATB, two-part, or unison) so that all can stay seated and be able to look up and see/hear the conductor and accompanist during rehearsal without straining the head, neck, and shoulders is essential. Our singers were keen to declare their voice part and looked forward to sitting in the same seats with their intergenerational friends each week.

Voices ranges and tessituras: It will come as no surprise to any experienced conductor that most women will declare themselves altos and most men basses although there will always be a few sopranos and tenors to carry those parts. Physically, as a person ages, the voice tessitura lowers, and without ongoing practice it takes time for singers to expand their range. This phenomenon creates some difficulty for older adults working with younger children especially because the healthy tessitura of the child or younger voice is physiologically higher than that of third-agers. Appropriate selection of repertoire, attention to starting on an accessible pitch, and working with elder voices to expand range needs to be a critical focus.

Repertoire choice: Age is a significant factor in choosing repertoire. Many older singers want to begin by learning and performing songs with which they are familiar, so knowing relative ages and interests of singers are important factors. Whereas WWII-era and popular songs of the 1930s might once have been commonly used with senior groups, those joining choirs now, are more likely

to request songs by the Beatles,¹¹ tunes from musicals like the *Sound of Music*,¹² and popular songs of the 1950s and '60s. Fortunately, publishers like Hal Leonard have amassed many good, accessible choral arrangements of such pieces. Ironically, in some of our programs when a new piece was introduced that the high school students did not know, their older partners would take great pride in helping teach them the melodies, usually accompanied by tales of their youth associated with the song. The positive aspect of selecting repertoire that provides opportunity for one generation to share repertoire with another, requiring new learning from each with the support of a partner who likely knows the piece under study, cannot be underestimated.

An example of one recent, one-hour program for an IG choir of 90 members—about 45 high school students and 45 third-agers—included varied unison to four-part octavo arrangements opening with *Oh, What a beautiful Morning*, followed by *Oklahoma*, *You'll Never Walk Alone*, *Pussywillows*, *Cattails*, *What a Wonderful World*, *Imagine*, *Under the Boardwalk*, *Over the Rainbow*, *Sentimental Journey*, *Blue Moon*, *Put a Little Love in Your Heart*, closing with their traditional *Blessing*.¹³ This is an IG choir in its fourth year, and while four of the pieces were repeated from earlier concerts but with additional finesse and harmony, most were new in this term. Each year, this choir's repertoire list grows longer and more pieces are added for performance indicating their cumulative musical growth.

Singing in harmony: While the youth attending these rehearsals may be accustomed to singing in three or four parts, many of the older singers may have forgotten how, or lost confidence, to sing a harmony part. The astute conductor reassures singers by advising them to sing along comfortably with the melody for now and to try singing the harmony parts when they feel comfortable. Some stick to the melody at first while others venture bravely into harmony parts. Pairing younger and older singer by voice part also facilitates learning and confidence as the younger singer will usually be learning the same harmony part right beside him/her and simultaneously developing leadership skills in doing so.

Many times, we have observed as conductors have worked only with unison songsheets on a new piece and when comfortable will invite the singers to improvise



harmonies, first perhaps at the end of a phrase or the end of a piece; they may then venture into the body of the song, sometimes introducing a new edition of the score with harmony parts. *Doh a Deer* from the Sound of Music medley is a great example of a known song that the choir can sing in two parts easily without adding a complex score. Singers learn that regardless of the parts written, they can pick and choose the appropriate sections to sing in harmony or in unison.

Sheet music & songbooks: In preparing for rehearsals, creating a ‘songbook’ that has the pieces in rehearsal order is necessary for all singers. Routine is important to all no matter one’s age, and following the pre-planned songbook order prompts muscle memory and helps to prepare for concert order. In some cases, the students take the books back to school at the end of rehearsal and realign scores for the next rehearsal.

The order of pieces in a rehearsal is also important. We have found that beginning rehearsal with a known favorite helps draw everyone’s mental attention to the rehearsal setting and establishes confidence. Following this with a piece that requires some new learning works well because minds are fresh and focused after warming up with the familiar. Establishing a pattern of interspersing review and familiar songs is helpful. When teaching a new song, often only the melody line is offered even if a full SATB score is introduced until there is a sense of mastery of the piece. With respect to the introduction of a new piece, elder members can be quite vocal about likes and dislikes, which requires the conductor and high school partner to listen carefully, acknowledge, and then

consider, depending on the issues, whether to continue with the piece in the repertoire.

For rehearsals, two kinds of songbooks need to be created—one with the musical scores, the other with only the lyrics typed out in large print. While the youth will normally be expected to use scores, the older singers have the choice of which book to follow. Often the youth partner shares the songbook with his/her partner depending on their abilities to physically hold the book and turn pages and may point to the words or music as the rehearsal progresses.

The songbooks should be set up so that the scores are in order for each rehearsal and singers only need to turn to the next page. Having flexible binding allows for students to rearrange as they plan for the next rehearsal and concert order with the conductor. Involving the students in the planning of the curriculum in this way provides a means for students to take ownership, show leadership, and begin to understand how careful development of curriculum supports learning. It gives them the opportunity to discuss the learning in the IG choir situation, to ask questions, and offer suggestions for optimal learning.

Another option if available is to project the music onto a screen at the front in a clear format to save looking up at the conductor and then losing one’s place when looking back down. Height for comfortable elevation of the chin and head and lighting need to be considered, as improper projection can tire neck muscles and/or eyes, which causes blurred vision.

Rehearsal format: Providing social time before and after the rehearsal gives opportunity for singers to establish and develop deep relationships of trust and co-dependency for learning outside of the rehearsal. The one-hour rehearsal then becomes a time when all are focused on learning through singing. The normal pattern is to begin with a known song for warm-up, usually the same one each week, that draws minds and bodies to the learning task at hand. The tessitura of the song needs to be in a comfortable range so that all can begin to warm up vocal folds, attend to sitting posture, and breathing. Songs such as *He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands*¹⁴ or *Doh a Deer* are great starters with a positive message.

Then the rehearsal follows a pattern of learning of a newer score, repeating and working on songs from last



session such as adding another harmony part, or solo groups, etc. Experienced conductors will vary the pace of the rehearsal to ebb and flow as suitable for the particular group, adding phrasing, dynamics, and so on to the songs as deemed appropriate in the situation. Just as most of the programs we have observed begin each rehearsal with the same piece, so to do they end each rehearsal and concert with the same piece—usually a blessing of some sort that wishes each other well until we meet again. Katie Bart’s *Blessing*¹⁵ is a wonderful example of a piece that can be sung in unison or with up to four parts.

Positive feedback and encouragement are essential components; members of IG choirs want to sing well, but they also want to learn how to sing better and to learn new repertoire, and they want to perform well. They expect praise along with constructive criticism. Choir directors need to be attentive yet demanding in pursuits of improvement toward excellence.

Transformational Learning

So, how do we know that learning for high school students and third-agers occurs in the IG choir setting? And how is it that this learning can be considered transformational? The following anecdote may help. In one program during the second term of the first season, the IG choir was called on to give a special performance. Because they needed more songs to perform than they were currently working on, the conductor asked the choir if they could recall and perform a song that they had performed four months earlier. *The Storm is Passing Over*¹⁶ had been totally new to all, and the choir hadn’t sung it in four months. No one knew what would happen, and this was a real challenge of recall and long-term memory.


As the piano began the introduction, every member sat up straighter and watched the conductor intently; they sang the piece in four parts with such rhythmic precision and aesthetic feeling that it seemed as if they had been working on it all along. The smiles and applause they gave themselves afterward was evidence that they had not only learned a piece new to all but had internalized it. In speaking with the conductor afterward, he noted that while he was quite aware that the choir was

improving in tone quality, reading, and retention, and that his students were learning about aspects of aging and working with singing partners with dementia, he wasn’t as sure what other benefits the older singers might be experiencing until this event happened.

We were all blown away by that experience. So many of the older singers—those with dementia and their caregivers—hadn’t realized that they could learn a new piece of music and retain it in the long term. I had thought they would be recalling and refreshing pieces they knew from life experience, but this had been new, and they proved their ability to learn.¹⁷

Conclusions

This research informs our understanding of several key guiding principles that one can use to establish, implement, and assess intergenerational learning experiences such as IG choirs. However, certain requirements must be in place to ensure that lifelong learning experiences become a priority.

There is no doubt that the creation, success, and longevity of intergenerational programs has a positive impact on the entire school-community area. IG choirs require attention to pedagogical changes that include experiential learning where age is irrelevant; where all are considered equal learners; where all are recognized as students—young and old; where all need to be part of the cyclical planning/implementation/review process. While there are costs to such a program, the investments are outweighed by the evidence of increased learning for all and the social and health benefits to society. Given the increasing number of seniors living well globally, such investments in lifelong learning through singing will a) transform the lives of many seniors as they enjoy healthy lifestyles, which ultimately places fewer demands on our healthcare systems, and b) help younger generations value aging and lifelong learning. 

NOTES

¹ Carol Beynon, Rachel Hayden, Susan O’Neill, Zhang Zheng & Wendy Crocker, “Straining to hear the singing: Toward an understanding of successful intergenerational singing

- curriculum,” *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 11 no. 2 (2013): 176-189.
- ² Feliciano Villar, “Intergenerational or Multigenerational? A Question of Nuance,” *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 5 no.1 (2007): 116.
- ³ Beynon et al.
- ⁴ There are also alternative IG environments more focused on multimodal interactions where elders and young children may be seated together around active learning centers using singing as the primary vehicle of learning.
- ⁵ Statistics Canada: Seniors. <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/subject-sujet/theme-theme.action%3Bjsessionid=5BB570A54531D975F11E69DBBB396CEB?pid=70000&lang=eng&more=0>
- ⁶ Canadian Council on Learning: Lessons in Learning. <http://www.thirdagenetwork.ca/Never-too-old-to-learn.pdf>
- ⁷ Beynon et al.
- ⁸ Christopher J Alfano, “Intergenerational learning in a high school environment,” *International Journal of Community Music*, 1 no. 2 (2008): 262.
- ⁹ The Intergenerational Choir Project of the Alzheimer’s Society of London and Middlessex <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5o3Nh6ydbo>
- ¹⁰ J. Hutchison, & C. Beynon, “It’s all about confidence and how you perceive yourself”: Musical perceptions of older adults involved in an intergenerational singing program, *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 5 no. 2 (2014): 1465-1474
- ¹¹ *Imagine*, arr J Althouse, Alfred Music Pub (unison to SATB) or *Yesterday*, arr R Emerson, Hal Leonard.
- ¹² *Sound of Music* (medley), arr C Warnick; Hal Leonard.
- ¹³ *Program listing for Intergenerational Spring Concert*, May 2016; Conductor Kathy McNaughton. Medway High School.
- ¹⁴ See Hope Publishing for arrangements of traditional, suitable repertoire.
- ¹⁵ *Blessing*, K Bart, Neil Kjos – available in unison, SSA, SAB, or SATB.
- ¹⁶ *The Storm is Passing Over*, C Tindley/arr B Baker, Boosey & Hawkes. SATB.
- ¹⁷ Interview with the author, 2013.

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INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY AND CHOIR

MODELING CONDUCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

RYAN LUHRS

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION BY

TIM SHARP

In October 2016, I traveled to Kenya with Thierry Thiébaud, president of A Coeur Joie, International, and director of the International Federation for Choral Music's program Conductors Without Borders. We spent two weeks in Nairobi where our host, Kennedy Okeyo Wakia, director of the Nairobi Chamber Chorus, ACDA member, and Cultural and Educational Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Kenya, created an intense schedule for us, consisting of daily visits and interviews with choral directors and educators, and evening workshops and master classes with a great variety of choirs. Both Thierry and I serve on the Board of IFCM, and Ken Wakia is a widely known choral conductor and friend to IFCM. Ken had also recently hosted Dr. Kevin Fenton, Florida State University Choral Professor and former ACDA Southern Division President, as the two collaborated on the choral film, *A Voice for Peace* (<http://avoice4peace.org>) a worldwide peace awareness project. ACDA was a major advocate for this film project. Kevin shares his experience and involvement with A Voice for Peace on pages 34-35.

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Conductors Without Borders takes its name from the universally known and beloved program, Doctors Without Borders, and has similar goals. It is a mutual assistance program whose goal is to give conductors in developing countries—mainly in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia—the opportunity to work with experienced teachers in choral conducting. The program originated in August of 2006 at the conclusion of the World Assembly of Choral Conductors' Associations (WACCA) in Buenos Aires. At that assembly, the need for a mutual assistance program for training choral conductors was clearly identified. In January 2007, a first announcement was published in the *International Choral Bulletin* with a call for interest in the CWB program. The multiple responses received testified to the great interest shown by conductors from all over the world.

In November 2007, a first meeting was held in Caracas with delegates who were already involved in similar projects. During three intense meeting days, the delegates agreed on the necessity of a sustainable program that would not only create insightful choral leadership all over the world but would also be committed to the fundamental social values and goals of choral singing, which include the establishment and conveying of solidarity, respect, tolerance, loyalty, community building, and inter-human communication.

ACDA is connected to Conductors Without Borders as a result of our close connection and affiliation with IFCM. However, as executive director of ACDA, it has been my goal for our association to be even more intimately attached to this program. This was my reason for immersing myself into the program with volunteer work in Kenya. I have discussed this initiative at length with ACDA's newly established International Activities Standing Committee, and I have great hope that an ongoing relationship can be established between ACDA and East Africa, and in particular, Kenya.

What I discovered during my visit is there are hundreds of choirs in Nairobi of all categories: children's, male, female, mixed, and many, many youth choirs. We estimated the number of choir directors in the region was in the hundreds. Throughout the country, choirs participate in the decades-old and decades-strong Kenya Music Festival, their national music festival organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This festival takes place every August in Nairobi and showcases the cultural music



heritage of the country, is supported by the national government, and is a cherished time in the life of Kenyans.

Public schools in Kenya offer music education. Universities in Nairobi teach music theory, ethnomusicology, music education, composition, and other traditional music tracks. Every university and conservatory we visited demonstrated strong interest in choral music. A majority of the choirs we observed rehearse twice a week. Rote learning continues to be the practice, although published music and music in manuscript was clearly in evidence. Usually the repertoire is unaccompanied, but sometimes it is accompanied by drums and keyboard.

It was our pleasure to talk to the directors we worked with about their hopes and plans for forming a national association similar to ACDA for their choral conductors. We introduced them to the programs of IFCM and ACDA and established communication tools for ongoing exchange. It is clear that choral music is a pathway to peace and understanding between our countries. The following article is based on Ryan Luhrs's dissertation on the topic of Intergroup Contact Theory and is in essence the "science" behind the goal of programs such as Conductors Without Borders and A Voice 4 Peace. Choral conductors and music educators have all experienced how the act of singing helps to build bridges and break down walls between and among individuals from diverse backgrounds, but why? Ryan shares recent research related to Intergroup Contact Theory while outlining the "five optimal conditions" that either advance or impede the ability of singing to break down social barriers. Kevin's and my experiences in Kenya are a practical testament to how this theory can and does function in the twenty-first century.

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Communal singing in contexts such as military settings, corporate worship, protests, vigils in the aftermath of tragedy, and sporting events provide evidence that singing may be one of the most efficient ways to foster a sense of “we” and unity in a group of people.¹ The sense that group singing unifies diverse people for a common cause is also present in traditional choral settings, evident as choristers work toward the common goal of preparing a concert program or worship contribution. Given the many ways people are divided, separated, and lack a sense of “we,” and the prospect of unifying a group through song, a question faces those of us who lead singing: Can bringing people together intentionally around song be an effective prescription in the effort to build bridges between people of social groups who don’t otherwise interact in meaningful ways?

Just as a physician who prescribes medication needs to understand how a drug functions, choral directors may benefit from understanding how singing functions in intergroup settings (situations where individuals from different social groups encounter each other). Much of the existing research literature devoted to the topic, however, simply credits the “power of music” as the underlying reason for the effect, an explanation filled with mystery, adding limited understanding on how singing in a group actually works to strengthen social bonds. The field of social psychology may provide helpful insight. Research related to the intergroup contact theory² includes more than 500 studies demonstrating compelling evidence that contact (interaction) between individuals from salient social groups typically leads to improved attitudes. The effect of intergroup contact is especially strong when five optimal conditions are present in the contact setting: equal status, cooperation, common goals, institutional support, and friendship potential.³ If singing does indeed break down social barriers, perhaps its power to do so results from the choral setting’s innate ability to bring about many aspects of these five conditions. The purpose of this article is to examine the five conditions, propose how they can be attained in choral settings, offer suggestions related to repertoire selection, and provide additional models for promoting intergroup choral activity.

Intergroup Contact’s Five Optimal Conditions

Condition 1: Equal Status

To achieve equal status, power disparities present in everyday life must not be perceived in the contact setting. All people involved need view themselves as equals. This may be an easy concept to grasp, but equal status is difficult to measure and attain.⁴ Yet, music making can provide a space where traditional hierarchies are contested.⁵ Directors organizing interactions can promote equal status by taking the following steps:

1. Sing. The mere act of singing together can challenge statuses. There is documented evidence that status disparities related to age, grade level, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, incarceration, and homelessness, etc., can all be contested in a choir.⁶ This phenomenon may be especially present when a group sings in harmony and the director encourages all singers to work on issues related to ensemble, such as balance and vowel uniformity.⁷
2. Select repertoire representative of the different social groups involved. Singing the music of both groups as one choir implies that everyone’s music is valued and one group’s music is not superior.
3. Teach the music using approaches representative of the different groups involved. For instance, if one cultural group traditionally learns music by ear and is forced to read music with the implied bias that “real” musicians read notation, they will probably feel lower in status. People are more likely to feel comfortable, valued, and of equal status when the music is taught in a manner familiar to them. Furthermore, a director’s words of encouragement can go a long way when asking singers to learn music using unfamiliar means, such as incorporating movement or not using sheet music.
4. Assemble leadership that represents the different social groups. When possible, collaborate with leaders from the various groups during the organizational process and the rehearsal and performance process. Events led by diverse leaders are less likely to neglect one group or favor one over the other.

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5. Offer leadership that encourages input from the group when practical, avoiding an overly autocratic style.

6. Avoid creating scenarios where select singers are perceived as being of a higher status. For instance, if a professional or auditioned choir participates, have members spread out among the entire choir. Otherwise, one runs the risk of creating a sense of unequal status between the “pro” and amateur singers.

Condition 2: Common Goals

Research suggests that sharing a goal has motivated people to be more supportive, friendly, and cooperative with each other.⁸ In most choral settings, this condition exists on its own. Just as teammates on a sports team work together for the common goal of athletic success, choristers strive for a quality performance or pleasing musical experience but with an increased feeling of shared success and aesthetic result not typically present in sports.⁹

Condition 3: Cooperation

Cooperation bears much resemblance to common goals, and the two are often positively correlated¹⁰ since cooperation is typically necessary for a common goal to be accomplished. In a choral setting, singers cooperate in the effort to achieve goals concerning vowel uniformity, diction, dynamics, onset, cutoffs, timbre, rhythm, etc. In an intergroup choral setting where music representative of one of the groups is being performed, that group can take a turn leading and demonstrating nuances specific to music more familiar to them.

Singing in harmony also requires cooperation. For instance, some members of each section often catch on to a part sooner, with weaker singers relying on stronger ones to learn their parts. In a study of an Icelandic men’s choir, Faulkner and Davidson even suggested that

A Voice for Peace

by Kevin Fenton

During the summer of 2012, I was looking for unique repertoire to program for the University Singers spring tour, which culminated with a concert at the national ACDA conference in Dallas. I reached out to former student Lillis Weeks, who was living in Kenya at that time, and a member of the Nairobi Chamber Chorus to learn about the choral music in Kenya. She provided several titles and suggested I attend a rehearsal with her during my visit to Nairobi, which was already planned for October.



As I observed the rehearsal, Ken Wakia, the conductor of NCC, conducted two arrangements that were celebrations of peace—*Wana Baraka* in Swahili, which is the national language of Kenya, and *Ukuthula* in Zulu, which is a language commonly spoke in South Africa. *Wana Baraka* began with Mark Onyango singing the melody as a solo, and I witnessed sincerity in his singing that was transformational. That sincerity was then expanded as the other voices of the choir entered with quiet strength, which transitioned to a bold sincerity that seemed to penetrate the soul. Then Maureen Obadha performed the solo in *Ukuthula* with the choir standing scattered around her in no particular order. As she sang, I was stuck by her humility as she became a vessel for the music and text.

In 2014, I took twenty members of the Festival Singers of Florida to Kenya to perform with the Nairobi Chamber Chorus. The two choirs would combine to perform Josh Rist’s *Invictus* as a representative piece from America and *Wana Baraka*, and *Ukuthula* from Africa. The rehearsal brought the members of the two choirs together for the first time. We rehearsed *Invictus* and *Wana Baraka* and shared tea

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and biscuits during a break. Then Ken provided a bit of instruction before we sang *Ukuthula*: “When we sing, we stand around the audience and the stage facing in the direction of Maureen. We lift our hands to demonstrate an openness to peace entering into the space, and we follow Maureen’s dynamics.” And with that, Maureen began singing. During the next six minutes, I found myself experiencing emotions I had not known; we were surrounded by peace, fulfillment, well-being, and it was overwhelming and tears flowed.



In 2015, Ken brought members of Nairobi Chamber Chorus to the United States to perform throughout the southeast. At every concert, members of NCC combined with host choirs to perform *Ukuthula*. As Ken introduced the arrangement at the University of Mississippi, he talked about the United Nations’ sponsored International Day of Peace. “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if choirs all around the world would sing *Ukuthula* on that day and talk about



and live for peace?” In the concerts that followed, Ken introduced *Ukuthula*, challenging audience members to talk and sing about peace, especially on the International Day of Peace. The tour concluded with combined concerts of the Nairobi Chamber Chorus and the Festival Singers of Florida in Winter Haven and Orlando, Florida. In Orlando, over 100 students from the Orange County School District joined the two choirs to perform *Ukuthula*, and we began planning what would be known as AVoice4Peace.



On September 21, 2016, choirs from all over the world joined the Nairobi Chamber Chorus in a stream of their performance from Kenya’s National Theater, and over 150 choirs submitted video recordings of their performance of *Ukuthula*. Conductors, singers, teachers, and students spent the day talking and singing about peace, and the vision of many individuals, young and old, was on a picture of a peaceful world. Unity and community are as central to the choral experience as peace and harmony, and it is clear that the choral conducting profession can provide the world a compelling display and profound understanding of a peaceful mind-set.

To learn more about A Voice for Peace, visit avoice4peace.org, where you can watch the film trailer, sign up to receive updates, and learn more about submitting your own recording of the South African peace hymn, *Ukuthula*.

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singing in harmony is representative of ideal human interaction:

When singing in harmony in a large collective, singers appear to make sense of themselves and their place in the world by recognizing their own voices and the different voices of those around them and by collaborating to find an ideal vocal and social state.¹¹

Condition 4: Institutional Support

The premise of this condition involves institutional authorities approving the intergroup activity. For instance, intergroup activity that is not legal or endorsed by influential leaders will likely not have positive outcomes. In the choral field, institutional support is already implied on a general level due to the popularity of choral music as a leisure activity¹² and the existence of so many choral ensembles throughout the world, most of which require funding approved by institutions or governing boards. If organizing an intergroup choral event, the following may attain additional institutional support:

1. Ask those in positions of leadership, such as teachers, professors, clergy, administrators, and government officials to actively approve and promote intergroup choral activity.
2. Invite those same leaders to participate in intergroup choral activity as singers. Their participation not only implies support but may also encourage additional singers to join.
3. If unable to sing, ask leaders to speak, deliver readings or poems, lead prayers (if a worship setting), or at the very least, sit in a prominent location where they are noticed.

Condition 5: Friendship Potential

Friendship potential refers to an intergroup contact setting's capacity to foster new, non-superficial, cross-group relationships. Attempting to manipulate friendships into existence can prove challenging. Fortunately,

choral ensembles provide fertile ground for friendships to spring forth.¹³ Some bonding may occur through the act of singing without additional interaction, and those organizing intergroup choral experiences can also arrange meals, dances, sports, retreats, and other get-to-know-you activities that can inspire friendships to form without coercion.

Repertoire in the Intergroup Choir

The limited research exploring the relationship between social cohesion and repertoire suggests that cyclically structured music is more effective at inspiring a sense of togetherness.¹⁴ Sacred music scholar C. Michael Hawn defines cyclic forms as open ended in length, learned by ear without sheet music in hand, episodic, related to movement, and community oriented. Sequential forms, which occur on the other end of the spectrum from cyclic, are usually performed over a fixed time, learned by eye with sheet music in hand, linear in structure, and text driven.¹⁵ Consequently, if the goal of the choral setting is to improve social relations between groups, standards of the Western canon, verbose hymns, and other through-composed pieces should be avoided. In a recent study that examined this phenomenon in a multi-ethnic context, Haydn's "The Heavens are Telling" and a through-composed setting of Langston Hughes's very fitting "I Dream a World" text was not perceived as socially cohesive even though participants expressed a positive musical experience. Three contemporary African American gospel selections with cyclic elements, a short repetitive song arranged by John Bell, and the hymn "It is Well with My Soul"—which has a refrain—were all more effective in the study.¹⁶

Intergroup Choral Models

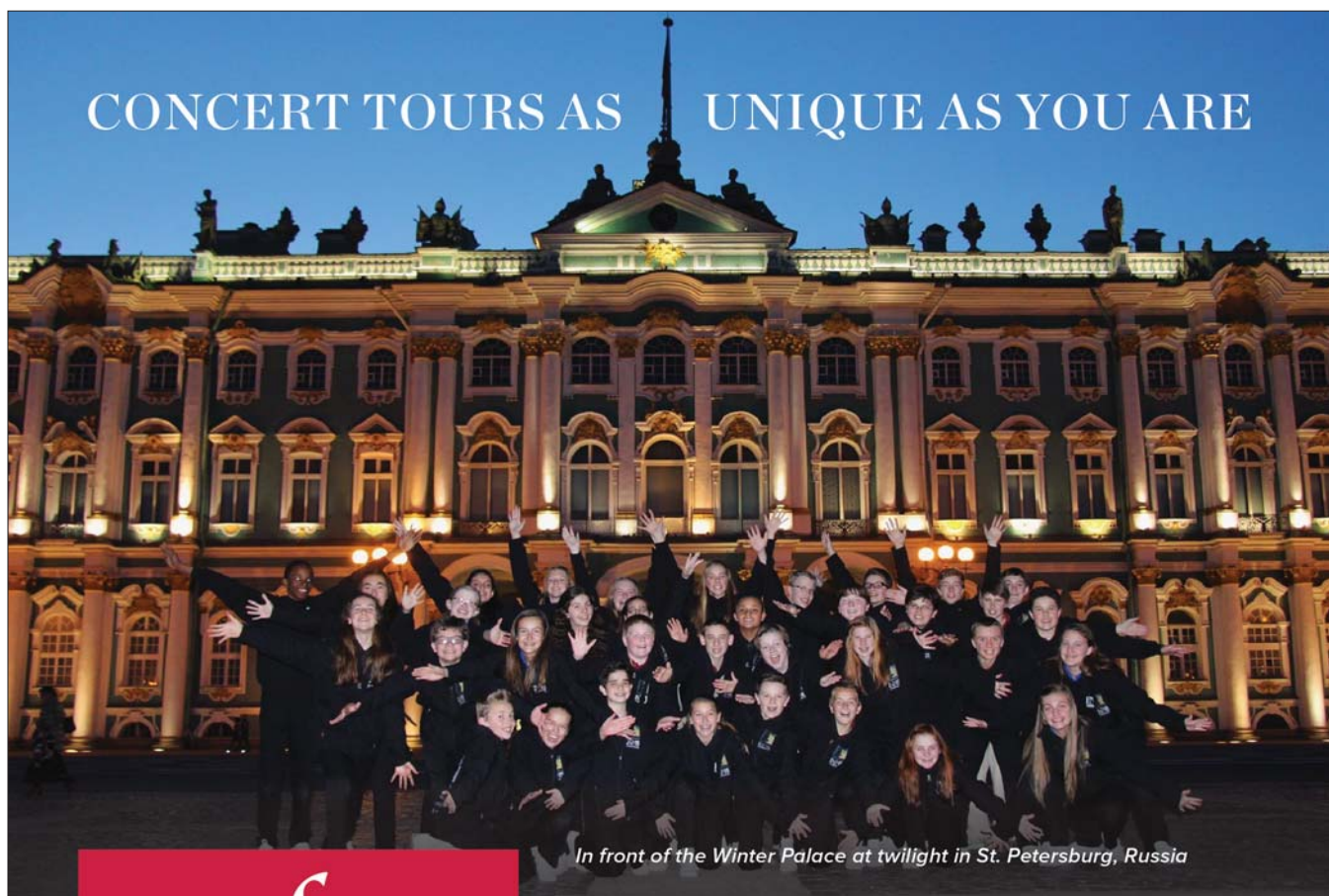
Unless a given choir already has substantial diversity, creative measures have to be taken in order to get people from different backgrounds singing together in a single ensemble. The following models can be implemented, often without a drastic interruption to a choir's existing cycle of rehearsals and performances, providing opportunities for meaningful interactions that would not otherwise take place.

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One-day Choral Festival

Combining choirs for a concert or worship is not new. School districts will sometimes feature all their choirs, elementary through high school, in a single event, often with a concluding selection with participation from all groups. Religious organizations sometimes hold ecumenical or inter-faith music events that draw choirs together from a given community. Building on these existing models, a one-day choral festival allows organizers to recruit singers from diverse backgrounds and form a

single choir that learns all the music (as opposed to multiple choirs coming together to sing for each other). A possible schedule for this model includes a three-hour rehearsal, a meal together, and a performance or worship event open to the public in the evening. There are multiple advantages of this model, including accessibility due to its relatively short time commitment and the sense of excitement and participant cooperation necessary to put together a full program in a short amount of time. Selecting music that either a large portion of the



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INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY AND CHOIR

singers already know or that is easy to learn is crucial to this model's success. Ideally, a sub-set of the festival choir will have learned all the repertoire in advance of the festival day and can serve as the backbone of the ensemble to ensure that the event will succeed musically.

Community Sings

Community sings seek to break down the wall between audience and performers because there is no audience—everyone sings!¹⁷ Song leaders empower people regardless of ability and training to participate in singing for pure enjoyment. The accessible music used is often learned without instrumental accompaniment or sheet music. Some worship communities are even adopting songleading as an alternative to traditional leadership from a keyboard instrument, and overall, this style of leading is gaining momentum. For instance, in October 2015 and 2016, master song leaders Alice Parker, Ysaye Barnwell, and Marlyn Haskell led *Raising the Song: Creating*

Communities that Sing at Virginia Theological Seminary, a symposium that taught song leading fundamentals to a class of twelve students with the hope this manner of singing leadership would gain wider use. This type of choral setting might be especially beneficial to those seeking singing to strengthen social bonds. Community sings potentially draw wider participation due to their accessibility and non-threatening environment. Repertoire is typically cyclic in structure, and when sheet music is not being used, greater social interaction while singing can occur.

Touring Ensembles

One of the most practical ways to encounter people from varied backgrounds is to travel to different parts of the country and world, a practice already common among many choral ensembles. Of course, tours provide opportunities for choirs to sing for diverse audiences. But given the ubiquity of singing throughout the world,



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tours might also allow for collaboration with the singers from regions visited. Shared concerts that include a set sung by all singers can give new insight to a different musical culture, provide programming variety, and increase audience size and engagement. Furthermore, tours to locations such as Latin America, South America, Eastern Europe, and Africa can expose choristers to regions of the world where singing has a heightened social function compared to the majority of Western Europe and the United States.

Conclusion

Singing together can be a tremendously powerful force that fosters a sense of unity among people of different backgrounds. Overall, the power of music remains a mystery. Yet its ability to improve relations between people might result from its capacity to foster the conditions of equal status, cooperation, common goals, institutional support, and friendship potential. Bringing diverse groups together around song can't solve all the world's social problems and divisions, but it may provide an ideal setting for the elusive goal of social harmony to exist. ■

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ONE VOICE, ONE LIFE: MANY CHANGES THROUGHOUT A LIFETIME OF SONG

BY KAREN BRUNSEN

This article is based on an earlier version published in VOICEPrints, the scholarly journal of the New York Singing Teachers' Association.

The singing voice changes constantly, reflecting the living musical instrument that it is.

Throughout life, muscular, skeletal, reproductive, circulatory, digestive, urinary, endocrine, lymphatic, respiratory, and nervous systems change. Variable and non-uniform growth and development with respect to respiration, vibration, and resonance have a profound influence on vocal production, vocal expectation, and vocal qualities in singers from infancy to old age.

At every age, vocal function is dependent on how the body is progressively and constantly changing. A deeper understanding of chronological development can better inform voice professionals in the pursuit of optimal singing. A “lifetime perspective” of each singer has potential to enhance the development of productive goals with respect for the past, the present, and the future.

Every singer, at every age, has vocal limits and vocal potential. Voice professionals should understand and work *within*, not below and not beyond, limits while at the same time working toward vocal potential. Choral directors can accommodate all singers better when they know the reasons people sing as they do at different ages. Then they can promote contiguous and realistic approaches and expectations through the course of a lifetime. Not only can choral directors espouse the well-laid-out principles of good vocal production, excellent musicianship, and a vast array of repertoire, but they can aspire to provide fact-based, age-appropriate sequencing of vocal expectations for singers from birth through old age.

This article will present a look at various age-related mutations of the evolving voice in relationship to respiration, vibration, and resonance. With even a limited amount of information, choral directors can be more aware of interesting, logical, and fact-based correlations between age, vocal function, and vocal expectations at every stage of their singers’

lives. This article discusses some of my favorite evolving voice facts, including the increase in the number of alveoli from birth to adulthood; the change in the laryngeal cartilages that are first spongy, then more firm, and later undergo some calcification; the changes in hyaluronic acid (HA) levels, how little pharyngeal space there is in a baby compared to an adult, how the shape of the air tube changes, and the evolving of the vocal cords from a single-celled composition to multiple and varied layers of tissue including a muscle.

Respiration

The ribs of newborns are cartilage with a compliant softer composition. They flare outward / \ and offer little resistance to breath. The muscles of support are not developed, and the tissue of the lungs is very spongy with little elastic recoil. Babies take 25-50 breaths per minute (bpm).¹ They have approximately 20 million alveoli. The length of the trachea is 2 cm at birth and will grow to 12 cm by adulthood.² Ossification of the ribs and intercostal

muscle tone increase with age. Alveoli increase to 300 million by the age of eight. By ten, a child's ribs will be oriented downward \ /. The tissues of the lungs change constantly as we age. After six years of age, the lung recoil increases due to more elastin fibers.³ The breath rate is 15-30 bpm.⁴

Children can sing at the level of an untrained adult. Kevin D. Skelton says, "The vocal and musical skills children are capable of achieving and employing is often vastly underestimated."⁵ Children naturally generate fifty to one hundred percent more lung pressure than adults for comparable loudness and softness. They work harder to use their voices and need more frequent breaths. By the age of ten, lung pressure is more comparable to that of adults.⁶ Trained children singers can learn to do all five vocal textures—legato, staccato, coloratura, messa di

voce, and articulation—at a suitable volume and range. By the time they are young adults with 400-700 million alveoli, fully ossified and developed ribs, and strong intercostal and oblique muscles, their earlier training will be a great resource, complemented with efficient subglottal pressure and optimally vibrated vocal cords that can sustain significantly longer phrases.

Approaching the age of seventy, there is dilation of alveoli and diminished compliancy of the chest wall as the bones become more calcified. Respiratory muscle strength decreases. The tissue of the lungs is stiffer with a slower recoil, and there is a greater reserved volume of breath with less access to the total volume of air in the lungs.⁷ Typical results are shorter vocal phrases, a slight to great loss of vocal intensity, and a slight to significant bowing of the vocal cords. As the muscles

of breathing lose strength, singers should be careful not to substitute extrinsic muscle tension around the larynx in an effort to achieve vocal clarity.

Vibration

The single purpose of the fetal larynx is to facilitate fetal breathing. At birth, the fetal larynx must suddenly assume three purposes: control respiration, protect the lungs, and produce the first birth cry.⁸ Newborns communicate with cries, whose pitch, loudness, and duration exceed that of adults. High amounts of hyaluronic acid (HA) in the superficial portion of the vocal folds offer shock-absorbing protection to the developing vocal cords.⁹ At birth the arytenoids are proportionately larger within the laryngeal structure than they will be later. The newborn's vocal cords have a single cellular structure that within just a few months becomes a bilaminar structure and a tri-layered structure by the age of seven. The superficial layer of the lamina propria is proportionately much bigger at birth and decreases until it reaches its adult proportion by the age of seven.¹⁰

The cartilage of the laryngeal structure is spongier and the epiglottis is floppy. The front of the thyroid cartilage is rounded and tilted slightly.¹¹ Gradual ossification of cartilages, including the laryngeal cartilages, begins the day we are born and continues throughout our lives.¹² First vocalization includes cooing, oooing, crying, and suckling noises. The larynx grows quickly up to the age of three and then more slowly until



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puberty.¹³ It is not until post-puberty that all the layers of the vocal cords are clearly delineated as layers of epithelium, three layers of the lamina propria: superficial, middle elastin, and the TA (thyroarytenoid) muscle.

During puberty the emergence of sex hormones activates incredible growth. For females, the menstrual cycle begins. The influence of estrogen and progesterone on the vocal folds is similar to the effect on the ovaries.¹⁴ Airiness in pubescent girls is referred to as the “mutational chink.” This is remediated naturally as the arytenoids and laryngeal cartilages grow to their adult proportions.¹⁵ Males secrete androgens that increase oxygenation and muscle performance.¹⁶ Their larynx grows, and the tilt changes as the formally curved front of the thyroid becomes more pointed so the Adams apple is visible.¹⁷ The influence of sex hormones results in the development of a third layer of epithelium in both boys and girls. It is not until the late teens, and even more so beyond the age of twenty, that the arytenoids, cricoid, and thyroid show signs of calcification.¹⁸ This is the beginning of three to four decades of hormonal stability with the adult physical proportions and strength necessary for rigorous professional and amateur singing.

Women experience menopause between the ages of forty-seven to fifty-five when progesterone is no longer produced. Just as the epithelium of the cervix atrophies, so does that of the vocal cord. It also triggers a progressive slowing in the nerve conduction of the vagus nerve, which affects coloratura and vibrato

rate.¹⁹ Men experience a one to two percent annual reduction in testosterone from the age of forty to sixty with fifty percent less testosterone by the time they reach seventy. This primarily affects muscle strength.

Resonance

When a baby is born, the head appears to be one quarter of the body. The neck is short, shoulders narrow, and the larynx is positioned near the second vertebrae. The tongue is proportionately larger than it will be in adult life, and the pharynx is proportionately smaller.²⁰ The shape of the air tube is cone shaped with a bend

at the smallest width below the vocal cords by the cricoid. It will become cylindrical and significantly wider at the cricoid as an adult.²¹ The proportions of a child’s body change so the head becomes about one sixth of the body. Gradually the neck lengthens and the position of the larynx lowers. Baby teeth begin to fall out and are replaced by adult teeth. The width of the resonator is 80% developed, whereas the length of the pharynx is 20-40% developed. During puberty, the neck lengthens significantly, and the larynx drops to near the fourth, fifth, or sixth vertebrae. The length of the vocal tract is done growing in girls around age

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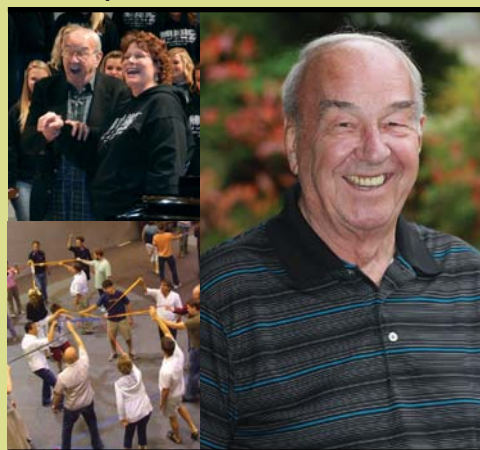
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seventeen. For boys it continues to grow past the age of nineteen.²² The cavities in the sinuses and nose also grow.²³

Singing voices change dramatically during this time as tissues and skeletal proportions of the resonators reach their adult size. For the first time, singers are able to anticipate resonant possibilities that may blossom over upcoming decades. A picture of the skull of an adult compared to that of an older adult shows that elderly bones lose mass, affecting the shape of the oral and pha-

ryngeal region and position of the jaw. Researchers agree that changes in the oral and pharyngeal regions of the vocal tract merit further study through two and three-dimensional measurements along with acoustic considerations.²⁴

Expectations, Limitations, and Realities in Singing at Every Age

Is there an optimal way to train singing from birth through old age? In reference to the changing male voice, John Cooksey said, "The core of the voice should be followed, be respected."²⁵ This is an excellent guiding principle throughout a singer's life. In order to intelligently navigate the significant and normal evolution of the singing voice from age to age, well-established principles of good singing can be synthesized with knowledge about changes in the body that account for variables in vocal production, expectations, realities, and normal limitations. Here are some examples:

- The high-pitched intense crying of a baby is not harmful to the vocal cords, thanks to a very short neck, soft cartilage, and high levels of hyaluronic acid in the vocal cords. Infants cannot sustain each cry for very long but can repetitively cry for up to two hours, after which it is likely that the less-developed support muscles will tire. The act of making noises stimulates muscles and tissue development within the larynx and the support muscles.

Proportions, tissue, muscle, cartilage, the number of bones in the body, and hormones are significantly different from those of adults. The evolving of their voices based on the developments of their bodies is profound.

- Children can learn to sing all the textures of the voice with a clear vocal quality in the treble staff with their agile smaller larynx and pharyngeal space.

- The clear sounds of a four-year-old child singing nursery rhymes, making up songs, experimenting with new sounds and vocal textures while dancing around a room is entertaining evidence of the emerging interplay between the evolving mind and body.

- It is common for adolescent females to have breathiness in their sound. This is due to the incomplete closure of the vocal folds and called the mutational chink. Normally it is remediated naturally as the arytenoids and vocal folds mature to their adult proportions. It is advisable that these singers avoid nasality and overuse of the chest voice, which could result in negative vocal effects once they reach maturity.

- Adolescent newly changed voices are unstable as they experience the hormonal surges, non-uniform growth, and development of the thyroarytenoid muscle. Their necks and torsos grow significantly in size and strength over the course of the next few years. The influence of estrogen and progesterone in ado-

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lescent females are reflected in new higher and lower frequencies. The influence of androgens in adolescent males may cause a sudden drop of an octave in their vocal range as the larynx and vocal cords grow.

- College-age singers can begin to follow the lead of their voice as they experience new parts of their registration, the internal feedback ring in the voice, and optimal coordination of respiration, vibration, and resonance. This is a time of new vocal possibilities and accumulating experiences in repertoire, range, style, resonance, language, music theory, and history. Pacing and sequencing can result in a dependable arsenal of fundamental knowledge that will be useful throughout their adult years.

- The optimal time for professional classical singing is during the adult years of hormonal stability. The presence of HA has lowered but is at a sufficient level. The gradual calcification of the laryngeal cartilages results in more stability. The muscles of support are strong. The ribs have just the right level of compliancy for good expansion while still offering resistance necessary for sufficient subglottal pressure. The resonator benefits as the length and circumference of the neck is fully developed, and the larynx has settled at C6 or 7. The strong muscles of support work with 400-700 million alveoli and fully developed lung tissues. The combined factors offer a balanced buoyancy in vocal production, which is capable and trainable for enormous beauty and musical facility.



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• As mature adults age, bones lose density. Facial features change with this as the jaw tends to jut forward. This changes the size and shape of the resonators and therefore the expectations for resonance. Senior citizens may not be expected to have the same look for a relaxed, dropped jaw as younger adults.

• Due to stiffening of the tissues of the lung, slower recoil of the lungs, and an increase in the amount of reserved air, seniors may take longer to get a fully refreshed breath and may need to take more breaths.

• Life expectancy has increased. Those singers blessed with long lives enjoy singing if they understand and adjust to realistic, normal expectations and limitations. Sue Ellen Linville sums this up perfectly: “The biology of aging is nondiscriminatory in terms of occupation.”²⁶

Choral directors have instinctively taken age into consideration for centuries. Now it is possible to know more of the facts behind “best practices” throughout a lifetime. Which fundamentals and techniques apply through the span of an entire life? What are the best vocal expectations

that would indicate normal vocal growth and progress? Do those expectations change? When is it age? When is it technique? When is it repertoire choices? When is it choral tone preferences? When is it too soon? When is it too late? Can expectations better match reality every step of the way as singers move from being the younger generation, to being the adult generation, to being the senior generation?

Synthesizing knowledge with the overall art of singing is an ongoing challenge for twenty-first-century vocal pedagogues and experts. As we work toward optimal vocal produc-

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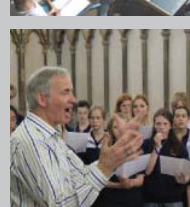
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tion for each person in our choirs and the finest choral sounds we can achieve, this layer of perception and knowledge will enhance and inform our work from a fact-based life-span perspective. The evolving voice is profound at every age! 

Karen Brunssen is associate professor of voice at the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University and president-elect for the National Association of Teachers of Singing. kabrunssen@gmail.com

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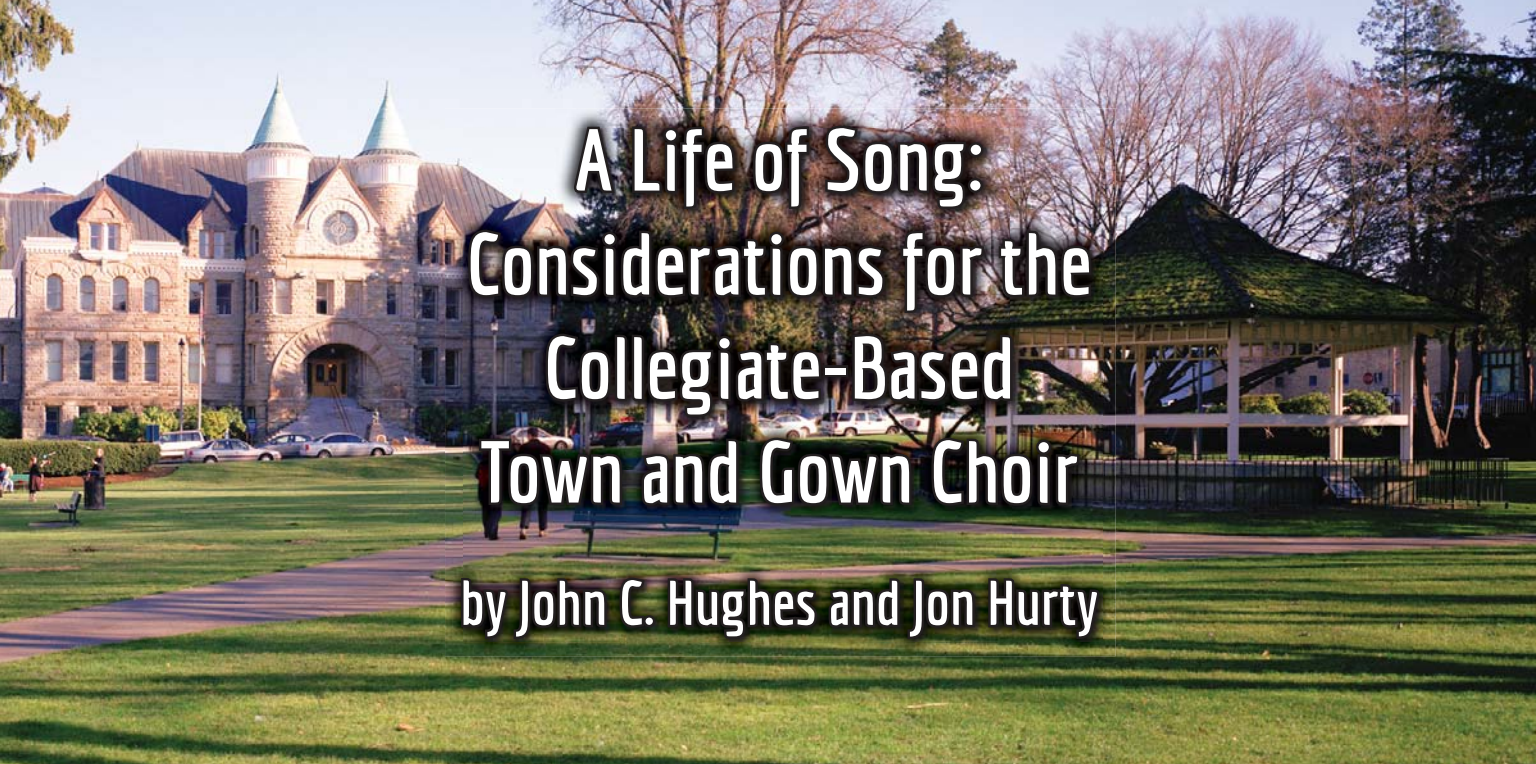


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A Life of Song: Considerations for the Collegiate-Based Town and Gown Choir

by John C. Hughes and Jon Hurty

“There was nothing in my childhood, only work... But I have forgotten one thing—the singing. There was such a lot of singing in the villages then, and this was my pleasure, too. Boys sang in the fields, and at night we all met at the Forge and sang. The chapels were full of singing... So I lie; I have had pleasure. I have had singing.”

—Fred Mitchell,
quoted in *Akenfield: Portrait
of an English Village* by
Ronald Blythe¹

Perhaps more so than any other type of choral ensemble, collegiate-based multigenerational choirs embody “a life of song,” the theme of the 2017 ACDA National Conference. Many colleges and universities offer a “town and gown” choir—an ensemble open to students, faculty, staff, and singers from the surrounding community. For the purposes of this article, the term town and gown

choir will describe a multigenerational choir that functions primarily in a college or university setting and includes both students and community members.

Undergraduate students away from home for the first time stand next to community members who have sung in the choir for decades. There are benefits for everyone who participates in this kind of ensemble. Musically, community members’ years of experience are advantageous, and younger voices balance more mature sounds. Furthermore, students recognize that regardless of major or profession, one can and should make singing a lifetime activity, and community members are energized by their interaction with young adults. This article explores the musical, social, and vocational benefits of these choirs and discusses the opportunities and challenges that are specific to town and gown choirs. The authors (who conduct multigenerational choirs at their respective institutions) offer suggestions for leading these unique ensembles.

Challenges and Opportunities

Every choir, whether high school, church, university or professional, comes with its own potential for success and inherent challenges. Multigenerational town and gown choirs are no exception. Two of the primary challenges are the wide range of individual skill levels of singers and limited rehearsal time—both of which can engender performances that are not of the highest quality. However, these challenges can also provide special opportunities for conductors and ensembles. Conductors have the opportunity once or twice each week to unite people of different generations and talent levels into something larger than themselves. By creating what Weston Noble refers to as “the special world,” when “everything is in line—we are momentarily whole,” conductors can guide choir members beyond social and generational divisions and toward oneness with each other.² The unique setting of these choirs provides particular opportunities.

Repertoire selection and using the skills, knowledge, and talents of the surrounding academic community can help everyone be more engaged in the artistic process. Examples include asking a German major to read a German text aloud or provide a translation for the group or inviting an English professor to lead a discussion of the text. One could even develop a course that addresses the context, history, and related material of a major work that the choir is preparing.

At Augustana College, we have an interdisciplinary general education requirement called “Learning Communities.” In conjunction with

a performance of Britten’s *War Requiem*, I (Jon Hurty) collaborated with English and Religion faculty to offer a Learning Community course exploring the musical, social, religious, textual, and historical context of the piece. In addition to the normal coursework, students did research on various aspects of the work, then shared their information with the larger ensemble through email and short presentations.

Involving the singers and sparking discussion about the music and text not only bridges the generation gap but also unifies them as an ensemble. Town and gown choirs can be more than a class to students or

another weekly obligation for community members. Rather, they can be an event that members look forward to in their own way—a break from exams and papers, a night out for parents of young children, or a social activity for retirees. Interesting repertoire presented in an engaging and collaborative manner is perhaps the fastest way to create a feeling of community.

Town and gown choirs can also help conductors establish a local singing culture. The addition of recent college graduates and high school students can not only improve the group’s musical quality but can also infuse the ensemble with new energy and invigorate its sense of potential. Alumni who stay in the area after graduation may be invited to sing in the choir. They will be familiar with the conductor’s rehearsal process and can serve as ambassadors for the ensemble. If a conductor is skilled at creating a fulfilling rehearsal climate and rewarding performance experiences, younger members will make time in their busy schedules to participate. When current college students see recent graduates participate in the ensemble, they may be more likely to continue to sing after graduation.

Sometimes community members ask if their high school or even junior high school children can be involved in this kind of choir in order to provide a kind of family activity. The question arises as to whether it is appropriate to have such young singers in the ensemble. This kind of situation can be resolved by talking to the parent and child and making sure the young singer understands

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the commitment and the parent is aware of their responsibility in guiding and helping the child learn the music. Because this is not a common situation, it may not be a problem to have one or two younger voices in an ensemble. Regardless, conductors should be upfront and clear about expectations.

On the other end of the spectrum, working with aging voices is a persistent issue in town and gown choirs and one that is somewhat unique to these ensembles (along with church and community choirs). While some professional, symphonic, and opera choruses impose age limits, many collegiate-based choirs invite singers to participate as long as they would like. As the population of aging adults in the United States continues to grow, conductors need to develop strategies to help older singers. Working with aging voices is a topic too large for this article; however, many useful resources on the topic exist.³

The main thing to consider is that unlike other collegiate ensembles that may comprise music majors or other serious college-age singers, town and gown choirs are most likely made up of people who have either not taken voice lessons, taken them only occasionally, or have not studied voice for many years. Therefore, the warm-up exercises at the beginning of a rehearsal are probably the only vocal training these singers receive. It is imperative to make vocalises meaningful to aging singers, who increasingly struggle with flexibility, agility, and intonation.⁴ In her book *Sing Into Your Sixties... and Beyond! A Manual and Anthology for Group and*

Individual Voice Instruction,⁵ Sangeetha Rayapati presents five primary areas that should be addressed. Although these categories of warm-ups can be applied to voices of any age, it is

more critical within the context of the aging voice to include regular and carefully planned warm-up sequences.



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- 1) Improving respiration—Panting, pulsations, brrr (lip trills)/sniff, staccato.
- 2) Managing vibrato—This is a particularly important element in working with aging voices in the choir and can include crescendo/decrescendo, visualization of purity of tone, and lightening the tone/concept.
- 3) Improving phonation—Sing/song and elevated speech level, lip trills, slides, and glides.
- 4) Improving resonance—Experiment with nasal and breathy sounds, hum/chew, descending slides, octave leaps, arpeg-

gios, using the sound “ner” in sequence.

- 5) Improving Articulation—Word plays, tongue twisters, hung-a, alternating vowels, tongue flapping.

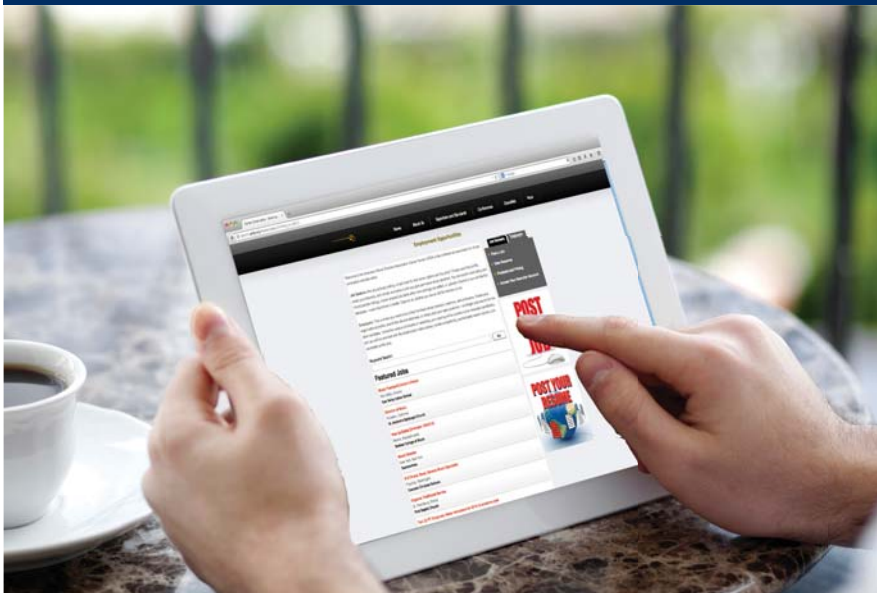
Another issue is whether or not to audition choir members. Sometimes, particular groups have a history of not auditioning singers. Altering that tradition can be difficult and may change the character of the ensemble. When I (Jon Hurty) arrived at Augustana College, the Handel Oratorio Society had been a completely non-auditioned choir for over a hundred years. I was interested in finding out more about

the singers and their ability levels, so I asked everyone to schedule a time so that I could hear them sing. This was not going to be an official “audition,” but rather an opportunity for me to get to know the singers and hear them sing a short passage. The uproar was deafening. Although I did follow through with the process, many singers were upset and thought that my primary motive was to try to “weed out” anyone who I thought was not good enough to be in the group. Ultimately, it worked out. I did not re-audition members in subsequent years, most singers stayed in the group, and I did get a sense of what kind of singers were involved. However, it was a relatively traumatic experience and one that I would recommend approaching carefully. Of course, if the goal is actually to change the character of the group from a non-auditioned to an auditioned ensemble, then a conductor must move forward with that goal in mind. One must first, however, determine whether the group is going to move to a new practice before embarking on that kind of change.

There are a number of other particularly problematic issues related to non-auditioned town and gown choirs. Singers with little or no experience may join and feel lost. Likewise, people with poor reading skills or significant pitch issues can disrupt the rehearsal process and adversely affect a performance. Conductors should prepare for these issues in two ways. First, proactive steps can be taken to address these issues in general. For example, email PDFs of marked scores to singers and

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ask them to transfer markings into their scores outside of rehearsal at their own pace, or place a score on a document camera that projects the image when giving markings to help people follow along. Pass out rehearsal schedules. Be prepared to teach notes and rhythms and how to sing them. In other words, remember that these are not professional singers. Inform choir members about learning-track providers such as www.cyberbass.com or www.choraltracks.com and encourage them to practice outside of rehearsal. Preempting issues is essential to limiting frustration (on both the singers' and conductor's part) and ensuring a smooth rehearsal process and successful performance. Second, establish personal relationships with members of the choir. Each singer and situation is unique and should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Establishing positive working relationships with singers is crucial to having difficult conversations about continuing to sing in the choir.

Another issue is finding ways to engage the best singers in a community into the town and gown choir. One method of attracting higher-level singers is to create a "core" group or a separate group of auditioned community singers that sings for major performances but also has additional separate performances during the year. These singers often do not want to make a commitment only to singing major works with non-auditioned singers but will do so if they have another outlet for smaller and perhaps more refined singing experiences. It is also possible with many major works to find

movements or passages that require a smaller ensemble, such as some of the *concertino/ripieno* sections in Handel's *Messiah* or *turba* choruses in Bach's Passions. Although this needs to be handled carefully, many of the non-auditioned singers understand that they too have the opportunity to audition for the select group. They also understand that their performances are enhanced by the addition of singers who might not normally choose to be in the group.

Standing arrangements are particularly important for choirs that have a range of generations. Given their own choice, most singers

would decide to sit with their friends and especially not with someone in another age group. For the highest impact on the group, it is important to establish a seating chart as soon as possible in the rehearsal sequence. Depending on the goal, many choices can be made. Options include:

- 1) Mixing younger and older voices together in every other seat. Doing so mixes the sound qualities of the voices and creates the best overall blending of disparate voices. Second, and perhaps even more im-



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portantly, it creates a social environment where singers with different goals and ages intermix socially.

- 2) Placing stronger voices in the back of the arrangement. Some strong singers gravitate to the front of the risers because they feel more connected with the conductor and have a better sense of hearing the whole ensemble, but by putting stronger voices in the back, less confident voices will hear stronger voices, and they will provide better leadership for the entire ensemble.
- 3) If the group is large enough, it is also possible to create small pods of younger and older singers that are influenced by each other. This allows sing-

ers to be close to their friends while still providing the musical and social mixing that is so important to town and gown choirs.

Many other options are available depending on the size of the group, the acoustic of the hall, accompaniment, etc. However, the primary goal should be to use the standing arrangement to encourage community and a higher level of musical achievement.

Case Studies

Town and gown choirs are as unique as the institutions they serve. In Table 1 on pages 56-58, five conductors of collegiate-based multigenerational choirs describe their respective ensembles. Respondents come from a variety of institutions,

including small, private colleges, Big Ten universities, and an Ivy League school. Each of the ensembles represented has its own constituency, culture, goals, and focus. They vary in size from around 65 singers to almost 200; some require auditions and others do not; some focus on choral-orchestral works while others perform a wide variety of repertoire. Regardless of these differences, each of these choirs meet once or twice per week to offer people of all ages and walks of life a meaningful musical experience.

Conclusion

Because some collegiate-based multigenerational choirs have been in existence for many decades, many readers might assume that this kind of ensemble is limited to those institutions with longstanding traditions.

Table 1 - Town and Gown Choir Case Studies

	Camerata, University of Iowa, David Puderbaugh, conductor	UMS Choral Union Ann Arbor, MI Scott Hanoian, music director and conductor	Choral Union, Ripon College, John C. Hughes, conductor	Handel Oratorio Society, Augustana College, Jon Hurty, conductor	Yale Camerata, Yale University, Marguerite Brooks, conductor
How many people sing in the choir?	c. 75 (63 student, 12 faculty/staff/community members)	180 (approximately 60 students, 120 non-students)	65 (35 students, 30 non-student members)	140-200 (depending on the project, 60 students and 80-140 non-student members)	112 (32 students, 80 non-student members)
How often and for how long does the ensemble rehearse?	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:15-9:15 p.m.	Mondays 7:00-9:30 p.m.	Thursdays 7:00-9:00 p.m.	Mondays 7:00-9:00 p.m.	Once a week. Chamber chorus, 55 minutes; large chorus, 2.5 hours.
How many concerts per academic year does the choir perform?	4-6	5: <i>Two Messiah</i> performances in December and usually three other performances	3	2: <i>Messiah</i> in December and another oratorio in the spring.	2-3 per term

Collegiate-Based Town and Gown Choir

Is an audition required?	Yes	Yes for new members and every other year for continuing members	No	No	Yes, and a voice check every year for those not in the chamber chorus.
What is the attendance policy?	Students: 2 unexcused before grade drops to C. Each absence thereafter: one letter grade lower. No absences allowed within 10 days of university session of a concert.	1 absence is allowed per concert rehearsal period.	All participants can miss one rehearsal per semester.	Community members are allowed two absences for each performance sequence.	One absence jeopardizes membership if they do not make up work done in that rehearsal, including markings, on their own.
What repertoire, if any, do you focus on?	Renaissance–present. At least one concert per year focuses on choral/orchestral repertory.	Major works for chorus and orchestra	Our concerts consist of a variety of pieces; however, the choir often does a ten- to twenty-minute piece as a centerpiece of the concert.	<i>Messiah</i> in December. Major works for chorus and orchestra in the spring.	We perform music of all periods, including a focus for a number of seasons on the J.S. Bach <i>Christmas Oratorio</i> . We also have a special commitment to music of the 20th and 21st centuries.
How often does this ensemble collaborate with other ensembles?	At least once per year, Camerata joins the other UI choirs in a mass choir/orchestral concert.	Nearly always with an orchestra.	Choral Union collaborates with the college orchestra approximately every other school year. In the past, the ensemble has performed in conjunction with the Green Bay Civic Symphony.	December <i>Messiah</i> with contracted professional orchestra. Spring is approximately every other year with the college symphony orchestra and alternate years with the local regional professional orchestra.	Usually once a year. If we need to, we hire instruments.
Are there fees associated with participating in the ensemble?	Concert attire and the scores for the major work concert.	Scores and concert attire. Students may also take Choral Union as a class and pay the appropriate fee to receive credit.	Students do not pay anything. Non-student members are not required to pay anything either, but a \$20/semester donation is recommended to offset the cost of music.	No	No
Do you provide any music literacy training?	No	No. Once in a while we provide optional enrichment courses.	No	No	On an ad hoc basis.

Table 1 continued

This page contains the remaining questions from the case studies of town and gown choirs. Some of the answers were too long to fit within the original table structure on pages 56 and 57.

How do you recruit and engage younger community members?

Camerata, University of Iowa We do not have a satisfactory way to reach out to the community because there is no budget for ads, posters, etc. Community members (not affiliated with UI) tend to be people who actively sought out the choral program, or we have people connected to UI employees/students/family members who received our on-campus communications.

UMS Choral Union Summer Sings, newspaper ads, emails from the University Musical Society, webpage, word of mouth, former students, interesting repertoire and performance collaborations.

Choral Union, Ripon College Making the rehearsals fast paced and programming challenging and satisfying music helps spark interest. Reducing the rehearsals from twice per week to once per week has helped parents with small children be able to participate.

Handel Oratorio Society Word of mouth, individual contact, media, and social media. We also sometimes combine with my younger auditioned ensemble, which has in general younger members.

Yale Camerata Word of mouth, social media, working with local arts magnet school. It helps to continually remind participants

that we don't mind having kids in the rehearsal room.

What is a recent accomplishment with this ensemble that you are especially proud of?

Camerata, University of Iowa In fall 2014, I was able to have Camerata appear on a high school conference honor choir festival I was guest conducting in central Iowa. It was great to see the choir, which is primarily non-music majors, rise to the occasion and represent UI and the School of Music as professionally as a music major ensemble. They performed well and showed the high schoolers that choral singing is a possibility in college.

In fall 2015, Camerata observed the Civil War anniversary by singing three movements of Paul Carey's *Civil War Requiem*. Through Skype, the choir interacted with the composer; it was a joy to hear the choir ask the composer probing, insightful questions about the music and his inspiration in writing it.

UMS Choral Union We were part of the William Bolcom *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* recording (Naxos) that won four Grammy awards in 2006. We were also part of the Milhaud *Oresteian Trilogy* recording (Naxos) that was nominated for a Grammy in the Best Opera Recording category in 2015. We also sang with the New York Philharmonic Brass during a UM football

halftime show conducted by Alan Gilbert.

Choral Union, Ripon College In 2015, Choral Union performed a themed concert to mark the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. The highlight of this program was Jeffrey Van's *A Procession Winding around Me* with the incomparable Fareed Haque playing guitar. The college's Symphonic Wind Ensemble also performed music inspired by the Civil War, and a music class curated an exhibit in the concert hall's lobby of local artifacts from the period. Our collaborative and crosscurricular concert was well received and truly helped the singers connect with the music on a deeper level.

Handel Oratorio Society One particular accomplishment does not stand out in my mind. However, I am very proud of the willingness and positive attitude of the ensemble to be involved in a wide variety of pieces, projects, and styles.

Yale Camerata Though I am the conductor of this chorus, our graduate student conductors serve as assistant conductors both in rehearsal and in concert. The singers (many of whom are professional singers, teachers, conductors, and instrumentalists) are proud of the fact that they contribute to the education of these future colleagues.

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Likewise, conductors currently leading town and gown choirs might feel that they cannot make changes to how these ensembles operate. Some caution is advised when implementing changes; however, organizations and programs that do not continually innovate are missing opportunities to grow and to better serve their singers.

In some cases, there can also be opportunities to start fresh either by restarting a previously existing ensemble or beginning something new. Christopher Aspaas, associate professor of music and director of choral activities at Texas Christian University, recently restarted TCU's Choral Union. When asked about his reasons for doing so, he writes:

Restarting the Choral Union at TCU is about engaging the lifelong learner and musician. This ensemble is dedicated to support members' continued growth as vocal musicians in addition to providing a conduit to connect them with other singers. I want their Monday night experience to support their singing in church and other ensembles and impact our greater singing community in the Fort Worth area. We are going to make great music and have a wonderful time doing it! Also, I want my students at TCU to see that singing is a lifelong endeavor, not just something that happens in school. My grandmother sang in her church choir until the age of eighty-seven when macular degeneration stole her

ability to read the music. Choir was an integral part of her community.

Conductors should not be afraid to try new things, regardless of whether they want to establish a new town and gown choir or are looking for ways to lead their current organization more effectively and efficiently. With prudent leadership, these choirs can go beyond simply preparing for performances. Conductors of these ensembles have an opportunity to open dialogue between members of a heterogeneous group of individuals. Finding common ground, exploring differences, and ultimately making music together forges understanding and inclusivity. Members are part of something bigger than themselves regardless of their ages, occupations, or skill levels. People need and value the unity and sense of belonging choirs offer.

Town and gown choirs provide a unique opportunity for all participants, regardless of age. Although every ensemble has its own unique structure, history, and traditions, the cultivation of a localized singing culture, wherein singing is valued and routine, could be seen as the highest call of conductors. They can strive to make high-level, communal singing available so that everyone can say, "I have had pleasure. I have had singing." 

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NOTES

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- ² Weston H. Noble, *Creating the Special World*, ed. Steven M. Demorest (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 18.
- ³ Interested readers should consult Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy and the Older Singer* (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2012); Sangeetha Rayapati, *Sing Into Your Sixties...and Beyond! A Manual and Anthology for Group and Individual Voice Instruction* (Delaware, OH: Inside View Press, 2012); Victoria Meredith, *Sing Better As You Age* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2007); Sarah Parks, "Enriching Choral Opportunities for Aging Voices," *Choral Journal* 53, no. 11 (June/July 2013): 32–41; Kimberly VanWeelden, Abby Butler, and Vicki A. Lind, "Working with the Senior Adult Choir: Strategies and Techniques for a Lifetime of Healthy Singing," *Choral Journal* 43, no. 5 (December 2002): 61–69; and Robert T. Sataloff, Deborah Caputo Rosen, Mary Kawkshaw, and Joseph R. Spiegel, "The Aging Adult Voice," *Journal of Voice* 11, no. 2 (June 1997): 156–160.
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- ⁵ Rayapati, 1–24.



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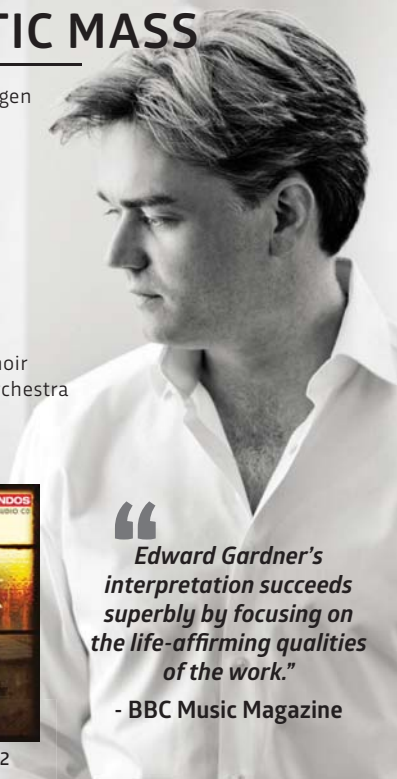


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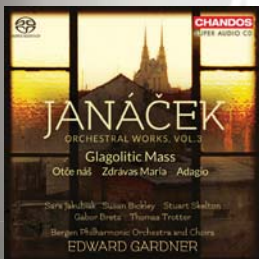
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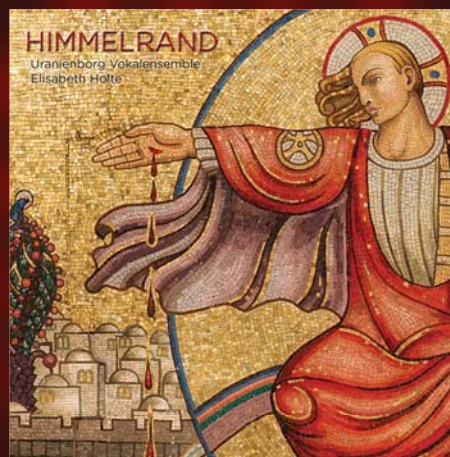
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Music in Worship



Terre Johnson

Those who grew up in the 1960s and '70s in the deep south have vivid memories of the integration of schools and society brought on by the Civil Rights Act and the Brown v. Board of Education decision. I grew up in South Georgia in a family that was strongly pro-integration. My father was an education professor and spent a year in a grant-funded project to help Georgia's rural school districts develop plans for integrating their schools successfully. My mother was a public school teacher, and as the small towns of the south developed private academies that were racially exclusive, we were among those children from white families who were determined to attend and support public schools.

It is no surprise that racial integration did not happen in our churches. And my parents were part of a group of church members who tried to get our Baptist church to open its doors to anyone who wished to worship there. The doors eventually opened, but not before their group started another church among whose founding principles were racial and gender equality.

As my formative church and school experiences became opportunities to meet and befriend people from whom I had previously been segregated, I heard the music of the black church for the first time. My classmates sang gospel and spiritual songs in school talent shows, frequently with great success and audience approval. This music was new and different and (in the verbage of that time) more soulful than our church's worship music.

As a freshman music major in a small college in Alabama, the first piece I encountered in the choral rehearsals that would eventually define my career path was William L. Dawson's "There Is a Balm in Gilead." Our conductor, a soft-spoken man who had grown up in the north, was deeply committed to the native-Alabamian treasure of the Dawson spirituals. That commitment was contagious, and we all loved the experience of these deep wells of musical and spiritual refreshment. When I attended graduate school at Auburn University I encountered Dr. Dawson at nearby

Tuskegee Institute and grew in my love for these songs.

I went on to Florida State University to pursue a doctorate, where a new professor had come the previous year. At thirty years old, André Thomas was already displaying the artistry, scholarship, and charisma that have made him such a great choral conductor. And while he joined a well-known faculty that was steeped in the western European choral tradition, it was a revelation to us all to hear him teach about the slave-songs of the deep south. I loved my encounters with Negro Spirituals as they occurred with my schoolmates and in the college choirs to which I had belonged. But I began to understand them better and desired to never stop studying them when this true scholar of the art form taught about them.

As a church choir director for most of the last forty years, I have observed that among the vast canon of sacred repertoire only a small percentage of available pieces brings equal parts of aesthetic beauty, musical challenge, and spiritual inspiration. For me, achieving the stylistic, technical, and emotional demands of the spiritual repertoire as presented by great historical arrangers like Dawson, William Henry Smith, Jester Hairston, and their contemporaries, or the added challenges of the modern settings of Moses Hogan, André Thomas, and many others, is among the more difficult and worthwhile opportunities I can present to my volunteer choir.

I hope you will read with interest as Eileen Guenther describes her new book in the following article, and gives the slaves from whom these miraculous musical expressions emerged the opportunity to be heard in their own voices. The songs of the Negro Spiritual tradition are worthy of our use as congregational and choral music, and the stories of their originators make the experience of singing them infinitely more meaningful.

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Hallelujah, Amen!

Spirituals

Music of the Soil and the Soul

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Editor's Note: This article is based on the author's book *In Their Own Words: Slave Life and the Power of Spirituals* (MorningStar Music Publishers, 2016)

Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear; that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins.

—W. E. B. Du Bois¹

Slavery has been called “America’s original sin.” It ripped apart families, communities, churches, and a na-

tion. The number of victims of slavery will never be known, nor will the extent of its poisonous effect ever be fully recognized. Its poison afflicted an entire social, political, religious, and economic system and everyone in it: the owners (the victimizers) and the slaves (the victims). The balance of power was totally unequal and, in the gross immorality of slavery, it is the story of the victim that captures our hearts, our sympathy, our imagination, and our admiration.

The creators of Negro Spirituals were fiercely determined survivors of the largest forced migration in history. Many of the captives did not survive. Because of starvation, disease, and cruelty, fifteen to thirty percent of those enslaved died on the march from their African villages to the slave ship that would bring them to the New World. An estimated additional ten to fifteen percent did not survive the Middle Passage. Between the march and the Middle Passage, millions of Africans died. “For every 100 slaves who reached the New World, another forty had died in Africa or during the Middle Passage.”²

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The cruelty they endured once they had been purchased and settled on a plantation reinforced the determination to survive. The enslaved peoples' frustration and anger at the oppression, torture, and control of body, mind, and soul are reflected in their Spirituals and in their autobiographical narratives (over 200 book-length documents) and the 2,300 interviews conducted by the Works Progress Administration.

The following article is based on a book about the history of the Negro Spiritual. The text from the book appears in this article as it was transmitted—sometimes in dialect, sometimes not, and the entries are reflective of the importance a subject held for the slave. There are also excerpts from specific spirituals. When considering the narratives, there are more entries relating to punishment and freedom than any other category because these subjects were foremost in the minds and memories of the slave or former slave. While the subject of punishment does not always figure significantly in the music, freedom is a prevalent subject.

The Spirituals sing of hope—hope for eternal life and hope for escape from the often diabolical control of the owner, or from the many others who controlled a slave's life such as the owner's spouse and children, overseers, slave drivers, jail-house masters, and any white person who saw the slave doing anything arbitrarily considered wrong.

Why Write about the Spirituals and Slavery?

Spirituals are among the most powerful music ever created. Spirituals are also universal; they apply to situations well outside of slavery. As psychologist and musician Arthur Jones writes, Spirituals are “available to all persons who are prepared to open themselves to the unsettling healing power that inhabits these marvelous songs of life.”³ They come out of slavery, indisputably “deeply meaningful, archetypically human experiences, relevant not only to the specific circumstances of slavery but also to women and men struggling with issues of justice, freedom, and spiritual wholeness in all times and places.”⁴ Indeed, they transcend their original circumstances and are “sources of wisdom and guidance in addressing current societal and psychological issues.”⁵

I remember a student who started to cry as we were

rehearsing the Spiritual *Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child*. When I asked him why he was crying, he said he was gay, had just “come out” to his family, and had then been told that he was consequently not welcome home at Christmas. At that moment, he truly felt like a motherless child. A recent study of older African Americans, led by Jill B. Hamilton of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing, showed that at the other end of the age spectrum, individuals not only found their feelings mirrored in the music but that, like the creators of the Spirituals, “song was a coping strategy for participants experiencing stressful life events who described feelings of being comforted, strengthened, able to endure, uplifted, and able to find peace.”⁶

James Lovell, a former Howard University professor and author of arguably the single most important book on Spirituals, estimated their number to be in the range of 800 to 1,000.⁷ In addition to the songs tracing themes such as the life of Jesus and celebrating the liberation of iconic figures in the Hebrew Scriptures, I have identified approximately forty subjects. Some of the subjects these songs address are: resistance, accountability, community, religion, death, steadfastness in the face of adversity, creation, consolation. More Spirituals are devoted to freedom, the second coming, and heaven (basically the same songs) than to any other subject.

There is beauty and genius in these “musical products of an enslaved community's struggle with the vital human issues of life and death, hope and despair, slavery and freedom.”⁸ While focusing on the text helps identify themes and specific subjects, it takes the combination of melody and words to enable the full power of the Spiritual to come through, and it takes both to deliver the insight and healing that can transform a hurting world.

Spirituals: Beginnings and Their Value

Spirituals began with the chants and moans of the field, becoming more subtle and complex over time. Their creation paralleled the hold Christianity took on the slave population, with the real explosion coming after the Second Great Awakening began in 1800. In addition to using rhythms and melodies the slaves had brought from Africa, the creators heard hymns of Isaac Watts and John Wesley in white services and at camp meetings

and appropriated the characteristics of those hymns into the Spirituals. The Spirituals were not composed in the traditional sense of that word but created, with one person beginning a song and others adding to it, resulting in a song that was “owned” by the community.

Society in the American South placed little or no value on the enslaved individual. The Spiritual counters that devaluation with affirmation: “I exist, and I matter.” The eminent theologian James H. Cone explained that “the essence of ante-bellum black religion was the emphasis on the somebodiness of black slaves. The content of the black preacher’s message stressed the essential worth of their person.”⁹ One of the most important aspects of the Spiritual is that it allowed the slave to feel a sense of personal dignity in a situation where they were treated and legally defined, in the words of philosopher and theologian Howard Thurman, as “a tool, a thing, a utility, a commodity.”¹⁰ This affirmation is unequivocal: “You are created in God’s image. You are not slaves...you are God’s children.”¹¹ The language of Spirituals is rich and symbolic, reflecting the slaves’ African heritage. And, as Arthur Jones has observed, Spirituals have a “seemingly magical ability to speak to universal issues of the human spirit.”¹²

Musical Styles

The three widely recognized types of Spirituals are:

- Slow, long-phrase melodies: *Deep River; Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen*
- Songs with syncopated, segmented melodies: *Every Time I Feel the Spirit; Glory, Glory, Hallelujah*
- Call-and-response (African roots, with leader and group alternating): *Woke Up This Morning; Go Down, Moses*

Spirituals are not limited to one type of song but encompass a variety of genres: sermons-in-song, jubilees, contemplative sorrow songs, work songs, shouts. Regardless of genre, the most prevalent structure is that of call-and-response. There are certain prevailing characteristics. Many Spirituals are repetitive and easily extended. By changing only a word or phrase in each verse (*Lord, I*

Want to Be a Christian; Give Me that Old Time Religion) a song could be extended to last infinitely. This was important for two reasons: work went faster and was more productive if accompanied by singing, and the relief from the boredom of manual labor—picking cotton in the fields or grinding grain in the mill—was essential.

The imagery of the text is sometimes unique (*Keep a-Inchin’ Along*), and there is an eternity to the message. The religious songs are overwhelmingly based on biblical texts. Throughout, there are double meanings: Canaan might refer to heaven, a life of freedom in the North, across the Mason-Dixon Line, or in Canada, or even freedom after emancipation. Code songs might seem harmless enough to owners or overseers but could convey to the slaves a hidden meaning, such as the time of a secret meeting or the arrival of a guide to lead them to freedom.

Spirituals address a wide range of emotions, from the wrenching cry when a family is torn apart by a sale (*Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*) to the quiet confidence of *Steal Away*, the joy of *In That Great Gettin’ Up Morning*, or the outright defiance of *Go Down, Moses*. Song was the slaves’ way of expressing their feelings. They sang of the present and sang of the future; they sang in the cabins and the fields, the mill and the kitchen—and the songs were of brokenness and sorrow, expectation and hope.

Melodic and Rhythmic Origins

Melodies of the music have certain modal characteristics and often use the pentatonic scale, a five-note scale utilizing notes spaced the same way as black keys on a piano. The melodies also use patterns that include the flattened third or seventh or the raised sixth. No matter how engaging the melody might be, it is the rhythm—the primary characteristic of African music—that remains the key characteristic of the Spiritual. Countless travelers and scholars have cited the relationship between Spirituals and the music heard in Africa, particularly in West Africa, the region so many slaves had called home, although that is a topic that goes beyond the scope of this particular article.

Creation process? Make no mistake about it: This is folk music! “Every folk song, verse, and melody is the product of a folk community,” said Lovell.

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When [an individual] creates the song and gives it to the group, the group generally accepts, but reserves its veto power. It may strike off portions that, in singing or in the present mood, do not fit. It may even add a phrase or a line. Over the period and range of transmission of the song it may add stanzas, and has often done so.¹³

Spirituals are “community-based.” “I” often means “we.” Regardless of the pronoun, whether specifically personal or communal, these songs reflect the joys or sorrows of the entire community while at the same time actually building community.

Regardless of what they are called—slave songs, plantation songs, jubilee songs, survival songs, religious songs, or sorrow songs—a single individual is never credited with creating a Spiritual that comes out of this time and place. These songs of the people were passed orally

by the enslaved from person to person and community to community, just as their ancestors in Africa had done. Only after they were written down in the 1860s do those outside the community of origin have the means to sing them.

Context Matters

It is impossible to understand the song fully without knowing the life and experiences of the community from which it came, and as choral musicians we have an obligation to our singers and our audiences to familiarize ourselves with the context and communicate it in rehearsal and perhaps even in performance. Therefore, this book includes detailed descriptions of slave quarters, clothing, food, work expectation, and punishments, including material directly from those enslaved.

A community sings, in the words of John Lovell, “the

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entire range of its deep concern.”¹⁴ Knowing the circumstances that gave rise to the songs allows us insight into the slaves’ lives, their fears, their longings, their joys, and their sorrows. By more fully understanding these concerns, one gains an appreciation for the ways their concerns intersect with our own today.

Slave Life

Let each reader put himself in the slave’s place to whatever extent he can. If you are like most of your colleagues in slavery, you are not only distressed by but indignant over your slavery. On your arrival in the colonies you are sometimes exposed naked, without distinction as to sexes, to brutal examination by your purchasers. You are driven against your will to work from dark to dark. You are forced to work without any clothes...

Your food and lodging are subminimal. You hear cloth and shoes referred to as Negro cloth or Negro shoes because of their sleaziness. Your stated name is rarely used; you are generally called upon in burlesque terms or in curse words. You see your closest relatives and friends sold in an instant and forever. You can be sold without being made aware of the fact until your new master comes to pick you up. You are compelled to watch the murderous beatings of your fellow slaves. One of your number was whipped because he cried when he saw his fellow slave and friend beaten to death.

You would have to shut your eyes to the legal aspects of your situation, for how could you ever reconcile yourself to the fact that some man or woman owned you, held papers showing that you belonged to him for life and were forced to obey him in every respect, at the expense of being beaten or sold. You are held to strictest account, but no promise ever made to you is binding, legally or otherwise.¹⁵

Slaveholders took vastly different approaches to their slaves. Not every slaveholder was cruel or abusive. Most were. The distinctions were rooted in the temperament of the owner, the owner’s economic and social status, the locale and size of his plantation or farm, and demands of the particular crop. What slaveholders did have in common were two simple facts: 1) They owned human beings and 2) their material success depended on those human beings working for nothing.

The influential abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass called slavery “the grand aggregation of human horrors.”¹⁶ The horrors began with a human being considered property rather than a person. Many individuals—the owner, overseer, slave driver, slave catcher and slave trader—controlled a slave’s life, food, work, worship, and punishment. Slaves had no legal rights: they could not own property, marry, testify against a white or, in some cases, even against another slave. “One legal opinion held that a slave’s word was assessed at the same value as ‘the cry of an animal.’”¹⁷

A slave’s name or family history received scant attention. A note might be made in the Bible of the owner recording the date a slave child was born and its name, but just as often there was simply an entry noting the owner’s holding had increased by one. As non-persons, slaves took the last name of the owner. Their first names often were also issued by the owner, who might call them by the month in which they were born or purchased or by fanciful names from mythology or history.

“Of my father, I know even less than of my mother. I do not even know his name. I have heard reports to the effect that he was a white man who lived on one of the near-by plantations. Whoever he was, I never heard of his taking the least interest in me or providing in any way for my rearing. But I do not find especial fault with him. He was simply another unfortunate victim of the institution which the Nation unhappily had engrafted upon it at that time.” (Booker T. Washington)¹⁸

Furthermore, the slave could be bought, sold, leased, or given away at the pleasure of the master. And if the master was in debt, his debtor or a legal authority then

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controlled the slave's future. If a slave were injured in any way (unless it was at the hand of another slave), there was no legal redress. "Not until 1821, in South Carolina, was murder of a slave made punishable by death; even then, if the deed was committed in sudden heat and passion, the penalty was a \$500 fine and six months in jail."¹⁹

"I knew a free man of color, who had a wife on a plantation. The patrols went to his house in the night time—he would not let them in; they broke in and beat him: nearly killed him. The next morning he went before the magistrates, bloody and dirty just as he was. All the redress he got was, that he had no right to resist a white man." (Francis Henderson)²⁰

The master's need for control was without bounds, and a slave who disobeyed or even showed "attitude" was subject to brutal treatment. One Kentucky owner chopped up a slave with an axe and threw each piece of the body in the fire while warning the watching slaves this could be their fate if they disobeyed, ran away, or even spoke about the incident.²¹ If a slave did something deemed punishable, there was no legal limit to what the master could do. Not surprisingly, the number of capital crimes in state statutes for slaves was much higher than those applying to white persons. There are many accounts of slaves being charged and punished for their actions but few for whites, even for killing.

"There was a planter in the country, not far from us, whom I will call Mr. Litch. He was an ill-bred, uneducated man, but very wealthy. He had six hundred slaves, many of whom he did not know by sight. His extensive plantation was managed by well-paid overseers. There was a jail and a whipping post on his grounds; and whatever cruelties were perpetrated there, they passed without comment. He was so effectually screened by his great wealth that he was called to no account for his crimes, not even for murder." (Linda Brent)²²

While the emotion of hatred does not often appear directly in the music, the narratives and the interviews clearly convey the slaves' hatred of those who owned them. In addition to their lack of freedom, food, and respect, they deeply resented the simple but profound fact that they were *owned*. They also resented the abundance of insults and punishments they received, often on a daily basis. "It don't seem to me that even upon the Lord's day...and now I know that there is a hereafter, it would be a sin before God to shoot him, if he were here." (John Little)²³

Psychological Damage

Linda Brent, the slave who went to such lengths in order to avoid becoming the mistress of her white master, felt "slavery wasn't so much a political fact as a poison, a disease."²⁴ Her narrative, the first by a female former slave, was also the first to focus on the psychological effects of slavery. The psychological damage inflicted on the slave was as deep as it was unrecognized. "We were all afraid of master: when I saw him coming, my heart would jump up into my mouth, as if I had seen a serpent." (Mrs. James Seward)²⁵

Another ex-slave, Sarah Jackson, remembered:

"I...did not feel safe at night: not knowing whom I might belong to in the morning. It is a great heaviness on a person's mind to be a slave. It never looked right to see people taken and chained in a gang to be driven off. I never could bear to see my own color all fastened together to go on to such a place as down the river. I used to go in the house and shut myself up—I did not know how long before it would be my own fate."²⁶

Enslaved for twenty-five years before he escaped to Canada, William Grose said, after five years of freedom, "I feel like a man, while before I felt more as though I were but a brute," a recurrent theme in the narratives. He no longer feared, he said, looking a white person in the eye, answering a question, oversleeping—and he rejoiced that he had "the rights and privileges of any other man."²⁷

Slave Labor and Punishment

Labor was generally organized one of two ways on the plantations: individual responsibilities or the “gang system.” With the gang system, overseers and drivers were the intermediate authorities. They managed the plantation agricultural operations and saw to it that the enslaved workers were as productive as possible—by whatever means necessary. The slaveholder received the benefit of their work but did not have to care for them if they became invalids or were too old to be productive. It was not unknown for slaves to be literally worked to death.

Slaves who acquired a variety of specialized skills were able to “hire their own time” in such work. They laid railroad track, cobbled shoes, baked bread, built houses, made clothes, drove carriages, and worked in foundries. They also played numerous musical instruments, and the best musicians were in great demand to provide music at plantation celebrations. Song leaders were much in demand and might receive special privileges if they were good at choosing the right songs and setting a tempo that increased productivity.

Punishment was the overriding aspect of slave life. As Frederick Douglass declared, “There is no earthly inducement, in the slave’s condition, to incite him to labor faithfully. The fear of punishment is the sole motive for any sort of industry, with him... [The slaveholder] naturally concludes the slave will be idle whenever the cause for this fear is absent. Hence, all sorts of petty deceptions are practiced, to inspire this fear.”²⁸

Slaves could be punished for just about anything one can think of: inadequate work performance (either in quality or in speed), drinking, gambling, selling something, insolence, the look on the slave’s face, or moving too slowly, lying, stealing, talking inappropriately to whites, seeming too smart or too knowledgeable, or not having passes when off the plantation. And for running away. Punishment was sometimes capricious but always brutal, frequent, repeated, and inescapable.

“In Alabama, I know how two plantations, of one hundred and fifty, and one hundred and thirty each, were managed [slaves] who were whipped and slashed under the kindest over-

seers they had—and when they had a hard overseer, there was no peace at all. It was whip, whip, continually, old and young; nobody got too old to be clear of the lash. It seemed as if the whipping had to be done, whether the work was done or not.” (Henry Gowens)²⁹

While not a frequent topic in the music, no subject is addressed more often than punishment in the slave narratives and interviews; testimonies such as these fill those pages. One Spiritual that addresses punishment (along with other standard aspects of life such as the rations of food and being at the mistress’s beck and call 24/7) is this one:



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*No more auction block for me... Many thousand gone
No more peck of corn for me...
No more driver's lash for me...
No more pint of salt for me...
No more hundred lash for me...
No more mistress' call for me...*

Family Separation

The separation of family members was a constant and soul-wrenching topic of the narratives and interviews, and it even made its way into the music. Spirituals such as *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* and *Mama, Is Master Gonna Sell Us Tomorrow?* speak poignantly to what many slaves considered the worst punishment to which they could be subjected.

*Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.... A long ways
from home....
Sometimes I feel like I'm almos' gone....*

*Mama, is master going to sell us tomorrow? / Yes, yes,
yes! / O, watch and pray
Going to sell us in Georgia? / Yes, yes, yes! / O, watch
and pray
Farewell; mother, I must lebe you / Yes, yes, yes! / O,
watch and pray
Mother don't grieve after me / No, no, no! / O, watch
and pray
Mother, I'll meet you in heaven / Yes, my child! / O,
watch and pray*

“When the white folks brung ‘em over here, they snatched ‘em up and sold and traded ‘em away from one another. The chilluns was took away from their pas and mas. Husbands and wives was separated and sold.” (Lucy Donald)³⁰

Slaves were property, although not often treated as valued property. As mere property, they could be a form of currency.

“[The slaveowner] was a drunkard and a gambler, for he had taken three different women’s sons, between the ages of twelve and fourteen

years, and gambled them off and came back home without them, leaving the parents in anguish.” (William H. Robinson)³¹

They were bought and sold swiftly and frequently, in order to settle a debt or fulfill the terms of a will, to punish the slave who had shown attitude or attempted escape, to punish the family, or simply because they were no longer needed.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 had a profound and disastrous effect on slaves because it not only required escaped slaves to be returned to their owners but also required the entire citizenry to assist in this action. Failing to do so resulted in a fine or imprisonment. It was strictly illegal to aid the escape of a slave.

“After my escape from slavery, I married a free colored man. We were comfortably settled in the States, and were broken up by the fugitive slave law—compelled to leave our home and friends, and to go at later than middle life into a foreign country among strangers.” (Slave name unknown)³²

Religion: Visible and Invisible Worship

The majority of the songs that have come down to us are religious. The importance of the Bible (King James, 1611) as a source of texts cannot be overstated. It has often been said that there are sufficient scriptural passages captured in the Spirituals that, if the Bible were lost, the enslaved would still have had enough left in the music to more than provide for their spiritual needs. Spirituals record the liberation stories of the Old Testament in songs such as *Go Down, Moses* and *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel*. They trace the life of Jesus from birth (*Go Tell it on the Mountain*) to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (*Ride on, King Jesus*) to his crucifixion (*Were you There?*) to his resurrection (*He Rose*). There are others such as *My God is a Rock* and *Oh, He Raise-a Poor Lazarus* that record acts in the ministry of Jesus.

The question of religion was a thorny one. If the owners felt that baptism would result in freedom for a slave, or if they feared that the slave might be exposed to some of the liberation passages from the Bible, then

they did not permit religious involvement. However, if it meant slaves might become more obedient as a result of their conversion, that is, if they took to heart the sermons focusing on a text like “servants, obey your master,” then the owners permitted exposure to religion. Slaves often attended worship with their masters, sitting in the slave gallery or standing outside listening through the windows.

More lenient owners might even allow their slaves to hold their own worship in a church on the plantation under the scrutiny of a white overseer. The services that most fed the souls of the slaves were ones they conducted themselves, often in secret. In these services, frequently held in the woods far away from the main house, they could form their own responses to the owners’ hypocrisy, their own version of God’s promise of freedom, and their own sense of community. They incorporated Bible verses along with snippets of the hymns they had

heard. But always, they created their own music. However, they risked severe punishment if caught.

“Any meetings of slaves ‘under pretense of divine worship’ might be dispersed and the slaves could receive twenty-five lashes on the bare back without trial. After Nat Turner’s uprising in 1831, the Virginia legislature passed a hard bill prohibiting any Negro—ordained, licensed, or otherwise—from holding religious or other assemblies at any time. To hold or attend such a meeting called for thirty-nine lashes.”³³ No wonder Spirituals reflect the need for secrecy in worship or prayer.

The invisible church—the church where slaves worshipped in secret—was fueled by the music, claims Wyatt Tee Walker, pastor and author. “Nearly all the Spirituals are derivatives of biblical themes, but heavy emphasis fell upon those themes where by supernatural means God delivered the faithful from impossible circumstances.”³⁴ As Morehouse Glee Club Music

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Director Wendell Whalum said, the music expressed “the gamut of human experience” with “the constant theme...of freedom.”³⁵

Spirituals and slave religion have been said to focus on the “compensatory” aspect of the enslaved person’s life; that is, thinking “we can put up with anything here on earth because we will have our reward in heaven.” At the same time, according to Benjamin Mays, a son of former slaves who became president of Morehouse College, Spirituals “affirm a complete trust in God to make right in the next world what was done wrong in this world... The Spirituals provided an emotional security for oppressed slaves during turbulent times. Since slaves had no economic or political security in this world, they put their trust in Jesus whom they believed would make everything all right.”³⁶

Code Songs and Resistance: Singing What They Could Not Say

There is a long list of ways that slaves resisted their masters: slowing down work, poisoning the owner’s family, starting fires, pretending to be pregnant, faking disability when on the auction block, self-mutilation, suicide, mothers killing their babies so they wouldn’t have to grow up as slaves. Escape was a primary form of resistance, but it was not without its challenges. Where should they go? Whom could they trust for information or directions? Would they be turned in for the promised reward? Where would they find food? What would happen to their families if they ran away?

Singing, too, was a form of resistance. The slaves could sing what they dared not say. Singing *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* had multiple possible interpretations. It could signal the impending arrival of a conductor on



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the Underground Railroad to lead them to freedom or an upcoming time for worship or a meeting to plan an insurrection. It would be heard by the slaveholder as an innocent song while the intended meaning was clear to those in the enslaved population. Several songs, including *Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass* and *Let Us Break Bread Together* (“Let us praise God together on our knees”), have been associated with resistance meetings.³⁷ Likewise, *Steal Away* may have signaled a secret meeting. It is the one song with which the name of a possible composer has been attached: it may have been composed by Nat Turner, but at the very least, it has been connected with him since his uprising in 1831. In addition, *Go Down, Moses* was connected with both Harriet Tubman and Denmark Vesey.

The resistance encoded in *Wade in the Water* has multiple facets, perhaps more than any other single song. First, waterways were boundaries between the freedom and enslavement (such as the Ohio River); slaves escaping often walked besides rivers or creeks and moved to the water when dogs were heard barking in the distance to make it harder to track their scent. It references healing (the pool of Bethesda as recorded in the New Testament in John 5), and confidence that God would, indeed, “trouble the waters” and ultimately the slaves would be free when they would be reunited with their friends (in heaven, or in freedom—*If you get there before I do...tell all my friends I'm comin' too* they sang.)

Meanings were fluid, changing according to the situation at the time as interpreted by the singer and by the community. While *Follow the Drinking Gourd* is embedded with a map for escape, others are less specific but nonetheless held meaning for the singers. Sometimes particular songs were avoided entirely in the presence of white authority. In one of many testimonies on this subject, Elijah Green explains: “One song I know I used to sing to the slaves when Master went away, but I wouldn't be so fool as to let him hear me.”³⁸ Secrecy in these matters was essential for the slaves' survival. When former slave Robert Smalls was asked whether master knew anything of the secret life of the slaves, he replied, “No, sir; one life they show their masters and another life they don't show.”³⁹

Some songs were more explicit than others. For instance, the later stanzas of *Go Down, Moses* contain the

lines, “No more shall they in bondage toil...let them come out with Egypt's spoil.” One can hardly be much more explicit than that!

“Singing, too, was a form of resistance. The slaves could sing what they dared not say.”

The unlocking of the “biblical code” in the music is not difficult: Egypt, Babylon, or hell referenced the land of enslaved people or specifically being sold “South.” Pharaoh or Satan signified slave owners or, indeed, anyone who mistreated the slave. The slaves referred to themselves as the Israelites. Patrollers were Pharaoh's army. Jesus or King Jesus referred to anyone who had the slave's interest at heart. Obtaining freedom was crossing over the Jordan River, which might actually be a reference to the Ohio River. The Promised Land might refer to Africa, the North, Canada, Canaan, or heaven.

Conclusion

The value of knowing—in *their own words*—the context that gave birth to the Spirituals, their meanings, and the potential for connecting to life in the twenty-first century is incalculable to those who sing and conduct.

Entwined in the rhythm of that freedom song were the perceptive musings of Olaudah Equiano, the questions of the child Broteer, and the sweet probing rhymes of Phillis Wheatley. That ode of unleashed joy celebrated the unquestioning fury of Denmark Vesey, Gabriel, Nat Turner, and John Brown. Each joyous lyric told the story of the visionaries Richard Allen, David Walker, and Jarena Lee.

The newly liberated slaves sang for themselves, for their new country, and for the thousands upon thousands of Africans ripped from the

Spirituals Music of the Soil and the Soul

clutches of home. They sang for those who surrendered to the water during the passage, for those who refused to eat, for those who died chained below the decks of a creaking ship. And they sang for the survivors, who lived through the indignities of torn families, numbing labor, and the dreaded auction block.

No song ever held so much.⁴⁰ 

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Sacred Music

Choral Reviews

When Jesus Wept

William Billings (1746-1800: 1770)

Text: Perez Morton

(1751-1837: 1770)

Arr. and alt. by Gwyneth Walker

(b. 1947: 2016)

SATB with div., Piano and

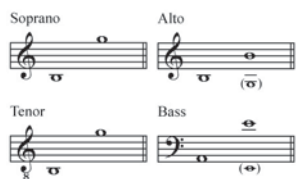
Percussion or Organ with optional

Brass and Percussion (4:00)

ECS Publishing ECS 7034

(Full Score ECS 7528)

e-address: www.ecspublishing.com



William Billings's canon *When Jesus Wept* has long been a favorite of choirs of every level of accomplishment. Gwyneth Walker provides a new, emotionally moving setting that utilizes the original canon material yet still succeeds in placing the material into a new wineskin.

Walker's arrangement includes the addition of an achingly haunting refrain, "my son, my son," evoking Thomas Weelkes's *When David Heard*. This refrain tolls lamentation throughout, in union with the optional timpani. The piano accompaniment paints a weeping *obligato* that underpins Billings's beautiful

melody. The transformation of the original triple meter time signature to common time completes the new structure.

The relentless forward rolling motion of the accompaniment succeeds in driving the dramatic tension of the choral texture. Walker's phrases overlap antiphonally between the upper and lower voices, entering stretto-like with increasing urgency, culminating at the mid-point of the piece in a dissonant, unaccompanied cluster chord that paints the "falling tear" text like blurred vision. The momentum restarts with a texture similar to the opening, though the upper voices now accompany the men's canon in a mournful hum. The hum eventually shifts to the "my son" text and comes to dominate the choral material, again driving the piece toward a climax of fortissimo dissonance accompanied by the full instrumental complement. The choir concludes the piece, again on the text "the falling tear," with an appropriately cascading minor scale canon.

Performance demonstration:

<http://www.canticle distributing.com/audioplayer.php?n=7034.mp3>

This Is My Father's World

Arr. Elaine Hagenberg

(b. 1979: 2016)

text: Maltbie D. Babcock

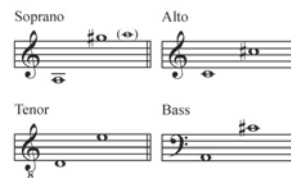
(1858-1901: 1901)

SATB, Piano, Violin (4:00)

Hinshaw Music

HMC2494

e-address: www.hinshawmusic.com



Elaine Hagenberg begins her arrangement of Maltbie Babcock's famous hymn *This Is My Father's World* conventionally, with a light upper-octave piano accompaniment that gently dialogues with a lovely violin solo. The opening simplicity of the famous TERRA BEATA tune, however, gives way later to clever, lush harmonies, highlighted by a fantastic key change during a phrase elision in the middle of the piece and an unexpected shift to the relative minor just a few bars later.

The piece soars with eloquence and ingenuity yet remains accessible. The bass and tenor ranges, in particular, are limited to a sing-able *tessitura*, which will lend itself well to the amateur church ensemble.

Sacred Music Choral Reviews

Hagenberg's well-crafted choral writing, however, includes enough vocal interplay and subtlety to satisfy the more accomplished choir as well.

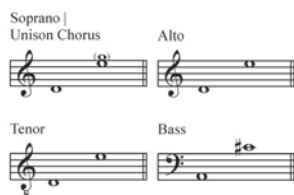
The solo violin, present throughout, is an essential part of this piece's success, though it requires a player with some skill. The counter-melodies in the violin, along with an almost orchestral piano, weave above, underneath, and through the beautiful choral texture. The solo violin part is included in the choral octavo—a nice bonus!

The piece ends with a sparkling, circular echo on the words "and heaven and earth be one," utilizing alternating dissonance and consonance, finally culminating in a satisfying unison tonic, symbolizing earth reaching up to heaven.

Performance demonstration:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfWjey9tQS0>

Antiphonal Processional

Hal H. Hopson (b. 1933: 2016)
Text: John 12:13 and Edward H. Plumptre (1821-1891: 1865)
SATB and unison choir, organ, handbells, optional brass, timpani, congregation (3:10)
Choristers Guild CGA1485
e-address: www.choristersguild.org/



Hal Hopson provides a new tune and multi-use festival setting of Edward Plumptre's hymn *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart*, to be sung on Palm Sunday or Advent #1, with alternate texts provided for General Use or Christ the King Sunday.

As the title suggests, Hopson recommends a number of different

acoustic arrangements for the multiple performing forces. Despite the scope of those forces, the arrangement is very accessible. The versatility and multiple available configurations are the basis for the success of this work. This piece is certainly appropriate for a large ensemble, though the composer suggests that it may be sung with only organ, and the treble choir replaced with adult sopranos if needed, for the smaller choir.

Opening antiphonal statements of "hosanna!" and a brass introduction give way to a unison first verse over a thickly orchestrated texture. Verse two introduces a busier choral setting with staggered entrances, symbolizing the "answering echoes" in the text. Verse three is reserved for the unison treble choir, followed by an extended florid brass and organ fanfare interlude. The congregation joins the chorus and instruments on verse four. Hopson provides a descant for the upper voices during this final verse. On the demonstration recording, the unison trebles join the sopranos, though it seems perfectly acceptable for directors to have the children continue singing the unison hymn tune along with the congregation, particularly if the high G is prohibitive. The edition includes an optional choral and instrumental *coda* and a reproducible bulletin insert for congregational use.

Performance demonstration:
<http://www.choristersguild.org/store/cga1485-antiphonal-processional/6893/>

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I Will Pray and Sing

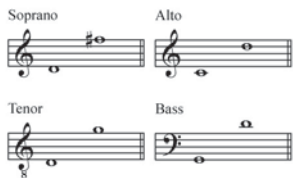
Jocelyn Hagen (b. 1980: 2016)

Text: 1 Cor. 14:15, Rom 8:26-27,
Eph. 3:14-19

SATB with descant, piano (3:40)

Jubal House Publications JH-1220

(distributed by Hal Leonard)

e-address: www.halleonard.com

Jocelyn Hagen's new anthem, *I Will Pray and Sing*, reflects upon the nature of prayer and song. The piece opens with a homophonic texture, reminiscent of Anglican chant, oscillating between a compound meter texture and the occasional duplet. This rhythmic pendulum serves both to mirror exactly the syllabic stress of the text while also calling to mind prayer traditions in which rocking back and forth is a prominent practice. Hagen employs a beautiful descant solo over this chant.

The peaceful opening abruptly transforms over a suddenly active and expansive accompaniment into an exploration of intercessory prayer. Hagen transitions back to the opening material by briefly fragmenting the original homophony amongst the voices before settling back into the original swaying mantra of the opening.

The third and final passage features harmonic, rhythmic, and textural transformation in the music. Hagen employs staggered Lydian scale entrances in the choir, which

make the return to the lowered fourth shortly afterward satisfying. She sets up an interior climax highlighted by a modulation back to the original key, and rising counterpoint in the upper voices culminating on the word "heights." Hagen completes the piece with a repetition of the opening choral chant, though lingers at the end on an unresolved plagal cadence—fitting commentary on the efficacy of unending prayer.

Performance demonstration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WAA2GQYweQ>

Azamer bishvokhin:***A Shabbat zemer******(I Will Sing with Praises)***Attr. to Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav
(1772-1811)Text: Rabbi Isaac Luria
(1534-1572)Arr. by Joshua Jacobson
(b. 1948: 2002)

SATB with div., piano (8:00)

ECS Publishing ECS 5742

e-address: www.ecspublishing.com

Rabbi Isaac Luria's medieval Aramaic poem was written to be sung at the Sabbath table. The original melody has not survived, though this new arrangement combines the text with a melody attributed to Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, an important

Hassidic teacher. Influenced by *Kabbalah* traditions, the text portrays the Sabbath as a bride and the singers as the "bridesmen." The poem includes imagery that is celebratory and mystical, and includes language depicting physical intimacy as metaphor. The edition includes a helpful transliteration of the Aramaic and both a literal English translation and a poetic, rhymed performance translation, all courtesy of the arranger, Joshua Jacobson.

Jacobson works through the lengthy text with a consistent and concise bell-like piano and frequent choral *divisi*, creating a warm, romantic texture. Through timely modulations, unaccompanied sections, and tasteful chromaticism, Jacobson brings new devotional life to both this text and melody.

The setting is strophic, with only a few instances of echoed repetition between the voices. To create contrast and interest between the sixteen stanzas, Jacobson reimagines the accompaniment throughout, almost like a theme and variation, and employs frequent choral "ahs," providing a fluid color palette upon which to place Rabbi Nahman's melody.

Performance demonstration:

<http://www.canticleistributing.com/azamer-bishvokhin.html>

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THE ACDA INTERNATIONAL CONDUCTORS EXCHANGE PROGRAM ICEP OF THE AMERICAS

by T. J. Harper

In 2016, ACDA created the Standing Committee on International Activities in response to the new structure approved by its membership. Central to this restructuring was the desire to innovate and revise the current state of the association in an ongoing effort to better serve ACDA members. The International Conductors Exchange Program continues to serve as a cornerstone of this initiative and plays a significant role in advancing ACDA's mission of *inspiring excellence in choral music education, performance, composition, and advocacy*. In the November 2016 issue of the *Choral Journal*, ICEP alumna Kimberly Dunn Adams eloquently expresses why this initiative remains integral to the future of our association:

“I have always believed choral music is vital in our communities as a venue for expression, education, appreciation of beauty, and connection to others. Ultimately, these exchanges are not about discovering and understanding simple “differences” or “similarities” between countries—as artists and humans, our commonalities are inherent. Rather, the real revelation was the dramatic expansion of our exposure to and conception of the immense world of musical literature, language, trends, and

techniques. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity and wish to encourage others to seek the same.”

In 2017, ACDA continues the important work of international exchange with ICEP of the Americas. With a total of thirty conductors from seven countries, ICEP of the Americas is a robust expansion of this ACDA initiative to include multiple international partners during a single year. The international ICEP Conducting Fellows are established leaders of the choral profession, and this year they represent Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, the United States, and Uruguay. The first half of this exchange will take place in the US and center around the ACDA National Conference in Minneapolis, MN, this March. The second half of this exchange will occur throughout 2017 when the ICEP Conducting Fellows will travel from the United States to their Latin American host countries, where they will be in residence with local choral organizations and institutions of higher education.

ICEP Liaisons

The continued success of this exchange program is due in large part to ACDA members who have heard the call to service and have stepped forward with vigor. These individu-

als oversee all aspects of the US residency for our Visiting International Conductors (VIC) from Latin America, and our counterparts from Latin America oversee all logistics of US residencies in our partner countries. Their contributions to ACDA, the ICEP, and the choral music profession cannot be overstated. This year's exchange would not be possible without our partners from Latin America. The ICEP Liaisons for the 2017 ICEP of the Americas are:

Timothy Westerhaus

Northwest & Western Division

Jeremy Jones

North Central & Central Division

Wendy Moy

Eastern Division

Emily Williams Burch

Southern Division

Oscar Escalada

Argentina & Uruguay

David Ramirez

Costa Rica & Guatemala

Jorge Cozatl

Mexico

Eduardo Lakshevitz

Brazil

THE INTERNATIONAL CONDUCTORS EXCHANGE PROGRAM

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows United States



Nicholaus Cummins is director of choral activities at Northwestern State University.



Alan Stevens is associate director of choral activities at East Tennessee State University.



Wendy Moy is director of choral activities and music education at Connecticut College.



Bradley Miller is director of choral activities at the University of Minnesota, Morris.



Nicolas Dosman is director of choral activities at the University of Southern Maine.



Phillip Shoultz III is the associate conductor of VocalEssence.



Jose "Peppie" Calvar is assistant director of choral activities at Syracuse University.



Paul Hondorp is director of choral activities at Western Kentucky University.



Joseph Osowski is choral director at St. Michael – Albertville High School.



Sherrill Blodgett is director of choral activities at Castleton University.



Trent Brown is director of choral activities at Florida Gulf Coast University.



Sara Durkin is choral director at North Andover High School.



Caron Daley is director of choral activities at Duquesne University.



Matthew Erpelding is director of choral activities at Lebanon Valley College.



Arian Khaefi is director of choral activities at Towson University.

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows Argentina



Camilo Santostefano is conductor at Conservatorio Ástor Piazzolla.



Virginia Bono is musical director of the Chamber choir Estudio Coral Meridies for The Girls Choir at the Instituto Coral de la Provincia de Santa Fe.

ICEP OF THE AMERICAS



Emiliano Linares is conductor at College of Juridical and Social Sciences, National University of La Plata.



Fabián Vargas Castillo is conductor at Estudio Choralia.



Bianca Malafaia is a conductor at Presbyterian Church of Rio de Janeiro.



Santiago Serna is conductor at Domingo Zípoli Institute.

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows Guatemala



Dulce María Santos Azurdia is music teacher at National Conservatoire of Music, Guatemala.



Eduardo Nóbrego is director of Coral Universitário Gazzzi de Sá.

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows Uruguay



Rodrigo Faguaga is conductor at Coro Rapsodia & Coro Panambí.

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows Mexico



Julio Morales is a composer, arranger, and the founding conductor of Vox Populi Project.



Tarik Bispo is music minister at Baptist Church of Recife.



Ana Laura Rey is conductor at Music School's Choir University of the Republic.



Abraham Tinoco is director of Jóvenes Cantores de Morelos Choir Fulgencio in Ávila Guevara, Cuernavaca.

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows Costa Rica



Susan Hernández Osés is conductor at Allegro Choral, D' Allegro in the Culture House of Heredia.

2017 ICEP Conducting Fellows Brazil



José Alberto Corulli is a music teacher at Santa Marcelina Catholic School, Botucatu.

If you are interested in learning more about the International Conductors Exchange Program or how to become involved with the conductor exchange in 2017, please contact T. J. Harper, Chair of the ACDA Standing Committee on International Activities: harper.tj@gmail.com. Consider joining our ICEP group on Facebook or the ICEP Choralnet Community (choralnet.org/home/280632) for the latest news and information about upcoming exchanges.

T. J. Harper is the chair of the Standing Committee on International Activities, director of ACDA's International Conductors Exchange Program, and associate professor of music at Providence College.

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STUDENT TIMES

Jason Paulk, Editor <jason.paulk@enmu.edu>

Intonation

by Bruce Dalby

Author's note: To see and hear demonstrations of the phenomena described in this article, go to <https://youtu.be/PfwwLp3_X0g>.

Accurate intonation is widely recognized as an essential element of effective musical performance. Musical performers, teachers and conductors must develop the aural skills necessary to make accurate judgments of intonational quality. These skills are of two general types:

1) *Interval judgments*, in which musical intervals heard are compared to intervals in the listener's memory; and

2) *Beat awareness*, in which the effect of beating phenomena on the perceived "smoothness" or "roughness" of musical sounds is used as a guide to intonation.

We are concerned here with only the second category. The purpose is to introduce the reader to certain physical phenomena that affect musicians' intonation judgments.

Musical Acoustics

Musicians are trained to listen for beats that occur when two voices or instruments performing the same note are not on precisely the same pitch. Beats are perceived as "periodic variations in volume whose rate is the difference between the two frequencies."¹ (Note that this definition of beat must be distinguished from the more familiar concept of rhythmic beat, a very different animal, indeed!) Performers strive to eliminate these unpleasant beats by matching unison pitches carefully. But what about non-unison pitches? Can beat awareness be used as a guide in tuning chord tones to each other?

The answer is yes. To understand why, you need to know a little about *acoustics*, the science of musical sound.

Complex Musical Tones

You probably know that the pitch of a musical tone is determined by the speed of vibration of the physical medium producing the tone. The faster the vibration, the higher the pitch we hear. But why do different instruments playing the same pitch have different tone qualities? Why

does a flute playing a given note, for instance, sound so different from an oboe playing the same note?

The reason is that a musical tone consists of many different "notes," not just one. The primary tone, or *fundamental*, is the strongest (loudest or greatest in amplitude), but there are other pitches, called *harmonics* or *overtones*, that contribute to the *timbre*, or tone quality, of that instrument.

Listening for Overtones

Try listening for the presence of multiple pitches in musical tones. A good way to do this is to play (and hold) C an octave below middle C on an acoustic piano. You should be able to hear two very strong overtones on middle C and G above middle C (Figure 1 on page 86).

The Harmonic Series

Most musical tones generate a series of pitches above the fundamental according to the pattern shown in Figure 2 on the next page. This is known as the *harmonic series*. An instrument playing a C2 produces all these other pitches at the same time (it also generates many pitches beyond those

displayed). Notice how each successive interval in the series is smaller than the one preceding it. Higher harmonics also have less amplitude, or volume, on the average than harmonics lower in the series.

The interval relationships in the harmonic series always remain the same, regardless of where the fundamental is located. The intervals proceed in this order: octave, perfect fifth, perfect fourth, major third, minor third, etc. An instrument playing a C3 would produce the harmonic series shown in Figure 3.

Timbre

The *timbre*, or tone quality, of a musical tone is determined by the quantity and relative strength of its overtones. A tone with an abundance of strong overtones, especially in the upper register, will sound brilliant and bright. A trumpet is a good example of an instrument that produces a bright tone. A flute tone is much more pure, less complex. Its upper harmonics are fewer and weaker than those of the trumpet. Consequently, its timbre is not as bright.

The Chord of Nature

Look closely again at the harmonic series shown in Figures 2 and 3. Notice that the first six harmonics, the strongest ones, form a major triad. The major triad is sometimes called the chord of nature. When played by an ensemble the various instruments reinforce the strongest overtones being generated by other instruments. We call the result har-

monious, or *consonant*.

The major triad is the most consonant chord type because of this alignment of the overtone structure. We consider other chords less consonant (more dissonant) to the extent that this alignment does not occur. Thus, a minor triad is a little more dissonant than a major triad, a diminished triad a little more still, and so on.

Perhaps now you can see how these acoustical phenomena affect the tuning of an ensemble playing a major triad. If the various instruments play in tune with the harmonics being generated by other instruments, the triad will sound in tune. If not, the resultant beats will make the triad sound out of tune. These beats are not as strong as those created by out-of-tune unisons, but they are strong enough to detract from the resonant, pure sound of the triad.

Beats between Non-Unison Tones

Let's take a closer look at the tuning of major triads. On the left in Figure 4 is a major triad as it might be played by a quartet. On the right in Figure 4 is the harmonic series of the bass up to the fifth *partial* (another term for harmonic or overtone). The soprano, alto, and tenor are sounding pitches that are present in the bass tone. If the fundamentals of any of these notes are out of tune with the corresponding overtones in the harmonic series of the bass, beats will result.

Beats between Harmonics

We've seen how beats can be created when one instrument's funda-

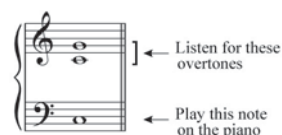


Figure 1. Listening for Overtones



Figure 2. The Harmonic Series

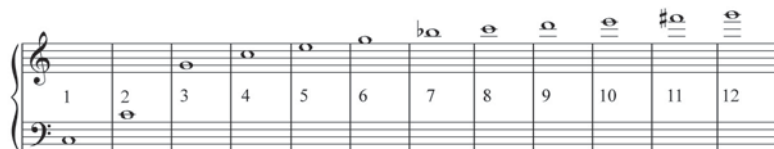


Figure 3. The Harmonic Series of C₃



mental is out of tune with an overtone being generated by another instrument. But what about a triad voiced such as the one in Figure 5? The first five partials of the C in the bass are shown in the center (the fundamental is considered the first partial). As you can see, the tenor's G is not present in the harmonic series of the bass. Is there any way for the tenor to tune to the bass?

The tenor *can* tune to the bass. Just as fundamentals can be tuned to harmonics, harmonics can be tuned to other harmonics. On the right in Figure 6 are the first several partials of the tenor's harmonic series. Notice that the tenor's 2nd partial is the same as the 3rd partial of the bass.

For the chord to sound in tune, the tenor fundamental must be tuned so that these two partials are the same pitch. If not, the partials will beat against each other and the chord will sound out of tune.

It should be stressed that playing in tune doesn't necessarily require a lot of conscious mental calculations of the type we've been describing. Good performers do, however, become so familiar with the sound of in-tune harmony that they can tune various chord structures with great accuracy and consistency. All it takes is 1) knowing what to listen for and 2) practice.

Musical Temperament

We've introduced some of the acoustical phenomena that affect the way we make judgments of intonation. Certain aspects of acoustics, however, make intonation a little more complicated than our discussion so far has suggested. We now need to examine the concept of *temperament*, a term that refers to specific methods of assigning pitches to the twelve notes of the chromatic scale.

The chromatic scale as we know it is a relatively recent development. Most early music was diatonic, using seven or fewer notes to each octave. As the use of chromaticism and modulation increased, so did the need for a chromatic scale that would sound good in any key.

The perfect fifth seems well suited for constructing such a scale. After the octave it is the strongest harmonic. In addition, a succession of perfect fifths progresses through all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. In other words, perfect fifths piled on top of each other lead in a circle back to the starting note.

If each succeeding note is placed a pure, beatless fifth above the one before, it should be easy to form in-tune major or minor chords on any of the twelve notes, since those strong 3rd partials, the perfect fifths, will be in tune. Unfortunately, things don't always work as we expect them to.

Figure 7 shows a succession of twelve perfect fifths starting and finishing on C, a "circle of fifths" (there are a number of octave transpositions, but you get the idea). We begin with the first interval, C up to G, tuning the G to form a pure, beatless



Figure 4. Beats between non-unison tones

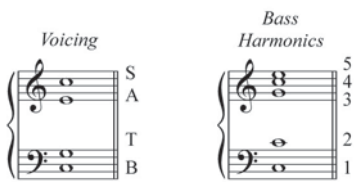


Figure 5. Beats Between Harmonics



Figure 6. Beats Between Harmonics (cont.)



Figure 7. The Perfect Fifths of the Circle of Fifths

STUDENT TIMES

perfect fifth with the C, then tune D in the same fashion to the G (second interval), and continue through the remaining notes of the circle of fifths.

When we finish the process, there will be 12 beautifully tuned fifths, but with a problem. The C of the last fifth will be 22 cents higher than the initial C. The fifth of nature, the beatless fifth of the harmonic series, is just a tad too big for the purposes of constructing a twelve-tone chromatic scale.

The solution to this problem is to adjust the pitch of the perfect fifth just slightly so that a circle of 12

fifths results in an octave of twelve half steps of equal size. To *temper* is to modify or adjust in some way. In music, *temperament* refers to systems of tuning in which intervals deviate from the “pure,” acoustically correct, intervals of the harmonic series. An equally tempered fifth is about 2 hundredths of a half step (or two *cents*) *smaller* than the pure fifth of nature. And a chromatic scale with all half steps (and all other intervals) of equal size is called an *equal tempered* scale.

The equal tempered scale is a compromise. By mistuning the perfect fifths slightly, we are able to

play in all 12 keys with only a small amount of “out-of-tuneness.” Because of its great versatility, equal temperament has become the standard tuning system. Most musical instruments are tuned as closely as possible to the equal tempered scale.

So why is this important? It isn’t easy, after all, to hear the two-cent difference between tempered and pure fifths.

Intonation of the Major Third

Let’s take a look at the other member of the major triad, the major third. We need to know how the pitch of the major third of the tempered scale compares to the natural third generated in the harmonic series of the root.

Figure 8 shows the first five harmonics of the harmonic series; notice again how they form the notes in a major triad, with the fifth partial corresponding to the third of the triad.

We’re interested in the pitch of the fifth harmonic in the chord of nature built on C (an E) and the equal tempered E derived by the process just described. As it turns out, the difference between tempered and pure thirds is much greater than that between tempered and pure fifths. A pure major third is 14 cents lower than the major third of equal temperament. Tempered major triads produce a moderate amount of beating and cannot truly be considered “in tune.” Their sound doesn’t bother us, however, because we have been conditioned to accept it. Equal temperament is a compromise sys-

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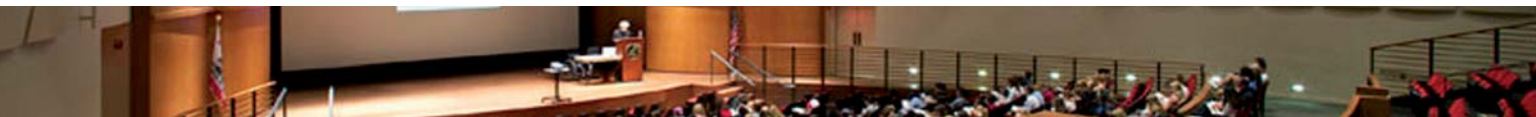
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tem that spreads out-of-tuneness equally among all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. We consider the flexibility of equal temperament so useful that we're willing to put up with its relatively minor imperfections.

Limitations of Just Intonation

Demonstrations of chordal passages performed in just intonation and equal temperament versions typically leave the listener astonished by how “out of tune” equal temperament sounds compared to just intonation. It follows, then, to ask the question: Why not establish just intonation as the target intonation system for all music making? Unfortunately, devising an all-purpose just intonation tuning system turns out to be as infeasible as building a 12-tone chromatic scale by stacking perfect fifths in the fashion described earlier.

To build usable chords in major tonality, we start with the “primary” triads of tonic, dominant, and subdominant (I, V, and IV). We have already analyzed the pitches of the members of the tonic triad. The numbers in Figure 9 indicate deviations from equal temperament (in cents) of those notes tuned in just



Figure 8. Intonation of Major Thirds

intonation:

For the dominant triad (Figure 10), the root (G) is already set (+2), the fifth (D) would be 2 more cents sharp to equal temperament (+4), and the third (B) is plus 14 cents to equal temperament minus the +2 cents of the root:

Pitch levels for the subdominant triad are shown in Figure 11. The root (F) is 2 cents flat to equal temperament, because we derive its root by going down a pure—2 cents larger—perfect fifth from C. The fifth (C) is the same as the tonic; no difference from equal temperament. The third (A) is an extra 2 cents flat from equal temperament because it is derived from the 2-cents-flat root F.

The pitch adjustments just discussed produce a just intonation major scale with pitch deviations from equal temperament as shown in Figure 12.

If the above math is too much to follow, then just take my word for it that tuning the seven notes of the diatonic scale in this fashion results in wonderful sounding I, IV, and V triads; the minor iii and vi triads also sound as good as minor chords can sound. If Western music needed no more harmonic variety than these five chords (in major tonality, that is), then life would indeed be wonderful. As we add more harmonic functions, however, the limitations of just intonation become glaringly apparent.



Figure 9. Tonic Triad in C major Tuned in Just Intonation



Figure 10. Dominant Triad in C major (G) Tuned in Just Intonation



Figure 11. Subdominant Triad in C major (F) Tuned in Just Intonation



Figure 12. Major Scale in Just Intonation

The ii chord plays an important role in major harmony. Basing it on the +4 cent scale degree 4 already set, we arrive at the calculations in Figure 13.

The discrepancies with the notes in our just intonation scale are easily noted. The biggest problem is scale degree 6, in this case A. That note was tuned way down in pitch (16 cents) to serve as the major third of the IV chord, but it needs to be 6 cents sharp to equal temperament to serve as the fifth of the ii chord.

The ii chord in major tonality poses unyielding complications to the attempt to devise a usable and practical just intonation tuning system. As harmonic complexity continues to increase, problems compound further. Ultimately, Western musicians gave up on the quest and settled on equal temperament as the best compromise system.

Just Intonation and Equal Temperament in Context

Although equal temperament is accepted as the most versatile over-



Figure 13. Supertonic (ii) chord in C major Tuned in Just Intonation

all tuning system, musicians should also be able to recognize the sound of pure intervals. Because many instruments are capable of flexibility of pitch, musicians can play (or sing) pure intervals if they prefer them to the sound of tempered intervals. They can play in just intonation. The primary concern of playing in just intonation is to lower the pitch of the third of major triads.

The two tuning systems sound noticeably different. Some musicians prefer one over the other, while others believe that the musical context should determine which system is appropriate. In practice, just intonation is likely to be used sparingly, such as on sustained chords at the end of a phrase or piece.

Just intonation is appropriate for the following contexts:

- Homophonic (chordal) sections in slow or moderate tempos
- Conventional diatonic, triadic harmonies
- At cadence points and other resting places in the harmonic motion

Use equal temperament:

- When texture is dominated by melodic rather than harmonic elements; in counterpoint passages, for example
- In harmonically complex passages (chromaticism, modulation) when there is no other choice, such as when playing an instrument such as piano that lacks flexibility.

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NOTES

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beat_\(acoustics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beat_(acoustics))

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