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# THE SINGING CONDUCTOR: INTERVIEWS ON THE BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF CHORAL CONDUCTORS AND TEACHERS CONTINUING TO SING

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THE SINGING CONDUCTOR: INTERVIEWS ON THE BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF  
CHORAL CONDUCTORS AND TEACHERS CONTINUING TO SING

by

Anne Carissa Gassmann

A DOCTORAL DOCUMENT

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THE SINGING CONDUCTOR: INTERVIEWS ON THE BENEFITS AND  
LIMITATIONS OF CHORAL CONDUCTORS AND TEACHERS CONTINUING TO  
SING

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University of Nebraska, 2019

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It is our duty as musicians, conductors, and teachers to continue developing our teaching and musicianship. One of the ways growth can occur is by singing regularly in ensembles outside of teaching. As one balances career and personal life, continuing to sing is a choice each must make. It is through this document that one may see the relevance of pursuing opportunities to sing, as it may inform and elevate one's teaching and conducting. Eleven interviews were conducted with elementary, high school, and collegiate teachers and conductors, only half of them still singing in an ensemble. This document is intended to provide insight about choral teachers continuing to sing as their conducting career progresses. The topics covered in the interviews include the reasons why the subjects sing or not, how singing influences their teaching, the main objectives in their teaching, and how they feel they are advocating for music and its status in the future. It is hoped that these sample interviews can serve as a basis for further research into the correlation of continuing to sing and the development of vocal music educators and conductors.

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## PREFACE

The idea for my document came from the observations of my colleagues and myself and the energy we seemed to gain from singing in ensembles. Having sung in ensembles under the direction of Dr. Jo Ann Miller, Dr. Michael Culloton, Dr. Michael Weber, Dr. Charlette Moe, Dr. Matthew Oltman, Dr. Tim McMillin, Sigrid Johnson, Tom Trenney, and Cynthia Peterson, I felt that there was a connection between the positive energy in rehearsal and the energy that was transferred to our professional lives as educators. I wanted to understand if there were underlying reasons as to why many started the path of music as singers and have since discontinued singing with the escalation of career status.

Based on availability to participate and their varied backgrounds, I chose to interview eleven subjects that currently teach different ages and are at various stages in their careers. In order to accelerate the Institutional Review Board process and approval at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, names of the interviewees have been changed for anonymity. Ensembles and places of work have been omitted from the interview responses and replaced with more generic terminology.

The first limitation of this study is the number of participants and their locations. Eight of the subjects are currently working in the Midwest. Participation from more states throughout the country may offer different perspectives. The second limitation is that this topic does not have much primary source material, as choral conductors and teachers may reserve highlighting their lack of chorus participation due to the negative implication it may carry. Much of the supporting information is peripheral. This is a qualitative study based on interviews and a synthesis of the responses.

The scope of this document is to draw attention to the idea of singing in an ensemble under another conductor as being beneficial to teachers and conductors. It is not intended to define the absolute necessity of participating as a singer, but to allow reflection for the possibility of more growth through this conduit.

The format of this document follows the formatting of Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

## INTRODUCTION

Choral methods textbooks state that teachers should continue professional development throughout their career.<sup>1</sup> As a vocal music educator, the job includes being the voice teacher for the students in addition to teaching choral repertoire and music literacy. The premise of this document germinated from my observations of some collegiate and professional conductors that no longer sing once they begin advancing their careers. This document initiates the conversation as to why some teachers do not continue to sing, though they are required to coach others, and how it can be seen as beneficial to continue singing outside of their teaching.

Any choral music program benefits from a tradition of excellence and from fine facilities, but there is no doubt that the choral conductor is also extremely important. A conductor who agrees to become the leader of a fine choral program must have strong personal qualities and solid musical training if that program is to continue at a high level. It is important, then, that the choral conductor's training never stop.<sup>2</sup>

Many well-known conductors also assert that continuing to learn will prevent stagnant teaching.<sup>3</sup> Documentation thus far in classroom methods provides ample techniques of self-reflection and collegial observation, but it is rarely stated that one should continue singing, whether it be in private lessons or in an ensemble directed by another conductor. "Students learn best to play an instrument or sing when they hear their teacher do the same. Master teachers have worked to acquire the desired vocal sound,

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<sup>1</sup> Don L. Collins, *Teaching Choral Music* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993); Kenneth E. Miller, *Vocal Music Education: Teaching in the Secondary School* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988); Kenneth E. Phillips, *Directing the Choral Music Program* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Miller, *Vocal Music Education*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cornell Runestad, "55 Tips for All Choral Directors." Nebraska Choral Directors Association Summer Conference, 2016. <https://youtu.be/HojgqyQs5Z0> (accessed March 1, 2019); Carole Glenn, ed., *In Quest of Answers: Interviews with American Choral Conductors* (Chapel Hill: Hinshaw Music, 1991), 122–128.

technique, and tone on all the instruments for which they have responsibility.”<sup>4</sup> Esteemed conductors like Robert Page state that “Continued development of their own vocal skills will permit conductors to know and love the voice [and] know and love the singer with all the eccentricities involved.”<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this sample survey is to discuss how a working professional continues to hone their craft and the practice of singing being an additional benefit in developing one’s teaching and conducting. As Paul Salamunovich stated to Carole Glenn, the one piece of advice he would offer to a beginning conductor is, “Stop living in your own little world of music. Observe and listen to many fine directors. Talk to them, sit in on their rehearsals, try to get into a top-notch choir even though you’re a director yourself.”<sup>6</sup>

When colleagues were informally asked of why they stopped included that the time spent singing was redirected toward their teaching careers and family. In order to promote the idea that everyone can and should sing, this study expanded surveillance to all levels of vocal music teachers. The interviews revealed that times of transition seemed to stand out as a factor for individuals that stopped singing. These include the first year of teaching, teaching in a new city, marriage, and having children. Daryl, one of the subjects of these interviews, describes the same issue of dropout rates for students during transitional times in their lives. Examples of these include elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college, and graduating college to full-time job status.

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<sup>4</sup> Paul G. Young, *Enhancing the Professional Practice of Music Teachers: 101 Tips that Principals Want Music Teachers to Know and Do* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 189.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick K. Freer, “The Conductor’s Voice: Working Within the Choral Art: Part Three in a Three-Part Series,” *The Choral Journal* 38, No. 4 (October 2007): 35.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn, *In Quest of Answers*, 126.

Twenty-first century educators know that music is an avenue for students and adults to continue developing not only musically, but emotionally within a community, by networking with other musicians, parents, and community leaders. A study done involving adults who live with a chronic mental illness or disability explored their experiences of singing in choir. Three content themes emerged: (1) personal impact (positive emotions, emotional regulation, spiritual experience, self-perception, finding a voice); (2) social impact (connectedness within the choir, connection with audience, social functioning); and (3) functional outcomes (health benefits, employment capacity, and routine).<sup>7</sup> It is pertinent to advocate for music-making to happen at all stages of life and not be seen as just a school activity.

The questions asked of the interview subjects are only the beginning of possible further research into the advantages of continuing to sing, specifically for vocal music teachers and conductors. The eleven subjects come from across the country, with a minimum of three years teaching. The group consists of two elementary teachers, three middle and high school vocal music teachers, and six collegiate level choral conductors and teachers. The states in which these interviewees currently work are Connecticut, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Dakota. Six of the eleven currently sing in an ensemble outside of their teaching duties. Three identify as female and eight identify as male. Five subjects are married and/or have children. These demographics are included because some of the interviewees stated these influenced lifestyle choices.

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<sup>7</sup> Genevieve A. Dingle et al., "'To Be Heard': The Social and Mental Health Benefits of Choir Singing for Disadvantaged Adults," *Psychology of Music* 41, No. 4 (2012): 405.

## CHAPTER 1

### PERSONAL HISTORY

Subjects are asked to describe their musical upbringing as early in their life as they wished to detail. The purpose of this question is to explore how each individual came to music and to discover any recurring themes as to what drew them further to teach music. Demographics that are foreseen as factors in their individual answers in these interviews include what part of the United States they were raised, parental support, teacher and mentor guidance, what university they attended, marital status, raising children, career goals, where they currently reside, and length of their career thus far.

This question also demonstrates in what capacities they are continuing to interact with music today, as some of the previously listed elements may influence their current involvement in teaching, conducting, and singing. Brief descriptions of each subject are listed to facilitate the reader's understanding.

#### Interview Participants

Mitchell is a third-year teacher, currently working for a 6–12 rural program. He travels to sing in a semi-professional ensemble that rehearses once a week.

Nicholas is currently in his eleventh year as an elementary teacher in a populated city. He is singing in a semi-professional ensemble that rehearses once a week.

Daryl is currently in his thirty-ninth year of teaching. He is in his twenty-eighth year working as a 9–12 high school teacher in a populated city. He does not sing in a semi-professional ensemble but sings with his madrigal ensemble and at church.

Susan is currently in her forty-first year of teaching, with thirty-four of those being at the collegiate level in a populated city. She does not currently sing outside of her classroom.

Jocelyn is currently in her twenty-third year of teaching, with twelve of those being at the collegiate level. She teaches in a densely populated city. She does not currently sing outside of her classroom but conducts civic and church ensembles.

Calvin is currently in his ninth year of teaching high school in a densely populated city. He sings in a semi-professional ensemble that rehearses once a week.

Amanda is currently in her tenth year as an elementary teacher in a populated city. She is in her third year of sabbatical from singing in a semi-professional ensemble.

Larry is currently in his sixth year of teaching at the collegiate level. He currently teaches in a populated city and sings in multiple church ensembles.

John is currently in his eleventh year of teaching, with eight of those being at the collegiate level. In addition to teaching, he directs a semi-professional ensemble and a church choir.

Byron is currently in his ninth year of teaching, with six of those at the collegiate level. In addition to teaching, he directs a professional ensemble and sings in professional and church ensembles.

Brad is currently in his twenty-first year of teaching, with fifteen of those being at the collegiate level. In addition to teaching, he directs a community ensemble and directed a church choir until ten years ago.

### **What does your history of singing look like and how did it lead you to a path of teaching and conducting?**

**Mitchell:** I don't come from a super musical family. My dad is not a singer, but my grandfather was a pastor and known for singing. My mom is a pianist so she would take me to rehearsals of the youth church choir since she was the accompanist, but I was initially too young to sing with them. A year before I was old enough, they let me sing since I was already there all the time. My mom was also the accompanist for a community choir that was for people with developmental disabilities and their caretakers. I think that is something that has really permeated my experience, especially when talking about education and full-integration with their peers that maybe have developmental and mental disabilities and are those people included fully or do you provide an alternative experience. I have always been of the mind that in a choral program there should be a place for everyone. If there isn't, I think it speaks volumes about your objectives and intent with who you educate versus sweep under the rug. I was involved with the music program all throughout my K-12 experience. I decided early on that I had wanted to do something with music, even in eighth grade I had wanted to work with choirs. When I got to high school, I had a great choir director. During my sophomore year, his alma mater came to a nearby town, so I went to listen. That was kind of my first time hearing high level quality choral music and I remember them singing Nordqvist's *Wonderful Peace*; I remember hearing it and being completely captivated. That was a defining moment; I've had great moments before and after, but I know that was kind of the one that really made me choose music. I attended their festival where you get to stay on campus and sing; all three of those combined set my path to go to that

college. After getting my education degree, I got a teaching job. I made it a point to find an ensemble and sang in an amateur choir for two years but now sing in a semi-professional ensemble in addition to my teaching.

**Nicholas:** One of the first things I can remember thinking about singing was around second or third grade and our elementary teacher suggesting that I sing in our church's choir. I remember thinking, you don't just sing in school? I didn't really have musical parents, so I was surprised that music happened elsewhere. So, I joined that and then was later picked to do an honor choir in sixth grade. Those moments were better than just the regular elementary music class and I picked up more that people were interested in music beyond just the music teacher telling them to do things. I was in music in middle and high school, but I didn't think about music until my junior year. I was talking with the high school counselor and trying to decide what to do for college. She pointed out that I was involved in band and choir and suggested doing something in that. It almost didn't dawn on me to do it until she said that people could go to college for that. My mom was a nurse and my dad was an auto mechanic. And I didn't know there were different levels—music teacher, music therapy, and that people could go on for things like ethnomusicology was incredible. I chose teaching over performance because of the competition; I knew there would always be someone that would be better, sing faster, higher, twice as loud or soft, have better breath control and I knew that competition would get me down if I failed. Also, even though the city has a large population, there weren't a ton of opportunities where musicians could make a living just performing. I had no idea how to break into the business or how you would even start that. While in college, I really enjoyed my early experience and got to work with some nice teachers which helped me see behind the scenes and how you choose music and prepare lessons. I chose elementary teaching because when I student taught with the elementary cooperating teacher, she showed me that while it was hard, it was so fun! She opened my eyes—she was a Kodaly philosophy-based teacher—and taught me how we introduce concepts slowly to students. It's not just time filler activities; it was all a schedule of building. And her enjoyment of it was contagious. I graduated and received an elementary position within the city in which I student taught. I then got my master's with Kodaly certification.

**Daryl:** I distinctly remember sitting in general music in sixth grade and a man came in and played a piece from *The Sound of Music* on the piano. I didn't recognize it at the time. He said he was there to audition kids that might be interested in being in choir for seventh grade. One of the things he said was that choir happened during the day so there would be no conflicts with after school activities like basketball. So, I went up and auditioned. I sang and I must have sounded OK 'cause I got into choir which was cool. I got to go to the junior high all state and all county choirs. All state choirs were a section of the state because the state is so big. I auditioned for high school concert choir as a freshman. I remember sitting in mixed formation all the time, which was quite a challenge. I loved my high school choral career. I didn't know what I wanted to do after school, so I went to a nearby community college and got involved in the music program. I was in college for a year, then traveled for a year with a gospel singing group, and then went back to that community college for another year. Then I went to the local university and was really impressed with their program. After three years I graduated and got a

junior high teaching job in the same city. It was challenging because you're dealing with a lot of craziness, but I really did enjoy it. I longed for music with more depth to it though and the high school position I moved to provided that for me. I really like the idea of having students for four years because you can see the progress—get them to sing the way they should—you see the fruit of your efforts.

**Susan:** My singing has been almost one hundred percent choral. In high school, I sang in a nine voice women's group that performed in the community. My senior year I moved to a larger city and it was all choral singing then too. I did solos, but my voice has always been on the ordinary side except for the fact that I have a good ear. When I started college, I knew I wanted to teach and knew that it would be choral, although I did a double major with flute as well. My first teaching job was band and choir 5–12. In that first year I realized I wasn't cut out to be a band teacher—there were so many parts of it that didn't appeal to me. So, then I did a year of K–12 vocal and realized that elementary was not my strength. I did one year teaching junior high general and vocal music which I really did love, and then three years in elementary school music. When I went back to graduate school, I had taught a little bit of everything. I was a parent of two young children and hadn't been doing any of my own singing at that point.

After my master's I realized that the music I was attracted to was no longer the music that I was going to do at the high school level, so I went straight into my doctoral work. While in graduate school, singing in choirs was part of the degree requirements. My children were elementary age when I started my first collegiate job. And instead of singing in a choir, I started my own community choir. That was a very successful ensemble and I learned a lot. Then I moved one more time and was in a similar situation. Because I was in a new job, I didn't take anything extra on and then within two years, the community choir asked me to direct so I did that for sixteen years.

**Jocelyn:** I think back to high school more than anything before that. I was a flute and piano player, too, but never seriously considered doing anything with piano. I'll joke with my students now about my sixteen-year-old self never thought she'd be a choral person because she thought she was going to be a band person 'cause I had done it for so long. But I had always loved singing, too, and I was in choir. It was really my choir teacher that I loved so much that I think drew me to that side even more. We had a beginning and advanced voice class and that helped me prepare for my college auditions. He was a seminal influence on who I am as a teacher and singer. When I auditioned for college, I did so on flute and voice because I really wanted to do both. The first two years of college I did both, but in a limited capacity, and more toward the vocal end. It got to the point, I think probably my junior year, when I couldn't do everything that I had been doing and I knew that it was going to be flute that I was going to give up. I think it was because I loved singing so much and the text was important and the expressive part—it's different when you have text that you can work and play with. I also had a female choir director for much of my time, and she became this person that I looked up to and it helped me believe that it was something I could do. She was in both realms of education and choral. She was someone that I wanted to emulate and thought I could be—singer, conductor, and teacher. My current job is only education courses; in my previous college job I was also conducting.

**Calvin:** I have been singing since before elementary school. Both sides of my family are involved in music, so it's been a large part of my life. When I graduated from high school, I was interested in a music major because I knew I wanted to stay involved in it and I didn't know what else to do. My path through music education in undergrad was really frustrating with regard to the music theory and ear training classes. It's nothing like participating in a choir when you were in high school, so I ended up changing majors every semester for four years. I would get frustrated with music and declare psychology, focus on that and then find out I missed music, and I just kept going back and forth. Eventually, I got so far along that I thought, this is dumb—I need to graduate. At that point I was close enough that I ended up student teaching in music. I was going to finish the degree but wasn't convinced I was going to teach. It wasn't until I had that hands-on experience with student teaching that I could really see myself doing that. So, I became a teacher and there were some challenges along the way for sure. Ever since then, it's been about how to get better and enjoy what I'm doing and minimize the things of the job that are really unpleasant and demanding.

In terms of memories that have stuck with me or have influenced me, it's all about the people that I have met through choirs or singing. Whether it's students I have had or people I've sung with, directors that I have had, the network of people I relate to... it's the innate connection with the people in our discipline that I don't quite find with people who function in other fields.

I did not sing when I had my first teaching job. The demands of that position did not allow for me to pursue singing. There were other circumstances, but I wasn't look for a place to sing when I got there since it was such a huge school of over 2,000 students. I was looking to throw myself into the department and develop the program. It wasn't until I left that school and started my master's that I realized how much I missed singing. That period of time was the first time in my life that I hadn't been singing. Reconnecting with old barbershop friends and singing with new directors and colleagues was very influential. With the benefit of retrospect, I don't think I was even aware of how much I missed singing until I started doing it again. When I moved after my master's, it was my first priority to find an awesome ensemble to sing with.

**Amanda:** I always loved singing since I was really young. I didn't do an ensemble until ninth grade and started taking voice lessons at the same time. I wondered to myself why I hadn't sung in choir before! I was in multiple choirs—show choir, women's choir, concert choir, and sang in church. I had always wanted to be a teacher since about second grade, and I knew I wanted to be an elementary teacher. When I got into high school I was thinking about my future and my junior year I figured I could combine [music and teaching elementary]. All of my teachers were awesome and influenced me in different ways and said I'd be good at that kind of thing. It felt like we were a family in choir, so I wanted that to continue in college.

**Larry:** I tell everyone that I came out of the womb singing instead of crying. I sang in musicals at the church with the kid and adult groups. I went to private Christian schools through eighth grade and they were relatively small. I was always involved in school and at our home church with the young adult choir and youth praise team. I always knew that

music was a part of me. Any opportunity someone gave me in any kind of catch group, I did it. My teachers in college were the ones that thought I should go into conducting. [I] originally went to undergraduate to be a music producer for gospel choirs, so I did the music engineering and technology concentration. Within the first semester I figured out that wasn't for me and switched to music education because all of the performance people end up teaching anyway, so you might as well just learn how to do it. I think the passion that I had for music and my teachers saw that I was always trying to dig deeper into it.

My first semester of conducting in my junior year, my professor was going to be away, and he asked me to run the rehearsals while he was gone; I was so surprised because I hadn't had enough training. I was always just thrown in stuff. At my home church, by the time I had reached undergrad, my voice had completely changed to baritone, so I couldn't sing in the choir because they only did soprano, alto, tenor music. The music director asked me to teach the tenor part and as the weeks went by the director said, "you can put it together and direct it in a couple of weeks." And I said, "but that's Easter—you want me to do this in front of tens of thousands of people?" And he said, "yeah, I'll be right behind you." I was never asked—it was just, why don't you do this. I looked up to all those folks, so I just did it. Even in graduate school, I wanted to do voice and my professor said to do either composition or conducting 'cause your conducting is the strongest of the three. I took his advice and did that. This was never something I thought I wanted to do, but it was just because it's something that my teachers saw in me and said, "just do it." I'm so thankful.

**John:** I remember the concerts given at my elementary school. My first real school concerts in the gym I remember doing *Let There Be Peace on Earth* every Christmas and our teacher had us singing all the time. Then I sang through high school and college. One of my favorite college experiences was being on choir tour. You got to hang out on a bus all day, get to a venue, warmup, have a good meal, and do a concert. I vividly remember thinking that if touring America with a professional choir was a thing I could do for a living, I would have done it. Before that though, I knew I wanted to do music education since my late high school years. I credit that to the repertoire that I was singing and the teacher I had who introduced me to *Messiah* and *Rejoice in the Lamb*. We sang Brahms every year; we were singing great classics every year...so when you figure out you love that, you can see yourself happy teaching them and doing the same thing for your career. At no point in my life did I think I could do a full-time job of singing in a choir. At some point, the practicality of having a job and being employed was to make your money as a conductor. I like any opportunity to sing. I still want to start a chamber ensemble that comes from within the community chorus I direct.

**Byron:** Singing started very early for me with church choir and a community children's chorus. My elementary school education was at three different schools; [I] started at a Catholic school, then public, then private school, so I think that might have been one of the reasons why even just in school, in general, it wasn't an option, so it was all community and children's chorus and church choir. I sang as a young boy in *Carmen* early on, and all these experiences really hooked me in[to] singing. My mother's side of the family was musical so that pushed us to be involved in music. I was thrilled to have

that, and they were quality programs. My parents supported my interest in music right away. Musicals in high school were big too. Seeing productions and how people would be doing their thing, but then the conductor came out it was a big deal, and that piqued my interest. I always wanted to sing, but I also wanted to conduct. When I got to my undergrad, the conducting was not so much that I wanted to be in charge but that I really liked the facilitating portion of being a conductor. Having sung, conducted orchestra, having the ability to play piano, horn, and trumpet in high school—those experiences gave me the understanding of what performers have to go through and be able to help them and facilitate what they needed to be able to have the best performance.

[I] started my undergrad as voice performance and I ended up with a degree in church music because I wanted all the conducting classes but didn't want to do all the general education classes. I never thought at the point that I'd teach high school or anything like that, so doing an education degree didn't make sense. The church music degree had a voice emphasis, so I was still able to have the same performance requirement with regard to voice lessons and choir, but I was taking all the conducting classes and survey of choral literature. After that I received master's degrees in conducting, voice, and orchestral/opera conducting. My DMA was in choral conducting. I stayed away from any music education. I think that is part of what has guided me to doing a lot of singing and conducting. I started singing in a professional choir in 1999. After my master's in orchestral and opera conducting, I did teach at the high school level for three years. During this time, I started a semi-professional ensemble, so I wasn't doing a lot of additional singing. After my doctorate, I taught at the university level for two years and did not sing professionally as much then either because of the schedule I had of teaching you couldn't be gone that much. The Fall of 2014 was really when I shifted back to professional singing and my colleague and I solidified the plans to teach a three-summer master's in conducting program. Currently, I'm singing with a professional ensemble, doing other side gigs and a church gig, and run the master's program and festival in the summer.

**Brad:** I focused in high school and college on being a pianist, but I took voice lessons and choir in addition to piano lessons. I was always involved in choral music. In college, I decided that music education was the track I should follow, and I had to choose between a vocal and instrumental focus since piano wasn't an option. While I was also a trumpeter, my love for singing with others won. After college, I sang in community and church groups and participated in community theater productions. When I moved to my current position, I got extremely involved as a conductor with church, civic, and school so my time to sing was cut short.

## CHAPTER 2

## PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT OF SINGING

When defining the involvement of subjects singing, this document qualifies “regularly singing” as singing in rehearsals at least once a week with ensembles that fall under the categories of civic or church. Subjects who received graduate degrees were required to participate in ensembles during their degree process. Some of these subjects were allowed to use civic ensembles to complete their degree requirements.

Subjects who are considered to be regularly singing are asked to expound upon why they continue to sing and discuss how, if at all, it influences their teaching and conducting. A research study was performed in Finland, asking the singers to

[I]dentify some of the aspects of choir that were important to them. For these singers, the desire to perform was the least significant motivator. Instead, a majority reported that factors such as being a member of the group, having artistic and emotional experiences, and forming social contacts in the choir were most valuable. Improving self-confidence, developing singing skills, and increasing their knowledge of music also played a role.<sup>8</sup>

Subjects who are not currently participating in this manner are asked why they stopped singing after their undergraduate degree (or graduate degrees) and if they miss it. Based on personal experience with teaching and how musical development influenced her teaching, an English high school teacher speaks on the choice to personally develop her music to enhance her classroom.

This personal development—making music a priority in my life—enhanced my professional life in several ways. After ten years of teaching in a suburban high school, I couldn’t describe one professional development presentation that significantly influenced my practice. Studies have shown that disjointed professional development efforts have been “notoriously unsuccessful” for teachers. Too often, teachers have little say or power in their schools about how to make professional development meaningful. Outside speakers frequently do not “get” the context of the school and, at the end of the day, the presentation melts

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<sup>8</sup> Voice of Chorus America, “Singing and Healthy Aging,” *Voice of Chorus America* 36, No. 3 (2013): 27.

away in the absence of adequate follow-up or follow-through, leaving teachers and their practice unchanged and uninspired.<sup>9</sup>

A follow-up question of what is holding them back from singing in an ensemble is then proposed. Asking for their explanations as to why they do not sing is to assemble recurring objections, if possible.

### **Why do you continue to sing?/Why did you stop singing?**

**Mitchell:** I sing because I need it. There is something to be said about teaching and conducting that is unlike anything else, but I think there is also something to be said about singing is unlike anything else. It keeps my skills sharp. Sometimes it is relaxing to show up to rehearsal and not have to run everything. It is still work but it is easier because someone else is guiding the rehearsal. You just get to be [there] and develop. It is also a little bit of a “mountaintop experience” being able to meet together once a week with a group of high-level singers and experience those wow moments. Then I get to take that feeling, enthusiasm, and passion back to my own ensembles. Singing in that ensemble is a little reminder of where we are going and where the progression leads. Seeing the director do something helps me think about the ways I can get my students to take the next step toward the ideal.

It is nice to see other conductors, even if it is the same conductor every week, to see what they are doing and what fits my persona, style, or ability and develop for myself.

It also helps me develop empathy for my singers. I am much more attuned to pacing of rehearsals. Being a low tenor, I know what it is like to sing a high taxing passage over and over and am conscious that some of my students are going to be baritones within a year or two. It helps me be aware of my sopranos who could be wearing out instead of just thinking about the musical product and the music on the page. As teachers we must be in tune with what our students are doing—their vocal health, mental focus, energy. Being in rehearsals myself the night before helps me understand what that feels and sounds like because I heard and felt the same thing the night before. I am also more aware with pedagogy and how to teach students about tall vowel space with a lot of breath moving forward versus just telling a section they are flat; they may not know how to fix it.

With the pieces I have sung, I understand them from a singer’s perspective; I know what the challenges are and how to approach them because I have already been through them versus a piece I have never experienced before.

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<sup>9</sup>Melissa McClain, “Rediscovering the Artist, Reinvigorating the Self, Reinventing the Teacher,” *The English Journal* 95, No. 2 (November 2005): 47. Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood, *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching* (New York: Teachers College, 2003). Anne Liberman and Diane R Wood, *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching* (New York: Teachers College, 2003).

**Nicholas:** After I graduated college, I was immediately hired for an elementary teaching position and for the first year of teaching I did not sing outside of my classroom at all. I wanted to get my bearings and focus on doing my job well. Right away I did not miss singing. Then I started in a church choir, but we did not meet regularly and it did not stretch me musically. After I became comfortable with teaching and did not have to focus all of my energy on preparing every single moment of every lesson, I found myself missing singing. The elementary music is pretty simple and I missed doing music for myself. I was unsure of who was involved in the community choir or if I would like it, but I found myself auditioning and was selected to be in the ensemble. Even after the first couple of rehearsals and the first concert it felt amazing. I did not realize how much I had missed it. I felt rejuvenated; I enjoyed being around people who worked hard and wanted to stretch themselves with more difficult music. It is something that I have really grown to treasure. I hope to keep my Tuesday evenings open because it has been such a joy in my week. I think of the students with extreme behaviors and this is such a good outlet to be with adults and feed that musical soul within myself.

**Daryl:** When I was teaching junior high, I was singing with the community choir, but it got to be too much because I was newly married and was doing a lot for my job and directing the church choirs. When I went back to do my master's degree, I had to take an ensemble credit, so I started singing with the same community choir and stayed with them for about three years. Since then I haven't sung with a semi-professional group. When I switched to teaching at the high school, their independence was pretty slim, so I was singing with the altos and tenors a lot. I teach a madrigal singers group of about 16 and have continued to sing with them. There are times when I step out of the group and direct, but I try to teach the ensemble to sing together and not need a director. I try to set a good example by singing with them. I always talk to my students about vocal health and how it feels to me when I am singing.

**Susan:** My life did not lend itself to singing in an ensemble. When I was starting my career, I was already married and had kids early on, so there was never a time where I thought I could take time to seek out a place to sing. As my career progressed, the few times I did sing at a conference sing along or something like that, I would always think, "I should do this more because there are different insights that you have as a singer that are valuable for me as a conductor." But my personal life and career really did not leave any time for me to do sing in a choir regularly.

**Jocelyn:** I was always singing in ensembles and lessons while I was a student. I never had that performance yearning and was very happy in the teaching world. As a singer, I was middle of the pack but was really shining in my education courses. My first teaching job was back in my hometown and I sang in a community chorus with my old high school choir director who is a lifelong music maker. I enjoyed being in the group and it kept me singing. After that first year I moved again and wasn't doing any singing. The state I was living in required that a teacher receive their master's within the first five years of teaching to get their permanent teaching license. I stayed a full-time teacher and the master's took three summers. They were intense because you cram as many credits as you can into five weeks, but you get a great cohort. I just love it. At this college you have

to take lessons every summer and there was a summer choir two days a week. I remember at one point my teacher asking me, how much do you think you're practicing now? Even though you're taking about ten graduate credits and didn't have a lot of time, I was loving singing then more than in my undergraduate because I could see it as the gift that it is. I had been out teaching but I was focusing on my own skill set and not on the kids in front of me. That's where so much of my growth happened as a singer. I was more reflective and I was probably only in the practice room 45 minutes a day and she said, how much were you practicing as an undergraduate and I thought maybe only a couple hours a week total because I could learn my pieces fast and wasn't working technique much. In my master's I understood the mechanism more and really enjoyed singing more because I was recognizing the changes I could make in my own voice. I was also a lot more confident as a person in my mid-twenties than as an undergraduate. I owned my body more and I felt better and was standing taller. That impacted a lot of the quality of my singing at that point too. When I was teaching, I was modeling a lot more. Now I tell my students all the time, don't talk—sing—model what you want.

During my previous job, I sang for a couple of years in a community chorus and I loved it. I had to stop because I had a young family and was on a school committee that could only meet at night. It didn't conflict with the chorus, but it was too much time away from home. Two nights a week having my husband do dinner, bath, bedtimes—and that was only with the one child—but I felt bad. As a mother and wife, I didn't think that was fair. I could see myself doing that more once the kids were more autonomous. It wasn't not wanting to sing, it was lack of time and other commitments with my job and being a mother. I miss it. I have a church choir that I direct and every so often I will sing for special music when the choir needs a weekend off. That kind of stuff feeds the soul a little bit but maybe not as much as I have done in the past or in the future.

**Calvin:** I am a better teacher because I am still in a choir. I can see that clearly. Vocal music is so unique because it is not research based where you are stuck in a science lab mixing chemicals. The best way to become a better choir director is to be in the presence of other choir directors and to see what they do; the best way to that is to be in a choir. The singing out here with this ensemble and director—these are the people who are at the top of the profession right now. To see how the director approaches things and his different strategies, how he listens, how he programs repertoire, and different techniques to get the choir to do what they need to do has been good for me to absorb from someone really talented like this conductor. I am very fortunate to sing in an ensemble where the vast majority of people in it, at the very least, have sung in really high caliber collegiate choirs like St. Olaf or Luther, but I think about a third of the group is also other choir teachers or music educators. I also appreciate getting to know people in the area and talking about different situations that pop up in the classroom or different strategies that people use. When you leave college, you lose that cohort of people that you are bouncing off ideas of all the time. As a teacher you need that. I will sing as long as I can. Knowing what I know now; I am a happier person when I have a family to sing with. Because of my own journey and struggles, I can't imagine not continuing to make singing a priority.

**Amanda:** I sang with a community chorus for about five or six years but then I had children, so I have been out for three years. I miss being a part of that a lot. I was fully

involved too with being on the board and running the silent auctions for the galas. At this point, it's just too hard with little kids but I hope to go back at some point. When you're a mom it just doesn't work. My husband's job is sporadic and we don't have family here to help out. Until I am fully done having children and they get a little bigger, I probably won't be in an ensemble. The ensemble in town has also expanded their number of concerts so the commitment is greater. We all realize that time is precious, so you have to find the balance. I eventually hope to sing again when my kids are older but then they will be in sports and activities, so I don't know.

**Larry:** With my first teaching job, I really did not do much singing in a group, but I taught almost everything by rote, so I was technically singing. It was very rare in those five years that I was in any formal choir; it was more just a catch group for a single event. I probably did not miss it because I was still singing with my choir when I was teaching them. We also had so many performances I got my outlet that way. My third year we had a total of 35 performances. During those five years I sang more frequently in my care or home and I have found of the last three and a half years during my PhD and this teaching position I almost never listen to music for pleasure. It may be because I have been in choirs. It wasn't until I was working on my terminal degree that I had a staff singing position. That just wasn't a thing for me before because my home church is all about volunteerism, so nobody got paid except the minister of music. When I moved to my new job, I saw the level of musicianship at a local church that it was something I saw that I could be a part of. Almost every week I get more and more fulfilled. Now having that outlet to be able to express myself, it's a powerful thing for me now. I have more time now to sing but if clinics and conducting opportunities come up then that might limit my time in the future.

**John:** During my first teaching job, I sang in the church choir with my wife. We committed to that together. At that point in time, it was just something you do. There was another point in my life when I was singing with a semi-professional ensemble and that was fantastic. For those three years, I came back every Wednesday morning, after our Tuesday late-night rehearsals, and I would try to recreate those great adult singers with my choirs. I always felt like the best rehearsal of the week was that Wednesday rehearsal. I went from being up in front of the classroom into a chorus of good singers and back to being in front of the classroom. It was almost like my priorities shifted on that day after I was singing with the ensemble. I always tell my students, if you are not conducting a community choir, sing in an ensemble. Keep filling your cup. I am pleased so many of my students come to sing in the community ensemble I conduct after they graduate. From a practical standpoint, conducting an ensemble will help bring my family to places like Disney. The financial benefit of providing for my family is more important than singing. That was different when I was 22–24 and my wife was singing with me and we didn't have any kids. To leave my family another night just to fulfill something I need seems selfish. If I have a free night, I'd rather be at home playing games with the kids. I know I'd enjoy singing in choirs but conducting is just what I do now, and I accept that.

**Byron:** Money is a factor. From the humanity aspect, there is something fulfilling in the soul. There is something to be said about being in the ensemble and making the sound

that is then a common collective. It is not the same kind of fulfillment when you are conducting compared to when you are singing. It's a way for me to have more of a community sense and of the greater world because I'm not teaching and seeing the same people every day. I am working from home or on the computer every day. The other part is that because I am a conductor and I teach graduate students. I think it is important to remind myself what it's like to be the singer and have to look at the conductor's gesture or listen to their rehearsal technique. If they ask me to do something, how does that translate to me as a singer or is that wording something I would say? These observations are different types of professional development compared to just sitting in another rehearsal in the back of the room led by someone else versus being in the ensemble and reacting to the conductor as a performer. Singing is a very educational tool for us.

**Brad:** During my first teaching job, I continued to take voice lessons and was still vocally maturing. Before my master's program, I sang with a community group and a church choir while I was teaching. I also founded a men's community ensemble. At some point, I stopped singing to focus more on conducting and teaching. Going back to singing in ensembles didn't happen for me until the summer of 2005, when I started my doctoral program. I have been in my current position for fifteen years now, and I have stopped singing regularly again, partially because of the demands of the job, but also because I accepted a position conducting another community choir and also had a church position for a while. I got extremely involved as a conductor, so I ran out of time for an additional ensemble to sing in. I miss singing, but when you are asked to lead an ensemble, it's an honor because it is what you are trained to do. Income also becomes a factor because you are typically being paid as the conductor.

## CHAPTER 3

## OTHER PROFESSIONALS' SINGING INVOLVEMENT

Interviewees are asked to verbalize their opinions regarding why other teachers and conductors may choose to stop singing. Subjects may speak from experience of previous conversations with their colleagues or merely speculate based on their observations. These opinions are through the lens of the individual's background in singing and their connection, or lack thereof, in pursuing singing. This question is to gain a broader perspective of the climate conductors produce around the topic of continuing to sing. "Teachers who practice an art form can model the behavior of artists, such as risk-taking, experimentation, revision, and comfort with not knowing all the answers."<sup>10</sup>

**Why do you think some teachers and conductors choose to stop singing?**

**Mitchell:** Teaching is exhausting. The ensemble I sing with is currently on break and I have been teaching for two and a half weeks and I haven't had anything going on in the evenings and I'm loving it. Usually by the end of the week I'm trying to catch up because of the busy days earlier in the week. It's busy and time consuming, and you're making music all day—which is such a thrill to say that I get to do for a living—but at the same time, it's easy to burn out. Teaching is vocally taxing. I teach 6–12; the first hour of the day is sixth grade and I have to sing middle C and above for fifty minutes and my kids aren't to the point that they can read well so I have to model a lot and sing a lot above the staff. I teach three periods and then supervise a lunch period so sometimes I have to shout to tell kids to stop doing something so at the end of the day my voice is fried. Some days I'm nervous about getting through evening rehearsals. Especially as teachers, you're using your voice all day and not always in a way that is necessarily kind to it. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of speaking in a way that is vocally healthy because sometimes you do have to shout at kids so they can hear you or know you mean business. The percentage of teachers versus other professionals with vocal problems or nodes is already higher than average. We're in an environment where no one is thinking about their vocal health; it's getting better but people following through is not always the case. Some schools have microphones which is great. I started using one last year, but it's run on batteries so I'm putting new ones in every two and a half days. The rechargeable ones are much more cost effective, but these had already been purchased before I got to the school.

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<sup>10</sup> McClain, *Rediscovering the Artist*, 50. Mary Clare Powell, "The Arts and the Inner Lives of Teachers," *Phi Delta Kappan* 78, No. 6 (1997): 452.

I currently sing with a semi-professional group and have some compensation. The group I sang with before cost me \$100 to be *in* the group. With someone who has the degree, it was a little insulting to have to pay to be in something. It's different when they say they can't pay and it's something you enjoy doing. I don't mind volunteering, but to actively pay to be in a group didn't seem right. That particular group was performing at decently high level, not just a city choir where you pay fees 'cause that's the only thing around. I could see that being a deterrent for some.

**Nicholas:** I know for some people one of the big reasons is family. Having children and creating that lifestyle seems to be a big one. I also know that some people that have taken longer breaks than I have from singing, they worry that they have lost those skills or are embarrassed to try out again. A friend and colleague of mine at another elementary school is her now in her forties and hasn't been in choir since her undergraduate and she said that she doesn't think she could try out again. She doesn't think she has the voice or the ear and has been out of that mode of thinking for so long that she fears she's lost those skills. It's sad because there are lots of opportunities to sing in our city—it doesn't have to be an auditioned ensemble. Somewhere along the timeline those feelings of insecurity crept in with people who took a long break. Even just after my break of four years, it was a little intimidating having someone critiquing and evaluating you again.

**Daryl:** For some it could be busy-ness. I have poured myself into my job and kind of maxed out—the program is as big as it possibly can be with one director. I'm just going from one thing to another so that doesn't leave a lot of room for doing stuff at night. From my observation, a few folks get the degree and then they think that they know everything that they need to know, so why would they need to continue to try to learn and grow?

For some people, there isn't anything around where they are. They are in a small rural town and the only other [trained] singer is their colleague in the next town over or their colleague the band director.

**Susan:** I think it's two-fold. If you are the kind of choral director that seeks out extra experiences for their choirs and looks for things to challenge your choirs to engage the choir in the community, then it's probably simply a time issue. If you are a teacher who really safeguards your personal time, then perhaps you choose not to sing in another choir because it just doesn't appeal to you. Some conductors prefer being the leader and don't want someone else to tell them what to do. Every choir is different and it is no fun singing in an ensemble if there is not a healthy and productive rehearsal process with like-minded people working hard together. I do think that more often the reason a conductor doesn't sing regularly in a choir is because they are looking for opportunities for their singers and that there isn't time to be responsible to another ensemble. I do think it would be great if more conductors continued to sing in a choir where they're not the leader. Every time I've had that experience, I've enjoyed it and thought that I should do this. But if you don't have time to do that, then you need to have a strong connection to your singers so they can let you know some of the things that they experience as singers. Simple things like letting you know if you didn't stand the entire rehearsal. If you're a choir director and you're singing in a group and they didn't have

you stand, that's going to remind you that you need to get your singers standing more often. Or, that you did a warmup was only three minutes and they feel so much better when we do a ten-minute warmup. I think those kinds of things are what you take away when you're sitting in a choir and thinking it through from a conductor's viewpoint. A good relationship with your singers is important so that they can knock on your door or raise their hand in rehearsal and that you don't take offense to those kinds of things. If you are the kind of conductor that doesn't allow any of that, you're going to miss out on some things that you need to hear that you might gather your own self if you were sitting in a choir. I think there are ways to mitigate the fact that you're not singing in a choir if you have a close relationship and an open rehearsal where people can give you feedback.

**Jocelyn:** I think time is part of it. I'm guessing identity is a part of it; they might not "like it" as much. They may not get the joy out of it. I remember when I started singing really well and I remember experiencing singing in a different way. It gave me a rush physically and mentally that I hadn't experienced earlier. Then you get a taste of it and you want more of it. I would guess that maybe some other teachers don't have that connection to the art. They connect as teachers and with the quality of music, but they've taken themselves out of the equation in the way of singing. I see it all the time when I'm observing student teachers or adjudicating. I feel like I can tell the choirs for whom the teacher is modeling quite a bit—I feel the students sing better. And the teachers that just talk about the music like "crescendo through this phrase" instead of modeling, the choir doesn't get it at the same level. Plus, I think when they are exposed to good quality singing it changes what one hears even as a middle or high school student. For some of my students, I can tell modeling is really hard for them. I have a round of peer teaching where students can't speak, and they get concerned because they aren't sure what to do. And I say, you sing it! You model what you're looking for instead of saying it. Count, show with your hands, move. Your singing on your worst day is still going to be better than your singers on their best day. You still know more and are the expert in the room. They just don't feel that connected to singing as an art.

**Calvin:** The job is very demanding. As a single twenty-something, you can try to keep singing because you don't have responsibilities, but when people start getting married and start having kids, priorities are working during the day and having family time at night. Teaching choirs is very rewarding, so maybe some of that intrinsic reward that people experience as singers is replaced by being a teacher. But I really do think it's an issue of time. The longer you are around singing and around music, the more opportunities you have. The more training you have, the higher the caliber you come to expect and look for. How many places in the country are there where there are enough people to come together to do a high caliber ensemble? There are a couple in Denver, you've got the New York area, but in the rural parts of the Midwest? How many are there that would be interested and of high enough quality and have the time to do something like that? And I think people who really want to sing start looking for those paid singing gigs because it's a higher guarantee of higher quality. I think it can be to someone's disadvantage to be in a rural Midwest area because you can't develop your musicianship that way and you're having to substitute with other things to try and keep growing versus a really populated city. It's just simple math, the larger the population, the more

opportunities there are going to be. I also think there are so many more entertainment options and social groups for people to be a part of now than there were 100–200 years ago, so a part of it is just a change in culture.

**Amanda:** I would say number one is family. I know some people are singing in community ensembles to fulfill choir credits for their upper level degrees. I started singing in the community ensemble because I was still teaching and needed an ensemble that rehearsed in the evening. I know other people that wanted a break to focus on their career when they graduated college. Others could not care as much about the performing aspect. I know I like challenging myself with music whereas some people are just content with their skills. There are some people I know that have voice issues too. Location could be a reason too. If you live somewhere that you don't have that opportunity or it's too far to drive could be a factor.

**Larry:** I think the biggest reason, it's not one that they may articulate, but that it's very difficult to go from being in control to then being told what you have to do. Singing in an ensemble, no matter how great it is, when you are actually next to all of those voices, you hear things that the conductor doesn't hear, so you wonder, now why are they fixing this or why do they do it that way? Sometimes you'll both hear the same thing, but they choose to approach it differently and you think, no, that's not going to be the best—I'd do it this way. For some people it's just difficult to sit there and be completely open to whatever the person is doing without any type of negative judgement going on. I think another reason is not feeling that there is a need to sing. If you are conducting music, you are still a part of it. People don't see it enough; I can't think of any of my conductors that I knew that also sang with a choir. An analogy would be that you need to see what some composers look like because if you don't see enough women as composers, then you may not think that it's something for you to do. For me, people say they are glad that I'm working at my current job so that people see a black man who is doing classical music [in a predominantly Caucasian demographic]. If you don't see it, you may not think it's possible or something that happens. I do feel like it's valuable and pretty close to being necessary for any conductor of any ensemble, no matter the makeup, to put themselves in the shoes of those who are there, rather than trying to remember what it was like as an undergraduate forty years ago. Even if you just join a church choir you can be in a place that is flexible with your attendance. There are too many other places where you just sing once a month and you are still able to put yourself in their shoes. I believe that a leader must be a servant as well. It doesn't necessarily mean that you are serving the ones you lead, but as long as you are being a servant somewhere else, specifically serving another conductor by just being there. It'll humble yourself so when you go to expect certain things, it's kind of difficult. There are certain choir directors who can't sing a lick, but then they're still expecting something really difficult, so how do they know that something can be done having not tried it themselves? Being part of an ensemble makes you more sympathetic and empathetic to your ensemble members and I can't see any downside for your students or choir members when you are really in their shoes.

**John:** Well, job demand. For me, I'm conducting three college choirs, a church choir, a community ensemble, and an All State choir. I'm already yielding three nights a week to conducting a group and working. People in my community choir who are not choir conductors, that's their one night out for a choral experience—and I still have them beat by three, so I don't know when I'd get singing in a group onto my schedule. The demands in this field are great, but so are the rewards.

For others, there aren't always opportunities to sing when you are having to be the conductor in the town. You might get asked to conduct before someone would even think to ask you to sing in a group. When I was working on my doctorate, it was refreshing to be on the other side of the podium. But the demands of continuing education, families, work expectations—it piles on. In our field, there are plenty of other things [that get added on]—like musical theatre, or after school jazz program, and teachers can't add another night in their lives to travel fifty miles from their home to sing in a choir. I think in America, the practicality is that there aren't many jobs that you can get paid full time to sing and it probably steers a lot of people toward conducting and teaching rather than singing.

**Byron:** Time is definitely the biggest thing. When you teach at a university there are so many obligations. If you were teaching on the voice faculty it would maybe be seen in a different way than conductors going and doing it. As people grow older in their careers, they have other ties like family. The job has to be there so the singing becomes superfluous and one may not have time to sing for pleasure.

There are some people, I had this for a while and had to adjust myself, but thinking that they can do better than the conductor in front, so why should they waste their time? Now I am more investigative and open myself up to other options. I think, I wouldn't have done it that way but why did they do it that way? I think some conductors aren't willing to do that. There is a little bit of ego for some people. They get tired of having other people telling them how to sing.

**Brad:** For those who get graduate degrees and teach at the college or high school level, I think they run out of time as they get more involved in civic and church groups in addition to their teaching. For others, it can be because of the family dynamic. I've witnessed in my own ensembles when I try to recruit other educators or qualified singers to get involved, they may say no because of children or "I do that all day and I need some time for family. I can't commit the time at this point." It seems that the conscientious singer understands that doing it well takes a larger time commitment. Sometimes those who are skilled get asked to do more things like leading sectionals or stepping in, which requires more time than they can or will commit.

## CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF SINGING ON REPERTOIRE, PREPARATION, GESTURE,  
AND TEACHING PERSONA

The foundation of this question involves the perceived value of regularly singing and how, if at all, it can influence the duties of teachers and conductors. The elements of choices in repertoire, preparation of a piece, gesture, and teaching persona are asked about because of the short- and long-term effects each can have on the relationship with the students and the musical growth that can occur in each rehearsal. Douglas McEwen commented in an interview, “It is terrifically important on a day-to-day basis that the rehearsals be refreshing and renewing and contain revitalizing experiences....Otherwise, the singers and the conductor may begin to feel such an unrelenting sense of sameness that it could become oppressive.”<sup>11</sup>

The topics of choices in repertoire and preparation of a piece are included in this document because educators need to provide a well-rounded education of the different eras in music. Singing in an ensemble may provide situations where one is in direct contact with pieces that may not otherwise be considered to teach with their students.

With regard to the element of gesture, Rodney Eichenberger stated in an interview about his own gesture and posture before a choir. “Decades before I heard the term ‘mirror neurons,’ I was absolutely convinced that a singer’s posture, dynamics, pitch, and tone were a mirror of the conductor’s stance, facial affect, and gestural language.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick K. Freer, “The Conductor’s Voice: Experiencing Choral Music: Part Two in a Three-Part Series,” *The Choral Journal* 48, No. 3 (September 2007): 29.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Con and Rodney Eichenberger, “Effective Conducting in the Choral Classroom: An Interview with Rodney Eichenberger,” *The Choral Journal* 55, No. 9 (April 2015): 31.

**How do you think singing or not singing influences your choices in repertoire, preparation of a piece, your conducting gestures, and teaching persona?**

**Mitchell:** As far as my own conducting and teaching, I am definitely more likely to program something that I've sung before. It's easier because you've got intimate knowledge about the piece from having all the repetition in rehearsals and performances. Even with the parts that you're not singing—you're hearing them during the rehearsals. I'll watch a conductor deal with the rehearsal process and how they face the challenges of the piece. I'm more attuned to the vocal demands placed on singers. I think about technical difficulty and tessitura. There is so much repertoire out there that I don't feel like we need to spend our time on anything less than what is a great composition, as well as what is written well for the voice. There are enough technical demands in putting a rehearsal together for a piece and set of pieces that I don't want to have to spend extra time just because something was poorly written. As a director, we think about the choir that's in our head and we hear our ideal sound. One could spend the entire rehearsal directed toward making the piece sound like that, but it is setting your singers up for failure. They're never going to sound like the choir in your head because it was written in the wrong part of the voice or written poorly. If a composer is worth their weight, they should be able to write in a way that is practical.

Regarding my gesture, it has a background from the college I attended. I was on the competitive ballroom and swing dance team for four years and when I was taking my conducting class, I realized how much they have in common with posture and principles of movement with the arm. Everything flows out from that for a fluid motion. Sometimes you change that depending on the sound you want or an articulation or prep you want for a piece. This also relates to posture; with the waltz, tango, foxtrot—it's a very vertical posture. I firmly believe that singers' mirror neurons will affect how they sound, stand, and present themselves in every way. I have a terrible time singing for conductors who have poor posture or conduct from their elbows or shoulders, or those who have a very muscular gesture. I feel like I experience a lot more tension in my voice and body unless they have a release of their arms and shoulders while still having a tall posture. In college, my voice teacher was an advocate for the Alexander Technique—releasing tension, aligning the spine, setting up your body for success. So, when I'm about to conduct, I'm tapping into those things, especially in a performance setting. I have done everything in rehearsals for my ensemble that now I need to model physically what they should be doing.

My teaching persona is that I'm a coach rather than a dictator. This goes back to my voice director and college directors—as we sing, they are shouting reminders—it isn't vocally the best but it's supporting what they are doing. It's not me against you—it's let me help you. I want you to be successful. It's not about the conductor; it's all about the ensemble. Nobody is going to show up to a choral concert where it's just the conductor, but they might show up where there is no conductor.

**Nicholas:** I have a before and after school fourth and fifth grade choir, so I think my singing has affected those groups. Mostly because the people that I sing with in the community choir and the church choir are so passionate about making music but have a fun and good way of bringing those same things out of us. I think about how can I get my

students to work for me the way that we work for these conductors? How are they so engaging? I don't think it's because we are adults and they are kids and their parents are forcing them. I have worked with some people that I just don't have a connection with, but I study them and wonder, is it their eye contact, do they know their music so well that they can look at us more, is it their gesture, is it the jokes, or are they taking the time to get to know us and building relationships more than just getting through twenty measure and lining up the chords? There is some way that they've gotten us to make a connection that makes us work harder than having them drag us along with them. And even after weeks of singing the same song, how are they getting us to continue to work deeper where sometimes I feel like my students think, 'we've memorized all the words, so we are good to go'. I study how these other conductors push us to be more musical. It's also helped me enjoy teaching music more knowing that I'm also doing some of it for myself again.

**Daryl:** My modeling and singing with the students definitely influences my work with students. I often say things like, sopranos, could you sing it like this? And then model to try to communicate how to sing well and kids can hear it. Especially with my younger students, I want to make sure my students are hearing good examples of healthy singing and good technique. With my concert choir, I've got some kids that sing really well and I get them in positions where other kids hear them a lot. In time, the students around them begin to sound like those students. They learn healthy technique just by being around it all the time.

I think I sing in a pretty similar manner to the type of person that I am. I greet the students at the door and it's very personal, "how did that math test go; hey, I'm glad you're back—were you sick with a cold?" I try to keep it so that kids can talk with me and tell me when they have needs. I'm telling them I'm glad to see them and happy they are here. When they hear me sing, I'm calm, I try to not use tension, I'm trying to convince them by my words and example to not go for those high notes with tension. I think if I was uptight, they would sing that way.

**Susan:** I think it has certainly influenced my repertoire choices because singing in a choir is always a good way to find new music, and if not specific pieces, then specific composers. I think persona and gesture are so personal. So, people who try to imitate or follow what someone else has done are never going to be successful with it. Your personality as a conductor is so unique. I think rehearsal techniques can be a great way to learn from other people. But choosing a persona based on what you admire from someone else isn't really going to work. Gesture is not a hard thing to teach, I love teaching it. But I think it's a hard thing at the graduate/adult level to change.

I'm not sure that a chorister knows what is required of a conductor to prepare for a piece. Maybe if the conductor talks about it. Early in my career I didn't talk a lot about the texts of pieces and took them at face value compared to what I do now. If a conductor is very expressive with how they describe what's happening with the text, it can be a really good thing for a choir to learn and other conductors who are in the choir to learn. It could be one of the best things for them to take away.

**Jocelyn:** I think my singing influences my conducting gestures because I think of lift. I do things where I'm emulating the lift of a soft pallet. In my teaching I'm such a physical person. In my warmups I'm doing gestures to emulate what we want for vowels or lift of the soft pallet. I think singing impacts literature choices. I recently did a festival with middle schoolers and picked a piece that had some really lovely lines and great movement in it. You look at the lines and see how singable they are, which also impacts how you rehearse pieces. You can talk about the music from the perspective of the singer instead of just the perspective of the ensemble.

**Calvin:** The director for the semi-professional ensemble I sing in is the North American representative for a publishing company. This makes him very well connected with contemporary composers. Some of the music that we're given has very thick textures and contemporary tonalities that I could never dream doing with my high school choirs. But something very unique with that group is the mission of the ensemble, which is to "elevate the human experience." In doing so, our closer for the ACDA conference will be an example of this...to demonstrate high level performance of a work that is going to be accessible to many choirs. There ends up being a really nice variety of things that will challenge me or the ensemble. But being in the group sparks ideas for things that I can use with my students. It introduces me to more repertoire by composers like Ola Gjeilo, Jake Runestad, Cecilia McDowall, and Will Todd. I have heard of the composers, but we get to really immerse ourselves with four concert season's worth of repertoire over the course of a year which keeps things fresh and spawns new ideas so that I can then go strategically looking for repertoire by composers when I can imagine my students singing it.

**Amanda:** I feel like the same teacher even though I'm not singing in the community choir. I still have my two degrees. I also do tons of workshops and teacher groups to learn things so I'm always getting new ideas. I'm a member of OAKE, Organization of American Kodaly Educators and part of the local Kodaly chapter. I am in my second year as professor of conducting and choir for the Kodaly institute at one of the local universities. Most of the students are elementary teachers and they have to perform music as part of the certification requirement. I teach conducting techniques and provide repertoire that is good for kids. When I taught the first year, I thought to myself, I wish I was still singing in the community ensemble because it gives me that edge on conducting and rehearsal techniques. Some of that music would have been harder than what I needed, but my own classroom is too easy, so I need that middle level.

**Larry:** It definitely influences my choices in repertoire because when you are singing at a church, you encounter so much music. I'm in three choirs and they do such different styles of music. I'm getting more ideas and being exposed to more repertoire and I get to experience what my singers would feel if I asked them to sing some of this music. I know me singing a piece as a thirty-five-year-old and how my voice works, so if it has a challenging tessitura, then I probably couldn't give that to a group of freshmen and sophomore singers.

My preparation is the same for the most part. I don't see my conducting gesture changing as a result of me singing. My teaching persona though, definitely yes. When I sit under a

conductor and there are certain things that are said and done, I sometimes think, I don't like that, I don't like the way that makes me feel. I don't want anyone else to feel that way. Part of that has to do with the fact that I've been taught there are just some things that you should or should not say. As a result of that, when I experienced some people who are just constantly harping on the negative or may talk for five to six minutes at a time, I just feel like saying, I just want to sing! I feel so much more invested in a rehearsal when I'm singing so I just always want to be singing and that has changed dramatically in my rehearsal style. I don't want people to be bored, especially with long rehearsals.

**John:** I don't think singing in the ensembles influenced my repertoire because they were different levels of choirs. What it did influence was that it really got me thinking about the voice. First, how can I get my basses to have more resonance and depth to their sound. How can I get my young sopranos to move seamlessly over the passaggio and coast along high G's. And how could I ever get my altos to sing with a taller 'oh' vowel and have more space. I was always thinking about vocal pedagogy and bridging the gap between sounding like a high school choir and an adult semi-professional ensemble.

**Byron:** With regard to choice of repertoire, I do sing a lot, so the exposure is greater. I'll still go online and sit at the piano to look through repertoire. As a singer, I end up knowing a lot of repertoire intimately, so then regarding rehearsals I know the ins and outs of what was tricky for me or other voice parts during the rehearsals with the group I sang the piece with previously. I'll know that there are some tough spots that we will need to work on.

With my gesture, I'm always thinking, is this clear? I would hope that every conductor does this, but if you just did something and it didn't work, you should ask yourself what am I doing that isn't clear or what should I be doing to help them more? Since I sing in so many different ensembles and with different conductors, I think about that a lot as I also work on the other side.

With my teaching persona, I have a much more collaborative feeling in general. I'm much more open to asking a section or the ensemble, do you need a breath there? If someone says, could this be louder, or asks other questions, I'm hoping they are asking so that they can have a better performance, so I should be facilitating that rather than thinking they have a different musical idea for the piece and they are trying to change my vision. I know when I'm singing and ask a question it's because I'm trying to clarify or I'm not hearing unity within the section and being a conductor, I know that one may not hear those things from farther away. If someone does say something like that, then as a conductor I'm definitely going to listen harder to that section the next time we rehearse it.

**Brad:** When I'm singing, it's usually for two and a half or three-hour rehearsals, and I'm reminded that being on the other side of the podium feels so much more labor-intensive. I don't know why that is. Maybe it's because, as conductors, we are moving around and constantly talking, but there is something to be said about standing still on stage for an extended amount of time. Your arms, bodies, and legs get sore and stiff as a singer. So, singing in an ensemble reminds me to be more empathetic to the physical needs of singers.

Singing in ensembles also helps me to think about the preparation of a piece and the choice of repertoire with regard to tessitura, etc. You know all of these things in the back of your mind, but those issues are brought to the forefront when you are singing.

When I'm not being as active as a performer, I can get in my head a little bit sometimes about needing to create an environment, but when I'm in a group, I'm reminded that what I really like is getting in, getting down to business, and getting it done. I don't need to create an aura or do lots of vocal warmups. While I'm not annoyed by having to do it, activities like establishing a tone for fifteen minutes without making progress toward music do annoy me as a singer. So, I tend to stop myself from going too far down that path if I'm more regularly singing.

I don't know if my gestures are impacted when I'm singing or not, because when I conduct, I want to be breath-filled when I move in general. I don't remove myself from the music making process when I'm conducting. My gesture is still breath-ful, round, and empathetic to the singer's experience, I think.

## CHAPTER 5

## ABSORBING CHORAL LITERATURE

The choral canon is a large body of repertoire from which one can teach. It is imperative to be knowledgeable in the different eras and be aware of how they influenced each other as time progressed. The eminent conductor Dale Warland commented in an interview about what he deems important. “Originality and freshness, craftsmanship, vocal suitability, texts of substance, appropriateness for the occasion, duration, instrumentation, and most of all, music that ‘grabs me.’ The conductor must always be excited about any given work to be programmed.”<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that new compositions are continuously created and one can facilitate relevance to their singers by providing music of their generation. For your students, “demonstrate your ability to be a lifelong learner.”<sup>14</sup>

**What are the most meaningful ways in which you absorb choral literature?**

**Mitchell:** Singing it! I have much more connection to a piece that I have sung by rehearsing and performing it. Even a cycle of rehearsals and conducting it would be included. You’ve taken the time with the piece versus just listening to it once. I don’t really go to concerts; every once in a while I do, I enjoy it, but I feel like I do enough performing that it’s nice to have a night at home. I’ll go to support my friends. I’ll see things posted online all the time, but when the day comes, I may have something going on or I’ll just need to stay home to clean the house because that needs to be done too. Sometimes it feels weird to go to concerts and not be performing in them. The listening I do is not of literature that I would realistically program with my students. It’s kind of that ‘mountaintop’ listening; the things that you aspire to so you can go into work the next day and be inspired and fired up about helping them grow.

**Nicholas:** One way that I have found that works well is going to reading sessions. I’ve done a couple. I find that I’m critical about some—there is sometimes a lot of junk, but I’ll always find one or two that are really good. I’ve gone on publisher’s websites and gone through the songs alphabetically and it’s just exhausting. I do think part of picking literature is experiencing it myself or seeing students doing it. I have found sometimes

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<sup>13</sup> Freer, “The Conductor’s Voice,” 32.

<sup>14</sup> Young, *Enhancing the Professional*, 200.

with my own self—where I listened to it and wasn't impressed but then when I sing through it and dig into it, I change my mind and think, 'oh, I can find joy in doing this.' Part of it is networking with the other teachers in the area and see what they have found their students gravitating to and what was really successful in their classrooms and trying those pieces. I really appreciate when I can get firsthand experience with someone saying, "my fifth grade did really well with this piece without pulling teeth and they really enjoyed it." There is also a spring choral festival for fifth through seventh graders that I have taken students to and it's always interesting to see what those conductors pick. Sometimes it's a little harder for my students when they pick a three-part piece, but sometimes they've done some nice partner songs or canons. It's really interesting to take students to a festival and see what a guest conductor picks because they don't know the choir and are meeting with them only for a day or two.

**Daryl:** I used to go to clinics put on by music stores, but, except when I taught junior high, I really didn't find a lot that I cared for much. I'd hear a few good pieces, but they were the best of the mediocre bunch. People don't tend to pick the same kind of music that I do, so that way of finding music was ok during the junior high years. Now I run across a piece on YouTube and it'll make me wonder what else this person has written. You find a few gems and then you dig a little deeper and realize this composer really knows what they're doing or arranges well and it's exciting! When I go to concerts, I mark my program with comments about what I've heard and liked. Sometimes I mark with numbers and write which choir of mine could perform the piece. I'll also call up my colleague who conducted the concert and ask if a specific piece they performed would be accessible for a high school group and she'll be honest. Sometimes All State choirs are just amazing, and I'll want to program the pieces but then I'll look and see that I won't be able to do it with the forces I have.

**Susan:** I still go through scores every summer. I go through every *Choral Journal* and go to the list of reviews and make a list of scores I need and order single copies. All twelve months at a time because I don't have time to do it during the school year. I play through all the new editions that publishers send. I'm also teaching graduate literature courses so I'm always finding something new, even though I've taught it for 12 years. We also have a composer on staff now who taught the Twenty-First Century Choral Literature course and a lot of her score selections I didn't know. There are some composers that I just love so I'll dig around and find other works by those people. My colleague is writing a book on Renaissance music, so he'll find things and make an edition for us. Because of my geographic area, I was asked to create my own series for a publishing company to make people across the country more aware of composers in my area. I'll get pieces sent to me that way—to see if they are worth publishing and I'll send them on. Our university also has a composition competition that people across the world can submit pieces and the one that wins generally gets published with this company. Now it's so much easier to go on YouTube and find things. But I usually go through scores first by sitting at the piano with scores and then YouTube if I like it enough. I don't really ever miss an American Choral Director's Association (ACDA) conference, but that has gotten a little depressing because everything is Twenty-First Century which is soapboxing to me.

**Jocelyn:** I still try to go to ACDA reading sessions. I went to the eastern conference last year. Regional conferences are a lot easier for me. I also have a repertoire project that my students do for choral methods and I'm always learning new repertoire from their projects. It wasn't the goal of the project, but it was a happy coincidence. I'd probably say a half to two-thirds of their choices I know, but the others I won't know at all. Sometimes when I'm looking for music for my church choir I'll just go online to a publisher or a specific composer's website and browse.

**Calvin:** I really enjoy reading sessions. My favorite day as a singer in any choir is the day we get new music because there is nothing I enjoy more than sight reading. I'm still trying to get everything in place with this new teaching position. Ultimately, I have to know my singers and their abilities and then very strategically pick repertoire that I know will appeal to them on a visceral level, that will challenge them educationally and musically to help them grow, but also that I know they can pull off. Part of that is building up a base where I'll have the liberty to select anything and they'll be able to reach it. For the time being, I'm just trying to come up with a good variety of genres, styles, eras, languages, but also what kids will resonate with.

**Amanda:** Going to workshops for new ideas keeps me excited. New games, repertoire, activities, and reading sessions. I like singing with an adult group and growing my voice to keep at the top of the game. It's something I do need to feed my musical soul, but after having babies I needed a break. Now I always try to do activities with my school to feed my kids' musical souls. I always try to do something just to get kids to experience music more and enjoy it—it's almost like a music advocacy thing for the whole school and their parents and the community, to get them to like music.

**Larry:** For me, it's definitely singing it—being in an ensemble and the actual performance. More times than not, no matter how many analogies someone can give me leading up to the performance, it's not until I'm in the performance when it finally clicks for me. And every time I do the piece after that, I'm then going back to that first performance and the rehearsals leading up to it, cause now those analogies make sense. The second way would be hearing a performance of a piece. Third would be finding random music and playing or singing through it or listening on YouTube.

**John:** I think it's a two-step process. I love going to concerts and being introduced to new music. That's my favorite—live human to human contact. I enjoy going out and seeing how other choirs work. Once I decide to do a piece, it's pretty organic by sitting at the piano and singing through the parts while playing another. The collegiate and community ensembles that I work with can do a lot. I could probably tell listening at a concert if one of my groups would be successful. I take notes about it on the program and write which group it could fit. Even if you have a great group but they only meet once a week, it's tricky. "Dust falls on notes that aren't looked at on a regular basis." You always take those two steps back but trudge forward. With a once a week ensemble, that's hard no matter what.

**Byron:** There is so much on YouTube so I'll just put it on in the background while I'm working on stuff and then something I haven't heard before will catch my ear and I'll look into it. I don't normally go to a music store except for conference to peruse the stacks and spend time looking through stuff. I try to stay away from listening to a lot of recordings as part of score study. I want to have my own ideas and not be studying with that recording as the model.

It is mainly new music at the conferences for me. In terms of the choral canon, once you've got higher education degrees, you've had a lot the material in your courses, so I always go back to that and look at my binders if I need a specific type of piece like a motet or something. I definitely search at a conference and buy a few new things just for my personal catalogue that I can have for later, but when I really search for programming, I'm normally going to specific composers or specific texts and then look to fill in with variety, so those searches are more specific. The canon for choral undergraduate education degrees is limited—they may not have even done a survey class because of the credits they are required to finish in four years. The distributors too may not be pushing old copies of something and then you have the other side like the Bärenreiter and Carus publishers who have great stuff and it's all historical editions, but they cost a lot of money, so what high school director is going to be able to buy that stuff?

**Brad:** There was a period of time when I served as a resource and repertoire chair for the ACDA Community Choir Chair and Four-Year-University Chair. Part of that job is that all the publishers are sending you the new releases or historic pieces that have a new edition, and they want you to review them and eventually put their pieces on reading sessions and lists so that other people know about them. That was intense with the amount of new music that is out there. I don't do that anymore, so I'm not getting as much literature sent to me that way.

I'm still learning about composers and their new works via Facebook or their websites. When you are at a convention and you hear three or four pieces by the same composer, they may be up and coming or perhaps their music speaks to you. That's still probably my largest, in terms of quantity, way I consume new music. In terms of historic music, I operate with the understanding that there are pieces I just don't yet know that have been around a long time. I enjoy learning those pieces largely by seeing other people's performances, my own research, and having that long list from our choral literatures courses that I still haven't performed but would like to conduct or sing someday soon. With new music, it's largely knowing composers and being led to their websites to see what they offer. I have been fortunate to work with a lot of living composers by commissioning works with my ensembles.

## CHAPTER 6

## CONTINUING TO DEVELOP TEACHING AND MUSICIANSHIP

Future educators are required to do multiple hours of observations of teachers and their classrooms. The requirement to observe and reflect on others' skills and musicianship is the impetus for seeking answers as to how teachers who have been in the field continue to grow and elevate their teaching. Teaching is a challenging business, and to be successful, educators need to work together, share ideas, work to solve common problems, and share best practices.<sup>15</sup> The adage of "the more you study, the more you realize how little you know" is an accurate observation that after a college degree one does not have all of the answers. Thus, in addition to learning new material to teach, one must continue to stay relevant with the generation of students with which one currently works.

Another item to be gleaned is to observe if those not regularly singing substitute other means of development. Development can be found in many ways, such as conferences, graduate courses and degrees. However, it is important to study if conductors and teachers find singing in an ensemble worthy of the label development. "Regarding their recommendation for improving conducting and managing rehearsals, each interviewee recommended observation of good conductors in rehearsals as the best way to learn these skills. This includes conductors under whom one sings, observation of conductors in other rehearsals, and "guided" observation of recordings for self-analysis."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Young, *Enhancing the Professional*, 192.

<sup>16</sup> R. Paul Crabb et al., "Training Choral Conductors in the Choral Culture of Sweden: Interviews with Seven Prominent Swedish Conductors," *The Choral Journal* 56, No. 7 (February 2016): 43.

### **What types of observations do you use to develop your teaching and musicianship?**

**Mitchell:** I continue to take voice lessons periodically. It is a good reminder to use my voice in a healthy manner. I also attend the state Music Educators Association conference. I also assist as a sectional coach for the All State Choir, so I am able to work alongside other conductors. Seeing other conductors that are similar in stature is always exciting to observe since height and the length of our arms makes a difference in our gestures.

My main source of professional development is singing in different ensembles. As a chorister in many ensembles, it is great to see how many different ways there are to approach things and different styles in which they rehearse and conduct. Even if they have a different approach, I am still thinking about what pieces I can take back and incorporate into my own technique and classroom.

**Nicholas:** I feel like singing in the community ensemble helps stretch me because of the difficult music and it's also helped me enjoy teaching music more, knowing that I'm also doing some of it for myself again. I have also received my master's with Kodaly certification.

**Daryl:** I go to All State every year and observe directors there; I make sure to check out the orchestra and band conductors as well. I do not limit myself just to the choral events and have learned some amazing things from those other clinicians. I have taken continuing education courses as directed by the district. I try to tell my students that you should never stop learning and I always say that I am still learning and want to be a better musician than I was last year. Part of what I do is self-reflection. What do I need to do differently and how do I communicate that to my students? It can be on a variety of topics like vocal technique, choral singing, reading of music, how to be expressive, or why my gesture isn't getting the desired response like why students don't do a crescendo when I show one. After reflecting on an idea, I will incorporate those exercises into the warmups. I also offer to give a session at conferences every few years at the state level of American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) or Music Educators Association (MEA). I just try to observe what any conductor is doing that is working so well and try to share that with others.

**Susan:** Sometimes new festivals or projects come from the interests that I have had in learning for myself and seeing that I have a lack in some area or just want to study and dig further. Some are ideas that my colleagues have, and we work hard to put events together that will reach a lot of people. The ideas definitely come from wanting to have special experiences for the choir/students. Having an administration that is willing to support the projects is also a big factor in how we make them happen.

**Jocelyn:** During my graduate work I was able to study voice as an elective. I continue to meet with my voice teacher now and then to make sure that I am still singing and teaching in a healthy and pedagogically appropriate manner. I currently teach vocal pedagogy within the choral methods course at our university. Since I was never a vocal performance major, there is always a nagging voice in the back of my head that says I

better make sure that I know what I am doing because I am responsible for these students and how they teach others.

I am also doing a lot more research in this position than the last and have presented at several conferences.

**Calvin:** I am singing with a semi-professional ensemble which gives me the opportunity to learn new repertoire and observe another conductor. Having colleagues with which I sing also gives me the opportunity to get new ideas for my classroom. I also attend ACDA conferences when possible.

**Amanda:** I am a member of Organization of American Kodaly Educators (OAKE) and the local Kodaly chapter. I have held vice president and president positions in the local chapter, organized workshops and festivals, attended national conferences. I am in my second year as the Professor of Conducting and Choir for the local Kodaly Institute. This stretches me to find music for elementary teachers to sing as an ensemble requirement for their certification. We worked through conducting techniques and repertoire options that are appropriate for young choirs. When I was hired and started this position, I had really wished I had continued singing with the community choir because it would have given me that edge on being really up to date with conducting and rehearsal techniques. I also take at least one continuing education credit per year so that my teaching license will be easy to renew every five years.

**Larry:** I am living in a different location in the United States now so I am connecting with the local high school and university vocal music teachers so that we can share what we know with each other. Sometimes I go in and work with the students but if I can be there for a longer time period, I will ask to observe the classroom as well. I think it is important that we see what good teachers are doing and even sometimes seeing what bad teachers are doing. If we don't see the bad, we don't know what makes the good.

**John:** I go to a lot of conferences and workshops. I have never presented because I always want to go to other people's sessions! Going to ACDA and hearing other choirs sing introduces me to literature, vocal styles, and conducting styles. An ACDA conference could be a conducting workshop in itself if you wanted it to be. Also, in the Twenty-First Century, I have decided I wanted to be in tune with who is the new composer.

I am also out observing my student teachers and other teachers in the community. On multiple occasions I have brought back warmups from watching my student teachers at schools. There are lots of ways in our daily lives to grow by going to concerts, workshops, conferences, observations.

**Byron:** I am singing in so many things that I am learning all the time. Anytime I am traveling and get to visit a university, I try to observe rehearsals and teachers as well as work with the ensemble. I take those moments to be like a master class for myself. I also do voice refresher lessons now and then. In terms of my conducting, so much is recorded now that I am able to quickly review my gesture or leadership as needed. When I go to concerts, I am listening more than studying a conductor's gesture unless there is a really

brilliant sound that makes me wonder how they are getting that to happen. I am more focused on the choral sound and refreshing my aural skills.

**Brad:** I have sung overseas as part of research and creativity components through my institution. I was learning about repertoire, but also getting to work with other conductors. I also bring in guest conductors to work with my students. The summer master's program that I teach as a part of is also a great opportunity because I get to work with at least two other conductors as colleagues and see how they work with students. The students also bring in a lot of ideas and we get to observe how they interact with an ensemble. It is a joy to learn from experienced graduate students.

## CHAPTER 7

## OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES IN TEACHING

Future K–12 educators are often required to write, in detail, their teaching philosophy. This focuses their thoughts as to what kind of teaching position they want to have and how they plan to run their classroom. As a related question to the previous query on developing one’s teaching and musicianship, an educator naturally grows in their teaching career and possibly looks for career advancement, so reflection upon their teaching style and objectives is inevitable. Collegiate job postings also regularly require a Teaching Statement or Philosophy of Education as part of the application.

This question is presented to subjects on the basis of finding common attitudes, as music standards in the United States were only established in 1994. The evolution of the music classroom in the last thirty years is made evident through the following sentiment: “The ability to relate to our students’ interests and lives is hardly a new phenomenon. While popular culture may change, the young person’s desire to establish one’s “self” through fashion, language, and music is a constant. However, as the cultural demographics of our nation have changes, so have the repertoire, instruments, and resources we use to teach music to our diverse body of students.”<sup>17</sup>

**What are the overarching objectives in your teaching?**

**Mitchell:** The baseline is notes and rhythms, but we must go beyond that. One thing I took away from my conductors and teachers from college was that everything was infused with the sense of line and direction. The sound always has to be going somewhere; my director used to say, your sound is always either going to the party or away from the party. An underlying focus in this is that choirs find it easy to shape a crescendo, but it is difficult to get softer actively. They must support the sound with breath energy even though it is soft. One cannot collapse because they think they have

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<sup>17</sup> David M. Hedgecoth and Sarah H. Fischer, “What History is Teaching Us: 100 Years of Advocacy in Music Educators Journal,” *Music Educators Journal* 100, No. 4 (June 2014): 55.

made it to the end. With Renaissance polyphony, there is always a stretch in the line and notes blossom. Even if there isn't a crescendo, it needs to move to the most important word or syllable in the phrase.

My second goal comes from my high school jazz band director. We read lots of music and really focused on articulation, which translates into diction for me. The ensemble must make the consonants the same way at the same time so there are many things to consider. What is the initial and final consonant? Are we making them the same way and at the same time? Are we making shadow vowels? Is the diction appropriate for that style? Just having correct rhythms does not make the choir sound together. They must make the same sound at the same time and it will impact the phrase. The idea is that one person one way will say something, but thirty people making the same sounds at the same time will really make an impact. I often tell my students a Vince Lombardi quote, "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence." My third goal is their tone quality; not too bright or dark. If it doesn't sound good, I don't care what your articulation is or quality of line.

**Nicholas:** A big concept which I have focused on the last couple of years, along with other teachers, is trying to get students to be more empathetic and more in touch with what other people are feeling. We have noticed a lot of change with extreme behaviors; my building now has a self-contained classroom for emotional behavioral students. I am also seeing my fourth and fifth graders being more self-conscious or ego-centric than before. I understand that part of that is puberty, but this is more than that. With this focus in mind, I am showing them ways through music to be more comfortable with themselves as well as be more mindful of how their actions can influence other people.

I also want students to know that music does not just happen in school at a scheduled time. I show them pictures of when I worked at a summer music camp and tell them about my singing experiences outside of school. I like having practicum students come in and sing or play their instruments to show that they are out of high school and still doing music. I want them to be aware that making or teaching music is a career and a way of living life.

The final objective is because of my training through Kodaly. I want my students to be music literate. I strive to be more than just a general education music appreciation class. We take time to learn the notes on the staff and read rhythms. I want them to enjoy music, but I also want them to be more independent by being literate.

**Daryl:** One of the things that comes to mind is choral blend. I will do exercises that get them listening to their neighbors and evaluating how they sound in comparison. We sing a unison pitch on "oo" and I ask, are you matching the pitch, and are the people all around the ensemble matching? Then I ask, are you singing the same volume as your neighbor? Is your neighbor sticking out because they are singing too loud or is it because you are singing too soft? Then I ask if we are on the same vowel? Match your neighbor. If I hear any improvement, I'll say, "Yes! That's what we're looking for! Did you notice how much better we blend if we are all on the same pitch, dynamic, and vowel?" When talking about the group, I refer to the ensemble as "we" or "us". We are a group, a miniature community, and we are in this together to make music and be expressive.

I also want my students to be good singers in their own right. I teach voice lessons to all of my students so they can further understand their voices and be more independent. Each one may need different focus; some might need to work on listening, technique, or expressivity. Some students need help understanding that solo singing is letting go of some of the choral idea we practice in class and feeling comfortable opening up into that bigger voice.

I try to make choir a safe place and a place where students want to be. My principal said, when you love your students more than your subject area, that is the day you become a real teacher. I remember, many years ago, when I would get frustrated with my students being too noisy and struggling to get them to quiet down at the beginning of class. I then went to a workshop and the clinician said, “You know why your kids are noisy when they come in the room? They are excited to be there!” That made me feel so much better and I understand the energy in the room a lot more now. They are excited to see each other and be in choir. Now I have gotten it worked out that within thirty seconds of the bell ringing, I have left the doorway where I greet the students and am leading warmups and they settle in quickly. I want them to know every day that this is a safe, comfortable place where everyone is accepted and loved.

**Susan:** My primary goal is to embed a real sense of musicality so singers understand how to sing a phrase, express a text, and sing with good tone so that they can serve the musicality that is in the score.

Secondly, I think it is important for my choirs to have experiences with all 500 years of choral repertoire. That is one of the reasons we have continued to do *Messiah* each December.

Students need to understand the core of how choral music came to be and how much is there for them to experience. Not everyone likes everything; you need a balance and enough variety so they can find something in the music that they can attach to their soul. The third goal is to develop the community that choral singers have as an ensemble. I want them to know that wherever they go, there is a place for them to sing.

**Jocelyn:** I largely work with music education majors, so I want my students to be knowledgeable about their subject matter. “You can’t teach what you don’t know.” I spend a lot of time with them on score study, showing how repertoire can be part of the curriculum, and teaching about the vocal mechanism.

I want their teaching to be meaningful and musical. They need to consider who their students are and how to reach them. They need to be aware of the types of pieces of music they are picking and how it will impact those students.

**Calvin:** The first two are music literacy and confidence. One of the most valuable lessons I have learned and try to instill upon my singers now is from studying with Eph Ehly. Nothing makes singers better faster than when they believe in themselves. Pedagogy and music literacy are the foundation of everything we do, but beyond that, my students need to believe in themselves and that they have talents they can grow. They need to believe in themselves enough that they are willing to learn a solo or audition for All-State or an ACDA honor choir. The music literacy skills will benefit them for however long they choose to keep singing.

The third objective is about mental health and students' need for community; this comes out of the experiences with my current students. This class of seniors has lost five students to suicide during their high school career. The research is showing a very direct correlation to the advent of the iPhone and the negative turn with mental health. It is nearly impossible to not have verbal interaction with the people in your choir. It is vital that we get kids to interact with their peers and be friends with whom they sing. Students need to have a community to which they belong, to have a program in which they also place a positive experience, where they have actual, genuine human connections. Having something to look forward to everyday really helps with their mental health.

**Amanda:** I really want my kids to appreciate and love music. This probably came from seeing my elementary teachers loving it. When teachers aren't as invested or their attitude shows a lack of care, students quit. I don't want anyone to go away saying they didn't enjoy their music experience.

**Larry:** For anyone who is working under me, I want them to have fun. Even if we are doing a serious set of music, they should feel some sort of satisfaction. If they learned just one thing, whether it was from something I said or did. I also want them to feel like they can go and do more, that they are empowered to keep creating. I want them to have a desire to learn other things about music as well.

**John:** All of my objectives are under the umbrella of singing great music. The first is to increase the musical literacy of my singers. They should be able to take a look at a piece of music and understand what the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements are so that they can give a good shot at reading for the first time. I think this is a goal for teachers of all ages to have. We hear so often that music is a universal language, but it is a language, we need to teach literacy so that other people can understand the language.

The second objective is to celebrate the creative process together. We should celebrate the fact that we are given a piece of music and, almost miraculously, it peaks right about the time we are supposed to sing in the concert. The celebration of the creative process is to recognize that it is ok to have group struggle when we start a new piece of music. That group struggle will really make the success of learning the piece and the ability to perform the piece all the better. It is a matter of perspective. We have to get to the point where we understand that when one is reading a new piece of music, it is not the conductor and the score standing on a battle field ready to wage war with the choir. It is the conductor and the choir standing together waging war on notes and rhythms and tackling the piece of music we have set out to do. Sometimes we panic when people are reading music and not liking it, but the singers will very often, probably eight out of ten, will come around to liking it because of the creative process and learning. It is ok to celebrate the struggles and the successes.

The third objective is to instill a love of the choral art so that students will leave an ensemble and desire to keep singing in some capacity. They join a church choir or community-based choir and continue singing because they could not imagine life without choir being in it.

**Byron:** The overarching goal is their overall understanding of the piece; history as well as style and how it all fits together. Whether it is a specific phrase or line of text, teaching the style and about the era for a piece will then transfer to other similar works. I want them to know different styles so that they are self-sufficient when they approach Bach or Palestrina the next time.

**Brad:** I am always striving to create literate, independent and self-sufficient musicians. I think this has been true when working at all levels including high school, college, and community groups. As I continue working with more advanced ensembles, it is the ability for them to be musical without being told. The concept of transfer of knowledge is vital, and I aspire to a point where singers engage in the responsibility of having interpretive minds and avoid becoming singing machines that just do what a conductor says. I also do not think any of us do music because of the great financial reward, but because there is some kind of joy involved, and I hope that I reinvigorate a joy in life through singing in my teaching and conducting.

## CHAPTER 8

### ADVOCATING FOR MUSIC

Subjects were asked to provide their current music advocacy practices because administration is continuously moving toward a standards-based curriculum. The struggle is demonstrating in more efficient ways that music is worthy of being part of the education curriculum instead of labeled as extra-curricular or an elective course. It is not music but music education that faces a legitimization crisis.<sup>18</sup>

Current advocacy within the “accountability model” of education demands more rigorous analysis of the impact of music education programs. The accountability era has emphasized measurement and assessment in the name of transparency and educational reform. Music education researcher Richard Colwell wrote in 2008 that “In the past, political leaders acted upon their own political beliefs and opinions; today the trend is to rely upon facts—those that reveal school efficiency and those used to promote educational reforms.” Standards and assessment of standards are common elements across schools in the accountability era. However, the arts have had a difficult time defining wide-scale measurements that would allow the arts to fully enter the fray of the measured subjects.<sup>19</sup>

Hedgecoth and Fischer try to comfort music educators in that the work of advocacy will never be done, so it should be viewed as a way to keep protecting the right to reach each student.

By knowing that advocating for our programs will never be truly “finished,” we can begin to accept that we will never feel completely stabilized. For more than a hundred years, music teachers have felt pressure to advocate for our subject matter. And yet, while there are countless challenges to our society and our field, we still continue to work for a musical education for every child. Rather than view advocacy as just another task to complete, consider it as a representation of what we hope music education can become.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wayne Bowman, “To What Question(s) is Music Advocacy the Answer?” *International Journal of Music Education* 23, No. 2 (August 2005): 126.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin Shorner-Johnson, “Building Evidence for Music Education Advocacy,” *Music Educators Journal* 99, No. 4 (June 2013): 54.

<sup>20</sup> Hedgecoth and Fischer, “What History is Teaching Us,” 57.

**In what ways do you feel you are being an advocate for music continuing in our schools?**

**Mitchell:** I feel very lucky in that my administration is very supportive. My personal battle right now is that my principal told me that for my position, I'm the seventh teacher in the last ten years. There is a massive band program that has evolved as a result of the vacuum of a revolving door. One of the things I am really trying to do is take a program that has been swept aside and say there is life here and grow it by showing the community, staff, and parents that there is something important happening. I think the biggest thing we can do to advocate is to make music that is meaningful and powerful. Part of that is the quality of musicianship and getting the people who are performing the music to connect with it. The more [people] we can get buying into that the more lifelong musicians we'll have. The more they'll encourage their peers to try it out. We have to do things of quality and do them with integrity to push things forward. We can do flashy stuff, but we should be building something that other people will advocate for beyond ourselves. If you have a giant program because you have a bunch of people who want to be in your ensembles, you create a space where people are supporting each other and finding meaning in the work. When talking about schools cutting programs, they aren't going to do it if the department has good numbers and is doing well or half the student body is involved—you'd be making too many students and parents angry. I can't affect what people outside the program think and do, but I can influence, support, and develop the people that are saying they want to be in the room. These students can have a sense of identity and pride which will make others want to be a part of it.

**Nicholas:** My choir and hand chimes groups do a tour in the winter and spring which is nice because they get to perform for groups that aren't their families. We go to the Veteran Affairs hospital for staff and patients and a senior living community. I think it's good for the community to see young students doing those things. My elementary school is close to one of the high schools, so we've gone over to sing the national anthem at volleyball and basketball games. I think exposure like that makes parents, more than anyone, see that music doesn't just happen in the classroom on "B days"—it gets integrated into society. They are out there giving joy to someone or entertainment for a little bit. I get a lot of praise and support from administration to do these kinds of activities.

I also try to be accommodating for any college student that needs observation hours and have taken on a couple of student teachers because I know that was a good experience for me. I think it's important to help future teachers so they can be good advocates. It's been nice to have student teachers. I tailor it differently for those who knew they wanted to do elementary versus those who were going to go straight on into a master's performance degree. Even if someone is going to teach at the secondary level or pursue a different degree, they still need to know what happens in the elementary level.

**Daryl:** I think I do that with my students—having a good experience every day in choir. I'm at the point where I'm starting to have children of previous students and they tell their child you've gotta be in choir! I think too that taking my carolers (madrigal singers)

out into the community and hearing is important. They are a pretty cohesive group and people stop to listen. I get lots of compliments when we do this. Administration is very supportive. One of the things that has caused this is that I never march in to anyone's office and demand anything. You have to have a good relationship with them. Another thing is that I never send my kids to the office or get them to the point where they are riled up. When I was a younger teacher that happened, and I realized I was the problem. I've learned to not go the wrong direction and let them save face when they're having a bad day. Part of it starts with greeting them at the door. The office trusts me. They know that if a student was sent that they know something is really seriously wrong. They don't worry about me and know that I'm going to be kind to everyone and handle my classes. They know I'm a calming factor with my kids.

**Susan:** I'm not sure I do this directly in any way. I guess the way I am is by training my teachers and by trying to be intentional about expressing the importance and significance of singing and choral singing, in particular, so that they can be that in their own schools. I do continue to take my students on choir tours to perform with and for schools and out in different communities.

**Jocelyn:** Well, the seed of getting my PhD was planted in my fifth year of public school teaching. I really liked what I was doing and I did it for six more years before I decided to get the degree. But I was talking with my mentor about what we do and that we do it because we love it. What my mentor said really stuck with me: The idea is that in a high school program with two hundred kids, you're influencing those students every day. My mentor said, if you're in higher ed though and you only have 25 students that you are working, those kids are going out to work and influence 200–500 kids in their schools and they can influence the next generation, so the outreach is so much more. Now yes, that's the perfect world scenario, but even if some of the students go and do that, I'm a part of that.

To that end, as much as I love singing and am such a choral nerd, I also recognize that that's not the pathway for everyone. So, in my methods courses I do ukulele. Choral methods isn't going away, but we need to get more popular music and things like ukulele because that's what draws kids in. The goal is to give them the skill sets to really make music. We need to expand the idea that it's not just band, choir, and orchestra anymore. Maybe a group of students want to write a song together. I'm here to help my students see those pathways so that when they are out in the schools that they can reach so many more students.

**Calvin:** We have an assignment within our music department that every student who is enrolled in a performing arts class (band, vocal, theatre) has a required assignment that is eleven percent of their semester grade. The assignment is to attend some sort of concert and submit a written evaluation from the defined criteria given. So, in the band world, if they see a symphony, they are being exposed to high caliber music. I will hang posters of the ensemble I participate in and have about a dozen students that come to our concerts as part of this assignment. I talk about the ensemble that I sing with in an almost reverential way a lot during our classes which creates some genuine interest. I'll say things like, "we tried this in rehearsal last night, so I want to hear when you all try and approach things

the same way.” And the younger the student is, the more likely they are to have a parent come with them. Suddenly parents pop up in the audience and they’ll talk to me after the concerts saying things like, “I have been around singing all my life and lived here a long time. I had no idea that something like this was right here in our own backyard.” Despite all of the publicity that goes on out there, people don’t necessarily think about it. So, it’s kind of a way to capitalize on music events that are happening and facilitate students learning more about music and what opportunities are available.

I am advocating by trying to get kids to understand that singing is one of those things that you can literally do your entire life. To overly simplify it, I’m trying to walk the walk. I don’t talk with my students now a lot about my first years of teaching, but I have shared with them that it was a really difficult time in my life and one of the biggest problems was that it was the first time in my life that I wasn’t singing and that is something that I see very clearly now with a bit of perspective.

I am also doing choral festivals with middle school students to get them excited about singing in high school when they transition. Each high school will try to bring in local ensembles or small groups of singers to work with their students. I think our area has been strong in collaborating with the community. It helps promote that singing is a life-long endeavor people who want to pursue it.

**Amanda:** I always try to do something just to get kids to experience more music and enjoy it. I do a lot for music advocacy. For several years, I’ve done a Fine Arts night with the art teacher. We made a huge wall of art by all the students in the school and then in the classrooms there were art projects that the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) funded so they could experience art and take it home. In the gym I had music groups performing; I had student groups and performers from around the community and universities. We’ve had Native American dancers, an Irish dance group. Our city has a lot happening that people don’t even know about. I had a beatboxer come before. I’ve done a family folk dancing night because I want the parents involved. They are the ones that are going to pay for their children to be involved in music groups in the future and provide the opportunity to have a love for music. We had a ukulele night where the students all performed for their parents and then they taught their parents how to play a little bit, so they were involved too. This year I’m going to have a night called Explore Music Night with different teachers and musicians helping me. In the classrooms we’ll have listening, music history, a harp player, a bucket drumming session, kazoos, and maybe an instrument making session that they can then take home. In the gym there will be performances of the third, fourth, and fifth graders and then the men’s ensemble from one of the universities will perform. We even have a “dad band” (dads of the students that have formed a band) that’ll perform and it’s like a dance at the end which is super fun. Generally, we get 600 to 1,000 people attending these events. I like doing these events because it’s a way to feed my soul and I can use my expertise to give back. Having sung in the community ensemble and being one of their committee members has really helped me build connections with the community. If I want to get something donated to my school or some funding for these events, I have a much easier time because I have worked with these companies already. Being in ensembles and doing activities like these events are so beneficial because they build connections and relationships within the community.

**Larry:** The fact that there are people who say, I enjoy singing with him, lets me know that they are going to continue singing music. If someone can have a positive experience with you and the music, it will stick with them. They may not be advocates in the sense that they don't go to city hall with signs, but they can have a pleasant conversation with someone about music. Whether they have sung with me or not, we're just planting seeds. And the seeds travel with them. If people have a good experience, then they will speak positively about things and the greater the chance it is that others will be convinced that it is something of value.

**John:** I am working my tail off to get the finest music educators to graduate from our college and get out into the schools. The best thing we can do is send forth the best teachers who have all the needs of their students at heart and that they have patient spirits, compassionate hearts, and the desire to make great music no matter what age level they're working with. I think my role as a music educator and choral professor here is related to the future of music in schools very closely.

The number of high school choir teachers in the community ensemble I conduct has to be at an all-time high right now. We are very intentional about them inviting their students to our concerts and let them know that they are welcome. We visit schools and work with their choirs. On one hand it's recruitment work, but maybe only or two kids will come to the college from any choir, so my time is better spent by working musical ideas with everybody and not caring in those moments whether or not they are coming to my college but instead, hopefully make the piece of music they are working on right now better. I want to create the next generation of great teachers.

**Byron:** The biggest thing right now for me is the master's program we're doing. For so long I have been visiting choirs and teachers and seeing that some students weren't enjoying it because they were wanting more, but the teacher needed more education to really help the students love the music and want to continue being in the program. That is one of the biggest things is having this program for a lot of middle and high school teachers—they need continuing education and learn how to be better advocates themselves in their schools. In the past, some of the ensembles I was singing with would go to area high schools to observe and clinic, but now it's more about how I can help music educators educate better.

**Brad:** In many ways, it's preparing future educators. Every time I go out or get invited to my former students' classrooms, I see that they are discussing music advocacy, and that is important. They are able to talk about the aesthetic and the pragmatic reasons that music is important. I also think that any chance I get in a public setting with parents, family, and administrators present at performances by honor choirs or in clinic settings, it's an opportunity to thank them for their support and acknowledge how important the arts are. I'll do anywhere from six to thirteen clinics and honor choirs in a year. We have to model why it's important. So, in teaching my choral techniques class and secondary methods class, I really work to help future music educators link the standards-based assessments and the 2014 music standards to other disciplines. I think previous generations just completely ignored this idea of actually developing an assessment that

gives us data to say that students are learning as opposed to preparing music for entertainment at concert performances—which is the way I grew up. The concept of actually holding ourselves accountable for learning in music is a foreign concept for many future music educators because that isn't the way they were taught. I think those are the keys to future music programs because I think we are not in an environment where nationally or otherwise there is interest in supporting things that we can't prove are effective. Helping future and in-service teachers create data to prove the impact of a music education helps provide the rationale for the continuation of music programs.

## CHAPTER 9

## STUDENTS SINGING AFTER HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

Distinguished choral conductors have been asked how they think the choral realm will evolve.<sup>21</sup> As conductors reflect and observe the upcoming generation of educators, they speak about the trends they see and how they feel those trends impact the field. A study performed with choral singers from Australia, England, and Germany measured their physical, psychological, social, and environmental wellbeing. “A high degree of consensus emerged on positive benefits of choral singing.”<sup>22</sup> A piece of positive advice regarding the future is to connect with students, parents, and the community about creating music outside the classroom. “Publicly personalize the value of music in your life. Again, openly share the impact music has in the present and throughout the varied stages of your life.”<sup>23</sup>

**What do you foresee happening with regard to music in schools and people continuing to sing afterward?**

**Mitchell:** Before my fulltime job I had a spring to substitute teach so I took on a church job where I grew up. There was a definite generational gap. Part of it was the church, but even though the people may not have been the most talented, the older people were the ones who had the sturdiest background in music literacy. I don’t think it’s sustainable to teach everything by rote, especially vocally. It gets so taxing and then they forget it in between rehearsals that you have to do it all again. So, if it’s written down and we teach the skills—I want my students to enjoy singing and I want them to continue to be able to sing music without me. People don’t have any guarantee of someone directing them. I want people to be able to have something put in front of them and look at it and say, yeah, I can sing this, give me a starting note and be able to just go; they should be self-sufficient. I’m not saying there isn’t anything wrong with rote or having a good ear, but I think music literacy gives you so much more independence and you don’t have to rely on

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<sup>21</sup> Barbara Tagg and Linda Ferreira, “Fourteen Conductors Speak about American Choral Music,” *The Choral Journal* 43, No. 8 (March 2003): 9–25. Freer, “The Conductor’s Voice,” 32.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Clift and Grenville Hancox, “The Significance of Choral Singing for Sustaining Psychological Wellbeing: Finding from a Survey of Choristers in England, Australia, and Germany,” *Music Performance Research* 3 (2010): 79.

<sup>23</sup> Keith Dye, “Advocacy 101: Music for the Sake of Music,” *Southwestern Musician* 84, No. 5 (2015): 8.

anyone else. The older choir members are able to walk in and read a melodic contour and I'm able to say, "basses, you're singing a D instead of a C" and they can fix it easily. I think there is a parallel with the churches using projectors instead of taking out the hymnals. If you are going to use a projector, that's fine, but then include the music because that's how I learned how to read music. It's tricky because we've been talking and singing since birth, so you have the faculty, but the literacy skills fall behind. We need more people that are empowered or value it. I don't think the issue of supporting the arts is that there are less professionals in the field, I think it's more of the people who aren't going into the profession don't get it because they didn't get taught how to do it or didn't do it themselves.

**Nicholas:** I think it's slightly sad. My students are required to take a music class in middle school, and I go back and forth because I don't ever want to push choir and say it's going to be more enjoyable. I usually say join choir because you'll make friends from other schools. I had read an article, "Stop Obsessing Over Talent, Everyone Can Sing"<sup>24</sup> and I can see a trend with my students. They kind of start to think that singing or music isn't a skill you can build on like reading or sports. They think that you either have it or you don't. And even parents will ask at Parent-Teacher Conferences, do you think my child has talent? And it's tough to answer because we all have degrees of talent, but everyone can improve or if it's something you enjoy, you can work at it to get better. This article talked about social media and reality shows that tell society you either have talent or you don't and boo get off the show. And hopefully most adults would know that it's edited like that and has hand-picked people, but do you kids know that? Maybe to some degree, but the article talked about how the talent mindset doesn't relate to the growth mindset and that people can do better. I wish students didn't think that it was something that you were born with. When I'm talking with parents, I try to make it more relatable. Probably anyone can run a marathon, but they can't do it tomorrow—just like you can't go and be the lead in the opera tomorrow. It takes training and dedication to do things. Another thing I tell parents, if a child is low on math or reading, we don't just give up and say they just aren't good at it, but sometimes that happens with music! If the child is low at math, we do something; there is remedial math, there is help with paraprofessionals, the teacher contacts home to say check out this app but sometimes with music I feel like it's "we're not good at it, just quit." It is sad because it is like reading—there are kids who read at a fifth-grade level or a seventh-grade level just as kids who could probably play piano at different levels.

I try to fight against this stigma by giving my students examples of other students singing. I try to avoid any that are the prodigies or on the reality shows with one of them singing *O mio babbino caro* at age ten. I don't think it's vocally healthy and it's not a realistic goal for an elementary student. I have them listen to recordings of students that sound like them. Sometimes I get backlash because it doesn't sound like the radio but then we have a conversation about how our voices don't have to sound like that.

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<sup>24</sup> Steven M. Demorest, "Stop Obsessing Over Talent, Everyone Can Sing," *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/stop-obsessing-over-talent-everyone-can-sing-74047> (accessed March 10, 2019).

**Daryl:** I think the transition from junior high to high school is tough; they get scared and think they need to take a study hall. I have to do a lot more recruiting than I used to do. I think that's similar to college. They think for the first year I'll just get used to things and get good grades and then some of them don't continue because of those transition fears. I talk about getting involved in singing and to keep enjoying it. I tell them that some schools will give you a scholarship just for singing in choir even if you aren't a music major. I wish more of my students continued.

**Susan:** I think if students got the concept of an aesthetic experience in high school, they might look for it in college. If they didn't have it, they probably just think of it as an activity and they aren't going to seek it out as directly. There are many more people that sing in high school than when they come to college—it's maybe fifteen percent, if that. I think partly, we hear it all the time, my advisor says I'm not going to have time or my parents think I need to focus on my major. We understand and just encourage them to come back to it.

**Jocelyn:** Churches are not what they used to be, even twenty years ago. But I think for some people in my church, the only reason they go is because of choir. I don't think music is every going to go away and I tell my students that too. My job is interesting because one side of me is promoting popular and general music and then the other side of me is talking about the importance of choir and how to teach it well. I think there are a lot of people in the field where people talk about secondary and general as one camp and the other camp are the ensemble directors and they are so threatened by each other. We should be working together. I taught both of these when I was teaching public—I had three choirs and then my voice class, theory class, and a history class. If I could do it again knowing what I know now, I would make the theory class an ukulele class. You can teach theory through that. You have to think about chords in a different way than playing the piano. There's sometimes a disconnect between the notes and taking those away for music making. I think it would strengthen what the kids do in choir—we just have to get the kids in the door. We did a show and a kid played on his guitar and sang and he was really good. I asked why he wasn't in choir and he said he didn't feel like he had a place in choir. Something is very wrong with that. So, I got to know him and I signed him up for choir and he stuck with it. As a first-year teacher I wouldn't have done that, but I was pretty confident at that point in my teaching career. We need to make sure music is less inclusive. We don't do ourselves a favor.

**Calvin:** The thing that I have noticed, and I've talked with other teachers about it, is that students who have a really positive experience in any given area in high school, be it choir, band, theatre, science, etc., that's where their interest leads them after high school. When I was interviewing for my current job, near the end of the time I was rehearsing with the students, I casually asked for a quick raise of hands from anyone who is thinking about doing music education after high school and they all kind of laughed because it wasn't on their radar. Fast forward a couple of years, I have three sophomore boys who have come and talked to me about considering music education. I had a senior last year who spoke with me at the end of the year who said that choir had been such a great experience that he was going to college to major in music. The students are having

positive experiences, so the interest is at least there to continue after high school. I have also been encouraging students to do honor choir events because that's one of the things that hooked me. This fall I'm going to be starting a class called Studio and will take about twelve students per semester. The sole purpose of the class is to help them build an audition portfolio so that material is ready to go when the time comes for them to do scholarship auditions. I'll get to work one on one to facilitate their unique needs and skill development. It is the people who have a positive experience that will continue with it and those that don't, won't continue. I have been around teachers who don't create positive experiences for their classrooms. At the end of the day, teenagers still crave validation, so you have to enjoy being around them, drama and all. We need to be willing to feed into them and give them a positive experience that they will want to recreate after they leave the school.

**Amanda:** I think it's probably 50/50. I think a lot of kids stick with choir that were with choir, but that's not my whole student body since it's extracurricular. When middle school choirs come to the elementary to perform and recruit, I see a ton of my students that have stuck with it. I have been teaching elementary so long that this is my second year of students who have continued choir into college. I don't think they are music education majors, but that's cool they are singing.

**Larry:** It is difficult to answer that; I have mostly been in environments where it's such a thriving thing. Most of my Facebook friends are musicians, so I'm inundated with information of people doing stuff in music, so it feels like music is so big, but I haven't thought about it in this context and I'm reminded that there are things outside this. I don't go to the grocery store and introduce myself as a PhD in music; no one cares how many pieces I have published or how many All State Choirs I have directed when I'm at the grocery or gas station. I've seen some people talk about programs getting cut, but then I'll see programs expand. When you see another school hiring more music teachers, that means something. I haven't seen any programs that have been cut, but I don't read a lot of music education literature. I read more *Choral Journal* articles about performance rather than education advocacy.

**John:** Choral music in America has to continue to be open to reforming. I think our country continues to evolve and change and we need to allow ourselves to go with while still remembering the past traditions and heritage of people who have come before us. If we only put Bach and Mozart in front of our choir, we're not going to recruit too many singers. I think we have to be open to a wider variety of literature and it doesn't have to be picked just because it's fun. There is plenty of literature that's well constructed and has craft behind it.

I'm optimistic and hopeful. The one thing about choir that is so fantastic is that everybody already owns the instrument, and nobody needs to be ruled out because they can't afford to go to the music store and buy their voice. At some level we all participate and on many different occasions we all sing anyway; there are national anthems before events and happy birthday at parties so I'm optimistic because I don't think we are going to lose our voice anytime soon.

**Byron:** In terms of music in schools, every administration is different. We're seeing a little more understanding with some schools that they see how arts are important to the overall development of a person. I think we'll always need to keep advocating. We want to collect data that says look at the students in choir who do so well on their ACT's and SAT's so we should keep it in our school. I think we have to make sure we keep programs in schools as part of the required curriculum because some states don't do that anymore.

I think ACDA and Chorus America are helping. A few years ago, *Chorus America* did a study about who comes to their concerts.<sup>25</sup> We always hear that just blue-hairs come to concerts, and it is true that there are a lot of older people that do go to concert, but that joke has been around for twenty to thirty years, so it's not the same generation of blue hairs.

If people have a good experience in high school or college then it's something they continue to do in their lives in one aspect or another. They may take a break, but they come back to it. The study showed that even after they stopped singing, that they will still go to concerts because of their kids. Then they have the financial freedom to also be supporting.

**Brad:** I am optimistic, but I also think that the future of successful arts programs is going to rest with their level of ability to show a collaborative and innovative nature. It could be collaborating with literature, dance, other arts, or the humanities, but we have to link what we do with broader world views because I just don't think the future of people's interests are sitting in a concert hall or church and listening to music exclusively for the sake of music. This sort of innovation is happening in the professional realm, and eventually the community and public/private education sectors will move in this direction. People are pairing the visual arts with dance and choral or instrumental music and creating multimedia, not meaning just projected video, but multimedia or multisensory experiences. We can work with composers, but how about bringing in the writer of the text to develop the conversation further from a literary aspect? Sometimes opportunities for collaboration are hard to imagine until they just sort of drop into your lap, but once it happens it's a really cool experience. It takes some intentional thinking about what and how to make it a deeper and more meaningful experience, not just for the audience but also for the participants.

With regard to my community choir, every time we talk about mission and vision, the words collaboration and innovation come into play. We've not done a great job of making every experience a collaboration, but this spring we are collaborating with other arts organizations and working with a local high school. This kind of work has positive benefits in terms of grant funding and being able to prove that we are reaching less-served populations, for instance.

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<sup>25</sup> Alan Brown, "Intrinsic Impact Audience Project," *Chorus America*, August 2014. <https://www.chorusamerica.org/conducting-performing/intrinsic-impact-audience-project> (accessed March 16, 2019).

## CHAPTER 10

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

All subjects spoke about the presence of music early on in their lives and an influence from a music teacher that facilitated their path in music. Having teachers who are invested in the creation of music and the development of the students are personal connections that sometimes lead to lifelong music participation. Activities for students outside of the classroom are also of note. Some subjects stated the opportunities at church or choir festivals throughout their formative years are factors for further development and excitement about continuing to make music. Ten of the subjects have their master's degrees and six have a doctor of musical arts or doctor of philosophy degree. These subjects expressed that singing in ensembles during these degrees was beneficial and that participation was a joy.

After the subjects expounded upon their musical background, each provided information about their current career and level of singing involvement. The five subjects who are regularly singing in ensembles reflect that it is important for their own need to be musical, and ensemble singing facilitates their teaching. Those who have opportunities to sing on occasion all expressed that they enjoyed it and wished they had the time to do it more.

The five singers conclude that singing keeps their skills sharp, and they are reminded of how their own singers feel in rehearsals. Pacing of the rehearsals, vocal fatigue from singing passages in the extended ranges repeatedly, mental focus, appropriate repertoire selections, and time spent sitting and standing during rehearsals were mentioned as things about which conductors know they should think but sometimes

need healthy reminders to consider. A common theme among the singers is that they all feel like they are getting to experience the music in a deep manner which facilitates their approach to any piece of music. While they may not choose those same pieces to conduct for their own ensembles, the outlet of singing spawns creativity for their own teaching. The biggest emotional impact is that singing with an ensemble leads them to be more excited and rejuvenated to teach the day after they have sung. Other positive outcomes include the importance of comradery and the built-in community upon which they can ask questions and gather ideas for their classrooms.

Those who do not currently sing regularly acknowledge the value that comes from being a singer in an ensemble under someone else's conducting. They recognize that there are different insights provided when one is sitting in an ensemble as a singer. Two of the subjects commented that one of the ways to compensate for these insights can come from honest communication with your singers. When a conductor and their singers have a positive and trustworthy relationship, the singers can provide this information to the conductor during or outside of the rehearsal. Examples of this are singers that made the conductor aware of when a longer warmup was helpful for the rehearsal or that a section of the ensemble was struggling with a section of piece. Balance is required with this relationship in that the conductor does not consider these comments to be injurious to their ego and recognize that students are speaking up because they are invested in the ensemble.

The two outstanding themes of why these conductors do not sing are, one, that they are currently conducting so many ensembles (school, civic, church) that they cannot give any more time to music, and two, that they have obligations to their spouse and

children. Some felt that their lifestyles at the beginning of their careers led solely to conducting and it was natural to not seek out an opportunity to sing because of the honor of being asked to lead an ensemble.

When commenting on ideas of why others do not continue to sing, eight subjects related the amount of time and effort that is required to do their jobs well. Interviewees commented that it is imperative for teachers to provide lots of experiences for their students which require a great amount of outside planning. Also, teaching and conducting multiple ensembles is physically and mentally taxing. A theme related to this was that there are teachers and conductors who want to take a break from singing after college to focus on their new jobs. While initially it may not seem like an issue, this break can become so extended that they never come back and then identify solely as conductors and teachers. Four subjects spoke on behalf of their colleagues who do not sing because of the commitments at home. Parents especially feel obligated to be at home to help care for their children instead of being away for another night of the week.

Subjects also proposed ideas that were not overtly common among the group but are worth noting, as the factors may be more prevalent in different areas of the country. The distance in which one may have to travel to participate in an ensemble may be too great or unrealistic. Vocal fatigue from teaching could lead some to avoid participation in singing. The financial cost of having to pay to participate can also be a deterrent. A person's ego was considered but from many perspectives. One idea was that teachers took a break to focus on the job, but have not come back because they are afraid they no longer possess the skills. Two subjects considered that maybe some conductors or teachers do not want someone else telling them "what to do." Two subjects

acknowledged that some may not enjoy singing as much as teaching or conducting. One observed that their colleagues give the impression that they “know enough” because they have received the degree and do not need to continue learning.

The overarching concept of personal development was then broken down into three questions. Subjects were all asked how singing can influence a teacher’s choice in repertoire, preparation of a piece, their gesture while conducting, and their teaching persona as they work with their students as well as how they continue to develop their teaching and musicianship, and how they absorb new choral literature. With regard to choices of repertoire, half are teaching at a lower level than they are able to sing. This category is, therefore, somewhat limited to those who are teaching at least at the high school level, as some repertoire is accessible for many levels of choirs.

Responses about the choices in repertoire are influenced by singing due to the familiarity of each piece because of the rehearsal process. As ensembles delve into the finer details of a particular piece musically and textually, it can also spark interest to research similar pieces or search for more pieces by the composer. Other factors that a singer/teacher might become aware of include fatigue from range or tessitura. This can make a singer/teacher more wary of programming certain pieces for their younger singers. The opposite of that is feeling how healthy and flowing a vocal line is for themselves and finding it to be a good option for their ensemble.

In general, the subjects did not feel that singing in an ensemble was an influence on the preparation of a piece. The exceptions are the gained knowledge of where the difficult portions are in the pieces and knowing any ensemble will struggle in those spots. The process of score study and preparation was formed by their past teaching experiences

and habits. However, singing in an ensemble did remind many about the preparation of an entire rehearsal and to be more empathetic to the physical needs of their singers.

Pacing of the rehearsal with regard to sitting and standing, tessitura and fatigue, vocal affects with regard to tone and color, and making sure singers are still engaged and not mentally losing focus were included under the entire rehearsal process.

One subject stated that a conductor's gesture is a very personal way to evoke sound from singers. When subjects spoke of gesture, it was related to emulating healthy posture, lifting the soft pallet, and breath-filled support. One subject was of the opinion that vocal modeling in rehearsals was part of his gesture to facilitate healthy singing. Only one subject stated explicitly that his previous conductors informed his current gesture. Another subject that teaches conducting says that students will not always continue to use the gestures they are taught once they leave their graduate degrees.

Singing in ensembles was not considered by most subjects to have a direct influence their teaching persona and style. The three comments made about singing in ensembles instigating an educator's teaching style summarize that one should be empathetic to how singers feel physically and emotionally during rehearsals. This led to statements made by subjects demonstrating the need for a positive and collaborative mentality when teaching. Details of this include wanting students to have fun, being empathetic to what they need, feeling like students have a coach instead of a dictator, and hoping that singers will emulate the demeanor of the conductor so one should be calm as they model.

Subjects were asked what they do to continue their own development and musicianship. While it was not mentioned as development, it should be noted that ten of

the eleven subjects have all received at least one graduate degree. Additionally, K–12 teachers are required to take continuing education credits to keep their teaching license current.

Half of the interviewees spoke about going to conferences to observe as well as present. Three of the five subjects who regularly sing noted that being in an ensemble is part of their development professionally and musically. Other ways that subjects felt they were developing include sporadically taking voice lessons. Four of the subjects stated observations of other classrooms and their own student teachers was part of their development. Continuing to work with and observe different teachers and groups of students, and letting student teachers work with ensembles, offer moments of reflection about material one could incorporate into their program. This led into the discussion of how each subject sought out new material for their students.

The two largest ways to find new material, mentioned by five subjects, were listening passively via media and attending reading sessions presented by publishers and/or during conferences. Doing further research on specific composers that subjects enjoyed was a secondary action. Attending concerts was third, with the suggestion that one should make written comments on the program about pieces of interest to reference at a later date.

Singing the repertoire as an ensemble member was mentioned, but it was typically followed with the conversation that the level of music they sing is at a higher difficulty level than what they currently teach. When looking for repertoire or ideas to teach specific concepts, tools that were better-suited for these subjects include asking other colleagues questions and networking.

Three other methods of finding repertoire were mentioned: looking through *The Choral Journal's* reviews, going back to their literature binders from graduate school, and publishers sending out scores because subjects were part of literature review committees.

As subjects continue to mature and develop as teachers and musicians, teaching objectives in their classrooms are themes that may evolve over time. Subjects typically listed three objectives, but few specific themes were stated more than three times. Musicality and the independence of their singers, the classroom as a safe community, and fostering the love of music are the broad themes with which other objectives could be placed. Within the objective of musicality and independence of singers, one can place the following subtopics: literacy, diction, tone quality, choral blend, the sense of line or phrase direction, and an understanding of the piece in relation to performance practice. The classroom as a safe community was mentioned with the subtopics of mental health, knowing and understanding the individual students in each class, teaching empathy, offering an environment for students to try new things and gain confidence, and celebrating the creative process by working through a piece of music as a team and finding satisfaction in the work. Fostering the love of music was characterized as teaching the students about the whole choral canon and singing quality music. Teachers spoke about how this would cultivate the intrinsic need to continue to sing outside of the classroom and throughout life.

Teachers are striving to demonstrate the importance of lifelong music-making, so subjects were asked in what ways they felt they were being an advocate for music. Five of the six collegiate teachers felt like training future teachers was their best way to

advocate. Future teachers need to be allowed into classrooms to observe and teach so they get the experience before they are seeking job placement.

With regard to the general idea of music advocacy, the responses collected from the subjects can be broken down into communicating with the community and students. When working to reach the community, responses included talking about music with parents at any opportunity, providing Fine Arts Events for the community to attend, performing out in the community for different groups like the Veteran Affairs Hospitals, senior living communities, sporting events, and during specific seasons like caroling during the holidays. When teaching students about music and its importance in their lives, responses were more varied. Subjects expressed the importance of giving opportunities for students to experience music in different ways and teaching them about the opportunity of being lifelong musicians. Students should be provided opportunities like having guest conductors come in to work with them, creating events or taking students to choral festivals, reaching students through varied mediums instead of the traditional choral/band/orchestral ensembles, and attending performances outside their school day.

When asked about music continuing in the future, the tone of each subject's response was positive. Each had their own idea of ways in which we should evolve and grow music. Two mentioned that music in religious institutions should continue to use scores and hymnals instead of solely projecting the words onto screens. This is congruent with other comments about strengthening music literacy and the need for more people to understand that it is skill instead of an innate gift.

Others commented on the evolution of music today. Multimedia projects can enhance the experience for the audience. Within the classroom, teachers can use new pathways by teaching through unique instruments or musical selections. Two teachers commented on students having a good experience and said that we need to facilitate their transitions between elementary, middle school, high school, college, and after to urge them to stay involved.

The findings of this interview process demonstrate that teachers and conductors must continue to grow as musicians for their entire career and continue to demonstrate how music can be important in everyone's life. The development of an individual is not solely dictated by regular participation of singing in an ensemble, but all subjects noted how it made them feel and wished they could do it more because they recognize the benefits. The crux of this study demonstrates that lifestyle and individual choices determine where one can make the commitment to self-improvement.

Teachers and conductors, like other professionals, have limitations and choices to make based on time. Singing in ensembles should be included in the ways that one can continue to grow.

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## APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What does your history of singing look like and how did it lead you to a path of teaching and conducting?
  - Prompt: Is there a memory that has stuck with you that influenced your career as a singer and conductor?
- For those who don't: Why did you stop singing?
  - Prompt: For those who don't sing: Do you miss singing?
  - If so, what is holding you back?
 For those who do: Why do you continue to sing?
  - How does it influence your teaching?
- Why do you think some teachers/conductors choose to stop singing?
  - Prompt: What do you think are the factors involved as to why others do not sing? E.g. location, family, age, ego, etc.
- How do you think singing or not singing influences your choices in repertoire, preparation of a piece, your conducting gestures, and teaching persona?
- For future educators, we ask them to do multiple hours of observations of teachers and their classrooms. What types of observations do you use to develop your teaching and musicianship?
- What are the most meaningful ways in which you absorb choral literature? E.g. going to concerts, watching videos, listening to recordings, participating in an ensemble, searching the internet, etc.
  - For those who don't sing: How do you substitute what one can learn by singing in another ensemble?
- What are the overarching objectives in your teaching?
  - Prompt: Can you identify any of these things as being adapted from other conductors/teachers with which you worked or studied?
- In what ways do you feel you are being an advocate for music continuing in our schools?
- What do you foresee happening with regard to music in schools and people continuing to sing afterward?

## APPENDIX B

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM



IRB: 19141

**Participant Study Title:**

The Singing Conductor: A sampling of interviews to provide information as to why teachers and conductors do or do not sing and how this influences their teaching.

**Formal Study Title:**

The Singing Conductor

**Authorized Study Personnel:**

Principal Investigator: Anne Gassmann, Doctoral Candidate Cell: (701) 840-1483

**Key Information:**

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- (Males/Females) between the ages of (25-70)
- 1 interview session
- 1 review of material synthesized by Investigator
- You will be provided a copy of this consent form

**Invitation:**

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a teacher or conductor and sing or do not sing outside of your teaching. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?**

Teachers and conductors continue to develop as their careers progress. The interviews are designed to provide insight as to (1) why some teachers and conductors sing or not, (2) the reasons why, and (3) how they choose to continue developing their teaching and musicianship.

**What will be done during this research study?**

You will be asked interview questions, lasting approximately 30-60 minutes over the phone.

**How will my interview be used?**

Your interview answers will be synthesized into a final document as partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. No identifiable information will be used in the document. All project files will be kept in a secure storage environment and only accessible by the primary investigator.

**What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

There are no risks.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

The benefits to music educators may include better understanding of how singing outside of the classroom can aid in professional development and musicianship.

**What will being in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?**

You will not receive compensation for your participation in this study.

**What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?**

Your welfare is the major concern of the primary investigator. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact the primary investigator listed at the beginning of this consent form.

**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. Your interview responses will be stored electronically through a secure Box cloud account and will only be seen by the research team during the study. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

**What are your rights as a research subject?**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- o Phone: 1(402) 472-6965
- o Email: [irb@unl.edu](mailto:irb@unl.edu)

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not

to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**Documentation of informed consent**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participant Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant: Please print)

**Participant Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date