

Analysis of Instructional Time Use and Preferred Teaching Strategies  
of Three Highly Successful Choral Directors

by

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Acknowledgements.....ii  
Abstract.....v  
List of Tables.....vi  
Chapter 1.....1  
    Introduction.....1  
        Purpose .....2  
        Significance of this Study.....3  
        Limitations of this Study.....4  
Chapter 2.....6  
    Review of Related Literature.....6  
        Time Use in the Rehearsal Setting.....6  
        Development of Observation Instruments.....8  
        Teaching Strategies Used in the Rehearsal Setting.....12  
        Comparisons of Rehearsal Activities Among Different Age Groups.....16  
        Conclusions.....17  
Chapter 3.....18  
    Design and Methodology.....18  
        Selection of Choral Directors.....18  
        Individual Choirs Observed.....20  
        Concert Proximity.....21  
        Observation Procedures.....22  
        Data Analysis.....22

Chapter 4.....	27
Results.....	27
Overall Time-Use Data.....	27
Musical Elements Targeted During Instruction.....	29
Teaching Strategies Used During Instructional Time.....	32
Instructional Activity During Performance Time.....	34
Data from the Post-Rehearsal Interviews.....	37
Chapter 5.....	43
Discussion and Conclusions.....	43
Discussion of the Overall Time-Use Data.....	43
Discussion of Musical Elements Targeted During Instruction.....	47
Discussion of Teaching Strategy Data.....	52
Discussion of Instructional Activity During Performance Time.....	54
Discussion of Post-Rehearsal Interviews.....	55
Implications for Teacher Training.....	61
Directions for Further Research.....	62
Concluding Thoughts.....	65
Bibliography.....	66
Appendix A - Interview Transcript - Director A.....	70
Appendix B – Interview Transcript – Director B.....	75
Appendix C – Interview Transcript – Director C.....	83
Appendix D – Reliability Tables.....	94
Appendix E - Human Subjects Approval.....	96
Appendix F - Letters of Consent.....	97

## **ABSTRACT**

This was an observational study of three highly successful choral directors working with middle school, high school, college and adult church choirs. Each director was observed and videotaped working with a beginning-level and an advanced-level ensemble in their home rehearsal settings. A total of six rehearsals were recorded. The videos were analyzed using SCRIBE software (Duke & Stammen, 2007). Analysis focused on 1) overall time use in rehearsal, 2) specific musical elements targeted during instruction, 3) use of specific teaching strategies during instruction and 4) instructional activity during performance time. In addition, post-rehearsal interviews were conducted with each director immediately following their rehearsals.

Results showed few differences in overall time use. Similarities and differences in were found in the targeted musical elements, with greater time spent in the less experienced choirs on pitch instruction and vocal production and greater time spent in the more experienced choirs on phrasing. The analysis of instructional strategies revealed a greater use of conducting in the experienced choirs and a greater use of teacher modeling in the younger, less experienced choirs. Data from the interview transcripts revealed several common traits among these directors. All three exhibited the ability to quickly shift from one teaching strategy to another when needed, a desire to develop the musicianship skills of their ensemble, and an awareness of some of the unique needs of their particular choirs.

LIST OF TABLES

4.1	Use of Rehearsal Time.....	27
4.2	Musical Elements Targeted During Instruction.....	30
4.3	Use of Specific Teaching Strategies During Instructional Time.....	33
4.4	Instructional Activity During Performance Time.....	35
A.1	Researcher and Reliability Observer Differences in Instructional Strategy Time Recorded.....	93
A.2	Researcher and Reliability Observer Differences in Musical Elements Targeted.....	94

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Achieving success as a choral director is complicated. One must have thorough knowledge of the musical score, effective conducting skills and an ability to teach the music to the singers who are present. The successful choral director has to choose instructional strategies that are effective and efficient in order to help the ensemble fully realize its own musical potential and to achieve musical success with the repertoire being performed. Since making music with an ensemble is such a human endeavor, the conductor is frequently adjusting and adapting to the needs of the ensemble; trying a variety of strategies to achieve the desired musical results.

For new teachers entering the choral profession or experienced conductors who are simply trying to improve their own rehearsal skills, one strategy for improvement is to examine what experts in the field do. How do highly successful conductors spend their instructional time? On which aspects of the music do they choose to focus and for how long? What strategies do they use to evoke a certain sound or achieve a desired musical result?

To further complicate the issue, every choir is different in terms of age, musical skill, and experience. Someone working with sixth grade beginning singers may employ different strategies than someone working with college music majors. A high school director may address different musical issues with a top-level auditioned ensemble than with a ninth grade beginning mixed choir.

If we seek to examine highly successful conductors and learn something about what it takes to be an effective choral director, then several questions arise: What exactly are these expert conductors doing in their daily rehearsals? How do they use their time teaching and rehearsing? What strategies do they use to teach the music to their choirs and on which musical elements do they focus their instructional attention? Do these instructional choices differ when a director works with different ensembles at the same campus? Do we observe any of the same instructional strategies or patterns of time use when we observe several different conductors who work with different age groups or choirs with different levels of experience?

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to identify an exemplary middle school, high school and college choral director with the goal of examining how these highly successful choral directors spend their instructional time in rehearsal and to determine what specific teaching strategies they use to deliver musical instruction. How much time do they devote to learning notes and rhythms? How much time is spent working with textual issues? Do they address matters of vocal technique? What teaching strategies do they use to accomplish their musical goals? Why do they choose certain teaching strategies over others in a given rehearsal? How much time is spent on phrasing, dynamics and artistic expression and how are the desired musical outcomes conveyed to the ensemble members? What instructional strategies are used during warm-up,

sightreading and other musical activities? What, if any, instructional activity occurs while the ensemble is singing?

Subsequent research questions will be answered by comparing these data among the conductors chosen for the study. How do the middle school, high school and college directors differ from each other in the way they spend instructional time? Does the same director spend instructional time differently when working with different ensembles? Does a director's choice of teaching strategies vary among different choirs at the same campus? Does it vary between middle school, high school and college groups? This study attempts to reveal a more tangible way to describe what these highly successful conductors do in the instructional portions of their rehearsals, identify commonalities between choirs of differing ages and experience levels, and illustrate how the instructional focus varies by age and experience level.

### **Significance of this Study**

The results of this study are of potential value to several groups of people:

- 1) Pre-service teachers who are seeking effective rehearsal strategies and trying to determine how best to spend instructional time in the choral rehearsal,
- 2) Practicing choral directors who want to improve their own rehearsal effectiveness,
- 3) University faculty who are charged with the responsibility of training new choral directors and preparing students to work with populations that vary in age and levels of experience.

### **Limitations of This Study**

For the purposes of this study data analysis was focused on instructional time related to musical elements and various teaching strategies employed to deliver that instruction. Observation was limited to a one day 'snapshot' of each director which limits the ability to make broad generalizations from the data. Numerous rehearsals would need to be observed over the course of the semester or year in order to begin to make predictions about what might be average teaching behavior for these selected conductors.

Concert proximity, the calendar distance between the observed rehearsal day and any upcoming performances, also needs to be considered when evaluating rehearsal behaviors (Davis, 1993, p.5). It is expected that different instructional priorities based on concert proximity would dictate how rehearsal time is spent three days before a concert or three weeks before a concert. Though concert proximity is noted for each of the observed rehearsals, it is not the aim of this study to make generalizations about the effect of concert proximity on instructional choices.

The nature of the repertoire being rehearsed is another factor that likely influenced certain instructional choices in these observations. One might expect a conductor to choose different elements on which to focus when working on a Bach chorale than when working on a setting of a folk song. Much more study would be needed to assess any repertoire-specific effects on instructional time use or preferred teaching strategies. This study is limited to the repertoire selected by the director and rehearsed on the particular day the recordings were made.

Differing from many previous choral rehearsal observations, this study does not attempt to measure student attentiveness or the teaching behaviors that might affect it. Students' ability to respond to the instruction, student attitudes towards the conductor and performance success of the ensemble were not be measured for the purposes of this project, but might be of great interest in further research comparing the different age and experience levels represented here.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The existing research literature covers many topics related to this study. Studies of time use in rehearsal have yielded important quantitative information about teacher and student behavior in the rehearsal setting. The development of specific observation procedures has allowed researchers to isolate certain aspects of a director's teaching and measure time spent on specific instructional behaviors. Various researchers have analyzed different teaching strategies such as verbal instruction, modeling and use of kinesthetic devices, in an attempt to understand their use and effectiveness.

#### **Time-Use in the Rehearsal Setting**

Numerous studies have been conducted to determine how time is used in choral and instrumental rehearsals. Much of that research has focused on specific teacher and student behaviors. Witt (1986) studied time use and student attentiveness in instrumental rehearsals and found that students were less attentive during non-performance times. Similarly, Brendell (1996) found more off-task behavior during non-performance times when studying the initial minutes of high school choral rehearsals.

In a study involving six high school ensemble teachers representing band, orchestra and choir, Yarbrough and Price (1981) observed student and teacher behavior in rehearsal and found that a strong relationship existed between student off-task

behavior, teacher eye contact, and performance activity. In all six ensembles, more off-task behavior occurred during non-performance time. More eye contact from the teacher corresponded with a decrease in off-task behavior.

Other researchers have measured differences in time use by experienced teachers, student teachers, and novice teachers and found that student teachers spent more time talking and less time in performance than experienced teachers (Goolsby, 1996). Kelly (2003) examined differences in time usage among student interns working with high school and middle school choral and instrumental rehearsals and found that high school interns spent more time on rehearsal behaviors while middle school interns spent more time on instructional behaviors, possibly suggesting that conductors may use different instructional approaches for different age groups.

Some researchers have measured time use in rehearsal settings in order to gain insights into the effect of observation focus on ratings of rehearsal excerpts (Yarbrough & Henley, 1999), performer attentiveness (Yarbrough & Price, 1981), and conceptual teaching behaviors (Blocher, Greenwood & Shellahamer, 1997). In each case, the measurement of how rehearsal time was used provided concrete data for analyzing one or more aspects of teacher effectiveness.

In addition to time use, how rehearsal time is structured may also impact the effectiveness of a rehearsal. Cox (1989) found that a significant number of high school choral directors preferred a rehearsal structure that placed familiar and enjoyable musical activities at the beginning and end of rehearsals and more detailed, analytical work on less familiar pieces in the middle portion of the rehearsal. In an article titled "Planning

the Perfect Choral Rehearsal,” Gorelick, (2001), advocated a similar structure, placing work on more familiar selections first and last with the middle of the rehearsal devoted to more challenging, analytical rehearsal work. Both Cox’s and Gorelick’s work seem to indicate that the sequence of the rehearsal may help determine the effectiveness of instructional time use and the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies.

### **Development of Observation Instruments**

Several researchers have designed special forms and procedures in order to facilitate rehearsal observations and allow specific behaviors to be tracked. In a study of four high school choral directors, Overturf (1985) analyzed a variety of vocal concepts and six choral elements that had the potential to affect vocal development. Rehearsals were analyzed to determine the amount of emphasis given to phrasing, rhythmic vitality and precision, intonation, balance, blend and dynamics. Verbal statements made by the conductor were coded into one of the above categories and were studied in the context of specific vocalises and rehearsal techniques that affected choral tone.

Madsen and Yarbrough (1985) developed several observation forms specifically for the purpose of recording information on conductor and student behavior in the rehearsal setting. The Choral Rehearsal Observation Form (Madsen & Yarbrough, 1985) allows a researcher to track an eight minute segment of rehearsal divided into ten second observation intervals and five second recording intervals. The observer records whether students are performing or not performing during each observation interval. Space is also given for the observer to record how many students are on-task and how many are off-

task. Teacher behavior is recorded as instruction, singing, or other. Teacher approvals, disapprovals and corresponding errors can also be recorded. A similar form for observing instrumental rehearsals was also developed.

The Music Conductor Observation Form (Madsen & Yarbrough, 1985) allows an observer to focus solely on the conductor's behavior. Rehearsal activity is classified as instructing, singing or chanting rhythm while the group is performing, or teaching or talking while the group is performing. The other conductor behaviors recorded are non-verbal ones including body movement, conducting gesture, eye contact, facial expression, speech speed, voice pitch and voice volume. The rehearsal observation form and conductor observation form and variations thereof have been used to facilitate observation in numerous published studies as related below.

Yarbrough developed and first used the Music Conductor Observation Form for her study of magnitude of conductor behavior (1975). Observing mixed choruses at one university and three high schools Yarbrough defined a high magnitude conductor as one having frequent eye contact, occasional proximity to the choir, varied volume and modulation of voice, varied conducting gestures, contrasting facial expressions and a rapid and exciting rehearsal pace (Yarbrough, 1975). Data from the study indicated less off-task behavior and a student preference for the high magnitude conductor. Hendel (1995) used the Music Conductor Observation Form and Yarbrough's definition of high and low magnitude teachers to examine instructional patterns and effective teaching qualities of nine elementary music teachers.

The Choral Rehearsal Observation Form was used by Dunn (1997) to determine the effect of rehearsal hierarchy and reinforcement on the attention, achievement and attitude of two high school choirs. Cox (1986) used a similar version of the Choral Rehearsal Observation Form to conduct a study of one high school director and one college director. He used observation intervals of 15 seconds and recorded time spent singing, non-singing time and time spent in sectional rehearsals. Director behaviors recorded were approvals, disapprovals, instructional responses and other. Cox found that more disapproval responses were made by the university director than the high school director and that a decreasing number of disapproval responses occurred with both directors in the final two rehearsals before performance. Performance time increased for both as their concerts drew nearer, with the exception of the high school group whose director spent more time in positive verbal encouragement the last few rehearsals.

Watkins (1986) also used a version of the Choral Rehearsal Observation Form to determine the relationship between verbal instructional modes and student attentiveness in rehearsal segments of thirty three high school mixed choirs. The researcher found that an average of 50.4 % of rehearsal time was used in verbal instruction and 49.6 % of the time was devoted to singing but did not find that the specific mode of verbal instruction had a statistically significant affect on student attentiveness. Watkins also examined the effect of concert proximity on teacher verbal behavior and found that the amount of verbalization time actually increased as the concert drew closer.

In a longitudinal study of a single university choral director and choir, Yarbrough, Dunn, and Baird (1996) observed rehearsals from the initial reading of two pieces of

music through their final performance in concert. They observed and calculated teacher and student behavior in the same way as many of the previously mentioned studies, but also recorded which musical elements were being addressed by the conductor during instruction and for how long. Musical elements recorded were pitch, rhythm, intonation, tone quality, diction, word stress, articulation, dynamics, phrasing, tempo and posture / breathing.

The choir rehearsed two contrasting pieces: *Shenandoah*, arranged by James Erb and *Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord*, by Undine Smith Moore. For *Shenandoah*, 21.2% of task presentations and reinforcements dealt with tone quality. When rehearsing *Daniel*, 23.7% of time was spent on rhythm and 23.4% on dynamics. These data seemed to indicate that the conductor had a different instructional focus for each of the two different pieces.

Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) observed and recorded teacher and student behaviors in seven rehearsal segments of a college choir. They presented the same excerpts to a group of university music majors and asked them to use a scale from one to ten to rate categories of teacher and student behavior. The categories were time use, musicianship, accuracy of presentation, student attentiveness, student performance quality, enthusiasm, intensity, pacing, personality, and overall effectiveness. The excerpts that were rated highest by the University students were those that contained less off-task student behavior, a higher percentage of approvals, more eye contact, and more activity changes. (Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998). These results seemed to imply a correlation between perceived teaching effectiveness and observable behavior.

The observation forms developed by Yarbrough and Madsen have helped researchers conduct numerous studies related to teacher and student behaviors. However, a disadvantage of these forms is that they do not distinguish between specific musical elements that are the focus of instruction nor do they address specific teaching strategies used. Another disadvantage is the sampling method requiring the researcher to observe for ten seconds and record without observing for five seconds, thus missing any rehearsal behaviors that occur during the ‘record’ interval. SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) is a software application that allows an observer to track multiple events on a video in real time. It has been used in published research studies to measure timed events in instruction (Cavitt, 2003; Duke, Prickett & Jellison, 1998) and was used to measure conducting time and non-conducting time in choral rehearsals in a pilot study conducted by this researcher (Patterson, 2007).

### **Teaching Strategies Used in the Rehearsal Setting**

Other researchers have approached the study of teacher effectiveness by examining specific teaching strategies used in rehearsal. Gonzo (1981) listed three modes of teaching that occur in a choral rehearsal: verbal analysis, modeling and psychological devices. He suggested that verbal analysis is “a direct appeal to the cognitive domain of the singers,” while modeling and psychological devices such as the use of metaphor and simile provide a “mental shortcut,” enabling the conductor to get a point across quickly (Gonzo, p. 6). Gonzo recommended that novice conductors spend some time analyzing

videotapes of experienced conductors in rehearsal to see what mode of instruction they employ and when and how they decide to shift from one mode to another.

Verbal instruction is certainly a necessary strategy for teaching in the rehearsal and is often the most frequently used means of delivering musical instruction (Yarbrough, Dunn & Baird, 1996; Skadsem, 1997). Overuse of verbal instruction may lead to more off-task behavior (Yarbrough & Price, 1981; Witt, 1986), but in many instances verbal instruction may be the most effective means for eliciting the desired response (Skadsem, 1997). The amount of verbal instruction used may vary according to the experience level of the conductor (Goolsby, 1999). Specifically, Goolsby found that novice teachers spent a greater percentage of rehearsal time in verbal instruction.

Focusing solely on verbal instruction, Blocher, Greenwood, & Shellahamer (1997) studied rehearsal videos of eighteen middle school and high school band directors in order to ascertain how much time was being spent in conceptual teaching. As defined by the researchers, conceptual teaching meant the verbal teaching of musical concepts beyond task-specific group practice. Results indicated that, on average, only 32 seconds out of a 19 minute rehearsal segment were devoted to conceptual teaching. Results also showed some differences in the way teaching time was used in the middle school and high school rehearsals. High school directors engaged in conceptual teaching more often than their middle school counterparts and used non-verbal instruction (primarily consisting of conducting) almost four times as much as the middle school directors (Blocher, Greenwood & Shellahamer, 1997).

In a different observation of verbal instruction, Goolsby (1997) compared pre-service teachers and practicing teachers at three career levels to see how verbal instruction in instrumental rehearsals differed. Findings indicated that all groups addressed rhythm and tempo most often. Expert teachers used more demonstrations and devoted more time to overall ensemble sound and intonation whereas novice teachers and pre-service teachers spent more time tuning individual notes or correcting wrong notes.

While verbal instruction is a frequently used teaching strategy, other modes of instruction can also be effective. Wis (1999) advocated the use of physical metaphor to help singers connect an abstract musical concept with a concrete, physical experience. She gave examples such as having singers “pull the pitch with their hand” when trying to improve intonation or “spinning an imaginary lasso” to create the feeling of direction in a musical line (Wis, 1999, p. 27). Others have recommended the use of various verbal and physical metaphors to assist in getting singers to produce a certain type of sound or realize an abstract musical concept (Kemp, 1981; McClung, 2006; Phillips, 1996).

In her 1993 study of movement activities of two choral directors, Wis reports that certain kinesthetic activities can be a means of developing musical skill and understanding. Two such activities described by the directors in her study are placing the backs of the hands on the cheeks with palms facing out to improve the space of the “ah” vowel and pointing upward with the index fingers of both hands while singing a descending line to avoid flattening the pitch (Wis, 1993, pp 195-6).

Conducting gesture is certainly another important teaching tool for choral directors. In most higher education settings, training in conducting gesture is an essential

part of the curriculum for pre-service choral music teachers (Gentry, 2008). Physical movements by the conductor can convey musical meaning to the ensemble using non-verbal communication. In addition, conducting gestures often provide a more efficient way to use rehearsal time (Gentry, 2008).

Other important aspects of conducting technique have been analyzed in conjunction with overall rehearsal effectiveness. When assembling a scale to assess student teachers' rehearsal effectiveness, Bergee (1992) listed ten items under the heading of conducting technique that were considered important for effective student teachers to demonstrate. These included an effective command of beat patterns, conducting phrases, and clear indications of attacks, releases and dynamics (Bergee, 1992). When surveying a group of successful middle school choir directors, Barresi (2000), found effective conducting skill and vocal modeling ability to be among many of the respondents' lists of musical skills necessary to be an effective middle school choral director.

Another teaching strategy identified by the research literature is vocal modeling. In a study of high school choral directors, Grimland (2005) found that directors used visible and audible modeling to demonstrate posture, breathing, vocal production, melodic intervals, rhythmic patterns, nuance, diction and phrasing. In addition to these musical concepts, two directors also used modeling to demonstrate a specific process for sight-reading. Other writers have indicated that vocal modeling can be an effective tool for quickly delivering instruction related to pitch and rhythmic accuracy and can also be

effective in conveying more complex musical ideas such as phrasing and the development of a musical line (Kemp, 1981; McClung, 2006).

In another study of teaching in the choral rehearsal, Davis (1993) determined that concert proximity had an effect on the use of instructional time and performance ratings in two high school choirs. As the performance drew closer and performance ratings improved, verbal instruction decreased while performing time and conducting time increased. This suggests that concert proximity might be an important factor affecting the type of instruction delivered on any given rehearsal day.

### **Comparisons of Rehearsal Activities Among Different Age Groups**

In her 2001 study, Derby examined rehearsal and repertoire differences among elementary, middle school and high school choir chosen to perform at the Texas Music Educators Association Convention. Observing instructional time only, she found that the most frequent targets of instruction were diction, vowel shape, dynamics and intonation. There were more similarities than differences in the frequency of use of these targets among the different grade levels. An overall preference for specific, precise directives was seen at all levels. According to the researcher, these findings suggest that across the elementary, middle and high school levels, the “skills students need to perform successfully in the choral ensemble remain fairly consistent” (Derby, p. 165).

The notable differences found in rehearsal activity among the three groups were more teacher modeling at the elementary school level, more teacher performance with the ensemble at the elementary and middle school level, and more frequent, but shorter

verbalizations at the elementary level. The duration of rehearsal time increased with grade level and the target passages chosen for instruction were longest at the high school level and shortest at the elementary level. Middle school choir directors spent more time addressing balance than directors at the other two levels and high school directors spent more time using metaphorical language (Derby, 2001).

### **Conclusions**

While there are some research data available regarding the use of individual teaching strategies in rehearsal settings such as verbal instruction, conducting or modeling, few studies have assessed how a variety of these techniques might be used in different rehearsal settings by successful conductors. Though many studies have been conducted involving rehearsal time use and teacher or student behaviors, few have focused on specific elements of musical instruction. In addition, there are very little data evaluating differences in instructional focus and preferred teaching strategies among choral directors at the middle school, high school and college levels.

Thus, the aim of this study is to answer the following questions: 1) How do highly successful choral directors spend their instructional time in rehearsal? 2) On which musical elements do they focus during instructional time? 3) What specific teaching strategies do they use to deliver musical instruction? 4) How do these instructional choices differ among choirs of different ages and ability levels?

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Selection of Choral Directors

For this study the researcher chose to observe three highly successful choral directors working with singers of different ages and experience levels. Each director was observed working with two different choirs in their home rehearsal setting. The individual directors chosen include one middle school choral director (Director A), one high school director (Director B), and one college director (Director C). The college director also directs an adult volunteer church choir which was included in the study. One rehearsal for each of the ensembles was recorded, making a total of six rehearsals to provide data for this study. The researcher contacted each director and made arrangements to travel to their campuses to videotape rehearsals during the fall semester of 2008.

The three conductors selected for this study are considered to be highly successful because each has a choir that was chosen by recorded, juried audition to perform at the 2009 Texas Music Educators convention. In addition to this criterion, each director has had numerous other awards and honors bestowed on choirs under his or her direction.

Director A oversees a choral program of 340 middle school students in five different performing choirs. Her choirs have consistently won sweepstakes awards at UIL competition and have been awarded Best in Class and Grand Champion awards at local

festivals. In addition to being invited to perform at the 2009 TMEA convention, her Varsity Treble Choir also performed at the 2006 TMEA convention (information from TMEA concert program, 2009).

Director B leads a choral program of 384 high school students in eleven different performing groups. Her choirs are consistent winners of UIL sweepstakes awards and have also won Best in Class and Grand Champion awards in competitions and festivals across the country. In addition to their 2009 TMEA convention performance, her varsity mixed chorale performed at the 2005 TMEA convention and the 2007 American Choral Director's Association convention in Miami, FL (information from TMEA concert program, 2009).

Director C is the director of choral activities at a large state university in Texas and the director of the church choir included in this study. He has been recognized as Favorite Professor at his university as well as the School of Music Professor of Distinction in Teaching and service. Director C is frequently engaged as a guest conductor and clinician throughout the United States and Europe, most recently conducting the Connecticut ACDA Women's Honor Choir and serving as conducting professor for the Transient Glory Choral Symposium at New York University. In addition to their 2009 TMEA convention performance, his college chorale has performed at the Southwest Division of ACDA convention, the International Kodaly convention, and has given concerts in Vienna, Budapest, Salzburg and Prague (information from TMEA concert program, 2009).

### **Individual Choirs Observed**

Rehearsal observations were made of the following choirs: Director A: Sixth Grade Beginning Treble Choir and Seventh and Eighth Grade auditioned Varsity Treble Choir, Director B: High School Junior Varsity (JV) Men's Chorus (grades 9-12 included) and High School auditioned Mixed Voice Varsity Chorale (grades 9-12 included, but mostly made up of juniors and seniors), Director C: auditioned College Chorale and volunteer Adult Church Choir. In each case, the auditioned choir was the one selected for performance at TMEA and the other group observed was an open enrollment (non-auditioned) ensemble.

The size of the choirs observed ranged from 21 to 84 singers. The specific enrollment of each choir observed was: Sixth Grade Treble Choir – 65 singers; Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir – 66 singers; High School JV Men's Chorus – 57 singers; High School Varsity Chorale – 84 singers; Adult Church Choir – 21 singers and College Chorale – 30 singers.

As would be expected, the repertoire being rehearsed was different for each choir.

Rehearsal repertoire for the days observed consisted of:

#### **Sixth Grade Treble Choir**

Sight Reading material displayed on an overhead transparency

*It's Snowing* by Hillary Kinsale

#### **Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir**

Sight Reading material displayed on an overhead transparency

*Gloria* by Shari Riley

*Kikkehini* by Johann Schein, arr. by Mary Goetze

High School JV Men's Chorus

*Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder* Spiritual, arr. by Robert DeCormier  
*Ruby Baby* by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, arr. by Kirby Shaw

High School Varsity Chorale

*Christ Lag in Todesbanden* from *Cantata #4* by J.S. Bach  
*Sure on This Shining Night* by Morten Lauridsen

Adult Church Choir

*Concertato on All Hail The Power of Jesus Name* by Hal Hopson  
*Celtic Introit* by Kevin Thomson  
*Sing to the Lord of Harvest* by Healy Wilan  
*God Walked in Eden's Garden Fair* from *Festival of Carols* by Hal Hopson

College Chorale

*Vigilia* by Einojuhani Rautavaara  
*Les Djinnns* by Gabriel Faure  
*Hard Times*, Spiritual, arranged by Craig Johnson

**Concert Proximity**

Concert proximity was different for each director observed. After the day of observation, Director A's choirs had 26 fifty-minute rehearsals (1,300 total rehearsal minutes) remaining before their next performance. Director B's choirs had 4 ninety-minute rehearsals (360 total rehearsal minutes) remaining before their next performance. Director C's college choir had 8 seventy-five-minute rehearsals (600 total rehearsal minutes) remaining before their next performance. Concert proximity is a more complex issue for Director C's church choir. One of the selections rehearsed was scheduled for performance on the Sunday immediately following the Wednesday rehearsal observed. Other selections rehearsed that evening were to be performed on subsequent Sundays.

### **Observation Procedures**

Each ensemble's entire rehearsal was filmed in its usual rehearsal setting with a Canon ZR500 digital video recorder, with the camera facing the conductor. Time spent on vocal warm-ups, sight reading instruction and any administrative matters were included in the video. The videos were converted to QuickTime movies to enable analysis with SCRIBE software (Version 4.0.6; Duke & Stammen, 2007). This application allows real-time coding and analysis of time spent on specified categories of behavior. The researcher was able to replay the rehearsals multiple times, identifying and coding specific musical elements emphasized during instruction and individual teaching strategies used in the rehearsal.

In addition to videotaping the rehearsals, the researcher conducted an interview with each director immediately following their rehearsals. The interviews were recorded on an Olympus VN-4100PC Digital Voice Recorder and later transcribed for analysis. Interview questions were specifically tailored to each observed rehearsal and focused on instructional targets, pacing, instructional choices made by the director during rehearsal, the director's various approaches to dealing with problem areas in the music, specific problems encountered by the ensemble, and the director's own assessment of progress made in the observed rehearsals.

### **Data Analysis**

Using SCRIBE software (Duke & Stammen 2007), rehearsals were analyzed in several ways. The initial level of analysis tracked how time was used in the rehearsal. A

second round of analysis was conducted focusing specifically on instructional time. The instructional portions of each rehearsal were analyzed in order to determine 1) what specific musical elements were being addressed during instruction and 2) what teaching strategies were being used to deliver instruction. Data were also gathered to determine what, if any instruction occurred while the choir was performing. Post-rehearsal interviews were conducted with each director to allow explanation and elaboration of teaching decisions that were evident in the rehearsals.

The initial time-use analysis recorded the total length of each rehearsal and tracked the number of minutes and seconds spent on 1) Instruction, 2) Performance, 2) Non-Musical Instructions, 4) Student Comments & Questions, and 5) Getting Ready. Getting Ready time included students finding their place in the music, students moving to a different location in the room and other non-musical actions by the singers or the director that did not include any kind of instruction. Because each of the six rehearsals was different in length, times were converted to a percentage of the overall rehearsal to allow for comparisons between choirs.

The researcher then tracked which musical elements were being verbally addressed by the conductor during instructional time and the length of time spent on each musical element. Categories tracked in this analysis were similar to those developed by Yarbrough, Dunn & Baird (1996), and are listed below:

- 1) **Rhythm** – learning or reviewing rhythmic elements
- 2) **Pitch** - learning or reviewing pitches
- 3) **Intonation** – addressed at the individual, section, or ensemble levels

- 4) **Vocal Production** - including breath support, posture, and laryngeal space
- 5) **Tone Quality**
- 6) **Phrasing**
- 7) **Dynamics**
- 8) **Diction and Pronunciation**, including vowel clarity, and consonants
- 9) **Text Emphasis and Word Stress** – also including syllabic stress
- 10) **Mood and Expression**
- 11) **Musical Articulation**, i.e. staccato, legato, and accent

In addition to instruction that specifically targeted one of these eleven musical elements, the researcher also observed instruction that was more global in nature (“sing it better this time”) and instruction that covered several musical elements at once (“now let’s incorporate the correct rhythms with the proper word stress and dynamics”).

Because of this, an additional category of Multiple Elements / Non-specific Instruction was added to the analysis. Categories of Performing, Non-musical Instructions, Student Comments or Questions and Getting Ready time were also added to provide data on rehearsal behaviors other than musical instruction. For the purposes of this study, Performing included singing by a section or the whole ensemble, chanting rhythms or solfege, and speaking text.

Finally, SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) analysis was performed on each rehearsal video in order to determine what teaching strategies were used to deliver musical instruction. The researcher tracked the following teaching strategies in the rehearsals:

- 1) **Verbal Instruction**
- 2) **Vocal Modeling by the Director**  
(Green, 1990; Grimland, 2005; McClung, 2006; Freer, 2006)
- 3) **Vocal Modeling by a Student**
- 4) **Other Modeling** - listening to a recorded model
- 5) **Verbal Metaphor or Verbal Imagery** used to convey a musical idea  
(Kemp, 1989; Wis, 1999)
- 6) **Kinesthetic Devices or Physical Metaphors** used to convey a musical idea  
(Wis, 1999; Lind, 2001; Williamson, 2007).

In addition to identifying the teaching strategies used during instructional time, this round of analysis also tracked any instructional behaviors that occurred while the choir was performing. Categories tracked were:

- 1) **Verbal Instruction** during performance,
- 2) **Director Performing** with the choir,
- 3) **Use of Kinesthetic Gesture** (other than conducting) during performance,
- 4) **Conducting** during performance
- 5) **Unassisted Performance** - no instructional activity was observed.

Portions of the rehearsal that did not involve instruction or performance were tracked using the categories of: 1) Non-Musical comments, 2) Student Questions or Comments and 3) Getting Ready.

Data on each musical element and teaching strategy were recorded in minutes and seconds and also given as a percentage of the entire rehearsal time. This allowed the researcher to determine how much time was spent in any one area and also make percentage comparisons across the different choirs. Since each choir rehearsal was

different in total length, ranging from 44 minutes to 1 hour and 29 minutes, the ability to make percentage comparisons is especially helpful. Reliability was conducted by a trained observer with 10 years of choral conducting experience for 25% of the rehearsal videos using the agreements / agreements + disagreements reliability formula (Madsen & Madsen, 1998, pp. 269-70). Overall reliability was 98.6% with reliability for each type of teaching strategy ranging from 93% on teacher modeling to 99% on numerous other strategies. For musical elements targeted during instruction, reliability ranged from 98% on vocal production to 100% on phrasing and diction.

An informal analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted in order to gain insight into the rehearsal decisions made by each conductor. Specific comments about instruction, pacing, ensemble progress, individual singer or section issues and rehearsal goals were highlighted to provide additional explanation about rehearsal behaviors observed in the video. It is hoped that the combination of quantitative data from the SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) analyses and qualitative data from the post-rehearsal interviews provides a comprehensive view of instructional behavior in these six rehearsal settings and reveals some of the thinking behind the instructional decisions of the three directors.

**CHAPTER 4**

**RESULTS**

**Overall Time Use Data**

Raw data for this study consisted of the SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) analyses of all rehearsal videos and the transcripts of interviews with each director. The broadest level of data collected during analysis is displayed below in Table 4.1 and shows how time was spent in each rehearsal.

**TABLE 4.1: USE OF REHEARSAL TIME**

	6th grade Treble Choir	7 <sup>th</sup> / 8th Varsity Treble Choir	HS JV Men’s Chorus	HS Varsity Chorale	Adult Church Choir	College Chorale
Rehearsal Length (min:sec)	49:11	52:27	44:04	89:53	54:36	73:57

**Percentage of Rehearsal Time Used for Each Activity**

Instruction	29.0%	41.35%	26.31%	39.09%	44.22%	45.45%
Performance	41.6%	46.96%	53.71%	46.79%	36.83%	40.51%
Non-Musical Instructions	19.3% <sup>1</sup>	8.65%	10.64%	9.69%	11.73%	9.22%
Student comments / questions	5.95%	.38%	.56%	2.33%	6.28%	3.86%
Getting ready	4.15%	2.66%	8.78%	2.10%	.94%	.96%

<sup>1</sup> Director spent several minutes in this rehearsal addressing fundraiser questions and collecting fundraiser envelopes.

This table shows the total length of rehearsal for each choir and lists what percentage of that rehearsal was spent on instruction, performance, non-musical instructions, student comments and questions and getting ready. Percentages are listed rather than minutes and seconds in order to enable comparisons between choirs.

As seen in the top portion of Table 4.1, rehearsal times were different for each choir, ranging from 44 minutes and 4 seconds for the High School JV Men's Choir to 89 minutes and 53 seconds for the High School Varsity Chorale. For all middle school and high school choirs, Performance consumed the most rehearsal time, ranging from 41.6% of the rehearsal for the sixth grade choir to 53.71% of the rehearsal for the JV Men's Chorus. In the middle school and high school groups, performance time was followed by Instruction, ranging from 29% of rehearsal time for the Sixth Grade Choir to 41.35% for the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir.

For the Adult Church Choir and the College Chorale, Instruction time dominated, at 44.22% and 45.45%, respectively. This was followed somewhat closely by Performance time which was observed at 36.83% and 40.51% respectively. The church choir spent more time with Non-Musical Instructions and Student Comments / Questions, which may explain why their percentage of time spent in Performance was noticeably lower than the other choirs. This difference is not surprising considering that the church choir is a volunteer group of adult singers and is somewhat different from the other groups in its function and purpose.

Non-Musical Instruction consumed 19.3% of rehearsal time in the Sixth Grade Treble Choir, mostly due to the fact that the director had to collect fundraiser envelopes

at the beginning of class and had to give several instructions related to fundraiser turn-in. In the other rehearsals, time spent on Non-Musical Instructions was close to 10% of the entire rehearsal.

Time devoted to student / singer comments and questions ranged from 0.38% in the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir to 6.28% in the Adult Church Choir. Getting Ready time was minimal in the college and church choirs (less than 1% of the rehearsal) and highest in the High School JV Men's Choir (8.78%). In that particular rehearsal the director asked the choir at one point to move down out of their seats and form a large circle in the front of the room. After performing the piece in this formation, each singer had to go back to his original seat in the room. Naturally, this series of movements resulted in an increase in Getting Ready time for that rehearsal.

### **Musical Elements Targeted During Instruction**

Table 4.2 displays the amount of time each director spent in musical instruction and lists the percentage of that instructional time devoted to each musical element. Total instructional time varied from 11 minutes, 30 seconds in the High School JV Men's Chorus to 34 minutes, 52 seconds in the High School Varsity Chorale. Percentage of the total rehearsal spent on instruction ranged from 26.31% to 45.45% (see TABLE 4.1).

Among the basic musical elements, Pitch received more attention than Rhythm in all choirs. The disparity between the two areas is quite large in the younger and less-experienced choirs (45.52% vs. 4.18% in the Sixth Grade Treble Choir) and less pronounced in the High School Varsity Chorale, Adult Church Choir and College

Chorale. This disparity is partially heightened by pitch-related sight reading instruction in the two middle school choirs.

**TABLE 4.2: MUSICAL ELEMENTS TARGETED DURING INSTRUCTION**

	6th grade Treble Choir	7 <sup>th</sup> / 8th Varsity Treble Choir	HS JV Men's Chorus	HS Varsity Chorale	Adult Church Choir	College Chorale
Total Instructional Time (min:sec)	13:57	21:41	11:30	34:52	24:07	33:35

**Percentage of Instructional Time Used to Target Specific Musical Elements**

Rhythms	4.18%	4.15%	4.34%	3.82%	1.38%	5.46%
Pitches	45.52% <sup>2</sup>	34.97% <sup>2</sup>	17.39%	9.27%	2.00%	9.88%
Intonation	0.48%	0.61%	7.68%	4.06%	2.00%	1.64%
Vocal Production	15.89%	17.60%	6.81%	4.59%	8.09%	6.50%
Tone Quality	2.15%	7.99%	2.75%	1.29%	8.29%	7.89%
Phrasing	0%	0%	0%	4.25%	4.91%	11.41%
Dynamics	0%	7.22%	4.78%	3.68%	0.62%	5.50%
Diction / Pronunciation	10.39%	10.45%	2.02%	7.07%	31.72%	17.62%
Text Emphasis / Word Stress	0%	0.53%	0%	6.83%	3.73%	0.25%
Mood / Expression	1.19%	0.99%	2.02%	2.58%	2.63%	7.15%
Articulation	0.84%	0.69%	6.8%	4.40%	0.48%	0.84%
Multiple Elements / Non-Specific	19.36%	14.80%	45.41%	48.16%	34.15%	25.86%

<sup>2</sup> Includes sight-reading instruction

Vocal Production was emphasized most in the two middle school choirs and least in the High School Varsity Chorale. Given the fact that the middle school choirs are comprised of younger, less experienced singers, their higher percentages in that area are perhaps not surprising. Intonation, Tone Quality, Dynamics, Mood / Expression and Text Emphasis / Word Stress seemed to vary among the groups without any particular pattern, and may have been a function of the literature being rehearsed. Instruction in Phrasing sharply increased with age and level of experience. No instructional time was spent on Phrasing in the middle school choirs while 11.41% of instruction was devoted to this in the College Chorale. Articulation was emphasized the most in the two high school choirs and emphasized very little in the others.

Diction / Pronunciation was an important instructional area for all groups except the High School JV Men's Choir. The Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir, High School Chorale and College Chorale all rehearsed pieces with foreign language texts, which required additional instruction in the area of pronunciation. Interestingly, the Adult Church Choir spent the largest percentage of time in this area. Though all of their pieces had English texts, much of the Diction work in that rehearsal emphasized clarity of text in order to enable the congregation to fully hear and understand what would be sung.

As mentioned earlier, a category for Multiple Elements and Non-Specific Instruction was created and percentage of time spent in this category ranged from 19.36% to 48.16%. The large percentages of time tracked under this category may indicate the need to redefine or further specify this category in future research, or it may simply indicate the instructional preferences of the individual directors.

### **Teaching Strategies Used During Instructional Time**

Table 4.3 displays the total instructional time for each rehearsal and the percentages of rehearsal time devoted to specific teaching strategies. Verbal Instruction was the dominant instructional mode in all rehearsals, ranging from 45.32% to 79.23% of instructional time. In all cases, Teacher Modeling was the second most frequently used type of instruction. The lowest occurrence of this was 15.38% of instructional time in the High School JV Men's Chorus and the highest was 39.3% in the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir.

Student Modeling, where the teacher asked a specific student or section to demonstrate a pitch or musical passage, was not used at all in the middle school groups and ranged from 0.65% of instructional time to 5.87% in the other groups. Only one instance of Other Modeling occurred. This took place in the High School Varsity Chorale rehearsal when the director played a recording of a piece that the High School Choir was rehearsing. The director asked the students to follow along in their music and gave instructions before playing the recording to help guide the students' listening.

The use of Verbal Metaphor or Imagery ranged from 1.61% to 5.63% of instructional time. This mode of teaching was used most frequently in the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir and in the College Chorale. The use of Physical Metaphors and Kinesthetic Devices ranged from 0% of instructional time in the JV Men's Chorus to 10.87% in the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir. Use of this teaching mode was mostly limited to the middle school choirs and the Adult Church Choir.

**TABLE 4.3 USE OF SPECIFIC TEACHING STRATEGIES DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME**

	6th grade Treble Choir	7 <sup>th</sup> / 8th Varsity Treble Choir	HS JV Men's Chorus	HS Varsity Chorale	Adult Church Choir	College Chorale
Total Instructional Time (min:sec)	13:57	21:41	11:30	34:52	24:07	33:35

**Percentage of Instructional Time Devoted to Specific Teaching Strategies**

Verbal Instruction	53.71%	45.32%	79.23%	69.18%	58.17%	66.17%
Teacher Modeling	34.14%	39.30%	15.38%	17.11%	34.05%	21.46%
Student Modeling	0%	0%	4.00%	0.65%	0.14%	5.87%
Other Modeling	0%	0%	0%	10.88% <sup>3</sup>	0%	0%
Verbal Metaphor / Imagery	1.61%	4.51%	1.38%	1.20%	0.36%	5.63%
Physical Metaphor / Kinesthetic Device <sup>4</sup>	10.54% <sup>5</sup>	10.87% <sup>5</sup>	0%	0.98%	7.28%	0.87%

<sup>3</sup> Director played a recording of another choir performing the piece they were rehearsing

<sup>4</sup> In many cases, the director's use of physical metaphor or kinesthetic device also incorporated verbal instruction and verbal imagery / metaphor

<sup>5</sup> Included Curwen hand signs

Curwen hand signs were often used in the middle school rehearsals to accompany solfege work, which partially explains the higher percentages of kinesthetic teaching in those two ensembles. These hand signs are commonly used in choral sight reading to accompany specific solfege syllables and provide a visual and kinesthetic pitch reference for singers. Beyond the use of Curwen hand signs, a director's use of a Physical Metaphor or Kinesthetic Device was usually accompanied either by Verbal Instruction, Verbal Metaphor/ Imagery, or both. However, the physical or kinesthetic component of these teaching segments, such as having students stand on tiptoes to 'reach' a higher pitch, is what set them apart.

### **Instructional Activity During Performance Time**

In analyzing the instruction that occurred in these rehearsals, it became clear that the director frequently offered some type of instructional assistance while the choir was performing. Sometimes this involved Conducting, other times it involved Verbal Instruction, Kinesthetic Gesture that was not considered a conducting gesture, or performing with the choir. Each choir also spent a significant amount of time performing without any type of instructional assistance from the director.

Table 4.4 shows the total time spent performing in each rehearsal. Performance time included singing and chanting text, rhythms or solfege and ranged from 20 minutes and 20 seconds in the Adult Church Choir to 40 minutes and 52 seconds in the High School Varsity Chorale. The table shows each type of teaching that occurred during performance time and the percentage of performance time that strategy was used. Verbal Instruction During Performance was usually limited to short verbal reminders. Its use

ranged from 1.62% of performance time in the Sixth Grade Treble Choir to 6.23% in the Adult Church Choir.

**TABLE 4.4 INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY DURING PERFORMANCE TIME**

	6th grade Treble Choir	7 <sup>th</sup> / 8th Varsity Treble Choir	HS JV Men's Chorus	HS Varsity Chorale	Adult Church Choir	College Chorale
Total Performance Time (min:sec)	20:36	23:41	22:38	40:52	20:20	28:46

**Percentage of Performance Time Devoted to Specific Teaching Strategies**

Verbal Instruction during Performance	1.62%	2.60%	4.86%	1.67%	6.23%	2.90%
Conducting during Performance	0% <sup>6</sup>	15.52%	15.98%	46.57%	6.88% <sup>7</sup>	71.26%
Kinesthetic Gesture during Performance	36.65% <sup>8</sup>	27.87% <sup>8</sup>	0%	17.01% <sup>8</sup>	2.38%	4.46%
Director Performing with Choir	11.57%	5.28%	13.70%	5.91%	0.40%	1.04%
Unassisted Performance (no instructional activity)	50.16%	48.73%	65.46%	28.84%	84.11%	20.34%

<sup>6</sup> Much of the performance time in this rehearsal was spent on sight reading material

<sup>7</sup> Director was also accompanying the choir for this rehearsal

<sup>8</sup> Includes use of Curwen hand signs

Time spent conducting during performance varied greatly in these rehearsals, from 0% of performance time in the Sixth Grade Treble Choir to 71.26% in the College Chorale, and merits some further explanation here. In the Sixth Grade Treble Choir, where no conducting occurred, much of the performance time was devoted to sight reading material displayed on the overhead projector. When that choir was working on concert literature, the director was at the keyboard playing pitches for a piece that was relatively new to the choir. For the Adult Church Choir rehearsal, the director, who is also the organist when the choir performs, was accompanying the choir at the keyboard for almost the entire rehearsal. Interestingly, the High School Varsity Chorale and the College Chorale, the two most advanced groups in this study, saw the greatest percentage of conducting time.

The use of kinesthetic gesture during performance ranged from 0% of performance time to 36.65%. In the two middle school choirs and the High School Varsity Chorale, this included the director's use of Curwen hand signs while the group was singing solfege. The High School JV Men's Chorus did not do any solfege work on the day of observation, but, according to their director, they frequently do use solfege and Curwen hand signs for sight reading instruction. In the Adult Church Choir and the College Chorale, the use of kinesthetic gesture during performance was usually a physical reminder of instruction that had occurred prior to that performing segment.

Occasionally in these rehearsals the director would perform with the choir, often for just a few seconds at the beginning of a piece or passage. For director C, this almost never occurred. Directors A and B did noticeably more performing with their beginning-

level group than they did with their advanced group. Unassisted performance consumed from 28.84% of performance time to 84.11%. Assistance from the keyboard, either by playing parts or accompaniment, was not counted for this study, so instances where the director played along with the choir but did not speak, sing, conduct or use kinesthetic gestures were still considered unassisted performance.

### **Data from the Post-Rehearsal Interviews**

Each director's interview followed the observed rehearsals and focused on some of the specific teaching decisions that were made in those rehearsals. The questions and responses were tailored to the events of each rehearsal situation, and thus, the responses yielded differing information for each conductor. No single, universal topic or set of questions was ever discussed by all three directors. The purpose of collecting this data was not to compare responses from one director to another, but to give each director an opportunity to illuminate, in their own words, some of the teaching decisions that were made in these rehearsals.

Due to the rehearsal-specific nature of the questions asked, the excerpts quoted below frequently shift from one topic or situation to another. Despite the differences in what was discussed, each interview provided a unique opportunity for the director to reveal some of his or her thinking behind instructional choices that were made and yielded some valuable qualitative information about their teaching. Complete interview transcripts can be found in Appendices A, B & C.

Director A was asked about one of the kinesthetic devices she was using with the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir. In one portion of the rehearsal the director had the singers make an imaginary throw with their arms as they sang their note on the first syllable of the Latin word ‘Deo.’ Director A explained:

“I think there’s a connection there. When they get the visual of ‘throwing’ their voice, their mouth will open up more and they will project more. Move volume comes out because they’re trying to kinesthetically do something at the same time they are performing.”

In this case her comments revealed why she chose the kinesthetic teaching device instead of verbal instruction alone.

In another rehearsal segment with the *Gloria*, Director A had the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir bounce in place with a gentle bend in their knees while singing a specific passage. When asked why she had them do this, Director A explained:

“To be lighter...it didn’t need to be heavy. It depends on what type of music we’re performing, but this piece for the most part is really light and bouncy and you don’t want them to sit too far down on the pitch. So, [I try] anything I can...to help them lighten the sound up.”

Again, in this instance, the director chose to employ a kinesthetic mode of teaching with her singers rather than just verbally telling them to lighten their sound.

Director B addressed some different rehearsal issues in her interview. In one of Director B’s responses, she revealed some of her thoughts on rehearsal pacing in general and, more specifically, how she approaches pacing differently in the High School JV Men’s Chorus and Varsity Chorale rehearsals.

“The first thing that I do is watch faces. I read faces and just kind of feel the room. You can see on their faces, in their body posture, and in their

response to what you are doing when it's time to just shift. And I always try to shift to something that they don't ever expect – something weird and wacky just to keep them guessing all the time, especially with the younger group. We drive a little harder and a little longer with the Varsity group because they can stay with it...and the music is a little bit different.”

In another comment, Director B explains a segment of the JV Men's Chorus rehearsal in which she had asked several different individual students to model a melodic line from the piece of music they were rehearsing. The first two singers she called on did not model the phrase correctly, but the director managed to compliment the portion that was right and use each example to further teach the entire section what they were missing.

“And then [the student], who thinks that he is the best singer we have, wasn't anywhere near the pitches. But his pattern was right. It wasn't in the right key, but he had the right pattern. I really tried to say ‘that was incredible, thank you for showing that. Did you hear that his pattern was good? Maybe a little lower next time.’”

Related to this same student modeling segment, the director also emphasized the importance of a safe classroom atmosphere when having students sing individually like this.

“Singing is something intimate. I want them to feel safe and I'm very proud of that because [another student] knew he didn't get it right, but nobody laughed. None of them in there are afraid to try and you can get a lot done with that.”

Director B also shared some insight into a moment of teacher modeling that occurred in the High School Varsity Chorale rehearsal. In this specific instance, she was demonstrating a musical phrase and intentionally singing a pitch flat in order to isolate and reproduce exactly what she was hearing the ensemble do.

“I really try to have them listen. I try to have them shut their eyes and let me sing it and have them analyze how I sang it, [and] have them then try to reproduce what needed to happen. [I] have them teach me, so they are in turn teaching themselves.”

Director C shared several insightful comments that revealed reasons behind some of his teaching strategies used in the rehearsals. In commenting about an instance in the Adult Church Choir rehearsal, this director reveals his thinking behind a quick shift that occurred in teaching strategies while rehearsing a portion of the *Celtic Introit* that involved singing and articulating the two words ‘Lord, we’ in quick succession.

“I started out by speaking it in my ‘lifted tone,’ as I call it, to get them all to speak with their soft palates [raised]. But then...when the articulation of the ‘d’ wasn’t happening...I decided to do something different which was to make a visual representation and [a] sort of kinesthetic [one] at the same time as I was using my finger [to show the placement of the ‘d’]. I had to change my tactic with it. We ‘spat’ it and we did different things and they finally got it.”

In another piece, Director C introduced a chant-like musical line that was new to the choir and explains his reasoning behind the specific teaching sequence that occurred.

“I [performed] it, then I asked them to experience it. I said we’re going to begin each of the phrases, move into the center [of the phrase], then ease out of the next part. I actually [showed] it with my hands, so I said it, I gestured it and they already had it. And...when they sang it they actually shaped each of the phrases the way we had done it.”

These comments provide some insight into how this director’s teaching was both effective and efficient. With minimal rehearsal time, as he was able to accomplish the teaching of notes and rhythms as well as the more sophisticated work of phrase shaping.

Speaking about the College Chorale rehearsal, Director C elaborated on several verbal metaphors or images that he used in an attempt to get the choir to focus their

sound. The passage in question was being sung slightly flat and a few of the basses were sliding up to the pitch. Director C comments:

“I said ‘really brightly right between your teeth’ and ‘focus it like a laser beam.’ Then I said ‘out of your left eye.’ Those are three things that I typically say....when you just think about your left eye it makes you focus your mind and attention.”

In this case, the director had used these images with the choir before, so they were able to understand the tonal shift he was asking for and quickly make an adjustment in their singing.

A different comment from Director C revealed something noteworthy about his approach to teaching in the College Chorale rehearsal and, in this case, why he chose to work on several musical elements at once rather than just focus on one issue. In this rehearsal segment, the choir was struggling with some of the rhythmic material and the director was having the choir count-sing to address it. However, he also chose to incorporate some verbal imagery that came from the composer’s own writing to help characterize the piece, and gave attention to phrase shape and word stress as they did the count-singing. Here he explains his reasons for taking a multi-elemental approach rather than just working the rhythmic issue that came up:

“From day one I want the musical concept to be in mind because really, what we’re hoping is that we are developing musicians. So when they look at a piece of music they can synthesize ‘what is the artistic intent of this piece?’ and they can reveal it right there without these huge hours of ‘let me look at rhythm, let me learn the notes, let me learn the dynamics’.... I am inviting their musicianship.”

At times, the comments from these interviews explained some of the data seen in the video analysis. For example, one can see in Director C’s last comment why a good

portion (25.86%) of his teaching might be categorized under the ‘multiple elements’ heading. The interview transcripts also revealed things that could not be seen in the video or the numbers that appeared in the resulting SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) analysis. From Director A’s comments, one begins to understand why she used physical metaphors or kinesthetic devices in her teaching. In director B’s remarks, we see how she adapted one student’s incorrect demonstration into a teachable moment for the entire choir, all while keeping the singer’s self-esteem intact. The combination of video analysis and interview comments begins to reveal some of the important components of the masterful teaching done by these three highly successful directors.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This was an observational study of three highly successful choral directors working with middle school, high school, college and adult church choirs. Each director was observed and videotaped working with a beginning-level and an advanced-level ensemble in their home rehearsal settings. A total of six rehearsals were recorded. The videos were analyzed using SCRIBE software (Duke & Stammen, 2007). Analysis focused on 1) overall time use in rehearsal, 2) specific musical elements targeted during instruction, 3) use of specific teaching strategies during instruction and 4) instructional activity during performance time. In addition, post-rehearsal interviews were conducted with each director immediately following their rehearsals.

#### **Discussion of the Overall Time-Use Data**

Though the data provided here present only a snapshot of these three directors working with their individual choirs on the selected rehearsal days, there is much to learn from it. In the case of these three directors and their choirs, one can see common trends in overall rehearsal time-use, similarities and differences in targeted musical elements and specific teaching strategies, and one can discover some common traits in their teaching as revealed in the post-rehearsal interviews.

Analysis of the overall time-use data suggests that there are few differences in rehearsal time-use among the varying ages and experience levels studied here. For all six

ensembles, performance time was similar, with an average among the groups of 44.4% of rehearsal time consumed by performance. Though there were individual variations from this average, this percentage provides a reasonable description of the rehearsal practices of these three directors. However, one does not expect that they planned their rehearsals with a target performance percentage in mind. Instead, this number is simply a result of their rehearsal practice and may reveal something about the amount of singing that occurs on a typical rehearsal day for these groups.

Neither extremely low nor extremely high performance percentages were observed here, but it is possible that certain situations like a dress rehearsal might lead to a greater percentage of performance time observed. Other situations, like having a guest performer or a day of lengthy instruction could lead to a much smaller performance percentage. There is no data in this study to suggest that older or more advanced groups spend more or less of their rehearsal time performing than beginning groups. This is somewhat contrary to Kelly's findings in an earlier study of instrumental rehearsals (Kelly, 2003).

Instructional time varied a bit more widely among the directors, but one consistency is that each director spent more time in instruction with their advanced group than with their own beginning level group. It should be reiterated that each of the three advanced groups had been chosen to perform at a highly competitive state convention scheduled within four months of the videotaped rehearsals. Perhaps the knowledge that they would be singing in front of a critical audience at TMEA led the directors to offer more instruction to those groups. Or, perhaps the more advanced level of the singers and

the repertoire demanded a greater amount of instructional time. As with performance time, there is no data here to suggest a difference in instructional time between middle school, high school, college and adult church choir.

With the exception of the sixth grade choir that had to take care of fundraiser business, all three of these directors used a similar amount of time giving non-musical instructions, averaging close to 10% of the total rehearsal time. When compared to the amount of time that each one spent in musical instruction, it is apparent that most verbal communication from these directors was about the music. Very little time was spent dealing with issues of discipline, placement of the choir, attendance, announcements and other non-musical matters.

Several factors are likely to be responsible for this. In all cases it seemed that procedures were in place to facilitate a quick start to the rehearsal. For example, Director A began both rehearsals with some call and response activities to engage the head voice. The choir knew exactly how to respond and immediately followed. No verbal instruction was needed from the time the bell rang until after the warm-up was over. This resulted in a lower amount of non-musical instruction and allowed more rehearsal time to be spent in performance and musical instruction.

In addition to procedures like this, the choirs were obviously aware of some behavioral expectations. When any of the directors asked the choir to begin a piece or a section, the choir was ready to do so without any question or argument. If talking or some other behavior issue had to be addressed, it was done so quickly and specifically by the director. Though the directors may have asked for input from the singers, their authority

in leading the rehearsal was not questioned. It is likely, especially in the case of the student choirs, that behavior expectations for the rehearsal were clarified at some earlier point. Future studies might observe the ways successful conductors establish expectations and procedures at the beginning of the year.

Finally, in all cases, the rehearsals moved with a great deal of efficiency. Though not specifically observed in this study, the directors seemed to have a clear plan for each rehearsal. There was never a point in any of the rehearsals where the director was unsure about what the choir was going to work on next. While the impact of certain procedures, behavior expectations and efficient planning could not be directly observed in this study, they are likely factors influencing the low percentage of time used for non-musical instruction.

Time spent on student comments or questions seemed to vary widely with no clear trend in these groups. The only commonality is that this behavior never exceeded 6.28 % of rehearsal time. Percentage of rehearsal time spent getting ready also varied among the choirs. In the middle school and high school groups the beginning choir spent more time getting ready than the more advanced choir. Director C's getting ready time was noticeably lower (less than 1% in both groups) which may indicate an especially efficient mode of rehearsing or other circumstances that were different from the public school setting of the other four choirs. The age of the singers (adult and college) may also have impacted Director C's lower percentage of time spent in this area.

### **Discussion of Musical Elements Targeted During Instruction**

At the outset of this study, it was hypothesized that there would be considerable differences in the musical elements targeted by each conductor. This may be due to an unspoken expectation that choirs with older and more experienced singers would work at a more sophisticated level. One would not necessarily expect the middle school choirs to be dealing with the nuances of phrase shaping and syllabic stress that a college choir might. Also, there is a commonly held assumption that church choirs, due to their volunteer nature, limited rehearsal time, and wide range of singing experience, are somehow less likely to be engaged in the same level of musical instruction seen in the secondary school and collegiate programs. The time-use data related to musical instruction in this study uphold a few of those assumptions but also refute many of them.

In several areas, one does see a difference in musical instruction delivered to younger, less experienced choirs. Both middle school groups spent a large amount of time addressing pitch issues. While part of this was due to sight-reading instruction in these choirs, it also suggests that instruction in the area of pitch may just be more necessary with younger singers.

The middle school choirs also spent more time working on vocal production than any of the other choirs. Following the two middle school groups, the adult church choir was next in order of time spent on vocal production. Considering that these three choirs contained singers with the least experience, it makes sense that more time would be devoted to the basic mechanics of singing. The two most advanced choirs in the study,

the High School Varsity Chorale and the College Chorale, spent the least amount of time on vocal production. One might conclude that this is because the singers in these advanced groups have already had some vocal instruction, either in a private setting or in another choir.

Phrasing is another area in which some of the aforementioned hypotheses are confirmed. No instructional time was recorded in this area for either of the middle school choirs or for the High School JV Men's Chorus. The beginning level groups in this study simply did not address this issue on the observed rehearsal days. Phrasing was addressed in the High School Varsity Chorale (4.25% of instructional time) and increased in the remaining groups. The College Chorale spent the greatest percentage of instructional time (11.41%) on phrasing. For the choirs in this study, one could conclude that phrasing increased with the singers' age and experience.

However, one should approach such a conclusion with caution, because it is also possible that concert proximity might affect instruction in an area like phrasing. The middle school choirs, who did not address phrasing at all, were the furthest away from their concert, with 1300 rehearsal minutes remaining before the next performance. The high school group had 360 rehearsal minutes remaining and the college group had 600 minutes remaining before the next performance. It may be that phrasing is something that directors address closer to a concert, after some of the more basic issues of pitch and rhythm are secure. Future research may be designed to address this issue.

Instruction related to text emphasis and word stress is another area that saw little emphasis in the less experienced choirs. No instructional time was observed in this area

for the Sixth Grade Treble Choir and the High School JV Men's Chorus and less than 1% of instructional time was devoted to this in the Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir. However, unlike the results in the phrasing category, a clear trend is not as visible here. The College Chorale devoted only 0.25% of instructional time to text emphasis and word stress and the group that spent the most time working on this was the High School Varsity Chorale, followed next by the Adult Church Choir. It may be that instruction related to this concept varies with the repertoire being sung or a particular focus chosen by the instructor for that given day.

Instruction related to dynamics was more difficult to characterize, and thus draw conclusions about. Director A and Director C each spent more time addressing this concept with their advanced groups than they did with their beginning groups. Director A's Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir spent more time on dynamics than any of the other choirs in the study. Director B actually spent more time addressing dynamics with her beginning group than she did with her advanced group, although the percentages for both of Director B's groups were very similar. There was no evidence to suggest that instruction related to dynamics increased from middle school to high school and college.

Several other instructional areas presented results that are unclear in terms of specific trends. Tone Quality, Diction / Pronunciation and Mood / Expression were all somewhat difficult to characterize in these rehearsals. Director A emphasized tone quality more in her advanced group, but the other two directors spent similar amounts of time addressing this concept with each of their choirs. Director A addressed diction /

pronunciation for similar amounts of time in her two choirs, but instruction in this area differed among choirs led by Director B and Director C. Mood / Expression was addressed in all choirs, but noticeably more in the College Chorale. These instructional areas may need to be studied over a longer series of rehearsals or with a larger sample in order to make meaningful conclusions about how their use differs among various choirs.

Several instructional areas seemed to vary by director. Time spent addressing articulation and intonation varied from one director to another, but each director spent similar amounts of time dealing with the concept in both of their own choirs. This may indicate that certain directors were more attuned to these issues or that certain directors chose to specifically isolate these elements while others addressed them in more global ways.

The category of Multiple Elements / Non-Specific Instruction is also one that seemed to be director-specific. Forty-five to forty-eight percent of Director B's instructional time fell in this category. This may indicate that director B preferred to use a more synthesized style of teaching, working several elements at once, rather than isolating one musical element at a time. It may also be a function of concert proximity. Director B was closest to a performance and this may have led to a more synthesized approach in her rehearsals. Director A, who exhibited the least amount of time in the Multiple Elements category, was also the farthest away from a performance.

For all directors, this category of Multiple Elements / Non-Specific Instruction was used to describe at least 15% of instructional time. This suggests that not all instruction can be clearly labeled as pertaining to only one musical element, and that

more study may need to be done to clarify this category and examine when instructors teach with a very specific focus and when they teach with a more global approach.

Rhythmic instruction was the one area that received a similar amount of attention in almost every choir. All middle school and high school groups registered near 4% in this category and the adult and college groups registered 1.4% and 5.4% respectively. Rhythm is one instructional area in which we see almost no variation between these different ages and experience levels, thus partially contradicting the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this section.

To summarize, instruction in Pitch and Vocal Production generally decreased with age and experience for the choirs in this study. Instruction in Phrasing seemed to increase with age and experience. Time devoted to Rhythmic Instruction was similar among all groups and Intonation, Articulation and Multiple Elements / Non-Specific Instruction seemed to vary by director. Dynamics, Tone Quality, Diction/Pronunciation and Mood/Expression were areas in which clear trends were not detected. These results are similar to those found by Derby in a study of rehearsal targets among selected elementary, middle school and high school choirs (Derby, 2001).

It should be pointed out that while there were few differences in the musical elements targeted during instruction, what did vary was the repertoire being rehearsed. Each choir worked on repertoire that was selected by the director for that specific ensemble. As suggested by the results of the Derby study and this study, it may be that the overall musical goals of these different choirs are really quite similar, while the repertoire changes with the age and experience level of the singer.

### **Discussion of Teaching Strategy Data**

In all rehearsal situations observed for this study, Verbal Instruction was used more than any other instructional strategy. It is perhaps the easiest strategy to use and can be a very clear and efficient way of communicating musical content. The data from the study may indicate a slight variation by director, but no clear trend in terms of verbal instruction varying by age and experience. Future studies may need to further analyze this category in order to specifically describe different types of verbal instruction and better understand how and why verbal instruction is used in the rehearsal.

Teacher modeling was used the most in the two middle school choirs and the least in the High School JV Men's Chorus. It was a strategy used by all directors in all choirs, for at least 15% of the instructional time. This indicates that modeling was an important teaching strategy for these three directors. It was used more in the less-experienced choirs but still used frequently in the advanced groups.

In this area of Teacher Modeling, the three lowest percentages were found with Director B's high school choirs and Director C's College Chorale. However, it is interesting to note that Directors B and C also utilized Student Modeling and director B utilized 'Other' Modeling, which, in this case, involved playing a recording of the piece her choir was rehearsing. While Director A's teacher Modeling percentages were the highest, she did not utilize the other types of Modeling in the observed rehearsals. Overall, modeling of any type seemed to be a well-used strategy, and a preference for Teacher versus Student or Other Modeling varied by director or the specific rehearsal situation.

The use of Verbal Metaphor / Imagery as an instructional strategy did not follow a clear trend, but was observed most in the College Chorale. In the case of Directors A and C, more verbal metaphor / imagery was used in their advanced groups than in their beginning groups. Director B used a similar amount of this strategy in both of her choirs. This may indicate that using such a strategy was repertoire-specific or dependent upon the particular focus of that day's instruction.

Physical Metaphors and Kinesthetic Devices were used most in the two middle school choirs. This category included the use of Curwen hand signs and other devices. The adult church choir also utilized kinesthetic instructional techniques, indicating these strategies might be effective for beginning singers. Kinesthetic Devices were used very little (less than 1% of instructional time) in the two high school choirs and in the College Chorale. This may indicate that it is a strategy not needed very often with more advanced choirs. Like the use of verbal metaphor, use of kinesthetic devices may also have varied according to the individual preference of the director or the repertoire being rehearsed.

The effect of concert proximity on a director's choice of teaching strategy is not evident from the data in this study, but might be worthy of further research. More teacher modeling occurred in the middle school choirs where their concert was farthest away. In the high school groups where the performance was most imminent, less modeling and more verbal instruction occurred. It is possible that modeling is a strategy that is more useful earlier in the process of preparing music and is less useful or desirable as the performance draws closer or that modeling was simply more characteristic of one director than another. More study would be needed to explore these possibilities.

In their choices of instructional strategies, we see few differences among these directors. With the exception of some discrepancies in the area of teacher modeling and the use of physical metaphor / kinesthetic devices, there is little evidence to suggest that the type of teaching changes very much when moving from middle school to high school and college or adult choirs. All three directors in this study are highly successful, so the teaching strategies chosen here may be common to high achieving choral programs. Future studies of other director or a longitudinal study of the same director over a series of many rehearsals might reveal different data in the area of teaching strategies.

### **Discussion of Instructional Activity During Performance Time**

Among these three directors, there were some interesting similarities and differences in instructional activity during performance time. Verbal Instruction During Performance occurred very little in these rehearsals with the most noticeable percentages being in the High School JV Men's Chorus and the Adult Church choir. As it is often hard for students to hear instruction that occurs while the choir is singing, it seems logical that this strategy would not be used very much at any level.

Conducting is one area where a reasonably clear trend was evident. Conducting time increased with age and experience and was substantially higher in the High School Varsity Chorale and the College Chorale. The one exception to note is the Adult Church Choir. Since the director was also accompanying this rehearsal on the piano, it was difficult to assess this rehearsal in the conducting area. That exception noted, it seems

that directors of older and more advanced choirs utilized conducting more in their rehearsals than conductors of younger choirs.

Kinesthetic Gesture (non-conducting) during performance was utilized much more in the younger choirs and follows the trend seen in the instructional strategies. The exception to that trend is the High School Varsity Chorale, in which the director often utilized Curwen hand signs and other kinesthetic gestures during rehearsal performance time. Performing with the choir was more difficult to characterize. Director A and Director B performed more with their beginning groups than they did with their advanced groups. They may have felt that the advanced groups were more secure in their singing and needed less help. Director C almost never performed with his choirs, perhaps indicating an individual preference not to use this strategy.

### **Discussion of the Post-Rehearsal Interviews**

The interviews that were conducted in this study were intended to provide an opportunity for each director to elaborate on the specific rehearsals that occurred. The questions asked of each director were intentionally different and were intended to be specific to their own rehearsals. There was no attempt to gather responses to a common question. While much of the data from these interviews was rehearsal-specific, there were some common themes that emerged.

First, each director encountered a moment in one of their rehearsals where the initial teaching strategy they used did not work. They had to respond to what the choir was singing and shift to a different approach. For Director A, this happened in her Sixth

Grade Treble Choir when they struggled to make the step from Do to Re in sight reading. She had already used modeling, Curwen hand signs and verbal instruction to address the issue, but the choir was still singing the sequence incorrectly. As she explains in her interview, she then chose to use a kinesthetic device which involved having them bend their knees, stand flat-footed and stand on tip-toes to show the differences in pitch between Do, Re and Mi.

Director B encountered some incorrect pitches in the bass section while working with the High School JV Men's Chorus rehearsal. She had already addressed the pitch issues verbally and had modeled portions of it herself. Since the problem was still occurring, she shifted and chose a student to model the phrase. However, as she revealed in her interview, having this student model it did not fix the problem because the student sang the phrase incorrectly. She had to shift again. She pointed out what was correct about the first student's pattern and chose someone else to sing it for the class. The second student sang it and still had some problems. After helping the students evaluate, the director moved to a third individual and finally got a correct model for the basses. In this short teaching episode, the director had to shift several times from what she had initially planned to do.

In rehearsing the *Celtic Introit* with his Adult Church Choir, Director C also encountered a situation that required him to adjust his teaching strategy in the moment of rehearsal. The choir was rehearsing a segment of text that included the phrase "Lord, we" in which the 'd' was not being articulated clearly. After using verbal instruction to address the point and having the choir speak the text, the articulation was still not

convincing. Director C shifted tactics and employed a kinesthetic device in which he used his index finger to ‘touch’ in the air and point out where the ‘d’ sound should go. After employing this strategy, the choir was able to place the consonant correctly and articulate it clearly.

In the examples above, all three of these directors were able to make a quick shift in their teaching when one strategy didn’t work. To the observer, this shift happened almost instantly in the rehearsal. This suggests that these highly successful directors have a repertoire of teaching strategies at their disposal. Though they clearly began with a planned teaching strategy in mind, they could adjust to the needs of the ensemble in the moment of rehearsal and employ a different approach to accomplish their original musical goal.

A second common theme that emerges from the interviews is that all three directors had a desire to go beyond just singing the correct pitches and rhythms. They sought to develop the musicianship skills of their singers. Director A spoke about her Seventh and Eighth Grade Varsity Treble Choir’s experimentation with several different dynamic levels in the repetitions of the chorus in *Kikkehiki*. Rather than presenting only one correct way to perform the piece, she allowed the choir to try several options with the dynamics. She explains her reasons for this experimentation in the rehearsal: “to make it more musical, because right now they’re just singing the notes – there were no dynamics. Everything is happening loud – so we will play with the dynamics until we get it where we want.”

Director B addresses the importance of musicianship even more clearly in some of her comments about her High School Varsity Chorale rehearsal. She mentions the importance of them becoming “independent musicians” and “good self-teachers.” In describing why she chose to model a specific phrase they were singing incorrectly, she elaborates on her philosophy of developing musicianship skills: “I really try to have them listen. I try to have them shut their eyes and let me sing it and have them analyze how I sang it, have them then try to reproduce what needed to happen – have them teach me. So they are in turn teaching themselves.” It would no doubt have been faster to simply correct the musical mistake that was occurring, but this director also sought to develop her singers’ listening skills and develop their critical abilities while addressing the particular issue that arose in the piece.

Like the other two directors, Director C also spoke of his desire to develop musicianship among his singers. In speaking about a rehearsal moment focused on the mood and musical nuance of Rautavaara’s *Vigilia*, he very succinctly describes his purpose: “From day one I want the musical concept to be in mind because really what we’re hoping is that we’re developing musicians, so when they look at a piece of music they can synthesize ‘what is the artistic intent of this piece?’ and they can reveal it right there.”

Though all three directors faced different rehearsal situations and were working on different literature, one can see a common desire to develop sophisticated musical abilities and a sense of musical independence among their singers. These highly

successful directors had a common goal of developing musicianship skills that would last beyond the specific repertoire being sung in these rehearsals.

A third theme that emerges from the post-rehearsal interviews is that each director seemed to be sensitive to some of the unique needs of the particular singers he or she was dealing with. Many of their specific teaching decisions in the rehearsal reflect this awareness. Director A had a moment of transition in her Sixth Grade Treble Choir rehearsal in which she had to put away the overhead projector and distribute music to the choir. While taking care of these tasks, she simultaneously employed some call and response vocalizations to keep the choir engaged. “With big groups especially, you have to have them do something. You can’t just walk away or they will get out of control.” Director A was aware of the attention span of her singers and was able to prevent a potentially disruptive situation by employing a strategy that kept the choir engaged during the transition.

Director B reveals her awareness of the emotional needs of her high school singers when discussing the climate she tries to create in the High School JV Men’s Chorus rehearsal. “Singing is something intimate. I want them to feel safe...none of them in there are afraid to try.” She gave that explanation in reference to a moment in the rehearsal where several students modeled a passage of music. Creating and maintaining an emotionally safe climate for her high school singers gave those individuals the courage to sing in front of their peers and demonstrate musical concepts for the rest of the choir.

When talking about his Adult Church Choir, director C explains why he had them work so carefully on diction and phrasing in *God Walked in Eden's Garden Fair*. In his comments he reveals his understanding of the unique purpose of that choir and the worship setting in which they sing. "It's important to me with my church choir that they be a powerful tool for empowering the congregation to engage in worship. If we separate the congregation in some way – they can't understand the words or it's a tune they don't get, or it sounds muddy - then we've failed in our purpose which was to empower them."

Each director, through his or her comments about discipline during transitions, the emotional climate of the choir rehearsal or the purpose of the church choir, revealed that he or she is not only occupied with executing the musical demands of the repertoire. These directors are acutely aware of the particular needs of their individual choirs and that awareness was reflected in specific teaching decisions that they made.

From the post-rehearsal interviews we gain some explanation from the directors themselves about specific events that occurred in the rehearsal. In some cases, this information illuminates the data resulting from the SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) analyses that focused on musical elements and teaching strategies. We gain a better understanding, for example, of why a director chose to use a certain kinesthetic device or why they chose to address diction in a certain piece of music.

Beyond that, some common characteristics of these three highly successful directors are also revealed. All were able to make a quick shift from one teaching strategy to another in rehearsal. All were concerned about developing habits of musicianship among their singers, and all had a working understanding of some of the unique needs of

their choir. The data from these interviews, in conjunction with the analytical data from the videos, help provide a more complete view of what comprises quality teaching in the choral rehearsal.

### **Implications for Teacher Training**

It is hoped that some of the information gained from this study can be helpful in the area of teacher preparation. Novice choral directors face many challenges as they enter the profession and one way to prepare for some of those challenges is to examine what successful directors do. The video analysis conducted in this study provides one model for analyzing a rehearsal. In this study, the focus of that analysis was on specific musical elements during instruction and specific teaching strategies used. Certainly, other elements in addition to these would also be important to examine in order to get a complete picture of what a successful choir director does.

If one chooses to use these three directors and their rehearsal situations as a model, then there is not any situation where work with pitches and rhythms is unnecessary. New choral directors, then, must have a command of these basic musical elements in the repertoire they are conducting. They must also be able to address intonation and a variety of more subtle musical elements from mood and expression to articulation and word stress in most secondary choral situations. If one used these three directors as a model, they would also note that rehearsals began and proceeded with a great amount of efficiency, with the majority of rehearsal time devoted to performance and instruction and very little time spent on other things.

If one is going to be working with a younger or less experienced choir, then special attention to vocal production may be required and additional strategies may be needed to teach pitch matching. If one is going to be working with a college level or advanced high school choir, then a sure command of conducting skill and a clear vision for phrasing may be needed. These specific emphases are drawn from the conductors studied here and, while they can not be generalized beyond these specific rehearsal situations, they may provide insight and direction for further study.

Also gleaned from these three successful directors, we see some common teaching traits that might be important to explore in teacher preparation. Having a varied repertoire of teaching strategies and having the ability to shift quickly from one teaching strategy to another are certainly common characteristics of these directors. Going beyond just teaching the songs and developing the skills of independent musicianship among their singers was also important to them. A sensitivity to the unique needs of their particular choir was evident in all cases. An awareness of these traits may be a starting place for new choral directors seeking to develop their own teaching techniques and rehearsal skills.

### **Directions for Further Research**

The data from this study raise several questions about how best to analyze a choral rehearsal and how to assess quality teaching in an authentic context. The SCRIBE program (Duke & Stammen, 2007) was a valuable tool in this type of analysis but also presented some challenges. Every behavior had to be labeled in some way in order to

collect data on that behavior. At times, identifying certain instructional behaviors became difficult. Often it was hard to make a determination about one single element that was being addressed. For this reason, the Multiple Elements / Non-Specific category was created for the analysis of musical elements. Future studies may want to describe these multiple elements in more detail, or design some other way to categorize the musical instruction being delivered.

Determining specific teaching strategies was somewhat more clear, though future research may wish to include more teaching strategies than the ones tracked here. In the rehearsals observed for this project, written instruction and the use of visual aids were not observed, though it is certainly possible that those could be valid teaching strategies in a choral rehearsal. Combinations of strategies, for example teacher modeling combined with the use of a kinesthetic device, might also be considered in future analyses.

The interview data in this study provided some valuable insights, though it did not provide the same kind of platform for comparison as the numerical data. Future studies might want to include a set of common questions for the directors as well as some tailored to a specific rehearsal. It might also be valuable to have the directors watch the video of the rehearsal and respond to specific events as they appeared.

It would be most interesting to be able to repeat this study with a larger sample of directors and choirs and with a broader span of age groups and experience levels. What additional data would be gained if an elementary choir, a community chorus or a professional choir were included? If observations included experienced directors and

novice directors, what differences in targeted musical elements and instructional strategies would be observed?

This study provided a ‘snapshot’ of specific choirs on specific rehearsal days, but it would also be insightful to observe these same directors over a series of rehearsals. How would their teaching differ from week to week? What instructional decisions would they make when introducing a piece of music for the first time or when conducting a final dress rehearsal? What additional insights would be gained from interviewing these directors several times over the course of a semester or concert season?

Concert proximity is another important factor that needs to be examined in future research. It was noted here in order to give context to the rehearsals, but could be a factor that would aid in the analysis of instructional behaviors. Careful planning would have to be done to observe several choirs at the same point of concert proximity, but doing so might make comparing the rehearsals easier.

Finally, one must ask, to what extent can good teaching be observed, recorded and analyzed? Do numerical data like those provided in the SCRIBE (Duke & Stammen, 2007) analysis really give a clear picture of what is happening in a rehearsal? Do the interview comments from one experienced director in his or her own specific teaching situation really inform someone who has never directed a choir of their own before? Surely one of the challenges in the area of music teacher preparation is to continually develop better ways of understanding what great choral directors do and how they achieve great results with their choirs.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

There is still much to be learned from observing expert choral directors working in their natural rehearsal setting. The data from this study present only a snapshot of three directors working with their particular choirs on selected rehearsal days. While the results of these observations are thought-provoking and may serve as a guide for future research, conclusions should not be generalized beyond the scope of these specific directors and situations.

It is hoped that the work from this study will make a small contribution to the field of music teacher preparation and continuing education. Certainly one of the goals of both novice and practicing choral directors alike is to be able to analyze their own teaching and constantly seek ways to improve their own effectiveness. Some of the observation methods and categories used here may provide a lens through which to discern characteristics of successful teaching in future choral rehearsals. Perhaps some of the questions raised by this researcher will ignite another's curiosity about what great choral directors do.

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**APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – DIRECTOR A**

**Mark Patterson interview with Director A, October 27, 2008.**

MP: This portion is just to get ‘inside your head’ as a choir director -to understand the quick decisions that you make for someone who might be new at this. Not to question the decisions you made but to reveal the thinking behind them. Going back to the advanced girls in the *Gloria* - you guys were working on the word “Deo” and you were having them do this throwing image. Talk to me just a little bit about that.

Dir.A: I always do a bunch of physical stuff and I think that there’s a connection there. I’d like them to... when they get the visual of throwing their voice, it will come out - their mouth will open up more and they will project more. So, not necessarily a ‘pushing’ thing but just more volume comes out because they’re trying to kinesthetically do something at the same time they’re performing.

MP: It was also a more focused sound. You guys were also doing a bounce kind of thing... you were having them bounce with their knees a little bit– tell me more about that.

Dir.A: To be lighter...it didn’t need to be heavy...and we do a lot of bouncing stuff too – plus, it depends on what type of music we’re performing, but this piece uses a really light - there are heavy parts in it - but for the most part it’s very light and bouncy and

you don't want to sit too far down on the pitch. So anything I can do to help them lighten the sound up...

MP: Kikkehihi – you guys performed that on your fall concert, right? As you were working on that today and as you think about what you want to do next with that piece what are your thoughts?

Dir.A: I would like to add more dynamics, even more diction. The German is mushy.

MP: There was one word you addressed specifically, and a vowel I think....?

Dir.A: There are a couple of vowel things – and the embouchure needs to be a little more forward. I always say “kissy kissy lips.” And, to make it more musical, because right now they're just singing the notes – there were no dynamics - everything is happening loud- so we will play with dynamics until we get it where we want.

MP: And there was a section where you were asking for them to do the first one softer, second one louder – reading your face, I don't think you got what you wanted – so talk about that decision – I think you decided to go on and address something else....

Dir.A: Yeah...with different songs you want different dynamics but with that one there are no written dynamics, so I wanted to try the loud soft thing, but I think I may change

it. I've got to play with it 'til I find what I want. When I heard it I was like "ah, not so much" - maybe later, maybe when we add more to different spots. It's also hard because we're missing several soprano ones today But it's not their fault - we'll just keep playing with it.

MP: Anything else you want to say about that rehearsal?

Dir.A: We've got a long way to go but we have come along way. I try to do sight reading and singing every day, so sight reading can sometimes be ten minutes or it can be thirty minutes - it depends on how much they get. I think the better they get at sight reading the more time you can spend on literature, but I think its important to do the sight reading. We spend one six weeks on rhythm only, not even notes. We may sing the notes but not looking at them, and including the hand signs with them and all that stuff. I know I do it differently than other people but it just works for me. Usually by about Chtistmas time we have gotten to our three part stuff as far as sight reading goes for varsity girls.

MP: So, 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls - there was a moment in there where they were really having a hard time with that "re" so you made a change in strategy - you went into this 'full body' thing...talk a little bit about that

Dir.A: You know, again it's a physical thing - if you take away the hand signs and the multiple things, and have them just zone in on one thing - because they can get it quicker

– and then you add on another thing to it, and another, and then eventually go back to what you were trying to teach them....at least that works for me...

MP: And you did that - you took that spot out and made a much larger physical gesture...

Dir.A: And I think it worked - even if it's just three notes like it was today on do, re and mi, just doing something different for each one will help them to really remember where that was. I do a bunch of weird stuff like that. Yes, do and re are not the same note, ladies!

MP: Yes, and you really engaged all of their person to make that point and then went back to the hand sign thing. Last thing: I love the way you handle transitions. There was one moment in there where you were having to put away the projector, get the music out, get it to them, and you did it all singing, and they were singing back. Anything you want to say about that?

Dir.A: With big groups especially, you have to have them do something. You cant just walk away or they will get out of control...we have a really chatty sixth grade group, so something has to be going on at all times or you're going to get kids just chit-chatting. They are very chatty this year. I do that with all my groups though – it gets their attention, it's really good when you're in public, like at the mall or something, that's how you get their attention - and that's their cue for not talking and listening.

MP: and you're doing some musical things too – engaging their head voice. Anything else you wan to add?

Dir.A. No, I think that's it.

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – DIRECTOR B**

### **Mark Patterson Interview with Director B, October 6, 2008**

Mark Patterson: All I really want to do is get ‘inside your head’ for a few minutes about some of the things you did and some of the decisions that you made....kind of explaining to the novice teacher who doesn’t understand how you make those decisions so quickly, trying to get at why did you make these decisions that you did, not to question them but to kind of reveal them. Does that make sense?

Director B: Yes. I’ll address first Men’s Ensemble and say that one of the things that I’m particularly proud of that group about is that those are boys that auditioned for Colt Chorale and didn’t make it. We combined them with ninth grade boys and some of those older boys who really have some issues and are stepping up and being leaders to those freshmen. It is ninth through seniors. I would say that the first thing that I do is I watch faces. I read faces and I just kind of feel the room. You can feel the room. You can see on their faces and in their body posture and in their response to what you are doing when it’s time to just shift. And I always try to shift to something that they don’t ever expect - something weird and wacky just to keep them guessing all the time, especially with the younger group. We drive it a little harder and a little longer with the varsity group because they can stay with it a little bit. And the music is a little bit different. But in a non- varsity group I try not to stay at something so long because they reach a saturation point, you know. Even if you go to something else for a while and come back to it and say “Now what did we learn a while ago? Okay, now see if you can do it right now -

reproduce it.” So that’s what I try to do with them. With Colt Chorale, they are such, starting to become such good independent musicians and good self teachers...

MP: You really emphasized that today.

Dir.B: Well, they have to be because this concert program is so difficult that we’ve decided to do for TMEA. I really try to have them listen, I try to have them shut their eyes and let me sing it and have them analyze how I sang it, have them then try to reproduce what needed to happen - have them teach me. So then they are in turn teaching themselves. That has proved to work really, really well. It kind of hones their listening and kind of hones those skills. And Colt Chorale - it was a blue Monday today - and a lot of times...I almost try to pit them against each other, use the whole competitive edge thing, because they’ve taken such ownership in being section leaders. They are all required to do a one hour sectional each week and today the basses were very upset because out of all those basses, 5 came to last week’s sectional. So they were unhappy at being here today, so they were going to take it into another room and have a meeting about attendance. Just having one section listen to another with that “Christ Lag,” there’s nothing to do with it but just layer it and just have them think their way through. They have to be independent. One of the things we are also teaching them to do is how to have a sectional and how to practice. And they’ve got to have... It’s too broad to say go learn “Christ Lag” and make sure that this section is rock solid...So, and the question that you asked me about how to shift... probably today I took Colt Chorale a little bit

longer. I learned a very important lesson from my mentor who was Linda Keifer, our orchestra teacher. Some days, they are not going to learn it. You can sit up there and juggle plates and breathe fire out of your mouth...it's not the day for them to learn it. So you move on to something else. So after so much "Christ Lag" - I could have spent the whole day on that piece- but it was time for them to go on to something that gets them out of that contrapuntal, hard driving rhythm, into a language that they are comfortable with. They love that piece of music....so they don't put up a wall about "Christ Lag in Todesbanden." .

MP: You did that really well, and then you came back to "Christ Lag" for just a mental moment which was nice. Because they have this great energy and ...and you went right back into that. Okay, let me ask you about a couple of specific spots, if I can. Let's see. I want to go back to guys for a minute. You do a lot of modeling for those guys. You sing and they sing it back, that kind of thing. Talk to me about that. Anything else you want to share about when you decide to do that, why you decide to do that, how that works for those guys?

Dir.B: Well, when they are learning their basic notes and rhythms, they are on their own. But Anton Armstrong said "if they sing it wrong three times, you're not going to get them to break the habit." And these are boys that have not grown up with any voice training. A lot of them are coming to the choral experience for the first time. And so I want them to hear how it needs to line up. And usually the only time I really do a lot of

vocal role modeling is when I'm trying to get a vowel locked in. I want them to hear how strange and literally modified it needs to sound...how you really have to alter the sound of it. Or when there is something I want them to do with a certain note, expanding it into making a phrase. And I'll kind of show them how that goes. I try to do a little less of that with Colt Chorale because I've got such a great team around me. I mean, we just all sit and teach this stuff all day.

MP: You also got some of the other singers to model. You've got this great way of keeping everybody plugged into what you are doing. You brought that out in the guys: you asked Gavin to do something, then you went to Matt, then you went to Ryan...and you were after something there.

Dir.B: What I really try to create in every single class period - singing is something intimate. I want them to feel safe and I'm very proud of that because Gavin knew he didn't get it right, but nobody laughed.

MP: It didn't seem to crush his self confidence.

Dir.B: No. And then that Corbin, who thinks that he is the best singer we have, who wasn't anywhere near the pitches. But his pattern was right. It wasn't in the right key, but he had the right pattern. I really tried to say "that was incredible, thank you for

showing that, did you hear that his pattern was good? - maybe a little bit lower next time.” But none of them in there are afraid to try. And you can get a lot done with that.

MP: That was a neat sequence how you heard one and took the positive out of that and then moved on to the next one and it was just a neat teaching sequence. There was a moment when you ...I think you started with the tenors, there was this part and you stopped and said I want to build this from the bottom up. Remember that section?

Dir.B: Yes

MP: Can you tell me just a little bit about ...There was a really cool thing that happened with that. Was there was something that made you say this strategy is what I want to do now.

Dir.B: Yes, but it's not scientific at all. It was just so muddy, and it wasn't making sense, And that tenor line which opens, that D section, there's so much to teach every other voice part in that tenor line. I think that started with those accented quarter notes that I wanted and then moving into all of those sixteenth note runs on “froelich” and “leben” so I wanted, and the tenors start that whole section, so I started with the tenors so they could maybe hear and maybe the other two could kind of role model and write some things in, hopefully that was my plan - and then adding to that that independence of singing , then add the layers on - all that contrapuntal motion with the altos, then bring in

the basses and laying over that chorale with the sopranos. The sopranos have a lot of sitting – it’s not good. This is a fabulous piece but the sopranos have a lot of sitting while we’re learning the other parts. I try to keep them engaged as much as I can. Today I was really focused on those bottom three voices.

MP: Sure, sure, and that may not have been your plan, but it seemed from an observer’s standpoint that you heard that the basses being shaky and you really shifted your focus in rehearsal - is that a fair assessment?

Dir.B: Yes. Yes. They had an off day. They are usually dead on. I’ve got a lot of my experienced boys in there –they were over there yawning - it was a Monday for the bass section. They just came in messy today.

MP: Good. And you did a really cool - I guess you’d call it modeling again - you guys were on word stress. It was on “shining night” - the late year lies down the north- you were trying to get the word stress. Anything you want to add about what you were going for there?

Dir.B: I wanted the stress off of the word ‘north’ because the word north is just a launch into the second part of that phrase and that wasn’t the end of it and so I was just trying to get them to do that. I think they pick up on that really well. Once they know what they need to do to with the phrase they’re really good.

MP: Your gesture was doing that at the same time too - it was a multi-dimensional thing going at them. Anything else you want to add about that?

Dir.B: about phrasing?

MP: Or about the rehearsals in general - anything about the things you're thinking now or things you're thinking "okay now after that rehearsal we've really got to work on this"...

Dir.B: Yes. Here's what will happen now. You heard me tell that little girl "it's time to go to the metronome." On the "Christ Lag" we have now got to just drill it, drill it drill it, because, I thought last week they were more independent with it than they were today. that means - we're block scheduling - so that means that three fourths of those children have not even looked at it since Thursday. So today we were re-learning. We cannot do that anymore. So I've got to take it back. I've got to take it way back and we've got to just do a lot of metronome work on little tiny sections so it's not so overwhelming with them. We also need to take all of the rubato all of the fermatas all of the musical nuance out of "Sure on this Shining Night" and know where those beats lie... so we need to take both of those back to the metronome. So that's my plan for next time. We've really pretty much reached I think with the JV men's ensemble where we'll be by our fall concert and it just reaches the point where 17 of them get it and the other 2 don't but those other two are monotone so now it's time to start making them feel like kings and

polishing and honing concert etiquette, their presence on stage - we'll be on riser work with this the last part of this week.

MP: when is your concert?

Dir.B: It's next Tuesday night

MP: Do you know in your head how many rehearsals you guys have left?

Dir.B: Oh yes- a frighteningly short amount. Well this is an a day so these guys have three more rehearsals left and on a convention year – our audiences are used to it – we do a convention every other year- and for Colt Chorale they'll know this first concert is rough because we start with the hardest and I think “Christ Lag” and “Sure on this Shining Night” are just two of the more difficult pieces that we'll do. “Sure on this Shining Night” because of its maturity and musical nuance, “Christ Lag” goes without saying. It's a beast and we're starting with that so that we'll have the most time to season those two pieces.

**APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – DIRECTOR C**

**Mark Patterson Interview with Director C after Adult Church Choir Rehearsal  
Wednesday, October 15, 2008**

MP: Let's talk about a couple of things that happened. Not to question them but to try and explain to someone that is starting out as a choir director - the split second decisions you made- why you did this and why you did that. So a couple of things to reveal the thinking behind what we see on the video. Is there anything specific that you want to say about the rehearsal what we just saw? [pause] On *All Hail the Power* - you were on the word "crown." You were on a mission there and you used a bunch of different things to get to that. The vowel and the diphthong thing- talk about that a little bit. What was going through your mind as you approached that and then you tried a different strategy?

Director C:: Most of the issue was with the basses. We review diphthongs almost every time. They know what they are. I used my finger to show 'ah' and 'oo.' And I like to hear a true diphthong when a choir sings or when anybody sings but whenever I can't get the notes to absolutely isolate the target vowel and not go to the secondary sound, then (as you can tell with the basses, I was losing the battle) I decided to go to them just singing one vowel sound and to sustain the 'ah'. So I changed my tactic whenever I realized that I need to take them to the extreme and just have a pure vowel sound. And later we will throw those secondary sounds at them. So that was why I changed my tactic.

MP: Yes, it's neat to see that progression, the thinking as it goes, and then the next strategy. And I think that's helpful to the new teacher who says "What do I do now?" You were on the *Celtic Introit* - you guys were working on the placement of the 'D', on "Lord we." And I want to say that you were speaking through it first and then you went to a kinesthetic thing. Talk about that for a little - what was running through your mind?

Dir. C: Actually, two things were my intent there: to put them in the mindset first about thinking text - it's a tune that has words that are not familiar to my congregation, so very crucial in this case is that the text be clear. So I started out by speaking it also, speaking it in my 'lifted tone,' as I call it, to get them all to speak with their soft palates - we sometimes call it the British tone. But then, when I was trying when I heard them speaking and I was trying to be clear about the articulation of the 'D', it wasn't happening, and even when I would say it and ask them to repeat it, there were still some people that didn't get it. So instead of having them listen I decided to do something different which was to watch and make it a visual representation and sort of kinesthetic at the same as I was using my finger. The next thing is I was going to make them go "lord [snap] we" and I would make them all snap where the 'D' should be, but they finally got it. But then, you may remember, I had to change my tactic with it. We 'spat' it and we did different things and they finally got it.

MP: Yes, and something at the end of that made it more natural.

Dir. C: Yes

MP: Let's see - *God Walked in Eden's Garden Fair*- I think you started that speaking text. Any particular reason why you chose to start with that strategy with that piece?

Dir. C: In this case, two things. To put them in the lifted sound of chant, and, you noticed that *I spoke it very much...* [spoken in head voice with lifted soft palate]. And I was also doing the pacing too, trying to multitask, subconsciously. My Kodaly roots - doing it subconsciously and then stating what it is I want them to do. So I did it, then I asked them to experience it, then I said we're going to begin each of the phrases, move into the center, then ease out of the next part. I actually did it with my hands, so I said it, I gestured it, and they already had it. And then I think you'll notice when they sang it, they actually shaped each of the phrases the way that we had done it....instead of having them sing it and me go back and try to fix it.

MP: And also it's an efficiency of time thing - they got a lot out of that. And you also were doing some consonant work with that too.

Dir. C: Again, that's a piece that is not known to our congregation and I know people were going to get it. It's important to me with my church choir that they be a powerful tool for, and I mean this sincerely, empowering the congregation to engage in worship. If we separate the congregation in some way - they can't understand the words or it's a

tune that they don't get, or it sounds muddy- then we've failed in our purpose which was to empower them. So in this case I want the church, whether they can go "you know, that was chant-based" or not...I think somewhere inside though or along their walk of life they've heard chant- whether on TV or in a movie, and they are going to associate it in some way with that. And, if we do our job of revealing that , just by presenting it the way it should be, then we have empowered the congregation to be a part of it. So it has to sound like chant but they also have to be able to understand the words.

MP: Yes, and you guys spend maybe 10 minutes on that...you got a lot of mileage out of the way you chose to approach it....That was neat to see.

Dir. C: I glanced at the clock and I'm almost out of time so I immediately in my mind came up with "What's the quickest way....."

MP: Great, good. Anything else you want to share about rehearsal stuff, things you were thinking, evaluating, what was going on inside your head?

Dir. C: Part of it is, I know this choir and I know they have the tendency to sing with a palate down like this the whole time. You'll notice that most of the things... and this comes – well, Tim Seelig has come down and done some work with our kids. And he just presented a book - and he worked with many of those things. And he talked about the warm up and that it should be like a well-rounded diet. And there are five things you

should address in the warm-up period - whether it is conscious or not: Breathing, posture, vowel formation, tone color, and energy. I don't know if I have those exactly like he stated it... so I was trying to lead them, in the warm-up, without spending too much time ... to remind them to sing...and there again, I had to use different things, like the 'freshly goosed look' or that they got cold water in their face, whatever. There are a lot of ways to teach that but my new favorite which came from one of our voice teachers Julie Wood, is that she said, 'You know guys, when you have a double latte with an espresso shot, that feeling that you get behind your eyes, you are just absolutely...'. So now I use that in most of my choirs because the generation these days always seems to know immediately what a caffeinated feel is. And all I have to do is look at my choir and go [lifted facial expression] ...and you'll see everyone of them raise their soft palates. I know you can't see that, but you *can* see it...

MP: And you can hear that.

Dir. C: And I think its important for anybody to come up with a vocabulary...whatever it is for you - it could be out of your music methods books if you want - like that "freshly goosed look" I think I heard that somewhere and now I've adopted the caffeinated look and the choir now knows what that means. I just say "freshly goosed" and then ...you can't tell these people to raise their soft palate they don't really have that strong conscious control of t I don't know if you noticed that posture - we didn't go through it - I said "imagine my hand between your shoulder blades" - we've done this many times -

and they sense it – and then leaning back slightly into it so that they get over the posture and up forward. So now all I have to do is throw my hand up like this - in all of my choirs- and they will immediately make a change. So we didn't have to go through all of the steps of finding your posture – and it makes them responsible for it.

### **Mark Patterson Interview with Director C after College Chorale**

**Thursday, October 16, 2008**

MP: I really just want to ask you about a couple of things – same idea as before. Tell me more about the “beauty box” image...

Director C: It came from Tim Seelig last year. His approach to choral music is that it's a voice lesson – you're constantly teaching them voice. As you know, on the University level, we have to stay away from that but one of his concepts is we have a 'beauty box' and we can go right to the edge of that in how loudly we can sing beautifully or how emotionally we can sing and still be beautiful. And some people step out of the 'beauty box,' just slightly over the line. So, keeping them mindful...it deals with a myriad of issues. Some people are over-singing, some are singing too loudly – not the same as over singing - some are singing an ugly vowel, so sometimes I just say “the beauty box”...and then they always giggle...nine times out of ten they knew they were out of the beauty box... so that's the concept.

MP: On the first piece one of the issues that kept coming up is the basses were scooping into that entrance. Talk about that

DirC: As you can tell there's a huge history there. It's complicated in this case because there's a young man with a really good voice who...part of his technique is to scoop into the pitch and I think in his private singing he does it quite a bit. That can be stylistically appropriate, but in this piece the onset of tone being precise is important. And then there's a young freshman sitting right beside him who loves musical theatre and has sung musical theatre quite a bit- not that scooping is synonymous with musical theatre- but it's certainly allowable there and if he hears it it's just like giving license to him so they feed each other - it's never the same one – one or the other. I think what I've got to do is separate them from each other. But, as you can tell in the room, I don't have any real basses. They've got the notes, they can sing a D, but it's not like it just sits down there like a ripe melon...and there also very fragile. The freshman's fragile because he's young and the other guy is insecure in his technique. He can have a gorgeous voice but as soon as he gets nervous, just all sorts of things... You noticed at the beginning of class I said "Basses I don't know where you've been but we're so glad you're with us today." I was trying to reinforce: 'the sound you're producing today is exactly what I want.' I don't know if you noticed I didn't want to do the second Ratavara – it was not in my plan - I think they wanted to show off a bit – they just wanted to sing it for you. I knew we'd have to address that very issue but sometimes, when *they* want to do it, you just let them.

MP: Yes and you dealt with that so quickly...obviously you guys had communicated about that before and so he knew when you said....

DirC: I said 'really brightly right between your teeth' and 'focus it like a laser beam' and then I said 'out of your left eye' – those are three things that I say – you know when you just think about your left eye it makes you focus your mind and your attention.

MP: And they were able to respond really quickly each time. It was neat to get to see that. So, in the second piece you guys were doing some count singing and maybe some text shaping within that - any thoughts on that?

DirC: We were. We started out and then we had the bass pitch issue, and there's just no rhythmic ensemble – right off the bat - everyone in the room was sort of on a different pulse on that. I had them go back and do the count singing but what a waste of time to just spend time count singing. I think as much as we can get them to get all of the musical elements – much like church choir last night –I'm trying not just to set up that we're getting the right notes and rhythms, but I want the *style* of the piece. I had read to them where Ratavara speaks about what led him to compose this piece in this way and it's dated back to when he was a child - hearing a Russian orthodox service for the first time, on an island...and because there was fog, as a child it looked as though the monastery were floating on clouds. So that and the idea of the slides in the Russian Orthodox

church, the use of bells and chimes in the worship service, so using the choir to create these images were a part of it. So from day one I want the musical concept to be in mind because really what we're hoping is that we're developing musicians. So when they look at a piece of music they can synthesize 'what is the artistic intent of this piece?' and they can reveal it right there without these huge hours of 'let me look at the rhythm, let me learn the notes, let me learn the dynamics.'" So that's what I was trying to set up ...that they're already shaping the word. In this, actually, Ratavara is constructing a pedal tone and he's doing the shape – he is a minimalist composer – and as you notice they're going from E minor to Eb major just by two voices moving but that G remains consistent and really the whole piece is pervasively about the relationship of E minor to Eb. Then when they shift to new text they go on.....so then I found with my singers when I said "on clouds" suddenly they all shifted there. I don't have to work them into getting there. I am inviting their musicianship to provide that information for them. I don't mind doing the work but I want equal musicians in that room. I just want to invoke images that put us all in the same place.

MP: It was neat to see how you did that and also you took care of the pulse issue. You took care of a basic issue and an artistic issue all at the same time. One other question I wanted to ask – In the Faure, you used some verbal imagery – the scratch and the cry - and that seemed to really evoke the sound you wanted. It seemed that there was a moment when you guys were working on that and you said "Stop, I want to give you

these three words.” Is there anything that prompted you to do that or use that imagery at that moment?

DirC: I planned on doing that one. All of them have been in music lit with me and we talk about the rise of Romanticism...the movement not only giving human characteristics to inanimate objects but also that it was a great time of Schubert and the art song and making musical meaning match the textual meaning. Even the harmonic language is used to match, different from the madrigalists...clearly we see this word painting, but in the case of the Romantics using text to create color and then the music reflects it. This is only our second rehearsal on the French and that's a big barrier for many of them – getting their lips around the French – and I don't want it just to be drilling French – I want them as musicians to remember, especially in Romantic music, that they must color the music to match the words and the sentiment. So my goal there is that when our audience is listening, for them to realize the genius of how Faure encapsulated the meaning of the words in the music that he chose. If I had a basic philosophy as a conductor, I feel my job is to remove the obstacles that prevent the musicians from engaging that music. Is it that the harmonic vocabulary is something that they haven't seen? Is it rhythmically complex? Is it a language they don't know? What are the barriers that are preventing them? And it will be different in the room but if we can remove those barriers and if we can reveal the truth of that piece music to them, then the ultimate goal for us as performers is that we reveal it to the audience. And then the audience is like “Oh my gosh I was able to be a part of that because they revealed it.” Also it is to keep their minds engaged. I've found

that if my rehearsal ever comes down to just learning notes and rhythms then I lose their focus - because there are great musicians sitting in front of me and that's not what speaks to them. So every time I can get them into thinking that we have a much more productive rehearsal.

## APPENDIX D: RELIABILITY TABLES

TABLE A.1 Researcher and Reliability Observer Differences in Instructional Strategy Time Recorded

Instructional Strategy (Total observed rehearsal time 54:35)	Time Recorded by Researcher (min:sec)	Time Recorded by Reliability Observer (min:sec)	Difference in Recorded Time (min:sec)	Reliability score
Verbal Instruction	13:36	14:06	0:30	.99
Teacher Modeling	7:58	4:07	3:51	.93
Student Modeling	0:02	0:01	0:01	.99
Verbal Metaphor	0:05	0:17	0:12	.99
Physical metaphor / Kinesthetic Device	1:42	1:46	0:04	.99
Non-Musical Comments	7:26	8:15	0:49	.99
Verbal Instruction During Performance	1:16	1:24	0:08	.99
Performing With Choir	0:06	1:21	1:15	.98
Kinesthetic Gesture During Performance	0:29	2:50	2:21	.96
Conducting During Performance	1:25	1:21	0:04	.99
Unassisted Performance (no instructional activity)	17:04	15:50	1:15	.98
Student Question / Comment	2:47	1:58	0:49	.99
Getting Ready	0:37	1:07	0:30	.99

TABLE A.2 Researcher and Reliability Observer Differences in Musical Elements Targeted

Musical Element Targeted (Total observed rehearsal time 1:33:18)	Time Recorded by Researcher (min:sec)	Time Recorded by Reliability Observer (min:sec)	Difference in Recorded Time (min:sec)	Reliability score
Rhythms	1:06	2:06	1:00	.99
Pitches	8:22	8:49	0:27	.99
Intonation	0:58	0:18	0:40	.99
Vocal Production	3:01	4:22	1:21	.98
Tone Quality	0:37	0:10	0:27	.99
Phrasing	0:00	0:00	0:00	1.0
Dynamics	0:33	0:21	0:12	.99
Diction / Pronunciation	1:42	1:42	0:00	1.0
Text Emphasis / Word Stress	0:00	0:04	0:04	.99
Mood / Expression	0:25	0:15	0:10	.99
Articulation	0:54	0:30	0:24	.99
Multiple Elements / Non-Specific	7:49	6:41	1:08	.98
Performing	44:10	43:42	0:28	.99
Non-Musical Instructions	14:11	13:42	0:29	.99
Student Questions / Comments	3:11	4:06	0:54	.99
Getting Ready	5:55	6:17	0:22	.99



September 11, 2008

Janice Killian  
Music - V&PA  
Mail Stop: 2033

Regarding: 501490 Analysis of Instructional Time Use and Preferred Teaching Strategies of Three Highly Successful Choral Directors

Dr. Janice Killian:

The Texas Tech University Protection of Human Subjects Committee has approved your proposal referenced above. The approval is effective from September 11, 2008 through August 31, 2009. This expiration date must appear on all of your consent documents.

You will be reminded of the pending expiration approximately eight weeks prior to August 31, 2009 and asked to give updated information about the project. If you request an extension, the proposal on file and the information you provide will be routed for continuing review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary Cogan".

Rosemary Cogan, Ph.D., ABPP  
Protection of Human Subjects Committee

*Analysis of Instructional Time Use and Preferred Teaching Strategies of Three Highly Successful Choral Directors*

**Dr. Janice Killian, Principal Investigator** (806) 742-2270 x264, janice.killian@ttu.edu  
**Mark Patterson, Co-Investigator** (806) 796-1102, mark.patterson@ttu.edu

CONSENT FORM

1. This study involves research conducted by the researchers named above. The purpose of this study is to determine how three highly successful choral conductors use their instructional time in rehearsal and determine what teaching strategies they use and on which musical elements they focus.

2. Procedure:

The researcher will observe three highly successful choral directors, each working with two different choirs in their home rehearsal settings. One rehearsal with each ensemble will be recorded, making a total of six rehearsals to provide data for this study. The researcher will contact the directors and make arrangements to travel to their campuses to videotape the rehearsals during the fall semester of 2008. The entire observation and interview process should be completed in one day and will be arranged to fit the subjects teaching schedule.

Each director's entire rehearsal will be filmed with a digital video recorder, with the camera facing the conductor. Only the director will be videoed. The camera will be placed behind the singers in order to be able to observe the conductor most fully. It is anticipated that if any students are seen on the video, it will be limited to the backs of their heads. Regardless, no students will be identified by name or school for the purposes of this project. Analysis for this study will focus on all music-related instructional time, including the warm-up period and any instructional time spent on sight-reading. Performance time and time spent on non-musical instruction or administrative tasks will also be counted, but are not the primary focus of this study.

Qualitative data will be collected in a post-rehearsal interview with each director, conducted on the same day as the rehearsal observation. The post-rehearsal interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed for possible use in the discussion section of the study. Questions will be asked by the researcher and will focus on the musical instruction given during the rehearsal and decisions the director made that determined which musical elements they addressed. Questions asked by the researcher will be tailored specifically to the rehearsal that is being referenced. During the rehearsal observation the researcher will make note of specific instructional methods and time use in order to formulate these questions.

3. There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts or benefits to the three directors in this study.

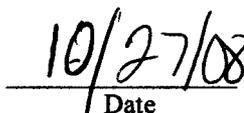
4. Anticipated use of the videos is limited to research presentations. The videos will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Music Education Library of Texas Tech University.

5. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which the directors are otherwise entitled. The directors may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

6. Dr. Killian will answer any questions you have about the study. For questions about your rights as a subject or about injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, 79409. Or you can call (306) 742-3884.

7. This consent form is not valid after August 31, 2009.

  
Director's Signature

  
Date

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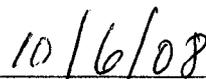
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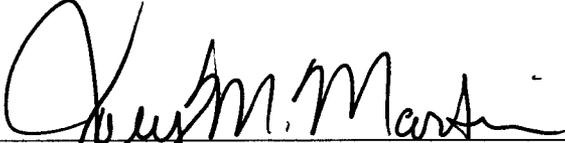
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Director's Signature

10/16/08  
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Date