

The Evolution of Choral Sound:
In Professional Choirs from the 1970s to the Twenty-First Century

by

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ABSTRACT

Imitation is the genesis of change. One basic principle of human nature is that people imitate what they see and hear. In the professional choral arena, musicians extend the high art of imitation through fine-tuning, and creative reinterpretation. Stimulated by this cycle, the color of the twenty-first-century professional choir shifted compared to that of professional choirs from the 1950s through 1970s, causing an evolution in choral sound.

In a series of interviews with iconic composers and conductors of professional choirs, the subjects involved in the study conveyed comprehensive and personal accounts outlining how professional choirs have refined the standard of choral sound. The paper is organized into three sections: (1) where have we been, (2) where are we now and (3) where are we going? It explores various conductors' perceptions of how and why choirs are unique when compared to earlier generations and what they believe caused the shift in choral tone. Paired with this perspective is the role of modern composers, whose progressive compositional techniques helped shape the modern choral sound. The subjects involved in the study further theorize how current inclinations may potentially shape the future of professional choral music.

Although the subjects expressed differing opinions about the quality of the twenty-first-century choral tone, many agree that there have been specific transformations since the 1970s. The shift in choral tone occurred due to developments in vocal technique, exploration of contemporary compositional extended techniques, an adherence to historically informed performance practice, imitation of vocal colors from numerous cultures, incorporation of technology and emulation of sound perceived on recordings. Additionally, choral music subtly became prominent in film scores, and innovative

conductors created progressive concert programming, and developed novel approaches to entertain audiences. Samplings of contributors involved in this study include: John Rutter, Harry Christophers, Charles Bruffy, Nigel Short, Craig Hella Johnson, Alice Parker, Michael McGlynn, Phillip Brunelle, Craig Jessop, Libby Larsen, Ola Gjeilo, Cecilia McDowall, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi and Stephen Paulus.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imitation is the genesis of change. A basic principle of human nature is that people imitate what they see and hear. Recent studies show that babies learn the roots of their native language while still *in utero*, earlier than previously thought.¹ Comparably, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, social psychologist Daniel Goleman states that babies begin to learn empathy through “motor mimicry,” the imitation of sadness or happiness they perceive in another child or adult.² Even in the field of music, an abundance of contemporary neuroscience studies steadily show that infants begin life as “avid mimics,” causing an initial shaping of the brain, which engenders future musical abilities.³ Additionally, these studies show that listening-imitation episodes extend throughout a human’s lifespan.⁴ As the old idiom “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery” suggests, composers throughout the ages felt it was the greatest form of respect and admiration to borrow ideas or thoughts from earlier generations and regenerate them with a revitalized

¹ Clements, Barbara, “Language learning begins in utero, study finds; Newborn memories of oohs and ahs heard in the womb,” ScienceDaily, <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/01/130102083615.htm> (accessed March 9, 2013).

² Goleman, Daniel, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ* (New York, NY: Bantam Dell, 1995), 96.

³ Hodges, Donald A, “Can Neuroscience Help Us Do a Better Job of Teaching Music? - ProQuest,” *General Music Today (Online)* 23, no. 2 (January 2010): 3–12.

⁴ Ibid.

interpretation.⁵ Even Russian composer Igor Stravinsky once said, “a good composer does not imitate; he steals.”⁶

From the macro perspective, targeted examples of international choral exposure appear significant in driving the initial model for change. A number of remarkable events did not merely expose choral music beyond the borders of an insular choral community, but instead may have widely manifested the genre into the public forefront, generating ‘buzz’ and interest. The 1997 performance of *Song for Athene* at the conclusion of Princess Diana’s funeral demonstrated the profound elegance of John Tavener’s music. Televised for over two billion viewers, the broadcast reached far beyond the concert-going public.⁷ Likewise, in the spring of 2012, the *Westminster Abbey Choir* performed the engaging music of John Rutter and Paul Mealer for the global audience of billions who watched the English Royal Wedding on television.⁸ Welsh composer Karl Jenkins’s composition *Adiemus* became a familiar tune due to its prominence as the song for the Delta Airlines Commercials in the 1990s, spearheading his successful career as a composer.⁹ Similarly, one of the most famous choral pieces to slip continually into public

⁵ The Phrase Finder, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,” The Phrase Finder, <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/imitation-is-the-sincerest-form-of-flattery.html> (accessed March 9, 2013).

⁶ O’Toole, Garson, “Good Artists Copy; Great Artists Steal,” Quote Investigator, <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/03/06/artists-steal/#return-note-5574-6> (accessed April 3, 2013).

⁷ Chester Novello, “John Tavener Biography,” Chester Novello, http://www.chesternovello.com/default.aspx?TabId=2431&State_2905=2&ComposerId_2905=1567 (accessed February 13, 2013).

⁸ Pipixcan69, “Prince William and Kate’s Royal Wedding Choir Music-Paul Mealer - Ubi Caritas et amor,” YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KjZvC_ga9M (accessed March 9, 2013).

⁹ hansm55, “Delta Airlines Commercial,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxQ4hBwp4Q4> (accessed March 9, 2013).

exposure is Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, which numerous films have referenced over the past forty years.¹⁰ Furthermore, world famous choral organizations such as the *Vienna Boys Choir*, *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* and *The Sixteen* continue to draw significant attention to choral music. Although noteworthy in terms of worldwide exposure, this handful of examples represents only a fraction of contemporary choral activity.

Based on neuroscience research, it stands to reason that even in the professional choral arena, musicians come equally endowed with the fine arts of imitation, fine-tuning, and eventually, creative reinterpretation. The truest seeds of change in choral tone sprouted within the microcosmic populations invested in choral music. Conductors and composers gained stimulus from previous generations and rallied behind fashionable developments in the field. The mid-twentieth century was a dynamic and progressive era. New professional choral establishments earned funding from state governments and through corporate sponsors of radio programs.¹¹ It was a productive age for choral entrepreneurs, opera and symphonic organizations.¹² At that time, choral communities interacted largely at a nuclear level, connecting through local channels, word of mouth

¹⁰ The Irish Times, "Those on top can take Orff," LexisNexis Academic Web, September 29, 2009, [http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=142626&sr=HLEAD\(Those+on+top+can+take+Orff\)+and+date+is+September+29%2C+2009](http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=142626&sr=HLEAD(Those+on+top+can+take+Orff)+and+date+is+September+29%2C+2009) (accessed April 16, 2013); BBC Staff Writers, "Fortuna is 'most listened to classical piece'," BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/8432499.stm> (accessed April 19, 2013).

¹¹ Waring, Virginia, *Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 117; BBC, "About The BBC Singers - History - 1920s," BBC Singers, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/singers/about/history/> (accessed April 17, 2013).

¹² Smith, James G. and Young, Percy M., "Grove Music Online: Chorus (i)," Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/05684?q=chorus&search=quick&pos=4&_start=1 (accessed March 2, 2013).

and insular networks.¹³ Drawing upon the inventive environment of the age, the choral community underwent revolutionary changes. Adaptations occurred in the distribution and accessibility of recordings. Increased availability of mass transportation facilitated global travel for choral directors and composers, allowing for in-person concert attendance. Technological breakthroughs in communication assisted in real-time information exchange. An explosion of compositional techniques and unearthing of historically-informed musical practice laid the foundation for a dynamic change in the choral sound. Additionally, professional choral music subtly but pervasively infused film scores, contemporary popular music and progressive concert programming.

This study addresses several potential causes for the shift in choral tone. For example, through natural imitative behavior, did these interactions cause a shift in the choral sound of professional choirs? Did the work of modern composers, through progressively crafted techniques within their compositions, cause choral sound to change? Did the need to satisfy and entertain the audience change the types of music composed and performed? Did the exponential growth in technology affect both the frequency in which listeners collect recordings, and did the high exposure of said recordings lead conductors to change the sound of their choirs? These questions, and several others addressed in the study, give insight to the larger *gestalt* of tonal evolution.

This study explores the perception that professional choirs have refined their sound through developments in vocal technique, contemporary compositional methods, historical performance practice, multiculturalism, audience entertainment and recording

¹³ Garretson, Robert L., *Conducting Choral Music*, 6th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 231–233.

technology. In consequence, stimulated by the genesis of imitation, the sound of the twenty-first-century professional choir sound shifted in comparison to that of professional choirs from the 1950s through 1970s. This investigation further explores how choral innovations, accomplished by professional choral directors and composers of the mid-twentieth century, led to twenty-first century trends and techniques.

Need for the Study

Considerable research that references choral tone, pedagogy and methodology exists about professional-level and collegiate choirs of the mid-twentieth century. Authors expound upon the philosophies of the conductors of that time, even categorizing them into different ‘schools of thought’ and choral tone. Some publications printed throughout the mid-twentieth century give the impression that the choral community had ‘arrived’ at a consensus, and often opinions held significant bias in one direction. Since the 1970s, choral activity has increased around the world, bringing about a slow but sure change in repertoire and choral sound. Research published since the 1980s tends to focus on a narrow view of subjects by isolating a single composer, choir or conductor without garnering a larger perspective of trends in choral tone and pedagogy since the mid-twentieth century. Existing choral approaches need examination as modern choirs extend the boundaries of historical standards by combining genres, exploring tonality, manipulating the voice, and incorporating technology.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of how professional choirs from around the world have changed in sound, performance practices and methods as opposed to thirty years ago. This paper will explore these facets in terms of how choral performance practice is applied, and ascertain if the practice is different from approaches employed thirty years ago. It asks conductors how their choirs are unique compared to earlier generations or other similar professional choirs, and what they believe caused changes in choral tone and application. This will yield a greater understanding of differences and similarities of modern performance practice application within professional choirs as compared to their predecessors.

Methodology

The author sought interviews with noteworthy choral conductors and composers of the twenty-first century. The author selected interviewees based on several factors: their status in the global choral community, awards and recognitions granted to the individuals or the choirs they work with, commercial success, radio, television and film exposure, and high sales volume. By the close of the interview process, thirty-four subjects held interviews with the author. Of those, twenty-two are included in the paper for the applicability of their comments to the present study. The eleven interviews excluded from the present study have been transcribed and will be reserved for future publications on the topic. In addition to the thirty-four subjects already interviewed, twelve more potential subjects agreed to an interview but scheduling conflicts and geographic distance prevented an appointment with the author.

Subjects decided whether to participate after an introduction to the research through an email from the author or a face-to-face conversation. Each subject received a recruitment letter outlining the intent, format and goals of the research, and if they accepted, the author scheduled an interview appointment. Additionally, each subject signed a consent form giving permission for the author to publish their thoughts and opinions, but also allowing them to decline to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any time before publication. Digitally recorded interviews occurred either in person or over Skype, and lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes depending upon the answers and dialogue. Each subject heard a similar set of questions, with some variability in phrasing by the author. The variability in questions occurred due to the expansive and helpful nature of answers given. Some subjects elaborated upon topics or gave answers before the author could ask it of them, or gave answers not specifically requested. Recorded interviews were transcribed either by the author or by a professional transcription service. In this series of interviews, subjects conveyed comprehensive and personal accounts outlining historical and contemporary professional choral sound, and expressed opinions as to how it had changed from previous generations. Sometimes it was necessary to conceal the identity of interviewees to relate judgments shared confidentially by subjects.

Table 1 lists conductors included in the present study and the choirs or organizations with which they have an association.

Table 1. List of Conductors Involved in the Study

Name	Position	Primary Organization(s)
Charles Bruffy	Artistic Director	<i>Phoenix Chorale</i> – Phoenix, AZ, <i>Kansas City Chorale</i> – Kansas City, MO, Kansas City Symphony Chorus (KCMO) Kansas City, MO
Phillip Brunelle	Artistic Director	<i>VocalEssence</i> Minneapolis, MN
Harry Christophers	Choral Director	Conductor and Founder of <i>The Sixteen</i> – U.K, Artistic Director of the <i>Handel and Haydn Society</i> – Boston, MA
David Hill	Choral Director	<i>BBC Singers</i> – London U.K. <i>The Bach Choir</i> – London, U.K. <i>Westminster Cathedral Choir</i> – London, U.K.
Craig Jessop	Choral Director Emeritus	<i>Mormon Tabernacle Choir</i> , London, U.K. <i>Air Force Singing Sergeants</i> – Washington, D.C.
Craig Hella Johnson	Choral Director	<i>Conspirare</i> - Austin, TX, <i>Chanticleer</i> – San Francisco, CA
Michael McGlynn	Director, singer, Composer	<i>Anúna</i> – Dublin, Ireland
Matthew Oltman	Choral Director Emeritus	<i>Chanticleer</i> – San Francisco, CA
Jerold Ottley	Choral Director Emeritus	<i>Mormon Tabernacle Choir</i> – Salt Lake City, UT
Alice Parker	Choral Director, Composer	<i>The Musicians of Melodious Accord</i> – New York, NY, <i>The Robert Shaw Chorale</i> – New York, NY
John Rutter	Choral Director, Composer	<i>Cambridge Singers</i> – London, U.K.
Nigel Short	Choral Director, Singer	<i>Tenebrae</i> – London, U.K., <i>King's Singers</i> – London, U.K.
Robin Tyson	Singer Head of Artist Management	<i>King's Singers</i> , U.K., Edition Peters Group
Jon Washburn	Choral Director	<i>Vancouver Chamber Choir</i> – Vancouver, Canada

Table 2 lists composers included in the present study and the professional choirs that heavily perform their music.

Table 2: List of Composers Involved in the Study

Composer Name	Major Professional Choral Affiliations
Jonathan Dove	Primarily a composer of opera. <i>King's College Cambridge, VocalEssence, Choir of Wells Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral Choir, London Symphony Chorus, Brisbane Chamber Choir, St. Peters Chorale</i>
Ola Gjeilo	<i>The Phoenix Chorale, Kansas City Chorale, LA Masterworks Chorale, Texas Choir, Manhattan Concert Chorale, Chamber Choir of Europe, Polyphony, Ars Nova Singers</i>
Gabriel Jackson	<i>BBC Singers, The Sixteen, Latvian Radio Choir, Tallis Scholars, Bavarian Radio Choir, Swedish Radio Choir, Ars Nova Copenhagen, Norwegian Soloists Ensemble, Philadelphian professional chamber choir, Netherlands Chamber Choir, Tallis Scholars</i>
Libby Larsen	<i>VocalEssence, Kings College Cambridge, Ars Nova Singers, Camerata Singers, Oregon Repertory Singers, Dale Warland Singers</i>
Jaakko Mäntyjärvi	<i>BBC Singers, Kansas City Chorale, Phoenix Chorale, VocalEssence, Chanticleer, King's Singers, Tapiola Chamber Choir, Sibelius Academy Vocal Ensemble, Exultate Singers, Vox Nova, Ensemble 96, Talla Vocal Ensemble, Chamber Choir Cantinovum, The Esoterics</i>
Paul Mealor	<i>Choirs of Westminster Abbey, Tenebrae, Con Anima Chamber Choir, Chapel Choirs of King's College</i>
Cecilia McDowall	<i>BBC Singers, The Sixteen, Kansas City Chorale, Phoenix Chorale, the Choirs of Merton College and New College (Oxford), the Choir of Clare College (Cambridge), the Choirs of St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral, Royal Scottish National Orchestra.</i>
Stephen Paulus	<i>VocalEssence, Dale Warland Singers, New York Concert Singers, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Robert Shaw Festival Singers, New Music Group of Philadelphia, Master Chorale of Washington DC, Vocal Arts Ensemble of Cincinnati, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Ars Nova Singers</i>

In addition to the interviews from subjects involved in the study, the author consulted several other sources to construct her argument. Sources include books, journal articles, album reviews, newspaper articles, magazine articles, dissertations, theses, blogs, YouTube, recordings, websites, biographies, and podcasts.

Format

This study is organized into three sections: (1) where have we been, (2) where are we now, and (3) where are we going?

The first section, in Chapter 2, provides a brief overview of professional choirs and their definition for the purposes of this study. A literature review of existing research follows, outlining publications that discuss several topics relevant to how mid-twentieth-century techniques differ in comparison to contemporary techniques or how they influenced a shift. Lastly, Chapter 2 offers record reviews written by twenty-first-century critics of older long-playing phonograph albums (LPs), outlining contemporary perceptions of mid-twentieth-century recordings, the author's observations of mid-twentieth-century choral tone, and descriptions of that choral tone as described by subjects involved in the research.

Chapters 3 and 4 contain the central focus of the paper, the shift of choral tone and the causes for that change. The arguments rely heavily upon input provided by conductors and composers involved in the study. Chapter 3 takes a brief journey through fourteen professional choirs. The dialogue demonstrates each professional conductor's application of performance practice within their own choir, expressing some thoughts as to how their contemporary technique compares to techniques of previous generations.

Chapter 4 continues with an in-depth description of practices that may have caused a shift in choral tone as perceived by subjects involved in this study. Chapter 4 finishes with a synthesis of the findings discussed in the chapter sketching how and why the choral tone has changed, as well some supplemental points of relevance.

Chapter 5 draws upon a broader view, moving from a historical synopsis and contemporary application to the future of choral music. Although largely conjecture, this section discusses the concerns and hopes that subjects involved in the study have about the future of the field. Additionally, these iconic choral figures theorize how current inclinations may potentially shape the future of professional choral music. Some of the topics in Chapter 5 do not deal specifically with choral color or shift of choral tone. However, as articulated in Chapters 3 and 4, choral tone is not an isolated manifestation, but rather garners influence from cultural, regional, technological and historical considerations.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY PROFESSIONAL CHORAL SOUND

As early as eighteenth-century French Revolutionary times, choral activity at the community level was a powerful force in musical history. Composer François-Joseph Gossec spearheaded civic festivals and demonstrations with music that called for over one thousand singers.¹⁴ The nineteenth century saw a popularizing of choral participation equal to the twenty-first century hysteria of sport and rock concert attendance.¹⁵ The twentieth century similarly benefited from that momentum with community choral organizations sprouting in every city, municipality and township. Singing became a way of life, a community of culture and an exciting path to revisit history. Naturally, these organizations became stronger, finer and more demanding. By the mid-twentieth century, several non-religious professional choirs sprouted.¹⁶

That is not to say that professional choirs did not exist before the mid-twentieth century. Religious institutions have been paying their singers as a part of their singing tradition since the Medieval and Renaissance periods.¹⁷ Professionally-paid Russian

¹⁴ Macdonald, Robert James, "François-Joseph Gossec and French Instrumental Music in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century" (PHD diss., University of Michigan, 1968), 144–146; Brook, Barry S. et al., "Grove Music Online Gossec, François-Joseph," Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/11509?q=gossec&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed March 2, 2013).

¹⁵ Musgrave, Michael, *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 39.

¹⁶ Smith, James G. and Young, Percy M., "Grove Music Online: Chorus (i)."

¹⁷ Baldwin, David, *The Chapel Royal: Ancient and Modern* (London, UK: Duckworth, 1990); Wright, Craig, *Music and Ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris 500-1550* (New York, NY: Cambridge University

choirs date from the fourteenth century with the *Tsar's Singing Clerics* who sang church music under secular authority.¹⁸ Some of the oldest non-religious professionally-paid choirs are opera choruses, which have their foundations in the sixteenth century in the forward-thinking poets and musicians of the *Florentine Camerata*.¹⁹ By the nineteenth century, chorus members, who often doubled in minor roles, received remuneration.²⁰

With the advent of broadcasting in the twentieth century, state-funded professional radio choirs in Europe and the United States sprang up in the 1920s and 1930s, and larger professional choruses began in the 1950s and 1960s.²¹ This chapter's literature review visits significant publications from the twentieth century that addresses techniques, trends and methods from that era. It documents applications that either led to a shift in choral tone, or differ drastically from choral tone found in the twenty-first century. The end of the chapter outlines perceptions of professional choral sound from the 1950s through 1980s by the study's subjects, the author, and an analysis of mid-twentieth century records through reviews written by contemporary authors.

Press), 170; Ongaro, Giulio, *Music of the Renaissance* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), 50–57.

¹⁸ Morosan, Vladimir, *Choral Performance in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986), 30.

¹⁹ Smith, James G. and Young, Percy M., “Grove Music Online: Chorus (i).”

²⁰ Ibid.; Rosselli, John, *Singers of Italian Opera; The history of a profession* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 118.

²¹ Oppenheim, Joshua J., “Overview of America's Professional Choirs: Considerations for establishing, maintaining and succeeding in creating a professional or community choir in the United States” (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2006), 4, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/305292776> (accessed March 21, 2013).

Defining the term ‘Professional’

The term ‘professional’ is a controversial designation among choral directors.²²

Contemporary definitions vary depending on the country, but most regions tend to view a professional choir simply as “a choir that pays its singers.”²³ However in 1977, *The Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles*, later renamed *Chorus America*, formed in Philadelphia and initiated a dialogue that eventually defined the parameters of semi-professional and professional choirs within the US.²⁴ Chorus America’s website offers this contemporary guideline: a professional choir is “one in which *all* singers are paid at least triple the national minimum hourly wage” and “the ensemble must perform a minimum of three separate, new programs, annually.”²⁵ In other countries, the designation lacks a definition.²⁶ Instead, the term ‘professional choir’ in other regions may simply mean that the singers receive payment.²⁷

²² Veltman, Chloe, “The ‘Professional’ Choir,” lies like truth, http://www.artsjournal.com/lies/2010/09/the_professional_choir/ (accessed February 8, 2013); Miller, Jonathan, “What, and Why, a Professional Vocal Ensemble?,” Chicago Classical Music Back Stage Blog, <http://www.chicagoclassicalmusic.org/node/918> (accessed April 3, 2012).

²³ Washburn, Jon, interview by author, Digital Recording, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 14, 2012. Longer quotations from interviews or correspondence provide fuller contexts for statements quoted in this chapter, and may be found in Appendix A.

²⁴ Buckner, William Robert, “A History of Chorus America - Association of Professional Vocal Ensembles” (DMA diss., Kansas City, MO: University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1991), 1.

²⁵ Chorus America, “Chorus Membership,” Chorus America, <http://www.chorusamerica.org/membership/chorus-membership#types> (accessed April 10, 2012). Similar by-laws may exist in organizations outside the U.S., but no documentation surfaced in the research for this study.

²⁶ Association of British Choral Directors, “Home,” Association of British Choral Directors, <http://www.abcd.org.uk/> (accessed February 4, 2013); National Association of Choirs Home Page, “Home,” National Association of Choirs Home Page, <http://www.nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk/> (accessed February 4, 2013); European Choral Association - Europa Cantat, “Home,” European Choral Association - Europa Cantat, <http://www.europeanchoralassociation.org/home/> (accessed February 4, 2013); IFCM - International Federation for Choral Music, “Home,” IFCM - International Federation for Choral Music, <http://www.ifcm.net/index.php?m=0> (accessed February 4, 2013); Association of Canadian

In rare circumstances, professional-level activity bestows on some choirs ‘professional’ status due to their significant contributions, even if members are not paid. The *Mormon Tabernacle Choir*, largely composed of professionally trained singers, is a volunteer organization. The only physical compensation singers may receive is the annual cost of a tour, covered by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Regardless, those singers devote 140-150 days per year to their volunteer positions, tour heavily around the world, and record discs regularly.²⁸ Craig Jessop, recent conductor of the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir*, compares professional choristers to the professionalism found within the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir*:

[Professional choristers are] paid for a service. It doesn’t necessarily say anything about the quality of their work, but they’re paid. Having said that, I think [in] the choral world . . . the vast majority of singers . . . are unpaid.

It’s not enough just to say that money itself is the factor that makes excellence. Excellence can spring out of anywhere depending on the commitment and engagement of the director and the singers. . . . The Tabernacle Choir is one of the longest continuous singing traditions in the nation. . . . The whole ethic/motivation behind the Tabernacle choir is faith, devotion, and that you offer your very best to God. Money has nothing to do with it I think [The Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s] standard is a professional caliber.²⁹

Jerold Ottley, who led the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* from 1974 to 1999, is arguably the director that propelled the *Mormon Tabernacle* choir forward from a group of average amateur singers. While the choir did win a 1959 Grammy Award for their work with

Choral Communities, “Home,” Association of Canadian Choral Communities, http://choralcanada.org/ACCC_en/index.html (accessed February 4, 2013).

²⁷ Washburn, Jon, interview; Tyson, Robin, interview by author, Digital Recording, London, England, July 11, 2011; Hill, David, interview by author, Digital Recording, Flagstaff, Arizona, July 29, 2011.

²⁸ Mormon Tabernacle Choir, “Frequently Asked Questions,” The Official Site of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, <http://mormontabernaclechoir.org/faq> (accessed April 16, 2012).

²⁹ Jessop, Craig, interview by author, Digital Recording, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 15, 2012.

Eugene Ormandy and the *Philadelphia Orchestra* under the direction of Richard Condie, Ottley's work furthered the choir's professionalism and their renown grew significantly. Under his guidance, the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* participated in weekly TV broadcasts, released several platinum and gold records, and sang for U.S Presidents. Under Craig Jessop, Ottley's successor, the choir participated in the 2002 Winter Olympics.³⁰ Many in the industry consider *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* highly influential, and refer to them often as 'the greatest choir in the world.'³¹Ottley points out,

The fact that we were . . . making recordings in [the] professional broadcasting arena . . . said to me, "We've got to become more professional in what we do because that world is changing." . . . [We try] to portray professional values even though we're not professional in the sense that there's monetary value exchanged.³²

Nicknamed "America's Choir" by President Ronald Reagan, they are one of the most recognized and acknowledged choirs in the world.³³ Ottley, Jessop and a community of admirers perceive the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* as a professional level ensemble.

Similar observations of professional-level choirs that do not pay their singers are equally true in England. Robin Tyson, former singer of the all-male English group *The King's Singers*, argued his point of view:

We have a lot of very good choirs in the U.K: King's College Cambridge, St John's College Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge, and some equivalents at Oxford. They do amazing work [and] can be as professional and sometimes more professional in the ways in which they work.³⁴

³⁰ Mormon Tabernacle Choir, "Frequently Asked Questions."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ottley, Jerold, interview by author, Digital Recording, Salt Lake City, Utah, July 11, 2012.

³³ Mormon Tabernacle Choir, "Frequently Asked Questions.""

³⁴ Ibid.

The boy choristers in the *King's College Choir* do not receive monetary compensation but do benefit from scholarships that cover the cost of their tuition. They are one of the world's best-known choirs due to their extensive touring, numerous albums and international televised and radio broadcasts such as the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* on Christmas Eve.³⁵

In determining the definition of a professional choir, other institutions to take into consideration include choirs whose members receive compensation but perform only once or twice a year.³⁶ Similarly, there are organizations such as the *Arizona Bach Festival*, *Oregon Bach Festival*, or *Carmel Bach Festival*, which hire professional singers to perform choral works, but only meet once a year.³⁷ These organizations operate at a professional level without meeting the criteria defined by Chorus America. The singers involved with these institutions likely consider these experiences as professional.

The definition chosen for this study primarily focuses on choral institutions from the 1950s to the early twenty-first century that pay their singers. However, a few instances of exceptional 'professional level' choirs of unpaid singers have also been included in the study, due to a work ethic and professional exposure equal to that of choirs that pay their singers.

³⁵ King's College, Cambridge, "About the Choir," King's College, Cambridge, <http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/choir/about/index.html> (accessed February 4, 2013).

³⁶ ChoralNet, "What is a professional choir?," ChoralNet, <http://www.choralnet.org/view/260042> (accessed April 3, 2012).

³⁷ Az Bach Festival, "Home," Arizona Bach Festival, <http://arizonabachfestival.org/> (accessed April 4, 2012).

Literature Review addressing Choral Tone and Performance Practice Techniques of the Mid-Twentieth Century

Authors in the twentieth century added numerous books to the body of publications discussing choral sound and technique from the 1930s through the 1990s. Publications range in subject matter from community to collegiate and professional choral activity. After about 1995, the author of the present study found fewer publications that deal specifically with professional choirs. This may be due to the tendency in current research to focus on singular topics, such as individual composers, isolated movements, or theoretical research on compositional methods. Alternatively, perhaps the lack of recent research is because it is easier to garner theories of style and sound long after the event. Publications highlighted in this literature review discuss several topics relevant to the evolution of choral tone. The publications cover topics such as how significant professional choral conductors of the twentieth century approached choral tone, how methodologies and opinions differ from contemporary trends and in some cases how the practices may have led to twenty-first-century methods. Texts were chosen due to content that correlated to shift in choral tone or demonstrated an oppositional approach to later methods. Examples are organized chronologically by publication date to show transformations across the years of choral documentation.

In a 1932 publication entitled *Choral Music and its Practice*, Noble Cain expresses a sharp dislike for the “vocal monstrosity” of humming. It became a prevalent *accompanimental* technique during that time. However, Cain feels, “this humming has no qualities that will improve tone quality and should be avoided except when used deliberately to secure a definite effect of instruments or other weird and unvocal

effects.”³⁸ He instead suggests a tone that is as far forward as possible and sends the sound in front of the teeth to develop projection.³⁹ Cain also advises singers to practice on the vowel “ah” to developing good open-throat tone production.⁴⁰

In William J. Finn’s 1939 book *The Art of the Choral Conductor*, he contrasts non-dramatic choral works regularly sung in choral music to the dramatic works exposed in the twentieth century. Finn says, “just as relatively light voices and a minimum of emotional expression are necessary for *a cappella* polyphony, so the broader voices, vitalized with all the resources of dramatic imagery, are needed for the convincing performance of most modern compositions”⁴¹ He goes on to offer reasons to protect the sonority of non-dramatic works in choral repertoire. He then argues that, in the twentieth century, dramatic voices have assumed more importance due to a rise in orchestral accompaniment and popularity in operatic styles.⁴² When discussing vocal abilities, Finn doubts the need of the *basso-profundo* as they are “too rare, and suitable only for too-highly specialized needs, to be included among the normal categories.”⁴³

³⁸ Cain, Noble, *Choral Music and its Practice: With Particular Reference to A Cappella Music* (New York, NY: M. Witmark & Sons Educational Publications, 1932), 78.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴¹ Finn, William J., *The Art of the Choral Conductor*, vol. V1 Choral Technique (Boston, MA: C. C. Birchard and Company, 1939), 101.

⁴² *Ibid.*, V1 Choral Technique:101–102.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, V1 Choral Technique:131.

In the book *Choral Conducting Symposium*, originally published in 1973, contributor Howard Swan outlines six different schools of singing.⁴⁴ He identifies characteristics of major American professional and collegiate institutions. Table 3 highlights descriptions that relate to the color of choirs within each of the schools identified by Swan. Although not specifically mentioned by Howard Swan, later researchers identified the conductors of each school. School A appears to be the *Westminster Choir College*, School B outlines boys' choirs, School C outlines the preferences of mid-west collegiate choirs and Schools D, and F outline professional choirs of the mid-twentieth century.

⁴⁴ Decker, Harold A. and Herford, Julius, eds., *Choral Conducting Symposium*, Second Edition. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988), 46–54.

Table 3: Howard Swan’s Schools of Choral Tone⁴⁵

School	Brief Descriptions
School A (John Finley Williamson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural vibrato. • Big, Full dark sound (lighter in women). • Scream and shout to extend upper ranges. • Choirs often flat. • Sharp attacks.
School B (Father William Finn)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Lyricized’ tone – less volume and energy. • No individual vibrato. • Small thin tone and a soft dynamic, but under pitch due to lack of support.
School C (F. Melius Christiansen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified vowels • Softer singing • Vibrato discouraged • Choral blend emphasized • Excellent intonation • No dynamic contrast.
School D (Fred Waring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every vowel and consonant exaggeratedly enunciated. • Emphasis on legato singing. • Rhythmic accuracy especially in lining up diction.
School E (John Wilcox, Joseph Klein, Doug Stanley)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocal Pedagogic approach to singing. • Singers encouraged to use full vibrato. • Big sound characterized by vitality. • Exact pitch relative due to full tone, tendency to sing flat.
School F (Robert Shaw)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported tone reaching dynamic vitality only after rehearsal period. • Rhythmic precision in the choir • Vowels define color • Consonants represent specific rhythmic value. • Shape of phrase of utmost importance.

The 1975 book *Four Decades of Choral Training* by Gerald F. Darrow characterizes the years from 1930-1970 as a “grand era in the development of choral technique.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., 12–54.

Darrow outlines the enormous growth of choral organizations in high schools, colleges, communities and the development of professional choirs as “a prolific professional and educational concert life provided the stimulus for ensembles and performances of highest quality.”⁴⁷ Darrow highlights in his findings that there was a shift in the mid-twentieth-century professional choirs towards a fuller, more reverberant choral tone. The professional choirs developed a “diction approach” attributed to Fred Waring, and an “interpretive approach” attributed to Robert Shaw, in which tone colors and variable tone quality shifted according to repertory.⁴⁸ Darrow also cites a “voice approach” from a study of proper voice production as taught by accomplished voice teachers of the day.⁴⁹ In addition, he outlines the evolution of preferred sound in the mid-twentieth century:

A study of the publication dates of the writings concerning the vibrato in choral singing reveal two significant points: 1) Since 1945, no author has recommended straight-tone choral singing, and 2) Since 1945, there have been frequent criticisms of straight-tone singing and statements favoring the use of vibrato.⁵⁰

Darrow also includes this quote by Fred Waring describing how to achieve blend:

It is by no means the ideal of the fine choral leader to have a chorus composed of voices as identical as eggs. In fact, just the opposite is the ideal. It is this which gives ‘character’ to the chorus, if the voices are uniformly of high quality.⁵¹

Russell A. Hammar outlines in his book *Pragmatic Choral Procedures*, published in 1984, three different choral schools. The first, which he calls the “Straight Tone School,”

⁴⁶ Darrow, Gerald F., *Four Decades of Choral Training* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

occurs in two areas. The first is jazz and rock ensemble singing, which he evaluates as “harsh” and “unpleasant.”⁵² The second comes from the Mid-western collegiate tradition of St. Olaf and Northwestern University. He characterizes the tone from this school as dry, devoid of vibrato, tending to sing flat, and having a tension in the voice causing harsh tones.⁵³ His description of the “Laissez-faire School” outlines John Finley Williamson’s desire for total freedom in the voice, where everyone is encouraged to sing as soloists. Significant *vibrato* is present, and a belief that a choral blend occurs in the hall as opposed to between singers.⁵⁴ The school he defines as the “Sonorous-Blend School,” includes conductors Fred Waring and Robert Shaw. This school encourages trained voices, some emphases on blending, but offers a wide spectrum of dynamic colors and amplitude, and allowed *vibrato* due to the quality of the singer.⁵⁵

In Richard Miller’s 1984 publication, *The Structure of Singing*, he sought help from scientists, phoniaticians, and voice teachers to discover what “produces free vocal function.”⁵⁶ While he sees trends occurring in the 1980s that predicted future choral tendencies, he also expresses high criticism for some of these trends. Miller says, “the solo counter-tenor is here to stay. It is unrealistic for teachers of singing to regard him as a nonlegitimate (*sic*) performer. The counter-tenor should be taught, and he should be

⁵² Hammar, Russell A., *Pragmatic Choral Procedures* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984), 58–59.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

⁵⁶ Miller, Richard, *The Structure of Singing; System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1986), XV.

taught seriously.”⁵⁷ He warns that the *strobass* (vocal fry) register should be practiced judiciously and rarely, as it is hard on the voice.⁵⁸ He points out that Eastern liturgical choirs have developed this register’s color for the literature, but that it should be avoided as he feels no other registers of the voice will be operable.⁵⁹ Miller offers personal opinions on *vibrato-less* singing often found in certain literatures. In speaking about popular vocal styles of the day he says:

A musically refined ear grows weary of the incessant mooring of nonvibratoed (*sic*) pitches which occurs among some prominent and revered singers of Lieder. Such crooning is largely a development of the late forties and early fifties, out of which grew the burgeoning recording business, where performance is centered around the microphone, not the acoustic of the hall. Some of these singers are committed to the belief that frequent absence of vibrato shows interpretive intimacy and technical control.⁶⁰

Further to the premise of the present study’s argument, he expresses an extreme dislike for the colors of a voice devoid of vibrato. Miller says, “no kind words are forthcoming with regard to its coloristic advantages; straight-tone has imbedded itself all too comfortably in certain vocal styles to be in need of further encouragement.”⁶¹

The 1991 publication *In Quest of Answers* has a similar method of research to the present study. Carole Glenn interviewed thirty-five American conductors of both professional choral and collegiate choirs asking many of the same types of questions as

⁵⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 124. Vocal fry is a: vocal rattle, vocal scrape, vocal creek or growl register. “The sounds that can be produced in the limited range extending below pitches normally used in speech.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 188.

⁶¹ Ibid., 194.

the author of this study.⁶² Glenn’s research uncovers salient beliefs and developments of mid twentieth-century choral conductors. Table 4 outlines techniques and developments of those conductors listed as influences by the subjects interviewed in the present study.

Table 4: Performance Practice of Mid-Twentieth-Century Conductors as outlined in book *In Quest of Answers*

Choral Figure	Technique/Development
Robert Shaw	Shadow Vowels, inspired by a book by Madeleine Marshall who taught diction at Juilliard School of music. Corrected blend is “a result of the right pitch at the right time on the right dynamic level with the right vowel.” ⁶³
John Finley Williamson	Singing through the diphthong. ⁶⁴
Roger Wagner	“It is important that at all times there should be a homogeneous sound without sacrificing vitality.” ⁶⁵
Dale Warland	Instead of organizing sound with the term blend, Warland says, “I prefer to use the term ensemble I find that most of the problems which affect good ensemble are related to vocal maturity, unification of vowel sound, and variance in vibrato.” ⁶⁶
Margaret Hillis	Match vibrato/match vowels. ⁶⁷
Harold Decker	Blend is unified pronunciation and enunciation. Do not blend for blend’s sake. ⁶⁸
Kenneth Jennings	Choral blend occurs at a point in front of the choir, not between two individuals standing side by side. ⁶⁹

⁶² I was not aware of this research until six months after the start of my own journey interviewing conductors and composers.

⁶³ Glenn, Carole, ed., *In Quest of Answers: Interviews with American Choral Conductors* (Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw Music, Inc., 1991), 58.

⁶⁴ Blocker, Robert, ed., *The Robert Shaw Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 117.

⁶⁵ Glenn, Carole, *In Quest of Answers: Interviews with American Choral Conductors*, 59.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 54.

It is significant to note that several of these figures talk about blend in terms of a perceived unified production, matching vowel and vibrato. The author of this study noticed that conductors listed in Table 4 described choral technique with similar language to modern conductors. However, as discussed in the following chapters, the application did shift; therefore, the sound changed even though the descriptors remain largely similar.

In a 1993 dissertation entitled *Norman Luboff: His life, Career, and Professional Choir*, Julie Lane Carter outlines the types of singers that Luboff hired for his choirs. He looked for accomplished musicians and excellent musical skills, but also singers who were versatile in Renaissance, contemporary and popular genres.⁷⁰ He expected high sight-reading skills and the ability to sing with or without *vibrato*.⁷¹ Although he had a strong appreciation for classical styles, he incorporated popular music into his touring repertoire and believed that if singers could sing a pop song appropriately, it gave evidence to their ability to sing his preferred choral sound.⁷²

The 1995 publication *The Complete Conductor* by Robert W. Demaree, Jr. and Don V. Moses, addresses the needs of the professional orchestral conductor who works with symphony choruses. In giving suggestions to upcoming conductors, the authors state that the unity and accuracy of vowels are the foundation for good vocal production. They suggest a warm and substantial output where blend is “the composite of a number of

⁷⁰ Carter, Julie Lane, “Norman Luboff: His life, Career, and Professional Choir” (DMA diss., Tempe, Az: Arizona State University, 1993), 111.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 115, 119–120.

attractive, albeit different, voices that constitutes an effective section, and four or five such sections ensure one choir that sings with power and beauty.”⁷³ The authors also warn that singers should not sound alike, and that the composite sound comes from the whole.⁷⁴

Fred Waring enjoyed a sixty-five-year long career as a choral music director, ending not with retirement, but when he passed suddenly from a stroke at the age of eighty-four in 1984.⁷⁵ He spent many of those years directing the *Fred Waring Pennsylvanians*, which toured around the country performing variety shows and appearing on television broadcasts. In the forward to the book *Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians* by his wife, Virginia Waring, Robert Shaw outlines how Waring had a keen sense of the “American popular song,” and single handedly popularized choral sound by establishing a public acceptance of choral music in America.⁷⁶ Waring, known as a tireless overseer, spurred his singers to the highest possible level of excellence. Virginia Waring wrote about his tenacity:

Singing the Fred Waring way is not easy, and Fred would not be too patient with someone forgetting what was taught the day before. “When we went from the workshop to becoming *Pennsylvanians*, Fred said ‘Come on, kid, you’re pros – you’re being paid now,’ Tommy Paterra recalled. ‘If you don’t like singing, you’d better find a different job.’”⁷⁷

⁷³ Demaree Jr., Robert W. and Moses, Don V., *The Complete Conductor: A Comprehensive Resource for the Professional Conductor of the Twenty-First Century* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 122.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Waring, Virginia, *Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 368.

⁷⁶ Ibid., XII.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 323.

Fred Waring's biggest stamp on choral music is through his diction philosophy. Named the Tone Syllable Method, Waring believed singers should "sing all of the beauty of all of the sounds of all of the syllables of all of the words."⁷⁸ The method emphasizes the hummed consonants (m, n, ng) to find a blend and keep the words understandable, and de-emphasizes s, sh, d, and k to take away the edge of the sibilant sounds.⁷⁹ Additionally, the method values sounding out every vowel in a diphthong in an effort to find the full beauty of each word. Ultimately, his method is based on the theory that you should sing the words in a song as you would speak the words, which ultimately dictates how the melody is phrased.⁸⁰ Additionally, de-emphasis of the articles of a sentence brings out only the most important words in the music.

In a 1986 radio interview with Bruce Duffie, Margaret Hillis talked about her preference to hire soloistic-quality singers who had intelligence, good sight-reading skills, and musicality.⁸¹ Originally intending to enter the orchestral conducting field, Hillis took the advice of mentors to study choral conducting. Her mentors warned that if she attempted orchestral conducting she would "beat [her] head against a wall and waste [her] talent."⁸² As a choral conductor, she desired to "prove that a chorus could be as good as an orchestra."⁸³ Although she did not believe there was a "Margaret Hillis

⁷⁸ Ibid., 220.

⁷⁹ Blocker, Robert, *The Robert Shaw Reader*, 117; Waring, Virginia, *Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians*, 221.

⁸⁰ Waring, Virginia, *Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians*, 220.

⁸¹ Duffie, Bruce, "Conductor Margaret Hillis - Interview," Bruce Duffie, <http://www.bruceduffie.com/hillis4.html> (accessed February 13, 2013).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

sound,” she said that the sound of a choir is the “result of the technique.”⁸⁴ She had no wish to put her “own stamp on it,” but rather desired that the choir and orchestra sound “different from one guest conductor to another.”⁸⁵

One technique Hillis advocated was diction, focusing both on strong consonants that could cut through an orchestra and on “mumbling” articulation for legato phrasing.⁸⁶

Hillis further describes how she viewed a sense of blend and ensemble:

They are individuals and . . . have . . . their own personalities, but when you get into the group dynamics thing, what you’re looking for is the best contribution from each individual of musicality, intelligence, listening and vocalism, the same way you are in the string section. In that way the chorus is like the string section.⁸⁷

Hillis went on to describe her approach to intonation, which favors a sense of the high leading tone, matching the tuning method of the orchestra.

Hillis felt that performing Bach with period instruments would negatively affect intonation due to a low A-420 concert pitch and equal-temperament methods.⁸⁸ Hillis explained that to perform Bach with early music performance-practice applications, a smaller choir, with the soprano part sung by boys, is necessary to balance the ensemble. “It’s a different sound absolutely,” said Hillis.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

The Robert Shaw Reader, compiled in 2004 by Robert Blocker, includes letters, speeches and articles outlining Shaw's philosophies. In a 1968 post, Robert Shaw speaks about intonation and precision. He says:

There is no such thing as *good intonation* between voice lines that do not arrive or quit their appointments upon mathematically precise, but effortless schedule Similarly, *sonority* and *color* are impossible to achieve among 70 voices whose rhythmic progress is casual, erratic and aimless.⁹⁰

Later in 1991, Shaw continues to advocate for a rehearsal period which uses a soft voice, even favoring a tenor mixture of *falsetto* vocalization, as he believes one cannot find the right notes with the unnecessary "screaming bedlam of tortured throats."⁹¹ He does not wish singers to wear out their voices by singing full-throated before they are sure of pitch, rhythm and enunciation. He assures the reader that "quiet singing facilitates the achievement of proper vocal balances" within sections and helps prevent disturbing vibrato wobbles and distortions of vowel.⁹²

William Owen's conversations with David Willcocks, published in the book *A Life in Music*, prove insightful. Willcocks discusses his years at King's College as the director of music and the organist. He recalls the years when radio broadcasts and the televised Christmas service began to extend the reputation of the choir internationally.⁹³ Gramophone Records became strong during the 1960s and they sold many recordings of King's College. Willcocks focused on recording music that had not been performed in

⁹⁰ Blocker, Robert, *The Robert Shaw Reader*, 83. Ibid.

⁹¹ Blocker, Robert, *The Robert Shaw Reader*, 83.

⁹² Ibid., 87.

⁹³ Owen, William, ed., *A Life in Music: Conversations with Sir David Willcocks and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145.

“four hundred years,” and would be new to the audience of two-million or more listeners.⁹⁴ Willcocks insisted there must be passion in singing. “You’ve got to get it right for yourself. I think that one should instil in people the burning desire to make sure it is done to the very best of their ability.”⁹⁵ Willcocks made the distinction between the desired choral tone of then and now:

With many of the pieces we were recording, we weren’t competing against anybody else. In those days many people also liked hearing boys’ voices, and preferred the sound of an all-male choir to a mixed choir. Now there are so many good mixed choirs. In England we’ve got some of these professional choirs where they’ve got the former choral scholars from Oxford and Cambridge with a new lot of women on top who sing without vibrato and to a very high standard. So we’ve got competition now on that front.⁹⁶

Another distinction Willcocks made about the recording process was captured in his narrative about recording the disc that “has been one of the most popular records that King’s has ever made:” *Allegrì Miserere*.⁹⁷ The boy soprano who sang the famous high C in the piece ran into the recording session after a particularly energetic rugby match. Despite the boy’s fluster, Willcocks was taken by the innate humanity of his performance, “there is one minute little ‘fluff’, where it just wobbles for a moment, and I said, ‘We’ll keep that because that is what it actually was.’”⁹⁸ And in fact, they kept the first take for the album.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Ibid., 146–147.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 148.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The literature reviewed for this paper shows an early-twentieth-century American collegiate preference for the subdued *a cappella* art. The tone then shifted to a mid-twentieth-century preference for darker, fuller and larger voices most notably in American professional choirs. Towards the end of the twentieth century, a honing-in on technique allowed singers to sing with a warm natural vibrato, focusing more on matching vowels, but reverted once again softer singing and an emphasis on phrasing. The English choral tone favored the traditional boys-choir tradition, with men singing the lower parts and boys singing the treble parts. The twenty-first-century professional sound, although dynamically varied, is often reminiscent of the early-twentieth-century American collegiate *a cappella* art and the English boys-choir color. This is discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

Historical Figures Interview Subjects Identified as Influential

The twenty-first century choral conductors and composers interviewed for this study have experiences, knowledge and educational influences that shaped their choices and creative output. While each practitioner is keenly interested in finding his or her own voice, the subjects involved in this study paid homage to the previous generation of “choral greats” whose techniques and philosophies inspired change in how subjects implemented choral methods within their own ensembles. Often, prominent “choral greats,” some who still work in the industry, were the teachers and mentors of study participants. Table 5 identifies all influential conductors named by the subjects involved in this study.

Table 5: Influential Conductors Identified by Study Participants

Leonard Bernstein	Margaret Hillis	Gregg Smith
Benjamin Britten	Kenneth Jennings	Howard Swan
Olaf C. Christiansen	Norman Luboff	Klaus Tennstedt
Harold Decker	Peter Phillips	Roger Wagner
Eric Ericson	Simon Preston	Fred Waring
Sir John Eliot Gardner	Simon Rattle	Dale Warland
Vance George	Helmuth Rilling	Jon Washburn
Philippe Herreweghe	George Schick	David Willcocks
David Hill	Robert Shaw	

One name that stands out as a significant choral figure is Robert Shaw. From the 1950s through the 1990s, he was one of America’s best-known choral personalities. He conducted the *Robert Shaw Chorale*, *Robert Shaw Festival Singers* and the *Atlanta Symphony Chorus*, to name only a few of his ensembles.¹⁰⁰ Shaw’s approach demonstrated his desire for precise intonation, quiet vocal beauty, warm tone color, and a preference for falsetto singing in the tenor range.¹⁰¹ Choirs today continue to use techniques and several conductors confess they drew their philosophies from Robert Shaw. Charles Bruffy, director of both the Phoenix Chorale and Kansas City Chorale shares how his experience singing with Shaw planted the ideas for his technique:

It was Robert Shaw who gave me “permission” . . . he’s the one that got me . . . thinking about detail. . . . Now I take his ideas and rehearsal techniques. . . . [and]

¹⁰⁰ Blocker, Robert, *The Robert Shaw Reader*, IX–XII.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 83–84.

try to wear them as my own . . . so I can be comfortable with it. [Ergo] I don't have to be doing an imitation.¹⁰²

Craig Jessop, the conductor of the *Air Force Singing Sergeants* from 1979 to 1987 and the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* director from 1999 to 2008 sang with Robert Shaw in the *Robert Shaw Festival Singers* on their tour to France.¹⁰³ Jessop said of that experience:

It was just one of the great spiritual revelations of my life and of course musical experiences Shaw was the midwife who delivered the child safely and didn't murder it.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, Jessop states:

If I were teaching a graduate course in choral conducting, I would make a whole section devoted to . . . the Robert Shaw scores and how he marked his scores Shaw carefully was very aware of balances and sonority.¹⁰⁵

Alice Parker, Shaw's collaborator and colleague remarked on his persistence for constant improvement:

I was learning how to listen so hard my ears felt as if they were getting washed out with vinegar. They hurt because I was trying to listen to what he was doing I was just learning.¹⁰⁶

Another influential choral conductor that participants named as influential is David Willcocks. Highly acclaimed for his work as the Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge, from the 1950s through the 1970s, Willcocks also taught at the Royal College of Music and directed countless professional choirs and orchestras around the

¹⁰² Bruffy, Charles, interview by author, Digital Recording, Scottsdale, Arizona, May 27, 2011.

¹⁰³ Jessop, Craig, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Parker, Alice, interview by author, Digital Recording, Fort Collins, Colorado, November 5, 2011.

world. *The King's College Choir*, founded in the fifteenth century, is renowned for its cathedral choir tradition, extensive recordings and worldwide touring schedule.¹⁰⁷ David Willcocks's significant work holds weight due to his widely distributed recordings and the influence he had with students who themselves became prominent voices in the choral world. David Hill, current director of the *BBC Singers*, director of *The Bach Choir* in London and previous director of Westminster Cathedral, names David Willcocks as one of his main influences, considering him "amazing."¹⁰⁸ John Rutter, choral conductor of the *Cambridge Singers* and a widely prominent choral composer said of Willcocks's choirs:

David Willcocks led the way in the same way that you would say Robert Shaw or Howard Swan . . . [did] in the United States. He sort of said, "Folks, what we've been doing isn't good enough. We've got to aim for something better."¹⁰⁹

Rutter went on to say that in the 1960s, it was quite normal for choirs to suffer from a lack of finite intonation. At that time, choirs regularly sang 'flat,' and it was just an accepted, yet unfortunate fact in choral music. However, he admired and trusted Willcocks for his bravery to refine the sound. Rutter says of Willcocks's tenacity, "if *King's [College] Choir* was singing it, you could be confident it would end in C-major. Not some distance south of there."¹¹⁰ Willcocks's work had reverberations beyond choral professionals in the UK. Craig Jessop heard "outstanding intonation" from Willcocks's

¹⁰⁷ King's College, Cambridge, "About the Choir."

¹⁰⁸ Hill, David, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Rutter, John, interview by author, Digital Recording, London, England, July 12, 2011.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

groups.¹¹¹ Jon Washburn, the director of the *Vancouver Chamber Choir*, recounts his memorable contact with Sir David Willcocks's recordings in the 1970s and his own frustration at the lack of other recordings like it:

I remember just crying out . . . to hear on a recording a chord that was not in tune because of color rather than pitch. A lot of that had to do with unruly vibrato. We would then listen to something . . . like David Willcocks and the *King's College Choir*, and say, "Oh wow! Listen to that!" What was happening was that the boys were singing in tune, in both color and pitch.¹¹²

Willcocks's work set the musical bar that subsequent conductors and singers imitated and revered.

The subjects involved in this study revered the work of the inspirational "choral greats," absorbing their ideas and in turn adjusting those techniques when working with the next generation of professional choirs. However, subjects are not the only individuals who noticed a shift in choral color, as critics have a voice in the discussion.

Record Reviews of Choral Performances pre-1980

Record reviews supply a distinct voice in documenting perceptions of older recordings. A number of older albums gained a re-release over the past decade, and several reviews resulted for 'compilation' or 'legacy' albums. Contemporary critical commentaries suggest choral technique in earlier eras differed from today's, as their perceptions describe dated recordings as heard with a contemporary ear. In a review of one of Robert Shaw's earliest recordings from the 1945-46, Lindsay Koob allows that the

¹¹¹ Jessop, Craig, interview.

¹¹² Washburn, Jon, interview.

album is, “hardly as smoothly sung or refined-sounding as his later [albums] . . . but you won’t find this level of exuberance or emotionality in Shaw’s later recordings Their unrestrained use of *vibrate* makes for rich, full-throated choral textures.”¹¹³ Koob implies here that Shaw himself shifted his approach over the years as a choral conductor.¹¹⁴ In 2005, regarding the re-released of the disc *The Robert Shaw Legacy (1956-1997)*, Lawrence Schenbeck described Shaw’s 1960s live performance of *Bach’s St. Matthew’s Passion* as energetic and emotionally forceful and at times overwhelming.¹¹⁵ Schenbeck continued, “this is largely an old-fashioned, big-band approach . . . unashamed of what larger forces, slightly slower tempi, and longer phrases could bring out.”¹¹⁶ Despite the out-of-date approach, Schenbeck adds that he believes singers should consider themselves lucky to have worked with Shaw on this recording due to Shaw’s strong emotive shape through timing, articulation and dynamic contrast.¹¹⁷

A significant recording, requiring inclusion, is *The Gregg Smith Singers’* 1968 recording titled *The Glory of Gabrieli*. It was not only a popular album at that time, but won a Grammy award for Best Choral Performance in 1969.¹¹⁸ In a 1996 review, Paul

¹¹³ Koob, Lindsay, “From The Archives: Early Robert Show recordings - ProQuest,” *American Record Guide*, 2003.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Schenbeck, Lawrence, “Compact Disc Reviews: ‘The Robert Shaw Legacy (1956-1997)’ - ProQuest,” *Choral Journal* 46, no. 1 (2005): 71–72.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ The Recording Academy, “Past Winners Search 1968 Best Choral Performance,” Grammy.com, http://www.grammy.com/nominees/search?artist=Gregg+Smith+Singers+&field_nominee_work_value=&year=1968&genre=All (accessed March 10, 2013).

Althouse describes the tone as “fairly harsh without a lot of musical line.”¹¹⁹ He goes on to criticize the balance, intonation, and blend of ensemble and asserts that the choral style is “no-nonsense” and “punchy.”¹²⁰ This relentless review may show a thirty-year difference in choral perception as opposed to how reviews from its time may have depicted the recording. Although recorded at St. Mark’s in Venice one of the most reverberant halls in the world, the album’s resonant echo is indiscernible to a modern listener. It sounds as if the recording microphones sat within the ranks of the choir. It is equally relevant to the present study to hear that the choral sound comes across harsh, and the variable intonation is obvious.

Record reviews of David Willcocks’s choirs at King’s College draw largely favorable conclusions of recordings before 1980. In his 2004 review of the recording *Best Loved Christmas Carols* from 1970, Charles Parsons says, “the recording . . . couldn’t be bettered.”¹²¹ Parsons compliments the diction as “excellent” and describes the singing as “pretty.”¹²² In a review of the King’s College 1963 Christmas recording by Phillip Greenfield, he describes the tone as “angelic . . . [and] delicate,” with a “haunting purity,” but casually mentions that the recording sounds “close-up.”¹²³ A slight criticism comes when he finds the diction “clobbering far too many consonants for my taste.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Althouse, Paul L., “Collections: Various Artists - ‘Robert Shaw Legacy (1956-97)’ - ProQuest,” *American Record Guide*, 2005.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Parsons, Charles H., “Guide to Records,” *American Record Guide* 57, no. 4 (July 1994): 184.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Greenfield, Philip, “Guide to Records: Palestrina,” *American Record Guide* 63, no. 2 (2000): 162.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

One informative recording for the scope of the present study is the *BBC Singers Scarlatti, D – Stabat Mater: Organ Sonatas* conducted by Jean-Claude Malgoire in 1977. In her 2004 review of that album, Ardella Crawford claims, “the singing is top-notch, if a little old-fashioned with respect to period performance.”¹²⁵ Her comments reference the choral tone on the disc, which embodied a “very full” choral sound that did not adhere to the performance practice of early music.¹²⁶ The choir exhibited impeccable intonation, but utilized full vibrato in all voices, including in the women. For England in the 1970s, allowing females to sound like women was in contrast to the prevalent English cathedral sound. By 1977, the early music movement, which asserted a belief in straight tone singing for all music composed before 1750, held considerable influence. This disc disregarded that philosophy. Another detail of note is the ‘flat’ and ‘muted’ reverberation present in the recording.

Although there are several positive comments about the albums reviewed, these observations suggest a few common themes. The vocal production often garners descriptions such as full, rich, throaty, less refined and harsh. The lack of depth and reverberation in the recordings suggest a recording method that valued a close-up and intimate preference. Of all the recordings, only those of Willcocks collected descriptions similar to twenty-first-century albums such as excellent intonation, haunting and angelic. That English sound became a model for choirs that sought a higher level of precision and accurate intonation.

¹²⁵ Crawford, Ardella, “Guide to Records: Scarlatti, D - ‘Stabat Mater’; Organ Sonatas - ProQuest,” *American Record Guide*, 2004.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Describing the tone of choirs from the 1950s to 1970s
Author Observations

Record reviews and commentary by people who heard mid-twentieth-century choral concerts are significant in defining perceptions of choral tone. However, words and explanations do not satisfactorily describe the tone as would a listening comparison between the periods. A preferable method to evaluate sound would be through a study of choral perceptions conducted with a large body of listeners, in which they individually evaluate recordings of similar genres sung by choirs from the 1950s through the present. Although that study is beyond the parameters of the present paper, it could be a helpful tool for future research to define musician's present day perceptions of choral tone between periods. However, comparative analyses of pre-1970 and post-1990 recordings of professional choirs reveal a marked difference in choral sound.

The Discography of this paper shows a list of recordings the author employed to compare the choral sound of the 1960s through the 1980s to that of the early twenty-first century to make the following observations. There existed a wide variety in color, tone, *vibrato*, diction and musicality based upon on the choir, the region and the conductor. Color and tone in some mid-century professional American choirs slanted towards a commercial 'Hollywood' and jazzy sound. However, the predominant choral approach focused on the natural, healthy and full-bodied voice of a trained singer, similar to an operatic technique. Various recordings exhibited conflicting vibrato oscillations, which blurred intonation. The concept of blend and choral balance gravitated towards a wash of collaborative sound that homogenized in the hall. Periodically, individual voices protrude. There seems to be a tendency to over-sing, and some moments of vocal

scooping are apparent. Recordings demonstrate round, tall and sometimes dark vowels, and a big, robust, energetic sound equal to that of operatic singing. Although flaws are apparent, most recordings exhibit warmth, passion, and a great sense of musical line. The recording technology of that time creates a sense of ‘immediacy’ in a dry acoustic, as if the microphones sit within the ranks of the choir. The English choir recordings from this period predominantly encompassed the boy treble cathedral choir sound. Although usually impeccably in tune, that color retains some shrill and biting characteristics.

Study Participants Observations of Mid-Twentieth-Century Professional Choral Sound

Human perception of sound is extremely complex. To ask twenty listeners to describe qualitatively a sound after a performance would yield divergent opinions.

Correspondingly, opinions on general descriptions of pre-1980s choral sound offer divergent thoughts. Furthermore, because modern ears have absorbed so many different types of music and interpretations since the 1970s, current bias results in opinions based on how we regard sound now, and not then. It is still beneficial to explore the study participant’s observations to ascertain their perceptions of choral tone in the professional choirs. The following quotes conceal the names of both the informants and the choirs mentioned in the interview to protect the individuals and institutions discussed in this chapter.

Informant B identified a lack of diversity in mid-twentieth-century professional choirs:

The chorus sounded like what it sounded like, no matter what they were singing. It was incredibly beautiful, but frankly, it [didn’t] sound any different. The

timbres, sonority, the quality of sound in the Rachmaninoff [didn't] sound any different than it [did] in the American Spirituals.

Informant B also spoke of vibrato in English choirs:

[The English] have such a boy choir tradition. . . . Even from the early days, their style of singing [uses] much less vibrato because the boys didn't have it. Here in the US, we didn't have that [tradition]. We came to singing wearing sequins.

Informant N discussed the lack of excellent professional choirs in the 1970s-1980s:

I would say that twenty-five [+] years ago, there were not a lot of good professional choirs. There were always some, but not a lot. . . . Again, there have always been people who were amazing. Norman Luboff, Bob Shaw, Fred Waring . . . these are people that really got it. They really knew what it was. But, they wouldn't have necessarily have done some of the really difficult music that is asked [for] today by composers.

Informant G raved about the energy, exuberance and soloistic quality of one professional choir from the 1980s or earlier:

I thought working with the choir was like putting your foot on a V-12 . . . turbo charged vehicle. It [was] fantastic. [However,] the group of twenty-five years ago (and possibly even more) had more individualized approaches. Full of extraordinary, really big characters, big voices. I daresay there was possibly less attention [paid] to blending and listening to others. Consequently, there used to be a lot of intonation issues. Things would never be sharp . . . but would often take a slightly downward trend.

Informant E contrasted the “conductor sound” of the mid-twentieth-century choirs to the model he perceives today that allows more singer input:

Thirty years ago I felt things were much more constricted in terms of contained sound. I think there was even more intentional talk about a conductor saying this is a ‘sound’ I’m interested in Thirty years ago it would have been much more frowned upon to play with some colors . . . that might be related to pop in some way Thirty years ago there weren't very many choirs at this [professional] level.

Informant S reminisced about the mid-twentieth-century career path for choral musicians:

Thirty years ago there was far less of a sort of structured career path [for professional choral singers]. Being a professional singer, it was very much a free-for-all and you'd have lots of soloists going in to sing with choirs. And that was really what most of the conductors wanted. They like a group of really good soloists and [when] you put them together; whatever sound comes out is what you get.

Informant P, criticized the mid-twentieth-century tendency to use editions that were not period accurate.

This is another aspect of singing from the post-war . . . let's say [the] '50s to '60s . . . and that is singing in languages. Instead [they] translat[ed] everything into English. For instance [how they sang] Bach in the '40s and '50s, Clarence Dickenson was famous for having translated all of the Bach cantatas and publish[ing] them. [However,] by the '70s, people just wouldn't do Bach in English anymore. Except people who had grown up [in] the previous [generation] . . . you always have an overlap of schools.

Informant F, described mid-twentieth-century choir blend as occurring through “mixed individual voices compatibly.” In addition, he believed that the “real choral sound” and “naturalness of the sound,” happens when “singers use their natural vibrato, within reason, and make it blend in such a way that no voice stands out particularly. But, [the voice] still mak[es] phase distortions that add warmth to the music.”

Informant J compared the English choral tradition of the 1970s to the contemporary English choral sound:

They didn't use a very heavy *vibrato*. . . . They tend[ed] to sound pure and boy-like. . . . Compare [the] choir of 1970 [to] now and you would probably find that now they sound more obviously female. . . . In the late 1970s, almost no one in that choir [took] individual voice lessons. . . . The little mouse-like voice, which if you put ten other [voices] with it sounds quite sweet, is rather a thing of the past.

Informant J imparted that the American choral tone originated from a source other than England:

Listen to very old scratchy recordings, the very earliest, where you get dark covered vowels. Where you get more *vibrato* is the German tradition. And remember of course that was imported into America through immigrant Germans

because so much of American music education and pedagogical method came from the Germans.

The comments from the informants raised the issues that choirs in America sounded different from those in other countries, particularly England. American choirs utilized a larger, darker heavier sound based on the German tradition and there were not very many good professional choirs at that time. English choirs, based on the cathedral tradition, had a predominant treble section, with boys or women who sounded like boys singing the upper parts. Choirs from that period often did not adhere to historically informed practices, but instead sang from ‘modernized’ scores, which altered the original intent.

Findings of Mid-Twentieth-Century Choral Tone in Professional Choirs

The professional conductors and choirs of the 1950s through 1970s forged groundbreaking work in the choral field. Their actions propelled the next generation of singers and conductors to strive for excellence and continually seek growth. Those mid-twentieth-century choirs embodied a choral tone that, while extraordinarily musical and natural in production, sounds to some modern ears as unrestrained, operatic, old-fashioned, full-throated, punchy and often suffering from a lack of precise intonation. The tone also garnered favorable descriptions such as natural, warm, healthy, robust, big and robust. English choral tradition of that period leaned toward a cleaner and thinner approach employing boys on the treble lines. The colors of the English ensembles sometimes gathered descriptions such as shrill, biting and nasal but equally won terms like angelic, gentle, quiet, and soaring.

The mid-twentieth century was a generation where the choral sound from one choir to another and one country to another varied dynamically. Cultural preferences leaned towards choirs of large size, which built the structure for a large and robust choral tone. In addition, it was an age of a tremendous growth in audiences and financial support from government entities for radio, recordings and touring. The mid-twentieth century was a dynamic age with a generation of choral forefathers who developed philosophies, techniques and sounds that set that time's choral sound apart as uniquely identifiable.

Subjects involved in the study recognize the great heritage in the choral field and draw inspiration from earlier generations of choral figures. However, just like an athlete trying to break a world record in the Olympics, subjects involved in this study confess to continually seeking refinement in their art thus perpetuating change in choral sound.

CHAPTER 3

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IN PROFESSIONAL CHOIRS

The skill, care and artistry displayed by mid-twentieth century conductors left a legacy from which the current generation of conductors, choirs and composers draw upon. By the start of the twenty-first century, many influences from around the world began to congeal and cross-pollinate through imitation and application of new techniques. While choirs from around the world still sound different from one another, their influences cross borders and the professional choral tone is now more closely related to each other globally than in generations past. While no two choirs sound alike, numerous influences gave rise to the twenty-first century choral tone in professional choirs.

In order to understand how choral tone has changed since the mid-twentieth century, it is beneficial to first consider contemporary performance practice and how the conductors involved in this study perceive what changes occurred. How has the sound shifted in these choirs and the overall choral field? What do professional choirs of the twenty-first century sound like? What do conductors desire in contemporary choral sound as compared to the sonority of previous generations? Additionally, what techniques and applications are prevalent within ensembles as opposed to earlier periods?

The following section compares conductor perceptions of mid-twentieth century professional choral sound against current methodology. Their input offers a sampling of diverse perspectives in the current practice, but also includes a comparison as to how their methodology differs from thirty to forty years ago. Conductors identify similarities

but also some differences from earlier periods. Choirs examined for this study do not include every professional choir that has existed or currently operates. However, the professional choirs, conductors, and singers included were chosen for their reputation and significance in the choral field. Samplings of criteria include conductor leadership and renown in the industry, recording presence and disc sales, international recognition and awards, commissions and commercial radio/television programming. The choirs are listed in the chronological order of the date of establishment.

Mormon Tabernacle Choir – Founded in 1847

Craig Jessop worked with Robert Shaw as a singer, conducted the Air Force Singing Sergeants from 1979 to 1987, and was director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir director from 1999 to 2008. He believes that Shaw, over the stretch of his career, was an originator in shifting the choral sound towards a lighter, more pure production that corresponds to the twenty-first century preference. Jessop comments:

Let's take Shaw. I love the early recordings of Shaw . . . but [compare] the *Rejoice in the Lamb* recording from the 1960s or even his spirituals. If you listen to the Robert Shaw Festival Singers in the 1990s, you'll find cleaner, more pure tone sopranos especially.¹²⁷

However, Jessop laments that, in modern choral tone, he hears the “luscious, dark chocolate alto” tone disappearing.¹²⁸ Jessop suggests that at present, choral practitioners opt for a straighter, countertenor-like sound, but in doing so sacrifice the mature womanly color. He firmly believes that in good healthy singing, *vibrato* needs to be

¹²⁷ Jessop, Craig, interview.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

present. However, he concedes that an oscillating tone is something that requires addition or subtraction as an ornament, which expresses the color. The “amplitude, the speed [and] the width shouldn’t be constant like a Hammond organ *vibrato* that is always the same.”¹²⁹

Moreover, Craig Jessop’s predecessor at the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Jerold Ottley, is disappointed in the current movement in the *a cappella* art. To his ear, contemporary choirs imitate the instrumental world of the twentieth century by singing in a straightforward and harsh fashion. “If you try to imitate that with the human voice, the tone becomes rather strident and colorless,” says Ottley.¹³⁰ He feels that the voices take on tonal attributes that started with 12-tone and the *pointillistic* music of the twentieth century. The disjunct melodies and angular lines were most successful with singers who had perfect pitch. These styles are difficult for choirs.¹³¹ To his ear, the twenty-first century choral tone is admittedly straighter, less warm and comes across as “sterile.”¹³² He says, “I hear choirs that are just magnificently in tune; choirs that are rhythmically, absolutely precise. I get about one third of the way into the concert and I begin to think, ‘Where is the music?’ It’s sterile to me because the warmth of the human voice is lost and has become more . . . mechanical.”¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ottley, Jerold, interview.

¹³¹ Jessop, Craig, interview.

¹³² Ottley, Jerold, interview.

¹³³ Ibid.

BBC Singers – Founded in 1924

David Hill is the current director of the English radio choir, the *BBC Singers*, which is also the only full time professional choir researched in this study. He began his tenure as chief conductor of the organization in 2007 and because of the nature of his choir, has a unique perspective that differs from his English counterparts. *BBC Singers* feature voices of immense flexibility. They are able to match sound and sing with a group, but also stand up and deliver as a solo artist. Hill remarks that there is an abundance of criticism in England that perhaps radio choirs do not blend very well, but he does not believe that to be true and, in fact, thinks the opposite is the case.¹³⁴

If you've got good singers and they're able to match their sound, color, [and] vowel formation . . . then you've got a blend of sound which is marvelous, seamless. That's what you want.¹³⁵

Having said that, he does not believe that fully-vibrated voices and singing in-tune are mutually exclusive. Singing in tune is of utmost importance to him, particularly because the *BBC Singers* perform an enormous amount of difficult twentieth and twenty-first century music. He insists, "I think none of the singers would disagree that we just actually have to sing it absolutely bang in tune."¹³⁶ Ironically, he finds that modern choirs often switch the *vibrato* on and off, particularly in the soprano section, because they think that is what conductors expect. However, there is always expression in sound, and he feels that if the basses and tenors can 'wobble away', so too should sopranos. Hill asserts, "you have to go absolutely through the whole pack and say it applies to the second basses

¹³⁴ Hill, David, interview.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

as it applies to the first basses, as easily as it does to the sopranos.” Yet, Hill does admit a preference for a pyramid structure, with a heavy amount of proper low bass sound. He argues that sopranos do not have to “take the varnish off the wood,” but instead, their tone should be colorful, not harsh.¹³⁷

Phoenix Chorale – founded in 1958 and Kansas City
Chorale – founded in 1982

Charles Bruffy, director of the Grammy Award winning choirs *Phoenix Chorale* and *Kansas City Chorale*, feels that the difference between the modern choral tone and choral tone of thirty years ago is an “evolution of sound,” and that the modern conductor is more concerned with “authenticity to repertoire.”¹³⁸ He articulates that the choir should not make the music come to them, but instead “the choir [should] go to the music.”¹³⁹ Bruffy goes on to explain that, for any composer, the choir should sound different according to the performance practices of that style. When describing choral tone for the music of composer Ola Gjeilo, he says, “it’s a very ‘cooey’ sound. It’s not brilliant or forward. It’s quite free and filled with breath.”¹⁴⁰ He believes that in his choirs, they collaboratively try to do “whatever is required of the voice, and the structure of the harmonies and . . .

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

manipulating even duration, so that undulation is believable.”¹⁴¹ Bruffy pays homage to his predecessors as he describes the shift of choral tone:

We owe such a debt to the Gregg Smiths, Roger Wagners and Fred Warings of the world, because they were providing for the country [and] for the world, through tours and recordings/concerts, high-level singing. I think that today, we still do the same thing with many more new challenges. But I think that, at least to my ear, the quality of the sound is purer.¹⁴²

That purer sound, Bruffy points out, is necessary due to the nature of music written by contemporary composers, “meaning *avant-garde*, with tone clusters and disjunct melodic intervals . . . the music requires more of a laser focus than all that . . . confusion of pitch that is created with the use of excessive *vibrato*.”¹⁴³ Instead, he advocates a sense of choral blend that invites a wash of sound, otherwise explained as a homogenized blanket of sound.¹⁴⁴ Bruffy says we should look at modern choral tone as we view an organ. “With organ stops, which voice needs to be a little more present either in terms of color . . . volume . . . [or] sonority [for a] particular repertoire?”¹⁴⁵

King’s Singers – Founded in 1968

Robin Tyson, long time countertenor in the ensemble *The King’s Singers*, does not feel that the sound of the group has shifted much since it started in 1968. Stability in *The King Singer’s* choral tone occurs because when a singer leaves they replace him almost

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

“like to like,” says Tyson.¹⁴⁶ He states that the replacement “who's going to be the most successful is the one who can fit in with the other five already.”¹⁴⁷ He goes on to say that a large number of arrangements made for the *King's Singers* over the years dictate the *King's Singers* sound. Tyson insists “the way in which they are written suggests that there is only one way to perform them properly to get all of the six notes to sound the same.” He notes that each member has an individual voice, but when a singer steps down, the change is subtle enough that it does not substantially impact the *King's Singers* sound overall.¹⁴⁸ Their performance practice is a “massive palate” of sounds, including blending, balance, tuning, solo *vibrato* voice, and close harmony with straight tone.

Tyson is unable to say that there is a large shift in choral tone in the U.K over the past thirty years. However, he does recognize conductors like Stephen Layton, Stephen Cleobury and Nigel Short who laid the groundwork for “creating a sound, or maybe an ethos which makes it easier to sing the vocal music which is current, like Eric Whitacre or multi-note chords.”¹⁴⁹ He also believes it is the contemporary music compositional methods that have changed the most since the 1970s.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Tyson, Robin, interview.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

VocalEssence – Founded in 1969

Phillip Brunelle got his start in the 1960s as an enthusiastic young man who realized that most of the music being performed was the “old War Horses”: Handel’s Messiah, Brahms Requiem, Verdi Requiem etc. Even though they are valuable works, Brunelle felt that choirs ignored other music types. In response, he decided to start the Plymouth Music Series, which he later renamed *VocalEssence*, to explore the rest of choral music.¹⁵¹ As an exuberant youth, he thought nothing of calling up a leading contemporary composer and asking that man to conduct his own music. Aaron Copland not only agreed, but said, “young man, no one has ever asked me to conduct my choral music.”¹⁵² As a result, *VocalEssence* began and continues today as an advocate of contemporary choral music. Brunelle, nicknamed “Mr. Repertoire” by his friends, worked passionately helping audiences and singers become excited about new repertoire.¹⁵³

As a young choral conductor, Brunelle dedicated himself primarily to rhythmic and tonal accuracy but admittedly lacked concern with blend. His ensemble rehearsal concept changed rapidly about ten years after the group started when he hired Sigrid Johnson as his assistant conductor.¹⁵⁴ Johnson, a conductor at St. Olaf Choir College, is tenacious about the sound and blend because, as a voice teacher she understands how the

¹⁵¹ Brunelle, Phillip, interview by author, Digital Recording, Flagstaff, Arizona, June 16, 2011.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

mechanism works.¹⁵⁵ Working as a team, they raised the quality of choral tone in *VocalEssence*.¹⁵⁶

Brunelle indicates that, in addition to conductor efforts, the choral quality increased due to higher-level singers who auditioned for the group. As singer membership grew, he eventually divided his choir into two components: the *VocalEssence Chorus* of about 130 community members, and a 32-voice professional group called Ensemble Singers.¹⁵⁷ Having a dedicated professional-level ensemble caused a substantial shift in the sound, says Brunelle. The *VocalEssence* of the twenty-first century enjoys specific types of singers: those who have a beautiful voice and a beautiful personality.¹⁵⁸ Brunelle reasons that singers who come with humility are more willing to forge collaborative and supportive environment among fellow singers. He insists this is an essential formula for making beautiful music.¹⁵⁹

Pedagogically, Brunelle is not opposed to *vibrato*. He just wants singers to be aware of it, and apply it according to the specifics of the repertoire. However, he insists that singers must be concise, particularly in dense chords as he feels strongly that singing in tune is never about “note to note.”¹⁶⁰ In fact, he feels “people can’t tune to isolated

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ VocalEssence, “About Us,” VocalEssence, <http://www.vocalessence.org/about> (accessed February 13, 2013).

¹⁵⁸ Brunelle, Phillip, interview.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

notes.”¹⁶¹ There is always a bigger chordal picture occurring: a concept he calls, “implied harmony.”¹⁶² He explains that often underlying chords exist inside a super structure that the composer never intended. The leading tones, the notes that build the linear line and the cluster elements all lead the ear to perceive an implied harmony. Those are the building blocks that lead to accurate intonation, he asserts.¹⁶³

Vancouver Chamber Choir – Founded in 1971

Jon Washburn is the director of the *Vancouver Chamber Choir*, which he founded in 1971. Washburn has recorded several commercially released albums and has directed several professional choirs and orchestras around the world.¹⁶⁴ Back then, the natural sound of the Canadian singers leaned towards the British-Canadian tradition that focused on blend and balance. However, Washburn considered their tone somewhat controlled and desired to incorporate greater warmth in the tone. Washburn, originally from the U.S, explored a sound that combined the British cleanness with “rhythmicity” and expressiveness that came from his American roots.¹⁶⁵ He jokes that he and his choir came to a compromise, which is, “quintessentially Canadian.”¹⁶⁶ The singers combined his

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Vancouver Chamber Choir, “Jon Washburn, Conductor / Artistic & Executive Director,” Vancouver Chamber Choir, http://www.vancouverchamberchoir.com/conductor_jon_washburn_bio.htm (accessed February 11, 2013).

¹⁶⁵ Washburn, Jon, interview.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

desire for a warmer, reverberant sound with their natural inclination towards the British sound.¹⁶⁷

Despite his pedagogical preference for a warm tone, Washburn still found accurate tuning of the utmost importance. Vowels and intonation are crucial, consonants, and how they interrupt is of concern, as is *vibrato*.¹⁶⁸ He says, “even though I allow a little more warmth in the sound . . . [I] really insist on good tuning, and it only took a couple decades to get it. The modern version of my choir automatically works that way.”¹⁶⁹

Washburn says that the most obvious change since the beginning stages of the Vancouver Chamber choir is that members now sing at a higher level.¹⁷⁰ He believes the research and scientific study of the human voice led to changes in voice teaching over the past thirty years. He is of the opinion that, “voice teaching is a very important component in the growth of choral music.”¹⁷¹ Although he concedes that there are still poor voice teachers, many are now tailoring their approach to each individual voice, instead of teaching a specific method.¹⁷² All singers have strengths and weaknesses, but some voices are more suited for professional choral singing. Teachers who allow for individual approaches beneficial to a choral singer support the work of professional choirs.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

When Washburn began with his choir, he hired any singer he could get, but now he hires a ‘sound’ rather than accepting singers who would need to matriculate into it.¹⁷⁴ With the success and acclaim professional choirs receive in the twenty-first century, conductors now expect professional singers to come to an audition already knowing how to healthily manipulate their voices. Washburn points out that although the voice is the prime instrument, the organ doing the heavy work is the ear. Additionally, this applies to both singers and conductors. Washburn believes musicians need to train their ears so that the demands of the music dictate the sound.”¹⁷⁵ Washburn asserts that these finite listening choices are the real evolutionary change in choral music.¹⁷⁶

Chanticleer – Founded in 1978

Matt Oltman started singing with *Chanticleer* in 1999, and around his fifth year transitioned into the role of assistant music director under Joseph Jennings. In 2009, Oltman became the music director and held that title until 2011 at which point he stepped down to pursue other professional opportunities. Oltman maintains that *Chanticleer* singers’ specialty is “doing lots of different music as authentically as possible.”¹⁷⁷ That means the singers of *Chanticleer* must be versatile in their tone since they sing music from Renaissance, jazz, contemporary composers, spirituals, English cathedral music and

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Oltman, Matt, interview by author, Digital Recording, Dublin, Ireland, July 6, 2011.

eclectic multicultural music such as drones mimicking the Australian didgeridoo.¹⁷⁸ Their ensemble is unique in that, like the *King's Singers*, all the singers are men. They all have “the same instrument in different sizes,” and for a modern audience that is more rare than hearing a mixed chamber choir of women and men.¹⁷⁹ The biggest shift *Chanticleer* has experienced since its inception in 1978, is that now there is more acceptance for countertenors to study their craft. In the late 1970s, countertenors had to fight to receive training in their natural voice. Oltman says that now, “our countertenors have never done anything else They’ve studied [it] all the way through their education.”¹⁸⁰ As a result, the sound of the countertenor in *Chanticleer* has become more robust, flexible and stronger and can facilitate more color options. To balance the larger countertenor sound, the ensemble now hires bigger tenors and baritones.¹⁸¹

Oltman explains that twenty-first century choral performance practice is no longer “imposing the sound of a choir” upon singers.¹⁸² Historically, the mid-western Lutheran tradition leaned towards a covered, straight tone. “The vowels are really funny . . . manufactured . . . it’s to achieve a certain sort of blend which can be really pretty, but can sound terribly monotonous.”¹⁸³ Oltman asserts that now there is a reversal of that trend. Instead of imposing a philosophy of vowels and style of singing, conductors encourage

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

dialogue between singers and colleagues to determine what method of production highlights each individual's strengths.¹⁸⁴

Although a 'straighter' tone is now an accepted performance practice within professional choirs, Oltman thinks modern choirs apply *vibrato* much more conscientiously than they did thirty to forty years ago. Instead of saying 'vibrate' or 'straight tone', Oltman insists that professional singers strive for figurative terms: flow, strength, confidence, misty, airy, ethereal, bloody, visceral, pressure, and spin. These terms, Oltman suggests, encourage the natural voice to achieve a color, which allows the brain to adjust width and speed of oscillation, rather than actively thinking more *vibrato*, less *vibrato* or straight tone.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, Oltman points out that modern performance practice includes a variety of extra-musical sounds that choirs are now expected to make, such as tongue clicks, hums, bird sounds, whistles and sirens.¹⁸⁶

The Sixteen – Founded in 1979

Harry Christophers founded his choir, *The Sixteen*, in 1979 at a time when the only full-time professional choir in England was the *BBC Singers*.¹⁸⁷ At first, the ensemble focused primarily on early music. However, they are now more diverse and program contemporary composers heavily. Christophers sees the two genres pairing nicely as they

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Christophers, Harry, interview by author, Telephone Conversation via Skype, London, England, July 12, 2011. There currently are no other full-time professional choirs of the same type or size as the *BBC Singers* in the U.K. However, there are small full-time vocal ensembles of less than 10 members in the U.K.

both require a chamber choir mindset and impeccable intonation. However, he does not want the choir's sound to model the English cathedral choir tradition. The pristine British sound, prized and sought after in the U.K., does not inspire him.¹⁸⁸ He wants life in the music, which is possible through a basis of fantastic technique coupled with warmth, and adaptability.¹⁸⁹ Additionally, he believes that life and energy can only exist in the music if the musicians sing as they speak.¹⁹⁰ He is proud of the work *The Sixteen* accomplished over the years. He believes the ensemble's reputation and signature sound coincides with the core color of the ensemble due to the long-standing involvement and honing of color from the dedicated singers in the group.¹⁹¹

Cambridge Singers – Founded in 1981

John Rutter founded his recording choir, *The Cambridge Singers*, in 1981. He contends the main difference between the singers of 1981 and those who sing in the ensemble today is, “they sound more obviously female.”¹⁹² Singers, mainly from Oxbridge chapel choirs, come to his choir with principals already set for chamber musicianship. Rutter defines those as, “spinning a nice line and getting a shape of phrase and elegance, listening acutely, tuning to everyone else, [and] responding.”¹⁹³ In addition,

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Rutter, John, interview.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

he adds that current singers will not try for a ‘Wagnerian’ tone, but instead a fairly straight and clear tone.¹⁹⁴

One area of note is Rutter’s perception of the English professional choral sound as opposed to the American professional choral sound. He explains that the English cathedral choir sonority is like an inverted pyramid: sixteen trebles, four altos, four tenors and four basses. “Rumor is, that’s how much space there is in the choir stall, so that’s the way it’s [been] done,” Rutter jokes, but then insists that professional choirs in England still sound that way today because of that historical model. The singers grew up in the English choir school tradition and now bring that tradition with them in professional choirs.¹⁹⁵ He gives further justification for the English top-heavy choral tone, and the lack of bass sound:

It’s not just that boys came free, and you had to pay the men. It’s that in a very reverberant acoustic [with a] five or six seconds of reverb, if you’ve got a heavy bass it just rumbles around and starts to sound muddy. What carries best in a cathedral acoustic is high clear notes. You don’t need very much of the lower voices to just touch in on the notes.¹⁹⁶

In contrast, the American churches and performance halls often consist of carpeted surfaces. Rutter explains that those halls notoriously lack reverberation; therefore, choral tone requires more foundation and singers must manufacture their own warmth in that acoustic because the buildings do not create abundant reverberation.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Rutter admits to a bit of envy of the American ethno-bass sound. He comments, “with the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

ethnic heritage from Eastern Europe and Russia, the [American] basses have that really rumbly organ-like rich sound. You don't find that in this country as much."¹⁹⁸

Professional English choristers, such as those in the *Cambridge Singers*, have a fortunate and bright career path as compared to professional choristers in other countries. Over the past thirty years, an increase in a vibrant choral scene in London has saturated the market with choral ensemble positions, says Rutter.¹⁹⁹ English professional choristers have the ability to make their full time living singing in choirs, but do so by singing in several different choirs. Their sight-reading ability must be extraordinarily high, due to the complex schedule and limited availability of singers and a competitive market. Rutter asserts, "most concerts in this country get one rehearsal, maybe two if you're lucky, and that's it! . . . There is also a sort of ethos in London of 'don't waste my time. We've got it, let's do it! Don't talk about it, just do it.'"²⁰⁰ From a functional perspective, this implies that not only do the singers need to be impeccable readers, but also the conductors must have considerable facility of craft and vast score knowledge.

Melodious Accord Inc.– Founded in 1985

The professional chamber choir *Melodious Accord*, conducted by Alice Parker, began over twenty-five years ago.²⁰¹ One of their primary goals is to preserve the American folk-song tradition, from colonial times all the way to the twenty-first century, with *The*

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Parker, Alice, interview.

Alice Parker Recording Project.²⁰² Parker's history includes work as an arranger, composer and collaborator with Robert Shaw. However, one of her greatest passions lies in conducting chamber music. She says of this inclination, "I've just realized that more and more, I'm a chamber music person. I love my sixteen [singers] and I can work with eight [singers]."²⁰³ Parker looks for choral members who exhibit flexible vocal techniques, who can sing in both a Brahms nineteenth-century tone and a Renaissance madrigal tone. Nevertheless, her basic model preference for choral sound is a Renaissance madrigal tone. "That very light sound is what I want," insists Parker.²⁰⁴ She speculates that if choirs continually sing with the late nineteenth-century sound, they will be unable to apply other colors such as those needed for chant, madrigals, or pop. Parker contrasts her preferred sound to early twentieth-century recordings of loud vocal production, intended to propel over the orchestra into large halls. She feels that type of voice lacked a sense of ensemble. All musicians need training in an ensemble "right from the beginning," says Parker, because it teaches you how to sing in tune.²⁰⁵

Anúna – Founded in 1987

In 1987, Irish composer Michael McGlynn founded the choir *Anúna*. Originally entitled *An Uaithne*, the name references the three types of Irish song: *Suantraí* (lullaby),

²⁰² Alice Parker & Melodious Accord, "Alice Parker Recording Project," Alice Parker & Melodious Accord, <http://melodiousaccord.org/activities/recording.htm> (accessed April 6, 2013).

²⁰³ Parker, Alice, interview.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

Geantraí (happy song) and *Goltraí* (lament).²⁰⁶ *Anúna* won their pivotal break to international fame in 1994 by performing in an opening segment of the Riverdance piece *Cloudsong*.²⁰⁷ The group has maintained international recognition ever since.²⁰⁸ *Anúna*'s sound "spans the gap between Classical and World music, but falls into neither category."²⁰⁹ They convey their unique presentation in both performance halls and video. The recent success of McGlynn's ensemble has piqued interest in the professional choral world, even though *Anúna* exhibits a different choral production than a typical classically-trained choir.²¹⁰ The mixture of trained classical singers and gifted amateurs provides for a unique and appealing choral tone, influenced by a natural singing voice, medieval music and the "lyrical sound of traditional elements of all cultures."²¹¹ While some of the music *Anúna* performs is Irish, McGlynn insists that *Anúna*'s musicians do not sing the style, as would a traditional Irish singer.²¹² Instead, *Anúna* exhibits their expression through "ritual." McGlynn explains the "ritual" as a performance "within the context of spiritual ceremony, primarily that of the 4th/5th century Christian church, and Greek drama."²¹³

²⁰⁶ Anúna, "About Us," The official Anúna site, <http://www.anuna.ie/AboutUs.asp> (accessed April 1, 2012).

²⁰⁷ McGlynn, Michael, e-mail message to author, March 27, 2013.

²⁰⁸ McGlynn, Michael, "Riverdance," Michael McGlynn - Pictures & Visions, <http://michaelmcglynn.wordpress.com/2009/11/07/riverdance/> (accessed April 1, 2012).

²⁰⁹ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

²¹⁰ Many professional choirs sing the music of Michael McGlynn including Chanticleer, Phoenix Chorale, and Kansas City Chorale.

²¹¹ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

Anúna travels extensively and, depending on the hall, may amplify themselves similarly to popular musicians or bands. McGlynn enjoys performing in smaller, more reverberant halls, but if the hall does not have a vibrant acoustic, the sound might be enhanced by artificial amplification.²¹⁴ However, McGlynn’s preference for that amplified choral tone is a gently ‘lifting’ of the natural sound. “The aim of the amplification is to make it sound unamplified, so that the audience gains the same experience from a small unamplified venue as from a 2000 seater, or as close to it, when they hear *Anúna*,” adds McGlynn. His sound engineers produce the sound by amplifying the high frequencies, eliminating the low frequencies, reducing the entire system to the lowest level and finally turning up the reverberation.²¹⁵ The effect exhibits a quiet wash of voices that the audience must strain to hear.²¹⁶ In this format, the sound system defines the choir’s blend, much the same as the natural acoustics of a cathedral enhances and rounds the color of the choir. The effect, meant to mimic the acoustics of a reverberant church, is soft, gentle and appealing to most listeners.

Conspirare – Founded in 1991

Craig Hella Johnson, conductor and founder of the Austin based ensemble *Conspirare*, shared that one of the important shifts in choral music over the past thirty years is more diversity of sound and “there’s a great deal more variety in the color palette

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ McGlynn, Michael, interview by author, Digital Recording, Sasebo, Japan, December 18, 2011.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

now.”²¹⁷ Johnson’s philosophy as an educator and conductor is that ensembles should evoke a community of energy and convey that mutually in performance. To this end, Johnson feels that singers and conductors must be willing to take risks in expression, wield a broad color palette, and check ‘egos’ at the door.²¹⁸ “I’m much more interested in what the music might invite,” says Johnson in describing what modern audiences find compelling. He does not feel that the music should reflect his own interpretation, but instead, “it’s like sculpture. We get out tools and start chipping away. I’m more interested in what will be revealed in our process.”²¹⁹ To Johnson, modern performance practice is “flexible, adaptable, and responsive to a variety of music texts . . . expression in the broadest range of freedom.” He feels that method is in opposition to the tendency thirty years ago in which choirs specialized in a particular sound.²²⁰

In practical terms, when Johnson auditions his singers he looks for the range of qualities in which the voice is comfortable. He is interested in a singer’s ability to govern all color elements, including dynamic contrast and tone. In addition, he exhibits a preference for a strong foundation in the bass section.²²¹ Johnson puts a lot of stock into the building blocks of singing such as sharing a pitch, a vowel, a dynamic, a rhythm and by an extension, intuitively sharing a gesture.²²² Nevertheless, he primarily desires that

²¹⁷ Johnson, Craig Hella, interview by author, Digital Recording, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 14, 2012.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

the ensemble perform the music's demands. That may be “*senza vibrato* . . . robust fortissimo . . . [or] the vapors of triple [*pianissimo*],” but all with a collective sense of higher musicianship.²²³

Tenebrae – Founded in 2001

Nigel Short, director of the English choir *Tenebrae*, is keenly interested in a colorful array of choral sounds. He expects his choir of twenty professional singers to utilize the precision he experienced as a member of the *King's Singers*, but also expects the “passionate sounds of a big cathedral choir or chamber choir.”²²⁴ That philosophy drives Short to explore a wide variety of repertoire and bring in different singers for different programs. Short explains, “I always try to find the right voices for the music that can change the color. Otherwise, you get a choir [that] basically sounds the same whether on a Renaissance piece, French, [or] Russian Orthodox piece It's more of a challenge, and it's better for the music to try and adapt the sound.”²²⁵

Because of Short's experience singing with the *King's Singers*, where he sensed any member could predict when a colleague was going to make a mistake, he strives for phenomenal accuracy and precision.²²⁶ When Short began *Tenebrae*, he felt uncertain that his singers automatically understood the level of accuracy he experienced as a King's Singer. He decided to guide them to that level of tenacity, and that created a new level of

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Short, Nigel, interview by author, Digital Recording via Skype, London, England, July 14, 2011.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

tension and intensity in the rehearsal and final product.²²⁷ Short is not interested in the typical English cathedral-choir balance of an inverted pyramid, top heavy and dominated with the trebles.²²⁸ He feels that there is much color lost when sopranos “smother” the sound. Instead, he tends to go with an extra low bass because he “prefer[s] a richer bottom sound,” and slighter, lighter and cleaner voices at the top.²²⁹

Tenebrae often employs countertenors in the alto section, although Short usually finds mezzo-sopranos more versatile and flexible when blending with the sopranos.²³⁰ Nigel Short believes the tendency for many chamber choirs to include the countertenor sound stems from the collegiate choir background prevalent in the English choral community.²³¹ Yet, Short likes the clarity of a countertenor voice and says they “tend not to carry a lot of overtones in their voice and that suits the sound I like.”²³² Due to a desire to build the sound from the bottom, he hires countertenors with bigger voices so they can fill the sound out and match a tenor. Then he also hires mezzo-sopranos to help diffuse the problem of blending color with the sopranos. Short admits that the countertenor sound often sounds “manufactured,” and the mezzo-sopranos add a natural color which helps blend all the voices together.²³³

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

Findings

Conductors involved in the present study revealed that they have observed a shift in choral tone since the 1970s, and many have called upon these changes within their own choirs, identifying a desire for techniques contrasting with earlier periods. They relayed several common descriptors of contemporary choral tone such as a more conscientious and precise application of *vibrato*, a desire for rich bass sonority, lengthy resonance, more precision in rhythm and articulations. They also observed that their singers come to them with greater amounts of training and are more willing to adjust their technique to the demands of the choral piece. While these changes forged a shift in the sound, some conductors voiced concerns about the disappearing warmth and spin in choral tone. They denied the fact that contemporary choirs exhibit finer intonation than previously, but instead sound distant and sterile.

Conversations with the subjects provoked further investigation into the origins and causes that led to the shifts of choral tone. There were several common threads between many of the choirs, such as a desire for fine intonation and a clean sound, a tendency towards a smaller chamber choir, a rigorous exploration of repertoire and a consistent desire to continually improve. These common perception raised questions regarding sources of sound shifts in professional choirs.

CHAPTER 4

CAUSES FOR THE SHIFT IN PROFESSIONAL CHORAL TONE SINCE THE 1970S

The natural discourse of conversation illuminated numerous potential causes of choral tonal shift; however, some points emerged more frequently than others.

Conductors and composers interviewed for this study identified nine main commonalities as potential causes for a shift in the color of professional choirs.

A basic shift transpired due to increased preference for the intimacy of a chamber choir environment over larger groups. Simply taking away one hundred or more voices from a choir vastly alters the timbre of the ensemble. The early music movement may have carved the path for reducing the choral size as much of the music composed before 1700 A.D called for smaller ensembles. Equally pertinent is how historically-informed practices altered the techniques of the singers by way of tuning systems and timbre. Twentieth century extended compositional techniques, although disliked at first, pushed boundaries in choral color and extreme vocalisms. However, a handful of contemporary techniques steadily remained within the repertoire, inviting new timbres into choral vocabulary. As the music grew more demanding, singers and choirs improved in their ability to articulate the difficult and new passages. Parallel to those increased skills, composers took note of the gifted musicians and continued to push boundaries.

Many cultural vocal colors infiltrated choral music over the past thirty to forty years, from locations as diverse as Bulgaria, England, and China. Each region brings different timbres, rhythms and embellishments to the choral sound. Rhythm and a few set-setting methods also stem both from ethnic heritage as well as the natural stress and

tones from various international languages. Equally influential is a pervasive bias for extremely low sonority, precipitated by several sources including the modern partiality to the sub-woofer and the drone, which stems from several cultures.

The modern populace, surrounded by numerous immediate forms of technology and entertainment, may have propelled directors and composers to alter their art to meet the perceived expectations of an entertainment-savvy audience. Inspired by films and modern popular music, they constructed compositions and concerts in such a way that satisfied the modern listener. Parallel to that development came the advancement of recording technology, dissemination of the digitally formatted mp3 and the ease in which a listener can access and consume music. The constant listening, reinterpreting and imitating caused conductors to not only mimic each other, but also seek out “perfect” recordings due to the advancement of the technology.

In this age of globalization, choral sound is more dynamic and diverse than any previous generation. This chapter discusses how and why the tonal palate of the twenty-first-century professional choir is multi-faceted and complex.

Size of Choir

Since the mid-twentieth century, a significant difference in professional choral organizations is their reduction in size, a basic factor that unavoidably alters the choral tone. Memorable professional choirs of the mid-twentieth century often consisted of more than one hundred singers.²³⁴ Over time, a sprouting up of chamber choirs resulted in the

²³⁴ Duffie, Bruce, “Conductor Margaret Hillis - Interview.”

dominance of smaller choirs.²³⁵ British composer Cecilia McDowall observed the shrinking of choir size:

In the past, with the great British tradition . . . of choral singing, the numbers involved [were] huge. An amateur choir, say 120 strong, produces a very different sound from a thirty-five or twenty-five strong chamber choir.²³⁶

Today, the most recognizable names in professional choral music are all choirs of less than 32 singers: *Chanticleer*, *Seraphic Fire*, *Cantus*, *Phoenix Chorale*, *Kansas City Chorale*, *Conspirare*, *VocalEssence Ensemble Singers*, *King's Singers*, *BBC Singers*, *Estonian Chamber Choir*, *The Sixteen*, *Tallis Scholars*, *Voces8*, *Tenebrae*, *Polyphony* and *Eric Whitacre Singers*. There are a few noted exceptions to this reshaping of the choral model. The *Chicago Symphony Chorus* is still a professional chorus and houses over one hundred singers.²³⁷ *LA Masterworks Chorale*, conducted by Grant Gershon, also boasts a membership of approximately 125 professionally paid singers.²³⁸ While many chamber choirs arose in the 1950s and 1960s, much of their sphere of influence did not culminate until the 1980s – 1990s through recordings and tours. Moreover, it was not until 2007 that chamber choirs earned the high distinction of a Grammy Award for “Best Choral Performance.” Before the *Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir*, *Eric Whitacre Singers* and the *Kansas City Chorale* won, “Best Choral Performance” Grammy Awards went

²³⁵ Matthew Sigman, “The Rise of the Professional Chorus,” Chorus America, <https://www.chorusamerica.org/conducting-performing/rise-professional-chorus> (accessed February 1, 2013); Smith, James G. and Young, Percy M., “Grove Music Online: Chorus (i).”

²³⁶ McDowall, Cecilia, interview by author, Digital Recording, London, England, July 13, 2011.

²³⁷ Chicago Symphony Orchestra, “Meet the Performers - Chicago Symphony Chorus,” Chicago Symphony Orchestra, <http://cso.org/about/performers/Performer.aspx?id=12972> (accessed February 25, 2013).

²³⁸ Los Angeles Master Chorale, “Los Angeles Master Chorale Singers,” Los Angeles Master Chorale at Walt Disney Concert Hall, <http://www.lamc.org/singers.php> (accessed February 25, 2013).

primarily to orchestral/choral collaborations of large choirs performing large choral works.²³⁹

Why did the basic size of the ensembles change? Although this question is not specifically part of this study, a few notions are worth mentioning. First, perhaps the musicians themselves found joy in chamber music, and prefer to work in that environment. Second, the most effective way for professional choirs to earn income is through touring. With fewer singers, the cost is more manageable.²⁴⁰ Third, as expected for most choral music composed before the year 1750, historically-informed early music period practice called for smaller ensembles. The chamber choir, with its smaller forces and tendency to integrate “vocal blend,” lent itself naturally to early music.

Early Music Movement

The sixties, seventies and eighties were a dynamic time when researchers unearthed historically informed performance practice, generally understood as music before the year 1750. New developments occurred in tuning procedures, recreating period instruments, bowing techniques and articulations.²⁴¹ Many professional chamber choirs

²³⁹ The Recording Academy, “Past Winners Search 2006 Classical,” Grammy.com, http://www.grammy.com/nominees/search?artist=&field_nominee_work_value=&year=2006&genre=5 (accessed April 17, 2013); The Recording Academy, “Past Winners Search 2011 Classical,” Grammy.com, http://www.grammy.com/nominees/search?artist=&field_nominee_work_value=&year=2011&genre=5 (accessed April 17, 2013); The Recording Academy, “Past Winners Search 2012 Classical,” Grammy.com, http://www.grammy.com/nominees/search?artist=&field_nominee_work_value=&year=2012&genre=5 (accessed April 17, 2013).

²⁴⁰ Sigman, Matthew, “Building Today’s Professional Choruses,” Chorus America, <https://www.chorusamerica.org/conducting-performing/building-todays-professional-choruses> (accessed February 1, 2013).

²⁴¹ Resources about early music performance practice are available from a number of publications. Examples include: Brown, Howard and Stanley Sadie, eds. *Performance Practice: Music Before 1600*.

born at that time began as early music ensembles, dedicated to early music performance practice. Emily Lau, singer and director of Boston's early music ensemble *The Broken Consort* gives this explanation for the benefits of performing early music with the accurate period technique:

Many musical compositions in the earlier periods (and also modern compositions) have extremely tight harmonic structures. Notes are so delicately close to one another that adding *vibrato* that bends the pitch will take away all the color and effect of that particular chord. Many early musical treatises also talk about the differences between different tuning systems, discussing the difference between 0.05 to 0.1 tones (instead of half tones). If everyone was using *vibrato* liberally, how could these early musicians have tuned to their desired 0.05 to 0.1 tone?²⁴²

It is clear to many of the subjects involved in the present study, that the early music movement had a profound impact on the choral tone of the professional choir. British composer, Gabriel Jackson, notes that the early music sound forced choirs to execute precise intonation: "you can't hide poor intonation when there's no *vibrato*. If it's not dead in tune, then everybody can tell."²⁴³ Matt Oltman suggests, "we really can't disassociate ourselves from the instrumentalists" in speaking about early music instrumental ensembles that collaborated with choirs in the 1970s.²⁴⁴ He recalls that Louis Botto, the founder of *Chanticleer*, was a practitioner of early music technique and often collaborated with *Philharmonia Baroque*.²⁴⁵ Oltman states that the two practices of

New York: W. W. Norton, 1989, 1990. Haynes, Bruce. *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Duffin, Ross, ed. *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000.

²⁴² Lau, Emily, e-mail message to author, February 3, 2013.

²⁴³ Jackson, Gabriel, interview by author, Digital Recording via Skype, London, England, July 20, 2011.

²⁴⁴ Oltman, Matt, interview.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

choral and instrumental early music technique go hand in hand, perhaps with the instrumentalists leading the charge.²⁴⁶ Ottley expands on Oltman's point, by explaining that not only were singers of the early music movement collaborating with instrumental ensembles, but also imitating instrumental articulations, *vibrato*, color and capabilities. He argues that the actual color of their vocal instrument changed to mimic the timbre of period instruments.²⁴⁷ In a DMA research document, Timothy Verville discussed historical writings dating before 1940 about *vibrato* application. Verville presented this quote from, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, by Leopold Mozart:

In his treatise on Violin performance, Mozart writes that *tremolo* is “an ornamentation which arises from Nature herself which can be used charmingly on a long note, not only by good instrumentalists, but also clever singers.”²⁴⁸

Additionally, Verville discovered:

Mozart states that since it does not fall firmly on just one note, that this undulating should not be played on every note. He cites that there are those who do so and describes them as ‘if they had the palsy.’ Mozart gives some ideas about where to employ *vibrato* and includes a chart indicating varying speeds as a method of practice.²⁴⁹

The early music instrumentalists of the 1960s and 1970s, being aware of defined period-appropriate *vibrato* techniques, became proponents of a cleaner and deliberate addition of oscillating tone. The expectation became that *vibrato* or tremolo exists only on some

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ottley, Jerold, interview.

²⁴⁸ Verville, Timothy, “Instrumental Vibrato: An Annotated Bibliography of Historical Writings Before 1940” (DMA diss., Tempe, Az: Arizona State University, 2012), 15.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

notes, at varying speed, dependent upon the music. The instrumentalists who led the early music movement in the 1960s and 1970s leaned towards a perfectly straight tone.

Jon Washburn insists early music research is not the only factor in choral music's shifting sound, but he does think it has been one of the important factors in legitimately cleaning up the sound.²⁵⁰ The early music movement that has gone back to historical mean-tone tuning, is something Washburn believes "really changes the sonority you're hearing."²⁵¹

While Harry Christophers believes the early music movement is principally what set the modern concept of choral tone forward, he thinks that the world sees the early music vocal model as pure lines without *vibrato*.²⁵² Christophers does not adhere to that model, but argues, *vibrato* is a Baroque term that is utilized as expression. You need to know how to shape it and blend it.²⁵³ Nigel Short too felt that the early music movement went too far in applying a straight tone. He says that the *Tallis Scholars* are the best example of a group that sings completely straight successfully as they still have a thriving establishment. However, most ensembles now seek greater flexibility in the singers' timbre. Short explains that there was a backlash in the 1980s, when singers decided they wanted to sing properly, causing the choral sound to grow bigger.²⁵⁴ Short claims that the resulting balance encompassed two evolutions: "[the] extreme early music approach that

²⁵⁰ Washburn, Jon, interview.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Christophers, Harry, interview.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Short, Nigel, interview.

developed in the 60s and 70s, and then a backlash in the 80s. And it's just kind of been honing itself for the past fifteen years."²⁵⁵ John Rutter credits the early music movement as a profound influence on current technique. He notices that even younger-generation opera singers' performance style is becoming straighter and freer but still with power and strength. Jokingly he adds, "*vibrato* is like sugar in coffee. It's a matter of taste."²⁵⁶

A scholar of medieval music, Michael McGlynn hears *vibrato* as a welcome vocal component for *Anúna* singers. McGlynn feels, "*vibrato* is natural; anything that is natural is right."²⁵⁷ However, continuous *vibrato* consisting of persistent oscillating beats, meant as a device for projection, is not the aesthetic McGlynn finds appropriate for his choir. He maintains talented singers should have the ability to manipulate the size, shape and color of the *vibrato* by changing the shape of the mouth and altering the rate of oscillation.²⁵⁸ McGlynn believes that inclusion of *vibrato* at points of tension and release within a phrase structure adds beauty and nuance. He considers it a tool for evoking emotion and tuning and feels the skill is an essential part of any performance as audiences interpret the beauty of the voice through the inclusion of *vibrato*.²⁵⁹

Michael McGlynn's compositional style relies heavily upon inspiration from early music, as he believes the ethos of ancient music is powerful.²⁶⁰ He describes the effect

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Rutter, John, interview.

²⁵⁷ McGlynn, Michael, interview by author, Digital Recording, Dublin, Ireland, July 7, 2011.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

his music and choir has on a listener as “a memory of a memory of a memory.”²⁶¹

Listeners often cannot put their finger on *what* effect they hear and see, but they recognize familiar elements such as religious or ceremonial rites, early Western chant and features of traditional Irish folk.

Various twenty-first century composers draw inspiration from early chant, polyphony and modal systems in their music. Examples include previously mentioned composer Arvo Pärt, who confesses to turning away from twentieth-century vernacular for techniques imbued with early music idioms.²⁶² Stephen Paulus describes his own melodies as modal.²⁶³ Ola Gjeilo found inspiration in the famous *antiphon* chant *Ubi Caritas*, which begins with the opening phrase of the ancient melody, and then the octavo expands into homophonic setting, channeling the modal spirit of Durufle’s *Ubi Caritas*.²⁶⁴ Paul Mealor describes his music as filled with *plainchant* throughout.²⁶⁵ Jonathan Dove describes his music as perhaps implied tonal but not strictly tonal with a proclivity for modality.²⁶⁶ Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, while he often explores musical content that is quite far from tonal, also gravitates towards modal and the use of a pedal point.²⁶⁷ Inspired by Schütz and Bach, Alice Parker enjoys composing and conducting modal

²⁶¹ McGlynn, Michael, interview.

²⁶² Muzzo, Grace Kingsbury, “Systems, Symbols & Silence - ProQuest,” *Choral Journal* 49, no. 6 (December 2008): 22–35.

²⁶³ Paulus, Stephen, interview by author, Digital Recording, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 16, 2012.

²⁶⁴ Gjeilo, Ola, interview by author, Digital Recording, Phoenix, Arizona, May 25, 2011.

²⁶⁵ Mealor, Paul, interview by author, Digital Recording, London, England, July 7, 2011.

²⁶⁶ Dove, Jonathan, interview by author, Digital Recording, London, England, July 15, 2011.

²⁶⁷ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview by author, Digital Recording, London, England, July 12, 2011.

harmony because it gives a sense of being “freed from the tyranny of the leading tone.”²⁶⁸

Steven Stucky composed a piece in 2006 entitled *Whispers*. His composition intertwines musical fragments from Renaissance composer William Byrd’s motet, *Ave Verum Corpus*, with Walt Whitman’s text *Whispers of Heavenly Death* (1868). The effect is haunting, and in the composer’s words a “mystical exaltation.”²⁶⁹

It is apparent that early music helped shape the choral tone in two ways. Many choirs adapted the technique itself, which asked for accurate tuning and a cleaner, less-oscillating tone. Early music also inspired contemporary composers to draw upon characteristics such as monophony, modal harmony, and polyphonic textures to integrate within their craft. Adhering to specialized early music vocal techniques only furthered singers’ skills and ability to adapt. Versatile singers and a fine-tuning of capabilities within the professional choir is another area that subjects suggested contributed to the shift in choral tone.

Composer Influence or Choir and Conductor Influence?

Which happened first? Did composers “push the envelope,” which necessitated pedagogical changes in the choral tone? Alternatively, did singers’ and choral skill facilitate an expertise that composers harnessed? Perhaps it is a question without an answer, as opinions of respondents’ varied.

²⁶⁸ Parker, Alice, interview.

²⁶⁹ Stucky, Steven, *Whispers*, Liner Notes (King of Prussia, Pa: Merion Music, inc., 2006).

In response to the question of whether composers or finer choirs spearheaded the change in choral tone, David Hill thinks, “no, I think choirs have gotten cleverer and cleverer to be honest.”²⁷⁰ Finnish composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi agrees. Not only have singers become better, but also they are more willing to accommodate changes to their vocal timbre to fit the music. He goes on to say:

That's something maybe that has been happening more over the past twenty years: that choirs have become not only more aware, but also more capable. Conductors have started requiring or asking choirs to adapt to different kinds of music, rather than using the same type of voice, the same type of performance for all repertoire.²⁷¹

Nigel Short observes that professional singers are now more willing to adapt their vocal quality for “the betterment of [the] music.”²⁷² In particular, a great deal of new music written over the past twenty to thirty years requires a more honed approach.²⁷³ In England, modern professional choral singers have a career path having trained in a system of historical choral tradition and intense, individual instruction.²⁷⁴ Singer skills have increased, coinciding with conductors holding greater expectations for flexibility, range, strength, and robust sound.²⁷⁵

Craig Hella Johnson has a differing viewpoint. He observes that the prevalence of excellent ensembles allows composers the freedom to write at a high level. If composers write pieces that are “more challenging, more virtuosic and more nuanced, it has the

²⁷⁰ Hill, David, interview.

²⁷¹ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

²⁷² Short, Nigel, interview.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Rutter, John, interview; Short, Nigel, interview.

²⁷⁵ Oltman, Matt, interview.

possibility of actually being performed. I'm certain that is having an impact."²⁷⁶ Brunelle added to Johnson's observation and commented upon composers who found themselves surprised at the reading and singing quality within his choir. Composers tell him, "Wow! Boy, I could have made this harder. You people are really good!"²⁷⁷ Brunelle believes that now composers know the potential and possibility of contemporary choirs.²⁷⁸

Several composers weighed in on the discussion, as well. Stephen Paulus sees that the abilities of professional choirs give the composer permission:

With a professional [choir] you expect the extremes of their range and that the choir will be able to pull it off I always hope for a certain agility to move between different chordal areas . . . that might require tuning on a dial. . . . [Professional choirs will] get it in the first ten minutes.²⁷⁹

Paulus explains further that contemporary professional choirs are much better in their technical ability to create multiple margins of sound, which leads to performing more challenging repertoire. He wryly adds, "thirty years ago they were more used to 'square' music."²⁸⁰

Gabriel Jackson, speaking about the *BBC Singers*, expresses that it is an exciting proposition that they can perform anything placed in front of them. However, Jackson warns that if composers consistently write to this level of expertise, there are few choirs that can perform the music as proficiently as a professional choir. He warns, "otherwise,

²⁷⁶ Johnson, Craig Hella, interview.

²⁷⁷ Brunelle, Phillip, interview.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Paulus, Stephen, interview.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

you write these pieces that get performed once, and never again. Nobody really wants that.”²⁸¹

On the other hand, perhaps the composers’ technical exploration caused the choral tone to shift. Craig Jessop says, “I think composers have always led the way. . . . They are the prophets [and] the poets.”²⁸² He likens the shift to how progressive invention occurs in any musical generation. He gives examples of this phenomenon by pointing to historical figures such as Brahms, Beethoven and Frank Martin, who progressively reshaped conventions during their lifetimes.²⁸³ Jessop asserts that demands of the composer dictate the style and says:

I would say in any art form, they push us to our limits beyond what we thought we could do, because they heard it in their minds That ability to take out of the cosmos these feelings of the human heart, to give them a language of music and then the ability to put it down on paper is astounding to me.²⁸⁴

Charles Bruffy also believes that choral tone is a result of the music written. He is convinced that compositional techniques in of the 1970s to 1990s required a shift in choral production to accommodate the repertoire. He speculates that had the music existed at an earlier time, Robert Shaw too would have changed his approach to choral color.²⁸⁵ Jonathan Dove theorizes that new possibilities in musical language began during

²⁸¹ Jackson, Gabriel, interview.

²⁸² Jessop, Craig, interview.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

the 1960s and flowered in the 1980s. Those shifts occurred in harmonic language, tunefulness, and approachability for the choir and audiences.²⁸⁶

Conductors, abilities of singers and composers appear to have built upon each other's strengths and creativity simultaneously. Regardless of the originator, both the experimentation of the composer and the improved quality of singers and choral technique has influenced the choral sound over the past thirty to forty years. The composers pioneered scores of innovative vocal techniques. However, were the techniques effective for singers and did it cause a shift in the color of professional choirs?

The Influence of Twentieth-Century Compositional Techniques

Benjamin Britten once said, "it is cruel, you know, that music should be so beautiful. It has the beauty of loneliness and of pain: of strength and freedom. The beauty of disappointment and never-satisfied love. The cruel beauty of nature, and everlasting beauty of monotony."²⁸⁷ Yet, how do we define beautiful music? The modern and postmodern world possesses music that jars the human psyche into attention through *avant-garde* expressions of sound. The twentieth-century compositional experimentation provoked alterations in choral sound.

²⁸⁶ Dove, Jonathan, interview.

²⁸⁷ Brown, Frank Burch, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 124n71.

Twelve-tone serialism stretched harmony beyond recognition.²⁸⁸ Minimalism and pattern music explored how long a human ear would tolerate static harmony and rhythm in excessive repetition.²⁸⁹ Electronic and chance music found new ways to define a musical instrument through its extended techniques.²⁹⁰ Composers invented and explored harmony, polytonality, polyrhythm, pointillism, tetra-chords, and new genres.²⁹¹ New technology in science, computers, engineering and mathematics paved the way for graphic notational techniques, pitch class sets, looping, and electronic sound manipulation.²⁹² Improvisation, indeterminacy and experimental music became common tools in a composer's palette.²⁹³ To some, *avant-garde* music sounded like random musical chaos. Those who appreciated the art form, such as Serge Gainsbourg, pronounced, "ugliness is in a way superior to beauty because it lasts."²⁹⁴ Additionally, Clement Greenberg remarked, "all profoundly original art looks ugly at first."²⁹⁵ However, to the mid-twentieth century singer, all of these extended techniques were unfriendly and perhaps "ugly" for the voice.

²⁸⁸ Cope, David, *Techniques of the Contemporary Composer* (United States of America: Schirmer, 1997), 58–70.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 216–219.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 161–167, 177–189.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 38–42, 71–76, 89–95.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 77–85, 150–158, 168–171.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 222–226.

²⁹⁴ Paramentier, Michel Alfred, *Mise Au Point: Grammaire Française, Vocabulaire Et Textes* (Ontario, Canada: Harcourt Canada, Limited, 1993), 254.

²⁹⁵ Clement Greenberg and John O'Brian, *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949* (London, UK: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 17.

Suddenly thrust into a world that excluded their natural ability to spin a melody or express an emotion, singers struggled to read and hear their part with the new twentieth-century techniques. The techniques forced singers to do what comes easier on an instrument: articulate complex rhythms, decipher indistinct tonality, and use their instrument unconventionally. Most choirs did not embrace these unfriendly methods. Jerold Ottley asserts, “it [was] just too hard in terms of satisfaction of the singers or [what] the audience would get out of it.”²⁹⁶ He argues that modern music increased emphasis on rhythm. “When the rhythm becomes a paramount feature, the *rubato* disappears, and the natural *portamento* between notes and a line disappears somewhat.”²⁹⁷ The twentieth century *avant-garde* bias limited the work of some composers as well. Alice Parker recalls that she first began composing at a time when the industry dismissed anything that was not progressive and difficult. Parker felt discouraged in her compositional abilities because she thought, “you’re not a composer; you’re not writing twentieth-century music.”²⁹⁸

Many of the most challenging *avant-garde* techniques developed for choirs eventually faded. However, some aspects remain in the repertory and still echo through the modern body of choral music. Perhaps contemporary composers do not create more difficult things than the mid-twentieth century, speculates Stephen Paulus, but they are writing different things.²⁹⁹ He sarcastically explains that in the 1970s, when he began his

²⁹⁶ Ottley, Jerold, interview.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Parker, Alice, interview.

²⁹⁹ Paulus, Stephen, interview.

craft, composers endlessly competed with one another by asking, “is this more contemporary than the last thing we heard?”³⁰⁰ Paulus felt they were stuck in that loop for several decades, yet the music was not overly interesting to artists or audiences. He argues, the *avant-garde* “melodies” lacked progression, lacked formulaic development and lacked sufficient arch within phrases.³⁰¹ Finally, Paulus mused that composers asked themselves, “why am I writing something I don’t even enjoy hearing?”³⁰² Practitioners eventually saw the evolution of music as not just a linear development, but as a return and redefining of older models. Now Paulus believes, “there’s more diversity in colors and kinds of great things that are being written.”³⁰³

Slowly, twentieth-century methods found their way into choral music in less aggressive ways, and choirs became more accepting and comfortable with their role in the genre. Jon Washburn says of the *avant-garde* techniques, “the ‘bleeps’ and ‘bloops’ kind of music just doesn’t work [for choirs].”³⁰⁴ However, he recognizes that the style may have led to a cleaning up of the sound, particularly with the advent of one technique prevalent in today’s compositions: the tone cluster. Contemporary composers regularly set music to clusters, the sound of which is dissonant, brilliant and perhaps more inviting and stimulating to the modern audience now accustomed to the sonority. The technique occurs in music by many composers such as James, MacMillan, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, René

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Washburn, Jon, interview.

Clausen, Morten Lauridsen, Arvo Pärt, Paul Mealor, and Eric Whitacre, to name a few. British composer Cecilia McDowall, demonstrates this method in her piece *Ave Regina*, found in Figure 1. She builds a tension and release effect through consonant and dissonant harmonic counterpoint, which slowly morphs into a cadential arrival of cluster chords at measure 4.

Andante espressivo e teneramente ♩ = c.74 CECILIA McDOWALL

p dolce *p cresc.*

A - ve Re - gi - na cae - lo - rum, A - ve Do - mi - na

p dolce *p cresc.*

A - ve Re - gi - na cae - lo - rum, A - ve Do - mi - na

p dolce *p cresc.*

A - ve Re - gi - na cae - lo - rum, A - ve Do - mi - na

p dolce *p cresc.*

A - ve Re - gi - na cae - lo - rum, A - ve Do - mi - na

Figure 1. *Ave Regina* Cecilia McDowall mm. 1-6

“Ave Regina” by Cecilia McDowall

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McDowall enjoys writing *a cappella* choral music for the exquisite way phrases carry within a reverberant acoustic. She loves how choral dissonance adds a certain acoustic “shimmer”.³⁰⁵ Phrase shapes overlap and blend, becoming an additional voice.

³⁰⁵ McDowall, Cecilia, interview.

McDowall states, “when certain dissonances are at play . . . there is almost an extra dissonance, or ‘add-on’ dissonance, which can enhance the harmonic colour.”³⁰⁶

Twenty-first century composers tend to set clusters in a way that eventually leads to harmonic understanding, tonality and cadences. However, often this style of composition comes at the cost of counterpoint, an ancient and valuable technique that many composers would like to see reinvigorated. Libby Larson loves counterpoint, but points out it seems to be disappearing and misses hearing it in modern compositions. She recognizes that the current choral trend is in homophonic settings that allow for a beautiful color from the choir, but she argues that the chords do not necessarily relate to the words.³⁰⁷ Nigel Short agrees and feels that it is a shame that contrapuntal music seems to be dying out.³⁰⁸ He feels there is an abundance of inventive choral music founded upon counterpoint, and the music of today overlooks that art. Short admits, however, that the lack of counterpoint itself could have influenced the current choral tone. He says, “there’s an awful lot of music where the entire choir sings all the text at the same time. And that has kind of created a different choral sound, if you like. Because obviously when you get a bunch of soloists together, and give them that kind of music, it doesn’t sound very nice.”³⁰⁹

Jonathan Dove believes that new music in the 1960s and 1970s of the *avant-garde* set a precedent. Minimalism, a prevalent twentieth century technique, is a compositional

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Larsen, Libby, interview by author, Digital Recording, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 15, 2012.

³⁰⁸ Short, Nigel, interview.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

method that found a sporadic home in contemporary choral music. Jonathan Dove does not see himself as a modernist, but sometimes critics compare his music to that of American minimalist, John Adams.³¹⁰ “I don’t like extensive and intensive dissonance. I tend to work in a bit of a quieter, simpler palette. . . . I’m quite happy to write stretches of music in C-major for example. I can find a lot for myself in that.”³¹¹ In Figure 2, *The Star-Song* exhibits Dove’s minimalistic approach. Measure 101 displays the last bar of an eleven-measure segment, which demonstrates a repeated pattern predominantly in G. Beginning in measure 102, the voices, and lower organ staves shift chords in an upwards step-wise motion, while the upper organ part continues the pattern based predominantly in G.

³¹⁰ Dove, Jonathan, interview.

³¹¹ Ibid.

101 **F**

S. *f* And when night comes, we'll give Him was - sail - ing; *mf* And that His tre - ble

A. *f* And when night comes, we'll give Him was - sail - ing; *mf* And that His tre - ble

T. *f* And when night comes, we'll give Him was - sail - ing; *mf* And that His tre - ble

B. *f* And when night comes, we'll give Him was - sail - ing; *mf* And that His tre - ble

Figure 2. *The Star-Song* Jonathan Dove M. 101-106

Extract from 'Star-Song' by Jonathan Dove
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Gabriel Jackson thinks the reshaping of choral music has benefits: “there are so many composers working in Europe and the United States . . . [and] around the world, who are writing interesting and rewarding, and sometimes very hard, new music, but it’s not impossible [to sing].”³¹²

Ola Gjeilo is a composer who writes demanding but rewarding music. He is influenced by elements of post-minimalistic music, particularly that by John Adams and

³¹² Jackson, Gabriel, interview.

Philip Glass.³¹³ One example presents itself in the “Gloria” of his *Sunrise Mass*. The beginning of the movement displays strings on minimalistic *arpeggiated* patterns, pared against arching choral melodies.³¹⁴ Originally from Norway, Gjeilo discerns a certain bias in the current continental European composition field, which leans heavily toward *avant-garde* and highly chromatic music.³¹⁵ He knew he would not flourish in that atmosphere so developed a divergent philosophy as a composer:

There isn't anything wrong with dissonance, as conflict and discord is a natural part of life and necessary for all positive development and maturation. And in most areas of society, conflict is something we very much want to resolve. But in a great deal of avant-garde art, the goal seems to be to stay in the conflict itself, which to me becomes a way of just inflicting the listeners with our own neurosis. Dissonance and high chromaticism is important to explore; the Modernists were brave to delve into parts of the human psyche that are dark and edgy, but I do think they got somewhat stuck in that. A lot of art pushed audiences away for some time. I think people naturally and instinctively want to experience transcendence, resolution and the feeling of redemption, joy and peace that the resolving of discord can yield.³¹⁶

Gjeilo believes we have reached a new period in composition where there is much more exploration in the realm of tonal and modal classical music through the prism of contemporary popular music.³¹⁷

Gjeilo's style outlines another contemporary compositional technique. In certain types of works, Gjeilo composes “symphonically.”³¹⁸ For him, the meaning of that term is twofold. First, he sometimes prioritizes sonic integrity and beauty over textual

³¹³ Gjeilo, Ola, interview.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

substance when the aural sonority is his primary goal. Second is in the application of his preferred sonorities of choir and orchestra together. He calls it “the ultimate sound.”³¹⁹ Gjeilo incorporates orchestral writing into the choral parts so that vocal sonority fills out the texture approximating instrumental denseness.³²⁰ The sonic effect he desires often requires massive breath control by voices in the ensemble to support the breadth and warmth of the thick-textured chords. It takes a tremendous amount of energy to maintain the elegant and slow moving lines seamlessly. As found in Figure 3, Eric Whitacre noticed a similar orchestrated style in Morten Lauridsen’s music.

I’m not talking about musical content, or text settings, or similarities to his other pieces. (There is much debate over all of that, but for the record, I’m a huge fan of his, both as a composer and as a person.) I’m talking about the orchestration of the choir, the ‘voice-estration’ if you will, his knowledge of the human voice and how to use it in an ensemble setting. His pieces just sound gorgeous. Lush, and warm, like honey, or butter, or cream. I think that part of his extraordinary success . . . is that it just sounds so *good*, and so many different choirs, both good and not-so-good, can pick it up and sound *good*. . . . [Lauridsen’s music] makes the choir open up and simply *blossom*.³²¹

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Whitacre, Eric, “‘When David Heard’ with the Los Angeles Master Chorale,” Eric Whitacre: Composer, Conductor, Lecturer, <http://ericwhitacre.com/blog/when-david-heard-with-the-los-angeles-master-chorale> (accessed February 17, 2013).

The image shows a musical score for the song "Sure on this Shining Night" by Morten Lauridsen, measures 40-42. The score is arranged for voice and piano. The vocal line is written in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are "shin - ing night, sure on this shin - ing". The piano accompaniment is written in bass clef. The score includes dynamic markings such as "rit." and "ff", and tempo markings "a tempo". The piano part includes "Ped." markings indicating pedaling.

Figure 3. *Sure on this Shining Night* Morten Lauridsen mm. 40-42

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Philip Brunelle recounts a story about Aaron J. Kernis exhibiting a similar proclivity. Brunelle describes Kernis's music as dissonant, requiring minimal *vibrato*, but also that it is an instrumentally conceived style of composition. Brunelle fondly remembers a time when Kernis wrote for sopranos as he would write for strings. "He . . . stretch[ed] the range and [had] the sopranos singing, sitting on high A, followed by B followed by C. And I'[d] say 'Aaron, that's really quite difficult.' He'[d] say, 'oh, is it?'"³²²

³²² Brunelle, Phillip, interview.

Finnish composer, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, found vast inventiveness in the late Romantic chromatic composers and twentieth-century classics, such as Shostakovich, for their “spikier and edgier” explorations.³²³ Mäntyjärvi’s idiosyncratic music elicits various descriptions from sonorous, somber, and poignant to pointy, jagged and gritty. However, he does not shy away from triads and consonant harmonies, and in some pieces, he explores clichés and humor.³²⁴ Other compositions, such as his *Four Shakespeare Songs*, utilize exquisite melodies, heart-breaking suspensions, and emotive cadential arrivals. He recognizes that the listener needs a “sense of familiarity” to have a chance at understanding his music.³²⁵ Although Mäntyjärvi admits his music may benefit from multiple hearings, he reveals that his inclusion of familiarity occurs through means of a “hook or an anchor point for the listener to be able to grasp some sort of the overall idea, whether it’s the structure or the harmonic, or the melodic ideas of the piece.”³²⁶

Irish composer Michael McGlynn harbors a fascination with a number of contemporary and early-music techniques, as his two most noteworthy compositional influences are Debussy and Machaut.³²⁷ Traditional Irish and medieval music are some of the foundations for many of his compositions; however he sees his own work “as

³²³ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

³²⁴ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, “Works :: Teokset SATB,” Jaakko Mäntyjärvi Website, <http://www.jaakkomantjarvi.fi/WorksTeoksetSATB.html> (accessed February 18, 2013). From the description of Mäntyjärvi’s cynical composition entitled, *Announcement II*. “Not originally designed as a series, this series began with an announcement reminding the audience to turn their mobile phones off (I), followed by one about the number of exits in the auditorium (II), an apology that the start of the concert has been delayed by this announcement (III) and a notice that unaccompanied minors are not allowed (IV); the last-mentioned piece of course consists almost exclusively of a cappella minor triads.”

³²⁵ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

soundtrack [repertoire] rather than as concert repertoire.”³²⁸ Drawing on an interest of György Ligeti’s music, McGlynn fused the soundtrack concept with contemporary methods in his own compositions.³²⁹ McGlynn often requires singers to articulate a slide between chords to hear every bend of pitch, similar to Ligeti’s use of microtones.³³⁰

In a DMA dissertation about McGlynn’s music, Stacie Rossow outlines a contemporary technique McGlynn is fond of employing, found in his piece *Sanctus*. Figure 4 demonstrates McGlynn’s desire for the chorus to engage in harmonic overtone singing in measures 9 -13. To do this the chorus moves slowly, and independently, through a series of vowels to change the overtones occurring at any given time. The rhythms and tempo are non-metrical throughout the opening section and chordal changes move with the soloist rather than on specific beats.³³¹

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ McGlynn confessed a love of many of Ligeti’s works, including the *Space Odyssey 2001’s* soundtrack. He is also attracted to the composer’s works due to the “appropriateness of the visual image.”

³³⁰ McGlynn, Michael, interview.

³³¹ Stacie Lee Rossow, “The Choral Music of Irish Composer Michael McGlynn” (DMA diss., University of Miami, 2010), http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/438 (accessed June 23, 2011).

"Oh*" indicates a form of harmonic singing. Form the mouth into an "oh" shape, lifting the soft palate. Without moving the mouth-shape, move the tongue slowly into the shape "ee" [as "she"], sending the sound through the nose. The lower the voice the stronger the sound.

Figure 4. *Sanctus* by Michael McGlynn mm. 8-14

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Harmonic-overtone singing comes from ancient traditions of cultures around the world, and contemporary insertions are not the first time it has appeared in choral music. Overtone occurrences come primarily from Asia, or eastern Russia. However, ethnomusicologist Bernard Lortat-Jacob discovered a rare form of polyphonic Renaissance settings where harmonic singing occurred in a brotherhood on Sardinia, an island off the coast of Italy.³³² When singing liturgical music, the brotherhood created harmonics within polyphonic four-voice melodies in such a way that a fifth note, or *Quintina*, sounded.³³³ To that culture, the overtones held a “spiritual function.”³³⁴

³³² Tongeren, Mark C. van, *Overtone Singing; Physics and Metaphysics of Harmonics in the East and West*, 2nd rev. ed. (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Fuscica, 2002), 154.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 155.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

Overtone singing has only recently entered the mainstream of choral sound. Karlheinz Stockhausen was the first twentieth century composer to draw on the colors of overtone singing with classical vocalists in his piece *Stimmung*, 1968. Since the late 1970s, enormous amounts of choral compositions utilize the technique and now listeners consider it an accepted, beautiful and divine choral color.³³⁵

The ancient tradition of overtone singing does not stand alone as a cultural influence on contemporary choral music. Diverse ethnic customs and timbres from around the globe also became attractive features in new compositions and application of sound.

Regional influences and Multi-Cultural Traditions

It is not possible to discuss the shifting of choral tone in professional choirs without acknowledging a rich and engaging body of multi-cultural music, regional influences and folk traditions in the twenty-first century domain of choral performance. The music from each country alone informs the needed choral tone based solely upon cultural rhythmic integrity, language structure, and regional colors. Instead of focusing on the repertoire, this section considers how the choral tone from a few regions inspired a tonal imitation in professional choirs.³³⁶

For many generations, the Scandinavian choral tradition implanted itself in the tone of the St. Olaf, Concordia and Luther College choirs.³³⁷ More recently, the work of Eric

³³⁵ Hinds, Stuart, "New Music for Chorus with Overtone Singing - ProQuest," *Choral Journal* 47, no. 10 (April 2007): 20–31.

³³⁶ The English choral tradition is discussed in earlier portions of the present study, so will not be further addressed in this section.

³³⁷ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview; Darrow, Gerald F., *Four Decades of Choral Training*.

Ericson in the 1960s through 1980s drew the attention of many musicians around the world.³³⁸ Several participants for the present study support Ericson’s influential legacy as well: Charles Bruffy, Craig Hella Johnson, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, Jon Washburn, and Craig Jessop. Swedish conductor, Eric Ericson, founded the *Stockholm Chamber Choir* in 1945, later renamed the *Eric Ericson Chamber Choir*. Renowned for their Nordic sound, his choir explored early music and contemporary music and was celebrated for his promotion of Scandinavian composers.³³⁹ Ericson commissioned contemporary composers, encouraging them to experiment with the voice. Now many of those compositions represent standard choral repertoire of the Nordic countries.³⁴⁰

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi describes Ericson’s tone as pared down to the essentials: no *vibrato*, no dark colors, extremely focused but just thin clear tone allowing them to pitch as accurately as possible.³⁴¹ Mäntyjärvi recalls that before the Ericson era, recordings consisted of distinct differences in voice production in almost in all aspects of tone, phrasing and approach.³⁴² Ericson’s philosophy, as Mäntyjärvi understood it, was that a choir “should be able to adapt its singing technically to the parameters of any given style.”³⁴³ Additionally, singers should be able to produce both a full, dark, romantic sound, and a light and narrow early-music sound. Charles Bruffy describes Ericson’s

³³⁸ Swedish conductor Eric Ericson passed away on February 16th, 2013 during the writing of this document. Thank you for your extraordinary contribution to the choral world, *Maestro*.

³³⁹ Eric Ericsons Kammarkör, “Home,” Eric Ericsons Kammarkör, <http://www.eekk.se/> (accessed February 20, 2013).

³⁴⁰ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

contribution as exploring the “rainbow of sounds that are possible,” especially in his progressive repertoire choices.³⁴⁴ To Jon Washburn, Ericson’s choirs defined professional choral sound which had a uniformity of vowel production not heard in other professional choirs during that era.³⁴⁵ Washburn is of the opinion that the natural Swedish color tended towards dark and light simultaneously, producing a blended clean sound that he found attractive.³⁴⁶

Regional colors, which may have had influence on professional choral tone, came from many different places. Charles Bruffy believes there may be a link between the *Bulgarian Women’s Choir* performing in the US during the 1990s and the willingness of choral conductors to try inventive programs incorporating the Bulgarians colors. He admits, “I was so magnetized by their use of the voice and all the hysteria” that came out of their sound.³⁴⁷ However, some American educators expressed horror at the way in which the women used their instruments. They argued it was not good choral singing due to its chesty and forced tone.³⁴⁸ On the other hand, Bruffy found the Bulgarian sound stimulating. He describes their sound as “a very guttural, throaty, heavy Bulgarian kind of sound. It’s amazing. Downright scary, actually.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

³⁴⁵ Washburn, Jon, interview.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.; Peccary, Gregory, “Bulgarian women’s choir, Dva Shopski Dueta,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdjIEaDgEr8> (accessed February 20, 2013).

Some modern choral performance practice applies this strong and guttural technique. *Raua needmine/Curse Upon Iron* 1972 by Estonian composer Veljo Tormis requires a riveting, grating and visceral sound from soloists and choir.³⁵⁰ This composition is a pivotal example of extended vocal technique settings in choral music. Figure 5 highlights a point in the score that calls for slowly changing nasal-focused vowels, or a “*Glissando* of vowels,” paired against male voices in a “screeching” register and color, singing a parallel melody set apart by a tri-tone.

³⁵⁰ StateChoirLATVIJA, “Veljo Tormis ‘Raua needmine / Curse Upon Iron’,” YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huQ_OcKwGwA (accessed February 20, 2013).

(kriiskavalt)
fff (screeching)

T.s. Taat see ah_jul ta ä_ri_ses,
(kriiskavalt)
fff (screeching)

B.s.

(võikalt) (sinisterly)

-(aa) - *) oo - uu - õõ - ee - ää - öö - üü - ii - ee - aa -

-(aa) - *) oo - uu - õõ - ee - ää - öö - üü - ii - ee - aa -

*) Häälikute glissando.
Glissando of vowels.

Figure 5. *Raua Needmine/Curse Upon Iron* by Veljo Tormis. page 28

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Additional techniques, seen in Figure 6, include *Sprechstimme*, (speech voice), dramatic physical choral movement, and a relentless bass drum eighth-note rhythm. A vocal slide, meant to imitate and evoke the terror of a siren, begins with the soloists in the last two measures of Figure 6, and later occurs in the choir. At one point in the score, the composer even calls for a scream from all the voices, meant to elicit a fearful emotion.

28

(hää «murdub») (the voice «breaks») *ff* > *gliss.**

aa...

(hää «murdub») (the voice «breaks») *ff* > *gliss.**

aa...

ff > *ff* >

tap.ma rau.a, te.ra.se, tap.ma rau.a, te.ra.se,

[otse] [straight]

* Sireeni imitatsioon. Imitating the siren.

Figure 6. *Raua Needmine/Curse Upon Iron* by Veljo Tormis. Page 36

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Estonia and Bulgaria are not neighboring countries so it would be a large jump to assume that somehow the vocal colors from these countries are related to one another. However, the recordings of Veljo Tormis only began to obtain releases outside of Latvia, Sweden, Russian and Estonia in the late 1980s and early 1990s.³⁵¹ That was also the era the *Bulgarian Women's Choir* began touring the United States, and it was a period that embraced multi-cultural choral music.³⁵² All of these changes came during the time that

³⁵¹ Tüür, Erkki-Sven, "Veljo Tormis Information Archive and Homepage Index," Sympatico, <http://www3.sympatico.ca/alan.teder/vtinfoarchive.htm> (accessed February 20, 2013).

³⁵² Graves, Dan, "Multiculturalism and the Choral Canon 1975-2000 ACDA - American Choral Directors Association," *Choral Journal* 41, no. 2 (September 2000): 37-44. Between the years 1975-1989,

composers were exploring new ways of fusing folk traditions with choral music.³⁵³

Jaakko Mäntyjärvi believes “that spilled over into choral music as well.”³⁵⁴

Jewish liturgical and folk music set in Hebrew now benefits from a higher frequency of performances in mainstream choral compositions. Cecilia McDowall found herself fascinated with the rich colors and textures inherent to that tradition. In a composition she wrote for the Liberal Jewish Synagogue of London called *Song of the Sea*, she sought to portray the historical quality of the cantor’s ornamentation through the Hebrew libretto. McDowall found that by adding this cultural flavor to her piece, it caused her music to sound unlike any of her previous compositions. She reflected, “I moved away from the English cathedral sound and aimed at writing a piece which would fit more comfortably within a Jewish liturgical context.”³⁵⁵ Due to the natural stresses of the Hebrew language, she found it to be one of “the most beautiful languages to set, full of rich and evocative vowel sounds which seem to bring an added poignancy to the meaning of the words.”³⁵⁶

Some professional choirs specialize in stylistic niches. Examples include *The Real Group*, which sings predominantly jazz; *Swingle Singers*, who specialize in eclectic jazz and pop; the *Mongolian Chamber Choir*, which sings Mongolian folk songs; *Anúna*, which specializes in the music of Michael McGlynn, Irish folk and ancient music; or even the late *Moses Hogan Chorale* that sang mostly Hogan’s spiritual arrangements.

the median number of multicultural pieces performed per ACDA convention. Since then performances have significantly increased.

³⁵³ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ McDowall, Cecilia, interview.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

However, the majority of the professional choral arena considers themselves specialists in all areas of choral music. Matt Oltman lists *Chanticleer's* dynamic repertoire as including Jazz, Australian didgeridoo music, Cuban folk music, spirituals, and Swedish Music.

Charles Bruffy insists that his ensembles specialize in singing choral music of all genres.³⁵⁷ Phillip Brunelle's group explores everything from newly commissioned works to opera, bluegrass and the music of South America.³⁵⁸ All three of these conductors (and several others) insisted that when they perform music from any genre, there is always an attempt to perform music based on the accuracy of its origins. The obvious conclusion is that professional choirs of the twenty-first century incorporate a wide variety of colors through the technical manipulation of the singers' vocal instrument, all dependent upon accurately following demands of the music's origin. By extension, professional choirs perform music from any culture with sound qualities that fall outside of a classically based choral tone.

Oltman gave an extended observation, an opinion he developed from his years of traveling around the globe performing with *Chanticleer* and having the opportunity to hear a large number of choirs. First, he offers a premise, "American choirs have started to define themselves, as opposed to trying to emulate something else."³⁵⁹ Instead of imitating British, Swedish or German choirs, he feels American professional choirs now try to find their own sound. By extension, Oltman hears that the imitation of choral colors is turning around. Instead of American choirs imitating European sound as

³⁵⁷ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

³⁵⁸ Brunelle, Phillip, interview.

³⁵⁹ Oltman, Matt, interview.

happened over the past thirty years, European choirs are now trying to emulate American choirs. According to Oltman, the American aspects they imitate are “being able to take some of the best from all of the different schools and apply it all as appropriate.”³⁶⁰ He continues to say that American choirs have always sought versatility with a wide body of repertoire. Therefore, in the professional choral setting, singers have a great deal of flexibility.³⁶¹ “It’s something that America has always done. Take the best from everywhere and sort of smash it all together.”³⁶²

Another extreme sound, partially influenced by folk traditions, religious traditions and some cultural traditions, is the predominance of the low sonority in the twenty-first-century choral tone. Subjects confess to demanding more low resonance and including extremes of the range within compositions.

The Low Rumble

As stated earlier, John Rutter believes American basses have a rich sound that comes from the Eastern Europe and Russian heritage. Other composers and conductors also expressed a preference for the low rumble. Libby Larsen, a highly regarded American composer of art song, choral music, opera, orchestra and band, mentioned that over the years of her career, she has heard the collective preference move from treble to bass but expresses a frustration that there seems to be a lack of such singers.³⁶³ “Lately, I’ve been

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Larsen, Libby, interview.

wishing that there were more, bigger bass and tenor sections than the trebles sections,” Larsen remarks.³⁶⁴ She offers a clue pointing to the origination of the bias, “I think it’s because of the sub-woofer. [We have] a preference for bass in the culture.”³⁶⁵ She insists that the development of recording and amplification technology has increased exposure to bass sound significantly.³⁶⁶ Cultural preference for sub-woofers equals the rampant prevalence for bass sonority in recorded music. An article by Hans Fantel outlines just how novel the sonic low boom is in modern recordings as compared to past recordings:

In the predigital past, audio designers often ignored the bottom octave of musical range, pointing out that the narrow grooves of LP records couldn’t hold much bass to begin with. Such vigorous vibrations would have thrown the stylus right out of the groove. So recording engineers in those days deliberately weakened the extreme lows or cut them out altogether.

This is no longer so. The advent of the CD now makes it possible to capture the bottom lows on recordings, because mere numbers, rather than mechanical motion are involved. As a result, some well-recorded CD’s boast bass of almost seismic grandeur and profundity, lending added realism to the thud of a bass drum or the deep utterance of a tall organ pipe.”³⁶⁷

Contemporary listeners of all music and cinema desire the deep sounds of a sub-woofer, often not even heard, but felt.³⁶⁸ Call to mind the physical sensation caused by the sub-woofer in a neighboring car when car seats vibrate and heart rates increase due to the

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Fantel, Hans, “Sight and sound: The deep,” *Opera News* 59, no. 15 (April 15, 1995), <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/1167608/abstract?accountid=4485> (accessed February 15, 2013).

³⁶⁸ Aaron Nemeč, “Why Bass? A deeper look at the Broad Appeal of Lower Frequencies,” *Executive Bird*, <http://www.executivebird.com/art/WhyBass.pdf>.

thumping and bone-rattling low blasts.³⁶⁹ Current movies, commercials, radio announcements, and popular music resonate with low frequency rhythms, sonorous voice-overs, rumbling sound effects, booming blasts and low-pitched drones.³⁷⁰ Even the ambient sounds we experience in modern life could shape a bias for low sounds: the hum of an airplane, the grumble of garbage truck engines, mechanical resonance from air conditioning and heating units in buildings, the rumble of underground subway systems, and the boom of fireworks.³⁷¹

Research found a bias for “low” sound in many areas of life. Scientific studies proved that biologically, females are inclined to pick a male partner who exhibits a deep, masculine voice, as opposed to men with higher-pitched voices.³⁷² By extension, in an attempt to sound more powerful, sexy, smart, equal and masculine, American women shifted the quality of their speaking voice to a lower sound.³⁷³ One study conducted an experiment analyzing speech patterns in women over the past decade, and the researcher shares her findings about the “creaky voice:”³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ Fantel, Hans, “Sight and sound: The deep.”

³⁷⁰ Frere-Jones, Sasha, “A Paler Shade of White,” *The New Yorker*, October 22, 2007.

³⁷¹ Passchier-Vermeer, Willy and Passchier, Wim, “Noise exposure and public health,” US National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1637786/> (accessed March 4, 2013).

³⁷² D’Costa, Krystal, “The Barry White Syndrome: Why Are Deep Voices Attractive?,” *Scientific American*, January 3, 2012, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/anthropology-in-practice/2012/01/03/the-barry-white-syndome-why-are-deep-voices-attractive/> (accessed February 17, 2013).

³⁷³ Vuolo, Mike and Garfield, Bob, “Get Your Creak On,” Slate Radio File, Lexicon Valley, http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/lexicon_valley/2013/01/lexicon_valley_on_creaky_voice_or_vocal_fry_in_young_american_women.html (accessed February 15, 2013).

³⁷⁴ Miller, Richard, *The Structure of Singing; System and Art in Vocal Technique*, 124. Vocal fry is a: vocal rattle, vocal scrape, vocal creek or growl register. “The sounds that can be produced in the limited range extending below pitches normally used in speech.”

Creaky voice may provide a growing number of American women with a way to project an image of accomplishment (on par with men) while retaining feminine desirability: the sociocultural meanings indexed through creaky voice in America have deviated from those of masculine authoritativeness proposed early in the study of creaky voice.³⁷⁵

English composer Paul Mealor admits an attraction to the sonorous quality of low tones in choral music.³⁷⁶ As demonstrated in Figure 7, he composed a piece that exhibits a low E, nearly three octaves below middle C and conducted an international hunt to find a bass capable of singing the tone.³⁷⁷

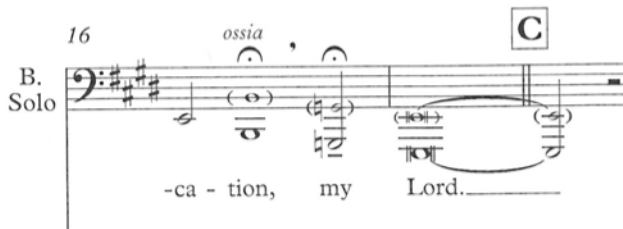


Figure 7: *De Profundis* by Paul Mealor mm. 16-18

De Profundis

Music by Paul Mealor

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³⁷⁵ Yuasa, Ikuko Patricia, “Creaky Voice: A New Feminine Voice Quality for Young Urban-Oriented Upwardly Mobile American Women?,” *American Speech* 85, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 315–337. Also called “Vocal Creak” or “Vocal Fry”

³⁷⁶ Mealor, Paul, interview. Paul Mealor is most well-known for composing the piece, *Ubi Caritas*, sung for Prince William and Princess Kate’s royal wedding in April of 2011

³⁷⁷ Ibid.; NPR Staff, “Super Bass: Can You Hit This Note?,” *Deceptive Cadence*: NPR, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2012/02/07/146532938/can-you-hit-this-note> (accessed February 15, 2013); Lebrecht, Norman, “Can you manage a low ‘E’? That’s 3 octaves below middle C...,” *Arts Journal Blogs*, <http://www.artsjournal.com/slippeddisc/2012/02/can-you-manage-a-low-e-thats-3-octaves-below-middle-c.html> (accessed March 8, 2013).

“I’m really attracted to the depths of the human spectrum,” he told NPR’s Robert Siegal.³⁷⁸ Mealor finds that there are many basses who enjoy singing extra low, and Mealor admits to writing lower and lower, exhibiting a strong interest in “ensemble virtuosity.”³⁷⁹

What other factors may have influenced the shift to a predominant low color? One potential answer comes from the religious and spiritual experience listeners’ gain from hearing the aged-old instrument, the organ. Professor Richard Wiseman from University of Hertfordshire conducted an experiment to discover the impact of low tones on an audience. Wiseman states “it has been suggested that because some organ pipes in churches and cathedrals produce infrasound this could lead to people having weird experiences which they attribute to God.”³⁸⁰ Much of the scientific research into infrasound, or lower frequency tones, came to a darker conclusion that the low notes evoke an impression of imminent death or danger.³⁸¹ However, musicians have found a way to harness comparable power by bringing about deep and meaningful emotional sensations.³⁸² Choral composers, often in the business of creating music for church services and religious settings, desire to evoke a spirit of mysticism. The English composer John Tavener is noted for a compositional style that frequently includes

³⁷⁸ NPR Staff, “Super Bass: Can You Hit This Note?”. Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Mealor, Paul, interview.

³⁸⁰ Amos, Jonathan, “Organ music ‘instils religious feelings’,” BBC News | Science/Nature, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3087674.stm> (accessed February 15, 2013).

³⁸¹ Pascal Wyse, “Sonic Boom: Whales communicate with it. Tigers terrify with it. And now musicians are playing with it,” *Guardian Friday Pages*.

³⁸² Amos, Jonathan, “Organ music ‘instils religious feelings’.”

extreme low bass sonority, often in the form of a drone such as found in his composition *Song for Athene*, found in Figure 8, or the dense low chordal foundations heard in *Mother and Child*. Tavener thinks of his music as deeply mysterious or spiritual and that the drone “is the acoustic representation of the silence of God in Eastern music.”³⁸³

³⁸³ Keeble, Brian, “Nonfiction Review: The Music of Silence: A Composer’s Testament,” Publishers Weekly, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-571-20088-7> (accessed February 15, 2013).

With resplendent joy in the Resurrection

S
Come, en - joy re - wards and _ crowns I have _ pre - pared _ _ _ _ _ for _ _ _ you.

S
A
Oh.

A
Come, en - joy re - wards and _ crowns I have _ pre - pared _ _ _ _ _ for _ _ _ you.

T
Come, en - joy re - wards and _ crowns I have _ pre - pared _ _ _ _ _ for _ _ _ you.

T
Oh.

B
Come, en - joy re - wards and _ crowns I have _ pre - pared _ _ _ _ _ for _ _ _ you.

B
Oh.

Figure 8. *Song for Athene* by John Tavener excerpt. m. 23

Song for Athene

Words from Hamlet by William Shakespeare and from the Orthodox Funeral Service

Music by John Tavener

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- Page 5

Further historical influence for a twenty-first century sonorous bass preference could come from the performance practice techniques of the *basso profundo* in Russian Choral Singing. Charles Bruffy points out that the predominant low tones of Slavic bass has been around for centuries, but perhaps as a choral community we have morphed away

from the centuries of treble dominance, found in British music, in favor of an eastern regional influence.³⁸⁴ Vladimir Morosan, a scholar in Pre-Revolutionary Russian choral music gave an explanation in the prologue of his book, *Choral Performance in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*. He asserts that little study on Russian music occurred after 1917 due to the Communist takeover and intense repression of Russian choral music. He contends that only beginning in the 1970s and 1980s did the Soviet Union allow scholars to study the sacred music heritage of Old Russia again.³⁸⁵ Morison highlights the historical Russian bass technique in choral singing, in which the sung bass line doubles an octave lower than written.³⁸⁶ Perhaps as Communist Russia fell and this repertoire became available for musicians in the west, the predominant bass sound from historical Russian traditions influenced contemporary choral tone. An example of the extreme low range for basses in Russian Choral music is shown in Figure 9, where Gretchaninoff sets the contra octave low A₁ on the last note of the movement.

³⁸⁴ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

³⁸⁵ Morosan, Vladimir, *Choral Performance in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, preface.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 152–154.

nas.
нас.

ppp smorzando

ppp

nas.
нас.

ppp

ро - мѣ - луу нас.
по - ми - луй нас.

ppp

ро - мѣ - луу нас.
по - ми - луй нас.

Figure 9. *All-Night Vigil Opus 59* “Movement 9” Alexandre Gretchaninoff mm. 168-170

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Estonian composer Arvo Pärt’s compositional style has its inspirations in chant, early polyphony and Russian Orthodox Church music.³⁸⁷ His choral works exhibit both a proclivity for deep bass as well as regular inclusion of the organ parallel to the choir. Pärt uses the term, *ison*, to describe his method for employing the bass voice. Grace Muzzo describes this *ison* technique as a drone or pedal tone that comes from “the Byzantine practice of sustaining the fundamental note of the mode by certain members of the choir.”³⁸⁸ This element is a fundamental component of the Pärt sound, readily apparent in his work *De Profundis*.³⁸⁹ Nigel Short, whose choir *Tenebrae* sings an abundance of

³⁸⁷ Muzzo, Grace Kingsbury, “Systems, Symbols & Silence - ProQuest.” Arvo Pärt converted to the Russian Orthodox Church later in life.

³⁸⁸ Fantel, Hans, “Sight and sound: The deep.”

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

Tavener and Pärt, prefers to fill his choir with a richer bottom sound, and does so by adding an extra low bass.³⁹⁰ Craig Hella Johnson also confesses he often hires two or three extra basses and Charles Bruffy chuckles, “that’s what I always say . . . lower means louder!”³⁹¹

As mentioned by subjects, much of the predominant low sonority has its roots in several cultures globally. Additional multi-cultural tonal characteristics had a part in the shift of choral sound.

Text Application and Rhythm

Taking the best from many cultural rhythms and language nuance is another cause for a shift in choral tone. Libby Larsen argues that the rhythmic features of American English are a profound system of organizing choral sound and a key method in which the compositional style has changed. She recalls when composers during the 1970s began exploring rhythmic complexity that we now regularly spot in contemporary choral compositions. Larsen considers herself a rhythmic composer and is passionate about setting text, in particular American English. She recounts the American Vaudeville tradition of pattern-naming songs and how that creates such a compelling tick, meter and articulation in the sound.³⁹² She feels sometimes a blend of text and other traditions can yield fascinating results. Larsen strengthens her theory on textual rhythm by saying,

³⁹⁰ Short, Nigel, interview.

³⁹¹ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

³⁹² Larsen, Libby, interview.

“marry the language and the music that comes from that language perfectly.”³⁹³ She insists that the results can be stunning.³⁹⁴

For a related example, take Russian bell ringing patterns, which are polyrhythmic, poly-metric and based on the overtone series.³⁹⁵ Likewise, take the English tradition of change ringing.³⁹⁶ Jaakko Mäntyjärvi took advantage of the polyrhythmic properties of the historical change ringing technique in his work *Psalm 150 in Kent Treble Bob Minor*, composed in 1998.³⁹⁷ When set in a choral piece, the text against the rhythm causes undulating peals and regularly-displaced vertical points of arrival and departure. Figure 10 demonstrates the pulse of rolling change-ringing patterns in choir I, as the word “*Laudate Dominum*” is sung in syllabic order. The melodic statement sung by choir II, is a similar melody to the change-ringing permutations above it, with leaps followed by stepwise motion, although not an exact representation. Mäntyjärvi adds to the gesture by setting melodic figures in canon between the rest of the voices, placing each canon a beat apart, beginning at the distance of fourth or fifth interval, and some voices set as inverted canons. Each canon recites the text “*Laudate eum in sono tubae.*” Mäntyjärvi says of

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Holden, Donald, “Canterbury Kent Treble Bob Minor,” YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6xTCkfK_bY (accessed February 20, 2013).

³⁹⁷ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, “Works :: Teokset SATB.” From Mäntyjärvi’s program notes: “Kent Treble Bob Minor is a ringing method. A method describes how pairs of bells swap places in the ringing order. Only shifts of adjacent bells are feasible, because it is difficult to vary the swing of a bell by more than one place from one change to the next. A minor is a method for six bells; doubles is for five, triples for seven and major for eight. Kent Treble Bob Minor covers 120 of the 720 possible permutations for six bells. In this application, a seventh bell is added as the tenor, which remains in the same place at the end of the change throughout; this enables the use of the tantalizingly asymmetrical (and numerologically significant) 7/8 metre. The bells are tuned in a modified Lydian mode (though there is no bell for the second degree): C - Bb - A - G - F# - E - (D) - C”

these few measures that they are “in fact the most strictly constructed in the entire piece.”³⁹⁸ The resulting cacophony has a mesmerizing effect.

59

1 da lau lau da

2 Do Do mi num

3 mi num num mi

4 lau da te te

5 num mi Do Do

6 te te da lau

7 dom-mm dom-mm dom-mm dom-mm

59

dom lau - da - te Do - mi - num dom lau - da - te Do - mi - num dom lau - da - te Do - mi - num dom lau - da - te Do - mi - num

59

S1 Lau - da - te e - um in so - no tu - bae, lau - da - te e - um in psal - te - ri - o et ci - tha - ra,

S2 Lau - da - te e - um in so - no tu - bae, - lau - da - te e - um in psal - te - ri - o et ci - tha - ra,

A Lau - da - te e - um in so - no tu - bae, lau - da - - te e - um in

T Lau - da - te e - um in so - no tu - bae, lau - da - - te e - um in

B1 Lau - da - te e - um in so - no tu - bae, lau - da - te e - um in psal - te - ri - o et ci - tha -

B2 Lau - da - te e - um in so - no tu - bae, lau - da - te e - um in psal - te - ri - o et ci - tha - ra,

Figure 10. *Psalm 150 in Kent Treble Bob Minor* Jaakko Mäntyjärvi mm. 59-62

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³⁹⁸ Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, email message to author, March 25, 2013

Sometimes text settings are an obstacle of modern choral performance practice, asserts Matt Oltman. Chen Yi, a composer of choral music with roots and inspirations from China, sets text intended to imitate the sounds of the natural Chinese environment. However, Oltman asserts that what she writes on the page is not exactly what she wants, “because it is so difficult for her to indicate in western notation a transliteration of what she really intended.”³⁹⁹ The sound effects mimic birds, whistles, the nasal singing voice of a native Chinese speaker, and native Chinese instruments. He insists the only way Chanticleer learned to form the sounds correctly was through a personal clinic with the composer.⁴⁰⁰ Oltman recalls, “she had to come explain it to us because it is so difficult. All of these sound effects don’t make any sense until she tells you how it’s supposed to sound and she sings it for you.”⁴⁰¹

Charles Anthony Silvestri and Eric Whitacre are the modern choral equivalent of a “Rogers and Hammerstein” team. Their collaboration extends over several of Whitacre’s compositions, and one of their first is *Leonardo Dreams of his Flying Machine*, featured in Figure 11. They fashioned this 2002 composition as if it were an *opera breve*, simultaneously creating text and music to suit the expressive and narrative demands to match Leonardo Da Vinci’s aeronautical aspirations.⁴⁰² The symbiotic relationship between the text and music creates a flowing work of text-painting and visual imagery.

³⁹⁹ Oltman, Matt, interview.

⁴⁰⁰ sfchanticleer, “Spring Dreams,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sK-HwUVxjHs> (accessed March 1, 2013).

⁴⁰¹ Oltman, Matt, interview.

⁴⁰² Whitacre, Eric and Silvestri, Charles Anthony, *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine* (Walton Music Corporation, 2002).

mp espressivo *cresc. poco a poco*
 Mas-ter Le-o-nar-do i - ma-gines an en-gine to car-ry a man up, —

mp espressivo *cresc. poco a poco*
 last, Le-o-nar-do i - ma-gines an en-gine to car-ry a man up, —

mp espressivo *cresc. poco a poco*
 Mas-ter Le-o-nar-do i - ma-gines an en-gine to car-ry a man up, —

mp espressivo *cresc. poco a poco*
 Mas-ter Le-o-nar-do i - ma-gines an en-gine to car-ry a man up, —

mp espressivo *cresc. poco a poco*
 Mas-ter Le-o-nar-do i - ma-gines an en-gine to car-ry a man up, —

Figure 11. *Leonardo Dreams of his Flying Machine* Eric Whitacre mm. 23-26

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Subjects involved in the study observed an abundance of methods that drive the rhythmic and sonic characteristics of contemporary choral music. The origins of the language have bearing on the “click” and nuance of the sound. Rhythms drawn from other performance mediums and then fused with new text present a unique format to construct a composition. As in years past, the traditional lyricist and composer collaboration delivers a distinctive voice.

Despite these unique developments, demanding audiences, accustomed to a fast-paced and multi-tasking age, often seek art that is entertaining and appealing. Subjects suggested that not only are choral directors programming concerts to satisfy the wishes of audiences, but composers too modify their art to please listeners.

Audience Satisfaction

Participation in the choral music community is at an all-time high thanks to organizations such as the World Choir Symposium, the World Choir Games, and community choir tours.⁴⁰³ Healthy level of participation is a coveted phenomenon, but the task community choirs and professional choirs face is keeping audiences engaged. Many feel the *avant-garde* and intellectual techniques of the twentieth century alienated average listeners. More recently, composers have adapted their technique to engage audiences by blending film music and contemporary pop music within a choral medium, causing a shift in choral tone. Some see merits to this movement, whereas others expressed concern.

Stephen Paulus believes that audiences are astute, and for that reason he always considers what makes people enjoy a piece and want to hear it repeatedly. He says, “I’m always looking for a way to make something a little more memorable.”⁴⁰⁴ Although he considers himself melodically inclined, Paulus equates audience enjoyment to composing a great song by way of clever harmonic devices. He calls the crafty technique “gates,” or points in a song where a listener passes through the “million dollar prize.”⁴⁰⁵ Composers guide the listener through harmonic gates, by way of “delayed gratification” to reach a satisfying goal. These age-old devices, known as suspensions and modulations, are found

⁴⁰³ Interkultur, “World Choir Games - The biggest choir competition worldwide,” Interkultur, <http://www.interkultur.com/world-choir-games/> (accessed February 25, 2013).

⁴⁰⁴ Paulus, Stephen, interview.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

in pop, hip-hop, rap and country music.⁴⁰⁶ Robert Zatorre and his team of neuroscientists at McGill University conducted an experiment that proved the “tear-jerker” phenomenon makes for a song’s commercial success.⁴⁰⁷ He says:

Emotionally intense music releases dopamine in the pleasure and reward centers of the brain, similar to the effects of food, sex and drugs. This makes us feel good and motivates us to repeat the behavior. Measuring listeners' responses, Dr. Zatorre's team found that the number of goose bumps observed correlated with the amount of dopamine released, even when the music was extremely sad. The results suggest that the more emotions a song provokes—whether depressing or uplifting—the more we crave the song.⁴⁰⁸

This same phenomenon is equal to the methods filmmakers harness. They create a form of tension, release, revelations, crux and conclusion all through music. What compositional methods encompass the film genre, and what does that sound like? Anahid Kassabian, a professor of music at University of Liverpool, whose expertise is “ubiquitous music; music, sound, and moving images; listening disciplinarily; music and new technologies,” gives a short and basic description of film music:⁴⁰⁹

A minor mode would make the scene sadder, an increase in tempo would make the scene seem faster, and the sequence more optimistic, an orchestration change might lend more pathos (solo violin) or humor (solo tuba). Descriptions of film music such as this one serve at least as convenient shorthand. They have by far the most connection with how the listeners actually perceive film music; they

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Doucleff, Michaelleen, “Why Adele’s ‘Someone Like You’ Makes Everyone Cry,” *The Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203646004577213010291701378.html> (accessed February 17, 2013).

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid. The author of this article used an incorrect term to describe the device. The term *appoggiatura* was switched to suspensions in later articles.

⁴⁰⁹ The University of Liverpool: School of Music Staff, <http://www.liv.ac.uk/music/staff/ak.htm> (accessed December 13, 2009).

function somehow subliminally or subconsciously, evoking meanings and moods rather than explaining ideas.⁴¹⁰

Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo desires to capture that evocativeness of film in his music. He intentionally endeavors to create an “aural picture,” induce a mood and tell a story through energy, atmospheric chords, suspensions, consonant major/minor tonality, and resolution of dissonance. Just as music can depict a mood in film, so does the aura at the beginning of *The Spheres* from Gjeilo’s *Sunrise Mass*. Represented in the way he evokes an atmosphere that sounds “out of this world” or “far away,” the loneliness of the melody line captures a sense of eerie expanse and endless space. Gjeilo, who is attracted to modern electronic sounds, endeavored to fuse a *filmic* atmosphere with overlapping synthesizer-like colors, but instead achieving that sonority with human voices.⁴¹¹ In his composition, *The Spheres* seen in Figure 12, Gjeilo sets expressive swells of symphonically layered fade-in, fade-out chords sung by double choir. The music depicts a visual image of stars or planets pulled onto the canvas by a gossamer thread, and then simply fading away behind the next planet or star. Charles Bruffy who recorded *The Spheres* on the disc, *Northern Lights*, with the Phoenix Chorale speaks about his attempt to create the appropriate sound for the piece. He describes it as “diffused . . . undulating universal resonance . . . suspended matter” and “light coming through particles.”⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: tracking identifications in contemporary Hollywood film music* (New York, NY: Routledge 2001), 17-18.

⁴¹¹ Gjeilo, Ola, interview.

⁴¹² Bruffy, Charles, interview.

$\text{♩} = 56$

Soprano 1
Ky - - - - - ky - - - - -

Soprano 2
Ky - - - - - ri - -

Alto 1
Ky - - - - - ky - - - - -

Alto 2
Ky - - - - - ri - -

Tenor 1
Ky - - - - - ky - - - - -

Tenor 2
Ky - - - - - ri - -

Bass 1

Bass 2

Figure 12. *The Spheres* by Ola Gjeilo mm. 1-7

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Film and television shows have in turn inserted legitimate contemporary choral music for filmic purposes. Showtime television's second season of *The Tudors* opened with a medieval setting, cinematically accompanied by the atmospheric sounds of a simple,

twelfth-century chant. The pictorial foggy English morning gently shifted to the slumbering inhabitants of an intimate chamber inside a cold castle, and finally revealed a worship service in a cathedral. Viewers witness a choir of girls singing the ancient chant processing by candlelight. Suddenly, the King's rough voice screams, "enough!" and they hesitantly cease their incantation, dispelling the serene mood. This scene employed Michael McGlynn's composition, *Jerusalem*. The mysterious and ethereal atmosphere encapsulated within the film is a prime example of McGlynn's proclivity to evoke a filmic character within his music.

Recently, *Anúna* received a nomination for Best Original Vocal (Choral) song in the Game Audio Network Guild Awards.⁴¹³ This nomination is for their work on a song entitled *Incantations*, which was included as background music in the video game *Diablo 3*. Blizzard Entertainments audio director, Russell Brower says, "hell is a beautiful and seductive sound, provided by Dublin's uniquely astounding choral group *Anúna*."⁴¹⁴ The effect of the recording is ambient, atmospheric and spooky, and meant to depict hell, as compared to another choir, London Voices, whose recording depicts heaven.⁴¹⁵

Choral music is not the only classical music field that dabbles in film crossover projects. In 2003, the famous operatic soprano Renée Fleming collaborated with Howard Shore for the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack. Fleming, heard in the piece entitled *Twilight and Shadow*, does not exhibit the large and expansive vocal technique found in her

⁴¹³ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

⁴¹⁴ Napolitano, Jayson, "Exclusive: Meet Diablo III's sound team, samples included - Destructoid," <http://www.destructoid.com/exclusive-meet-diablo-iii-s-sound-team-samples-included-227017.phtml> (accessed March 27, 2013).

⁴¹⁵ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

operatic works.⁴¹⁶ Instead, the listener will hear an exquisite, somber, plaintive and pleading color, reminiscent of a boy soprano. Fleming willingly altered her standard technique for the requirements of the score.

Composer Eric Whitacre's music, immersed in twenty-first century culture, is a sensational phenomenon in the professional choral field. Whitacre's music collects descriptions such as filmic, spiritually uplifting, rich and reverberant.⁴¹⁷ Whitacre's most famous dip into film music is through his collaboration with Hans Zimmer on the film *Pirates of the Caribbean IV*, on "The Mermaid" theme.⁴¹⁸ However, much of Whitacre's music is composed for choirs and lends itself to audience appeal. He made himself famous beyond the scope of the choral community by creating the first *Virtual Choir*, a project in which he stitched together videos that singers recorded of themselves singing his piece *Lux Aurumque*.⁴¹⁹ This phenomenon went "viral" and continues to be a popular activity for singers to participate in around the world today.⁴²⁰ His disc *Light & Gold*,

⁴¹⁶ Shore, Howard, "The Lord of the Rings - The Return of the King (Soundtrack from the Motion Picture)," iTunes, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/twilight-and-shadow/id3991448?i=3991324> (accessed February 25, 2013).

⁴¹⁷ Tyson, Robin, interview; Greenfield, Phillip, "Guide to Records - Whitacre: 'Light and Gold' - ProQuest," *American Record Guide* 74, no. 1 (January 2011): 215; Puccio, John J., "Whitacre: Water Night (CD review)," *Classical Candor*, May 1, 2012, <http://classicalcandor.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/whitacre-water-night-cd-review.html> (accessed February 17, 2013).

⁴¹⁸ Whitacre, Eric, "Pirates of the Caribbean IV," Eric Whitacre: Composer, Conductor, Lecturer, <http://ericwhitacre.com/music-catalog/film-scores/pirates-of-the-caribbean-iv> (accessed February 22, 2013).

⁴¹⁹ Whitacre, Eric, "History – Virtual Choir 3: Water Night – Eric Whitacre," Eric Whitacre: Composer, Conductor, Lecturer, <http://ericwhitacre.com/the-virtual-choir/history> (accessed February 22, 2013).

⁴²⁰ McCarthy, James, "Sounds of America," Gramophone, <http://www.exacteditions.com/read/gramophone/sounds-of-america-7365/1/3> (accessed February 22, 2013). The term going "viral" refers to information, videos, pictures or a link that spreads quickly when people share it through email, the Internet or on social media websites.

where he conducted his own music, garnered both high Billboard ranking and eventually won the Grammy for “Best Choral Performance” in 2012.⁴²¹ The composer is widely popular for his music, his personality, his “cool” public image and the worldwide triumphant success of his creation, the *Virtual Choir*.⁴²² It seems fair to say that his music has garnered an enthusiastic acceptance and fondness amongst singers and choral conductors alike.

Many facets of Whitacre’s persona and music compel audiences. Some of it is his enigmatic personality, some is his willingness to communicate personally with his fans on his webpage, on Facebook and Twitter, and some is the enormous popularity of the *Virtual Choir*. Nevertheless, much of the attraction boils down to Whitacre’s music.⁴²³ He blends triads, tone clusters, dense textures and intriguing melodies with the pop/rock harmonies of his techno-pop background which listeners and fans adore.⁴²⁴ However, he is a controversial figure in the choral field.⁴²⁵ Critics occasionally call out a lack of diversity in his compositional method using the terms “definitive” and “instantly

⁴²¹ Billboard Charts, “Traditional Classical Albums(tm).,” *Billboard Charts* 124, no. 13 (April 21, 2012): 45.; Petersen, Jan-Marie, “Eric Whitacre Wins Grammy’s ‘Best Choral Performance’,” Chorus America, <https://www.chorusamerica.org/publications/high-notes/eric-whitacre-wins-grammys-best-choral-performance> (accessed February 17, 2013).

⁴²² Whitacre, Eric, “History – Virtual Choir 3: Water Night – Eric Whitacre.”

⁴²³ Whitacre, Eric, “Part of Something Larger Than Ourselves,” Huff Post Ted Weekends, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-whitacre/virtual-choir_b_2175526.html (accessed February 17, 2013).

⁴²⁴ Larson, Andrew, “Textual Density in the Choral Music of Eric Whitacre - ProQuest,” *Choral Journal* 47, no. 6 (December 2006): 22–23; Pliable, “On An Overgrown Path: Eric Whitacre outsells Mozart,” Overgrownpath, <http://www.overgrownpath.com/2006/02/eric-whitacre-outsells-mozart.html> (accessed February 17, 2013); Puccio, John J., “Whitacre: Water Night (CD review).”

⁴²⁵ Rosenblum, Joshua, “Choral and Song,” *Opera News* 75, no. 8 (February 2011): 62.

recognizable” to describe his music.⁴²⁶ However, several of the conductors and composers interviewed for this study held the opinion that Whitacre’s music is relevant and influential to the twenty-first century professional choral sound.

Mason Bates is an up-and-coming contemporary composer who has won international recognition as composer in residence to the Chicago Symphony and for performances in Carnegie Hall and the Tanglewood Music Center.⁴²⁷ His compositional method is unique in that he comes to the genre by combining classical music with techno electronics, inspired by his work as a DJ. He has made a splash in the classical music world, receiving favorable accolades that remark on his inclusion of both older and newer mediums. Jeff Kaliss of the San Francisco Classical Voice had these thoughts:

It’s that very same embodiment of 21st-century embrace of technology, combined with a lush, evocative approach to melody and orchestration evocative of older American composers from Virgil Thomson to Aaron Copland to John Williams, that makes Bates such an exciting and welcome worker in the new-music idiom.⁴²⁸

Bates’s primary work is with instrumentalists; however, he composed a work entitled *Observer in the Magellanic Cloud* for *Chanticleer*. The clamor of vocal noises on this piece is outside the usual spectrum of choral sounds. This esoteric piece incorporates the story of a *Māori* tribe looking up and calling into outer space. Then centuries later, modern satellites pick up the ancient tribe’s sounds.⁴²⁹ In the composition, Bates mixes a

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Chicago Symphony Orchestra, “Meet the Performers - Chicago Symphony Chorus.”

⁴²⁸ Kaliss, Jeff, “Mason Bates: Musical Transporter: San Francisco Classical Voice,” <http://www.sfcv.org/events-calendar/artist-spotlight/mason-bates-musical-transporter> (accessed March 7, 2013).

⁴²⁹ Oltman, Matt, interview.

modern sound of “whirring satellites” against “grunting” noises of the *Māori* tribe.⁴³⁰ Bates went a step further in collaborations with *Chanticleer* on *Interlude: Siren Music*, found on the album *Digital Loom*. For that composition, he mixed up electronica and DJ spins against a choral sound. In a National Public Radio interview about the disc, Bates said that classical musicians are the least accepting of his style; but he thinks overall “people have been receptive to the cross-pollination of classical and electronic music.”⁴³¹

Libby Larsen gave a thought-provoking answer to why she feels the choral sound shifted. She says, “the need for large [audience] numbers to be excited about us has changed the choral sound.”⁴³² She feels that the desire to increase choral patrons has caused composers to work in a particular fashion, which she dubs “franchised choral writing.”⁴³³ Larsen criticizes the collective need to incorporate fashionable appeal and warns that it short-changes audiences. She loved the inventiveness of possibilities within the human voice that was healthy in the 1970s, but feels that is an element that is missing now.⁴³⁴ She felt that the choral tone of that era was more human and immediate than what we hear in professional choirs now.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ NPR Staff, “Mason Bates: Electronica, Meet Orchestra,” NPR Music, <http://www.npr.org/2011/03/13/134457684/mason-bates-electronica-meet-orchestra> (accessed March 4, 2013).

⁴³² Larsen, Libby, interview.

⁴³³ Ibid. “Franchised choral writing” - Composing frequently in a fashion that is popular among consumers and marketed as a means to sell great quantities of the score, compared to composing music for the aesthetic value of the art.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

The human voice is infinite, it can do anything, and a number of human voices together they multiply infinity, as to what it is possible And so the chorus has a place to express the depth and breadth and wholeness of the human voice. . . . [Franchised choral writing] is not a place to go.⁴³⁶

She insists that the choral field is “rife with possibility and potential” and encourages composers and conductors to think creatively at delivering words and music “alive and healthy in their authenticity.”⁴³⁷

Cecilia McDowall recalls a time from the 1960s and early 1970s when composers often wrote music “as much more of an intellectual exercise.”⁴³⁸ Now, she sees that the movement in contemporary choral music leans towards “a more significantly tonal language” and that “there is a greater desire, perhaps on the part of the composer, to connect with the audience now.”⁴³⁹ McDowall continues, “the listener is a part of the equation.”⁴⁴⁰

Professional choirs regularly employ “audience pleasing” compositions, and the choral color changes and shifts based upon the needs called for within the music. Words that describe choral tone within these types of compositions include somber, plaintive, spooky, reverberant, ethereal, rich, filmic, synthesized, electronica, yearning, and atmospheric. Achieved by incorporating popular harmonic chords, music more tonal, filmic, movies, video games, and the *Virtual Choir* composers and conductors increasingly create programs in such a way that draws in more listeners. This helps choirs

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ McDowall, Cecilia, interview.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

gain financial stability and a sense of “vogue” in the choral industry. However, the trend could be perceived as “franchised choral music,” written only to appease an audience rather than further artistic merit.

Parallel to the success in audience pleasing music is the boom in the recording industry. Since the inception of the first playback machines, humans have had the privilege of hearing a concert while not physically present in the hall. Returning once again to the concept of “imitation,” hearing recordings and replicating the sounds from that recording is an effortless process in the modern world. Similarly, modern technology offers capabilities that no other era has had at their disposal. That is to create perfect and seamless recordings even though no such concert existed during the recording process.

The Recording Revolution: Awareness and Easier Access to Recordings

Technological advances in recording have driven a change in choral tone. Distinctive shifts in technology made possible the wide distribution of and accessibility to recordings, and the technology itself caused an evolution of what listeners hear. By extension, choral conductors, composers and singers had easy access to said recordings, opening the door for global imitation.

In his book *Capturing Sound: How Technology Changed music*, Mark Katz talks about how recordings influence perception:

This is a crucial point . . . if we understand the nature of recording, we can understand how users have adapted to, compensated for, and exploited the

technology. It is in these actions that we discover the influence of recording; it is here that we find phonograph effects.⁴⁴¹

We live in a different sound world than did the generation of the late 1970s. At that time, recordings came primarily in two forms: the phonograph record and the tape.⁴⁴² The cassette tape was just beginning its ascent as a playback medium and had the unique and desirable trait that consumers could make their own (albeit low quality) recordings.⁴⁴³ Back then, music consumption occurred largely in these formats: at home listening to a phonograph, radio, or TV performances, listening in the car to the radio or 8-track (later cassette) tapes or by attending a live concert. Shortly thereafter, battery-operated, cassette players with self-contained speakers became popular. Affectionately called the “ghetto blaster,” for the popularity with urban youth, these heavy but portable systems were the first in a train of music listening devices that allowed listeners to have a musical experience whenever they desired.⁴⁴⁴ Starting with the introduction of the Sony Walkman in 1979, these portable devices decreased in size and format so that today, most listeners carry any number of smart phones, iPods, or mp3 players, all equipped to hold thousands of songs and stream music through Songza, Pandora or Spotify.⁴⁴⁵ In addition, listeners no longer have to go to a record store to purchase an album. Contemporary listeners have

⁴⁴¹ Katz, Mark, *Capturing Sound : How Technology Has Changed Music* (Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, 2004), 9, <http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/lib/asulib/docDetail.action?docID=10068606> (accessed February 25, 2013).

⁴⁴² Cook, Nicholas et al., eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 129–132.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁴⁴⁴ Kelley, Frannie, “A Eulogy For The Boombox : NPR,” NPR Music, <http://www.npr.org/2009/04/22/103363836/a-eulogy-for-the-boombox> (accessed April 17, 2013).

⁴⁴⁵ Cook, Nicholas et al., *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 108, 134–135.

immediate access to any recording of their choice through services and on-line retailers such as Amazon, iTunes, Rhapsody and Classic FM.⁴⁴⁶ The biggest difference for the modern music listener as compared to a listener in the 1970s is that access to the device and the music is relatively inexpensive and fast.

Along with the rise in accessibility of music, came massive developments in the recording technology itself. Many argue that because the physical grooves on a vinyl record reproduce the analog signal the same as the live sound, the sound is richer, has greater depth and more “real” sounding than modern digital media.⁴⁴⁷ However, the drawback of listening to a record on a phonograph was the pitfall of analog technology. A phonographic needle sitting in the groove of a vinyl record picked up each speck of dust or damage on the album, which then came through the speakers as a scratch or noise, often louder than the music.⁴⁴⁸

By the 1990s, the digital format became the standard recording method. The biggest difference in this format is in the waveform. Instead of capturing the waveform as a continuous analog replication, digital recordings take snapshots or samples of the analog waveform’s amplitude at a high sample-rate and digitize each sample into a number that represents the waveform’s amplitude at the sample time.⁴⁴⁹ As long as the sampling time is at least twice the highest frequency component in the analog waveform and the number of bits used to represent amplitude is sufficient to replicate the waveform’s dynamic

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 167–175.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 166–167.

⁴⁴⁹ Katz, Mark, *Capturing Sound : How Technology Has Changed Music*, 138–139.

range, it can be mathematically proven that the original analog waveform can be perfectly (identically) reproduced from the digital samples.⁴⁵⁰ That is, there will be no loss in fidelity or content.⁴⁵¹ The device, or player, then converts the digital signal back into an analog signal, supposedly rendering the ear to hear a continuous and true reproduction.⁴⁵² However, implementation variables in the digitation processes have the potential to add distortion to the reproduced analog waveform.⁴⁵³ Consequently, there is much debate among music enthusiasts as to which has a better sound; the analog record or the newer digital format.⁴⁵⁴

By only giving credence to people who believe analog audio is of higher quality than digital, it would seem that switching to a digital recording from an analog recording is not a desirable choice. Nevertheless, there are many advantages to a digital recording. The sound is much cleaner, as there are fewer opportunities in playback to introduce noise.⁴⁵⁵ The technology for recording and distributing are affordable and easily purchased by both amateur and professional engineers.⁴⁵⁶ Operators can easily record and store multiple tracks at nearly no cost and without taking up physical space. With a digital format, both professional recording engineers and amateurs with inexpensive equipment have the

⁴⁵⁰ Lathi, B.P., *Signals Systems and Communication* (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), 437; Montgomery, Christopher, “24/192 Music Downloads ...and why they make no sense,” xiph.org, <http://people.xiph.org/~xiphmont/demo/neil-young.html> (accessed March 4, 2013).

⁴⁵¹ Day, Timothy, *A Century of Recorded Music* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2000), 23.

⁴⁵² Katz, Mark, *Capturing Sound : How Technology Has Changed Music*, 138–139.

⁴⁵³ Montgomery, Christopher, “24/192 Music Downloads ...and why they make no sense.”

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Day, Timothy, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 23–30.

⁴⁵⁶ Cook, Nicholas et al., *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 173–174.

ability to cut, splice, weave, amplify and alter the sound through editing software, as opposed to the need to electronically cut and paste magnetic tape tracks as they did with older technology.⁴⁵⁷ The software also has tools for deleting certain types of mistakes. Engineers have the ability to take slices of the performance, much like a puzzle, and fit together any desired arrangement of the original recording. In addition, the technology allows multiple-track vertical placement, where different elements of one performance, recorded at alternate times, can be overlaid on top of each other after the fact.⁴⁵⁸

These technologically advanced recordings provided opportunities to change the perception of choral tone. Jaakko Mäntyjärvi speculates that the awareness of the new technological capabilities by the conductors propelled their quest for “perfect” recordings.⁴⁵⁹ Today’s computer technology coupled with digitized music enables wider ranges of edits than was formerly possible with analog tape recordings. He recalls a digital recording session where he witnessed edits that cleaned up an attack on a single chord by inserting “the intake of breath from one take, a clean attack from another take and the body of a chord from a third take.”⁴⁶⁰ He believes that the engineers then applied some pitch correction to the chord in question. With that type of technology available, Mäntyjärvi suggests that the awareness of the choral conductor may feed into the

⁴⁵⁷ Day, Timothy, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 19–28.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23–32.

⁴⁵⁹ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

process.⁴⁶¹ The modern professional choral conductor knows that technology allows for greater editing capabilities, which can result in a finer recording.

Jerold Ottley recalls CBS Masterworks' recording sessions with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir where he had two three-hour sessions to conduct an LP recording with choir and orchestra. He remembers the intense and fast recording session and working furiously to get as much as possible on tape. Then, he and the engineers went into the cutting room and literally "cut tape."⁴⁶² On an album consisting of twenty-seven minutes per side, they made perhaps a dozen slices total.⁴⁶³ Ottley believes that now, the digitalization process takes away the quality of warmth in the music and recordings are "too perfect."⁴⁶⁴ In Ottley's words:

Now in this digital age, they are cutting notes out, cutting bad attacks off [and] making hundreds and hundreds, and hundreds of edits. The music actually comes out being so perfect that I don't enjoy it very much. Because when you go to a live performance in a live hall, you hear all the warts. That's part of the performance, that's part of the music, that's part of the experience! Perfection goes too far as far as I'm concerned.⁴⁶⁵

He warns that the choral community is trying to emulate the perfect sound we hear in recordings with immaculate blend and no *vibrato*, sacrificing warmth.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ottley, Jerold, interview.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

Charles Bruffy, a choral conductor with over twenty years of recording experience, has noticed many shifts within the technical side of the choral recording industry. He shared his recollection of recording in the early stages of his career:

In Kansas City, we started recording for Nimbus records which also was a British recording company, [in] Wales. Their philosophy was to record as close to live performance as possible, which meant they wouldn't edit. They'd turn the machine on, we'd sing the song and they'd turn it off. We'd do maybe three runs of each song and they would choose which, over all had the best feeling.⁴⁶⁷

Bruffy expressed his frustration at that method, as any mistake remained documented “for life.”⁴⁶⁸ Although he does not believe that a conductor should strive for imperfection in the recording process, he felt dissatisfied with the results of the early Nimbus recordings. In response, he changed his approach as a conductor, asking the choir quite literally to be as perfect as possible the first time lest having to do another take. Bruffy expressed gratitude for that experience as it taught him to approach every take as the only take, ideally eliminating the need for excessive editing.⁴⁶⁹

In Bruffy's latest recording sessions, he relied heavily upon the ears of his engineer not only to provide input during a recording session, but also to decipher the most effective path for editing of the collected takes. However, he expresses concern about the overall effect the edits may have on the resulting disc. He says, “has all of the editing of imperfections also edited out the feeling, the emotion of the music?”⁴⁷⁰ He goes on to talk about how the qualities of the contemporary recordings are unbelievably high, with every

⁴⁶⁷ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

single flaw deleted. Listeners now hear “flawless” recordings in surround sound, intimate, up close and personal settings through high quality earphones or expensive speaker systems.⁴⁷¹ Not only is the quality of what they listen to higher, but also listeners consume music at a greater rate than previous generations. Music constantly occurs in today’s society as background noise, or through radio, music players, television or just life’s soundtrack through earphones.

Bruffy believes the perfection heard on recordings influences tastes and ideals for choral tone, but he has not lost hope for the impact of a live performance. He points out that the “impact of the visual” has a bearing on the perception of live performance.⁴⁷² When listeners are present, they are influenced by sight and the energy of the performance and will come away saying it was a fantastic concert. Yet, in Bruffy’s experience, when he listens to archival recordings of a performance, he does not have the same experience, even if he was involved in the original concert. He thinks, "Wow, that's not at all what I heard when I was sitting in the seat when my other senses were being stimulated."⁴⁷³ Without the other sensations, listeners are more likely to hear the flaws of a live performance when listening to a recording, furthering the perceived need for flawless recordings. Bruffy suggests engineers and conductors seek a “perfect” recording

⁴⁷¹ Bayley, Amanda, ed., *Recorded Music: Performance, Culture and Technology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37–48.

⁴⁷² Bruffy, Charles, interview.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

quality because they know that with multiple listening, those flaws become prominent and obvious with an absence of sight and physical proximity to the performers.⁴⁷⁴

Libby Larsen relates her concern that the “pristine” nature of the headphone listening experience has now transplanted itself into the performance arena.⁴⁷⁵ She says, “what’s happening is that the professional choirs are delivering what the audience is expecting, which is [a] . . . pristine experience.”⁴⁷⁶ She sees in the performing arena a preference for distance, and that the choir is further away, even removed. She warns that it is possible the choir has become objectified and impersonal, like in the way choral recordings come across pristine and flawless. She would like to see and hear a move towards warmer and more personal presentations.⁴⁷⁷

Craig Hella Johnson’s agrees with Larsen, as his philosophy about how recording should sound leans towards one of ultimate expression. He is interested in finding ways to get warmth and passion across to the listener, even through the medium of a recording.⁴⁷⁸ That is one of his key elements in picking the right venue, and he searches over considerable distances for halls that fit the required resonance of a specific set of repertoire.⁴⁷⁹ *Conspirare* has traveled far from their home base in Austin to find the right recording space. They have recorded in Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, Troy, New York,

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Larsen, Libby, interview.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Johnson, Craig Hella, interview.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

Goshen, Indiana and Skywalker Ranch, California. Johnson is interested in the length of time a sound extends through the hall, and the warmth that adds to the tone. At times, such as in the disc *Sing Freedom*, he seeks a hall that has immediacy to help in clarity of diction, bring out intricate passage work and expression.⁴⁸⁰ Johnson explains further in describing the hall sought for *Conspirare's* Barber disc:

I wanted the textures to be heard clearly . . . the right sort of warmth around the sound and yet at the same time balancing that with clarity of texture [and] text. The basic sound palette [is] a quality that sounds natural . . . and [is an] authentic expression of these singers.⁴⁸¹

To Johnson, the hall must reflect the “grains and sounds” he wants to hear from the individual expression of the singer.⁴⁸² It is of the utmost importance that what the listener hears is “human beings singing.”⁴⁸³

Johnson admits that he is quite involved in the editing process and considers himself in a co-role with the engineer.⁴⁸⁴ He has considerable respect for them and is grateful to work with gifted sound engineers whom he trusts and defers to for balance and resonance.⁴⁸⁵ Still, he enjoys a high involvement in listening and tweaking:

I feel like the editing process, for example, is a place that is as important to me as the recording sessions themselves. [The choir] ha[s] to get the sessions, but those editing days are critical. We [want to] shape those in a way that really reflects . . . our intentions.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

Johnson believes it is a product of intent listening, to choose which takes reflect the ultimate expression and personality of the music performed.

Matt Oltman sees an opposite trend in the consumption of recorded choral music; that listeners are less discriminating than in times past.

Most people are downloading [music], and if they are buying the CD, they are ripping it on to their iPods or computer. That whole idea that somebody is going to buy a CD and sit down under a \$10,000 high-end stereo and “listen” to it is something from the past. There are some that [still] do it and bemoan the loss. But the recording industry is gone. . . . It’s not something that’s supported.⁴⁸⁷

Oltman comments about events he witnessed during his work with *Chanticleer*. In recording sessions of earlier years, every millisecond yielded incredible amounts of time and thought under intensely controlled circumstances.⁴⁸⁸ Many hours of editing in the studio followed, but Oltman concludes that the incentive for that style of recording does not exist now. Listeners are no longer interested in such perfection, but are much more likely to go to YouTube and find a real choir giving a live performance, allowing for a real interaction. Oltman shares an example when *Chanticleer* recorded half of a program onto disc prior to their tour, and the rest of the pieces were excerpts from the first performances of the tour. Although Oltman had a concern that the disc would not have the quality of previous recordings, it turned out to be a well-loved disc. He thinks the audience wanted to purchase a disc that gave them the same experience they just had in a live concert. Oltman says, “all they wanted was to be able to hear what they heard that

⁴⁸⁷ Oltman, Matt, interview.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

night. That instant gratification. They didn't care one whit that half was live and half was studio."⁴⁸⁹

Oltman speculates that this new model for recording may be the direction we are moving towards in the industry, as it is a cheaper method for the performing artist.⁴⁹⁰ Despite the fact that he can tell the recordings are not as perfect, musicians record a greater amount of music in a shorter amount of time, and Oltman feels most listeners cannot tell the difference.

Having heard a number of criticisms of the *BBC Singers* recordings, David Hill concludes that microphones do not tell the real story. As a radio choir conductor, he feels this concept is of critical importance.

All microphones (plural) pick up a "semblance" of what's happening in the room wherever you are . . . performing at the time. But never totally . . . the real experience. It's still one removed from actually being there and actually being present.⁴⁹¹

All a microphone is capable of doing is picking up sounds. Hill explains that sometimes microphones enhance a choir's reputation, but others detract from it, all depending on the engineering specifications.⁴⁹² In contrast, in a live setting the human ear hears the totality of amplified or unamplified sound, reverberating off the walls, floor and ceiling. This mixture of sounds ultimately produces the nuance and color interpreted by the listener.

John Rutter is convinced that, more than anything, recordings have influenced choral tone. He says, "the CD era has made it possible for everybody to enjoy everybody else's

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Hill, David, interview.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

choirs. The national boundaries are not so real anymore.”⁴⁹³ Of note is that besides the influence of recordings over the past thirty years, it is now easier than ever for conductors and composers to travel around the globe and hear choirs from any culture. International choral conventions, choir festivals, workshops, touring choirs and YouTube are all sonic events, which potentially influence choral tone of the twenty-first century.

No other time in history possessed the powerful tools available to modern choral conductors, singers, composers and listeners. Personal listening devices and digital downloads allow for instant access to millions of recordings within seconds. Higher quality digital sound takes out the noise and static listeners experienced in previous recordings, and the sterilization and studio manipulation of live takes “cleanse” the original source. The result being recordings that sound perfect, objectified and precise. The sound is a desirable occurrence to many as they find it enhances the listening experience. However, some believe that the warmth, human intimacy and vulnerability vanished from the final project through the post-editing process, eliminating the natural sound of a choir.

Synthesis

The conductors and composers interviewed for the present study largely agreed that the choral tone of professional choirs has shifted since the 1970s. Several found criticized that shift and yearn for the warmth, beauty and creative inventiveness they recall from the 1970s and before. Although no era is black-and-white and there is always a crossing of

⁴⁹³ Rutter, John, interview.

generational biases and methods, there are specific transformations most conductors agree occurred since the 1970s. The membership of the professional choir decreased in size, perhaps due to monetary concerns or perhaps because of the characteristics within contemporary compositions. The professional choral tone, although not free of *vibrato*, is more clean, clear and pristine than it was in the mid-twentieth century. Conductors feel that the reading ability and attention to intonation of choral singers has improved. Choirs are now more likely to stay in tune, remain in the center of the key that the composer wrote, and adjust to each interval and chord they sing with an awareness of the larger tonal structure. Choirs now display a plethora of colors dependent upon the music. Listeners might hear from the choir: over tone singing, dark colors, light colors, *vibrato*, non-*vibrato*, language accents, nature sounds, harsh and strident vocal resonance, sonorous bass predominance, multi-cultural colors dependent upon the region, instrumental techniques within the voice, and extreme ranges within voice *tessitura*. Additionally, compositions now display extended techniques that call for specific manipulations within the voice such as atmospheric colors, symphonic writing for the voice, cluster chords, polyrhythmic synthesis, and textual overlay.

The findings of the present study show that singers participating in professional choirs are excited about the prospect of singing in a professional choral setting and willingly mold their vocal technique to fit the contemporary construction. Furthermore, conductors established that the countertenor voice is now more acceptably included within alto sections or as a part of an all-male ensemble. English conductors believe that female singers no longer imitate a choirboy sound, but now employ a louder, freer and more natural voice.

One area that conductors believe helped foster change in professional technique is in the manipulation of *vibrato*. This study shows that conductors and composers expect singers to have the facility to sing healthily with or without *vibrato*, and asked singers to apply it with varying colors and oscillations depending on the repertoire. Some say that choirs in the 1970s that applied a “straight tone” had a harsh and reedy resonance, which many found undesirable. The subjects interviewed for the present study believe current methods allow for more flexibility, more vault and more beauty even within a “straight tone”.

In every era, there are undulating opinions that reshape preferences from generation to generation. In Timothy Verville’s study, he collected historical documents about *vibrato* that found:

Throughout history, different regions and schools of teaching have supported one side or another, with various levels of acceptance in between. However, one finds no consensus at any time in Western art music that *vibrato* is wholly acceptable or wholly unacceptable. The findings of this project demonstrate that any statement to the contrary could be easily refuted and would therefore be without merit.⁴⁹⁴

Despite historical fluctuations in accepting *vibrato* usage, research exists showing that in non-professional choral settings, some singers are upset when asked to attempt the choral methods of singing softly with minimal *vibrato*, and admit an unwillingness to try.⁴⁹⁵

Debra Adkinson advocates for a need to recognize healthy singing in choral music by comparing it to other vocal technique shifts and points out those singers may already have the technical facility that they perform within repertoire they are familiar with:

⁴⁹⁴ Verville, Timothy, “Instrumental Vibrato: An Annotated Bibliography of Historical Writings Before 1940.”

⁴⁹⁵ Adkinson, Debra S., “The Effects of Choral Formation on the Singing Voice - ProQuest,” *Choral Journal* 50, no. 8 (March 2010): 24–33.

During the nineteenth century, singers developed vocal techniques that allowed them to meet the demands of being heard over large orchestras in large concert halls. Therefore, it may be necessary for some twenty-first century singers to slightly modify their technique in order to legitimately perform Renaissance music. Unfortunately, many singers and voice teachers are unwilling to make any kind of adjustments, fearing that some damage could be done to the voice. Daryl Edwards points out that the singers who think singing softly in choir is unhealthy are the same ones who think nothing of singing *sotto voce* in an art song such as Schubert's *An die Musik*.⁴⁹⁶

This is a point that raises considerable argument between choral conductors and voice teachers, as many teachers feel the techniques called upon in choral music are not good for the voice or desirable for singers.⁴⁹⁷ Admittedly, the method is not a “one size fits all” practice, as each voice merits individual strengths and weaknesses, which may lead the singer to prefer one style of vocalization to another. Nevertheless, results of the present study conclude that there is a demand for professional-level singers to have refined skills that fit the needs of demanding contemporary choral music. Conductors and composers expect singers to have the ability and facility to meet the requirements found in the score. Singers over the past thirty years have proven that not only are they capable of performing the demanding music, but many feel they can negotiate it healthily and insist that they enjoy the work.⁴⁹⁸ The conductors involved in the study assert that many voice teachers are finding ways to teach their singers to sing choral music healthily, and as a result, the sound of professional choirs has improved. It is valuable to encourage and guide singers who have an interest in singing with a professional choir during their

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Olson, Margaret, “Vibrato vs. Nonvibrato: The Solo Singer in the Collegiate Choral Ensemble,” *Journal of Singing - The Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 64, no. 5 (May 2008): 561–564.

⁴⁹⁸ Oltman, Matt, interview.

career. The singers will need instruction in vocal technique that supports healthy singing in all choral genres.

It is not clear if composers' extended techniques caused choral tone to shift, or if the choral tone and talents of singers inspired composers to try new things. The likely answer falls in-between, with a symbiotic relationship of the two. However, other measures proved influential to both composers and conductors. The early music movement of the 1960s through 1970s reinvigorated an interest in period-accurate performance practice and unearthed previously unknown historical repertoire. The exploration of this music gave rise to applications within instruments and voices as well as interest in blending early music with contemporary compositional styles, forging new choral music genres.

Moreover, the work of progressive twentieth century composers changed choral tone by calling upon *avant-garde* techniques within the voice. Although many of the disjunct intervals and strange sounds did not resonate with most choral communities, some techniques eventually penetrated the choral domain. We now find a plethora of extended techniques within modern compositions embraced by twenty-first century professional choirs and their audiences.

The need for entertaining and retaining audiences drove composers to write compelling and audience-friendly music. Composers borrow from popular genres such as pop, rock, hip-hop, folk, country, Broadway and film, cross-mingling genres in a sophisticated fashion. The trend helped popularized choral music and exposed the art to listeners who may not have found interest with traditional choral models. Billboard charts, Gramophone Awards, Grammy Awards, and iTunes Top Picks all document the public interest for this type of choral art. Professional choirs take advantage of these

trends by producing discs and giving concerts that appeal to audiences, increasing ensemble exposure and strengthen financial sustainability. As successful as this form of choral music is, some feel this may encroach upon the quality of the art itself. There is a fear that catering to the audience in an effort to popularize the choral art and generate patrons may not be in the best interest of the choral field. Conductors feel that the potential within choral music is dynamic, versatile and can be explored in multiple ways. They encourage all composers and conductors to strive for the highest possible quality in both creating and performing challenging and aesthetically pleasing music.

Returning once again to John Rutter’s clever tag line, “singing is partly taught and partly caught,” it is human nature to hear and mimic what the ear likes.⁴⁹⁹ Worldwide circulation of choral recordings has had a tremendous impact on the synthesis of choral tone since the 1970s. Mark Katz found a similar phenomenon in violinists shifting tone due to the advent of recording technology at the beginning of the twentieth century:

At the turn of the century, classical violinists treated [*vibrato*] as an occasional ornament, yet only a few decades later they had adopted a nearly continuous *vibrato*. As I argue, this transformation in technique was closely linked to the rise of recording activity among violinists, who adapted their playing to the distinctive traits of the medium Our very notions of musical beauty and of what constitutes a musical life have changed with the presence of recording The “new” *vibrato* came to be regarded as integral to beautiful violin playing.⁵⁰⁰

As is in the case of the shift in the violinists’ *vibrato* at the start of the twentieth century, recording quality and effortless product availability over the past thirty to forty years has propelled a change in the choral tone.

⁴⁹⁹ Rutter, John, interview.

⁵⁰⁰ Katz, Mark, *Capturing Sound : How Technology Has Changed Music*, 188–189.

Advances in technology caused engineers to move away from the analog tape recording process towards a digital medium. The switch removed the hiss that existed in the analog format, and presented a cleaner, clearer sound. Technology gave rise to new editing devices that eliminated the need for a slice of the tape. Instead engineers are now able to manipulate recording takes at a finite level of detail, fixing pitches, deleting blips, inserting alternative cuts, adding reverb, equalizing balance and creating a “perfect” recording out of several takes. The sound is full, round, dense, pristine, distant, and near to perfect. In turn, listeners are more able than ever to download, stream and purchase recordings from around the world for immediate consumption. Music listening can occur anywhere from the concert hall, car or home to on headphones while running, on the subway or a plane, or in a crowd. The listening experience is immediate, personal and powerful.

This study determined that choral color both in live performances as well as on recordings has changed, and some conductors and composers are not satisfied with the results of that change. In comparison to recordings from the mid-twentieth century, they say many modern recordings sound sterile, distant and objectified. Conductors and composers yearn to hear recordings that hold the warmth, heart and richness they recall from earlier years. The shifts in recorded sound occurred both due to the vocal technique applied by the choir and the switch away from analog to a digital format. The analog format, which captured the exact sound wave and allowed the ear to hear the entire dimension of the sound, became obsolete. In contrast, many listeners feel that digital formats take away the warmth and depth of the tonal spectrum, exhibiting a cleansed but distant color.

Overall, it is the belief of each conductor and composer that the last thirty to forty years of choral music was a significant and creative time in the field. Professional choirs broke boundaries in repertoire, vocal production and quality. Subjects interviewed for the theory of the present study concur that the twenty-first century professional choral tone has shifted and transformed since the mid-twentieth century professional choral tone.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF CHORAL MUSIC?

The Death of Choral Music?

Many years ago, I attended a seminar on choral music repertoire. The course, scheduled to run for sixteen weeks, began with a comment raised by the conductor teaching the class. He said, “Choral music is dying.” I furiously sifted through my memory to recollect experiences from my life that validated his statement. However, in my younger years, my experiences as a chorister were positive and inspirational. I fondly recalled my high school choral program that boasted seven choirs totaling two hundred fifty students. I thought of my collegiate experience: the classes I took on conducting, choral history and methods, and all the beautiful concerts and tours in which I participated. Choral music seemed so steeped in tradition, history and audience appeal that I could not imagine a world without it. My professor’s point has merit, however, as harsh spending cuts in the arts, in music education, and a drying up of arts endowments, grants and corporate sponsorship give cause for concern for the survival of all artistic organizations, including professional choirs.

As shown in the previous chapter, education of the singers, technology, recordings, music from earlier periods, composer techniques and trends, multi-cultural sonority, texts, films, pop/rock, sub-woofers, and regional colors have *all* influenced the sound of the twenty-first century professional choir. Admittedly, analyzing isolated choral communities omits the larger story. Church, community, children’s, school, collegiate

and professional choirs all mutually affect choral sound. The symbiotic relationships between organizations all potentially shape the future of choral tone.

The subjects involved in the present study had a range of opinions on the future of choral music. Although their answers have bearing on the broad choral community, long reaching effects of their responses potentially have significant impact on how professional choirs function, how they receive support, and ultimately how they sound. Dwindling financial support may cause a reduction in singer staff, thus reducing the fullness of the choir's sound. Finding ways to continually engage audiences, thus maintaining commercial financial support, may foster the creation of music that appeals to wider audiences. The modern world, constantly inundated with visual stimulation, may only remain engaged if choirs change their dramatic approach. The decline of music education in schools may lead to a lack of appreciation for the art, causing a decrease in audience attendance. In spite of these hazards, the participant's sentiments did not agree with my professor's opinion that choral music is dying as they outlined shining beacons of hope. However, these are areas of concern for the future of the genre.

Financial Woes in Professional Choirs

The future of choral music is moving towards an era when the professional choir will have to work harder to "sell themselves," expresses composer Gabriel Jackson.⁵⁰¹ He insists choirs have been fortunate to survive with reliance upon government funding and corporate sponsorship. However, with a decrease of state resources, choirs need to work

⁵⁰¹ Jackson, Gabriel, interview.

harder to draw audiences, as the continued success of professional choirs depends upon name recognition and a strong marketing platform.

European radio choirs are predominantly state-funded but Jackson states that the funds are harder to obtain, and he worries choirs may need to operate in an innovative fashion.⁵⁰² Radio choirs' primary function is to perform on-air programs instead of physical concerts. They can give creative, imaginative yet expensive shows due to radio-station funding. Jackson points out that the disadvantage in having no paying audience is that choirs do not have the same requirements to market their product. As a result, Jackson feels radio choirs are often not as well-known or valued as they should be, which diminishes their perceived importance in the professional choral world.⁵⁰³ With a drying-up of state funds, Jackson states radio choirs will need to work harder to bring the audience to them. He warns that the competition is fierce and gives credit to the amateur choirs for that challenge:

For an awful lot people, they can't tell the difference between a good amateur choir and a professional one. . . . Where there are good amateur choirs who are available . . . much more cheaply, . . . professional choirs don't get as much work as they should.⁵⁰⁴

Jackson is concerned about the trend in downsizing as it has reduced the size of several professional choirs: the Netherlands Chamber Choir from twenty-four to twenty singers, the SWR Vocal Ensemble of Stuttgart from twenty-four to eighteen singers, and

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

the BBC Singers' core singing staff from twenty-four to eighteen.⁵⁰⁵ Radio stations traditionally employ professional choirs in Europe, but find it increasingly difficult to continue to support them at the same financial level.⁵⁰⁶ These choirs do not often record commercially and do not have traditional concert-going audiences. Currently, their primary function is to sing for radio programming:

Maybe, as economic realities start to affect these things . . . it's quite difficult to justify paying twenty-four . . . full-time [singers] to sing [for] a fairly minor audience out of the budget of a broadcaster if nobody knows who they are.⁵⁰⁷

Jackson believes that radio choirs must become creative in selling their product through more commercial recordings, building audiences and building name recognition, or they will cease to exist. Optimistically Jackson points out, "I think as long as people want to hear high-level choral singing, then there will continue to be a demand for professional choirs, but I do think the economic side of it is problematic."⁵⁰⁸

Nigel Short also sees a troubling economic climate ahead for professional choirs. His own choir, Tenebrae, struggles in this economic climate despite international and national touring, disc releases and local London concerts. The idea of having a strategic five-year plan, which diagrams the operation and development of the choir, is a luxury he hopes for, but does not currently possess.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Short, Nigel, interview.

Audience Dissatisfaction

The notion of attending a choral concert is not an appealing prospect to some listeners. One blog author offers several detractions that inhibit listener's desire to attend a choir concert. Chloe Veltman criticizes the choral art for its slow, tedious music, disengaged singers, uncomfortable performing venues, visually unappealing attire, dull presentation, and the pompous choral director who takes him/herself too seriously.⁵¹⁰ She even suggests that certain composers' music, the very type addressed in this study, bores audiences and drives them away.⁵¹¹ Similarly disparaging, a recent Huffington Post article caused a rigorous debate among classical fans over the confusing "cloak-and-dagger protocols" expected of a classical audience.⁵¹² The author, Richard Dare, points out that the way in which we consume classical art today is not the environment composers intended. Concert attendees in Beethoven's time thought nothing of cheering, clapping and calling out at exciting moments! Dare asserts that, over the past century, the average age of an audience rose, which in turn toned down the youthful exuberance found in concerts of past generations. Dare maintains that until the late 1960s the form "remained most popular among energetic thirty-somethings rather than subdued grey-hairs."⁵¹³ Megan Garber laments the loss of historical nuanced communicative formulas

⁵¹⁰ Veltman, Chloe, "The Choral Dirge," lies like truth, <http://www.artsjournal.com/lies/2011/12/the-choral-dirge/> (accessed February 27, 2013).

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Dare, Richard, "Richard Dare: The Awfulness of Classical Music Explained," Huffpost Arts & Culture, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-dare/classical-music-concerts_b_1525896.html (accessed February 27, 2013).

⁵¹³ Ibid.

that had expressed ‘rewards by clapping, “trilling” or thumping.’⁵¹⁴ Instead, she describes the modern day applause ethic as a “transaction” between performer and listener.⁵¹⁵ “Applause became an expectation rather than a reward. And artists saw it for what it was becoming: ritual, rote.”⁵¹⁶ Finally Dare asserts, “Classical music belongs to the audience - - to its listeners, not the critics, to the citizens, not the snobs.”⁵¹⁷

Achieving Modern Relevancy

Professional choirs must now balance convincing new listeners to support the art while still engaging loyal audiences. There is a need to find ways of appealing to modern audiences by not offending them, not boring them and not portraying an aura of “snobbery.”⁵¹⁸ However, the question then becomes how to balance the desires of a younger modern audience against the need to sustain and build upon the traditional choral enthusiast who savors the established and historical aesthetic.

One conductor involved in this study sees both sides to the “snobbery” argument, although, he admits, he falls in the middle of the discussion. Craig Hella Johnson confesses a desire for a quiet audience, but only because he wants the audience to listen

⁵¹⁴ Garber, Megan, “A Brief History of Applause, the ‘Big Data’ of the Ancient World,” *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/03/a-brief-history-of-applause-the-big-data-of-the-ancient-world/274014/> (accessed April 5, 2013).

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ ⁵¹⁶ Ibid. “A Brief History of Applause, the ‘Big Data’ of the Ancient World - Megan Garber - *The Atlantic*,” <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/03/a-brief-history-of-applause-the-big-data-of-the-ancient-world/274014/> (accessed April 5, 2013).

⁵¹⁷ Dare, Richard, “Richard Dare: The Awfulness of Classical Music Explained.”

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

and savor the music.⁵¹⁹ However, he is concerned about the human hierarchies that invade music, such as the expectation of clapping only at defined times, and philosophies that divide, such as limiting the styles of music that merit artistic accord.⁵²⁰ Instead, he raises the question, what is art and who is it for? Is it only for a population that enjoys a particular form of art, or is it for everyone?⁵²¹ Johnson's goal with professional choir, *Conspirare*, is to develop "world class musical excellence" at the same time as "debunk[ing] musical snobbery."⁵²² To Johnson, the future of choral music will occur by inviting the audience to be "present" through an inclusion of expressive music to which they can relate.⁵²³ Johnson suggests doing so by way of interpolations, or programs strung together with provoking text and historical choral pieces, paired against relevant modern music.⁵²⁴ Johnson explains that, for each concert, there are different types of listeners: a lieder listener, a Beatles listener, a chant listener, a Renaissance listener and a pop listener.⁵²⁵ He says, "it's more about the intention, the content of our interactions . . . we hope that is an inclusion of all people."⁵²⁶

Intrigued by *Conspirare*'s interpolation concerts, English composer Jonathan Dove gives merit to the idea of a program with a continuous journey. He saw the interpolation

⁵¹⁹ Johnson, Craig Hella, interview.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

program on a DVD and thought Conspirare's range of repertoire, which embraced world music, popular songs, and classical choral music, made for a compelling program.⁵²⁷

Dove reasons that composing a story, an idea or a message out of a compilation of choral songs is brilliant, and views this as a "development of greater theatricality."⁵²⁸ Known both as a composer of choral music and opera, Dove believes the dramatic element in sharing music is essential. "Classical music generally struggles to keep and develop its audience," but programming dramatically is "more likely to attract a crowd." This statement likewise holds merit for professional choirs.

The "magic key" that attracts audiences and brings choral music to the main stream is the "missing link" Jaakko Mäntyjärvi is waiting for.⁵²⁹ Perhaps the future of choral music is through popular culture and popular music, but Mäntyjärvi is not convinced existing crossovers are doing the job well. Rather, he feels current trends may be doing the choral art more harm than good. Mäntyjärvi offers, "I have this very strong feeling of the paradox of choral music being very much perceived as a marginal phenomenon, even though it has . . . a huge number of people doing it all over the world," and it can be performed anywhere without the need of equipment, owing to the *a cappella* nature of much choral music.⁵³⁰ It concerns him that the public sees choral music as mostly an amateur pursuit, therefore, not challenging or relevant. Mäntyjärvi believes choral music is an easily marketable genre even for a professional choir. He argues, "you just need

⁵²⁷ Conspirare, "Conspirare choral music DVDs, buy online at Conspirare," Conspirare: Craig Hella Johnson & Company of Voices, <http://conspirare.org/shop/dvds/> (accessed March 2, 2013).

⁵²⁸ Dove, Jonathan, interview.

⁵²⁹ Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko, interview.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

people who can sing . . . [We] need something that would render vocal music in the sense of ensembles or choral singing more relevant to mainstream popular culture.”⁵³¹

Ola Gjeilo agrees and is of the opinion that popular and positive trends in the contemporary professional choral community are drawing audiences. He thinks the future of choral music will occur through the dynamic personality of composers, conductors and ensembles that eclipse earlier methods of composition and showmanship. He also credits the work of Eric Whitacre, who he sees as an excellent composer who also transcended the typical mold of a conductor and composer.⁵³² Ola insists Whitacre is a revolutionary figure as his role and position helped make choral music “cool” for participants and listeners.⁵³³ The phenomenon has not just benefited Whitacre, but also opened doors for other musicians to explore popular genres within the choral field. Gjeilo believes that in order to be sustainable, the future of choral music will include elements of rock, pop and film music as well as innovative employment of technology, internet and video, because those elements interweave into the “sound of our time” and lives of the modern listener.⁵³⁴

A Visually Stimulating Future

The tradition of professional choral music historically relied solely upon the aural experience for concert goers. However, several participants involved in this study believe

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Gjeilo, Ola, interview.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

that professional choirs will have to do more to engage modern audiences. Study participants cited recent occurrences of choirs that incorporate visual and dramatic aspects into the choral performance medium. The visual aspect was not included in the previous chapter of the present study, as it does not directly influence the overall shape and color of choral tone. However, it is relevant in the contemporary practice, and some of the interviewees see it as a seed of change in the future in choral music. Visual and dramatic applications for the purposes of this conversation include surround-sound singing (or singing from different geographical points in a hall), moving while singing, and incorporating dance, visual art, choral formations or dramatic acting within a choral performance. Just to be clear, this section is not referring to choreography executed by the entire choir, such as in a show choir.

Nigel Short believes the amateur choirs have been more successful visually than have professional choirs. Committed amateur singers perform from memory by spending volunteer time outside of rehearsal, committing the music to heart. He admits the amateur choral institutions boast singers who have a rigorous commitment that professional choirs lack. Professional choristers in the UK are fantastic sight-readers, and pride themselves on being able to address artistically any score. However, committing music to memory takes commitment outside of rehearsal and professional choral organizations do not have funds to pay singers for that extra time. In the future, Short would love his professional choir *Tenebrae* embrace performing by memory, while aggressively perusing new repertoire.⁵³⁵ He says, “I don’t think you can ever just say ‘we are a professional choir,

⁵³⁵ Short, Nigel, interview.

this is how we sound' and not worry about what you look like."⁵³⁶ Short knows professional choirs need to employ devices to compete with amateur choirs. He insists that professional choirs bore audiences by just walking on stage holding their music and singing for forty-five minutes. He thinks the future of professional choral music requires finding ways to motivate professional singers to incorporate memorization.⁵³⁷

Jonathan Dove hopes for a bright future of professional choral music complete with existing choral traditions and historical repertoire. However, intrigued by an experience he saw and heard with the Crouch End Festival Chorus, he believes multi-media may be a part choral music's future. The chorus performed combined choral and orchestral realizations of hip hop and dance music while wearing dark glasses and incorporating rousing lighting effects.⁵³⁸ Dove felt that the innovative expression illuminated the music in a strange, yet exciting way.⁵³⁹ He insists, "there's no limit, really, in ways that choirs can be part of music making."⁵⁴⁰

Furthering the argument, motion-activated multi-media technology is the way of the future, according to Libby Larsen.⁵⁴¹ She currently dabbles in this fun and innovative electronic synthesis and describes the method:

You're the singer, here's my laptop; I've got a digital camera pointed at you. I've programmed into my laptop a grid of possibility, and you're sitting in the middle

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Dove, Jonathan, interview.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Larsen, Libby, interview.

of the grid, and the camera is watching you. You do this [moves her hand], and suddenly the lights turn red.⁵⁴²

She sees this technology as a means by which listeners will experience choral art that appeals to modern expectations of visually stimulating expressions. She insists that there is a substantial amount of innovation possible in performance and is excited to try new things. Larsen believes fervently that choral music will always exist because people genuinely enjoy singing together, but that the format will undoubtedly change.⁵⁴³ It may take one hundred years to change formats, it may shift away from chamber choirs to smaller vocal ensembles, and it may evolve in presentation, but Larsen remains positive:

I think the future is rife with possibility and potential, and there's no doubt that there will be choral music because people like to sing together. Whether it stays in this format or not, is the big question, because the formats for the presentation of music are evolved by culture.⁵⁴⁴

Michael McGlynn weighs in on the discussion by saying that the future of choral music must include the audience in the artistic experience. If a conductor stands in front of a choir, McGlynn surmises, the effect is creating an “invisible wall” between the choir and the audience. McGlynn wonders who the audience is really there to see: the conductor or the choir? By extension, he worries that singers rely upon the direction of a conductor too heavily and instead need to be proactive as independent musicians.⁵⁴⁵ His premise is that the choir can only express frailty, humanity and humility genuinely if each

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

singer approaches it as a personal expression.⁵⁴⁶ Only with a “level playing field,” of similar vocal and aesthetic conviction can a choir achieve uniform choral tone. McGlynn believes “it isn’t about the conductor. It’s about the choir.”⁵⁴⁷ Instead, the conductor is a “guide, an interpreter of the score . . . [and] is only a part of the essence of a choir.”⁵⁴⁸

McGlynn’s affinity for early music helped him create an enticing quality for modern audiences through ethereal visual techniques. Many aspects of the *Anúna* concert model function similarly to that of a rock band.⁵⁴⁹ The halls in which *Anúna* perform lend themselves to dramatic sets and lighting. Decorative candles sit throughout the hall and stage and are a visual hallmark of this ensemble. Often the lighting engineers create a visual tableau through sets of sweeping sheaths, lit up with multiple colors to augment the staging. Varying shades of color and dimmed-light texture create the allure. All of these elements pull together the backbone of *Anúna*’s presentation, which lies in the idea of the *ritual*. To the average listener, the powerful images created by *Anúna*’s music take the audience on a journey to a nebulous age where they perceive they are experiencing something historical, religious or ceremonial.⁵⁵⁰ “We don’t have any illusions about the power of the ritual on an audience,” says McGlynn about this phenomenon.⁵⁵¹ For that moment in time, the audience becomes an active part of the performance. In this

⁵⁴⁶ McGlynn, Michael, interview.

⁵⁴⁷ McGlynn, Michael, interview.

⁵⁴⁸ McGlynn, Michael to author, March 27, 2013.

⁵⁴⁹ McGlynn, Michael, interview.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

interdisciplinary world, McGlynn feels that the beauty of the visual, combined with the beauty of the aural, is the way in which professional choirs need to communicate in order to stay fresh and relevant.⁵⁵²

Further cutting-edge examples of visual and aural effects are demonstrated in Latvian composer Ēriks Ešņvalds's compositions. Ešņvalds compositional philosophy opens himself up to a number of different approaches, from compositionally outlining the shape of a constellation on a staff to determine a melodic sequence, or by symbolically portraying the visual effects of the aurora borealis within his music aurally. Ešņvalds welcomes unconventional timbres into the choral sound, and he reasons that members of the choir are capable of doing more than just singing and he often assigns them additional tasks.⁵⁵³ In his composition, *A Drop in the Ocean*, a piece in memory of mother Teresa, singers pull a piece of white material over the choir at the end of the song, which displays a picture of the famous sister.⁵⁵⁴ Additionally, Ešņvalds is fond of enlisting singers to produce "extra-musical" sounds to evoke a sense of mystery or atmospheric energy, such as whistles, chimes or water-tuned glasses.⁵⁵⁵

Figure 13 shows an excerpt from Ešņvalds's piece *Northern Lights*, recently performed at the ACDA National Conference in Dallas. He incorporated both chimes and water-tuned glasses, which acted as a third and fourth "voice" within the choir. The droning glasses evoked a sense of the audible energy, metaphorically representing tones

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ešņvalds, Ēriks, interview by author, Digital Recording, Dallas, Texas, March 15, 2013.

⁵⁵⁴ quartzmusicltd, "A Drop in the Ocean," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULz7Bp_i3sY (accessed March 26, 2013).

⁵⁵⁵ Ešņvalds, Ēriks, interview.

that some witnesses claim can be heard during the spectral event. Ešenvalds and the director who commissioned the piece collaborated to identify points for specific choral movement to achieve the dramatic and mysterious effects during the performance.⁵⁵⁶

Figure 13 shows the jointly chosen moment in the piece where all the instruments and voices are sounding, subsequently the choir turns away from the audience leaving only the soloist facing out to theatrically deliver the message.

106 $\text{♩} = 60$

Solo *mp*
Cik nak - snī - nas pret zie - me - li re - dzēj'

Chimes

W.-tuned glasses

S *p* *legato*
in - to un - known worlds. Oo

A *p* *legato*
in - to un - known worlds. Oo

T *p* *legato*
in - to un - known worlds. Oo

B *p* *legato*
in - to un - known worlds. Oo

Figure 13. *Northern Lights* by Ēriks Ešenvalds mm. 106-111

Extract from 'Northern Lights' by Ēriks Ešenvalds
 @ Copyright Musica Baltica, Riga
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 on behalf of Musica Baltica

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

Should professional choirs incorporate such visual displays in live performance?

When compared with amateur choirs, most subjects agree professional choirs have a higher quality sound. However, when placed side by side against a passionate amateur choir that incorporates effective visual techniques, professional choirs face a predicament: do they sacrifice the aural-only tradition for visual interest, or do they carry on with the proven traditional “stand and sing” method? Ēriks Ešenvalds recalls a choral competition in Finland where both professional and amateur choirs competed against one another.⁵⁵⁷ The Latvian amateur choir won that competition, taking home a substantial monetary prize for their passionate performance.⁵⁵⁸ Many argue that professional choirs do not belong in competition settings, as it is a different environment from their intended purpose. However, Ešenvalds example does cause one to consider that some amateur choirs may have an entertaining “edge” over professional choirs.

Despite some musicians’ excitement for visual additions in the choral arena, Jon Washburn finds the technique unsettling. “Do you suppose that’s the direction that choral music is headed? Is there such a need for visual stimulation that choral music will have to become chorographic?” He worries that the visual details distract from the listening experience and explains by recalling a performance he saw that incorporated an extra-musical story through dance, but staged in front of the choir. Washburn recalls “I felt that I was so interested in the things that were happening in the dancing and the staging that I

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

didn't hear those pieces as well."⁵⁵⁹ He understands why this method might draw in a modern audience, but "I'm not convinced that's a good direction in the long run."⁵⁶⁰

Support through Choral Participation

Although John Rutter sees a vibrant and thriving professional and collegiate choral population, he expresses concern about the lack of commitment in community choirs. He sees that, in modern life, people's lives are bustling with activities that compete with a standing weekly choral rehearsal. Rutter says,

In a way, you can be misled by walking around Oxford or Cambridge or London and saying, there are all these good choirs all over the place. [However,] it may be a little bit like . . . [the] flowers are blooming brightly, but the roots are decaying.⁵⁶¹

Rutter goes on to say that most of the musicians involved in the professional field are the slim 8-9% who were privileged enough to receive English private high school and collegiate education, where the choral tradition is strong. The rest are all amateurs who do it for the love.

On the other hand, Jerold Ottley sees the future of choral music as bright, with much of the best work coming from amateur community choirs instead of professional choirs. He says, "it's just amazing what's happening in churches, communities, symphony orchestras, [and] universities."⁵⁶² Ottley refers to the 2008 National Endowment of the

⁵⁵⁹ Washburn, Jon, interview.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Rutter, John, interview.

⁵⁶² Ottley, Jerold, interview.

Arts survey, which found that there are more people singing in choral groups than ever before, and there is continual growth:

With 11.6 million adults participating, this activity had more than double the number of participants of any other type of personal performance other than classical music (6.9 million adults participating).⁵⁶³

Similarly, the 2009 Chorus America Impact Study garnered promising results with Finding 1, “choral singing continues to be the most popular form of participation in the performing arts,” and Finding 3, “children who sing in choruses have academic success and valuable life skills.”⁵⁶⁴ However, the impact study discovered a worrying trend with Finding 4, “the decline in choral singing opportunities for children and youth is a key area for concern.”⁵⁶⁵ Continued choral education at the elementary, middle and high school level is key to the future sustainability of professional choral music.

Decline of Music Education

Charles Bruffy expanded upon the decline of music education and how that will hurt the future of professional choirs. Disturbed by the trends of today’s youth, who emulate pop culture, he foresees a downward spiraling effect.⁵⁶⁶ Bruffy believes that young students receive no introduction to classical music at home (where there is an infiltration of pop culture), and no exposure at school due to funding cuts in music education. By the

⁵⁶³ Williams, Kevin and Keen, David, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (Washington D.C.: National Endowment of the Arts, November 2009), 44.

⁵⁶⁴ Chorus America, *Chorus Impact Study: How Children, Adults, and Communities Benefit from Choruses* | Chorus America, 2009, <https://www.chorusamerica.org/advocacy-research/chorus-impact-study> (accessed February 28, 2013).

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Bruffy, Charles, interview by author, Digital Recording, Phoenix, Arizona, February 15, 2013. Ibid.

time students are old enough to participate in an orchestra, band or choir, it is too late to engage them because they lack an understanding of the aesthetic and do not want to participate.⁵⁶⁷

In addition, Bruffy thinks the lack of exposure removes their ability to participate in a church choir, community choir or collegiate choir because they cannot read music. Sadly, they grow up without an interest and do not support the arts as salary-earning adults thus making it increasingly difficult for professional choral organizations to survive. Bruffy goes on to explain that even the students who make it into the music classroom face a challenge. Music teachers lack resources, administrative and financial support, and Bruffy asserts that many music education graduates leave college without adequate education in their field of expertise.⁵⁶⁸ The students who succeed in this environment reside predominantly in economic situations that can afford private lessons and have family support to provide transport to rehearsals and concerts. Bruffy worries that the result will culminate in a world where music education only benefits individuals from affluent families.⁵⁶⁹

England has a healthy tradition of choral music education going back hundreds of years. However, David Hill likewise expresses worry over recent U.K. a decline in music education, where children no longer have the opportunity to sing. He likens the problem to the popular saying about the National Health Service in the UK, “it’s free at the point

⁵⁶⁷ Bruffy, Charles, interview.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Bruffy, Charles, interview by author, Digital Recording, Phoenix, Arizona, February 15, 2013.

of delivery.”⁵⁷⁰ Owing to the fact that it does not cost anything to stand up and sing, he believes choral music should be an unchallenging inclusion to a child’s education. Hill upholds the choral music tradition as he feels there is too much history to ignore the extensive cultural heritage of choral music.⁵⁷¹

Craig Jessop expresses a similar concern for music education in America. It troubles him that legislators, “in their wisdom,” have inserted themselves into topics that they do not understand, causing a dynamic erosion of music education.⁵⁷² They eliminated some of the very things that gave American education a stamp of quality and focused instead on academics and heavier testing.⁵⁷³ Jessop says, “they think they’re saving money and time. Actually, as they have eliminated arts programs, test scores have gone down.”⁵⁷⁴

Yet, there is a glimmer of hope for the future of choral music, declares Jon Washburn.⁵⁷⁵ He believes that a favorable destiny will ensue in Asian countries. He recounts his experience working with Japanese choirs:

The Japanese personality is really suited to choral music. First of all, you’ve got a language which is vowel oriented. Secondly, you’ve got an incredible teamwork mentality. You’ve got fantastic concentration and willingness to take direction . . . And they are so willing to learn.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁰ Hill, David, interview.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Jessop, Craig, interview.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Washburn, Jon, interview.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

With the popularity of corporate choirs, like the Toyota choir that has one-hundred fifty singers and the Korean choir *Incheon City Chorale* that recently made international waves with their tours, Jon Washburn may have a valid argument.⁵⁷⁷

A Promising Future

Despite all the worries and concerns shared by the subjects involved in this study, there is hope for the future of choral music both at the community and at professional levels. Many innovative developments continue to occur with the support of local communities, choral organizations, church choirs, children's choirs, school choirs and professional choirs. The continued growth in American choral activity has promise and worldwide choral competitions have a healthy level of support.⁵⁷⁸ There is a thriving professional choral scene in England, and professional choirs around the world are breaking ground in disc and award exposure.

One thriving example is in the choir, *Voces8*. As one of only a few full-time professional singing organizations from England, they tour globally as a group of eight singers for about six months of the year.⁵⁷⁹ They pair the high-caliber historical choral music of Bach and Byrd against crowd-pleasing tunes such as opera medleys and *Nobody Does it Better* from the James Bond sound track for *The Spy Who Loved Me*. They are

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Rutter, John, interview; Bruffy, Charles, interview; Ottley, Jerold, interview; Brunelle, Phillip, interview.

⁵⁷⁹ Smith, Barney, interview by author, Digital Recording, Dallas, Texas, March 14, 2013. VOCES8 only employs eight singers, therefore more accurately classified as a vocal ensemble (much like The King's Singers), as opposed to a chamber choir of sixteen or more singers.

popular for their gorgeous choral sound, dynamic programming, and engaging showmanship. *Voces8* displays traditional concert formations while incorporating visual and dramatic variation. The telling story of *Voces8*'s success is in how they interweave professional performances with an educational facet. They give numerous workshops in schools, spending individual time with over 25,000 young students annually.⁵⁸⁰ Most importantly, *Voces8* has an economically sound business model that supports a full-time professional vocal ensemble, which is a rare but favorable phenomenon in this business.⁵⁸¹

John Rutter offers another bright view on the future of choral music. He trusts, “as long as the human voice continues to bring tears to their eyes and joy to their heart . . . [then] choral music continues . . . in some shape or form.”⁵⁸² In the meantime, Alice Parker encourages the choral community to cease worrying about what’s to come, and instead focus on what music is, how we experience it and enjoy the moment while it sounds:

Music happens right now. It doesn’t happen five minutes from now or five minutes ago. It’s where time crosses space or where . . . musical sound crosses musical time . . . What kind of sound can we make right now that is exactly right for this instant?⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ VOCES8, “Education,” VOCES8, <http://www.voces8.com/web/education> (accessed March 22, 2013).

⁵⁸¹ Smith, Barney, interview.

⁵⁸² Rutter, John, interview.

⁵⁸³ Parker, Alice, interview.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Areas of Further Research

The current study focused primarily on the shifting choral tone in professional choirs from the mid-twentieth century to the twenty-first century. However, room exists for research in the development and ever-changing dynamic of the professional choir as a whole, as opposed to focusing on choral tone.

More in-depth study is needed, as there are numerous professional choirs not included in this study. Here is a short list of additional choirs the author believes deserve further investigation based upon the same criteria as subjects involved in the present study:⁵⁸⁴

1. *Manhattan Concert Chorale*, under the direction of Craig Arnold,
2. *LA Masterworks Chorale*, under Grant Gershon,
3. *Tallis Scholars*, under Peter Phillips,
4. *Seraphic Fire*, directed by Patrick Quigley,
5. *Dale Warland Singers*, emeritus conductor Dale Warland
6. *Simon Carrington Singers*, directed by Simon Carrington (who is also noted for his founding of the King's Singers),
7. *Polyphony*, conducted by Stephen Layton,
8. *Minnesota Chorale*, conducted by Kathy Satzman Romey,

⁵⁸⁴ Criteria for choosing choirs and conductors include: Conductor and choir status in the global choral community, awards and recognitions granted to individuals or the choirs they work with, commercial success, radio, television and film exposure, and a high volume of album sales.

9. *San Francisco Choral Artists*, conducted by Magen Solomon,
10. *Essential Voices USA*, directed by Judith Clurman
11. *Eric Whitacre Singers*, directed by Eric Whitacre,
12. *Monteverdi Choir* under the direction of Sir John Elliot Gardiner, and
13. *King's College Cambridge* directed today by Stephen Cleobury.

Additionally, there is value in researching the effect of traditional jazz, vocal jazz and musical theater on the development of professional choral sound. Of importance are choirs such as the *King's Singers* and *Voces8*, who regularly sing tunes from those genres in their concert programming.

The dynamic between conductor and composer, their interrelationship and how that shapes sound and performance practice deserves further research. An example of that collaborative effort is when a conductor pulling moments out of a score that are not specifically written by the composer rather than following the letter of the composer's intentions. What artistic sacrifices or benefits arise when two creative musicians work together?

There is opportunity for further study in the economic and financial sectors to discover how professional choirs have functioned, survived and in some cases thrived over the past thirty years. Some choirs have made a financial success for themselves through frequent touring while others have found the cost of that avenue beyond reach. The financial health of an institution could affect the choices they make in terms of repertoire, numbers of singers, and concert venues, and in turn have an effect on choral sound. Grants, private endowments and foundations may be a part of the financial puzzle. In the past, choirs relied heavily upon public funding and private donations for their

financial bottom line. With the downward trend in the economy, drying up of federal grants and reduced corporate sponsorship a reality in today's market, how do professional choirs continue to survive?

How has the act of financing recordings changed? Should choral organizations choose label representation over the ease of self-releasing an independent album and do those choices potentially beneficial to choir's economic stability and stature? There may be benefits and detriments both for choosing representation by a label or for moving forth independently.

Do professional choral singers have protections similar to those offered by the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA), whose membership holds protections against abuse and provide wage minimums, rehearsal and concert hour regulations, recording right regulations and assurances of safe working environments? Some choral organizations currently have this protection, but it may influence recording, repertoire and concert choices. The union regulations on cost may further jeopardize artistic choices.

Furthermore, the change in advertising and media landscape could conceivably affect professional choirs in the digital age, where e-blasts, personal websites and mp3 downloads are the norm and radio broadcasts are decreasing. By extension, technology may play a role in the effort contemporary choral organizations make to cultivate patrons and sponsors.

An area in need of increased research is in technological innovative performance applications, both in live forms and through technology such as YouTube, Vimeo and Podcasts, which were briefly mentioned in Chapter 4. These examples are growing

steadily as choirs incorporate dance, stories, visual art, poetry, lighting, choral formations, acting, costuming, processions, singing from various spaces inside or outside of the hall, and sound effects not produced by the choir. In addition, live shows that occur in public spaces, such as flash mobs, which take art to the audience as opposed to bringing the audience to the art, are worth exploration. YouTube, Vimeo and live streaming of concerts need further review as their sphere of influence has reached a level of world-wide participation. In contrast, there are some instances where the MTV video phenomenon of a “story within a song” or visually stimulating footage accompanies the choral performance as opposed to a video of a live concert. It is much easier to introduce a choir to local and international audiences due to the rise in technology and the ease with which choirs can upload videos of themselves.

Community choral organizations may compete with professional choir’s patrons as the competitive community choirs are growing in popularity around the world by energizing the field at the ground level. The high-spirited music these ensembles sing are often arrangements of pop and rock songs, sung with microphones, beatboxing and special-effect lighting.⁵⁸⁵ Equally thrilling to television viewers is *Glee*, a television show in America that portrays choral music with musical theater and pop remakes, performed as a part of a dramatic “coming of age” story line.⁵⁸⁶ Perhaps more helpful to the choral field, is the U.K.’s popular choral conductor and entrepreneur Gareth Malone. Malone single-handedly popularized choral music on the BBC television series *The Choir* by

⁵⁸⁵ jantrost, “Perpetuum Jazzile - Africa,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjbpwlqp5Qw> (accessed March 10, 2013).

⁵⁸⁶ FOX Broadcasting Company, “Glee TV Show - Glee TV Series - Glee Episode Guide,” FOX Broadcasting Company, <http://www.fox.com/glee/> (accessed March 10, 2013).

bringing choral music to “the people.” The show outlines Gareth’s creation of choirs in unlikely locations such as, “Unsung Towns,” with “Military Wives,” work places and with “Boys [who] don’t sing.”⁵⁸⁷

While these examples of choral activity are not professional choirs as traditionally defined, the trendy instances are setting a precedent in the choral field and having an impact on professional choral conductors who are aware of the successes in this arena. Subjects in this study mused that the community choir phenomenon had the potential to surpass the traditional influence of professional choral music by taking the genre back to its roots as a community of voices. This could have a tremendous impact on the future of professional choral music.

Final Thoughts

If imitation is the genesis for change, then change is inevitably constant. The choral tone of professional choirs has changed since the mid-twentieth century and will likely continue to transform in the ages to come. However, change is not necessarily something to fear or postpone. Returning to Igor Stravinsky, the *maestro* had this simple quip: “*revolution* means turning the wheel.” *Revolution* can also mean moving from one era to the next, igniting creative process, jointly building, innovation, dramatic change, reorganization or transformation. However, *revolution* does not have to mean rebellion. Instead of fearing, fighting or postponing change, choral directors might gain the most by being the instigator of change, staking claim to the direction of choral music and creating

⁵⁸⁷ BBC Two, “The Choir - Episode guide,” BBC Two, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b008y125/episodes/guide#b00mkzvc> (accessed March 10, 2013).

dynamic methodologies that keep the art of choral music vibrant. Unfortunately, the professional choral field has three main shortfalls: financial support, continued audience growth, and education in the schools. Despite the obstacles, this age is rife with global connections, technological capacity, phenomenal talent, amenable choristers, visionary composers, and masterful conductors. Time does not march backwards; therefore, we cannot hang onto false hope that choral music may return to the nostalgia of previous eras. It is only by drawing upon the past and reigniting, reimagining and recreating those values within new applications that a return to “what was” occurs. In the wise words attributed to Mark Twain, “history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes.” No, professional choral music is not dying. It is just going through a metamorphosis.

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APPENDIX A

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPT APPLICATION

Arizona State University
Office of Research Integrity and
Assurance
660 S. Mill Avenue Suite 315
Arizona State University
Tempe AZ 85287-6111
(Mail Code 6111)
Phone: 480-965-6788
Fax: (480) 965-7772



For Office Use Only:
Date Received:
HS Number:

**ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH**

PROTOCOL TITLE: "Innovative Choral Performance Practice Techniques Post 1990: Within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music"		DATE OF REQUEST: April 26, 2011
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Gregory Gentry	DEPARTMENT/CENTER: Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts	UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION: <input type="checkbox"/> Professor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Associate Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify. ("Other" categories may require prior approval. Students can not serve as the Principal Investigator)
CAMPUS ADDRESS: (include campus mail code) PO Box 870405 (40 E. Gammage Parkway) Tempe, AZ 85287-0405	PHONE: 480 727 3605 E-MAIL: Gregory.gentry@asu.edu	
List all co-investigators. (Attach an extra sheet, if necessary.) A co-investigator is anyone who has responsibility for the project's design, implementation, data collection, data analysis, or who has contact with study participants.		
CO-INVESTIGATOR: Kira Zeeman Rugen	DEPARTMENT/CENTER: Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts	UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION: <input type="checkbox"/> Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify. DMA Graduate Student
CAMPUS ADDRESS: (include campus mail code) PO Box 870405 (40 E. Gammage Parkway) Tempe, AZ 85287-0405	PHONE: 480 251 1609 EMAIL: kira.rugen@asu.edu	
CO-INVESTIGATOR:	DEPARTMENT/CENTER:	UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION: <input type="checkbox"/> Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please specify.
CAMPUS ADDRESS: (include campus mail code)	PHONE:	

EMAIL:

STUDY OVERVIEW

1. Provide a **brief** description of the **background, purpose, and design** of your research. Avoid using technical terms and jargon. Be sure to list all of the **means you will use to collect data** (e.g. tests, surveys, interviews, observations, existing data). Provide a short description of the tests, instruments, or measures and **attach copies of all instruments and cover letters for review**. *If you need more than a few paragraphs, please attach additional sheets.* **FOR ALL OF THE QUESTIONS, WRITE YOUR ANSWERS ON THE APPLICATION RATHER THAN JUST SAYING SEE ATTACHED.**

"Innovative Choral Performance Practice Techniques Post 1990: Within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music"

The scope of this research is to peer inside the world of professional chamber choirs from around the world that are dedicated to the promotion of contemporary music to discover the goals and purposes of these ensembles, how choral performance practice is different from the approach twenty years ago and if they feel their choir is unique compared to earlier generations, or other similar professional choirs. Contemporary composers will also be interviewed to discern the expectations they have of the choirs singing their music and their desired methods of performance. Potential questions are attached.

Process of this research will be conducted through a series of interviews with composers and conductors. The data will be recorded on an audio device and will then be transcribed into a text format and kept for the duration of the research as well as saved for potential future research and educational purposes. Case studies of any choral music written from 1990 forward will be chosen to provide examples to compare against in the document.

The subjects in the study will include set of several conductors from around the world who direct professional choirs or compose for professional choirs. The following organizations may be included.

Conspirare
King Singers
Anuna
Seraphic Fire
Phoenix Chorale,
Kansas City Chorale
Chanticleer
Vocal Essence
Tenebrae
BBC Singers
Greg Smith Singers
Dale Warland Singers

RECRUITMENT

2. Describe how you will recruit participants (**attach a copy of recruitment materials**). Each conductor or composer will be asked individually for an interview. The contact will be made predominantly through email and personal contact, and less so through telephone calls. Recruitment script included.

PROJECT FUNDING			
<p>3. How is the research project funded? (A copy of the grant application(s) must be provided prior to IRB approval. For funded projects, researchers also need to submit a copy of their human subjects training certification: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/irb/training/)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Research is not funded (Go to question 4)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Funding decision is pending</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Research is funded</p> <p>a) What is the source of funding or potential funding? (Check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> Private Foundation <input type="checkbox"/> Department Funds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Subcontract <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other GPSA Research grants</p> <p>b) Please list the name(s) of the sponsor(s):</p> <p>c) What is the Project grant number and title (for example NIH grant number)?</p> <p>d) What is the ASU account number/project number?</p> <p>e) Identify the institution(s) administering the grant(s): GPSA</p>			
STUDY POPULATION- If you are doing data analysis only, please write DA.			
4. Indicate the total number of participants that you plan to include or enroll in your study. 30		Indicate the age range of the participants that you plan to enroll in your study	20 to 85
SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS			
<p>5. Attach a copy of the following items as applicable to your study (Please check the ones that are attached):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Research Methods (Research design, Data Source, Sampling strategy, etc)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Any Letters (cover letters or information letters), Recruitment Materials, Questionnaires, etc. which will be distributed to participants</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If the research is conducted off-site, provide a permission letter where applicable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If the research is part of a proposal submitted for external funding, submit a copy of the FULL proposal</p> <p>Note: The information should be in sufficient detail so IRB can determine if the study can be classified as EXEMPT under Federal Regulations 45CFR46.101(b).</p>			
DATA USE			
<p>6. How will the data be used? (Check all that apply)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dissertation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Thesis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Results released to participants/parents</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Results released to agency or organization</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publication/journal article</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate honors project</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results released to employer or school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conferences/presentations</p>			
EXEMPT STATUS			
<p>7. Identify which of the 6 federal exemption categories below applies to your research proposal and explain why the proposed research meets the category. Federal law 45 CFR 46.101(b) identifies the following EXEMPT categories. Check all that apply to your research and provide comments as to how your research falls into the category.</p> <p>SPECIAL NOTE: The exemptions at 45 CFR 46.101(b) do not apply to research involving prisoners. The exemption at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), for research involving survey or interview procedures or observation of public behavior, does not apply to research with children, except for research involving observations of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (7.1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.</p> <p>Please provide an explanation as to how your research falls into this category:</p>			

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (7.2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; AND (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.</p> <p>Please provide an explanation as to how your research falls into this category: The validity of this research is dependant upon the name recognition and international respect which befalls these composers status. The intent is to share their identity, beliefs, options and practices with safe and educational intentions.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (7.3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) The human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.</p> <p>Please provide an explanation as to how your research falls into this category:</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (7.4) Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.</p> <p>Note-Please review the OHRP Guidance on Research Involving Coded Private Information or Biological Specimens: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/cdbiol.pdf</p> <p>Please provide an explanation as to how your research falls into this category:</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (7.5) Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) Public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs. (Generally does not apply to the university setting)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> (7.6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>Please provide an explanation as to how your research falls into this category:</p>
TRAINING
<p>8. The research team must document completion of human subjects training within the last 3 years. (Attach a copy of the human subjects training for the PI and all Co-Investigators: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/humans.)</p> <p>Please provide the date that the PI and co-investigators completed the training. Included</p>

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	
<p>In making this application, I certify that I have read and understand the <u>ASU Procedures for the Review of Human Subjects Research</u> and that I intend to comply with the letter and spirit of the University Policy. I may begin research when the Institutional Review Board gives notice of its approval. I must inform the IRB of ANY changes in method or procedure that may conceivably alter the exempt status of the project. I also agree and understand that records of the participants will be kept for at least three (3) years after the completion of the research</p> <p>Name (first, middle initial, last): Dr. Gregory Gentry</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>	

FOR OFFICE USE:	<p>This application has been reviewed by the Arizona State University IRB:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Exempt Category/Categories:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Deferred to other review</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Recommended that investigator submit for expedited or Full Board review.</p>
	<p>Authorizing Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>X</p>

Leticia De Los Santos
To: Gregory Gentry , Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>
Innovative Performance Techniques--Approval

May 26, 2011 10:05 AM
[Hide Details](#)
[Inbox - ASU Gmail](#) 1

Dear Dr. Gentry and Kira,

Your study "Innovative Performance Techniques" was determined to be exempt in accordance with Federal Regulations 45CFR46.101(b)(2) and has been approved. Please use the attached materials to conduct the study.

Research may begin.
Thank you,

Best Regards,

Leticia De Los Santos
IRB Coordinator
Office for Research Integrity & Assurance
Arizona State University
Phone (480) 727-6526
Fax (480) 965-7772

<http://researchintegrity.asu.edu>

Susan Metosky

To: Kay Norton

Cc: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

RE: will replace Gentry as PI

February 1, 2013 1:06 PM

[Hide Details](#)

2

Dear Kay,

I have updated the study "Innovative performance practice techniques within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music, post 1990." (HS 1105006439) to list you as the PI in our database.

Have a nice weekend!

Susan

From: Kay Norton

Sent: Friday, February 01, 2013 9:59 AM

To: Susan Metosky

Cc: Kira Rugen

Subject: will replace Gentry as PI

Hi, Susan,

I'm satisfied that Kira Rugen has faithfully executed her proposed interview-based project which received IRB exempt status in the past, so I will serve as her new PI.

Thanks for all your advice. These students received unhappy surprises in one form or another, so it's nice when you can be so helpful and cooperative.

All best,

Kay

Kay Norton, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Music History, School of Music

Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts

Barrett Honors College Faculty

PO Box 870405, Arizona State University

Tempe, AZ 85287-0405

Kay.Norton@asu.edu

480 727 7051, fax 480 965-2659

APPENDIX B

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW BOARD INFORMATION LETTER



INFORMATION LETTER

Researcher – Kira Zeeman Rugen

“Innovative Choral Performance Practice Techniques Post 1980: Within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music”

Date: _____

Dear _____,

My name is Kira Zeeman Rugen, and I am a DMA graduate student in area of Choral Conducting under the direction of Dr. Gregory Gentry in Herberger School of Art and Design, College of Music at Arizona State University. I am conducting research for my dissertation on “Innovative Choral Performance Practice Techniques Post 1980: Within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music.” I am seeking to interview conductors of professional choirs that perform and promote contemporary music and contemporary composers.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve an interview of approximately 45 to 60 minutes of your time. The purpose of the research is to peer inside the world of professional chamber choirs from around the world to ascertain the goals, purposes and methods of these ensembles. These facets will be explored in terms of how applied choral performance practice is accomplished, if it is different than approaches used twenty years ago and how conductors feel their choir is unique compared to earlier generations, or other similar professional choirs. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

The possible/main benefits of your participation in the research are a greater understanding, differences and similarities of modern performance practice application (of contemporary composers) within professional chamber choirs. There is a potential goal of identifying what has changed in the approach, sound and technique in choirs performing contemporary music, as opposed to the application thirty years ago. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be confidential, but because it is important to share your insight, it is expected that others will know your beliefs and practices as the study may be published. However, your responses will not be shared unless permission is granted. You have full authority to identify any aspects that you do not wish to be included in the study and can withdraw your commentary at any time. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications.

The researcher would like to audio record the interview, however the interview will not be recorded without your permission. Participants may skip any questions they do not wish to answer and may stop the recording at any time. The audio files will then be

transcribed to text, which will be used as a reference for this study, and saved for future research and educational purposes.

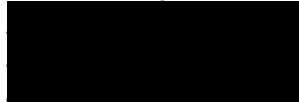
If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at:

Dr. Gregory Gentry

Director of Choral Activities
Arizona State University
The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts
School of Music
PO Box 870405 (40 E. Gammage
Parkway)
Tempe, AZ 85287-0405
Phone: 480.727.3605
Gregory.Gentry@asu.edu

or

Kira Zeeman Rugen
DMA Candidate
Arizona State University
The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts



Kira.Rugen@asu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

APPENDIX C

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW BOARD INFORMED CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

“Innovative Choral Performance Practice Techniques Post 1975: Within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music”

Dr. Gregory Gentry – Principal Investigator

Kira Z. Rugen - Researcher

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Gregory Gentry (Faculty advisor) and Kira Zeeman Rugen (DMA Candidate at Arizona State University) has invited your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to peer inside the world of professional chamber choirs from around the world to ascertain the goals, purposes and methods of these ensembles. These facets will be explored in terms of how applied choral performance practice is accomplished, if it is different than approaches used twenty years ago and how conductors feel their choir is unique compared to earlier generations, or other similar professional choirs. The interview itself should take approximately 45 – 60 minutes of your time.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, you will be one of several contemporary composers or conductors included in the research for Kira Rugen’s dissertation. Your participation will include a face to face interview with Ms. Rugen.

The researcher would like to audio record the interview, however the interview will not be recorded without your permission. Participants may skip any questions they do not wish to answer and may stop the recording at any time. The audio files will then be transcribed to text, which will be used as a reference for this study, and saved for future research and educational purposes.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked for an interview that will last for 45-60 minutes at a location chosen mutually. You will be asked a series of questions pertaining

to the topic of the paper. Approximately thirty subjects will be participating in this study internationally.

If you agree to participate, it indicates that you give consent to the researchers to quote you for this study.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS

The possible/main benefits of your participation in the research are a greater understanding, differences and similarities of modern performance practice application (of contemporary composers) within professional chamber choirs. There is a potential goal of identifying what has changed in the approach, sound and technique in choirs performing contemporary music, as opposed to the application thirty years ago.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Responses are confidential but because it is important to share your insight, it is expected that others will know your beliefs and practices as the study may be published. However, your responses will not be shared unless permission is granted. You have full authority to identify any aspects that you do not wish to be included in the study and can withdraw your commentary at any time.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers want your decision about participating in the study to be absolutely voluntary. There is no payment for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by:

Dr. Gregory Gentry
Director of Choral Activities
Arizona State University
The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts
School of Music
PO Box 870405 (40 E. Gammage Parkway)
Tempe, AZ 85287-0405
Phone: 480.727.3605

Gregory.Gentry@asu.edu

or

Kira Zeeman Rugen
DMA Candidate
Arizona State University
The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts



Kira.Rugen@asu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study. By signing below, you are granting to the researchers the right to use your words for presenting or publishing this research.

Subject's Signature	Printed Name	Date
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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator _____
Date _____

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*Subjects were asked to respond to some or all of the questions below.

“Innovative Choral Performance Practice Techniques Post 1980: Within professional choirs that specialize in and promote contemporary choral music”

Questions for Conductors:

1. Which composers/conductors/ensembles influenced you as a conductor?
2. How long have you been the director of your ensemble?
3. What kind of music does this ensemble specialize in? What is the goal/purpose of this ensemble?
4. How do you see a professional choir as different from a collegiate choir or an amateur choir?
5. How do you feel your choir is unique in comparison to other choirs in the world? What makes you stand out?
6. Describe your usage of gestural conducting, vocal modeling and descriptive verbiage to help your choir to understand the nuance you desire in the music. Do you feel that your conducting gesture shapes the tone?
7. Describe visual and dramatic aspects of a choral performance that you strive for and/or are unique to your organization.
8. Is it possible that the quality of the techniques the recording industry uses have either changed how we hear the recordings, or even how the choirs themselves record to compensate for the fine tuning of that industry?
9. How has the advertising and media landscape of a professional choir changed over the past thirty to forty years?
10. Do you feel that facets of your own musicality have changed over the years with this ensemble?
11. What is the future of choral music?
12. Is there anything you would like to share that I did not previously ask?

Choral Production

1. What (if anything) is different in the choral production now vs. thirty years ago?
2. Do you feel that the way we apply vibrato to music today is a result of the historically informed practice of early music?
3. Is there a difference in singing contemporary composers vs. composers from previous generations or historical composers? How is the application different?
4. Do you feel there are regional/country specific tendencies in choral production? Please explain.

5. What types of voices are in the choir (female, male, countertenors etc.)
What is your audition process and what qualities/vocal technique are you looking for in a voice?
6. What is the size of your ensemble and how many per part?
7. Can you describe the overall sound and color of your preferred choral tone (or, what is your choir's 'signature' color)?
8. What do you strive for in terms of balance between sections?
9. Describe your preferences in the use of vibrato (color, shape, size).
When is vibrato sought? When is straight tone expected?
10. Can you describe techniques you use to homogenize vowel unification within your choir?
11. What is your philosophy how a choir should approach clean and clear diction?

Singing Environment

1. How do the acoustics of the hall impact your performance?
2. Does the space dictate the repertoire?
3. Do you have a standing order for your singers, and what is that order based on? Does that impact the sound?
4. Do you alter formations in the performance, and how does that impact the sound?
5. Elaborate on your use of instruments.

Interpreting the Score and relationship with composers

1. Do you regularly commission works of contemporary composers?
2. When you commission a work, what are you seeking from that composer?
3. Can you comment upon the idea of a conductor being able to pull moments out of a score that are not specifically written by the composer, or following the letter of the composer's intentions?
4. Name other contemporary composers that you perform.
5. Would you expand upon your beliefs about the dynamic between conductor and composer?

Questions for Composers:

1. What are your major influences? Previous composers, techniques, styles? Landmark works?
2. Which composers/conductors/ensembles influenced you as a composer?
3. What type of choir do you compose for?

4. Describe visual and dramatic aspects of a choral performance that you include in your compositions.
5. Is it possible that the quality of the techniques the recording industry uses have either changed how we hear the recordings, or even how the choirs themselves record to compensate for the fine tuning of that industry?
6. How has the advertising and media landscape of a composer changed over the past thirty - forty years?
7. What is the future of choral music?
8. Is there anything you'd like to share that I did not previously ask?

Choral Production

1. What (if anything) is different in the choral production now vs. thirty years ago?
2. Is there a difference in singing contemporary composers vs. composers from previous generations or historical composers? How is the application different?
3. Do you feel that the way we apply vibrato to music today is a result of the historically informed practice of early music?
4. Do you feel there are regional/country specific tendencies in choral production? Please explain.
5. Expectations by composer of vocal technique: What do you assume a singer should be able to do? What expectations do you have of the choir that performs your music?
6. Can you describe your music (style, sound, effect)?
7. Describe the overall sound and color of your ideal choral tone.
8. What do you strive for in terms of balance between sections?
9. Describe the characteristic preferences in the use of vibrato. (Color, shape, size).
10. When is vibrato sought? When is straight tone expected?
11. Do you think about vowel unification within the choir while composing?
12. What is your philosophy how a choir should approach clean and clear diction?

Singing Environment

1. How do the acoustics of the hall impact performances of your music?
2. Does the space dictate the repertoire?
3. Do choral formations in the performance impact the sound?
4. Elaborate on your use of instruments.

Interpreting the Score

1. Can you comment upon the idea of a conductor being able to pull moments out of a score that are not specifically written by the composer, or following the letter of the composer's intentions?
2. Would you expand upon your beliefs about the dynamic between conductor and composer?

APPENDIX E
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Michael McGlynn

March 22, 2013 9:33 AM

To: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

Re: Sanctus Permission

3

Dear Kira,

I hereby grant you the permission to use any desired amount of the score of "Sanctus" for you dissertation. Note that the work is published by Warner Chappell Music, and licensed to me on a non-exclusive basis. Please acknowledge this in the publication.

With best wishes

Michael

Michael McGlynn

www.anuna.ie

www.michaelmcglynn.com

Reijo Kekkonen <reijo.kekkonen@sulasol.fi>

March 19, 2013 12:42 AM

To: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

Re: permission to print music in a dissertation

1

Dear Kira,

We hereby grant you the permission to use two pages of Psalm 150 in Kent Treble Bob Minor by Jaakko Mäntyjärvi in your dissertation. We ask you to print (c) SULASOL, Helsinki. Used by permission. together with the pages.

With best wishes

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--- Alkuperäinen viesti:

> Lähettäjä: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

> Vastaanottaja: reijo.kekkonen@sulasol.fi

> Päiväys: 18.3.2013 23:25

> Aihe: permission to print music in a dissertation

>

>Dear Reijo,

>

>Jaakko Mäntyjärvi gave me your contact information as the publisher in charge of granting permission to print portions of his music for publications. I am finishing up my DMA in Choral conducting and my dissertation is on choral tone in professional choirs. I'm hoping to show a page or two of Jaakko's Psalm 150 in Kent Treble Bob Minor. I'm demonstrating his creative rhythmic and textual application by taking the polyrhythmic properties of historic change ringing.

>

>I would need a certificate from you giving me permission to print that example in my document. My time schedule is a little tight, however. I have to submit my completed document next week on friday.

>

>Thank you.

>Kira

>

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March 19, 2013



Kira Rugen
Arizona State University

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Kevin McGee
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March 18, 2013 9:58 AM

To: kiradawn@asu.edu

Re: musical excerpts permission for a dissertation

1

Dear Kira,

Indeed it was very nice to meet you and to learn more about your project. Later I saw you busy at work collecting more data from the popular Latvian composer. Hope you will get it all together in time.

You have Walton Music's permission to use the sample pages of our music as requested.

Good luck with your dissertation!

Claes

In a message dated 3/18/2013 12:48:59 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, kiradawn@asu.edu writes:

Dear Claes,

.

It was so nice meeting you last week at ACDA. I am the girl who is doing her dissertation on professional choirs and choral tone. I am hoping to gain permission from you to print a few excerpts from two of your composers.

The first is:

Ola Gjeilo - The Spheres - pages 1-2

Eric Whitacre - Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine - (I don't know which pages, but I will only use 2)

I will need certificates from you giving me permission to use these examples. I'm in a bit of a rush as I must turn in my final document next friday.

Thanks again and it was wonderful to meet you.

Kira

Kira Zeeman Rugen
Arizona State University - Faculty Associate
Director of Choral Union
Director of Solis Camerata (Early Music Chamber Choir)
Email: Kira.Rugen@asu.edu
Website: www.kirarugen.com

The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts
School of Music
Room W141

Vlad Morosan <vlad@musicarussica.com>
To: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>
Re: Excerpt permissions

March 18, 2013 2:52 PM

1

Hello, Kira,

Likewise, a pleasure!

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Please give the credit as:

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Best wishes on completing your degree!

Vlad Morosan

on 3/18/13 8:43 AM, Kira Rugen at kiradawn@asu.edu wrote:

Dear Vlad,

It was such a pleasure to meet you last week at ACDA. I am the girl who would like to print an excerpt in my dissertation documenting very very low notes in orthodox russian music.

Here is the score and the place in the score I'm hoping to use:

All-Night Vigil opus 59 – Alexandre Gretchaninoff- Movement 9 Page 103

If it is acceptable to you, I will need a certificate giving me permission to print that page in my paper.

Thanks again.

Kira

Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

To: David Jacome

Re: "Sure on This Shining Night" (Lauridsen)

March 22, 2013 7:35 AM

Important



Dear David,

Thank you so much for your response. Indeed, I will only use page 6 (Measures 40-45) of "Sure on this Shining Night" by Morten Lauridsen in my paper.

Sincerely,
Kira Rugen

On Mar 21, 2013, at 2:43 PM, David Jacome <djacome@peermusic.com> wrote:

Dear Ms. Rugen,

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Regards,

David Jácome
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Main: 818-480-7037 | Fax: 818-480-7058

Andrew Kemp

To: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

Cc: Linda Hawken

RE: Kira Rugen - Musical examples needed

March 25, 2013 2:57 AM

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Cc: eriksesenvalds@inbox.lv Esenvalds

RE: Kira Rugen - Musical examples needed

March 25, 2013 2:52 AM

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March 25, 2013

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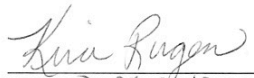
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KIRA RUGEN


Date: 3-25-2013

Susanna Lehtinen

April 3, 2013 1:51 AM

To: Kira Rugen <kiradawn@asu.edu>

VS: permission for musical excerpt in a dissertation

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Fennica Gehrman Oy

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