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The Church Music Program: The Effect of Moving from Performance-based to Education-based Emphasis in a Church Music Program

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**THE CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAM: THE EFFECT OF MOVING FROM
PERFORMANCE-BASED TO EDUCATION- BASED EMPHASIS
IN A CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAM**

By

Ronald Glynn Sherwin III

B.A. Castleton State College, 1995

M.M. University of Maine, 2000

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Interdisciplinary in Church Music and Education)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

May, 2004

Advisory Committee:

Dennis Cox, Professor of Music

Beth Wiemann, Assistant Professor of Music

Laura Artesani, Instructor of Music

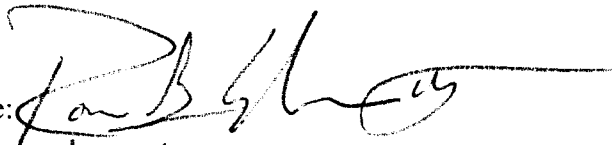
A. James Artesani, Associate Professor of Special Education

Clifton Guthrie, Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship,
Bangor Theological Seminary

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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dennis Cox

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
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This research project sought to answer the primary research question: What occurs when the music program in a church changes its emphasis from performance to education? This qualitative study of a church choir included participant observation of Wednesday evening and Sunday morning rehearsals over a 12 week period, individual interviews, group interviews, written responses, and written and visual assessment of musical skills. The goal was a rich description of the participants and emerging themes resulting from the shift in emphasis.

Analysis of data occurred through inductive processing. Data was initially coded and then the codes were categorized into sub-themes, and finally into major themes. Early analysis of the data began with reflection in a researcher journal. Following the completion of the study the journal was entered into a word processor, as were transcriptions of videotaped rehearsals, and written reflections from the participants. After all data had been reviewed repeatedly and entered into the word processor, it was

coded, reexamined, and finally categorized into sub-themes and themes. After coding and identification of major themes and sub-themes the finding were challenged by looking for disconfirming evidence. Finally, after the completion of the analysis stage, member checks were conducted.

The results of the analysis of data revealed themes that could be associated either with the choir or the director. The key themes primarily associated with the choir were: Response to the change in rehearsal format; Attitude toward learning; Appropriateness of community learning model; and, Member's perceptions of the results of the program. The key themes associated with the director were identified as: Conductor assuming the role of educator; Conductor recognizing the choir as learners; Conductor treating rehearsals as a time for teaching and learning; and, Conductor's perception of the effectiveness of the change in focus.

The study concluded that a change in focus from performance to education did not noticeably improve the sound of the choir after twelve-weeks. There were however, indications that improvements were being made by the individual members. Further study of the effects over a longer period of time is recommended.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“Don’t envy the music program down the road. Work hard on your own program until it becomes just as good as your colleague’s.” That was the message delivered during a graduate course on high school choral-music. The message made a great deal of sense to me and I wondered how one accomplished such a goal. Unfortunately the topic never came up again in any of my courses, but the idea of bettering one’s situation never left my thoughts.

The subject of the course was high school choral-music and the lesson that day included a discussion about the tendency for music teachers to envy their colleagues with better programs. At the time, I was pursuing a career in music education; however, not long after my experience, I found myself active in the music program of a small rural church, and choir director at a small Protestant seminary. Over a period of time, I realized that sacred music was my niche and that teaching high school music was no longer what I wanted to do. Nevertheless, the idea of building music programs remained in my thoughts, only now the programs I considered improving were in churches, and not high schools.

My interest in building church music-programs significantly increased when my seminary work led me to become music director in a small, city church. The membership of the church was looking to add new life to their community and part of that process, they believed, should include rebuilding the music program and hiring a new choir director and organist. While the church appeared to hold high hopes for these changes in the music program, they did not appear to have any evidence supporting their belief that

musical change could help revitalize their church (it was clear they believed that new staff, drawn from outside the community, would at least distance the social and ethical issues they had faced under previous music staff). Although I held some initial beliefs as to how music might go toward revitalizing their church, I too was lacking in concrete data to support my beliefs.

My ignorance of the subject initially led me to review information in two areas. First, I needed to determine if my church was an isolated case, or if other churches had need for revitalization. Based upon my own experiences as a church member I suspected that there was a need, given the financial difficulties that seemed to face many churches, and what I perceived to be a reduction in attendance at worship services in some community churches. Second, I felt it would be important to investigate the role music could play in revitalizing a church. I had witnessed the excitement that often accompanies quality music in church settings, but I had little information regarding the phenomenon beyond my personal experiences. The search for the answers to these questions led to my master's thesis *The Role of Music in the Revitalization of the New England Church* (Sherwin, 2000), and provided a background for this study.

Through my quest for information regarding the need for revitalizing churches I discovered data that suggested there was a real need, and that my inquiry into the area was timely. I found that congregations with weekly attendance below one hundred people were closing at a rate of fifty per week (Trueheart, 1996). This was possibly due to the fact that only 40% of Americans regularly attended a worship service while at the same time 96% were reporting they believed in a personal God (Gallop 1997, 1999).

Could a quality music program help to bring people back into church or perhaps even bring some of the unchurched into worship for the first time?

I looked at musical elements of worship in an effort to determine if music could in fact play a role in revitalizing a church by increasing attendance in worship services. I discovered that one third of the average worship service involves music and that one characteristic of the growing mega-churches is a thriving music program. I found that these mega-churches carefully plan their use of music in worship and intend for their strong music programs to attract new people, many of who are young and part of the unchurched population. Finally, I considered what I discovered about church attendance and the religiosity of the population, in light of the information I found regarding music and worship practice. I concluded that building the music program could be an important step in revitalizing New England community churches (Sherwin, 2000).

My findings regarding music and church vitality were important in determining how music fits into a church program, and how a quality program could be an effective part of a revitalization effort. However, my findings did not offer enough specific information regarding how to build a quality music program. In effect, I concluded that improving one's own program instead of envying your neighbor's is an applicable philosophy for church musicians, and in fact could result in some churches remaining open. What I did not address was specifically how to do it.

In many ways this study is the second part of the project I began with my master's thesis. It is an examination of one possible "how to" route for the musical leadership of a church to build or rebuild their program. At the heart of this method lies the issue of musical personnel. Does revitalization of a music program require the introduction of all

new musicians, use of only those musicians already serving the worshiping community, or a combination of both? My own search for the answer to this question led to two basic realizations. First, small and medium sized churches often do not have budgets that could handle the costs required to hire trained professional or semi-professional musicians. Second, revitalization should not be about forgetting those who have faithfully served during tough times and are still participating in the program. Similarly, the introduction of paid musicians from outside the church community could be perceived in a very negative way. The current musicians could see the new people as “ringers” and conclude that their own talent is insufficient or even unwanted by the church community they had been serving.

Nevertheless, if the musical skills of the current singers and players are not up to the level required, something must be done. The solution seems to require an increase in the skills of the ensembles without completely changing their membership. Some change in membership will eventually occur since I had found in my previous research that as a program improves, more-skilled musicians are likely to become interested in the church and its music program and begin to participate in worship and eventually join one or more of the ensembles (Sherwin, 2000). The incorporation of these new people would obviously change the make-up of the groups, but would occur without the negative effects that could result from removing old members in favor of more-talented new members.

As I considered all of the above, with special attention to providing a program’s current musicians with the tools necessary to participate in revitalization effort, I was brought back to the field that initially led me to graduate school where I first encountered

the question that sparked my interest: music education. Although, by this time my field of interest had changed from music education to church music, I concluded that education could hold the solution to the problem. The implementation of an educational component into a church music-program might allow for the retention of the current musicians, while eventually leading to their obtaining the greater musical skills demanded and increasing the possibilities for growth within the music program. In addition, an education component could also become one more service that the church is able to offer its congregation and the area community. In fact, I realized that offering musical training to the membership was not a new concept, but rather a return to an old one.

The Historical Precedence

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) credit the singing schools of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century with being the first formalized musical training offered in the United States. The process began when a church, or sometimes a community, would hire a singing master to teach singing and note reading. The length of the training varied, but evenings for one or two weeks was common practice. The classes included adults and children of both sexes, all of whom were required to purchase tunebooks. These books contained basic singing instructions and psalm tunes. Later the books were expanded to include hymns, anthems, “set pieces”, and a few secular pieces (Tawa, 2001).

The singing masters who taught these classes were not necessarily highly trained musicians. Often their own education occurred at other singing schools, or through what they could teach themselves by reading instructions in tunebooks. Despite this lack of

formal training, singing masters had a significant effect on congregational singing in the churches for which they worked.

It is important to note that these schools were more than just dry, educational experiences for those involved. Singing schools were community events during which many people came together to both learn and socialize. It was a time of recreation and socializing for the entire community. The classes were completely heterogeneously grouped. No consideration was given to a person's education, social status, marital status, age, or gender. Everyone participated together. Even musical skills varied, since it was common for people to attend singing schools more than once.

Through the singing schools, churches took a leading role in the musical education of the community. However, their role would diminish as music became a part of the public school curriculum. Music had already been a part of the curriculum in private academies in colonial New England, but support began to grow for its inclusion in the newly formed public schools. In 1838 Lowell Mason persuaded the Boston public schools to include vocal training and music reading in the curriculum for elementary school children. Mason's experiment was a success, and through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the inclusion of music as a curricular subject increased and the need for churches to take responsibility decreased.

Importance of this Study

The church in early America successfully began the music education for much of the population. Then, through the efforts of Lowell Mason, music education made its way into the public school system and became available to more people. Given school budget considerations today, it can no longer be assumed that every child attending

public schools will have access to a thorough musical education. As church leadership consider the possibility of allocating time and money for the education of its musicians for Sunday worship, they should realize that an additional benefit would be some assurance that music education is being maintained, at least for those within the church's own community.

This need for churches to take an active role in music education is supported by current research. Linda Clark (1994) identifies the role of the church musician as being both a performer and an educator. Others note that church musicians need to assume the role of teacher given the fact that many participants in church music programs have limited musical skills and little musical education beyond that received in their church programs (Ihm, 1994, Townsend, 1996, Clark, 1994). Given the fact that many churches have Christian education departments it is interesting that the same interest is not taken in the musical education of all the participants.

Perhaps one reason for the lack of education focus is the volunteer status of most church musicians. Titcomb (2000) observed that many church musicians are volunteers, but confirmed that they still have educational needs. Non-professional musician status does not lessen the technical demands of music performed in church. Neither does a musician's professional or volunteer status lessen the musical understanding they can gain from music study (Anderson, 1972). Musically heterogeneously-grouped choirs will obviously have some members who will learn more and some less in any given rehearsal, but the potential for increasing some degree of musical understanding exists for everyone. And since the research confirms that learning can occur in any situation (Rogoff, Matsuv, & White, 1996), it should be able to occur in a church music rehearsal.

Purpose of the Study

This research studied a small, city church-music-program as it shifted its focus from performance to education. It examined the changes that occurred both during the shift and after it had taken place. Although the music program consisted of five ensembles, the adult vocal-choir was selected for in-depth study. The changes in the choir as a whole, as well as the changes in the individual musicians were examined. The purpose of the study was to develop a rich description of the choir, individual members, and the music program within the church community. It was hoped that the data collected would aid in determining if education was one possible answer to the question: How do you make your church music program as good as the one down the road?

Before undertaking a study involving the use of education in a church setting, it is first necessary to determine the model of teaching and learning that such a program will be based upon. While it is possible to choose any number of methods, this study utilized a sociocultural model of teaching and learning. More in-depth discussion of models of teaching and learning will occur later; however, two primary factors led to the selection of the sociocultural model. The first factor was the wide range of musical abilities and training among the membership in the choir involved in the study. The second factor was the general characteristic of congregations. Congregations often see themselves as communities of God; however, they often act in ways similar to social institutions (Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, & McKinney, 1998). Given this characteristic, a sociocultural model of teaching and learning appeared to be most appropriate for the situation.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the primary research question: *What effect does moving from performance-based to education-based emphasis have on a church music program?* Related questions included: (a) *Does changing the focus of church music program result in improvements in the program and/or the individual participants?*, (b) *How is a sociocultural model of teaching and learning an effective model to utilize in such a setting?*, (c) *How does a participant's motivation affect the teaching and learning process?*, (d) *How do time and performance constraints of a weekly worship schedule affect an education-based program?*

These preliminary questions were selected for their potential to identify the key issues pertinent to practitioners in church music-programs. Additional areas of inquiry emerged from analysis of field data. The approach was designed to identify descriptors and to provide foundational material for future research in the area and to provide practical information for future educators in the church-music field.

Attention was given to formative assessment of musical skills of the individual singers and the choir as a whole. Basic understanding of Christian worship was explored as well as musical knowledge. Because the choir involved was a completely volunteer organization, considerable attention was given to the participant's assessment of the change in focus and their feelings as participants in the process.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the nature of the program studied. The participating program consists entirely of volunteer musicians who attend the small city church studied. Membership into all of the ensembles was non-auditioned. The ensembles were

heterogeneously grouped regarding age, musical education, musical skills, general education, income level, previous church and denominational affiliation and length of membership in the ensembles. In addition, while it did not appear to be an issue, there was not a strict attendance policy in place and members occasionally missed rehearsals or services. As a result, this study is more relevant to small to medium sized, heterogeneously grouped, volunteer, church music programs.

The study is also limited by the fact that a sociocultural model of teaching and learning was used. The study sought to examine a program experiencing a shift from performance to education-based focus. Nevertheless, the study more accurately studied a shift to education based on a sociocultural model. It is possible that the results could change if the study were to be duplicated with a different model of teaching and learning being utilized.

Finally, the study is limited by exclusion of the children in the junior choir program. The programs and participants studied involved only musicians from high school age and up. The church studied did have a children's music program that appeared to have a strong educational component. The director was a professional music educator holding an advanced degree in music education. Children's music education was not considered in any part of this study. The need, or lack of need, for changes in music education in children's church music programs is a topic that could be studied in the future.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Church choirs are unique institutions. Traditionally members are multi-generational, mixed gender and of varied educational and religious backgrounds. Because of these differences within church choirs, and limited writing in the area of education in a church music setting, literature from a number of areas will be reviewed. The bulk of the literature is theory and practice with limited actual research. Music education in a church setting is not a subject that has been heavily explored and so the areas of review are tangentially related. Areas for review include: teaching models and educational methods, reading literacy, school music-education, adult learning, education and self-efficacy, and community and church choir practice.

A review of teaching models and educational methods is required to determine which strategies are most likely to be effective in this setting. In addition, the teaching strategies of reading literacy are reviewed not only because they are transferable to the development of music literacy, but also are important to examine given the limited perspectives on music literacy found in the literature. Primary and secondary music education methods are also transferable and important to the musical development of the church choir.

Adult learning strategies are necessary given the age of church choir members. Literature specific to adult music learning is needed to provide background for understanding the adult learner. Finally, reviewing community and church choir techniques provides information regarding the practice most commonly used in the profession.

Teaching Models and Educational Methods

One possible way to label teaching and learning models is to categorize them as either linear one-sided or two-sided sociocultural models. These two techniques can be further divided into teacher-centered, student-centered and community-centered. The teacher and student-centered models are both one-sided models while community-centered is a sociocultural model. (Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube, 2001, Rogoff, Matsuv, & White, 1996, Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 1995)

One of the leaders in literacy education who categorizes learning models in this way is Jeffrey Wilhelm. The recent text, *Strategic Reading*, (Wilhelm et al., 2001) may be most significant because of its role in increasing awareness of the possibilities for using sociocultural models at all levels of literacy education. However, the text is also significant because it clearly outlines these three models of teaching and learning. Each model's general historical and theoretical roots, implications for instruction, roles of all involved in the learning process, dominant instructional activities, and even responsibilities are all outlined. Each model is then covered with special attention to how it relates to literacy education.

In North America the dominant educational models have been the linear or one-sided models (Wilhelm et al., 2001, Tharp and Gallimore, 1991), the most popular of the linear models being teacher-centered (Flanders, 1973, Goodlad, 1984). The teacher-centered approach is based on behaviorism with its roots in the work of Skinner, Pavlov, and Thorndike (Wilhelm et al, 2001). In these models it is the student who is responsible for learning. The role of the instructor is to be a conduit through which information is

pipied. The role of the student is to receive, process, and demonstrate mastery of that information.

Tharp and Gallimore (1991) refer to this model of teacher assignment of material and assessment of student mastery as “recitation.” In the classroom it takes the form of lectures, presentations, recitations, and discussions. Goodlad, (1984) in a survey of 36 American schools in 13 communities and 7 regions of the United States found that teachers favored rote learning and immediate response. The student’s role in these classrooms was passive learning and little individual instruction occurred. Given the tendency to teach or rehearse as one was taught, it is not surprising that this is the model most often found in school, community, and church rehearsals (Rogoff et al., 1996).

Piaget, Chomsky, Geselle, and Rousseau, with their theories of progressivism and cognitivism, are the foundation of the student-centered model (Wilhelm et al., 2001, Woolfolk, 1998, Brooks and Brooks, 1993). Student-centered models (often identified as constructivist) are based on the principle that learners must construct their own understandings through self-initiated inquiries and personal investigations (Rogoff et al., 1996, Brooks and Brooks, 1993). This model puts emphasis not just on the material the students “discover,” but also on the process used to learn. Students involved in this “inquiry learning” are able to master both content and a process they will be able to use in the future (Kindsvatter, Wilen, & Ishler, 1988).

This model puts all responsibility for learning into the hands of students since the theory is that “no one else can ‘do’ learning for them” (Wilhelm et al., 2001 p. 27) and that the student’s themselves want to know about their world (Secules, Cottom, Bray, & Miller, 1997). The role of the instructor in this model is to provide opportunities for the

students. The role of the student is to pursue learning through the opportunities provided by the instructor. Constructivist learning environments often involve open-ended projects selected by the students, discovery learning-centers within the classroom, and learning activities may even occur outside of a classroom setting. Given the structure of this model it is less practical in a choral setting.

While not often encountered in a choral setting, it is possible that the sociocultural, community-centered model could be a very effective model for educating the church choir. The community-centered model is based on the work of Vygotsky, Rogoff, Bruner, Hillocks, and Dewey and their theories of coconstructivism and socioculturalism (Wilhelm et al., 2001, Woolfolk, 1998). Learning in this model is the result of interaction with more expert others.

All knowledge is socially and culturally constructed. What and how the student learns depends on what opportunities the teacher/parent provides. Learning is not “natural” but depends on interactions with more expert others (Wilhelm et al., 2001, p. 28).

The role of the student is one of collaborative participant. The role of the teacher or more capable fellow-learner is to interact with the learner and help them progress in the learning process. This model requires individual knowledge of the student-body and attention to the needs and development of each individual learner. Community-centered learning environments involve the use of small and large groups, extended periods of time together in which the sense of being a community of learners is developed, individual attention given by both the teacher and fellow students, and activities are similar to those seen in constructivist settings but in this case they are guided by the

teacher or more expert peer. Learning is the result of collaboration by the entire community but planned and guided by the instructor.

Language and Community-Centered Learning

Community-centered learning is a relatively new model and is only starting to be explored outside of the early childhood and elementary school level (Wilhelm et. al., 2001). A search that included ERIC, Music Index Online, and Academic Search Premier, produced no evidence of its use within church-music education. However, the model is beginning to be utilized by those in the language arts and given the similarities of reading literacy to music literacy, it is in the context of reading that community-centered literature will be explored.

One of the primary spokespersons for community-centered learning was the early twentieth century Russian psychologist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky whose body of work has begun to be considered by many socio-historical theorists, researchers, and educators (e.g., Cazden, 1981; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, 1991; Wertsch & Stone, 1985; Bayer, 1990; Wilhelm et. al., 2001). In his recently translated works, Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 1987, 1993) suggested that children learn through interaction with the people in their world and the real and symbolic tools provided by their culture. In Vygotsky's theory the most important symbol is language for it is through language that knowledge is passed from adult to child in both formal and informal interactions (Woolfolk, 1998).

Vygotsky (1978) suggested that every function of a child's cultural development progresses from interpsychological to intrapsychological. It appears first on the social level and then on the individual level; learning first begins with interaction between

people and is later internalized by the child. Individuals help each other construct meanings that are eventually internalized by the individual (Bayer, 1990). Tharp and Gallimore (1991) identify this method of learning as the “natural learning” of home and community where more capable family and friends assist children to do things they cannot do alone. Through this process not only are specific tasks learned but also communication and thinking skills. The specific goal is to learn how to do the household chore at hand but skills that can be applied to other situations are taught at the same time.

Vygotsky (1978) considered language to be the mechanism through which negotiation of meaning occurs (Bayer, 1990, Tharp and Gallimore, 1991, Woolfolk, 1998). In a Vygotskian community of learners, language is the tool through which the more expert members of the community guide their fellow community members. The learners in the community are the primary users of language since the more expert members use language only as tool to guide, rather than to lecture. Often the use of language comes in the form of a conversation during which the more expert participant in the conversation guides the less expert toward an understanding. The use of conversation to teach turns participants into a “community of learners” (Dalton, 1989).

Speech, in a model of learning based on Vygotsky, can be placed in three categories: Social speech, private speech, and inner speech. Social speech is the point at which the more expert participant in the instructional conversation uses language to model the process being taught. It is part of the interpsychological stage of development. The adult and the student are sharing language and activity. As the learner progresses into the intrapsychological stage they begin to utilize private speech. Private speech is the point at which the learner emulates the language of the expert in order to regulate his

own behavior. This speech is still audible and resembles social speech with one's self. Inner speech is when the learner carries on a silent dialogue in order to complete a task. Inner speech is in effect the internalization and transformation of private speech. (Vygotsky, 1978; Woolfolk, 1998; Bayer, 1990; Bivens & Berk, 1990; Wilhelm et. al., 2001)

In children, the use of the audible private speech begins as early as words and sentences are used, peaks around 5-7 years of age, and disappears by about 9 years of age with brighter students progressing to inner speech earlier (Bee, 1992; Bivens & Berk, 1990; Berk, 1986). However, use of private speech to solve problems does not completely disappear but rather reappears when children and even adults are confused, making mistakes, or working through a very difficult problem (Woolfolk, 1998). Inner speech also continues to be utilized by both children and adults to solve problems and regulate behavior (Woolfolk, 1998).

Although much of the material relevant to this literature review is theory, a significant amount of both theory and research exists in the area of private speech and the progression from private speech to inner speech. In addition to Lev Vygotsky, the two other prominent early theorists whose ideas regarding private and inner speech have been studied are John Watson and Jean Piaget. Watson, whose theory is no longer given as much consideration by theorists, believed that private speech was inappropriate behavior that existed until parents and teachers stopped it. Piaget believed private speech to be egocentric and a product of the child's immaturity. Vygotsky believed it to be social speech with one's self that helped integrate language and thought, and control behavior. (Berk, 1986)

The conflict in private speech theory led to a series of four studies by Lawrence Kohlberg and his colleagues at the University of Chicago. The studies involved nearly 150 children aged 4 to 10 and led Kohlberg to conclusions which strongly supported Vygotsky's theory. (Bivens and Berk, 1990; Berk, 1986; Kohlberg, Yaeger, & Hjertholm, 1968). Kohlberg's work in turn led to a number of other studies in the 1970's and resulted in a body of empirical evidence favoring Vygotsky's over Piaget's position (Bivens and Berk, 1990; Berk, 1986). Despite the evidence supporting Vygotsky, Bivens and Berk (1990) noted that the validity of the data is weakened by the fact that all the studies have been cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. In addition, they noted that in a majority of studies Vygotsky's belief that private speech helps overcome obstacles to task success and problem solving, is only minimally supported or not supported at all.

The limits noted by Bivens and Berk (1990) led to their own study of private speech. Their three-year study was the first longitudinal study and followed thirty-three students during first, second, and third grades. Although the study added a longitudinal study to the literature, its population validity is weakened by the small number of participants and their being middle-class laboratory children. Nevertheless, the study provided more evidence that private speech did in fact move from externalized to internalized forms as the children aged as Vygotsky predicted. It also showed that task-relevant private speech predicted future performance better than concurrent performance. This finding suggests one possible reason why the initial studies were inconclusive in supporting Vygotsky's belief that private speech aided in problem solving.

Private speech also appears to resemble what Bayer (1990) identifies as "expressive language" and Barnes (1976) "exploratory talk." Expressive language makes

up much of the language that occurs during community learning. It is the written or verbal method through which learners grapple with new ideas, and develop language and thinking skills (Bayer, 1990; Barnes, 1976). Expressive language has the sound of informal conversation but it is through this talk that a member of a learning community can “shape his ideas, modify them by listening to others, question, plan, express doubt, difficulty and confusion, experiment with new language and feel free to be tentative and incomplete” (Barnes et al., 1975, 162).

In a case study of five teachers working in small, mixed-expertise, group settings over a period of three weeks, Bayer (1986) observed language used while problem-solving. She observed that the collaborative groups used more expressive talk as they began problem-solving but that their language began to change as they made progress in solving the problem. Increased use of formal language and appropriate specialized vocabulary appeared to parallel progress in solving the problems. Bayer concluded that language could be a by-product of the “teachers as learners” strategies to construct shared meaning for new concepts and to reach consensus on the topic they were discussing. Bayer then noted the similarities of her findings to those made by Barnes and Todd (1978) in a study involving adolescents working in small groups. While the external validity of Bayer’s study is weak because of her small sample and she even calls for additional research focusing on the parallel language and learning processes used by learners of all ages, her work suggests the possibility that at least in certain settings, adults and children construct meaning in similar ways.

The possible significance of expressive speech in the learning process of learners of all ages may be an element in the decision to utilize a sociocultural model with a

church choir. Expressive speech resembles the conversations that often occur within sections of a choir. Recognizing when this chatter is disruptive and when it is the audible sounds of learning that should be encouraged may be key to continued advancement of the choir. Traditional choral techniques follow the theory of John Watson by encouraging silence on the part of the choir when they are not singing.

Developmental Levels and Community-Centered Learning

In the Vygotskian model of teaching and learning, the developmental level of the learner is identified by what they can do alone. These activities are considered to be within what Vygotsky labeled the “zone of actual development” (ZAD). Those activities that the learner can do with the assistance of a more expert person are in the area Vygotsky called the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) (Wertsch, 1991; Woolfolk, 1998).

According to Vygotsky, teaching is the process of using language to assist a learner through their zone of proximal development. In the Vygotskian model the teacher does not provide information, they assist performance (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991). Good teaching “awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1956, p. 278; quoted in Wertsch & Stone, 1985).

Assistance through the zone of proximal development occurs through the building of what Bruner called “scaffolding” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding is support given by teachers or more expert peers that is based on what the learner can already do (Zeuli, 1986). It can come in the form of clues, encouragement, breaking the process into steps, or any assistance that allows the student to reach a level where they

can accomplish a task independently (Woolfolk, 1998). When the information, encouragement, etc. that builds the scaffolding occurs at the right time and in the right amount, an environment where “assisted learning” (also known as guided participation) is created. Woolfolk describes assisted learning as “providing strategic help in the initial stages of learning, gradually diminishing as students gain independence” (1998, 49). Thus, as learners develop more of the necessary skills, teachers or more expert peers can withdraw their support and the learners can accomplish the tasks on their own (Wilhelm et al., 2001; Woolfolk, 1998; Bayer, 1990;).

Literacy Education

Wilhelm et al. (2001) describe the process of assisting readers through their zones of proximal development through the use of scaffolding with the simple phrases: I do, you watch; I do, you help; you do, I help; you do, I watch. The process begins with the teacher choosing material specifically for its teaching value. The teacher reads to the student, modeling the skills they wish their student to achieve. This modeling is accompanied by explicit instruction in how to accomplish the task. The teacher is modeling the reading skills while the students watch. The next step involves reading material chosen jointly by students and teacher based upon both the needs and desires of the student. The reading is shared by both the teacher and students. In addition, teacher-directed reading and thinking activities are utilized. These directed activities and teacher guidance are the scaffolding used to assist the students. Finally, the teacher becomes less and less involved until the process is internalized and the students are choosing their own reading material and they are working in the context of their own inquiry project.

Wilhelm is describing reading literacy but the same process might be applicable to music literacy.

Assessment

Assessment plays a critical role in the application of Vygotsky's theories to a structured community-centered learning environment. However, the difficulty of adopting a Vygotskian approach is that most tests measure what students can do alone (Woolfolk, 1998). In effect, they measure the zone of actual development when Vygotsky suggests that it is knowledge of a learner's zone of proximal development that is key to assisting them to learn. Given this difference between what a standard test reveals and what a teacher in community-based learning environment wants to know, the teacher must learn new skills. Teacher must learn to: "Observe learners closely, as individuals and groups; Scaffold learning within the zone of proximal development, match individual and collective curricula to learners' needs; Create inquiry environment" (Wilhelm, et al., 2001, 29). In other words, a key component of community-based learning environment is the teacher's knowledge of her students.

The potential for successful application of this model in a music setting exists, but instructors of large ensembles encounter additional challenges. In a large musical group it is difficult to assess the ZPD and ZAD of each singer or player. For this reason it may be beneficial to charge the ensemble with the responsibility for assisting each other in musical development. Members of an ensemble are likely to be aware of their own needs and the needs of their fellow musicians immediately around them.

Use of More-Expert Peers

Utilization of members of a musical ensemble as peer leaders is in keeping with the community-learning philosophy because in a community setting it is not always necessary for the teacher to always act as the guide. In fact, it is sometimes more effective for a fellow learner to be the guide (as in large choral ensembles). In addition to a greater awareness of what is occurring around them in the ensemble, an added benefit of using peers comes when that peer is operating in (or close to) the same ZPD as her peers but has just solved a problem or reached an understanding. This slightly- more-expert peer remembers the hurdles they just overcame in order to accomplish the task and can relate to their colleague who is still having difficulty (Woolfolk, 1998). This insight, which is not available to the teacher, can be very beneficial to learners attempting to reach the same goal. However, even if a fellow learning is not operating within the same the same ZPD they can be an effective guide, especially when working in small groups.

Johnson and Johnson (1979) suggest that cognitive development and critical thinking skills can be developed through conflict resolution while engaged in what they call cooperative learning. They note that evidence exists that suggests that more controversy arises in heterogeneous groups rather than homogeneous groups (Fiedler, Meuwese, & Oonk, 1961; Torrance, 1961). This might suggest that heterogeneous grouping should be sought; however, Johnson and Johnson point out the number of contradictory studies regarding effectiveness of problem solving with heterogeneous versed homogeneous groups. One possible reasoning for the contradictory evidence is that relevant expertise may be needed within a group and if it does not exist then heterogeneous grouping will not improve problem solving (Johnson and Johnson, 1979).

Similarly, collaborative work is endorsed by Bruffee's experience with college students, but he notes the need for preparation, and "doing more than throwing students together with their peers with little or no guidance or preparation" (Bruffee, 1984).

While the literature suggests a number of variables are involved in choosing, or working with, heterogeneous versus homogeneous groups, a community-based learning environment may best be suited to heterogeneous grouping rather than modeled after homogenous grouping. In a collaborative approach based on Vygotsky, "heterogeneous groups work best because group members with diverse prior experience broaden the collective pool of knowledge that the group can use for problem solving" (Bayer, 1990, 13). With such diversity members of the group may each, at some point, act as the more expert guide precisely because of their "diverse prior experience."

Consideration of models that are most effective with heterogeneous groups may be an important part of developing an educational program within a church setting given the nature of many church choirs. The membership within church choirs often has varied musical training, skills, and talent. This diversity can be the result of programs ranging from open membership in an all-volunteer choir to open membership supplemented by paid soloists.

Utilizing a questionnaire, Linda Clark (1994) surveyed 1700 congregants from twenty-four Episcopal and United Methodist churches located in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Following the return of the questionnaires (response rate 49%) eight of the churches were chosen for further participation in case studies. While not a question specifically covered by the study, the data from the questionnaire suggests the congregations were, from a musical standpoint, heterogeneously grouped. 32% of the

sample considered themselves musicians, 64% read music, 16 % were involved in musical activities outside of the church, 50% said they like to sing but don't do it well, and 46% said they like to sing and do it well. Clark did note that while choirs draw from the congregation, choir members are typically more musical (p. 41). From the case studies it was also observed that each church's choir ranged from no full-time choir, to four volunteer singers, to thirty singers with ten paid soloists. While, the study does not provide data regarding the degree of heterogeneity found in the choirs of most American congregations, Clark's findings do lend support to the idea that American church-music programs have heterogeneous tendencies and musical leadership should consider issues regarding such grouping.

Primary and Secondary Music Education Methods

It has been stated that teachers teach the way they were taught (Rogoff et al., 1996) and that the most popular method of instruction in North American schools is the linear, teacher-centered model (Wilhelm et al., 2001; Tharp and Gallimore, 1991; Flanders, 1973; Goodlad, 1984) with homogeneous grouped classes (Bayer, 1990). As a result, it is not surprising that the dominant method espoused in some of the more popular music education literature is a form of the teacher-centered model where the teacher is making most of the decisions rather than collaborating with the learners.

Anderson and Lawrence (1995) in their text on integrating music into the classroom only identify teacher-centered and student-centered models in their text on music in the elementary classroom. Hoffer, (1989) in one of the more popular secondary method texts, does not use the phrases teacher-centered or student centered but describes methods with elements similar to teacher-centered approaches. Campbell and Scott-

Kassner (1995) in their popular book on elementary music education do mention sociocultural models with a brief mention of Vygotsky but focus primarily on one-sided models with emphasis on the teacher as provider of information and to a lesser degree the child as creator of their own understanding.

This limited awareness of sociocultural methods persists despite the awareness that music is learned in much the same way that language is. Reynolds, (1976) in a text designed to assist classroom teachers in supplementing the work of music teachers, compares teaching/learning language skills to learning musical notation. Children hear words before they can speak them, imitate the speech of others, use words of their own invention to communicate with others, learn the symbols that represent the words they are hearing, and finally learn to write the words that symbolize what they wish to say. Musically, students can go through the same steps. Students hear music and imitate it, they then create their own songs, they learn the symbols that represent the sounds they hear, and finally they learn how to write the symbols that represent the sounds they hear.

One reason for the continued reliance of teacher-centered models may be due in part to the fact that the imitation element of learning music is given the most consideration (Swears, 1985; Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 1995). It could also be due to the fact that many directors feel they are personally responsible for their singers and have difficulty allowing them to have a more responsible role in the process (Besig, Nygard Jr., & Albrecht, 1987). The use of imitation is also attractive because it is often the quickest way to get a desired result from a choir when literacy is not the focus. However, rote learning is not the only model found in the literature.

While many of the methods of teaching and learning music in the literature follow the linear models rather than the sociocultural model, they are neither purely lecture-based nor student-inquiry based. Instead, these models utilize a great deal of interaction between teacher and learner (e.g., Hoffer, 1989; Reynolds, 1976; Anderson & Lawrence, 1995; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995; Rao, 1993; Hackett, Lindeman, & Harris 1979; Lavender, 1991; Swears, 1985). They differ from sociocultural in that there is no scaffolding provided to assist the student through their ZPD, use of more expert peers is minimal, and they recognize the homogeneous organization of most classrooms.

The most common approach is one based on Skinnerian stimulus-response-stimulus sequence (Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 1995). In these models the music teacher provides information, the student repeats it, the teacher then assesses the students action and provides the appropriate feedback and new information . It is assumed that repeating information and providing correction to students rather than helping them develop an understanding by grappling with the information themselves is the most effective way to teach/learn. An example of this method is found in Hoffer's explanation of how to teach choral parts.

1. Select a phrase of from two to eight measures. If the music is a typical homophonic SATB work with the melody in the soprano part, ask the accompanist to play the bass line. (A male teacher may want to sing it.) Then have the basses sing their part back in full voice. Ask the tenors, altos, and sopranos to sight sing the bass part softly with the basses. Singing along with other parts strengthens the singers' ability to read music in both clefs and contributes to their understanding of the music and its harmony.
2. Cover the tenor line in much the same manner....
3. Repeat this procedure for the altos

4. Approach the soprano part last because it is frequently the simplest and most easily learned; often it is the melody. The entire group then performs the phrase of passage. (Hoffer, 1991, 143-144)

Just as in reading literacy, music-education literature also suggests that concepts and skills learned in one piece be transferred to another. This process builds music literacy; however, in many of the texts these activities are separated from the sections on rehearsal planning. For example, Hoffer's rehearsal method above is different than his method for improving the literacy of a choir (a fact he recognizes) and actually appears after his section on teaching choral music (Hoffer, 1990). This separation of activities is one area where the music education literature differs from the literature regarding sociocultural models of teaching and learning. McQuarrie (2002) did note that elementary music texts have begun to increase their emphasis on literacy through actual songs. However, she found that no one text was adequate for a music program that adopts such a practice, and that textbook series were designed in a such a way that it was difficult to deviate or mould them for different classroom situations.

Adult Education

Researchers have attempted to classify what motivates adults to learn. Hiemstra (1976) suggested that an increasingly complex world was one motivator. Wlodowski (1985) suggested adults are motivated if they are learning something they value. More specifically he found that motivation is the product of the integration of four areas: Success, volition, value, and enjoyment. Wlodowski suggested that the learner must be achieving success, learning something they want to learn, the subject must be of value to them, and they must find the process enjoyable.

Houle (1963), looking at who is motivated to learn, identified three types of adults who pursued lifelong learning: the *goal-oriented*, the *learning-oriented*, and the *activity-oriented*. Goal-oriented learners saw learning as a means to an end. Learning-oriented people learned for the joy of learning. Activity-oriented learners enjoyed the social aspect of educational experiences. Boshier and Collins (1985) divided Houle's activity-oriented group into social stimulation, social contact, external expectations, and community service. Others have found that motivation to learn is often connected to an individual's work (e.g. Tough, 1978, Kim et al. 1995; Merriam & Clark, 1991; Knowles, 1984). Merriam and Clark (1991) however recognized that motivation to learn is a complex phenomenon that is rarely able to be classified into distinct, concrete entities.

Although Boshier and Collins found Houle's categories to be oversimplified, and Merriam and Clark suggest that motivation to learn cannot be easily classified, it still may be helpful for the church choir conductor to attempt to identify the reasons why adults will participate in learning activities. An understanding of this subject may be especially important when making a switch in the program from performance-based to education-based in order to build the music program. Members with goal-oriented tendencies may respond differently from those with learning-oriented tendencies when the focus of the group they have been a member of is changed and learning becomes a key component of the program.

Adult Group Learning

Brookfield (1984) noted that group dynamics and process can both help and hinder individual learners within a group. Merriam (1993) also noted the importance of looking at the social and cultural context of adult learning. Wilson (1993) connected

learning with the context in which it is occurring. However, Imel (1997) has noted that learning in group settings is still a little-researched area and that the research that does exist, does not look at how learning occurs in such a setting. Webb and Palincsar (1996) observed that social interaction and learning were areas where research is needed.

Looking specifically at informal learning in groups there appear to have been only two studies (Titcomb, 2000). Blud (1988) has studied social interaction in informal learning environments. However, Blud's work is limited to children and her findings may not be applicable to adult church music participants. Rao (1991) studied adults in North India and her study did find that a learner's social system influenced participation and motivation.

Adult Participants in Music Programs

Research into needs of adult musicians suggests that programs involving adult music education should contain certain components. One of these components found to be of considerable importance is knowledge of both the community-of-learners and the individual participants. This has also been noted as a key component of community-based learning. Atkinson, (1986) in a look at community music-education, noted that programs should meet the needs of both the learning community and individual participants. The importance for educators to possess a strong knowledge of individual learners skills and what is meaningful for them is stressed by a number of adult music-education researchers (e.g. Johnson, 1996; Kellmann, 1986; Coates, 1984; Gibbons, 1982; Davidson, 1980).

Adult needs and expectations for what they are taught will powerfully influence how they motivationally respond to what they are taught...The more their needs and expectations are not met by what and how they learn, the

lesser the chance that they will be motivated to learn...Adult learners learn in response to their own needs and perceptions, not those of their instructor. (Wlodkowski, 1985, quoted in Johnson, 1996, 16).

There exists some literature regarding the music education of the more senior members of musical ensembles. However, Darrough & Boswell (1992) note that music educators are only starting to explore the possibilities for musical involvement for older citizens. There are only a few studies in existence that look at the aging singer and even fewer that address the areas of older adult (age 55 and older) participation in community music groups, motivation to continue participation, and the characteristics of the typical adult music participant.

The work of both Darrough (1990) and Gibbons (1982) have begun to change the misconception that elderly are unable to continue developing musical skills and are satisfied with performances that require little or no skill. In an early study Gibbons (1979) noted that older participants do in fact have an innate capacity for musical development and that peer group support and high expectations encouraged musical growth. Both Gibbons (1979) and Coates (1984) observed that lessons designed for children or with low expectations could discourage or embarrass participants.

McCullough (1981) recommended that a philosophy of music education should not end with high school or even college, but should in fact continue throughout life. This idea is supported by Gibbons (1980) study of 152 noninstitutionalized elderly subjects. In her study, 52% said they would like better singing skills and 84% stated they would like better overall music skills. Gibbons (1982) noted the effect of increased musical skills of senior citizens.

Some elderly persons who desire better music skills may involve themselves willingly in music learning opportunities. As they experience success in learning music, elderly persons will likely demand the development of effective music education programs that are broadly available to all older adults who desire them. As demands for effective music education programs increase, music educators will be requested to provide them (Gibbons, 1982, 24).

Her statement appears to support an increased in the music education component in the music education component of a church music program.

Community and Church Choir Techniques

A survey of choral conducting and church-choir method literature reveals mixed opinions regarding the role of education in a choral program. While everyone agrees that continuing to learn is an important attribute for musicians, not everyone believes that the choral conductor should be the teacher, or the rehearsal the setting. Those who do stress the importance of education do not necessarily mean music literacy. For example Lovelace and Rice (1976) in one of the significant texts on church music, give little space to concerns over literacy education.

Despite what appears to be a unanimous belief in continuing musical education, the literature is divided as to where this education should occur and at times even the same scholars appear to contradict themselves. The division occurs between those who believe that the rehearsal is a place for building literacy and increasing musicianship, and those who believe that these skills should be developed outside of the rehearsal. For those who believe these skills need to be developed outside of the rehearsal, the audition is the gateway into the choir.

Whittlesey, (1957) in an early argument for auditioning-out poor singers, compares singers with limited skills or older voices to a diseased heart or a child born with a leaky heart valve. Kettring (1958) in an early church-music text, supports literacy education for church choirs but feels that there is not enough time and that public schools and private teachers should be responsible for it. Nordin (1973) notes that it is easier for choir directors if they have fewer but more qualified singers. And Topp (1976) goes as far as to suggest that accepting all volunteers into a choir seriously limits performance quality and could spell disaster for the program.

The church choir that accepts all volunteers is usually doomed to a middling quality of performance. In addition to the built-in mediocrity caused by acceptance of all volunteers, the church choir may lose further quality when competent singers quit in frustration with the general lack of growth and improvement (Topp, 1976, 90).

Topp's argument is to some degree contradicted by the philosophy of Harvard choral music professor Archibald Davison. Davison (1965) argued that a singer's vocal quality is less important than their desire to sing and interest in music and that excluding singers should be avoided. He footnotes his argument with the following anecdote.

May I offer an extreme example of this indifference to vocal endowment. I once had, as members of a chorus, two monotones. It would be impossible to exaggerate the delight they experienced in having a part in the rehearsal of great music, and had I denied them one of the real resources of life I should always have regretted it. They were not in the least sensitive over their deficiency and made no protest at being seated together a little apart from the chorus. Fortunately their voices were not strong ones. They sang, without deleterious effect, not less than four major choral works with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and its conductor (Davison, 1965, 27-28).

It should however be noted that Davison does not mention any attempts to develop any musical skills.

For those who believe that education is a key component to a church music program, the advancement of the program through education is not necessarily the main goal. Nearly fifty years ago Whittlesey (1957) and later Nordin (1973) pointed out the expectations of volunteer singers. They suggest that education may be one of the motivators for singing in a church choir. In his text on church choirs, Nordin simply states, “choir singers come to learn” (Nordin, 1973, 161). Whittlesey noted that “Singing in a choir must be one form of adult education. The more that can be offered in the way of voice instruction, musicianship study, and musical appreciation, the greater the appeal to the conscientious singer” (Whittlesey, 1957, 81). However, the previously mentioned lack of literature related to why older adults participate in community musical activities should be kept in mind.

Singers may expect education to be a part of what they receive in exchange for their participation in the choir and the literature suggests that musical leaders should meet their demands. In many of texts the role of the conductor is teacher of the choir (e.g. Garretson, 1993; Pfautsch, 1988; Davison, 1965; Sydnor, 1963). Discussing church choirs Pfautsch (1988) notes that church choir conductors must not neglect their educational responsibilities. And realizing the changes since Kettring (1958) wrote that music education needed to fall to public schools and private teachers, Pfautsch acknowledges that developing a singer’s musicianship might be the most important pedagogical responsibility for a choral conductor.

The methods suggested in the literature for teaching and learning in music education are for the most part teacher-centered. Common disciplines for study included voice production, diction, intonation, balance, rhythmic accuracy, and sight-reading. Lewis Gordon (1989) lists six teaching strategies that help correct singers errors. These six strategies have similar features to those suggested in much of the literature and include: Trial and error (mistakes clear up after repetition), listen and sing (director demonstrates correct way), elemental commonality (finding elements that two or more parts share), superimposition (the voice part with difficulty sings at a louder dynamic than the other parts), wrong-right (repeated singing of both the right and wrong notes), and intervallic (correct interval is sung repeatedly).

Although linear, teacher-centered models dominate the music education literature, there is mention of other models. Stapleton studied the possibilities of implementing a more student-centered model of choral rehearsal and the challenge: “How can we make a learning group out of a performing group?” (Stapleton, 1975, 59). In the first half of a trial rehearsal he asked the choir to break down into small groups and look at the pieces that were to be rehearsed. He gave them a set of tasks that included listing spots in the music that would need particular attention during the coming rehearsal, identifying issues regarding intervals, rhythms, words, breathing, and dynamics. The goal of his task was to involve the choir in determining what needed to be rehearsed. He expected that “groups would be contributing problems on their own instead of my specifying them. We would really be working together on a shared task...” (Stapleton, 1975, 53).

Stapleton’s plans were designed to facilitate a more student-lead type of learning but his strict lesson plans and the student’s response indicated teacher-centered

tendencies. The task was seen by some to be an assignment given by the teacher rather than an opportunity for student-driven learning or an opportunity for the choir to come together as a community of learners. Others felt that they needed more direction, while still others saw the benefit of teamwork. Stapleton returned to a more conventional rehearsal after this brief study but felt that it did lead to more interaction with the choir and the creation of a course in music literacy.

Finally, while the label “sociocultural model” is not used, Sydnor’s (1963) model for training the choir during rehearsal includes elements common to community-based learning. He noted the disparity of knowledge and skill amongst church choirs and suggested that this be treated as an opportunity to develop leaders from within the choir. The more expert peers are called upon to help the less expert. Rather than Vygotsky, Sydnor bases his model on the work of social psychologist Margaret Kuhn. Kuhn (1956) noted that “to be the formal leader of any group is no simple assignment. No one person could possibly succeed in it alone, without the presence and interaction of informal leaders...” (Kuhn, 1956, 10).

Areas Not Included

Literature regarding an educational focus for a church music-program is limited. Literature regarding the use of a sociocultural model in such a setting is nonexistent. As a result, this review relies on literature in the related areas of teaching models, reading literacy, adult education, public-school music education, and church music-programs. The theories that drive these areas and the models of teaching and learning they follow are within the scope of this review and have been discussed. However, it is not within

the scope of this review to discuss specific strategies for designing units or methods for sequencing material and as such have not been covered within this chapter.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Selecting a Research Tradition

This study sought to understand a church music-program that switched its focus from performance to education. One possible way to design such a study would be to use a quasi-experimental design where one variable is manipulated and the affect of that manipulation on another variable is observed. Such a design would require the participation of at least two churches with similar performance-based programs. One church would act as the control group and continue with their program while the other would be exposed to the intervention (a switch to an education-based emphasis). Pretest and posttest scores would then be calculated and the treatment analyzed.

Utilization of that design for this study would be difficult for several reasons. First, finding two programs that are similar enough to act as control and treatment could be difficult. This is especially true in this circumstance because I was the minister of music in the church where the music program was going to be studied. However, even if two similar programs were found, and the difficulty of the researcher being a participant in one of the programs was overcome, both programs would have to be willing to take part in the study. Finding programs that are both appropriate and willing could be difficult.

The second problem with using such a design is the uniqueness of the area of study. A review of literature relevant to the area showed this study to be unique. As a result of this uniqueness, identification of the most important areas of inquiry has not

occurred, and in fact is one of the goals of the research. A quasi-experimental design would be too focused a design for use in this circumstance.

Third, the needs and desires of the participants are vital to church music-programs and a quasi-experimental design would not allow adequate focus in that area.

Researchers utilizing experimental designs tend to “view causal relationships among social phenomena from a mechanistic perspective.” If the needs and desires of the members of the music program are to be considered, the researcher must be able to “assign human intentions a major role in explaining causal relationships among social phenomena” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999 p. 15).

Fourth, the participation of the researcher as a musical leader in the program, both before and after the study, is an important variable that might not be accounted for in such a design. Experimental designs generally require the researcher to “take an objective, detached stance toward research participants and their setting.” If the researcher is both studying the program and fulfilling the role of minister of music, they must be allowed to remain “personally involved with research participants, to the point of sharing perspectives and assuming a caring attitude” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999 p. 15). As a result of these four parameters, it was determined that this study should use qualitative methods, and specifically the design needed to draw from action research, phenomenological, and case study traditions of qualitative research.

Phenomenology

Qualitative researchers believe that social phenomena do not have an independent existence apart from its participants. Reality is the meanings constructed by participants in an activity, and it is a goal of qualitative researchers to understand the nature of those

meanings. Developing this understanding requires the researcher to “make holistic observations of the total context within which social action occurs” (Gall et al., 1999, p. 289). Given this focus, all qualitative research can to some degree be identified as phenomenological research. Nevertheless, phenomenological research, when studied as a research tradition, is used when looking to understand the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it. Very often these experiences are common experiences or transitions that are of interest (Merriam, 2002; Creswell, 1998). Data regarding the participant’s perception of experiences are collected and used to identify meanings, meaning themes, and to develop a description of the participant’s experiences (Creswell, 1998). For the purposes of this study, I was looking to understand how the participants in the choir experienced the transition from a performance to an educational emphasis.

One approach to studying a phenomenon which emphasizes both the needs and perceptions of the participants is the participant-oriented approach. This method of program study was the result of practitioners in the education and social service fields questioning whether those studying such programs with classical experimental designs were recognizing the human elements of programs. As a result of their concerns, during the 1970’s a model of program evaluation that emphasized firsthand experience and the observation and identification of concerns, issues, and consequences of educational and social service enterprises was developed. Those researchers who now use this model see programs as “complex human undertakings and attempt to reflect that complexity as accurately as possible so that others may learn from [them]” (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997 p. 167).

Stake (1967) was an early pioneer in the use of participant-oriented evaluation. Later, elements of his work were linked by Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1985, 1989) to naturalistic inquiry (Worthen et al., 1997). The naturalistic inquiry model studies a program as it occurs in its own environment. The ability to work within an actual church setting is important for this study given that one of the primary goals is to understand this specific program, in context and as a whole, as it made a switch in emphasis from performance-based to education-based.

Naturalistic inquiry also allows considerable input from the stakeholders of the program. This is important in the study of any church music-program because the needs and desires of participants in such activities have been shown to be key elements. In naturalistic inquiry the researcher is looking to understand the participants' world and then translate what they learn into a format that others can understand. The applicability of what is learned to other settings is based on how closely that other setting resembles the one studied (Worthen et al., 1997). That appropriateness is determined by studying the "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) found in the study. Guba and Lincoln (1981) describe such descriptions as a "literal description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, the nature of the community in which it is located, and the like" (p. 119). Those looking to determine if what is learned in one setting is applicable in another setting must do so by comparing the description of the setting to one they wish to apply it in. As a result, applicability can be limited by this design.

Applicability is not the only possible weakness sometimes associated with this model. Concerns have been raised regarding credibility, consistency, neutrality, as well

as with the aforementioned issue with applicability (Worthen et al.). However, methods for overcoming these limitations have been developed. Questions of a study's credibility are reduced through cross-checking and triangulation of the data collected. Using many diverse sources for information is a common method for increasing credibility in qualitative studies. Allowing an outside party to review data and consider the conclusions drawn from the data is useful in checking the consistency of findings. Concern for the neutrality of a researcher is a crucial issue in classical research designs. However, the neutrality of the participant-researcher and his/her conclusions is not important with this design. In fact, the influence of the researcher is often expected to be reflected in the work. Instead of neutrality, reviewers of participant-research are looking to determine if the data is factual and confirmable. Finally, as previously expressed, the degree of applicability of such a study comes through a review of the study's specific setting to see if it is similar enough to apply in other situations.

Action Research

Although phenomenology is the qualitative research tradition from which the design of this study draws most heavily, elements of action research play an important role as well. The study of a phenomenon through naturalistic inquiry allows for recognition of the needs of the participants and does not require the researcher to attempt a neutral role. Action research follows the same practice but takes it a step farther in that it is based upon a researcher's desire to create change through his/her participation in the research process. Often, the change that is looked for is an improvement in teaching and learning since action research has a long tradition in educational settings (Hatch, 2002).

As the researcher and minister of music for the church music-program involved in this study, I was responsible for much of the success of my program and this research was a product of my exploration of ways of improving it. Given this set of circumstances, incorporating elements of action research was natural in that action research generally: “is undertaken for the sake of investigating practice, usually in concert with those working on the front lines, and improving that practice based on what is discovered” (Hatch, 2002). I was working on the front lines in that I was the current minister of music looking to improve my choir, and wondered if changing my focus to education would be an effective way to do so. This research was not looking to develop theory but rather find a solution to a problem, and action research’s: “primary purpose is as a practical tool for solving problems experienced by people in their professional, community, or personal lives” (Stringer, 1999, p. 11)

Case Study

Although this study is a phenomenological study with elements of action research, it also draws from a case study approach. However, rather than drawing from its methodology, it looks to case study as a way to define what is being studied. In fact, there is debate as to whether case study is actually a methodology or a way to define an object of study (Merriam, 2002; Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 1998). Creswell defines a case study as: “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (1998). Following Creswell’s definition one can describe this study as looking at a system bounded in that it involves the members of one specific church music program (First Congregational), who experienced a unique treatment (a change in

emphasis from performance to education), that was studied over time (12 weeks) and utilized multiple data sources.

Types of Data Collected

Collection of data in a qualitative study takes many forms including interviews, observations, nonverbal cues, documents, records and other unobtrusive measures. However, a study collecting only qualitative or quantity data is likely to be incomplete. As a result, while relying primarily on qualitative methods for data collection, this study also utilized some quantitative methods of data collection in an effort to accurately describe the participants, the program, and the phenomena (Worthen et al., 1997; Gall et al., 1999).

Thumma (1998) supports the need for a variety of methods of data collection in studies of American congregations. Recommended methods include direct observations, interviews, participant creation of congregational timelines, archival document analysis, collection of census and secondary source records, and use of questionnaire and surveys. Thumma's combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology is similar to Worthen et al. (1997) who recommend use of existing documents and records, direct observations, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and tests. This study followed the recommended practice by including observations, interviews, creation of a timeline, review of archival data, review of census and secondary source records, questionnaires, participant reflective quick-writes, tests, and a researcher personal-journal.

Direct Observation

One of the primary methods of data collection was direct observation. Direct observation by a participant-observer has both advantages and disadvantages. Given the

proximity of the researcher to the object being studied, it is possible for the researcher to miss important information. However, it is also recognized that a participant researcher's "inside knowledge" of a congregation can be an asset when it comes to recognizing what to observe, and how to interpret what they discover (Thumma, 1998). In an effort to facilitate more disciplined observation in this study, the sessions with the members of the music program were video taped for future review by the researcher and outside experts.

Interviews

The perspectives of participants have been recognized as an important, and determinable, part of a qualitative study (Patton, 1990). Determining credibility is also an important part of a qualitative study (Worthen et al., 1997). The use of interviews allows a researcher to do both. Interviewing participants is one way to learn how the participants perceive what is going on around them. Interviewing can also correct errors in interpretation made during direct observation (Thumma, 1998). For that reason, interviews during this study took place after the initial observations were made. All members of the study were invited to take part in some group discussions and interviews, but others were selected for more in depth interviewing. The musicians selected for these interviews were chosen for their representativeness of the diversity of the heterogeneously grouped music-program.

Time Line

One tool for "uncovering links between external demographics, cultural, and organizational shifts and the internal stresses and strains historically experienced by the congregation" that can easily be "shaped in a number of ways to suit the particular focus of [a] study" is a congregational time line (Thumma, 1998, p. 209). In a setting similar to

a focus group, the musicians involved in the music program gathered together and developed a time line of the music history of the church. The goal was to aid the researcher in understanding the participant's perceived history of their program and how they saw themselves fitting into that history.

Secondary Source

A review of archival, census, and other secondary source records was also conducted. These resources can be helpful in discovering data not observable, or for providing information that is not revealed in other methods of data collection. These recorded documents are also critical tools for the crosschecking or triangulation required to confirm the credibility of findings from other sources.

Written Responses

Questionnaires and quick-writes were utilized as paper and pencil instruments for measuring the attitudes and opinions of the participants in the music program. Some of the instruments utilized Likert-scale items while others required short answers to open ended questions. Since the need was for instruments that could measure attitudes and opinions specific to this study, pre-designed tests did not exist. This situation, although expected, required the design of program-specific instruments (Worthen et al., 1997).

Testing

Objectives-referenced tests were given to measure musical literacy and knowledge of worship practice. Although quantitative methods of data collection, the tests were designed to provide descriptive data that would aid in the development of the educational program. They also provided information useful for identifying any changes in the musical literacy skills of the participants during the educational program.

Researcher Journal

Finally, the researcher kept a reflective journal. Journal entries allowed the researcher to reflect upon what was occurring in the music program and his role as teacher, minister of music, and participant researcher. Although highly subjective, this qualitative method of data collection is supported by Eisner's (1991) view of education research.

All forms are influenced by styles, and since style is personal, an inevitable personal dimension enters into qualitative work—a dimension that conventional research methodology typically tries to minimize. In qualitative inquiry, personal stylistic features are neither liabilities nor elements that are easily replicable. Qualitative inquirers confer their own signature on their work (p. 169).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research generally has an emphasis on inductive processing of information. Analysis proceeds from the specific to the general as specific pieces of data are analyzed in order to identify the connections between them (Hatch, 2002). This qualitative study also followed an inductive model. Data was initially coded and then the codes were categorized into sub-themes, and finally into major themes.

Early analysis of the data began with the start of the study through the use of a researcher journal. The journal allowed a place to record specific observations but it also provided space to simultaneously reflect upon that data. This reflection allowed me to focus and shape the direction of the study while at the same time identifying what might be emerging themes (Glesne, 1999). Since these entries began at the onset of the study there was no way to tell what would become important, so the journal provided a place where all ideas could be immediately recorded for more careful analysis at a later date (Glesne, 1999).

Following the completion of the study, the journal, which had been kept using a pen and notebook, was entered into a word processor. Typing the journal into the computer allowed the data to be formatted in a way that allowed for future coding and it provided another opportunity to review the data and reflect upon its contents. Similarly, videotapes of rehearsals were reviewed and transcribed into a word processor; again allowing for more review and a format easier for coding. Finally, the hand-written quick-writes that were collected from the choir were also placed into a word processor for the above reasons.

After all data had been reviewed repeatedly and entered into a word processor, it was then coded. Coding involved the segmenting of data in categories that represented concepts, ideas, actions, phrases, or events (Glesne, 1999; Creswell, 1998). After initial coding, the codes and the examples they were derived from were both entered into a computer database and also placed on index cards so that they could physically be shuffled as analysis continued (Glesne, 1999). The codes were then reexamined and categorized into sub-themes and themes.

After coding and identification of major themes and sub-themes, the findings were challenged by looking for disconfirming evidence; evidence that did not support conclusions that were drawn from other sections of the data. This disconfirming evidence was then considered and explanations for its contradictions sought. Finally, to further insure validity of the findings, after the completion of the analysis stage, member check interviews were conducted with the participants as well as an interview with the pastor of the church. These interviews helped to correct for any errors in interpretation (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2002; Glesne, 1999).

The Setting of the Music Program Studied

The choir involved in this study is part the music program at a small Congregational Church in north-central Maine. Throughout this study the church will be referred to as “First Congregational.” First Congregational is located in a city with a population of about 9,010 that borders another small city of 31,011. These two cities are part of the most densely populated section of a county that has a total population of 144,919. In addition to the permanent residents of the immediate and surrounding communities; there are also a number of college campuses in the area with a total student population of approximately 15,000. The demographics of these communities are important to consider given the fact that they have all been sources from which congregants and members of the music program have been drawn.

Table 3.1 Church Attendance by Month and Year

Month	Attendance 2002	Attendance 2001	Attendance 2000	Attendance 1999
January	87.25	107	89	79.2
February	91.75	100.75	87.5	93.8
March		105.5	94	86.25
April		122.2	118	118
May		110.5	90	98.6
June		83.5	77.25	68.25
July		71.4	76.4	65
August		68.5	52	72.6
September		114.8	91.3	93
October		109.3	93.2	105
November		103	106	109
December		105.8	110	111

Table 3.1 shows the reported attendance figures for Sunday-Morning worship from January 1999 to February of 2002. Currently the number of full-members, also identified as covenant-members, of First Congregational is 202 and the average attendance on Sunday morning in 2001 was 100 worshipers. Attendance at Sunday worship fluctuates depending upon the movement of summer/winter residents, vacationers, and students. The greatest number of worshipers in 2001 was 122 and occurred in April. The smallest congregation was 69 and occurred in August.

The music program consists of five ensembles, an organist, and a minister of music. The ensembles include a junior vocal choir, adult vocal choir, adult hand-bell choir, piano and hand-bell ensemble, and a wind ensemble. Officially the junior choir has 10 members, the adult choir 20, the adult hand-bells 10, the hand-bell ensemble 3, and the wind ensemble 8. However, rehearsals are regularly attended by 8 in the junior choir, 12 in the adult choir, 9 in the hand-bell choir, and 3 in the hand-bell ensemble.

Table 3.2 Church General and Music Budgets by Year

Year	Music Salary	Music Budget	Total Music	Total Budget	% of Budget
01-02	14,525	1,628	16,153	111,048	14.5
00-01	14,000	1,350	15,350	104,045	14.8
99-00	7,160	1,350	8,510	93,657	9.1
98-99	6,900	1,400	8,300	89,953	9.2
97-98	7,826	1,000	8,826	89,368	9.8
96-97	7,603	1,000	8,603	88,718	9.7
95-96	5,407	1,000	6,407	85,650	7.5
94-95	5,150	800	5,950	82,975	7.2
93-94	5,000	900	5,900	78,500	7.5
92-93	4,700	900	5,600	84,200	6.7

Table 3.2 shows the percentage of the entire budget occupied by the music program. Financial support for the music program is strong. Over the last ten years the

music budget has grown from 6.7% of the operating budget to 14.5%. The salaries of the musical staff take up the largest portion of the music budget and include the organist, vocal choir directors, and bell choir director. In 2000 the position of minister of music was created and increased the music portion of the budget from 9.1% to 14.8%. In dollars this increase was \$6,840 but that figure also reflects a raise for the organist and junior choir director.

A search of archived data from 1932 to the present, interviews with senior vocal-choir members, and observation of the size of the choir loft indicated the size of the vocal-choir has ranged from 6 to 24 singers. No evidence was uncovered to indicate the choir has ever been anything but a S.A.T.B. choir. However, women have usually outnumbered men and at times there has been only one male singer. This uneven gender distribution is consistent with New England congregations.

Group discussion and individual interviews revealed a perceived “golden age” in the music program’s history. This period was defined as the time during which a much-loved musician was their director. The date of this period was unknown by the group and some indicated the 1950’s while others believed it to be the 1970’s. Very few of those currently in the choir were members of the choir during that time. It was suggested that the reason that this was the golden age was because this director treated each rehearsal like “a mini music lesson.” Rehearsals were held at his home, and despite membership in the choir being small one member suggested that that was when they “sounded the best.” This director was described as a small man who ran strict, educational rehearsals, and was himself a fine singer who often covered the male parts alone. Perhaps the most important aspect of these statements, given the nature of this study, was the fact that the

golden age was marked as one of education. However, there is no evidence indicating that learning was or was not occurring at a different rate than under the leadership of others.

Church records indicate that this figure was choir director from 1972 to 1983. The records also confirm that under his direction the choir was at times as small as 6 singers with his being the only male voice. Recordings of the choir (taking into consideration that they are poor quality tape recordings made from the church sound system) indicate they did not attempt difficult works and their level of musicianship was no better than an average, small church-choir. This difference between fact and myth is not surprising given the reported large personality of the director and the fact that the current member of the choir who claimed to know the most about his leadership was only in her teenage years at the time, and had received no formal music education either in or out of school. An interview outside of First Congregation revealed this man to have been a big figure in all areas of the music community throughout the county. This big personality seems to have left its mark on the church.

Currently there are twelve consistent participants in the choir. This figure breaks down as six sopranos, three altos, one tenor, and two basses. Ages within the group range from 15 to 83 with the majority being over 40. This group is the remainder of members from a choir of 21 a year before. The reduction in members was the result of division within the church regarding homosexuality, the theology of the current pastor, the theology of the United Church of Christ, and the use of endowment monies. The drop in choir members was not primarily due to any events taking place within the choir

specifically. However, a small group of musical families left the church entirely as a result of these issues.

The remaining members (N=11), who have been the participants in this study, have a diverse musical background. Four of the members joined in the 1970's, the rest have joined since the mid 1990's. Their musical education ranges from limited public school training to college music major. The majority of the choir has had little formal musical training. However, most members do have at least some experience singing under a conductor other than this author.

Assessment of both personal, and group musical-skills perception was accomplished through observation, informal discussion, and a personal assessment instrument based on a Likert-type scale. These tools indicated that the choir had a low opinion of their own musical abilities but considered the ensemble as a whole to have good musical skills. The exception was the two most educated musicians within the ensemble who rated their own skills as superior and the choir's as poor.

Currently the choir is facing four significant challenges that are relevant to this study: Gender, Time, Skills, and Space. The limited number of men is an issue because a vast amount of the sacred choral-repertoire calls for tenors and basses. The three men are capable singers but the absence of even one makes for a difficult rehearsal. In addition, balance is a problem with so few basses. This leads to the second issue, time. As a volunteer choir rehearsal time is limited to one hour on Wednesday night and one half hour on Sunday morning. This means that if one of the members is away they miss a great deal and if the choir is required to spend an extended period of time on one piece it limits the amount of preparation time for others. And, as with any volunteer

organization, it is important to be flexible and honor a singer's occasional need to be some place outside of rehearsal.

Skills are perhaps the most important concern, given the nature of this research. Due to the varied background of the group it is important that rehearsals and lessons are interesting for all members while at the same time building the skill level of each of the singers. This requires flexibility in programming and a well-planned rehearsal schedule. Unfortunately, the lack of a rehearsal space dedicated to music makes this a difficult task. The choir rehearses in the sanctuary on uncomfortable chairs that are placed around a piano. There is no blackboard and the arrangement makes it difficult for the entire group to be addressed by the conductor and to hear what is taking place. The lack of a blackboard further makes the inclusion of visual aspects of learning awkward.

To understand the study taking place at First Congregational it is important to at least briefly review four areas: Demographics, History, Current Membership, and Current Issues. An understanding of who the church is can help one see how the choir fits into the worship community. Then, with a picture of who makes up the choir, what the history of the choir is, and what issues they are currently facing, one can better understand the context of what is observed during this study.

The Vocal Choir

In a naturalistic inquiry of a specific ensemble within a church music program it is important to develop some understanding of both the church and the entire music program involved in the study. This allows the specific ensemble studied to be seen in the context of the music program and the church to which it belongs. Nevertheless, it is also important to understand that specific ensemble as an individual group as well since

its identity comes both from being a part of the larger whole and from being its own separate unit. Developing such a contextual understanding is critical preparation for understanding what is being observed during the study.

In this study, the specific ensemble being studied in detail is the adult vocal choir. Given that the area of the research is education and the fact that the study involved making changes to an already existent program, certain aspects of the choir need to be described if the results are to be understood. Four vital areas that need to be understood are: the diversity of age of members; the willingness of members to try new things; the educational background of the members; and the initial attitude of the members regarding participation in the study. Although each of these areas will be considered in more detail as the results of the project are studied, a brief description of these characteristics through small examples will greatly enhance understanding of the results.

The range of age within the choir is extreme. When the study began the youngest member of the ensemble was fifteen and the oldest eighty-three. The majority of the choir was over forty years of age but included in the membership were singers in their twenties and thirties. The older members of the choir appear to be very nurturing to the younger members, while at the same time often looking to them for musical guidance. Age does not seem to be a method for social division and often older and younger members share rides to rehearsal and are found conversing with each other.

One factor that could be of concern regarding the applicability of this study involves the choir's willingness to try new things. Church leadership often discuss the problem of getting membership to do things differently than they have been done in the past. This is not an issue with the choir involved in this study. In the years leading up to

this study the choir loft was remodeled and the location of the conductor's podium relocated. The seating arrangement that had been in place for a number of years was redone and older members who had always sat in the front row were moved to the back and vice versa. In addition to physical changes, a combination of modern and traditional sacred pieces replaced what had been primarily a contemporary repertoire. Throughout these changes the membership did comment on the changes, and discussions as to how this was different did occur; however, they remained very willing to try new things. This characteristic is one of considerable importance when looking at how the choir reacted to the change in focus or when looking to see how the information gleaned from this study could be used in other settings.

The educational background of the choir is also useful information to know before looking at the results of the study. The choir was very diverse in this respect as well. Many, but not all, of the members had at least some college experience. Most had limited formal training in music although one was very active in her high school music program and local youth orchestra, and another was in college majoring in music education. All had been in some form of musical ensemble prior to this study and prior to the coming of this researcher as minister of music. And, while the members openly acknowledged that some members had more musical skills than others, the amount of formal musical training one had received did not appear to be the only factor in determining who was considered a musical leader within the ensemble. In fact, great respect was given to a younger woman who had very limited musical education during her public school years and none in college.

Finally, it was known by the choir that they were involved in a study, and while they did not know the exact nature, they were aware that things were changing. As a result, it is important to note their initial attitude toward participating in a study. More detail will be provided regarding their attitude throughout the study; however, initially it can be said that they were very apprehensive about the project. Many of the members understood that the research was involved in their director's pursuit of a degree and they initially believed that their performance could affect my future. This fear of possibly letting the researcher down, combined with concern about their own skills, led to a noticeable change in behavior at the onset of the study. These two issues became less of a concern when they began to understand that their actions were neither right nor wrong and that they could in no way jeopardize my future.

The Researcher

The influence of the researcher in a participant-research design has been recognized and accepted as an element that needs to be included in the study. This means that just as the choir needed to be described in their pre-intervention state, the participant researcher also needs to be described in his pre-intervention state. As a result, three aspects of my background that are necessary to describe before studying the results of this study are my educational background, choral experience, and teaching skills. While any number of areas of a participant researcher's background could affect their work, in the context of this study, these three areas are critical.

As a baccalaureate student I had little interest in education. History and performance were my primary areas of study and I did not take any courses in education. Upon pursuit of my master's degree, I enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate

courses in education in an effort to obtain teaching certification and teach choral music in the public schools. Finally, as a doctoral student, I continued to take more classes in education as a part of my degree program. It is important to note that all of these courses were taken after my initial degree in music and not in the order usually prescribed for those looking to have a career in music education.

While involved in my educational pursuits I held a number of musical positions. I worked as a conductor of choirs ranging from small church groups to college ensembles. I did have some limited experiences with young singers but for the most part the groups I worked with were made up of college-aged to older adult-musicians. The goal of all of these groups was, at least in my mind, quality performances at concerts or during worship services. The education of my singers was never my primary concern.

Given that my interest in education developed later in my educational pursuits, the opportunity for developing polished teaching skills was limited. However, even if the opportunities had been there, given the performance focus of most choral educators, I suspect that my practice of educational methods would have been limited anyway. What is critical to note is that upon beginning this study of moving a focus from performance to education, my teaching skills were also being developed. Any classroom experiences I had were limited to controlled environments created while taking education courses and the teaching I had done as adjunct faculty and teaching assistant. Thus an important feature of this research is that this researcher was learning to teach while engaged in the study. This element could be seen as a weakness to the study or, given the number of church musicians who are not trained educators, it could increase the applicability of the results to programs with non-teacher leadership.

Definition of an Education-Based Emphasis

This study sought to examine what occurred when a church music-program experienced a change in emphasis from performance-based to education-based. As a result, in order to fully understand the results of the study, it is first necessary to understand what (for the purposes of this study) was meant by an education-based emphasis. In order to do this, an education-based emphasis will be defined in terms of director attitude, rehearsal planning, and rehearsal format.

In many ways, the change in focus examined in this study was a change in director attitude. The study began as part of my quest to explore ways to improve my choir and was not driven by any external forces such as participant desire, pastoral direction, or music committee request. I was interested to see what would happen if I became more concerned with developing the musical skills of my choir, and less concerned with impressing the congregation with the service music I provided. Thus, the change in focus first occurred in how I as director and researcher approached my job. However, while such a change in a director's attitude is a necessary starting point, simply deciding that one is more interested in the education of one's musicians will not make a difference without further action. For this study, the necessary further action came through a change in rehearsal planning.

When the focus had been on performance, service music had been chosen for its ability to make the choir sound as good as possible while at the same time fitting into the service theme. This meant that the music was considered in light of accessibility given the skill limits of the choir, the constraints of rehearsal time, the appropriateness of the text to the Lectionary theme, and finally my like or dislike of the piece (I recognized that

if I did not like a piece it was more difficult to get the choir to perform it well). Once the pieces were chosen, I would prepare to teach them in rehearsal.

Preparation for rehearsal simply meant determining how to get the sound I wanted in what I believed to be the most efficient manner. This often meant preparing to drill difficult rhythmic or melodic patterns, providing page numbers for complex repeats, explaining dynamics in non-musical terms, and providing phrasing guideline without explaining the reasoning behind these decisions. The plan for each piece was to teach it by rote, providing piece-specific performance guidelines, and doing so with as much efficiency as possible. Each piece of music was in effect taught in isolation with the goal being to get it ready for a great performance, and when that performance was over the piece was forgotten.

When the emphasis was changed to education, the requirements for rehearsal planning changed as well. The first change was in the selection of music. The music still needed to meet all the same criteria as before, but now it also needed to be tool for teaching. This meant that once music that met all the other needs was found, it was further scanned to determine how it would work with the educational plans of the director. These plans included a pre-designed sequence of concepts to be presented during the twelve-weeks of the study. Each anthem or introit to be used during the study would either need to introduce or reinforce one or more of the concepts being taught. The music chosen, and the rehearsals during which they were taught, would build upon each other. No longer would pieces be taught in isolation and then forgotten after Sunday performance.

The plans for each rehearsal then shifted from being a list of difficult spots to work and performance instructions to outline, to having the look of lesson plans. Each rehearsal plan still had the same general outline in that each included specific warm-ups, announcements, and order of music to be rehearsed and what specifically needed to be worked on with each. However, each lesson was based upon a long-term plan for introducing, reinforcing, and eventually mastering concepts. This long-term plan for sequencing included all of the selected service music and the important concepts that needed to be taught during the twelve-week study. In both the long-term and daily rehearsal plans, the educational components were classified as relating to eye, ear, and mouth. The eye content included both new and familiar rhythms, intervals, or terms that I wanted the choir to be able to recognize at sight. The ear content included the material I wanted the choir to be able to recognize when they heard it. And finally, the mouth content was that material I wanted the choir to be able to sing either from memory or when shown on music.

Each lesson was planned so that eye, ear, and mouth material would be presented throughout the entire rehearsal, beginning with warm-ups and continuing through the end of rehearsal. It is important to note that educational goals drove the entire rehearsal as opposed to just occurring during a set period of time during which educational material was presented before returning to the standard rehearsal format. However, this is not to say that each activity was always tied to an anthem the choir was already in possession of. Often the plans called for specific periods during which material was presented but not immediately connected to an anthem. For example, rhythms, and the Kodaly mnemonics taught as an aid to negotiating them, were often presented on sentence strips

or hand-outs as a way of front-loading for future anthems where these rhythms would appear. Such front-loading plans helped the choir prepare for and even master tasks that would seem more difficult in the context of an actual piece.

Naturally, with a change in attitude of the director, and change in rehearsal planning, the format of a rehearsal with educational-emphasis looks different. First, warm-ups were not changed; however, instead of being used for only to prepare for singing, they were additionally used for ear training. The choir learned to name the intervals they were already familiar with and this became the start of their ear training. Warm-up time included elements such as interval quizzes for both the choir's ears and mouth.

Service music preparation also looked different. Previously, the most introduction the singers received to a new piece of music was the accompanists playing of it for them. Now, new or difficult ideas were front-loaded prior to the piece being handed out. In addition, when pieces were handed out they would be accompanied by questions that helped the singers recognize familiar elements that they had encountered in front-loading activities or in pieces they had previously mastered. Following the scaffolding model, the preparation of each anthem was supported by material that had previously been presented.

Finally, the rehearsal format changed in that there was an assessment component added. When the choir had a performance emphasis, if the choir performed a piece well, that was enough for me to consider that I had completed my task. When the emphasis became education, it was not as easy to determine if I was accomplishing my task. In order to determine success it became necessary to evaluate how the choir was

progressing. This meant that things like the above mentioned interval quizzes needed to be included in rehearsal. These assessment activities were intended to be short and cause as little fear or disruption as possible. Thus rehearsals were filled with short questions that could be answered by shouting out, raising hands, or working as a group. Nevertheless, this added participation requirement for the singers changed the look of rehearsal under the new educational emphasis.

Summary

This study of a change in emphasis from performance to education utilizes qualitative research methods that draw heavily from the traditions of phenomenology, action research, and case study. Data from many diverse sources were collected and analyzed using an inductive process. In the following chapter, the results from the collection and analysis of that data will be explored.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This research sought to answer the primary research question: What effect does moving from a performance-based to an education-based emphasis have on a church music program? The participants in the study were members of a volunteer church choir. Given the number of volunteer choirs found in church settings, and the nature of this qualitative research design, of considerable interest were the experiences of the participants and their reactions to the change. For these reasons, the first half of this chapter will focus on the primary research question as it relates more closely to the participant singers in the choir and will include data regarding the choir as a whole as well as data from specific members of the choir.

The second half of the chapter will focus on the primary research question as it relates more closely to the director because my experiences as both as researcher and a participant in the program are also of interest. Further, any dramatic change to a music program will affect both leadership and membership and as such the affect on, and perceptions of, both should be explored. However, it should be noted that completely isolating issues as being either related only to the choir or the director may be impossible given the relationship between them. And finally, it should be noted that in both sections the examples of the data presented were primarily collected from within the music department during the study but were validated through a comparison with data collected from outside; i.e. the pastor and non-musical membership and through member checks in the form of follow-up interviews after the study was completed.

Key Themes Associated with the Choir

As noted in the methods section, data collected from the researcher's journal, transcriptions of rehearsals, written responses from participants, and transcripts of interviews with participants were coded and emerging themes identified. The key themes primarily associated with the choir were: Response to the change in rehearsal format; Attitude toward learning; Appropriateness of community learning model; and Member's perceptions of the results of the program.

Change in Rehearsal Format

“I think the new rehearsal format is fun and interesting”

“I'm bored”

The quotes above represent the range of opinions offered by the choir after the first four weeks of the new educationally-focused choir rehearsal. Data analysis suggests that this apparent difference in assessment of the change may be linked to a participant's actual or perceived skill level and may be an important piece when trying to understand how the change in the focus of the church music program to education was experienced by the different members of the choir. Further, this information may prove useful for understanding how other heterogeneously grouped, volunteer, church-choirs might respond to such a change.

As described in the previous chapter, the members of the choir had very diverse musical backgrounds and as a result there was a wide range in musical skills amongst the membership, with the majority of the choir having limited musical skills, little formal musical training, and few musical experiences outside of church choirs. This required

lesson plans that focused more on elementary musical concepts while at the same time keeping the more advanced musicians engaged (the primary method for keeping them engaged will be addressed in greater detail under the topic of community learning).

Results from an initial quiz to ascertain the level of musical and liturgical literacy of the participants further supported this diversity in skills and reinforced my decision to focus my lessons toward helping them develop elementary musical skills. However, while my preliminary work did indicate that many of the members had limited musical reading skills, it also suggested that the members must have developed strong musical survival skills that helped them both hide and overcome their musical deficiencies. This appears to be the case because despite the members' inability to read music (as assessed in the initial quiz), they were able to master more difficult works by composers including Bach, Handel, Schubert, and Bruckner. In addition, a survey of recently performed anthems revealed Eighteenth Century fuguing tunes and atonal Twentieth Century musical works as part of their repertoire.

One specific example representative of the choir's actual level of literacy (zone of actual development) being revealed as different from what I, as their director, had perceived it to be involves the choir's understanding of the fermata. As the conductor of the choir both before and during the switch, I was aware of numerous times when we performed pieces with fermatas. However, in the initial assessment quiz, 36% of the choir could not identify a fermata when shown a piece of music containing one. Later, when a section of music containing a fermata was presented during a lesson as part of this study, it became evident that many in the choir understood that a fermata involved holding a note but they did not understand how long to hold it. They had in fact been

negotiating fermatas, for a least as long as I have been a director, without knowing that they were following my artistic will or in the case of hymns, the will of the organist leading the worship music. Their subtle following of those around them or picking up on other clues allowed them to have the appearance of possessing a skill that they actually did not have and kept me from recognizing it as an area needing explanation.

The decision to teach elementary musical skills was based on the written and aural assessment at the start of the program and was supported by observations such as the fermata example. It appeared that the majority of the choir was in need of building their basic musical skills and as the program progressed it became apparent that the early perceptions of the program were linked to a member's musical skills. One group of members provided written responses indicating that they were very willing to take the time during rehearsals to build their musical skills which they recognized to be limited.

“I’ve heard of a lot of the information before but wasn’t sure about it.”

“It [the new format] has explained what I was trying to do without knowing why.”

“It’s a lot to get when you’ve never really taken music. But I like it and I’m very interested.”

“I’m thrilled. It feels good to begin to read...”

“It has improved my knowledge of notes etc.”

“It’s easy to assume that everyone in a choir reads music but this is not the case.”

These responses provided evidence that many of the members recognized they were lacking in musical skills that would allow them to reach their fullest potential as singers

and that they were willing and in some cases eager, (“I am thrilled,”) to develop these skills in a church choir setting.

The bulk of responses indicated a positive reaction to the change in focus but of equal importance is the data suggesting that others were reacting negatively to the new focus of the educational program. These negative responses, while limited to a few individuals at the beginning, began to decrease as the program continued. In their final written response, the individual who wrote “I’m bored” for their first response ended the program with what appeared to be a partial joke followed by acceptance of the importance of the program:

“I’m ready to get back to normal. But seriously, the overall has been positive.”

Nevertheless, the existence of negative responses to the change in focus does hold information that may be of great importance for future educational efforts.

What appears to be most significant about these negative responses is who, at least in part, reacted negatively to the change in the program and the reason for their reaction. The common denominator amongst those who showed a negative reaction to the switch was a high actual or perceived level of musical skills. For example, the most ardent writer of negative comments was a highly talented singer just finishing his bachelor of music degree. For this member, and those with similar views, study of their statements suggests that their negative reaction was to the repeated exposure to material they fully understood and found tedious. The inclusion of an educational component was never the reason for their negative reactions. Confirmation of this belief came in an interview with one of these members following completion of the program.

“I found it frustrating to continue to work on basic music skills but I understand the great need for other members of the choir to learn this material.”

However, because these members are often the unofficial leaders of their sections, their feelings must be considered as they play a key role in supporting the ensemble at a high level while the foundational skills of other members are being developed, and because their attitudes are likely to be able to be sensed by the other members of the choir.

That these members were reacting negatively to educational content and not program focus may be of importance to understanding what occurred in this study. The switch from performance-based to education-based rehearsals was not met with criticism from anyone. It was the content of the lessons that they had problems with and responses such as “I’m bored” clearly represent the difficulty these members had with the program. Confirmation that this was their area of concern is found in some of their other written responses. While writing negatively of their experiences with concepts they consider too elementary, they included supportive statements such as:

“I think more is to come if they are willing to focus and grow...”

“They [fellow choir members] require much less prompting, and realize the worth of exercises, and employ more concepts naturally!”

“For the good [responding to the question how do you feel this program has affected the choir].”

“Hopefully the 12 weeks will pay off in the future.”

From the observations, written responses, and interviews with the members of the choir it is apparent that there were both positive and negative perceptions regarding the change in focus of the program. For the majority of the choir the new focus was a change

for the better, but for some the change was met with some degree of dissatisfaction.

However, further analysis of the data revealed that those dissatisfied were not dissatisfied with a change in focus to education but with the content of the lessons that came with that change. In fact, there were no indications that any members felt that a change in focus to education could not be of benefit to the program.

While nearly all of the more skilled members had some degree of dissatisfaction with the program, it should not be inferred that all of those with higher skill levels indicated boredom or dissatisfaction with the material presented. One example disconfirming that more highly skilled members were always dissatisfied, was a highly trained high-school aged musician who was a frequent “All State” flute player, substitute organist, and capable singer. In her written responses to the program she noted:

“I think it [the new format] has made me able to know more”

“I feel my musicianship has improved greatly. I can sing better than when I joined.”

Finally, while this was not one of the possible results even anticipated with the change in format, there is some evidence that the change in program focus may have promoted feelings of unity amongst the membership. As was explained in the description of the church and choir involved in this study, they had recently experienced division and the loss of many prominent members. And although the choir was not directly responsible for the split, it suffered from the incident. However, responses from the choir members such as:

“It [the program] also brings us together as a group if we are all trying to learn together”

“Everyone seems to have worked together...”

“We have grown together and communicated as well”

suggest that the implementation of an educational program with a focus on community-learning may have helped bring the choir closer together.

Attitude Toward Learning

“I feel that most of the choir has learned more than me”

“I’ll be a pro at the end of 12 weeks (or on my way)”

Suggest, that like the duality of perception of the switch (all were in favor of an educational component but were mixed regarding the content of the lessons), when it came to personal attitudes toward learning within the choir, members were both united and divided. In this case it appears that they were united in that a majority of the members were glad to be learning but were divided in that the degree to which they felt capable varied from member to member.

The possibility that the idea of participants questioning their ability to learn, or the amount of musical knowledge left for them to learn, might become an important issue first began to emerge during the first week of the program. As part of the first stage of the change in focus within the program, the choir was asked to assess their own skills and the skills of the entire choir using a Likert-type scale with one equaling “very weak” and five equaling “very strong.” Of the thirteen members present to perform the assessment, nine rated their own “overall musical skills” as three or below while at the same time eleven of the members rated the “overall musical skills” of the choir as four or above and none rated the choir below three. This difference between personal and group assessment suggested that at the onset of the new educational program, I might be dealing with singers who felt their colleagues were superior musicians in comparison to them.

Although no instrument for assessing their actual level of musical development had been given yet, one possible reason for this indication of low self efficacy was their knowledge that they were going to be assessed soon and that they did not want to give themselves a high rating and then do poorly on the exam. Nonetheless, if this was the case, their high ratings for the choir as a whole suggests they did not feel that it was going to be a problem for their fellow musicians.

What is interesting about the difference between the member's ratings of their own overall skills and the ratings they gave the choir is that they parallel the responses that these same members would later give regarding both their personal learning and the group's learning. Just as many members of the choir indicated that their fellow members were more skillful musicians, these same members also suggested that their fellow members were learning more than they were. A good example of this comes from an individual who initially rated her personal overall skills as three and the choir's as five. Throughout the program she continued to indicate that she was not achieving as much as those around them. Her responses included statements such as:

"I find it hard sometimes"

"Most of them do a much better job than I do"

"I feel most of the choir has learned more than I have"

"I think I have learned something, but I [sic] not sure how good I am"

"I think the choir as a whole is a lot better."

This theme of being a slower learner than one's peers was one that was echoed by many others in the choir. When the responses of all the participants were analyzed, the average overall skill rating of the choir was found to be 3.93 and the average personal

rating 3.08. Further, when the ratings provided by the two very skilled musicians are removed from the calculations, the personal score lowers to 2.7 and the choir's increases to 4.1. Confirming this theme are the written responses of other members which include phrases such as:

“...I am slow to catch on”; I am learning but I am slow at picking up on what the notes are”

“I’m trying but I’m not sure how much I’ve progressed. Be patient-I’m sure I’m learning something”

“...I’m a slow learner.”

These responses, coupled with the initial self and group ratings, indicate that many members of the choir entered this study considering their skills to be low and that as they progressed through the program they believed that they were slow to acquire new skills. Given that the negative statements about learning ability, especially as compared to their fellow participants, continued to be received throughout the duration of the program, it would appear that instruction, at least for the 12 weeks of treatment, did not change these participant's perceptions of their personal abilities.

However, while it did become clear that a large portion of the choir felt that they were slow learners with limited skills, the data suggests that not all members felt that way. For example, one of the highly skilled musicians indicated that she was confident in her skills from the beginning and that she also improved herself throughout the program. On the first day of the program she rated her own personal ability as five on the Likert-type scale (the highest skill level possible), but nevertheless ten weeks later suggested:

“I feel like my musicianship has improved greatly”

“I feel like the choir has improved also.”

In contrast was another of the highly-trained musicians who also rated his own skills as high (5 on the scale) but who gave no indication that he had either improved or learned anything from the program. However, like his highly-skilled colleague he also noted the improvement with the choir by indicating that the educational component had a “positive” effect on the other members. Still, another member whose performances indicated that they were not as skillful a musician as they rated themselves, responded to the question “How do you feel our new rehearsal format has affected your personal ability to read music?” with “N/A” but she too indicated that:

“...it has been helpful for those with limited music reading skills.”

Finally, one member’s data was different from all of the others. This member rated her skills as very weak (1 on the scale), and yet she responded positively regarding her personal growth and her fellow learners:

“I feel like I’ll be a pro a the end of 12 weeks (or on my way)”

“For those unable to read it has been great.”

Clearly, the participant’s perceptions of their ability to learn, and their need to learn was varied. Those who rated their skills as lower were more likely to rate their learning speed as slower and their progress less than their peers. However, amongst those who gave themselves higher skill ratings, there did not seem to be any pattern, but that may also be due to the small number of participants. Perhaps what may be most important to note was the unity found among all of the responses. Specifically, it needs to be noted that none of the participants indicated they could not learn nor did any

indicate an unwillingness to learn. Further, even those who rated themselves as highly skilled suggested the benefits received by the other members of the choir.

Once again analyses of the negative responses regarding learning suggests that the actual issue driving the negative responses may have been dissatisfaction with lesson content. Specifically, the content problem was likely to have been the weighting of the lessons toward the more elementary skills that were needed by the majority of the participants. Those who did not indicate that they had learned anything were also the ones who rated their skills the highest. However, how the one member who demonstrated high skill level, rated herself as highly skilled but also stated “I feel like my musicianship has improved greatly” fits into this model may be an important future consideration. What may currently be concluded from this data is that diversity of self-efficacy levels amongst the participants of this choir was not a factor working against the inclusion of an educational program. The importance of learning was never disputed by any of the participants. Although some indicated they had much to learn and would be slow at learning it, others indicated they had little to learn, and others indicated they had much to learn but were quickly taking it in, all indicated the importance of learning for the choir. In fact, the participant’s desire to learn actually became an obstacle during some of the rehearsals (and a topic to be discussed in the second half of this chapter). By the fifth lesson I had noted in my journal:

“That seems to be my biggest problem these days. I am often led astray by their questions.”

Appropriateness of the Community Learning Model

“We are all learning as a group, which benefits each one individually...”

“I have really enjoyed us as a learning group”

The statements above appear to be supportive evidence for selecting a community- centered learning model for a church music program. It has already been indicated that at the onset of this study a model of teaching and learning needed to be selected. Of the possible ways of classifying teaching and learning models, one way to do so is to classify them as teacher-centered, student-centered, or community-centered and for the purposes of this study the community-centered model was selected.

At the heart of the community-centered model is the idea that learning is a collaborative effort. Teachers, more-capable peers, and less-capable peers work together through the learning process in an environment that develops into a community of learners. During this study the creation of such a learning environment seems to have evolved naturally as the educational component progressed. As director and researcher I set the content for each lesson and asked the questions that drove the overall focus of the rehearsal; however, the more expert members in each section appeared to naturally take on the role of teaching assistant. This appears to be an important occurrence because, while my decision to adopt a community-learning model led me to support this budding peer teaching/learning, I did not overtly ask any of the members to take on such roles. However, even though I did not ask them to do so, they were aware it was occurring and by the second quick-write one member even noted:

“We’re all learning from each other, as well as from the director.”

This natural development into a community of learning may have its roots in the aforementioned “survival skills” developed by the choir. One of the skills highly developed by the less skillful members was the ability to subtly follow the lead of the more skillful members in each section. Sometimes the leadership of one or two members was easily noticed and even spoken of out loud, but at other times the relationship went unnoticed by the director and at times perhaps even to those involved. However, a relationship between more and less capable members appears to have existed in the choir for some time and it may be that it was a comfortable progression into an open peer teacher/learner relationship.

Review of videotaped rehearsals shows numerous occasions in each rehearsal where the above relationship can be seen. An example of this occurred during a rehearsal in which I asked the choir to look for “any other passages that look like things that are familiar.” The intent was to have the choir recognize a familiar rhythm we had previously learned as playing a key role in the new anthem we were just beginning to learn. One member of the soprano section became openly confused:

“See. [pause] Quick question. [pause] How do I know?
You’re saying those are quarter notes?”

Seeing her confusion I started to approach her in order to determine exactly what her question was and to attempt to help. However, a more skilled member sitting directly beside her began to explain it to her and a third soprano, who had what appeared to be a look of confusion, also leaned in to join the pair as they worked out the problem. At the same time, review of the video suggests that the confusion was not relegated only to the soprano section. Members of the alto section could be seen gathered around the most musically literate alto while she appeared to be explaining the music.

Further evidence that a community model may be a natural and effective model of teaching and learning for a church choir may be found in an incident which occurred outside of rehearsal. During the eighth week of the program the choir was working on syncopation. As part of the learning process I gave them a take-home musical example and asked them to locate and mark the notes that fell on the beat and those which fell off the beat. This exercise proved difficult for many; however, I later learned that one of the sopranos had called a bass so they could work out the problem together. This is important because it is further evidence of the desire to learn, and it suggests that a community of learning was actually developing. The soprano involved could have easily called me or visited my office but she chose to work it out with a fellow choir member- a member, who until this point, I had never witnessed her socializing with and whom I believe to be outside of her regular circle of friends.

While review of data suggests that many members felt comfortable going to their more-capable peers for guidance and most of the more-capable peers were happy to help, it should not be assumed that this was the case for all members. The importance of the role of more-capable peer was not one easily accepted by the most highly-educated member of the choir. While he did fulfill the role, and even substituted for me while I was away, he felt that he was not helping the choir to progress but was acting as a sort of permanent crutch. This was a role he sometimes felt was being played by others filling the role of more-capable peer.

“Look, who answers your questions all the time? I know lots of people look at me for answers.”

“I still think that a lot of responses are solicited from other’s responses. Many still answer with others (peer voting). I think more is to come if they are willing to focus

and grow, not just remain the status quo! More independence should be stressed- greater individual growth.”

This member’s observation that singers were relying heavily on a few key members and that many members often did not appear to be answering my questions, is a valid observation. However, to suggest this as being a negative situation may not be fully accurate. First, the fact that the members were relying on each other may be another indicator that utilizing a community learning approach was most appropriate for this church choir. Second, and perhaps more important, is the fact that such observations regarding who is relying on whom, and who appears to be answering the questions, may not be the most accurate way to determine who is mastering the material. This idea became clearer after having the opportunity to review videos of rehearsals I had conducted.

Closer examination of videotaped rehearsals showed that often the loudest person answering a question was actually not the first, or only, person with the correct answer. I found that at times members who knew an answer were not necessarily anxious to share their knowledge very loudly and as the leader of the rehearsal I at times missed these more timid people. One example of this involved my asking sections of the choir to speak some basic rhythms utilizing Kodaly mnemonics. In the soprano section the video revealed one member to be negotiating the rhythm correctly but slightly behind and quieter than the others in her section. However, when her group had an opportunity to say another rhythm, during this second time she was again correct but also louder and answering at the same time everyone else did. Similarly, a member of the alto section responded correctly to a question I asked but she responded so timidly that she was not

heard over the responses loudly shared by the more advanced members of the choir. The benefit of promoting a community of learning is that the skill levels and needs of members in each section may be recognized and appropriately handled by their peers in that section.

However, perhaps the best evidence supporting the use of a community comes from the final statement of one member at the conclusion of the program. While the member quoted below does not use the words community-learning, and in fact is probably not even aware of the concept, her description of how the program worked clearly describes that model of teaching and learning.

“Everyone seems to have worked together as musicians and as a team- helping one another along the way- to improve their skills at sight reading and singing.”

Member’s Perceptions of the Results

Much of the data collected regarding the choir member’s perceptions of the results including what they learned, and what changes they felt had occurred in the choir as a whole, during the program has been presented under the previous headings and especially under the entitled: Response to the Change in Rehearsal Format; and Attitude Toward Learning.” Nevertheless, given the importance of the subject it needs to be considered on its own. A review of the data collected from the quick-writes written after the program was completed revealed three major themes: Increased literacy; Improvement with the choir; and Personal enjoyment.

Perhaps the most common theme found at the end of the program was an increase in how the members perceived their level of musical literacy. Although the term literacy

was never used it was alluded to in many other ways. From the perhaps overly optimistic (or misguided):

“Now that everyone can read music...”

to the more basic and perhaps realistic:

“We have learned about notes, what they mean, etc.”

the issue of literacy was a reoccurring theme. Some participants indicated that they had become more aware of what could be found in the music beyond simply negotiating pitches.

“[the program] pointed out the symbols, etc. that hadn’t meant much. It was always the notes that I paid attention [to] rather than the important symbols, timing, etc.”

“Members are more aware of how a piece of music comes together if they know some of the basics.”

Others indicated improvement in sight reading skills:

“Everyone seems to have worked together...helping one another along the way to improve their skills at sight reading and singing.”

However the strongest and clearest statement regarding literacy came from an individual who had initially been reluctant to join the choir because he perceived his skills to be inadequate.

“It has really given me more confidence coming to the music. This has made me less dependent on needing to hear those around me just to feel I know the music. We [the choir] seem to be much more aware [of] the music in its entirety- not just narrowly ‘listening’ for each note, but reading it and looking for its relationship to the whole piece. We are really just at the beginning of this realization, but I think, even now, it has positively affected our sound.”

The perception that the choir had improved as a result of the educational program was another of the reoccurring themes. From the simple use of only the word “positive” to the comment:

“I would hope that the choir has improved very much.”

followed by the writer’s own presentation of evidence:

“Comments from individuals in the congregation certainly bear this out!”

the data suggests that the choir saw improvement in the program. However, what area of the educational program they felt contributed most to the improvement was not always clear. Some members made simple comments like:

“I think the choir as a whole is a lot better”

“The overall has been positive.”

However others, like the writer of the quote from the previous paragraph, connected the improvements within the choir with the increased literacy skills.

The church choir in this study was a voluntary organization, as are many church choirs, meaning the members of the choir come because they want to be there. For this reason the recognition of personal enjoyment as a major theme was an important discovery. Some of the positive statements regarding personal enjoyment were very short and simple:

“I have really enjoyed us as a learning group”

“It has been good.”

Others wrote extensively and included great detail about the positive aspects of their participation and the role of the director in initiating the program. Perhaps the most extreme of these responses stated:

“Quite frankly I can’t believe this class has been twelve weeks, so that must mean that the instructor (you) presented a stimulating program that engaged our thought processes and made me “stretch my brain” to read music with greater skill (and I’m a slow learner)”

And while these responses may represent satisfaction with me as a director as much as enjoyment of the choir program, they still are indicators that the final feelings associated with the change in focus to education were positive.

Nevertheless, while most of the responses categorized under the personal enjoyment theme were considered positive, there were some responses that were not.

One member said:

“I’m ready to get back to normal”

but he then added:

“but seriously, the overall has been positive.”

This comment seems to suggest that while they saw improvement with the choir, perhaps it was not as enjoyable an experience for them. The other less than positive comment seems to be similar in the suggestion that the program may have been helpful but a return to previous format may bring more enjoyment.

“Singing ‘Beulahland’ (sic) was a spiritually uplifting experience. I find Ti Ti Ta Ta very confusing. Now that everyone can read music maybe we can sing more challenging music. Hopefully the 12 weeks will pay off in the future.”

Still, the majority of responses related to personal enjoyment suggested that the members of the choir enjoyed participating in the program. However, the existence of these two contrary responses should be noted but at the same time considered in light of the fact that these writers were also the writers of the negative comments under the themes of

Response to the change in rehearsal format and Attitude toward learning, and the reasoning behind those responses should be considered.

Key Themes Associated with the Director

Just as the first part of this chapter focused on the primary research question as it related to the choir, the second half of this chapter will focus on the question as it relates more closely to the director. Given that the focus is on the director rather than on the choir, the bulk of the data analyzed for presentation within this section comes from the study of my participant-researcher journal, and my notes taken while reviewing the videotaped rehearsals. These sources were reviewed, coded, and four major themes emerged. These were identified and labeled as: Conductor assuming the role of educator; Conductor recognizing the choir as learners; Conductor treating rehearsals as a time for teaching and learning; and, Conductor's perception of the effectiveness of the change in focus.

Conductor Assuming the Role of Educator

Changing the focus of a church choir from performance to education requires a change in how a director approaches their choir. In this study I, as the conductor and researcher, assumed the role of educator rather than just director of the choir. In the broadest terms, this meant that my new primary goal was the education of my singers and that the production of a quality performance during worship became my secondary goal. This was a significant change given that previously I had been looking to do just the opposite. My goal had been to produce the best sound from my choir and I felt their musical education was of secondary importance. However, it should not be inferred that I was in any way lessening my performance standards with this change in focus. It was,

after all, my ruminating on how to make my choir “just as good as the program down the road” that led me to study the effects of an educational program in the first place.

Given my limited experience as an educator (as was noted in the previous chapter) one of the biggest issues I now faced was the development of the skills necessary for effective teaching. I entered the program with the benefit of having taken music education courses, but I was hindered by a lack of actual classroom experience. This lack of experience is a significant theme in this research because it represents one of the unique characteristics of this study and because it is likely that others who may attempt similar educational programs in the future may also be more performance-oriented as well and as a result be building their teaching skills at the same time. Looking specifically at how my lack of experience manifested itself in this study, three themes seemed to emerge. These themes, which in many ways are interconnected, were labeled as: Teaching skills; Teacher confidence, and Teacher control.

The development of teaching skills was of constant concern throughout the study and the skill that required the most attention was rehearsal pacing. The need for improvement in this area was noticed both by the choir and those assisting me with the research. Quite simply, in the early stages of my new role as educator I spent far too much time talking about music and far too little time singing it. In a clear statement to myself I note simply:

“I tend to talk too much.”

At first I recognized the problem but expected that, with an increase in my skills and the skills of the choir, the pacing would get better.

“Giving directions and working through each exercise takes a bit more time but don’t get discouraged, I can see how it will get faster and not be such a waste of time later”

Later as the program continued I realized that the problem was not going away and that it was going to be crucial for me to cut down on the talking and began to develop methods that used my time more efficiently.

“...I feel that I need to decrease some of my teaching time and increase the amount of singing. The rehearsals are getting boring for the more advanced musicians. I suspect that it could also become the same for everyone if this keeps up.”

In many ways the recognition of the need to keep things moving, and the initial signs that I was beginning to develop some of the necessary skills to do so, appears to be a critical point in the program. In a note of confidence following the first rehearsal that I felt achieved my goal I noted:

“Yea! Was able to improve pace of rehearsal a bit. Perhaps I am becoming a teacher after all.”

Following that entry, the change in rehearsal pace continued to be a key area of concern with similar entries such as:

“One thing I am doing is getting in ideas quickly. I just ask where is the key signature or how many beats in a measure, etc. This keeps things going and they are learning and I am assessing their skills and progress.”

The need for me to continue to improve my skills in this area remained throughout the program and in the final weeks of the study I began to consider the future of the program and determined that:

“Clearly I need to do more singing and just quickly insert the learning...The next time I do this (which will be with every choir from now on) I will not say we are going to be learning. I am just subtly and quickly going to do it.”

The problem of too much talking within the choir rehearsals was not entirely related to my lack of teaching skills. In fact, it may be that talking in rehearsal is not always a problem but may at times need to be encouraged by the director. An example of this positive talk is the talk associated with groups working out problems amongst themselves. Talk between group members working out a problem is encouraged within a community of learners, and if done appropriately should not be considered a problem. Also not a problem, but still an area of concern appears to be the adult-learner's need to talk while learning. I had noticed prior to this study that members of my choir had a tendency to talk when new ideas arose during rehearsal. With the change in rehearsal format this idea again surfaced but with more frequency. After one rehearsal I related that:

“Once again I am finding that they want to work with and discuss new ideas and that I think it helps process and truly learn but it takes time.”

Nonetheless, the choir's desire to talk about new ideas and process them out-loud, when coupled with my already noted problem of talking too much, became a serious concern.

“I am not sure that I didn't do too much explaining with that one [questions over major and minor]. That seems to be my biggest problem these days. I am often led astray by their questions.”

The balancing act between talking and singing for both the teacher and learners in this adult choir was one of the key areas of concern and while perfect balance was not reached, attempting to reach such a balance may be of extreme importance.

While the development of skills necessary for developing the appropriate amount of teacher/learner talk for a well paced choir was the primary teaching skill needing

development during this program, the development of other skills were identified as being of significance. First among them was the need to develop efficient methods of assessment. While I often assessed by soliciting responses from short questions quickly asked while working on a piece of music, I eventually realized that I was not getting a full understanding of what was being learned. This was a fact confirmed by review of videotaped rehearsals and my suggestion that:

“I do need to work on determining who exactly knows what. The issue of course is the vocal v. the quiet members. The quiet ones are not necessarily confused (just as the loudest ones often shout out the wrong answers.”)

In an effort to overcome this problem, in the ninth week of the program I incorporated questions asked to the entire group that could be answered by raising their hand at the correct response. Given the small size of the choir I could scan the group to see who raised their hand. And while that still did not give concrete evidence (people could follow the leaders of the sections) it was an extra assessment tool.

Also revealed to be a concern for a newly developing educator in a church choir was the need to focus equally on each of the members of the choir rather than on a few individuals. The process of coding my researcher journal and the rehearsal transcripts revealed that I often focused on two members of the choir. Further study of the codes revealed that these two members were also the ones who most often verbalized their enjoyment of the learning process,

“I learned that [one soprano] loves learning music so much she is going to Borders to buy a Dummies guide to music”

were most likely to ask questions about the material,

“How do I know...”

and most clearly displayed their progress in learning to read,

“It [asked about a dot] makes it half of the note more. In other words it makes it one and a half of what it was.”

My focus on those participants most clearly displaying signs of progress or willingness to learn may have resulted in others learning less than they might have, or feeling left out. Given the numerous positive responses to the education program found in the quick-write responses and the assessments given, the data suggests that far more members than the two that received the most attention were glad to be learning and were in fact doing so.

“I’ve heard of a lot of the information before but wasn’t sure about it.”

“... I like it and I’m very interested.”

“I’m thrilled. It feels good to begin to read...”

“It has improved my knowledge of notes etc.”

Finally, as may be expected, the need to follow through and not revert back to old techniques was of some difficulty for me as a new educator. I would plan how to present a concept in what I believed to be the most effective method according to my training in education classes and I would effectively follow those plans. However, I would find myself falling back to my old methods during those times that I had not completely preplanned for. For example, I had decided to teach rhythm utilizing Kodaly mnemonics and while following my lesson plans I did so. But, during those times when the choir had difficulties with a rhythm pattern that I had not planned for, I would at times revert back to my own made-up syllables rather than reinforcing the material by using the Kodaly mnemonics I was trying to teach.

“After I got through my planned lesson I had five minutes and I worked another piece and taught by rote and even

used my own nonsense syllables as I screamed out the rhythm instead of the Ta Ta Ti Ti I had just introduced.”

However, as the study continued I began to be more comfortable in my role of teacher and the problem began to lessen but did not disappear in the twelve weeks.

Entries like the one above regarding my failure to follow through on teaching strategies are also indicative of another of the issues discovered and grouped under the topic Conductor Assuming the Role of Educator. The issue is teacher confidence and it too played a large role in this study. Entries in my journal ranged from:

“As I get ready to do rehearsal, I wonder if I am just trying to do too much”

to

“Perhaps I am becoming a teacher after all.”

In between were entries regarding both my successful attempts at teaching and the times that I perceived that I had failed. From these reflections, which continually fluctuated between positive and negative, it becomes clear that I spent considerable time thinking about me as a teacher- perhaps nearly as much time as I spent considering the choir as learners.

Perhaps related to my concern over my own development and overall competence as a teacher, is the third sub-theme of Teacher Control. The heading Teacher Control might, in this case, have alternatively been labeled Relationship with Accompanist. The reason for this is first that the accompanist was a veteran classroom teacher with a great deal of experience introducing the same material I was introducing for the first time and second, that I was in a relationship with the accompanist before, during, and after the study. This situation played a significant role in the study and a review of the data produced a sizeable amount of information on director / accompanist relationships;

however, for the purposes of this study, data related specifically to the change in focus to education will be examined.

Given the qualifications of my accompanist, as a new teacher I was benefiting from having a veteran teacher who could both take rehearsals when I was forced to be out of town, and also observe each of my rehearsals and provide immediate feedback. In many ways this situation resembled the student teaching experience. Following a discussion with my accompanist which resembled a conference between a student and cooperating teacher, I noted in my journal (without citing my accompanist as the source):

“I needed a transition from clap to sing and that should have been clap while pianist plays and maybe even follow that with sing only your rhythm.”

At another point I openly state:

“Based on word from [my accompanist] regarding the last rehearsal I plan to make a change in order.”

While I, and most likely the choir, benefited from this instruction, just like a student teacher, I felt as if both my teaching and I were being evaluated. This feeling, while not overtly recorded in my journal, may have weakened the degree of confidence with which I led rehearsals, and thus added a new dynamic.

While my journal entries did not reflect any changes regarding this possible new dynamic, review of the videoed rehearsals clearly showed a change. This change came in the form of increased guidance from my accompanist. This guidance was generally very subtle and may not have been noticed by the choir. One frequently observed form of this guidance was the interjection of musical examples supporting the material I was presenting. For example: in one rehearsal I told the basses “Basses you’re used to singing fifths constantly” and I then started to show them a visual example. My

accompanist, without being asked, began to play *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* as a way to reinforce the interval of a fifth. Similarly, in another lesson I was talking about leaps of a fourth that are then filled back in step-wise. In this case my accompanist reinforced the idea I was presenting by pointing out the number of examples of this that could be found in the anthem we were currently working on. In each of these cases the subtle interjection of material from the accompanist supported what I was doing and review of the videos did suggest that the choir benefited from them, they nevertheless indicated where I could use improvement.

However, while most of the assistance from my accompanist was subtle and provided as part of her effort to aid my teaching, not all of her actions were that subtle. On numerous occasions, and especially in the early stages of my teaching, she attempted to aid me in curbing my tendency to talk too much or let the choir talk too much. On these occasions when the talking had gone on for what she believed to be too long (and review of the videos later supported) she would begin playing the introduction to the piece we were discussing when perhaps we should have been singing. Recognizing this cue I would then stop talking and move on to singing.

Review of the data regarding the interaction between the accompanist and I suggest a relationship similar to that between a student and his cooperating teacher. And while that is how I often saw the relationship, that may not have been how the choir saw it. It appears that the choir may have seen my accompanist and I more as co-teachers than as teacher and accompanist. And given that I as the director was allowing her to interject material and to cover rehearsals in my absence, that perception may have been warranted. Certainly there were many instances when members of the choir would ask

her questions instead of me –questions both relating to music but also including the general administration of the choir.

Soprano (to accompanist): “Jason’s not here? How long is he going to be away?”

Accompanist: “Just ‘till Sunday”

Conductor Recognizing the Choir as Learners

Just as I, as a director, needed to change how I viewed my role in that I needed to see myself as becoming an educator and developing the tools needed to fulfill that role as well and learning to deal with the issues that arose from making that switch, I also needed to change how I viewed the role of the choir. Instead of looking at my members as an ensemble that needed to be prepared for a weekly performance, I needed to see them as learners needing to be taught. Review of the data related to this change revealed three major themes of importance: Different learning speeds and base skill levels; Frustration at discovering what was not known; and Keeping the rehearsal enjoyable.

The journal entry stating:

“One thought I keep having is that my approach can’t be treating them like a class in which most are equal and will continue to progress through graded music classes”

illustrates the importance I gave to recognizing that the choir involved in this study was a heterogeneously mixed group not only in terms of age and gender but also in terms of basic skill level and learning speed. The use of a community-learning model, which gives a role to both more and less skilled peers, was chosen precisely for its ability to deal with this type of grouping. However, it was important at all stages of lesson planning and teaching to keep in mind the many differences amongst the group. I had to be aware of

the fact that the membership could remain at different levels and progressing at different speeds. A program that was benefiting each of the participants would likely result in both those with more skills as well as those with less skills advancing and thus continuing the diversity of skills within the choir. Further, the different learning speeds of the members would add to the unlikely event that all members would reach the same level. That this was both the case in this study, and that this concept was at the forefront of my thinking and planning, is revealed by my journal entry at the start of the second half of the study.

“As I begin to look at lesson 7, the lesson that begins the second half of my project, I have reviewed my original goals and reconsidered my final goals. In many ways I see my work has changed a great deal. Preplanning was important but half way into it I have a better understanding of my teaching, my group, and what a 12 week educational experiment in a church can accomplish. I have therefore both simplified and expanded on my final goals for the choir. I understand now that just as I began with a group at different levels of music and worship literacy, I will end with this same group at different levels.”

Recognizing the choir as a group of learners meant not just recognizing where they were in their musical development in relation to how they were progressing, but also in how their learning was affecting their self efficacy. What emerged from this area of study was not expected. I observed that as members began to increase their skills they began to realize how much they did not know. For example, after the choir began to understand key signatures, instead of being pleased with their new knowledge one member suddenly realized the importance of key and stated:

“Yea, but it wouldn’t mean anything to us.”

This question of meaning began his quest for greater literacy skills and an attempt to understand the essence of music at a very deep level. This member’s quest was revealed

through nearly weekly questions which continued long after the end of this study.

Helping these new learners deal with these new frustrations became an important part of my work as a teacher and how I approached the entire group. In my journal I note:

“There is also the problem that as they learn what they don’t know it becomes increasingly frustrating. As the teacher you must keep that coach mentality and encourage them and let them know you are training them and that they can do it but that it may come at different speeds for each of them.”

The need to keep encouraging and clearly showing them their progress was a constant concern and one that continued even after the study. One member who recognized this need identified the process as:

“a very unique way of both calling us to task and, at the same time, affirming our effort.”

Finally, while it was important to this study to consider the choir as a group of learners, it was also important to realize that they did not volunteer to sing in a church choir in order to learn to read music. They joined the choir because they enjoyed singing, and thus keeping the rehearsals enjoyable for them was important. Review of rehearsal transcripts revealed that choir initiated humor or silliness could appear at any time; however, there did appear to be at least a possible connection between humor and learning new or difficult material.

One example of humor being used while learning new material occurred during the introduction of triplets. One of the leaders of the soprano section defined triplets as:

“you smush those three little notes into two beats.”

The accompanist added that triplets could also be related to the word “blueberry.” This sparked the choir into discovering that the word pineapple would work as well blueberry. The leader of the tenors, in a very serious tone then asked:

“and that is a product of?”

To this question another member responded “Hawaii.” This resulted in the choir laughing about pineapples being a product of Hawaii until the tenor could get them serious again and recognize that he was trying to get them to associate triplets with syncopation, not pineapples with Hawaii.

Perhaps the most common use of humor was related to those times when the choir was having difficulties with a piece or a concept. For example during one rehearsal I asked

“Basses how are you doing on that run?”

and received a humorously overdramatic

“Not spectacular.”

Similarly, what appeared to be nervous laughs of support or short amusing statements would follow indications that members were lost or did not get something. And finally, after the completion of a very intense session working on a piece I observed the members start joking and socializing as soon as they had put away the piece that had been giving them the trouble.

Conductor Treating Rehearsals as a Time for Teaching and Learning

Assuming the role of educator and recognizing choir members as learners were the two major themes first discussed as being important categories related to the conductor in an educationally focused church music program. Therefore it seems that

coming to see the rehearsals as a time for teaching could naturally follow as the next theme. When organizing the data under this area it was possible to identify three emerging secondary themes. These themes could be labeled as: The need to work within Lectionary, sequencing, and performance constraints; The need to work with fluctuations in attendance; and The need to work within the facilities provided.

Of the three secondary themes the issue of working within Lectionary, sequencing, and performance constraints may be most important and my reflection on the process suggests that it may have taken the most amount of work for me as the teacher, but it was rarely identified as an issue during the coding of my journal. The reason for the importance of this issue is that a choir's role in Christian worship is not lessened simply because their choir director chooses to focus on education. The education program must work within the confines of worship. Worship is after all the reason for the existence of a church choir in the first place. Nonetheless, working within these confines became a critical issue and was most often reflected in the journal as it related to having to make adjustments to performance schedules. My notes included entries such as:

“Based [on the previous rehearsal] I plan to make a change in order. Perhaps this change reflects what happens in a school when you just run out of time but must produce something...This is a tough situation.”

“Sometimes we have to make changes in music [scheduling].”

These changes reflect the fact that much of the content of the program was planned in advance so that anthems matched service topics outlined in the Lectionary, were

appropriate for my plans for sequencing music lesson material, and simply so that enough rehearsal time was allotted to insure a quality performance.

Also of some issue, and related to the need to be somewhat flexible with plans, was the need to deal with the fluctuations in attendance at rehearsals. As a voluntary choir made up of members who had a number of responsibilities, both within and outside of the church, it was not possible to maintain a strict attendance policy and as such fluctuations in attendance had to be dealt with. Missing members obviously affected the sound of the choir and the speed with which pieces could be learned, but more important for the purposes of this study, was the fact that absences affected the community of learning.

One way in which absences affected the community of learning was simply the concern for each other and especially those members they recognized as most often filling the role of more-expert peers. For example, one young and leading tenor was required to be away for a period of time and each week the same members asked about him. The first week they asked:

Soprano: "Is Jason coming?"

Accompanist: "Nope"

The second week was similar but with some commentary suggestive of concern:

Soprano: "Jason's not here? How long is he going to be away?"

Accompanist: "Just 'till Sunday"

Soprano: "He's got things lined up for the whole summer."

This scene was repeated in some variation each time this or another member were away and this feeling of community appeared to continue to build. Shortly after the end of this

study one bass who often helped his neighbor bass even left a note of encouragement on his fellow bass's seat on a Sunday when he was not going to be there to sing with him.

Concern over absences was not relegated only to the members of the choir. The problem was one that at times required me to adapt lessons and sometimes change my interaction with the choir. Often this changes involved me taking on the role of the absent more-expert peer; a role I could not actually fill as I was their leader not their peer. Reflecting on this problem in my journal I noted:

“Once again however, I was hampered by poor attendance due to a poorly scheduled meeting at church. I was missing a key soprano, good bass, and a second good quality soprano. Given the sopranos have the lowest self-efficacy I like when their community members are all there to help work through the tasks. I think it is better than when I do it. When I lead them through it is more teacher-student like. When their fellow musicians help it is community.”

The sentiments found in the above journal quotation were found more than once in my journal. Nevertheless, the problem remained throughout the program despite my feelings regarding attendance, and suggests that it is an issue to be dealt with rather than eliminated.

Finally, if one is to consider rehearsals as a time for teaching and learning, then the space one rehearses in takes on the role of a classroom. In this study the classes took place in the sanctuary of the church. This space (which was previously described) was not an ideal workspace and review of the data revealed issues related to having to work within the facilities provided. Of primary concern were the poor visibility within the space (lighting issues have been present since before my tenure as minister of music), and the inability to provide illustrations on anything but photocopied sheets or elementary

school sentence strips. And while this was of only a modest concern, I did note it first in a frustrated opening to my journal following the eighth lesson of the program.

“I need a big board to write on. It would help a great deal not to have to use so much paper so that we can see what we are singing.”

My reflections on the program seem to suggest that the program would have benefited from a better facility; however, how a better facility might have affected the program obviously cannot be determined from this data.

Conductor’s Perception of the Effectiveness of the Change in Focus

In the first half of this chapter it might be argued that the reporting of the member’s perceptions of the change in focus was the most important part of the section as the membership in a voluntary organization is of supreme importance. Similarly, it could be argued that that the conductor’s perception of the effectiveness of the change is the most important part of this section of the chapter. After all, the emerging themes discovered from a program are of little use if the effectiveness of the program remains an unknown. However, the effectiveness of the program, as perceived by me as participant researcher, is known and developed from review and coding of my journal, study of videotaped and transcribed rehearsals, and interviews and correspondence with the participants. From these sources two major themes related to the effectiveness of the change in focus emerged. These themes are labeled as: Perceived changes in literacy; and Perceived changes in performance.

Following one of the common practices of qualitative researchers (Creswell, 1998; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 2002; Hatch 2002), I reflected upon my research throughout the duration of the study and believed I was seeing an increase in musical

skills as a result of the educational program. A review of the specific notes in my journal when compared to the rehearsal videos confirms that skills were being developed but that they were not occurring without some difficulty at times. Specifically observed and noted were the changes in the choir member's ability to aurally recognize intervals and modes, visually recognize and negotiate rhythms, identify notes and recognize and follow musical symbols, and understand and use appropriate musical terminology.

During the third week of the program one soprano, who had little musical training, stated that she understood higher and lower pitches but that she did not understand how to tell exactly how high or how low. This student-initiated interest led me to give more time to the idea of interval identification and ear training than I had originally planned for. The interest in working on ear training and resulting success was unexpected. My method of ear training was to work from the most familiar intervals found in the warm-ups that they could sing from memory, and as a result the fifth became the first interval they could regularly identify. My journal and video transcripts have repeated examples such as:

Conductor: "I stopped playing the piano and you know what you guys did?"

Choir: "We kept going."

Conductor: "You kept singing what interval."

Bass: "Fifth."

Conductor: "Yes."

And from their ability to negotiate a fifth they progressed through fourths, major and minor thirds, the octave, and the identification of major and minor modes. In one instance during a rare occasion when the choir and I were sitting with the congregation

singing a hymn (Watchmen Tell Us of the Night) one of the basses leaned over and proudly announced that the hymn was in minor. I could not help but note in my journal:

“He seemed so proud and so did I.”

Examples such as the above two occurred at many times during and after the study; however, as in any classroom the material was not learned overnight and neither was it always possible to identify how many members of the choir were making progress. Written examinations were not a significant part of the program and as such I assessed primarily by having people shout out answers or raise their hand at the correct response. This process was not as accurate as others and led to my focusing more on the most confident members and as noted in my journal:

“The ear training is moving along but sometimes they lean on [the two most educated members] too much.”

Nevertheless, significant progress did seem to be occurring within the choir as a whole as one of my regular pep-talks indicates.

So I want to point out, as we start to move on with, what it is we know, that you already know the octave...And I want us to visually see how much we know in ear training. So we know about fifths and fourths, and we've learned about the kinds of thirds and fourths- major third and minor third...So look at how much we've learned as we've gone through this.

Progress also appeared to be made in the area of recognizing and negotiating familiar rhythms. Review of the rehearsals showed a number of times when members of the choir were able to recognize rhythmic patterns in the anthems that we had previously written out on large sentence sheets. In one illustrative example I asked the choir to open an anthem and asked:

“Do you see anything that looks familiar?”

and one of the sopranos responded:

“Oh there are four of them [indicating a pattern of four quarter notes which she had just learned].”

Similarly, the choir began to recognize and understand time signatures. And while I did not spend considerable time working on some of the possible complexities, as part of preparing to sing pieces in rehearsals I at times asked quick questions about the time signature and what it meant. The choir began to demonstrate the ability to locate the time signature and identify what it meant in the case of the anthems we were preparing. Indicative of this ability is one of those quick questions asked at the start of a piece:

Conductor: “Pull out O Savior Let Me Walk with Thee...What’s the time signature?”

Choir: “Three –Four.”

Conductor: “How many beats in a measure?”

Choir: “Three.”

Another benefit of the program was what appeared to be increased skill at identifying notes and recognizing and following musical symbols. At the onset of the program some members were unable even to identify note names when looking at notes on a staff. However, as the program progressed the use of correct note names increased.

Conductor: “Page 16, middle system, beat three, that alleluia.”

Soprano: “You mean those G’s?”

Conductor: “Yea, all those G’s.”

Finally, what may have been the highpoint of the program occurred when the most highly trained member of the choir was corrected by one of the members only just learning to read music.

Conductor: “On page one, tenors and basses, at the very bottom of the page, what note do you end on?”

Trained Tenor: “Bb.”

Bass: “No, that’s all cows eat grass. It’s G.”

Choir: All laugh because it is a G.

The choir also demonstrated that they were beginning to develop better skills at understanding and following musical symbols. Most progress in this area appeared to be in the ability to follow repeat signs. The ability to negotiate repeats was another of the survival skills they had developed to such a degree that I was unaware that most did not understand them until this study began. In what is as good an example of the success of community-learning as it is indicative of how the choir had learned about repeats, an alto who had indicated her skills were above those in the rest of the choir is guided through a series of repeats by the rest of the choir.

Conductor: “Can somebody walk us through how the repeats work? [pause] So how does it begin? [pause] Does somebody want to jump in?[pause] Does the alto section want to go first?”

Alto: “Sure. OK, you start at the beginning...”

The alto then begins to explain the entire piece until she misses one of the repeats. At that point the rest of the choir appears to come to attention and as a community they work out all of the repeats. Even when one member gets lost,

“but I didn’t find that”

her neighbor is quick to get her caught up.

“Page six.”

Finally, after working through the repeats as a group, one of the sopranos proudly exclaimed:

“We’re ready!”

The choir also began to display a greater understanding of musical terminology and the ability to use the terms. Early indication of this increased skill came during warm-ups when I began to call different dynamics and have them sing at that level without giving them any guidance with my piano playing. In a review of rehearsal seven I note:

“asks for dynamics using proper terms and the choir appears to be following them correctly.”

Previously I would use the correct terminology but my playing may have been what they were following rather than my words.

A second example of their increased use of terminology also indicates that this improvement was gradual and did not come without some difficulty. At times they were a bit vague in their understanding. For example when I asked:

“what’s a coda”

one member replied:

“It’s an ending”

but they did not appear to be sure exactly what it was. Sometimes they would use words that were close but not totally accurate as in another example involving a coda. In this example, a soprano, who prided herself in her use of correct terminology (notes from

rehearsal one reflect her association to the term “system” and when to use it) in the past, attempts to use correct terminology but gets confused.

Soprano: “Ron, sopranos second ending.”

Director: “You mean the coda?”

Soprano: “Yea, you know what I mean.”

These examples, of similar but not totally correct language, were not the only examples but what may be most important is that as musical terminology continued to be used it did improve and there were no indication that they felt uncomfortable trying to add to their vocabulary.

Although study of the data collected suggests that, at least from my perspective as participant researcher and conductor of the choir, there were improvements in the musical skills of the participants, the question still remains as to how these changes affected their performances. Review of data and my reflections as a participant suggest that the answer to that question is that over the period of the program the performances of the choir did not change dramatically. In fact, journal and rehearsal video notes have few entries related to this topic. The primary comments that are made are related more to accurate singing and singer confidence.

Before addressing the issues of accuracy and confidence, it may be important to note one area that was not noted anywhere. That is, there was no indication that the level of performance went down during this study. The evidence to follow suggests only limited improvement in performance during the study, but given the previously noted problems with rehearsal pacing and the need for me to build my skills as a teacher during the study, it may be important to notice that there was no decline. In fact, in one response

from a choir member he offers that congregation has been pleased with the sound of the choir during the program.

“I would hope that the choir has improved very much- comments from individuals in the congregation certainly bear this out!”

Noted especially when studying the videos of rehearsals, was the fact that the choir seemed to be singing with better accuracy. Pitch accuracy was noted during a warm-up after the piano stopped playing and it was noted that:

“The choir accurately keeps singing the interval until the warm-up ends.”

Further, increases in pitch accuracy and accurate performances of rhythms were noted at various times throughout the program. However, it must be stressed that these improvement were slight, and as previously noted, do not play a big role in my journal or notes on the videotaped rehearsals.

Singer confidence is the second area of improvement, and while it too plays a limited role in the assessment of the study, it received slightly more attention than the topic of accuracy. The first indication that confidence might be on the increase was noted by the third week of the program and suggests that it might be an issue of some relevance to me as the director as well.

“Sunday service with *Praise Ye* was great. The choir appeared to feel confident and it was perhaps the first time in a while that I did not feel that I had taken the easy road with them.”

A second example of the possible increase in confidence came from the strength of a piece performed at the end of the program in the tenth week. During worship that week the choir performing a very challenging arrangement of *Shut de Dō*. Based on the

comments from members, they enjoyed the piece despite the difficulty of the work.

During the final rehearsal the choir sang the piece a cappella with great strength and I noted:

“The piece is then run a cappella and it sounds good and is very strong. The men seem particularly strong.”

The fact that the strength of the men is noted is significant in that the men were significantly out-numbered by the women and were often heard to be making discouraging comments about their abilities.

Bass: “Can we just hear the basses?”

Director: “Yea, but you guys know this.”

Director: “Pull out *We Are Often Tossed and Driven*.”

Bass: “We are!”

Study, coding, and classification of the data into emerging themes regarding the primary research question (What effect does moving from performance-based to education-based emphasis have on a church music program?) reveals the two major themes which were labeled as: Key Themes Associated with the Choir and Key Themes Associated with the Director. Classified under these major themes were several sub-topics under which both the participant’s perceptions of the change in focus and the director’s perceptions were addressed. Given the exploratory nature of this research, the identification of the key themes that emerged from this study are perhaps of the most significance. Nevertheless, the possible implications of this study may be of interest and also provide some direction for future research. These implications will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

IMPLICATIONS

Presentation of the literature relevant to this area of study has been done, the methods employed for conducting the research have been explained, the results have been offered, and remaining is a discussion of the possible implications from this study of the move from a performance-based church music program to an education-based church music program. These implications will be addressed through four questions. What was discovered that reiterated findings from previous research? What new information was discovered through this study? What areas are identified through this research as needing further study? And finally, what does this research mean for church music-education?

What Data was Discovered that Reiterated Previous Research Findings?

Desire and Ability of Older Participants to Learn

The members of the choir in this study were of mixed age, but with a large percentage of them retirement age or older. In my review of literature related to older people, I found that there had existed (and to some degree still exists) the misconception that older people tend to be satisfied with their musical skills, do not want to improve them, and as a result are willing to perform works that require little or no skill. However, the work of Gibbons (1972, 1982), McCullough (1981), Coates (1984), and Darrough (1990) challenges these misconceptions and it is beginning to be recognized that older people do in fact want to learn about music and improve their skills.

Confirming that older people do in fact have a desire for musical education was one the results of this study. Data collected from all of the participants indicated both that they enjoyed learning, and that they were pleased to have the opportunity to do so.

In fact, one of the problems identified with the rehearsals was the participant's (often the eldest ones) ambition to try to learn too much too quickly, thus causing the rehearsals to get bogged down.

Of related importance is the idea that older people not only have the desire to learn and improve musically, but that they also have the ability to do so successfully. This idea has been suggested and supported by the work of Gibbons (1972, 1979, 1982), McCullough (1981), Coates (1984), and Darrough (1990) and additional supportive evidence was found through this study. In this study (acknowledging for the previously described difficulties in adequately assessing all of the participant's musical development), there were no indications that any of the older members of the choir were not making progress. In fact, there was substantial evidence indicating that the oldest member (age 83) of the choir was making some of the most significant progress in musical development.

What the literature and the results from my study seems to suggest is simply that older people want to learn about music, improve their skills, and that they are fully capable of doing so. This is important information for church-choir directors to be aware of, especially given the previous misconceptions about music education and older people. It means that even choirs made up of older members of the congregation have the potential to improve and that it is no longer acceptable for choir directors to use the age of their choir members as an excuse for not making improvements in their program. If a director is willing to put the work into adding an educational component to their program, this study suggests that it is likely that his/her work will pay off to at least some degree.

However, the inability to use age as an excuse is not the only implication to be drawn from this study and the previous studies it supports. In what may be equally identified as a warning, it should be noted that Gibbons (1982) believed that there were serious implications for the discovery that older people could develop musically. Gibbons' words appear to have special urgency for the church choir director who is in the early stages of developing an educational component that encompasses these members. "As they experience success in learning music, elderly persons will likely demand the development of effective music education programs that are broadly available to all older adults who desire them" (Gibbons, 1982, 240). If such demands are made, are those in church leadership positions ready to meet them? And are parishioners ready or able to pay for them?

Satisfaction with the Program

Although it has been noted that none of the participants in the study, regardless of age, indicated any degree of unwillingness to learn, and in fact all indicated that they believed education could play an important role in a church music program, there were nevertheless some discrepancies in personal satisfaction related to the change in focus to education. Analysis of responses suggests that many of those dissatisfied felt the way they did as a result of the elementary content of the musical lessons. They understood that the material needed to be covered in order to benefit the majority of the membership in the choir, but they did not feel it worthwhile for them personally.

In many ways, this response appears to be similar to Atkinson's (1986) finding that community music-education programs need to meet the needs of both the learning community and the individual participants. In this study, the needs of the majority of the

choir were very similar in that most needed training in very basic musical areas.

Nevertheless, as a heterogeneously mixed choir, there existed at the same time members who were highly trained; however, for a majority of the rehearsal time the needs of the lesser-skilled members overshadowed the needs of those more musically advanced. This situation resulted in some feelings of dissatisfaction amongst those more advanced (and even those perceiving themselves to be more advanced) and is further support for Wlodkowski's (1985) finding that adult learners are motivated by their own needs and expectations.

These findings suggest that it is critical for church choir directors to recognize the musical level of each of their members and identify both where those members need to develop musically as well as where they want to develop their musical skills. From this information directors need to develop lessons and rehearsal formats that allow each individual's needs to be met. The challenge for heterogeneously grouped choirs, as revealed through this study, is to develop a program where the less skilled members are being offered the basics, while at the same time the more advanced members remain engaged and have the opportunity to learn material they feel is relevant to them.

This need for church choir-directors to recognize and deal with the frustrations of their more advanced members may be something of a new twist as far as church music-education goes, but as an issue in choral music it clearly is not new. Topp (1976) notes one of the common concerns when he suggests that a "church choir may lose further quality when competent singers quit in frustration with the general lack of growth and improvement" (Topp, 1976, 90). In this study none of the participants left the program out of frustration; however, the validity of his concern was supported by what appeared

to be more absences by one of the more advanced participants when compared to his less-skilled peers. However, while the experiences with this study seem to support Topp's observances, they do not support the conclusion that less-talented members should be auditioned out of membership. Rather, these same frustrated members were supportive of the educational program, perhaps seeing it as a way of helping the other members obtain the skills necessary for the choir to begin to advance. Once again, the implication is that church choir-directors need to make an effort to keep the more advanced members challenged while continuing with the effort to build the skills of the rest of the membership. Failure to meet the needs of all of the members may result in poor attendance, eventual loss of some members, and perhaps most importantly it could send the message that the church leadership is less concerned with them.

Talking During Rehearsal

In addition to data reiterating the findings of other research regarding participant's desire, ability, and motivation to learn, data supporting previous studies regarding adult talk and learning were also discovered. First, this study supports previous suggestions (Woolfolk, 1998) that adults revert to the use of private speech in order to deal with their confusion, mistakes, or to help them work through difficult problems. Often the participants could be heard verbalizing their thinking process as they worked through difficult problems. For example, one member repeatedly verbalized the acrostic; all cows eat grass, when trying to answer questions regarding note names in the bass clef.

Second, this research supports the findings that adult members return to verbalization in order to facilitate learning during periods of community-learning. Barnes (1976) identified a form of adult talk that is similar to private speech and is described as

having the sound of informal conversation but is used by members of a learning community to “shape his ideas, modify them by listening to other, question, plan, express doubt, difficulty and confusion, experiment with new language and feel free to be tentative and incomplete” (Barnes et al., 1975, 162). This type of informal conversation was frequently heard throughout the program as members of learning groups grappled with new ideas and developed language and thinking skills. Often the relationship of this talk to the musical idea being explored was at first remote or connected to humor; however, over time the correct use of terms or ideas by the choir led to the conclusion that the talk was actually part of their process for learning the new material.

These findings related to talk and learning have important implications for choir directors undertaking an educational program. A director must first recognize that talk can be a critical part of the learning process. Too often talk that occurs during rehearsals is immediately assumed to be the result of bad behavior when it might in fact be a product of active learning. Choir directors must learn to distinguish between talk indicating that learning is occurring and talk which suggests bad behavior.

The skill to decipher types of talk becomes even more critical for the choir director (or classroom teacher) when utilizing a community-centered model of teaching and learning. The reason for this is that this model requires significant dialog between learners and their more expert peers; dialog that must be encouraged by the director. If a director misinterprets a dialog as being merely an informal conversation and takes action to stop it as if it were a disruption of rehearsal, the director jeopardizes that learner’s motivation to continue learning and halts the continued development of a community of

learning. Similarly, if a director just assumes that all talk is productive talk, then control over the rehearsal could be lost.

Of course, all of the above concern over talk related to learning and disruptive conversations must be tempered with realism. Church choirs exist primarily to aid in worship but that is certainly not the sole reason people join them. Church choirs, like many volunteer groups, also function as social organizations. And, many would suggest that building a social community is one of the strongest ways to build a choral ensemble. It therefore follows, that allowing some limited degree of social conversations (as long as it does not disrupt rehearsal or other members learning) must be allowed even if it is not contributing directly to the development of the member's musical skills.

What New Information was Discovered through this Study?

This research was a qualitative, exploratory study of what occurs when a specific church music program changed its focus from performance to education. As exploratory research into an area which until this point little research had been previous done, it would be possible to classify any of the key themes that emerged through analysis of the data as new information, and in fact, simply identifying those key themes was a major focus of the study. However, only those findings and their implications that are most appropriately categorized as new information discovered through this study will be presented in this section. Specifically, these areas relate to: the natural development of community learning; and, building unity through learning.

Natural Development of Community Learning

One of the major themes identified from the data was the natural development of the choir membership into a community-of-learning. In the early stages of the change in

focus I, as director/teacher, set the lesson topics, encouraged group/peer interaction, but I did not specifically assign or even describe particular roles for specific members in the learning process. The musically more-advanced members automatically assumed the role of more-expert peer and those in need of help seemed to naturally be drawn toward their more-skilled peers expecting to receive any needed help. This movement into a community-learning environment, with each member naturally taking on their most appropriate role, appears to have occurred so naturally because it closely resembled the relationships that were already in place as a result of some of the member's survival skills; specifically, the ability to rely on subtle (and at times not so subtle) aural and visual cues provided by their more-expert peers.

The implications of this natural development are of considerable importance to the choir director looking to implement a music-education component in their church program. First, it suggests that for a heterogeneously grouped choir (at least in terms of skill), a community-centered model of teaching and learning might be the easiest model to introduce as far as participant acceptance. At least in this case, the choir accepted the community-centered model with little difficulty because it was in many ways a natural progression from the way they had already been operating. Although in this case, the choir was clearly aware of a complete change in the way the rehearsals were being run, and that there appeared to be a new goal, the introduction of the actual method of teaching and learning went rather smoothly, and would have been even smoother if my teaching skills had been more developed and the change in focus was not concurrent with an obvious study taking place. Thus for the director of a mixed-skill church-choir who is

looking to quietly introduce an educational component into their rehearsal, a community-based model might be the most effective.

The second implication to be drawn from the apparently natural flow into community-learning roles relates to the messages sent to the participants through the encouragement of peer teaching/learning relationships. By encouraging community learning, a director is validating the idea that it is alright to recognize and benefit from the more-skilled people sitting around you and on whom you have already been relying. Further, it also allows those members who are more skilled to feel comfortable guiding those around them, and may in fact remove any feelings of concern or guilt associated with doing so (especially when required to openly help them along and risk appearing to be disrupting the rehearsal or ignoring the director). And perhaps most importantly, while validating members' reliance on each other, it at the same time encourages the interactions to become teaching moments so that eventually less reliance on each other will be needed. It turns what had previously been the survival skill of following a more-expert peer, into an opportunity for developing new skills in musical literacy.

Building Unity through Learning

Perhaps the most unexpected finding to come out of this study was the increased feelings of unity that occurred as a result of the change in focus. Neither my review of related literature, self-reflection while preparing for the study, nor conversations with advisors or clergy suggested that this would be an emerging theme and for that reason this may be an area that could have equally been addressed in the following section on areas needing further study. Exploration of this idea in another setting is further warranted by the unique fact that the church studied in this case was at the time

experiencing severe division. Nevertheless, the increased unity of the choir as a result of the process appears to be a completely new discovery.

Given the importance of developing unity amongst vocal ensembles, and especially those made up of volunteers, this discovery may have significant implications for choir directors. The increased unity amongst the membership of this choir as a result of learning together, suggests that one way for church choir directors to build an ensemble is to undertake such an endeavor. However, the uniqueness of this case and the characteristics of the community-based model of teaching and learning, make it impossible to tell if this effect would be experienced in other settings. Nevertheless, this preliminary study suggests that involving a choir in the learning process may be one way to build unity.

What Areas are Identified through this Research as Needing Further Study?

Motivation for Singing in the Choir

A review of related literature suggested that adult learners are motivated by their own needs and desires (e.g. Johnson, 1996; Kellmann, 1986; Coates, 1984; Gibbons, 1982; Davidson, 1980). However, in this study, the participants were the current members in a volunteer church choir that, until this study, did not have a focus on education. This means that the members joined the choir for reasons other than a desire to be taught music. And while these participants did show a strong willingness to learn, and appeared to recognize the importance of learning, education was not what motivated them to join the ensemble. In fact, one member, who joined just before the study began, was under the impression that well developed musical skills were a prerequisite for joining.

Recognizing that the choir involved in this study was small and that its representativeness is at best extremely limited, one wonders if adult participants in other choirs would respond as positively to a new educational focus instituted after they joined an ensemble they understood to have a focus on performance. In order to answer this question, future study is needed in the area of motivation to remain a member of a church music program after a change in focus occurs. If the current membership of the choir is motivated to leave an ensemble as a result of the new educational focus, then the benefits of that new focus could be of little consequence. After all, the goal of implementing an educational program is the improvement of the current ensemble and not a change in membership. If this were not the case then it would be more effective to simply replace current singers with already highly-trained ones.

Different Models of Teaching and Learning

In making the change from performance-based to education-based, this study utilized a community-centered model. The rationale for this decision has been discussed, as have the results from that decision. Nevertheless, the utilization of community-learning outside of elementary reading-literacy is relatively new, and within church music-education this study appears to be the first time it has been utilized. Thus, it cannot be considered the only way to approach a church music-education program. Further, the limitations of this small, exploratory, case study, do not allow for anything more than the suggestion of possibilities regarding the appropriateness of it as a model for teaching and learning in a church setting.

The result is need for future studies of church music-education programs to be conducted utilizing other models of teaching and learning. The exploration of teacher-

centered and student-centered models (as well as other models outside of the three ways of classification utilized in this paper) would provide more information for church music-educators as they consider designing and implementing their programs. Future church music-education studies that compare other methods of teaching and learning are likely to provide a better understanding of how the different models work in different church settings and when and how it is most appropriate and effective for directors to utilize them.

Homogenously Grouped Church Choirs

The choir selected for this study was heterogeneously grouped in many ways. The age of the membership ranged from an alto in her teens to a bass who was over eighty years old, their musical backgrounds were equally diverse, as were their previous religious affiliations, economic status, and most every other category. The diversity of the choir in this study was beneficial in that it provided information about how a change in focus might affect a heterogeneously group church-choir; the most common grouping of volunteer church choir.

However, while this study provides information that may be of use to directors of one of the more commonly found church-choir grouping, it provides little information regarding how a switch in focus might affect church choirs that are more homogenously grouped such as those within a graded choir-system that allows for grouping according to criteria such as age or skill. Nonetheless, the conductors of these choirs still face the need for their members to better themselves as musicians. In order to benefit these directors, their members, their programs, and their churches, future study of how the introduction of an educational focus might affect homogenously grouped ensembles is necessary.

Longitudinal Study

Perhaps the area most needing future research is the long-term affect of a change in focus from performance to education. This study was limited to twelve weeks, or just under one half of the choir's performance season. The data collected and analyzed from this twelve-week period suggests that the members were personally making progress in the areas of music-reading skills, ear training, and there was some evidence that the accuracy of their singing was improving as well. However, there was little indication that the sound of the choir as a whole was improving, or that more challenging pieces were soon likely to be able to be added to their repertoire. At the same time though, there also were no indications that the level of there performance quality was going down during the twelve week study.

This study was initiated following my questioning whether an educational component could be the answer to making my choir as good as the one down the street. During the short duration of the program it appears that the personal skills of the individual members improved, and those improvements are likely to be the first steps in building a better choral program. However, if the resulting performances never begin to improve then there is some question as to the worth of an educational program (unless music education is one of the services offered by the church- an offering that may be quite valid). In this case the short duration of the program may be the reason why overall performances did not show improvement despite the individual progress. For this reason, a longer study looking at a choir that changes their focus is needed. While the implication of improved skills is that improved performance will follow, such a

conclusion cannot be verified by this study but a longer study is likely to provide more conclusive results.

What Does this Research Mean for the Future of Church Music-Education?

Perhaps out of this entire document, the following discussion, of what this research means in terms of the future of music-education within a church setting and those choir directors undertaking such an endeavor, could be the most important section. It is here that the most practical implications from the study will be presented with the goal being to provide useful information to future church music-directors. It was after all, out of a practical question regarding my own music program that I sought to explore this line of research. Nevertheless, for one last time it must be noted that these implications are drawn from this exploratory case-study of a small, heterogeneously-grouped, church choir, and as a result the following section needs to be considered in light of the limitation inherent in such a study.

Learning in Church

For the choir director considering implementing an educational program into their music department one of the first concerns is likely to be their participant's willingness to learn in a church setting. A study of literature related to this area found that people are willing to learn about music and in fact want to learn about music. This desire is not limited to younger people but in fact is strong among older people. Nevertheless, the studies found in the literature review did not look specifically at a desire to learn about music in church but rather looked at musical learning in general.

Evidence supporting the notion that people are willing to learn about music in a church setting was however discovered through this research. Although some members

were more enthusiastic about the opportunity than others, none of the participants in the study indicated they were unwilling to learn more about music. Even those members who were less enthusiastic provided information that led to the conclusion that their negative feelings were associated with the content of what was being taught, as opposed to simply being taught. The implication of my findings, and the related studies preceding it, is that church choir directors (at least of church programs similar to the one studied) need not fear that their members will be unwilling to learn if given the opportunity.

While church member's willingness to learn and attempt to make musical advancement is obviously an important component, the potential church music-educator is also likely to be concerned with the effectiveness of an educational church-choir format. Given the previous conclusions regarding older people (and many choirs are made up of older people) and their ability to learn and improve vocally, it would not be unusual for a director to question whether or not his/her effort would be worth it. However, for choir directors asking such questions, the findings of researchers such as Gibbons (1972, 1979, 1982), McCullough (1981), Coates (1984), and Darrough (1990) suggest that these previously held beliefs are actually misconceptions.

Nevertheless, the work of the above researchers did focus on music learning in settings outside of church music programs. However, support for their findings was however found in this study which did involve a church program. Progress made in singing accuracy, music reading, and ear training was discovered across all ages of participants. In fact, there was some indication that the greatest advancement in ear training was made by the oldest member of the congregation. Thus collectively, the

implication of this and previous research is that many members of a church choir are likely to be able to improve their musical abilities as a result of an educational focus.

Finally, it is likely that a choir director could question his/her ability to implement an educational component within the physical confines of their church's rehearsal space. Here this study may be able to provide data relevant to programs of all kinds. In this study, the rehearsal space was an empty area of the sanctuary where chairs could be placed around one long pew in order to place the choir in a semi-circle. The lighting was considered poor by most of the participants and there was no blackboard or other device for presenting written material. In many ways, this setting represented the worst situation for teaching and yet individual progress in musical skills was made. Based on the physical setting for this study, there does not seem to be a need for a choir director to prolong implementing or completely dismiss an educational program simply because of the space. Similarly, it remains to be seen how the results of this study would have been different if a better teaching/ rehearsal space had been available.

Issues Related to the Change in Focus

Implementing a change in focus from performance to education requires a significant increase in the amount of work for the church music-director. This increase in work is one of the problems with such an undertaking. This difficulty may be experienced most by those directors in part-time positions who do not have the ability to spend extra time preparing for their rehearsals. For those in this situation, the potential benefits for the members of the choir and the church will likely have to be balanced with the other demands placed upon the director. The reasons for this increase in work-load can be appreciated when exploring what the change in focus requires.

As was described in previous sections of this paper, the switch in focus required the implementation of lessons that not only efficiently prepared the choir to perform in worship, but also presented new musical ideas in a properly sequenced manner. Further, the ZAD and ZPD of participant's need to be identified and constant assessment methods employed. It is likely that the development and implementation of such lesson plans would become easier and be completed more quickly as the director's skills increased, nonetheless, at least at the outset, this additional work requires significantly more preparation time. This is especially true in Lectionary-based churches where the challenge is not only to prepare appropriate anthems that also work with proper sequencing of musical concepts, but additionally to match Lectionary topics at the same time.

The concern over increased prep-time is clearly not the only issue of concern. It is also important for the potential church music-educator to recognize that based on the results of at least this study, it is likely that the increase in work-load is not going to result in short-term improvement in performance during worship. The results of this study in fact suggest that benefit to the sound of the choir may only occur after an extended period of time. This leads to at least two important considerations. First, the conductor must recognize that the extra work they are putting in is likely to result in improvements in the choir over time, and that they should not give up on the program if results are not seen immediately. Second, the choir directors with part-time status who must account for their time need to be ready to defend their actions. The church administration must be informed of the potential immediate growth of the individual members, the long-term

potential for the entire choir and as a result overall worship service, and perhaps of the added service they are providing members by offering this musical training.

However, while this study seems to indicate that individual progress may occur quicker than improvement to the overall sound of the choir does, there was no indication that the quality of the choir decreased during the study. The fact that there was no loss in performance quality is of important consideration for the church musicians considering the possibility of changing their focus from church choir-director to church music-educator. Just as there may be concerns over the increased amount of preparation time which yield little improvement easily viewed by administration over the short time, it is more likely that such concerns would be raised if the quality of performance were to decrease noticeably to church administration.

That this could be a concern is expected given that, at least at the onset of the program, the amount of rehearsal time necessarily decreases as new educational components are introduced. The ability to introduce the new activities and negotiate the new rehearsal format did begin to improve throughout the study; nevertheless it was an issue at the beginning. The fact that this study suggests that the choir remained at least at its status quo during this time should be of some comfort to those considering the change; especially if they will need to develop considerable teaching skills. Fear over performance requirements should not be a reason to avoid introducing an educational focus.

Non-Musical Incentives

For church music leaders, especially those filling roles such as minister of music, the implications of this study reach beyond merely those related just to music. For many

participants in this study, the ability to improve their skills and feel like they accomplished something meant a great deal to them. Similarly, the potential from the previously discussed increase in feelings of unity amongst the participants in the choir as they made this progress as a community cannot be overstated. Church musical leaders, who recognize that they play a role in the lives of their musicians that is far more important than just preparing music for worship, can draw from this study evidence that implementing a music-education program can be of benefit to the greater church in both musical and non-musical ways. This evidence could become a critical part of the argument made to administration when looking to develop support for making a change to the program and the increase in time, effort, and possibly funds required to operate it. Or, perhaps more realistically, this information may at least provide incentive for church administrators to keep budgets at their current levels.

Finally, this study suggests that changing one's focus from performance to education can have a positive and non-musical effect on the director themselves. The joy of seeing veteran church-musicians get excited about actually reading music for the first time was an incredible experience for me as a researcher and teacher. Further, coming to work to find emails of thanks following rehearsals made all of the extra work involved in this study worthwhile. As a trained musician, teaching the choir by rote never felt exactly right because I knew I could, and should, do more for the musicians in my care. As a result of implementing this program I noted with pride in my journal: "it was perhaps the first time in a while that I did not feel that I had taken the easy road with them." For the church musicians looking to take another step in their offering to their congregation, the work of implementing an educational program could be the answer.

Conclusion

Did the switch in focus from performance to education make my choir “as good as the program down the road”? Not during the short twelve-weeks of the study. Nevertheless, there were indications that improvements were being made by the individual members and that these improvements would gradually lead toward a better choir. In the course of twelve weeks a new educational focus did not make my choir as good as the choir down the road. It did however get us started down that road.

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BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Ronald Glynn Sherwin III was born in Rutland, Vermont on March 13, 1972. He was raised in Proctor, Vermont and graduated from Proctor High School in 1990. He attended Castleton State College and graduated in 1995 with a Bachelor's degree in Music. After attending the Vermont Police Academy and working for the Rutland County Sheriff's Department, he moved to Maine where he worked for the Penobscot County Sheriff's Department while pursuing the Master's of Music in Choral Conducting. In 2000 he earned his M.M. and began working as Minister of Music at the First Congregational Church of Brewer, Maine.

After receiving his degree, Ronald will be the conductor of a European Church-Choir Tour and following that he will return to service as Minister of Music in Brewer. Ronald is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, interdisciplinary in Church Music and Education from The University of Maine in May, 2004.