

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SHARED INSIGHTS: A SURVEY OF
POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT MEN'S
CHORUS DIRECTORS

Gregory Gustafson Graf, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2016

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The following dissertation focuses on the all-male chorus context. Through a survey of university, GALA and adult affiliated community chorus directors on the specific challenges – vocal pedagogy, rehearsal techniques, auditioning, and repertoire – of the TTBB chorus, valuable insights were gathered from participating directors that serve to supplement existing literature available to directors.

SHARED INSIGHTS: A SURVEY OF POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT MEN'S CHORUS
DIRECTORS

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to Jeremy Jones, “male choral singing in the United States quickly found a foothold on college campuses influenced in part by community male choral groups first established by German-American immigrants in communities throughout the Northeast and Midwest.”¹ The first well-known male glee clubs in America were established at Harvard University in 1858, the University of Michigan in 1859 and Yale University in 1861. Jones then chronicles how the glee club tradition took hold in America just after the Civil War (1861-65). Over 200,000 soldiers of German descent fought for the Union armies and many of these soldiers participated in male choral societies in the United States prior to the War. When the war ended many men pursued a college education and took their enthusiasm for male choral singing with them to college campuses across the country. Jones also found that the broadening interest in collegiate male choruses just prior to and after the Civil War correlated to the rise of male community singing clubs in the German tradition, such as the *Liederkrantz* of New York City and the *Columbus Männerchor* (1848). In the first decade of the early twentieth century other historic male choruses were established such as – the Mendelssohn Club of Kingston, New York (1903), The Choral Club of Hartford of West Hartford, Connecticut (1907), The Orpheus Club of Ridgewood, New Jersey (1909), and the Mendelssohn Club of Albany, New York (1909). From this point forward in the development of all-male choruses and choral singing in general, Patrick Freer states that, “The expansion of the choral arts in late twentieth century United States was [...] made possible by the intersection of three complementary and simultaneous efforts:

¹ Jones, Jeremy D, “The Development of Collegiate Male Glee Clubs in America: An Historical Overview,” D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010.

knowledge about the male changing voice, the development of the North American children's choir movement, and a focus on teaching vocal technique to amateur singers of any age."²

The catalyst for this project comes from my personal experience as director of the University of Maryland Men's Chorus. Having had virtually no prior exposure to all-male ensembles, I had many questions, for instance, why do some male singers prefer the all-male choir? What are appropriate criteria for designating part assignments? How does one effectively teach tenors to negotiate the head voice successfully and consistently? Since few printed resources were available, I sought answers to these questions by asking trusted professionals in the field.

The list of choral pedagogy books and articles is rich and continues to grow. Many offer valuable perspectives pertaining to rehearsal technique, vocal pedagogy, choral diction, sight-singing, and historical performance practices. However, most of these resources address the mixed-voice ensemble experience only. Issues related to the TTBB ensemble are usually relegated to a brief discussion, if mentioned at all. While TTBB ensemble conductors can gain useful information about the male voice from these resources, few offer a comprehensive examination of the challenges exclusive to men's choruses. However, helpful lists of men's chorus repertoire abound, and a number of organizations for men's ensembles are now thriving (e.g. Intercollegiate Men's Choruses, Associated Males Choruses of America, Barbershop Harmony Society and Gay and Lesbian Association [GALA] of Choruses).

In Carole Glenn's book, "In Quest of Answers³," written in 1991, she interviewed many of America's top choral conductors and asked them to share their insights on a wide range of topics. For men's choirs, I believe a new and different set of questions is needed. This dissertation

² Patrick Freer, "From Boys to Men: Male Choral Singing in the United States," *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, vol. 10 (2012): 13-26.

³ Glenn, Carole, *In Quest of Answers*. Chapel Hill: Hinshaw Music, 1991.

investigates the specific challenges of conducting men's choruses – vocal pedagogy, rehearsal techniques, auditioning, and repertoire – and it serves to supplement the literature currently available for men's choruses. Since many questions were answered by personal communication with other directors, my intention is to create a lasting resource by producing a comprehensive survey of successful men's chorus conductors and to document their shared wisdom.

In preparation for this project, resources that were similar in nature to this project were reviewed. Transcribed interviews such as the aforementioned *In Quest of Answers* by Glenn, Jonathan Palant's *Brothers, Sing On! Conducting the Tenor-Bass Choir*,⁴ and *English Ways: Conversations with English Choral Conductors*⁵ by Jeffrey Sandborg were of great benefit. Articles in the *Choral Journal* and the *Journal of Singing* were consulted and were beneficial in answering vocal and choral pedagogy questions. Particularly helpful was the May 2012 edition of the *Choral Journal* that focused on issues related to the male choral singer. Articles from this volume such as Jefferson Johnson's "The What, Why, and How of Young Adult Male Choirs"⁶ and Colin Durrant's "An International Perspective on Male Singing in University Choirs"⁷ gave insight into the college-age male singer. The April 1996 issue of the *Choral Journal* featured an interview with Robert Shaw entitled "An Interview with Robert Shaw: Reflections at Eighty"⁸ that included engaging questions I sought to emulate in my survey.

The most important recent book of its kind is *Brothers, Sing On! Conducting the Tenor-Bass Choir* by Jonathan Palant. It offers in-depth questions and answers with contributing authors on the training of male singers. Palant's book offers a historical overview of men's choral singing

⁴ Palant, Jonathan, *Brothers, Sing On!*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2014.

⁵ Sandborg, Jeffrey, *English Ways: Conversations with English Choral Conductors*. Chapel Hill: Hinshaw, 2001.

⁶ Johnson, Jefferson, "The What, Why, and How of Young Adult Male Choirs," *Choral Journal* 52, no. 10 (May 2012): 28-37.

⁷ Durrant, Colin, "An International Perspective on Male Singing in University Choirs," *Choral Journal* 52, no. 10 (May 2012): 38-48.

⁸ Baxter, Jeffrey, "An Interview with Robert Shaw: Reflections at Eighty," *Choral Journal* 36 (April 1996): 9-13.

with emphasis on the current research in the study of the changing male voice. It also addresses topics of vocal placement, vocal warm-ups, programming and repertoire, and gives insights about recruiting, fund-raising and travel. There are naturally some overlapping areas between Palant's work and my own. However, this dissertation focuses exclusively on the collegiate and adult affiliated male choruses.

Though the intent of this project is not necessarily to provide an in-depth analysis of gender theory, more specifically masculinity, a project of this nature warrants a brief discussion.

Scott D. Harrison, Graham F. Welch and Adam Adler, well known writers in the field of music education and masculinities in music described the current state of research on gender in choral singing when they wrote, "[S]inging is frequently omitted from studies on stereotyping and gendered attributes....It is striking to observe the absence in the literature of hard evidence of the lack of males' involvement in vocal activity. No singing studies have come close to the more [than] 8,000 plus instrumental participants of Sheldon and Price (2005)."⁹ They note that, "There have been a small number of studies in recent years centred on the work of [only] four or five researchers (Koza, 1993; Adler, 1999, 2000; Harrison, 2002, 2005b, 2007, 2008, Freer, 2006, 2008 2010; Ashley, 2007)."¹⁰ However, in a study in 2007, Harrison found that the singing voice was rated the third most feminine instrument behind the flute and clarinet.¹¹

In Sarah J. Powell's *International Journal of Music Education* article, "Masculinity and choral singing: An Australian perspective," (Powell, 2015) Powell focuses on the theoretical observations of masculinity among male participants in choral singing drawn from her research

⁹ Scott D. Harrison, Graham F. Welch and Adam Adler, "Men, Boys and Singing," *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, vol. 10 (2012): 3-10.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Scott D. Harrison, "Engaging Boys: Overcoming Stereotypes – Another Look at the Missing Males in Vocal Programs," *Choral Journal* 45:2 (2004): 26.

of four Australian choirs of different age groups: junior high, secondary, university and community. Her study centers around the question, “What effect do notions of masculinity have on male participation in choir?” She explores how societal stereotypes of masculinity often negatively impact the personal experiences of singing boys and men in choirs. She advocates for a breakdown of these gendered stereotypes for the benefit of each male’s personal and creative expression in singing.

Powell defines “masculinity” as, “a socially constructed concept, the definition of which differs according to socio-cultural context. It is associated with activities and stereotypes that exude power, aggression, competition, strength and macho attributes”¹² (Powell, 233). Oftentimes these attributes are displayed most clearly in sports. A college age participant in Powell’s study said, “Singing in a choir does not typically represent sporting prowess and strength and so, inevitably, it is labeled ‘feminine’: ‘Singing is pretty, it’s graceful, therefore it’s feminine, and it’s emotional so therefore it’s feminine’” (Powell, 239). Though nothing is intrinsically wrong with enjoying the physicality of contact sports, Powell posits that, “The problem arises when this single ideology becomes dominant and exclusive” (Powell, 240). Are boys and men who do not exhibit these qualities still male? Or as Robert Faulkner asked in his article “Icelandic Men, Male Voice Choirs and Masculine Identity”,¹³ “If there is no place for softness in maleness, is there a place for song?” Furthermore, “If men sing songs that suggest rich and highly expressive emotional lives, are they men at all?”

¹² Powell quotes the work of Adler & Harrison, 2004; Ashley, 2002, 2006; Harrison, 2012; Talbot, 2010.

¹³ Robert Faulkner, “Icelandic Men, Male Voice Choirs and Masculine Identity,” in *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, vol. 10 of *Landscapes: the Arts, Aesthetics, and Education*, ed. Scott D. Harrison, Graham F. Welch and Adam Adler (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 2012) 215-32.

Powell goes on to cite how Connell and Messerschmidt¹⁴ advocate for “multiple masculinities” or a “plurality of masculinities” and that “definitions and expressions of masculinity, although complex, should remain fluid, changing with time and context.”¹⁵ Simply stated, “[t]he best definition of masculine is one that simply refers to anything a man does.”¹⁶

Powell calls for music educators to create a climate in the classroom that validates, supports and encourages equally valid masculinities. Moreover she writes, “Breaking the stereotypes begins with providing a supportive environment for adolescent boys to express themselves creatively through music and singing, and again, the conductor contributes significantly to this. The choral setting is an important avenue for boys because it offers this, and it offers it within a community of men.”

Robert Faulkner is an international author whose research spans phenomenological psychology, ethnomusicology, music sociology and gender studies within the context of Icelandic men’s everyday lives. He was director of *Hreimur*, an Icelandic male voice choir, for nearly 20 years during which time he carried out an investigative project that explores the role of singing in the men’s everyday lives but also in the male voice choir. From years of research through many interviews and analysis of male singers’ vocal diaries, Faulkner observed, “Singing and vocal social awareness is clearly a central concept in a particular kind of homo-social identification, not just for men who sing in the male voice choir, but apparently for a great majority of men in the community studied here [*Hreimur*]. Singing appears to provide access to a

¹⁴ R. W. Connell & J.W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept,” *Gender and Society* 19 no. 6 (December 2005): 829-859.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ S. M. Demorest, “Encouraging male participation in chorus,” *Music Educators Journal*, 84, no. 4 (2000): 38-41.

particular state of being a man and of belonging to a particular group of men.”¹⁷ He wrote, “[M]asculine identities are always contextual and provisional: they are tied to meanings about specific practices in specific times and locations.”¹⁸ He also observed that the men enjoyed songs of deep emotional content displaying a softer side. Furthermore he noticed that men in choral rehearsal or at the pub afterwards desired to be together and even enjoyed physical contact in non-erotic ways as natural expressions of masculine affection. Faulkner concluded that, “It is clear that singing has gendered identities that conform much more closely to the plural and fluid masculinities...than to any notion of ahistorical maleness.”¹⁹

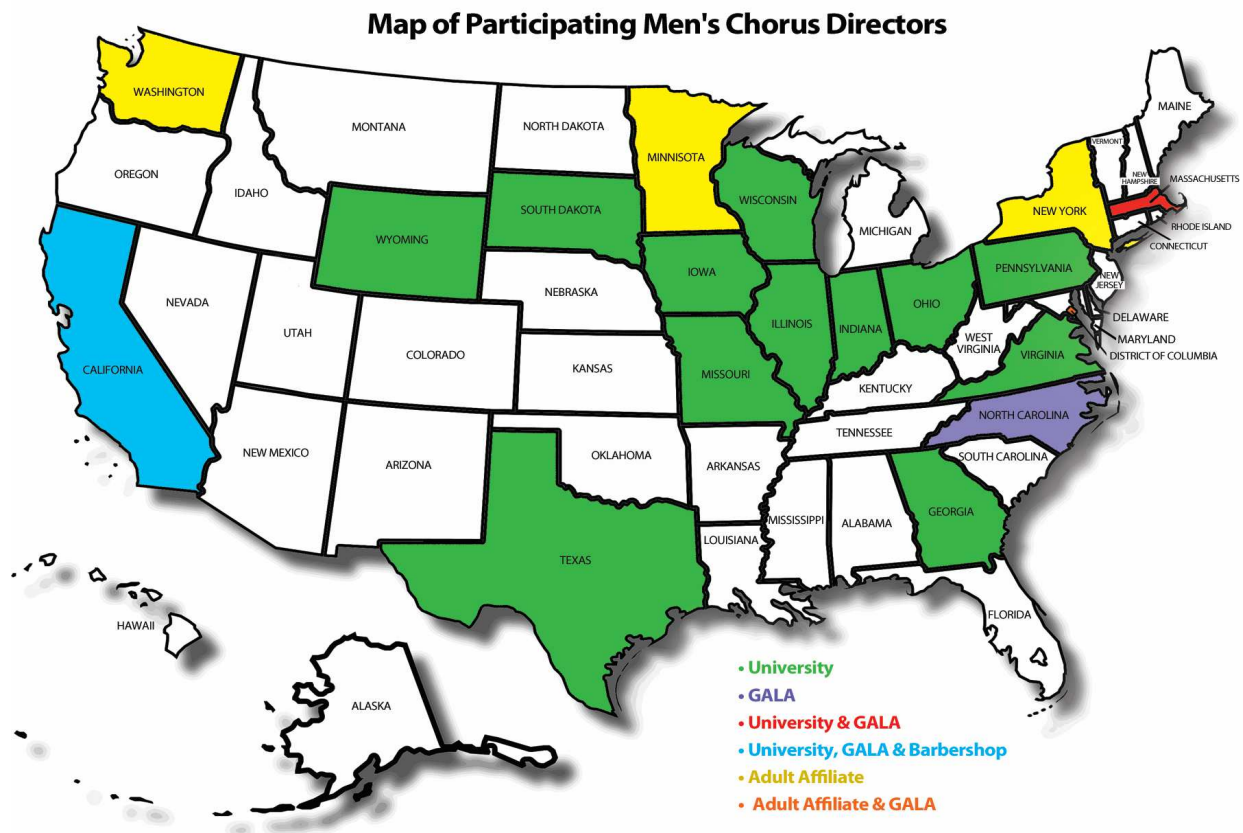
The main criterion for selecting qualified participants was to select conductors of postsecondary and adult male choruses who operate at a high level of musical achievement. Conductors who have performed at regional and national American Choral Directors Association conventions (ACDA), Intercollegiate Men’s Choruses (IMC) national seminars, and national and international Barbershop Chorus championships were selected for participation. GALA chorus directors in major cities around the country and elected officers of national choral organizations were also invited to participate. I also attempted to recruit participants from all regions of the United States to analyze whether men’s choruses were more active in certain areas than others.²⁰

¹⁷ Robert Faulkner, “Men’s vocal behavior and the construction of Self,” *European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music* 8, no. 2 (Fall, 2004): 231-255.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ For a comprehensive map of barbershop, community, GALA, religious and military choruses as of 2010, refer to Jeremy Jones’ dissertation, *The Development of Collegiate Male Glee Club in America: An Historical Overview*.



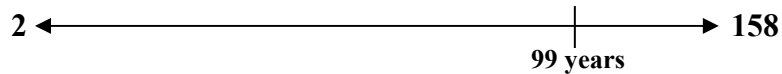
Above is an infographic illustrating the geographic areas and types of choirs represented in this study.

Since directors often receive requests to complete surveys for dissertations, I decided that a generic and impersonal email from a stranger would not entice a large number of busy men's chorus directors to participate. Instead I produced a video to explain my topic and to ask for their assistance.²¹ The results were quite positive as 51% of men's chorus directors who were solicited accepted my invitation to participate. Of the twenty-eight participants that began the survey, 82% percent completed it. Data were collected mostly through an online survey but also through follow-up emails and one phone interview.

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyiFm7z3XJ0>

Justin Miller of the Westminster Chorus was the only one to participate. The average size of his chorus on average from year to year is approximately fifty singers.

When asked how long each men's chorus had been in existence, collegiate men's chorus directors' responses ranged from two years to 158 years with an average age of 99.6 years.



GALA Choruses Inc. is nearly 33 years old and it became incorporated on July 26, 1983. It is the leading association committed to serving the LGBT choral movement. Though some participating directors lead choruses that began before GALA Choruses' inception, the average chorus age among GALA chorus participants is 31.8 years. The average age of professional, adult affiliated choruses is 19.6 years. The one participating barbershop chorus director reported that the Westminster Chorus is 14 years old.

My primary goal in writing this dissertation is to produce a lasting resource for current and future men's chorus directors. This project will offer a unique look into the practices and procedures of some of America's leading collegiate and adult affiliated male chorus directors in America. I hope this document will supplement current research and that it will serve as a valuable tool for active and future men's chorus conductors.

PART I: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL ASPECTS

Chapter 1: Culture & Environment

“The centrality of singing in the lives of many people is evidenced across the world in our schools, colleges, churches, and communities where regular meetings of choral groups gather, rehearse, socialize and formally or informally perform.”²⁴ The preceding words of Colin Durrant remind us of the desire of people across the world to come together and join in song. Between 1986 and 1991, the people of Estonia peacefully protested the Soviet occupation of their land with no other weapon than the singing of their patriotic songs. Thousands of Estonians across the country gathered together in song to defy the Soviet Union’s tyrannical rule before winning back their independence. Many thousands still advocate through singing for different political causes including the social justice movement for the gay and lesbian community. However, the vast majority of singers are active in choral organizations for no other reason than the sheer enjoyment of being a part of a singing community. In the United States a panoply of choirs exist that represent an array of musical styles and expressions including early music ensembles, African choirs, jazz choirs, Bach choirs, and German heritage choirs to name but a few. Choirs of all types including boy’s choirs, girl’s choirs, children’s choirs, mixed choirs, women’s choirs, and men’s choirs are present in thousands of communities, religious organizations and educational institutions of all levels across the United States. Patrick Freer in his article, “From Boys to Men: Male Choral Singing in the United States,”²⁵ reports that according to a study

²⁴ Colin Durrant, “An International Perspective on Male Singing in University Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 52, no. 10 (May 2012): 39-48.

²⁵ Patrick Freer, “From Boys to Men: Male Choral Singing in the United States,” *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, vol. 10 (2012): 13-26.

published in Chorus America in 2009²⁶, choral singing is, regardless of gender, the most popular form of participation in the arts. This survey reports that 22.9% of American households have a choral singer and that 32 million adults regularly sing in choruses – a figure that rises to 42.6 million singers when children are included. This survey also reports that there are nearly 270,000 choruses in America, including 12,000 professional and community choral organizations, 41,000 school choruses, and 216,000 religious choirs. Men’s choruses in universities and communities make up an important segment of the American choral scene. Once the German-American and English Glee Club traditions reached our shores beginning in the 1830s, they began to spread to colleges and towns across the country. Now, men’s choruses are present in many colleges and universities across the country and have organized under the Intercollegiate Men’s Choruses with over 48 participating collegiate men’s choruses and 19 adult-affiliated choruses.²⁷

What is it about the all-male choral experience that attracts the male choral singer? In this set of questions I sought to find – what is the unique draw of the all-male choral experience; how directors fostered a sense of team within the TTBB ensemble; what are successful recruiting methods that are distinct from mixed choruses; and how the men’s chorus is a consistent and positive force in the cultural life of the ensemble’s university or community. I also asked their opinions on why so few women currently conduct university and adult TTBB choruses. (An anecdotal look at the world of men’s choruses as well as a search of the Intercollegiate Men’s Chorus membership webpage and other men’s chorus organization websites will reveal the scarcity of female conductors of all-male choruses.) Finally, each director was asked his or her

²⁶ Chorus America. (2009). *The chorus impact study: How children, adults, and communities benefit from choruses*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved August 14, 2011, from http://www.chorusamerica.org/about_choralsinging.cfm

²⁷ “Membership list,” Intercollegiate Men’s Choruses, last modified March 20, 2016, accessed May 18, 2016, <http://www.imci.us/membership-list.html>.

opinion of the health of men's choruses in his or her state or region, the current condition of men's choruses in America today, and the future of TTBB ensembles from their perspective.

What appeal does the all-male chorus offer that is different from a mixed voice setting?

"The camaraderie, community, and relationships formed in a TTBB ensemble represent a unique attraction and culture that attracts and retains our students." – Andrew Clark

"Singing is an empathetic mechanism of identifying with and understanding other people's situations, feelings, and motives, often developing very close personal relationships."

– Robert Faulkner

What is the unique experience of the all-male chorus that attracts the male singer? My objective in asking this question was to discover why certain men sought out a men's chorus rather than a mixed chorus. When survey participants were asked to describe the appeal, four major themes emerged – camaraderie, vocal sonority, unique repertoire and vocal pedagogy.

Embedded in the human experience is the desire to belong and be accepted. Whether an individual seeks community in the context of a large or small group, many yearn to find a place in which they share commonality and friendship. Many men discover this experience in a men's chorus. Fraternity, camaraderie, brotherhood, fellowship, community, common experience, relaxed and comfortable atmosphere were adjectives that participants listed to describe the social experience of a men's chorus. Buddy James discussed the importance of men singing together saying, "The all-male chorus offers a bonding experience for men that is crucial and often lacking in society. If a man is not into sports there are few opportunities for him to interact in a setting just for men. Choruses also allow men to connect on an emotional level, and they do not need to worry about the presence of women in an all-male chorus." Similarly Andrew Robinette

noted that, “There are experiences unique to each gender and I have observed that many men feel able to show a side of themselves when interacting with other guys.” Participation in a male chorus can offer a freedom for men to be fully who they are and express freely that individuality without any reservation. Cameron LaBarr emphasized that the men’s chorus, “gives many of our male singers a specific identity.... Singers tend to desire the feeling of home, and singing in a men’s chorus can do just that.” Not only is there a unique bond among singers but there is also a special connection between a male conductor and a men’s chorus. Andrew Robinette adds,

“From a leadership perspective, it is incredibly rewarding to help shape young men into being good men, and inspiring to me to see how many good men are out there. I feel the same type of reward in a mixed setting, but I can’t offer some of the common experience, nor speak to some of the common challenges of young women. There are some points of the human experience that are simply gender specific.”

Many directors of gay men’s choruses mentioned that the mission and their message of equality and social justice drew like-minded men to sing in their choirs. GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association) Choruses is an organization that provides resources, support and leadership to the LGBT choral movement in North America and around the world. According to the organization’s website, two of their four core values state the following,

“We are **HARMONIZERS**. We are diverse people who employ the power of song with respect and understanding. We bring our communities together to experience musical excellence, collaboration, cooperation, acceptance, transparency, and opportunities for all. We are **LISTENERS**. We listen to our members, our colleagues, and each other in order to understand the issues, define our roles, and serve the common welfare of our movement.”²⁸

Gay men’s choruses bring together a diverse community of members that offers a safe and warm space to engage with like-minded people. The choir’s core mission of encouraging social change is just as important to them as their music-making.

²⁸ “Mission,” About GALA Choruses, last modified, accessed May 18, 2016, <http://galachoruses.org/about/mission>.

A second theme that emerged when describing the appeal of the all-male chorus was the rich and warm tone qualities it produces. Thirteen of twenty-eight respondents mentioned that the different sonorities and the specific timbres, such as the higher male register, were what drew many of their male singers. With the absence of the female voice, a distinct combination of rich tone colors and overtones can be achieved. Barrington Coleman described the men's chorus sound as containing a, "broad spectrum of colors and in-depth strength." The experience of gathering with like-minded brothers to create full, deep and robust sounds can be exhilarating to male singers.

According to eleven of twenty-eight respondents, a third appeal of the men's choir was the unique and versatile literature that is most often performed. Andrew Robinette commented that, "There are genres and historical pieces written for men's voices specifically. Additionally, there are texts that lend well to a male narrator." The literature that a group chooses to sing can often reflect the values, passions, and struggles represented in the men's chorus. In gay men's choruses, music selection is reportedly driven by the mission of the chorus and often includes arrangements of songs from the popular idiom. Joe Nadeau and Tim Seelig both commission large amounts of music each year with texts that match the mission of their organization. Justin Miller of the Westminster Chorus, a barbershop ensemble based in California said, "With men's choruses, the repertoire that is selected can be incredibly diverse and fun.... There is different repertoire available to a men's choir that may not be suitable for a mixed group, either due to range or appropriateness of text." Receiving satisfaction and enjoyment through the music is an important aspect of the total experience in a TTBB chorus.

Another minor theme that emerged was the specific appeal that men's choruses have to audiences. Male choirs can display a "masculine bravado that lends itself to appealing to a wide

audience base,” said William Griffel. Certainly the choices of repertoire for men’s choirs can encourage a particular onstage swagger and showmanship. Four respondents also mentioned that the men’s chorus may also be appealing to the director, citing that they may have an easier time addressing vocal pedagogy issues in a single-gender choir.

I posed this question to my own singers in the UMD Men’s Chorus. There were striking parallels to their answers and those of the conductors. The two greatest appeals mentioned were the brotherly bond and the unique sound a men’s choir produces. Most guys commented on how the ensemble feels very much like a fraternity to them. Men’s Chorus is a comfortable atmosphere for them because they are among other guys and they feel completely at ease to be themselves. They described the all-male choir setting as fun and inviting, allowing for a, “greater sense of camaraderie.” The second main appeal mentioned was the uniquely beautiful sound of an all-male choir. One singer said, “My introduction to choir was a community college mixed choir. I had a hard time hearing the harmonies with the large range between bass and soprano. Once I joined an all-male choir I was able to distinguish the harmonies, especially the inner voices. I feel that an all-male choir has done wonders for my ear training.” Another young man stated it this way, “While mixed voices offer the soprano and alto voices, the four-voice all-male setting offers more closely knit voice groups, but also a great diversity of male voices as well. It’s a really interesting sound.” One singer mentioned he liked men’s chorus because it, “allows me to be a baritone and sing comfortably in my range instead of being forced to be a tenor or bass.” A few students also mentioned that they enjoyed the specific vocal instruction for male voices. They thought they received much more individualized teaching on voice pedagogy than when they participated in a mixed choir.

The men's chorus is appealing for many reasons that are unique unto itself. The interested male singer may discover a community that can provide lasting friendships, increased confidence and satisfaction in both newfound sounds and unique literature that is offered only in a TTBB ensemble.

Please provide one or more examples of how the men's chorus is a consistent and positive force in the cultural life of your university or community.

In asking this question, I wanted to give directors an opportunity to talk about how their men's choirs enrich the cultural atmosphere of their universities and communities. Some men's chorus directors may be searching for ways to be more active in the life of their schools or to have greater visibility in the wider communities. Respondents offered many specific examples of how they engage through performance in their locales.

Gay men's choruses are keenly focused on advocacy. Many of their responses centered on the advancement of their ideals of social justice for the LGBT community. Joe Nadeau of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles offered specific examples of how they have promoted their values to a larger audience. He writes that the GMCLA is a, "high profile organization that regularly appears on national television - including the Academy Awards, talk shows, and TV shows (*Six Feet Under*, *Will & Grace*, *Parks & Recreation*, and *I Am Cait*)." Nadeau says that these performance opportunities, "brings our message to millions of people around the world. We also have extensive youth outreach programs that address bullying, discrimination, and tolerance. These programs have reached over 41,000 young people in middle schools and high schools in the greater LA area."

Collegiate men's chorus directors said their activities in the life of their universities include performing their school song, fight song and the National Anthem at athletic events. Other university functions such as Baccalaureate, Commencement, President's receptions, Chapel, alumni events, and University Christmas events were all listed as ways of actively serving the university community. Randall Bradley says that the Baylor Men's Choir, "has a tradition of singing each year for the President's state of the University address." In an effort to innovatively encourage school spirit, Cameron LaBarr relayed how his men's chorus, "produced a video singing our school's alma mater in a variety of places across campus: the student union, the arena, the library (whispered of course), the shuttle bus, and the President's office (with our University President singing as well)." Two participants also mentioned that their group is considered the "go-to choir" for on and off campus performances often serving as the "PR arm" of the choral program for various university events. Bruce Trinkley, former director of the Penn State Glee Club told how the men's chorus sang for a memorial service dedicated to Penn State university students who lost or took their own lives.

Several participants also cited that their men's choruses are involved in the local community. Barrington Coleman said that, "For our 128 years of existence as the oldest student campus organization, our group has offered philanthropic and mentoring assistance to campus-oriented affiliates, off-campus entities and alumni." Frank Albinder mentioned that both of his ensembles, The Virginia Glee Club of the University of Virginia and the Washington Men's Camerata do "good deed" performances at retirement homes and hospitals.

Buddy James highlighted that his men's chorus hosts annual Men's Chorus Festivals where they, "encourage men from the larger community, from junior high through octogenarians to continue singing." Similarly Randall Bradley said they, "host over 300 high school men each

fall for a Men's Day Out event planned to encourage high school men to continue singing in high school and college.”

Andrew Clark said that the Harvard Glee Club seeks to use its performing platform as a catalyst for conversations on relevant issues within the university community. He writes,

“Like many collegiate choruses, we aspire to high standards of excellence in performance and music education. However, it's even more important for us to define success through the significance of our work, rather than our technical mastery (though these are surely not mutually exclusive). In recent years, the Glee Club has sought to connect with other campus groups, university faculty and departments, and lend its voice to the conversations around important topics and issues on the minds and hearts of our students and community. The Glee Club aspires to leverage choral music as an agent for social change. We see learning as an emotional experience and look for ways that our music can connect and teach us about more than just the notes on the page.”

There are diverse ways for a men's chorus to positively impact its university and local community. As each director closely examines the needs of his or her school and surrounding area, exciting new opportunities may be revealed in which the chorus may play a positive role.

Describe how you foster a sense of team among the choristers.

Robert Faulkner posits that, “Themes that were central to nineteenth century male voice choir identity still appear to have salience in contemporary settings, so that men's choirs continue to perform dual roles as sites for *gleeful* homo-socialisation [*sic*] on the one hand, and as a site for the construction of national identity on the other.”²⁹ The German Männerchor and English Glee male chorus traditions have always included a strong homo-socio element and this aspect of the all-male chorus seems to continue to some degree in many TTBB ensembles.

When asked to illustrate ways in which directors encouraged unity with an all-male ensemble, four common themes emerged: student investment and leadership, promoting and

²⁹ Robert Faulkner, “Icelandic Men, Male Voice Choirs and Masculine Identity,” *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, vol. 10 (2012): 3-10.

maintaining a positive, safe and respectful environment, and relationship building through social events and mentoring opportunities. Though some points mentioned below could be useful for mixed choruses, themes and ideas specific to all-male choruses were suggested as well.

Many directors said that student leadership opportunities encouraged personal ownership of the choir. Section leaders, section managers, event coordinators, assistant conductors and student elected officers were specific positions mentioned by Buddy James. The investment of time and energy performing the office's duties instills in the singers a sense of ownership. This is their choir. Thea Kano of the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington DC says she encourages ownership and pride by having over half of her entire ensemble of 250 singers volunteer behind the scenes at their events. Andrew Clark of Harvard University's Glee Club describes his approach to student involvement:

“We empower our students. The Harvard Glee Club, since its founding, has been a student-run, faculty conducted organization. The students manage and facilitate nearly all of our administrative tasks. The group is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, legally separate from the University and our student board assumes ownership (and liability). This investment in the group and independent leadership model builds a culture of student investment. Musically, we spend a great deal of time prioritizing the practice of listening as a vehicle for team-building and group cohesion. We work hard on music, but we believe that at a certain point, it's not about excellence or perfection or being great, it's about being connected. Tapping into that connection allows each singer and the collective whole to reveal ourselves while staying tuned in to what's happening.”

Justin Miller describes the appeal of competition as bonding men together. “Men are generally competitive, and so we use that to our advantage by participating in competitions; when we are not involved in competitions we have friendly competitions within the group aimed to improve each other's quality. We also encourage social interactions outside of rehearsals and shows.”

The second theme that emerged in fostering a sense of team in an all-male choir was by

providing a positive environment through shared success and maintaining a respectful and safe atmosphere. Several respondents mentioned the importance of ensuring that every member of the ensemble feels needed. William Griffel of Purdue said, “We talk extensively about every member’s contribution to the group. We rely heavily on each member doing their job, and we rally around each other to improve each week.” Success early on in the rehearsal process is important to the morale and team atmosphere of the ensemble. Dusty Francis says, “The very best motivator and bonding experience...is success. Giving choristers the experience of singing together well early on is the best way to form cohesion in an ensemble.” Two participants referred to the importance of inculcating an inclusive tone in rehearsal that creates a safe environment of expression. Joe Nadeau says,

“For most of us, [choir] has become our "church" – we support each other in difficult times, celebrate the good times, sing uplifting and inspiring music, and connect with diverse audiences. Within the gay men's choral movement our music making also includes political and social activism that gives our choruses a sense of purpose that transcends the music.”

Andrew Robinette explains his approach to team building by offering an invaluable reminder about the importance of respectful social interaction in rehearsal.

“A respectful and loving atmosphere must always be modeled by the conductor. If you give respect, you will get respect. You must always hold that true for EACH individual. You must also expect it in return. When you show genuine respect and care, it is modeled in turn by the group. If an event happens between students, it must be addressed, but can be done so in a manner that is respectful, but also sets the expectation of what 'this choir' is about. Not everyone will stay, but the type of people who are drawn to that sense of purpose will continue. One of the greatest things about my group is that they are good to one another.”

Many directors build morale and a sense of team through extra-musical means such as: social events, retreats, informal athletic events, weekly meals and mentoring opportunities. Tim Seelig of the Gay Men’s Chorus of San Francisco and Mallorie Chernin of Amherst College

advocate for a mentoring system wherein each new member of the chorus is assigned a big brother to show them the ropes. Cameron LaBarr of the University of Missouri Springfield said, “Our chorus works hard and plays hard. One of the best things we do to foster a sense of team is to rent a gym at the recreation center and play dodge ball. We've done this both at the beginning of the semester and then again after a big concert.” Frank Albinder of the Virginia Glee Club of the University of Virginia outlines a specific and amusing example of how he cultivates teamwork:

“My collegiate group has a week-long competition to crown a King of the New Guys each year. The new members are randomly divided into 3 teams and each morning, they receive an email with a list of tasks they can accomplish for points. They need to upload video proof that they've completed each task. At the end of the week, there's a trivia quiz about the group's history. Each of the lower scoring teams can put up one member to play, but the winning team gets to have all of their members play.”

Team building may come in the form of individual responsibilities that promote ownership and investment or it may come through group recreational activities which builds relationships and strengthens bonds. Whichever way a chorus seeks to unify, those efforts will produce rewards that will benefit them both individually and collectively.

What have been your most successful recruiting methods?

Finding men to sing in a men's chorus can be a challenge at any age level. One of the natural desires for many choral organizations is to grow in number. Though not all recruiting methods mentioned below are exclusive to men's choruses, the compiled feedback below does offers important reminders on recruitment as well as new methods in our changing culture of social media.

The most commonly mentioned successful recruiting method is not a method at all, but rather is the existence of a healthy, vibrant and growing choral program. “If you build it they will come. Students want to be a part of something that is successful,” says Robert Ward of Ohio State University. Many respondents echoed the words of Andrew Crow who wrote,

“Providing a positive and engaging experience for the ensemble now is key to further growth. The natural manifestation of this success is students drawing in their friends and roommates. Walking in each day with the purpose of teaching and inspiring our students to do great things is the most important and effective recruiting tool at our disposal. Of course, this point is not exclusive to men’s choirs, yet it cannot be emphasized enough.”

Andrew Robinette adds that being genuine is key to attracting singers.

“I feel much of recruiting is similar among all settings. My primary advice in recruiting is to always be genuine. Recruiting is about relationships and relationship building. I have a lot of interests that are pretty typical such as sports, cars, current music, current TV shows, movies, science fiction, etc and that helps me relate to a lot of my guys. However, really being engaged in them and genuinely caring about them is the most vital. I think the main thing is to give whoever is there a positive experience. By positive I mean ever respectful, but also to maintain high standards. No one aspires to be mediocre. Build excellence by lovingly and continually making them better. When this happens, people are drawn to the program.”

The importance of developing strong relationships with high school directors as well as continually reminding high school singers that your collegiate men’s chorus exists cannot be stressed enough and is fundamental to ensemble growth. Cameron LaBarr said he works, “directly with the university’s admissions office. Once per year, we send out an email to those students who have a choral background according to their admissions portfolio.” LaBarr also said he, “invites high school men’s choruses on campus. We often will do combined concerts with a select area high school men’s chorus. This allows the high school students to see a different option for collegiate level singing.” He went on to say that for some prospective students who are non-music majors observing a men’s chorus might be less intimidating than seeing only a flagship mixed chorus.

Many directors also said that having a strong presence at school events that target underclassmen is helpful for recruitment. Freshman Orientation, New Student Festivals, and other college activity fairs are most effective. Randall Bradley suggested following up these highly visible performances with auditions the same or next day. Contacting interested singers by email or phone within a day or two of the event is also a very effective way of recruiting men into the ensemble.

Other recruiting methods that are perhaps geared more towards men came from Randall Bradley who said showing pride in the ensemble by having all members wear a men's chorus tie on a specific day was an effective recruiting tool. He said the men's chorus also appeals to guys by participating as a team in intramural sporting events, having dodge ball tournaments as well as dating events. Barrington Coleman draws in students by bringing in professional male artists for performances and master classes. Justin Miller suggested having a strong presence on social media and YouTube. Christopher Kiver said that they, "hold an annual Men of Song Festival, a one day event for boys with changing and changed voices, and they rehearse and perform with the collegiate Glee Club." Andrew Clark said he also has open rehearsals for interested singers who want to see the choir in action. Christopher McCafferty who directs a Seattle-based professional group suggested, "going outside the traditional channels and advertising on theater/acting boards." Joe Nadeau of the GMCLA says he seeks to combine, "relevant and engaging programming" that, "attracts people to my chorus."

The singers of the UMD Men's Chorus were also asked their perspective. A majority concluded that word-of-mouth was a great recruiting technique. Many of the men testified that they joined men's chorus when another guy spoke highly of his choral experience and invited him to join. Some men mentioned they could also be motivated to recruit their friends with

prizes such as a Chipotle gift card. When the men display the, “connection they share as a chorus, it will be enticing to others” one said. Several students mentioned the importance of going outside the usual choral demographic when trying to recruit new singers. One member noted, “In terms of recruiting, perhaps extending the number of mediums of reaching out to a greater number of people (social media, web pages, etc.) is also a good way to recruit. Flyers are good, too. Anything more than just spreading by word-of-mouth would be effective.”

Success in some fashion is most often the best recruitment for a men’s chorus. Success can mean many things to the director and singers, no matter the size of the ensemble – establishing a positive and inclusive rehearsal environment, improving every day as an ensemble, or providing high quality performances. These are the building blocks of success, and once they are in place, growth and recruitment will most likely be a natural by-product of the daily success in rehearsal.

Why do you believe there so few women conductors of men’s choruses?

Roulston and Mills stated that, “music teaching has been constructed as a feminized activity” and that women have dominated the elementary through secondary music classroom since the late nineteenth century.³⁰ Julia E. Koza’s article “The ‘Missing Males’ and Other Gender Issues in Music Education: Evidence from the Music Supervisors’ Journal, 1914-1924”³¹ published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education* reported that a shift occurred in the early twentieth century in which females began to outnumber males as singers and teachers in choral music. That trend continues to today in elementary through secondary music classrooms

³⁰ Roulston, Kathryn and Martin Mills, “Male Teachers in Feminized Teaching Areas: Marching to the Beat of the Men’s Movement Drums?” *Oxford Review of Education*, 26 no. 2 (2000) 222.

³¹ Julia E. Koza, “The ‘Missing Males’ and Other Gender issues in Music Education: Evidence from the ‘Music Supervisors’ Journal’,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 41, no. 3 (Fall, 1993): 212-232.

across America.³² In 2011 Jana G. Williams reported in her dissertation, “Male Participation and Male Recruiting Issues in Middle and High School Chorus” that among middle and high school choral programs, the majority of choir directors and singers were female.³³ In addition, through an empirical approach of data collection, Kenneth Elpus found that from 1982 through 2009, “female choristers outnumber their male counterparts by a greater than 2:1 ratio, and have done so consistently for nearly thirty years.”³⁴ Also, conducting a general search of membership lists on various men’s choral organization websites reveals that most collegiate and adult-affiliated men’s choruses are directed by men. If the majority of vocal music educators on the elementary through secondary levels are women, where then is the disconnect among pre-collegiate age men’s choruses and collegiate and adult affiliated choirs including barbershop ensembles? Richard Mook in his article, “The Sounds of Gender: Textualizing Barbershop Performance,” anecdotally reported that female directors are a rarity in the barbershop world.³⁵ Is it due to sexism within the choirs, the institutions and organizations? Or is it societal conventionality? Do male singers in men’s choruses feel that they “relate” better to male conductors? Is it lack of confidence or interest among female conductors?

Eight participants suggested that the reason there are so few women conductors of men’s choruses in America is due to sexism. “Women are not inherently any better or worse suited to conducting men’s choruses than men,” said Dusty Francis. Andrew Clark of Harvard drew a similar conclusion when he wrote,

³² Kenneth Elpus, “National Estimates of Male and Female Enrolment in American High School Choirs, Bands and Orchestras,” *Music Education Research* 17, no. 1, (2015): 88-102, DOI: 10.1080/14613808.2014.972923

³³ Williams, Jana G., “Male Participation and Male Recruitment Issues in Middle and High School Chorus,” Doctoral diss., Boston University, 2011.

³⁴ Kenneth Elpus, “National estimates of male and female enrolment in American high school choirs, bands and orchestras,” *Music Education Research* 17:1, (2015): 88-102.

³⁵ Richard Mook, “The Sounds of Gender: Textualizing Barbershop Performance,” *Landscapes: the Arts, Aesthetics, and Education: Perspectives on Males and Singing* 10 (2012): 201.

“Conducting, as a profession, has shown itself to be behind the curve in providing equal opportunity for women. Are men's choral organizations even guiltier of sexist and misogynistic practices? I'm not sure, but for every female conductor of a men's chorus, I would guess that there are exponentially more male conductors of women's choruses. It's an important question you raise, and one we must address.”

Buddy James of California State University, East Bay concurred and added that he believes part of the onus rests on conducting graduate programs stating,

“I believe the fact that there are fewer women conductors than men conductors of men's choruses is a reflection of the collegiate conducting scene in general. I know when I was in school there were far fewer women than men in the DMA program, and these days you almost certainly need a DMA to be fully considered for a position unless you are unquestionably exceptional in some demonstrable way.”

Andrew Robinette attributes the problem not only to embedded sexism in our society but also to the sexism within the conducting profession itself. He went on to share his positive and successful experiences working with many women's choirs through, “offering a different viewpoint and set of circumstances” as a man.

Four respondents did not attribute the low percentage of women conductors to sexism but rather possibly to women's lack of interest in men's choruses. TTBB ensembles may not be a type of choir they seek out. Three respondents cited that most male chorus conductors most likely come from the all-male ensemble tradition, and the same may be true for women's chorus conductors. Six respondents pointed out that tradition and historical stereotype were likely reasons, which may correspond softly to the claim of sexism. It is interesting that none of the four female participants attributed the out-of-balance ratio to sexism.

Eleven respondents thought so few women conducted men's choruses perhaps because of a lack of vocal connection with the male singer. Thea Kano of the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington DC said, “Some women may not have the ability to teach the vocal technique (since they can't demonstrate e.g. fry tone).” Andrew Crow of Ball State University mentioned, “It can

be intimidating to try to build an ensemble when you can't model the vocal technique.” Frank Albinder specifically mentioned that women are not able to match the male singers’ vocal range and may not be able to provide a vocal model.

Eight respondents believe perhaps the smaller proportion of women in the field is related to the social connection with the ensemble. Richard Bowen of Wabash University, an all-male college asked, “Do male singers in men's choruses feel that they and the ensemble ‘relate’ better to male conductors?” Although he says he has no evidence for a reason, Joe Nadeau surmises, “My best guess is that men feel more comfortable and behave differently around a woman versus a man conductor.” Randall Bradley of Baylor University says,

“I think most men do not imagine themselves connecting in the same vulnerable way to a female conductor that they are able to connect to a male conductor. I also think the environment that men's choirs usually create may in some ways be a bit unfamiliar to many women; therefore creating/fostering this environment may be difficult for some women.”

Likewise William Southerland in Greensboro, North Carolina says, “Being the only woman in a room full of men may make some female conductors uneasy.” He says that the female conductors of men's choruses that he has observed tend to be "larger-than-life" people with exceptionally strong personalities. Thea Kano is a bright example of Southerland’s point. She said, “When I was in the running for the position of Artistic Director of GMCW, the search committee interviewed our singers and patrons and asked what they thought about the idea of a female director. The response was that musical quality and strong leadership were priority, and gender was not important.”

Dr. Nicole Lamartine is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Wyoming and is one of the few women in the United States to be Director of Choral Activities at a university. Her research is in female leaders of male choirs. I had the opportunity of conducting a phone

interview with Dr. Lamartine that proved to be very insightful as she described her experience as a woman in the field. Dr. Lamartine has conducted The UW Singing Statesmen, a non-auditioned choir, since 2008. Their mission, to promote male ensemble singing, has taken them across the state of Wyoming to performances at numerous high schools, the governor's mansion, state legislature and at the Northwestern Conference of American Choral Directors Association in 2012 and the National Association for Music Education in 2015, along with associated tours to the Western states. Her time with them, however, did not begin so easily. She said, "The first semester was an adjustment time for both me and the ensemble, but by the second year membership had doubled." She realized that there was nothing to fear and that, "good music making is good music, and good teaching is good teaching." She went on to say that "There is a testing period where the men see what you are made of. Eventually they will accept you. I call it the 'buy-in factor.'" She said that this testing period does not seem to exist with women's choruses in her experiences. "Guys don't play emotional games. They wear their hearts on their sleeves. If women conductors are perceptive of that; if they can also be just as vulnerable and can harness that energy, they will be successful." Dr. Lamartine said she observed that, "High school women conductors of men's choruses sometimes struggle because they feel have to be someone else they are not when the opposite is true. Women don't like to show this honest, playful, rambunctious side of themselves. We are bred to have an all-business attitude, at least at the collegiate and adult levels." She went on to say that, "To be a director of a men's chorus takes a special set of leadership skills – a certain 'I don't care what people think' attitude. My guys always tell me that they are amazed how such a small person (I am less than five feet tall) can keep the attention of 75 guys!"

She also added, “In my experience, the guys have a certain sense of rambunctiousness that allows us to have fun and play. The more they play, the better music they make I have found. At high school clinics, the Statesmen are so good at being playful and really engaging with the kids.” Dr. Lamartine then revealed a special insight with her connection with her guys. She said, “There is a certain physicality in the men’s music-making that I didn’t fully understand until I became an athlete. I recently became a power lifter, and now I can talk their language in a way I could not before. They had me bench press the smallest tenor for ‘street cred!’”

I asked Dr. Lamartine about her experience in her DMA program. She commented that she was not offered the same opportunities as the men in her department. She said, “I learned I had to be a little more ‘present’ and that I just had to be better than my male colleagues.” It was her graduate school experience that gave her the strength to eventually conduct The UW Singing Statesmen at the University of Wyoming.

As we were nearing the end of our conversation she added, “As a conductor, I know we’re not supposed to have favorites, but I love my Singing Statesmen. My dedication to each individual is so strong because they have let me in to their brotherhood. We often keep in touch more than any other of my choir students.” Their sense of community and spirit of openness is at the core of who they are and is what binds them together. Dr. Lamartine shared a story as an example of their spirit. “At our annual retreat this year, I asked a group of guys to watch after Jeff, an annoying 6’ 8” guy, who was loud and who was learning how to function in the ensemble. Though he got on their nerves, the guys were ‘there for him.’ They opened their hearts and they accepted him. That was profound for me. I realized then that they don’t care who is in the ensemble. They care that whoever is in there is a part of the community. It is sometimes hard to articulate the spirit of the ensemble. But this story crystallizes the heart of our community.”

She went on to say that, “Wyoming is a conservative, rancher, farmer, individually-minded state. It’s a profound thing in this area I think to be a woman and conduct a men’s chorus. I am proud of the guys for being open-minded and accepting me.”

Would you describe men’s choruses as thriving in your state or region? Please explain why or why not.

The general consensus among respondents is that men’s choruses are not thriving in their state or region with a few notable exceptions. The lack of collegiate and adult-affiliated men’s choruses might have its roots in the difficulty of recruiting male singers on the secondary level. According to the research gathered here, urban areas seem to generate the most activity in community-based male choruses, particularly GALA and Barbershop choruses.

Reports from participants in northeastern states such as Pennsylvania and Massachusetts offer mixed responses. Christopher Kiver, National Repertoire & Standards Committee Chair on Male Choirs for the American Choral Directors Association, reported that only a handful of high schools have a men’s chorus and very few collegiate men’s choruses exist in Pennsylvania. Male community choirs exist he said, but their membership tends to be older. In Boston, Andrew Clark reported that a wide array of ensembles exist for men of all ages but that, “participation continues to be a problem for middle and high school teachers.”

The Midwestern states of South Dakota, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, Minneapolis, Wisconsin and Ohio were mixed in their responses. Robert Ward from Columbus, Ohio described, “men’s choruses, both traditional and barbershop, as well grounded in the state of Ohio.” William Griffel from West Lafayette, Indiana answered yes and no to this answer and said that they, “host a Men's Choral Festival at Purdue each spring for high school students.” He

said that it is, “very popular and well attended each year, which leads me to believe that there is a need for other programs to get together to foster this genre.” He goes on to praise barbershop choruses saying that the The Barbershop Harmony Society has a successful outreach program for high school and college age male singers. Conversely, Andrew Crow in Muncie, Indiana reported that concert choirs, “take a back seat to show choirs.” Cameron LaBarr in Springfield, Missouri reported that men’s choruses,

“...are on the rise in our region. We are experiencing more and more men's choruses emerging at the university level, setting an example for what is possible at the high school level. Many conductors are realizing the benefits of having a men's chorus in the program – not only for the men's chorus itself, but for the growth of choral arts as a whole. It's my hope that we continue to experience more men's choruses emerge.”

Andrew Robinette in Brookings, South Dakota said men’s choruses are gaining popularity in high schools but that to his knowledge, the South Dakota State University Statesmen is the only collegiate men’s ensemble in the state. Barrington Coleman in Champaign, Illinois said that men’s choruses are alive and well, “although there is a need for increased visibility and organizational resources among secondary education locales.” However, Mary Hopper, in Wheaton, Illinois and current National President-elect for ACDA, said that few collegiate men’s choruses exist other than in large universities. The Minneapolis all-male professional choir Cantus stated that Minneapolis has a thriving choral scene, but very few are men’s choruses. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Gary Schwartzhoff said very few men’s choruses exist.

Respondents from southern states such as Georgia and North Carolina both reported that there are few men’s choruses. Jerry Ulrich of Georgia Tech said that few men’s choruses exist in high school programs and that only three or four collegiate Glee Clubs are active in the state. William Southerland of the Triad Pride Men’s Chorus, a GALA group in Greensboro, North

Carolina flatly said that community-based choruses are dying because, “younger people seem unwilling to participate in civic organizations, musical or otherwise.”

Randall Bradley, in Waco, Texas reported that few collegiate men’s choirs exist in the state of Texas but those that do are strong. Christopher McCafferty in Washington said that there were many men’s choirs in school programs and that many specialized groups existed in the Seattle area including: Barbershop, Sons of Norway, early music, and GALA choruses.

Many GALA chorus directors from major metropolitan areas in California were positive about the current condition of men’s choirs. Tim Seelig of the Gay Men’s Chorus in San Francisco said that they are growing and continue to experience huge audience support. Joe Nadeau of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles reported that GALA groups in the area are thriving but that many music programs have been taken out of the curriculum in southern California. Buddy James of California State University East Bay did not think that men’s choruses are thriving in California. He attributed this mostly to the,

“...decline of arts electives in the public schools. Students often leave high school with less training and with less of a priority on the arts than in many other places in the nation. There are notable exceptions, of course, but by and large, our students in California receive less than optimal training in the arts, leading to a less than optimal appreciation of the value that the arts can offer to their lives.”

In the District of Columbia Thea Kano of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington DC reported that male choristers enjoy a wide variety of genres. Frank Albinder, Intercollegiate Men’s Choruses President and Artistic Director of the Washington Men’s Camerata discussed at length his assessment of the current health of men’s choruses.

“In the US, I find that many people consider men's choruses to be vestiges of the past, when there were far more single gender colleges and men dominated the choral world. In the 19th century, mixed choirs were often 75-90% men! There are some notable exceptions, especially gay men's choruses in big cities and barbershop choruses and quartets (virtually everywhere). But the traditional collegiate or community men's chorus

has a much harder time finding an audience today. Choral music has always had a tough row to hoe, because it's a participatory art form. Many people would rather sing in a choir than listen to one perform. And the ubiquity of entertainment options available electronically has taken a toll on more traditional forms of entertainment, perhaps especially choral music. Men's choruses also lack famous major works that are almost guaranteed to bring in an audience. All that said, there are several university men's choruses in the US that have built large followings, including Purdue, Cornell, Michigan, and Harvard.”

From your perspective, what is the current condition of men’s choruses in America today and what does the future hold?

“The future never looked brighter.” – Tim Seelig

Since many respondents to this survey are prominent leaders in the field, I asked them what they thought was the current condition of men’s choruses in America and where they saw the art form heading. Among collegiate men’s choral conductors, there was an even split between those who felt positively and those who felt negatively about the future. Overall GALA chorus directors were very positive in their outlook of men’s choruses in America.

Buddy James in California feels positively about the future and says that many opportunities exist for men to sing at the collegiate level and higher. He wrote,

“I believe that the current condition of men's choruses is strong in America. There are some remarkable choruses for men, both at the collegiate level and beyond, and most communities offer opportunities for men to participate and grow as singers, no matter their abilities. I also believe that as the quality of chorus training continues to improve, so will opportunities for men to learn to sing. In many ways we are in a golden era of choral singing, and that certainly applies to men's choruses as well.”

Barrington Coleman in Illinois also believes that, “there is a great interest and incentive to establish and unify efforts by choral organizations nationally to honor and inspire artistic relevance, particularly among amateur singers who enter the profession from the private sector.”

Cameron LaBarr is optimistic and he advocates for a “how-to guide” on how to inculcate men’s choruses into choral programs.

Randall Bradley stated that in his over thirty years of teaching, men’s choirs have stayed fairly consistent, and he gave partial credit to the vigor of the Barbershop organizations and other men’s choirs in larger cities. Justin Miller of the Westminster Chorus, three-time winner of the International Chorus Championships of the Barbershop Harmony Society, is also optimistic about the future and gives much credit to the Barbershop art form and to pop culture. He wrote,

“I think things are looking positive. There is a lot more singing in pop culture which bodes well for the future, especially now that that Pentatonix has the number 1 album on the billboard charts. That and the Pitch Perfect movies have made singing cool (not Glee, where singers are shown as outcasts). As a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society for over a decade, I know that there are tens of thousands of men in this country interested in singing, whether as soloists or ensemble members in small groups (i.e. quartets) or choruses. Those figures come from those interested in a fairly niche choral genre – barbershop. If we were to expand our gaze, I think we would find that male singing is alive and well.”

Similarly, Thea Kano’s statements align with Justin Miller’s when she wrote of pop culture’s positive influence on choral singing, “Gay men's choruses are thriving and expanding. Middle School and High School choruses have seen a spike [in enrollment] due to many of the choral-based films and television shows (*Glee*, *Pitch Perfect*, *The Sing Off*, etc.) - making choral singing somewhat "cool".” William Griffel in Indiana offered a similar point of view in praising the a cappella movement on university campus across the country with its roots in pop culture by saying, “I think with the increase in a cappella music across the country, the attention to male choruses will increase. We do a wide variety of styles of music, which makes us very popular with audiences.”

A representative from Cantus believes that collegiate men's choruses are alive and well in America but that there is a lack of opportunities for ensembles outside the university system, particularly for classically oriented ensembles. He stated,

“Cantus hopes to propagate a very specific type of choral music through concerts, outreach, and commissioning. It's difficult to say what the future holds. The patron and donor bases for all the classical performing arts are getting old. While we continue to have strong influx of performers, all organizations have to deal with the struggle to expand their reach.”

Frank Albinder similarly stated that the donor base and audiences are shrinking for classically based groups. He posits,

“While choral singing remains the most popular participatory art form in the US, finding an audience for choral music is a task that becomes more difficult with each passing year. While mixed choruses can rely on standard repertoire to draw an audience, it's much more difficult for a men's chorus to program music that will appeal to a wide audience (except for the most specialized choruses). In audience surveys of my choruses, we've found that over 90% of the audience comes to a concert because they have a personal connection to someone in the group. The one exception to that is Christmas concerts, which tend to draw a wider audience because of the season and its connection with choral music. I think there will always be male choruses (and female choruses), but, as is true with all choruses, finding an audience and remaining financially viable will be the most difficult challenges for the future. That said, performing in a collegiate setting is less challenging in that most college choirs receive institutional support and have a built in audience. For community choruses, it's much more difficult to pay the bills.”

Christopher Kiver in Pennsylvania has lived and taught abroad. He believes that American collegiate men's choirs are in fine shape but that these singers are experiencing difficulty when searching for singing opportunities upon graduation. He explained,

“Having lived overseas, I think the one significant advantage the US has is collegiate choirs, and organizations such as ACDA and IMC. In England, Australia, and New Zealand, male choirs are largely for older men, and there are very few if any, male collegiate choirs. In Australia and New Zealand, there are a good number of secondary boys' schools, so there are a fair number of male choirs for high school age students, but they lack groups for the 18-26 year old bracket. In the US, the difficulty is how to cater for the post-college singer.”

Likewise, Christopher McCafferty directs a professional choir in the Seattle area and he said that “too many male singers are lost between the ages of 18 and 30” and he hopes that, “college Glee’s and adult choruses can bridge the gap.”

Those who feel negatively about the future offered a plethora of reasons. Though William Southerland in Greensboro, NC believes men’s choruses in big cities are thriving, “in smaller areas, civic organizations of all types are suffering.” He also touched on a cultural point by mentioning the influence of social media. He said, “Thanks to social media and technology, people no longer need to come together in groups to socialize and so it is harder to maintain a sizable group of volunteers.” Others blamed the lack of interest in singing on the emphasis our culture places in sports.

Andrew Clark in Boston, Massachusetts took a different path in answering this question by examining the ramifications of our culture’s poignant discussion of gender. He wrote,

“It will be interesting to see how the social justice movements around gender identity issues, advocacy, and particularly transgender awareness and rights impacts the future of men's choruses. In an era where many question and critique the ideologies of gender binaries, it has become challenging, at least for us, to continue to promote and justify a "gendered-exclusive" ensemble. In response to the concerns of our students, we have officially, through our by-laws, changed the framework and identity of the Harvard Glee Club to a TTBB ensemble, no longer seeing ourselves as a ‘men's chorus’.”

He went on to say,

“This may seem like another venture into the land of political correctness, ubiquitous in higher education, but it’s actually a very important issue for our students. Issues of gender identity and inclusion, transgendered awareness and advocacy, and other concerns along these lines inspired our students to engage in some difficult but fruitful and important conversations about our language, our identity, and sensitivity to every member of our community. Though it took me two or three years, I finally trained myself to stop saying “women, let’s start in measure 10” or “the men are rushing,” etc... [mostly in mixed choir situations]. I had received several letters (some kind, others less so) about the use of strict binary gendered language as limiting, oppressive, etc; at first, I scoffed and thought it was ridiculous and way over the top. But after having some meaningful conversations with students, including some who have been struggling personally or even

victimized by others due to their identity, I've come around. This may seem outrageous, but the process of considering these ideas and issues catalyzed a transformation in the way we see ourselves: as an ensemble performing repertoire written, throughout history, for men's choruses - and yet we no longer see ourselves as a male chorus and will, over the course of a few years, begin to describe ourselves exclusively as a TTBB choir. Unlike our peer institutions at Princeton and Yale, who changed their choirs to SATB ensembles when their institutions included women, the Harvard Glee Club will continue to sustain the tradition of TTBB music at Harvard for the foreseeable future. For the record, I'm not advocating a national movement to change the semantics, membership requirements, or traditions of male choral music. It's up for each group to decide how to handle all of this."

In Joshua Palkki's article, "Choral Music's Gender Trouble: Males, Adolescence, and Masculinity in the Choral Context,"³⁶ he asks the question, "In the twenty-first century, do overgeneralizations about male choirs accurately reflect the contemporary needs and attitudes of male singers?" Palkki goes on to advocate for choral conductor-teachers to reform their classrooms to create a safe environment for male singers that demonstrates a fuller understanding of the spectrum of masculinity. He suggested choosing repertoire with subject matters that represents a "plurality of masculinities."³⁷ He also advocated using genderless language such as calling the women's choir and men's choir the "treble clef" and "bass clef" choirs. Studies in gender theory and its effects on the choral classroom continue to grow through the research of Scott Harrison, Adam Adler, Graham Welch, Patrick Freer, Robert Faulkner and many more.

Robert Ward in Columbus, Ohio believes that the future of men's choruses in America depends on continual search for quality literature. "Our future is bleak if all we sing are arrangements of SATB tunes or sea shanties." Gary Schwartzhoff summarized the discussion succinctly, "The future is our responsibility to grow the experience and challenge young men to join the art form."

³⁶ Joshua Palkki, "Choral Music's Gender Trouble: Males, Adolescence, and Masculinity in the Choral Context," *Choral Journal* 56, no. 4 (2015): 24-35.

³⁷ R. W. Connell & J. W. Messerschmidt. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19 (6), 829-859.

The varied perspectives concerning the condition of collegiate and community men's choruses in America provide valuable insights into the rising or declining trends of these ensembles. Pop culture's strong influence on American culture is having an impact on choral participation and repertoire, particularly within the GALA and barbershop ensembles. The leaders of men's choruses might consider the ramifications of these changes upon the art form. Understanding the history of men's choruses in America may also shed light on what the future holds.

PART II: PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS

Chapter 2: Vocal Pedagogy, Rehearsal Technique & Music Literacy

In Jefferson Johnson's article "The What, Why, and How of Young Adult Male Choirs,"³⁸ he addresses three common pedagogical challenges that face TTBB choirs which he identifies as tone quality, intonation, and balance. The article examines the origins of these challenges and offers a conceptual framework through which a "hands on" approach is efficacious. He discusses at length issues of tone quality relating to vowel formation, uniformity, and modification, as well as registration, and body alignment specific to men's voices. Ideas and issues of choral formation, intonation, and balance are also examined. Johnson's article is a helpful resource to the men's chorus director and is referred to often in this section of questions on vocal and choral pedagogy.

Many vocal techniques taught in a men's chorus rehearsal are also taught in a mixed setting such as: stance, proper breath motion, and connection, healthy phonation, and proper resonance balancing through focused vowels that produces a ringing quality in the tone. However, the all-male ensemble has the advantage of only needing to address male vocal issues, which simplifies somewhat the tasks at hand. In this section of questions, I asked men's chorus directors to share their ideas on how they teach the concept of head voice, issues of balance, and what standing formations they employed for what reasons. Participants were also asked to describe what specific challenges (e.g. music literacy and aural skills) occur when working with amateur singers and what strategies they employ to meet these challenges.

³⁸ Jefferson Johnson, "The What, Why, and How of Young Adult Male Choirs," *Choral Journal* 52, no. 10 (May 2012): 28-37.

What are your priorities when teaching vocal technique to your men's chorus?

Dauids and LaTour state, "The more conductors, teachers, and singers understand vocal technique and the science underlying it, the more readily they can apply these concepts in both individual and ensemble singing."³⁹ Not all conductors have the same amount of knowledge on vocal science and pedagogy, and many may feel inadequate in their level of technical instruction. But all men's chorus directors should have a basic understanding about the fundamentals of how the male voice functions. When asked to list their priorities of teaching vocal technique to their men's choruses, all participants said healthy vocal production is their top priority. Andrew Clark said, "We start with the basic fundamentals and continually reinforce healthy singing. Most of our challenges require a solution grounded in awareness and technical fluency of the voice. More than anything, we want our ensemble to sound and feel healthy."

Similarly Andrew Robinette stated that,

"Healthy singing is the primary concern. I teach applied voice at South Dakota State University as well and am fortunate that several [men's chorus singers] are in my studio. While it is more challenging in a group to diagnose, the release of tension, proper breath support, and not straining to attain pitch have to be the primary concerns. It should never hurt to sing."

Frank Albinder pointed out that many singers in men's chorus have never had a voice lesson and focusing on the basics of breath, placement of tone, and coordination are the fundamentals that he reinforces consistently through short and simple vocalises. To his point regarding coordination, amateur male singers require instruction on how to transition through their "lifts, shifts, links, breaks," etc. Mary Hopper says she focuses on mixing the head voice, "keeping it light, singing softly and beautifully, and not pushing the sound." (A fuller discussion of male registration is discussed in the next question.)

³⁹ Dauids, Julia and Stephen La Tour. *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Teachers, and Singers*. Waveland Press, IL, 2012.

Several participants listed resonance balancing as a priority. William Southerland said he teaches, “Bel Canto singing: clarity of tone ("chiaro) and space in the voice ("scuro"). I work on getting freedom of breath while maintaining a focused sound, and then help the men to develop good soft palate technique to ‘round out’ the sound.” Many other participants also listed forward mask placement and a ringing quality throughout all ranges as a necessity in vocal instruction.

Cameron LaBarr mentioned one of his priorities in teaching music, unrelated to vocal technique but worth noting was the concept of phrasing. “Teaching the concept of musical line and musical rhetoric through great literature is important. Great literature is often the key to good vocal technique. I find that it's much easier to teach good singing when the music is worthy of our time and energy.”

Based upon the responses provided, the majority of collegiate and community-based men’s chorus directors have a firm understanding of the basis of singing. For more resources please refer to the bibliography.

In many cases, the tessitura of T1s lies at the top of the staff leaving them to negotiate their chest voice and head voice. What particular exercises, visual images, kinesthetic motions, etc. do you use to reinforce consistent head voice production?

The world is full of male-mezzos. – Gary Schwartzhoff

Perhaps the most important and convoluted vocal issue in a men’s chorus rehearsal is registration of the male voice. Directors listed several terms when describing events in registration such as “lifts, shifts, links, and breaks.” When discussing this concept in *The Structure of Singing*, Richard Miller advocates for the use of terms that highlight the unification rather than the divisions between registers. When asked why he avoids teaching register

separation, Miller simply responded, “The aim of good teaching is to unite registers, not to separate them.”⁴⁰ Our use of vocal terms has psychological effects on our singers and directors should consider using language that gives clarity when instructing singers on traversing registers. The scope of this discussion is not to argue for or against the similitude or differentiation between falsetto and head voice but rather to offer the insights of practicing conductors of men’s choruses with the goals stated by Davids and LaTour: “understand specific pitch areas that might pose difficulties for singers depending on voice type; assist singers to pass through transitions smoothly by blending modes of vocal fold vibration; and understand how vocal tract resonance adjustment can help with register transitions.”⁴¹

All respondents were keen on a top-down approach when training their singers in unifying the registers of the male voice. Respondents offered images, varied terminology and exercises that often included kinesthetic connection for instruction in singing through the *passaggio*. Most directors also said that training in vocal registration is not relegated to the tenor section but that all singers in the choir engage in the instruction. Frank Albinder added that he reminds his ensemble of the differences of solo and choral singing. “It takes a lot of verbal reminders to encourage some singers not to sing all of their high notes ‘con belto.’ I reinforce the idea that there are many different ways to produce a sound, and that a solo production might not be the best way to blend in a choral setting.”

Finding specialized language on which all vocal and choral pedagogues can agree when discussing the registers of the voice, male or female is a challenge. Andrew Clark said he has no one way of teaching concepts of registration but that the choir is constantly experimenting with

⁴⁰ Miller, Richard. *Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2004.

⁴¹ Davids, Julia and Stephen La Tour. *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Teachers, and Singers*. Waveland Press, IL, 2012.

new ideas depending on the desired color of a particular piece. He also advocated for clarity when using technical terms.

“It's not clear to me what you mean by head voice (not to sound snarky, but I think we throw around these terms without really clarifying or building consensus around these meanings: physiologically, acoustically, technically.) We explore a variety of vocal qualities and colors for all voice parts, using a variety of prompts -- some metaphorical, others anatomical, kinesthetic, etc. It definitely depends on the context and the specific color/shape we're aiming to achieve. We're constantly inventing and improvising new ideas and strategies which may be detrimental as opposed to a reliable, consistent toolbox of teaching technique.”

Andrew Robinette also calls for clear and precise language in technical discussions. “I would say that it is not as simple as head and chest but that head and middle or modal voice are negotiated. Likely this is a variance of wording more than anything, but I think the wording can help because amateur singers can associate chest voice with a belting sound. Terminology such as ‘float the sound’ can help.” When Cameron LaBarr is training his singers to unify registers, he uses terms such as, “fresh, clear, tall, rich, alive and vibrant.” These ideas seem to really help singers understand the kind of sound that should be happening.” He also uses the, “yawn-sigh in both directions, along with sliding on pitch with various vowels.” Barrington Coleman recommends using lip trills to unify the voice, “along with aleatoric conducting methods to parallel body and vocal gestures.” Dusty Francis uses, “descending scales beginning in head voice and gradually transitioning to chest voice on the descent.” He also recommends, “leap[ing] across the break of an ascending major seventh on the continuant [ng] which resolves to the octave on an open vowel.” Jerry Ulrich and Robert Ward also use descending arpeggios to bring qualities of the upper voice down. In addition to using broken chords and octave exercises to help them sense head sound Andrew Robinette incorporates dynamics saying, “I also encourage a falsetto/full mix if needed. Use of dynamics can greatly ease this as well. At times a softer dynamic can help

singers not ‘muscle’ the sound. It can allow them to flip. Typically however, if a singer can't negotiate the head tone well, they don't sing tenor 1.” Tim Seelig said he also integrates dynamics saying they, “do a lot of work on passaggio with all sections....We build voices on the pyramid with all exercises being sung with stronger dynamics on the bottom, lighter dynamics in the top – it is working.”⁴² Chapter five of Tim Seelig’s book, *The Perfect Blend*⁴³ offers easy-to-understand exercises and imagery to help the conductor explain and the singer understand the phenomenon of vocal registers.

Andrew Crow discusses the particular use of vowels and consonants to aid in instruction. He wrote, “We spend significant time finding, identifying, and negotiating various approaches to smooth the transition for different vowels and different kinds of repertoire. One exercise starts at the break with a closed ‘ng’ sound that opens to a vowel, then descends.” Similarly LaBarr said that he works through the “transition” using the [i] and [u] vowels. Randall Bradley also wrote, “I continually talk about and do exercises that encourage ringing and resonance to help them negotiate this challenge. We use lots of brighter vowels with nasal consonants.” Several conductors talked about utilizing gestures to help bring awareness. Thea Kano offered this exercise with a kinesthetic connection.

“I use the following exercise to create an ‘automatic transmission’ between chest and head voices: 9-step scale, ascending and descending on VEE-EH-AH-OH-OO, holding the [u] on top (2nd scale degree) and ‘pulling’ the sound forward by putting one hand on the shoulder and drawing the hand out to the audience. This exercise reinforces head voice throughout the range, and it encourages consistent forward placement. It ‘irons out’ the break, and increases the break/mix area from one or two pitches to several pitches in the range.”

⁴² Chapter five of Seelig’s *The Perfect Blend* gives the full exercise of the pyramid image. “Ask the singers to sing an ascending octave scale (or exercise of your choice). On the bottom, their hands are as in the first picture [hands out to side] and they are singing the [a] vowel forte. As they ascend, the hands move to the up and down position and they migrate the vowel to [u] as they decrescendo. Then back down, back to [a] and back to forte and back the first hand position. This exercise helps them understand the pyramid shape of vocal registers.”

⁴³ Seelig, Tim. *The Perfect Blend: Seriously Fun Vocal Warm Ups*. New York: Shawnee Press, 2005.

In addition to physical movement, imagery can also be beneficial when illustrating upper voice sensations. Joe Nadeau said, “sirens, whoops, placing a delicate glass on the top shelf of a china cabinet.” Christopher Kiver suggested, “Begin with non-musical sounds: frizbees, lazars, speaking a la Julia Child etc.”

Unifying the registers of the voice into one seamless instrument is one of the main objectives of learning to sing effectively. A shouting or belting quality from any male singer in a choral setting does little to achieve the desired balance, blend and color in most cases. A top-down approach when realizing a mixed register was the favored method of directors.

What is the approximate percentage of untrained singers in your men’s chorus? What specific challenges does this percentage of amateur singers present to your ensemble and what are some strategies you use to meet these challenges?

“This is not a challenge. In fact, it is one of the things I would cite as a part of our success story.” – Robert Ward

Perhaps because all people have the ability to phonate and sing, the choral art form tends to attract the amateur performer more so than instrumental playing. When asked what percentage of singers in their ensembles were amateurs, 47% of respondents said that 50-74% of their singers were amateurs and 52% reported that 75-100% of their singers were untrained. One director said that 20% of his choir was untrained. By untrained, respondents qualified their responses to mean singers that are musically illiterate and/or have little or no vocal training.

To meet the challenges directors stated that sectionals were often used to address these issues. Many also said they address musical literacy and ear training in the warm-up. Christopher Kiver said, “For some, their awareness and understanding of how to make sound is seriously lacking, so for many we have to help build an instrument. I take up to 10 minutes for warm-ups

in an 80 minute rehearsal so we can establish fundamental principles of good singing. Students often have very poor literacy skills, so we have to cover theory as well.” When learning a new vocabulary, the learning process can be slow. Many participants said that repetition and reinforcement are essential in the training and development of their singers. Andrew Clark said, “We spend a good deal of time teaching and reinforcing the basic fundamentals. Our students are malleable and quick learners, though good singing, like any athletic activity, requires not just comprehension but repetition and muscle memory.” Likewise Barrington Coleman said, “Such representation offers the challenge of building techniques and confidence for the exploration of diverse literature and advancements among other more experienced participants.”

A challenge that several respondents mentioned was the wide array of experience levels in the rehearsal. At times the men’s chorus rehearsal may feel akin to a K–12th grade classroom, musically speaking. Cameron LaBarr says that this setup gives experienced singers a teaching and leadership opportunity saying,

“Our men's chorus includes singers who are first semester freshman non-music majors through graduate students in voice. This provides more of an opportunity than a challenge as the less experienced singers learn quite quickly, simply absorbing good singing technique led by the example of the others. For the more experienced singers, it gives them the chance to lead by example and also take their singing technique to the next level.”

Andrew Crow mentioned the importance of training the inexperienced singer while not neglecting the trained singer saying, “We are constantly working on vocal technique, which requires a great deal of repetition and reinforcement. For trained singers in the ensemble, that can make the pace of repertoire instruction seem slow. I work diligently to keep those singers engaged without neglecting the needs of the untrained, sometimes by giving them extra responsibility.”

Andrew Robinette brought up a point that is a common theme among many directors, which is that many or even most trained singers in men's chorus are tenors (which might account for the fewer number of tenors). He offered another salient issue that was a common thread among participants regarding the importance of choosing appropriate repertoire that meets the vocal needs of the ensemble. There is perhaps nothing more demoralizing to a choir than requiring them to perform a piece or set of pieces that is beyond their current abilities. When little progress is made in rehearsal over a span of time, singers' confidence vanishes quickly and a spirit of defeatism creeps in. It is incumbent upon directors to know the musical intelligence of each member of the ensemble and to select repertoire that matches the capabilities of the group.

Most community ensembles rehearse once a week, which does not afford them the opportunity to work on music reading. Thea Kano writes, "The large number of singers that don't read music is a challenge, and as a community chorus that performs 90+ times a year, we don't have the time to teach theory." To expedite the music learning process she goes on to say that they provide recorded tracks so singers can practice throughout the week. Frank Albinder wrote that using recorded materials can enable singers to, "practice their music alone, using a computer program/app (Musescore) or learning recordings (for major works). It's hard to get singers to use these materials, but when they do, the positive results are 'noteworthy'."

Meeting the challenges that face directors of ensembles with singers of diverse musical backgrounds can seem overwhelming. On what does the director focus his attention? How much time should be devoted to warm-up, vocal exercises, and music reading skills? The voice major in the rehearsal may be the sharpest sight-reader and have the strongest voice, and giving these singers an opportunity to guide others can give him a sense of ownership and allow him to lead

from within the ensemble. However, the singer with the least amount of training cannot be left behind. The effective director/teacher will find creative ways to engage singers on all levels.

Describe your approach to issues of balance.

Many directors do not have the luxury of having the same number of singers in each section of a four-part men's ensemble. Choirs often lack a sufficient number of natural tenors, with a particular shortage of T1s, while also having an overabundance of baritones. Conductors have many ways of addressing issues of balance at their disposal.

Four choral directors mentioned John Finley Williamson's⁴⁴ concept of the choral pyramid model as a foundation for balance. The pyramid model in choral music pictures the optimum balance of any given chord with the bass singing a louder dynamic and providing the foundation at the bottom of the pyramid. As one works up the pyramid, each higher voice sings progressively softer with the sopranos on the top of the pyramid. With men's chorus, the same is true for B2s serving as the foundation of the choir with the T1s singing a softer dynamic. Four participants directly mentioned the use of dynamics to balance. Tim Seelig says he uses a number system where, "1 is *pianissimo* and 8 is *fortissimo*. We work on the basses being at an 8, baritones 7, 2nd tenors at 6 and 1sts at a 5," reinforcing the principle of the pyramid model.

In conjunction with this idea, three participants brought up their use of shifting singers to other parts to balance a particular chord. One participant said that he prefers to fill out the baritone section due to *divisi* passages where baritones can sing the upper bass 2, a split baritone line, or even the bottom of a tenor 2 *divisi* passage. Andrew Clark also said, "The tessitura of the

⁴⁴ A more thorough discussion on John F. Williamson's approach to choral balance can be found on p. 12 of *Choral Conducting: A Symposium* edited by Harold A Decker and Julius Herford.

B1s and T2s are often interchangeable (at least for a good deal of works that we sing) so we adapt some pieces and ask the singers to swap or cover different parts.”

It comes as no surprise that another foundational principle five participants addressed in choral balance was listening and self-assessment. As conductors balance chords during a rehearsal from the podium, the hope is that singers will begin to understand and hear for themselves when a chord is balanced proportionally. Andrew Robinette says,

“I instill in my singers to always listen for balance as they are singing. There are so many variables in balance with range, divisi, etc. The most effective is a self-policing choir. I will also address what line is the most important in certain passages and ask for it to be evoked.... In almost every rehearsal we balance and tune a chord. This is one way to build the habit.”

Christopher Kiver consistently says, “Listen louder than you sing” in his rehearsals. Andrew Crow says his ensemble likes to, “identify the components of prominent chords and work to get in line with the harmonic series of partials.” Cameron LaBarr describes how to achieve this. “We spend a great deal of time balancing chords, where the strongest part is the tonic, then the fifth, then the third, then the seventh (if applicable), and then other notes that might appear in the chord.”

Four directors said they focus on the issue of balance by addressing timbre. An overly dark or bright choral tone produces many other kinds of technical problems. To combat this issue Barrington Coleman said, “I will occasionally have lower voices switch parts with higher assigned voice classifications to established and borrow needed elements of chiaroscuro and comfort throughout registers.” Mary Hopper said she generally prefers to, “keep the tenors light and have the warmth from the baritones.” Christopher McCafferty directs a group that is a mix of professional and non-professional singers. He wrote, “The mix of professional, and non-professional voices also provides its own balance. The professionals provide a point to wrap

around (generally, a more present, or piercing tone), and the amateur singers wrap around that, and provide some warmth and balance to the sound, by taking the edge off a bit.” Similar to his choral situation, other directors mentioned their men’s choirs include singers of varying ability levels, oftentimes with tenors being the more trained singers. This training affords them a stronger and clearer tone quality which allows for fewer singers needed to balance other sections. Randall Bradley said, “I encourage the T1s in our choir (about 15% of our singers) to sing with a ringing quality which allows them to balance. I also encourage brighter singing in the low ranges of the basses to balance.”

What strategies do you employ to teach aural skills and musical literacy?

Kenneth Phillips said, “Developing students who can sight-sing has been a long-established goal in music education in the United States.”⁴⁵ Yet it is common knowledge among choral directors that choral singers are generally poor music readers. The need for improved aural skills and music literacy is not a challenge exclusive to men’s choruses. Nonetheless it is an important question in which many participants offered insightful answers. While some directors mentioned the Kodaly method or count singing technique as foundational to their teaching, many respondents said that, just like any other skill, sight reading at every rehearsal was crucial to success. Andrew Crow offered an idea that keeps the process fun. He wrote, “We sight-sing a barbershop tag once a week, learning to sing it in 3 to 4 minutes, then "performing" it for a student with a video recorder. He posts it on our social media. This motivates them to work quickly toward performance goals through the task of sight-singing in repertoire with chromatic

⁴⁵ Phillips, Kenneth H. *Directing the Choral Music Program*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2004.

challenges.” Many directors said they connect music reading skills directly to the repertoire.

Cameron LaBarr writes,

“We primarily teach music literacy through the literature at hand. Generally, when we hand out a new work, we read through it start to finish two times without stopping. This allows the singers to correct anything they can, individually, that second time through. We save a lot of rehearsal times doing this. It also builds a certain degree of musical independence.”

Christopher Kiver says he constantly refers to the score, “pointing out similarities and differences.” Andrew Clark provided an example of how he bridges the gap between a sight-reading warm-up and repertoire.

“We work on aural skills (ear-voice coordination, intonation, etc) and music literacy both in our warm-ups and in learning the repertoire itself. We'll develop various exercises and games tailored to the work at hand. For instance, we had a piece to learn recently that used the octatonic scale. In the warm-up, we taught the scale, improvised octatonic melodies, and then applied this work to the repertoire.”

Some collegiate conductors said that they do not concentrate much of their attention on literacy. Frank Albinder wrote, “We don't spend a lot of time on this, though we include a guide to basics in our annually-produced member guide. I also incorporate certain elements in each rehearsal, often writing things on the white board in our rehearsal space.” Randall Bradley says that the process for his singers is more organic and built in to their rehearsal process. “I do not stress music literacy a lot; however, I find the men I teach start to develop quite high levels of music literacy as we move at a high pace, and I place stronger readers by less skilled readers. I encourage them to work together in a buddy system of sorts.” As was mentioned in the previous question, many community based ensembles cannot conceivably direct their attention to music reading. Seeing this as a need however, Thea Kano says that her ensemble offers occasional reading workshops. Christopher McCafferty and Joe Nadeau oftentimes will refer interested parties to private teachers and will also put other resources into their hands.

Many respondents reported that training in aural skills is a more manageable task than music reading skills. Directors said they use solfeggio and sing scales and different modes for awareness of linear intonation. Andrew Crow says he works on vertical intonation by building, “chords with a variety of voicing identifying various parts of the chord and their role.” Jerry Ulrich says that having the singers, “constantly listening and allowing the students themselves to contribute to the arranging process” by asking, “them to occasionally make up their own harmonies” has been very successful. William Griffel also pointed out that being an active listener is very important. “They need to listen to the other parts as well as the guys within their own section,” says Griffel. Andrew Robinette pointed out, “The main thing is to always point out when it is not in tune. If you don't accept out of tune singing and bring attention to it, the group starts to notice it as well and correct more quickly, and eliminate issues.”

Cameron LaBarr, along with many others, discussed the effectiveness of interval training. He said, “We do a fair amount of work with interval training in the beginning of rehearsals. For instance, we'll start on a certain pitch, then sing a minor 6th up from there and down from there. Then we'll choose a different interval and work on that one.”⁴⁶

All musical training including aural skills, music literacy, and vocal technique are interrelated and they are working together toward the same goal of improving the choral artist. A singer's persistent flat singing may not be just a problem of an unrefined ear. Perhaps the root of the tuning problem and subsequently the solution can be found in the singer's vocal technique. McCafferty speaks to this point and states, “We work a lot on teaching the basics of how sound is produced in the body, and what affects it has. This is for singers at all levels. Shape, space,

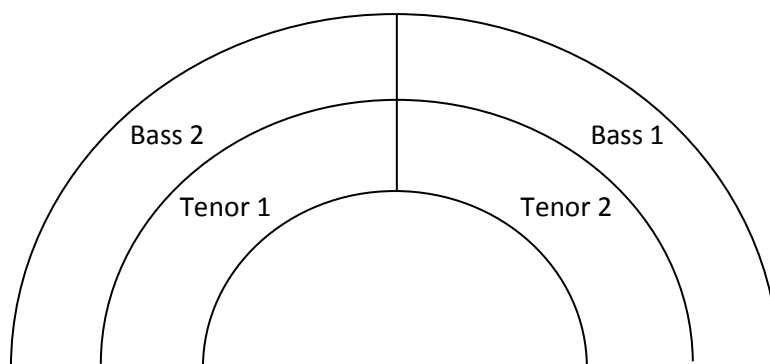
⁴⁶ In *Directing the Choral Music Program*, Phillip's listed several other steps in developing aural skills: “sensing of tonality, inner hearing (audiation), aural recognition of tonal patterns, aural recognition of tonal patterns in songs, aural recognition of beat and meter, and aural recognition of rhythm patterns.”

and placement can all affect pitch. We discuss how they do this, and work with it.... Once they hear the changes they can make, it helps develop the fine ear.”

The ultimate goal with all aural skills exercises is to sharpen the ear and make the singers aware of in-tune and out-of-tune singing. Awareness of linear intonation through singing modes, major, minor, chromatic and other scales are effective in ear training.

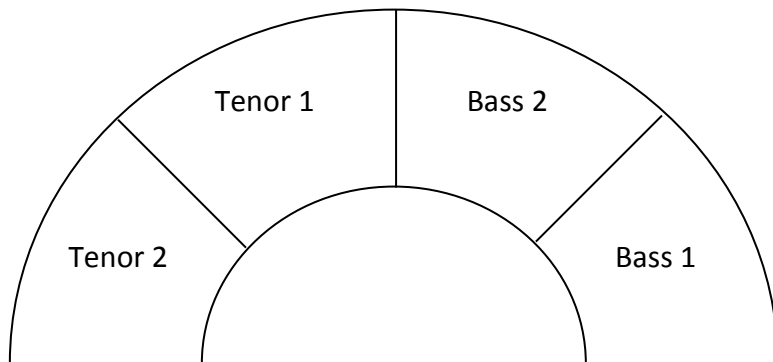
What standing formations do you use and why?

Physical placement of singers in rehearsal and performance spaces can greatly impact the overall sound and balance of an ensemble. The standing formation of a choir can have a profound effect on its ability to sing with accurate intonation and proper balance. A men’s chorus with a disproportionately large baritone section and a small tenor 1 section would do well to place the tenors in an optimal position where they can be heard the best. Directors must choose formations that fit the unique needs of their ensemble. Standing formation may change with each piece of music and also with any given performing venue. Jefferson Johnson offers illustrations of four standing formations for the men’s chorus in his *Choral Journal* article, “The What, Why, and How of Young Adult Male Choirs.”⁴⁷



⁴⁷ Jefferson Johnson, “The What, Why, and How of Young Adult Male Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 52, no. 10 (May 2012): 28-37.

The above illustration allows the outer voices (bass 2 and tenor 1) and the inner voices to be in close proximity for better intonation.



The above illustration shows the outer voices adjacent. This formation is also helpful on pieces with more significant unison singing.

T2	T2	B1	B1	T1	T1	B2	B2
B2	B2	T2	T2	B1	B1	T1	T1
T1	T1	B2	B2	T2	T2	B1	B1

The above illustration is a “hybrid mix” with two voices standing together to achieve a double quartet.

T2	T2	T2	B1	B1	B1	B1	T1	T1	B2	B2
B2	B2	T2	T2	T2	B1	B1	B1	B1	T1	T1
T1	T1	B2	B2	T2	T2	T2	B1	B1	B1	B1

The above illustration is a “hybrid mix” with three voices standing together to achieve a triple quartet.

Due to the unique and individualized nature of the participants’ responses, verbatim responses from each participant are provided. Common criteria that were addressed among many directors were – B2s were positioned to be optimally heard; a mixed formation of sorts, quartets or sections were preferred depending on the technical challenges of a given piece; many directors experimented with different formations throughout the concert cycle.

Richard Bowen – “A typical setup from my perspective is, left to right = T1 / B2 / B1 / T2. I’d like to be able to put them into quartets at times, but we’ve not yet gotten there in any performances.”

Bruce Trinkley – “Parts, but sometimes quartets, especially later in the rehearsal process.”

Tim Seelig – “TTBB/TTBB from left to right as I look at them - when my choruses have reached 150 or more, they have always been split into two choruses - for better hearing, intonation, etc.”

Dusty Francis – “Arched rows with sections organized across the rows. Closer to concert time, we might try mixed formation. Typically, the choristers are not secure enough in their reading to sing in mixed formation early in the rehearsal process.”

Anonymous – “I have around 180 in rehearsal every week. We are constantly changing seating – some weeks we are in sections and some weeks we sit in a mixed formation.”

Andrew Clark – “We use different formations depending on the venue, the repertoire, and the confidence of the group. Medieval and Renaissance polyphony seem to work better for us in quartets, or a mixed (scrambled) formation. Baroque and Viennese classical counterpoint (particularly with orchestras) seems better served by singing in sections. Normally, we have around 20-25 baritones (B1) and maybe 8-12 first tenors and we have, for the sake of balance,

placed the T1s in the front and center of the ensemble with the B2s in the center back (for tuning) and the B1s and T2s on the wings.”

Barrington Coleman – “Circles and mixed sections for independence and timbre equalization.”

Andrew Robinette – “T1 / T2 / B1 / B2 is my standard reading order. At times my ensemble will sing in a "shuffle" in which no one stands beside his own part. It can be random and need some adjustment but can also be rewarding. I have had them in columns to where, from top to bottom on the risers, they are with their own parts, but across the riser they are in quartets. I also have them sing in various pairings with the instruction to not attempt to blend. This allows me to listen for natural blend so I can place them from brightest to darkest timbre. This is primarily done so they don't have to hold back from their true sound, but can still match tone and balance well.”

Andrew Crow – “Our default position is (left-to-right) B2 / T1 / T2 / B1. This puts our T2 in the middle of the choir since we typically are unbalanced and need more T2 sound. It also puts the outside voices of a chord next to each other, which helps with intonation.”

Cameron LaBarr – “We are currently in two rows – back row left to right: B2, then B1. Front row left to right: T1, then T2. This allows the foundation to be in the back, the inner voices are together and the outer voices are together. We also stagger the formation to end up basically with four rows.

Frank Albinder – “I place my sections in blocks. For my adult choir, we stand T1 / T2 / B1 / B2. My collegiate group stands B1 / T1 / T2 / B2, because we have fewer tenors. I've toyed with different standing positions over the years, and while one can make a case for nearly any formation, I've found that with constantly changing personnel and attendance issues, it's hard to make things consistent. I find standing in mixed formation (quartets) difficult for many singers,

and I don't feel the section blend is good that way. I also don't like hearing polyphonic music where each part comes from everywhere. And I take comfort in the fact that when I sang in a professional choir under Robert Shaw, he lined us up by height and had us stand in sections.”

Mary Hopper – “I vary it a lot. This year we are in six rows – three facing each other. In concert formation I have (from left to right) T2 / T1 / B2 / B1 - try to keep the T1 and B2 close to each other. I always aim to try a mixed formation at some point in the year.”

Thea Kano – “Depending on the repertoire, in sections left to right TTBB, or mixed in a "checkerboard" so that 8-10 singers are in sections throughout the chorus.”

Randall Bradley – “We stand in a circle formation for much of our rehearsals. We are able to hear better in a circle, and we learn faster when we can hear more effectively. Our room is deep with short rows and standing in a normal choral formation is challenging – 8 rows deep!”

Joe Nadeau – “I have groups stand left to right – B1 / B2 / T1 / T2 – so the lowest and highest parts are center.”

William Southerland – “I have used standard sections (T1 and T2 on the left; B1 and B2 on the right); "towered" sections T1, then T2, then B1, etc; and mixed formations. It depends on the complexity of the song, the independence of the vocal lines in the song, and the overall acoustic demands of the performance space.”

Christopher McCafferty – “It honestly depends on the song. We usually stand in sections, for a unified section sound, but we do switch around a lot during multi-part pieces and also when switching SATB to TTBB with the countertenors. We will often try to layer up sections that are duetting or who are providing drones in the music. If not, then we pair the bass with the melody line. Usually basses are in back.”

Jerry Ulrich – “We sight-read in sections (either TTBB or BBTT) and then perform in mixed position.”

Cantus – “We usually stand, from stage left to stage right - TTTTTBBBarBar. This is our default position. It keeps the basses near the middle and we tune to the basses. As we don't always sing the same parts, we generally move to stand next to our part partners. Sometimes we use very narrative specific staging - whatever tells the story of the song best.”

Gary Schwartzhoff – “Sections – tradition, tuning and mentorship within the ensemble.”

Christopher Kiver – “Somewhat varied though recently we have been using T2 / T1 / B2 / B1 quite a bit, with the basses more in the middle of the choir, and close to the T1s for intonation as the outer pitches of the chords are closer together. We also sing in mixed formation depending on repertoire.”

William Griffel – “I go back and forth with this every year. I usually have them stand in sections to start: Basses and Tenor I's in the center, Baritones and Tenor II's on the outsides. Mid-year, I try and move them to a mixed formation. It makes the blend so much better.”

Robert Ward – “It varies from piece to piece.”

Chapter 4: Audition Process

Auditioning is the process by which ensemble directors assess each singer's level of musical abilities. Skills and aptitude are adjudicated through completed musical exercises that oftentimes test vocal color, range, pitch accuracy, sight-reading ability, and other musical and nonmusical criteria important to the conductor. Jonathan Palant's aforementioned book, *Brothers, Sing On! Conducting the Tenor-Bass Choir* includes a helpful discussion in Chapter Eight on the audition process. He asks his interviewees to describe in detail their audition process and also how to make auditioning less intimidating. Understandably, there is some overlap between the questions he asks and the questions asked in this project. However, the inclusion of different participants yielded a different set of responses.

What is your audition process for male chorus? Do your audition requirements for male chorus differ from a mixed chorus audition? If yes, please explain.

"No one likes to audition." – Frank Albinder

"The notable difference [in TTBB chorus auditions] is the lack of women auditioning for the men's chorus – typically." – Jonathan Palant

Very few people enjoy auditioning. Oftentimes nerves get the best of them, and they often leave the room feeling they performed poorly. Because of this Frank Albinder says, "I try and keep my auditions short and painless. No one likes to audition, and the stress a singer feels directly affects his ability to perform well in an audition setting. I usually start by having a short conversation to put the singer at ease and learn more about their musical background." Many directors agree and said they prefer to begin the audition process with friendly conversation by asking the auditionee about his singing and musical background.

In addition to a discussion of musical training, most participants' audition processes encompass vocalization, sight-reading, pitch retention, and a prepared solo. All respondents said they vocalize the auditionee to evaluate range, timbre, register shifts, vocal agility and to identify any severe vocal issues. Twelve respondents include sight-reading as a necessary component of the audition. All but five collegiate directors and one community ensemble director include a tonal memory (aural skills, pitch retention, tonal matching, tonal recall, ear memory, interval matching) element in the audition. Andrew Clark mentioned,

“We change the scales and ear patterns from year to year, or often vary them completely within an annual round of auditions. Usually we ask for a descending five note scale, a cappella, to assess how auditionees negotiate intonation. We might also ask for a five note ascending scale near the passaggio, sustaining the top pitch for a longer duration. The four or five note pitch memory exercise traverses non-diatonic territory.”

Nine of the collegiate conductors and five community chorus directors ask their auditionees to sing a prepared piece. If a song is not prepared, he is asked to sing a folk song, hymn or “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.”

Three directors' audition processes offered additional components to the ones described above. (Other respondents may employ additional procedures but chose not to include them in their responses.) Andrew Clark of Harvard University said that his ensemble has two rounds of auditions. The first is a preliminary round to test all skills listed above. Those that are invited back have, “...[a] quartet audition where they perform a prepared polyphonic work with three returning members. In this audition, we are evaluating their preparation, independence, intonation, the ability to self-correct, to adapt to the small ensemble, and their general musicality.” Joe Nadeau of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles said that before singers audition, all are required to attend an open rehearsal. Cantus offered their entire audition process:

“Pre-screen materials include an application form, a cover letter, a headshot, a resume (max 2 pages), and recordings: At least two varying vocalises of your choice and three solo repertoire selections. At least one of these must be an aria. At least one of these must be in a language other than English. We call back anywhere from 5 to 15 guys. They each have a solo audition during which they sing two solo pieces, do some pitch matching, some vocalises, and sing "My Country Tis of Thee" in a variety of styles. During the group audition, we have them sing with the returning members of the group and switch them in and out of the group. Then we have dinner with them to make sure our personalities don't clash too much since we spend a good amount of time on the road.”

Several respondents say they do not have auditions for their ensembles. Seven out of the sixteen collegiate choir directors and one out of seven adult affiliated ensembles said they have open enrollment or membership. Four of the sixteen collegiate chorus directors do not test sight-reading skills.

When asked to describe whether their audition process for men’s chorus differed from a mixed chorus setting, seventeen of the twenty-two respondents said there was no difference in the requirements or methodology of auditioning. Mary Hopper mentioned that the music reading skills and overall level of ability of female auditionees are generally higher than male auditionees. Jerry Ulrich said that he has, “a very rigorous audition for Chamber Choir. Glee Club is a ‘y’all come’ group. This is due to the nature of the repertoire.” Similarly, Cameron LaBarr said that initial audition requirements are the same and that two rounds of callbacks are included for his mixed choirs. Randall Bradley noted that he is, “more careful to try and get their part assignment correct.” Christopher McCafferty said his only difference is that his ensemble includes countertenors and that, “we make clear that this is not your mother’s church choir.” Frank Albinder concluded, “They are the same, except that women sing higher.”

What vocal qualities do you listen for and what level of music aptitude do you expect?

Not surprisingly, the most sought after vocal quality during the audition process was tone quality. Twenty of the twenty-three respondents described this as a top priority. Adjectives directors used to describe the desired tone quality were: healthy, natural, resonant, clear, agile, fresh, pleasant, warm, pure, relaxed, forward placed, open, strong, and core. Nine directors said that intonation was an important skill.

Eight participants noted they looked for whether or not the singer was teachable. By “teachable” directors were referring to the singer’s vocal flexibility to change his color and sound to blend his voice in a group setting. Bruce Trinkley noted that, “a willingness to learn” was important to him. Robert Ward said he asks himself, “Is there something in the voice that can be built?” Cameron LaBarr wrote, “For our men's chorus, the more important thing is that the singers are teachable. For instance, if a singer comes in to audition and has a particular vocal issue, I'll ask the singer to make a change and try something else. If they seem teachable, I'll most often put them in the group.” Along the same lines Frank Albinder said he looks for singers to have, “...the ability to change the sound if necessary. I look for potential, since many who audition have only sung in the shower. If a voice is loud or strident, I work with the singer to see if those qualities can be changed. If not, it's unlikely I'll accept them into the group, since it hard to blend when there are a few strong voices sticking out.” Two participants said that possessing a teachable spirit and a “willingness to learn,” was important to them.

Another skill directors looked for in singers was a clear understanding and consistent execution of a well-supported tone. A “freely produced” and “evenly distributed” breath was language used to describe the quality of breath. In connection with their breath as a link to other vocal hindrances, Andrew Clark noted, “We listen for a singer's sense of line, their breathing,

how (and where) they're 'working' or locating their effort and we're on the lookout for any red-flag problems, tensions, pathologies, etc.”

Four said that registration was a consideration particularly if they were able to access their “falsetto/head voice” or discern between chest and head voice. Cantus responded, “Solo virtuosity...and whether or not they’re singing the correct repertoire for their *fach*”⁴⁸ were important indicators of abilities.

When asked what level of musical aptitude directors expected, nine directors said that little or no level of musical aptitude was required upon admittance. Bruce Trinkley wrote that if he, “wants to sing, the aptitude will develop. This is probably the last chance the young man will have to learn to sing!” Cameron LaBarr says, “As long as they are willing to learn, we are willing to give them a chance and teach them along the way.” Frank Albinder adds that an instrumental background is useful. He wrote, “I expect no [level of musical aptitude] and am pleasantly surprised when there’s any. Many of my collegiate singers play an instrument, and I’ve found that those who play melodic instruments (trumpet, violin) have much better ears than those with no musical training at all.” Two metropolitan-based GALA ensembles said they are more selective due to existing strong membership. Joe Nadeau said, “As GMCLA has grown larger, there is less room onstage requiring the bar to be set a little higher than the past. We usually accept about 60% of those that audition.” Thea Kano responded that, “If the voice is pleasant and they are unable to read music, they are accepted for one concert period, then re-auditioned.”

⁴⁸ The German *fach* (category or specialization) system is a method of classifying singers, primarily opera singers, according to the range, weight, and color of their voices.

Ten respondents replied that some level of music literacy was required, though the range of competency varies widely. Five respondents said that at least a decent sense of pitch was required, and two directors said that matching pitch was a minimal requirement.

How do you determine singer placement within each section?

“One can make an argument in favor for most any standing position, but I’ve never been good at determining what’s best.” – Frank Albinder

The purpose in asking this question was to determine what, if any, methods and rationales directors used to position each individual singer in the choral ensemble. Three themes emerged from the participants’ responses – physical height, a “natural” blend of vocal timbre, and mixing of experienced and inexperienced singers.

Four respondents mentioned height as a determining factor on where to place singers within the section. As Frank Albinder mentioned, it is commonly known that Robert Shaw routinely “seated” his choirs according to height. With very large ensembles, singer’s stature becomes the determining factor; such is the case of Joe Nadeau who leads an ensemble that exceeds two hundred fifty singers.

Seven participating directors said that they will often intersperse seasoned singers with new singers. Some directors described a seasoned singer as one who is a strong sight reader and who is vocally well-grounded. Andrew Crow said, “Since the group is non-auditioned, the ability [level] of the singers varies widely. My strategy in this ensemble is to place vocal and musical leaders strategically in order to help those with less experience.” Christopher McCafferty said that his ensembles begin a concert cycle in a seated arrangement that pairs strong readers with

less experienced readers and then a few weeks into rehearsing he will “revoice” each section to match timbre.

Four directors mentioned that they prefer to seat their choirs primarily according to complimentary tone qualities. Andrew Robinette specifically described that he has, “them balanced for a ‘natural blend’ by singing in pairs at a true forte, and placing the most similar tone colors beside each other.” Mary Hopper said that she generally puts, “heavier voices in the middle of the section with lighter voices on the ends (middle, front and back of the risers).” Frank Albinder mentioned the capricious nature of seating arrangements when he said, “While I find voicing the choir creates a notable difference in the overall sound, I also find that the results are different every time I do it, and that it is hard to seat people in their ‘voiced’ order.”

Many sources are available that offer cogent arguments for one standing arrangement over another. However, many ensembles have achieved successful outcomes by using a variety of methods and rationales for placing singers within their section. No two choirs are alike and therefore, no one “voicing” method is universally effective.

The audition process is the means by which directors determine each singer’s musical and vocal abilities. It comes as no surprise that the evidence gathered in this chapter generally differs little among TTBB and mixed chorus directors. The author was curious as to whether or not directors used any distinct methods and criteria when selecting singers for their all-male ensembles. For instance, did directors require auditionees to sing in a male quartet as part of the TTBB ensemble audition process? Or did directors seek out tenors who were particularly successful in achieving a lighter tone quality in the upper range? Not many distinct differences were found.

Chapter 5: Repertoire & Programming

Careful and creative repertoire selection for any choral ensemble is challenging but also worthwhile. Much of the success of the ensemble is contingent upon the choice of appropriate literature. The criteria for choosing choral repertoire often includes – the quality and appropriateness of the text, voice leading, key and tessitura, difficulty level and a myriad of other considerations. In this next set of questions I asked a mix of broad and specific questions particular to the current trends of men’s choral repertoire.

How do you choose literature for your ensemble? Program to program? Over an entire season? What are your criteria?

“Literature selection is likely the most important issue for male chorus conductors. Much time and energy must be spent here.” – Cameron LaBarr

Dr. LaBarr is correct. The winnowing process of repertoire selection is often a time-consuming task, but is well worth the effort when the right program is selected. The responses below are varied and offer advice with each participant showing his or her thought processes.

Seven participants said that rather than choosing literature one year in advance, they gravitate towards selecting literature program to program. Of these seven, six were collegiate conductors. Andrew Clark’s rationale for this approach is,

“Our repertoire accumulates as the year progresses so that, by March, we have a full program for our annual spring break tour. On that program, we strive to present excellent and engaging music from diverse eras and cultures.... We look for pieces that provide didactic benefits: works that will help build our skills without demoralizing the choir with excessive demands. We ask a simple question: will the choir sound good on this piece? It’s a tough question to answer without knowing your ensemble so we often change and adapt our plans as the year progresses.”

Cameron LaBarr similarly wrote that he picks music that matches the level of the ensemble. He wrote,

“I choose music over an entire season that gets us from one place to another. However, I’m always willing to add and subtract a piece here and there depending on how the year is going. I always err on the side of ‘less is more’ when thinking about literature. Starting out each year with 2-part, 3-part, and simple 4-part music is always best. Getting the choir singing as a whole and feeling successful is incredibly important.”

Christopher McCafferty also says that while he favors programming one concert at a time, he tries to, “create a seasonal arch.” Andrew Robinette finds that he can, “get a more complete complement of the languages and periods over a complete season than I do in one program.”

Most GALA and community ensembles tend to choose their repertoire a year or more in advance. This is most likely due to the need for advance publicity for their audiences, subscribers and sponsors. Joe Nadeau says that the, “GMCLA has a Music Advisory Committee that helps the Artistic Director select music for the concerts. Concert themes are selected 3-5 years in advance. Specific repertoire for each concert is decided 6 months to a year in advance.” Another anonymous GALA director says that his organization has, “the entire season planned before we start. We usually have the big ‘idea’ for concerts 3 years out.” Thea Kano of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington DC said, “I program a year in advance for the entire season. Our shows are always themed-based with the goal to speak to our mission of equality.” GALA and community ensemble directors are constantly trying to grow their audience and also remain viable in the marketplace of entertainment. Therefore they often take into consideration the preferences of their audience and what will get people in the seats while remaining true to their mission of social justice and equality. Cantus offered a unique look into their process of selecting repertoire.

“We program 2 years ahead of time to give our management plenty of time to book the following season. Our programming consists of first deciding on a strong narrative. Then we take a week or two or three to individually research possible repertoire for the show. Resources for this are very similar to any other choir. We come together. We talk through each of our sample programs and repertoire and we put a whole lot of pieces on a white

board. Then over the next weeks or months, we slowly whittle it down to the pieces that tell the story the best.”

“Choosing literature is always a balance. The program has to make sense within itself,” said Andrew Robinette. When discussing criteria for selecting repertoire, two popular themes were balance and variety. Some choose to achieve variety and balance in every performance while others accomplish this over an entire season. Under this umbrella, nine conductors desired the repertoire to have a mixture of challenging and yet accessible music, as Clark and LaBarr explained above. Most respondents also wanted their choices to reflect balance in terms of style, tempo, key relationships between pieces, range, historical period and significance, thematic and programmatic contextualization, languages, textual considerations, accompaniment, and general worthiness. Furthermore, collegiate conductors considered the balance of education and entertainment for the singers. Andrew Crow wrote, “I aim to give them a good mix of the standard canon and innovative or untraditional repertoire.” Audience appeal, as mentioned above for collegiate and GALA conductors, was also a consideration for at least eight respondents. McCafferty wrote that, “We try to choose music that will work for the ‘every person’ audience. If we do somewhat ‘unapproachable’ pieces, we try to balance that with approachable ones, or make the unapproachable one ‘the experience’.” Singers must also be fully invested and engaged with the music. Tim Seelig accurately wrote, “At the end of the day, the singers must engage. If they hate it, it doesn't matter how much you try to ‘sell’ it. This also results in audience engagement – when the singers love the music.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ For directors searching for a helpful list of major works for TTBB choruses, reference Frank Albinder’s article “Extended Works for Male Chorus” published in the *Choral Journal* 46, no. 6 (December 2005): 55-57.

What resources do you use when searching for men's chorus repertoire?

Not surprisingly many directors reported they use the internet for searching for men's chorus repertoire. Web-based programs such as Spotify and iTunes and other websites were utilized, including: <http://www.acda.org> (ACDA), <http://imci.us> (IMC), <http://www.youtube.com> (YouTube), <http://www.imslp.org> (IMSLP), <http://www.choralnet.org/resources/> (ChoralNet), www.musicanet.org (Musica International), www.cpdn.org (CPDL), and <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/> (Oxford Music Online). Nine directors listed materials from music publishing companies and one mentioned educational journals as useful resources. The majority of participants said that past programming of other men's chorus directors was the most helpful. Other activities and events remind conductors of the standard repertoire and help introduce them to new music. Reviewing concert programs of performing men's ensembles at professional conferences, listening to released albums, attending conference reading sessions, and seeking advice of trusted friends were all of benefit to directors. Randall Bradley mentioned that he often has talented composers in his choir that write music for the ensemble. GALA conductors also mentioned their annual GALA Chorus festival⁵⁰ as a helpful way of sharing ideas. Tim Seelig and Joe Nadeau said that much of the works they perform are newly commissioned. Nadeau wrote, "GMCLA frequently chooses the songs we want to perform and then have arrangements done for these. We have a pool of 8-10 qualified arrangers within the chorus."

Many respondents have had a long career conducting men's choruses and they cited their own valuable experience, personal arrangements, as well as their school libraries. Andrew Clark

⁵⁰ Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, on-Line official website of GALA, available from <http://galachoruses.org/events/past-events> (accessed January 31, 2016).

mentioned that, “At Harvard, our long history serves us well with a vast men's choral library and nearly 160 years of repertoire lists.”

Some composers routinely revoice compositions for men’s choirs that were originally conceived for mixed choirs. When evaluating a revoicing, what criteria do you use to critically assess the arrangement? Do these criteria differ from the criteria you use to evaluate music originally conceived for men’s choir?

Most participating men’s chorus directors preferred TTBB music that was originally conceived for men’s chorus, and they were cautious when considering revoicings or they avoided them all together. Bruce Trinkley said he tends to avoid revoicings and says that revoiced arrangements, “rarely demonstrate a thorough understanding of the sonority” of a men’s chorus. Frank Albinder said that, “I am constantly surprised that a lot of composers do not understand the basics of range and tessitura for TTBB ensembles.” Tim Seelig wrote that, “Revoiced music can be a mess if the composer does not understand what he/she is doing.” Andrew Robinette and Cameron LaBarr said that sometimes revoicings work and sometimes they do not. LaBarr continued, “It’s important to review the piece as if you do not know it in any other form.” Similarly, Christopher Kiver asked the question, “Does the arrangement work as well as the original?” Their points are well taken. Can the arrangement stand on its own? Randall Bradley said, “I look to see if the piece has been reconceived or only revoiced. There is a difference.” He went on to say, “Often works that are only revoiced are not as effective.” If a revoicing is sought out, Christopher McCafferty suggested that in general the best scenario is for the conductor to revoice the work. Thea Kano takes this approach and said that she sometimes, “approach[es] the original composer for the rights to rearrange it for TTBB.”

Andrew Clark of Harvard University offered insight into the tradition of revoicing at one of the oldest all-male chorus traditions in America. He wrote,

“In the early days of the Harvard Glee Club, its first conductor, ‘Doc Davison,’ [Archibald T. Davison] published numerous volumes of SATB works arranged for men's voices: even major works like the Bach b-minor mass! Having only male students at the time, it was a way to immerse his students in the great works of choral literature. I have learned the hard way that one must be very careful when considering a ‘re-scored’ work for men's chorus. Often, chord-spacing, tessitura, and other problems arise. We prefer to perform works written for men, particularly since the repertoire itself is so vast and exciting.”

When evaluating a revoicing, the criteria most frequently mentioned among conductors were appropriate range and tessitura for each voice part, correct voice leading, excessive voice crossing, and spacing between voices. Dusty Francis said that the last criterion is often lacking with revoicings that have an overly dense texture that does not allow the sound to ring. Andrew Crow evaluates, “if a melody can be heard through the texture.” Frank Albinder said, “Since much of the TTBB repertoire performed today is arranged from older SATB sources, it's important to make sure that the arrangement doesn't make the piece too muddy (a common problem for some composers when working in the TTBB range).” Barrington Coleman assesses, “whether the composition in question is ‘singable’ and contains attractive elements that are inspiring and impulsive for the interest of singers.”

Cantus opened a window into their general approach to revoicings.

“About 80% of our repertoire on any given program is already published men's music. If there's an excellent piece that tells the story we want to tell but it's in SATB voicing, we'll often rearrange ourselves if it's not available for men's voices. It's really all about how well a piece tells the story. We can usually make just about anything work. When rearranging, we often start with the upper tenors singing the soprano line an octave down; the baritones singing the alto line and octave down; the lower tenors on the tenor line; and the basses on the bass line. But we don't use a lot of SATB music.”

When singing Renaissance music that is not specifically edited for men's chorus, what adjustments, if any do you make? For instance, do the tenors sing the upper octave in falsetto; do you re-arrange voices; do you transpose?

Renaissance music is an important part of our musical heritage and is great for men's choruses.
– Cameron LaBarr.

I approach this with as much dignity toward the original composition as possible, but with a pragmatic approach of what my ensemble can do well. – Andrew Robinette

In response to the above question many conductors said they were willing to consider all arranging and transposing options to produce the best results with their ensembles. When asked if they rearranged voices, five respondents specifically mentioned that they prefer music that has already been edited and arranged for a TTBB ensemble. Eight respondents said that they will rearrange voices as necessary. Regarding transposing, twelve directors said that they transpose for tessitura, intonation, and performance acoustic considerations. When asked if they prefer tenors to sing the upper octave in falsetto two participants avoided the practice. Six participants said they encourage their tenors to sing in their upper registers. Christopher McCafferty's ensemble includes countertenors and they will sing the soprano line, and the T1s sing the alto line. Albinder said that he found that, "the best countertenors are baritones," and Barrington Coleman said he often assigns baritones to the *superius* voice line.

Of the five GALA chorus conductors who answered the question, all said they typically do not perform Renaissance music. William Southerland said the music, "would be too esoteric for our audience and too frustrating/boring for our singers." He goes on to say that, "Our historic music starts in the early Romantic [period]."⁵¹

⁵¹ For more detailed discussions on editorial considerations and historical performance practice, refer to Steven E. Plank's book *Choral Performance: A Guide to Historical Practice*, and Jameson Marvin's article "Music of the Renaissance: A Wealth of Literature for the Male Chorus" and essay *Perfection and Naturalness: A Practical Guide to the Performance of Renaissance Choral Music*.

What are your "desert island" men's chorus pieces?

This question was posed to discover what the favorite men's choral pieces are among the conductors. Their answers create a collection that serves as a helpful resource to the director searching to build a repertory of quality men's chorus literature. Choral works that were mentioned three or more times include the following: Benjamin Britten's *Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard*, Maurice Duruflé's *Messe cum Jubilo*, Pavel Chesnokov's *Spaseniye sodelal*, Johannes Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, Franz Biebl's *Ave Maria* and Parker/Shaw arrangements. The following pieces were mentioned twice: Morten Lauridsen's *Dirait-on*, Francis Poulenc's *Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise*, and spirituals arranged by Fenno Heath. A complete list of the selections submitted participants can be found in Appendix D.⁵²

How much do you agree with the following statement? Commissioning new music for men's choirs is important – why do you feel this way?

"We need to ask, encourage, and commission composers to write new music for men's choruses." – Richard Bowen

A primary concern among TTBB ensemble conductors is the value and worth of new men's chorus literature. Tim Seelig clearly stated, "There is not enough quality music composed for men's choruses today." However, Bruce Trinkley noted that, "the TTBB repertory is rich and diverse. All too often composers have not been exposed to the wealth of the existing repertory and are reinventing the wheel, so to speak." Survey participants were then asked, "How much do you agree with the following statement: commissioning new music for men's choirs is

⁵² Jeremy Jones' dissertation, *The Development of Collegiate Male Glee Club in America: An Historical Overview* includes a helpful appendix entitled "Repertoire Reference Guide of Twenty-First Century Works for Male Chorus." Jones includes information regarding: voicing, accompaniment, text source, approximate duration, year of publication, publisher information, and commission ensemble.

important?” Participants were asked to respond using a Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree. Of the twenty-four responses, the results were – 0 strongly disagree or disagree, 1 neutral, 10 agree and 13 strongly agree. Virtually all men’s chorus directors agreed that commissioning new music is important. Further insights came when the question, “Why do you feel this way?” was posed. Not surprisingly, the most common response among participants was that the commissioning of new music helps the men’s chorus art form continue to grow and thrive. In Andrew Robinette’s article, “The Benefits of New Commissions,” published in the North Central – American Choral Director’s Association Newsletter, *Melisma* he stated,

“The need for new commissions is keenly felt within male choruses, and for logical reason. There are fewer male choruses than mixed choirs or treble choirs, creating a smaller market. In a sales driven economy this serves as a deterrent to both publishers and composers. To supplement the smaller number of pieces written for specific voicing, publishers have compensated by reworking compositions and selling them in multiple voicing options.”

On the topic of providing more men’s chorus literature merely through re-voicing Robinette said,

“There is a down side to the re-voicing of compositions; it is the absence of distinct repertoire. In a text driven medium, the ability to pair specific texts with specific voicing is a valuable tool. Some texts work better from a single gender perspective, be it male choruses or women’s choirs. Other texts lend themselves naturally to a mixed gender/mixed choir perspective. Because mixed choirs dominate the landscape, the latter texts are more likely to be set. However, due to financial incentive and re-voicing, texts that could come from any perspective are most likely to be used. As a result, not only are some powerful texts far less likely to be used, but the same texts, by the same composers, are being sung by a vast majority of choirs in the country.”

Robinette’s point is also a special concern among gay men’s choirs. Seelig noted that, “Text and themes are critical to engaging the singer and audience in carrying our mission forward.”

Another GALA chorus conductor said, “As all the music we perform is mission-driven, we find that much traditional men’s chorus music has no meaning to us.” Compatible themes and salient

topics are essential to establishing connection between the music and singers. For this reason, Andrew Clark states,

“Commissioning and performing new music stands as one of the most important and essential facets of the Harvard Glee Club. Usually, learning a new piece elevates the collective skill and technique of the ensemble. We really gain a great deal from the ‘co-creative’ process of working closely with a living composer, discovering his or her musical language, and performing a work that, hopefully, reflects the world we inhabit today.”

This collaboration brings a multitude of benefits to the ensemble, conductor, composer and audience. Robinette’s column suggested several benefits to commissioning new music.

“The conductor and ensemble become part of the creative process. Composers want their works to be successful and well received. By and large, they are open and communicative with the musicians that bring their pieces to life and value the performers’ opinions. The collaboration enhances the excitement for the ensemble members as well as their investment throughout the rehearsal and performance process. It often creates a positive sense of ownership of the work. The second addition is perhaps the most important. It is a personal connection that is inherent in commissions. It is unlikely that your most-prized possession is a mass produced object for which you feel no personal connection. This is just as true for music. The use of local composers, writers, or a subject matter that is meaningful to the ensemble and community, can all be very powerful. The more personal the connection that is established between the ensemble and the music, the more focused the ensemble and the more rewarding the experience. Similarly, greater connection between the music, ensemble, and audience allows for greater success of the ensemble and greater enrichment of the community. Commissions allow an excellent opportunity to say something both new and meaningful. Additional benefits include maximizing the ensembles resources, contributing to choral literature, and giving voice to a deserving composer. Finally, there is a responsibility for the conductor beyond the first performance. We must champion the works. In order for a piece to have the opportunity to gain a place among standard choral literature it cannot be performed once and put away. It must be programmed multiple times in order to make an impact.”⁵³

Conductors may see commissioning new music as an expensive project. Frank Albinder suggested, “Commissioning consortiums are an excellent way for groups with limited resources to band together and have a composer write a piece for them all. It’s great for the composer too, since the piece will receive multiple performances instead of just one or two.”

⁵³ Andrew Robinette’s complete article, “The Benefits of New Commissions” can be found in Appendix C.

Although most participating directors stand in favor of commissioning and performing new choral works, some offered critiques of current compositional trends. Bruce Trinkley pointed out that, “commissioning for the sake of commissioning has resulted in a lot of second-rate choral music—for all ensembles.” Andrew Crow observed that, “The current trend in choral composition relies on extensive divisi and extremes of range.” This compositional style may result in, “much of the new music [being] either too difficult or challenging from a vocal perspective,” concluded Jerry Ulrich. These critiques serve as a reminder to directors to proceed with care when selecting a suitable composer. Furthermore, though generally understood and accepted, directors may consider examining the complete compositional output of a composer to more fully understand his or her musical language prior to commissioning a new work. A worthwhile question to ask may be whether the composer is capable of providing a platform of musical expression through which the singers may be inspired and can grow.

A few directors mentioned that much of their programming is made up of commissioned works and that among those works are some of the best pieces in their repertoire. Christopher McCafferty, conductor of Illumni Men’s Chorale said that his ensemble has, “. . .commissioned or premiered over 35-40 new works in the last 6 years.” He went on to say that, “[Commissioning new music] is vital to the men’s chorus tradition staying alive. We have not yet learned to fully use a men’s chorus to its greatest extent. We are capable of so much more than patriotic tunes, fight songs, and drinking songs.” As participation in all-male choruses continues to grow in the United States, so too will the body of TTBB repertoire.

Selecting repertoire is one of the most important tasks of the choral director. To create a single concert program or an entire season that sets up the ensemble for success requires a careful balance of many factors. However, knowing where to look for quality repertoire is the

first step. Also, a large body of Renaissance repertoire exists for TTBB ensembles. If a conductor is uncertain about which editions accurately reflect the composers original specifications or how to approach early music, Steven E. Plank's book, *Choral Performance: A Guide to Historical Practice* offers many criteria to consider. Jameson Marvin's *Perfection and Naturalness: A Practical Guide to the Performance of Renaissance Choral Music* is also a succinct primer for approach to style and performance practice.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Based on the evidence collected in this survey, many men's chorus directors around the United States seem to continue to be professionally well-connected through organizations such as the Intercollegiate Men's Choruses, Gay and Lesbian Choruses, Barbershop Harmony Society, The Associated Male Choruses of America, and the American Choral Directors Association. The consensus among respondents also seems to be that TTBB ensembles are thriving nationally, however mostly in urban areas; some collegiate director participants in many regions of the country said that men's chorus participation on the state and local level was low and that most activity is isolated to a few larger universities. In addition, though this study was purposely not a comprehensive survey of all men's chorus director's in the United States, according to the demographic illustrated in the infographic in the Preface as well as the respondents' feedback in Chapter 1, the men's chorus tradition seems vibrant particularly in the Midwestern region of the country.

Though a majority of secondary level all-male and mixed choruses are lead by female directors, the current research reveals that male directors far out-number female directors of post-secondary men's choruses of all types. This author believes that female conductors are no less qualified to conduct all-male choruses than males are qualified to conduct all-female choruses. Successful female and male directors of TTBB choruses should consider looking for more ways to empower women conductors to begin men's choruses in their universities and communities. Perhaps more interest sessions at conferences and journal articles targeting female choral conductors could be offered that would provide them with useful tools and information on how to build an all-male chorus of any kind at any educational level.

Based on the research above, camaraderie within a men's chorus oftentimes organically emerges as a central ethos of the ensemble. Though this study does not seek to enumerate the differences between men's choruses and women's choruses, some participants who have directed both men's and women's choruses have noted the different "energy" that is palpable in the rehearsal. Just as many male conductors have successfully harnessed the unique energy in an all-female chorus, so too can the female conductor engage effectively with an all-male chorus.

Since only one barbershop chorus participated in this project, few conclusions could be drawn from the Barbershop tradition. Barbershop choruses generate a sense of togetherness that seems to center around the tradition of close harmonies, showmanship, as well as constant and friendly competition. The Barbershop tradition continues its tradition of competition.

Male singers in adult-affiliated ensembles often have experience singing with all-male choruses and want to continue participating in an all-male environment. In a follow-up email, I asked Frank Albinder, director of the Washington Men's Camerata, "Do the majority of your Washington Men's Camerata singers have previous experience singing with a TTBB chorus? If not, why do you believe they are attracted to the all-male adult-affiliated choir?" He answered,

"Yes, nearly all of the men in the Camerata have sung in a men's chorus before, usually a collegiate TTBB ensemble. Some have sung in the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, but switch to the Camerata to sing different repertoire. The few who haven't sung in a men's chorus before joining the Camerata were usually recruited by a current member. And most of our members sing in at least one other chorus, usually a large, SATB symphonic choir, and often a church choir as well."

Gay men's choruses also seem to cultivate a spirit of solidarity within TTBB ensemble with the added component of advocacy for social justice for the LGBT community. The landmark United States Supreme Court's case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. declared that the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees same-sex couples the

fundamental right to marry and to have the same benefits of marriage as opposite-sex couples. With this momentous advancement of equality and legal rights within LGTB community, what does this mean for the future of gay men's choruses? I followed up with Thea Kano of the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington D.C. and Tim Seelig of the Gay Men's Chorus of San Francisco by asking this question. Kano responded, "Marriage equality is obviously a huge achievement for the LGBT community, but until every heart is changed and every mind is opened to equality and justice for all, we will have a reason to sing. And when that day comes, we'll then have a reason to continue to sing in celebration." Many countries around the world outlaw same sex marriage and also people openly identifying as gay or lesbian. Kano said that her ensemble travels around the world promoting LGBT equality. While responding to my query, Kano was aboard a plane heading to Ukraine with an ensemble to promote LGBT equality. She went on,

"The reality is, it is not safe to be out as an LGBT citizen in Ukraine, and our going there means we cannot use the "g" word in many of the places we will sing. But our singing for members of the LGBT there will hopefully empower them and give them hope. And for the members of our audience who aren't open to the idea of equality, we hope our presence – and our singing – might have a positive impact for change.

Many LGBT people still live in a place where it is not safe, and where it is even illegal to be gay. It sadly points to the fact that there is still so much more work to be done for equality. Music is the vehicle that often does break through to those closed minds where words leave off, thus where GALA choruses come in."

Tim Seelig said,

"The relevance of LGBT choruses has been far-reaching and at the same time, laser focused throughout the years. As the oldest openly gay chorus in the movement, SFGMC has experienced the changing times and adjusting of focus for almost 4 decades, from the AIDS pandemic years to social justice. The overriding theme throughout, is to give voice to the underserved, marginalized, ignored and abused communities in our world. It certainly does not stop at the LGBT door as member choruses of GALA have stood tall and sung out proudly for an amazing array of causes, people and injustices. We will keep doing this as long as young people are thrown out of their homes for being different, as long as any people are denied equal rights – whether water fountains or bathrooms, as long as ignorance abounds. That said, we are beyond thrilled with how far our country

has come in what at times seems like a very long time, but in the big picture is a nanosecond. Unfortunately, we are still fighting what we consider the good fight – it's just that now, we are married while we do it!

GALA Choruses has a statement that ‘Every time a GALA chorus steps on stage, it makes a political statement.’ Our voices win freedom. Together, we can do so much more than any of us could do separately. The power of our voices and our music is incalculable. We believe, with all of our hearts, that music is not the end, but a means to the end. The ‘end’ is defined differently by each chorus and each singer in each chorus. Bottom line: equality. Just as it takes ‘one of everything’ to make a beautiful chorus, so it is with choruses of all kinds to make the world a more beautiful place because of our singing.”

In chapter one Andrew Clark discussed the potential future ramifications of our culture’s discussion of gender. His choir, the Harvard Glee Club no longer identify as a “men’s chorus” but rather as a “TTBB chorus.” As our Western culture continues to move further away from binary gendered language and sensitivities, what impact will this have for university men’s choruses and other gender-exclusive choirs across the country? Will directors of all types of choirs begin to use gender neutral language? Will there be a rise in transgender males wanting to participate in all-male choirs? If so, will directors change the audition process and alter any vocal requirements for admittance in the ensemble? And what impact, if any, will this have on new TTBB music written?

Many directors expressed the need for more high quality men’s choral literature to be written. Rather than a revoicing or an arrangement of an SATB song, TTBB directors are looking for music that is originally conceived for men’s chorus. Though a particular collection of men’s chorus literature includes drinking songs and sea chanties, many directors also desire meaningful texts set to impactful music for their ensembles to sing. Many gay men’s chorus directors reported that they commission a great deal of repertoire that fits into their mission. As other men’s chorus directors seek to enrich the corpus of TTBB repertoire, they can continue

supporting new music by commissioning new works to be written. If a choral organization does not have adequate funds to commission a work but desires to promote new music, programming newly commissioned works will obviously boost sales and thus encourage more TTBB music to be written.

My primary goal was to provide a platform by which men's chorus directors could share their valuable insights on a wide range of topics and thus create a compilation of shared wisdom for further understanding and professional growth for all men's chorus directors. I hope the insights gathered here from successful university, community, professional, GALA and Barbershop men's chorus directors from all over the United States will be an enduring resource for new and seasoned men's chorus directors.

Appendix A

What advice would you give a young conductor wanting to start an all-male chorus at his or her musical organization?

“Do It!” was the recurring theme among most participating directors. Cantus urged, “Be excited about it. Make other people excited about it. Put something together. Invite a bunch of people and show them what you have. Worry about money later. Be passionate and inventive in your programming and your performance spaces. Get out into the community.”

Similarly, Bruce Trinkley recommended, “Go for it with enthusiasm and program works that the singers will love and be challenged by!” Tim Seelig recommended, “Focus on the brotherhood aspect first – the music will come!” Like building anything of value, starting a men’s chorus takes perseverance and a vision. One participant said, “Know why and what you want to create.” Intentionality will inform decisions of recruitment, programming, as well as the kind of rehearsal atmosphere and culture to create within the ensemble.

Robert Ward encouraged new men’s chorus director’s to, “Be willing to stay the course. If you want to build a tall building you often have to start by digging a deep hole.” Likewise, Andrew Crow noted, “It takes four years to build or to change a culture. Work to build a critical mass and recruiting will become easier.” Andrew Clark wisely encouraged directors to, “Work with a group where they are (musically, socially) not necessarily where you want them to be and build from there. Be open, humble, and love your singers as much as the music.” Randall Bradley also encouraged future men’s chorus directors to, “Become comfortable in your own skin if you want to work with men. Learn who you are, what makes you tick, learn to be vulnerable and authentic.” Cameron LaBarr, who recently began a men’s chorus at the University of Missouri, Springfield said, “Rely on your colleagues and mentors to assist you in

this process. There are a lot of people out there who are ready and willing to help.” Andrew Robinette also noted the value of seeking advice from seasoned colleagues and said, “Find mentors who conduct men's groups and regularly meet with them.”

Barrington Coleman commented, “Develop a culture for healthy singing among a small group of male singers who desire fun companionship along with audiences for exposure to diverse idioms.” Christopher Kiver similarly encouraged men’s chorus directors to maintain high artistic standards. He wrote, “Create a vibrant artistic organization that has high musical and fraternal ideals. In other words, don't just think that all men are ‘jocks’ and that they only enjoy singing sea shanties and humorous pieces. Have equally high expectations for a gender group as a mixed gender group.”

Finally, several directors advocated including a men’s chorus in the choral curriculum and arts community. Frank Albinder commented, “It's always challenging to start something new, but if you try multiple approaches to building an ensemble, you'll find that it'll quickly become a valuable part of any curriculum and arts program.” Gary Schwartzhoff recommended, “[using] this ensemble as a recruitment tool for the SATB program. It can serve as a training choir in the program.” Likewise, LaBarr said, “Be prepared for the men's chorus to be one of the greatest components of both your musical organization and your career.”

The benefits of starting a men’s chorus in a school or community are numerous. There will be challenges along the way, but starting a men’s chorus will prove to be well worth the effort if the director is determined and perseveres.

Appendix B

“The Benefits of New Commissions”⁵⁴
(Used by permission)

By Dr. Andrew Robinette

The need for new commissions is keenly felt by male choruses, and for logical reasons. There are fewer male choruses than mixed choirs or treble choirs, creating a smaller market. In a sales-driven economy, this serves as a deterrent to both publishers and composers. To supplement the smaller number of pieces written for specific voicing, publishers have compensated by reworking compositions and selling them in multiple voicing options. I was introduced to re-voiced arrangements as an impressionable undergraduate in the UNC Greensboro Men’s Glee Club. We performed a piece by Emma Lou Diemer for the composer when she was visiting campus. After the final chord rang out, she smiled, thanked us, and said, “Huh, I didn’t realize it had been released for TTBB.” While I was surprised at the time, the reality is that re-voicing has had many positive effects for choirs. Notably, it has created additional new repertoire for male choruses, it has allowed treble choirs access to more historical repertoire, and it has allowed smaller or younger mixed ensembles greater variety through SAB and SAT arrangements.

However, there is a downside to the re-voicing of compositions: the absence of a distinct repertoire. In a text-driven medium, the ability to pair specific texts with specific voicing is a valuable tool. Some texts work better from a single-gender perspective, be it male choruses or women’s choirs. Other texts lend themselves naturally to a mixed gender/mixed choir perspective. Because mixed choirs dominate the landscape the latter texts are more likely to be

⁵⁴ Andrew Robinette, “The Benefits of New Commissions,” NC-ACDA *Melisma* 34, no. 1: (Fall 2014): p. 12-13.

set. However, due to financial incentives and re-voicing, texts that could come from any perspective are most likely to be used. As a result, not only are some powerful texts far less likely to be used, but the same few texts, by the same composers, are being sung by a vast majority of choirs in the country.

The incorporation of new literature is beneficial in many ways. New repertoire can infuse energy into performing ensembles and capture audiences' attention. As a conductor, one of the hardest balances is between programming beloved standards and new pieces. Choral music has a rich tradition that deserves to be celebrated. However, if we lean too much towards beloved standards, we are simply saying the same thing over and over again. Like any repetition, the danger is that the audience will become numb to the message. At a time when audience size is a great concern for most choral ensembles, this is a particularly alarming prospect.

New commissions enhance each of these benefits and add several more. The first is that the conductor and ensemble become part of the creative process. Composers want their works to be successful and well received. By and large, they are open and communicative with the musicians who bring their pieces to life and value the performers' opinions. The collaboration enhances the excitement for the ensemble members as well as their investment throughout the rehearsal and performance process. It often creates a positive sense of ownership of the work.

The second contribution that commissions offer is perhaps more important; it is a personal connection that is inherent in the process. It is unlikely that your most prized possession is a mass-produced object for which you feel no personal connection. This is just as true for music. The use of local composers, writers, or a subject matter that is meaningful to the ensemble and community can all be powerful. The more personal the connection that is established between the ensemble and the music, the more focused the ensemble and the more

rewarding the experience. Similarly, greater connection between the music, ensemble, and audience allows for greater success of the ensemble and greater enrichment of the community. Commissions allow an excellent opportunity to say something both new and meaningful. Additional benefits include maximizing the ensemble's resources, contributing to choral literature, and giving voice to a deserving composer.

Finally, there is a responsibility for the conductor beyond the first performance. We must champion the works. In order for a piece to gain a place among standard choral literature it cannot be performed once and put away. It must be programmed multiple times in order to make an impact. A commission is a partnership between the composer, the conductor, and the ensemble. It is an important partnership that is central to our art.

On a more personal note, one of the most meaningful things I have ever experienced was the rehearsal and premiere of a commission by Stephen Hatfield. "As She Goes" was written in memoriam of my predecessor at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, Eileen Hower. Not only had the Women's Choir sung for a deeply loved professor, however; she and Hatfield had also been friends prior to her passing. It was an uncanny experience. The emotional connection between composer, ensemble, conductor, piece, and the love for Professor Hower was palpable. The choir sang with more depth and nuance on that piece than any other. They were engaged in a way that was mature beyond their level of development as eighteen- to twenty-one year old musicians. It was the type of experience that shaped not only the singers' musicianship, but also helped them heal and grow, and it was the commission process that was central to the experience.

Appendix C

“Desert Island Music Choices”

Collegiate

Richard Bowen

Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal – arr. Alice Parker

Prayer of the Children – Kurt Bestor

Come Travel With Me – Scott Farthing

Send in the Clowns – arr. Michael Martin

Testament of Freedom – Randall Thompson

Things That Never Die – Lee Dengler

The Greenland Whale Fishery – arr. David Poole

Down by the Sally Gardens – arr. Henry Mishkin

Dirait-on – Morten Lauridsen

Be Thou My Vision – arr. Robert Hunter

Battle Hymn of the Republic – arr. Peter Wilhousky

Randall Bradley

Blow the Candles Out – arr. Michael Richardson

We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace – arr. William Appling

Andrew Clark

Ballad of Lady Barnard and Little Musgrave – Benjamin Britten

Alto Rhapsody – Johannes Brahms

Messe cum júbilo – Maurice Duruflé

Lowlands – arr. Robert Shaw and Alice Parker

Barrington Coleman

Ave Maria – Franz Biebl

Sure on this Shining Night – Morten Lauridsen

Dirait-on – Morten Lauridsen

Spaseniyе sodelal – Pavel Tschesnekov

Carmina Burana (excerpts for men's chorus) – Carl Orff

Andrew Crow

Down in the Valley, arr. George Mead

Tiger! Tiger! – Virgil Thomson

Workin' for the Dawn of Piece – arr. Ron Jeffers

Almost any of the Shaw/Parker arrangements

Dusty Francis

Messe cum Júbilo – Maurice Duruflé

Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard – Benjamin Britten

Beati Mortui – Felix Mendelssohn

Mary Hopper

Alto Rhapsody – Johannes Brahms

Quarter Petites Prieres de Saint Francois D'Assise – Francis Poulenc

Der Herr Segne Euch – J.S. Bach

Christopher Kiver

The Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard – Benjamin Britten

Ave Maria – Franz Biebl

Cameron LaBarr

Meestelaulud (Men's Songs)- Veljo Tormis

Hard Times – arr. Alice Parker

What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor – arr. Parker/Shaw

Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child – Fenno Heath

The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald – arr. Alan Dunbar

Ave Maria – Tomas Luis de Victoria/ed. Robert Sund

Andrew Robinette

Ave Maria – Franz Biebl

Spaseniye sodelal – Pavel Tschesnekov

Brother's, Sing On! – Edvard Grieg

Betelehemu – Wendell Whalum/arr. Barrington Brooks

When I Hear Her I Have Wings – Mark Templeton

Bruce Trinkley

A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map – Samuel Barber

Song of Peace – Vincent Persichetti

spirituals arranged by Fenno Heath and Bruce Trinkley

Jerry Ulrich

A Survivor from Warsaw – Arnold Schoenberg

Robert Ward

Alto Rhapsody – Johannes Brahms

Adult Affiliated

Frank Albinder (and collegiate)

Dostoyno yest – Nikolai Golovanov

Five Ways To Kill a Man – Bob Chilcott

Danny Boy – arr. Patrick Dupré Quigley

Carnival Song – Walter Piston

Invocation – Claude Debussy
I Have Had Singing – Steven Sametz
Loch Lomond – arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams
And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda – Eric Bogle
The Pasture – Randall Thompson
Last Letter Home – Lee Hoiby
Quarter Petites Prieres de Saint Francois D'Assise – Francis Poulenc
Sea Fever – Amy Beach
Song of Peace – Vincent Persichetti
The Singer – Veljo Tormis

Christopher McCafferty

Dona Nobis Pacem – Joseph Gregorio
Krestu Tvoyemu – Piotr Goncharov
Winter Medley – Edwin Wendler
There Was an Old Man Whose Tears – John Muehleisen
Spasěniye sodělal – Pavel Chesnokov
Lux Aurumque – Eric Whitacre
Yuletide Fires – Dianne Loomer
Ave Maria – Franz Biebl
Quarter Petites Prieres de Saint Francois D'Assise – Francis Poulenc
Shenandoah – James Erb/Marshall Bartholomew
There is Nothing Like a Dame – arr. William Stickles

GALA

Thea Kano

Messe Cum Jubilo – Duruflé
Make Them Hear You – arr. Jeff Funk

Joe Nadeau

Ave Maria – Franz Biebl
The Road Home – Stephen Paulus (rejoiced TTBB version)
Everything Possible – arr. Willi Zwozdesky
Finally Here – Eric Helmuth
I am in Need of Music – David Brunner

Tim Seelig

Salvation is Created – Pavel Tchesnokov
The Awakening – Joseph Martin
The Last Words of David – Randall Thompson
Testimony – Stephen Schwartz

William Southerland

Stars I Shall Find- Victor C. Johnson

Appendix D

Respondents' Biographies

Grammy® Award-winning conductor and singer **Frank Albinder** currently directs the Washington Men's Camerata, the Virginia Glee Club at UVa and the Woodley Ensemble. A native of Hollywood, California, Mr. Albinder holds degrees from Pomona College and the New England Conservatory of Music. He is currently President of Intercollegiate Men's Choruses, a member of the steering committee for ChoralNet.

Randall Bradley joined the Baylor community in the Fall of 2000 where he became the Director of the Church Music Program. In addition to directing the Baylor University Men's Choir, he teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in church music and is the Ben H. Williams Professor of Music and Director of the Center for Christian Music Studies. He received the BME Degree from Troy State University (Troy, Alabama), and the MM Degree in Conducting and the DMA Degree in Church Music from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, Texas).

The “intellectually, emotionally and musically rich” (Star Tribune) men's vocal ensemble **Cantus** is known for its trademark warmth and blend, innovative programming and engaging performances of music ranging from the Renaissance to the 21st century. Cantus performs more than 60 concerts each year in national and international touring, and in its home of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota and has released 17 albums on its self-titled label. Integral to the Cantus mission is its commitment to preserve and deepen music education in the schools.

Mallorie Chernin is Director of Choral Activities at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, where she coaches, teaches conducting and conducts three choirs, the Concert Choir, Women's Chorus, Men's Glee Club and Madrigal Singers. Mallorie Chernin completed a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from Westminster Choir College.

Andrew Clark is the Director of Choral Activities and Senior Lecturer on Music at Harvard University. He serves as the Music Director and Conductor of the Harvard Glee Club, the Radcliffe Choral Society, and the Harvard–Radcliffe Collegium Musicum, and teaches courses in conducting, choral literature, and music and disability studies in the Department of Music. He earned degrees from Wake Forest, Carnegie Mellon, and Boston Universities.

Barrington Coleman is Associate Professor of Voice at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is director of the Varsity Men's Glee Club. He holds degrees from Illinois Wesleyan University, Northwestern University and the Juilliard School of Music.

Andrew Crow joined the Ball State University faculty in 2009. As Director of Choral Activities, he leads the Ball State Statesmen and the Chamber Choir. Crow also teaches conducting and choral literature and supervises the choral graduate conducting program for students pursuing the degrees Doctor of Arts or Master of Music. He earned the degree Doctor of Musical Arts in

Conducting, including studies with choral, orchestral, and wind ensembles at the University of Minnesota and earned his Master of Music in Choral Conducting at Temple University.

Conductor and bass-baritone **Dusty Francis** enjoys an active career as a performer, clinician, and adjudicator in the New York metropolitan area and across the country. He currently serves as Music Director of the Park Slope Singers and of the Ars Musica Chorale; Founding Artistic Director of the New Jersey State Children's Chorus; Assistant Conductor of the New York City Master Chorale; and Choirmaster and Organist at All Saints Episcopal Church in Leonia, New Jersey. Francis holds the Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Maryland. Francis earned a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Xavier University in Cincinnati.

William E. Griffel received his bachelor's degrees in Music Education and Vocal Performance from Viterbo University in LaCrosse, WI in 1991. He went on to receive a master's degree in Vocal Performance in 1994 and a performance certificate in Vocal Performance in 1996 from DePaul University in Chicago, IL. William is the Director of Purdue Musical Organizations at Purdue University, and he directs the Purdue Varsity Glee Club.

Mary Hopper is Professor of Choral Music and Director of Performance Studies at the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music conducts the Wheaton College Men's Glee Club and the Women's Chorale. Dr. Hopper is currently National President of the American Choral Directors Association.

Buddy James is Professor of Music at California State University, East Bay where he is the Founding Director of the School of Arts and Media and the Director of Choral and Vocal Studies. He is past president of the National Collegiate Choral Organization, and has served on boards for Intercollegiate Men's Choruses and The American Choral Directors Association. Dr. James holds a Doctor of Music Arts degree from the University of Southern California, and received honors and a Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Akron. He attended the University of California, Irvine as a Chancellor's Fellow, receiving the Master of Fine Arts degree in Choral Music.

Jeremy D. Jones is an Assistant Professor of Music and Naus Family Faculty Scholar at Miami University in Oxford, OH where he conducts the Collegiate Chorale and Men's Glee Club, teaches Choral Conducting and Choral Techniques, and supervises student teachers. In addition to the DMA degree in conducting from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Dr. Jones holds the MM degree in choral conducting from East Carolina University, and the BM degree in vocal music education from Middle Tennessee State University.

Dr. Thea Kano received her doctorate in choral conducting from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2004. Dr. Kano holds a Master of Music degree from UCLA and a bachelor's degree in choral music education and piano performance from Arizona State University. In 2005 Dr. Kano founded the New York City Master Chorale and has served as its

Artistic Director since its inception. She also conducts the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, DC, for which she has served as its Artistic Director since 2014.

Christopher Kiver is director of choral activities at Pennsylvania State University where he directs the Concert Choir and Men's Glee Club, oversees the graduate choral conducting program and teaches classes in choral conducting and choral literature. Kiver is a graduate of the University of London, Florida State University and the University of Michigan where he received the D.M.A. in choral conducting. Kiver is currently national chair for the Repertoire and Standards Committee on Male Choirs for the American Choral Directors Association.

Cameron F. LaBarr is director of choral studies at Missouri State University where he leads a comprehensive choral program including over 200 singers in five choirs. He holds a Bachelor of Music from Missouri State University, and he earned a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of North Texas.

Dr. Nicole Lamartine became Director of Choral Activities at the University of Wyoming in 2008. She conducts the Collegiate Chorale, The UW Singing Statesmen and teaches conducting and applied voice. She holds the BM degree in Vocal Performance from New Mexico State University as well as an MM in Vocal Performance and the DMA in Choral Conducting from the University of Arizona.

Jameson Marvin was Director of Choral Activities, Senior Lecturer on Music at Harvard University for 32 years.

Justin Miller attended Chapman University where he earned a Bachelor of Music degree, majoring in both music education (vocal) and performance (conducting). In 2008, Justin became music director of The Westminster Chorus, an award-winning Barbershop ensemble based in California.

Joe Nadeau is the artistic director and conductor of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles. He has a Master's degree from the UMKC Conservatory of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Kansas in Choral Conducting. He has taught at every educational level from pre-K through college.

Reuben M. Reynolds III has been the Music Director of the BGMC since 1997. After earning undergraduate degrees in both economics and music, Mr. Reynolds received his Master of Music degree from Louisiana State University.

Gary R. Schwartzhoff is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where he conducts Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, The Singing Statesmen and teaches conducting. Schwartzhoff received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Central College in Pella, Iowa and a Master of Music Degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Tim Seelig is conductor, singer, teacher and motivational speaker. He is currently Artistic Director of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. He is Conductor Emeritus of the Turtle Creek Chorale, which he conducted for 20 years. Dr. Seelig holds four degrees, including the Doctor of Musical Arts and the Diploma from the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. He has authored seven books and DVDs on choral.

William Southerland is a professional conductor, singer, and music teacher based in North Carolina. He currently works full time teaching general and choral music to elementary and middle school students. William is also the conductor and Artistic Director of the Triad Pride Men's Chorus in Greensboro, NC.

Bruce Trinkley taught composition and orchestration and conducted the Penn State Glee Club from 1970 to 2006, and was music director for Penn State's Centre Stage from 1970 until 1995. He received degrees in composition from Columbia University. He remains an active composer with works published by Alliance, Alfred Music, Oxford University Press, Augsburg Fortress, Lawson-Gould, GIA, Hinshaw, Hal Leonard and Yelton Rhodes.

Jerry Ulrich is currently Director of Choral Activities in the School of Music, where he directs two mixed choirs and the all-male Georgia Tech Glee Club. He is also an ASCAP award-winning arranger/composer. He has earned degrees from Eastern Illinois University, Southern Methodist University and the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music.

Robert J. Ward serves as Director of Choral Activities at The Ohio State University where he conducts the Men's Glee Club and Chorale. He is also currently the editor of a children's choral music series and a men's choral series published by Santa Barbara Music Publishers. He holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Michigan State University.

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