

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE EFFECTS OF ACTING ON CHORAL SINGING: TEACHING THE CHORAL SINGER TO BE AN ACTOR WITHIN THE CHORAL REHEARSAL PROCESS

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The purpose of this project is to determine the effects of acting on choral singing. The human voice is our innate instrument and thus, singing has the capacity to be our most communicative art form. Choral directors often ask their choral singers to tell a story, or to look like the music, but rarely are the singers given the necessary artistic tools to make that happen. A good actor does not “put on” a mask, but reveals and exposes the essence of herself in order to portray a character—and that character comes from within. This project aims to provide choral directors and their singers the techniques necessary to help them achieve powerful and honest communication of the material.

I have designed a rehearsal method of teaching choral music that helps choral singers personalize and communicate the text in honest, organic, and well-informed ways.

The method helps singers achieve freedom of voice, the skills of empathic listening, and encourages them to think critically and specifically about the music. It creates a learning environment that is free of judgment and that invites unapologetic risk taking that leads to artistic growth and self-actualization.

This method of choral rehearsal was experienced with a group of undergraduate vocal performance majors from the University of Maryland School of Music and culminated in a performance after ten rehearsals. The paper contains the following: descriptions of the methods used, the materials, goals and procedures actualized with this ensemble, reflections from singers and audience members, modifications for choral directors of other types of ensembles, and conclusions.

The recital was performed in the Ulrich Recital Hall at the University of Maryland. Recordings of the performance and talkback session can be accessed at the University of Maryland Hornbake Library.



THE EFFECTS OF ACTING ON CHORAL SINGING:  
TEACHING THE CHORAL SINGER TO BE AN ACTOR WITHIN THE  
CHORAL REHEARSAL PROCESS

by

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*To anyone who has ever taught me something*

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*“You are the sum total of everything you've seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot- it's all right there.” – Maya Angelou*

Everything we do is influenced by everything we have done. I have been so fortunate to be surrounded by loving and supportive teachers, mentors, and friends. Every relationship plays an integral part in my life. Thank you.

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*“We come to the theater to have an individual experience collectively.”*

*~Patti LuPone*

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## INTRODUCTION

“Go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is.” –Jimmy Carter

I believe that the purpose of art is to offer understanding, empathy, and healing to its creators and observers alike. Artists unmask themselves in order to facilitate and allow their audience to do the same. A successful actor is one who can embody her character so fully that the audience does not see an actor on stage, but the journey of a human being. I believe that great choral singing can have the capacity to do the same thing. The purpose of my project is to determine the effects of acting on choral singing. I have experimented with a new choral rehearsal model that focuses on the development of singers as actors—natural conveyors of the text.

The voice is our most personal instrument. It is the natural conduit for our needs, wants, and emotions. It is the direct line of communication from our inside thoughts to our outside expression of them. It is natural then, that singing both individually and collectively is often considered the most personal art form that is available to us as musicians. There is no extra-physical apparatus or instrument, only our innate sound, and the body out of which it pours. In his book *Choral Conducting*, Colin Durrant asks,

“...why do people sing?”<sup>1</sup> He answers: “Singing or vocal activity appears to be a common phenomenon across cultures of the world, suggesting that singing is a visceral human need, like eating, drinking, and sex. But why do we seem to *need* to sing? ... What makes singing so different from other forms of music making?..[The] human voice is an agent for the emotions, the most effective means of expressing wide

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<sup>1</sup> Durrant, Colin. *Choral Conducting*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003, 40.

ranges of thoughts and feelings. Such thoughts and feelings have been part of the human condition since pre-linguistic man. Expressions of anger, joy, love, tiredness, or fear can all be expressed vocally.”<sup>2</sup>

Choral music is texted. The people singing it are responsible for understanding its texts and the way the composer has illustrated them. Durrant writes that the singers are responsible for conveying the meaning of the text,

“I always find it interesting to analyze the ways in which composers set lines of text, sacred or secular...The craft of composing vocal music is to be inspired by words and then capture the character and expression of those words in the composition. The solo singer then has to capture the same expression and character in the performance of the song for others to hear and recognize its expressive dimension. The performance, by solo voice or multiple choral voices, expresses feelings associated with the song’s character...So singing is essentially about communication.”<sup>3</sup>

If “singing is essentially about communication,” this leads to an important question for the choral conductor, and that is, how can she teach and encourage choral singers to communicate freely and honestly. Instructing a group of singers to “express feelings associated with the song’s character” can cause them to put a face on, and may lead to a disingenuous performance. Actors are not successful when asked to play an emotion. They are successful when the desired emotion is the result of experiencing the material. It is easy to think of a performance that is overly exaggerated and shallow, and compare it with a performance that is stripped down to its honest core. Acting is not an imitation or a reproduction of an emotion. It is a process of doing and experiencing that results naturally in an emotional response. It

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, Durrant, 40.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, Durrant, 44, 45

is a false conceptualization of acting that people put on masks to become a character. Rather, acting is a taking off of masks to reveal the character, and the character, at its core, comes from within.

As children become young adults, inhibitions, manipulations, and veils develop that cover their natural voices in the futile search for perfection. Bernard MacLaverty writes, “we are all born conductors and gradually lose the ability over the rest of our lives.”<sup>4</sup> The same could be said for singing, dancing, or any number of activities that we do naturally as uninhibited children. In the book *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, Noah Pikes quotes 20<sup>th</sup> century voice teacher Alfred Wolfsohn,

“...we have all heard a baby cry. It can cry for many hours, it knows nothing about economy, it has no consideration for its throat or vocal cords. Two tiny tender vocal cords achieve extraordinary things without suffering any harm...Children, on the whole, also use their voices correctly...When they get older, they lose much of their naturalness and with it inhibitions set in. The grown-up has forgotten how to open his mouth in a natural way; by adjusting himself to the world around him, he has forgotten how to scream. And thus, after losing this primitiveness, the voice is exposed to all sorts of deformations... Behind this vocal condition lies the loss which the grown-up suffers by not being able to preserve his state of naturalness.”<sup>5</sup> Pikes adds, “in spite of his reference to ‘losing this primitiveness,’ he is talking not of a simple return to Nature, but of a return to soul through Nature. He believed that humanity’s loss of Nature is the cause of our pain, and one’s rebirth comes about through conscious vocal expression, otherwise known as singing.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> MacLaverty, Bernard. *Grace Notes*. London: Johnathon Cape, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Pikes, Noah. *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*. Woodstock, CT: Spring Journal Books, 1999, 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, Pikes, 39.

In choral music, we work towards precision of rhythm, unification of tone, intonation, syllabic stress, balance of chords, and consistent execution of the music. These are fine choral ideals, and it takes directors and their choirs time to achieve them. In my experience as a choral musician (singer, director, observer), I have found that these ideals can lead to clean and beautiful, but also sterile performances of the music.

Nick Olcott, the Director of Acting for the University of Maryland Opera Studio, describes this type of choral performance as, “another beautiful but faceless wash of sound.” While the notes are accurate, the tone consistent, the chords balanced and in tune, etc., the singers do not seem to be connecting with the text. How can we teach our choral singers to be natural and believable conduits for the text? In other words, how can we teach our choral singers to be actors?

What kind of rehearsal environment is necessary for artistic exploration? Educational psychologists have proven that a judgment-free learning atmosphere is one that encourages and invites students to take risks. When students take risks, they are able to explore and realize their own potential.

In an experimental model of choral direction, the most important element is creating a safe place where singers feel invited and encouraged to take creative risks. Emmy Award-winning director Bob Guza writes that, “The key is to build an environment where they feel safe and fearless, willing to try anything. Trust is critical.”<sup>7</sup> There

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, interview with Guza

needs to be room for experimentation, discovery, and even improvisation. Guza continues,

“Given sufficient rehearsal time –and once the actors have a handle on their characters – I like to improvise. It greatly enhances the discovery process, helps the actor build the role and invariably gives me ideas. I never give actors line readings, or show them how to move; I don’t want them doing me doing the role. Instead, I’ll ask questions, suggest they explore alternatives and “play” around the moment...When you’re moving as fast as we [are], it can be a temptation to settle rather than reject the first approach in favor of further exploration.”<sup>8</sup>

Noah Pikes quotes Roy and Dorothy Hart in their book *How Voice Gave Me a Conscience* by suggesting that, “we believe that the greatest contributing force to mental breakdown is the lack of outlet for truthful self-expression, tolerance of this expression by others and courage to persevere in it for oneself.”<sup>9</sup> In an environment governed by judgment and scrutiny, humans cannot reach their deepest level of growth. In her book *The Artist’s Way*, Julia Cameron writes of “recovering and protecting the artist child within”<sup>10</sup> suggesting that in order to live our most creative lives, we must shed the debilitating fear of being wrong. She writes that,

“...there will be many times when we won’t look good—to ourselves or anyone else. We need to stop demanding that we do. It is impossible to get better and look good at the same time. Remember that in order to recover as an artist, you must be willing to be a bad artist. Give yourself permission to be a beginner. By being willing to be a bad artist, you have a chance to *be* an artist, and perhaps, over time, a very good one.... trusting our creativity is new behavior for many of us...Creativity flourishes when we have a sense of safety and self-acceptance. Your artist, like a small child, is happiest when feeling a sense of security.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, interview with Guza

<sup>9</sup> Pikes, Noah. *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*. Woodstock, CT: Spring Journal Books, 1999, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Cameron, Julia. *The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1992, 29.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, Cameron, 41, 42

It is the responsibility of the choral director to create an environment that fosters this type of security for the individuals to explore their artistry. In establishing a rehearsal atmosphere free from the fear that cripples our development, we can encourage freedom of exploration, recovery, and discovery in a group setting.

Very little work has been done in the area of choral singers as actors. Ryan Hebert's article "The Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavski and Their Relevance to Choral Conducting"<sup>12</sup> addresses the choral conductor individually. While this information is useful for conductors I do not believe that it is enough for the choral director alone to be an actor. Teaching choristers to be actors will place the responsibility on the individual to be a natural conveyor of the text. The purpose of this project is to explore the effects of acting on choral singing. It is about the singers, not the conductor. Tom Carter's book *Choral Charisma* addresses this topic. In the chapter, "The Singer Acts", he states that,

"...when trying to create an expressive choir, a director's first impulse might be to give an external or result-oriented direction like 'show it on your face!' or 'Make the audience believe you!' This is counter-productive. If the singers think about showing it on their faces, their faces will reflect *that* thought and NOT the thoughts and feelings necessary to support the desired expression. If they try to make the audience believe them, the singers' story loses integrity—and their objective becomes audience-based. They end up losing the very credibility the director is trying to create."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hebert, Ryan. "The Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavski and Their Relevance to Choral Conducting", *The Choral Journal*. American Choral Director's Association: Vol. 52, No. 5, December 2011, 20-26.

<sup>13</sup> Carter, Tom. *Choral Charisma: Singing with Expression*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2005, 98.

While the book does address personalization of text, it differs from this project in a number of ways. Mainly, its audience is elementary and secondary schoolteachers, while this project is geared towards collegiate voice majors. The first half of the book offers warm-up games, ice-breakers, and ways that a teacher can ensure that her classroom has focus and attention. The second half of the book addresses the use of substitution and sense memory, but the examples and repertoire given are appropriate for children and early teenagers.

My experimental rehearsal method teaches singers some of the acting techniques of: Konstantin Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, Sanford Meisner, and the teachers at Circle in the Square Theatre School in New York City. It also invites critical thinking of text and music, and encourages students to engage in active listening and discussion. I experimented the use of this model with a group of undergraduate vocal performance majors in January 2017 with a culminating performance after ten rehearsals.

The paper is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1: An overview of the acting techniques substitution, emotional memory, and sense memory.

Chapter 2: An overview of critical questioning, objective questioning, and the Sanford Meisner technique.

Chapter 3: The project's Goals, Materials, and Procedure

Chapter 4: Discussion and reflections of the results of the project

## Chapter 5: Modifications available for other types of choral ensembles

### Conclusions

The performance and talk back session were recorded and are included.

Ultimately, I believe the purpose of art is to offer understanding. An effective actor can help members of the audience understand themselves better. This project seeks to accomplish that level of empathy—through the act of naturally communicative choral singing and choral observation, people can understand themselves and the people around them clearly and openly.

## CHAPTER I:

### SUBSTITUTION, EMOTIONAL RECALL, AND SENSE MEMORY

*“I always tell the truth. Even when I lie.” — Al Pacino*

A successful actor is one who can transform into her role. One of the marks of a successful actor is that in her portrayal of a role, members of the audience subconsciously or consciously begin to think of his/her own experience, rather than the experience of the person on stage. It is the difference between a disingenuous “put on” and a performance into which you become lost. “The true actor should not ape the outward manifestations of passion, or copy outward form, or indulge in mechanical playacting according to some ham ritual or other, but perform actions in a genuine human fashion. You must not play passions and characters but react under the influence of passion, in character.”<sup>14</sup> I have seen many young singers “perform” a piece through use of over-exaggerated gestures, faces, and motions. The motions and faces seem disconnected from the music and from themselves, and that is because they are. Moving an arm or walking to stage right or making a face will be

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<sup>14</sup> Stanislavski, Konstantin. *An Actor's Work*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2008, 43.

disconnected if there is no motivation for doing them. Movements, motions, and facial expression are honest and genuine only if they come from a natural place within.

This idea of truthful acting first came from Konstantin Stanislavski in the early half of the twentieth century. He proposed that actor preparation needed to consist of more than physical and vocal training. His system is based on “the art of experiencing” rather than “the art of representing”. Rather than playing an emotion, believability is achieved through reliving and recapturing a personal moment that resulted in that particular emotion. The emotion is the product, not the process. The Stanislavski system, “mobilizes the actor's conscious thought in order to activate other, less-controllable psychological processes—such as emotional experience and subconscious behavior—sympathetically and indirectly.”<sup>15</sup> Paraphrased by acting teacher Alan Langdon, “Stanislavski says the cardinal principle of acting is using conscious means to activate the rest of your system.” Acting from the inside out, rather than the outside in, also originated with Stanislavski. The actor generates the truth from within and her voice, body, face, and motions are a result of that experience.

Three well-known techniques that actors use to find truth in the text are substitution, emotional recall, and sense memory.

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<sup>15</sup> Benedetti, Jean. *Stanislavski: His Life and Art*. London: Methuen, 1988, 170

Substitution is when an actor uses an experience in her own life as a substitute for an experience within the script. Experts and actors agree that substitution is not a final answer, but a “starting way in” to the role. Six-time Tony Award winner Audra McDonald *became* Billie Holiday in her acclaimed performance of *Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill*. In an interview with Show People’s Paul Wontorek, she describes feeling lost at the beginning of her journey as Billie, but found an entry to the role in a moment of realization that Billie’s voice sounded like the voice of her grandmother. She substituted quotes of her grandmother’s for quotes of Billie’s, and was able to launch into the character through this initial substitution. Once she had a way in to the role, she was able to do further work to fully embrace Billie. Nick Olcott helps student opera singers find their way in to Puccini’s *Suor Angelica* by allowing them to substitute Angelica’s deceased son for someone whose loss they may have experienced: a pet or a friend/family member. Once they have this initial access to the role, he then leads them to actually sing about their deceased child. (This process of actualizing will be described in Chapter Two). As a choral singer, I have sung the “*Kyrie eleison*” text, (Lord have mercy), countless times in rehearsal and performance. In personalizing the cry for help, I sometimes substitute “*Kyrie*”, (Lord), for somebody in my life from whom I may have asked for mercy. The substitution allows me a direct access point into the text. Then, the music itself helps me determine to whom I am singing at specific points. Am I begging for mercy from an actual person in my life? Am I asking gently or pleading desperately? Am I digging even deeper within myself to find the faith to ask mercy of the Lord, himself?

The study of the music answers these questions, and my personal substitution informs my performance and deepens my vocal capabilities.

Alan Langdon's students at Circle in the Square create lists for themselves that personalize the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth, and the seven virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, patience, faith, hope, and love. These lists are referred to as "epiphany lists". On them, students write a sin or virtue at the top of the paper, and below it, catalog all of the experiences in their lives that have resulted in this sin or virtue. In creating these lists, the actor has an arsenal of material to bring to each rehearsal. If one particular experience is not offering insight, they can immediately shift to another experience that is easily accessible to them. Joanna Gleason, in speaking of her 1987 Tony-Award winning portrayal of The Baker's Wife in "Into the Woods", advises actors to go to rehearsals with their "pockets full". This means that actors come prepared with many ways of accessing, embodying, and becoming the role. Langdon's epiphany lists are a way of filling the actors' pockets.

I observed Langdon's acting class in October 2016, on which day the students had prepared their lists of "anger". On their lists, they wrote what situations provoked their anger, what they did in immediate reaction to that anger, and how they subsequently coped with it. In the creation of these lists, students realized that reactions varied, and that anger is not always expressed through rage or higher level dynamic. They discovered that some reactions are too expansive to even recognize.

Creating the list helped them get a sense of who they are in anger, how they express it, when they express it, and the amount of energy that the expression takes. They discussed that anger and rage strike humans in a place of survival, and that the emotion is a systematic recognition of attack. Langdon added, “the surge of adrenalin rises to the surface place: right at your very essence of being.” When approached with “anger” in the script, actors can then draw from their list of circumstances that provoke anger, and the specific experiences will naturally result in that same surge of adrenalin, creating a believable and tangible anger from the inside out. This process is to be completed for all fourteen sins and virtues so that actors have an immediate and visceral approach to emotional availability.

There is an element of substitution that is vital to the process (which also applies to sense memory and emotional recall), and that is to keep your experiences personal and private. Uta Hagen writes to,

“...please remember that in any example I have given you for substitutions, I was only making my own examples. You must find your own substitutions if they are to be of real value of you. Find your own substitutions—a warehouse full of them. And let me warn you of the great trap of sharing your substitutions with *anyone*. Don’t fall victim to the temptation of revealing your little goodies to your director or your fellow actors. The minute others are in on your source—and they will probably be extremely interested in knowing what it is—they become an audience to your source and evaluate its consequent action accordingly, rather than finding their *own* relationship to the action.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Hagen, Uta. *Respect for Acting*. New York, NY: Hungry Minds, 1973, 44.

Sharing experiences verbally will immediately and wrongly shift the group focus from personalization *of the music*, to the person herself.

Sometimes substitution on its own fails to stimulate the actor and is insufficient in fully invoking her emotional resources. A deeper search for personalization can happen through emotional recall and sense memory. The two techniques are often conflated into one, though they are separate. The difference is outlined by Uta Hagen who writes, “I link ‘emotional [recall]’ of a psychological or emotional response to an event moving in on me which produces sobbing, laughter, screaming, etc. I use the term ‘sense memory’ in dealing with physiological sensations (heat, cold, hunger, pains, etc).”<sup>17</sup> While it is true that physical sensations can cause emotional response, and that emotions can produce physical sensation, the recollections of emotions and of the senses are unique. They often work together in memory exercises, in which the importance is not the recollection itself, but the responses that it can produce.

Emotional recall has also been called “affective memory”, which was introduced in 1896 by the French psychologist Theodule Ribot in *La Psychologie des sentiments*. The book uses the terms affective memory and emotional memory interchangeably. Ribot found that an individual had the capacity to feel the effect of an event in his/her past by reliving the event in the imagination. Acting teacher Lee Strasberg refined the definitions of sense and emotional memory writing, “affective memory has sense and emotional memory whereas sense memory may not have emotional memory but

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid* Hagen, 46.

deals with objects and other specific stimuli.”<sup>18</sup> In affective memory, an actor chooses a personal experience associated with the desired emotional state. Then, she uses sense memory to recreate her scene: the light, the temperature, the smell, the texture of the furniture, the voices, etc. As the senses are stimulated, the emotions associated with the sensations of that particular experience take possession of the actor and create a natural response. Emotion itself cannot be recaptured, as emotion itself is not directly controllable. An actor does not remember emotions. She remembers the place, the taste, the smell, the touch, the sight, the sound, the actions, etc. Affective memory allows the actor to consciously create and control a desired emotion. External imitation of an emotion is not effective. “The basic value of affective memory is to produce honest emotion that is appropriate for a character’s needs at a given moment, and that can be repeated at will.”<sup>19</sup> It is possible for an actor to have a number of affective memories upon which she can rely many times. The memories will always be useful as long as she goes through the entire process of recalling the specific senses. Memories become stale and useless if the actor begins to anticipate the result, or focuses on what she thinks should happen next. Emotional recall also fails if the memory itself becomes more important than the material. Uta Hagen outlines the technical failures that lead to the staleness of memories:

- “1. You are stopping to demand that you feel, because you have not made your object synonymous with the one on stage.
2. You are anticipating how or at what second the emotion should manifest itself.
3. You have dwelt on the emotion for its own sake, rather than for furthering your stage action.

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<sup>18</sup> Gassner, John. *Producing the Play*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1953, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Hull, Lorraine. *Strasberg’s Method*. Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow, 1985, 84.

4. You are weighing the degree of intensity of previous use of the emotional experience.
5. You are fearful that the emotion will elude you.”<sup>20</sup>

There may be times when an affective memory does not work as the actor intended, even if she is focusing correctly. This could mean that the emotional impact or value of that experience has changed, or that the original experience no longer carries the same emotional force in the actor’s life. An experience that an actor uses one year may have a different effect on her when she uses it two years later. Her resulting emotion may be anger when she was expecting sadness, or she may laugh when she expected to cry. These surprise outcomes are positive because they prove the actor’s full engagement in the process, not the resulting product. The memories that cause surprise outcomes should not be discarded, as they can be used at another time for the emotion that they evoke currently.

As the actor experiments, she will develop an arsenal of affective memories that will become permanent, consistent, and readily available to her. The more she uses specific memories, the easier they become to use.

“Eventually, the actor becomes so conditioned that he can command himself to experience almost any emotion. He has developed new conditioned reflexes for himself. A good actor can eventually have unconscious sensations functioning and unconscious emotions functioning, so what is needed for the role becomes second nature. The actor has learned to stimulate and control his physical, mental, sensory, and emotional behavior.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid* Hagen, 50, 51.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid* Hull, 102.

The tendency for a beginning actor is to be general. If actors are to be effective, they must be specific. In order to create tears, a beginning actor might “think sad things, pump for the mood of that general state of being, try to remember a sad occasion, and then pray that somehow he will be catapulted into an appropriate emotional response somewhere along the way.”<sup>22</sup> It is impossible to try and conjure up sadness without specificity or technique. Remember, actors must come to work with “their pockets full.” If the desired emotion is happiness, the actor should have a list of events in her life that have made her happy. Recall Alan Langdon’s exercise of creating lists for the seven sins, and the seven virtues. Once the list is created, she should record the specific senses that surrounded her in that particular experience. Perhaps it is the sound of ocean waves, the texture of a car’s seat, the feeling of dirt between the toes, the smell of a lover’s cologne, the voice of a grandparent, the taste of coffee in a spouse’s kiss, the polka-dotted fabric of a best friend’s couch, etc. These sensual specificities are the stimuli of our emotions.

One of America’s leading 20<sup>th</sup> century teachers of emotional recall and sense memory was actor Jacqueline Brookes, who taught at Circle in the Square Theatre School in the latter part of her career before her death in 2013. She taught her students that, “the most that you can bring is your experience.” In her sense memory class, students sat on chairs in a natural and relaxed position with their eyes closed and their hands resting on their knees with palms facing up. This position of the hands allows relaxation and prevents tension. She led students through a series of exercises,

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid* Hagen, 47.

beginning with deep breathing and the invitation into a relaxed state of mind. Students feel the weight of their hands, and as they center themselves, feel themselves “melt into the ground.” She then leads them into the recollection of a memory. While the memory of each student is different, this procedure helps the individual achieve emotional and sense recall in a group setting. For instance, if the desired emotion is happiness as in the example above, Jacqueline chooses what type of happiness this exercise will help produce. Her speech calm, she walks them through being in a place, hearing a voice, smelling the air, doing a task, seeing a figure, etc. The prompts are general so that the individual responses can be personal and specific. Students think their responses silently. The final step is having students recite their text in this state of emotional and sensual recall. Eyes remain closed to prevent distraction, and to encourage vulnerability. Once secure in the ability to recall, students can go through the process more quickly, on command, while keeping their eyes open. The ultimate execution of emotional and sensual recall is almost entirely up to the will of the individual to commit to it.

Certain experiences should be avoided in the pursuit of truthful storytelling. Most acting teachers agree that any examination of a painful past experience about which an actor has never spoken should be avoided. Trying to access a painful memory that has not been processed yet emotionally is dangerous. The actor does not know how she will react, and,

“...without an understanding or a degree of objectivity to the experience it is useless to [you] artistically. There are teachers who actually force actors into dealing with something buried. What results is hysteria or worse, and is, in my opinion, anti-art. We are not

pursuing psychotherapy. If you feel mentally sick or disturbed and in need of it, by all means go to a trained doctor or therapist, but not to an acting teacher.”<sup>23</sup>

It is important to avoid experiences from which you do not have distance. This is not the distance of time, per se, but the distance of understanding. For instance, an actor may have lost a parent as a child and has not yet been able to cope with the death fully. This experience is useless to her as an actor. However, the same actor may have experienced a separation from a good friend, has processed the grief fully, and is able to use the experience in a healthy way.

In the choral context, the three techniques of substitution, emotional recall, and sense memory can be particularly useful because most of the repertoire is void of named characters. In most oratorios there are specific roles, historical or fictional, that must be portrayed accurately. But the majority of choral music does not. This offers freedom to personalize the music further, which can be crippling to a singer without the knowledge of how to achieve it. A structure or a prescribed role provides security. Freedom to develop a character from within the material can lead to a creative block caused by fear of failure, generalization or shallow characterization, or a lack of ideas. These three consequences of freedom are often the reasons for disingenuous performance. But it is here that we are reminded of the purpose of acting: a removal of masks and a stripping down of layers to reveal the character, and the character is always you.

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<sup>23</sup> ibid Hagen, 49, 50.

Take for example Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal, *Si ch'io vorrei morire*. In performing this piece, the first step is to have a complete understanding of the Italian text in your native tongue. The Italian poetry, by 16<sup>th</sup> century poet Maurizio Moro, is this:

*Sì, ch'io vorrei morire,  
ora ch'io bacio, amore,  
la bella bocca del mio amato core.*

*Ahi, car' e dolce lingua,  
datemi tanto umore,  
che di dolcezza in questo sen' m'estingua!*

*Ahi, vita mia, a questo bianco seno,  
deh, stringetemi fin ch'io venga meno!  
Ahi, bocca! Ahi, baci! Ahi, lingua! Torn' a dire:  
Sì, ch'io vorrei morire!*

Translated poetically into English:

*Yes, I would like to die,  
now that I'm kissing, sweetheart,  
the luscious lips of my darling beloved.*

*Ah! dear, sweet tongue,  
give me so many moist kisses  
that from their sweetness in this breast may I perish!*

*Ah, my life, to this white breast  
ah, crush me until I faint!  
Ah mouth! Ah kisses! Ah tongue! I say again:  
Yes, I would like to die!*

It is then essential to do a word-for-word translation of the poetry. Poetic translations are fraught because difference in sentence structure between languages can lead to a loss of the understanding of a composer's musical setting of specific words. The following is a word-for-word translation of the text:

*Si ch'io vorrei morire*

Yes, that I would want to die

*Hora ch'io bacio, Amore,*

Now that I kiss, Cupid,

*La bella bocca del mio amato core.*

The lovely mouth of my beloved heart.

*Ahi car' e dolce lingua*

Ah, dear and sweet tongue,

*Datemi tant' humore\**

Give me so much humor

*Che di dolcezz' in questo sen m'estingua*

That from sweetness upon this breast I expire

*Ahi, vita mia*

Ah, life my!

*A questo bianco seno*

To this white breast

*Deh stringetemi fin ch'io venga meno*

Oh squeeze me until I become less.

*Ahi boca, ahi baci*

Ah, mouth, ah, kisses,

*Ahi lingua torn' a dire:*

Ah, tongue I return to say:

*Si, ch'io vorrei morire.*

Yes, that I would want to die.

\*"Sixteenth-century medicine and philosophy held that the body contained four fluids or "humors", blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. The humor spoken of in the poem is certainly phlegm, in the form of saliva."<sup>24</sup>

In late Renaissance and early Baroque language, "*morire*" or "death" was used as innuendo for tantric climactic pleasure: orgasm. Approaching Moro's poem, we appreciate the ways in which the speaker wishes to reach "death" with his/her partner. The text is romantic, and Monteverdi's setting of it is evocative. There are frequent dissonances between voices, painting the pull and intensity of sexual chemistry. There are independent polyphonic entrances of the text "*ahi, cara e dolce lingua*" which have four anacrusic eighth notes on the words "*cara e dolce*", which lead to two half notes on "*lingua*". The illustration is of a rush of excitement in speaking of the "dear and sweet" "tongue", lingering on the word tongue, as if in awe of its sweetness. This same rhythmic effect is used for "*datemi tanto umore*", with quick anacrusic notes on "give me so many" that lead to a prolongation of "moist kisses", in reverence of them. And then, "*che di dolcezza in questo sen m'estingua*", "that from their sweetness in this breast may I perish!" is set to considerably longer note values than have been used before, illustrating the calmness that comes after satisfaction. The poetry goes on, "*ahi, vita mia*", "ah, my life", painted with longer rhythm on the

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<sup>24</sup> Paine, Gordon. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire: Volume III: French and Italian Texts*. Coravllis, OR: earthsongs, 2007, 211-212.

words “*ahi*” and “*mia*”, in drawn out musical sighs. The next section sets “to this white breast hold me tight until I faint!” with dotted rhythms and syncopations that increase and build up tension. Then starting in the bass voice, the voices build to sing “ah mouth, ah kisses, ah tongue”. They begin low, with the bass as the first entrance, and answering low in their own vocal ranges. As the text is repeated, the range expands in all voices. The tenor voice is off-set from the other four so that complete homophony is not achieved until “I say again, yes, I wish to die.” Climax has been achieved at that moment of homophony, and the remaining measures of the piece come back down by lowering in range, and increasing the length of the rhythmic values.

It is a perfect example of text painting. The piece presents opportunity for the practice of the three acting techniques outlined in this chapter. Once the material is within the singers’ grasp, sense memory and emotional recall can lead them to a natural and connected performance of this piece.

In contrast, Carlo Gesualdo’s madrigal “*Mille volte il di moro*” illustrates sexual orgasm in a different way.

*Mille volte il dì, moro  
E voi, empi sospiri  
Non fate, ohimè,  
Che, in sospirando, io spiri!  
E tu, alma crudele,  
Se il mio duolo T’affligge sì  
Che non ten’ fuggi a volo?  
Ahi, che sol Morte a mio duol aspro e rio  
Divien pietosa e ancide il viver mio !  
Così dunque i sospiri e l’alma mia*

*Sono ver me spietati e Morte pia.*

Translated to:

A thousand times a day I die,  
yet thou, pitiless sighs,  
won't you, alas, let me expire sighing?  
And thou, cruel soul, or my grief  
afflicts thee so, why not haste away?  
Ah, Death alone, on my harsh and bitter grief  
takes pity, and kills my life!  
Thus, then, my sighs and my soul  
are heartless towards me, and Death merciful.

The madrigal employs the same popular literary idea of the time, where “dying” is metaphor for sexual orgasm. Most madrigals suggest that “dying a thousand times a day” is greatly desired, while Gesualdo expresses the anguish of a lover who longs to “die” while the partner torments him. Other madrigalists might have illustrated this text as a light-hearted or ironic lament, but Gesualdo composed the madrigal seemingly governed by his own experience. An independently wealthy prince, Gesualdo assassinated his wife and her lover when he caught them in the act of sexual intercourse. He remarried and was abusive to his second wife, causing her to flee his home to live with her brother. Historical accounts suggest that Gesualdo was mentally ill, violent, and masochistic.<sup>25</sup> His music is a reflection of this inner turmoil. It is highly chromatic, expressive, and experimental, and sounds like the musical representation of pain.

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<sup>25</sup> Watkins, Glenn. *The Gesualdo Hex: Music, Myth, and Memory*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

In the singing of this madrigal, recall and substitution are useful, but they cannot be the only technique used. Considering Gesualdo's personal history with lovers, it is necessary to explore the *person* singing this text. Reflecting on the setting of the text, it might be inferred that the speaker is Gesualdo himself. This leads the actor to the words "what if". Audra McDonald states that once she has found her entry point to a role, she then asks a series of questions that help her better understand a character. The first of these questions always begin with the words "what if". For instance, in the case of her role as Bess in *Porgy and Bess*, "what if I were a drug addicted prostitute searching desperately for love." Or, in the instance of this Gesualdo madrigal, "what if I were a mentally ill and violent depressive with sociopathic tendencies that found my wife in bed with another man."

Chapter Two will discuss the use of "what if" questioning, critical thinking questioning, Uta Hagen's Objective Exercises, the process of finding the Objective, Obstacle, and Action in any given text, and the Sanford Meisner Technique.

## CHAPTER II:

### CRITICAL QUESTIONING, OBJECTIVE QUESTIONING, AND THE SANFORD MEISNER TECHNIQUE

*"I'm curious about people. That's the essence of my acting. I'm interested in what it would be like to be you." – Meryl Streep*

An actor must be curious. She must be observant of the world around her. She must study the intricacies, mannerisms, and idiosyncrasies of people—watching what

makes them human. Viola Davis said of Meryl Streep that she is “an observer and a thief. She reveals what she has stolen on that sacred place which is the screen. She makes the most heroic characters vulnerable, the most known familiar, the most despised relatable. Her artistry reminds us of the impact of what it means to be an artist, which is to make us feel less alone.”<sup>26</sup> Great acting is the result of great research, and great research is the result of curiosity and critical thinking.

When asked about her preparation for different roles, Audra McDonald says that,

“The composer and the lyricist are God. You do what they’ve written. But you do as much background research as you possibly can. For *La Voix Humaine*, I researched all of Poulenc’s life, and especially during the time that he was writing this piece. A lot of the material came from his own life, and the actor and singer that they were writing the piece for, Denise Duval. You’re always trying to respect what was done before. I think just by nature of each different person that interprets each different role is going to portray that role through the filter of his or her own life... ‘What if’ is a very powerful thing. ‘What if this was 1958 and I was of a certain age and my lover of five years had left me and my prospects were dim. What would I be feeling like? What would I be wanting? What would I be trying to accomplish? I have the availability of my experiences to draw from when I am going in to each of these characters.”<sup>27</sup>

Ms. McDonald touches on a number of background steps in this response. She mentions that historical work is crucial to understanding the context of the piece within a composer’s life. She mentions the inevitability that each actor will bring aspects of her own experience to the portrayal and she mentions the emotional availability necessary to access those experiences. She also mentions the words “what if”. Stanislavski calls this the “magic if”.

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<sup>26</sup> Golden Globe Award Ceremony, Sunday, January 8, 2017. Viola Davis presents Meryl Streep with the Cecile B. DeMille lifetime achievement award.

<sup>27</sup> Audra McDonald interview with Ernie Manouse, January 27, 2010.

For matters about which we might not know through first hand experience, the actor must speculate. She must imagine and enter the mind of someone else entirely. “If” is a stimulus word. It does not speak in actual facts, but of what might be. It is not a statement but a question to be answered by the actor. The word “if” is dependent upon the actor’s creativity and thinking, and provides impetus for the further development of the creative process. The word spurs research into all aspects of the character: her circumstances, her background, her historical context, her demographic, her sociological upbringing, her financial status and her environmental surroundings, etc. “What if” can only be answered through thorough research.

In asking questions of the character, both general and specific, an actor begins to empathize and understand that person—what motivates them, what frightens them, what excites them—and it is at this point that she can begin to embody them. Philip Seymour Hoffman spoke of his journey with each role saying,

“It’s always me playing games with myself to try to eventually get the will to ask the hard questions that are going to lead toward understanding psychologically why a person does what they do and how they actually do it, and then how do I make that all my own? You start to ask yourself questions. What am I doing? What am I doing to the other people? How am I doing it? You ask simple questions of actions and things, just basic kinds of things like that, that will send you off on your journey. It’ll get you thinking about all those things that’ll get you to remember things about yourself. And then you slowly start to piece it together, logically, how this character moves through this story. But it really is just about looking at this person: What am I doing here? What am I doing there? What, ultimately, do I want?”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tichler, Rosemarie and Barry Jay Kaplan. *Actors at Work*. New York, NY: Faber and Faber, 2007, 339.

Lee Strasberg outlines six initial questions for the actor to investigate and explore:

- **“Who am I?”** The actor considers all the information the author reveals about the character, including the thoughts and words other characters may have about her. The actor asks about the character’s education, income, religion, occupation, age, weight, height, health, handicaps, family life, habits, customs, era, society, etc. She then works to determine how these elements define how she behaves.
- **“What is the present situation?”** What is her physical condition: tired, hungry, cold, sick, healthy, etc? What is her mental condition: upset, angry, frustrated, apathetic, calm, confused, disoriented, aware? What is her relationship to the other people in the room? What did she do right before this moment? What will she do directly following it?
- **“Where am I?”** Where does the action occur? What is the environment: the era, year, time of day, season, temperature, precipitation, humidity, dryness? Is she indoors or outdoors and is she familiar with this location?
- **“What is my Emotional Condition?”** What types of emotional stimuli are influencing her? Are they internal or external influences? Can she control them?
- **“What is my relationship to other people in the scene?”** The actor must complete an analysis of each of her relationships prior to any scene work.

What is her history and current relationship with mother, father, sister, brother, friends, strangers, lovers, etc, and how do her individual relationships with each of those people affect her relationships with the others. The actor can then ask herself if her responses, physical and emotional, are logical within the relationship.

- **“What do I want?”** The answer to this question leads to the actor’s objective, and thus, her actions. When the goal is pursued, the behaviors are likely to result naturally. Questions that can arise within this are “what is in my way?” and “how will I overcome it?”

Uta Hagen prepares each scene similarly with a technique she calls “The object exercises.” In these exercises, she answers questions specifically that help to discover and lead to an understanding of a character’s human behavior. She answers these questions for each new circumstance in any given scene because the character’s circumstances must become the actor’s own circumstances. Her questions are the following: Who am I? What time is it? Where am I? What surrounds me? What are the given circumstances? What is my relationship? What do I want? What’s in my way? What do I do to get what I want?

In applying these object exercises to Tomkins’ *When David Heard*, we can inform our singing of the piece.

Piece: Thomas Tomkins’ *When David Heard*, measures 1-22

*Who am I?* I am the narrator of the Book of 2 Samuel. According to Jewish tradition, the book was written by Samuel with additions by Gad and Nathan, all prophets. Modern scholars believe it more likely that the books were compiled from various texts and authors.

*What time is it?* It is the end of a day of battle.

*Where am I?* The battle was fought at the Wood of Ephraim, between the cities of Jerusalem and Mahanaim. I am now between the gates of both cities, where David awaits to hear the outcome.

*What surrounds me?* There are not many people. A soldier in David's army ran from the site of Absalom's death to the gate to inform David of the Israelites' victory.

*What are the given circumstances?* Absalom was the third son of King David and was favored by him. Absalom's sister, Tamar was raped by Amnon, David's eldest son by another woman. Absalom avenged his sister's death by having Amnon killed. He then fled to Talmai to live with his grandmother for three years, until returning to Jerusalem and again into his father's favor. In Jerusalem, he spoke against his father and uncovered flaws in his judicial system. He gained favor with the people of Israel and Judah and declared himself the King. David fled, but kept spies in the city. David's servant and spy, Hushai, told Absalom to ignore the advice from his counsel to attack David by surprise at night. He told him, instead, to prepare his forces for a major attack from David. This afforded David the time necessary to prepare his own troops for battle. David strictly demanded of his troops that they not kill Absalom. In battle, Absalom's head was caught in the boughs of a tree as his mule rode quickly beneath it. He was discovered alive by David's troops, who reported it to the King's commander, Joab. Absalom had once set Joab's field on fire, and Joab set out to avenge himself. Joab killed Absalom with three darts through the heart.

*What is my relationship?* I am the observer—the bystander and narrator of this event. I am about to describe David's actions after hearing the news of his son's death.

*What do I want?* I want to tell the story of David's reaction to the news of Absalom's death.

*What's in my way?* The difficult knowledge that David ordered this battle, though also ordered that his son be kept alive.

*What do I do to get what I want?* I state plainly that when David heard that Absalom was slain, he went up to his chamber and wept.

The second half of the piece requires a new set of Objective Exercises.

Piece: Thomas Tomkins' *When David Heard*, measures 23-69

*Who am I?* I am King David, the King of Israel.

*What time is it?* It is the end of a long day of battle.

*Where am I?* I am now in the chamber over the city gate of Mahanaim, which is where I found refuge from Absalom initially.

*What surrounds me?* The gate is made of stone and the chamber is thick-walled and cold. I have come up to the chamber and left the soldier who informed me of Absalom's death down below. There are no other people present.

*What are the given circumstances?* I ordered my troops to leave my son unharmed in battle. We had this battle because my spy told Absalom to prepare for my assault, rather than strike me quietly on the run. The battle was my idea.

*What is my relationship?* At one time, Absalom was my favorite son. After he killed his half-brother Amnon, it took Absalom three years to regain my favor again. Upon his return to Jerusalem he gained the support of my people and overthrew my judicial system. I fled to safety over the Jordan River to Mahanaim. I kept a spy in Jerusalem, who informed me that Absalom planned to attack me in the dark of night. I told my spy to suggest a different plan to Absalom so that my troops and I would be prepared to fight back.

*What do I want?* I want to right this wrong and die in place of my son. I want to take back my own sins and weaknesses of vengeance, rebellion, and violence.

*What's in my way?* The truth is in my way. What's done is done. I commanded that this battle be fought. And though I ordered my troops to leave Absalom unharmed, I could not control their actions. My own guilt is in my way.

*What do I do to get what I want? I pray and I weep. I cannot get what I want.*

In completing Hagen's Object Exercises, the actor begins to define the evolution and humanity of the character. Actors objectify the situations found in the script so that their acting is governed by doing something, not by playing on an idea or an emotion. The actor identifies that each character, at any given moment, has an objective, an obstacle that stands in her way of obtaining that objective, and an action that will help her achieve it. Nick Olcott and Alan Langdon teach students to complete an index card for a particular scene or aria that state these three principles as simply as possible: the objective, the obstacle, and the action. The index card completion is a modified version of Hagen's Object Exercises. In the case of Carlo Gesualdo's *Mille volte il di moro*, a possible index card might be:

Objective: To bring guilt to my lover.

Obstacle: She does not love me.

Action: Kill her

This action is not one that is in the piece itself, but if we are to look at the historical context of this madrigal in Gesualdo's life, we can reach this solution logically. It is best for an actor to play an action rather than an emotion because in doing an action, the actor releases the tensions and manipulations she might exhibit while consciously playing an emotion. For instance, we know Gesualdo was angry. But if a singer simply states that she is "angry" while singing, she will likely contort and manipulate a type of timbral production, whereas if she states that she will "shoot her lover right in the forehead", it is more likely that her tone will have point, direction, specificity,

and a natural production. This will happen because she is doing something, not playing an emotion. In my observation of Alan Langdon's class in October, 2016, one particular student had trouble speaking through her monologue from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. She was becoming so wrought with emotion that her voice failed her. Alan explained that this was the result of her personal feelings becoming more important to her than her character's objective. Everything must be done in order to better serve the piece. He advised that actors must be adaptive and responsive, and able to immediately adjust. When something does not work and we keep using the same technique, we work against the character's objective. Recall Joanna Gleason's advice to come with your "pockets full".

The Scene Study class for Masters students in Opera Studies at the University of Maryland focuses on critical questioning. Each student must complete an index card before performing his/her aria. The format of the class was developed by Leon Major, former director of the Maryland Opera Studio, and continues with Nick Olcott, its current Director of Acting. Students perform arias individually, and then classmates and teachers ask questions of the character that concern both her physical and emotional stimuli. The actor answers the questions in subsequent performances of the piece. This format encourages singer and observer alike to be critical, curious, and specific.

The students and professors also ask critical questions of the musical score. For instance, in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, Juliette's aria "*Je veux vivre*" begins with an

ascending leap of a minor 7<sup>th</sup> followed by a descending chromatic scale on the syllable “Ah”. Observers asked the student singing: why not a leap of a full octave? Why a descending chromatic scale? Why the syllable “Ah”? Why the longer length pitches towards the end of the scale? Why the grace notes leading to the leap? Why the fermata on the rest following the scale? Why the diminuendo? These questions all concerned only the first 8 measures of singing in the aria, and spurred a level of specificity in the singer that better embodied the mind and body of Juliette at that moment in the story.

The music demands that we act as its sleuths. We must ask why Henry Purcell set the phrase “hear my prayer, O Lord” sixteen times in his anthem before the final resultant plea “and let my crying come unto thee.” We must ask why Thomas Tomkins, composer of *When David Heard*, repeats the word “O” at the same pitch three times as David laments the death of his son Absalom. We must ask why after the sixtieth anguished wail “O Absalom, my Son”, Tomkins ends the piece in C Major, having been in C minor throughout. We must ask why Antonio Lotti sets the word “*Crucifixus*” (was crucified) with eight terraced voices, layering each in a way that creates dissonance and tension until the resolution at the eleventh measure. We must ask why Carlo Gesualdo composes such sharp harmonic shifts between phrases, and why Claudio Monteverdi rhythmically layers “ah mouth, ah kisses, ah tongue” among the five voices until the final homophonic “I say again, yes, I would like to die.” We must ask why Eric Whitacre sets the words “boy” and “girl” differently between the three verses, and we must ask how each different setting illustrates where they are in

life at that moment. These questions are only a snapshot of what we must ask of the scores as their interpreters and their advocates. Involving the students in the critical questioning process not only encourages their development as actors, but also as more thoughtful and observant musicians, singers, and artists.

Recall that acting is a series of actions and experiences that elicit natural emotional responses, not a recreation of those emotional responses. Critical questioning allows an actor to explore, discover, and realize her objective and in so doing, her actions towards fulfilling it are the natural and believable byproduct that the audience witnesses. Stanislavski writes,

“When someone needs to delve deep into his innermost, secret thoughts and experiences (as in “To be or not to be” in *Hamlet*), he turns in upon himself and tries to express what he is thinking and feeling in words...A serious actor hardly wants a lot of theatrical hubbub in passages that convey his most cherished thoughts, feelings, and the innermost secrets of his being. For deep inside those passages are the actor’s own personal feelings, parallel to the role. He wants to convey them not to the sound of vulgar bursts of applause, but, quite the opposite, to heartfelt silence, in great intimacy. If the actor sacrifices these things, and has no compunction about debasing this solemn moment, then he demonstrates that for him the words he is articulating are empty, that he has not invested them with anything precious or private.”<sup>29</sup>

Leigh Smiley leads an exercise that requires the actor to repeat a phrase in response to her prompts. They are to react immediately, as the information necessary for emotional response is somewhere naturally within their conscious state. She

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<sup>29</sup> Stanislavski, Konstantin. *An Actor’s Work*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2008, 55.

demonstrated this exercise with me using Hamlet's "To be or not to be" monologue. First, I answered her statements with "to be". Prompts varied from "your first kiss" to "the love of your life" and included approximately ten other prompts about relationships, monumental life moments, or objects. The execution of speaking "to be" came naturally. In speaking quickly, the actor is unaware of her voice, her face, her body movements, etc, and simply IS. Next, I answered her prompts with "or not to be". Stimuli ranged from "you've lost that love of your life" to "the day the twin towers came down." Again, between the two were approximately ten other prompts that triggered a memory of loss, disappointment, fear, or disorientation. The person speaking the prompts must speak generally as she does not know what stimuli may trigger a negative psychological response from the actor.

This technical exercise will prompt the initial response necessary for the singer to stop consciously thinking about her comportment and to simply let herself be. Acting is not planning or controlling a timbre, inflection, or accent on specific words. It is living each word and speaking naturally in the pursuit of acting upon the objective. Take for example "Hear my prayer, O Lord". The phrase is repeated sixteen times, quietly at first, and over the course of twenty-four measures growing with intensity and anguish. Helping the singers portray each cry differently, the prompter may begin lightly, "you are taking a final exam", "you want the lead in the play", "your car is out of gas", and then increase intensity, "your favorite pet has died", "your parents are sick", etc. Any timbre, dynamic, tone, rhythm, or pitch that the prompts solicit are positive ones, because they will be natural and subconscious.

Through sense memory, emotional recall, substitution, critical questioning, and objective exercise the actor is able to piece together a method that might work for her. But how can an actor learn to be reactionary with other actors? How can she be taught to be immediate and responsive with what she is given? Sanford Meisner says that, “acting is the ability to live truthfully under the given imaginary circumstances.” Through the Meisner technique the actor learns to listen and react. Meisner’s approach to training, “is based on bringing the actor back to his emotional impulses and to acting that is firmly rooted in the instinctive. It is based on the fact that all good acting comes from the heart, as it were, and that there’s no mentality to it.”<sup>30</sup> The technique allows an actor to learn to live in the moment, and teaches, “the foundation of acting is the reality of doing.”<sup>31</sup> It is through Meisner technique that we can *listen louder than we act*. New York based actor Matt Phillipps describes how his process in a role involves both Stanislavski preparation and the techniques of Meisner:

“The history and the backwork and the practice is all worthless without an *in the moment* grounded presence. The opposite is also true. You *need* to do the backwork. The same is true for any subject! You might be great at improvising a lesson as a teacher, but if you don’t have any of the back knowledge, there is no truth in what you teach.”<sup>32</sup>

An actor develops a sense about the other actors with whom she shares her space.

The development comes from her will to watch and listen. Rather than act

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<sup>30</sup> Meisner, Sanford. *On Acting*. New York, NY: Random House, 1987.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, Meisner, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview, Matt Phillipps, October 22, 2016.

defensively, she must act generously. Meisner developed his technique in response to Strasberg's method, which he believed was too much "in the actor's head."

Meisner's approach encourages the actor to behave instinctively to the environment that surrounds her. There is a greater focus on listening to the other actor rather than to one's own thoughts. In many ways, Meisner actors are like jazz musicians—they listen while the other speaks, and they react conversationally with an appropriate and exigent response.

Similar to the techniques outlined previously in this chapter, Meisner believed in the "reality of doing" and that in this reality, the emotions come freely as a benefit of our actions. There are three fundamental principles in his acting technique: to accept, to recognize, and to do. That is, to accept one's feelings, to know one's purpose, and to do what needs to be done. The third element is the most important. It is the doing that is important, and not the result. It is the behavior that is vital, not the emotional result of it. What a person "does" is the only thing she can control. When the actor's personal attention is not on the act of emoting, her emotions become readily available. An actor cannot force an audience to believe her, she can only invite their response and to share in her experience. In the actor's reality of doing, she never pretends. If she is supposed to engage with an audience, she really does. If she is supposed to be writing a letter, she really writes the letter. If she is supposed to kiss her lover passionately, she kisses her lover passionately.

Just as a person evolves socially and learns to listen and react to others in appropriate ways, so does the actor experience social evolution. Meisner draws from *The Tao of Leadership* in his individual and partner work:

“When you cannot see what is happening in a group, do not stare harder. Relax and look gently with your inner eye.

When you do not understand what a person is saying, do not grasp for every word. Give up your efforts. Become silent inside and listen with your deepest self.

When you are puzzled by what you see or hear, do not strive to figure things out. Stand back for a moment and become calm. When a person is calm, complex events appear simple.

To know what is happening, push less, open out and be aware. See without staring. Listen quietly rather than listening hard. Use intuition and reflection rather than trying to figure things out.

The more you can let go of trying, and the more open and receptive you become, the more easily you will know what is happening.

Also, stay in the present. The present is more available than either memories of the past or fantasies of the future.

So attend to what is happening now.”<sup>33</sup>

The ability to intuit and listen to people develops over years of a person’s life. All ways that an actor can respond have evolved from her years as a student, a friend, a daughter, a stranger, a neighbor, etc. An actor is the product of her whole life of observation and interaction.

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<sup>33</sup> Heider, John. *The Tao of Leadership: Leadership Strategies for a New Age*. New York, NY: Humanics, Ltd, 1986.

The bulk of Meisner's exercises centralize repetition. Actors work together in pairs and repeat a given phrase. They do not imitate or mimic their partner, but respond quickly and without too much thought. The actors repeat the phrase to one another. If we take Purcell's anthem once more, we can put actor intuition and response into practice.

Two actors sit together, face-to-face. They are to speak to one another, repeating the phrase "Hear my prayer, O Lord." The actor to speak first is "the leader", and the actor to respond is "the responder". (Note that she is not "the follower"). The leader repeats this phrase as many times as she feels necessary. She can change her inflection, her tone, her dynamic, her pitch, her tempo, her intensity, etc. The responder reacts accordingly with the same phrase. Once the leader feels it is time, she moves forward in the text, "and let my crying come unto Thee." She speaks and the responder reacts as many times as the leader feels the message has come across for both herself and her partner. Partners then switch roles and repeat the exercise.

The goal of this exercise is to be as natural as possible in speech. The actor should not *try* to be interesting. Stanislavski said, "...YOU are more interesting than the greatest actor who ever lived." This exercise aims to promote an improvisatory dialogue that results from the intuitive sense of the leader.

A great tool in the advancement of intuition is “Actor Communion”. In this exercise, actors are in pairs and sit face-to-face, a forearm’s length apart. They do not break eye contact throughout the exercise. The actors look through one another and ask the question, “what do you see?” Her partner responds by repeating the question, “what do I see?” and then answering it, “I see innocence.” The actor to ask “what do you see?” first continues to ask, and her partner continues to repeat the question, and then answer with what she sees within the eyes of her partner—pain, longing, loyalty, love, care, anger, calm, happiness, euphoria, hunger, etc. Once the first actor decides it is time, she does not ask the question again. At this point, her partner asks the same question, “what do you see?” and the exercise is repeated now in the opposite roles. Once the second actor decides to stop acting the question, she speaks a monologue, or a song text, to her partner. In kind, her partner responds with a different text.

It is through this exercise that actors can learn to prioritize the needs of their partner over their own—to look through the person and to see what they see and feel what they feel. The exercise works only when actors lack cynicism and open themselves to the possibility of pure and honest communication. An actor must have the will to listen and watch, and accept that another human will do the same.

### CHAPTER III:

## MATERIALS, GOALS, AND PROCEDURE

*“With any part you play, there is a certain amount of yourself in it. There has to be, otherwise it's just not acting. It's lying.” –Johnny Depp*

I selected seven undergraduate students to participate in this project. All are vocal performance majors at the University of Maryland School of Music. There were two sophomores, three juniors, and two seniors. These students were selected because they are thoughtful, kind, curious, open-minded, and open-hearted. Their lack of cynicism was perhaps the most crucial element of the rehearsal and performance methods. These particular students were also selected because I knew that they would learn their music and be able to execute it vocally prior to our rehearsal experience.

I gave each student the music in early October, 2016 and asked that they learn it before our first rehearsal on January 15, 2017. They were also responsible for writing their text translations into their scores prior to our first meeting.

The pieces selected were:

A Boy and a Girl	Eric Whitacre b. 1970
Si, ch'io vorrei morire	Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
Mille volte il di moro	Carlo Gesualdo (1566-1613)
Crucifixus	Antonio Lotti

(c. 1667-1740)

When David Heard

Thomas Tomkins  
(1573-1656)

Hear my prayer, O Lord

Henry Purcell  
(1659-1695)

The repertoire chosen deals with some aspect of love or loss: Romantic love, tantric love, anger in love, love of a child, loss of a child, loss of control in prayer. I chose these pieces because most people have experienced love and/or loss in some capacity by the time they are an undergraduate student in college. I believe in these pieces compositionally, and that their texts allow the members of the ensemble freedom to connect, commit, and communicate.

Text and Translation:

### **A Boy and a Girl**

Stretched out on the grass,  
a boy and a girl.  
Savoring their oranges,  
giving their kisses like waves exchanging foam.

Stretched out on the beach,  
a boy and a girl.  
Savoring their limes,  
giving their kisses like clouds exchanging foam.

Stretched out underground,  
a boy and a girl.  
Saying nothing, never kissing,  
giving silence for silence.

- Octavio Paz (1914-1998)

**Si, ch'io vorrei morire**

Sì, ch'io vorrei morire,  
ora ch'io bacio, amore,  
la bella bocca del mio amato core.

Ahi, car' e dolce lingua,  
datemi tanto umore,  
che di dolcezza in questo  
sen' m'estingua!

Ahi, vita mia, a questo bianco seno,  
deh, stringetemi fin ch'io venga meno!  
Ahi, bocca! Ahi, baci! Ahi, lingua!  
Torn' a dire:  
Sì, ch'io vorrei morire!  
-Maurizio Moro (16<sup>th</sup> century)

Yes, I would like to die,  
Now that I'm kissing, sweetheart  
the luscious lips of my darling beloved.

Ah! Dear, dainty tongue,  
give me so much of your liquid  
that I die of delight  
on your breast!

Ah, my life, to this white breast  
Ah, crush me until I faint!  
Ah mouth! Ah kisses! Ah tongue!  
I say again:  
Yes, I would like to die!

### **Mille volte il di moro**

Mille volte il dì, moro  
E voi, empi sospiri  
Non fate, ohimè,  
Che, in sospirando, io spiri!  
E tu, alma crudele,  
Se il mio duolo T'affligge sì  
Che non ten' fuggi a volo?  
Ahi, che sol Morte  
a mio duol aspro e rio  
Divien pietosa e ancide il viver mio!  
Così dunque i sospiri e l'alma mia  
Sono ver me spietati e Morte pia.  
-Carlo Gesualdo

A thousand times a day I die,  
Yet you, pitiless sighs,  
Won't you, alas,  
let me expire sighing?  
And thou, cruel soul,  
if my grief afflicts thee so,  
why not haste away?  
Ah, Death alone,  
on my harsh and bitter grief  
Takes pity and kills my life!  
Thus, then, my sighs and my soul  
Are heartless towards me, and Death  
merciful.

### **Crucifixus**

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato  
passus et sepultus est.  
-from the *Credo* of the Mass Ordinary

He was crucified for us under Pontias Pilate.  
He suffered, and was buried.

### **When David Heard**

When David heard that Absalom was slain  
He went up into his chamber over the gate and wept,  
and thus he said: my son, my son, O Absalom my son, would God I had died for thee!  
-2 Samuel 18:33

### **Hear my Prayer, O Lord**

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto thee.  
-Psalm 102:1

There were a total of ten rehearsals ranging between two and four hours in length. These rehearsals occurred over Winter Break at the University of Maryland and began on Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup> and culminated with a performance on Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **GOALS:**

There were a number of goals to be attained in our ten rehearsals, but I made a point of not mentioning them to the ensemble. I wanted to measure whether this method resulted in these outcomes naturally without my explanation. At the talkback session following the recital, a number of the students mentioned these results on their own, unprompted, suggesting that those goals had been achieved.

The overarching goal was that the students develop the skills of empathic listening. I wanted to create an environment that was free of judgment and safe for experimentation and risk-taking. Essentially, I attempted to create a rehearsal atmosphere free of negative consequence for taking risks. Within this space, students

were invited to try, risk, and delve into the depths of their artistic and musical creativity and “persons”. It was important that I not conduct the ensemble, but that I teach the singers to be individually committed and responsible for their own artistry and musical creation. Within this judgment-free rehearsal space, I wished to model and teach the skills of empathic listening. Empathic listening is defined by Richard Salem as:

“A way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding and trust. Among its benefits, empathic listening:

- 1) Builds trust and respect
- 2) Enables [people] to release their emotions
- 3) Reduces tensions
- 4) Encourages the surfacing of information, and
- 5) Creates a safe environment that is conducive to collaborative problem solving.”<sup>34</sup>

Salem goes on to quote Madelyn Burley-Allen’s description of skilled listeners,

“When you listen well, you:

- 1) Acknowledge the speaker
- 2) Increase the speaker’s self esteem and confidence

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<sup>34</sup> Salem, Richard. “Empathic Listening.” *Beyond Intractability*. Editors Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, July 2003.

- 3) Tell the speaker [through words and actions] that “You are important” and “I am not judging you”
- 4) Reduce stress and tension
- 5) Build teamwork
- 6) Gain trust
- 7) Elicit openness
- 8) Gain a sharing of ideas and thoughts, and
- 9) Obtain more valid information about people and the subject.”<sup>35</sup>

An empathic listener can take information from others while remaining non-judgmental and open. She acknowledges people in a way that invites their communication, and provides encouraging responses that can carry the ideas and thoughts of others forward. Empathy itself is a fundamental feature of human interaction and enables people to recognize the emotional and mental states of those around them, and then to respond appropriately. It also allows one to predict how another will likely behave. Listening in a musical context also, “requires components of cognitive and affective processing... Only recently have researchers in the field of music, personality, and social psychology begun to focus on how music and empathy are linked. Wöllner showed that people with higher levels of empathy are able to perceive and identify a musician’s intentions with greater accuracy than those with

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, Salem.

lower levels, and Egermann and McAdams demonstrated that perceived and induced emotion from music is moderated by empathy.”<sup>36</sup>

A common trope of the choral conductor is telling her singers to “listen louder than you sing.” I have used this phrase both as a singer and conductor. In both situations I have observed that the result is successful in helping the intonation of the ensemble and collective timbral unity, but it can detract from the vitality of the voices and cause sterility of sound. In my observations, it can also cause singers to subconsciously create tension in their own bodies to create a sound that is disconnected from breath and body. A goal of this rehearsal model is to help create *active* listeners, which requires both giving and receiving. Empathic listening conveys the message that everyone in the room is encouraged to fully express him or herself free of interruption or criticism. Teaching students to become empathic listeners happens through unconditional modeling of empathic listening.

In many ways, chamber musicians are able to listen empathically by nature of their musical setting and repertoire. They breathe together, phrase together, and listen deeply to one another. I was pleased that towards the end of our rehearsals, the students were able to sing the music without any visual aides. They had developed as empathic listeners through the process of creating music in an environment free from

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<sup>36</sup> Greenberg, David M., Peter J. Rentfrow, Simon Baron-Cohen. “Can Music Increase Empathy? Interpreting Musical Experience Through the Empathizing-Systemizing (E-S) Theory: Implications for Autism. *Empirical Musicology Review*, Ohio State University, volume 10, No 1-2, 2015.

judgment. Their singing was unafraid and free because the process itself was unafraid and free.

During the rehearsal process, the singers opened their minds to ideas they had not known before, which created a trusting environment of reception and deeper thinking. Lyman S. Steil, former president of the American Listening Association, writes that one of the signs of a completely empathic environment is that people within it are able to experience catharsis. Catharsis is the process of releasing ones feelings. Cathartic communication, “requires caring, concerned, risk-taking, and non-judgmental listening. People who need catharsis will often give verbal and non-verbal cues, and good listeners will be sensitive enough to recognize them. Cathartic fulfillment is necessary for maximized success. Truly empathic people suspend evaluation and criticism when they listen to others. The challenge is to understand without judging actions or feelings.”<sup>37</sup> After the first full run of our program, one of the students mentioned that she experienced “catharsis” through the performance of the music. This came after seven rehearsals in an environment where she and her classmates were invited to be open, vulnerable, and exposed with the music and its texts. In either the talkback or in response to the survey, each student mentioned that this rehearsal model made them feel safe to listen and react fully. Because of that safety to create, the process caused the individuals to sing from deep within with their full voice at full capacity. They had developed as active choral singers who used their ears and their voices equally.

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, Salem.

Another major goal was to help students sing freely. A deep understanding and personalization of text takes the mental focus off vocal technique and results in a free, open, and completely natural sound. When singers are busy thinking about how they are singing, they obscure and manipulate their sound in ways that prevent them from singing to the best of their capacity. When we commit to the music and commit to the text, we are able to communicate *both* much better than if we commit our mental energy to our technique. For these particular students, or students like them—vocal performance majors who have studied and worked extensively on their technique—they can operate and produce through the adage “one must lose control to gain control.” “Control” is a troublesome word that often leads to tension, manipulation, and the imprisonment of our own sound. I never discussed vocal technique with the students, nor did I mention that if effective this project would result in their freedom of voice. I was pleased that this happened naturally and without solicitation in the process, with three of the students mentioning the phenomenon at the talkback, the remaining four mentioning it to me privately, and a number of members of the audience mentioning the sound as being free, engaged, open, deep, natural, and “gutsy”. Also at the talkback, one of the sopranos reported that despite our long three or four hour rehearsals, she never once experienced vocal fatigue. The other students agreed.

A third goal was that the students understand that our job as communicators is not to fabricate or to create emotions within the material. I often hear choral directors

talking about “dramatizing the text.” This is unnecessary. The text is already dramatic and powerful. As its conveyors, we simply communicate that drama by being honest and forthright within it. We trust our ability to sing with technical soundness, and we “support what [we’re] saying from within, and then let loose.”<sup>38</sup>

The fourth goal was that the students apply the techniques learned here to their other work as musicians, singers, teachers, and human beings. Most of them said that the project made them think more critically about music, and to become more critical with text. WHY are certain words chosen, WHAT do they mean in the context, WHO is saying them and to whom, and what do they hope to accomplish by saying them at that particular moment. We called this technique “asking critical questions of the text” and it prompted in depth discussions about word choices and their contextual meanings. A number of the students have told me that they have begun using this technique in their solo work, as well as their work with other choral ensembles. They have also mentioned that they are applying sense memory, substitution, and objective questioning in their other repertoire.

My final goal was to help choral observers (audience/listeners) be involved in their choral observation. Our goal as singers is not to prescribe HOW one should feel, nor is it to force that one feels at all. But when witnessing choral singers who sing truthfully and vulnerably, people are invited to be truthful and vulnerable as well.

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<sup>38</sup> Midgette, Anne. “How to Survive the Next Four Years on Social Media? Opera can help” The Washington Post, Feb. 10, 2017.

One of the singers effectively stated in the talkback that he once believed that acting was a “put-on” that an audience was to observe, but not experience. Through this project, he realized that acting is actually a revelation of the inner self that results in others revealing and understanding themselves, too. There were many positive comments following the performance that suggested that this goal was achieved. Specific responses will be shared in Chapter Four, as well as methods of improving the model further to help deepen the level of communication. In Chapter Five I offer modifications in application to other types of choral settings.

### REHEARSAL PROCESS:

The following outlines the procedure of the rehearsal process. Teaching was sequential and as new techniques were introduced, ones we had learned on previous days remained in use.

#### **Sunday, January 15, 5:45-7:30 pm: Rehearsal No. 1**

Room:

We met in the choral rehearsal room which is a relatively large rehearsal space and the one with which the students are the most familiar. I set up a table and eight chairs, where we spent much of our time.

Sequence:

I began by sharing my views on what it means to be an artist: true artistry cannot know vanity, and vanity cannot know true artistry. We must shed all vanity in order to create fully and deeply. An artist is only as effective as her willingness to be entirely exposed. If we build walls within and around ourselves we confine our truths. In so doing, we can never fulfill our potential, nor can we share ourselves fully with one another, the audience, or the music and text that we perform. It is idiosyncrasies—the things the world perceives as weird, bizarre, ugly, messy—that make us unique. Hiding those things is easier than revealing them. But hiding them also keeps us from fully realizing our own performances. We cannot create *at full capacity* if we actively hide those things that make us completely human.

I then spoke about the environment and atmosphere of our rehearsal room: that they were completely free from judgment, criticism, and consequence while making music in the space. They were invited and encouraged to take risks, to be *only and always* themselves, and to be untethered from the unachievable and crippling goal of “perfection.” I said that choral music is special because it requires a group of individuals to come together to make sound. I shared that the purpose of my project was to teach choral singers to make a sound that is entirely from within, but that can still serve the music, text, and composer. Ultimately, I wanted them to have “an individual experience collectively” (LuPone).

We discussed the word “acting” and I defined it as a reproduction of activities and experiences that result in the communication of an emotion. The emotion is the

product, not the process. We cannot play an emotion, but in the act of doing something, an emotion is produced. We discussed that acting is not a “put-on” or a series of exaggerated gesticulations and faces. Rather, it is a taking off of those masks, walls, and façades to reveal those things that make us most real. We also discussed that everything we do as actors and musicians is done IN SERVICE TO THE MATERIAL. Everything we do as artists, in preparation, rehearsal, and performance, is done for the purpose of communicating the material itself. The material is already dramatic and emotional. As artists, we communicate the material in a fully committed way that serves as a vessel of the inherent emotion and drama that already exists. We do not need to ADD emotion, but communicate it. And finally, we discussed that in order to fully communicate the material, one must be committed with body, voice, mind, and spirit to expose oneself, and to take risks.

We commenced with a read-through of each text in the program. In a round table setting, each student took a turn to read. This established an immediate level of trust and sharing. Our first time around the table, students were to read the texts straightly, without any perceived *affects* or affectedness in their voices. After this initial reading, we went back and dissected each text for as long as the discussion lasted in a technique I have called “Asking critical questions of the text”.

#### ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS OF THE TEXT

We can only communicate texted music with a deep understanding of the text. We can only sing a word if we understand why that word is there. In this exercise,

students could ask questions of each text that would lead to their critical thinking of its meaning. First, we gathered information from the material in a group setting, and started to think about the answers within ourselves. This allowed EACH student the opportunity to think of possible answers thoroughly, without having the reaction of another quickly and prematurely superimposed on their conception and understanding.

The first text was a poem by Octavio Paz translated to English from its original Spanish. The poem reads:

### **A Boy and a Girl**

Stretched out on the grass,  
a boy and a girl.  
Savoring their oranges,  
giving their kisses like waves exchanging foam.

Stretched out on the beach,  
a boy and a girl.  
Savoring their limes,  
giving their kisses like clouds exchanging foam.

Stretched out underground,  
a boy and a girl.  
Saying nothing, never kissing,  
giving silence for silence.

Octavio Paz (1914-1998)

After reading the poem once more, I opened the questioning with “why do they first savor oranges and then limes.” (I did not share that I believed it was to signify the sweetness of a young relationship in which two lovers savor the ease and vivacity of

their love (oranges), and then the growth of that relationship where the lovers now savor the bitterness of troubled times and pain (limes) that have brought them closer together). I invited them to ask ANY questions that came to mind, as nothing was too obvious and similarly, nothing was too cryptic or obscure. The students began to speak, asking the following questions:

- Is it the same couple in each stanza?
- Are they actually on the grass and on a beach?
- Why are their kisses like waves on the grass and like clouds on the beach?
- Are they actually eating oranges and limes?
- How can you savor a lime?
- Why are their kisses like clouds and waves? Neither of those things last very long.
- Why are they underground in the third stanza?
- Have they died?
- Why are they still a boy and a girl?
- Have they died together?
- Are they still in love?
- Are they actually dead, or is it that their relationship has died?
- Is "underground" a metaphor for feeling trapped someplace with no way out?
- Why don't they kiss anymore?
- Why do they have nothing more to say?
- Why do they live in silence?

I invited the students to keep thinking about these questions and others that might arise, and to come back to rehearsal with their own conceptualization of them.

We moved on to the Monteverdi madrigal with text by Maurizio Moro:

**Si, ch'io vorrei morire**

Sì, ch'io vorrei morire,  
ora ch'io bacio, amore,  
la bella bocca del mio amato core.

Yes, I would like to die,  
Now that I'm kissing, sweetheart  
the luscious lips of my darling beloved.

Ahi, car' e dolce lingua,  
datemi tanto umore,  
che di dolcezza in questo  
sen' m'estingua!

Ah! Dear, dainty tongue,  
give me so much of your liquid  
that I die of delight  
on your breast!

Ahi, vita mia, a questo bianco seno,  
deh, stringetemi fin ch'io venga meno!  
Ahi, bocca! Ahi, baci! Ahi, lingua!  
Torn' a dire:  
Sì, ch'io vorrei morire!  
-Maurizio Moro (16<sup>th</sup> century)

Ah, my life, to this white breast  
Ah, crush me until I faint!  
Ah mouth! Ah kisses! Ah tongue!  
I say again:  
Yes, I would like to die!

We read the poem once in Italian, and again in English, and then opened the table to critical questioning of the text:

-How did “*morire*” become euphemism for orgasm?

-Why are we singing about liquid?

-What is “*umore*”?

-Is extinguishing the same as dying? How are “*m'estingua*” and “*morire*” different?

-Why do we exclaim about our life? “*Ahi, vita mia*”.

-Is “*venga meno*” the same as extinguishing and dying? What are the differences between the three exclamations?

I asked the students to prepare word-for-word translations to the texts as well as poetic ones, which allowed them to understand each word literally, as well as contextually.

We then moved on to the Gesualdo's "*Mille volte il di moro*" and began with a similar process.

### **Mille volte il di moro**

Mille volte il dì, moro  
E voi, empi sospiri  
Non fate, ohimè,  
Che, in sospirando, io spiri!  
E tu, alma crudele,  
Se il mio duolo T'affligge sì  
Che non ten' fuggi a volo?  
Ahi, che sol Morte  
a mio duol aspro e rio  
Divien pietosa e ancide il viver mio!  
Così dunque i sospiri e l'alma mia  
Sono ver me spietati e Morte pia.  
- -Carlo Gesualdo

A thousand times a day I die,  
Yet you, pitiless sighs,  
Won't you, alas,  
let me expire sighing?  
And thou, cruel soul,  
if my grief afflicts thee so,  
why not haste away?  
Ah, Death alone,  
on my harsh and bitter grief  
Takes pity and kills my life!  
Thus, then, my sighs and my soul  
Are heartless towards me, and Death  
merciful.

-Is this the same type of "*morire*" as Monteverdi?

-Isn't it good to orgasm "a thousand times a day"? Is that even possible? Isn't it a metaphor?

-Who is "you" and why do they have no pity?

-Who is he singing about?

-Did Gesualdo write this before or after he killed his wife while catching her in the act of cheating on him?

-Is "*Morte*" different than "*morire*"?

-Does he actually mean that Death, the noun, is the only thing to offer him mercy, because “*morire*” – or the verb metaphor “to orgasm” makes him miserable?

-Are the sighs that are heartless towards him the sexual ones?

Retrospectively, the understanding of the Gesualdo piece took extra attention and care, and as our process continued, I adjusted the plan to offer enough time to our full understanding of the text and the music.

Our process continued with a reading of the text and translation of the Lotti

“*Crucifixus*” followed by questioning of the text:

### **Crucifixus**

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato passus et sepultus est.

-from the *Credo* of the Mass Ordinary

He was crucified for us under Pontias Pilate.  
He suffered, and was buried.

Questions were:

-Why does Pilate always get the blame?

-Who did he die for? Who is the “us”?

-Who wrote this *Credo* text?

-Why does this text always get special attention in the *Credo*?

-Who are we when we sing this text?

### **When David Heard**

When David heard that Absalom was slain  
He went up into his chamber over the gate and wept,

and thus he said: my son, my son, O Absalom my son, would God I had died for thee!  
-2 Samuel 18:33

-Who is David?

-Who is Absalom?

-Why was Absalom slain?

-What is “his chamber”? Is it his bedroom chamber?

-What is the gate?

-What was the context of Absalom’s death?

-Why does he repeat “my son” so many times?

### **Hear my Prayer, O Lord**

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto thee.  
-Psalm 102:1

Questions:

-What are we praying about?

-Why can’t our crying come without prayer?

-Why do we have to repeat ourselves so many times to be heard?

-Why do we want our crying to come unto the Lord?

After we asked critical questions of the text, I asked that the students think deeply about the questions that were asked so that we could discuss them in depth in the coming days.

In beginning our rehearsal process with a round-table discussion of text, the focus was immediately placed on the holistic understanding of the words and their contexts. This way, when we began to sing the music, there was a deeper layer of communication of the text rather than merely singing the correct pitches at the correct time.

Finally, in this initial rehearsal, we looked at Purcell's "Hear my Prayer, O Lord" and in a similar fashion, "asked critical questions of the score." Open-ended, as in our questioning of text, students were free to mention anything they observed in the score and ask why it was there. Questions included:

- Why are there eight voices?
- Why do the voices finish the sentence for each other?
- Why is the texture so thin to begin with?
- Why does it take seven measures before the lowest, most grounding voice comes in?
- Why are there so many dissonances?
- Why does it take sixteen measures to finally get to a strong cadence?
- Why, after all the voices are in, does the texture begin to thin out again at measure twenty?
- Why are there different rhythms on the word "crying" throughout the piece?
- Why do the voices keep rising and rising until finally there is a big cry and burst in the fourth measure to the end?
- Why does it end with an open 5<sup>th</sup>?

We discussed possible explanations to these questions. Explanations included:

-Why are there eight voices? *A greater number of voices creates a thicker texture and more possibility for polyphonic individual cries, and then a greater homophonic sound at climactic moments. When a greater number of moving lines come together, a natural crescendo is created. A greater number of voices creates a greater feeling of urgency. Having more voices adds to the effect that many voices are crying.*

-Why do the voices finish the sentence for each other? *Musically and textually, it could be that many people are gathered together to plea collectively to be heard.*

-Why is the texture so thin to begin with? Why does it take seven measures before the lowest, most grounding voice comes in? *Its construction implies a long unbroken crescendo from beginning to end. This crescendo is not only of volume but one that underscores a growing intensity and urgency. Beginning with fewer voices and gradually adding more creates this intensification. Delaying the lowest and most grounding voice makes people feel uncomfortable, untethered, and ungrounded, which adds to this sense of anguish.*

-Why are there so many dissonances? *The growing intensity of the piece is not only achieved through its structure, but also through the pungent dissonances heard when the text moves from "Hear my prayer, O Lord," to "and let my crying come unto Thee."*

-Why does it take sixteen measures to finally get to a strong cadence? *Delaying a cadence for sixteen measures allows the voices to wander and cry and seek before finding. Delayed cadences create urgency and desperation.*

-Why, after all the voices are in, does the texture begin to thin out again at measure twenty? *Sometimes in the act of crying, we gather momentum with erratic inhalation. Speed gathers and there is an intensified release of tears. After a large heave or sob, sometimes there is a slowing of tears, and an occasional instance of holding in breath or sobs. In this time, there is a re-gathering of emotion that seek release. These measures with thinner texture could be this moment of re-gathering momentum for the next sob.*

-Why are there different rhythms on the word “crying” throughout the piece? *Each altered rhythm represents some form of crying. There are the smooth eighth note cries, as in the Tenor 1 voice at measure 25. There is the most frequent dotted quarter followed by an eighth note and two quarters cry, as introduced by Soprano 1 in measure 3. There is the more syncopated cry in the Tenor 2 voice in measure 28, with a dotted quarter followed by an eighth twice in a row, and then there is the most rhythmically complex cry in the Soprano 2 voice at measure 29, which is a dotted quarter followed by an eighth, and then a dotted quarter followed by two sixteenths. Each of these rhythmic cries signifies the level of intensity in the cries. Sometimes a cry is smooth (as in the Tenor 1 voice), sometimes the crier holds in the breath so as*

*not to let out their tears, as in the Soprano 1 voice, and sometimes the chest heaves and there is push and pull between breathing and sobbing, as in the Tenor 2 and Soprano 2 towards the end of the piece. Each rhythm adds a certain level of intensification or relaxation.*

*-Why do the voices keep rising and rising until finally there is a big cry and burst in the fourth measure to the end? The entire piece is a crescendo towards the full catharsis the voices experience collectively at the end. All thirty measures to this point have been a slow growth to this point of release.*

*-Why does it end with an open 5<sup>th</sup>? The open fifth sounds hollow and empty at the end of this textually, harmonically, and melodically dense piece. It sounds as though we are left still with no answer at the end. At the end of a cathartic cry, there is a feeling of emptiness—like there is nothing left to give. The hollow fifth at the end represents that moment.*

We have now asked critical questions of each of the texts, and have asked and discussed critical questions of the score for “Hear my Prayer, O Lord”. We have not yet sung a note or rehearsed any music. As the director, I have already asked all these important questions of the texts and scores before arriving, and I have my own answers so that I can help guide and direct the students. It is mandatory that the director of the ensemble knows the music and the texts thoroughly before asking her students to do the same.

With fifteen minutes remaining, we did a call and response exercise with the text “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto Thee.” This exercise allows the students to react immediately and honestly to a series of prompts. They are to answer my prompts with either the text “Hear my prayer, O Lord” or “and let my crying come unto Thee”. Students are to speak immediately, as their responses will be most honest and reactionary before thinking too deeply. Responses are there in the subconscious and will happen quickly. The prompts given were designed specifically for this group of students, and it is important to know to whom you are speaking.

The following prompts were given and they responded with, “Hear my prayer, O Lord”:

*You have a final exam in your worst subject*

*It's the end of the semester and you've run out of dining points.*

*You REALLY want that solo.*

*Your best friend is sick.*

*Your crush has not texted you back.*

*Your parents are ill.*

*There's no way you can help.*

The following prompts were given and they responded with, “And let my Crying come unto Thee”:

*The person you love does not love you back.*

*Your best friend wrote you a beautiful card thanking you for your friendship.*

*Your parents visit you on campus for the first time this semester*

*Your parents cannot come visit you this semester.*

*It is the end of final exam week at the end of a long semester and you have not slept.*

*Racism still exists in this country.*

*You feel objectified because of your gender.*

*There is bigotry all around us.*

After these call and responses I gave the starting pitch for the piece, and for the first time this rehearsal, we sang. We sang through the piece, without having rehearsed it, now with this reactionary and real connection to its text.

At the end of the run, the students were silent for a moment and realized that their singing of the text was meaningful to them. At the end of rehearsal, I handed each student a blank piece of paper with a brief prompt at the top, and asked that they complete it for Tuesday (which gave them about two days). It said the following:

Epiphany List: Anger and Rage. List all the moments in your life that you have experienced significant anger and/or rage. Explain how the rage physically manifested itself in you, and what actions you took in response to it.

As outlined in Chapter Two, Epiphany Lists are a way of organizing actors' thoughts so that they can "come to rehearsal with their pockets full" (Joanna Gleason), in order

to have quick and conscious means of understanding their own experiences and their reactions to them. This particular epiphany list was in preparation for our rehearsal of the Gesualdo madrigal.

**Monday, January 16, 7:30-10:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 2**

I had asked the students to think specifically about “A Boy and a Girl” and “When David Heard” for this rehearsal. We began at our round table by reading “A Boy and a Girl” and asking questions of the text, as we had in our first rehearsal. This time, the students were also encouraged to have an open discussion answering those critical questions. This allowed for a free flow of ideas and it invited the students to acknowledge and consider some different perspectives. This process encouraged the students to be individually and completely engaged in the music-making and critical-thinking process. They discovered the answers on their own, rather than accepting them from a source without thinking further. Understanding the text together as a group transferred musically—the group began to listen and phrase together based on these textual discussions.

Many of the critical questions asked of the text were the same as those asked the night before. In the paragraphs below I have gathered the majority of the students’ answers into a paraphrase:

*The poem follows one couple through its romantic life. They are at first young lovers, savoring the sweetness and ease of young love, represented metaphorically as*

*“oranges”. They then go through more of life with one another, experiencing and conquering challenges together. They savor these bitter times, represented metaphorically as “limes”, because the challenges and history make for a deeper and stronger relationship. Their kisses are represented as waves first, because waves are fleeting and passing. In the second stanza, their kisses are like clouds, which are also passing, but it takes longer for a cloud to pass than a wave. The relationship now is more rooted in time. It has lasted.*

The final stanza offered a particular challenge to the students. Had the couple died? Were they stretched underground as in a grave? Or were they physically living, and it was their romantic life that had died—“stretched out underground” a metaphor for feeling trapped in a stifling and lifeless relationship? Were they literally silent and never kissing because they were physically dead, or did they just have nothing more to say to one another, with a lost desire for physical intimacy? Rather than giving kisses as in the previous two stanzas, they gave silence for silence. My interpretation of the piece is that the two lovers have gone through life and have died, still loving. The reason for my interpretation lies in the music itself, but I did not wish to impart my interpretation on the students. Rather, I directed them to open their music and look at what the music was saying. On their own, they reached the conclusion that the lovers had died physically, rather than emotionally. The answer, I believe and they discovered, lies in the final ten measures of the piece, when the music revisits the melody on a hum (mm). The story and the voices of the lovers carry on somewhere. We continued to ask critical questions of the score, and the students

discovered together that the music is simple in the first stanza, based mostly on parallel major chords with an added second. The dynamic range is small, from *piano* to *mezzo piano* throughout. In the second stanza, the dynamic range is from *piano* to *fortissimo*, the meter changes frequently, the harmonies are more complex, the dissonances more pungent and pronounced, and the *tessitura* and range of the voices higher. Everything Whitacre has done sets the second stanza as an illustration of a richer and more complicated love. Finally, the third stanza is once again simpler harmonically and rhythmically, the dynamic range is back to *piano-mezzo forte*, and the vocal range and *tessitura* have come down again. As discussed above, the piece ends with a repeat of the melody harmonized with parallel major chords with an added second sung quietly on a hum (mm), signifying the continuation of this love story somewhere else.

After discussing the poetry at length, we then rehearsed the music itself. We rehearsed each verse individually and fixed any musical and choral issues (intonation, incorrect pitches, unification of vowels, rhythm, etc). After rehearsing each verse, I asked them to write down one person about whom they could sing. In the first verse, a first love or a first crush. Somebody with whom they have experienced only joy—or, a person with whom they have experienced more than joy, but imagined in the time before bitterness. After writing this person's name into their music and envisioning them before them, the students sang the first verse.

Next, they were to write the name of a person with whom they have experienced not only joy, but also some sort of challenge. After writing this name in their music, we sang verse two. For the third verse, students wrote the name of a person with whom they are comfortable in silence.

We took a fifteen-minute break and returned with Tomkins' "When David Heard". We gathered at the round table and worked together to complete Uta Hagen's Objective Exercises with the text. Each student received two copies of the following questions:

Piece and specific measures:

Who am I?

What time is it?

Where am I?

What surrounds me?

What are the given circumstances?

What is my relationship?

What do I want?

What's in my way?

What do I do to get what I want?

The first character in the piece is the storyteller. We decided together that the specific storyteller is the soldier who found David and reported that David's son, Absalom

had been slain in battle. In the second half of the piece, for which we completed a separate objective exercise, we are the voice of David. [Please see Chapter Two for both completed forms].

After our discussion and work together, the students understood the circumstances of this battle, the relationship history between David and Absalom, and the complex results of pride and ownership. They also understood that for the first 22 measures, they are the soldier delivering the news to David, and in the remainder of the piece, they are David himself in reaction to the news of his son's death.

We rehearsed the first 22 measures of music and then reminded ourselves of the objective exercises. Especially, we reminded ourselves that our goal is to tell fellow soldiers about David's response. Standing in our way of communicating the story is shock and sadness, and our way of overcoming this obstacle is by repeating it enough that we believe it happened. This added a layer of purpose to our singing.

Next, we rehearsed measures 22-47, whose text repeats "O, my Son, Absalom my Son." After rehearsing the music, we went back as before and reminded ourselves WHY we were repeating these words, WHAT we hoped to get from the repetition, and what was getting in our way of achieving that goal. The goal was to mourn the loss of our son, the hope was to reach understanding, and the obstacle was shock and disbelief of reality. We then rehearsed measures 48-end, whose text repeats "would God I had died for thee, for thee, O Absalom my Son." After rehearsing, we

discussed our objective exercises, and were reminded that our goal was to beg to take our son's place in death, standing in our way was the reality of our GUILT for ordering this battle to happen, and the HUBRIS and PRIDE that brought us there. The wails and cries of David are a mixture of grief, guilt, and disbelief.

At the close of rehearsal I reminded the students to have their Epiphany lists with them tomorrow, and that we would be focusing on the two Italian madrigals.

**Tuesday, January 17, 3:00-7:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 3**

Gesualdo's "*Mille volte il di moro*" was the most challenging piece on the program to execute musically and vocally. It would have been ineffective to engage in any exercises to help execute it more effectively before being able to execute it at all. In an effort to maximize effectiveness, we rehearsed the music at the start of rehearsal without any prior discussions. We worked slowly and carefully, as the harmonic shifts and melodic leaps are not always intuitive and are somewhat foreign to us as choral singers. We do not often sing works of the late Italian madrigalists. After rehearsing for 90 minutes, we took a break.

After the break we discussed our epiphany lists. I prefaced the discussion by mentioning that we would never share our memories with one another. Memories are only helpful when they belong to the person who has them. Sharing memories with one another has a few negative benefits. First, it makes artistic creation about the

*person* rather than the *material*. If a memory helps an individual connect with the material and affords them a greater ability to bring it to life, then it is used positively in service to the material.

Second, sharing a memory of mine will not help somebody else connect personally with the text. I have sung in many choral rehearsals where the choir director shares a personal story or memory with the ensemble with the hope that their own personal memory will affect the sound of others. This is negative and ineffective for the following reasons:

- 1) Immediately the shift has gone from the music to the director. And if the memory is a sad one, choristers are now focused on concern for their leader.
- 2) Choristers receive the subliminal message, whether it was intentional or not, that the director may have chosen this particular piece for selfish reasons—to express something that the director felt the need to express.
- 3) Choristers have now expended energy, time, and thought concerning themselves with something that has nothing to do with the music, their singing of it, their understanding of it, or their execution of it.

Most importantly, we must have emotional safety in the classroom. When I observed the acting class at Circle in the Square Theatre School in October 2016, it was concerning that students were sharing deeply personal stories of their lives without a certified therapist present. I witnessed a young woman work herself into a full anxiety attack while trying to perform a monologue from *Macbeth*, and later in the

class, a young man self-flagellate with a belt while performing a soliloquy from Richard II. Watching these mental breaks was uncomfortable, and neither seemed to help at all in the students' execution of their scenes. I learned from this observation that I did not want my classroom environment to become dangerous.

At our round table, I explained to the students that personalization of text through our use of memories can ONLY be useful if we have fully processed the event mindfully and emotionally. Recall that "the cardinal principle of acting is using conscious means to activate the rest of our system" (Langdon). We have the choice to consciously choose the memories that can be of use to us.

I asked the students if they realized anything about themselves in the creation of their epiphany lists for anger/rage. Were there common physical manifestations of their rage, or was it case specific? Did they get a sense of who they are in anger: HOW they express it, WHEN they express it, TO WHOM they express it, and the amount of energy it takes to express it?

Students discussed their discomfort expressing anger, but that not expressing it can cause residual rage or resentment that festers and causes damage. They shared that anger is a recognition of needing to self-protect, and that the surge of adrenalin rises to the surface of their skin. Anger causes a visceral and blood-filled physical response, and expends much expressive energy.

I set up seven chairs in a wide circle, with each chair about five feet apart. With a few select words in the Gesualdo, we began our first experience with Jacqueline Brookes' sense memory teaching technique, outlined in detail in Chapter One. Once students were breathing deeply with feet and bodies grounded, I prompted that they bring themselves back to ONE of those moments of anger from their epiphany lists. Where are they? What is the temperature? What does the texture of their clothing feel like on their body? Is it loud where they are? Is it still and quiet? Are they alone? Are they in a crowd? Are they with only one person? I was sure to make the questioning general so that I did not impose or plant any false senses. I then said the words "*e voi*" (and you), and the students chanted those words. It was easy to hear that the sound grew more committed with each chant. Then, I gave the pitches of an E minor chord and I started chanting the words "*e voi*" on a combination of those pitches. This was another non-verbal cue that students were invited to do the same. Students sang, at their own pace and tempo and on any combination of pitches in E minor, the words "*e voi*". We did the same speaking to singing process with the words "*alma crudele*" (cruel soul), "*spietati*" (ruthless), and "*ahi!*" (ah!).

We took a long break, and came back to begin work on Monteverdi's "*Si ch'io vorrei morire*". We began our Monteverdi process similarly to our work with Gesualdo: rehearsing the music first because of its difficulty. After rehearsing, we gathered at our round table and asked critical questions of the score. In a discussion of possible answers to those questions, students noticed the obvious word painting of this romantic text. A discussion of this music can be found in Chapter One. Including the

students in the musical exploration of the score invited and encouraged their full engagement and understanding. In this discussion, I encouraged the students to discuss how they thought the music should be phrased. I had my own conviction which I kept until I felt that they had fully expressed theirs. I described that beginning at measure 58, the male voices rise higher and higher with increasing speed (a metaphor to be sure!) to be joined by the female voices in rhythms that push and pull against one another. At measure 74, the momentum slows right before the moment of climax. All voices come together, with the tenors not quite homophonic yet, to express “*ahi bocca, ahi baci, ahi lingua, ahi lingua i torn’a dire si, ch’io vorrei morire.*” I then spoke the words in English, slowly at first, and speeding to the word “*si*” with no breath breaking the phrase: “Ah mouth, ah kisses, ah tongue, ah tongue again I say YES!!! I would like to die.” Because I allowed the students to talk about a different phrasing, and then walked them through my idea with complete commitment and conviction, they expressed that they could no longer think of that final phrase sung any other way. We rehearsed the music both ways, and the students themselves decided that the latter made musical and artistic sense.

We then sat in our sense memory seats, and I led the students through an exercise that could lead them to a more connected conveyance of the piece. I asked the following questions:

- What time of day is it?
- Are you inside? Are you outside?
- What is the temperature?

-Is there breeze?

-Are there walls? Are there windows? Is there wallpaper?

-Who are you with?

-How do they smell? Are they wearing perfume or cologne? What kind of soap do they use? Are they dirty? Have they just showered?

-Where are you lying down? Is it a bed? Is it a car? Is it the ground? What does it feel like beneath you?

-Look at your lover. Look into their eyes. Are they blue? Are they brown? Are they green or caramel? Are they big? Are they almond shaped? Are they wide?

-Look at their face. Are they cleanly shaven? Are they scruffy? Is their hair down? Is it messy? Is it done?

-Feel their face. Is it smooth? Is it thin? Is it round? Is it rough?

-Touch their lips with your fingers. Are they supple? Are they thin? Are they open? Are they wet? Are they dry?

-Touch their lips with your lips.

And then I spoke, “*ahi bocca, ahi baci, ahi lingua*”. The students followed the cue and spoke out, freely and at their own pace, those words. I then played the notes of an A Major chord and sang these words in any configuration of A Major. The students sang the text likewise at their own pace. Once it seemed that the students were done repeating the text, I asked them to open their music to the pick-up to measure 74, and we sang the music, “*Ahi bocca, ahi baci, ahi lingua, ahi lingua’i torn’a dire si, ch’io vorrei morire.*” The sound was connected to the breath and natural, and the phrasing worked collectively and intuitively.

At the end of rehearsal, I asked the students to prepare an Epiphany List for gratitude and to be ready to work extensively with “*Crucifixus*” and “Hear my Prayer, O Lord” at our next meeting. I chose “gratitude” because of the nature of the *Crucifixus* text.

**Sunday, January 22, 6:00-10:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 4**

At the start of this rehearsal, I asked the students if they had any thoughts about our first experience with Sense Memory on Tuesday. We discussed that it was helpful to touch, smell, and see because those systematic responses in turn helped to evoke an emotional response. We were not trying to conjure an emotion—rather, we recreated physical experiences that resulted in a response. One of the students mentioned that her singing felt “natural and free” because she was “singing the music from [her] soul rather than from [her] voice.”

I reminded students that in our work with sense memory, the only memories that are useful to us are events that we have processed and understood prior to our use of them. I also encouraged them to keep adding memories to their toolbox that they could use in different circumstances. I shared Joanna Gleason’s quote to “come to rehearsal with your pockets full.”

We discussed our Epiphany lists for gratitude and discovered that while anger and rage are visceral and rise quickly to the surface, gratitude is deep and difficult to

express fully. It is a more intimate and personal feeling. We then read the full Nicene Creed, from which the text for “*Crucifixus*” is excerpted. We discussed Christian doctrine and the belief that Christ died for the forgiveness of sins of those who believe. We also discussed the roles of Pontius Pilate and the people in the death of Christ. It was interesting to see which students took a leadership role in this discussion, and which took on the role of listener. Those who felt comfortable with Christian liturgy felt confident to speak, and those who were not felt compelled to listen. Religious texts offer the conductor an opportunity to exercise empathy in considering the various traditions and knowledge bases of her singers.

We went on to rehearse the opening eleven measures of the Lotti, a musical landscape that illustrates multiple voices gazing upon the death of the Lord with tension, anguish, pain, and the humiliation of personal responsibility. Its dissonances are pungent and rugged. The music changes drastically at measure 12 with the quiet polyphonic repetition of the text “*crucifixus etiam pro nobis*” (he was crucified for us): an illustration of quiet and unyielding guilt. The intensity of the music abates slightly with the repetition of “*sub Pontio Pilato*” (under Pontius Pilate) and then shifts from transparency to density with the dissonant cries of “*passus*” (he suffered). Polyphony joins finally at a homophonic declamation “*passus et sepultus est*” (he suffered and was buried). The harmony is brash and harsh—illustrating the brutality of his suffering and the intensity of the believers’ guilt. After rehearsing the music, the students wrote certain “trigger words” into their scores to help capture the affect of each section of music. In the first eleven measures, students wrote the name of a

person who sacrificed something in order to help them. Over measures 12-17, students wrote the name of somebody they may have treated unfairly, and in measures 18-26 with the text “*sub Pontio Pilato*”, they wrote of a time when they may have either watched somebody take the fall for something they have done, OR did not stand up to defend somebody that did not deserve the blame. Over the word “*passus*” they wrote of a time they watched a loved one suffer, and over the text “*et sepultus est*”, they wrote of a time either they themselves or a close loved one felt buried or trapped. We then sang the music with these trigger words directly in the score. The exercise afforded the students a reason and a way to sing the text.

After a break, we returned to rehearse the Purcell “Hear my Prayer, O Lord.” We had discussed the music and text at length at our first rehearsal, and had had a read through of the music following a series of call-response questioning. At this rehearsal, we worked to make our singing of the music more accurate. I gave the students the dynamic architecture of the piece so that we could have a framework in which to work. Next, we found every time our own line iterated “Hear my prayer, O Lord”, and wrote answers to the following questions above each iteration:

- 1) To whom am I speaking?
- 2) What am I seeking?
- 3) What do I hope will come of it?

Then, at each personal singing of the text “and let my crying come unto Thee” we answered the following questions:

- 1) Why do I need help crying?

- 2) Why do I want to cry?
- 3) What is standing in the way of my tears?
- 4) What do I hope will come of my tearful release?

This took a considerable amount of time, as is the case with all the exercises in this method. It is vital that the director makes the decision that committing time and energy to these techniques is worth the investment. If the director is not committed, the students will not be. This commitment is necessary, as is the full allotment of rehearsal time to ensure maximum effectiveness.

After writing the answers to our questions in the score, we sang the piece.

**Monday, January 23, 8:15-10:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 5**

At this point in the rehearsal process, all music has been rehearsed, we have “Asked critical questions of the text and the score” with all texts and scores, and we have worked with Objective Exercises, trigger words, epiphany lists, and sense memory. At the start of this evening’s rehearsal, we rehearsed some of the parts of the Whitacre “A Boy and a Girl” that needed work. After that, I introduced the “Actor Communion” exercise that is explained at length in Chapter Two. This exercise helped the students connect more deeply with one another. After completing the Actor Communion, we sang the piece through with our acting partner, never breaking

eye contact. The goal was that students would both ACT and REACT with one another.

With the remaining time in this shorter rehearsal, we rehearsed all of the transitions between pieces. I had assembled the pieces in a way that not only made sense textually, but also musically with smooth transitions of closely related keys. It was important that we spend a good amount of time to solidify these transitions so that the students could be committed to the new story they were telling at the start of each new piece.

#### **Thursday, January 26, 4:30-7:30 pm: Rehearsal No. 6**

As it had been over a week since our first work on the Monteverdi madrigal, we began the rehearsal by fixing some of the intonation and musical issues we experienced last Tuesday. Once the musical execution was accurate, we commenced with another sense memory exercise that led us into a performance of the entire piece. Last Tuesday, we only sang through the end of the piece.

I introduced the Meisner repetition exercises to the students. In this exercise, they found a partner and then the partners chose who would take the role of the Leader, and who would be the Responder. The Leader chose a piece of text, for instance, “*ahi bocca*”, and spoke it to the responder. The responder replied to this text by repeating it. They repeated this text until the Leader felt it necessary and intuitive to

switch to the next text, in this case, “*ahi baci*”. The energy in the room was palpable with this exercise and we then sang the piece in our partnerships, and then opened up to a circle. We sang to one another in the circle. Students were listening empathically to one another—breathing together, phrasing together, tapering together, waiting together, experiencing together.

After a break, we came back to rehearse the Gesualdo. Once we felt confident in our ability to sing the music well, we came back to the round table and we had an in depth discussion on the meaning of this poetry. This text, in particular, had given the students the most confusion at our initial rehearsal. At this round table, we discussed the difference between *morire*, the verb, and *Morte*, the noun. Gesualdo wrote this poem and music after killing his wife and her lover. He had remarried and his second wife ran from him because of his violence towards her. Gesualdo had lived a troubled and violent life, and so there was every reason to conclude that “*Morte*”, “Death”, capitalized in the poem, did indeed refer to physical death, while “*morire*”, never capitalized, likely referred to the madrigalian euphemism for orgasm. The language of the poem is somewhat stilted and in order to understand it best personally, I asked each student to write a paraphrase of the poem in English. We took fifteen minutes to work, and at the end of this time, each student chose to share his/her paraphrase aloud.

We made different partnerships than we had used for Meisner repetition exercises with the Monteverdi, and commenced with the exercises for this text. We then sang

the piece to one another, and then again in our circle. Finally, with the ability to sing the music, a complete and fully realized understanding of the poetry, and a visceral way of communicating it with one another, we were able to sing the piece with deeper understanding.

**Friday, January 27, 5:30-8:30 pm: Rehearsal No. 7**

In order to make our Italian madrigals as comfortable as possible, we began this rehearsal with the Meisner repetition exercise for the Monteverdi madrigal and then segued directly into singing it. We did the same with Gesualdo. We worked with different partners for each, and were sure to be with people we had not partnered with before. It was crucial that each member of the ensemble connect with each other member. This added a level of safety and security in the ensemble: that all were experiencing with one another.

We then revisited the Lotti "*Crucifixus*" and I asked the students to discuss the opening eleven measures as though they were the director of a movie. The first to speak imagined a group of believers chanting the Creed in a Cathedral, their belief intensely personal but shared collectively in that vast space. One student described a scene of Jesus hanging on the cross and the crowd watching him there, suddenly struck by their guilt and shame. Another student described the scene of Jesus carrying his cross to Golgotha while the crowd chanted "Crucify Him" behind him—their anger fervent and their guilt not yet realized. I shared that my thoughts aligned

with the vision of the latter student, and because of the intensely scrutinizing and pungent dissonances of the opening eleven bars, I imagined that this cry of “*Crucifixus*” came before the feeling of deep and painful guilt. The pain in the dissonances here comes from the horrifying demand that nails pierce through the flesh of another human. At measure twelve, the musical shift is so stark that it appears that at *this* moment, we turn inward and realize the gravity of our transgression, culpability, and remorse.

We chose new partners and commenced with Meisner repetition exercises with the English text first. “He was crucified”, “He was crucified for us” “under Pontius Pilate” “he suffered” “and was buried”. Partners worked together for about twenty minutes, benefitting symbiotically from the energy each provided in response to the other. We then sang all the segments of the piece after repeating the specific text of that segment. Finally, we sang the piece in its entirety.

Students asked if we could take our final three pieces, Lotti, Tomkins, and Purcell, and sing them together in a reverberant staircase in the school. Because we were still on Winter Break and it was Friday evening, I decided we would not be bothering anybody. We stood in a circle and sang. The moment in the stairwell was our first attempt at successfully communicating the three pieces without specific prompting ahead of time. A new space and acoustic brought new energy to the singing. We were completely connected with one another and with the material, and the “stairwell performance” of these three pieces made the students feel proud and connected to one

another by doing something important. Those qualities are vital for an ensemble to succeed.

**Monday, January 30, 6:00-8:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 8**

We began with a rehearsal of the Tomkins. We fixed some of the intonation issues that we had experienced in the stairwell on Friday evening. We then reminded ourselves of our Objective Exercises for each section of the piece: measures 1-22; measures 22-48; and measures 48-69.

For each section:

- Who am I?
- What time is it?
- Where am I?
- What surrounds me?
- What are the circumstances?
- What is my relationship to this person?
- What is my objective?
- What is my obstacle?
- What must I do to overcome this obstacle?

This gave the students a purpose for singing the text, especially with its large number of repetitions. We paid particular attention to the final three questions: Objective, Obstacle, and Action.

Following our rehearsal of the Tomkins, I shared the blocking for our performance on Friday. We would be in a choral semi-circle, but for the first three pieces about love, we would work with a “scene partner” facing directly towards them. At the downbeat of “*Crucifixus*” our gaze turns outwards, symbolizing the cries of the crowd in the crucifixion of Christ. At measure 12, we turn inward and sing of our individual and collective guilt with one another in our semi-circle. We stay this way through the Lotti and the Tomkins, and then at measure 10 of Purcell, we walk forward to the edge of the stage and beg to be heard and for our cries to come facing outward.

I decided on this blocking because it afforded students the opportunity to work with scene partners (which were chosen based on voice type), to exercise focused and empathic listening across the ensemble, and to interact with the whole group in the three final pieces. They came to the front of the stage in “Hear my Prayer, O Lord” because the word is “my” and the prayer is personal. The goal of this project was to determine the effects of acting techniques on choral sound, and so the blocking, flawed though it may have been, was created in order to best afford the singers opportunities to interact with one another.

We spent the remainder of this rehearsal doing Actor Communion and Meisner repetition exercises with our scene partner. We then sang the first three pieces in these partnerships, a difficult feat for the singers as we were only facing one other person. They had become empathic listeners in the rehearsal process and were able to

sing these pieces with their ears. The music-making was committed, focused, and engaged.

**Tuesday, January 31, 6:00-8:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 9**

We walked through our transitions and blocking, set the tempi of each piece, and took ten minutes in silence to focus our minds for a full run of the program. I encouraged students to review their music and texts, their trigger words and their personalizations of each text, and to breathe deeply and calmly in order to effectively communicate this music.

We came together and sang through the program, all six choral pieces with their blocking and scene work. At the end, there was an intense and deafening silence in the room. I was proud of the full-spirited commitment and delivery of the students. We sat in a circle and one student, as mentioned earlier, described that she was able to experience complete catharsis through her singing. Other students described similar sensations: that their first performance of these pieces was therapeutic; that they felt connected to their own bodies while singing; that they realized their voices took care of themselves when they were committed to communicating the text.

**Wednesday, February 1, 6:00-7:00 pm: Rehearsal No. 10**

In our final rehearsal together, we reminded ourselves of all the techniques we had experienced over the past nine rehearsals. I encouraged the students to use whichever techniques worked best in *their personal communication of the text*, and I thanked them for their outstanding work with this project. We ran the program again, and in this performance there were even deeper and newer layers of communication between partners, and among the full group. I gave them each a survey of seven questions, outlined in chapter 4, and asked that they keep answers anonymous. I asked that they return the surveys within two weeks so that their reactions could be fresh.

I was a part of the ensemble in each step of this process. I never stepped back to just *watch* the students. I did not want students to think that they needed to be concerned with what they looked like, what faces they may have subconsciously made, what movements their bodies may have systemically produced, etc. I was happy to know that they understood, at the talkback, that these techniques were about communicating the music from within, and that the faces or body motions that were made in response to that “inside-out” approach did not matter.

On Thursday, February 2 we had our dress rehearsal in Ulrich Recital Hall, and our performance was Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8 pm. In the following chapters, I will outline student and audience reactions to the work, as well as ways the method can be improved or modified for different ensemble settings.

## CHAPTER IV:

### REFLECTIONS

*“I became an artist because we are the only profession that celebrates what it means to live a life.” –Viola Davis*

There have been a number of opportunities to measure the effectiveness of this project—throughout the process, immediately following the performance, and now in the weeks and months that have followed. Perhaps the most important result of this rehearsal method is that it provides students an opportunity to take artistic and creative risks in an environment free of judgment. When students are invited to take risks, they can explore their own artistic capacity. We can never realize our full potential without the freedom to push boundaries. In her work as an artist and author, Julia Cameron writes that,

“Creativity cannot be comfortably quantified in intellectual terms. By its very nature, creativity eschews such containment. In a university where the intellectual life is built upon the art of criticizing—on deconstructing a creative work—the art of creation itself, the art of creative construction, meets with scanty support, understanding, or approval. To be blunt, most academics know how to take something apart, but not how to assemble it.”<sup>39</sup>

The rehearsal experience invited students to connect with the material, with themselves, and with one another in ways that could encourage their musical, vocal, and artistic growth. It introduced students to the power of creativity as a form of knowledge, and the ways that artistic innovation can inform learning. It is experiential learning through the craft of acting, which is about creating powerful, visceral, and intellectual experiences.

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, Cameron.

The students had prepared their music prior to our first rehearsal, which meant that they were able to invest in the artistic process quickly. They learned the skills of empathic listening. Their critical thinking of the text and of the music, and of their connection granted them access to freer use of their voices. Their work with the historical contexts of the pieces, the specific meanings of each text, and the personalization of those texts helped them each sing in a sincere and compelling way.

In March 2017, the University of Maryland voice faculty invited Dawn Upshaw to perform a master class with the vocal performance majors. Her work with the students was centralized around communicating the text. Ms. Upshaw addressed the class and said “I’ve been to many recitals where people try to exude confidence and I’m not moved at all. Being open and vulnerable is perhaps the hardest thing to do. But *that* is what invites people in.” It is important for voice students at every level to learn the tools of deeper expression. Because they have *also* done the hard work with their vocal technique, they will be able to communicate effectively. The purpose of learning proper vocal technique is so that it will be there for you when you are ready to “let loose.”<sup>40</sup> Ms. Upshaw’s entire masterclass was focused on the belief that the whole point of singing is communication. Choral teachers and directors should provide choral singers with musical, artistic, and vocal lessons that are applicable and meaningful to their work in other areas of their development.

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<sup>40</sup> Midgette, Anne. “How to Survive the Next Four Years on Social Media? Opera can help” The Washington Post, Feb. 10, 2017.

The following pages offer the reflections of the undergraduate singers involved in this process, as well as members of the audience. Quotations are anonymous. The first section contains comments from the students made outside the survey. The second contains student responses to the survey. The third contains questions from audience members and answers from the singers in our public talk back session after the performance. Messages received from members of the audience are included in Appendix A.

The comments below are ones I have received from the participating students in the weeks during and following the experience:

“The work we all did on your dissertation has done so much for all of our solo work...I’m using so much sense memory with these Brahms Lieder right now and it is so right. Thank you for giving us that.”

-Junior vocal performance and music education major

“Thank you for letting me be a part of this. I’ll probably look back at this concert and experience as one of those life-changing months for years to come.”

-Junior vocal performance and music education major

“I feel like I now have tools to actually make my communication in my solo repertoire SPECIFIC. I’m not just generally communicating something, but I’m connecting with each moment specifically.”

-Senior vocal performance and music education major

“Just so you know, I really loved rehearsal last night. I thought your activities and order of things was just so cool. Each new thing we were gonna do I was like “I love that! Let’s do it!” I think everyone’s very excited and inspired to be doing this!”

-Senior vocal performance and music education major

“Thank you for giving me so many new ways to study and approach music. This has changed EVERYTHING about the ways I learn and

approach my scores. I don't think there is a way I could NOT use these tools now that I know them."

-Sophomore vocal performance major

The students were given a survey at the final rehearsal and were asked to keep their answers anonymous. These are the questions and some of the answers:

- 1) **Question:** Did the work you did over the course of our ten rehearsals affect the way you sang the repertoire? If your answer is yes, how did it affect your performance?

**Answers:**

"I was able to sing more freely, and I was more in tune to what other parts were doing, especially with those who were taking cues at the same time as me. It made those cues more habitual in performance. When we weren't in a semi circle formation, it was harder and required more thinking and listening to ensure I was in sync because I couldn't rely on visual cues as much. All the prep/background work made singing the repertoire natural. As we said, the singing took care of itself. Thus, in performance, I used less conscious effort to achieve certain dynamics, etc, and focused more on the message."

"The process as a whole entirely changed the way that I sang the repertoire. When I first got the music and started looking at it, all I really thought about was making sure that I was singing the right notes at the right time. I definitely thought about the text and what I was thinking about, but I didn't go nearly as deep as we did throughout the process. Honestly, that was my favorite part about the whole thing: getting to discuss and dig deeper into the meaning of the text, and how it can be related to us personally. Although the performance was great, it was only the result of all of the depth that we went into with each song, and I loved it. With every piece, I was able to connect every part of it to my own life in some aspect, and I felt like I was telling my own personal story...it was also interesting to be reading and singing the music from the poet/composer's perspective. I don't think I'll ever fully understand Gesualdo with his mindset, but now I feel like I've caught a little glimpse of it through his music. Trying to understand Gesualdo's feelings and emulating that through singing strongly affected the way that I performed on stage."

“My performance was deeply affected by the work done in our rehearsals...The theatrical exercises allowed me to connect with the other performers in new ways—I became part of a positive feedback mechanism of sound, sharing and being shared among the ensemble.”

“I was singing the music. I was singing the text. I was singing the material. I wasn’t concerned with how I sounded, and so singing was easy and my voice took care of itself.”

- 2) **Question:** We learned and implemented a number of acting techniques. Which of these did you find particularly helpful to you? If there were one or more of these techniques that helped particularly, can you explain why there were most effect *for you*?

**Answers:**

“Personally, I felt most connected with the music when using the ‘what if’ questioning, substitution, and actor communion techniques. With the first two, I felt like I was really able to personalize the text and relate the music to my own life. By having real life examples that I could sing about and refer to, I felt much more engaged and connected with the text. I think that trying to analyze the text and understanding is very important, but once you get past that initial step, your understanding of it can be taken so much further if you are able to relate to it in some way. I can list “When David Heard” as an example where I used the first two techniques. I don’t know what it’s like to start a war that ends up killing my son, or to still mourn for that son even though he wanted to kill me. But everyone has dealt with some form of loss, and I was able to imagine and substitute that feeling with questions of my own: “What if I had a son?” “What if he rebelled against me?” “What if he had died?” Even these simple questions put a lot of context into what I was singing, and I felt so much more invested in the music when I could relate it back to myself.”

“Paraphrasing the texts was helpful for making the text more relatable and understandable because although one can understand flowery poetry, such an understanding is typically on the “gist” or the theme of the poem, versus knowing the exact meaning of each line of text. It personalizes the text for me and highlights important words in my mind because of the specific meaning I can attribute to them.”

“Quick call and response questioning was great in providing targets to think about or consider and I was able to take note how my responses differed. It brings attention to how many different shades of emotions

there are, which just reminds me of all the colors I have at my disposal.”

“I liked asking critical questions of the text because it urges me to understand the text and bring my attention to particularly evocative or noteworthy words. It opens the door for further discussion of the meaning of the text: why the poet chose those specific words, etc.”

“The Actor Communion was helpful for me because I felt like I was able to connect with every single person in the group in ways that I wasn’t able to before. I don’t know why we, as a society, seem to fear eye contact. I think it’s one of the most beautiful ways to connect with people.”

“Of all the exercises we did, the Actor Communion most sticks in my mind, not least because it was the most uncomfortable for me. Simply maintaining prolonged eye contact is an intimate experience, and even within a group I knew fairly well it left me feeling extremely vulnerable. I think that vulnerability was key to my openness to and connection with the other singers for the remainder of the rehearsal and performance process—I had already let someone stare through my open windows at my soul; what did I have left of which to be ashamed?”

- 3) **Question:** Will you take any of these techniques with you and apply them to your other work as singers and musicians? If so, which ones and in what capacity?

**Answers:**

“I believe that everything that we did is something that can be applied to other work, as a musician, and simply in life. I believe that everybody should be asking critical questions of the text and of the score. That’s the foundation on which you build and add to your artistry. I’m going to go back to the “What if” questioning and substitution as the techniques that I will probably take with me everywhere I go... I often hear choirs that sing beautifully, but it does not sound like they know what they are singing about. They sing accurately, but not in a moving manner, and usually it’s because they’re focused on either the pitches, diction, or in some cases, the memorization of the music. I can use these techniques to help other singers and students to personalize the text so that they can really understand what it is that they are singing about.”

“I would like to apply sense memory to other works I perform, particularly solo works to create a more interesting and engaging

performance so that I do not simply communicate the meaning of the music and text, but also what it means to me. If not clear to the audience, at least I will be more engaged and invested in my performance. Especially with repetitive music that requires contrast, I hope writing in targets and paraphrases will re-energize and re-invest myself in the music. For duets of small groups like this, I would use the repetition exercise to develop interpersonal communication so that we can be in sync with each other.”

“This process of breathing a personal life into the music will follow me in my performance of art songs and arias throughout my solo performance career. I will definitely continue the technique of Asking Critical Questions of the Text. In “When David Heard”, the character we created of the messenger who brought David the news of his son’s death led me to an interpretation I could not otherwise have reached. This technique compounded with the effects of sense memory and what if allowed me to act as a mouthpiece not only for the composer, but also for the specific characters.”

- 4) **Question:** Has this project affected the way you think about choral music?

**Answers:**

“Choral music, prior to this project, always seemed to me to idealize a pleasant sound. Musical theatre coaches, in particular, exhorted my fellow singers and me to lose the “nice choir sound.” A choral sound, to them, stood for the antithesis of evocative performance. Naturally, I no longer believe in that dichotomy—this process has proven that choral performance is, if anything, more effective at telling a story, simply because by its nature the performers have companions on the stage with whom they can interact.”

“This project made me reconsider the importance of background work for expressing any choral music to a greater capacity, with more layers of meaning. It should be treated as importantly and prepared as diligently as the solo work I do.”

“The project has confirmed the reason that I sing in choir, which is because I love singing this type of music and love being part of an intimate ensemble. This was one of the best concerts that I have been a part of.”

- 5) **Question:** Has this project affected the way you think about the text?

**Answers:**

“This project has taken everything that I have wanted to do with text and has forced me to sit down and really do it. Everything that we did is something that I’ve wanted to do with my own music, but have never actually done. Now that I’ve finally done the work and have seen and heard the impact that it has on my singing, it makes me want to go that in depth with every text that I come across now. I am inspired to put in the same amount of work that I did with this choir music into my own solo work.”

“Most definitely. I already believed in the importance of knowing the exact translation of text, but now I also appreciate the equivocality of text because as Gesualdo showed, there are many interpretations. Considering text seemed more obvious to me with pieces like “A Boy and a Girl” because of the poetry, but now I think Latin and sacred text has more to it than before.”

“I have always felt that text deserves more credit than most choral directors give it. I am horrified that any director would consider performing a piece without fully understanding text. No matter how much time the ensemble spends working on the minutiae of phrasing, dynamics, and tone quality, an ignorance of the text has lost them the heart of the music. I am very glad we did so much text-based work, and I think we have that in large part to thank for our success.”

“This project has deeply affected my work with text. Rather than reading it through a few times and having a general understanding of the overall feeling of text, now I understand how important it is to understand it specifically and contextually.”

6) **Question:** How would you describe the experience of rehearsing in this ensemble?

**Answers:**

“I have never felt as safe and secure in a rehearsal space as I did in this one. Everyone was so open and honest and vulnerable with each other, and I had never felt so comfortable in a choir rehearsal. I’m going to really miss making music with this particular group of people.”

“The word ‘personal’ has come up several times already in this survey, but I feel it really captures the experience of the ensemble. There is nothing more frustrating to me than when the director hears a problem I do not—‘Did you hear how flat that was?’ No, I didn’t, or I would have sung a higher pitch. In this project, our problems were our own, and not those of a vague concept, ie “the tenors”, to be abstracted and

excused away. Our triumphs were our own, too, and each rehearsal felt like we accomplished something, a step towards that unreachable point at the “end” of artistry. We rarely slid back, and if we did, it was because we had taken a giant step forward in some other area. Still every moment moved—our repetitions were never static, our lines never stagnant. We charged forward with sound.”

“This atmosphere felt casual and free but in a way that still allowed for serious work to get done. I think it’s important to have that balance. It did not feel awkward or uncomfortable. There were good vibes in the room.”

“The word I keep thinking of is ‘safe’. I felt really safe to be myself, not someone that I thought the conductor wanted me to be. Because I could be myself, I was able to sing on my own voice and be my own musician. It felt freeing.”

“The rehearsal space let me let loose. I wasn’t trying to impress anybody. I was there to sing this music with others and to be myself with and in the music. I was secure and invited to fully experience.”

7) **Question:** How would you describe the experience of performing in this ensemble?

**Answers:**

“The performance felt just like a rehearsal. I think that is the ideal—I never get stage fright if I know what I’m going to do. In my previous choral mental model, the presence of the audience changed everything. The choir was singing to them, so the experience was totally different from rehearsal. Fear clung to the whole endeavor, the sense of suspense and chance that undermines even the best preparation. Our ensemble did not sing for the audience; they were there, yes, but in the periphery. Our performance was for ourselves, and so there was no fear within me. Any failure was only failure of each other, and we had long since learned trust in mutual forgiveness. Because I did not fear failure, I did not fail, and gave one of the greatest performances of my choral career. I think most of us did.”

The end of that quotation bears repeating, because it speaks to the entire rehearsal process and method: **“Because I did not fear failure, I did not fail, and gave one of the greatest performances of my choral career.”** Fear cannot be at the helm of

artistry. When we fear, we inhibit ourselves. When we have no fear, we are free to create.

“I loved vibing off of other people more directly and actively, as opposed to being focused on the conductor. Performing was supportive and fluid and natural.”

“Performing in this ensemble wasn’t even the best part of the process. I think for me, the performance was the cherry on top of what was an amazing experience. The whole project made me think about my own life in a much more intimate and intense way than I had previously thought about it before. I sang with so much more intent in this concert than I probably had in any other previous concert. By the time we got to our performance, I was actually quite sad to know that this was the end. At first, I felt kind of weird letting the audience take part in such an intimate experience as the performance, but I realized immediately that that is the point of all of this: to share the experience with the audience so that they can have a similar experience of their own. And honestly, knowing that some of the audience walked away that day moved by the performance made me feel so proud to have been a part of that experience.”

“This is the most memorable concert I have sung throughout my whole college career, and the process that led up to it is the reason for that. I sang more invested than any other time I have sung in a choir. I was telling a story. I knew that my voice and my ears and my good intonation were all going to be there for me, because we had done so much work leading up to the performance. I was able to invest and commit in the moment. We all did.”

“Performing and rehearsing with this group was magical. We actually made magic together. I have never been in a concert like that, and I really hope that this wasn’t the last time that I ever am.”

Directly following the performance, we held a talk back session with the audience where its members could ask questions of us. The session lasted over forty-five minutes and suggested that members of the audience were invested in the performance, interested in the process, and grateful for the experience. I had not prepared the students for this session. I believed that

their answers would best capture their true feelings if they were spontaneous and unprepared. In their answers, it was clear that the students had experienced and achieved the goals I had for the project. As outlined in Chapter 3, I did not share these goals with the students, as I thought it would be more effective to measure whether or not they were achieved without my prompting.

Members of the audience included undergraduate students, graduate students, doctoral students in choral conducting, doctoral students in orchestral conducting, voice, theater, and choral faculty from the University of Maryland, professional conductors, professional singers, parents, and friends. The following are selections from the talk back session.

**Question:** “You said that the singers all came prepared. So I assume that this rehearsal process is different from others that you have experienced. How was it different.”

**Answers:**

“The most immediately different thing for me is that we spent so much of the first rehearsal not singing. We read all of the texts aloud, we did literary analysis, and only then did we sing. It was so much more text based than I had ever experienced before.”

“To go along with that, in a ‘normal’ choral rehearsal or in any choral experience I had prior to this, when you talk about the text it’s well into the process and it’s just for a little bit. Your conductor is giving you a translation or just kind of telling you what it means...and that’s really it. You don’t tend to get much more than that. With this, every gathering that we had, at least half the time was spent on text.”

“I think one of the biggest things that was different regarding text is that in a normal choral setting you spend time learning what the text means, what the historical significance is maybe, if you’re smart you translate your texts...The large difference was applying that specifically *to you*, in this setting, to having real experiences: making it incredibly personal, so that we are having a *REAL* experience on stage. It’s not acting in the way that you think about ‘I’M ACTING’, you’re having an actual experience based on the text.”

“And once we did start to work the music, much of that preparation took the place of what you would expect in a choral setting where you work the minutiae of the interpretation of the notes. You know...’put a messa di voce here. We want to get to a certain dynamic by this point...’ We did discuss broad overarching phrases, like ‘this entire page is a big crescendo to this point’, but where you would normally have a very fine detail work, a lot of that was reassumed. A lot of that was accomplished through the work we had done with the text and understanding why we, personally, were singing this.”

**Question:** “Did you guys find that in doing all of that deep Meisner work and expression that it got in the way of your ensemble work, or did it compromise your vocal technique at all?”

**Answers:**

“When I was in the nascent stages of this I thought ‘what is this actually going to mean for our choral sound?’ Are we going to be way out of tune all the time and is everyone going to be wobbly and will it be an ensemble at all? And actually, our text work sort of just fixed all of that. These singers are so fine, and they are also trained in the same choir, and so it might be a little bit different if they weren’t. But it really did not negatively effect their ensemble sound. If anything it just made the singing gutsier and more connected to the breath.”

“I thought it was a valuable skill to learn to be a singing actor. To be able to relate that deeply, and invest yourself that deeply while still being able to maintain a solid vocal technique. I thought that was a really important skill that we learned.”

**“Speaking from a completely technical standpoint, what I found throughout this process is that after these four hour rehearsals, I WASN’T vocally tired which is really unusual. And for me, at**

**least, it was because you're feeling everything down in your gut in the area of your body where all your support comes from, it purely technically becomes physically easier to support your sound! So...that was a nice surprise!"\***

\*The response above is emboldened because it speaks directly to the theory of the importance of using this method.

“We were thinking of the music and of the texts and of the purpose of singing and we weren't thinking about our technique, and because we weren't busy thinking about it, it didn't get in our way.”

**Question:** “I think you have begun to answer my question, but my question is, what is the feeling of your voice having done this work. And, I think you answered my question by saying your voice is not tired after four hours of rehearsal. So, I was wondering if there are other ways that you experienced your voice that was in contrast to another kind of choral rehearsal.”

**Answers:**

“You certainly don't normally have a four hour rehearsal where you don't feel particularly tired, and I think if anything, with this whole process of really focusing on text and music, I felt like my voice was just happening. I wasn't thinking ‘oh, now I need to do this so that I can sound nice’. I was really invested in these techniques that we had been working on, and on experiencing these things together, and so I was not thinking about my voice. It just sort of happened.”

“I think being engaged textually became being engaged physically, which then became being engaged vocally as well, which is just smart singing.”

“It forces you to become engaged vocally immediately. In a typical choral setting you have more time to eventually become vocally engaged. Whereas, in this textual immersion really immediately forces you to be musical and connected to your voice.”

**Question:** “I was just wondering if through these techniques any of you felt that you were channeling what the composer would have wanted?”

**Answers:**

“In ‘When David Heard’ before we had started getting into it I will freely admit I was not interested in it. I was not fascinated by it at all. And then we got into talking how there is a character change between the first half and the second half. At first we are not David, and then we are David, so you get inside the change of character that the composer has clearly intended. And so at that point the music had transformed, and I suddenly realized ‘oh! We are from a distance, we are not David, and that’s why it’s square and lovely at the beginning. And then you are David and you get all the weeping and wailing and dynamic waves and then it all makes sense.”

“I actually would say that in every single piece, the things that we did directly enhanced what I think the composer intended based on the text and the musical setting.”

“The composer picked that specific text for a reason and I think one of the whole points of this is that we spent the time to find that reason.”

“At the very end, sometimes we can’t know exactly what the composer wanted. But in the end, we were able to find a meaning for ourselves that hopefully other people can relate to.”

“In the beginning stages of the rehearsal we did something called ‘asking critical questions of the score, and asking critical questions of the text.’ So for instance, why is it that Octavio Paz writes that first they are savoring oranges, and then they are savoring limes. We all thought what the answer was and then we could sing it. Or, why at the end of all this weeping wailing in ‘When David Heard’ why all of a sudden do we have this change to G Major? Why does that happen? And then we could answer that with our singing.”

**Question:** I'm curious about how the singers feel after this as opposed to how you typically feel after another choral concert. To me, this feels less like a choir and more like a cast. So I'm just curious how you feel after this compared to other times you are done with a choir concert."

**Answers:**

"We were all pretty close before this, but we've definitely gotten a lot closer through the process. It definitely feels more like after a show than after a concert. After a show you are totally drained. You've given it everything you have, you've reached your moment of catharsis and now you can finally sleep."

"I'm going to miss singing OUR version of this program. Other times in different choirs I'll miss being with the people, and I'll miss singing the music, but I feel like that could be satisfied by singing the music with anyone, and being with the people in any musical context. What I'm going to miss here is the version of these pieces that WE created. We made something that's different from any other time that I will sing these pieces with anyone else in the world. This was something that is ONE TIME."

"This felt different than any other production or anything that I've ever been a part of, because it didn't feel like a production or a concert. It felt like it was an authentic interaction. It felt like I was giving not only of myself, but of my music, and of my musical self. It didn't feel like we had a goal that we were trying to reach, but that we found a mode of expression."

**Question:** "This is for the seven undergrads. I'm wondering if this is something you feel is a practical tool for you. Is it something you will use in your own work in the studio, or do you need other people to do it?"

**Answers:**

“I will definitely use this again because most singers know that in most arias, most of the words are repeated over and over. You can’t just sing them the same every time. You need to add different layers. It can’t just be “sad” the entire way through. It has to be different shades of sad. Maybe more of an ‘angry sad’ or a ‘very distraught sad’ and adding all of those layers creates a more natural experience for you and hopefully the audience as well.”

“Five of us were also involved in Opera Terps<sup>41</sup> during this process. And we would do these exercises in rehearsal and the next day I would show up at opera staging rehearsal and I would try to access those things. I immediately noticed a difference in how involved I was able to get vocally and physically through the process. Having used it in other music WHILE WE WERE LEARNING IT, I know that I am definitely going to keep it going forward. I think it’s incredibly helpful.”

“I think a lot of the time when you are learning a song, or preparing a role or something, you kind of think about the character in the song, or in the text, and so I have never really necessarily thought ‘what is MY experience in my own life that relates to this experience that I am singing and speaking about.’ And that’s such a powerful thing to be able to use. So you don’t have to just think ‘what is this person going through and how can I portray that?’ You can portray it by having some connection. It allows you to access something.”

“I would say that this definitely changed any way that I will approach singing in the future, because before a lot of the way I had thought about acting was ‘I’m putting on this character. I am portraying this.’ Rather than I am becoming me. I am revealing myself through this song and through this character. So it definitely has changed the way that I will sing ANYTHING in the future.”

For the full talk back session, please watch the video recording of this performance.

In a meeting with Nick Olcott following the performance, he offered some suggestions to elevate the communication of the text to the next level. He suggested

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<sup>41</sup> Opera Terps is a student led opera production at the University that stars the undergraduate students.

that one of the questions asked in singing a piece is “WHY are we singing this RIGHT NOW?” “WHAT do we hope to get IN THIS MOMENT from singing this text and this music?” He understood that we had asked critical questions of the text. In the case of Whitacre’s *A Boy and a Girl* and its Octavio Paz poetry, we had asked “why are we savoring oranges?”, “why are we savoring limes?”, “why does this couple now have nothing to say? At first they gave kisses, and now they give silence for silence”, etc. He suggested that there would be a more intense necessity and exigency in the singing if a further question after all of those would be: “why am I singing this to you right now?” “I want to get something out of sharing this with you...what is it?” He also suggested that in each of the object exercises, the objective be specific. The more specific the objective, the deeper the communication. In my further work with this method of rehearsal, I will incorporate this next level of questioning in the process.

I received a number of messages from audience members following the performance: they were sent without solicitation, and offered insight to the value of this type of choral communication. Four of the messages are below, and the full collection of them can be found in APPENDIX A on page 125.

“Last night was a triumph. It was incredibly artistic and powerful. This was one of the best things to ever happen at the University of Maryland. Thank you for doing something so brave.”

-Professor of Music at UMD

“I wanted to let you know again what a beautiful performance that was on Friday. It was perhaps the most intimate choral concert I’ve been to. I especially loved the Crucifixus. Religious text is definitely dramatic and personable. Your talk back helped me think about my own singing. At church on Sunday we sang Tallis’s “Hear the Voice

and Prayer”, and I decided to think extra critically about the text. (Why the voice *and* prayer? Why night and day? Why remind God of his promise?) Almost immediately the pitches became secondary, and I felt so much more invested in the music. Congratulations on your sincere contribution to knowledge and art and people!”

-Piano performance Major and member of the UMD Chamber Singers

“I experienced my entire life while watching your performance. And I realized that I have been keeping so much of myself locked up so that I can never really let it out to communicate while I sing. The performance was life changing. I want to immediately open myself up to the possibilities of being vulnerable. Thank you.”

-Undergraduate vocal performance major

“Your concert has made me change my entire way of thinking about music. I have already started approaching the text more seriously and specifically for the repertoire in my voice lessons. It was so beautiful and I wish I had gotten to be a part of it.”

-Undergraduate vocal performance major

What these comments have in common is that this level of communication is rare, desired, necessary, and welcome. Art has the capacity to move and to connect. It can be an agent for understanding and compassion. Students and observers alike crave visceral and potent musical experiences. We have the unique and rare opportunity to provide those experiences for choral singers and for their audiences. Students are capable, willing, and hungry for this level of experiential education. We need to trust ourselves as educators and artists and provide them with that which they need. Powerful and meaningful aesthetic experiences can only positively impact human, social, and artistic development.

## CHAPTER V:

### MODIFICATIONS FOR DIFFERENT ENSEMBLES

*“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” – Albert Einstein*

The vital elements in modifying this choral rehearsal method are commitment and imagination. If the use of this method is timed correctly, it can be effective for any type of ensemble, no matter its size or the age and skill level of its members. These techniques are most effective if implemented once the singers have the capacity to sing the music well so that their vocal technique will be there for them as a necessary element in full communication of the text. In the sections below, there are some ideas for effective implementation in secondary school choir, or in choirs comprised of untrained singers. The method can be modified in ways that will maximize its effectiveness for a specific ensemble. It can only be effective if the director of the ensemble is convinced of its exigency and is committed to its execution. Our artistry can only be as deep as we are willing to commit and expose ourselves.

### MODIFICATIONS FOR THE CHORAL DIRECTOR

The choral director must embrace the following if she is to use this method:

- 1) The pace of her rehearsal will change.
- 2) The atmosphere will be one of safety and security for students to take risks, make choices, make mistakes, and feel comfortable to commit themselves fully to the material and the process.
- 3) There will be group discussion.
- 4) The focus will be on text analysis and understanding.
- 5) The process is time consuming.
- 6) Every reaction to ideas is a positive one: if students suggest an analysis that may be misguided, rather than rejecting it, the conductor redirects and guides the student towards a better-informed decision.
- 7) Some of the techniques are most effective when implemented once the singers are able to sing the music well, in tune, and with consistency.

Regarding item 7, students in this experience received the music three months in advance with the understanding that they would come to the first rehearsal with their parts learned. These were also among the highest achieving undergraduate vocal performance majors at the university, and their instruments are reliable and consistent. However, this does not preclude other ensembles from using a similar methodology. In the subsection “Lower-Level Choirs” on page 112, there are modifications for choral settings where the rehearsal method can be implemented during the note-learning process.

What can the conductor do to modify the method for her own ensemble? She must know herself, know her ensemble, know her rapport with the group, know the ability

level of the singers, and choose material that will best serve that ensemble for its own growth educationally, musically, vocally, and artistically. The following are suggestions for directors of various types of choral ensembles:

### LARGE ENSEMBLES:

In December 2016, the University of Maryland Concert Choir sang Handel's *Messiah* with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center under the direction of a guest Maestro. Maestro's direction of the piece was inspired primarily by the text, and much of his work with the choir focused on the communication of the story. It was wonderful that textual communication was the goal, but it was difficult for the choir to accomplish it without the tools. Some of the maestro's directives were to "look happy" and to "keep your face smiling to the audience until the music stops." The result was a sea of smiles plastered on the choristers' faces. The reason for this is twofold: first, students were told to *look* a certain way. The result is a mask or face that choristers "put on". Recall, the process should be a series of experiences and actions that result in a certain emotion. Second, the message sent to the choir is that it is important that they *look* a certain way, not that they communicate the material.

Hearing choral directors tell their singers to "look like this means something to you" is not uncommon. In fact, I have heard it so many times as a choral singer that it has become another "choral director trope." This direction is the antithesis of effective communication and should be eliminated from the collective choral director

vocabulary. It does nothing but prompt singers to be shallow with their music making.

The ensemble was comprised of approximately 50 singers—full time students who sing in the UMD Chamber Singers, joined by alumni of the program who are working professionals. The nature of the full ensemble is one of limited rehearsal time. Despite the size of the ensemble and the finite time allotted to its rehearsal, the Concert Choir could have achieved the level of communication desired by Maestro. At a surface level it *was* achieved, but not to the depth and extent that might have been possible. Take for example “Glory to God”, the chorus in which we were asked to “look happy.” The quick-call-and-response technique could have elicited natural and immediate responses from the choir. The choir could have been prompted with short phrases, and the singers could have responded with “and peace on earth.” The prompts would have been tailored to the members of the choir at that particular time in the semester. For instance: “final exams are almost complete”, “in three days you will be on winter break”, “home cooked meals”, etc.

Part Two of *Messiah* illustrates the passion of Christ. The story and its music are dramatic. The choruses “Behold the Lamb of God”, “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”, “And with his Stripes we are healed”, and “All we like sheep” are difficult to sing because they require stamina. They also feature texts that repeat a number of times within the choruses. A group discussion that asked critical questions of the text and music could have helped the singers understand each

textual repetition. Asking WHY we are singing a specific phrase, TO WHOM we are singing, and WHAT we wish to gain from singing it can help singers give a more gripping performance. For instance, why do we wish to “behold the lamb of God”? Who is our audience, and are we asking them to “behold the lamb”, as well? What do we wish to gain in “beholding the lamb”? The answers to these questions add focus to the singing and help to communicate the text to the audience.

### CHOIRS WITH UNTRAINED VOICES

The method can be used in choirs whose members are less advanced in their singing technique. It is essential that the director teach her singers solid and proper vocal technique. We cannot expect a singer to sing well while being open and exposed if they cannot sing well to begin with.

Many lower-level choirs are composed of amateur singers who might not have the ability to teach themselves the music prior to rehearsal. Much rehearsal time is spent teaching notes, rhythms, diction, vocal technique within the context of that piece, phrasing, dynamics, etc. In this instance, it is possible to use different techniques throughout the learning process. Recall a student response on the survey that the diction, pronunciation, dynamic, and phrasing minutiae that are often a focus of conventional rehearsals take care of themselves in this method through the detailed work with text. In a lower-level choir, the process can still begin with higher critical thinking and discussion of text and music. This will engage students’ minds holistically through the process of learning to sing the music. Understanding the text,

rhetoric, and affect of the music will serve the development of the singers' vocal mechanism and breath as they learn the music in the same way that it does the more advanced singer. Uta Hagen's Objective Exercises (Objective, Obstacle, Action) can add purpose and direction to vocal execution if introduced early in the process, and understanding to whom we sing—Is it God? Is it ourselves? Is it a lover? etc, helps vocal intent and use of breath. The techniques of personalization: substitution, sense memory, epiphany lists, Actor Communion, and Meisner Repetition are most effectively used once the music is within the singers' voices consistently. This way, their technique will be there for them as they communicate.

The rehearsal method will have the same effects if introduced over the span of teaching the music: empathic listening, freedom of singing voice, deeper level of personal responsibility to the music and to the ensemble, growth of artistic and creative properties, and encouragement of deeper critical thinking.

### SECONDARY SCHOOL CHOIRS

It is vital that the method be used only once the members of the ensemble feel confident and comfortable with one another. Middle and high school students can be self conscious and concerned with their appearances, and if they do not feel safe yet in a space, they will mute their artistic expression. If using the technique of sense memory, it is important to remember that what we remember are *senses*, not emotions. Affective or emotional memory is a technique used by many actors, but in a school setting without a therapist present, its effects can be unhealthy. It is best to

avoid this technique—especially with amateur actors who do not know how to control or limit the use of their memory. Sense memory is more effective, anyway, because it is easier to recall a physical state than a mental one. It is more plausible to relive events, actions, and experiences than to conjure up a resulting emotion.

“Asking critical questions of the text and music” is the most important skill to teach secondary school students. Critical thinking and open-ended questioning is crucial for the cognitive growth of young children and young adults. Teaching these skills in a music classroom can help them grow into more holistic and creative thinkers.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENSEMBLES

An artistically holistic learning experience can happen at any age level. Music educators have been committed to a holistic experience in the music classroom since the 1970s with the development of the *Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance* model (CMP). In this model, “students can develop an understanding of musical concepts such as expression, melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre and form by being involved in a variety of roles including performing, improvising, arranging, composing, conducting, and analyzing music.”<sup>42</sup> Music educators who use the CMP model believe that it is important for students to experience more than technical skill development. The model provides a systematic approach to teaching critical thinking and creativity. There has been much research over the past forty

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<sup>42</sup> Sindberg, Laura. “Just Good Teaching: Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance in Theory and Practice.” New York, NY: R&L Education, 2012.

years that suggests that students who benefit from the CMP model achieve at a higher cognitive level than those who do not. Elementary students are not only capable of having aesthetic experiences—those experiences are essential to their human development. If the studies prove that CMP is successful in the elementary classroom, then the use of this choral rehearsal method would also be welcome with students of this age. As with any ensemble, the music educator is responsible for adjusting and modifying the techniques to best suit the age and singing ability level of the students.

Take for example G.F. Handel’s “Art Thou Troubled.” This is an aria used frequently in elementary school choirs to teach legato, use of the head voice, and excellent listening (students are singing in unison). Once the students can sing the piece well, the teacher may open discussion about its text:

*Art thou troubled? Music will calm thee,  
Art thou weary? Rest shall be thine,  
Music, source of all gladness,  
Heals thy sadness at her shrine,  
Music, music, ever divine,  
Music music calleth with voice divine.*

*When the welcome spring is smiling,  
All the earth will flow’rs beguiling,  
After winter’s dreary reign,  
Sweetest music doth attend her,  
Heav’nly harmonies doth lend her,  
Chanting praises in her train.*

First, it is important for students to know the context of this piece, which is an aria in the Handel opera *Rodelinda*. Rodelinda’s husband is thought to be dead after battle, and so she and her son are exiled. Her husband, Bertarido, is in fact secretly alive.

He sings this aria, which is a recitation of the inscription on his own tombstone.

Next, the teacher may ask students to create a group paraphrase of the poetry. Once they understand the language in their own terms, they will be better equipped to communicate it.

### CONDUCTED PERFORMANCES

The choral director does not need to recuse herself from conducting the ensemble.

The ensemble was not conducted in this particular project because the goal was to create a method of teaching acting to choral singers within the rehearsal process. It was not the goal of this dissertation to address the conductor's gestural vocabulary. If the conductor goes through the entire acting process with the students, she too will personalize the text and its music. She will not share her personalization with the choir, just as the members of the choir do not share their personalizations with her. Conducting the ensemble does not substitute any of the process outlined in chapter 3, nor will it detract from the individualization of the members if the process is a group commitment.

If the choral conductor is acting from the inside out, her movements and facial expressions will be natural and spontaneous extensions of her being. Of course, there must be a technical basis for her conducting before this is possible. Just as the singers must have sound vocal technique for text work to be effective, so must the conductor have a strong conducting technique. Recall that acting from the inside out is using conscious means to produce unconscious results. It is not about planning what face to

make when, or how high the arm movement will be on beat two. Rather, when the music is well prepared, the conducting gesture is solid, the text work has been done, and the conductor is fully committed to communicating the material, she will move in a way that is natural and personal to her artistic interpretation. The singers will respond naturally because they have done the work in effectively communicating the text. The conductor and the singers react to the energy given from one another—as in a conversation—rather than the conductor serving as the sole conduit.

### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

The first misconception is that this process is “dramatizing the text”. As outlined in chapter 3, the drama is inherent in the text and music already. We are not adding drama or fabricating emotions. We are using acting tools and techniques that help us communicate the drama that is already there.

The second misconception is that “choralography” is necessary for a performance to be compelling. In fact, movements can detract from communication if they have nothing to do with the music itself. There was minimal blocking in this performance and each singer moved his or her own body in a way that was natural to them: their bodies beckoned to move by their own interpretive singing.

The third misconception is that being “open” means that actors just stand there and cry. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the word “open” as, “allowing access,

passage, or a view through a space; not closed or blocked up.” This is a perfect definition of that which we strive to achieve as artists—we allow access and passage through the process of not being closed or blocked up. This is brave and difficult, and at some point in the process there may be tears, but that only allows for an even clearer path for communication in the future.

The final misconception is that the process becomes group therapy. In fact, neither the singers nor the director speak aloud about their experiences. Recall Uta Hagen’s warning that sharing personal experiences with fellow actors takes the focus from the work itself and counteracts the work of everyone in the room. We use our experiences, but we do not talk about them.

### The Importance of Teaching Creativity

American psychologist Abraham Maslow prioritized the hierarchy of human needs, which culminate in self-actualization. The hierarchy is:

- 1) Physiological needs: air, food, sleep, sex
- 2) Safety needs: protection and security
- 3) Social needs: acceptance, belonging, intimacy
- 4) Esteem: self-esteem, confidence, respect of others, respect by others
- 5) Self-Actualization: morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts.

Maslow’s model suggests that human needs can only be fulfilled one level at a time, and once one level is fulfilled, humans can progress to the next. He writes that in

order for the basic needs to be fulfilled, a person needs “freedom of speech, freedom to express oneself, and freedom to seek new information.”<sup>43</sup> Self-actualization is defined as achieving the fullest of one’s talents. He observed that “self-actualized individuals have a clear sense of what is true and what is false; are spontaneous and creative; and are not bound too strictly by social conventions...have a better insight of reality, and deeply accept themselves, others, and the world.”<sup>44</sup> Maslow also writes that, “self-actualizing people share the following qualities:

- Truth: they are honest, real, pure
- Goodness: they are benevolent and upright
- Wholeness: they are not dissociated
- Aliveness: they are spontaneous, fully functional, not dead
- Uniqueness: they are idiosyncratic, individual, not comparable
- Perfect: there is nothing superfluous, nothing lacking, everything is in its right place
- Justice: they are governed by fairness and non partiality
- Simplicity: they are naked, essential, skeletal, blunt
- Richness: there is intricacy, totality
- Effortlessness: there is ease, lack of strain
- Playfulness: they experience and elicit fun, joy, amusement
- Self-sufficiency: they have autonomy, independence, self-determination.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Maslow, Abraham. “The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance.” New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, Maslow.

<sup>45</sup> Maslow, Abraham. “Toward a Psychology of Being”. New York, NY: Van Nostrand, 1962.

How can one help develop self-actualization? Maslow outlines the following necessary steps:

- 1) Provide a space for free play that is sustained, focused, and concentrated.
- 2) Learn from others through discussions and interaction
- 3) Use personal emotions and experiences
- 4) Work together
- 5) Be constructive
- 6) Talk with other creative people—encourage dialogue
- 7) Sacrifice—share ideas with others.<sup>46</sup>

These are the goals of a holistic artistic education and experience—for students to fulfill their potential. In a method like the one developed through this project, students have the opportunity, the tools, the safe environment, and the encouragement to become themselves through art. Teachers and conductors have the obligation to modify the method to best benefit the students in their particular ensemble.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, Maslow.

## CONCLUSIONS

*“If you’re afraid to dive, just dive afraid. That is the bottom line for actors. Jump afraid. Dare to do it, and maybe you’ll land!” –Viola Davis*

Educational psychologists and scientists have proven the direct benefits between creativity and higher levels of cognitive development, and social and behavioral psychologists have proven the direct benefits of empathic listening on a person’s ability to interact with and understand other humans and themselves. American Psychologist Abraham Maslow and his pupils have shown that self-actualization and realization of one’s full potential happens through the acquisition of social acceptance, taking risks, remaining open to new ideas, sharing ideas in group settings, and developing creativity in environments free of judgment. The purpose of this project was to provide a method by which students—in this case choral singers—could achieve self-actualization, empathic listening, and creative development through the vehicle of choral music.

As evidenced through their singing and their understanding of the process, students achieved and unlocked depth, range, and freedom in their voices through acting. In experiencing acting techniques that help them communicate text, students can now approach their solo repertoire and other choral music in a more specific way. In revealing themselves through the material, students provided audience members the ability to experience an understanding of themselves and others. Through complete

immersion in a judgment free learning environment, students gained skills in empathic listening, explored their artistic potential through being fearless and taking risks, and were able to experience catharsis—the highest result of empathic listening.

Beth Hennessey, professor of Psychology at Wellesley College, has done extensive research on the impact of creativity in a students' workspace. She writes that,

“Parents and teachers alike have been led to believe that the motivation that stems from wanting to earn a good grade or receive a gold star or do better than the person sitting at the next desk is a positive force. However, in the case of open-ended, creative tasks—tasks for which there is more than one possible solution—extrinsic constraints have frequently proven harmful. A social-psychological approach to the study of creativity is especially useful for answering the question of how best to foster creative behavior in the classroom. Rather than focus on the (largely innate or at least unmalleable) differences between creative and uncreative persons, social psychologists concentrate on "creative situations" (i.e., the particular social and environmental conditions that can positively or negatively impact the creativity of most individuals).”<sup>47</sup>

The intrinsic motivation present in a creative learning environment helps students reach their artistic potential far more than any extrinsic motivation. Recall a response from one of the undergraduate singers in the talkback session:

“This felt different than any other production or anything that I've ever been a part of, because it didn't feel like a production or a concert. It felt like it was an authentic interaction. It felt like I was giving not only of myself, but of my music, and of my musical self. It didn't feel like we had a goal that we were trying to reach, but that we found a mode of expression.”

Through this process, students were able to find their own mode of expression.

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<sup>47</sup> Hennessey, Beth A. “Social, Environmental, and Developmental Issues and Creativity.” *Educational Psychology Review*, Vol. 7, No 2, June 1995: 163.

In the “Actors on Actors” series, Viola Davis has a conversation with Tom Hanks and discusses her process as an actress. She says, “it’s like that David Mamet quote that says if there’s an actor on a stage and a cat on a stage, who’re you going to watch? Well, you’re going to watch the cat, cuz the cat’s just being a cat! And so, you’re always just trying to be.” This choral rehearsal method has attempted to give students the necessary tools to “always just try to be” in the material they communicate. It gives:

- 1) Ample time to prepare their material prior to rehearsal.
- 2) A learning atmosphere that is completely free of judgment and cynicism
- 3) A space that allows students to take risks and to dare to fail with no consequences.
- 4) A number of acting techniques: Asking critical questions of the text, asking critical questions of the score, objective exercises, sense memory, epiphany lists, actor communion, Sanford Meisner repetition exercises, poetry paraphrasing, and quick call-and-response questioning.
- 5) A place for group discussion and critical thinking brainstorming.
- 6) An open, free, and holistic approach to understanding text, music, self, and others.

The results of the project strongly suggest that students and audiences crave a deep level of communication, and that this deep level is rare. Text work and an openness to communicate it does not compromise vocal technique, but in fact helps it. Taking

risks and diving in to explore the artistic capacity of ourselves as teachers and artists and of our students can lead to powerful, meaningful, impactful, and life-changing communicative moments. Choral music has the ability to communicate stories that help to heal, understand, and empathize. But we must be willing to shed our vanity in the process: there might be a movement or a face or a vocal tone that emerges from our bodies that is not classically “beautiful”. But this may be the moment that communicates the loudest. Let it happen. Let yourself be. The only limit to our impact is our own willingness to commit, reveal, interact, and expose.

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APPENDIX A

MESSAGES RECEIVED FROM AUDIENCE MEMBERS FOLLOWING THE  
RECITAL:

“Last night was a triumph. It was incredibly artistic and powerful. This was one of the best things to ever happen at the University of Maryland. Thank you for doing something so brave.”

-Professor of Music at UMD

“I wanted to say congratulations on your beautiful work. I found it very moving and one of the best examples of what I always wanted a choral performance to be like. It felt personal and joyful and well cared for.”

-Doctoral student in orchestral conducting

“That was a magnificent program that you put together with your incredibly talented ensemble. It was so intense at times as to be overwhelming. The tuning of the tight, dissonant intervals in many of these works was breathtaking, and the 110% involvement of every singer on that stage at every single moment was nothing short of electrifying.”

-Professor of Music at UMD

“The performance last night was compelling, musical, dynamic, moving, and overall brilliant. It speaks to my philosophy of what music is about—communicating the essence of truth in a beautiful, excellent way. I love the idea that you worked mostly on texts during rehearsal, because from the sound of it, it sounded like you worked so hard on diction, dynamics, and phrasing. All of that was so beautifully done. It’s made me think how I might incorporate more text work in my rehearsal, and how important it is, no matter what size the group, to create a safe space of honesty and trust.”

-DMA Choral Conductor

“I have never been as moved by a choral performance as I was earlier tonight. The music created by you and the other wonderful singers was unlike anything I have experienced from choral music. I was blown away by the performance tonight and felt a visceral connection from the first note to the last. I lost myself in the moment and felt like I was part of the performers’ experiences, rather than an outsider looking in on a private moment. You and the other performers made the music into something truly spectacular, and I will cherish hearing that performance. It has reaffirmed my deep passion for music. I feel that I now more fully appreciate the essential and profound connection between text and music. I think that I will approach both listening and making music differently now, as a result of the performance and comments afterwards. So often it seems the importance of text to a piece is thrown in as an afterthought and empty gesture, and thus makes little significant difference. I have sung “A Boy and a Girl” and “When David Heard” before, and although I liked the pieces prior to

this, I see them and their potential in a different light now. Thank you again for the beautiful music.”

-Undergraduate student at UMD

“Congratulations on a truly fabulous and path-breaking performance. You are a true artist and are sharing that with the world.”

-Member of the UMD Summer Chorus

“I wanted to let you know again what a beautiful performance that was on Friday. It was perhaps the most intimate choral concert I’ve been to. I especially loved the Crucifixus. Religious text is definitely dramatic and personable. Your talkback helped me think about my own singing. At church on Sunday we sang Tallis’s “Hear the Voice and Prayer”, and I decided to think extra critically about the text. (Why the voice *and* prayer? Why night and day? Why remind God of his promise?) Almost immediately the pitches became secondary, and I felt so much more invested in the music. Congratulations on your sincere contribution to knowledge and art and people!”

-Piano performance Major and member of the UMD Chamber Singers

“You inhabited the text with breathtaking fullness and complexity. When you came forward and shared that moment with us, the *sound* was completely elevated and I forgot to breathe. It takes guts and bravery and courage to do something new, and you embraced this medium *completely and fully*. We all had an experience collectively on Friday night. I have never seen anything quite like it.”

-Professional Actor, NYC

“I experienced my entire life while watching your performance. And I realized that I have been keeping so much of myself locked up so that I can never really let it out to communicate while I sing. The performance was life changing. I want to immediately open myself up to the possibilities of being vulnerable. Thank you.”

-Undergraduate vocal performance major

“Your concert has made me change my entire way of thinking about music. I have already started approaching the text more seriously and specifically for the repertoire in my voice lessons. It was so beautiful and I wish I had gotten to be a part of it.”

-Undergraduate vocal performance major

“I actually had a dream about your choir rehearsal method. I can’t remember all the details, but in the dream I was coming to some sort of epiphany about what makes a choir cohesive and compelling, and it was basically your method.”

-DMA student in Choral Conducting

“I just wanted to tell you again how incredibly special Friday night was. I felt everything so strongly and experienced so many feelings.”

-DMA student in Choral Conducting

“This was the best choral concert I have ever been to. The performance of “When David Heard” will stick with me forever. Thank you for creating something so important and for bringing something so beautiful into this world.”

-Chorus America representative

## APPENDIX B



1204 Marie Mount Hall  
College Park, MD 20742-5125  
TEL: 301.405.4212  
FAX: 301.314.1475  
irb@umd.edu  
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: January 16, 2017

TO: Ianthe Marini, MM  
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1000919-1] Teaching the Choral Singer to be an Actor within the Choral Rehearsal Process

REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: January 16, 2017  
EXPIRATION DATE: January 15, 2018  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 15, 2018.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

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Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or [irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

APPENDIX C

Consent Form:

<b>Project Title</b>	Teaching Choral Singers to be Actors in the Choral Rehearsal Process
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by <b>Ianthe Marini</b> at the University of Maryland in College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a vocal performance or music education major with a voice concentration at the University of Maryland. The purpose of this research is to consider whether the implementation of acting techniques in a choral rehearsal positively impact the performance and sound of an ensemble.
<b>Procedures</b>	<p>Students will be given six choral pieces three months in advance to proceedings so that they can fully learn their parts prior to the first meeting. Rehearsals will take place over the course of three weeks. There will be eleven total rehearsals, ranging in length from 90 minutes to 3 hours. Rehearsals will contain appropriate breaks. There will be a dress rehearsal and a performance at the end of the rehearsal cycle.</p> <p>The acting techniques that will be used in this experiment come from five main sources: the courses taught at Circle in the Square Theatre School in New York City; Nick Olcott’s Scene Study class at the University of Maryland Opera Studio; the writings of Uta Hagen in her book Respect for Acting, the techniques of Konstantin Stanislavski; and the practices of Sanford Meisner.</p> <p>Rehearsals will be videotaped, as will the final performance.</p> <p>Students participating in the research will answer a survey at the end of the procedure describing which techniques they may have found most effective or ineffective. The survey will take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete, and will be no more than two pages in length.</p>
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn about effective choral rehearsing.

<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>The data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Data will not be destroyed, but the surveys are anonymous and will not contain information that may personally identify participants.</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you are an employee or student your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:  <b>Ianthe Marini</b>  617-721-7895  <a href="mailto:iantheoneliamarini@gmail.com">iantheoneliamarini@gmail.com</a></p>
<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>University of Maryland College Park  Institutional Review Board Office  1204 Marie Mount Hall  College Park, Maryland, 20742  E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a>  Telephone: 301-405-0678</b></p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b>
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>

<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>DATE</b>	

## APPENDIX D

### Si ch'io vorrei morire

Claudio Monteverdi  
1567 - 1643

Canto

Alto

Quinto

Tenore

Basso

Si, ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re, ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re,  
 Si, ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re, ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re,

4

ch'io vor-rei mo-rir-re: Ho-ra, ch'io ba-cio a mo-re La  
 ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re: Ho-ra, ch'io ba-cio a mo-re La  
 ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re: Ho-ra, ch'io ba-cio a mo-re La  
 ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re: Ho-ra, ch'io ba-cio a mo-re La  
 ch'io vor-rei mo-ri-re: Ho-ra, ch'io ba-cio a mo-re La

11

bel-la boc-ca del mio a-ma-to co-  
 bel-la boc-ca del mio a-ma-to co-  
 bel-la boc-ca del mio a-ma-to co-  
 bel-la boc-ca del mio a-ma-to co-re.  
 bel-la boc-ca del mio a-ma-to co-

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 Revision 1.1, 2013-07-27 by Gerd Eichler

15

re. Ahi, car' e dol-ce lin - gua, ahi, car' e dol-ce lin - gua!

21

car' e dol-ce lin - gua, ahi, car' e dol-ce lin - gua! Da - te-mi lin - gua, ahi, car' e dol-ce lin - gua! Da - te-mi tant' hu - mo - ahi, car' e dol-ce lin - gua! Da - te-mi tant' hu - mo - re, da - te-mi Da - te-mi tant' hu - mo -

26

tant' hu - mo - re, che di dol - cezz' in que - re, che di dol - cezz' in que - sto re, che di dol - cezz' in que - sto sen, tant' hu - mo re, che di dol - cezz' in re, che di dol - cezz' in que - sto sen, in que - sto sen, in

33

sto sen, m'e stin - gua. Ahi, vi-ta mi - a, ahi, vi-ta mi -  
 sen, m'e stin - gua. Ahi, vi-ta mi - a, ahi, vi-ta mi -  
 in que-sto sen, m'e stin - gua. Ahi, vi-ta mi - a, ahi, vi-ta  
 que - sto sen, m'e stin - gua. Ahi, vi-ta mi -  
 que-sto sen, m'e - stin - gua. Ahi, vi-ta mi - a,

42

a, ahi, vi-ta mi - a! A que-sto bian-co se - no, a que-sto bian-co se - no,  
 a, ahi, vi-ta mi - a! A que-sto bian-co se - no, a que-sto bian-co se - no,  
 mi - a! A que-sto bian-co se - no, a que - sto bianc', a que-sto bian-co se - no,  
 a! A que-sto bian-co se - no, a que - sto bian-co se - no,  
 ahi, vi-ta mi - a! A que-sto bian-co se - no, a que-sto bian-co se - no,

49

deh! Strin-ge - te - mi, strin-ge - te - mi fin ch'io ven - ga me no, a que-sto  
 deh! Strin-ge - te - mi, strin-ge - te - mi fin ch'io ven - ga me - no, a que-sto  
 a que-sto bian-co se -  
 a que-sto bian-co se -  
 a que-sto

56

bianc' a que-sto bian-co se - no,  
 bianc' a que-sto bian-co se - no,  
 no, a que-sto bian-co se - no, deh, strin-ge - te-mi, strin-ge - te-mi fin ch'io ven - ga me -  
 no, a que-sto bian-co se - no, deh, strin-ge - te-mi, strin-ge - te-mi fin ch'io ven - ga  
 bian-co se - no, deh, strin-ge - te-mi, strin-ge - te-mi fin ch'io ven - ga

63

A que - sto bian - co se - no, A que - sto bian - co se - no,  
 A que - sto bian - co se - no, A que - sto bian - co se - no,  
 no,  
 me - no, A que - sto bian - co se - no  
 me - no.

68

deh! Strin-ge - te - mi, strin-ge - te - mi, strin-ge - te - mi fin ch'io ven - ga  
 deh! Strin-ge - te - mi, strin-ge - te - mi fin ch'io ven - ga me -  
 Ahi boc - ca Ahi ba - ci Ahi lin - gua Ahi lin - gua

73

me - no. Ahi, boc - ca Ahi, ba - ci Ahi, lin - gua Ahi, lin - gua torn' a

- no. Ahi, boc - ca Ahi, ba - ci Ahi, lin - gua Ahi, lin - gua torn' a

Ahi boc - ca Ahi ba - ci Ahi lin - gua Ahi lin - gua torn' a

Ahi boc - ca Ahi ba - ci Ahi lin - gua i' torn' a

Ahi boc - ca Ahi ba - ci Ahi lin - gua Ahi lin - gua torn' a

78

di - re: Si, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor - (t)

di - re: Si, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor -

di - re: Si, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor -

di - re: Si, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor -

di - re: Si, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor -

81

rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re! (t)

rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re!

rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re!

rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re!

rei mo - ri - re, ch'io vor - rei mo - ri - re!

# MILLE VOLTE IL DI

Il sesto libro di madrigali - 1613

Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa  
(1560-1613)

5

S Mil-le vol-te ildi mo-ro, mo-  
A1 Mil-le vol-te ildi mo-ro, mo-  
A2 Mil-le vol-te il di, mil-le vol-te il di mo-ro, mo-  
T Mil-le vol-te il di mo-ro  
B Mil-le vol-te il mo-ro

10

- ro, mo-ro, E voi, em-pi so-spi-  
ro, mo-ro, E voi, em-pi so-spi-ri, so-spi-  
- ro, mo-ro, E voi, em-pi so-spi-ri, so-spi-  
mo-ro, E voi, em-  
- ro, mo-ro, E voi,

15 20

ri, Non fa-te,oi-mè, che in so-spi-ran-do io  
ri, Non fa-te,oi-mè che in so-spi-  
- ri, so-spi-ri, Non fa-te,oi-mè,  
pi so-spi-ri, Non fa-te,oi-mè,  
em-pi so-spi-ri, Non fa-te,oi-mè,

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25

spi - ri! E tu, al -  
 ran-do iospi - ri, che inso - spi - ran-do iospi - ri! E tu, al -  
 che in so - spi-ran-do io spi - ri! E tu, al -  
 Che in so - spi-ran-do io spi - ri! E tu, al -  
 Che inso - spi - ran-do iospi - ri! E tu, al - ma cru -

30

ma cru-de - le, se il mio duo - lo T'af - flig - ge si,  
 ma cru-de - le,  
 ma cru-de - le, se il mio duo - lo T'af - flig - ge si,  
 ma cru-de - le, se il mio duo - lo T'af - flig - ge si,  
 de - le, T'af - flig - ge si,

35 40

che non ten' fug-gi a vo - lo,  
 T'af - flig - ge si, che non ten' fug-gi avo -  
 t'af - flig - ge si, che non ten'  
 t'af - flig - ge si, che  
 t'af - flig - ge si,

45

a vo - lo? che sol  
 lo? che sol Mor -  
 fug - gi a vo - - - lo? Ahi, che sol  
 non ten' fug-gi avo - - - lo? Ahi, che sol Mor -  
 a vo - - - lo? Ahi, che sol

50

Mor - te al mio duol a - spro e ri - o Di-vien pie - to - - sa  
 te al mio duol a - - spro e ri - o Di-vien pie - to - - sa  
 Mor - te al mio duol a - spro e ri - o Di-vien pie - to - - sa  
 - te al mio duol a-sro e ri - o Di-vien pie - to - - sa  
 Mo - te al mio duol a - spro eri - o Di-vien pie - to - - sa

55 60

e an - ci - de il vi-ver mi - o! Co - sì, co - sì dun -  
 e an - ci - de il vi-ver mi - - o! Co - sì, co - sì dun -  
 e an - ci - de il vi-ver mi - - o! Co - sì, co - sì dun -  
 e an - ci - de il vi-ver mi - o, il vi-ver mi - o! Co - sì, co - sì dun -  
 il vi-ver mi - - - o! co - sì dun -

Mille volte il di

65

que iso-spi-ri e l'al-ma mi-a So-no ver me spie-ta -  
 que i so-spi-ri e l'al-ma mi-a So-no ver me  
 que i so-spi-ri e l'al-ma mi-a So-no ver me  
 que i so-spi-ri e l'al-ma mi-a So-no ver me  
 que iso-spi-ri e l'al-ma mi-a So-no ver me

70 75

ti e Mor-te pi-a,  
 spie-ta - ti e Mor-te pi-a,  
 spie-ta - ti e Mor-te e  
 spie-ta - ti e Mor-te, e Mor-te  
 spie - ta - ti e Mor - te e Mor -

80

e Mor-te pi-a.  
 e Mor-te, e Mor-te pi-a.  
 Mor-te pi-a, e Mor-te pi-a.  
 pi-a, e Mor-te pi-a.  
 - te pi-a, e Mor-te pi-a.

Mille volte il di



13

S1 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis cru-ci-fi-xus

S2 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis pro

A1 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis e-ti-am pro

A2 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis e-ti-am pro

T1 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro

T2 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no

B1 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro

B2 cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro no-bis, cru-ci-fi-xus cru-ci-fi-xus e-ti-am pro

14

S1 e-ti-am pro no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to

S2 no-bis pa-

A1 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to

A2 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to sub Pon-ti-o pi-

T1 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to

T2 bis sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to sub

B1 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to sub

B2 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to

15

S1 e-ti-am pro no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to

S2 no-bis pa-

A1 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to

A2 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to sub Pon-ti-o pi-

T1 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to

T2 bis sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to sub

B1 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to sub

B2 no-bis sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to

16

Musical score for measures 21-25. The score is written for eight parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2). The lyrics are: pa, ssus, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, pa, ssus, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, la-to, pa, ssus, sub, sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, sub, Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, sub, sub Pon-ti-o pi-la-to, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, pa.

Musical score for measures 26-30. The score is written for eight parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2). The lyrics are: ssus, pa, ssus, et se, pa, ssus, pa, ssus, et se, pa, ssus, et se, Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, pa, ssus, et, pa, ssus, et se, Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, pa, ssus, et, ssus, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, sub Pon-ti-o Pi-la-to, pa, ssus, et se, pa, ssus, pa, ssus, et se.

31

pu - - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu  
pu - - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu  
pu - - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu  
- se - pu - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu  
pu - - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu - tus, et se - pu  
- se - pu - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu  
pu - - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu  
pu - - ltus est, pa - ssus et se - pu

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of a musical score, measures 31 through 36. It features eight staves: S1 (Soprano), S2 (Soprano), A1 (Alto), A2 (Alto), T1 (Tenor), T2 (Tenor), B1 (Bass), and B2 (Bass). The music is in a key with two flats and a common time signature. The lyrics are Latin, describing the passion and resurrection of Christ. The vocal lines are written in a clear, legible font with appropriate phrasing slurs.

37

ltus et se - pu ltus est.  
ltus et se - pu ltus est.

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, measures 37 through 42. It continues with the same eight staves (S1, S2, A1, A2, T1, T2, B1, B2). The lyrics are the concluding phrase of the previous system. The musical notation includes various note values and rests, with some notes tied across measures. The lyrics are aligned with the vocal lines.

# When David Heard

Performing Edition:  
Stuart McIntosh

Thomas Tomkins  
(1573-1656)

Soprano  
Alto 1  
Alto 2  
Tenor  
Bass

When Da - vid heard that Ab - sa - lom was slain, that  
When Da - vid heard that Ab - sa - lom was slain, that  
When Da - vid heard that Ab - sa - lom was slain, that Ab - sa -  
When Da - vid heard that Ab - sa - lom was slain, that

6

Ab - sa - lom was slain, he went up to his cham - ber,  
Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom was slain, he went up to his cham - ber, he went up to his  
lom was slain, was slain, he went up to his cham - ber, he went up to his  
Ab - sa - lom was slain, was slain,  
he went up to his

11

o - ver the gate, the gate, and wept, and wept, and  
cham - ber o - ver the gate, the gate, and wept, and wept, and  
cham - ber o - ver the gate, the gate, and wept, and wept, and wept, and  
o - ver the gate, the gate, and wept, and wept, and  
cham - ber o - ver the gate, and wept, and wept, and

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32

Ab - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom my son,  
 Ab - sa - lom my son, O my son, my son Ab -  
 O Ab - sa - lom my son, O my son,  
 - sa - lom my son, my son, Ab - sa - lom  
 Ab - sa - lom my son, my son Ab - sa - lom my son, ab - sa -

36

my son, Ab - sa - lom my son, my son, my son, Ab - sa - lom,  
 - sa - lom my son, O my son, O my son, Ab - sa - lom  
 Ab - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom,  
 my son, my son, Ab - sa - lom my son, my son, Ab -  
 lom, Ab - sa - lom my son, my son,

41

Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom my son, O Ab - sa - lom,  
 Ab - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom my  
 Ab - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom, O my son, O Ab - sa -  
 - sa - lom my son, my son, O Ab - sa - lom, O my son,  
 Ab - sa - lom, Ab -

46

my son,  
son, Ab - sa - lom, my son, Would God I had died for thee, for  
lom my son, Ab - sa - lom my son, my son,  
O Ab - sa - lom my son: Would God I had died for  
sa - lom my son, my son, O my son,

50

Would God I had died for thee, for thee, would God I had  
thee, would God I had died, died for  
Would God I had died for thee, would  
thee, for thee, would God  
my son, Would God I had died, I had died for

54

died I had died for thee, thee, would God I had died for thee, for  
thee would God I had died for thee, for  
God I had died for thee for thee, Ab -  
I had died for thee, would God I had died for thee,  
thee, would God I had died for thee, Ab - sa -

58

Ab - sa - lom my son, my son, Ab - sa - lom  
 thee Ab - sa - lom my son, my son, O Ab - sa - lom,  
 - sa - lom my son, Ab - sa - lom my son, my -  
 Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom my son, O Ab - sa - lom my son, my  
 lom my son, my son, O my son, Ab - sa

62

my son, O Ab - sa - lom my son, O my  
 Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom my son, O  
 son, Ab - sa - lom my son, O Ab - sa - lom my  
 son, Ab - sa - lom my son, O Ab - sa - lom my son,  
 lom my son, my

66

son, Ab - sa - lom my son.  
 Ab - sa - lom my son, O Ab - sa - lom, Ab - sa - lom my son.  
 son, O Ab - sa - lom my son.  
 O Ab - sa - lom my son, my son.  
 son, O Ab - sa - lom my son.

Psalm 102:1 Hear my prayer, O Lord Henry Purcell  
(1659-95)

5

Soprano I: And let my cry- ing come un -

Soprano II: - - - - -

Alto I: Hear my pray-er, O Lord, and let my cry- ing

Alto II: - - - - -

Tenor I: Hear my pray-er, O

Tenor II: - - - - -

Bass I: Hear my

Bass II: - - - - -

10

S: to thee, hear my pray-er, O

A: and let my cry- ing come un - to thee,

A: come, my cry- ing come un - to thee, and let my

A: and let my cry- ing come un - to thee, hear my

T: Lord, and let my cry- ing

T: Hear my pray-er, O Lord,

B: pray-er, O Lord,

Hear my pray-er, O Lord,

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord - Purcell

[20]

S to thee, hear my

A and let my cry- ing come un-

T come un - to thee, and let my

B Lord, pray - er, O Lord, and let my cry- ing

[25]

S hear my pray - er, O Lord, and let my

A pray - er, O Lord, and let my cry- ing

T to thee, hear my pray - er, O Lord, cry - ing come un - to thee,

B and let my cry- ing come un -

come un - to thee,

Soprano: Lord, and let my cry- ing come un -

Alto: and let my cry- ing

Tenor: cry- ing come un - to thee,

Bass: pray-er, O Lord, my pray- er, O

Alto: come un - to thee,

Bass: hear my pray-er, O

Bass: and let my cry- ing come un - to thee,

Bass: hear my

Soprano: to thee, and let my cry- ing come un -

Alto: come un - to thee,

Tenor: hear my pray-er, O Lord,

Bass: Lord, and let my cry- ing

Tenor: and let my cry- ing come un-to thee,

Bass: Lord, and let my cry- ing come un- to thee,

Bass: come un - to thee, hear my pray - er, O

Bass: pray - er, O Lord, hear my

30

S cry- ing come un - to thee, and let my cry-  
 come un - to thee, let my cry- ing come,  
 A and let my cry- ing come, my cry-  
 and let my cry- ing come un - to thee, let  
 T to thee, and let my cry-  
 and let my cry- ing come un - to thee, and  
 B to thee, my  
 and let my cry-

S ing, cry- ing come un - to thee.  
 my cry - ing come un - to thee.  
 A ing, cry- ing come un - to thee.  
 my cry- ing come un - to thee.  
 T ing come, my cry - ing come un - to thee.  
 let my cry - ing come, my cry - ing come un - to thee.  
 B cry - ing, my cry - ing come un - to thee.  
 ing come un - to thee.

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