

PROCESSES AND CRITERIA  
OF NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL DIRECTORS  
FOR THE SELECTION OF PERFORMANCE LITERATURE

By

TRACY CALDWELL HUNSAKER

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To my husband, Jason;  
and to my four children, Ruby, Emerald, Abraham, and Pearl Ann.

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## LIST OF TERMS

9ths:	An extended chord with an added note at an interval of a ninth above the root of the chord.
11ths:	An extended chord with an added note at an interval of an eleventh above the root of the chord.
<i>A cappella:</i>	(Italian: in the “chapel” style) Vocal music or singing without instrumental accompaniment, or a piece intended to be performed in this way.
ABA form:	Also called ternary form. A musical work divided into three sections in which the first and third sections are the same and the second section is contrasting to the other two.
ACDA:	American Choral Director’s Association.
Anacrusis:	The note or notes which precede the first downbeat in a group, often called a pickup.
Arsis and Thesis:	Arsis: the upbeat or unaccented section of a measure which builds up to the thesis: the downbeat or accented section of a measure. Also, a phrase in musical composition that rises in one part, and falls in another, or vice versa.
Baseline:	A specific value or values that can serve as a comparison or control.
Benchmark:	A standard by which something can be measured or judged.
Cataloguing:	A system used to classify, track and/or file works of music.
CD:	Compact Disc recording.
Chronological programming:	A system of programming music on a concert in which the musical works are placed in an order from the earliest written in history to the most current.
Criteria:	Standards, rules, or tests on which a judgment or decision can be based.
Cultural Redundancy:	The degree to which an individual develops expectations of the melody and harmony of musical style based on the individual’s former experience.
Descriptive study:	A study which describes a given state of affairs as fully and carefully as possible.
<i>Divisi:</i>	(Italian: division, divide). Division of a principle part into one or more subparts (e.g. from tenor to first and second tenor).

Empiricism:	Also known as realism, a philosophy that knowledge comes from experience, not thought, with a belief that truth can be discovered by scientific evidence and observation.
Festival:	A regularly occurring program of performances, exhibitions, or competitions comprised of choirs from various institutions.
Festival literature:	Music works or pieces performed at music competitions and adjudicated events.
Golden State Choral Competition:	A particular choral competition for all types of choirs in the state of California.
Literature:	Can denote any written materials, such as in books and articles. In this study it largely denotes musical works or pieces.
MENC:	The National Association for Music Education, formerly called the Music Educators National Conference.
Mixed choir/chorus:	A singing ensemble comprised of both men and women voices
Mono-stylistic programming.	A method of programming music on a concert in which all of the works are from the same musical style.
Musical genres:	Classifications into which music is divided according to basic similarities, most often based on race or time period.
Musical styles:	Category of music works that share basic musical characteristics.
Music education as aesthetic education:	A philosophy of teaching music in which the belief in the importance of music education centers around music as an aesthetic art, that is to say, an art which evokes feeling.
<i>Passaggio</i> :	(Italian: passage). The tones of the vocal range that comprise the transition zone between chest register (chest voice) and head register (head voice, falsetto), specifically those tones belonging to both registers (i.e. mathematical intersection of the tones in the two registers).
Perceptual Redundancy:	The degree to which an individual develops expectations from melody and harmony.
Philosophy:	An underlying set of beliefs about the nature and value of one's field.
Plural-thematic/stylistic programming:	A method programming music on a concert in which works are representative of multiple themes and styles.
PML:	Prescribed Music List, a list of required festival literature in the state of Texas.

Polychord:	Also known as a bichord. A chord that consists of two or more chords, one on top of the other.
Pragmatism:	A philosophy based on practicality. A belief that all things change and that truth can be known at any given time by application of the scientific method.
Praxial music education:	Practical application in the teaching of music; a philosophy espoused by John Elliott.
Programming:	A term used to describe the way that choral directors select and choose the sequence of repertoire for a concert.
Qualitative, phenomenological research:	A research method for gaining insight into how an individual perceives a phenomenon in their world using techniques such as interview or focus group. It focuses on the uniqueness of an individual's thoughts and perceptions rather than on empirical or objective data.
Rationalism:	Also known as idealism, a philosophy which relies on reason, or thought, as the way to arrive at truth. A belief that what is true is always true and that it can be arrived at through techniques such as the syllogism, comprised of two true statements and a state of logical conclusion based on the two truths.
Reading sessions:	Meetings at which music teachers and conductors sight read through multiple works of music.
Redundancy:	The degree to which the information conveyed in a piece of music meets the expectations of an individual while listening to the work.
Reflective musical practicum:	An approximation of real music-practice situations, or music-cultures; when performing is supplemented with improvising, composing, arranging, conducting and music-listening projects.
SATB:	The four primary choral/vocal parts of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
SSAATTBB:	Subdivisions of the primary choral/vocal parts, typically first soprano, second soprano, first alto, second alto, first tenor, second tenor, baritone, and bass. Additional groupings include TTBB, SSA, SAB, etc.
Structural redundancy:	The degree to which the structure of a piece of music meets the expectations of an individual while listening to the work.
<i>Tessitura</i> :	(Italian: texture). The prevailing range of a vocal or instrumental part where most of the tones lie. Somewhat analogous to the mode in statistics, but applied to pitches instead of numbers.
Y'all Come Choir:	Non-auditioned open-enrollment choir.

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Tracy Caldwell Hunsaker

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This study investigated and described the choral literature selection processes and criteria of “successful” public high school teachers. “Successful” was defined as being nationally recognized by performing at a national American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) convention. Participants consisted of 11 high school choral directors who performed with their choral ensembles at one or more national ACDA conventions held in 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005. Participants were interviewed. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Analysis revealed what philosophy, generally either aesthetic or praxial, guides directors’ choices; where and how directors acquired their selection knowledge; sources used for selection ideas and exposure to new literature; specific selection criteria; festival literature influences; literature cataloguing practices; and concert programming processes and their influences on selection.

The 11 directors interviewed have almost 250 years of combined teaching experience in selecting high school choral performance literature. The individual years of experience at the time of the interviews ranged from only 9 years up to 39 years. The school populations at which the directors teach range from about 850 to 3,500 students, with most reporting student

populations of around 1,500. The directors interviewed were Christine Bass, Ryan Beeken, Kim Drusedum, R. Daniel Earl, William Erickson, Kevin Hawkins, Terry Hicks, Jack Hill, Gary Lamprecht, Sally Schneider, and Kay Sherrill.

Although most of the directors interviewed teach at what would be considered large to very large high schools, the processes and criteria they follow in the selection of choral performance literature should be of interest to high school choral directors at any school. Each director conveyed information which was unique to that director, and each director also conveyed information which was similar to most if not all of the other directors. The directors teach in varied communities, and their processes and criteria reflect both the directors' backgrounds and their consideration to the programs and communities in which they teach. The findings from this study could be used by other high school choral directors to apply and try out the ideas presented by these "successful" choral directors in their own selection of performance literature.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

A successful musical performance begins weeks, months, and at times even years before the actual performance with the selection of the literature to be performed. “Music is the heart of the curriculum, and despite the amount of attention given to how we teach, the character of the music is more foundational to school music programs than the method” (Mark, 1996, p. 183). “No other single factor is as important to the success of a choral program as the selections of the materials to be learned and performed” (Perincheif, 1965, p. 85). Furthermore, Collins (1999) states:

[The] choice of music literature reaches the heart of the choral music education program. Since a large portion of the time is spent singing, choosing what to sing is vital. A good percentage of the director’s time outside class will be spent choosing music. What, then, are the criteria for choosing literature that best suits the program? (p. 52)

In selecting performance literature, many factors and criteria compete for the choral directors attention. Some of these factors are the strength and quality of individual voices, the strength and quality of sections in the choir, the number of voices in each section, the age and maturity of the voices, variety of musical styles and periods, programming of music by a particular composer or a particular style or period, difficulty level and complexity of the literature, the aesthetic qualities of the music, the quality of the work, and the “like-ability” of the piece by the choir or the expected audience. Directors must also factor in whether to select a single monolithic work or two such as an oratorio or song cycle; or select pieces to fit particular themes such as Broadway, madrigal, seasonal, holiday, or whether to have any theme at all.

James O’ Donnell, the Master of Music at Westminster Abbey, alluded to this complexity of selecting choral literature for performance:

The blankest sheets I ever have are when the choir is singing a concert. Here, my approach is to choose a program which I think communicates to the audience the character of the

choir and the breadth of its repertoire. I often choose new music to do in-concert so we can actually learn something. . . . In a concert program, I would try to sing some old music, some new music, and some in-between. I would try to make it varied, but I would try to make sure that the pieces illuminated each other: try to have some sort of thread— that thread would go through the concert, whatever it was. I'd try to give some kind of indication of the breadth of our repertoire, and I would also try to program it so that the choir wasn't consistently singing the same kind of music at full-pelt. So if there was a very difficult, demanding or long work, we would either then have a break with an organ solo or we would sing a simpler, straight-forward piece. (Sandborg, 2001, p. 150)

Other factors may also come into play in the selection of choral literature, some of which are personal to the director. Directors might program a work because they personally like the piece, or want to impress other choral directors. They might program a work because it would provide a balance in terms of tempo, style, mood, accompaniments, and other factors. They might select a piece to teach to specific educational objectives, music history, music skills, or hope that students would learn something about music from singing a particular work. Budgetary constraints can limit a director's options for selecting music to what already exists in the school's choral library.

The requirements are high in regards to professional expectations in selecting choral literature, particularly where contests are concerned.

One would expect that the music selected for inclusion on the state contest list as well as the other selections used by the directors for contest participation would exhibit the ideals set forth by the music education profession including 1) music sufficiently representative of all major time/style periods in music history, 2) music of established, time-tested composers, and 3) music marked by qualities of skillfulness, sufficient complexity, inventiveness, and craftsmanship. (Devore, 1989, p. 11)

As multiplicitous as the criteria are for performance literature selection, there is also a multiplicity of sources to which a director may go to discover potential performance pieces. These sources can include referring to professional journals or other published lists of recommended literature, attending reading sessions, perusing promotional materials sent out but

publishers, or simply looking through the school's music library. Choral directors may also frequently get ideas for music to perform from listening to the performance of other choirs, or from recommendations of other choral directors.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For directors to sift through all the sources for literature and make the best selections for their choirs, it is valuable for choral directors to know what the "best practices" are of the most successful directors when choosing performance literature. What are they looking for as they sift through pieces? What are their criteria? What are the musical and extra-musical factors? Bennett Reimer (1970) acknowledged the value of expert opinion in selection of music:

No simple number-scale can be applied to the differences in quality between art works, but the combined judgments of sensitive people can serve as a rough guide to the level of goodness of particular works, ranging from good to great. (p. 38)

High school directors whose groups have performed at the national American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) conventions are among the most accepted experts for that level. What are their criteria and methods for selecting literature? In speaking particularly of inexperienced teachers at the beginning of their careers, Blosch (1985) wrote that they "need the assistance of teaching techniques or 'tricks-of-the trade' not often learned in undergraduate studies, but which can be furnished by experienced teachers" (p. 12).

### **Significance of the Problem**

The selection of literature is typically the first step that happens in the preparations for a choral performance. If the literature selected is not of good quality, is not suited to the individual and collective voices within the choir, or simply has no appeal or meaning to the singers, director, and audience, then the performance of the selected choral pieces will not be as successful as it could have been. William Schumman (1953) noted:



With increasing experience as a teacher, I found over and over again that success with my students was directly related to the choice of materials that proved meaningful to them. The selection of repertory, not only for instruction but also for public performance, is of utmost importance for an educational institution. (p. 9)

In addition, Alfred J. Swan (1949) stated

Much of the music director's success depends on his personality. Is he or is he not, able to make an average musical endowment flare up and show a maximum artistic response? But perhaps a still more decisive point, making for ultimate success, is the choice of the material, since no amount of inspiration will overcome the obstacles presented by compositions that are too difficult or that are generally ill-suited for amateur performers. (preface)

The success of a choral performance hinges on the competent and skilled selection of literature. Great rehearsal techniques cannot fully overcome the selection of a piece which is ill-suited to a choir, has no appeal, or simply is not well crafted. The selection of choral literature requires knowledge, planning, continual attention, and a flare for recognizing a piece with appeal. It requires knowing where to go to find quality literature, and once you find it, knowing what to look for. To be able to gather information from directors who are the most successful at selecting choral literature and share that information with all directors could help directors gain invaluable knowledge and skills. It is, after all, one thing to read in a textbook what can be done; it is yet another to actually know what is done, as will be uncovered by this study.

Just to create a balance of repertoire regarding styles takes research, time, and planning. A director must be knowledgeable about literature from each of the major musical periods. Those include Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Contemporary, and multicultural. Within the Contemporary period there are many styles to consider such as jazz, popular, Broadway, Gospel, and atonal and polytonal music. There are also folk styles, African American spirituals, and various styles of world and cultural music to be considered. Once a director has studied literature from these various styles and periods, decisions must be made regarding which

styles should be represented and which piece or pieces should represent those styles. The greatest significance in the selection of choral music is in the power of great choral music. Paine (1981) stated that

The singing of great choral music can be a life-changing experience, a window to something more profound, lasting, and beautiful than the everyday. The key to this power of choral music is literature—good literature, great literature. . . . Our students—of all ages—need choral experiences that will expand their consciousness and push them to new limits of understanding and emotional involvement with art. (p. 5–6)

While many factors go into a great performance, the first step occurring before any rehearsals begin must be the competent selection of the literature. The complexity of selecting literature was described by Lamb (1979) as follows

The selection of repertoire is probably the most demanding and time-consuming task facing a choral conductor. The decision to program a particular work is one of the most important decisions he can make. He must choose music that will best represent our vast choral heritage. He must further be certain that the work will be musically interesting and satisfying to his choir. (p. 95)

No matter how great the rehearsal and technical skills of the director, a choir without the best literature for that particular group of singers cannot live up to its potential. It is important that choral directors have the best current information on how to achieve that potential. Certainly there are directors who are achieving this from whom much information may be shared.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Just listening to an accomplished group perform, such as at national ACDA conventions, is seldom sufficient to help other directors know what “tools” were used to get the group to that point. What those directors do to accomplish this needs to be uncovered in order to benefit others. Other directors will receive greater benefit from the performances of accomplished choral groups when the directors of those groups are given the opportunity to share their knowledge

with them. The purpose of this study is to discover and describe the processes and criteria used by “successful” public high school choral directors to select literature for their choirs.

### **Research Questions**

- **Research Question 1:** What is the basic philosophy of a successful high school choral director regarding the selection of performance literature?
- **Research Question 2:** From where did successful high school choral directors gain their knowledge of literature selection?
- **Research Question 3:** What sources do successful high school choral directors use to find new literature?
- **Research Question 4:** What criteria are the most important to successful high school choral directors in selecting performance literature?
- **Research Question 5:** What part does festival literature play in the selection of music for the whole year by successful high school choral directors and what influences the choices for festival literature?
- **Research Question 6:** Do successful high school choral directors have a system for cataloguing pieces they discover and wish to incorporate into their programs in the future?
- **Research Question 7:** What factors influence the programming of concerts by successful high school choral directors?

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction and Rationale**

This study was concerned with processes and criteria in the selection of choral performance literature. The process which culminates in a choral performance begins with the selection of the music to be sung. Considering the multiplicity of choral music from which a director may choose (literally in the many thousands with more being written every year), how does any director sift through the volumes of it to arrive at the pieces to be sung during a given school year or on a given concert? What a choral director chooses is based on his or her philosophy, knowledge, experience, and taste regarding the selection of performance literature.

Books, articles, and dissertations, address the topics of philosophy and knowledge. Philosophy as it applies to music education has a tremendous impact on the decision-making process of a director. A director's philosophy is encapsulated in his or her belief in the importance and impact of choral singing, the most important music in the realm of choral singing, the criteria that makes a piece of music worth singing, and how choral music can best have a positive impact on the lives of the students in the choir.

In the philosophical realm of music education there are two main approaches. The first approach deals with music, and thus choral music, as an aesthetic form, advocating aesthetics as the most important realm of the arts. Aesthetics in the arts was addressed as far back as 1794 in a series of letters by J. C. Freidrich von Schiller when he wrote *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*. In his writing Schiller speaks of aesthetics as beauty and essential to life. Bennett Reimer wrote in his *Philosophy of Music Education* (1970) about aesthetic music education. He also states the importance for music educators to have a philosophy, a belief system, related to his or her profession.

The second approach is very practical, the praxial philosophy. It is a “doing” philosophy, based on what can be done and observed. In other words, it is based on objective and observable behaviors. The praxial philosophy was explained by David J. Elliot in his book *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995)

Many types of general philosophies have bearing on the present study. Rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism, and eclecticism all approach music with distinct belief systems. Those belief systems have a strong influence on decisions made in regards to literature selection. In addition, three categories of viewpoints on reasons to listen to music have bearing on literature choices. They are referentialism, expressionism, and formalism (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

Various theories related to musical behavior if taken into account affect the choices made by choral directors with regard to performance literature. Those theories include information theory, the hedgehog theory, McMullen’s theoretical model, Fiske’s theory of music cognition, theories in evaluating the quality of melodies and harmonies, Meyer’s theory of musical meaning, and Adorno’s hierarchy of listeners. Some of these theories deal more with the director’s perception of the quality and effect of the music. Other theories deal with consideration of the audience and/or choral students’ responses to and understanding of the music (Radocy & Boyle, 1997).

## **Philosophical Foundations and Viewpoints**

### **Philosophers**

#### **J. C. Friedrich von Schiller: Aesthetic education**

J. C. Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) was one of the early philosophers to write about aesthetics. In his *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), he talks about the importance of beauty and art in human existence:

By your permission I lay before you, in a series of letters, the results of my researches upon beauty and art. I am keenly sensible of the importance as well as of the charm and dignity of this undertaking. I shall treat a subject which is closely connected with the better portion of our happiness and not far removed the moral nobility of human nature. I shall plead this cause of the Beautiful before a heart by which her whole power is felt and exercised, and which will take upon itself the most difficult part of my task in an investigation where one is compelled to appeal as frequently to feelings as to principles. (p. 1)

Schiller believed, even in his time, that practicality and physical needs were too much of a focus. He philosophized that day-to-day needs were weighing down humanity, and not enough focus was being placed on arts and beauty. He saw science as engulfing and taking over the possibilities of the imagination:

But in our day it is necessity, neediness, that prevails, and bends a degraded humanity under its iron yoke. Utility is the great idol of the time, to which all powers do homage and all subjects are subservient. In this great balance of utility, the spiritual service of art has no weight, and, deprived of all encouragement, it vanishes from the noisy Vanity Fair of our time. The very spirit of philosophical inquiry itself robs the imagination of one promise after another, and the frontiers of art are narrowed, in proportion as the limits of science are enlarged. (Schiller, 1794, p. 2)

In addition, Schiller believed that in focusing on tasks and the “mechanical” jobs to be done day-to-day, that other possibilities of man’s thought and development of character were being lost:

If the community or state measures man by his function, only asking of its citizens memory, or the intelligence of a craftsman, or mechanical skill, we cannot be surprised that the other faculties of the mind are neglected, for the exclusive culture of the one that brings in honour and profit. Such is the necessary result of an organisation that is indifferent about character. . . . (Schiller, 1794, p. 9)

Schiller (1794) believed that aesthetic education, our feeling that comes from it, should bring the ultimate meaning to the things that we learn, and that it can bring about further inspiration. He wrote that “the road that terminates in the head must pass through the heart” (p. 14). His statement tells us that what we learn, for it to truly have an impact on what we

incorporate into our lives, into what we think, and into our belief system, it must first be felt by us. In other words, he believed that for humanity feeling comes before thought. He truly believed that art, that is the beauty of aesthetics, not only affects what we believe and do, but it can be a catalyst for further thought and inspiration. He wrote that “If the nobility of art has survived the nobility of nature, it also goes before it like an inspiring genius, forming and awakening minds” (p. 15).

Another element of beauty and art which Schiller expressed in his writings was the relationship between play and beauty. He expressed that beauty is not being used for its full purpose and potential when it is looked upon merely as a source for enjoyment when he wrote:

But perhaps the objection has for some time occurred to you. Is not the beautiful degraded by this, that it is made a mere play? and is it not reduced to the level of frivolous objects which have for ages passed under that name? Does it not contradict the conception of the reason and the dignity of beauty, which is nevertheless regarded as an instrument of culture, to confine it to the work of being a mere play? and does it not contradict the empirical conception of play, which can coexist with the exclusion of all taste, to confine it merely to beauty? (Schiller, 1794, p. 23)

Schiller believed that beauty, that is aesthetics, was meant for more than just play, or in other words, fun and enjoyment. It holds a higher purpose to lift culture to a higher and more noble level. Schiller (1794) further expressed that “no error will ever be incurred if we seek the ideal of beauty on the same road on which we satisfy our play-impulse (p. 23).” In other words, we have the need for enjoyment and fun, what Schiller calls “play,” but as we are out looking for enjoyment, we should also be looking for the beautiful things in life. By so doing, Schiller believed that we will also make good, sound decisions, for those decisions will be based on a balance between beauty and enjoyment.

As further explanation of his belief in the character of beauty and what it can do for us in our lives, Schiller (1794) wrote that “Beauty is indeed the sphere of unfettered contemplation

and reflection; beauty conducts us into the world of ideas, without however taking us from the world of sense, as occurs when a truth is perceived and acknowledged” (p. 40). In other words, Schiller believed that beauty opens our minds and helps us to think more clearly, while still allowing us to be rational human beings. It can help us to learn and discern what is truth.

Aesthetics are described by Schiller as even having the capacity to affect society in positive ways, so much so that he believes it is the only element capable of truly bringing society together. He believed that “... aesthetic communication alone unites society, because it applies to what is common to all its members” (Schiller, 1794, p. 48). In this statement Schiller expressed what is still believed today, that aesthetics have a way of reaching across cultures, groups of peoples, and between individuals, to achieve understanding, commonalities, and communication, in a way not possible by any other means.

Beauty, that is the realm of aesthetics, was expressed by Schiller as having the ability to bring happiness to all people, and furthermore, it can have the effect of helping individuals to aspire to their greatest accomplishments. He wrote that “Beauty alone confers happiness on all, and under its influence every being forgets that he is limited” (Schiller, 1794, p. 48). Beauty can evoke positive feelings such as joy, and beauty it holds the tremendous ability to allow individuals to let go of the inhibitions which hold them back from great things. These are two very important beliefs of Schiller.

He also believed that what is beautiful is not to be judged simply by an outward appearance, nor can it be determined by the preferences of any experts. He believed that “Taste does not suffer any superior or absolute authority, and the sway of beauty is extended over appearance” (Schiller, 1794, p. 48). Indeed, Schiller believed that beauty was, to quote a modern cliché, “in the eyes of the beholder.” For him, beauty was determined, and sought after, by



individuals in society for the betterment of their own lives and their relationships within their societies.

**Implications for this study.** In the realm of choral music, aesthetics, that is beauty and the realm of feeling, has often been stated as the most important element for its existence and performance. Indeed, that is true for justification of all of the arts, but it seems to be particularly prevalent in the realm of choral music. Choral directors will often talk about “feeling” the music. They also talk about trying to reach their students with music through which the students will be able to feel and experience emotions. Aesthetics, that is beauty and feeling, is the main criteria by which most choral directors select their performance literature.

Choral directors select literature to increase their students’ knowledge of choral music and the art of singing, but more importantly they select music to open the minds and hearts of their students. It is the “awakening” of minds to the arts, as referred to by Schiller (1794), to which most choral directors are always aspiring. They are always searching for literature which they feel will inspire their students and give them a desire to want more.

### **Bennett Reimer: Music education as aesthetic education**

Reimer is considered by some to be *the* philosopher of music education. He wrote the first edition of his book *A Philosophy of Music Education* in 1970 (now in its third edition), and many music educators still use his philosophy in the development of their own. Believing that a philosophy is dependent on the time during which it is formed, Reimer makes clear that his philosophy is meant to be “a” philosophy of music education, not “the” philosophy of music education. In his writing he gives what he believes to be a thumb print of the commonly held beliefs of music education at the time he wrote the book. That being said, many music teachers still find his philosophy to be applicable today.

Reimer believes that a philosophy of music education is needed for important reasons. The foremost reason is to guide the profession as a whole and give it direction. He writes:

First, the profession as a whole needs a formulation which can serve to guide the efforts of the group. The impact the profession can make on society depends in large degree on the quality of the profession's understanding of what it has to offer which might be of value to society. There is an almost desperate need for a better understanding of the value of music and of the teaching and learning of music. (Reimer, 1970, p. 3)

Ironically, although that statement was made almost four decades ago, the justification of music education is still an important and on-going topic of curricular debates.

In addition to the profession as a whole needing a philosophy to guide it, Reimer believes that great teachers will have a philosophy, a belief, of why they program the literature they do, and having that philosophy will also channel the director into a higher level of "operational effectiveness," as Reimer puts it. He believes that there are fundamental reasons why an individual teacher needs a philosophy.

First, the individual who has a clear notion of what his aims are as a professional, and who is convinced of the importance of these aims, is a strong link in the chain of people who collectively make a profession. . . . The second reason for the importance of strengthening individual beliefs about music education is that the understanding a person has about the value and nature of his profession inevitably effects his understanding of the value and nature of his personal life. (Reimer, 1970, p. 5)

Reimer advocates that having a clear philosophy guides a music teacher both in education and in other aspects of life for "every aspect of the teaching and learning of music is similarly influenced by a philosophy" (p. 11). He believes that "everything the music educator does in his job is a carrying out in practice of his beliefs about his subject" (p. 9), and that music educators should ask themselves "Just what is it about my work that really matters?" (p. 6).

At the core of Reimer's own philosophy is aesthetic music education. He believes in the arts as a means for people to tap into their own feelings which come from life's experiences. He writes that "the arts are the most powerful tool available to man for refining and deepening his

experiences of feeling” (p. 38). Just as Schiller believed in the arts as a unique way to express the feelings associated with life’s experiences, Reimer also believes that they can give people a mode of expression to convey a message which words cannot and help to better understand the “subjective reality” of life.

Feelings and emotion are subjective aspects of life. Words are not adequate to express them. Reimer believes that the arts are unique in their ability to take what cannot be put into words and put it into a form that can be sensed by others, and he feels that the arts are able to do this for three reasons: “1) The creation of an art work, 2) the way an art work presents a sense of feeling, and 3) the experience of an art work” (p. 38).

Reimer believes that it is the “obligation of aesthetic education is to systematically develop the ability of people to perceive the aesthetic qualities of things and to react to the expressiveness of those qualities” (p. 79). He makes four recommendations on how this can be accomplished, how education can become aesthetic education. They are:

First, the music used in music education, at all levels and in all activities, should be good music, which means genuinely expressive music. . . . Second, opportunities must constantly be provided for the expressive power of music to be felt. . . . Third, the most important role of music education as aesthetic education is to help children become progressively more sensitive to the elements of music which contain the conditions which can yield insights into human feeling. These elements—the expressive qualities of melody, harmony, rhythm, tone color, texture, form—are totally objective: they are identifiable, nameable, capable of being manipulated, created, discussed, isolated, reinserted into context. . . . Finally, the language used by the teacher should be appropriate for his purpose, which is to illuminate the expressive content of music. . . . Words must be carefully chosen for their power to call attention to the events in music which present the conditions for feeling. But words should never stipulate what that feeling should be. (p. 40)

Within these recommendations Reimer advocates that music educators should be cognizant of always selecting the best, quality literature, continually look for opportunities within which students can experience the emotional power in music, help the students become sensitive to the elements of the music which combine to create the “feeling” in the music, and that the teacher be

capable of verbalizing to students the physical aspects of music which combine to create those emotions.

At the heart of Reimer's philosophy is the concept that by being aware of the elements within music and paying attention to those elements and how they work together, people are better able to sense and experience the aesthetic qualities within the music. This could apply to any great art work, that by having knowledge of and paying attention to the elements which make it a great work, a person is better able to sense the emotion and feeling being portrayed within it. Reimer states that:

What matters is, "Did you hear what happened in this song and did you feel what you heard?" "Did you see more in this painting and did you feel more of what you saw?" "Did you grasp more of the subtleties of this poem and did you feel more subtly as a result?" In the sense of perceiving more and reacting more, the central question is "Did you *understand*?" (p. 84)

Reimer believes that it is the ultimate job of a music teacher to educate the students about music and its elements, as the teacher provides good music for them to learn. As students better understand what is contained in the music, how it is written, and how those elements combine to create a sense of feeling and emotion, and as the teacher exposes them to the sensitivity of music, the students will experience the emotion of the music and grow in their musical understanding and appreciation. As Reimer puts it, the job of a music teacher is the "education of feeling."

**Implications for this study.** Choral directors look for music which they feel will "move" their students. Typically they judge the effects of performance literature by whether or not they themselves are "moved" by a musical work. Just as Reimer believed that good music portrays emotion, choral directors seek after performance literature which can "touch hearts," also believing that the best literature is that which helps performers and listeners alike to experience feeling. Most choral directors are also aware of the elements in music which create the emotion

within it, and they incorporate curriculum into their teaching which helps their students to gain a better awareness and knowledge of those elements.

### **David J. Elliot: Praxial music education**

Elliot wrote an important book in the realm of music education entitled *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995). One of Elliot's first points he makes in his book in regards to philosophy is quite simply the importance of having a philosophy. Elliot defines philosophy as "some underlying set of beliefs about the nature and value of one's field" (p. 6). He believes that music educators should question their beliefs in regards to music education. He states that "among the first questions a philosophical person wants to have answered are these: 'What do you mean?' and 'How do you know?'" (p. 7). People who are philosophical will question what they are doing, what they believe, and why they believe it.

Elliot makes comparison with what a philosophy is and developing a philosophy to a map and map-making. He states:

A philosophy is like a map, and doing philosophy is like map making. A map provides a comprehensive overview of a territory. It gives us our bearings. It helps us decide where to go and how to get there. Like a good map, a good philosophy can show us the best routes to our destinations based on careful considerations of the territory we want to travel. It may also point us to routes and destinations we never considered. . . .

Experienced teachers who reject philosophy often have an inborn fear of testing their practical procedures by reference to critically developed principles. Their main concern is the quality of the roads they travel in the classroom each day (that is, the nature of their teaching methods and materials). But however good teachers may be at using or building roads, it is essential that these roads take students to the right places. To suggest otherwise is to abdicate one's responsibility to think intelligently about why and how one ought to educate people. (p. 9–10)

Elliot believes it to be the responsibility of all educators to develop and build their philosophies with regard to what they do as teachers and why they do it. That philosophy, like a map, will then guide and direct the direction they go in terms of what they teach and how they teach it.

The bulk of Elliot's book explains his own philosophy of music education. Elliot wrote a philosophy that counters the ideas set out by Reimer's philosophy of music as aesthetic education. Elliot's philosophical viewpoint he terms as a "praxial" philosophy. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition* (2000) defines the term praxis as: "1. Practical application or exercise of a branch of learning. 2. Habitual or established practice; custom." Elliot's praxial philosophy is very much one of practical application in the teaching of music. Elliot (1997) explains that the word "praxis" is a noun derived from the verb *prasso*, which means "to do" or "to act purposeful" (p. 16). In other words, a praxial philosophy, according to Elliot, involved doing things intentionally. In the realm of music education it denotes that music teachers will make purposeful decisions based on their beliefs and teach according to those beliefs and decisions.

Elliot's praxial philosophy contains many different elements and ideas. He defines his philosophy as a "multidimensional concept of music" (p. 16). He further argues that "all forms of music making involve a multidimensional form of thinking that is also a unique source of one of the most important kinds of knowledge human beings can gain" (p. 33). Elliot believes that music is a complex mental activity that has value for all human beings.

With his active approach, Elliot advocates teaching music in a way that keeps students involved in music performing, no matter what the type of music class, including general music classes. He writes that "music making in the sense of singing and playing instruments lies at the heart of what music is and that music making is a matter of musical knowledge-in-action, or musicianship" (p. 50). That music is meant to an involved and participatory activity lies at the heart of Elliot's praxial philosophy. In his philosophy music is something that is to be done, not just learned about. In addition he believes that "doing implies intention; the word *activity* alone

does not. . . . Performing involves doing and making. . . . The key word above is *intention*” (p. 50). In other words, Elliot advocates that music be a deliberate and purposeful activity.

Put in a context of teaching and learning situations, Elliot believes that it the job of a teacher to design curriculum and lessons which approximate real musical situations and actions. He writes that:

musicianship develops only through active music making in curricular situations that teachers deliberately design to approximate the salient conditions of genuine musical practices. The name I give to this kind of teaching-learning environment is *curriculum-as-practicum*. . . . knowledge cannot be separated from the context in which it is learned and used. . . . developing musicianship is a matter of inducting students into particular music cultures. (p. 72)

That the teaching of music approximates the music practices of real life, involving students in authentic music making experiences, is at the heart of the praxial philosophy.

In creating a classroom of musical practice Elliot believes that the role of music teacher is one of being an exemplar and a guide. He writes that the “music educator’s role is principally one of mentoring, coaching, and modeling for music students conceived as apprentice musical practitioners” (p. 74). This fits with the belief of the praxial philosophy that the music classroom should be a place for students to make music in an as real-to-life context as possible, and by this statement Elliot further explains that the role of the teacher with the students is to be a guide and a model. A phrase that seems to fit: a teacher should be a “guide on the side,” leading students through musical activities.

Consistent with his belief that music involves a “multidimensional” mental process, he believes that the making of music also involve many various aspects and activities. For those learning music he writes that:

Musicianship is not something given by nature to some children and not to others. Musicianship is a form of thinking and knowing that is educable and applicable to all. . . . The best music curriculum for the best music students is the best curriculum for all music

students: a music curriculum based on artistic musicing and listening through performing and improvising in particular, and composing, arranging, and conducting whenever these are possible and relevant. (p. 260)

Elliot affirms that a strong musical curriculum should be created not just for the elite and high-end musical students, but for all students who take music classes. Further, he affirms that the activities in the music classroom involve not passive learning or even just one musical activity, but involvement in multiple activities. These can involve more than just singing or playing an instrument, but also writing their own music, improvising, and even directing the music.

Elliott proposes that it is not the level of musicianship that will contrast from one music program to another, but what differences are more evident in the high level of musical activities that are seen through the selected curriculum materials. He writes:

What will differ between and among music education programs across grade levels and school regions is not the essential content of the music curriculum (musicianship) but the kinds and levels of musical challenges inherent in the curriculum materials chosen (and, perhaps, with the cooperation of) one's own students. (p. 260)

For Elliot, it is not what students can intellectually tell you about music, what he calls “musicianship,” that is the mark of a good music program, but it is what is evidenced in how well the students make music and the materials with which they make music.

As part of those materials which should be representative of real life, Elliot also believes in multi-cultural curriculum. He considers that:

The *dynamic multicultural curriculum* overlaps our concept of the music curriculum as a reflective practicum. I have urged that music students can best achieve the values of music by learning to work together artistically (in action) in the context of familiar and unfamiliar music cultures. Such efforts inevitably include encounters with familiar and unfamiliar beliefs, preferences, and outcomes. (p. 293)

Involving musical practice that is representative of multiple musical cultures for Elliot is an important aspect of connecting music to the world.



Elliot concludes that establishing a diverse and active musical environment can not only teach students about the practice of music, but also on an even loftier scale, connect them to humanity. He writes:

I shall take a leap of faith at this point and suggest that the induction of students into different music cultures may be one of the most powerful ways to achieve a larger educational goal: preparing children to work effectively and tolerantly with others to solve shared community problems. As I explained, the music curriculum-as-practicum includes a concern for developing critical perspectives on a range of music cultures. In this view, reflective musical practicums are communities of interest. Practicums are characterized by a dynamism fueled by the determination of the participants to make music well through deeper understandings of the beliefs (artistic, social, and cultural) that influence music making and listening in different practices. . . . In addition to developing students' abilities to discern the similarities and differences among and between music cultures, the praxial approach to curriculum has the potential to achieve a central goal of humanistic education: self-understanding through other-understanding. (p. 293)

For Elliot an active musical classroom, involving the students in multiple music activities with curriculum and materials representative of many cultures, has the great ability to bring people together through a greater understanding of themselves and each other.

**Implications for this study.** All choral directors create classrooms of musical activity, namely the activity of singing. Not all directors create a classroom in which they fill a role of a guide versus being the leader in charge whom all students must follow. Increasingly, choral directors are coming to believe in the importance of selecting music which represents multiple styles, genres, and cultures. The use of multi-cultural music is one of the fastest growing industries for music publication, and choral music is the primary area of music which consistently involves multi-culturalism as a part of the curriculum. Most choral directors work to select the best quality music for their students, and they believe that selecting good literature helps to improve the musical abilities and musical tastes of all of their students, whether they are naturally great musicians or not.

## **Philosophies**

The philosophical viewpoint of a choral director will often drive the criteria followed for the selection of performance literature. There are four categories of philosophical viewpoints addressed in this study which can affect a choral director's choices of literature. They are rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism, and eclecticism (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

### **Rationalism**

Rationalism, also known as *idealism*, is defined in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (n.d.) as "Reliance on reason as the best guide and action." With rationalism, thought is more important than experience or authority, and what is true is always true. Truth, according to rationalists, can be arrived at by techniques such as the *sylogism*. A syllogism is comprised of two true statements and a state of a logical conclusion based on the two truths (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

### **Empiricism**

Empiricism is also referred to as *realism*. Very different from rationalism, with empiricism knowledge is believed to come from experience, not thought. Ideas are believed to come only through experience, not through innate ideas (*Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, n.d.). It is believed that truth can be discovered by scientific evidence and by observation. In music applications, the empirical philosophy holds that great music is great because of its well-composed physical qualities, and a person who does not consider a great piece of music to be so merely does not understand or perceive correctly what he or she is hearing (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

### **Pragmatism**

Pragmatism is a philosophy based on practicality. The *American Heritage Dictionary* (n.d.) defines pragmatism as "a movement consisting of varying but associated theories,

originally developed by Charles S. Peirce and William James and distinguished by the doctrine that the meaning of an idea or a proposition lies in its observable practical consequences.”

Pragmatism, with its practical, observable approach, also incorporates the idea going back to Heraclitus in the 6th century B.C. that all things change; nothing is permanent. The only way that truth can be known at any given time is by application of the scientific method. The scientific method, as proposed by John Dewey (1859–1952), is comprised of five steps of thinking. They are: activity, awareness of the problem, observation of data, formulation of a hypothesis, and testing of a hypothesis. With this belief in scientific method, pragmatists place strong emphasis on education (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

Pragmatism has particular application in aesthetics, and thus in the arts. Dewey believed that values are based largely on experience and that experiences involved practicality, but also include aesthetics. He believed that aesthetics are the meaning people attach to the experience and choose to continue to incorporate into their values. Furthermore, Dewey believed that words were not adequate to express the values derived through aesthetics of experience. He saw the arts as important to life because of their ability to more aptly express the values derived aesthetic experiences. In discussing the writings of Dewey in regards to aesthetic experience, Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman (1995) wrote that:

. . . the enjoyment of beauty is related to the cycles of life, the “ups and downs,” the “rhythms.” At times, life is stable and we feel content, while at other times it is disturbing and difficult. It is in such a world that aesthetic values can exist. If everything were finished, perfect, and complete, there would not be unknowns or struggles. Without difficulties to reflect back on, there would be no present moments of satisfaction to enjoy. It is the artist and musician who through their media allow us to contemplate the experiences of overcoming difficulties and tensions and to enjoy the times of satisfaction. In that sense, the arts express human experience, and they make life richer because they make us more conscious of its qualities. (p. 47)

In describing the beliefs of Dewey, Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman (1995) have explained the connection between the arts and the philosophy of pragmatism; that life is made up of experiences from which we learn, experiences and thus knowledge are always changing, each experience is embedded with rich emotion, and that those emotions are best expressed by the arts.

**Implications for the present study.** Depending on the belief system, or philosophy, choral directors, they will choose literature for different criteria or for different reasons. Choral directors who follow a rationalist philosophy are going to be sure to program “classic” choral literature, and they will place emphasis on the concert choirs. They will not choose “pop” literature or have any concerts geared towards popularity. They are not likely to choose literature based on what will be popular for audiences or even the students in the choir. Instead they will choose literature to teach their students and audiences about music that has lasted through time and thus proven itself to be quality music. They will also be likely to program “classic” literature from all music periods so that students will have a broad understanding of music literature (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

Choral directors following a philosophy of empiricism will choose music for very different reasons than those following a rationalist philosophy. Those who believe in the empiricist philosophy will choose music according to “outward” criteria. Those criteria will come from following recommended literature lists and literature which they feel will impress adjudicators when performed at festivals. Empiricist choral directors will also be careful to follow requirements of the curriculum of their district and state in selecting performance literature. They will be very conscientious of outward stimulus, choosing pieces they believe will get “superior” ratings. They believe high ratings will give students positive motivation. Additionally, empiricist

directors will not be concerned with selecting literature to attract “common” students. They will more than likely gear their literature choices to high ability choral students (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

The choral director who follows a pragmatic philosophy will be motivated by the students’ ability to learn for themselves, to learn to sing and interpret music on their own. To that end, pragmatic directors will be likely to choose music to meet educational objectives. They are going to be more likely to choose literature to increase their students sight-reading skills, thus making them more capable performers in their own right. They also might choose literature from various periods and styles, but their motivation for doing so would be to teach particular concepts and performance practices from those styles, helping the students to understand them better for their own future experience (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

## **Viewpoints**

Three different viewpoints pertaining to reasons for listening to music can also influence performance literature selected by choral directors. Those are referentialism, expressionism, and formalism or absolutism. These viewpoints can motivate a choral director to choose music depending on what he or she listens for in music, what they want their students to listen for in music, and also what they want to convey to audiences through their selection of literature.

## **Referentialism**

Referentialism is the viewpoint that the value of music lies in the message it conveys, in whatever is “referred to” within the music, something that lies outside of the music itself. Choral music is most influenced by referentialism because most people who perform and listen to music believe that the most important part of the music is its text. Although instrumental music can be written to tell a story, paint a scene, or even suggest a mood, choral music can do so more overtly

because it contains texts to clearly communicate those same things (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

### **Expressionism**

Expressionism is the viewpoint most concerned with feelings conveyed by music. Those feelings can be different for different people as they listen to a piece. Musical works are considered to have the ability to arouse feelings which words cannot. For that reason, listening to instrumental music is typically more in keeping with an expressionistic viewpoint, for text and words with the music make its meaning more specific and less open to individual interpretation by the listeners (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

### **Formalism (or absolutism)**

Formalism (or absolutism) maintains that music is listened to for its formal properties. That is to say, the meaning of the music is held only in the music itself. The focus is on qualities such as the musical form, dynamics, melody, harmony, and other physical elements of the music. With the formalistic viewpoint the reasons to listen to music are for the formal properties, not for the message it may convey, nor for the feelings it may “arouse,” as with the other two viewpoints (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995).

**Implications for this study.** A choral director’s own motivation for listening to music will strongly affect the performance literature he or she will select. Most choral directors are very motivated by the text of the pieces they select. The message conveyed by words of a piece are an important consideration, if not the main consideration for most directors. They are also typically concerned with the appropriateness of the text for their choral students and the subject to which the text refers. Many directors also look for musical texts which they think will convey certain messages to the audience. For this reason, all choral directors are influenced by the viewpoint of referentialism to at least some degree, typically to a strong degree.

Because the viewpoint of expressionism holds that the reason to listen to music is held in the emotions it arouses separate from an overt message, it holds less application to choral music than does referentialism. Many choral directors do, however, consider the emotional effect of music aroused by harmonies, melodies, chords, rhythms, and dynamics. When a choral director selects music based on the emotions aroused in listeners by the physical properties of the music apart from the text, he or she is selecting the literature following an expressionistic viewpoint.

The least applicable viewpoint in the selection of choral performance literature is that of formalism or absolutism. Choral directors are not very likely to select music based on its formal properties alone. The most likely reason a director might do so would be for educational reasons, such as selecting a Renaissance piece to teach students how to sing polyphonic music, follow the melodic lines, and learn how the melodic lines weave together. Still, ultimately, if the piece is selected for performance, the director's motivation for doing so is more likely to be for the message it will convey to students and the audience, and/or the emotions he or she thinks it will bring to the listeners and performers alike.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Several theories can help explain some of the thought processes and considerations taken by choral directors as they make decisions regarding the selection of performance literature and how they program it on a concert. The theories to be discussed with their relationship to selection of choral performance literature are: information theory, the optimal-complexity model (a.k.a. "hedgehog" theory), Meyer's theory of musical meaning, McMullen's theoretical model, and theories in evaluating the quality of melodies and harmonies.

#### **Information Theory**

Information theory offers some explanation to answer the question, "Why does music hold meaning for some individuals and not for others?" (Radocy & Boyle, 1997, p. 204). The

explanation given with information theory, lies in a balance between information and redundancy. Information is considered to be anything new being received, a message which is unfamiliar. That message could be a new melody, new harmony, or a new rhythmic figure. The new information, or message, being received creates a certain amount of uncertainty for the receiver, be the receiver a listener or performer. Radocy and Boyle (1997) state that “Information theory basically is a system for quantifying the amount of *uncertainty* involved in a sensory stimulus or *message*” (p. 204).

Redundancy, according to information theory, is any stimulus received which meets preconceived expectations. In other words, the stimulus received is not new to the receiver. It is something already familiar and known. Radocy & Boyle (1997) explain that:

The amount of *information* an individual receives when listening to melody or harmony, and hence an individual’s *expectations* regarding them, is a function of two basic variables: (a) the extent to which the *structural* characteristics of melody and harmony conform to fundamental laws of perceptual organization and the individual’s previous experience with the given style of melody and harmony. As should be apparent from previous discussion, melodies and harmonies that conform most closely to the rules and grammar of Western tonal harmonic structure generally conform to the fundamental laws of perceptual organization; the tonal harmonic framework provides the structural unity, and the melody or harmony is received as a Gestalt or holistic pattern. (p. 205)

For a performer or listener of music, the more the music meets their expectations and preconceived understanding of melodies, harmonies, rhythms, an structure, the more redundant the message of the music is considered to be. The information is considered to be low.

Radocy & Boyle (1997) give an example of how information theory could hold meaning within a musical form. They explain that if a musical form is simply A A A A A A A, the information is very low and the redundancy and expectations met are very high. However, in a musical form of A B C B A there is still some redundancy in the repetitions of sections A and B,



but the rest of the stimulus is information; it is new to the receiver. Also, there is less redundancy simply in that there are less sections within the musical form.

There are a few important types of redundancy within information theory. The most encompassing type is *perceptual redundancy*. Perceptual redundancy is the most broad form of redundancy because it entails all stimulus received which meets expectations and limits the amount of information in the message. Perceptual redundancy includes the more specific types. More specific types of redundancy include *structural redundancy* and *cultural redundancy*. Structural redundancy, for those in what is considered the Western part of the world, involves following the harmonic structures, the tonality, and the melodies common in Western music. As music follows the scales and tonality of Western music, regardless of the musical period or style of the music, the music has a high level of structural redundancy. Cultural redundancy involves stimulus, or music, which is familiar because of the life experiences of the receiver. For music simply to follow Western tonality does not necessarily give it cultural redundancy. Within Western tonality there are many different styles of music, and only those styles which are already familiar to a listener or performer will have a high cultural redundancy (Radocy & Boyle, 1997).

**Implications for this study.** In selecting performance literature choral directors make decisions regarding how much of the music they select will be new to the students and the audience and how much will be familiar. They will typically try to find a balance between information and redundancy as they program their concerts. They know that if the perceptual redundancy is very high there will not be enough new information or stimulus to keep their students learning new things, and there will be nothing new to capture the interest of the audience and help to educate their audiences either. By the same token, if the information, or any elements of the music which are very new, is too high the students can become overwhelmed as

they try to learn it, and the audience is not likely to comprehend or appreciate the performance. Choral directors will try to find a balance between information and redundancy. They understand that some perceptual redundancy is needed to help students make connections with previous knowledge so that they can feel successful as they learn. In addition, the right amount of redundancy will help the audience to understand and thus feel more comfortable with music at the concert. They also will try to select their performance literature with just the right amount of information, new concepts within the music, so as to keep the students learning and moving forward in knowledge and ability with choral singing, and also to interest the audience with some of the new things they will hear within the music.

### **Optimal-Complexity Model (Hedgehog Theory)**

The optimal-complexity model, also known as the “hedgehog” theory, has a lot in common with information theory. Where information theory explains the relationship between information and redundancy in stimuli, the optimal-complexity model uses the terminology of familiarity and complexity. In studies using musical excerpts listened to by college students, both music and non-music majors, a strong positive relationship was discovered between familiarity and preference. Nonetheless, the excerpts rated as the “most preferred” were those marked as moderately complex. This information would suggest, at least in the case of college students, that they enjoy listening to music which is familiar to them. Given a choice, they will choose music which also contains some elements which are more complex, holding their interest. The fact that the majority of students marked “moderately complex” versus a higher level of complexity would also suggest that they like the music to make them think a little, but not too much as to be “over their heads.”

**Hedgehog theory.** The optimal-complexity model is also known as the “hedgehog” theory because of the imagery of the natural response of hedgehogs. Whenever a hedgehog experiences

either fatigue on one extreme or over-stimulation or fright at the other extreme, the natural response is to roll up in a ball and “shut down.” The hedgehog will essentially withdraw if there isn’t enough energy and stimulation or if there is too much. This model suggests that people can have the same response to music. If music does not contain enough interesting and stimulating elements or if it contains too much by being too complex for the listeners, they will “hedgehog” or “shut down.” In other words, if music is either so familiar that it is boring (i.e. “elevator music”) or if it is so complex that there is nothing familiar (i.e. serialism) listeners will just stop paying attention to it (Radocy & Boyle, 1997).

**Implications for this study.** In selecting performance literature a choral director will try to find a balance for the selection of pieces which will be familiar to the audience and to the students, as well as pieces which will give all something new to discover. In selecting concert repertoire, most directors will intentionally program music to alternate pieces which are more familiar with ones that contain more complex and challenging elements within a single concert. Sometimes that is done simply by alternating pieces with English texts with ones set in another language. They will also select individual pieces which are thought to contain a balance between elements which are more familiar with ones that are new and more challenging. For example, one piece might have complex rhythms with familiar tonality and structure, while another will be written with more simple rhythms but a complex tonality. Choral directors are aware in programming their concerts, that is if they desire to hold their audience’s attention and maintain their students’ attention as they are learning the music, they must find that balance between the familiar and the complex. If absent the audience and their students will start “tuning them out” and will mentally roll up like the hedgehog.

## **McMullen's Theoretical Model**

McMullen's theoretical model places musical works on a "continuum" between music which is "stimulative" and music which is "sedating." Some musical works contain elements which create a feeling of excitement and energy. Fast and energetic rhythms and tempos and louder dynamics are particularly evident in music which is considered to be exciting. On the other hand, some music has a more calming and soothing effect. Musical works which would be considered "sedating" typically will have slower tempos, less energetic rhythms, and softer dynamics. On the continuum of McMullen's model, some pieces would be placed on extremes as either very stimulative or very sedative. The majority of works are going to fall somewhere in between the two extremes (Radocy & Boyle, 1997).

**Implication for this study.** As choral directors program the literature for their concerts they are typically very aware of programming both pieces which are more calm and soothing in nature and those which are more exciting. First, as they are selecting literature to teach their choirs they will usually try to find both types of pieces. In this way they can alternate having students learn pieces which are slower and more expressive with pieces which are faster and more energetic. When they program concerts they will typically do so with an eye of awareness and alternate pieces from different ends of the continuum. Choral directors know that by alternating contrasting styles of calm pieces with energetic ones they will be more likely to keep the attention and interest of their audience.

## **Meyer's Theory of Musical Meaning**

Meyer's theory of musical meaning evaluates music on its aesthetic qualities. A piece of music is considered to have aesthetic value as it arouses the emotions of the listener. Meyer believed that someone listening to a musical work develops expectations as to what they will hear. As those expectation are not met, the person feels a degree of tension, and arousal of

emotion. If those expectations continue not to be met and the tension continues, the pleasure of the listener is decreased. However, if the expectation is met at just the right time, the response for the listener is a positive one. Music meaning for the listener is high when a musical work contains just the right amount of latent expectancy, that is to say, expectations are not met for just the right amount of time so that the listener experiences heightened emotion as he or she waits for resolution, and then the listener experiences satisfaction and release when those expectancies are finally met. Too long of a wait can produce feelings of frustration and too short of a wait can bring about a lack of interest and emotion. Meyer's theory, with its call for balance between anticipation for expectations to be met and those expectations finally becoming realized, has much in common with information theory. Information theory calls for balance between information, or new material, and redundancy, essentially meeting expectations with what is already familiar (Radocy & Boyle, 1997).

**Implications for this study.** Whether or not a particular piece of music has “meaning” for the conductor has a high degree of influence on the performance literature which a choral director will select. Choral directors will rarely choose musical works which do not have at least some degree of aesthetic value for them. They will be influenced in their evaluation of whether or not a piece of music has “meaning” for them by the excitement they feel as expectations are delayed and then met. Additionally, they will usually take into consideration how much “meaning” they anticipate will be felt by their students while they are learning the musical work, and also by the audience at the performance.

### **Evaluating Melodies and Harmonies**

There are multiple theories regarding how to evaluate the quality, or “goodness” of a melody. Hickman postulated a four-criterion model for evaluating whether or not a melody could

be considered as “good.” Radocy & Boyle (1997) describe the four steps to his model as the follows:

(a) the melody must manifest a pattern of elements, (b) the melody must be a product of a person or persons, (c) the melody must do more than adhere to specifications previously laid down, and (d) the melody must be worth having in itself apart from any purpose it may serve. (p. 220)

These above criterion state that a good melody must have a pattern. In other words, it is not simply endless notes spinning with no perceivable order or shape; it will have some structural redundancy. A good melody is going to be written by an actual person. This may sound like an obvious criteria, but in a day and age when so many things are being produced by computers, this has been listed specifically. A good melody should have something about it which is new, and it must have inherent quality apart from anything else, be that text or other elements to which it might refer or for which it might be written. A good melody is created when the notes, rhythms, phrasing, and other musical elements are well-crafted. Referring to information theory, Hickman’s criteria requires that a good melody have a combination of information and redundancy.

Sloboda’s determination of good melodies is derived from how well melodic characteristics conform to the rules of Western tonal music. He believes that a good melody will follow the structure and tonality of Western music most of the time. If it coforms all of the time, then it is not a quality melody; it is too boring. By the same token, if a melody breaks the “rules” too often then it also loses its meaning for the listeners. The listener will not be able to understand it (Radocy & Boyle, 1997). Sloboda’s view also appears to have much in common with information theory.

Reimer refers to “musical goodness” instead of just good melody. In evaluating how good music is he uses two criteria. These are *excellence* and *greatness*. Radocy & Boyle (1997), to

explain Reimer's view, define that "*excellence* . . . has to do with the syntactic or structural refinement in the music, and *greatness* . . . has to do with the level of profundity of the music's expressive content" (p. 220). They further explain that "while the *greatness* criterion is more properly discussed under aesthetics, the *excellence* criterion has its roots in the meanings of musical messages an individual receives while listening to music" (p. 220–221).

Reimer believed that the quality of music is considered is determined by the meaning a person derives from it. The quantity of meaning a person derives from a piece of music depends on that person's experiences. This can also relate to information theory, for a person's experiences dictate the level of perceptual redundancy in the musical work, and that redundancy helps to add to the "meaning" extrapolated from it. Whether or not music is "good" is much more personal, and perceptions will vary greatly from one person to another. Of course, too much perceptual redundancy takes away from the *greatness* of a work by rendering it boring.

Less attention has been given to the matter of evaluating harmony. Harmonies are evaluated on whether or not they can be considered "acceptable." Approaches to determining the "acceptableness" of harmonies relies more on whether or not "experts" accept the harmonic structure in a musical work. Of course, the Western harmonic tradition strongly influences that which most "experts" consider to be acceptable. For individuals, that which is considered to be acceptable harmonies really depends upon personal preference and experience. Acceptance of harmonies also is tied to information theory in that a person listens for structural redundancy, expecting to hear familiar harmonies which fulfill that person's expectations based on previous experience.

**Implications for this study** As a matter of practice choral directors evaluate how "good" they think the melody and harmony of a piece are, very important criteria in the selection of

performance materials. Most will choose melodies and harmonies which follow expectations for Western tradition. Unlike some ideas presented in the evaluation of “good” melodies and “acceptable” harmonies, especially by Sloboda, it is becoming more common for choral directors to include in their programs at least one piece which does not follow the Western tradition of tonality. This especially is true as there is now a trend toward the incorporation of musical works from other countries and these musics may not follow the rules of Western tonality. For the most part, though, choral directors still look for works which balance melodic and harmonic ideals and which meet common expectations most of the time, while seeking enough new ideas to keep the interest of their students and audience.

### **Recommendations in the Selection of Choral Literature**

#### **Choral Method Books.**

Choral method books and refereed journal articles regarding choral repertoire offer varying amounts and types of information in regards to the selection of choral performance literature. Some choral method books offer no information on process or criteria on the subject (Jipson, 1972; Darrow, 1975; Robinson. & Winold, 1976). Some method books do offer ideas for programming music on concerts, yet offer no information in regards to how to select the choral works in the first place (Ehret, 1959; Wilson, 1959; Roe, 1970; Miller, 1988). Still other choral method books mention the search for choral literature, while offering little information on the subject. They briefly address the decision making process used to program music for a concert (Cain, 1942; Wilson, 1950; Garretson, 1970; Decker & Herford, 1973). Almost non-existent in choral method books are ideas related to cataloguing literature that a director discovers and wants to “keep track of” for future programming consideration. Absent from the literature reviewed was ways of utilizing technology to catalogue literature.



## **Choral music and its practice.**

In his book *Choral Music and Its Practice*, published in 1942, Noble Cain offers ideas on types of literature which can be performed by high school choirs and on various concepts of programming. For classic choral literature he recommends Russian works by composers such as Gretchaninoff and Rachmaninoff; pieces by “old Italian school” composers such as Palestrina, Vittoria, and Lotti; and works by English writers such as Byrd, Morley, and Purcell as all being accessible for high school choirs in that they “can be studied without overtaxing the powers of the chorus” (p. 34). He also makes recommendations for the selection of larger works. He suggests that no full oratorios be performed as they can be too taxing for teenage voices. He does, however, believe that excerpts from oratorios and some opera/opera choruses are appropriate for high school choirs. Whatever the selection of literature, Cain believes that choral works should “conform to sound educational practice” (p. 37). Furthermore, he advocates that choral works be chosen with attention given to selecting music from all of the last five centuries, and that the music include both sacred and secular works.

Cain also addresses concert programming. He writes about three types of programming. First he lists “chronological”. This entails choosing a program because of “chronological significance.” Even back in 1942 Cain viewed this type of programming as being an old fashioned way of doing it. The second type of programming he lists is “mood type.” For “mood type” programming the first work on the concert or a section of the concert is carefully placed to establish a particular mood. For example, a complete section of a concert might be all sacred music. The last type of programming Cain lists is “contrast.” For this type of programming, various works are set off to create contrast and variation from one to the other. Elements such as tempo, key signature, and style are considered and balanced. Cain recommends this type of

programming as the most successful for his time. In programming a concert, he suggests that music be selected which will appeal to the more musically educated and the uneducated alike.

### **Teaching choral music.**

One of the more current choral methods books is *Teaching Choral Music* by Collins (1999). Collins offers valuable information on selecting choral literature today. He addresses issues from selecting literature to suit the particular voices in the choir, criteria for selecting music, factors determining difficulty level, factors in sociological and cultural appeal, factors in aesthetic value, multicultural influences, and presenting religious music in public schools.

Collins (1999) believes that a choral director of younger voices must take into consideration their development in selecting performance literature. He states that directors should be cognizant of both the needs of the adolescent voice and also that the best vocal qualities of younger voices be highlighted and presented to audiences. In other words, Collins believes that choral directors should choose music that is vocally appropriate so that the students will sing well and successfully. He writes:

choosing literature that adolescents are capable of singing well is one of the best ways to establish control in the classroom. If the music is within the comfortable singing tessituras of the singers' voices and they are pleased with the selections, they will have a positive attitude about choir that will cause them to be much more willing to cooperate and much less liable to disturb. (p. 359)

Collins postulates that choosing literature that students can perform successfully will have a positive effect on their overall attitude about and behavior in the choir.

Collins believes that the selection of choral literature is one of the most important process in which a choral director will engage. He advocates that directors always be aware of the specific characteristics of their choir throughout the selection process. He states:

Directors may spend hours training their singers to be good musicians who sing with excellent vocal and choral technique, but out of a desire to sing "impressive" literature

some directors choose pieces in which the unique choral characteristics of their choirs are not considered, so the choirs do not sing well. All the hard work has been pointless. Considered in this light, choice of literature may be the most significant contributor to the finished product of any choral organization. (Collins, 1999, p. 359)

The success of a choir hinges on the choir singing literature which is suited to its abilities and unique qualities. A director, according to Collins, should not simply program music because it is great literature. The best literature, if not suited to the specific voices in a choir, will not bring a good performance, nor will it provide a positive experience for students.

Four important criteria for selecting performance literature are addressed by Collins , (a) difficulty level, (b) sociological and cultural appeal, (c) educational value, and (d) aesthetic value. Collins believes that all of these factors are important to consider in the selection process, especially in relationship to voices in middle school and high school.

Addressing these four criteria, Collins offers many suggestions. In terms of difficulty level, he states that a director should choose music which is not too easy and lacking any challenge, while at the same time not being too difficult which can bring frustration for student. He advises that directors take into consideration the community in which he or she lives, being aware of the social and cultural impact of the music they select on their school and community. Very importantly, Collins writes of many factors which should be taken into account for their education value. Those factors include teaching proper vocal-choral technique, providing aesthetic experiences, developing musicianship, and exposing students to a variety of accompaniments, styles, and genres. Lastly, Collins feels that aesthetic value is a highly important criteria. He writes that “when evaluating the text and the music, directors should consider the ‘lasting’ value of the selections” (p. 360).

Collins offers six considerations in determining the difficulty level of a work, a prime criteria for selecting performance literature. The six considerations determining difficulty are (a) rhythmic complexities, (b) key changes, (c) harmonic complexities, (d) melodic features, (e) texture, and (f) text. Rhythmic complexities entail meter changes, fast notes and tempos, and syncopation. In terms of key changes, a director should examine how frequently they occur, whether they occur in just the accompaniment or also in the choir, and whether the key changes are closely related or not. Harmonic complexities involve consideration of dissonances and their resolution, the tonality of the work, and the speed of the harmonic rhythm. Melodic features include intervals and melismatic passages. Difficulties pertaining to texture are determined by how many parts there are and whether or not the piece is polyphonic, if any individual sections contain exposed parts, and does or does not the accompaniment support the voices. Last, whether or not a text is difficult is determined by the language which is set and the speed at which the words are to be articulated.

In assessing factors affecting sociological and cultural appeal, Collins discusses six topics, (a) location, (b) socioeconomic level, (c) race, (d) religion, (e) musical background, and (f) educational level. Location includes consideration for whether or not the community is in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Socioeconomic level is consideration for whether audience members will be mostly comprised of professionals or blue-collar workers. Regarding race, Collins writes that a director should consider whether the audience will be primarily from minority groups and which minority groups will be represented. Pertaining to religion, a director should know which faiths will be represented. Musical background involves consideration for whether the audience will accept new types of music and the type of music they would prefer. Lastly, educational level involves knowing whether the audience will have a high number of college graduates.

Collins lists three important factors affecting the aesthetic value of music. The first is text. He believes we must discern if a text is either too childish, or to the opposite, too mature for a young choir. Directors must determine if the text and the music fit together well. Second, Collins writes about arrangements. Directors should assess whether the arrangement enhances or detracts from the original work. Finally, he suggests what he terms a “time test.” Has or has not a piece passed the “test of time,” and has it become a part of our culture? He writes that “those pieces that have high cultural value are the ones students remember and continue to sing throughout their lives” (p. 360).

Collins addresses multicultural influences. He acknowledges that many schools today require a multicultural curriculum. In the realm of music it is often termed “world music.” Collins suggests that a choral curriculum should include arrangements and original works by minority composers and also include folk song arrangements representative of many cultures. He also believes that directors should educate themselves about the background of the country and culture of pieces which they select, learning the proper performance practice of those works.

As an important and current topic, Collins addresses religious music in the public schools. Increasingly, he acknowledges, that separation of church and state has become a pressing issue which is limiting the selection of choral literature in many schools. Many choral programs are being affected. The performance of sacred choral music, in particular sacred music with Christian texts, is being questioned. Does performance of sacred choral music violate this principle? Of course, much of what is considered “great” classic choral literature falls into this category. In addressing this relevant issue, Collins quotes *The Choral Journal* from December of 1993 which states:

Any work of art studied or performed should be selected for its inherent beauty of structure and form. Its purpose of study should be learning for the sake of developing artistic

understanding and responsiveness. Often artworks are related to a specific religious [or] cultural tradition. The study of such works of art can enhance one's understanding and appreciation of a cultural product which a particular tradition has fostered. . . .

Typical educational standards should include a range and balanced offering of music from various religious [and] cultural traditions. Music from a sacred tradition shall be created, studied, and performed as an educational experience that relates to achieving goals and objectives, and shall not be designed to foster a religious belief. (Collins, p. 367)

**Implications for this study.** Over the last half century most of the recommended considerations in the selection of choral literature have remained the same. Any differences have not come so much by way of changing the recommendations from 50 years ago, but adding more selection criteria relevant to today. Recommendations for types of programming, selecting literature based on evaluation of difficulty of the music pertaining to the abilities of the voices of the choir, selecting literature representative of multiple genres and styles, looking for quality texts which are married well to the melodies and harmonies of the pieces, and seeking out good, quality literature which has been well-composed or arranged has remained the same. Issues which are new in the realm of choral literature selection, and music in general for that matter, are the considerations to program multicultural music and for care to be taken in programming sacred music. Fifty years ago there was very little choral literature available outside of what would be considered classic western or American folk music. Also, the separation of church and state issue had not yet really had an effect on choral programs.

### **Dissertations.**

Many dissertations have addressed the topic of choral literature selection. Some dissertations have the selection of choral literature as the main focus (Dahlman, 1992; Davis, 1970; Devore, 1990; Forbes, 1998; Jones, 1988; Ogden, 1980; Reames, 1995; Rucker, 1992). In many other dissertations selecting choral music or recommended literature is one of the topics addressed, although it is not the main topic (Baker, 1981; Blinde, 1969; Bloch, 1985; Dunaway,

1986; Grimland, 2001; Levi, 1986; Melton, 1985; Perinchief). For the present, focus will be placed on dissertations that study literature selection the most in-depth.

**John Lindsay Davis (1970) Ed.D., Columbia University**

For his dissertation entitled *A study of choral repertoire in selected high schools and factors affecting its selection*, Davis sent out a questionnaire to 400 high school choral conductors in Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York. He received responses from 303 conductors. The purpose of his study was to identify and analyze:

1. The musical criteria used by high school choral conductors in selection of repertoire;
2. The factors external to the music itself that influence high school conductors in selection of repertoire;
3. The extent and kinds of diversity in the choral repertoire selected

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

1. The choral conductor;
2. The high school choral programs;
3. The sources and criteria utilized in selection of choral repertoire.

By addressing each of these three areas Davis hoped to receive enough information to draw valid conclusions in regards to the state of choral literature in the United States.

The results of Davis' study suggest that choral music from the 20th Century is the most widely used of the musical periods. The music from the other musical periods followed in rank order of Romantic, Classical, Baroque, and Renaissance. In addition, Davis' study suggests that sacred music is selected more than secular works. The directors answering the questionnaire for the study responded that the most important musical factors for them in selecting literature are (a) music that will raise the standards of musical taste of the performer, (b) music worthy of required rehearsal time, and (c) vocal range of each part. The directors indicated that the musical criteria

of least importance to them are (a) music easily memorized for performances, (b) arranger's name, (c) music for choral-instrumental groups, (d) variety of keys, and (e) type and/or difficulty of the accompaniment.

Of less importance to the directors surveyed were extramusical factors in the selection of choral literature. Nonetheless, they listed the most important extramusical factors in choosing repertoire as (a) ability of students to learn and perform, (b) number of programs presented, and (c) amount of rehearsal time. The extramusical criteria of least importance are (a) court rulings concerning religion in public schools, (b) administrative pressure to perform certain types of music and/or programs, and (c) recommended lists in textbooks.

The directors surveyed also answered questions pertaining to what was learned by the respondents regarding selection of choral literature while they were taking undergraduate music education courses. It was reported that the directors surveyed found their undergraduate education was inadequate in developing competency in the selection of choral literature. Respondents also answered questions regarding sources they utilize to acquire new literature. They cited the three most important sources to find choral literature as (a) attendance at choral concerts, (b) participation in choral workshops, and (c) publishers' condensed scores.

Based on the data from the questionnaires, Davis concluded that high school choral directors are aware of the importance of exposing students to a variety of musical styles, periods, and genres, and they attempt to program music representative of those various styles. In order to find new literature Davis discovered that the majority rely heavily on publishers to supply them with high quality literature that is also appropriate for their students. The directors, however, did not make use of lists of choral music published in books or developed by publishers. Davis also concluded that professional organizations were not doing an adequate job of helping choral



directors with regard to selecting their repertoire. Lastly, he discovered that high school choral conductors were exposed to very little literature in college that would also be appropriate for high school choirs.

**Pamela Kae Odgin (1980), Ed.D., Northern Arizona University.**

The title of Odgin's dissertation is *An analysis of criteria by which secondary choral teachers select course content*. The main focus in examining "course content" was choral repertoire. To that end, Odgin formed a questionnaire which contained 52 items. The first 35 items were designed to gather information on the directors' classes, schools, curriculum, and about the directors themselves. The last 17 items focused on criteria considered to be of importance to the choral directors in selecting their literature. For those 17 criteria they were asked to mark each item which they currently use, and also those that ought to be used. In addition, the directors were asked to select seven of the 17 criteria and rank them in importance from one to seven, one being the most important. Of the surveys sent out, 97 were returned and 74 were considered to be "usable."

Of the 17 criteria listed, criteria 16 which stated, "An attempt to provide a variety of musical styles and experiences affects course content," was cited by all respondents as a criteria they use in the selections of choral literature. The top ranked criteria for choosing choral repertoire were (a) Criteria 16: Variety of musical styles, (b) Criteria 1: Students skill level at entrance, (c) Criteria 6: Student growth, (d) Criteria 12: Difficulty level, (e) Criteria 10: Fundamental repertoire, (f) Criteria 9: Festival/ Concert participation, and (g) Criteria 3: Student interest and Criteria 17: Teacher fulfillment.

**William Darryl Jones (1988), Ph.D., University of Miami.**

Jones' dissertation entitled *An index of choral music performed during National Convention of the American Choral Directors Association (1960-1987)* is a descriptive study in

historical research analyzing the literature from the national ACDA biennial conventions over a span of 27 years. Because ACDA first held a national convention in 1960, the research catalogued all of the musical works performed from the convention's beginning up to the writing of the dissertation.

The study was conducted in two phases. In phase one Jones (a) collected and examined national convention programs, (b) collated and compared titles and composers of literature which had been performed during national convention concerts, (c) investigated the frequency of performance of works representing specific publishers, (d) ascertained balance between performance of literature with sacred and/or secular texts, (e) compared the frequency of performance of literature representing each musical style period, and (f) compared appearances of groups representing various choir classifications. In phase two Jones identified repertoire trends observed through the study of the national convention concert programs. Using a title index from the conventions, Jones utilized 14 fields for study and analysis that were: title, composer, arranger, publisher, octavo #, text, language, accompaniment, convention/year, style, group type, group class, group name, and conductor.

By breaking the information down into percentages, Jones was able to determine which factors were the most consistent. In regard to text types, texts were fairly equally divided between sacred and secular texts, sacred comprising 52%. English was found to be the predominant language with 58%, followed by Latin at 20%, and German at 11%. 52% of the pieces listed were performed *a cappella*, and 21% utilized keyboard accompaniment. The 20th Century was the most widely represented musical period with 49%. The least used period was the Classical at only 2%. Up to that point 76% of the selections performed were by mixed choirs, followed by men's choruses with 18%. College and university groups performed the most

frequently with 46%. The most performed composers at that time had been, in ranking order: Brahms, Schubert, J. S. Bach, Poulenc, Randall Thompson, Kodály, Palestrina, Victoria, Britten di Lasso, Nystedt, Vaughan Williams, Distler, and Handel.

**Henry Nicholas Dahlman (1992), D.M.A., University of Missouri - Kansas City**

The purpose of Dahlman's dissertation, *The effect of choral program size, teacher experience, and teacher education level on the selection of high school music literature*, was to determine whether choral program size, teacher experience, and teacher education affect choral music literature choices for high school choirs. Additionally, Dahlman's survey studied the most important criteria for the selection of choral literature by the respondents.

Surveys were sent to all high school choral music directors in Missouri. The survey collected data in the three areas of (a) choral program size, teacher experience, and teacher education level, (b) three representative choral works from the 1990-1991 repertoire, and (c) the reasons why these pieces were selected. The survey was sent to 576 high schools, and 148 usable surveys were returned. The selected representative music was analyzed according to four characteristics: sacred versus secular text, accompaniment, language, and style.

The results of Jones' research indicated that texts were fairly evenly distributed between sacred and secular texts, sacred texts representing 52.7%. Accompanied works comprised 65% of the repertoire versus 35% being unaccompanied. Literature performed in English made up almost 70% of the pieces. Latin language works comprised 19.7% of the total repertoire. The rest of the percentage, over 10%, were comprised of choral works in other languages. Listed in rank order were German with 3.6%, French with 2.3%, Italian with 1.6%, and other languages with less than 1%.

Regarding historical styles, Jones' discovered that choral directors with small programs performed more accompanied music, more pieces in English, and more 20th century music than

did other programs. Teachers with more experience chose much more repertoire from before the 1900s. Respondents of the survey reported that the three 20th Century musical styles of choral concert, popular, and folk music comprised almost two-thirds of all their repertoire. They reported a low frequency of choral selections that would be considered ethnic or multi-cultural music and avant-garde music. Teachers who were less experienced also selected more accompanied literature and pieces from the 20th century. Jones discovered that teachers with graduate degrees selected more sacred choral literature for performance.

He discovered that the criteria of importance to teachers varied depending on the choral program size, experience level of the teachers, and the teachers' education levels. The criteria he found to be of the highest priority included personal appeal to the teacher, musical quality, teaching goals, and preparation factors. The factors of moderate importance to choral directors were student appeal, programming, text, and audience appeal. Of least importance to the directors were the criteria of style and historical factors, accompaniment, score design and clarity, and cost.

**Anthony Taylor Rucker (1992), Ph.D., Florida State University.**

Rucker's dissertation, *An index of choral music performed during Southern Division conventions of the American Choral Directors Association 1970-1990*, analyzed choral works performed at the Southern Division ACDA Convention over a 20 year period. The purpose of the study was to prepare an index of choral. The literature performed was analyzed for the following information: title, composer, arranger, publisher, octavo #, text, language, accompaniment, convention year, style, group type, group class, group name, and conductor.

The information from the 14 different fields were compiled in order to (a) study similarities and differences in literature performed during Southern Division conventions, (b) compare the frequency of the performance of literature representing each musical style period,

(c) compare the frequency of performance of music by specific composers, (d) investigate the frequency of appearance of specific musical selections, groups, and conductors, (e) investigate and compare appearances of groups representing various classifications of choirs, (f) ascertain balance between performances of literature with sacred and/or secular texts, (g) provide choral conductors a guide through which they may gain an overview of literature performed on Southern Division Convention programs, and (h) preserve Southern Division convention concert program information as a part of the ACDA's history.

There were four phases to Rucker's study. First, a survey was sent to former officials of the Southern Division of the ACDA to obtain any suggestions or ideas for the study. Second, Southern Division programs from 1970-1990 were obtained and collated. Next, data in the programs were extracted and divided into 14 categories for analysis. Last, an analysis of the content from the Southern Division ACDA programs was compared to the analysis of the National ACDA concert programs in Jones' study in 1988.

Rucker's research indicated that Brahms, Poulenc, Randall Thompson, and Britten were the composers with the highest numbers of works performed. Sacred texts comprised 48.5% of the works performed, and 61.5% had secular texts. In terms of language, English was performed significantly more than all other languages combined with 67%. 18% of works performed were in Latin and 7% in German. The majority of works, 63%, were performed with accompaniment, and 29% were a cappella. Twentieth Century compositions made up 51% of the repertoire, spirituals, hymns, and folk music comprised 12%. Renaissance and Romantic styles made up 10% and 11% respectively. The choirs were predominantly mixed choruses with 83%.

**Rebecca Rae Reames (1995), Ph.D., Florida State University.**

The purpose of Reames dissertation, *Literature, Music Education, and Characteristics of Selected Virginia Beginning High School Choirs*, was to investigate and describe the literature

performed with a population of beginning high school choirs. She conducted her research by way of a survey sent to 263 high school choral directors in the state of Virginia who were also members of MENC. She gathered data on demographic information, repertoire selection criteria, music literature sources, types of music repertoire performed, and recommended repertoire for beginning high school choirs.

Seven questions guided the study. They were:

1. Is there a relationship between teacher experience and the literature selection for beginning high school choirs?
2. Do directors consider technical criteria to be of equal importance to aesthetic criteria in selecting beginning high school choral literature?
3. Which sources are the most valuable for securing beginning high school choir literature?
4. To what degree is literature from various historical style periods being performed by beginning high school choirs?
5. What pieces are being successfully performed by beginning choirs?
6. Are these surveyed pieces representative of all historical style periods?
7. Are these surveyed pieces recommended by high school choral literature experts?

The findings showed that directors programmed 20th-century literature most frequently and the most successfully. This finding has also been verified by many other dissertation studies (Bolt, 1983; Dahlman, 1992; Devore, 1990; Jones, 1989; Melton, 1985; Rucker, 1992).

Respondents in the study reported choosing their literature for beginning and advanced choirs similarly. They cited that technical and aesthetic criteria were equally weighted in the selection process.

Little agreement was found between literature recommended by directors and large published lists, specifically the Wyatt (1988) published listing of literature recommended by choral experts for mixed high school choirs. In addition, teachers cited their best sources for repertoire recommendations to be live performances, choral reading sessions, personal libraries, and recordings. College methods classes were found to be the least helpful source for choral repertoire recommendations; however, no information was gathered as to whether recommended choral repertoire was taught in the methods classes, or if it was simply taught and forgotten.

**Guy Wayne Forbes (1998), Ph.D., University of Florida.**

The purpose outlined in Forbes dissertation, *The Repertoire Selection Practices of Public High School Choral Directors in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia*, was to provide a basis for improving the literature selection practices and procedures of current high school choral directors and undergraduate instruction in choral literature selection. The study was conducted as a comparative study in the states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, between successful high school choral directors and directors who are less successful in the selection of performance literature.

Two different instruments were used to collect data from respondents, a written survey and a phone interview. The instruments were used to discover the demographics of the respondents, the processes and criteria utilized by the respondents in the selection of choral repertoire, and the level of agreement between the two comparative groups regarding what criteria justify a choral work to be quality literature. In addition, the study sought to determine what relationships existed between college studies, the quality and kinds of literature selected, the criteria and methods used, the education, experience, and philosophy of the director, and the perceived success of the director and the director's progress by university choral faculty members.

Written surveys were sent to 89 high school choral directors who were recommended by college choral faculty as being successful high school choral directors. In addition surveys were sent to 208 high school choral directors who were not selected by college choral faculty. Based on the findings of the study it was determined that there is no significant difference between the data received from high school choral director perceived as being successful and those who were not selected as such. Owing to a significantly low response rate from the 208 directors, phone interviews were conducted to acquire more data. 26 directors from each comparative groups were interviewed by phone.

Conclusions from the study suggest that more time in undergraduate studies should be devoted to teaching students the processes for selecting choral literature, how to determine if a choral work is of a high quality, and how to choose a variety of styles and genres for a choral program. In terms of demographic information high positive correlations were discovered between successful high school choral directors and the following factors: large school populations, minority population of between 10% and 50%, the receiving of graduate degrees, teaching experience, and the playing of an instrument. In information cited as repertoire selection process a high correlation was found between the following: the amount of classical music programmed with advanced students, the programming of spirituals and folk music with advanced choirs, and the low amount of programming of pop music.

**Implications for this study.** The focus of present study is the processes and criteria in the selection of performance literature. The dissertations studied deal with many of the same issues considered herein. The research findings of past dissertations hold many similar findings. Although choral directors seem to agree that selecting music which represents a variety of musical styles, periods, and genres is important, 20th Century literature typically made up more



than half of performance literature in the studies. There also appears to be consensus in the studies in terms of where choral directors go to find their literature. Most of the studies revealed that choral directors find repertoire at live performances and at choral reading sessions. Some utilize samples from publishers. Few choral directors appear to have gained much knowledge of literature selection during their time in college.

### **Summary Analysis of Literature**

Seven major themes related to choral literature selection emerged from the study of choral method books, dissertations, and other literature addressing repertoire selection. Those themes include philosophy of the selection of performance literature, knowledge development of literature selection, sources for finding literature, criteria for selecting literature, selection of festival literature, methods for cataloguing literature for future performance, and the programming of literature on concerts. Of these major topics, the criteria for selecting choral literature were addressed the most thoroughly. Knowledge development of literature selection was addressed the least.

Philosophy which affects the literature selected by choral directors is addressed by Reimer (1970) and Elliot (1995). Reimer discusses philosophy of music education from the perspective of aesthetics, that is to say the emotion inherent in music. Elliot discusses the importance for music educators to have a philosophy, and he discusses the importance of a “praxial” philosophy. His praxial philosophy is a multidimensional approach at the heart of which is the making of music, not just learning about it. The choral method books reviewed do not address philosophy of music education or literature selection as such. Rather, Cain (1942), Collins (1999), Garretson (1993), Gordon (1989), Jipson (1972), and Wilson (1959) discuss the importance of literature selection to the over-all choral program and also that directors should be sure to define the

purpose for including a song in a program. Collins (1999) in particular addresses the importance of considering the purpose for selecting particular pieces for performance.

Not much is written on the subject of knowledge development in regards to the selection of choral literature. In Dahlman's dissertation (1991) the level of teacher education was determined to have an impact on the literature selected, however, the form of that teacher education in regards to repertoire selection was not addressed. In their books Decker & Hereford (1973), Heffernan (1982), Lamb (2004), and Stanton (1971) address the ways in which directors can and should develop their knowledge of literature and its selection. Heffernan in particular notes the importance for conductors to continually broaden their knowledge of repertoire.

The sources for finding literature have changed somewhat over the last 50 years. In their books Decker & Herford (1973), Heffernan (1982), Neidig & Jennings (1967), and Stanton (1971) all address sources to find literature, back before the last two decades. Brinson (1996), Collins (1999), and Lamb (2004) discuss it from a more current point of view; however, it is interesting to note that the approaches recommended have not changed over time.

The criteria for selecting choral literature is the most widely addressed topic in the choral method books reviewed. From Cain in 1942 to Hoffer in 2001, the majority spent a portion, if not all, of a chapter on the subject. Brinson (1996), Cain (1942), Collins (1999), Decker & Herford (1973), Ehret (1959), Garretson (1993), Gordon (1989), Hoffer (2001), Hylton (1995), Jipson (1972), Miller (1988), Neidig & Jennings (1967), Roe (1970), Stanton (1971), and Wilson (1959) all address various criteria for selecting choral repertoire, with particular notes on the importance of selecting literature from a variety of genres, periods, and styles. The oldest of the choral methods books typically mention the importance for choral directors to include more contemporary works in their literature selections, instead of just the "classics." The most current

method books commonly encourage directors to balance out their literature with more than just contemporary works.

A related and yet separate topic from criteria for selecting literature is specifically the selection of festival literature. The only choral method book mentioning festival literature specifically is Roe from back in 1970 as he encourages directors to choose pieces that their choirs are capable of doing, and he admonishes them to not use the same worn-out songs that judges hear time and time again. The selection of festival repertoire is more specifically addressed in the dissertations of Devore (1989), Jones (1988), and Rucker (1992). Each dissertation explores the repertoire selected for performance at contests or conventions.

Another topic emerging from the literature review is that of the methods for cataloguing literature for future performance. Only four of the choral method books reviewed address the topic (Brinson, 1996; Ehret, 1959; Miller, 1988; Neidig & Jennings, 1967). The books by Neidig & Jennings in particular address the issue of how to track pieces discovered and which a director wishes to use in a future performance. Because the source is from 1967 the recommendation is for the use of an index card file, since computerized databases were not generally available until after 1980.

The final major topic to come from the literature review relates to the programming of choral music for performances, that is to say, how directors put together the music for their concerts. Where the criteria for selecting repertoire was the most discussed topic in the literature, the programming on concerts is a close second. In fact, many of the sources which discussed criteria also discussed programming, sometimes interchangeably. Brinson (1996), Cain (1942), Garretson (1993), Gordon (1989), Heffernan (1982), Hylton (1995), Jipson (1972), Kaplan (1985), Kinney (1987), Mark (1996), Miller (1988), and Neidig & Jennings (1967), Roe (1970),

Stanton (1971), and Wilson (1959) all discuss the topic of choral concert programming.

Although the choral method books reviewed cover over 60 years, the recommendations for choral programming have not changed much.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

Because this is a qualitative, phenomenological study, its purpose is to discover and describe choral literature selection criteria and processes of choral directors. To put together the most effective information possible, it was determined that “successful” directors would be interviewed. It was also determined that the directors interviewed should represent a national sample, and the criteria for selecting the directors should be as objective as possible. To that end, it was determined that choral directors of mixed choirs who have received national recognition would be invited for interviews. “Successful choral directors” was thus defined as those choral directors that had performed with their ensemble(s) at a national ACDA convention. For the purpose of this study, the scope was limited to public high school choral directors which had performed with their ensembles at one or more of the 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005 national ACDA conventions, as printed in the corresponding issues of the *Choral Journal* (ACDA, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005). Nineteen directors met these criteria. Contact information was available for 18 of these directors. A total of 11 directors consented to be interviewed for this study.

#### **Selection**

Within the realm of choral conducting in the United States there is currently no greater recognition to be earned than for a choir to be selected to perform at the national ACDA convention. National ACDA conventions only occur biennially. Of the choirs selected to perform at the convention, only a few are selected from mixed choirs at public high schools (ACDA, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005). At the 2005 ACDA convention held in Los Angeles, California, only 86 choirs were invited to perform. Of those 86 choirs, only seven were mixed choruses at public high schools (ACDA, 2005). That number was higher than those selected in previous years, illustrating the importance of the recognition of being invited to perform.

To be selected for performance at a national ACDA convention a choral director must follow a list of requirements. First, the director must be a current member of ACDA. Second, the director must have been employed at the same school for at least three years prior to submitting an audition application. No choir nor director is allowed to appear on successive national conventions. The director submits an application listing a proposed program not to exceed 25 minutes. The program cannot include more than one manuscript of an unpublished piece. It is recommended by the ACDA that the program include a variety of styles and genres, unless the proposed program is intended to be a concert by a single composer or genre. With the application is also submitted an audition tape or CD. The total length of the audition tape or CD should be 10 to 15 minutes and include three selections. All three of the pieces must be performed by the choir applying to perform. Each piece must be from a recording in a different year from each the three years prior to application. For example, an application submitted by April 30th for performance at the 2007 ACDA convention must contain a performance of a piece from 2005-2006, another from 2004-2005, and the third from the year 2003-2004 (ACDA, 2006).

For selection among those choirs submitting valid applications, national committees of the ACDA are formed. The committees listen to the recordings by the choirs in “blind” listening of the performances. A blind listening means that those on the selection committees do not know to which choir they are listening, nor do they know who the director of the choir is. This is established by tapes and CDs being organized and presented by a person outside the committee. Also, no person submitting a tape or CD for the convention may serve on the national audition committees (ACDA, 2006). In this manner the selection of the performing choirs for the national convention is as objective and fair as possible.

The 19 directors that met the selection criteria represent 18 public high schools, two directors being listed at the same high school. The 11 directors interviewed represent 11 high schools in the following nine states: Arkansas, California (two directors), Iowa, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey (two directors), Ohio, Colorado, and Texas.

### **Participants**

**Christine Bass** has been teaching for 23 years, and for the past 17 years she has directed the choirs at Cherry Hill High School in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Ms. Bass directed the Cherry Hill High School West Singers at the 1999 and 2005 national ACDA conventions. She had been teaching there for 10 years at the time of the performance. Cherry Hill High School has about 1,600 students in grades 9 thru 12. Student pianists accompany the choirs.

Ms. Bass directs four choirs during the regular school day and three more choirs as extra-curricular activities outside of regular class time. The four choirs meeting as part of the regular school day are the Vocal Workshop, the Chansons, the Concert Choir, and the West Singers. The Vocal Workshop class is for all grades, is SATB, and is non-auditioned. The Chansons are an SSA choir for grades 10 thru 12, and an audition is required. The Concert Choir is a mixed choir for grades 10 thru 12 and requires an audition. The West Singers are an auditioned mixed chorus for grades 10 thru 12. The Chamber Singers, Men of Note, and Fermata choirs meet outside of the regular school day. The Chamber Singers is a mixed chorus for grades 10 thru 12 and requires an audition. The Men of Note are an auditioned male chorus for grades 10 thru 12, and Fermata is an auditioned female chorus for grades 10 thru 12.

**Ryan Beeken** directs the choirs at Waukee High School in Waukee, Iowa. He had been teaching a total of 12 years, eight of those years at Waukee High School, when he took the Waukee High School A Cappella Choir to the national ACDA convention in 2005. Waukee High

School has a school population of about 850 from grades 10 thru 12. A paid, professional pianist accompanies the choirs.

Mr. Beeken directs five choirs at the school. All five choirs are open to students from any of the three grades, 10 thru 12. The A Cappella choir, a mixed choir, is the only auditioned choir. The other four choirs are the Bass Clef Choir, the Treble Clef Choir, the Chorale, and the Intermezzo Choir

**Kim Drusedum** is the director of choirs at Green Valley High School in Henderson, Nevada. She has taught for 16 years, all but one of those years at Green Valley High School. She had been teaching at Green Valley High School for 14 years when she led the Green Valley High School Madrigal/Chamber Singers at the 2005 national ACDA convention. The total school population is 2,763 in grades 9 thru 12. Ms. Drusedum plays the piano during class and hires another choir director to play for their performances.

Ms. Drusedum directs seven different choirs at her school. All choirs are open to all of the grades 9 thru 12 except for the Concert Choir and Madrigal Singers for which girls must be in grades 10 thru 12; however, the boys can be in grades 9 thru 12. The Madrigal Singers is a mixed choir with 40 singers. It is an auditioned choir, and students in the choir must also take Concert Choir. The Concert Choir has about 115 singers and is also auditioned. The other auditioned choirs are the Bella Voce, Women's Barbershop, and Men's Barbershop. The Bella Voce is a women's chamber choir with 40 singers. The Women's Barbershop and Men's Barbershop are small quartet ensembles. The non-auditioned choirs at Green Valley High School are the Girls Glee with 30 singers and the Intermediate Women's choir, also with 30 singers.

**R. Daniel Earl** is now retired and teaching adjunct at a junior college one night a week, but he was a choral director for 39 years. He taught at Santa Rosa High School in Santa Rosa,



California, for 28 years. He had been teaching there for 22 years when he took the Santa Rosa High School Chamber Singers to the 1999 national ACDA convention. Santa Rosa High School has a total student population of about 2,000 in grades 9 thru 12. There is no full-time accompanist for the choirs. Sometimes the accompanist is an outstanding student pianist, and at other times it is someone paid by the choir boosters, primarily to play at performances. The beginning groups are more likely to be accompanied, whereas the advanced choirs sing primarily *a cappella* works.

Mr. Earl conducted five choirs at Santa Rosa High School. The Women's A Cappella Choir and Men's A Cappella Choir were considered beginning choirs. They were both for students in any of the grades 9 thru 12 and were non-auditioned. The Las Choralistas Choir, primarily comprised of students in the 9th and 10th grades, was considered to be an intermediate choir. The students in this mixed chorus had to audition and have previous choral experience. The two advanced choirs were the Concert Choir and the Chamber Singers. Both required an audition and previous experience. The Concert Choir was largely comprised of students in the 10th and 11th grades, while the Chamber Singers was comprised primarily by students in the 11th and 12th grades.

**William (Bill) Erickson** is the choral director at Cherry Creek High School in Greenwood Village, Colorado. He has taught for a total of 24 years, the last 17 of those years at his current position. He had been teaching at Cherry Creek High School for 14 years when he directed the Cherry Creek High School Meistersingers at the 2003 national ACDA convention. He had been conducting the Meistersingers for eight years in 2003. The total school population at Cherry Creek High School is about 3,600 in grades 9 thru 12. There is a paid accompanist for the choirs.

Mr. Erickson directs seven choirs at Cherry Creek High School. The Choralaires, the Statesmen, the A Cappella Choir, and the Camerati are non-auditioned choirs. The Choralaires is a 9th grade women's choir, and the Statesmen is a 9th grade men's choir. The A Cappella Choir is a mixed chorus for 10th graders, and the Camerati is a mixed chorus for 11th and 12th graders. The Union St. Jazz Choir, the Girls' 21, and the Meistersingers are auditioned choruses. The Union St. Jazz Choir is comprised of students in grades 10 thru 12, and the students in the choir must also sing in one other choir. The Girls' 21 is a women's chorus for girls in grades 10 thru 12. The Meistersingers is a mixed chorus for students in the 11th and 12th grades, and students in the Meistersingers also audition for the honors choir. Although there is not prerequisite to any choirs, most students in the Girls' 21 and the Meistersingers have been in the choral program for two to three years.

**Kevin Hawkins** has taught for his total nine year career as a choral director at Glendale High School in Springfield, Missouri. He had been teaching for eight of those years when he directed the Glendale High School Chamber Singers at the 2005 ACDA convention. The high school has a total population of 1,525 in grades 9 thru 12. Accompanists come from a variety of sources including students, parents, a community volunteer who is paid quarterly, and Mr. Hawkins himself.

There are six choruses at Glendale High School, all led by Mr. Hawkins. Only one chorus, the Chorus I, a mixed chorus for grades 9 thru 12, is non-auditioned. All other choirs require an audition. Chorus II is a mixed chorus in grades 9 thru 12 for which experience in Chorus I is a prerequisite. The Women's Choir and the Men's Choir for students in grades 10 thru 12 have a prerequisite of experience in Chorus I and Chorus II. The Concert Choir is a mixed chorus for grades 10 thru 12 which requires previous experience in Chorus I and II. The Chamber Choir is

also for students in grades 10 thru 12 and has a prerequisite of participation in Chorus I, Chorus II, and Concert Choir.

**Terry Hicks** is the choral director at Bentonville High School in Bentonville, Arkansas. He has taught for a total of 15 years, 12 of those years at his current position. He had been teaching at Bentonville High School for ten years when he took the Bentonville High School Chamber Choir to the 2001 national ACDA convention. He also took the Chamber Choir to perform at the 2005 convention. Bentonville High School has a total school population of 1,852 in grades 10 thru 12. The choirs use a paid accompanist from the community.

Mr. Hicks conducts six choirs at Bentonville High School. The Concert Choir and Harmony chorus are non-auditioned. Both choirs are open to students from all grades at the school. The Concert Choir is a mixed chorus, and Harmony is a women's chorus. The other four choirs are all auditioned choruses. The Sophomore Select chorus is for students in the 10th grade. The other three auditioned choruses are for students in the 11th and 12th grades. Two of those choirs are A Cappella Choirs held in two different class hours, and the other is the Chamber Choir.

**Jack Hill** has directed the choirs at Clearview Regional High School in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, for all of his 30 year career. He had been teaching for 28 years when he directed the Clearview High School Vocal Ensemble at the 2005 national ACDA convention. Clearview High School has a total school population of about 1,500 in grades 9 thru 12. Accompanists for the choir come from students, a school staff member, and Mr. Hill.

Mr. Hill conducts four choirs at Clearview Regional High School. The Concert Choir is a non-auditioned, mixed chorus, for students in all grades. The Men's Choir, the Women's Choir, and the Vocal Ensemble are auditioned choirs. The Men's Choir and Women's Choir is for

students in all grades, 9 thru 12. The Vocal Ensemble is comprised of students in grades 10 thru 12.

**Gary Lamprecht** directs the choirs at San Luis Obispo High School in San Luis Obispo, California. He has taught for 32 years, 24 of those years at San Luis Obispo High School. He had been teaching at his current position for 21 years when he directed the San Luis Obispo High School Concert Choir at the 2003 national ACDA convention. San Luis Obispo High School has a total school population of about 1,600 in grades 9 thru 12. The choirs use both students and a paid accompanist from the community to accompany the choirs.

Mr. Lamprecht directs five choruses at San Luis Obispo. The Beginning Women's Chorus and the Men's Chorus are non-auditioned choirs for students in all grades at the school. The Advanced Women's Chorus is for girls in the 9th and 10th grades and requires an audition or one year in the Beginning Women's Chorus. The Chamber Choir is a mixed chorus for students in grades 10 thru 12 and has a prerequisite of previous choral experience. The Concert Choir is comprised of boys in grades 9 thru 12 and girls in the 11th and 12th grades. An audition and previous choral experience are required.

**Sally Schneider** is the choral director at Firestone High School in Akron, Ohio. She has been teaching a total of 24 years, 13 of those years at her current position at Firestone. She had been teaching at Firestone for six years when she directed the Firestone High School Symphonic Choir at the 2001 national ACDA convention. Firestone High School has a total student population of 1,300 in grades 9 thru 12. Ms. Schneider accompanies the choirs in rehearsal, and another accompanist comes in for performances.

Ms. Schneider directs six choirs at Firestone High School. Only the Intermediate Choir is non-auditioned. It is a mixed choir for grades 9 thru 12. The Men's Chorus and Women's Chorus

are auditioned choirs for all grades at the high school, but the audition requirement is very “lenient.” The Symphonic Choir, the Madrigal Singers, and the Vocal Jazz Ensemble are all auditioned choirs students in grades 10 thru 12. The Symphonic Choir is a mixed choir which requires previous participation in the Men’s or Women’s Choir. The Madrigal Singers and the Vocal Jazz Ensemble are both mixed choirs which also require previous participation in a Firestone High School choir along with “character” and academic references.

**Kay Sherrill** is the director of choirs at Judson High School in Converse, Texas. She has taught for a total of 24 years, eight of those years at her current position. She had been teaching at Judson High School for only four years when she directed the Judson High School Chorale at the 2003 national ACDA convention. Judson High School has a school population of 3,500 in grades 9 thru 12. The choirs are accompanied by a paid accompanist from the community, Ms. Sherrill, and, at times, a digitally sequenced accompaniment.

Ms. Sherrill conducts six choirs at Judson High School. Three of the choirs are non-auditioned and three are auditioned. The three non-auditioned choirs are the Nova Choir, the Concert Women, and the Brother’s Ensemble. Nova is a women’s training choir for all grades, and the Brother’s Ensemble is a training choir for men in all grades. The Concert Women is also for all grades, and the girls in the choir must have previous choir experience. The Ladies A Cappella Choir, the Chorale, and the Cantate Choir are all auditioned choirs. The Ladies A Cappella is a women’s choir for grades 9 thru 12. The chorale is a mixed choir for students in grades 10 thru 12 and a few 9th graders. The Cantate Choir is a mixed madrigal and show choir for all grades at the high school, and the students must also be in the Chorale.

### **Procedure**

The first step in the study was to put together a list of nationally recognized high school choral directors. The list was compiled by choosing for the study high school directors whose

mixed choirs have performed at the national ACDA convention since 1999. The directors names and schools were collected from the January 1999, January 2001, January 2003, and January 2005 issues of *The Choral Journal*. These issues contain the convention overview and schedules of conference sessions and performances. The performances list the names of the performing choirs along with the names of their directors. With the names of the directors and their choirs, the Internet was used to locate contact information along with information about their respective high schools and programs. Using Microsoft Excel, a database of contact information was compiled. The data-base fields listed were: Name, School, Group (name of the choir), ACDA Year (the year of the performance), e-mail (school e-mail address), Phone (school phone number), Address (school address), and Interview Date (for documenting when the actual phone interview took place).

Contact information for eighteen high school choral directors whose mixed high school choirs have performed at the 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005 ACDA conventions could be found on the Internet. As of the spring of 2005 each of those eighteen directors were still listed as the choral directors at the same high school and with the same choir with which they performed at the convention. Of those directors, one directed choirs at both the 2001 and 2005 conventions, and another directed choirs at both the 1999 and 2005 conventions. A choir which performed in 1999 listed two directors of the choir, so the eighteen directors actually only represent programs at seventeen high schools.

The eighteen directors for whom contact information was available were each mailed a packet in a manila envelope. Within the envelope was a letter giving an introduction, a brief explanation of the study, and an invitation to participate in the study. Also within the envelope was a consent form with a study approval number by the University of Florida Internal Review

Board, an “Interview Schedule” sheet, a form for basic demographic information related to their choral position, and a form for contact information. The form for contact information included filling out an e-mail address, phone number, and available times for being interviewed. If they were willing to be interviewed, the directors were asked to fill out and return everything in the packet except the letter of introduction and the Interview Schedule sheet. They were instructed to keep the copy of the Interview Schedule so as to provide them opportunity to think over their responses prior to the interview. Of the eighteen directors to whom were sent packets, eleven directors representing eleven different high schools returned the required consent materials and were interviewed.

### **Data Collection**

An interview time was established by e-mail, and the interview was conducted by telephone. Interviews were conducted on the following dates:

Table 3-1. List of interview dates

<b>Director</b>	<b>Date</b>
Kevin Hawkins	23 May 2006
Kim Drusedum	23 May 2006
Kay Sherrill	24 May 2006
Gary Lamprecht	25 May 2006
Terry Hicks	26 May 2006
Christine Bass	30 May 2006
Bill Erickson	7 June 2006
Sally Schneider	16 June 2006
Ryan Beeken	17 July 2006
Jack Hill	24 July 2006
Daniel Earl	24 August 2006

The Interview Schedule was followed during the interview. The interviews were recorded on blank cassette tapes using a tape recorder and a telephone recording device. Each interview lasted from 25 to 50 minutes.

The tapes were later transcribed to create interview transcripts. These transcripts were edited to create more complete or grammatically correct sentence structure; to reduce the amount of filler words such as “oh” and “um;” to omit repeated words and phrases; and to omit some personal comments, and to add references for choral works cited in the transcript. An edited transcript was sent as an e-mail attachment to each corresponding director for review of content accuracy. The requested changes by the directors were incorporated into the final transcripts.

Interview transcripts were used to compile the information given on each question or prompt of the Interview Schedule. The transcripts were coded with the numbers one through sixteen corresponding to the sixteen items on the interview transcript. The numbers were written on the transcript wherever a comment was made relevant to the interview item. A separate analysis document was created for each of the sixteen interview items. Each analysis document was divided into sections for each director. The coded comments were then copied from the transcripts to their corresponding analysis document and director section. The analysis documents were then analyzed for themes, patterns, and content.

### **Instrument Design**

The Interview Schedule contained a total of 16 discussion items, categorized in the interviewers copy of the Interview Schedule into seven larger subjects (see Appendix A). Those subjects were: (a) philosophy on the selection of performance literature, (b) knowledge development, (c) sources for finding literature, (d) criteria for selecting literature, (e) selection of festival literature, (f) methods for cataloguing literature, and (g) programming concert literature.

Topics for the Interview Schedule were developed from issues addressed in choral and secondary education books (Boyd, 1970; Brinson, 1996; Cain, 1942; Collins, 1999; Darrow, 1975; Decker, 1973; Ehret, 1959; Garretson, 1993; Gordon, 1989; Heffernan, 1982; Hoffer, 2001; Hylton, 1995; Jipson, 1972; Kaplan, 1985; Kinney, 1987; Lamb, 1979; Mark, 1996;



Miller, 1988; Neidig & Jennings, 1967; Roe, 1970; Stanton, 1979; Swan, 1949; Wilson, 1950; Wilson, 1959). The issues addressed were philosophy on the selection of performance literature, knowledge development, sources for finding literature, criteria for selecting literature, selection of festival literature, methods for cataloguing literature, and programming of concert literature. Items were addressed from the Interview Schedule sheet. The interviewer, following the Interview Schedule for the interviewer, addressed bullet points under the main statement or question as needed for clarification.

The first topic addressed is “Philosophy on the Selection of Performance Literature.” Number one on the Interview Schedule sent to the directors states:

1. Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature.

The interviewer could, as seemed necessary, ask for more information such as represented in the bullet points in the interviewer’s schedule sheet. The follow-up information listed on the interviewer’s schedule sheet could ask the directors to describe their views of the importance of the selection of performance literature to the over-all success of their programs. The interviewer might also have asked how they developed their philosophies in regards to selection of performance literature.

The next topic addressed in the interview schedule relates to ‘Knowledge Development’ in the area of selection of choral performance literature. Number two on the interview schedule asks:

2. From where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection?

The interviewer may have asked more specific questions related to various common sources to learn about the selection of choral literature. Those included college courses and professors, professional organizations, conferences, attending performances, other teachers, listening to

recordings, study of choral scores, reading professional journals and books, or experience, trial, and error.

The third area addressed in the study relates to ‘Sources for Finding Literature.’ Question three in the interview asks:

3. What sources do you use to find new literature?

Additional questions may have been asked about particular sources such as professional journals, lists of recommended literature, reading sessions at conferences for professional development where finding literature is just one of many professional functions (such as ACDA conferences), reading sessions at other functions where finding literature is the primary purpose of the event (such as at events sponsored by a publisher), looking through the school’s library, looking through and listening to promotional materials sent out by publishers, casual conversations with other directors, intentional calling of other directors for suggestions, and listening to other choirs.

The directors interviewed were asked to respond five statements or questions related to the next topic, the ‘Criteria for Selecting Literature.’ Number four on the interview schedule asks:

4. What criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature?

The interview may have asked follow-up questions related to variety of musical styles and periods, programming of a particular style or period, difficulty level/complexity of literature, programming of music by particular composers, aesthetic qualities of the music such as beauty and effect, particular themes such as songs of Broadway or songs for a season, large works such as an oratorio or song cycle, quality of the work, ‘like-ability’ of the piece by the choir, the number of voices in each section, the strength and quality of individual voices and age of the singers.

For the number five on the interview schedule directors were asked to:

5. Discuss pieces (3-5) which you have selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those pieces.

As the directors were discussing recent performance pieces which they had selected, they may have been asked more specifically if the reasons for the selection included whether or not they ‘liked’ it, they thought the audience would like it and thus get a lot of applause, the piece provided a balance in terms of tempo, style, mood, and other factors, they thought would impress other choral directors, they needed to use a work in their own library to save money, the work met educational objectives, or they thought the students would learn something about music from singing it.

Question six, still under the topic of criteria for selecting literature, asks:

6. How often do you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent of performing them?

Related to this question, directors may have been asked to give an example of a piece they might have used and why. They might also have been asked if they sometimes changed their minds and chose to use a piece for performance which previously had only been intended for teaching in the classroom.

For question seven directors were asked:

7. What consideration, if any, do you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment?

There were no specific follow-up questions to this item.

For question eight directors were asked:

8. Did you ever start rehearsing a work that you thought was a good choice but then withdrew it because it did not seem to be working for one reason or another?

Directors who answered ‘yes’ were to describe the situation, what the piece was, and why it was withdrawn. They were also asked how frequently this had occurred.

The next two items on the ‘Interview Schedule’ were related to the ‘Selection of Festival Literature.’ For question nine directors were asked:

9. What part does festival literature play in your selection of choral music for the school year?

To further clarify the question some directors were asked if their festival literature is selected separately from the rest of their concert pieces, if the concert literature was selected and then the festival literature selected from those pieces, or if the festival literature is selected and then integrated into the rest of the concert pieces?

For number ten on the ‘Interview Schedule’ directors were asked:

10. What influences your choices of festival literature?

With this question all of the directors discussed the influence of a festival list on their choices.

Number eleven on the interview schedule deals with the subject of ‘Methods for Cataloguing Literature.’ Directors were asked:

11. Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future?

As follow-up to this question, directors were asked to explain the format used for cataloguing the pieces they find. Some were asked to explain the elements of the literature they document.

The last five items addressed in the interview all dealt with the subject of ‘Programming Concert Literature.’ For question number twelve the directors were asked:

12. Do you use any particular methods for programming literature for concerts?

For further clarification, some directors were asked what method or methods they use the most. Examples of methods of programming mentioned by the interviewer were chronological, topical, alternation of contrasting styles, mono-stylistic, plural-thematic/stylistic, and miscellaneous.

The remaining four questions dealing with 'Programming Concert Literature' had no follow-up points for clarification. For question numbers thirteen through sixteen directors were asked:

13. How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year?
14. What is a typical proportion of styles and genres you program on a single concert and throughout the year?
15. Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature? (e.g. varied accompaniments, ability of the accompanist, use of your own arrangements, etc.)
16. How much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased for that performance?

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

### **Basic Philosophy for the Selection of Performance Literature**

When it comes to the philosophies of the choral directors interviewed regarding selection of performance literature, most aspects are the same or at least similar. Most of the directors expressed the importance of educating the students with the literature selected. They also considered the exposure to a variety of styles and genres, the vocal and choral skills that will be gained, and the musical concepts to be learned. The directors also spoke of the need to look for “quality” literature. Another common characteristic sought after by most of the directors is quite simply that the music be “moving.” The directors themselves expressed that they have to “love” a piece of music to rehearse it and perform it. A few of the directors spoke of the importance of selecting pieces with the students and the audience in mind. The music needs to challenge the students and the audience, yet still be accessible to them.

#### **Kevin Hawkins**

The philosophy of Kevin Hawkins centers largely around aesthetics and whether he is personally moved by a piece. In selecting literature the most important aspect to him is that he “love” the music he chooses. Specifically he said that, “It has to be something that I want to keep and do again sometime down the road,” and that he has “to be singing it around the house.” As he is looking at a piece of music he will ask, “Does this piece move me?” He stated that, “If it moves me then it is well-written, the words touch me, the music is something I’ll want to do, and I’ll want to invest hundreds of hours into it.”

Even when looking for “easier” pieces, Mr. Hawkins wants the music to move him so much that he feels absolutely compelled to perform it. He likened that process to being in a

candy store: “and my Momma is saying, ‘Here is a dollar. You can get five pieces. Pick out which ones you want.’ I’m going to pick out the ones that I really like. I’m selfish.”

The ability of a piece to teach the students is also important to Mr. Hawkins. He maintains a philosophy that teachers are preparing students for life. In that vein he believes that music should be selected with the training of the students in mind, even in selecting festival literature. In the end, however, Mr. Hawkins believes the most important aspect of the literature he selects is the aesthetics, the beauty, the passion.

If one described me it would have to be passion, that everything I do, it has to be passionate because I really feel that I only have a certain amount of time, and I don’t want to waste it on something that doesn’t move me. I want to be moved, and I want to move others.

### **Kim Drusedum**

Kim Drusedum selects performance literature with the students and audience in mind. Her philosophy is centered around selecting literature which will be enjoyable to the audience while at the same time challenging her students. She believes in choosing quality literature in which the audience can become “involved,” the students will experience musical growth, and she herself can remain interested in the music she is rehearsing. Ms. Drusedum sees the selection of performance literature as important to her overall program because it affects the work ethic of her students. When she chooses musical works which are very difficult but which the students like, she has seen her students work harder to learn those pieces.

### **Kay Sherrill**

For Kay Sherrill the first consideration in selecting choral performance literature is considering the development of her students, namely where the students are going in terms of literature and what they need to get there. For Ms. Sherrill the music needs to teach. She believes that by knowing where her students are in terms of knowledge and skill, and selecting literature

to meet their needs, she can help her students progress as they move through the levels of her program. For example, with her younger groups she selects folk-based music so that it can be learned more quickly, while at the same time developing sight-reading skills and teaching the solfege system.

Additional factors for Ms. Sherrill in selecting choral literature are variety and doing great literature. She deems variety and quality in music to be equal in importance. In terms of variety, she believes in choosing pieces from different centuries and time periods. With her top choir she always tries to select performance literature from different time periods. For instance, every Fall she tries to select a major work for performance by her top choir. That work might be something from the Classical periods, such as *Te Deum* (Haydn, 1799/1959), or something from 20th Century literature such as the *Frostiana* (Thompson, 1975) series. By selecting literature representative of a variety of musical periods, genres, and styles, Ms. Sherrill is also filling the requirements set by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). For quality, Ms. Sherrill believes in having her students learn and perform what would be termed as “great” literature. She states that, “You’ve got to do the best possible literature that you can do, literature with integrity, literature of different centuries.” Ms. Sherrill comments that she as the director has to keep variety in mind while selecting “great” literature.

Ms. Sherrill thinks that, in her situation, the selection of performance literature is a “vital key” to the over-all success of her program. In addition, she believes that the music she chooses is the reason that a “pride” is cultivated in her students, a pride that they will be singing all types from music from Mozart to contemporary. She tells her students:

All right, this is a legitimate choir program, and we are going to sing everything. We are going to be singing Mozart, and we are going to be singing Beethoven. . . . We’re also going to be singing hard music, and popular music, and folk, and we’re going to sing



everything. I would be a really bad teacher if I didn't expose you the things that you didn't know.

The philosophy of Ms. Sherrill includes a belief that students must be given more than things they already know, otherwise they will not stretch out of their comfort zones. When she senses that students are not happy with learning a new style of music she will say to them, "Why should I teach you what you already know? That's not what you're in my classroom for. You're in my classroom to get out of your comfort zone." At times she will proceed to discuss comfort zones with students and stress that real learning takes place on "the edge of the comfort zone." She will then share with her students that if they are uncomfortable with the new literature they are learning; that is a great thing. She asks that all of her students give the literature a chance and their best effort.

### **Gary Lamprecht**

Regarding the selection of performance literature Gary Lamprecht describes his philosophy as a belief in a buffet of various music. He believes that people are more interested in musical performances when they get a smorgasbord of music styles, because in that way there is something for everyone to enjoy. Along with providing variety in the musical selections, he believes that music should be selected with concert programming in mind, particularly in regards to programming of upbeat pieces at points in the concert when the audience might have difficulty continuing to stay attentive. Mr. Lamprecht believes that the music selected for performance should "hook" the audience and the singer alike. He selects literature which he feels the students will love once they have learned it, and by loving the music they are learning and performing, they will love coming to choir. Furthermore, Mr. Lamprecht states that he must "love" the music. He says that he never will select a piece of music which he does not like.

## **Terry Hicks**

The philosophy of Terry Hicks regarding the selection of choral performance literature centers around a meaningful text combined with difficulty level of the music. He believes that the text is the most important consideration while choosing choral repertoire. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of finding literature of a difficulty level which will be both “complimentary and challenging.” Mr. Hicks believes that selecting repertoire of the best difficulty level is important for each individual choir. He states that the selection of choral literature is the most important aspect of developing his choral program in terms of getting the students to challenge themselves. He thinks it is important that students consider the music they are learning and performing to be “worth-while.”

## **Christine Bass**

The philosophy of Christine Bass in the selection of performance literature is that her job as a teacher is to expose students to high quality and varied literature. Similar to Mr. Lamprecht, Ms. Bass refers to choral literature selection as a “smorgasbord of repertoire.” She believes in exposing her students to music from all periods, styles and genres. She will try to teach them to perform the music authentically, whether the music is a classical piece by Bach or a pop piece. If a piece has been simplified Ms. Bass will say to her students, “Okay, we’re changing this because this arrangement is obviously dumbed-down.” While teaching the authentic performance of music from various styles, she also believes it is important to teach healthy vocal technique for each of those styles.

Ms. Bass believes that having variety in the selection of repertoire accomplishes many important objectives. First of all, she advocates that variety of music will broaden vocal skills and create more rounded musicians. Second, choosing a variety of literature creates an inclusive

curriculum versus and exclusive one. Ms. Bass lives in an area with a very diverse population of cultures, so she says that it is important that she include music representative of those populations, including Hebrew, African, and Asian music, and Black gospel music. In addition, each year she will include at least one German Romantic piece, some early Latin pieces, and some madrigal pieces. Her programs are so varied that she says her top group will often perform in five languages on the same concert. Providing variety, she states, also makes choir enjoyable for her students and keeps the community supportive of her choir program.

Ms. Bass believes that the selection of performance literature and the over-all success of the choral program go hand-in-hand. The students in her choral program are a cultural and ethnic cross-section of the diverse population of her school. She believes that the diverse make-up of her choirs is largely due to the diverse selection of music performed by the choirs. Everyone feels included. She selects music to appeal to all of the populations of her school. Students progress through four levels of curricular choirs, each choir becoming more advanced and mature in terms of choral literature, until the top choir has a “serious musical appetite” as Ms. Bass calls it. The selection of repertoire within her program affects over-all success by the creation of this stepped program.

### **Bill Erickson**

For Bill Erickson the education of his students through the repertoire selected is the most important aspect of his selection philosophy. He believes that “literature should teach or enhance or introduce at times choral history, performance practice.” He uses chant at the beginning of every school year to teach its performance practice and to teach his students phrasing, which can then be applied to literature from other musical periods. In selecting literature which will educate his students, he believes in choosing pieces which are both well-known and obscure, paying

particular attention to teaching the articulation and phrasing which are indicative of the particular musical style or period. Annually he includes spirituals in his selections, choosing “some of the more common ones and the ones that really started the movement in choral history.” He does not do much repertoire which would be described as aleatoric, an exception being a few of pieces by Eric Whitacre.

Along with the education of his students, Mr. Erickson’s philosophy centers around what is appropriate for high school students to sing. He believes in selecting quality literature which both he and his students will love and learn together, but he also believes that the musical work should be high school appropriate. That is not to say that he does not believe in selecting difficult literature, but he stresses the importance of healthy vocal production and that not all literature is good for a high school voice to perform.

Lastly, Mr. Erickson believes in selecting and programming literature with the audience in mind. He describes putting together a concert program as being like designing a menu or planning a journey. He considers what the music performed is going to do for the audience and listeners. He states that it “comes down to the fine art of once you’ve got your program, whether it’s a theme or not, where do they go? Where do the pieces fit in?”

### **Sally Schneider**

Sally Schneider believes first and foremost in selecting “good, quality literature.” Her philosophy in selecting choral repertoire for her high school choirs is that the music has to be of a collegiate-level or that it is written with high-level composition technique. To that end, Ms. Schneider does not believe in teaching pop culture music or what she terms “watered-down show choir literature.” She selects her repertoire to fit within a total concert length of 60 to 75 minutes, and attempts to ensure that every piece is high quality literature which requires something of the

audience as listeners. To train her audiences, she puts information about the pieces in the concert program and encourages her students to go home and talk to their parents about the pieces they will perform.

Ms. Schneider believes that the literature she selects is important for the development of the ensembles and the individual students. She states that the students' appreciation and ownership of a piece of music helps in the development of the ensemble. Furthermore, she tries to pick repertoire which will help her students prepare for college. She wants her students to be able to put on their resume a substantial list of works from six or seven different languages, and that those works be ones that last, versus pop tunes which come and go. She believes her students understand that intent in terms of the music they learn and perform. As Ms. Schneider states, "They understand that we're not singing for today. We're really working for a life-time of mobilization."

### **Ryan Beeken**

The philosophy of Ryan Beeken regarding the selection of performance literature centers around three criteria. First, he believes that the music he selects must meet the goals he sets for the development of each of his choirs. He thinks of areas in which he feels his ensembles need to improve, and he tries to select repertoire which will accomplish that. Second, Mr. Beeken feels it is important to select repertoire representative of a variety of languages, cultures, and periods of musical history, thus giving his students a broad background in choral literature. Ultimately, he says that he has to love the music he chooses. He does not believe that he can be very effective teaching music which he himself does not love.

## **Jack Hill**

Jack Hill maintains a philosophy on the selection of performance literature based on variety of music, quality literature, and entertainment of the audience. He believes that variety of literature should be considered in multiple areas. For each of his performances he will select at least a masterwork, or a part of one. He believes in incorporating at least one cultural piece from outside of the United States, be that something in a foreign language from Spain or Italy, or even something written by a composer in Canada. Mr. Hill will always choose a piece which could be considered Contemporary, but he specifies that does not mean “pop” music. He also believes in varying accompanied and unaccompanied pieces, selecting no more than one-third of the music for a concert as unaccompanied pieces. He thinks that, “the ear gets tired after a certain amount of time of hearing choral music without accompaniment.” In addition, Mr. Hill believes in finding a balance between literature which teaches the audience and literature which simply leaves the audience with a good feeling.

Mr. Hill feels that good literature should be selected which teaches something. For quality, Mr. Hill picks music he considers to have “content.” That content is based on the text of the music. He looks for poetic texts which will have meaning for his students, texts with which the students can “connect.” That is not to say he believes in using something “dumbed down,” but something which they can at the least understand.

Mr. Hill thinks that the end result of a concert should be that it is a performance, and thus be entertaining. He states that he has erred sometimes in the past by choosing repertoire which is of so high a quality as to be above the understanding of the audience, something he believes should be considered. As he selects his literature he is not only conscious of whether or not the

music will teach something to this students, but also whether the work will be entertaining and enjoyable to his audience.

### **Daniel Earl**

The philosophy of Daniel Earl regarding the selection of choral performance literature centers on choosing repertoire which he loves, that the students will enjoy, is varied in terms of style, and is appropriate for the students.

It is up to you as the director and as the “professional” to start building their ears as well as those of your students and help both develop an appreciation for great choral literature and the “choral art.” At the same time most people like to be able to sit back and just enjoy music without having to spend a lot of intellectual energy.

To foster in his students an appreciation for great choral literature, Mr. Earl thinks it important to introduce students to as many styles as possible. He also believes it is important to select literature which will stretch the students musically.

Mr. Earl thinks it is important to select music that is both age appropriate and skill appropriate. As part of the selection process, “It is then important to ask yourself . . . ‘Is this appropriate for my students?’ . . . [Is] this piece is age appropriate, are their skills developed enough to sing this piece and is the text appropriate for this age level[?]” In terms of skill, he looks for literature in which the choirs can “hone those skills, of our singers and ourselves, that provide a significant musical experience.” He feels this is the most challenging with younger groups. Those are the students he describes as coming to choir,

because they like to sing, not because they know anything about choral music. Many of your people in the audience, Mom and Dad, don’t know anything about choral music. But their son or daughter, Johnny or Susie, likes to sing and they are part of the choir and mom and dad are going to listen.

Mr. Earl selects his literature with this in mind, so that the literature is capable of reaching the students while at the same time stretching them in their musical skills. As an example of tasteful literature, he cites beautiful folks songs as being both very musical and appropriate.

Mr. Earl does believe that music should be enjoyable for himself and for the students. He feels it is possible to select literature which is varied, teaches the students, is appropriate, while at the same time is something that he and his students will want to continue rehearsing. In choosing repertoire he asks himself,

Do I love this piece? Am I going to be able to come back to this piece, over and over if necessary, to make it “musical?” Or are we all going to be bored or tired of this piece after only 20 minutes of rehearsal?

For Mr. Earl, spirituals are an example of music which can be all of these things, because they are, as he describes, “usually big and fun and fast and loud and everybody enjoys them.” He believes it is possible to select choral literature which can be all of these things, educational, appropriate, and fun, including that the music be something he himself loves.

### **Summary of Philosophy**

All the directors have some of the same core beliefs in their philosophies. They all believe in varied literature in terms of styles and musical periods. Hand in hand with that, they have a belief in selecting music which is quality literature, whether the music be the great literature of the past, folk tunes, spirituals, or Contemporary pieces. They all want the repertoire they choose to teach their students in terms of skill and musical understanding, but most comment that the music should be carefully selected to be appropriate for the age of the students in the choirs. A few of the directors specifically mentioned the importance of text in choral literature. Last of all, the directors believe in selecting music they themselves love and that the students and audience will enjoy.



## **Knowledge Development of Literature Selection**

When asked how they developed their knowledge of literature selection, the majority of the directors interviewed commented that they learned mostly from experience. Much of that learning through experience has come through trial and error. Part of that experience-learning has come through listening to other choirs. Many were also influenced by other directors they had known in the past, while they were still students themselves, or from colleagues or directors at workshops and reading sessions. Most of the directors commented that they learned little if anything directly about selecting choral literature in college. What was learned in college, they stated, was typically learned from simply singing in choirs.

### **Kevin Hawkins**

Kevin Hawkins states that he learned mostly from the “school of hard knocks.” He has learned by simply “doing it.” He says that he didn’t learn it in a class. He learned to select music which is tied together with a particular message through planning worship services. He planned worship music for 15 years before entering public school teaching. Mr. Hawkins also adds, “I don’t know it all. I am always learning.” He knows that learning is an on-going process and that he is still has more to learn.

### **Kim Drusedum**

In high school Kim Drusedum was influenced by the philosophy of her choir teacher in selecting choral literature. She learned from her teacher to select music which was of a high quality and that the audience and parents would enjoy and want to continue supporting. In addition, she says that in college she learned a little, but not much. When it came time to put together a Spring concert program and a festival program during college, she simply chose literature she had performed in high school. She states that she has learned some things about selecting repertoire from ACDA through its performances and publications, but most of her

knowledge she has “developed.” She has learned how to choose repertoire through “on-the-job training.” She comments that, “The longer I teach, the better I get at picking literature. I think it just takes a while. You have to get used to who your audience is and what kind of kids you have and go from there.”

### **Kay Sherrill**

Starting in junior high school, continuing into graduate school, and then on into her professional career in Texas, Kay Sherrill describes learning important aspects of selecting choral literature in each era of her life. Starting in junior high, Ms. Sherrill developed a love for the music of Bach through playing Bach inventions on the piano. During that same time, her junior high choral director introduced her to renaissance music. She “fell in love” with that style of music and describes that she “just couldn’t get enough of it.” In graduate school Ms. Sherrill picked up the concept of starting each Fall by programming a larger work from her graduate professor, Ken Fulton.

During her professional career Ms. Sherrill has been greatly influenced by the established professional association and the system of competition in Texas. She explains that she has learned a lot about selecting choral literature from her involvement with the Texas Music Educator’s Association, the University Interscholastic League (UIL), and the state’s Prescribed Music List (PML). The UIL, she states, has a strong set of guidelines and rules. At any given competition in Texas, two of the music selections must come off of the PML, based on the UIL determined classification level of the particular school. Ms. Sherrill knows that in selecting literature off of the PML, she is choosing from quality repertoire, selected by committee. At times she will select music for her choirs, and later in the school year she will look to verify if the repertoire she has chosen is on the PML. When she sees that the music she has selected is on

the PML, she feels validated that she is choosing her music well. Ms. Sherrill feels this process has helped her to learn to choose quality literature and know that, in that aspect, she is “on the right track.”

### **Gary Lamprecht**

Gary Lamprecht states that he learned the most about selecting choral music from other directors. He says that he learned from every director under which he sang, the great ones and the not so great ones. He was introduced to one of his favorite pieces, *Sicut Cervus* (Palestrina, 1946), while singing in college. Over his years of directing choirs he has programmed, taught, and performed *Sicut Cervus* with junior high, high school, college, and adult choirs. That same director in college introduced him to pieces such as the *Sixty-Seventh Psalm* (Ives, 1939). Mr. Lamprecht also has learned about choral literature selection through directors at choral festivals and reading sessions.

### **Terry Hicks**

Terry Hicks believes he has learned about choral literature selection through various venues during his professional career. First, he states that he has been influenced through performances he has attended at ACDA conventions primarily. Second, he has learned how to choose repertoire by hearing choirs at local festivals. Third, he has gained more knowledge of literature selection by purchasing many CD's and building his own choral CD library. Last, he states that he develops his ability to choose music by attending reading sessions sponsored by the Texas Choral Directors' Association (TCDA), and by the ACDA in Arkansas.

### **Christine Bass**

Christine Bass describes her learning in regards to selecting choral literature as coming from high school choir, college choir, and church choir background. She explains that she had a

quality high school program, and then attending Westminster College in the 1970s under Joseph Flummerfelt, Ms. Bass says that she learned the idea of different timbres, tone colors, and styles, because the Westminster Choir always sang a varied repertoire. On a typical concert she says that the Westminster Choir would start with early music and end with an exciting piece such as a spiritual. She also explains that the choir would perform large, symphonic works, giving her a vast experience with choral literature for larger choirs. In addition, she has learned about choral repertoire for smaller ensembles as she has sung in church choirs. In particular, on the weekends while in college she would sing in her husband's gospel church choir (she is White, her husband is Black), giving her authentic experience singing gospel music. All these experiences Ms. Bass describes as giving her a diverse background for selecting and performing varied choral literature.

### **Bill Erickson**

Bill Erickson comments that his biggest influence in learning about choral literature selection has been one person, David Bauer. David Bauer arrived at his college, Northern State College in Aberdeen, South Dakota, during his last year as an undergraduate. He influenced Mr. Erickson to change from instrumental to choral music. He sees David Bauer as being in, as he describes it, "in this life-long, relentless pursuit of new literature, any period, whatever it is. He's been doing this for 35 years, or more, and I bet you can count on two hands the number of pieces he's repeated in 35 years. It's always something new." He says that David Bauer is still his best source for literature. In addition, Mr. Erickson states that he does not select literature which could be considered aleatoric because his training did not include that type of music. Particularly, his director at Arizona State maintained that if a piece of music does not allow singers to sing that there is not a purpose in doing that work.

## **Sally Schneider**

Being self-motivated, Sally Schneider claims, was how she learned about selecting choral literature. She is quick to say that her high school choir experience was not a positive one. The *Hallelujah Chorus* (Handel, 1742/1992) was the only “classic” piece of choral literature she says that she ever performed in high school, and as a result, she still does not like the *Messiah* (Handel, 1742/1992). Although she describes a negative high school choral experience, she had positive musical experiences through taking preparatory lessons in voice and piano from the nearby college where she studied with professors and graduate students. Those lessons, she says, “really cemented that somewhere out there is musical integrity.” She attended all of the college choir concerts, and after graduating from high school, she enrolled in and graduated from her local college.

During her years in college Ms. Schneider feels she did not learn much about choral literature selection. The professor she had studied with and observed during her years of growing up all seemed to retire by the end of her first year in college, and she states that she did not have a choral literature class in college. At the time of graduating with her bachelor’s degree she had two choices, taking a job offer or taking the GRE and going to graduate school. Ms. Schneider describes that at that point she still felt “dumb as dirt,” prompting her to spend two years in graduate school so that she could attend more ACDA conventions, see what other teachers were doing, and get out of her “comfort zone.” Even in graduate school, she states, that she did not have what she considered to be a “premier choral conductor and a premier choral lit program.” She learned through being self-taught. She learned how to select choral literature by persuing the thought, “Somewhere out there I know there is a more sophisticated element going on, and I’ve got to find it.”

## **Ryan Beeken**

Trial and error are the main resources Ryan Beeken claims that have taught him how to select his repertoire. Other than what he felt he picked up from performing in ensembles during college, he states that his “undergraduate education didn’t really do a whole lot.” Like many directors, he believes he has learned the most from practice and “hit and miss.” With that practice he says that he spent a lot of time looking for and researching repertoire on-line. He also spent time as the Standards and Repertoire person for the state of Iowa, receiving a lot of music and materials through the mail. He had to review all of that music from the various publishers. In the process he learned a lot about the styles, composers, and publishers he preferred.

## **Jack Hill**

Jack Hill also believes that he learned how to select choral literature simply by “doing it.” He remembers taking courses in graduate school in which he had to design choral programs, but he feels that more of his focus was on impressing his professor, so he selected what he describes as “esoteric” literature. Mr. Hill states that during his career he has had times when he designed choral programs which were heavy on Contemporary literature, and that he had times when his programs were heavy on the traditional literature side. Over time, he says that he simply has developed a “feel” for selecting and programming his repertoire, but he also shares that it took him “time to get there.”

## **Daniel Earl**

Daniel Earl believes that a part of his ability to select literature developed over time from his own experiences, particularly with regard to working with various age groups. During high school and college he feels that he had instinctively a sense of what was musical and of the types of musical works into which it was worth putting one’s time and energy to work on. As he went

on to teaching, he first taught 7th and 8th grade. He found it challenging to find and select age-appropriate music in terms of maturity of both the music and the text.

Today Mr. Earl says that he continues to learn how to select literature and is influenced in his literature selection as he attends festivals, national ACDA conventions, divisional conferences and other various conferences, and as he listens to the repertoire of his colleagues. When he runs reading sessions and teaches at clinics, he tells those in attendance,

Teaching this age, you're so lucky. There's so much more literature out there for you to select from. Of course, a problem is there's so much literature for you to select from; you have to be very selective because there's too much.

## **Summary**

The majority of the high school choral directors who were interviewed state their main avenue of learning in terms of selecting choral literature has come through experience. That experience has taken various forms from trial and error, to attending conferences and festivals, listening to other choirs, recommendations of literature from other directors, listening to CD recordings, and following prescribed or recommended literature. A few of the directors do remember learning some elements of choosing repertoire early in their own educations, but all of the directors interviewed acknowledged that learning to select and program quality literature is something which has developed over time.

## **Choral Literature Sources**

For some choral directors acquiring knowledge about selecting choral literature and finding quality choral literature are similar. Many of the directors interviewed have learned how to choose repertoire by attending ACDA conventions, conferences, reading sessions, festivals, and other choral performances. Some also state that their repertoire list has grown by listening to CDs, reading repertoire lists, and speaking with other choral directors. Likewise, the directors

cite these same sources as places to look for and to find new literature for their choirs. There exists a difference in opinion among directors as to the usefulness of attending reading sessions, reading recommended repertoire lists, and perusing choral music packets and listening to the sample CD's from publishers. There is a strong consensus supporting the importance of attending conferences, conventions, and festivals, and as to the general usefulness of listening to other choirs whether by live performance or CD recording.

### **Kevin Hawkins**

Like all of the directors interviewed, Kevin Hawkins picks up most of the new literature he selects as he listens to other choirs. He listens to the repertoire sung by choirs at regional, state, and national concerts. When he hears a work which he particularly likes he thinks, "That is something that I want." He also listens to a lot of choral works on CD. He has a choral CD library of about 250 CD's. and he listens to CD's continually throughout the summer. Mr. Hawkins also draws from the extensive corporate library of his school system, a central library from where the music is checked out and is then sent back after use. He states that he does not prefer to attend reading sessions, citing the poor quality of the selected music. Likewise, he says that he never refers to journals or recommended literature lists for large choral repertoire.

### **Kim Drusedum**

Kim Drusedum finds her choral works through various sources. Like most directors she enjoys attending workshops and festivals to pick up new literature. In particular she cites the four-day long school district festival which she is in charge of, so she has the opportunity to hear a lot of new music performed by the choirs in the district. She also listens to multiple choirs at the Heritage Festival for which she is a judge. When she hears a work she really likes, she writes it down. Other directors are a common source of literature for Ms. Drusedum. Some of her



colleagues will recommend pieces to her which they feel might suit her and her choirs. She states that, “They’ll give you the information, and I’ll give it a shot. Most of the people around here, they’ve known me for so long now, they know what styles I like.”

Unlike some of the other directors, Ms. Drusedum does see value in reading publications, perusing publisher materials, and in attending sessions and workshops at which many choral pieces are introduced. One festival in particular which she cited was a week long master class program sponsored by Portland State University at Cannon Beach, Oregon, at which 200 different pieces of music were read. Another event she attends in Santa Fe, New Mexico is called Perspectives Choral Sessions at which she walks home with about 150 choral works. She believes that, “When you go to workshops, even if you find one piece out of that 100 pieces of music, then you are in good shape.” In terms of sampler CD’s from publishers, Ms. Drusedum states that she will “throw” CD’s into her car CD player throughout the summer and listen. If she does not like a piece she simply forwards past that particular track. If she does like it she will circle that piece on the publisher list at the next possible moment (such as at a stop light). She particularly noted that she uses the mailing lists from Alliance Music Publishers and Santa Barbara Music Publishing and the CD packets from publishers such as Hal Leonard.

### **Kay Sherrill**

Kay Sherrill uses various sources to find new choral literature. First, she states that the PML is a great source. She feels a sense of assurance that when she selects music from the list, the pieces are going to be great literature because of the committee process used to compile the list. In her repertoire selection she believes in using a combination of her own choices and literature found on the list. For her own choices, she takes note of pieces she hears as she judges choirs. In addition, every summer she attends a conference of TCDA. At the conference she

participates in the reading clinic and collects free packets of music. Also, she states that she uses the music library at her school.

### **Gary Lamprecht**

Gary Lamprecht states that he finds most of his new literature at the large annual choral festival hosted by his school, one of the largest choral festivals in the state of California. For two days he announces and then listens to each choir. As they are singing he listens for repertoire which would be good for his choirs. Mr. Lamprecht states that he will commonly pull a copy of music out of a choir's packet if he likes it and wants the opportunity to study it. He will put a note in their packet which says, "I loved your piece. I'll mail it back to you after I've studied it." He has had the same thing happen to him, and he feels it is a compliment when another director is interested in a piece his choir has performed. After the festival is over, he then takes his copy of the recording of that choir from the festival and listens to it as he studies the score. In that way he gets a more objective look at whether a particular work would be worth ordering and programming with one of his choirs.

The annual Golden State Choral Competition in California is another venue Mr. Lamprecht uses to listen to repertoire performed by multiple choirs. At the Golden State Choral Competition he reports that the choirs try to "out do" each other in their performances, so they perform very difficult music. It was at this competition several years ago that Mr. Lamprecht first heard the choral music of Eric Whitacre. He began selecting and programming Eric Whitacre pieces for his choir, along with works by Morten Lauridsen. He also cites the library for the adult choir he conducts as a source he uses to pick repertoire for his high school choirs.

## **Terry Hicks**

For Terry Hicks, the methods he has learned to select literature and the sources he uses to find new literature are the same. He looks for new repertoire by attending ACDA conventions and local festivals. He also listens to repertoire in his own choral CD library for ideas. He attends the reading clinic sponsored by ACDA in Arkansas, and like Ms. Sherrill, he attends the reading clinic sponsored by the TCDA. He enjoys finding literature at those reading sessions because he feels that the people running the clinic have already gone through the tedious process of reading boxes full of choral pieces, sifting through them, to find the “few little gems” that are there. Mr. Hicks also utilizes the UIL from Texas for repertoire ideas. One source he does not use is the publisher marketing materials he receives in the mail.

## **Christine Bass**

When asked her primary source for finding repertoire Christine Bass says, “At the concerts I hear at ACDA.” Particularly she will tell you it is the “college stuff” from which she will pull her ideas for choral literature. If Ms. Bass is not able to attend an ACDA convention, she will order CD’s of all the high school, college, and honor choir performances. When she hears something she finds interesting, she orders a copy of the score to look over. In addition to ACDA performances, she also gets ideas for repertoire as she attends the concerts of her colleagues and All-State concerts.

Although Ms. Bass primarily uses choral performances to find new literature, she will also search through other sources. She states that she will look through the All-State repertoire list published by ACDA. Having performed at ACDA, she says that composers and publishing houses send her pieces to look over. She also listens to many of the publishing house packets she

receives, fast forwarding through everything quickly. In the summer she will go through a very large pile of music, reading the pieces and picking repertoire.

### **Bill Erickson**

When asked his best sources for finding choral literature, Bill Erickson immediately begins to spout names of particular individuals. Networking is his greatest tool for discovering new pieces. He says that his greatest source is David Bauer at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Mr. Bauer sends him boxes of single copies of music that he has picked up at reading sessions for use at his college for literature classes. Mr. Erickson uses Jeff Harris from the Phoenix area indirectly, as he puts it. Dick Larsen, a retired teacher who conducts a local community choir called Kantorei, Mr Erickson states, is a great source for literature and programming advice. He also cites the names of Larry Kaptein, Joan Catoni Conlon at CU Boulder, Galen Darrow at UNC in Greeley, and James Kim at CSU as personal sources he calls upon for repertoire ideas.

I pick a lot of literature from these networking sources. I'll call them up, "I need an opener. I need something in the centerpiece. I need a penultimate piece. I need a closer. What do you think? I need a processional." These guys will just rattle off of the top of their heads a half dozen winners.

Mr. Erickson does say that he uses publisher materials and attends choral functions. He says that he uses publisher materials approximately 10% of the time for selecting his choral literature. He particularly likes Alliance Music Publishers. He also, as is shared by the other directors, attends summer conventions and regional or national ACDA conventions. He attends ACDA reading sessions and a reading session associated with the All-State Chorus in Colorado.

### **Sally Schneider**

Sally Schneider utilizes lists and various sources for acquiring perusal music copies. First, she looks at the Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) contest list and other competition lists. She gets perusal packets and copies of choral pieces from her state publishing houses for all

of the different class levels, and she takes advantage of anything produced by ACDA. Although her schedule makes it difficult for her to attend all the performances she would like, she does go to as many concerts and conventions as possible, listening for that piece which makes you think, “Wow! I love that piece. What is that?”

### **Ryan Beeken**

Ryan Beeken states that he typically goes “right to the publishers.” Having spent time as the Standards and Repertoire chair person for the state of Iowa, he was given the opportunity to receive and sift through countless numbers of choral pieces sent to him by various publishers. As a result, he knows which publishers suit his preferences. In particular he says that he looks through materials sent out by Earthsongs and Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and he spends time reading and looking at the web pages of publishing houses and their mailing lists. He also looks for repertoire by attending reading sessions.

### **Jack Hill**

Jack Hill says that finding repertoire is “always the hardest thing.” Over the years he has learned what his preferences are, and he knows which publishing houses and composers fit those preferences. He receives “a million things in the mail” from various publishing houses, and he throws away the ones he does not like. He takes time to look through the music from the publishers he does like. In particular he likes music from Alliance Music Publishers. He belongs to Oxford University Press music club which sends him new music three or four times a year. Mr. Hill also visits web-sites of composers he likes such as Gwyneth Walker to see if they have any new choral works listed. Like the other directors, Mr. Hill also spends time attending concerts and conventions, listening to a lot of repertoire, and taking time to “thumb through

stuff,” as he calls it. In addition, he often gets ideas for literature through conversations with his colleagues.

### **Daniel Earl**

Reading sessions are the first source Daniel Earl mentions that he uses to find new choral literature. He feels they are valuable because a group of directors sort through the masses of choral pieces to find the few really good ones, and the directors who chose those works for the reading sessions have been selected because of their success in the choral field. The opinion of Mr. Earl is that if he attends a reading session and comes away with just one piece which he is excited about for any of his choirs, then attending the session was worth his time. If he can find two or three pieces which would work for his choirs, then he feels he has “hit the jackpot.” He cautions that directors cannot attend one or two reading sessions right before school starts and expect to find their literature for the school year.

In addition to reading sessions, Mr. Earl also attends conferences and workshops to find literature. At some of those workshops a special clinician will have music which everyone will sing and work through as the clinician teaches different aspects of the choral workshop. Of course, Mr. Earl also attends festivals and competitions, gleaning ideas for future repertoire for his choirs. Like Mr. Lamprecht, Mr. Earl, being from California, listens for literature at the annual Golden State Choral Competition of which he was a founding member.

### **Summary**

Some of the directors interviewed heavily rely on attending performances to search for new choral literature, whether those performances are at conventions or concerts presented by other local choirs. Others look primarily to written sources, such as publisher’s marketing materials, recommended literature lists, packets of perusal materials, or even web-sites. Many of

the directors attend reading sessions where other directors have already sifted through stacks of choral publications to find the best choices available. Some of the directors rely upon other directors for suggestions. The largest discrepancy comes in each of the conductor's opinions regarding the usefulness of publisher materials. Some rely heavily on those materials, and others are vehement that their time is too valuable to sift through all of the pieces, which they have already deemed to be of poor quality. Regardless of their methods for finding new choral literature, each director has established the way which works best for that director, the method which suits individual preferences.

### **Criteria for Selecting Literature**

All of the directors interviewed have the majority of criteria by which they select performance literature in common. They all look for quality, well-written choral works, and all of them have variety as an important criteria. That variety of repertoire takes many forms, by differing musical styles, periods, and composers, as well as textures and tempos. In addition, all of the conductors select music which they themselves "love." What varies between conductors is criteria such as length of songs and how much weight is given to whether or not the students and audience will love the music.

### **Kevin Hawkins**

Whether or not he personally loves a piece of music is arguably his most important criterion for selection. He will not select repertoire which he does not like. With that, he says that if he really loves a piece of music, then he has to be singing it around his house. For large choirs Mr. Hawkins states that he is looking for literature which "moves" him. Especially when he picks music that would be considered "easy," his main criterion is that the music has to move him. He believes that if he chooses music which moves him enough to get him excited about it, then he will be able to get his students excited about it also. He states that even if at times he has

selected a piece which his choir does not at first want to do, through his excitement the students will “buy into it, and then they’ll love it later.” He believes that in selecting music he himself loves and finds moving and exciting, the students learn to love the music also, then that love and excitement are reflected in passionate performances. In turn, the passion reflected from him to his students is then reflected from the choir out to the audience, resulting in greater performances.

In addition to loving a piece of music, Mr. Hawkins looks for literature which he considers of “extremely good” quality, with a great text, and matching the strength and quality of the voices in his choir. He states that well-crafted music must have interval jumps that are good and part-writing that is well constructed for the voices. In picking repertoire he searches for pieces that match the strength and quality of both individual voices as well as the sections of his choirs. For an example he explains that he has had a couple of years with strong basses, so he has looked for literature which highlights them.

Mr. Hawkins also looks for pieces which contrast in complexity, periods, and texture. For complexity on a given 30-minute concert program, he selects one piece that the students will think is impossible to learn at first, a couple of pieces which would be considered of medium ability, and one or two pieces which would be deemed as easy to learn. Pertaining to musical periods, Mr. Hawkins selects repertoire representative of various periods.

In selecting music with variety in mind, Mr. Hawkins only programs pieces lasting under four minutes, allowing him to choose repertoire of more contrast in all categories. He might program one movement of a multi-movement work, such as *Missa Kenya* (Basler, 1996). However, he does not select more than one movement of a work to be performed on the same concert. Lastly, he searches for literature to provide a mixture of textures. As an example, he



performed a ten-part antiphonal choir piece with his large choir, and then he followed that with a two-part piece. Mr. Hawkins compares his criteria for variety in the performance literature he selects to cooking. He states:

When I was little, I used to go through the [lunch] line as a little kid and get tater tots, and then French fries, and mashed potatoes. But a good cook is going to give variety to the textures and colors, and that is what you are really giving the audience and the choir.

### **Kim Drusedum**

Multiple criteria are important to Kim Drusedum in selecting repertoire. First of all, she wants to challenge the students, so she begins the year already looking toward festival and even the end of year. She selects literature which is a little “out of reach” of the abilities of her students at the beginning of the year. Along with challenging the students, she believes in finding good quality literature that will both stretch the students and involve the audience. She also wants the literature to be “meaningful” to her students, so she balances selections which are lighter and maybe even some pop-style with some repertoire which could be described as meatier. She uses some of the music she selects to be like carrots she dangles to inspire students to work more. Along with considering her students’ needs, Ms. Drusedum takes the audience into consideration. She wants the parents in particular to enjoy the concerts. For her, part of taking the audience into consideration includes concert length. She does not want her audience to be at her concerts for four hours, so she carefully determines how long each group will sing. She does not look at the length of individual pieces. Instead she looks at her performances as complete pictures. At times she might include several short pieces, and at other times she will include one longer work or a work with multiple movements.

Ms. Drusedum also takes into consideration voicing, accompaniment, variety, and education. She has to look carefully at the accompaniment for each choral piece because she is

not provided with an accompanist for her choirs. She tries to select repertoire representative of a variety of styles and periods, especially for festival time. In particular, Ms. Drusedum selects renaissance works for her madrigal singers and typically selects at least one renaissance piece for her concert choir for festival. She usually looks for a piece which is “cool,” such as an Eric Whitacre piece. She is not, as she puts it, “a big Romantic fan,” but at times she will pick a work from that period in order to teach students about that style. Meeting educational objectives is also important to her as a criterion.

### **Kay Sherrill**

Quality, variety, and highlighting the particular strengths of her choirs are the main criteria set by Kay Sherrill as she selects her performance literature. First, she believes that the most important criterion is selecting quality literature, and she states that applies even to “pop” tunes. If she is looking for pieces of a popular nature for her Spring concert she looks for music which has “validity”, music which is well-written. She likes to include variety in musical styles and periods as she programs for a school year, although she does have concerts with particular focuses, such as a Broadway Night in the Spring. Always as Ms. Sherrill is looking for repertoire she is aware of the strength of the sections in her choirs, particularly the tenor section. She states that some years she is able to program works with more difficult tenor parts, and other years she has to find music with simpler tenor parts. Depending on the personnel in her bass section she is able to select pieces with lower bass parts. In the end she states that, “Hopefully by picking the right literature you won’t expose your weaknesses, but your strengths.”

### **Gary Lamprecht**

The first thing that Gary Lamprecht looks for is literature which matches the strength and quality of the voices in his choir. When he has had a strong tenor section he has found literature

to highlight his tenor section. If he has strong soloists he will search for pieces with solos to highlight those voices. During years when he had a strong student pianist he selected repertoire with involved piano accompaniments; however, during years without a strong student pianist he selects mostly *a cappella* literature.

Mr. Lamprecht finds music to match the demographics of the groups. When his groups are younger and less experienced he is careful to not program literature which would be too difficult for them. He also feels it is important to select music which is age appropriate in terms of text. As an example he has programmed *A Boy and a Girl* (Whitacre, 2004) for his high school choir, but he does not feel the text would be “accessible” for middle school choirs. Good text is a very important criteria to Mr. Lamprecht. In describing what he looks for in text he says:

I am looking for how the text is married to the music. I am looking for the poetry of the piece. I don't do madrigals because they are just full of “fa-la-la-la-la,” and that type of thing. I am looking for something that will take kids to a higher place. It can even be in a foreign language, like this *Amor de Mi Alma* by Z. Randall Stroepe (2001). It's in Spanish, but if you get the audience the translation so they know what the piece is about, it's rich.

### **Terry Hicks**

Terry Hicks looks first at text as he selects his choral literature. He feels that is the most important criteria for the music he chooses. The next thing he looks for as he picks his repertoire is range, the vocal range in which each piece is written, keeping in mind the strength and quality of the voices in his choirs. Along with the strength of his choirs and sections, he is aware of difficulty level as he selects music, whether or not there is *divisi* for example. For his beginning choir he is concerned with how the harmonies fit together.

Mr. Hicks also feels that variety in the repertoire is important. He tries to “hit a broad spectrum.” For example, in selecting literature for his chamber choir, he typically picks a piece which is Renaissance style, a spiritual, and a piece which is contrasting, such as a piece by Eric

Whitacre or a folk song. He seeks out new works, sometimes commissioned works by a composer in his school district. He does not typically choose large choral works, unless his choir is involved with a guest conductor who has programmed a large work. Mr. Hicks does feel it is important to select music that his choirs and audiences will enjoy. However, he states that he knows many pieces he chooses his choirs will grow to like as they learn them, pieces which may not grab them initially.

### **Christine Bass**

Vocal technique is the strength of Christine Bass. In selecting her choral performance literature she is always thinking, “How do we learn this?” She is also looking for pieces that are going to “draw them out musically.” She states that with her top group she can “throw anything at them,” but with her beginners she finds it much more difficult to choose music they are capable of learning. Particularly with her beginners Ms. Bass says that the music has to have a chord. Once she has chosen the pieces for her entry level choir, sometimes she has to change those pieces because of the particular strengths of the individuals and sections in the choir. Her repertoire varies a lot depending on the personnel in each of the choirs each year. For Ms. Bass this comes back to thinking about the process of teaching as she is selecting her repertoire. She states that, “If the process in teaching that choir that particular piece that you’ve got your mind set on is just going to cause so much frustration, and it’s not going to be pleasurable, then why are you doing it?”

Ms. Bass factors in variety, classic choral literature, and whether or not a piece has something which grabs her interest. First, she says that a great thing about doing a lot of repertoire is that it enables the director to choose three different feeling pieces to work on in any given class period, helping to maintain the students’ interest and to help them grow musically.

Ms. Bass looks at music with an eye as to how each piece will fit into the total choral area programming. She selects several pieces for each choir to sing alone and a large work for her top choirs to sing together. Additionally she looks for selected easier works, some which will be, as she puts it, “appealing,” and some which adds humor and comedy to her total program. In describing what she is looking for as she peruses new music she says, “If it hits me right away, or if I get sucked in either by a rhythmic energy or a beautiful harmonic structure, as far as new music goes, I’ll look at that.” Ms. Bass also programs classic choral pieces such as works by Brahms, Byrd, Purcell, or Morley, setting a “balanced diet” for her choirs between new and classic choral literature. She also has times in which she picks her repertoire according to the particular students she has, choosing pieces which allow great instrumentalists or vocalists to perform solos within choral works.

### **Bill Erickson**

Bill Erickson looks for expressive music which has been written well for the voice. In particular he describes what is for him the most important criterion. He states:

I look for pieces that allow a kid to study and learn and sing a beautiful line, the phrase, that they understand what it means to phrase, because after it’s in tune, after the tone is beautiful, . . . and we work on our technique, then we can be expressive. . . .

Music that is expressive, contains beautiful text, great poetry, great composers, composers that know the voice, that know how to write for the voice.

Other criteria are important to Mr. Erickson as he chooses his literature. He considers tessitura. He looks for other elements which accommodate the strengths of his choirs. He does not really dwell on whether he thinks his students or his audience are going to like the literature he selects. Rather, he feels that when he does literature he loves, music which is, as he puts it, “great literature at a higher district level,” that the students and audience will like. He adds that they expect great literature at his concerts. Erickson also looks for pieces which add variety to a

concert. That variety might come in the form of works with vocal or instrumental solos. He may select modal music, such as the Dorian mode. He may include musics creating unexpected moods, such as humorous music which makes the audience laugh.

### **Sally Schneider**

When it comes to selecting choral literature, Sally Schneider says that, “It’s got to fit the ensemble.” The first thing she determines is the strength and numbers in the sections in her choirs to perform a specific work. In particular, she looks at the number of men she has in her mixed choir, and that number is “going to drive” the music she chooses for that year. She states that she does not consider whether or not she thinks her choirs are going to like the pieces she selects for them to sing. She says, “That’s something you look at weeks down the road.” In other words, she will take into consideration whether the choirs like the literature they are singing after they have spent the time to learn it.

In addition, Ms. Schneider tries to look at different time periods. She always tries to do “a really cool, polyphonic Renaissance piece.” She does not tend to choose music from the Baroque or Classical periods, because she personally finds them to be boring, in addition to the fact that those works require an accompanist. She prefers to perform *a cappella* literature, selecting about 80% of her choral literature as *a cappella* works. She does try to add pieces with different instrumentation such as classical guitar or cello. Ms. Schneider does not care for avante garde choral works which are largely atonal, sometimes accompanied by instruments such as chimes, banging drums, or other miscellaneous instrumentation for effect. As she listens to choral music she asks herself, “Where’s the motif? Where’s the beautiful phrase?” She searches for repertoire which provides periods of tension and relaxation. Those are qualities she is looking for in the music for her choirs. In recent years Ms. Schneider has favored the music of Morten Lauridsen

and Eric Whitacre, stating that in her opinion each composer has written about five or six works which are accessible to really good high school choirs.

### **Ryan Beeken**

Ryan Beeken searches for choral literature which offers just the right balance between accessibility and challenge for his students. He says that the pieces he chooses need to offer something which is “tangible” for his students, or in other words, something they can relate to. In addition, he wants his students to feel successful as they learn their music, but he says that he also wants his students to feel challenged. Mr. Beeken states that he can do pretty much anything he wants to repertoire-wise. Common with other directors, he does have to take into consideration the strength of the sections in his choirs, particularly the tenor section. He is careful to select music within the tessitura of his tenors. His primary concern with individuals in his choirs is selecting pieces with solo work for he has soloists capable of performing them well. Mr. Beeken rarely takes into consideration whether or not he feels that his choirs will like the literature he selects. If he does his job well teaching music to his choirs, he feels that they will gain an appreciation for it and come to like it.

### **Jack Hill**

For Jack Hill the literature he selects for his choirs has to be “good music” with a good text that stays “true to the style.” While “good music,” is “subjective to the individual person,” for him it has to “have some kind of musical base to it that has interest.” That musical base consists of something rhythmic, melodic, or tonal which he finds interesting or unique. The text is equally important. He looks for texts which are expressive: “There’s nothing worse than a good piece of music with some trite text.” In terms of style, he looks for choral works which stay “true to the style.” He specifies that:

If it's a folk arrangement it's got to be true to the folk song. It has to use the folk song in a way that doesn't destroy its nature. If it's a spiritual it has to be in the style of the spiritual it represents, so it also has to be true to the type of piece.

In addition to the criteria of quality, text, and style, Mr. Hill does take into consideration the strength and quality of the individual voices and sections within his choirs. He believes it is "foolish not to." However, he does not believe in waiting for the school year to start so that he can find out what kind of voices he has in his choirs before he selects his literature for the year. He states that for him that "destroys the programming concept." In selecting music for the year he says:

You have to make certain assumptions that you're going to build your choir to a certain level, not fit them into where you think they are, because in this business the choir in September is never the choir that you see in May—never. Where they go from September to May I think has a lot to do with the repertoire you're doing with them. If you're doing repertoire you think fits them in September, in May they're going to be much closer to where they were in September. If you pick something beyond where they are, something to reach for, you'll see a much higher result. I really believe that that's true. I've seen it happen many times.

Mr. Hill further believes that a director should be practical in the process of selecting literature. In a year in which he has 60 women and only 10 men he does not choose a choral piece with tenor *divisi*, even if that particular piece is his favorite. However, with his young choirs in particular, he does not believe in the philosophy of, "It's a young choir, and they haven't done much; they won't understand the rhythm, so I can't pick that piece." He states, rather, that he prefers to put a work in front of his choirs which they might not attain, even if the process is difficult for the director. He believes that the hard work pays off in the end. He does believe that the size of the choir has to be considered while selecting music, although he adds that he has the opposite problem of most directors. Where most have to be concerned with whether or not their choirs are too small for a particular work, he has to decide if his mixed high school choir is too large because there are typically around 240 students in that choir.



## **Daniel Earl**

Appropriateness of the text and the quality of the music are the first criteria which Daniel Earl takes into consideration while selecting choral literature. After those criteria he looks for repertoire which will help him work on specific student skills. The first of those skills is choral tone building. As he is choosing repertoire he asks, “Do I have a piece of music that has all the characteristics that will enable me to spend time building the ‘sound?’” Similarly, he searches for pieces which will increase the ability of his choirs to follow and sing with him as the director.

Mr. Earl also tries to select literature representative of various styles and periods of music. Within each individual choir in a given year, he states, he may not choose repertoire representative of each period or style of music; however, as he looks at his annual program inclusions for all choirs, he believes that he is successful in covering the various genres in a “broad spectrum.” As an example, Mr. Hill states that he is able to do literature from the Renaissance with his chamber choir that he would not be able to perform with the boys in his beginning choirs. Throughout his program, he explains that, “If you look through the programs my choirs present, you’ll see a great variety of periods and styles.” Along with variety in musical styles, he also looks for repertoire in different languages.

In terms of the “like-ability” of a choral work by his choirs and audiences, that is not an important criteria for Mr. Hill. That is not to say that he does not take his audience’s tastes into consideration. He states that he always tries to program something that the audience can relate to more easily, but he adds that the audience’s ability to relate to the repertoire being performed is something that a director can build. He states:

“I’ve always felt that part of what I’m doing is trying to build an audience that understands what the choral art really is as well as the kids. It’s through the kids, of course, that we demonstrate it. We try to make a Brahms motet accessible and exciting to

the audience by giving them things to listen for. Their appreciation can be developed a little bit more.”

## **Summary**

With the eleven directors interviewed most of the criteria for selecting choral performance literature is largely the same. All of them believe in the importance of selecting quality repertoire that is well-written. They take into consideration the strength and quality of the individual voices in their choirs and of the section within their choirs. A few of the directors particularly noted the need to select music with their tenor section in mind, being careful to select works with an appropriate tessitura for the tenors they have. All of the directors interviewed strive to select literature representative of varied styles and periods, a few of them making comparisons of selecting repertoire to creating a smorgasbord or buffet.

Where the directors seem to differ is on their fundamental philosophies for the selecting literature. For some of the directors the teaching aspect of the repertoire selected is the most important criterion, focusing on choosing music which will advance their students’ choral singing skills and musical knowledge. For other directors the aesthetics of the music is the most important criterion they look for in the choral works, particularly whether or not they themselves “love” the music. Another point on which the directors interviewed vary is the importance of selecting music which the choirs and audiences will like. Some of the directors make particular note of the importance of the text of the music, that it should be accessible and appropriate for high school singers and that it should have meaning.

## **Specific Choral Works Selected by the Directors Interviewed**

### **Kevin Hawkins**

*Hodie Nobis de Caelo* (Philips, 1992): This is an 8-part polyphonic work for a double antiphonal choir. It is polyphonic throughout for both choirs. Sometimes the choirs are echo each

other, and at times the choirs will unite in eight-part polyphony. Mr. Hawkins selected this work as an “impossible” and challenging piece. He likes to choose a work such as this so that he can say to his students:

Okay, look. This piece is 26 pages long. We are going to learn two pages a week. . . . How do you eat an elephant? One piece at a time. We are not going to look at the big picture. We are going to take it in small bites, and we are going to accomplish this.

*Tanzen und Springen* (Hassler, 2004b): Mr. Hawkins chose this piece because it is from the renaissance period. It is in four parts and in a foreign language. He considers this work to be of medium difficulty.

*Frühzeitiger Frühling* (Mendelssohn, 1843/1984): He selected this piece because it is in a different foreign language, German, and it was to follow the *Tanzen und Springen*, presenting two pieces from different musical periods, Renaissance and Romantic, and in a foreign language. It is also in four-parts. He also considers this piece to be of medium difficulty.

*Drop, Drop, Slow Tears* (Daley, 1998): Mr. Hawkins considers this piece to be a fairly easy, Contemporary work. Although it is simpler, it is a four-part work of “glorious” sound. This work balanced out the program with the three other works, giving Mr. Hawkin’s choir one very difficult, two of medium-difficulty, and one simple piece on a program. This selections rounded out a program which began with a difficult antiphonal piece, then had a renaissance work followed by a Romantic piece, and ending with a simple yet beautiful Contemporary octavo.

### **Kim Drusedum**

*O Nata Lux* (Lauridsen, 1997): The first reason stated by Ms. Drusedum for selecting this Lauridsen work was simply that it is beautiful. The second reason she states for selecting *O Nata Lux* was for her choir to learn tuning. The tuning in this piece is very difficult with 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> chords, and she used it to teach her young concert choir how to tune those difficult chords.

Additionally she wanted her students to perform a work on which they would essentially have to give their all to achieve:

It's . . . a great piece for opening up yourself and kind of letting yourself be naked out there. It's because you have to let your feelings out. You cannot just sing in a box. I really work on that with my kids. High school kids have emotions just like everybody else. . . . I want them to feel drained when they're done singing it.

*Sing Joyfully* (Byrd, 1948): This work splits the women into four parts, and the men into tenor and bass. With a strong women's section in her madrigals, Ms. Drusedum felt this piece would work well with that particular choir. She also thought the four women's parts would be very challenging. It is a work with many different sections which require different articulations in order to "really make the music dance and come alive." She studied the various sections together with her choir, allowing her students to give their input on how each section should unfold. She used the work as an opportunity to give her students ownership of a piece, something she feels is very important.

### **Kay Sherrill**

*El Guayaboso* (López-Gavilán, 2000): This work was originally selected by Sherrill for her madrigal/show choir of about 20 students to sing at a choral competition in Dallas. The composer is Cuban, so the music and text are Cuban. Sherrill describes *El Guayaboso*, as being rhythmically complex and very difficult. Her choir spent two weeks working out the rhythms without singing a note. She said the choir was not having fun, and it became apparent to her that they were not going to be able to perform the selection successfully, so the piece was dropped from the program. The next year her madrigal choir retained many of the students from the previous year. One of the students asked about singing *El Guayaboso*. Ms. Sherrill was skeptical, but she decided to pull it out and let her students try it again. She said that her students remembered the

rhythms, and with the particular group of students being “the cream of the crop,” they were motivated and capable of performing it.

*Missa Brevis* (Haydn, 1750/1990): This piece was selected as a small major work to be performed on the Fall concert. Small major works are regularly programed for the Fall concert. This piece was recommended to her by a friend who is also a choral director. Because the work includes orchestra she approached the orchestra director at her school, asked him to listen to a recording of the work, and asked if his orchestra would be capable of and interested in performing it. In the end the choir performed some of movements with the orchestra on the orchestra’s concert and all of the movements with piano accompaniment on the choir’s concert.

### **Gary Lamprecht**

*Tema* (Janson, 1967): Mr. Lamprecht had sung this piece in 1972 as a college student. He recently programmed it after taking his adult choir to sing in Poland where they went to Auschwitz. While in Auschwitz they viewed a movie containing historical footage about the prison camp before entering Auschwitz. Behind his choir sat two elderly Jewish men with their grandsons. The elderly men cried through the whole movie. One of the grandsons tried to persuade his grandfather to leave saying, “Grandpa, Grandpa, let’s go out. We don’t have to sit here.” The grandfather replied, “No, we must never forget what happened here. We stay.” At that point Mr. Lamprecht decided he had to program *Tema*. It is an avant garde work in which there is talking, singing, yelling, and instruments pounding. He said that his choir struggled with it because at the end there is a snare drum which sounds like a machine gun, and then everything goes quiet and the heads of the choir members go down. When this work ends, he shares, an audience does not know what to do.

*The Lord is My Shepherd* (Rutter, 1978): This piece was selected to immediately follow *Tema*. It has a harp introduction. The effect of having *Tema* following by *The Lord is My Shepherd* caused audience members to cry. Mr. Lamprecht specifically chose this piece to share the message that no matter “emotionally how bad it is, and no matter how bad it gets, there’s hope. There’s a better place.” In essence he says that the audience is pulled from “one end to the other in a very positive way,” from despair to hope.

*O Vos Omnes* (Victoria, 1969): Mr. Lamprecht likes to structure his concerts in an historical, or chronological format. The first piece he programs on his concerts is typically a Gregorian chant or a Renaissance piece. This work was selected as the Renaissance piece to begin a performance.

*Gloria* (Vivaldi, 1961), three movements: This work was selected as a Baroque period work to follow the Victoria.

*Lacrimosa* (Mozart & Süßmayr, 1882): Mr. Lamprecht chose this movement from the Mozart *Requiem* as a Classical period work to follow the Renaissance and Baroque period works. He did not program a Romantic period work on this particular performance.

*Oh My Luve's like a Red, Red Rose* (Clausen, 1998): This piece was chosen because Mr. Lamprecht did not select a Romantic period work; however, this work is a Contemporary piece with a romantic message and sound.

*Kyrie* (Sato, 2005): This particular piece is a 20th Century work which was premiered at the 2005 National ACDA Convention.

*O Whistle and I'll Come to Ye* (Wilberg, 1983): Mr. Lamprecht chose this work to end the first half of his concert. He explains his reasons for selecting this work by saying, “I try to end

the first half with something that will keep the audience wanting to come back, so it's going to tend to be rhythmic and somewhat appealing, as opposed to something that's slow and somber."

*Amor de Mi Alma* (Stroope, 2001): This is described by Mr. Lamprecht as a "beautiful piece" based on "a gorgeous setting of a Spanish poem." It is a work with a slow tempo which is "beautifully written," and he chose it to open the second half of his concert. Additionally, because it is based on a Spanish poem, it is selected as a foreign language piece. Mr. Lamprecht says that Spanish is a beautiful language to sing, and the translation of this particular text he describes as being beautiful and able to "take kids to a higher place." The poem itself dates back the 1500s, so he adds that *Amor de Mi Alma* "goes across the centuries."

*Still I Rise* (Powell, 2005): This is a gospel piece for women's voices, and it has, as Mr. Lamprecht describes it, "a feminist kind of message." He also says that the message is very positive, so he chose it to follow the *Amor de Mi Alma*.

*Marianne* (Wilby, 1983b) and *Byker Hill* (Wilby, 1983a): These are two folk songs from the north country of England. They are available in a set called *North Country Folk Songs* which contains three pieces. *Byker Hill* has a fairly well-known melody. This particular setting of *Marianne* is also well-known. Mr. Lamprecht has used it with both high school and college choirs, and he says that he highly recommends it. He describes the setting of *Marianne* as being "just gorgeous." It says that it reminds him of *The High and the Mighty*.

*Ain't Got Time to Die* (Johnson, 1960): This piece is based on a spiritual and was selected to follow the two folk songs from England.

*Red River Valley* (unpublished): Mr. Lamprecht selected a very traditional setting of this American folk song as the next piece on his concert. While in Italy his choirs were in a competition at which one of the songs had to be a traditional folk piece from the choir's home

country, and it could not be an arrangement,. His choir started out with harmonica to provide a musical sound which gave the audience a sense of “Americana.” He then had a dulcimer play. He said a lot of people there had never seen nor heard a dulcimer before. His choir entered next singing simply in unison which then moved into two-part harmony and then three-part harmony. Last, the choir went into a “made-up” harmony in the form of a sing-along.

*Rockin’ Jerusalem* (Thomas, 1987): Mr. Lamprecht selected this as an exciting last work on his concert.

*Kde Su Kravy Moje* (Schimmerling, 1944): Staying with an international theme, Mr. Lamprecht chose this work from Slovakia as an encore piece to end a concert which consisted of the chronological organization in the first half and turn into an Americana and international folk song themed second half. He said the Slovakian folk song was done quite often in the 1970s and 1980s. It has a text sung by a girl who is watching her cows. The maid falls asleep, and the cows take off. She then goes around calling for the cows. Mr. Lamprecht says that this piece is “a fun thing.”

*A Boy and a Girl* (Whitacre, 2004): Mr. Lamprecht states that he considers this Eric Whitacre work to be appropriate for high school, but he does not think that it would be accessible or appropriate for middle school.

### **Terry Hicks**

*A Boy and a Girl* (Whitacre, 2004): Hicks chose this work first for its text. He felt that the text was “very compelling, thought-provoking, symbolic,” and that it had a wide range of application for each of the singers to explore. He selected this piece to challenge his top choir to improve tuning skills while dealing the dissonances in the work. Also he wished to challenge their ability to balance and blend.



## **Christine Bass**

*Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein, 1965): Ms. Bass's choirs performed this work with the community symphony which she describes as being "wonderful." About 320 of her choral students participated, singing the three movements in Hebrew. She selects some repertoire in Hebrew particularly because of the large Jewish population in the area. Although the combined choirs sang the work in April, her symphonic choir performed the first movement on the winter concert as a symphonic piece, and then the choir performed the second movement on the Spring concert. Ms. Bass said that was nice because the symphonic choir did not have to learn something new. It was simply what they had been working on.

*Praise His Holy Name* (Hampton 1998): The programming of the *Chichester Psalms* sung in Hebrew, afforded Ms. Bass the opportunity to program this piece. The use of the word "Jesus" is not always accepted in the area where she teaches. If she had not balanced praise with the *Chichester Psalms*, she explained, she could have "received some fire." Instead she reported that no one said a word. She did have a couple of Jewish students who chose not to sing this particular piece, which Ms. Bass says was fine. However, she reminded those students that they had just sung three movements in Hebrew.

*Antiphonal Alleluia* (Handel, 1999): Ms. Bass selected this for her beginning choir as a simple four-part alleluia. It has a little Choir I and Choir II. She simply selected eight students to sing the second choir part which was not written as an echo choir. She chose this work to teach many educational objectives. The students were able to become familiar with a certain era of music and a certain style of singing. Additionally, it is all homophonic, not polyphonic; however, each part trades back and forth between the echo and the rhythmic. Ms. Bass said that the students had to learn to sing their parts while there is another part going on. With all of this

happening in the music, she said that the students enjoyed singing it, and they were able to have a feeling of success. Basically, this work was selected by Ms. Bass to move her beginners toward future years.

*The Forest* (Martin, 1997): This work was selected for the beginning choir also, and Bass comments that she has used it for several years. She describes it as a simple 20th Century piece which is very legato and portraying a very strong mood. She tells them that the work is “like an enchanted forest in the *Lord of the Rings*. You’re watching the screen go by, but they have to sing a very beautiful, legato line.” Bass says that beginners can sing fast music, but sustaining and singing legato lines is very difficult for them. Additionally the piece contains contemporary harmonies with, as Bass describes it, “a little guys against the girls idea.” This brings up very different style and vocal issues she explains, and that is exactly what she wants to accomplish with her beginners to train them. She tells her beginners, “I’m gonna pick music that’s really gonna challenge you. Each piece is going to be different, and you’re gonna have to music those changes between pieces.” She says that her students buy into that idea and respond that they can do it. Bass explains that is the mind-set she is fostering is that particular choir.

*The Neighbor’s Chorus* (Offenbach, 1954): This work finished the set on a concert performed by Bass’ beginning choir. She says this is a work she frequently uses on the Spring concert with her entry-level choir because it develops singing in three-part voice. As she teaches this pieces she asks her students, “Can you go back and forth? Can you get this crazy diction? What’s it all about? What’s a comedic opera?” Bass says that brought a new dimension to what the students needed to learn about singing and musical independence which she considers to be an important skill for them to develop.

*O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf* (Brahms, 2006): This is a Brahms motet written in six movements. Bass explains that she has taught this work four times, the first two times in English, and the last two times in German. She opened a Spring concert with her top choir singing this in German.

*Angus Dei* (Barber, 1939): This work was chosen to follow the Brahms work, which Bass says worked really well with her programming.

*My Spirit Sang All Day* (Finzi, 1939): After the two long pieces by Brahms and Barber, Bass chose this work as something really fast and short. She says that it is only about a minute long, and her students were able to learn it at “lightning speed.” She added it to the program at the “last second,” and says that she was very proud of her students learning it so quickly after spending so much time working on the Bernstein.

*Ezekiel Saw de Wheel* (Dawson, 1942): Bass selected this piece as the closer for the Spring concert.

*The Wizard of Oz* (Arlen, 1939), *Wicked* (Schwartz, 2003), and *The Wiz* (Smalls, 1974): In the Cherry Hill area of New Jersey Bass explains that a lot of kids take dance lessons, so every year she puts on a Broadway program at the end of the year. This program gives her students the opportunity to put together their own dance moves to perform to Broadway works. The music of these three musicals were highlighted in just such a performance in 2006. The performance pushes the students, including the beginning choir students, to sight-read and learn moves and memorize music very quickly, in about two-and-a-half months. Of particular note, Bass says that the score to *Wicked* is actually quite tricky, and it gave her beginning students the opportunity to sing with her older students. This particularly, she adds, is a good experience for the boys in her

young choir to sing with the more mature young men's voices and get a sense of what they will be able to sound like.

### **Bill Erickson**

Gregorian chant: Erickson starts every school year teaching Gregorian chants to his choirs. It uses them to teach phrasing in other styles for many other periods in history. He uses them as a "launching point." By starting his choirs each year with singing chants he says that his choirs learn to phrase together and do "exactly the same thing at exactly the same time." He says, "It helps, even the principals might be different in applying those *arsis* and *thesis*, you know the rise and fall of the line, and the phrase might be different from the motet, but it sure gets kids to be really flexible.

*A Boy and a Girl* (Whitacre, 2004) and *Sleep* (Whitacre, 2001): Erickson says that he just started doing Eric Whitacre pieces with his choirs. He feels that these two works are approachable for the high school voice. *A Boy and a Girl* was programmed as part of a choir performance in Europe.

*Laudate Dominum* (Mozart, 1948): Erickson believes that a director has to accommodate the strengths in the choir. To that end, every time he has what he would describe as a "stellar soprano" he will program this work.

*Ave Verum Corpus* (Mozart, 1997): This piece and the *Laudate Dominum* were both sung during a tour to Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. Additionally, they were selected in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth, especially since they were going to be in Salzburg.

*Justice O God* (Mendelssohn, 1976): This work was chosen by Erickson during their European trip because they were in Leipzig. He describes this as being a great piece. He had 46 members in the choir which he says was just enough for the divisi required to perform it.

*Lost in the Night* (Haugen, 2000): This is a three-part work. It is SAB with piano accompaniment. Erickson says that it is “one of the stunning, beautiful settings of about any style that you’ll hear. It’s gorgeous.” He put the first tenors on the alto line to give support to that part, but he says that the effect of the piece is that it sounds much thicker than just three parts. He says that there is a lot which can be done with this piece in terms of timing and phrasing. He further adds, “When I did that piece, at the end, you can keep your arms up for literally 10 to 15 seconds. Nobody will move. It’s one of those. It drops your jaw. Gorgeous.” Erickson states that it is well-written and conscious of all of the voices. It is written for all of the men to sing up in the passagio for a little while which is a good challenge for a director. He believes that if a director can pull that off that then that director is “doing something right.”

*No Mark* (Effinger, 1964): This piece is the first in a set entitled *Four Pastorals*. Erickson chose this along with one of the other pieces in the work to be the closer at National ACDA. In this piece the poet’s son had been shot down over the waters off of England in World War II. “No Mark” stands for there being “no mark” for the grave of that son. The piece ends with a big polychord which mixes with unison singing, returns to the polychord, and then it cadences on a triad with oboe accompaniment. Erickson explains that the piece is a cappella, not having a piano accompaniment. Further he adds that it “wasn’t a foot stompin’ hoe down or a spiritual,” however, he says that, “It worked perfectly.” He wanted to end his program with something written by a composer from Colorado, and the text was written by Thomas Hornsby Ferril, the first poet laureate from Colorado, and set by Cecil Effinger.

## **Sally Schneider**

Brahms motets: Schneider “loves” Brahms. In general she likes to select works in another language because it gets kids out of mid-west vowel patterns. She says that the students are able to hear things differently because they are singing in a different language. She particularly like German, such as in Brahms motets. Additionally she states that, “Their harmonic road map is very interesting to the listener, but it’s also interesting to the singer.” She also says that she loves the phrases in Brahms with “consideration of the anacrusis and the climax.”

Hogan spirituals: Schneider also says that she loves Hogan spirituals and that they are “magnificent.” She thinks they are “well-written and well-crafted,” and they represent truly American compositions. She states that although only about 15-20% of her top choir is made of African American students, about 48% of the total school population is African American. Because of this she selects a Hogan spiritual at least once a year. In addition to the African American students at her school she says also has students who are Muslim, Jewish, and Jehovah Witness, and she appreciates spirituals because they are “about the human condition.”

Works by Eric Whitacre and Morten Lauridsen: Schneider selects work by these two composers because the choral pieces by them are, as she describes them, “very atmospheric, abstract. They’re not cut-and-dry.”

Polyphonic Renaissance works: Some Renaissance works are obscure, and Schneider says that she just loves that type of piece. She likes the polyphony, the mathematical scheme, and the form of this style of works.

## **Ryan Beeken**

*Pamugun* (Feliciano, 2002): This work grabbed Beeken’s attention the first time that he heard it on a recording. He was caught by hearing a “blood-curdling scream.” He looked into the

piece and its story and thought that it was a very unique. Beeken looks for a choral work for each of his concerts with a tune which is “a little bit out there.” With different sound effects the choir would have to make, such as imitating birds, he felt that this piece would “fit the bill.” He also chose this work because it was in a language in which his choir had never before sung. The piece contains some complicated 12 and 16 part writing. Additionally, Beeken likes works which are very rhythmic, and this one contains a lot of rhythmic ostinatos which are piled on top of each other. Overall, he selected this piece as a unique work which would really challenge his choir.

*Bogoróditse Dévo* (Rachmaninoff, 1988): Beeken selected this choral piece simply because he loves it and think that it is beautiful. He describes it as having “great, long, legato lines,” and states that it offers the opportunity for a lot of musical moments. About this work Beeken says, “Mainly, just because I remember loving to sing it, and kind of having lots of ‘goose-pimply’ moments, so that’s the main reason I picked that. I’m very selfish when I pick music.”

### **Jack Hill**

*Requiem* (Rutter, 1986): This work was one of two major works programmed for the same concert. Even though this work was not published until 1986 it is written in a rather traditional style. Hill chose the Rutter *Requiem* as a contrast to the other major work on the same concert, the *Chichester Psalms*.

*Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein, 1965): Even though this work was published in 1965, almost two decades before the Rutter work, it is written in a less traditional, Contemporary style. Hill says that the two works together provide a nice contrast to each other. This work was also selected because it is written in a different language and represents the musical style of a different culture. He chose this piece for his select choir, and he wanted something for them to perform which was short, and energetic, and something which they could learn fairly easily

while challenging them rhythmically. This helped Hill to meet an educational objective with that particular choir because he felt that the select choir was a little bit weak in the area of rhythm, and this came to his mind as a good piece for developing rhythmic abilities.

*Stars I Shall Find* (Dickau, 2003): This piece is written on a famous text by Sarah Teasdale, and it has been set to music by many composers. Hill says that it is a complicated text, and that “it’s a text that can spur some kind of thought in the students.” He selected this work also because it a Contemporary work written with the text from a traditional poem. Additionally, he chose this piece because it has “beautiful, rich *divisi* harmony,” and he likes to use those types of harmonies to teach his students to sing independently. Hill further describes the work as being difficult because it is written for four-part men and four-part women, and it is lyric in contrast to *divisi* writing which has large, “bombastic,” homophonic chords. He believes that lyric *divisi* is much more difficult to learn.

*Alleluia* (Basler, 1999): Hill selects works to highlight his students who are really good soloists, be they singers or instrumentalists. To that end, he programmed this work to showcase one of his choral students who is also a gifted French horn player.

### **Daniel Earl**

*Dessus le Marche D’arras* (Lasso, 1969): This work was selected by Earl to be sung by his chamber singers. First he explains that he chose it simply because he likes it. It is a chanson, and as such, the text tells a story. Earl describes the text as being fun, portraying a “delightful, off-color story.” The text is in French, and he likes to program repertoire in a variety of languages. He says that selecting literature in different languages helps to build not only variety but also musical periods into a program. Earl also chose this piece for the light percussion with which it can be performed, adding some tambourine or drum. Additionally the work is written with



variety in voicings. For part of the song the women sing, then the men sing, and then they sing together. Earl likes the overall effect of this piece, and he says that with the interesting text in French the students have to work on their singing and their acting at the same time.

*My Child Is Gone* (Nightingale, 1949): This work is an arrangements of an early American slave song which Earl selected for his winter concert. He describes the text as being “terrible” because of the story it tells. It is about a mother wailing when her child is taken from her. He says that it builds, starting with the alto line, then adding a second alto part, then the soprano line, and then the tenor. It builds part by part for about six verses, ending with a “huge wail.” Earl says that this piece is “very strong, very poignant. . . . It depicts a time in our history that is just horrible.”

*Sfogava con le Stelle* (Monteverdi, 1986): Earl says that he likes the music of Monteverdi because to him it represents the beginning of harmony and dissonance. He chose this particular piece for his chamber choir because he loves Monteverdi when it comes to realm of madrigals. Additionally, he describes this work as being passionate.

*Go, Lovely Rose* (Stevens, 1954): Another piece for his chamber choir, Earl taught this piece to his choir because it was a required piece for the Golden State Competition.

*Mata del Anima Sola* (Estévez, 1993): This work is about a cowboy who is out singing to himself. Earl chose it as a piece representative of world music. Also, it was in a foreign language, providing more variety of languages on the concert. He says that it has a beautiful tenor solo and that the choir represents instruments doing dances, several different dances of the Argentine culture. Earl says that it is a “delightful piece.”

*Ehre sei dem Vater* (Schütz, 1977), *Christus Factus Est* (Bruckner, 1966), *Cloudburst* (Whitacre, 1996), *Kasar mie la gaji* (Grau, 1991), *Danny Boy* (Flummerfelt, 1991): Earl selected

all of these works to be sung by his Concert Choir on a winter concert. Each piece was selected to provide variety and quality in the choral program. Of particular note, Earl states that the particular work by Alberto Grau is a fine piece and different. He programmed *Danny Boy* simply because it's a particular work which he loves.

### **Additional Considerations in Selecting Choral Literature**

Three additional considerations in selecting choral literature are (a) whether nationally recognized directors select literature for educational purposes with no intent of performing them, (b) whether those directors withdraw a work from performance and for what reasons they do so, and, (c) how much consideration do those directors give to the literature they select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment. For all of the directors interviewed the issue of withdrawing literature from performance if it is not working for one reason or another is an issue, and they each commented that it does happen from time to time. The issue of practicing works without intent to perform them received a wide range of responses from “never” to “every semester.” In terms of selecting works with the accompaniment as a consideration, the responses were split between never, sometimes, and regularly. Those responses were mostly based on whether or not the school had paid accompanists.

### **Kevin Hawkins**

Kevin Hawkins sometimes does select works to sing in class without intending to use them on a concert. He pulls out a lot of repertoire for practice in sight-reading skills. As a result he says that his students are great sight-readers. Rarely does he ever end up using a sight-reading piece on a performance because those works are at a sight-reading level in four-part, ABA form, and in simple keys; that level of repertoire would be too easy for his students to learn for a performance.

Hawkins is not afraid to withdraw from a concert a work which he had intended to have performed. He feels that is a strength, to know if a piece is not working for your choir and be willing to set it aside. A director should be willing to admit, “Hey, this is going to take 100 hours to learn this. Is it worth what we are doing here?” Hawkins will evaluate the pieces his choir is rehearsing and ask himself, “Here is where we need to go. Here is where we are. Do we have the time and the energy to put into this, and will it distract from the other pieces that we are doing because of it?”

If Hawkins elects to put a piece aside, a typical reason is intonation problems. One year he chose a lot of repertoire with descending passages, and “a couple of them ate our lunch.” He spent a month trying to work out the intonation and finally asked his students to hand it in. Other reasons Hawkins might withdraw a work might have to do with the way the melody or the harmonies are written, or maybe the way the text works with the piece. It is often “just the whole package of it. I come back to the feel—the aesthetic—it doesn’t *feel* right.” In the end, this does not happen frequently for him, but when it does he simply tries to be honest. He would rather put a work back on the shelf than spend a lot of time working out something which is not worth the time.

As for accompaniment, Hawkins does not really have to think about the literature he selects. For the most part accompaniment is not an issue because 8 of 10 pieces performed by his choirs are *a cappella*. Of note, even with the works which have an accompaniment he never uses the accompaniment in rehearsal until the day of the concert. He rehearses parts *a cappella*, working on intonation. He describes that putting the works together with the accompaniment just prior to performance is a “really neat experience.”

One more issue Hawkins deals with is the use of sacred music. He has to be “really concerned about church choral stuff.” He has to be sure to program enough secular works to balance out the sacred literature. He stills admits to choosing more sacred music than secular, but he tries to be careful to have enough secular to provide variety in his programming. He probably has a ratio of two-thirds sacred to one-third secular in his repertoire.

### **Kim Drusedum**

Every year Kim Drusedum says that there might be one or two pieces for each year that she selects just for educational purpose with no intent for those works to be performed. However, she sometimes will change her mind and decide to add them to a concert. On the other hand, there are works she has intended for performance but will withdraw for one reason or another:

Sometimes things just don’t click with the kids. . . . If it’s something that I didn’t have a recording to listen to, I might have played it on the piano, and when it got to the voices it just didn’t resonate and do what it needed to do.

Having a piece she has to set aside only happens about every other year. For example, she recently pulled out *My Spirit Sang All Day* (Finzi, 1939). It was to be sung by her madrigal choir, but it “just didn’t really click at all.” She pulled the piece, feeling that it was not the right piece for the particular voices she had in the madrigal choir that year.

Regarding accompaniment Drusedum says that they are not provided with their own accompanist. She plays the piano for rehearsals, but then she has to be sure that she has a competent enough pianist for the concerts. In addition to piano accompaniment she is aware of additional instrumental accompaniment needs when her choir is traveling. As an example, her choirs recently traveled to Hawaii. She wanted to program *Cloudburst* (Whitacre, 1996) so she called ahead to find out if there would be a thunder sheet and bass drum available. She also checked with the airlines to be sure that hand bells could be taken on the plane. At other times if

her choir is performing a work with organ accompaniment she will call ahead to be sure there will be an organ available at whatever venue they will be performing. If one is not available she will select a different piece.

### **Kay Sherrill**

Kay Sherrill never pulls out pieces solely for educational purposes, not intended for performance. She does, however, use methods books and octavos which are in her library strictly for sight-reading purposes. When her choirs are getting close to contest-time she has several method books they use to practice sight-reading. In the state of Texas, the sight-reading pieces at contest are not published and are written specifically for the contest. These contest sight-reading pieces can be purchased the following year. Sherrill purchases those pieces and uses them for sight-reading practice.

There are occasions when Sherrill has programmed a work that she then had to pull from a performance. For example, she programmed *El Guayaboso* (López-Gavilán, 2000). It is a piece which is rhythmically very complex. After two weeks working strictly on the rhythms in the piece it became apparent to her that her choir would not be capable of singing it. She pulled it from the concert. The next year Sherrill had some of the same students in the choir, and they asked about singing *El Guayaboso*. She decided to let them try it. The students remembered the rhythms, and they were motivated to learn it. That year the choir was able to learn and perform the piece well.

Sherrill says that she never has to select her choral literature based on the complexity of the accompaniment. She describes her community as having very good accompanists, and a person from the community is used as the accompanist for her choirs. In recent years she states that she has had an excellent accompanist who can play anything the choirs sing. Sherrill does say that

she cannot currently program repertoire requiring organ. The performing arts center for her school does not have an organ, and would have to rent one for her to have her choirs perform a work with an organ. It's a possibility in the future.

### **Gary Lamprecht**

Sight-reading purposes are the only reason Gary Lamprecht uses choral pieces not intended for performance. Similar to Drusedum, he sometimes will end up taking a sight-reading piece and using it on a concert. He has not had to withdraw many pieces from performance, but he says that has happened twice. He relates the following situation in which he withdrew a piece a choir was rehearsing for performance:

Years ago, we were doing a 20th Century piece in Latin that I thought the kids would like because it was very rhythmic. One of the kids said, "Mr. L, why are we doing this piece?" I said, "Because I like it, and you will learn to like it." The kids all went, "Ugh." "You guys, all of you don't like it?" [They said], "Yeah, we don't like this piece." I said, "Well, this is the first I've heard of it, and we know this piece." [They said], "What do you see in it?" I said, "I don't know. Pass it in."

Lamprecht says that situation is not likely to happen with a piece in which a lot of rehearsal time has been invested; however, his students are very open with him, albeit typically they will be diplomatic and ask to speak with him after class.

In terms of accompaniment, Lamprecht likes to use student accompanists when he has them in his choirs. He had a recent year in which he had a very good student accompanist who could play anything Lamprecht selected, in fact pieces were chosen which could feature the young pianist. More recently he has not had as strong of a student accompanist, and Lamprecht believes that "You always have to put kids in a position where they're going to succeed." With that in mind, he has selected choral works which are not very demanding. On a choir tour he programmed *Seasons of Love* from *Rent* (Larson, 1996/2004) and also *Ave Verum Corpus*

(Mozart, 1997) because both accompaniments are simple. He has a paid accompanist who can handle the works which the student accompanists cannot.

One other issue for Lamprecht in the selection of choral music is finances. Due to budget cuts not many years ago he was moved to a different school within his school district. The school he moved to only had a budget of \$1000 a year for the choral program. That is only enough to purchase three pieces for a medium-sized choir, and his choirs sing 20 to 25 works in a year. He had to come up with other solutions than purchasing new literature. One of his solutions became music in the public domain. He has found many of what he terms the classic chestnuts of choral music in the public domain on the Internet, and then all he has to pay for is the photo copies. For example, he had been using old, out-dated copies of *Sicut Cervus* (Palestrina, 1946). He found a new clean copy of it on the web which he could print out and photo copy.

### **Terry Hicks**

Every semester Terry Hicks says that he has one or two pieces that he selects just to challenge his students. He wants to push his students, and he does not necessarily intend for those pieces to be performed. He also has times when he has a choir sing through a piece which he knows they will be able to sing through beautifully, however, he does not plan to use it on a concert. Sometimes he might change his mind and decide to add that work to a concert.

Hicks is not afraid to pull a piece from a concert if it is not coming together. He says that might happen even on day one of rehearsing a piece if it just is not working for that particular choir. For example, he had picked out *You are the New Day* (David, 1992) to be performed on his Spring concert. He was trying to put together a really good performance that would be memorable to the students. It became apparent to him that he was going to have a hard time “selling” this particular piece to his students for that particular concert: “I cut it just because it

was their senior concert, and I wanted them to do pieces that they loved.” Depending on the choir, Hicks might also substitute out a piece for a concert which he feels simply would not be showcased well.

Piano accompaniment is not an issue for Hicks as he selects his repertoire. He states that he has an accompanist who is phenomenal, and he knows that he can give her any piece. In reality, he says that at times he intentionally programs works with very difficult accompaniments in order to let the accompanist “shine.” He believes that his students enjoy hearing someone play who plays so well.

### **Christine Bass**

To motivate her students, Christine Bass believes that they need to know that they are going to perform every piece that they sing in class; she does not select any literature for purely educational reasons with no intent of performing them. Sometimes she may do “a little test-drive thing.” She might have a choir sing through a piece so that she can consider if it would work for them to learn for a particular performance. For example, she describes reading through *Ubi Caritas* (Duruflé, 1960) with her top group; she was considering using it on a performance they were possibly going to do that Sunday.

Bass says that her entry group is a challenge in terms of selecting literature because she does not know ahead of time what type of personnel she is going to get. For one reason or another she oftentimes has to set aside pieces she had pulled out, such as having a work with a tenor part which is too difficult for the tenors that particular year; she has to make adjustments to the literature.

Bass relates a particular experience in which she had to put off having her larger choir sing a particular piece until they were more ready. The work was *O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf*



(Brahms, 2006). She originally had planned for the work to be performed on the winter concert because she planned to have the *Agnus Dei* (Barber, 1939) sung at the end of the year. The Brahms is five to six minutes long, and the Barber is about eight minutes long. She planned one of them for performance the first half of the year, and the other for the second half. When it came time for the winter concert Bass says that her choir could not sing it well. They were struggling with the German, their faces were “buried in their books,” and it needed more time to “settle.” Out of 75 students in that choir, 35 of them were new, so those students were not used to the speed at which she was trying to have her students learn. She thought to herself, “No, this is not how this piece is supposed to be. You’re supposed to really enjoy it. It’s got to settle with you, and it obviously hasn’t settled.” She pulled it from the winter concert. The students expressed disappointment after the hard work they had put into it. Bass told them that would keep working on it and perform it later in the year. They performed it in March and April for one of their adjudication pieces. The German had time to “settle,” and the judges reviewed the performance as “amazing.” She says the students were confident when they sang it.

Bass feels very strongly that a piece which is not ready should not be performed. She believes that allowing students to perform a piece at which they will fail does not teach them anything. Typically when she has selected a work she schedules plenty of time for the students to learn the piece well. Bass states that, “You’ve got to make sure that you’ve done your part, and that you have everything you can to make it a success early enough.”

Bass lives in a community which she describes as “very arts-oriented.” Within the community are many students who play the piano. Not all of those students are capable of playing really difficult music, however, she often has students who are very competent pianists. Recently she had a student who was able to play the *Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein, 1965). More

recently Bass has had students who were good pianists, but who were very young and not able to play difficult literature. In those cases she has had to be careful to select repertoire within the capabilities of her student accompanists. She believes in allowing her students to play, and does not hire out for accompanists. Typically she states that she has wonderful pianists, and she just has to be sure to give those students plenty of advance time to prepare the pieces she has chosen.

### **Bill Erickson**

Bill Erickson does not often pull out music for his choirs to sing in rehearsal if he does not intend for them to be performed. He will “stuff [the students’] folders knowing that we’re not going to get to everything.” As the choir sings through the music in the folder he gets a feel for the pieces which are going well, the reaction of the students to the literature, and which pieces might need to be set aside for a year or two because there will not be time to learn them. Erickson will put off performing a piece because of lack of time to let it “sink in” and let the students become comfortable with it. He never likes to perform a piece if it feels “iffy.”

Erickson has a turnover of student accompanists every year or two, so selecting music with the accompaniment in mind is an issue. He even deals with a lot of turnover in his paid accompanists. He says that it is important to get to know an accompanists concert performance abilities. When he has a really strong accompanist he likes to select works which will feature that pianist. An example of a piece he chooses for that purpose is *A Jubilant Song* (Dello Joio, 1948), or *I Saw Three Ships* (Wilberg, 1987).

### **Sally Schneider**

Sally Schneider says that unfortunately she never selects pieces for her choirs to sing just for educational purposes and not for performance. She states that she does not have enough time to do that. She does acknowledge occasionally needing to set aside a piece previously selected

for a performance. Typically she says that might happen if she has handed out two works from the same genre, such as Renaissance, and after reading through both works, she gets a sense of which of the two pieces is working better for the choir. Schneider says “Time is precious,” and she does not have time to spend rehearsing pieces and then not use them in performance, although she acknowledges that it does happen occasionally.

Type of accompaniment is an issue for Schneider at her school. Her school does not have the resources to pay an outside person to accompany the choir. At each of her concerts they “pass the hat” to collect donations to pay for an accompanist to attend a few rehearsals and the concert. She says the accompanist is typically the mother of a student from the community. She is very careful about programming repertoire requiring different accompaniment instrumentation such as French horn, cello, or string quartet. The intense academic scheduling at her school does not allow her to pull kids out of class to practice with the choirs, and the school does not have the resources to pay for someone from the community.

### **Ryan Beeken**

For Ryan Beeken it is rare to have his choirs sing a song in rehearsal which is not intended for performance, because his program is very performance-oriented. About 90% of the pieces they rehearse they end up performing. Of course, that does mean that there is about 10% of the literature which is sung in rehearsal which is not performed.

Over the course of a school year there might be one or two pieces which Beeken originally intended for performance, but he changes his mind and pulls them instead. Mostly, a work just might not “fit” what his choir is doing. Other reasons for setting aside a piece instead of performing it include that the piece was not teaching what Beeken had intended for his students to learn from it, he over-programmed the pieces for a concert, or he made a judgment error. A

judgment error typically will be something like selecting a work with a tenor part which is too difficult for the tenors in his choir.

### **Jack Hill**

Jack Hill says that, to be honest, he never has his students rehearse music for educational purposes without an intent to have it performed. However, there are times the music ends up being used that way. Sometimes he chooses a piece that simply is not working for his choir. Typically that is because the work was too difficult or even after learning a piece both he and students do not like it. Hill co-teaches half of his classes with another director, and he jokes that a conversation between them might follow something like this, “‘You must have picked this piece,’ and he’ll say, ‘No, I didn’t. You picked this piece.’” If nobody likes a piece, or maybe they simply do not like working on it any more, they will pull the piece and not perform it. He believes it is counter-productive to keep working on pieces which no one enjoys, or to spend a lot of time on pieces that too difficult.

For Hill the complexity and difficulty of accompaniments are not an issue. He has the resources he needs at his school and in the community to have whatever accompaniment he needs. He has a staff member who plays well, and Hill himself plays the piano. At times he looks for pieces with more difficult accompaniments. He is aware of selecting music to balance out accompanied and unaccompanied repertoire. He believes that a program needs to have a balance between types of accompaniment, and he typically only programs one-third unaccompanied music, believing that there is only a certain amount of unaccompanied music which the ear can process. To have more variety on a concert he frequently looks for literature which includes other instruments than piano in the accompaniment, particularly if he has really competent high school students who play other instruments.

## Daniel Earl

“How often” is the question Daniel Earl says comes to his mind when asked about selecting literature only for educational purposes and not for performance. He does not do that very often, however, when he does it is so that he can work on particular weaknesses he perceives in the performance literature his choirs are learning. When he perceives weaknesses such as in rhythms, intervals, or tuning, he goes to his choral library and finds a piece he thinks will help him to solve the problems they are having in their music. He tries to choose performance repertoire which will develop the skills his students need.

In the past there were times at which he selected performance literature which his students did not like and in which they saw no value. The students felt it was not worth their time and effort. At the time Earl did not have the energy to “prove them wrong,” so he dropped pieces. Even more common are times when he programmed a piece for the opening concert in October, but the students simply were not ready to perform it. He would take the music back, and after a period of time, typically a few months, he might bring that piece out again. Many times he found that a work and his students simply needed time to “ferment.” Additionally, Earl says that if the students are going to end up performing five or six things for a Fall concert, then the director should be rehearsing seven or eight things. Two or three of those works could be used on a later concert.

Earl does not have a paid accompanist to play every day, so he selects music which is mostly *a cappella*. He believes that is a good thing, because he believes that has made his students develop really good “ears.” He does more accompanied pieces with his beginning choir. Sometimes he says that he is blessed with having a really good student accompanists, and then

he can program any piano accompaniment he finds. Sometimes he will use choir students who are also in band to play an accompaniment part on something, such as flute or oboe.

## **Summary**

Most of the directors interviewed state that they do not have time to rehearse literature if it is not intended for performances. Some of them use non-performance pieces for the purpose of improving sight-reading skills, and only one says that at times he will pull a piece out of his library to work on specific skills and not for performance. He might use other pieces to help his students improve their abilities to sing their performance literature, but he tries to select the performance literature itself which will be capable of developing the skills needed. A few of the directors say that they intentionally put more pieces of music in the students folders than can be prepared in time for an upcoming concert. Overall the directors say that there simply is not enough time to work on repertoire if it is not going to be performed.

All of the directors comment that at times they rehearse a piece which was intended for performance, but which they end up pulling from a concert. Typically the reason for doing so is simply that a particular piece of music simply is not coming together; it is not working for the choir. At times the music simply needs more rehearsal time and will be sung at a later concert. Another reason stated by the directors for pulling literature from performance is that they and their students end up not liking it. A couple of the directors share that it is not worth the rehearsal time to put into music which is not being enjoyed. All of the directors seem to agree that spending a lot of time working on a piece which a choir will not be able to perform well is not worth the rehearsal time.

The directors interviewed vary as to how much they take into consideration the type and complexity of the accompaniment parts in their selected choral literature, particularly when it

comes to piano accompaniments. Some of the directors state that they can choose any repertoire they want regardless of the complexity of the accompaniment because they have very capable accompanists, usually paid accompanists in the community, and at times they have excellent student accompanists. In those instances they typically intentionally search for pieces with complex accompanists which will highlight the pianist's abilities. Other directors say that whether or not they can choose difficult piano accompaniments changes from year to year depending on the changing accompanists, usually student accompaniments. Other directors steer away from difficult accompaniments because they do not have the resources to obtain capable accompanists.

When it comes to accompaniment instruments other than piano, a couple of the directors commented on being careful when it comes to pieces with organ accompaniment, stating that they might not have an organ for use at a given performance venue. Some of the directors spoke about using non-keyboard instruments. A few of them said that they will intentionally look for pieces with extra accompaniment instruments, such as French horn or flute, if they have students in choir who play those instruments well. One director stated that she avoids works which require extra instruments because at her particular school it is difficult to schedule having students miss class for extra rehearsals.

### **Festival Literature**

High school choral directors focus a lot of time and energy into the selection and preparation of festival literature. For nationally recognized high school choral directors such as those interviewed, the literature they choose for festival is an important part of their choral programs for the year. The part that repertoire plays in the program for year varies between directors. For most of them it is simply music they have pulled from the literature they are already rehearsing and performing with their choirs. They state that the repertoire they perform

at festivals and occasions such as state competition and national ACDA is no different from the repertoire they perform all year. For a few the festival literature is something they choose apart from the works they perform throughout the rest of the year. What the directors look for in the literature they select for festivals is the same: They all look for high quality literature which varies in style, period, and other criteria such as tempo.

### **Kevin Hawkins**

Kevin Hawkins takes a unique approach to selecting festival literature for the year. He allows his students to choose their festival pieces from the music they are learning or have already learned. Around February, about a month before contest time, Hawkins lists on the board all of the names of the songs which they have learned. His students pick three songs from that list. He has trained his students to know about contests and what will be expected of them. Additionally he has trained them to be selective about the criteria to look for in festival literature.

Hawkins believes in students, that they will make wise choices. His students will say, “Look, we need to do maybe a baroque piece. . . . We need to do three different periods. We need to do fast-slow-fast, or slow-fast-slow.” Hawkins just stands back and lets them pick the songs. The literature they are choosing from, which they have already performed, is all festival-quality literature. When his choir performs at contests they take pride in what they are doing, and they are committed to their pieces because they chose them. Their commitment and ownership comes out in their performances: “My choir sings with such passion because they are committed to the music. They picked it.”

### **Kim Drusedum**

Kim Drusedum selects her festival literature separately from her concert pieces. Her choirs begin rehearsing the festival repertoire in January, and a lot of their rehearsal time until March



and April is focused on that literature. As she looks for her festival repertoire she takes into consideration programming a variety of styles and periods, or she might focus on selecting music from a particular style or period. With her madrigal singers she mostly chooses pieces from the Renaissance, however, she might add in a “cool” Eric Whitacre work, or at least something similar. For her concert choir she has a basic formula she follows. She opens with a renaissance piece, has a “meaty” piece in the middle, and closes with a spiritual. She shares, “That’s just always worked for me.”

For the school district festival, Drusedum has some required criteria which she has to follow in selecting her literature for her advanced choirs. First, one piece which is rated level “four” or higher must be chosen from the Texas or New York literature list. Second, she is required to have one of the songs be in a foreign language, and third, one piece must be a *cappella*. Drusedum says that it is possible to have all three of these requirements filled in one choral work. In addition to these three rules, the choirs are asked to perform three contrasting pieces.

### **Kay Sherrill**

Kay Sherrill does not start out a year having already decided what her festival literature will be, nor does she simply pull from past concerts. Early in the year she begins forming a hand-written list of possibilities for festival repertoire. Sometimes that list might include a piece from the fall concert, but she may or may not end up using that particular work for festival. She does not typically like to program her fall and winter concerts with her contest literature in mind. She finds if she has her students perform for festivals and contests works which they performed early in the Fall, the choirs revert back to their sound from the beginning of the year instead of the improved sound to which they had progressed. She prefers to start with new literature so that her

students are working from their newer sound in which they are “a better choir, more cohesive, and their tone’s better.”

Sherrill is heavily influenced in her literature selections for festival by the Texas Music Educator’s Association (TMEA) and the University Interscholastic League (UIL). The UIL governs all competitions throughout the state of Texas, with a really strong set of guidelines and rules. For choral festivals two of the pieces performed have to be selected from the Prescribed Music List (PML). Sherrill says that by choosing from the PML she knows that all of the pieces on that list are all great literature. She knows that the music she pulls from the PML will be some of the hardest pieces her choirs will perform that year, and she tries to balance that out with choosing works with which her students can be successful. She does not believe that festivals and contests are a time to program music which could be considered as “cutting-edge,” such as the *El Guayaboso* (López-Gavilán, 2000) that her madrigal choir learned.

### **Gary Lamprecht**

For Gary Lamprecht the selection of festival literature is very big, because his choirs are typically involved in the Golden State Choral Competition for high school choirs in California. He selects his festival repertoire separately from the rest of the concert pieces, and he spends more time rehearsing them. Lamprecht says that in the Golden State Competition one of the pieces each choir has to perform is dictated by the jury. Every choir has to perform the same test piece. The other two works are chosen by the individual choirs. He says that having at least one test piece, or assigned piece, is not uncommon at other competitions to which he takes his choirs, particularly when he has taken his choirs to competitions in European countries such as Wales and Austria.

Once Lamprecht knows what the assigned piece is going to be, he listens to a recording of it. He then starts thinking of pieces which would sound good in juxtaposition with that work. He looks for three pieces which are contrasting to each other. The one assigned piece, Lamprecht notes, is typically very difficult, so the other two pieces he selects will provide contrast to that difficult one. He illustrates his point as he describes the works he did one year for the Golden State Competition:

One year it was *Tu es Petrus* (Palestrina, 1968), so the opposite side of that, we did *Sarba pe Scaun* (Pascanu, 1994). . . . [It has] driving rhythms, [a] complete contrast to *Tu es Petrus*. The other piece was a 20th Century harmony piece by Eric Whitacre. It was *Sleep* (Whitacre, 2001). The kids love Eric Whitacre, and they love Morten Lauridsen as well.

### **Terry Hicks**

Terry Hicks states that his choirs perform festival-level literature throughout the year, so for the most part he is able to pull his festival literature from the rest of his repertoire his choirs are performing throughout the year. Typically he begins each year with his choirs singing easier literature while he assesses each choirs abilities. If his *a cappella* choir performs a piece on the fall concert which he feels would be good to have sung at festival he might program that piece for one of his lower choirs to sing. As he looks at festival literature for his choirs, he will often refer to the Texas UIL list to choose the music for his beginning groups, but for his other choirs he has found that typically the works he chooses are already on the list. If they are not on the list, he will submit to have them approved.

### **Christine Bass**

Christine Bass typically pulls her festival literature from her concert repertoire. In the year in which her choirs performed at the national ACDA convention, as she looked at the literature requirements for the convention she was able to match up those requirements with pieces she had already chosen for her choirs. Bass has genres and styles in her annual concert repertoire which

meet most of the requirements for the festivals her choirs would attend. For example, every year her choir sings a Bach chorale, so if a Bach chorale is needed, she already has it out. She has works which are standardized in her program each year. Beyond that she selects her festival literature by choosing pieces she knows are high quality, will fit the rest of the repertoire being sung that year, and which she will be capable of teaching.

### **Bill Erickson**

Bill Erickson says that programming for festivals definitely starts at the beginning of the year, but his festival literature is not everything in his repertoire. His choirs are asked to sing for a lot of organizational events, such as the *National Anthem* (Key & Smith, 1942) at sporting events, banquets for various clubs, and seasonal performances. In addition, there is a standard set of five or six pieces which Erickson says are typically performed every year. The music his choirs learn for these types of venues are not really what he considers to be appropriate for festival performances. His festival music typically comes from a couple of concerts in the first half of the year. Some of the works, such as motets, he will start working with at the beginning of the school year, because he believes that works such as motet style pieces takes a year to “sink in.”

As to what influences Erickson in his choices of festival literature, he does not have to choose his repertoire from a recommended literature list. He simply follows what he considers to be the characteristics which make up a good program. Typically to start a festival program he will select a light and short piece that “get people sitting up and gets them clapping right at the beginning.” He wants to get the audience attention right from the beginning. He states that his first piece might be a procession, even possibly a processional with a chant. Following that he might choose something ethnic and then a piece which is more sedate. He might follow those

pieces with a motet or madrigal, and then he likes to select a 20th Century piece which will once again grab the attention of the audience, sort of shock them. He then likes to follow up with a piece which is expressive and heartfelt, a song which will highlight beautiful phrasing. He will typically end with a spiritual, especially on his home concerts. With the last two works he likes to, “Pull them to your heart, and then end with something fun.”

### **Sally Schneider**

For Sally Schneider festival literature is selected based on a required literature list in Ohio from the Ohio Music Educators Association (OMEA). She prefers to attend festivals at which her students are objectively assessed based on the classification of literature they are singing. For Schneider her festival repertoire is selected separately from the rest of her concert music because of the required literature list from the OMEA. A list comes out in the October OMEA magazine listing six pieces. Each choir must select one piece for district level from the list and a different piece from the list if the choir then qualifies for state. She states that typically she has performed some of the pieces on the list. The list is only regenerated every other year.

Schneider says that to an certain extent her selection of literature is driven by that list. After she selects the one piece her choir will perform from the six or seven on the list, she then has to supplement the performance with two other pieces. She makes sure that the two works she chooses are of a different style and period from the one piece she pulls from the list. As an example, if she selects a Brahms piece from the required list, then she will not choose another Brahms piece, and she not likely to choose another Romantic period work. She will create a program by programming around the required piece.

## **Ryan Beeken**

Ryan Beeken views festivals as a culmination because they come at the end of a school year. He believes that for festivals his choirs should be performing at their highest levels. Because his choirs perform their highest level at the end of the year, he tries to program his repertoire backwards. He will start by choosing his festival literature for the end of the year, and then he consider the music his choirs will learn in the Fall by asking himself, “What things do we need to do to achieve that?”

Beeken has a festival list from which he has to select one piece. He does not particularly like having to choose his festival repertoire from the list because a lot of the music which he want to do is not on the list. Typically the pieces he wants to perform are too new to be on the list; the list is not very updated, and that there is a lot of music listed which is now out of print. In particular, sometimes the folk songs that are on the festival list are too easy for his choirs to learn.

## **Jack Hill**

Jack Hill pulls his festival literature from the repertoire he is already performing with his choirs. He does select literature specifically for a festival. As he puts together his program for state festival, he has to pick three pieces. One of them has to be unaccompanied, and one has to come from a required list. In the case of the required list, sometimes he does has pick a work specifically for festival, but typically he states that he appeals the required list. He does not feel that the required list is extensive enough, and he is usually able to get approval for a substitution piece to the required list.

## **Daniel Earl**

Daniel Earl selects his festival literature from the rest of his concert literature. Almost anything his choirs would sing he would feel comfortable taking to a festival. He chooses festival-level literature for his choirs to sing all year. Earl does not have a specific recommended literature list from he has to select his festival repertoire, however, there are requirements set by the Golden State Competition. Just as with Gary Lamprecht, Earl's choirs have to perform the specific piece required of all the large choirs. The required piece is selected from the literature performed by the winner the previous year. In addition to the required piece, Earl describes that the choirs at the Golden State Competition perform their best music, and he says that music is extraordinary literature.

## **Summary**

Successful high school choral directors perform festival level literature throughout the school year. The repertoire throughout the year is representative of a variety of musical periods, styles, and genres. Additionally, the works performed at regular concerts throughout the year are also typically of an appropriate festival-level difficulty. For this reason, some successful directors simply pull their festival literature from the repertoire they are already learning throughout the year. Other successful directors choose their festival repertoire separately from the rest of their choral works, especially those directors who live in states with more stringent festival music requirements. Some states and festivals have literature lists from which a certain number, if not all, of the choral pieces performed must be selected. In some festivals, each choir is required to perform the same piece. Additionally, some states and festivals also require the performance of a variety of periods and styles.

Whatever the requirements for particular states and festivals, successful high school choral directors look for what they consider to be quality choral literature. They also choose repertoire representative of a variety of musical periods, styles, and genres. Particularly, they choose at least one work written before the 20th Century and at least one folk song, whether the folk song be American or from another country. Typically, successful directors select one choral piece which will be a more difficult, featured selection, and the rest of the works are programmed to offer contrast to that featured work.

### **Cataloguing Choral Literature for Future Performance**

One of the processes to finding and selecting choral literature which is often not considered is the process to keep track of possible works which a director finds and may want to incorporate into the program in the future. The level of organization in a cataloguing process for keeping track of performance literature possibilities varies significantly between the directors interviewed. They do, however, hold one thing in common. They all have some form of a system for keeping track of the pieces they discover and want to remember for future reference.

**Kevin Hawkins** has a black box. It is a file box which he describes as being about one foot by one foot. There are no divisions within the box. During the school year when he finds something in which he is interested he will order one copy of it and throw it in the box. By the end of the year he takes the box home. He sits down and goes through the box. He listens to each piece and plays each piece. With a particular choir in mind, such as his top choir, Hawkins will take the pieces he is considering for that choir and sort through them. If he has about 50 pieces in the box for that choir, and he is typically looking for about 10 pieces for that choir, then he will first take the stack down to about half. He puts about half of the works back in the box, and the other half he leaves out and continues to sort through until he has the stack down to the pieces he needs.



**Kim Drusedum** uses big filing cabinets. Within the cabinets she has what she calls her “little gem folder,” a folder for single copies of pieces she really wants to do some day. They are the works she describes as ones she wants to perform before she dies. She says that they might be repertoire she heard at festivals and the like. The rest of the cabinet is filled with other single copies of choral works filed alphabetically and according to voicing. In the summertime she puts together most of her programming for the next school year, so she takes home her little gems folder, she starts with those pieces first, putting together her performance literature.

**Kay Sherrill** does not have a very organized system for cataloguing repertoire. She describes it as a loosely organized system. She has three aspects to her system. First is a set of six filing cabinets of octavos which she has collected over the years. Literature is sorted by genre and type, and also by voicing. She goes through it from time to time and might see a piece for which she might think, “That would be a great piece for Nova [the beginning choir] next year.” She pulls out her copy and adds it to the next level of her system, a set of files on a shelf. She has a file for each choir in which she will place a copy for each piece she is thinking of having that choir learn the next year. Sherrill also has what she describes as a huge pile of music which she has simply tossed pieces into as she has discovered them and wants to consider. During the summer she organizes the pile of music and goes through the little files.

**Gary Lamprecht** states that he does not have a very organized system. He has a stack of envelopes on his desk. Most of the envelopes are filled with copies of pieces for his choirs: Beginning Women’s Chorus, Men’s Chorus, Advanced Women’s Chorus, Chamber Choir, Concert Choir, and also includes some specialized categories like Vocal Jazz, “Pop,” and Festival. He also a choir for pop pieces and others for just miscellaneous works. He also has some of the current music from his choirs in the same stack. At the end of one year he starts to

look for repertoire for the next year. He says that he pulls down his stack, lays it around, and starts to prioritize the pieces in the envelopes. It is a system which he says works for him.

Lamprecht also has a computer filing system for cataloguing literature. He says that when he is really thinking about doing a work, he enters it on his database on his computer. The database is organized by composer and name of the piece. He has been cataloguing with his database for at least 15 years and he now has about 8,500 octavos listed, with titles and also recordings catalogued. For example he says, he might look up *Ave Maris Stella* (Victoria, 2003), and when he does he will find he has five recordings of it by different groups.

**Terry Hicks** has what he calls his personal library. He orders perusal copies of new pieces, and he has pulled one copy from each piece in his choral library. He has those copies in a box he keeps at his home. When he is at a convention he will grab copies from reading sessions. He puts those single copies into his personal library. In addition he has an octavo collection sorted by voice and difficulty level.

**Christine Bass** has an organized system for cataloguing literature on a computer spreadsheet. As she listens to programs throughout the year and hears works she might want to do with one of her choirs, she adds it to her spreadsheet. She lists literature on the sheet with the level of difficulty and the group which would be able to sing it. Every summer she takes a copy of the spreadsheet and looks it over for repertoire ideas. After going over the list she decides what she would really like to have her groups perform. She particularly picks one or two pieces which she thinks would be perfect for each choir and what they will be doing the next year. For example, she had a year that she knew one choir would be singing in a beautiful cathedral. After searching through her list she chose the *Adagio for Strings* (Barber, 1939) knowing that would be great in that setting.

**Bill Erickson** has a four-drawer cabinet. Within the cabinet he has single copies of choral works alphabetized from A to Z. The pull-out drawers are two-and-a-half feet deep, and he has 300 to 400 single copies in them that he can go to for ideas. Erickson also described three full binders of what he calls “sure-fire literature.” The binders contained about 120 pieces catalogued alphabetically and also by style and period. He also created a file of those works on his computer. He relates that he took the binders to the Colorado ACDA convention. At the time he was the chair for high school mixed choirs. Directors were encouraged to put together binders of materials and put them on tables for other directors to look through. His binders disappeared, and he has not seen them since. He does still have the information about the pieces backed up on his computer.

**Sally Schneider** totes around “big, ugly, portable, black filing cabinets which are plastic things.” When she gets a perusal or sample score she puts it into one of cabinets. She keeps her own personal copy there even if she does not choose to purchase any for her school choirs. When she is looking for literature for the next year she will sit down and spread out copies of scores all over her table. On the pieces that she has already performed, she writes the year or years it was done. If there is no year written on a piece of music that signifies that work has never been performed by her choirs.

**Ryan Beeken** says that he does not have a scientific system for cataloguing future performance literature he discovers. He has a folder in which he places a copy of works which interest him, music which to him says, “Look at me again. Think of doing me someday.” He also has a list on which he has written titles of works, and he throws that list in his folder as well.

**Jack Hill** makes piles of interesting music. When he attends conventions and reading sessions and receives perusal copies, he takes time to look through the stacks of copies later in

his motel room. He immediately throws away the pieces the which do not look interesting to him. Literature which looks interesting he will keep and add to his pile. In the summer he will take home boxes of single copies. As he sorts through them he puts each piece in one of three piles: the “yes” pile for works he wants to do the next year, the “save” pile for pieces he wants to hold onto for later, and the “trash” pile for pieces he wants to simply discard. At times Hill has pieces he pulls out which he has done in the past and to which he wants to return in the future. He also writes brief notes on the front covers of the perusal copies.

**Daniel Earl** says that he does not have a very organized system. He describes a time in his career that he attended reading sessions, and he had a file in which he placed copies. The copies were sorted by voicing and choirs, however, he found that he did not use the file much. He felt that he did not want to throw anything away, so he found that he had, as he describes it, “hundreds, thousands of dollars of individual sheets.” Eventually he came to a system which is more useful for him. As he comes across works which really interest him he puts them in a bin. As he starts thinking about the repertoire for the following year, he pulls out that stack from the bin. The stack is fairly small with only around 30 pieces in it, instead of hundreds.

## **Summary**

All of the directors interviewed have some form of a system for keeping track of, or cataloguing, literature which they have discovered and want to have their choirs perform in the future. Even the three directors who claim to not have an organized system for cataloguing literature have some way to keep track of pieces they might want to do. The methods for cataloguing range from very organized filing cabinets organized typically by genre and voicing, to organized envelopes of music, to computer databases, to stacks of music set aside to be considered at a later date as the director becomes serious about programming the music for the

following year. At any rate, all of the directors have a way to set aside the repertoire which really interests them, and that is where they turn to as they begin to select literature. They each have found a system which works best for them.

### **Programming Literature**

Most of the directors interviewed will say that their concert programming is their literature selection for the year; finding and placing works within the context of a concert drives the pieces they choose for their choirs. For most it is an issue of finding pieces that seem to flow one to the other while at the same time contrasting from piece to piece. The particular methods to used by each director to program literature varies greatly. Most of the directors focus on concepts related to keeping the attention of the audience with variety in periods, styles, and moods. Top choirs tend to perform mostly works which have been newly purchased for performance that year, while with younger choirs the directors tend to focus on selecting already established works which will prepare them for the literature in future years.

#### **Kevin Hawkins**

Message, pacing, variety, and contrast are the elements considered by Kevin Hawkins as he programs literature for his concerts. First he tries to piece together a program with a message which ties it together. Next he focuses on concert pacing. He likes to program an upbeat fast piece, then turn the pace around with a slow work, then follow that with another really upbeat piece, and then slow again. He says, “The pacing of the concert is huge for me . . . To me it’s a presentation, and you are telling a story through what you are doing.”

Just as is requested of choirs performing for national and regional ACDA conventions, Hawkins likes to program a variety of musical periods, at least two, three, or four of them. Unlike some directors though, he does not necessarily program the pieces chronologically. He might take the audience from the Renaissance to the Romantic to the Baroque and then to the

Contemporary, just to change the moods of the music. He thinks more in terms of how the works move him, and he lays them out in an order which he feels flows.

In addition to contrast of periods, he also programs pieces with contrast of textures. As an example, he programmed a ten-part antiphonal choir piece with his large choir, and then they followed that work with a two-part piece. For Hawkins putting together a concert is like cooking. He shares:

When I was little, I used to go through the [lunch] line as a little kid and get tater tots, and then French fries, and mashed potatoes. But a good cook is going to give variety to the textures and colors, and that is what you are really giving the audience and the choir.

For three of the four concerts of the year—the Fall, the Winter, and the Spring concerts—Hawkins programs difficult and serious repertoire. In describing those three concerts he says, “It’s all about getting serious and doing this horrendous literature.” For the last concert of the year he allows his students to just have fun. The concert is even conducted by students. He describes the final concert by saying, “[Let’s] let our hair down, and let’s pick some things that we can just go on, and wail on; and we are not being judged, so forget dynamics, and let’s just have fun.”

Hawkins’ concert programming affects the literature which he selects. As he is looking at music for the coming year, he is deliberating on which concert to perform the works and what their sequence will be within the concert program. As he selects his literature he lays when he is going to work on each piece and when it will be performed.

How much of Hawkins’ literature is newly purchased each year depends on which choir he is programming for. With his top choir, his men’s chorus, and his women’s chorus, most of the repertoire is purchased new each year. He rarely ever repeats a work which has been performed by one of these choirs. On the other hand, his Chorus One and Chorus Two (his training choirs)

recycle a lot of music every few years. He prefers to use the money in his budget for purchasing literature for his top choirs.

### **Kim Drusedum**

For Kim Drusedum selecting literature to be performed by her choirs works hand-in-hand with her concert programming. As she listens to new pieces which catch her attention she typically envisions which concert with which choir that piece would be good for. She tries to pick music from different time periods in programming her concerts. She admits that she is not a fan of Romantic music, so she only programs a Romantic piece once in a while mostly for educational purposes. Her Madrigal Choir performs a lot of Renaissance works. She believes that by programming music from a variety of musical periods and times in history the students can benefit from cross-curricular teaching with music and history. She takes the opportunity to teach about a time periods as her students are learning a work from that time.

Drusedum does not care to program a concert chronologically, nor does she like to program a performance with songs with similar titles. She gets bored with those concepts of choral performance. She prefers to pick sets of music which work well together. For each of her choirs she tries to find what she calls a good opener, a piece with which the students can feel comfortable while grabbing the attention of the audience. She follows the opener with a slow work; sometimes that piece is *a cappella*. Last she will pick a song which is upbeat. In describing the programming of her concerts Drusedum says, “It’s like a puzzle. I look at it like a puzzle, and then I just get the puzzle [pieces] to fit.”

In terms of newly purchased music, Drusedum says she believes that about half of her concert literature is new each year. Between her two choirs she states that the purchasing of new music is about the same. She has works in her library which she says that she will always

perform with her students because she feels the students need those pieces. At the same time, she tries to find some of the things which she wants to teach her students by searching for new literature to meet her objectives.

### **Kay Sherrill**

When considering her concert programming Kay Sherrill selects repertoire suited to each individual choir. For her top mixed choir she always tries to program music from a variety of time periods. She typically has them perform a “semi-major” work on her Fall concert. Doing that is a little more limiting in terms of styles and periods that can be performed on a single concert. Sherrill also tries to program a variety of literature for her younger choirs, but the pieces will generally be more folk-based. She finds that her younger singers can learn folk pieces more quickly while they are learning the solfege system and how to sight-read. Additionally, Sherrill looks for repertoire which she describes as having high integrity and which will help young high school voices to develop. Partly because of that, she programs a “pop” show at the end of the year every year. In general, she always tries to program across the centuries.

### **Gary Lamprecht**

Gary Lamprecht’s concert programming is his literature selection for each year. Programming music from various periods and also programming it in such a way as to keep the attention of the audience are the most important factors considered by him. He likes to have the first half of his concerts representative of the historical side of music, and he programs the music in chronological order. He typically starts a performance with a Gregorian chant or a Renaissance piece. Next he will program a work from the Baroque period, followed by the Classical and Romantic periods. At times he might skip over one of the periods, but typically he tries to have a work from each period.



To end the first half of a concert Lamprecht tries to find a piece that will interest the audience so that they will want to stay for the rest of the concert. That piece is usually very rhythmic and some sort of crowd-pleaser. He selects an upbeat work for right after intermission . The second half of the concert is programmed mostly with folk music, that is Americana and folk music from other countries. He believes in creating a concert of variety that is engaging for the audience, or else “by the end of [it] their butts are going to sleep.”

### **Terry Hicks**

Terry Hicks feels very strongly about programming a wide variety of styles and periods of concert repertoire. He says that he tries to hit a broad spectrum as he consider various styles. For example, when he is selecting a piece for his chamber choir he always picks out something from the Renaissance period, a work which is a spiritual, and another piece which is representative of a broader scope such as a piece by Eric Whitacre or a multicultural folk song. Hicks does not often put together a thematic-style concert. Instead each performance he tries to program with a mixture of elements. He feels very strongly about spirituals. He jokes that because he loves spirituals he will, “have a spiritual on my concert, if not ten.” The literature he admits that he programs the least is from the Romantic period. He feels Romantic period literature is too difficult for high school students because of the musical richness and depth required to perform them well. If anything he feels that he errs on too heavily favoring the Contemporary side in the repertoire he programs. He also works to vary the tempos from piece to piece. At least half of his literature is new every year, and he reports that he has a good budget for buying new works.

A major element of the concert programming used by Hicks is his use of a centerpiece musical work around which the rest of a particular choir’s repertoire will be built. He describes a centerpiece as a work that the director is trying to frame. That centerpiece work is typically third

in the performance, and once he has the centerpiece selected he will begin to find other works to program around that piece, works which will compliment the centerpiece music. The literature is designed to work up to the centerpiece and build around it. Hicks even gets his students involved in the literature selection process in the spring when he allows them pick one or two pieces they want to perform. Once those works are chosen he will then find other repertoire to compliment those particular pieces.

Hicks looks at each year as a progression from performance to performance. In the fall the concert is comprised in part of literature which was learned for Region Choir try-outs, particularly in his A Cappella Choir and his Chamber Choir. For his second and third choirs he believes that those students need to feel successful singing the music in the fall, or what he terms easy access music which is still good literature. Around the time of the fall concert, Hicks has a pretty good idea of the point to which his students will progress by Christmas. Based on that assessment, he will select his centerpieces for the Christmas concert, and programs other works for that concert which will highlight the centerpiece. In terms of difficulty of literature on a single concert, Hicks like to program one challenge piece and then balance out the rest of the program around that work. Other performances for which he programs music during the year include a madrigal feast after Thanksgiving for which his Chamber Choir learns more than 20 pieces. For the Spring concert he just select music which the students will enjoy, although he says that does not include pop music because his students do not want to do that kind of literature.

### **Christine Bass**

Christine Bass looks at total school programming as she selects her concert literature. In fact, she states that her concert programming is her literature selection for any given year. For

every concert each choir sings several pieces by themselves, and then the choirs are grouped together to perform part or all of a larger work such as the *Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein, 1965), or large works by Fauré or Vivaldi. If the choirs are going to sing a larger work in its entirety sometimes Bass will schedule a separate performance outside of the regular concerts on which just that work is performed. She does that because she does not expect a whole audience to sit through an extended number of minutes of music by the same composer. She believes that a conductor should be careful that way with programming, and that the audience should be taken into consideration as to how much they can tolerate.

With her students and audience completely changing every four years, Bass tries to be aware each year of what the types of students and audience that she has. She makes sure that her students perform some easy works, some repertoire which appeals to the audience, and some pieces which include a little bit of humor. She likes to set up a concert with a little bit of musical interaction with the audience, and then she programs the more serious literature.

Bass is very aware of programming for diversity. She lives in a very diverse community, and many restrictions are placed on her as to the types of music she can have her students perform, particularly regarding Christian religious music. She cannot have a “Christmas” concert, nor is she allowed to have her students sing sacred Christmas music such as *Silent Night* (Mohr & Gruber, 1818), so she often will put together a multicultural winter concert. She is allowed to program music which has text related to winter, non-Christmas sacred music, and any music in Latin.

To accommodate the diversity in her community, bass tries to program concerts representative of that diversity. She has adopted what she considers to be an inclusive philosophy in repertoire selection. Every year she programs at least one Hebrew piece for each of her choirs.

Her choirs will also perform in African. She says that they perform it all, and then no one can say that she is favoring one group or another. What used to be one special concert entitled “Music from Around the World,” has now become the common practice at all her concerts.

In addition to multicultural pieces, each year Bass programs music from a variety of musical periods. Her top group performs at least one German Romantic piece. Her choirs always sing early Latin pieces. Her madrigal choir sings madrigal literature. The more advanced choirs perform more Renaissance repertoire and what would be considered standard choral literature. For her beginning choirs Bass programs easier pieces which are more accessible to her young students to help them feel good about their first experience singing in choir. Overall she looks at her concerts as a “smorgasbord of repertoire,” with a little bit of something for everyone. Bass says that in a typical year at least half of her literature has been newly purchased for performance.

### **Bill Erickson**

Bill Erickson looks at programming literature as taking the audience through a journey or a menu. He believes that programming comes down to the fine art of considering where you are going to take the audience and where do the pieces fit in, whether the concert repertoire is built around a theme or not. Erickson follows what he considers to be the characteristic of good programming in creating a journey for his audience. Typically the first song is something light and short that grabs the attention of the audience. He might choose a processional on something such as a chant. Next he might choose a motet or a madrigal. Next he programs a 20th Century work, something which he describes as really shocking and unexpected. He typically follows that with a work which is moving with beautiful phrases. He ends with a piece that is up-beat, usually a spiritual.

Depending on the concert Erickson varies the type of programming he might follow. Sometimes he uses chronological programming and other times topical or thematic. In years when his choirs are traveling outside of the United States he programs music from the area where his choirs are traveling in addition to American music such as spirituals, folk songs, and works by Eric Whitacre. When his choirs are traveling in the United States, he states “pretty much anything goes.”

Whatever the program might be Erickson tries to achieve a balance in repertoire throughout the school year. When a school year is finished he wants to know that there has been a good balance of periods, that there is even representation of styles. He programs what he considers to be standards of choral literature at the beginning and the end of the school year. Erickson is aware of selecting literature representative of both sacred and secular music. Some of his concerts are centered mostly around a particular genre or period of repertoire such as early music, modern music, or folk songs and spirituals. However, he looks at his performance literature as a whole package for the year. By the end of each year all his choirs have sung music representative of a good variety of styles and periods, although he does say that he probably tends to use the repertoire of living composers predominantly. In addition to this, each year around half of the music performed by his choirs is newly purchased for that year and around half is used from his library.

When his choirs are invited to participate in a religious service he treats the occasion as an opportunity to teach the music as great choral art, not theology. During December Erickson programs seasonal works. Specifically he likes to select a motet such as one of the Marian motets, a piece such as *O Magnum Mysterium*, or a Hebrew work such as pieces published by Transcontinental Music Press. Every other year he brings in a guest conductor from somewhere

around the country, and in those instances his programming for that performance centers around the music in which the guest conductor specializes.

### **Sally Schneider**

For Sally Schneider programming performance literature is “a work in progress.” She has a particular formula she tends to follow as she sets up her concerts. First, she tends to set up each concert chronologically, believing that is easier for the ear to listen to. Much of the layout of her performances is based on what she believes will keep the audience actively listening to each group on stage, active listening being a skill which she feels has largely become lost in today’s society of loud, amplified sound. She feels, in fact, that there exists today a whole generation of kids and adults who have not learned how to listen, so she structures her concerts with that belief in mind.

Schneider begins with her small choir, the Madrigal Singers. That group wears either typical black tie or Renaissance costumes, and she describes them as very professional. Because they are a small group they require the most heightened listening skills, something Schneider also feels will happen the most readily on the part of the audience right at the beginning of a concert. The Madrigal Singers typically open with what she calls a “welcoming” piece to get the audience engaged in the concert. She follows up the small choir with a larger chorus such as the Men’s Chorus. Next she will have the “Y’all Come” Choir, the training choir that is open to all students. After hearing the first couple of choirs sing she finds that the beginner chorus seems to rise to the occasion and sing at a higher level. Her 12-voice vocal jazz group is the penultimate group to sing. They use amplified sound, and for that reason she puts them singing near the end of the concert, because she believes that amplified sound changes the listening skills of an audience. Last she ends with her large mixed choir. She describes them as being impressive to

look at, impressive to hear, and with a nice orchestral-like symphonic sound. She says that they are good enough to even follow the jazz group.

In terms of programming repertoire from a variety of music periods and styles, Schneider says that she always does a “really cool, polyphonic Renaissance piece.” She admits to not being a fan of the Baroque era, so she only programs repertoire from that period when required by a contest list. She also does not prefer to perform works by Mozart or Haydn because in her opinion they are boring, although she does find them to be easy to teach and for her students to learn. In addition, repertoire by Mozart or Haydn require an accompanist, and she tends to program at least 80% *a cappella* literature. Schneider says that about 50% of her repertoire is written in the 1900s or later, and the other 50% is a combination of Renaissance and Romantic music with an occasional Baroque piece. Of the music performed by her choirs, she states that at least 50% of it is newly purchased each year.

### **Ryan Beeken**

Ryan Beeken says that his concert programming is directly related to his literature selection, and as he programs his concerts he is looking for flow and variety from one piece to the next. Typically he organizes the repertoire chronologically, and it is rare that he will select concert literature based on a theme or message. At least two of the pieces on a concert will be what would be considered multicultural. He programs at least one work on each concert that is from the Renaissance or other early style of music, and selects literature up through the Contemporary. He states that he has a tendency to program more Contemporary repertoire than any other period.

Beeken tries to vary and balance many elements and styles of music. In terms of accompaniment, he selects mostly *a cappella* works and one piece for each choir to be

accompanied by piano. He also looks for repertoire that includes other instrumental accompaniment such as drums. He tries to vary and balance works that are legato with ones that are percussive, homophonic works with polyphonic pieces, and up-tempo songs with slower ones. Of the literature his choirs performs, he states that for his top ensemble probably 80% of it is purchased new every year. For his younger ensembles he thinks only about 30% of the repertoire is purchased new each year.

### **Jack Hill**

Jack Hill looks at the whole of his concert literature at one time, and he states that his concert programming is his literature for the year. By looking at all of his performances for a whole year he believes that he is better able to achieve a balanced curriculum. He states that his repertoire has to be varied, and it has to have content. The literature he selects has to keep the concert program moving, and he says that it has to be practical in terms of balancing even elements such as key signatures. He does not like duplicate keys within a concert. He alternates upbeat and slow works. Even in the case where he programs large works on a concert, such as the Rutter (1986) *Requiem* and the Bernstein (1965) *Chichester Psalms*, the pieces need to provide contrast to each other. In the case of these two works, they contrast in language and culture.

Hill does not use particular methods such as chronological for programming concerts. He does try to program with variety of periods and languages in mind. He states that for each concert he has to have something Contemporary. By Contemporary he does not include “pop” music, but a Contemporary piece with some Contemporary poetry. Hill believes that makes the music more meaningful to the students. His concerts are heavier on the Contemporary side, but he also includes arrangements of spirituals and folk music as being Contemporary literature.



More recently he has begun to program what he terms a *traditional piece*: a cultural piece from oral tradition which is not in written music. It is typically a spiritual to which he and his students know the tune, and they create their own arrangement without looking at any music. Out of the music his choirs perform, he says that probably 80% of it is newly purchased.

Hill selects something which would be considered classic literature on each concert, and for him the classic work on a concert needs to be primary, and not an arrangement. For example, he believes that if a director is going to program a work by Haydn it should be the real Haydn, not an arrangement of the Haydn. He also has a formula for foreign languages on a concert. He includes literature in at least three languages on each concert, English being one of those languages. Typically there will be at least one Latin piece, so another work will be in German, French, or maybe even something like Russian.

### **Daniel Earl**

Like so many other directors Daniel Earl states that his concert programming is his literature selection. As he puts together the repertoire for his concerts he is aware of the periods, styles, and languages of the pieces he chooses as well as their accessibility for his choirs. In terms of balance of literature from different music periods, Earl recognizes that he is probably heavy on the 20th Century. After Contemporary pieces, he states that his next most programmed musical period is probably Renaissance. Baroque he thinks would be next percentage-wise, followed by some Romantic. For Baroque music, he performs Handel fairly often and Bach less often. From the Romantic period in any given year he will program something by [Felix] Mendelssohn and also something by Brahms. He selects repertoire from the Classical period the least, however, he says that his choirs perform Mozart fairly often. Out of the all of the literature

Earl's choirs perform in any given year he figures that around 60% to 70% of it is newly purchased for that year.

## **Summary**

Most of the directors interviewed say that their concert programming is their literature selection for any given school year. From the get-go as they are looking at repertoire to teach their choirs, they express that they are looking at how various pieces will fit into an overall scheme for individual concerts and their concert programming over the course of the year. For all of the directors variety and balance is important as they select their music. They program a variety of music in terms of periods and styles; *a cappella* versus accompanied music; types of instrumental accompaniment; tempos; and moods.

Although a single concert may or may not have music from each musical period and major style of choral music, throughout the year the directors strive to expose their students to most if not all of them. All of the directors program Contemporary or 20th Century music more than all of the other periods. They include as part of Contemporary music arrangements of folk songs and spirituals, but not "pop." With the higher percentage of modern works being selected, the directors also cite that more than 50% of their literature is newly purchased for performance in a given year. After Contemporary music, early music was the next most frequently selected type, which includes Gregorian chant and Renaissance music. As for the other three major periods of music, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic, there is some variation on how much each director pulls from an one or more of them. Many of the directors try to program repertoire from all of them throughout the year, but some have a particular like or dislike for one period or another, influencing their concert programming accordingly.

In terms of methods of concert programming, a few of the directors often like to program their concerts chronologically. The first work performed by each choir in a performance is typically an early music piece, either a chant or Renaissance work. The pieces then proceed through time concluding with the Contemporary period. Although they may have most of the musical periods represented throughout the concert, most of the directors prefer instead to sequence them based on tempo, style, and timing rather than on the year they were written. As for thematic programming, other than concerts with a specific purpose such as Broadway concert or a madrigal feast, most did not care to program by a message or theme.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### Summary

The goal of this study was to investigate and describe the choral literature selection processes and criteria used by “successful” (or nationally recognized) public high school choral directors. *Successful* and *national recognition* were defined as those directors who had performed with their ensemble(s) at a national ACDA convention. The scope of this study was limited public high school choral directors, and the 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005 national ACDA conventions. Eleven of the 19 directors that met the above selection criteria consented to be interviewed for this study. The directors responded to 16 interview items on literature selection covering the topics of philosophy of the selection of performance literature, knowledge development regarding literature selection, sources for finding literature, criteria for selecting literature, the selection of festival literature, cataloguing of literature, and programming of performance literature for concerts.

The results from this study represent almost 250 years of experience in selecting high school choral performance literature by directors who have been nationally recognized in their field. The individual years of experience at the time of interview range from only 9 years up to 39 years. The schools at which the directors teach have school populations ranging from about 850 to 3,500 students, with most reporting students populations of around 1,500. The directors interviewed represent nine states from across the United States. They are:

Christine Bass from Cherry Hill High School in Cherry Hill, New Jersey;

Ryan Beeken from Waukee High School in Waukee, Iowa;

Kim Drusedum from Green Valley High School in Henderson, Nevada;

R. Daniel (Dan) Earl, retired, from Santa Rosa High School in Santa Rosa, California;

William (Bill) Erickson from Cherry Creek High School in Greenwood Village, Colorado;  
Kevin Hawkins from Glendale High School in Glendale, Missouri;  
Terry Hicks from Bentonville High School in Bentonville, Arkansas;  
Jack Hill from Clearview Regional High School in Mullica Hill, New Jersey;  
Gary Lamprecht from San Luis Obispo High School in San Luis Obispo, California;  
Sally Schneider from Firestone High School in Akron, Ohio; and  
Kay Sherrill from Judson High School in Converse, Texas.

Although most of the directors interviewed teach at what would be considered large to very large high schools, the processes and criteria they follow in the selection of choral performance literature should be of interest to high school choral directors at any school. Each director conveyed information which was unique to that director, and each director conveyed information which was similar to most if not all of the other directors. The directors teach in varied communities, and their processes and criteria reflect both the directors' backgrounds and their consideration to the programs and communities in which they teach. The findings from this study could be used by other high school choral directors to apply and try out the ideas presented by these "successful" choral directors in their own selection of performance literature.

### **Data Collection**

A list was compiled of high school choral directors whose choirs had performed at the National ACDA conventions in 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005. Directors were contacted initially by mail. Those who consented to be interviewed mailed back a consent form, a form for basic contact, and another for demographic information. An interview time was established by e-mail, and the interview was conducted by phone. An "Interview Schedule" was followed. A copy of the Interview Schedule was included in the original packet, allowing the directors time to think

about the topics before the interviews were conducted. The interviews were taped with a tape recording device on cassette tapes. After the interviews were concluded the cassette recordings were used to create interview transcripts. The transcripts were edited to create more correct grammatical structure, to reduce the amount of filler words such as “oh” and “um,” to omit repeated words and phrases, to create more complete sentence structure, to omit some personal comments, and to add references for choral works cited in the transcript. An edited transcript was sent as an e-mail attachment to each corresponding director for review of content accuracy. The requested changes by the directors were incorporated into the final transcripts. Even though the interviews were conducted between May and August of 2006, the information is still current because in September of 2007 each director had the opportunity to update and clarify responses provided in the interviews.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The findings of this study provided the following answers to the seven research questions:

1. What is the basic philosophy of a successful high school choral director regarding the selection of performance literature?

The findings appear to indicate that “successful” high school choral directors have a philosophy regarding selection of performance literature. Some directors select choral repertoire based largely on a philosophy of aesthetics. For them the aesthetic qualities—the musical qualities which evoke emotional response—are the most important criteria of music. Other directors maintain a more “praxial” philosophy which greatly influences their choices of literature. That is to say, they select choral works for what the students are going to learn and the vocal skills they will develop from the music. Whether the directors’ philosophies are more aesthetic or praxial in nature, they take into consideration variety of styles and genres as well as the ages and quality of voices in their choirs when selecting music. Other directors hold that

choral music they select for their choirs must have meaningful and age-appropriate text.

Furthermore, some of the directors believe in choosing music which will appeal to the students and audience.

2. From where did successful high school directors gain their knowledge of literature selection?

Findings from the interviews suggest that successful high school choral directors have gained their knowledge of literature first and foremost from experience. Basically, they have learned how to choose choral repertoire by trial and error once they became choral directors. Another common source for knowledge on the selection of choral literature by successful high school choral directors is attendance at other choral performances. To a lesser extent, but still seemingly important for gaining a knowledge about choral literature selection are materials and functions of professional organizations, particularly the ACDA, conferences, listening to recordings, and attending reading sessions. Successful choral directors have not typically learned how to choose repertoire from a course in college or by reading professional journals and books. It was not determined whether or not directors learned how to select literature through the study of scores.

3. What sources do successful high school choral directors use to find new literature?

To find choral literature successful high school choral directors use a variety of sources. The most heavily used source is performances. Successful directors typically hear many performances by other choirs at conventions, festivals, and concerts, and they make note of the pieces which impress them and catch their attention. Another source heavily used by successful directors to find their repertoire is printed materials. The printed materials include recommended literature lists, perusal packets, and to a lesser extent, publisher materials. Another highly used

source for successful high school choral directors is reading sessions. They find it useful to attend reading sessions because other directors have already taken the time to sift through the myriads of choral works available to find the ones worth sharing with those attending the session. Successful choral directors build up a personal CD library with choral recordings and draw from those recordings for repertoire ideas. They also use networking with other directors as an important source to find new choral works. They share ideas with colleagues, and they might call up a colleague or other respected choral conductor for repertoire suggestions.

The largest discrepancy for finding new choral literature comes over the usefulness of publisher materials. Some successful directors use them regularly, typically listening to them over the summer. Other successful directors do not find them worth their time, and they simply throw them away. Typically, successful directors know which publishers put out choral pieces that they like, and they focus on looking through the materials sent out only by those publishers. The rest they discard. More directors reported picking up pieces at reading sessions and conventions than through materials mailed out by the publishers. Regardless of the methods used to find their new literature, successful choral directors spend a lot of time searching for music. It is something they work on all year long, particularly in the summer.

#### 4. What criteria are the most important to successful high school choral directors in selecting performance literature?

Successful high school choral directors look for literature that is well-written, what they call “quality” literature. Included in their assessment as to whether or not a choral work is a quality piece of literature is good voice leading, sound part-writing, good marriage of music and text, a moving melody, and in the case of an arrangement of a piece such as a folk song, that the arrangement be true to the original source. All successful directors are aware of the need to



expose their students to a variety of styles and genres of choral repertoire, so they look for works from many musical periods from early music to Contemporary. Within the Contemporary choral works they look for variety in styles and genres also. In addition, they look for some works which are in a language other than English.

It is important to successful directors to find works that they themselves love, and a work must have something about it which grabs their attention. All successful directors are aware of the strengths of their singers individually and collectively in their sections of the choirs as they search for new choral pieces, being careful to find works that are appropriate in text and tessitura for high school age singers. Of particular note for successful directors is the need to look for music that matches the abilities of their tenor section in any given school year. Successful high school directors search for music representative of varying levels of difficulty, typically choosing one or two works for each choir that would be considered a very difficult challenge piece.

Successful directors also look for choral works that highlight various strengths of the choirs, such as selecting a piece with a French horn solo when there is a really good French horn player in the choir, or selecting a piece to showcase a particular vocal soloist. They are also aware of the ability of their piano accompanists when selecting literature, particularly in cases where the accompanists are students. Performance venues are also taken into consideration as successful directors choose their repertoire. For example, a director might look for a piece with organ accompaniment to be performed in a cathedral.

Where successful high school choral directors vary is in their fundamental philosophy regarding the most important criteria for selecting choral music. For some the most important criteria is quite simply whether they themselves love a choral work. They want to feel moved by a piece when they hear it in order to put the time into rehearsing it with their choirs. For other

directors the most important criterion is considerations for the teaching elements within a choral work. They search for repertoire that will develop their choirs as musicians and singers, finding a balance between music that will stretch and challenge their choirs' abilities while making sure they can find success with the music they will sing. For some successful directors the most important criteria they look for in choral literature is the quality of the text. They want the texts of choral works to be moving, fit well with the music, and be appropriate for high school students to sing.

Successful high school choral directors differ in the importance of selecting literature which will be liked by their students and their audiences. For some that is an important consideration and criteria, selecting music they feel will appeal and at least be accessible to all types of students. They also feel it is important to select music which will be accessible and enjoyable to the audience. Other successful directors follow the philosophy that if they themselves like the work, then their students will come to like it also, and they believe that their audiences will become a more educated audience as they attend concerts.

5. What part does festival literature play in the selection of music for the whole year by successful high school choral directors, and what influences the choices for festival literature?

Successful high school choral directors perform festival level literature throughout the school year. The repertoire throughout the year is representative of a variety of musical periods, styles, and genres. Additionally, the works performed throughout the year are also typically of an appropriate difficulty level to be sung for festivals. For this reason, some successful directors simply pull their festival literature from the repertoire they are already learning throughout the year. Other successful directors choose their festival repertoire separately from the rest of their

choral works, particularly those directors who live in states with more stringent festival music requirements. Some states and festivals have literature lists from which a certain number, if not all, of the choral pieces performed must be selected. In the case of some festivals, each choir is required to perform the same piece. In addition, some states and festivals require the performance of a variety of periods and styles.

Whatever the requirements for particular states and festivals, successful high school choral directors look for what they consider to be quality choral literature. They also choose repertoire representative of a variety of musical periods, styles, and genres. Particularly, they choose at least one work written before the 20th Century and at least one folk song, whether the folk song be American or from another country. Typically, successful directors select one choral piece that will be a more difficult, featured selection, and the rest of the works are programmed to offer contrast to that featured work. It is also common practice for successful directors to select at least one work in a language other than English.

6. Do successful high school choral directors have a system for cataloguing pieces they discover and wish to incorporate into their programs in the future?

Successful high school choral directors have a system for cataloguing pieces they discover and wish to incorporate into their programs in the future. The level of organization of the system may vary, however, keeping track of the choral works they discover and might possibly want to program in the future is a continual and ongoing process. Successful directors with a more organized system typically have some form of a file system in a box, a filing cabinet, or on a computer database. Non-computer based files typically contain single copies of choral works organized by voicing. Some filing systems will be broken down into musical periods, styles, and

genres. Some successful directors make notes about a piece such as why they found it interesting when they first discovered it.

Other directors at least have somewhere that they place copies of works they want to consider when they are programming their literature. It might be a stack on a desk or a box in the office where the pieces are placed so that they are available and easy to find at a later date. In any case, whether the system is highly organized or not, successful high school choral directors have a way to keep track of the pieces they want to remember in the future when they are programming their repertoire.

7. What are the influences for concert programming by successful high school choral directors?

Successful high school choral directors view their concert programming as inseparable from their literature selection process. For them their concert programming is their literature selection. When successful directors look at and consider a particular choral work, they typically are thinking about the choir that could sing the piece, the concert on which it would be sung, and where it would be placed on the concert in juxtaposition to the rest of the repertoire. In addition they consider how that particular piece would fit into the overall scheme of the choral program for the year.

Successful high school choral directors take into consideration many different criteria as they look at their concert programming. First, all successful directors look for contrast and variety in the works on their concerts. That contrast and variety comes first through the programming of a variety of musical periods, styles, and genres. It also comes through the selection of choral works with different languages, tempos, voicings, accompaniments, moods, and levels of difficulty.

Successful directors try to program works from most if not all of the major musical periods at some point during the year. More than half of the choral repertoire programmed by successful high school choir directors is Contemporary, or 20th Century, however, those works include folk songs and African American spirituals. That is also reflected in the fact that typically more than half of the music programmed has been newly purchased for performance. The next most programmed musical period would be Renaissance or some other form of early music such as chant. All successful directors program some early music pieces throughout the year. As for Baroque, Classical, and Romantic period works, how much they are programmed depends on the personal preference of the director, however, successful directors program works from one if not all of these three periods each year.

When it comes to methods of programming, some successful high school choral directors follow a chronological method for programming on concerts, while others simply try to alternate between contrasting styles. Those who follow a chronological programming style place the early music piece first on the concert and then continue through time up to Contemporary works. Those who do not follow a chronological style of programming decide where to place the different choral works on a concert by considering contrast of tempos, styles, accompaniments, difficulty level, lengths of works, and voicings. Successful high school choral directors do not typically program a concert by following a theme or message, unless the concert has a specific purpose such as putting on a Broadway night or a madrigal feast. Whatever the method, the programming on a concert by successful high school choral directors is always planned carefully.

### **Recommendations for Choral Directors**

1. It is recommended that choral directors develop a philosophy which will serve to guide them as they select the literature for their choirs, whether that philosophy is one based on aesthetics or one which is more praxial in nature.

2. It is recommended that choral directors strive to select the best quality choral literature.  
To accomplish that they have to first know the criteria that determine whether or not a choral work is well-written and be able to look at a piece to discover if it fits those criteria.
3. It is recommended that choral directors incorporate a variety of musical periods, styles, and genres in the literature of their programs. The literature should include early works such as chants and madrigals, works from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods, folk songs from America and other countries including African American spirituals, and Contemporary works.
4. It is recommended that high school choral directors select music accessible and appropriate for high school students. That includes choosing repertoire written in an appropriate tessitura for the high school voice and with appropriate text.
5. It is recommended that high school choral directors select music that they themselves like. When directors love the music they are teaching and conducting, they are more committed to those works, and that commitment is perceived by the students. Students are then more likely to be committed to learn the music and come to appreciate it themselves.
6. It is recommended that high school choral directors select music with teaching in mind. They should select literature that will develop high school students as musicians, singers, and members of a choir.
7. It is recommended that choral directors make the process of searching for, selecting, and cataloguing quality choral literature a continual and intentional process each year.

8. It is particularly recommended that choral directors listen to other choirs for choral literature ideas by attending festivals, conventions, and concerts, and by listening to CD recordings of other choirs.
9. It is recommended that choral directors select literature representative of a variety of languages, tempos, voicings, textures, and accompaniments.
10. It is recommended that high school choral directors strive to select literature for their choirs throughout the year that is festival quality repertoire. Choirs benefit from learning quality classical literature throughout the year, not just during the time to prepare for festivals. Additionally, it is recommended that high school choral directors be aware of what constitutes festival quality literature.
11. It is recommended that high school choral directors program concerts with contrast between choral works. That contrast can be programmed with repertoire from different musical periods, styles, and genres. It can also be programmed through the selection of work of contrasting tempos, accompaniments, textures, voicings, and languages.

#### **Additional Research Possibilities**

1. It is recommended that further research be conducted with nationally recognized high school choral directors in other aspects of teaching such as rehearsal techniques, classroom management techniques, and assessment.
2. It is recommended that research be conducted to discover the processes and criteria of nationally recognized high school choral directors in the selection of performance literature for other choirs such as women's chorus and men's chorus.

3. It is recommended that research be conducted to discover the processes and criteria in the selection of performance literature by directors of other levels of choirs such as children's choirs, middle school and junior high choirs, college choirs, and community choirs.
4. It is recommended that research be conducted to compare the processes and criteria in the selection of performance literature by nationally recognized high school choral directors with other high school choral directors.
5. It is recommended that research be conducted to compare the festival literature requirements between different states in the United States.

### **Conclusions**

One of the most important tasks a choral director undertakes every year is the selection of performance literature. "Successful" high school choral directors, in particular ones who have achieved national recognition by performing at national conventions of the ACDA, have a lot of knowledge and proven practice in the selection of choral performance literature. The eleven directors interviewed are arguably experts in their field, and many choral directors can gain greater knowledge on how they can successfully approach their own repertoire selection choices by following the processes and criteria modeled by these nationally recognized directors.

Although the directors interviewed express some differences in philosophy and literature choices, they share many things in common. First and foremost, they all believe in the importance of selecting good, quality repertoire for their choirs and in spending the time needed each year to accomplish that. They also all believe in choosing repertoire representative of various genres, styles, and musical periods. Additionally they all carefully program their music on their concerts to create balance between pieces and interest for their audiences. Although each of these directors teaches in different areas, with different and diverse populations, and under



differing circumstances, each has shown that selecting quality repertoire should and can always be what choral directors strive to do.

APPENDIX A  
FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

**Interview Invitation Letter**

**The University of Florida**

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**Tracy KC Hunsaker, Doctoral Candidate**

College of Fine Arts  
School of Music

**Assistant Professor of Music Education**

Northeastern State University  
FA 205/600 N Grande Ave  
Tahlequah, OK 74464  
[Contact Telephone]  
Email: [Contact E-mail]

[Name and address of director]

[Date]

Dear [Director's Name],

I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Florida. I am working on my dissertation to complete a Ph.D. in music education with emphasis in choral music. The topic of my dissertation is *Processes and Criteria of Successful High School Choral Directors in the Selection of Performance Literature*. As you are well aware, the literature selected for a music ensemble has a great impact on the program's success and on the quality of music education received by the students in the ensemble.

For my study I would like to request an interview with you on this subject. As a director of a choir which performed at the national ACDA convention in [year], you are recognized by the ACDA as one of the best high school choral directors in the country, and I believe that you could contribute useful and important information on this subject. I am only requesting interviews with high school choral directors whose choirs have performed at the national ACDA convention since 1999. The information from the interviews would not only be used for my dissertation, but I would also submit it for wider publication in a journal so as to benefit many choral directors.

The interview would be conducted by phone and would take 30 to 60 minutes. After the interview I will send to you a cashier's check in the amount of \$50 as compensation for your time. I have included with this letter the following: a document of informed consent, a form for basic demographic information, a form for contact information, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you are willing to participate in this study, simply sign the letter of informed consent, fill in the forms for demographic information and the contact information, and return them to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. I will then contact you to establish a time for the interview.

Thank you for your time and for your leadership in the field of choral music education.

Sincerely,

Tracy KC Hunsaker, Doctoral Candidate  
Assistant Professor of Music Education

## Document of Informed Consent

Principal Investigator:

Tracy KC Hunsaker, M.Ed

Candidate to the Doctorate in Music Education, University of Florida

Assistant Professor of Music Education, Northeastern State University

This study is to discover the processes and criteria used by successful high school choral directors in the selection of literature. Included with this consent form is a paper to be filled out regarding basic demographic information about your program, a form for basic contact information, and also a list of the basic topics to be addressed during an interview. When this consent form and the forms of basic demographic information and contact information have been sent and received, a time for a phone interview will be established. During the interview, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. The phone interview will be taped for accuracy. Your personal information will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Only your name, school, and the name of your choir which performed at the National ACDA Convention will be included in the study.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your consent at any time without penalty.

There are no potential risks involved in participating in this study, nor are there any immediate benefits expected.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, feel free to contact me at the following campus address or phone number at Northeastern State University:

Tracy Hunsaker  
Northeastern State University  
FA 205  
600 N Grand  
Tahlequah, OK 74464  
(918)456-5511 ext 2702

or you may contact my faculty supervisor at the University of Florida:

Dr. Russell L. Robinson  
School of Music  
University of Florida  
MUB 354  
Gainesville, FL 32611  
(352)392-0223 Ext. 216.

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant can be directed to:

UFIRB office  
Box 112250  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL 32611-2250.

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2006-U-0375  
For Use Through 04/26/2007

The expected amount of time to complete the interview is 30 to 60 minutes.

When your interview is completed you will receive financial compensation of \$50. The money will be mailed to you in the form of a cashier's check.

Only the principal investigator will access the audio recording. The principal investigator will transcribe the responses, and your responses will be attributed to you by name. After the study is completed, all audio recordings will be erased.

---

I have read the procedure described above. I agree to participate in the procedure, and I have received a copy of this description.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Principal Investigator

---

Date

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Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2006-U-0375  
For Use Through 04/26/2007

## Demographics

1. Name
2. Number of years teaching
  - a. Total
  - b. At current position
3. With the choir you took to the national ACDA convention, how long had you been teaching at that school when you performed at the national ACDA convention?

For the following list information about your current assignment:

4. School
5. City, State
6. Total School population
7. Grades taught at school (i.e. 9–12, 10–12)

8. For each choir at the school list the following:

Name and Type of Choir	Grades in this Choir (9th, 10th, etc.)	Auditioned or Non-Auditioned Choir	Prerequisites for the class (if any)

9. Who is the accompanist for each of your choirs? (a paid accompanist from the community, a student, yourself with another accompanist for performance, etc.)

---

### **Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

The best time(s) to contact you: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Interviewer's schedule sheet

The following is a list of basic topics to be addressed with a main topic or question to act as a “springboard” for discussion. Bullet points list other topics or follow-up questions which might be asked by the interviewer if they are not addressed by the interviewee in discussion of the main statement or question.

### PHILOSOPHY ON THE SELECTION OF PERFORMANCE LITERATURE

1. Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature.
  - Describe your view of the importance of the selection of performance literature to the overall success of your choral program.
  - How have you developed your philosophy in regards to selection of performance literature?

### KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

2. From where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection?
  - College courses/ professors
  - Professional organizations
  - Conferences
  - Attending performances
  - Other teachers
  - Listening to recordings
  - Study of scores
  - Reading professional journals and books
  - Experience, trial and error



## SOURCES FOR FINDING LITERATURE

3. What sources do you use to find new literature?
  - Professional journals
  - Lists of recommended literature
  - Reading sessions at conferences for professional development where finding literature is just one of many professional functions (such as ACDA conferences)
  - Reading sessions at other functions where finding literature is the primary purpose of the event (such as at events sponsored by a publisher)
  - Looking through your school's library
  - Looking through and listening to promotional materials sent to you by publishers
  - Casual conversations with other directors
  - Intentional calling of other directors for suggestions
  - Listening to other choirs

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTING LITERATURE

4. What criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature?
  - Variety of musical styles and periods
  - Programming of a particular style or period
  - Difficulty level/complexity of literature
  - Programming music by particular composers
  - Aesthetic qualities of the music (beauty and effect)
  - Particular themes (Broadway, Madrigal, season, holiday, love, etc.)
  - Large works (oratorio or song cycle for example)
  - Quality of the work, particularly of the work as an arrangement
  - "Like-ability" of the piece by the choir
  - The number of voices in each section
  - The strength and quality of individual voices
  - The strength and quality of sections
  - Age of the voices
5. Discuss pieces (3–5) which you have selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those pieces.
  - You liked it
  - You thought the audience would like it and it would get a lot of applause
  - The piece provided a balance in terms of tempo, style, mood, and other factors
  - You thought other choral directors would be impressed
  - You needed to use something in your library to save money
  - Education objectives
  - You thought students would learn something about music from singing those works

6. How often do you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent of performing them?
  - Can you give an example of a piece you might use and why?
  - Do you sometimes change your mind and choose to use that piece for performance?
7. What consideration, if any, do you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment?
8. Did you ever start rehearsing a work that you thought was a good choice but then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working for one reason or another?
  - If yes, describe the situation, what the piece was and why it was withdrawn
  - How frequently does this occur?

#### SELECTION OF FESTIVAL LITERATURE

9. What part does festival literature play in your selection of choral music for the school year?
  - Is your festival literature selected separately from the rest of your concert pieces?
  - Do you select concert literature and then choose festival literature from those pieces?
  - Do you select festival literature and integrate it into the rest of your concert pieces?
10. What influences your choices of festival literature?
  - Are you influenced by the festival list?

#### METHODS FOR CATALOGUING LITERATURE

11. Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future?
  - Will you explain the format used for cataloguing the pieces?
  - What elements of the literature do you document?

## PROGRAMMING CONCERT LITERATURE

12. Do you use any particular methods for programming literature for concerts?
  - What method(s) would you say you use the most? (chronological, topical, alternation of contrasting styles, mono-stylistic, plural-thematic/stylistic, miscellaneous)
13. How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year?
14. What is a typical proportion of styles and genres you program on a single concert and throughout the year?
15. Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature? (e.g. varied accompaniments, ability of the accompanist, use of your own arrangements, etc.)
16. How much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased for that performance?

## **Transcript Review E-mail**

Dear [Director's Name],

Now that it has been about a year since I spoke with you, I would like to finally send to you a copy of the interview transcript from our conversation. Some minor changes have been made to the raw transcript for the following reasons:

1. To create more complete or grammatically correct sentence structure,
2. To reduce the amount of filler words such as “oh” and “um,”
3. To omit repeated words or phrases, and
4. To omit some personal comments.

I did not change any content. I am currently using the transcripts as I type the final “Results” and “Conclusion” chapters to my dissertation. I would also like to include the transcripts in the Appendix portion of the dissertation. To that end, if there is any part of the interview in which I did not represent your views and statements correctly, please let me know, and I will make those changes. If there are clarifications you would like to make as to what you said, they could be added as well. Also, if there are portions of the conversation which you are not comfortable having printed, please let me know.

Additionally, music cited in the transcript is referenced at the end of the transcript. For some of these citations I have been unable to get information for a complete reference (usually publication/copyright dates, and publisher information). It would be very helpful if you would review these references and fill in any gaps you can.

I personally have found the insights and knowledge which you shared to be very illuminating. I have already shared some of those things with colleagues, and I look forward to sharing more in the future, so that your expertise in the area of literature selection can help many other choral directors.

Attached is a Word document of your transcript with “track changes” enabled. You may make whatever corrections, clarifications, changes, or comments you wish directly to this document and then e-mail it back to me. If you are satisfied with the transcript “as is” send me an e-mail to that effect, or feel free to call me if that would be more convenient for you. After my final chapters are finished, I will be happy to share my work with you.

I will need to have your final modifications returned to me by Tuesday, September 25, 2007. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Again, thank you for your help.

Tracy KC Hunsaker

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview Transcript

23 May 2006 11:30AM CT

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Kevin Hawkins

Bio Note: Kevin Hawkins is the choral director at Glendale High School in Springfield, Missouri. The school has a total school population of approximately 1,500. At the time of the interview Mr. Hawkins had been teaching for nine years.

[Introductory conversation]

TH: So as not to keep you too long, I'll get right to the questions, just as I sent you:  
Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature.

KH: Now are we basing all this on just the National? Or just the way I pick literature?

TH: Just the way that *you* pick it; what is *your* philosophy that you follow.

KH: So we are not basing all these on the National [ACDA performance]; you are just basing this on my philosophy.

TH: Yes. This is you.

KH: Okay, so I'll just talk and ramble. I don't have a budget at all. I don't get any money. I get a little bit of money for a few octavos a year, but most everything we do, we have to fund-raise for it, so for me to purchase a piece of music it has to be extremely good. It has to be something that I want to keep and do again sometime down the road. Usually what I do is I throw it in a box. I have a black box. It is a file box. It is about one [foot] by one [foot]. All year long, when I find something, I will order one copy of it and throw it in the box. By the end of the year ([like] right now), what I'll end up doing is taking that box home. I don't really go to reading sessions any more. I don't like reading sessions. A lot of it is just poorly written and stuff I'm not going to use. It's a shotgun approach to picking your music; and I don't use a shotgun, I use a scope when I'm picking out literature. First, I have to like it. I order a copy, I throw it in the box, and then in the summertime what I do is go through the music and cull out what I want. I always order all my literature in July, for the whole year, for all my groups. Most of my friends, they wait until midway through the [school] year, and then they are scrambling trying to find out something they want to do for large contests. I already know a year in advance, so I'm not throwing things at the kids. I know way ahead of the time what we are going to do. It has to go through the box. It has to go through this summertime where I go through

it, I listen to them, and I play through them. Then what I do is I cull it again. Let's say I have fifty pieces for my top choir, and I need ten for the whole year. I go through it, and I cull it, and I throw about half of them in the black box again, and the other half I keep culling. In the summertime, it has to grow on me, and I have to really love it, and I have to be singing it around the house. It goes through a process, a lengthy process, before I narrow it down to the ten pieces I want to do. Maybe three pieces for my men's choir, three pieces for my women's choir, seven pieces for my chamber choir. Most people would say it's a real negative that you don't have any money to buy music, but I try to look at it as a positive. It forces me to *really* be selective of what I am going to use.

TH: So these pieces that you do take and put in your black box, where do you find them since you don't go to reading sessions?

KH: Well, most of it is concerts at the State, Regional, and National. I'll hear a group and I'll say, "That is something that I want." The other thing is, I am a CD packrat. When I came here from church work I had about 200 church CDs of contemporary Christian artists, but I didn't have any choral CDs. In that time frame I have gotten about 250 choral CDs. I listen to CDs all the time in the summer. I don't really have time during the year, at all. Most people are picking their music during the year, but I don't. I've already got my selections, and I focus on making the music during the year and making the selections during the summertime. It is through CDs. It's through that black box. I listen to CDs sometimes, and I'll say there is *one* off this CD that I want to order. I'll order one copy and throw it in the box, or I'll hear a concert and order the one copy.

TH: So your black box—just trying to envision it—is it a box that you have divided into separate classes?

KH: No, not really <laughing> I'm not that organized. I'm organized, but I just kind of throw it in there.

TH: For all of your classes?

KH: Yes, and here is the other thing, all these publishers send their CDs and packets out wanting me to look at it. Well, I don't have time. I'm working 60 to 70 hours a week, so I throw it in the black box, and then I'll go through it in the summertime, but that's not really what I get my music from. I'll tell you what, if I look at the Heritage Press CD packet, I probably get *one* out of there. It is the ones I hear from concerts or CDs, and I order one copy, and I will not order a piece unless I've got that one copy to look at when I listen to the song.

TH: So you don't hear one and go, "Wow! I'm going to buy that for my whole—

KH: Never do I do that. If I do that I always regret it, because I found that, depending on my mood, it is different all the time.

TH: So your mood when you heard it at that moment— it might be a different impression of it later.

KH: Sure, so I go back to it. This just came to my mind: I don't think an artist paints the portrait in one sitting. I think he is always sketching, and he is always adding layers and refining, and then the masterpiece comes alive. So that's what I do, and I didn't learn that anywhere. In church work, the church I came from, I took a \$25,000 pay cut, and my budget was like \$40,000 just for new music. It was huge. I come here, and I got \$1000 for the whole year for like six choirs.

TH: And I know \$1000 doesn't get much at all.

KH: No. And it's not my money. Our school system is huge, and we have a corporate library where everything comes from and goes back to.

TH: Just a general warehouse where all the music is stored. And you order it in and out of that warehouse, basically?

KH: No actually, we order it through like Winger Jones [Winger Jones Music, Inc.], or Peppers [J. W. Pepper & Sons, Inc.], and then it goes to the main library.

TH: But you have it pulled out of that [main library] so that you use it.

KH: Yes.

TH: How much do you do by way of professional journals or lists of recommended literature in terms of choosing what you do?

KH: It depends on what you are talking about. Are you talking ensembles or solos, or are you talking about choral?

TH: Choral.

KH: Large choir stuff? I never look at it.

TH: [You] don't worry about looking at the recommended literature and those things.

KH: I don't. Now I'm always looking at the State manuals for picking ensembles and solos, but when it come to a large choir, I'm looking for what moves me. Here is another thing you might grab. When I pick stuff it *has* to move me. It has to move me to the extent that

I get excited about it, because if I'm not excited about it and trying to excite my kids, they're smart, they'll read it, and they won't want to do it. A lot of times they won't want to do it anyway when I've picked something, but because of my excitement, they'll buy into it, and then they'll love it later.

TH: Because the students are feeding off of you in terms of how they feel about it.

KH: Yes, but if I buy it, and I ordered it and bought it off the spur of the moment, they are not going to follow through with that either.

TH: In terms of these things you go on to select your literature, where would you say you gained this knowledge?

KH: The school of hard knocks— doing it. I didn't learn it class.

TH: I found that to be common. Not very many people say they learned it in a class.

KH: Well there are five major high schools here where I'm at, and every one of our directors is totally different when it comes to what they pick. It's my personality, and I bring that to the forefront when I pick literature. It's really just that this is what has worked for me, and this is what I do. I can't imagine having to pick literature during the year, as busy as I am, because I have a church job too.

TH: So you're doing double.

KH: Yeah, most school people are. I just can't imagine picking my literature during the year. I do it all in the summer.

TH: I'm very much a planner. I plan ahead. I want the year to start, and I want to know what is happening before it starts. I know you say that you are looking for a piece that moves you. What other criteria do you look for?

KH: The text has to be great. It has to be well written, and there's just a zillion things there. For example, the interval jumps have to be good. I don't know. People always say that I'm able to pick the greatest literature, and then I'm able to piece a program together that has a message that ties it all together. I think that comes from my worship planning for fifteen years. What I try to do with my pacing of a concert is that I pick a real upbeat fast piece, then turn it around with a slow one, and then go back to real upbeat, and then slow. The pacing of the concert is huge for me. To me it's a presentation, and you are telling a story through what you are doing. I really believe that comes from worship planning for all those years.



- TH: Well, if you have all that experience . . . that's interesting. That's an interesting note. I hadn't thought on that before because nobody had mentioned that before, that it would come through that experience. That's neat. In terms of variety, musical styles and periods, do you focus much on that?
- KH: I do, very much so. At the National and Regional ACDA there is that written expectation of you, that you have to include certain things. If you pick 25 minutes of music, they ask you to pick at least two to three to four musical periods, involving your music in at least 3 musical periods. So I'm always looking for variety, and I like change too. Some people plan their concert by going through the musical periods in order. I don't do that. They'll go Renaissance, Baroque, and move their way into Contemporary. I don't really think about that. I think more in terms of just how it moves me, how it flows.
- TH: For the overall program of the concert or performance?
- KH: Yes.
- TH: Do you think, when you are listening and you think about whether it moves you, how much do you take into consideration the like-ability by the choir, or do you just figure that if you like it and you are moved by it, you can convey that to your students?
- KH: For me, I don't know, I think that if it moves me, I don't ever worry if it's going to move the kids, because if it moves me, it's going to move them because they see it in me.
- TH: And then the audience too?
- KH: Yes. The audience and judges always say, "There is something different about your choir. They sing with such passion." It is because we are committed to the music and its message. If I'm showing it on my face and body, then the kids, they are just a mirror of me, and then the audience is just a mirror of them, so it just works that way.
- TH: In terms of when you are looking at these criteria, how much are you looking at the pieces and watching for the difficulty, the level of complexity for the choirs, strengths of individual voices and sections?
- KH: I look for that all the time. Every year it is different. Like for two years I've had unbelievable basses. Two years before that I had unbelievable sopranos, and so you want to pick things that compliment your group. The other thing is that at regional, national, and state conventions that I do, people are surprised and totally blown away at some things I'll do. I did a ten-part antiphonal choir piece with my huge choir, and then I'll turn around and do a two-part piece, so what I'm showing is not only a contrast of periods, but some contrast of texture. They are able to sing that antiphonal choir stuff, and then they are able to turn around and sing unison lines passionately. I love doing a

variety. My family watches a cooking show all the time. When I used to eat when I was little, I used to go through the line as a little kid and get tater tots, and then French fries, and mashed potatoes. But a good cook is going to give variety to the textures and colors, and that is what you are really giving the audience and the choir.

TH: Question number 5 says: Discuss pieces which you have selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those pieces. Can you just discuss a few pieces that you chose and say why you chose them?

KH: There is a piece called *Hodie Nobis* (Philips, 1992). It is antiphonal. I have 80 in my top group that sang it at the state convention this year. It is total polyphonic all the way through for both choirs. That means that sometimes they are echoing and choir one is polyphonic within the 4 parts, choir two is polyphonic within their 4 parts, and then when they sing together it is eight-part polyphonic. I've got college professors that listen to us that couldn't even follow the music. So usually I'll pick a piece that just blows my choir, and they can't even follow, and that is our challenge piece for the year.

TH: Okay, so you like to have a challenge piece?

KH: Just an impossible piece. I love doing this with my kids and saying, "Okay, look, this piece is 26 pages long. We are going to learn 2 pages a week. I always tell my kids: "How do you eat an elephant? One piece at a time. We are not going to look at the big picture, we are going to take it in small bites, and we are going to accomplish this." Then there are other pieces that I put in there, maybe right after that, which they can almost sight-read, [and in] one or two days [be ready to perform it]. Then we will turn around and do something just trying to get a different texture. I want pieces that are impossible, maybe one piece out of a concert of 30 minutes, one piece that they have had to work so hard at that they think it is impossible when they first start, and then a couple of pieces that are medium ability, and maybe one piece or two in there that's fairly easy.

TH: Can you name maybe a medium ability one that you have selected in the last year, and why you chose that piece?

KH: Okay, maybe a French Renaissance piece, maybe a German Renaissance piece, or Italian Renaissance, 4-part, maybe even a madrigal or something like that. There are so many of them out there.

TH: But those are things that you might look for each year to do, those types of pieces to fit in as medium level literature?

KH: Yes. There is one that I do with my basic choirs that I just finished, *Tanzen und Springen*. It is by [Hans Leo] Hassler (2004b), Renaissance, 4-part. That is a medium. You are

doing 4-part, [non-English] language. Then before that was maybe the split choir, 8-part, just extremely difficult.

TH: Who was the split choir , 8-part by?

KH: *Hodie nobis de caelo* by Peter Philips (1992), that's the 8-part polyphonic split antiphonal choir, and then I turned around and did [Felix] Mendelssohn's (1843/1984) *Frühzeitiger Frühling* [Op. 59, No. 2]. It is only 4-part but it is German,. And then I turned around and did *Drop, Drop, Slow Tears* by Eleanor Daley (1998). So within three songs I've done Renaissance, Romantic, and Contemporary; I've done Latin, German, English.

TH: The one that is English, did you consider that an easy piece?

KH: It is. It is fairly easy. For us it is easy. It is 4-part, and just glorious. For the kids it is just not even hard to do.

TH: I like to go to a performance and listen to that occasional piece that sounds more simple. What do you look at when you are looking at the easy pieces to know it is still worthwhile literature?

KH: It moves me.

TH: Just because it moves you.

KH: It moves me in a way that . . . I can just can't help but do it; I gotta do this piece. It is like a candy store, and my Momma is saying, "Here is a dollar, you can get five pieces. Pick out which ones you want." I'm going to pick out the ones that I really like. I'm selfish. They are the ones that I think, "Ooo, I want that and I want this." I think it all stems from worship experience. When I'm writing worship services, I am writing services that move me; and when I lead them, all I am doing is drawing the congregation into it with me. It is like I have to worship first, and then the congregation will follow, and that is the way I believe to be so for the choir program. I am doing things selfishly that I want to do, and then the kids see the excitement in following.

TH: These pieces when you choose them, do you ever choose them because they fit any educational objectives that you may have?

KH: <laughs> Do you want me to be honest? No. I'm shooting straight with you. I'll tell you what, if you cut and slashed it all away it comes back to, "does this piece move me?" If it moves me then it is well-written, the words touch me, the music is something I'll want to do, and I'll want to invest hundreds of hours into it. A lot of directors, they dive into their music, and they don't really like it any more, and they burn out on it. I never get that way with it.

Then what I did after the English piece is I turned around and sang Russian by Mikhail Glinka (2000) from *Musica Russica* [www.musicarussica.com]. It is called *Poputnaya Pesnia* [Traveling Song]. So within four songs— this is from my chamber choir singing at the ACDA Southwestern Regional in Saint Louis in March. Then they turn around and do *Exultate Deo* by [Hans Leo] Hassler (2004a). It is a 4-part piece, and then they did *El Hambo* [by] Jaakko Mäntyjärvi (1997). It is sooo hard. Then we closed with a piece called *Psalm of Hope*, which is 4-part, by Andrea Ramsey (2004) from Arkansas. I didn't even direct it. I just sat down on the front row. It is 4-part, really easy, and it does a lot of unison and 2-part in there. I had a girl stand out where I conduct, and she signed it as the choir sang it, without my direction, and so, I don't know, I've changed a lot in doing conventions. Most, I'd say 99% of the choirs end on some spiritual, okay? Big Spiritual. It's kind of: everybody, okay, we are going to do the tough stuff, and now let's give a song that the kids want to sing. I'm not worried about that any more. What I want to do is that if I'm going to do a spiritual, I want to do it in the middle somewhere and then end with something really . . . just . . . passionate and moving, so that people just go, "Wow!"

TH: So you are pretty much an aesthetics person in terms of your selection?

KH: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

TH: Well, from everything you've said, I don't think I even I need to even worry about my question number 6 that I put down: How often to you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent of performing them. It sounds like that is not something you would do.

KH: I do do that. I do. The other strength of mine is teaching my kids the sight-reading. I pick things all the time, and I throw them at them—not to perform—but just throw music at them and say, "Okay, here we go." We sight-read all the time. My kids are just unbelievable sight-readers, so we do just tons of literature in the year to train them to sight-read.

TH: At any time have you had a piece you put out just to sight-read and went, "You know what? I'd like to perform that one."

KH: Yeah. A lot of time I'll say, "pass it in." Very few times do I ever say, "okay, let's keep this one." That's because most of my sight-reading stuff is meant to emulate what we do at the sight-reading level, 4-part, and it does kind of an A B A [ternary form] and simple keys [key signatures]. But I don't really perform a whole lot of stuff that is at the sight-reading level; it would be extremely easy.

TH: Do you have to give any consideration to what you select, based on how hard the accompaniment is? I read what you put for who does your accompaniment, but are you limited at all in what you choose?

KH: I would say no. I don't really think about it. Although when I pick ensemble music, none of my ensembles had piano accompaniment, and probably 8 out of 10 pieces that I pick don't have piano. That is, they are *a cappella*. I just finished a student teacher; I have a student teacher every semester. If I do have piano, they are surprised that I never use the piano accompaniment until the day of the concert.

TH: Really!? That's interesting. I haven't ever heard anybody say that.

KH: I rip the thing apart, and do it mostly a cappella, making sure they have the correct intonation. And my student teachers usually freak out like, "These kids aren't going to get it without the piano." I'll say, "No, they're going to get it, and it's going to be great." Just to see them they put together the accompaniment with the music they have learned, it is just a really neat experience.

TH: It's like the cherry on top?

KH: Yeah, it is.

TH: My question eight that I have was: Did you ever start rehearsing a work you thought was a good choice but then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working?

KH: Yes. I'm not afraid to do that, and I think that's a strength. If you are not afraid to admit that, "hey, this is going to take 100 hours to learn this. Is it worth what we are doing here?"

When I first came here, I heard a girl say, "we want to have some say about what we do." I always remember that from the first year I was here. I always say, "what do you want to do? This is your program. I'm just coming in to help. What do you want to do?" The program has doubled since then. What I do at contest time, about a month before contest, maybe around February, I'll throw all the names of the songs up on the board that we have done, and I'll have them pick the three songs we are doing for contest.

TH: So you let your students choose from the literature that you have done?

KH: I don't know anybody else that does that.

TH: I haven't heard that either.

KH: Why in the world do I do that? I'll tell you, number one: the kids that I have trained know about contests and know what is expected of them. They make wise choices about what

to do. They'll say, "look, we need to do maybe a Baroque piece. We need to do three different periods. We need to do fast-slow-fast, or slow- fast-slow. I just step back and let them do this, and they will pick out the right songs because I have trained them to be selective. If I let them do them, my choir sings with such passion because they are committed to the music. They picked it. When they come to contests they are like, "hey, this is the way we've laid it out. These are the pieces we've picked." I'll stop sometimes, and I'll say, "look, you guys are the ones that picked these. You are the ones that have done this."

TH: Boy, that is an interesting concept. That really is!. That's neat.

KH: <laughs> I'm all about training the kids for life, not just for the class. I had a student teacher that just finished with me, and when we went to sight-reading with my four choirs, I made her take my girls, because I knew my girls. They normally sing a 1-plus on sight-reading; and I knew that they would be fine. Even if they did badly they wouldn't make a 2. It would be around a 1 or a 1-minus, and I made that student teacher do that experience of directing my girls during sight-reading, and she did great! She said she is already hired. I am really a believer in training student teachers and students to be independent of me. At my last concert last week I had all my choirs sing. It was an hour and 15 minute choir program, and I didn't direct a single song. My student teacher directed about a fourth of them, and then my ensembles from State sang. They are all independent of me. I pick a captain who is in charge of the group, and then all the rest of the songs that my top choir did I had six seniors direct.

TH: Huh. That's amazing.

KH: It's cool!

TH: That is way cool because it sounds like you really are about the music and about the kids.

KH: I teach them how to direct, so when they hop up there and direct as an eighteen-year-old or seventeen-year-old ,in front of their class, it's so great. That is for the last one. The other three that we do—the Fall, the Winter, and the Spring concerts—it's all about getting serious and doing this horrendous literature. The last one is: "let our hair down, and let's pick some things that we can just go on, and wail on; and we are not being judged, so forget dynamics, and let's just have fun."

TH: I used to do that when I was teaching too. The May concert was the one, "This is for fun." So that answers my questions about festival literature.

Just so I know, when you have basically scrapped a piece, what things make you decide to not use it—if you had planned on using it and decide not to. And how frequently might that happen?

KH: Uh . . . intonation problems. This year I picked a lot of descending passages in pieces, and to be honest with you, a couple of them ate our lunch. So I would spend a month on them, and finally I just said, “Look. Pass it in. We could spend the next five months on this and probably get it down, but I don’t want to spend all our time on this one.” I really look at the piece, and maybe it is the way the way the melody is written or the harmonies are written, or the way the words come out, just the whole package of it. I come back to the feel—the aesthetic—it doesn’t *feel* right. I evaluate it and think, “here is where we need to go. Here is where we are. Do we have the time and the energy to put into this and will it distract from the other pieces that we are doing because of it?”

TH: Does that happen very often for you?

KH: No, it doesn’t. But when it does, we are just honest. Some directors wouldn’t do that. They would know it in their heart, but they might think, “well, I’ve spent a hundred bucks on this. We’re gonna do it! I don’t care what you say!” They would just pound them to death. I’d rather put it on the shelf and send it back than spend a hundred hours. It’s time that is just not worth it.

TH: The last questions I have, 12 through 16, are all dealing with programming your concert literature. You have talked quite a bit about it actually. I’m just trying to look and see if there is any of it that you haven’t. You’ve talked about your methods for programing concert for literature; you’ve talked about your concert programming affecting the literature you select. Do you look at it like, “This is for this concert, and this is for this concert, and this is for this concert?”

KH: I sure do.

TH: So you do look at it that way when you are looking at that in the summer?

KH: I do. When I order the music, I know exactly when I should start working on it, what part of the year, and I lay it out. If I don’t lay it out on paper, it is mentally laid out.

TH: Then you can make sure in each concert you have that variety, that contrast?

KH: Uh huh. I do 70% of all the literature we do in the whole year within the first semester. The last semester, actually the third quarter, we don’t do any new music. We are sight-reading every day, and we are polishing the songs that we chose for contests. So really I have my year planned out mentally all ahead. The last two months is: “let your hair down, and let’s pick some pieces that are fun. Let’s involve our ensembles and solos, and let’s celebrate. But the first semester, we are in sectionals all the time. We have sight-reading captains. It is like an army. We are fine-tuned. We are pounding. They will throw all these things at me. “We are going bell to bell today and working hard.”

TH: You mentioned solos and ensembles. Do you use solos and smaller ensembles to mix in between your large choral pieces?

KH: I do for ensembles, and I only pick large ensembles. I never do trios, and I never do quartets. Very seldom do I ever do a sextet. It is mostly eight kids. I do that because it sounds fuller and you've got two to a part. I'll intersperse those in a concert, but I don't do that on solos. If they make a "1" at state, which I had eleven kids make "1's" on their solos, I highlight those 11 kids on a separate concert an hour before our final concert, and the parents and family come for that. I don't know anybody else that does that either. Our concerts are sixty minutes and [then] we're out of there, except our last one, because I involve the ensembles from state that got "1's." This time I had 8 octets that got "1's." So you are involving a lot of kids, and it adds a little bit of extra time to your concert. But most of my concerts are an hour long, and that's it, and that's with six choirs performing. They are an hour and we're done.

TH: So you keep yours basically to an hour then?

KH: The choir program that competes with us in town, they have been doing two- and three-hour concerts. I've got two kids at home and a wife. My kids are 10 and 12. I'm going home. The other one you wanted to ask me was the length of songs. You bring your personality into your program. I've heard a lot of my choral friends, and they are doing pieces that are 4, 5, and 6 minutes long. When I select music, if it is over 4 minutes long, I don't do it. My concert choir sang at the State convention, and my chamber choir sang at the Regional ACDA—two different groups. We have 25 minutes to do a program. That is applause and everything. At both of those we did seven pieces. A lot of my friends, they will do five pieces that are like 5 and 6 minutes pieces. For me, I've an attention deficit. After about four minutes I don't care what it sounds like <laughs>. I want a variety; I want different emotions; I don't want to sit and listen to a song for eight minutes that is in minor and just goes on and on and on; I want to be moved. We have different emotions every hour, every moment almost. I don't think I've every really voiced this to anybody because I'm kind of embarrassed about it, but I'll throw something in the black box, and then I'll get home and listen to it or play through it, and time it. If it's six minutes long, like this Z. Randall Stroope (2001) piece, *Amor de mi Alma*, it's glorious, it's so beautiful . . . but it's six minutes long.

TH: So do you not do multi-movement works, or do you sometimes do that?

KH: I don't really. I did a piece for my chorus two. Do you know Paul Basler? He wrote an African Mass [*Missa Kenya*] (Basler, 1996). I've never done the whole mass, but I've done every one of his pieces on that mass at different times. I don't mind doing major works. It just seems like you are just sitting there eating potatoes and fries and tater tots. I like to take people from the Renaissance to the Romantic to the Baroque to the Contemporary, just change the mood.



- TH: That leads into the question that asks: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres that you program on a single concert and throughout the year? What would you say is your typical proportion? You have talked about doing renaissance, romantic, contemporary. Would you pretty much that you are pretty equal?
- KH: Hmmm. . . . Oh that is a tough one. It depends on what time of year. It really does. The first part of the year, the first semester, I'm really into just learning as much music and variety as possible. The third quarter I'm really nailing down what four choirs are going to do, what three pieces each of the men's choir, women's choir, chamber choir, [and] concert choir are doing, and polishing, sight-reading. The last concert we do mostly just "let-your-hair-down" pieces like gospel, black spiritual, just crazy pieces.
- TH: So it depends on the time of year and what the concert is. Is there anything else you take into consideration when you are programming your concert literature, like different accompaniments? We talked about the ability of the accompanist.
- KH: I have to really be concerned about programming sacred pieces and church choral stuff, that I give variety in secular. I have to be real careful with that.
- TH: In terms of programming sacred and secular?
- KH: Yeah, there has got to be a balance. I probably err on the sacred side. I do probably two-thirds sacred, one-third secular.
- TH: That is a conversation I always have to have with my music education majors. I always make sure to have the conversation on sacred and secular music and how do we approach that in public schools.
- The last question I had down was: How much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased? You've kind of talked about that. So on a given concert, let's say you have a choir doing seven pieces. Might you have one of those that is new?
- KH: No, it would be more like. . . . it really depends on the time of year. My top choir, they would all be new, and my men and women, it would all be new. But my chorus two and my chorus one, I don't want to spend all my money on chorus one and two. We are going to recycle a bunch of the stuff every few years, because my goal is on my top choirs. They get to see a lot of new stuff.
- TH: With your chorus one and two, are you recycling your literature so that they have certain basic literature to prepare them for your upper choirs?

- KH: Yes I am. They may say, “I remember my brother doing that or my sister doing that.” That is okay with me. It is fun for them to do something that they have heard, but for my upper four groups, they are doing songs they have never heard before we started learning them, or seen. They are brand new to me and to my library. I very rarely ever go back and repeat something in the nine years that I’ve been here. Probably once or twice with my upper choirs have I ever done that.
- TH: Your women’s, men’s, concert choir, and chamber choir, all those?
- KH: Yes.
- TH: So if you are buying that much new literature, you really have to make sure that it is the right stuff when you go to order it.
- KH: Yes.
- TH: That takes a lot of planning and a lot of making sure you know that piece before you even buy it. Well, thank you so much. Is there anything else that you can think of that I haven’t asked that you feel is important?
- KH: No. The greatest thing I’ve learned is through the rough times in my life, when I really . . . fall. The first year I came back here nine years ago and did sight-reading, I just fell on my face. I didn’t know what I was doing, so I determined that I was going to be the best sight-reading choir in this area. I came up with strategies and ideas and got on the phone and called experts in this area in the state. You would ask me, “Where did you learn all this, in school?” I don’t think so. I just really learned it through the school of hard knocks and tweaked it every year to make it the way I want it and the way I think it works best. I don’t know it all. I am always learning; You always hear that, too, that you always need to be a student of learning. That is why I pick new literature all the time; because I want to learn something new and fresh.
- TH: I think the very best teachers are those that are striving to learn more. In teaching we teach by making sure we are always learning.
- KH: Yeah. I think that the key for me is the aesthetics, the beauty, the passion. If one described me it would have to be passion, that everything that I do, it has to be passionate because I really feel that I only have a certain amount of time and I don’t want to waste it on something that doesn’t move me. I want to be moved, and I want to move others.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript

23 May 2006 1:30PM CT

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Kimberly (Kim) Drusedum

Bio note: Kim Drusedum is the choral director at Green Valley High School in Henderson, Nevada. It has a school population of approximately 2,700 students. At the time of the interview Ms. Drusedum had taught for 16 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: What is your philosophy regarding the selection of performance literature?

KD: As I work towards festival and the end of the year I try to make the literature a little out of reach. I also look for things that I think the audience is going to enjoy because their parents are coming to all the concerts and I don't want to bore them to tears, but I also want to challenge the kids at the same time. So I feel like it needs to be good quality literature that the audience can get involved with, and that will stretch the kids a little bit so that they can learn.

TH: How would you say you have developed your philosophy, or do you feel like you just went out teaching with that philosophy, or have you developed it?

KD: I think I've developed it. I look at my high school choir teacher as the person that steered me that way. I was such a choir geek and she knew it, and so I would always ask her questions about things. If you were to talk to her today she would say the same thing: make sure that it is really good quality literature, but also that the audience is going to enjoy it, because the parents are part of this whole thing and if they don't enjoy it they are not going to want their kids in it and then you won't have audiences that come to the concert.

TH: So then what is your view of how important the selection of literature is in your overall program?

KD: I think it is really important. I've seen my kids, when I have pulled out something that tough but that they really, really like. They work hard. They seem to work harder. When I pull out something really easy, sometimes they won't work as hard. And so I think it is really important that you plan out your concerts really well, and that you pick literature that going to be interesting . . . as a teacher too, because it can get boring teaching things.

TH: Where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection, did you do it in high school—you talked about your high school teacher—did you learn things in college?

- KD: Yeah, I watched her a lot. When I got to college I got a little bit, but really not much. I really think that it was on-the-job training. I have to say, in college we had to put together a spring concert program and a festival program. Basically what I used for those is stuff that I had done in high school myself, stuff I had performed. I think the longer I teach, the better I get at picking literature, I think it just takes a while. You have to get used to who your audience is and what kind of kids you have and go from there.
- TH: Do you think you learned any of it from professional organizations or conferences or any of those kinds of things?
- KD: I have learned some from ACDA, yes. They have a publication with all the ACDA performances, the music that everybody did, and I look in that a lot. Sometimes it triggers my memory of stuff that is really old that nobody does any more. There was an article in the Choral Journal many years ago by Bruce Mayhall (1994) who used to be at University of Nevada, Reno, and he did an article on choosing literature and it had a lot of resources from different ACDA conventions and stuff. So, yes, I will say that has helped immensely.
- TH: Particularly it sounds like you read-up on the things that are put out by ACDA.
- KD: Right. I do. And then I go to workshops all the time to find new literature. I spent a week last summer in Oregon with Rod [Rodney] Eichenberger [of Florida State University] at [a master class program sponsored by Portland State University's] Haystack [Summer Program at Cannon Beach, Oregon]. We had 200 different pieces of music, and we read through almost every single one of those pieces in that one-week period; it was pretty awesome. And then in Santa Fe, [New Mexico] they do a thing called Perspectives [Choral Sessions] where I walked home with about 150 pieces of music. When you go to workshops, even if you find one piece out of those 100 pieces of music, then you are in good shape.
- TH: Then that was something that you found that hopefully will work.
- KD: Exactly.
- TH: What other sources? You said you read literature and you go to workshops. Are there places you go to for other sources to find it?
- KD: I also get in the mail those CD things from like Hal Leonard and all those things. I just take those—because they always come around this time of year, and so in the summer I just throw them into my CD player in the car and I listen. If something is junky I just forward it, and then if I really like something I'll wait until a stoplight and circle it and say, "Okay, I like this one," and then go back and revisit it again. I find it really helpful when there is a recording of something. It makes it a lot easier in this day and age with

CD players and stuff to be able to listen to it right away. Sometimes you don't get a lot of time to sit down at the piano and just fish through music and play through it. Also I am a judge for Heritage Festival. I have a little notebook next to me when I am doing judging, and if I hear a piece of music I like, I write it down.

TH: So you pick things up from hearing other performances too.

KD: Yes. I am also in charge of our school district festival here, so I get to watch the whole thing, all four days of it except when my kids are on stage, so I really get to hear a lot of new music from where ever those people went out to get it, workshops, or whatever.

TH: Do you pick any up from having conversations with other directors?

KD: Yes. Sometimes they'll say, "I heard this piece and I think you should do it with your women's group," and I'm like, "Okay." They'll give you the information, and I'll give it a shot. Most of the people around here, they've known me for so long now, they know what styles I like.

TH: When you are picking these pieces, what criteria are the most important to you in selecting the literature?

KD: First of all, voicing and accompaniment, and the reason being is that we are not provided our own accompanists here. Some states in their classroom they have an accompanist. We are not provided our own. I play piano, so I'm okay, but as far as concerts go, I like to conduct. I don't want to have to play, so I need to make sure that I have somebody that can play the accompaniment. I also think it needs to be meaningful to the kids, and very good quality, something that they will enjoy doing. They enjoy doing pop music, and we do stuff like that in the spring for our spring concert, but they really like something that is meaty and stuff they can get into and that they can make their own, at least my kids do. So I look for something that is going to be that little carrot that's going to dangle. Usually when I pass out music, if I have a recording of it, I play it so they can hear what it is going to sound like when it is done. When they hear something that is really, really neat, then they want to work on it. So it has got to be meaningful to them.

TH: So you say that in the spring you might do more pop stuff-you might have a concert at the end of the year that's more pop style.

KD: The other night we did our spring concert, and we call it "Movies, Musicals, and More," and we do some musical theater, and then there's some scenes from movies, then the more is whatever else I want to do. I leave it open for that. There's the choirs, but then there's also some solos. It's a real audience pleaser; the parents love it. We always send a letter to our incoming that are going to be freshmen to come, and they love it—to get them all excited to come hear the choir.

- TH: When you are programming, how much do you take into consideration programming a variety of styles and periods, a particular style or period.
- KD: I try to take it into consideration, especially at festival time. With my madrigal singers I usually try to do renaissance things. Once in a while I will add in some really cool Eric Whitacre, and stuff like that. With my concert choir for festival I always try to do some sort of renaissance piece to open, and then have a really meaty piece in the middle, and then do a spiritual. That's just always worked for me.
- TH: That's very typical. I've found that for a lot of choir directors that works for them.
- KD: It does work. I try to pick from different time periods. I'm not a big Romantic fan, so I don't do a lot of Romantic literature, but once in a while I'll throw one in, but I try to make each piece different so with the kids we can talk about the time period. We can talk about why it was written. It's a cross-curricular thing with history. That's makes everybody happy.
- TH: Can you discuss a few of the pieces which you've performed during this last year and tell why you chose them.
- KD: The first one that came to mind is the *O Nata Lux* by [Morten] Lauridsen (1997). I did it with my concert choir, and one of the reasons that I chose it is I just think that it's a beautiful piece. Second of all, the tuning is really tough. I have a pretty young concert choir this year, and I want them to learn how to tune all of the 9ths and 11ths, and so it was a great piece for that. It's also a great piece for opening up yourself and kind of letting yourself be naked out there. It's because you have to let your feelings out. You cannot just sing in a box. I really work on that with my kids. High school kids have emotions just like everybody else, and a lot of people don't let their students give everything they've got. I want them to feel drained when they're done singing it.
- TH: You want them to have a piece that they have to give their all to perform it.
- KD: Exactly, from their toes, all the way up.
- TH: Do have any other pieces you can think of?
- KD: With my madrigals I did the William Byrd (1948) *Sing Joyfully*. That splits the women into four parts, and just tenor and bass. I have a very strong women's section this year, so I thought four parts would be very challenging. Also, it has so many different sections that you have to do different articulation and really make the music dance and come alive. We can all study those sections together and decide how we wanted each of those

sections to happen. It was really good for them to give them ownership of the piece, which I think is important too.

TH: To help them to process.

KD: I don't always give them all of the answers. I say, "Let's talk about this. What do you think? What should we do with this section of the piece?" They come pretty close, and then I just kind of hone in on what they say and spin it, and we do it that way.

TH: It sounds like sometimes you select pieces for education objectives you might have.

KD: Probably most of the pieces are. I didn't say that before, but yeah.

TH: You alluded to that at the beginning with your philosophy. How often do you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent to perform them. Do you ever do that?

KD: Yeah, I think every year there's one or two pieces for each choir that I just do for educational purposes, and we don't always perform them.

TH: But you might change your mind and decide to perform them?

KD: Yeah, sometimes I do.

TH: What consideration, if any, do you give the accompaniment?

KD: When I choose for accompaniment, especially at festival time, we always travel. We do a festival here, and then we travel someplace. I have to think about, "Can we travel with the other things that we need?" Like the Whitacre (1996) *Cloudburst* comes to mind. We were going to Hawaii, and I had to make sure I could get a thunder sheet there. I couldn't take that on the airplane, and there are handbells. We had to make sure that those could go on the airplane and get a bass drum there. So if I'm traveling some place, and let's say I have something with organ, and we're going to a festival and there's no organ there, I won't use it that year.

TH: You look ahead at where you're going with those pieces, and you might, depending on the accompaniment, go: "You know, that's not going to work where we're going?"

KD: Right.

TH: Did you every start a work you thought was good but scrapped it because it didn't seem to be working?

- KD: Yeah, sometimes things just don't click with the kids, and also, if it's something that I didn't have a recording to listen to, I might have played it on the piano, and when it got to the voices it just didn't resonate and do what it needed to do. Sometimes yes, I've had to do that.
- TH: Can you think of any particular pieces that you ran across that?
- KD: This year we pulled out *My Spirit Sang All Day* (Finzi, 1939/1969) with my madrigals at the beginning of the year, and it just didn't really click at all. I put it away. It just wasn't right for that group of kids at that time with those voices.
- TH: How often do you think that happens? Is that something that you think each year there's a piece?
- KD: Maybe every other year.
- TH: For the selection of festival literature, what part does festival literature play in the selection of choral music for the year. Do you select it separately from the rest of your concert pieces? Do you pull it from the rest of your concert pieces?
- KD: I select it separately from my concert pieces. We start our festival literature in January, when we get back after New Year's. Usually our festival is in the first part of March, and we travel in April, so it lives with use for a while. I do select it separately.
- TH: So it is its own selection when you say, "This is for festival."
- KD: Exactly.
- TH: What influences your choice of festival literature? Are you influenced by a festival list?
- KD: Here at our school district festival we have to have for our advanced groups one piece that's off the Texas or New York list, level 4 or above. You also have to have a piece that's in a foreign language and a piece that's *a cappella*. They might be all the same piece really, and then they ask us to have three contrasting pieces. Those are our rules.
- TH: Do you have a system for cataloguing the pieces you discover and want to use in your program in the future?
- KD: Yeah, I have these big filing cabinets, and when I get single copy stuff, I file them, and I have a file for special stuff that I really want to use. The other stuff I just put alphabetically according to voicing, and then I have my little "gem" folder of things I want to do some day before I die.



- TH: To set them aside for the right time, the right moment?
- KD: I have stuff I'd like to do before I stop teaching, stuff I've heard at festivals, or whatever. Right now we are winding down the year, and in the summer is when I really choose my program for the next year. So I'll take my little gems folder home with me of pieces that some day I want to do, and go from there.
- TH: So you use that to kind of look through and decide what pieces you are going to do next year in the summertime?
- KD: And sometimes in the beginning of the year I'm on the mailing list for a lot of the publishers. Alliance [Alliance Music Publishers] they send a fall and then a spring big packet. So does Santa Barbara Music Publishing, and so I could get all of my music picked and then in the fall get something from Alliance or from Santa Barbara and go, "I'm going to use this right now." Things could always be knocked off if I find something that's good.
- TH: Something that you'd rather do?
- KD: Right, yeah.
- TH: The rest of the questions that I sent really deal with programming your concert literature. Do you use any particular methods for programming the concert literature for your concerts, like chronological or topical?
- KD: You know, my college director use to do that. He use to do like three pieces with the same title but different composers. I got bored with that. I just try to pick sets that work well together. For each group I'll pick a good opener that they are going to feel comfortable on that kind of says to the audience "Hey, here we are." Then we'll do something slow, maybe something *a cappella*, and then we'll add something upbeat.
- TH: So it's more putting it in order of contrasting styles.
- KD: It's like a puzzle. I look at it like a puzzle, and then I just get the puzzle to fit.
- TH: So, how much does you concert programming affect the literature you select? Are you right when you are selecting it looking in terms of that puzzle that you are going to put in the concert? Or do you pick ones you want to do and fit them in?
- KD: I look at pieces I'm selecting for concerts. The other day I was listening to one of these CD things I got, and I heard a piece, and I thought, "Oh, that's perfect for my women's group on the spring concert." So I'm thinking how it would fit in a concert.

TH: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres you program on a single concert or throughout the year? Or is that something that you can't really say because it's so different each year?

KD: I think it's so different each year. I can't really say. It's different every year.

TH: So you aren't one that says, "Oh, I actually do a lot of 20th Century every year," or anything like that. It's just whatever the pieces are that have fit into the puzzle regardless of their styles and genres and things.

KD: Yeah.

TH: Are there any other considerations you take into account when you're programming your concert literature, like varied accompaniments, or any other factors that you take into account that we haven't touched on?

KD: I don't think so— Timing, because I don't want them to be here for four hours, so I have to look at how long each group is gonna sing. It's kind of important because a lot of parents bring little kids and stuff like that. For festival we only have fifteen minutes on stage. When we go out of town it's longer, but here it's only fifteen minutes. I have to plan accordingly.

TH: How much do you basically look at for timing on a concert? What's typical for you?

KD: We usually do a two hour concert with a ten minute intermission.

TH: When you are looking at pieces, do you look at length of individual pieces? Does it really factor in for you if you do a long piece or a short piece?

KD: I don't look at the length of the individual; I look at the whole picture, and I put it together.

TH: So you don't shy away from a longer piece, or anything like that?

KD: No.

TH: Do you do things that have multiple movements?

KD: I have. I haven't lately, but we have done things with multiple movements.

TH: Last, how much of the concert literature you do each year has been newly purchased for performance?

KD: I thought about this a lot. I would say half.

TH: Does that change depending on which group you're working with? Do you buy more new music for one group than another.

KD: I think it's pretty even, because there are some things in my library that I'm always going to do with kids because I think they need to do them, and then there's other things that I try to go out and get new music so they can experience, so I would say half.

TH: Is there anything I haven't asked that you think is important in selecting literature?

KD: I don't think so. I think we've covered all of it.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript

24 May 2006, 7:05 am

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Kay Sherrill

Bio note: Kay Sherrill is the choral director at Judson High School in Converse, Texas. It has a school population of approximately 3,500. At the time of the interview Ms. Sherrill had taught for 24 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: I know this is a really broad question, and it might answer some of the other questions, to ask you to describe your basic philosophy when you are selecting performance literature.

KS: Oh, well, there probably would be several components of that basic philosophy. Is that all right?

TH: Yes, that's fine.

KS: Okay. Let me think, let me prioritize here. I think one of the first components here is thinking in terms of the students, where they are developmentally, and what they need. What I will be picking for fall of the year is going to be a whole different matter from what I will be picking in the spring. There needs to be good teaching literature, so the kids that are new to the program and to the particular choirs can learn what they need to learn without just freaking out. You can't throw the *Symphony of Psalms* (Stravinsky, 1930/1948) at them or something. The number one priority is just sort of knowing the students, what their needs are, and where they are. Second is literature variety and doing *great* literature. These would really be equal. You have to keep the first one in mind as you're selecting the great literature. You've gotta do the best possible literature that you can do, literature with integrity, literature of different centuries. I'm thinking in terms of my top mixed choir. I always try to do something from different time periods. I've fallen into trying to do a semi-major work on my fall concert, so that locked us into a particular time period. I did the Haydn (1750/1990) *Missa Brevis* this past fall, and the year before that we did [Giovanni Battista] Martini's (1958) *Domine Ad, Adjuvandum Me Festina*. Before that we did the Haydn (1799/1959) *Te Deum*, but that's been several years ago. One year we did Randall Thompson's (1975) *Frostiana*, so that kind of takes care of my top choir. My younger groups, same thing, just trying to pick, I'm going to pick folk-based music, so that my younger singers can learn it quicker while in the process of teaching them to sight-read, and understand the solfege system. I'll pick the music that will sort of support that choice, while picking music with the greatest integrity.

TH: Really trying to get a balance between all of those factors.

- KS: If I can get through the year and feel like I have exposed them to every time period that's required by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, in which we are asked to teach across all time periods.
- TH: That's something that not that many states make that much specification.
- KS: That surprises and saddens me.
- TH: Well, yes, I would agree. So, how important do you see the literature that you select to the over-all success of your program? How important do you think it is to the over-all success of your program?
- KS: Well, let's see. Let me think for a second.
- TH: That's just kind of a sub-question about your philosophy.
- KS: I think in our situation it's a vital key, and the reason is that when I get new kids in the program we cultivate in the kids, I think, the pride that they are going to be singing Mozart and they are going to be singing McCartney. I tell them, "All right, this is a legitimate choir program, and we are going to sing everything. We are going to be singing Mozart, and we are going to be singing Beethoven." They are probably not going to know Palestrina. "We're also going to be singing hard music, and popular music, and folk, and we're going to sing everything. I would be a really bad teacher if I didn't expose you to the things that you didn't know." You know, if we give them things that they know, then we don't stretch them out of their areas of comfort. So if I sense any type of discomfort from a student or if a group balks at something saying, "Why do we have to do this one thing? Why don't we do this that we know?," I don't get those questions any more, because I usually just nip it in the bud with comments like, "Why should I teach you what you already know? That's not what you're in my classroom for. You're in my classroom to get out of your comfort zone." Sometimes we'll talk about comfort zones and where learning takes place. It takes place on the rim of the comfort zone, the edge of the comfort zone, so if you're uncomfortable, that's great.
- TH: It's true.
- KS: We'll push you out a little bit, and you don't have to love it, but you should honor it. You should give it a chance. You should give it your best shot. You tell them the well-known road of, "How many of you have hated a song, and by the time we're done learning it, it had become your favorite song?" Hands go up, and I manage to psychologically set the road for them to be open-minded about it.

- TH: From where did you get this knowledge you have of selecting your literature? Where would you say you learned all this, just from experience, or would you say attending conferences, or where?
- KS: First of all, I think I am instinctively drawn to great music because I fell in love with Bach by taking piano lessons in junior high school playing Bach Inventions. I just insanely loved it, and then when I was also in junior high, my choir director did Renaissance music. I fell in love with it. I just couldn't get enough of it, so personally I was drawn to it. I think here in Texas, the way our public school system is set up, our professional organization, Texas Music Educator's Association, and our system of competition or contest, which is governed by an organization called UIL, University Interscholastic League keeps us exposed to great literature.
- TH: University Interscholastic League?
- KS: UIL, yes, it comes out of the University of Texas, and they govern not just the music competitions, but athletic competitions, drama, theater, academic, any competitions set up across the whole state, but we're governed by UIL with a really strong set of guidelines, rules, and anytime we go to competition it is called UIL competition. There are certain rules that we have to follow. We have a prescribed music list; two of our music selections must come off of that list, and it's set up with levels. I mean, the whole system here in Texas, when you have to open up that PML [prescribed music list] and pick your literature, it's all great literature. The literature on that list was selected by committee. It's just great literature.
- TH: So you've really been influenced by a combination of what you've learned to love growing up and the professional structure there in Texas.
- KS: As a choral teacher picking music for my students, I would check the PML, and music that I had already selected for them in the fall was on that list, and I would think, "Oh, okay, I'm on the right track. I'm choosing quality literature," and eventually you just start to trust yourself more. You're picking the right literature.
- TH: So, it validates you.
- KS: I feel validated that I was choosing well. If I wasn't choosing well I usually know because it just doesn't sound good.
- TH: I taught middle school for nine years, and I remember.
- KS: You think, "I'll never pick that one again," because you tire of it. It bores. You follow your own choices, the combination of that and on the list. I began to judge choirs myself. As choirs do literature I take notes. "That was a great piece," or "I didn't like that one."

TH: Well, what sources do you use to find your literature typically? You mentioned the list from Texas. What other things do you do to find literature?

KS: One of our primary sources is at a conference that I get to go every summer, Texas Choral Directors' Association, attached to ACDA, the state version, and we have a reading clinic every summer. I attend every summer and collect free packets of music. I begin collecting using that. I certainly use the libraries of the schools that I was attached to. I never opened a brand new school; I was always at an established school. I would look through the library. I taught for three years, and then I went to graduate school. After I finished graduate school I started my first high school teaching job, and I over-programmed. When you come out of graduate school, you are a choral musician, right?

TH: Yes.

KS: Would you like to know what I did my very first fall?

TH: Sure.

KS: In my very first high school job, for my choir, I think I had 24 in my top choir, I did *Tu es Petrus* (Palestrina, 1968). That's double choir, you know. I did it because I had a recording of the All-State Choir performing it. I'm just laughing; I can't believe I did *Tu es Petrus*, but I had enough voices to do it with a double choir. One fall I did the Brahms (1869) *How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place* from the *Requiem*. That was over-programming for that choir. You know what, on the other hand, I did expose them to some beautiful music. Whether they did it beautifully is another question. They got to sing it. Over- programming can . . .

TH: It can still teach them something, give them some exposure.

KS: Yeah.

TH: The *How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place* is beautiful music.

KS: Yeah, it's great. I realized after I programmed it, but not for several weeks, I probably should not . . .

TH: Well, what criteria are the most important to you when you're selecting choral literature? You've kind of mentioned some of it along with philosophy.

KS: Well, the important criteria, you know the quality-literature of quality, and that's even true when you're choosing music for a pop show, to try to get music that has some validity to it, quality to it.

TH: So, even pop music has its level of quality to look for.

KS: We'll never do that *Flintstones* (Hanna, Barbera, Curtin, 1962/2001) piece again.

TH: *The Flintstones*, is that what you said?

KS: <chuckling> We did a pop show one year that was called "Songs for the Young at Heart," and we didn't want to do just Disney music. We wanted to be able to do music from television and animated cartoons and children's stuff, so we did a lot of Disney music, but we wanted to do other things. Our boys did a quartet arrangement of *Mighty Mouse* (Sheib & Barer, 1953/1999). It was really kind of good. Think about when that was written. <singing> "Here he comes. . . ." To balance that, I had my girls do the song *The Flintstones*. I unfortunately ordered it sight unseen, and it was so hideous. It was horrible. I had to bribe the girls to do it.

TH: Oh really?

KS: I said, "If you do it, I will sing it with you." So actually I got up on-stage in a costume with girls and sang it with them. The audience loved it, but it was a bad piece of music. It was very badly arranged.

TH: How much do you have to take into consideration, when you're looking at the music, well, you've mentioned that you like to include variety in your musical styles and periods, so I take it that really when you are programming you look at that across, and it sounds like you do certain concerts with particular focuses, like your pop pieces, versus more of a balanced program of different things? Am I gathering this correctly?

KS: Oh yes.

TH: Then, how much do you take into consideration elements like how many voices you have in each section and the strength and quality of those voices?

KS: Well, that's constantly on your mind. Sometimes life centers around your tenor section, so that's another element that has to be there. Choosing music that's appropriate for teaching and choosing music of quality. You can't just choose music that features tenors on high A all of the time if you have a weak tenor section. On the other hand, the years that I've had a really great tenor section I go, "All right, I can do blah, blah, or I can do blah, blah. I've got the tenors for it." This particular year we did a piece by Frank Ticheli. I don't know if you know the piece, beautiful piece called *There Will Be Rest* (Ticheli, 2000).

TH: What is it called? *There Will Be Rest*?



KS: Yeah, a fine piece of music. It's got low E-flats in it. I couldn't do it for a couple of years, but this year I've got two basses, I've got two and a half basses, I've got two basses and a third bass who sometimes had a low E-flat, and so I did it.

TH: So it was a great year to pull that particular piece out.

KS: Sure, yeah. Next year I think I'm going to be a little weak in my tenor section. This year I had really good tenors. I'm graduating them. We're a high school choir, and sometimes that's just how it turns out. We have to do literature that has tenor voices in it, but hopefully by picking the right literature you won't expose your weaknesses, but your strengths.

TH: You already mentioned a Frank Ticheli piece. Can you discuss one or two other pieces that you've picked in the last year, and why you chose them? Maybe a particular piece and explain why you chose that particular piece?

KS: Yeah, I have a madrigal / show choir. It's a small group. My big group now has about 60 in it, 62, and I have a madrigal choir of about 20, 22 to 23, and the madrigal group, we were trying to prepare a piece for a little competition that we were doing in Dallas. We take a little trip every year. This year we were going to Dallas for a competition, and we had pulled out a piece called *El Guayaboso* (Lopez-Gavilan, 2000). It's published by Earthsongs. It's Cuban, and it's very rhythmically complex, and very hard, little bit of a beastie. Actually I started learning that piece last year and I was going to do it with my top choir. We literally spent about two weeks working out the rhythm. I didn't let them sing a note. We did work out an elaborate teaching method. It would make a great workshop <chuckles>. I borrowed the idea from another really wonderful teacher: Denise Eaton. I developed this elaborate step-by-step way to teach the rhythm. It was really fun, but it became really clear that that choir couldn't do that piece. So this year I was talking to my [names of one of her choirs], and they said, "What about the piece we worked on last year that we dropped." I said, "El Guayaboso?" They said, "Yeah, yeah, that piece that we worked so hard on the rhythms." I said, "Oh dear. I don't know. Let's see." So I went and pulled it out, and I did a little initial rehearsal on it, and darn if they didn't remember those rhythms. They remembered it. Of course this was the cream of the crop. My madrigal choir is my best singers, my most serious, college-bound a lot of them, college-bound music majors, and they really are the cream of the crop. They started, and it was clear that they not only remembered, most of them were in that class the previous year, could do it well, and probably sing this, and were motivated to do it. I said, "Okay, let's do it." We started working on it, and we did it, *El Guayaboso*, and it's hard. If you're familiar with the Earthsongs CDs, it's on one of those CDs. You can find a recording of it. We didn't sing it quite like they did on the CD, because they had a real Cuban choir, kind of brassy. We didn't quite sing it that way. We just couldn't do that. It was an adult choir.

TH: Your talking about that answers another one of the questions which is: Did you ever start rehearsing a work you thought was a good choice but then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working for one reason or another? By talking about that one, that's basically what you did the one year.

KS: Oh yeah, absolutely.

TH: Because at the time it seemed too much.

KS: I think one other piece I was going to tell you we did, in the fall we did the Haydn (1750/1990) *Missa Brevis* in F. I picked that because I was chatting with a friend of mine about how we try to do a small major work on our fall concert, and he does the same thing. He said, "Oh, you should try, . . ." And I said, "Oh, you should try. . . ." So we exchanged pieces. He did the Martini (1958) *Domine Ad, Adjuvandum Me Festina*, and he said, "We did it with the kids behind the spread of the orchestra." I said, "How cool. How hard is the orchestra part?" He said, "I don't know. Our orchestra did it fine." We have an orchestra program, so I trotted across the hall to the orchestra director and asked him if he thought his orchestra could do it. I gave him a recording of it. He goes, "Yeah, I think we can," so we collaborated with our orchestra this year, and it's a young orchestra, and they did a decent job on it. We sang it on their concert. They ended up not performing it on our concert. We did it with a piano accompaniment. They [the orchestra] couldn't learn all of it. On their concert we actually cut several of the movements. On our concert we did the whole thing.

TH: So you try to do a larger work at the beginning of the year?

KS: I try to do them when we can. The kids kind of look forward to it. I got that idea from my graduate professor, Ken Fulton. He's at LSU. Ken, I think, had started doing that when he was teaching high school in Lubbock, Texas. I always thought in the back of my mind, "What a great way to start out in the fall." I do remember one year we decided to do our pop show in the fall instead of the spring. We started out our year doing our pop music. I did it once, and I said, "I will never do that again— ever!" I think it just started the year with so many bad ideas. It just was wrong. It was wrong for the kids. They don't learn to sight-read. They don't use good tone quality when they sing pop music. They were sloppy, lazy with it. You can't teach tone. You can't teach sight-reading. You can't teach rehearsal discipline in the same way when you are doing pop music. I said, "I will never start my year that way again." I like to use a major work to teach all of those things.

TH: You are setting your sights high at the beginning of the year.

KS: Yes. The one year I prepared a mini concert because I had an ACDA choir. The year we went to New York I didn't do that because I had to learn that literature. So my whole fall

was based on learning the literature for ACDA. On the fall concert we did a portion of the literature. On our winter concert we did another portion of it, so that we'd be ready to go by February.

TH: How often do you select pieces for education purposes with no intent of performing them? Do you ever do that?

KS: Never.

TH: Do you pull out pieces for sight-reading purposes that you then just pull back in?

KS: Yes. We have several method books that we use when we get closer to our contest season. We pull out our octavos, and we have a whole collection of octavos of sight-reading music that has been used in the past. Our music is composed specifically for our sight-reading contest. None of it has been published. No one has seen it before the contest, so once we get through our contest season that music is open to be bought. Some will buy that music to put in their library. You pull out a piece and say, "Here's what we did last year," so your choir would be able to sight-read what last year's choir had to sight-read, or two or three years before. So these are the pieces we've had to read, and this is the level we need to be able to do. That way you give them kind of a guideline. We can say, "Oh, we did bad. We're going to have to be better," or they're kind of relieved and say, "Oh, that wasn't that bad," so absolutely we pull out just sight-reading pieces.

TH: That's probably the only educational reason you would pull out a piece that's not for performance would be for sight-reading?

KS: Everything else we do is performance based. It doesn't mean we don't try something and toss it out. Sometimes we'll pass out a piece that doesn't work.

TH: What consideration, if any, do you give the literature you select because of the type and the complexity of the accompaniment? Is that something you have to factor in? You mention the piece with the orchestra. Are there other times that you have to look at something because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment?

KS: Never because of the complexity, because we have access to good accompanists in our area. This lady that plays for me, [names accompanist], she can play anything. We did the Patriquin (1993) *J'entends le Moulin*. I don't know if you know that piece.

TH: I'm not familiar with that one.

KS: [Donald] Patriquin, he writes pretty difficult accompaniments, and she played that. The only thing that we have to sort of be careful of is we cannot do organ works, works that

really depend on organ. For example, I have the Britten (1945) *Festival Te Deum* in my library. I'm dying to do it.

TH: That's a good piece.

KS: It's great. It's on our literature list for our contest, and we can't do it because we don't have an organ in our performance hall. I'd have to rent an organ to do it, and I haven't gotten around to do it, but now that I say that, maybe next year would be a good year to do that.

TH: So complexity isn't an issue, but organ is an issue.

KS: Yeah, because we have an actual performing arts center, and we have a theater. In one of my other jobs they didn't have a performance hall, and we had to either go and do concerts in the cafeteria or we would go to local churches, to some nice church nearby, so we did have access to organ since we were going to churches.

TH: What part does festival literature play in the selection of literature for the year?

KS: When you say festival are you thinking like competitive?

TH: Yes. Do you choose them separately from your concert pieces, or are they pulled from your concert pieces?

KS: Here our groups have to perform three pieces. One of the three pieces has to be a *cappella*, but that's our guidelines, and when it comes to my top mixed choir I end up with three competitive groups in that group because I do them as a mixed choir, and then I pull the men out and do them as a men's choir. I pull the women out and do them as a women's choir, so each child has learned six pieces of music. . . . There is a lot of time that we are learning it pretty rapidly. I do try to pull at least one piece of music that they've done in the fall, but I don't necessarily like to program that way. In the back of my mind in the fall and in the winter when I'm picking literature I think, "Oh, we might be able to do that as a contest piece," but I don't specifically program it that way. This year I didn't use anything from the fall. I programmed a piece in the fall that I thought, "I might be able to do that at contest." It was a Parker-Shaw arrangement of *God Is Seen* (Parker, 1967a). It's a spiritual. They did pretty good on it, but I ended up not using that. I ended up doing *Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal* (Parker 1967b), so I didn't do the *God is Seen*. One of the reasons I don't like to do that very much is that if I do something from the fall they revert back to an older sound. I find that if I do brand new literature that they'll start from where they have progressed to. In other words, whatever they have done in the fall concert and whatever they have done in the winter concert, well, by this time they have got a new sound. They are a better choir, more cohesive, and their tone is

better. If I go back and I select something and I pull it from the fall or winter concert, they step backwards.

TH: So you don't necessarily start out the year knowing what you are going to do for festival?

KS: I don't know, but I've penciled in. I already have right now some ideas of things I would like to do in the spring. It's kind of a conglomeration, a list of a collection of octavos, and a little hand-written list, and when it comes time to choose it then I customize it to where the group has progressed to, what they actually sound like, what works well for them.

TH: My question number ten is "What influences your choice of festival literature?" So, for example, the festival list. You are very, there in Texas, influenced by the festival list.

KS: Well, only for that set literature. I keep it in mind because it is going to be some of our hardest literature that we do, and also, because it's a competition, I want the kids to be able to be successful on it. This is not the kind of place where you pick the "cutting-edge" piece of music. You'll probably not do *El Guayaboso* for this competition. A lot of principals and administrators, they look at your rating, and they care. They want you to do well. If you are doing poorly at those competitions, if you go looking for another job, they look at those ratings. They want to know what those contest results have been over the past years, whether you've been successful. There is some pressure. I haven't ever received a lot of that pressure. It sounds bad. I hate to even say that, but it's true.

TH: That is true anywhere you go, because administrators, what else do they have to go on?

KS: They don't know what else to look at. You know, a winning football team, well, that says a lot. So choir—

TH: You get superiors at state, that says something. Well, the next question has to do with cataloguing. Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future? Can you describe what you do? Do have a way of keeping track of what you're planning on doing— or something that you find and are thinking, "Maybe I want to use this?"

KS: I don't have a very organized system. I have a loosely organized system. It has files with the different choirs names on it. I have a beginning training choir called Nova, and I have a file called Nova, and I toss pieces in there. I have six filing cabinets of octavos that I've collected over the years that I've sorted by genre and type, voicing, and I'll be going through it. For example, a friend of mine wanted to borrow a piece of music. I said, "Let me go see if I've got that in my file," and as I'm going through my file looking for something, I come across another piece. I think "That would be a great piece for Nova next year." I pull it out and stick it on the shelf, and it ends up going in that little file.

TH: So you've got a filing cabinet that's divided by genres and styles, voicing, and then you keep a folder for each choir, the copy you pull, and you're thinking, "I want to do this." Do I understand correctly?

KS: Exactly. Right now behind my desk I have a huge pile of music that I've kind of tossed. "Oh, I want to do that for next year." It's just a big pile. One of my jobs once I get back to school will be to sort that out. "This would be good for chorale and pop choir. This might be good for my madrigal choir. This would be good for Nova." So I haven't sorted everything. It's a little disorganized right now. I'll have it organized by the fall.

TH: I think a lot of us that teach use the summer to reorganize our stuff. Well, all the rest of the questions have to do with programming the concert literature. Do you use any particular methods for programming your literature for concerts? We've kind of talked about this a little bit already, but do you, for example, ever do chronological programming, or alternating contrasting styles, or things like that?

KS: Well, always both of those. I'm always trying to program across the centuries somewhat. You've got to do Renaissance, you've just got to. I try to do something Classical. I have a hard time finding something.

[Problems with phone reception throughout, but especially the last five minutes of conversation. The recording device was not able to pick up the remaining conversation.]

Interview Transcript

25 May 2006 2:10 PM CT

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Gary Lamprecht

Bio note: Gary Lamprecht is the choral director at San Luis Obispo High School in San Luis Obispo, California. It has a school population of approximately 1600. At the time of the interview Mr. Lamprecht had taught for 32 years.

[Conversation omitted about Gary's trip to Europe with his high school students]

GL: If you can't take kids on trips then you are just performing for Grandma and Grandpa, Mom and Dad, or the student body.

TH: And it loses motivation.

GL: Totally.

TH: It helps keep the momentum going.

GL: Exactly. Last year I took 126 kids to New York. We did a joint concert with two high school choirs from our this nation with the Saint Luke's Orchestra, a professional orchestra from New York in Symphony Hall, and with the director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir directing the [Maurice] Duruflé (1947/1961) *Requiem*. Gorgeous piece of music, but I would not select it for high school. Vocally it's very abusive for young voices, but they did it, and they did it well. That's such a motivator for the whole year. We worked our tushes off, in addition to doing Handel's (1742/1992) *Messiah*, in addition to doing festival, and the Golden State Competition. It was just a really full year, but what a great year. You can get kids to jump through hoops like that when that's the carrot. That's what we're looking at. The year I took kids to sing at the National in New York—144 kids—those kids, they all had to prove that they knew their music by testing on machines. Girls had to score at an "A" level. Boys had to score at a "B" level. A machine no longer made called a Pitch Master. It was made by Temporal Acuity Products: TAP. A lot of colleges had them. It is a tape system, or it use to be a tape system where you would read out of a book, and then there is a click track. You've got earphones on, and you tap out the rhythm that's written in the book. The machine would tell you what your score was and how good that was. They came out with this machine that would measure what it heard, and it would measure it against anything you put into it. So what I would do is I would have a recording of the piece we were learning either on MIDI or an actual choir singing it. That's on the left track and their part played on the right track. So what happens is they put on the earphones with the recording, and if they're singing correctly the needle goes right to the middle, and they start getting points, and they hear a clarinet playing along with them. As soon as they get off of that and

they're on the wrong part, they're not getting points, and the needle says you're too high or you're too low, and at the end of the song I've already calculated how many possible points there are and figured out a graph on a chart on the wall. They get to the end of the chart and they look at the graph, and they get immediate feedback on how well they know the song—how accurate they were. I've got five of those machines. I've been using them for about twelve years. I bought up every one that they had left. I was at two schools, so I needed eight of them. After they stopped making them, I found some people who had them and weren't using them, and I bought them too. I'm really into technology. We use a computer accompaniment. We don't use a live accompanist in rehearsal, just in performance. . . . Everybody has their different way of doing things.

TH: And that's why I decided to go this route for my study. I've read tons of textbooks on how to choose performance literature, but that's not the same as finding out from people who are doing it and who are successful at it, what they do, so that's why I chose to go this route.

GL: It's a very good route. It would be an interesting thing for people to read. I would like to read your dissertation when it's done.

TH: I hope people will find it interesting, so I appreciate that.

GL: If there's any one facet of choral music that I'm really interested in it's technology and the choice of literature because technology allows you to do more. Choice of music allows you to "hook" the audience and "hook" the singer. Why should they come in and sing music that they hate: because you know that they are going to love it by the time that they perform it, or because you know that they are going to accept it for one reason or another. It's been years and years and years since someone asked me, "Why are we singing this?" They just don't ask that question any more. The last time someone asked that question was probably fifteen years ago. It was one of my high school students that asked, "Why are we doing this Bible music?" I said, "Well, there are two kinds of music. There's secular music and sacred music. In choral music 90% of what's written is sacred music. The secular music, most of that is pop music." I said, "When we go to the competitions that we are going to be doing, they don't want us to do pop music, and they may select a test piece that's a secular piece, but it won't be pop. More often they select something like *Beati quorum via* by Charles Villiers Stanford (1905) or something that has historical significance like Palestrina. Those pieces were traditionally written for and performed in the churches. After you explain it to the kids they kind of go, "Oh, okay." That was the last time anybody asked me that. Except when I give them a really strange piece. When we were in the Nationals in New York we did a piece called *Tema* (Janson, 1967) which is in my view a musical depiction of Auschwitz. So there's talking in it, and there's instruments pounding. Then there's singing and yelling. In the end there's a snare drum that sounds like a machine gun, and then it goes silent.



TH: That already tells me that you've done an avant-garde piece.

GL: Yes. It was avant-garde when I first did it in 1972 in college. I programmed it after I took my adult choir to sing in Poland and Russia. We went to Auschwitz, and we sat through a movie before you go into the actual Auschwitz. We sat through this movie. It showed real footage of what happened there. Behind us there were two elderly Jewish men with their grandsons, and they cried through the whole thing. At one point one of the grandsons said, "Grandpa, Grandpa, let's go out. We don't have to sit here." He said, "No, we must never forget what happened here. We stay." I thought, "I'm gonna program *Tema*." So we programmed *Tema*, and we immediately fought with it because it ends with this machine gun sound, and everybody their heads go down, and it was dead quiet. The audience doesn't know what to do. We immediately segued with a harp to *The Lord is My Shepherd* by John Rutter (1978). It was just people crying. It was so emotional how bad it is, and no matter how bad it gets, there is hope, there is a better place. So the audience is jerked from one end to the other in a very positive way.

TH: You've kind of started answering number one, that I have, "Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature." That can be a really broad question. What would you say for that.

GL: First of all, I hate theme programs because they are so restrictive. I prefer instead, in terms of choral music, little snippets of the historical side of music. I usually start with something from Gregorian chant or Renaissance at the beginning of the program, and then we'll go into Baroque style period, the Classical stuff style period, Romantic. I try to get a piece from each of these. Sometimes I skip over, but right now we're starting out with *O Vos Omnes* by Tomás Luis de Victoria (1969), and then we were doing three movements of the Vivaldi (1961) *Gloria* so there's Renaissance-Baroque. We're doing *Lacrimosa*, Mozart (Mozart & Süßmayr, 1882) that's the Classical. Then we're jumping over Romantic into *My Luve's Like a Red, Red Rose*, the René Clausen (1998). A *Kyrie* (Sato, 2005) that was premiered last year at the National which is 20th Century. We end the first half with *O Whistle and I'll Come to Ye*. That is secular by Mack Wilberg (1983). That's the first half. You can see it's kind of set up chronologically. I try to end the first half with something that will keep the audience wanting to come back, so it's going to tend to be rhythmic and somewhat appealing, as opposed to something that's slow and somber. My philosophy is that an audience can listen to anything in the beginning of the concert or right after intermission, but you need to give them something upbeat, or [else] by the end of that their butts are going to sleep—if their mind is on, you know. The second half of our program we're starting off with a beautiful piece, a Spanish by Z. Randall Stroope (2001) called *Amor de Mi Alma*. It's just a gorgeous setting of a Spanish poem. That's an opener. It's slow, but it's gorgeous. Then we do a piece for women's voice, a gospel one called *Still I Rise* (Powell, 2005), which has kind of a feminist kind of message to it. It's very positive. Then we're doing two pieces from the *North Country Folksongs*, by Philip Wilby: *Marianne* (1983b) and *Byker Hill* (1983a).

TH: *Biker Hill*?

GL: *Byker Hill* (Wilby, 1983a). <singing> “Lal, lal, lal, lal. When I came in to the dirt, I had no trousers or pit shirt.” It’s a fairly well-known melody at least. I first heard it at the University of Northern Arizona with Jo-Michael Schiebe’s choir singing. The setting of *Marianne* (Wilby, 1983b) is quite well-known too. I highly recommend it. I’ve done it with both high school and adult community choir. It is a Banks Music Publication, and it’s arranged by Philip Wilby. I don’t especially like the first song in the set, but the second is just gorgeous. It reminds me of *The High and the Mighty*. It’s very reminiscent of that. It’s basically, “Fair thee well, my love. Fair thee well, my dear, for the ship is waiting, and the wind blows free, and I am bound away to see *Marianne*.” Anyhow, nice set of two, and then we do *Ain’t Got Time to Die* by Hall Johnson (1960) —spiritual.

Then we are doing a very traditional setting of *Red River Valley* (traditional, unpublished). It starts off with harmonica, and it’s accompanied by dulcimer. What I’m trying to do here is we’re starting a new international competition in our town. I’m gonna tell them about our last tour to Europe. We were in Italy and then on to Spital [in Austria]. We were in a competition. One of the pieces we were doing in the competition had to be a traditional folk piece from your own country, and it could not be an arrangement, so I picked *Red River Valley*. We started with harmonica, so it really set people in the audience to thinking, “Americana, yeah.” Then the dulcimer entered, which a lot of them had never seen before, and then we just started off singing unison, and that went into two-part harmony and three-part harmony, and then just made-up harmony at the end, so it’s going to be in the form of a sing-along.

The last piece is *Rockin’ Jerusalem*, [André Jerome] Thomas (1987). Our encore, again with this international theme, is a song that was pretty well done back in the 1970s or 1980s, *Kravy Moje* [arranged] by [Hans Aldo] Schimmerling (1944). It’s from Slovakia. It’s sung by a girl who’s watching her cattle, her cows. She falls asleep, and they all take off. She is going around calling them. It’s a fun thing. So the second half is a lot of Americana and a lot of music from around the world is how I approach it.

TH: So within one concert you fit all kinds of genres and periods and styles.

GL: Because I find that there is something there for everyone. I find it so interesting to taste lots of different foods. I love going to smorgasbord. You can pick this flavor and that flavor. A buffet is much more interesting because you can see what the food looks like, and will guess what it tastes like too, but that is kind of my philosophy. It’s a lot like a meal.

TH: How have you developed this philosophy? Obviously you have taught for a long time, but where would you say you have gained this knowledge?

- GL: From every director I every sang under. I had some really great directors, and I had some not so great ones, and even the ones that were not so great I learned from because I thought, “I’m never gonna do that,” whether it’s teaching methods or choice of repertoire. You are just interested in the choice of repertoire aspect of it. Interestingly enough though, the director I thought was the weakest of all introduced me to *Sicut Cervus* by Palestrina (1946). It’s one of my favorite pieces of music. I’ve done it with junior high, high school, college, and adults.
- TH: It’s accessible to all of those levels—amazing.
- GL: It’s an extraordinary piece, and I had never even heard the piece until I got to graduate work, and it was a director who was into the mathematics of music. A typical rehearsal would be “Take out your pencils. Basses, take a breath here. Sopranos, take a breath there. Take the ‘T’ off of this word.” It was this “nit picky” stuff; we never really got the big picture. He introduced me to Charles Ives’ (1939) *Sixty-Seventh Psalm*; so you pick up stuff from anyone and everyone.
- TH: So that is where you have really gained your knowledge of what you do is from directors.
- GL: Directors, and I attend reading sessions. We also host one of the largest choral festivals in the state of California. This year we have a few elementary schools, a lot of junior high, but the high schools come through our performing arts center. Over a period of two days we had 68 choirs. As they sang—I am there for each of them because I announce them, each choir—and as they are singing I am picking up some great ideas for repertoire. I very commonly put a note in their music and say, “I loved your piece. I’ll mail it back to you after I’ve studied it.” I’ll just pull a piece of music out of their packet. I’ve had adjudicators pull out my music, and it’s a compliment.
- TH: When they want to keep a piece for a while to look at it.
- GL: What I’ll do is I’ll take the piece back, and I always have recordings of the pieces because the tech crew records everybody who sings. They each get a recording, and I get a master recording of everyone. I can sit down afterward with a cool head, and I can look at this piece of music and listen to it and go, “I’m ordering this.” So I get a lot of music in those kinds of ways. We are also usually involved in the State competition for high school choirs here in California called the Golden State Choral Competition, and there everybody is trying to out do each other with their choice of music, usually really hard, difficult stuff. That is where I first heard Eric Whitacre. We got off on an Eric Whitacre and Morten Lauridsen kind of jag for a number of years, a bunch of their music.
- TH: I think there are a lot of choirs that are doing that right now. That also answers the question of the sources you use to find new literature, number three. So, what criteria are the most important to you when you’re selecting your choral literature?

GL: That it is appropriate for the grade level, for instance. In other words, we are doing *A Boy and a Girl* right now by Eric Whitacre (2004). It would not be appropriate for middle school, for instance. It might be accessible, but it might not be appropriate. I am looking for how the text is married to the music. I am looking for the poetry of the piece. I don't do madrigals because they are just full of "fa-la-la-la-la," and that type of thing. I am looking for something that will take kids to a higher place. It can even be in a foreign language, like this *Amor de Mi Alma* by Z. Randall Stroope (2001). It's in Spanish, but if you get the audience the translation so they know what the piece is about, it's rich.

TH: *Love of my Soul*. I speak Spanish, so I love pieces in Spanish.

GL: It is a beautiful language to sing. Listen to this text:

I was born to love only you.  
My soul has formed you to its measure.  
I want you as a garment to my soul.  
Your very image is written on my soul.  
Such indescribable intimacy I hide even from you.  
All that I have I owe to you.  
For you I was born.  
For you I live.  
For you I must die,  
And for you I give my last breath.

That's great stuff, and it is beautifully written.

TH: That is very Latino. All those expressions, that is something that— Latino people often times speak and write to each other that way.

GL: And this dates back to 1503 when the guy was born. 1503, that goes across the centuries.

TH: You have mentioned a lot of things. Is there anything else that you feel really strongly about.

GL: I never select music to do that I don't like. That's kind of given. Now we are doing a piece that we are going to perform with an orchestra in Germany. It was commissioned for this festival, and everybody—we all hate it. It is so avant-garde, it sounds like the sound track for a horror movie. It's hard just to work on it.

TH: But you don't have much of a choice.

- GL: We have no choice, and the kids all know that, but whenever I say take out [Michael Bell's] *Twisted* (1963), they all go, "Ugh." I said (and I haven't had to say this lately), "We are obligated to do this. They are housing us. They have commissioned this work. They can't refuse it, and nor can we." That is why I hate doing commissioned works, because you have to do it after you get the music.
- TH: At this point of having a very established program, do you still have to look at the strength and quality of sections or individual voices when you are looking at music?
- GL: Thank you for asking. That really is the first thing that I look for. This year I have a very strong tenor section, so I picked pieces that feature the tenors. I have a particular couple of good soloists. I have selected music that really will show them off, but I don't always. This year, up until this last year, I had a student who could play really well, so we used more music that had piano. This year we are doing mostly *a cappella*. So I really do look at the strengths. Next year is going to be probably a culminating year. The year after that is going to be a hard one for whoever comes in because our feeder program has been dying for several years. A teacher from the high school is now doing the middle school in the in the afternoons, so it's going to turn around, but it's going to take years to do that. Meanwhile, my numbers have gone down because of that. It's hard to recruit. If I recruit guys it's hard to give them Eric Whitacre's (2005) *Lux Aurumque*. I mean, after they have sung for a while they can handle stuff like that, but it is just overwhelming to somebody who is a novice. We are doing a little simpler music this year than we did last year. [The Maurice] Duruflé (1947/1961) *Requiem* would have killed them. So the age and the demographics of the group are very important.
- TH: You have already kind of done number five. You have discussed some pieces which you selected for performance. So, how often do you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent of performing them? Do you ever do that?
- GL: Just in sight-reading.
- TH: That is pretty common. Have you ever had a piece that you pulled out just for that, and thought, "This is a nice piece. Maybe I will use it for performance."
- GL: Yes.
- TH: You have kind of answered this, the number seven. What consideration do you give to the literature you select because of the complexity of the accompaniment? You mentioned that last year you were able to do a lot of piano because of the level of pianist you had.
- GL: Last year we had a pianist in the group that could handle it. I liked to feature him. This year I don't have him in the program. I have a girl who can play pretty well, and she is

playing on two pieces that are not extremely demanding. You always have to put kids in a position where they are going to succeed.

TH: So this year you are really not considering the pieces with the harder accompaniment.

GL: I have a paid accompanist who can handle that, and we do pieces that he will accompany on. In terms of touring we are doing two pieces that call for piano, and she is playing *Seasons of Love* from *Rent* (Larson, 1996/2004) and *Ave Verum Corpus* by Mozart (1997). Both are simple accompaniments.

TH: Question number eight asks, “Have you ever started rehearsing a work that you thought was a good choice and withdrew it because it didn’t seem to be working?”

GL: Yeah.

TH: Can you describe the kind of situation where that might happen?

GL: Years ago, we were doing a 20th Century piece in Latin that I thought the kids would like because it was very rhythmic. One of the kids said, “Mr. L, why are we doing this piece?” I said, “Because I like it, and you will learn to like it.” The kids all went, “Ugh.” “You guys, all of you don’t like it?” They’re going, “Yeah, we don’t like this piece.” I said, “Well, this is the first I’ve heard of it, and we know this piece.” They’re going, “What do you see in it?” I said, “I don’t know. Pass it in.” <laughing> That has happened twice, because if I can’t justify it to the kids. . . . You know, it was on the shelf, so I thought we would just pass it out. I have done that with sight-reading stuff. Not with a piece that you took as much work as this. The kids are really open with me—usually not in rehearsal. They will be very diplomatic and say, “May I speak to you after class.”

TH: That is good; that is the appropriate way to address it.

GL: And that is the way I kind of set it up if a kid will ask a question. I will say, “Can you stick around after class, and I will answer that for you?” But that day was particularly interesting because they all went, “Ugh.” Some groups are more comfortable with you. My program is kind of like home to these kids. Most of them are in here for four years, and so I used to have my room open even at lunch, which I don’t anymore because I need some down time, but we’re pretty open.

TH: The next two questions have to do with selecting festival literature. What part does your selection of festival literature play in your selection of music for the school year?

GL: It is pretty big because we are typically involved in the state competition for high school choirs, and there are typically only fifteen choirs, at least in the north. The state is divided in north and south, and we are in the middle, so we can go either direction, and we have.

One of the things that you do is dictated by the jury. It is the test piece everybody does. The other two pieces you select. The way I do it is I try to do three pieces that are contrasting, so that one they are given is difficult, and two are going to be contrasting. One year it was *Tu es Petrus* (Palestrina, 1968), so the opposite side of that, we did *Sarba pe Scaun* (Pascanu, 1994). I can't remember the composer of that, but it's by a Hungarian composer—driving rhythms, complete contrast to *Tu es Petrus*. The other piece was a 20th Century harmony piece by Eric Whitacre. It was *Sleep* (Whitacre, 2001). The kids love Eric Whitacre, and they love Morten Lauridsen as well.

TH: So then, it sounds like you pick your festival literature separately from the rest of your concert pieces?

GL: I do. I spend more time on it.

TH: And so up front when you are looking at programming your year you are already looking going, "Where are my festival pieces?" "What are they?"

GL: Exactly. In fact, as soon as I can find out what the required pieces are I listen to recordings of them, and then I start thinking about what would sound good in juxtaposition with this piece.

TH: You are the first one that I have talked to that [says] there is one piece that is assigned to all of the choirs. Do I understand that correctly? It is interesting state to state how that differs, how that's handled.

GL: You know, in the international competition it is extremely normal. When you go to Llangollen, Wales, and compete there (which I have done three times) they always have a set piece, and a second piece from a certain style period. They say, "You must do this piece, and then you must also select a piece of music that is Baroque in nature." That might have changed since we were last there in 2000, but I am sure that they still have the required piece. In 2004 we competed in Spital, Austria, and they have two or three test pieces, which really shapes your repertoire a lot when you have that many. It just shapes a lot of your repertoire, and they are all very difficult and hard pieces. We spent a lot of time on them. One of them is usually so new that you can't even find a recording of it, so that is not uncommon out of the United States.

TH: Well, since you go on a lot of those trips, you would have more experience with that.

GL: I was one of the people who was instrumental in establishing the Golden State Competition. This is years ago, but before that there was a precursor called the Concord Pavilion Festival. They required a test piece for chamber choir and required a test piece for large choir. The fascinating thing was to hear how many people interpreted the same

piece so differently, and some people learned them wrong. Everybody would go, “What? That was a B-flat, that wasn’t a . . .” because everybody knows.

TH: Well, you have already kind of answered number 10. What influences your choice of festival literature? Is there anything that you haven’t already stated that you would say influences what you choose?

GL: I don’t think so.

TH: I was thinking you pretty much have answered that. Number 11: Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future?

GL: Well, I don’t have it really organized. I have a stack on my desk. As I am looking at it right now, it is about ten inches tall, and it’s divided into envelopes—well, some of them are envelopes, some of them are just stacked in there. Some of them are for my beginning women’s chorus, advanced women’s chorus, Chamber Choir, Concert Choir, Vocal Jazz—which we have kind of gotten out of doing; we do a little bit; we used to do nothing but vocal jazz for about two months—and then I have a pop folder, and then the festival stuff. It is kind of separated on my desk. Also, I have some of my music from my other choirs in that stack as well. I am starting to look for pieces to order. I pull that whole stack down and lay it out around and start going, “Okay, let’s prioritize.” It’s a system that works for me.

TH: Okay, you have a stack, and you can look through that stack. As you find something that you are interested in you stick a copy in your folder?

GL: And I note why I thought it was interesting. First thing I do after that, when I am really thinking about doing it—I have a catalog on my computer that I have been cataloguing for fifteen years maybe. I can enter a piece by composer or by the name of the piece, and I have 8,456 octavos with titles and recordings catalogued, so that I can say, “Okay, I am looking at *Ave Maris Stella* by Tomás Luis de Victoria (2003). I have five recordings of it by different groups. I believe when I am teaching the kids a new piece of music, I will pass out the music. We will sit down. There are no chairs in my room. It is just carpet and risers, so I have kids sit a lot because they are standing the rest of the time, and so I will have the kids sit down, and I’ll say, “I have a new piece for you. I’ll talk you through it, and I’ll play a recording of it.” And I will say that we are in measure 14, measure 18, or the top of page 3—whatever it is. They immediately start getting a gestalt of the whole thing from the get-go. If I don’t have a recording of it, I have an accompanist or one of my students put it through MIDI onto the computer, and I let the computer play it for them, which is not as good, but the recordings are really important.



TH: You have already addressed some of the rest of these questions because the rest of them have to do with programming literature for the concert. I think you have pretty much addressed number 12: Do you use any particular methods for programming literature for concerts? You talked about that. Number 13: How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature that you select for the year? I think you have pretty much addressed that. And 14: What is the typical proportion of styles and genres you program on a single concert and throughout the year? I think you have pretty much addressed that.

GL: Yup, I read these questions before you called.

TH: Yes, I figured you had.

GL: It was very helpful because it made me think about what I do.

TH: Yeah, that is why I sent them ahead.

GL: That's very smart of you.

TH: And 15: Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming literature? Anything we haven't touched on?

GL: Finances. For the last four years I was at two different high schools, because we had budget cuts in our district, so I went to the other high school in our district which is fifteen miles away on the ocean in Morro Bay, and I got there, and the budget for the entire year for all of choral music was \$1000 for everything: chalk, paper clips, everything. At the high school where I have been for 24 years the budget here is closer to \$7000. When I addressed that with the principal and that there was a big discrepancy here, his answer was, "I don't give a damn what they do at San Luis Obispo High School." The band director and I would always be going in there, and he would congratulate us after an assembly or a concert or something, and we would say, "We need more money." So when I was selecting music there I had to borrow a lot of it from my adult choir. I had to carry music back and forth literally between the two schools because all the programs we did we would share. I joined the two programs together, so that all the kids learned the same literature, but I physically had to carry the music back and forth after I spent that first thousand dollars which took about one order.

TH: That amount of money goes [quickly]. That's nothing.

GL: That's three pieces for a medium sized choir, and that is ridiculous. You can't sing three pieces in the year. We sing about 20 to 25 in a year for one choir, so the budget is definitely affected. One of the things that I have found is music that is in public domain. It is on the web. I have been using an old, out-dated *Sicut Cervus* (Palestrina, 1946). I

was searching on the web, and I found a web-site where it's public domain [Choral Public Domain Library, <http://www.cpdlib.org>], and I found a really clean copy of *Sicut Cervus*. You may photo-copy this music all you want.

TH: Isn't that great. I love that.

GL: It's wonderful.

TH: What a great tool.

GL: Then you are only paying for the photo-copies which isn't cheap in itself, but it is a lot less than paying.

TH: I have used some public domain things for church choir. There is a lot of public domain, really nice things.

GL: The classics, typically—the chestnuts. When I was teaching junior high school, which I did for thirteen years, I use to write a lot of music, because it wasn't written well for junior high school, so I didn't have any boys to sing anything low enough. You know, the “cambiatas” that were in-between, so I would have to re-write stuff, and that was really time-consuming. With MIDI the way it is now you can do a lot of that stuff and cut and paste. Back in those days it was all by hand.

TH: Okay, the last, you kind of answered this a little bit just now. How much of the concert literature you perform has been newly purchased for that performance?

GH: With my adult choir I try to incorporate three or four pieces that we have done, but not as recently as five years. Actually, I can't say that. At the high school I don't repeat music within five years. With my adult choir it is more like about ten, although this next year is our 30th year, and we are doing all music by request, just from any program we have done throughout the last 30 years. We do three concert series. We do two concerts at Christmas, two pops concerts, and two spring concerts, and so everybody has been e-mailing me, “I'd like to do this piece again,” or “I'd like to hear that piece again.” So this next year we are doing no new music just for that one year, but here at the high school. It's kind of on a cycle of four or five years at the high school.

TH: So you do repeat so that the new group of kids get exposed to that music?

GL: Yes. Exactly. Also to save money.

TH: So you get a half dozen new pieces?

GL: I would say more than that. We probably have bought ten new pieces this year, because it is for three different groups. The library for my adult choir is here. I tap into that for the kids a lot, and I loan it to different schools.

TH: One other thought, can you just kind of give me an idea of how long a typical concert is for you?

GL: No more than two hours. I shoot for an hour and a half. I used to, back when we had cassette tapes, make sure the music would fit on a 60-minute cassette. So I actually go through and time the concert when I'm putting a concert together. I will go through and play through each piece, or play a recording of each piece in the order I wish, and then I'll change that around, but I'll time it. The goal for me is to not exceed an hour and a half with a fifteen minute intermission.

TH: The intermission included?

GL: Yeah. I just attended the *B minor Mass* (Bach, 1994) last Saturday. It was a long concert. Probably two and a half hours. That was a long concert. It was a very comfortable hall, air-conditioned, comfortable swivel chairs, and my butt still went to sleep. The poor alto soloist has to sing this long, slow solo right before the ending. I went looking around, and I am seeing college students who are there, and their mouths are wide open. They are laying back <makes snoring sound>.

TH: Snoozing. No matter how wonderful the music is the brain turns off.

GL: Yup. Too many notes. The mind can only accept so much. That is one of the reasons I keep changing the pace of the music, so that the mind will— you get done with a beautiful love song and they'll go, "Ah," and then you pick it up with something up-tempo, a complete different style. It helps me to keep my mind on what I'm doing. That is how I program.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript  
26 May 2006 5:00 pm  
Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker  
Interviewee: Terry Hicks

Bio note: Terry Hicks is the choral director at Bentonville High School in Bentonville, Arkansas. It has a school population of approximately 1800. At the time of the interview Mr. Hicks has taught for 15 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: First of all, I know this is a very broad question, but would you describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature.

Hicks: My basic philosophy is it has to be a meaningful text combined with a difficulty level that is going to be complimentary and challenging to each individual choir.

TH: So text combined with the right level of difficulty. With that, could you tell me how you view the importance of selecting of choral literature in terms of the over-all success of your program? How much part does it play?

Hicks: I think it's the most important part in terms of getting the kids to challenge themselves. They're going to have to feel that they're doing something that's worth-while.

TH: That's great. The second question has to do with where you gained your knowledge of literature selection. Where would you say you've learned the things that you have?

Hicks: As far as literature goes? I would say ACDA conventions, followed by local festivals. Also just purchasing many CDs, building my choral CD library.

TH: Listening to CDs of other choirs? So it sounds like it has a lot to do with ACDA, listening to CDs, and what other choirs are doing.

Hicks: Yes.

TH: Okay. Under that, how much are you influenced by what is sent out by publishers?

Hicks: Very little. I find that most things that publishers produce is garbage.

TH: So you are more influenced at ACDA by other choirs that you hear perform there?

Hicks: Typically when I get my CDs from Hal Leonard and the other publishing companies I just throw them away. I never listen to them.

TH: So I guess you're not that big on reading sessions?

Hicks: Well, that's a little different. At TCDA and Arkansas's reading clinic.

TH: TCDA?

Hicks: Texas [Choral Directors Association]. In the reading sessions there the people that are doing the reading session typically have gone through the painful process of reading through a box full of music to find those few little gems that are in there, so I do find reading sessions to be a valuable tool to an extent that I would put that after my CD collection.

TH: Next, what sources do you use to find literature? Well, you've kind of mentioned that.

Hicks: One other source that I have used is the UIL [University Interscholastic League] list from Texas.

TH: Actually I've heard of that. You've mentioned TCDA, so do you go and attend things in Texas?

Hicks: Yes.

TH: Okay, I guess it's close enough to do that. For criteria, what criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature?

Hicks: First off, text, most importantly. The next thing as far as picking out literature with the knowledge of the choir that I'm picking for, is the range. It's important as well, vocal ranges that is.

TH: To fit the age of the voices, the strength and quality of the voices?

Hicks: Right, and then I would go to, I don't know what category to put it under, I guess difficulty level, whether there's a *divisi*, if it's more of a beginning choir, how the harmonies fit. I guess that would fall under difficulty level.

TH: How much are you influenced by programming variety of musical styles and periods?

Hicks: That's another thing that I feel very strongly about. I have done thematic concerts, but I really feel that it's more important to keep a wide variety when I program for a choir. I really try to hit a broad spectrum.

TH: So do you necessarily look for criteria to fit particular themes then. You don't really do that?

Hicks: No, not typically. I have done that, so there are exceptions to that, but pretty much I try to think of various styles. For example, when I try to pick out something for my chamber choir, I always will pick out something that is Renaissance type, and I will usually have a piece that is a spiritual, that genre, and then I kind of leave the other up to a broader scope. For example, we did some Eric Whitacre this year. Last year we did a Scottish folk song, so I try to keep a pretty broad range as I select my program.

TH: How much are you influenced by just whether or not you think your choir will just plain like it or the audience will like the piece? Do you think about that when you're looking at the pieces?

Hicks: To me that's a trick question, because quite often I know that after a piece is learned my choir will like it, so I think it is important. I really do.

TH: At least, eventually, once they've learned it, will they like it?

Hicks: Will you restate the question?

TH: Are you influenced by the "like-ability" of the piece by your choir and audience?

Hicks: I would say yes.

TH: Do you ever do large works? Do you ever have a criteria that you say, "We're going to do a large work this year?"

Hicks: I have not done that, but we're doing that next year.

TH: Have you already chosen a piece?

Hicks: Well, we've been selected by the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall to sing in Carnegie Hall next year.

TH: Excellent.

Hicks: Craig T. Jessop has picked out Poulenc's (1960) *Gloria* and Stravinsky's (1948) *Symphony of Psalms*.

TH: How nice! So is that your trip for next year, going to Carnegie Hall?

Hicks: We get to have a short concert of our own where we have about four pieces so that we get to perform on our own, and there are three other choirs that have been selected across the country. Craig T. Jessop will be rehearsing the groups for four days, and the orchestra of St. Luke's is coming in to accompany the choirs. It's all paid for by the Weill Institute.

TH: Wow! That's neat! Can you discuss a few pieces that you've selected for performance during this last year and tell why you chose those pieces?

Hicks: Sure. I chose *A Boy and a Girl* by Eric Whitacre (2004). I chose that piece because, number one, the text is very compelling, very thought-provoking, symbolic, and a wide range of application for each singer to explore. Secondly, I chose it for my top group. That piece, in particular, was going to challenge them in ways that they had never been challenged before insomuch that for the dissonances that are in that piece, the tuning of that piece, that was really going to challenge their ear and their ability to balance and blend and their confidence in their tuning.

TH: Do you have any others?

Hicks: I chose *Exultate Justi* by Viadana (1964), and I chose that piece to really challenge the vocal technique of the choir to be able to go to that purity of the Latin vowel of the style of Lodovico Grossi da Viadana.

TH: So it sounds like for each piece you had really different reasons to choose the piece.

Hicks: Yes.

TH: How often do you select pieces for educational reasons with no intent of performing them?

Hicks: I do it every semester, and there's usually one, if not two pieces that I pick out just to really challenge them and to push the envelope, and I have done it on a few pieces that I knew they would just be able to do beautifully and just for rehearsal sake.

TH: Do you sometimes change your mind and choose to use a piece for performance, sometimes go, "Oh, we might use this anyway"?

Hicks: Of course, yes, I've had that happen.

TH: What consideration, if any, do you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment? Is that a factor for you?

Hicks: Can you rephrase that?

TH: Do you ever select literature based on how hard the accompaniment is, or does that limit you?

Hicks: No. Basically, the one accompanist I have is phenomenal, and I know that basically anything I pick out that she'll be able to do. I guess maybe. I have picked out a couple of pieces and knew that she could really shine on it and that the kids would be really thrilled to have someone of that ability accompany them.

TH: So you picked ones that were harder to show off the skill?

Hicks: Yeah.

TH: You're very fortunate then if you're able to do that. Do you ever start rehearsing a work that you thought was a good choice, but then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working for one reason or another?

Hicks: Yes, day one sometimes.

TH: Can you describe a situation when that's happened?

Hicks: Just about six weeks ago I picked out *You Are the New Day* (David, 1992) for our spring concert. It's from the King Singers collection. I forget who wrote it. I chose that for my chamber choir to sing at their spring concert, and we rehearsed it probably twice. Basically at that point I was trying to put on a good spring concert that the kids were going to remember, and I chose to cut that piece because I could tell that I was going to have a difficult time selling it on that. Had I done it in the fall I think it would have been better timing. I think that piece would have gone better in the fall. I cut it just because it was their senior concert, and I wanted them to do pieces that they loved.

TH: Does it happen very often that you end up basically "scrapping" a piece?

Hicks: Yeah, again, depending on the choir, I try to give them a pretty broad spectrum, and then once in a while I'll just pick out a piece, and just knowing that performing ability of the choir, knowing that that piece would not be showcased well, I have substituted out pieces before, yes.

TH: The next couple of questions have to do with selecting festival literature. What part does the selection of festival literature play in the selection of literature for the school year? For example, do you pick it separate from the rest of your pieces, or do you select concert literature and then pull your festival literature from those?

Hicks: My program, we are pretty much doing festival-level literature throughout the year, and even for our spring concert only a couple of times have I done a pops spring concert, so I



guess basically you could say that I pull my festival literature from my other literature. It's all of that level.

TH: So you don't necessarily start out the year knowing, "These are my festival pieces," or do you?

Hicks: Basically, I begin the year assessing the ability level. I usually start the year with some easier level literature. I start the year a little bit easier, and I gage the ability of each of the choirs from the first couple of months of the pieces that we're working on then. We have pulled some festival things from that fall concert, but it's typically, if my *a cappella* choir does a piece in the fall that is really good, I might have one of my lower-level choirs do that piece, and pull that for another choir of the difficulty level that they can achieve that piece later that year.

TH: What would you say influences your choices of festival literature? You say that basically your literature you do throughout the year is festival level. Are you influenced by a festival list there in Arkansas?

Hicks: Luckily with the program I have established now only my beginning choir do I use a list sometimes to pull from and that sort of thing, because the rest of the pieces that I pull are usually going to be on the list, or I have them approved for performance.

TH: Let me just ask this, because I have found it very different state to state, do you have when you do things in Arkansas, do you have a specific list that you have to match, or anything like that?

Hicks: We use the Texas list, the UIL list. We use that.

TH: Are you required to take pieces off of that? Is it a requirement there in Arkansas?

Hicks: If it's not on the list you have to have it approved.

TH: Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future? The pieces you hear, for example, sung by a choir at another festival, do you have a way of keeping track of what you want to do?

Hicks: Typically what I'll do is I'll order a perusal copy, and I have what I call my personal library. I pull one piece from every piece that I have in my library. I have one copy in a box at my house, and pieces that I order as a perusal. If I'm at a convention, I'll just go through, and I'll grab a copy sometimes, or if it's from a reading session. I bring all of those single copies to my house, and I have an octavo collection, if you will, by voice and by difficulty level.

TH: And it's there for you to keep looking at and reviewing the pieces?

Hicks: My wife loves it when I pull out the box.

TH: So do you separate it anymore within your box?

Hicks: Yes, by voice part and difficulty level.

TH: Okay, the last questions have to do with programming your literature. We talked about it a little bit earlier talking about criteria. Do you use any particular method for programming literature for concerts?

Hicks: I have very infrequently done a thematic concert, and they can be successful, but as far as choosing a concert program, I usually try to pick, again, pretty much a mixture. I feel very strongly about spirituals. I love spirituals, and I find that I teach spirituals quite well, so I typically will, inevitably, have a spiritual on my concert, if not ten <chuckles>. Not that many, but I lean towards them quite a bit. After that my concerts have varied quite a bit from [Benjamin] Britten to [John] Rutter. As far as how to pick out a concert, I try to vary the tempos. I try to pick out pieces that are going to compliment each other. If a piece is legato I will usually try to back that up with a piece that will be a little bit more lively, a little bit more energetic. I try to do a centerpiece if I'm doing four pieces or so. With a choir the third piece is the one that I'm kind of trying to frame. Basically I usually work toward that one piece and build around it.

TH: So it sounds to me that you are building a program with contrasting styles to make sure you're moving the program along.

Hicks: Yes.

TH: How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the whole year? When you're doing your concert programming, is that what drives your literature selection for the year—OK, here's the fall concert, here's the spring concert—or do you select a bunch of pieces you want to do with your choir for the year and then put them in the concerts?

Hicks: Yeah, I think I do that, and I think of a few pieces that I'm going to do for sure, and then I kind of build the program around those important pieces.

TH: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres you program on a single concert and throughout the year? You've mentioned that you really like the spirituals for one so that you'll always make sure to include spirituals in your concert.

Hicks: I think inevitably every concert has a spiritual or two for each choir. I kind of look at the year as a progression as well. I look at the beginning of the year, my fall concert. In Arkansas we also have Region Choir try-outs, and if you are going to be auditioning for the region choir all of the students learn that program. Whatever the region clinician picks for region, those are the pieces inevitably that we will do in the fall, especially in my top groups, my A Cappella and my Chamber Choir. We will learn those pieces for sure, and I will add to those some other pieces, because those pieces will typically be a little more difficult than what I would like to start the year with. So what I do to compliment those pieces, I choose a few pieces that I know are within their range of immediate success.

Then you get into my second and third choirs. Those choirs, we do pick out pieces that are definitely going to be successful for them, so what I'm getting at as far as the programming goes is that we're looking more for easy access in the fall, but yet with good literature.

I then look at the Christmas season as another. I expect to progress to a certain degree of difficulty. Again, with each of the choirs I will select a kind of centerpiece where I think they will be come December. I will usually pick out my Christmas program in the beginning of October, and I usually have a pretty good grasp on the speed with which they are improving and where I think they can be by Christmas, so I pick out my centerpieces for Christmas for each of those choirs, and then build around those with the rest of the literature. My Chamber Choir does a madrigal feast right after Thanksgiving, so they're learning probably 20 to 22 pieces.

TH: For the madrigal feast?

Hicks: We learn more than 20 pieces for the madrigal feast, and so we just pick out whatever's best for our Christmas concert, but again with the other choirs I will gauge where I think they will improve to by Christmas and choose their centerpiece. I'll usually have a good challenge piece for difficulty level and then balance out the rest of the program.

The next part of our season in Arkansas is our festival season, so by the time Christmas rolls around I've got a pretty good gauge of just how far I can take the choirs this season, and I start pulling for all intensive purposes for our region. We pull three pieces for region festival, and of the three pieces I will choose my piece for them to strive for, and then I pick the other two pieces to compliment that one piece.

Then for the spring concert usually we're just trying to pull pieces that I know the kids will enjoy, that they will finish the year feeling really good about. When I say "fun" concert, I'm really glad that my students really don't want to do any of the pop pieces or that sort of thing. They really want to do really good literature. It surprises me now that I have students who bring choir CDs to me that I've never heard before, because they've started to enjoy listening to different choirs. I had a student bring me a recording of the BYU [Brigham Young University] choir that he just found on the internet. Anyway, that's off the subject.

TH: No, that's great! It shows that your students are on the high end of valuing—I mean, it's so hard to judge “valuing,”—the affective domain of how far you're getting, and that shows that the students are there at the high end.

Hicks: I have a student who wanted us to do *It Takes a Whole Village* (Colwell & Allen, 1993), and I was blown away by the piece. I had heard it before. I kind of had forgotten about it. I start asking the kids, “What pieces do you want to do?” Now it's grown to this point that they are requesting some really wonderful pieces for us to do on the spring concert. I usually pick one or two of the ones they want, and then I pick to compliment those pieces.

TH: Would you say that throughout the year with your choirs that you are able hit most of the musical periods at some point?

Hicks: I would say that of the least amount of attention that I give to any era or genre the Romantic Period is the one that I spend the least amount of time on. I think it's just very difficult for high school students, and I think the students know it. I think they know the kind of richness and the kind of depth with which those pieces need to be performed. I just don't think that there's a whole lot of literature from that time period that we can pull off well.

TH: That's accessible for high school students?

Hicks: Yeah.

TH: If you were to set your pieces out, would you say the majority of them fit on the contemporary side, like 1900s or later?

Hicks: Yes.

TH: Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature, anything that I haven't asked?

Hicks: There's commissioned pieces. We have a composer in our district, so I do try to search out pieces that have never been done.

TH: To be able to premier new pieces?

Hicks: Yes.

TH: Just as a side note, how long would you say a typical concert is for you?

Hicks: Anymore I would say it's about two hours long.

TH: Two hours? And does that include an intermission?

Hicks: Yes, definitely <chuckles>. And again, another thing is that we've got about 375 kids in our choir program. Basically we're doing two concerts a night. It's like two concerts in a concert. Basically we're encouraging the parents to go.

TH: Well, the last question, how much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased?

Hicks: A lot. This last year we spent well over \$10,000 on music.

TH: That's a lot.

Hicks: Next year we're probably going to spend closer to \$13,000, because with the freshmen coming over to the high school, we're really going to have to build the women's and men's library.

TH: So next year when you have them coming up, are you going to have separate men's and women's ensembles? Is that what you're going to do with them? That's a great idea actually. So would you say the majority of your music is new?

Hicks: Each year I would say that close to 50% of it is new.

TH: About half. Well, that's great that you have the resources to be able to do that.

Hicks: Yeah, I can't believe what we have for budget here. It's unheard of.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript  
30 May 2006, 7:00pm  
Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker  
Interviewee: Christine Bass

Bio note: Christine Bass is the choral director at Cherry Hill High School in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. It has a school population of approximately 1,600. At the time of the interview Ms. Bass had taught for 23 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

- TH: So as not to take up too much of your time I will go right to the questions. The first one I know is really broad; you might end up answering other questions under this one. Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature.
- CB: I guess it depends on what choir I am selecting it for. Do you want me to talk in terms of the whole program, or do you want me to be more specific?
- TH: It's up to you. If you take a different philosophy with a different kind of group, that is great, or if you would rather speak broadly.
- CB: There is broad, and then there is more detailed, so we will start more broad. I feel very strongly that as a high school teacher my job is to expose the kids to a lot of really quality but varied music. With my top groups I take great pride in being able to go from an early piece of music with a particular tone color to a Romantic piece with a different tone color, and then as the style changes their voices have to change with it. When we get into the 20th Century literature, it is different there, and then with the spirituals there is [yet another] whole different sound. I really think that it is great for a high school voice to learn repertoire that is going to broaden their vocal skills and not just give them a one-dimensional [experience, like]: "Okay, we all have to sing Bach, or just Classical music in high school; you need to learn the greats." So in my broad philosophy I want to show them everything, and I want to show them as much variety in an authentic way. In other words, if I am going to do multi-cultural music, I am going to try really hard to do it authentically, and not just the generic multi-cultural [performance]. If I am going to do pop music, I am going to put back [in] those dotted rhythms. I am going to listen to the original recording and say: "Okay, wait, we are changing this because this arrangement is obviously dumbed-down, so we are going to put [these things] back in." I want my kids to have good, healthy vocal technique so they can survive in all kinds of repertoire. So I think it's important that they know how to sing well in a pop style, in an opera chorus, and in the [Morten] Lauridsen. We just did the Barber (1939) *Agnus Dei* with my top group. That takes a lot of vocal finesse, and you are not going to learn that if I only do a certain repertoire. That is my broad view.

The other spectrum is that I live in a very diverse community, so I need to teach to a very diverse community. I have to be very careful to protect the sacred music that I do because I can come under attack and I could lose the ability to do any sacred music, because there are so many different cultures and religions in my community that I teach in. So I have adopted the inclusive, not exclusive philosophy, where we will do everything. We will sing in Hebrew. We will sing in South African. We will just do it all, and then nobody can say I am favoring one thing over another. We used to have a concert called “Music from Around the World,” and that was a specialty. Now it’s just like that is what we always do. We always find enough variety with all of the choirs. Every year every group does at least one Hebrew piece. With my top group we do at least one German Romantic piece. We always do early Latin pieces. We have a madrigal group; they do some madrigal. Everything is there, the smorgasbord of repertoire.

TH: I’m glad to hear you say “inclusive” because that is what I have been trying to express to my music education students about repertoire.

CB: My community could shut me down really quickly if the kids weren’t so successful and weren’t enjoying it. My case in point, this year we did the *Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein, 1965) with a really wonderful community symphony. They all sang with the symphonic orchestra—not all of them but 170 of them did, there are 320 [total]—but they sang three movements in Hebrew, so then when I got to my spring concert I did Anton Armstrong’s *Praise His Holy Name* (Hampton, 1998), we actually sang “Jesus.” Normally, if I hadn’t really balanced it, I could have received some “fire” for that, but no one said a word. I had a couple of Jewish kids opt not to sing it, which is fine, but I did remind them that we had just done three movements in Hebrew. So it’s kind of a balancing act; you have to really make sure that you don’t overload in any one way. We also have a large Asian population, so it’s actually important for me to try to find really great Asian culture music. That’s kind of a challenge because there isn’t a lot. What is out there—there are some really nice things. I like Jing Ling-Tam; I do her stuff. The kids all know that they are going to sing everything. Often we will get into a concert, and my top group will be in five languages. That’s great.

TH: That’s neat that they get exposed to all of that. Along with your basic philosophy, how would you describe your view of the importance of selection of performance literature to the over-all success of your program.

CB: I think it really goes hand-in-hand, and here’s why: I think that when you teach a variety of musical styles, first of all, you appeal to a larger variety of kids. I remember when I was teaching at the junior high, and then I went to the high school my first six years of teaching, and then I took seven years off to raise my kids. When I came back in, I was interviewing everyone who was teaching high school: “What do *you* do? What do *you* do? What do *you* do?” One lady I’ll never forget said, “I do only Classical music, and the most musical theater we would do would be *Phantom* [Phantom of the Opera] or *Les Mis*

[Les Misérables] but that would be it, nothing else.” I thought, “Okay, all right. How many do you have in your choir?” “90.” “Okay, good.” Then I also talked to this lady who was from New York State, her husband was a football coach at the same school, and she had 300 kids in her choir. I said, “What do *you* do?” She said, “Everything.” I said, “What do you mean?” She proceeded to tell me that she did her winter concert and her spring concert with a variety of repertoire. She had a kind of a pops night thing where the kids took on a different character, and obviously it was very successful. I thought, “You know what? I think I want to do what she’s doing. I want to do more.” I have a background where I have contemporary music in my background; I’m comfortable with it. I think that is another thing too—if you’ve never really performed it yourself. I think with all of the music, the conductor has to feel a sense of security with it. For example, if I have not had much Asian repertoire in my particular background, which I hadn’t, then I need to go hear some good recordings, good choirs, and find out how to perform that successfully. Obviously I also have my kids that would help me with any pronunciation or any authenticity.

TH: And that’s a great way to include them.

CB: When I do Hebrew I say, “Okay, who are my Hebrew kids? Help me with this.” So the kids all feel ownership because we do something for everybody. I mean, we have a Black population; we do Black gospel. They get all excited, “Yeah, we’re finally doing. . . .” I say, “Before you open your music, let’s learn this first movement by ear, because if we were in a Black church, that’s how they would teach it. So, even though I teach you how to sight-read, let’s just try learning this in an authentic way.” I’ll just sing a part, get the men going, and then add the alto, and then add the soprano. Then I’ll say, “Okay, open your book.” They’ll say, “Ooo, that’s cool. We never did that before,” so I’m just exposing them to all of those kinds of things. We just did several gospel pieces, and the kids were really familiar with them. I say, “Who can take the lead?” This one guy just opens up and starts doing all this leading all over the chorus, and the other kids are kind of like, “Whoa!” “If you’ve never been to a Black church before, now you all were just in there, because that is how it is, and here’s the clapping, and away we go.” I think my kids really appreciate that about the program. I think that they don’t get bored, because they are not just singing one way, and just singing one style, and I think it really helps to draw a wider variety of kids. I’ve been to large comprehensive high schools where the choir looks like it came from Vermont, and it doesn’t look anything like what the rest of the high school looks like. That’s probably because the conductor is doing music that only appeals to a small portion of the population.

TH: Like all Classical, which wouldn’t necessarily pull in your Black students.

CB: It’s interesting because as the kids mature— They go through a stepped program: they enter vocal workshop, then the next step, and then the next step. The beauty of the four curricular choirs is that they have their own repertoire levels, so the entry level kids have



easier SATB music, especially in the fall. Everybody is at a different level, and what happens is as the kids get pulled in with the more popular and the appealing and the more simple music, by the time they reach their senior year they say, “Eh, we don’t really care about this. Let’s do the Barber or Brahms.” It’s different, so their musical taste has matured. They enjoy it all, but they have a more serious musical appetite as time goes on.

TH: So you are able to pull them in with something they can connect with, and then move them forward step by step.

CB: Critical part: Start where they are.

TH: That’s great. From where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection?

CB: Well, I went to Westminster, and it was in the 1970s, so we were doing all the big huge works, and then I was in Westminster Choir with [Joseph] Flummerfelt. We did everything, and that’s where I really learned the idea of the different timbres and tone colors and styles, so we would start with early music and end up with *The Battle Hymn* [of the Republic], or a rousing spiritual, or something that we could open wide up with. If I hadn’t been in Westminster Choir I wouldn’t have gotten this. We did so much symphonic work in the college that it’s good that you’re in a smaller ensemble so that you can do other choral repertoire. I did that. I had my church background and my school background. I had a real good high school program where I came from. My husband and I met at Westminster. I’m White, and he’s Black, so I went during the weekends to his father’s church. His father is a pastor at St. Paul’s Methodist Church in South Jersey, and I sang in their gospel choir. I would come during the week and sing in the Westminster Choir. I would go down and visit him on the weekends, sing with the gospel choir, and come back, so I’m kind of a rare breed because I have authentic experience. My husband was in a contemporary Christian band that I was in for a long time and actually had several albums out. I’ve done all that, so I’m a weird bird because a varied musical background, and I bring it all to the kids.

TH: Would you say you gained very much from professional organizations and conferences?

CB: I do. I think that when people say, “Where do you get your repertoire?” the first answer I give is, “The concerts I hear at ACDA.” A lot of times, but not entirely, it’s the college stuff, because we’ve sung at three of the National Conventions and one of the Eastern ones now. We did an MENC eastern one. I just didn’t like how they viewed choral music—no risers, a stand-up piano—that’s what you get, and practice an hour before you sing, so I think we’re going to stick with ACDA. I’ve heard good groups there [at MENC], but I think that their focus is more instrumental or general—less specific to choral genre. If I’m not at a Convention I would order the CD’s of all the high school and college and all of the honors choirs and I would listen to the repertoire and then order the scores of the things that are interesting. I go through Hal Leonard and all those five

thousand packs of stuff, but I really find myself fast-forwarding everything very quickly because it's hard to take. You just know that it is going to be this same, <singing in a tinny voice> "Gloria in excelsis, . . ." one of those, "we are singing Latin so you should buy us," but ugh, why? Those things I just don't understand.

But it is a problem with my entry-level group that I have to have quality SATB music that is going to hold their interest, but that they are going to succeed with right away. I think that is probably my biggest challenge. With my top group, I can throw anything at them, and they'll grab it, but with my little beginners, it has to have a chord. It has to have a line. It has to have a way for me to teach them how to sing in it. My strength is vocal technique, so every piece that I pick has to have a lot of, "How do we learn this?" We do it with "tum's," or we do it with "mi's," or we connect, and we use our bodies, and I'm always looking for pieces that are going to draw that out of them musically. I think the great thing in doing a lot of repertoire is that you can pick three pieces in your class period. You know, you warm up, you do your sight-singing, you do three different feeling pieces, and everything moves so quickly, because one is doing this, and the next is working on a different area. It just really helps to keep their interest. It helps them to grow musically.

TH: You've mentioned picking up literature from ACDA, going to ACDA events and hearing other groups. Are there any other sources you would say you use to find new literature?

CB: I try to go to my colleagues' concerts and things like that and All-State concerts. ACDA publishes the All-State repertoire list from all the All-State choirs, so I'll look at that. Usually I end up with a three-foot pile of music that I can read through in the summer, pick repertoire, and it's crazy. Because we've done ACDA stuff, I have composers sending us stuff now, or publishing houses sending us pieces that they want us to look at, but I just read through a lot of stuff. If it hits me right away, or if I get sucked in either by a rhythmic energy or a beautiful harmonic structure, as far as new music goes, I'll look at that, and then I have to rotate in the staples, the Brahms, the Byrd, the Purcell, or the Morley. I rotate that in various forms so that they have a balanced diet. I thought it was really good that at the last National that we did, the one in Los Angeles, they actually set standards for your programming, and they said you must include two early pieces. You must only do one commissioned work. I thought that was interesting because sometimes, I think, people go, "we must present new music, a commissioned work," or "I only want to do the entire work of somebody." You sit there and you think, "Why is that?" I think it was interesting that they were specifying, "no, we want to hear diversity in your programming."

TH: I like that. Are there any other criteria that are important to you when you select choral literature? You've mentioned a lot of things, the quality of the work, programming the different styles and periods.

- CB: You know, how it fits in with my total school for programming. Each choir sings several pieces by themselves, and then I group the choirs. I put my two top groups together in a larger symphonic choir. We'll sing a large work, such as the one that just did, the *Chichester* (Bernstein, 1965). I've done Fauré. I've done Vivaldi. We do parts of larger works, and then sometimes we'll take the entire work, and I'll do a separate concert outside of school, such as Fauré. That way I don't expect the entire audience, the parents of all 325 kids to sit through 20 minutes of one composer, so you have to be careful of how you're programming. You have to know your audience as far as what they can tolerate, because my kids change every four years, and so do my audiences in a lot of respects. I have to make sure that we do some easy stuff, some appealing stuff, and some stuff that has a little bit of comedy so there is interaction with the audience, and then we hit them with the real stuff, and you say, "Please don't clap until my arms go down."
- TH: Do you actually say that?
- CB: Oh yes!
- TH: You know, I believe in that, and so when I go to concerts and they don't say it, and they start clapping in between, I just sit there and go, "Oh."
- CB: I said it, and we did the Barber. Of course, a kid in the front row claps right after we did a big chord, and I'm like, <with clenched teeth> "you didn't do that." <laughs>
- TH: You have to educate the audience.
- CB: That and the cell phones. If the program is really popular, then Sally wants her friends to come, and her friends are "hoodlums." They come to my concert. They're the kids that clap at the wrong time. They just don't know, because they haven't been to a real concert, but it's cool because the choir kids are having fun. It's kind of like, "Okay, so how do you do this?" You know, that's all part of the growth.
- TH: So, how much do you have to take into consideration the difficulty level of the literature? For example, taking into consideration the strength and quality of your sections or your voices.
- CB: Oh yeah. For me, that's why I said my entry level group is always a big challenge. I don't know exactly who I'm gonna get, and so I just have to get in there, and then I just have to pull from my bag of tricks. "Okay, this piece is not gonna work. I need to go with something else. My tenors are just not going to handle this." So I'll make the adjustments. It varies every year. This is the year for me to try the Barber, because I had a really solid group. I wouldn't do that every year. It's not every year that I'm going to try that. My repertoire varies greatly depending upon my personnel, and I think you're crazy if you think, "I'm gonna do this *this* year," and you look at your kids and go, "I hope they

can do it.” If you can’t teach that particular kid to do that successfully, or in other words, if the process of teaching that choir that particular piece that you’ve got your mind set on is just going to cause so much frustration, and it’s not going to be pleasurable, then why are you doing it?

TH: You’ve mentioned a few pieces that you’ve done. Can you discuss a few of the pieces you’ve selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those particular pieces?

CB: Yup. I have my spring concert program right here. Do you want me to send you repertoire that we’ve done?

TH: That would be great. You don’t have to.

CB: I have all the programs. I could just send you stuff. Okay, on this spring concert that we just did last week, my little beginning group did Handel’s (1999). *Antiphonal Alleluia*. It’s [edited and arranged by] Patrick Liebergen, and it’s just a simple four-part alleluia with a little choir one, and choir two, so I pulled eight kids to sing in the second choir—it’s not really an echo choir. They got to be familiar with a certain era of music, a certain style of singing. They enjoyed it.

TH: So you were meeting an educational objective in selecting that?

CB: Well, it was— it’s not contrapuntal; it’s all homophonic; each part had the back and forth between the echo and the rhythmic, not just filling in holes; you have to sing your part while there’s another part going through. It was educational, but was also, I think, for them, that they got a feeling of success being able to do that, because I’m always telling my beginning kids, “You’re building your skills for when you get into the other group. So what you bring with you as a beginner to the next group is what I’m going to be able to use to build on.” Then we did a piece that I’ve used for several years. It’s called *The Forest* by Joseph Martin (1997), and it’s a simple piece, very legato, 20th Century, and has a very strong mood. I tell them it’s like an enchanted forest in the *Lord of the Rings*, and you’re watching the screen go by. But they have to sing a very beautiful, legato line, and that’s hard for beginning kids. They can sing the fast stuff, but can they sustain, and can they make a line. There’s a little of contemporary harmonies in there, a little guys-against-the-girls idea, so that, again, there’s a totally different style, and totally different vocal issues, and that’s exactly what I want to do in that beginning group, and I tell them that. I say, “I’m gonna pick music that’s really gonna challenge you. Each piece is going to be different, and you’re gonna have to make those changes between pieces.” They buy into that. “Yeah, we can do it.” It’s all a part of the psyche that I try to develop. We finished their little set with the *Neighbors’ Chorus*, Offenbach (1954), which is a piece that I frequently use for their spring concert in the entry level, because it’s: “can you sing three-part boys? (It’s actually two-part for the girls.) Can you go back and forth? Can you

get this crazy diction? What's it all about? What's a comedic opera?" That brought a whole other dimension to what they had to learn and to their musical independence. That was important. Those were the three pieces that the little beginning group did. How much more detail do you want me to go into?

TH: How about the top choir?

CB: That's the one that does the ACDA stuff. We did the Brahms (2006) motet, the *O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf*, Opus 74 No. 2. It's six movements. This, interestingly enough, it's the fourth time I've taught it. The first, I did it in my high school in English, then the first time I taught it, I taught it in English. The second time I taught it, I taught it in German there, and then I did it when I conducted All-State; I did it in German, and then I did it this year in German. So I had programmed it for the beginning of the year, because I did the Barber at the end of the year, and both of them are about five or six minutes, and the Barber is about eight minutes. I didn't want to put them together. When we got to the winter concert the kids could sing it. They could sing it really well on their neutral syllable, but when we threw in all the German, it needed time to settle. I had about 71 kids in the choir. About 35 of them were new, so they weren't used to learning things at the speed at which I was cramming it down their throats, so we got ready to do the winter concert. They were in their books; they were buried. I said, "No, this is not how this piece is supposed to be. You're supposed to really enjoy it. It's got to settle with you, and it obviously hasn't settled," so I pulled it from the winter concert. I said, "We'll keep working on it. Don't worry." They said, "Oh no. We've worked too hard." I said, "That's fine, but we've got an international dinner that we do in the end of January, we'll sing it for that, and we might use it in the spring. We'll see." Well, it turned out to be really glorious. In March and April, as we revisited it, and the German had time to settle, we used it for our adjudication pieces. We just did three sets at adjudication. We received rave reviews. The judges were like, "I wouldn't do that with my college choir. That was amazing. The German was wonderful." The kids felt very confident with it by the time we sang it. It was a good thing for me. It was a good call. I'm always questioning myself. "Should I cut something? Is it ready? Do I take the risk? Is it going to just turn the corner right in time, or not?" I really felt like, "No, you're not singing this. It's not ready." We opened up. We started our spring concert with that, then we did the Barber (1939) *Agnus Dei*, which worked really well except for the kid clapping. <laughs> After those two very long pieces I wanted to do something really fast, so I chose *My Spirit Sang All Day*, Gerald Finzi (1939/1969), which is only about a minute long.

TH: So you gave them something quick and short.

CB: They learned that really at lightning speed. I was very proud of them. I just threw it in at the last second, because all the time we're working on the *Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein, 1965) too.

TH: That's a lot of literature.

CB: That's not half of it. *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel* (Dawson, 1942) was our closer for that concert, so we did those four pieces. The *Chichester* (Bernstein, 1965) we did in April, so the symphonic choir did the first movement in our winter concert for the symphonic piece. I did the second movement in our spring concert for the symphonic piece, which was nice because I didn't have to learn something new. That's what we had been working on. We always do what we call "Broadway Night," and this [idea] is basically from that gal in New York that I mentioned in the beginning, a time when we can use lighter music and we can use more solos, and Cherry Hill kids take dance lessons since they were able to walk. I have a lot of kids that dance, and I have them make up choreography for a small team of kids. Every year we pick a different theme. We do like an Andrew Lloyd Webber Broadway night. We do a Bernstein Broadway night. We do musicals through the decades. This year the first half we did *The Wizard of Oz* (Arlen, 1938), *Wicked* (Schwartz, 2003), and *The Wiz* (Smalls, 1974). The second half we did all television stuff. So my kids learn about 120 pages of that fluff in about two-and-a-half months, with moves and memorized, and then they put on that show, and that's all the choirs. My little beginning kids are trying to get "This is the alto part. This is the tenor line," so they actually are sight-reading through stuff that is a little bit above their level. For example, the *Wicked* score is actually pretty tricky, but they sing it with all 320 kids, so they're not just performing it with their ensemble. That's a great strengthening, because they get to sing with the more mature voices. "Wow, this is how all the tenors sound," so it's a real win-win for us to do it that way. I also use the Jensen Sight-Singing (Bauguess, 1987) method, movable "do," and we spend every day, four days a week, doing two or three exercises from that book, so they all learn how to sight-read, because that is a lot of repertoire. I don't know if there are a lot of schools that do as much repertoire. We do a lot of repertoire because they all [sight] read.

TH: You kind of answered this a little bit, but my number six, how often do you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent of performing them? Would you say that you do that mostly for sight-reading purposes?

CB: Usually, for my kids and for motivation, they need to know that they are going to perform it. Today we read through the [Maurice] Duruflé (1960) *Ubi caritas* because we might sing it in this concert we have on Sunday for my top group, so I said, "here is the Latin; it's nothing new; let's look through the Latin; it's four-part; and here we go—boom". We just read through it. You could say that was for educational purposes, because we were maybe going to do a joint number with this church that we are doing our final concert at.

TH: So it was more of a trying out because you might. . . .

- CB: A little test-drive thing. When we went to the ACDA state festival thing; they have a sight-singing component now that you perform for the judges, and then you go to a sight-singing room. They give you something in four-parts at various levels. You get like twelve minutes to look at it, and you can't sing a note. You can speak it. You can do all this stuff, but you can't sing anything. Then you get one time through with the piano. You go a second time, and you get scored. We did a couple practice runs of those so that we knew what to do. My extra-curricular group, Chamber Singers, got an exemplary on that because they picked the hardest level, and they nailed it. I was really excited, because it was my first time doing that.
- TH: Wow, that's neat. Number seven asks what consideration, if any, do you give the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment. I notice you wrote you use students, so is there something that you have to watch for?
- CB: Yeah. We have been blessed. I live in a community that is very arts-oriented, so there are always kids taking piano, but that doesn't mean that they're going to be able to handle a heavy-duty accompaniment. Right now I am just graduating a kid who played the *Chichester* (Bernstein, 1965) for us. He is amazing, but coming up I have three or four freshmen who are really good, but they're not where he is. Next year I can probably do Brahms. I have to be careful of which ones I choose—just kind of test them. I don't have anyone that I can just kind of plop down a piece and say, "Okay, do this," where I've had that before. In fact, I have one of my students who is getting his doctorate at Juilliard in piano performance. He's amazing, so I've had everything. I do have to watch that, and in general we have some really wonderful pianists. I've never really had to hire out like some people have to. We always let kids play. Sometimes it takes work because I have to give it to them plenty in advance, but we have the good fortune of having a lot of players.
- TH: Number eight you already answered in terms of one of the pieces. Did you ever start rehearsing a work that you thought was a good choice but then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working for one reason or another? You already explained how basically you just performed it later when they had more time.
- CB: I have an interview question that we give our new candidates: "What if it's not ready? What are you going to do?" You want to hear them say: "I'm not gonna do it. I don't want the kids to go up there and bomb. That's not gonna teach them anything."
- TH: It doesn't help them feel successful. How frequently would you say that occurs for you?
- CB: Very rarely. We just did, with my chamber group, the Swingle Singers *The Flight of the Bumble-Bee* (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1985). I had these four little soprano ones that had to sing about a million notes, and my chamber group only meets once a week after school, and everybody's playing lacrosse or football, spring sports, and I said, "You know what? We are going to try this." I think we started it in March maybe, and very slowly. It went

<singing melody slowly>, and it's supposed to be <singing it up-tempo>. About three weeks before the concert I said, "Okay guys, this practice I'm either going to feel that we're really gonna have a chance or we're just gonna bag it." They were not sure, and then they pulled together, and I said, "I'm seeing some light at the end of the tunnel." I said, "I don't want to take it off just yet." We'll see what happens next week. They came back and "boom," there it was, and they were ready. They were so proud of themselves. That's usually what happens. I'll give myself plenty of time so that the kids can actually make it work, rather than two days before the concert saying: "this is not worth it." Well, that's just poor teaching. You've got to make sure that you've done your part, and that you have done everything you can to make it a success early enough.

TH: The next two questions have to do with the selection of festival literature. Number 9: what part does selection of festival literature play in your selection of literature for the school year? So do you, right at the beginning of the year, ear-mark what your festival literature or do you have your concert music and decide out of that?

CB: I think the second is what I do? This year we did the ACDA festival which has the required pieces, and I just kind of looked through in the middle of the year and thought, "oh good, we do *this*, we do *this*, we do *this*. Okay, I can use it." With my men's group I was fortunate to have worked on one of the pieces that was one there, because we do other repertoire. We do lighter stuff mostly. Fortunately we had a men's night out, and we did *Brothers, Sing On!* (Grieg, 1935), so they all knew it. We had something. Now that we're doing more of that state festival where there is a required thing, I have to probably be a little more careful to plan it ahead of time. Sometimes I'll get moving too fast. All of a sudden it's like, "Whoops. I've got to get to know that." If they need a Bach Chorale, we sing a Bach Chorale every year. We've kind of got some things that are standardized.

TH: So that you're already set and ready for that. You've already mentioned this. What influences your choice of festival literature? Well, obviously you're influenced by the requirements that are set down.

CB: Again, it has to meet my other criteria, so I'm not going to blindly pick a festival piece. I'm gonna look and say, "this is what I know is good, and I can teach it because, . . . and it's going to fit into this year's repertoire because. . . ." It has to line up with everything else.

TH: Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future? You find a piece and you want to possibly use it?

CB: Right. I have. What I do is every summer I do repertoire ideas, and I take a computer sheet and I say, "here are the things that we're looking at." I go through and I read it all, and I go, "this could be a possibility for this group." I go through, and I do it by level of



difficulty. I've listened to programs throughout the year, and I've already said, "this is a Westsinger's piece for the fall." I have kind of a gradation of level of difficulty and the group it would correspond with. After that I go through and say, "now this is what I really like and want to do. There are one or two pieces that this would be perfect for the group this year," or "we are going to go sing. . . ." Like, for the Barber, we did it in a beautiful cathedral. I knew we were going to do that, so everything worked out. There's usually several criteria that I go through. I hope I'm making sense.

TH: Yes. Well, all of the last questions all have to do with programming concert literature, which you've discussed. So, if there are any points you think you haven't touched on. . . . Number 12: do you use any particular methods for programming literature on concerts? You mentioned that you try to fit in all these different styles.

CB: Sometimes I'll say, "Okay, we're going to do a multi-cultural winter concert." I can't have a Christmas concert. I'm not allowed to do *Christmas* sacred music, but I am allowed to do sacred music. We have to have a *winter* concert. Right in my town where I live you can have a Christmas concert, but five miles down the road you can't.

TH: So for Christmas could you do *Magnum Mystorium*, for example?

CB: I can do anything in Latin. They don't consider that could influence the kids. That's really what the issue is: like they could get converted from singing a song. My same chamber group sings the whole month of December out in restaurants in groups of sixes and eights, so they learn 35 holiday songs by December 1st, and then they take it out, and they sing all month, but in school I can't do that. I can do *Sleigh Ride* (Anderson, 1950/1962) in school, but I can't do *Silent Night* (Mohr & Gruber, 1818).

TH: So you can do the secular stuff that doesn't reference Christmas?

CB: Right. You can do winter. You can't do Christmas. Every once in a while I'll do *Carol of the Bells* (Leontovych, 1936) or *White Christmas* (Berlin, 1940)—nothing too religious.

TH: All right. Question 13: how much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year? You've kind of talked about that too.

CB: Concert programming is my literature that I select for the year.

TH: So it really drives it. Okay, number 14: what is the typical proportion of styles and genres that you program on a single concert and throughout the year? Would you say that it is fairly even across?

CB: I think that it's fairly even across. It also depends on the group. My more advanced groups will do more Renaissance—you know, they'll do more standard choral rep—

where my beginning groups will do more of the stuff that's out there that's a little bit easier to appeal.

TH: So your younger groups might do a little bit more on the contemporary?

CB: Right. I always do a pop song with my younger groups on the winter concert because they need to know that it's Okay to sing, and it's cool to sing, and "Oh, yeah, I know that song." I never do a pop song with my top group, but then they all sing in Broadway Night. So that could be a Disney Broadway, or something so that everybody does plenty of the lighter stuff because of the Broadway thing.

TH: But that's more focused on a concert, right?

CB: Right, a specific concert.

TH: Question fifteen, are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature, anything we haven't discussed?

CB: Yeah, do I have a year where I have two guitarists, and I want to do the *Gloria a Dios* (Mendoza, 1998). What specific instrumentalists do I have? The year I did the Fauré I had wonderful string players in my choir, so that definitely makes a difference.

TH: Having good instrumentalists that you might want to feature on something.

CB: Or do I have a wonderful mezzo? I just know that I want to sing *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*. She's just got the right voice for that. I'm gonna do that. So there will be times that I pick according to the kids that I actually have.

TH: Okay, that's great. Lastly, how much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased for that performance?

CB: That's a great question. This year, because I was finishing my masters in the summer, and we had just come off of [our] Los Angeles [trip] and everything else, I just went back and thought, "This is stupid. I've taught for sixteen years. I've got great repertoire. I'm gonna do all stuff I know." It's the first year I've ever done it.

TH: So you did all things you already knew?

CB: I did all old stuff, except for the Broadway Night where we did different things. It was just all my old standards and all my really cool multi-cultural pieces that I've done before, so that I just didn't have the stress and strain. It wasn't 100%. Like I said, the *Bumble-Bee* (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1985) one I'd never tackled that, so for me that was a really neat thing. Obviously, the second and third time you teach something the better

you are. The kids succeed with it more easily, so this is more of a different year, but usually I make myself crazy and dig through repertoire all of the time. It also has to do with budget concerns. This year we didn't have as much money, and music's getting more expensive. You can't buy 120 copies. It's a lot of money. It's kind of crazy. We buy a significant amount every year, even if I'm reviewing something, just because the choir sizes have changed. You've usually gone up, so you have to have enough music for everybody. Like with the *Chichester* (Bernstein, 1965), we borrowed it from a university and another school because we just could not afford that.

TH: So before this year when you made the choice to stick with things that you already knew, would you say that even half of your music was newly purchased?

CB: That's typically what I do is at least half.

TH: Okay.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript

7 June 2006

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Bill Erickson

Bio note: Bill Erickson is the choral director at Cherry Creek High School in Greenwood Village, Colorado. It has a school population of approximately 3,600. At the time of the interview Mr. Erickson had taught for 24 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: I notice in your demographic information that you've been teaching for quite a while.

BE: Yes, and in various places too. I have a very diverse background. I don't know if the information included that. . . . Where I started is where I grew up in South Dakota, in rural north central South Dakota. From there I discovered that this is what I wanted to do, so I went on to Arizona State (ASU) to study with Dr. Douglas McEwen and Dr. David Stocker. My years spent at ASU were from 1985 to 1987. From there I moved on to inner-city Denver and spent two years at Thomas Jefferson High School. The last 17 years have been here at Cherry Creek High School.

TH: At inner-city Denver— was that a lot different from what you had experienced?

BE: Very different. It was a real growing experience. I had some really wonderful kids and some opportunities to perform a lot, but it was a rough school. Coming from South Dakota, and then coming from Arizona State where it was just choral heaven, and then dealing with a rough bunch was just a real education.

[Discussion on demographics omitted]

TH: The first question is really broad, so you might end up answering some of the other questions just in answering number one. Number one says: Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature. Do you have it in a nutshell what your philosophy is?

BE: Yes, the literature should teach or enhance or introduce at times choral history. Performance practice based on historical perspective gives us an understanding of how to approach music that has no "professionally recorded" history. In other words, we do our educated best at stylizing a motet, a movement from a Mass, even chant. We were lucky enough to get a workshop in chant from a priest at El Escorial over in Spain. After the workshop he took us up to the sanctuary at El Escorial and we sang the music of Spanish composers and chant with him and some of his staff. I've attended other such workshops—Paul Salamunovich, who was recognized or knighted by the Pope for his

contribution to chant in the Western hemisphere. So I feel fairly comfortable doing chant with the kids, whose guides can be applied, really to the phrase in so many other styles for so many other periods in history. That often can be a launching point. We'll learn chant about every fall when the kids come in. We're all phrasing at the same time; we're all doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. It helps, even the principals might be different in applying those *arsis* and *thesis*—you know, the rise and fall of the line—the length of the line, and the phrase might be different from the motet, but it sure gets kids to be really flexible. As far as other periods in history, it is great to introduce them to the well-known and maybe the obscure composers throughout time. You know, you pick a different period, and you'll be teaching a different thing, articulation, phrasing. I teach theory regularly in class, so we would recognize where the harmonic rhythm is going, coupled with the melody, why the stress on these particular words, or is it a word stress period in history, or is it the harmony, the melody taking charge of the line. I try to do some spirituals every year from various composers, some of the more common ones and the ones that really started the movement in choral history. These composers/arrangers—Moses Hogan particularly,—and those part of more recent history, were not part of my training. The way I learned was to listen to these works and attend the workshops presented mainly by Anton Armstrong and André [Jerome] Thomas. At ASU the philosophy of programming was more toward early music to music of modern composers, but did not include chance music or atonal music. Particularly at Arizona State, his philosophy was that, if the piece doesn't let the singers sing, why do it? In other words, the aleatoric stuff, or music incorporating non-traditional notation in works such as *Epitaph for Moonlight* (Schafer, 1969), were presented to me in post-graduate school. Therefore, I don't do a lot of that. I just started programming Eric Whitacre. I found a couple of pieces that I felt were approachable to the high school voice.

TH: Which ones have you done with Eric Whitacre?

BE: We did *A Boy and a Girl* (Whitacre, 2004) this year and *Sleep* (Whitacre, 2001).

TH: How important to you is the selection of performance literature to the over-all success of your program?

BE: Along with tone and your sound that get enhanced by the literature that you choose, it's your identity. Your success depends on it. The quality literature, the literature that the kids and I will love together and learn together, but I still feel that it should be high school appropriate. We'll do difficult literature, but I know that there are programs out there that will tackle stuff that I think is more difficult, you know, the [Henryk] Górecki, the [Krzysztof] Penderecki, and Bach cantatas or motets. There is plenty of Bach that is way over the head of a high school singer. I know there are other programs that might tackle that, but I choose not to, because they are still high school kids. As more and more educators learn about the voice, the push has been vocal health, care of the voice, healthy vocal production, and so if I feel the literature is over our heads, I won't program it, but

as far as your identity and what you do for an audience, what you do for the listener, taking them through however you want to look at it— a journey, a menu—comes down to the fine art of once you've got your program, whether it's a theme or not, where do they go? Where do the pieces fit in? I think I may be jumping to another question.

TH: That's okay. From where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection? You've mentioned Arizona State. It sounds like you learned some things from being there.

BE: David Bauer came to my undergraduate school up in Aberdeen, South Dakota, at Northern State College, my last year. He turned my focus from being a band director to being a choral director. He came out of Arizona State. David is in this life-long, relentless pursuit of new literature, any period, whatever it is. He has been doing this for 35 years, or more, and I bet you can count on two hands the number of pieces he has repeated in 35 years. It's always something new. He is my best source for literature. He will send me boxes of single copies that he has picked up, reading sessions or what he has sent into his college for literature classes.

TH: What university is he at?

BE: He is at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. A source of his I use indirectly is Jeff Harris down in the Phoenix area.

TH: So you are really using other directors.

BE: Yes, networking is critical in our business. There's nothing like having a few directors whom you admire to call on for help. Dick Larson, now back in Denver, was at Cherry Creek from 1982 to 1995, and currently has a fantastic ensemble: Kantorei. Now he is a retired teacher, but he's got one of the finer community choirs in the country. Dick is a great source for literature and programming, just where to program and how to program. Larry Kaptein has been a huge help, as has Joan Catoni Conlon over at CU Boulder. Also, there's Galen Darrow up at UNC in Greeley and James Kim at CSU.

I'm sitting here holding a Kjos successful performing literature package. Actually I use such sources, I bet, only 10% of the time.

TH: The CD's? This leads into the sources you use to find new literature too.

BE: I really don't use those that much. I pick a lot of literature from these networking sources. I'll call them up, "I need an opener. I need something in the centerpiece. I need a penultimate piece. I need a closer. What do you think? I need a processional." These guys will just rattle off of the top of their heads a half dozen winners. I do listen to those some of the time, but I bet it's just 10% of the time. I like Alliance [Alliance Music Publishers]. I feel they represent great, diverse literature and composers.

- TH: Do you go to many reading sessions?
- BE: Yes, I go to reading sessions at ACDA, summer conventions, or regional or national ACDA. Our All-State Chorus in Colorado has a good reading session.
- TH: There in Colorado, do you have lists of recommended literature that you go by?
- BE: I don't believe we have a list as other states would publish, or contest literature that I know Texas or Arkansas or Minnesota publish. To my knowledge I don't think we have one of those.
- TH: It's interesting. That is something that I have just been kind of finding on the side is that some states have them. Some states live and die by them. Some states it's a recommendation. Some it's required, but in Colorado there really isn't that?
- BE: I would hate to be wrong on that, but. . . .
- TH: I would think after all of your years that you would know though. If that's the case you would know that by now.
- BE: I know what they look like. I know what you're talking about. I don't think we have one.
- TH: What criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature? You kind of mentioned some at the beginning. I can tell already from what you said that variety and styles and periods are important to you, and even programming particular styles and periods sounds like it's important.
- BE: Yeah, I know you have to address that. I mean, in the answer I just gave you, I have to address that, but I look for pieces that allow a kid to study and learn and sing a beautiful line, the phrase, that they understand what it means to phrase, because after it's in tune, after the tone is beautiful, you work on relentlessly here, and we work on our technique, then we can be expressive.
- TH: So once you take care of those background details, then you can add in the musicality to it. So you look for music that you will be able to do that?
- BE: Yes, music that is expressive, contains beautiful text, great poetry, great composers, composers that know the voice, that know how to write for the voice. Of course you deal with tessitura, whatever group you have. You've got to accommodate that, and whatever strengths that you have. Every time I have just a stellar soprano every few years I will dig out the *Laudate Dominum* by Mozart (1948) from *Solemn Vespers*.
- TH: So you can feature that?

- BE: Yes. In all these pieces, Mozart or Haydn, and you're teaching Classical style. You know, the harmonic formulas, the antecedent-consequent part of the phrase. How to sing Classical style, Classical phrase. Which, when a choir comes in, that's what you get.
- TH: How much do you consider the like-ability of the piece by the choir or the audience?
- BE: I do. I don't really dwell on it. I do literature that after all these years that I love, that really are appealing to me. Most of the time I'm right—the kids like it, and the audience does, just judging from their responses, you know, with applause and comments after our performances. It works. Here they know, and have even before I got here, that we do great literature at a higher artistic level, and they just expect that at the concerts.
- TH: Can you discuss a few pieces that you've selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those pieces?
- BE: Sure. During this last year?
- TH: Yes.
- BE: Let's see. We did a tour to Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic, and this being the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth, we did the *Ave Verum Corpus* (Mozart, 1997), the *Laudate Dominum* (Mozart, 1948), since we were going to be in Salzburg. We also sang the Mendelssohn (1844/1976), *Richte mich Gott, (Judge Me, O God)*. Because we were in Leipzig we studied and performed that specific work. We were in residence with Amici Musica, Ron Dirk Enteutner was their conductor, and we did workshops with them. We joined with them in concert. So we performed Bach, a Sanctus from one of the Masses, the Ave Verum Corpus, *Judge Me, O God*, Mendelssohn, and then *Lost in the Night* arranged by Kyle S. Haugen (2000). We performed the Eric Whittacre's (2004) piece with his choir, *A Boy and a Girl*. We also performed a new folk song arranged by Robert H. Young, (2005) in Texas, the *Annabelle Lee*, the last poem that Edgar Allen Poe ever had published.
- TH: I hadn't heard of that one.
- BE: It's nice. It has violin accompaniment and is set *a cappella*. It's a story of a past, precious love. One that lingers in the memory long after it's gone. I would say those pieces, the Mendelssohn, the Mozart, and then the *Lost in the Night* (Haugen, 2000) Were the most memorable pieces from that tour. *Lost in the Night* is just a three part. It's SAB with piano accompaniment. It's one of the most stunning, beautiful settings of about any style that you'll hear. It's gorgeous.
- TH: Sometimes you'll find some surprising things.



- BE: What you can do with this, timing-wise, and the phrase is so free to interpretation. It's one of those. It drops your jaw. Gorgeous. Well-written, very conscious for all of the voices. It gets the men up in the passaggio, all the men, and they sit there for a little while, which is a nice challenge too. Pull that off, and hopefully you're doing something right.
- TH: Between those three pieces you had Classical, Romantic, the folk song-contemporary, it sounds like?
- BE: Folk song, uh huh.
- TH: The next question, how often do you select pieces for education purposes with no intent of performing them? Do you ever do that?
- BE: Not very often. I'll pick literature and stuff their folders knowing that we're not going to get to everything, but we're probably going to program 95% of it. That is the way to answer that. Which are going to—it really goes back to your question, selecting literature for the choir that they'll like, that the audience will like. I'll get a feel for what's going well, what they're really taking to, and maybe what has to go on the back burner, but then those pieces I'll bring back the next year, or two years after that, if we didn't have time to get to it.
- TH: That kind of answers the question: did you ever start rehearsing a work which you thought was a good choice, but then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working for one reason or another? So maybe you'll have a piece that year that just isn't going like the others are, and might decide to put aside for another group?
- BE: One of the reasons, we just might not have time to get to it, and to treat it justly, and to let the music sink in, and then get really comfortable with it to bring it to fruition. I never like to go on if it's "iffy."
- TH: What consideration, if any, do you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment? Do you have to watch for accompaniments to make sure they are not too hard, or any of those kinds of considerations? You've mentioned, for example, using a string quartet. So, how much do you watch for those things?
- BE: We'll have turnover, if the students are accompanying, every year or every other year. We now have a paid accompanist. We've even had three accompanists in the last three years, and you really need to get to know them and what you can trust once they hit the stage. If there's a really good accompanist then I like to pick a piece that will feature the

accompanist, like the [Norman] Dello Joio (1948) *A Jubilant Song*, or Mack Wilberg's (1987) *I Saw Three Ships* setting for 4-hands piano.

TH: So those are the things you might look for—whether or not you have the accompanists to do them?

BE: Yeah.

TH: What part does festival literature play in your selection of literature for the school year? For example some directors might just pull their festival literature from the regular lit they are doing. Others might set it aside special right at the get-go.

BE: Festival—is that kind of a broad term?

TH: Anything you might go to be adjudicated, or the things that you chose to do for ACDA.

BE: Okay, the programming for something like that definitely starts at the beginning of the year, but it's not everything. We are asked to sing for so many different organizations throughout the year, such as the *National Anthem* (Key & Smith, 1942) at various sporting events. We might be asked to sing something at the National German, French, or Spanish Honor Society banquets, which we would have something ready to go in one of those languages. We sing a lot, of course, in December, a lot of seasonal things. There's a real standard set of five or six pieces that have been done here for decades. Those we would not put on a festival or convention. I would say, as time goes by, I think to teach motet style to a kid takes a year to let a couple of them sink in, so I would start those at the beginning of the year. We're going to do chant, or we might set a standard processional at every appropriate concert throughout the year, but the meaty stuff would definitely come between October and January. Most conferences are January, February, March-ish. I believe we would not introduce anything new for a conference or a convention after the new year. Programming for these events would come from a combination of a couple of concerts.

TH: OK—looking at what's already been performed or what will be performed and kind of pull?

BE: Uh-huh.

TH: So what influences your choices for your festival literature of what you pull to sing for those?

BE: Oh, just what makes up a good program, using characteristics of good programming. One way to get started could be something light and short that gets people sitting up and gets them clapping right at the beginning: about a 60- to 90-second piece.

TH: Get their attention right off?

BE: Get their attention right off. Or, a processional, doing something behind that, and that might be something ethnic that you can process with, a little more sedate that you could process with, or you could process with chant, and then maybe do a motet or madrigal behind that one, and then into something from the 20th Century, something really shocking that just goes, “Wow! I wasn’t expecting that.” Of course, something that is expressive that is very heartfelt, one that you can really show the beauty of the phrase, and then something up. We’ll end on spirituals, you know, on our home concerts most of the time. When I go out on tour people love the spirituals.

When we closed at national ACDA we closed with two of the *Four Pastorals* by Cecil Effinger, and in No. 1, *No Mark* (Effinger, 1964a), the poet’s son had been shot down over the waters off of England in World War II, and “no mark” means there is no mark for his grave. We closed with *Wood* (Effinger, 1964b), also accompanied by oboe, has more to do with nature in Colorado. It incorporates a fusion of unison singing with rich polychords. It wasn’t a foot stompin’ hoe down or a spiritual. It worked perfectly. I wanted to end with the Colorado composer Cecil Effinger coupled with the first poet laureate from Colorado, Thomas Hornsby Ferril.

TH: So you ended with something that was more personal?

BE: Yes. A good idea generated by Larry Kaptein.

TH: So it sounds to me like when you do the programming for these that you want to kind of grab the audience and pull them in close.

BE: Yeah, pull them to your heart, and then end with something up and fun.

TH: So the next question, kind of changing gears, do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future?

BE: Yes, I have a four-drawer, pull-out cabinet that is full of single copies alphabetized A to Z. There are probably 300 to 400 single copies in there that I can just go to.

TH: So they are in alphabetical order. Do you have anything else documented on them? You know to grab your attention when you’re looking at them.

BE: You know, I did. I had three thick, full binders of sure-fire literature. I backed it up on the computer. I took it to Colorado ACDA. I was chair for high school mixed choirs. All of us were encouraged to put these things together, bring them out, and let people look at them on the tables, so they could thumb through them and write down things, and I never have seen them in six years. I’ve got them backed up on the hard drive.

TH: That's shocking, though, that that happened.

BE: There's probably 120 pieces in those three binders, and they were catalogued alphabetically and by stylistic period, so I do have that stuff. I can always print it out.

TH: So you can have access to that. You can print them out when you have some hours to spend.

BE: Yeah—when they put a month between July and August.

TH: Well, the rest of the questions all have to do with programming concert literature. Some of that you've already discussed. Do you use any particular methods for programming concerts? You've talked about trying to make sure you alternate styles. Can you think of any other methods you might use, such as, chronological, topical, thematic?

BE: Yes, I would say all of those. Every year, wherever we're going to travel to, I like to take that region and program a little more music from that area. When we went on our last tour we did the Mendelssohn, Mozart, and we would typically program music indigenous to that area, but not wholly on that. We would program American music to take, spirituals, folk songs, Eric Whitacre, things like that, but when we stay within the US, like next year we will be going to the upper Northeast and that, pretty much anything goes. Typically, I don't have to do anything special with that.

Programming different concerts in public school, and the balance of sacred and secular literature is always scrutinized, not by the school, not by the choir, but by the school community, maybe some parents. What we do is make an attempt at balance. When the school year is done, is there a good balance? There is a lot of representation. As I said, we do standards at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. We would fulfill our commitment, our statement in our handbooks, and we put in our auditions that we do sacred and secular literature. If we are invited to go on tour to participate in a service we teach it as great choral art, not a theology.

December we have seasonal things. It's heavily singing on Christmas, hopefully a motet, one of the Marian Motets, possibly something like *O Magnum Mysterium*, but also with Transcontinental Music Press, there is a ton of great Hebrew literature, and I have done more and more over the last five years. I never thought I would; I never thought I would find such a rich source. It's a great source. Joshua Jacobson does some great editing. He has the Zamir Chorale of Boston. Anything you get [from] Transcontinental Music Press, and you're probably going to find a winner—great quality. It's probably not easy, but it is so singable, and so well-written that I've done a lot of Hebrew literature lately. You know, we visited Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial, and we took a few Hebrew pieces, *Let the Redemption Come* (Cook, 1995). We recently, I'd say in the last five years, we do much more Hebrew music as well. There's a large Jewish population here as well, and it really works. This stuff is great quality.

- TH: So you are really fitting diversity for your students and to fit the community.
- BE: Uh huh, definitely.
- TH: How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year? Is your concert programming your literature for the year, or do you have literature and then just kind of fit it into your concert? Or does looking at your various concerts, does that drive the literature you do?
- BE: With the various venues that we will do throughout the year I can program those separately. The contests we do, seasonal, during each quarter, during the school year, those can pretty much be separate entities. I can do a theme concert, or I can do a mostly early music, or modern music, or folk songs and spirituals, but once the end of the year comes, that's when we tour. Those should fit together into a much larger package—all those concerts. Then every year, like I say, we bring in a guest conductor from around the country, and we program for that person too. Last year it was André [Jerome] Thomas, so the choir that he worked with programmed a few of his pieces, as well as other composers from around the US that Andre would know. So I was a little bit more stuck on this end of the historical perspective. Dennis King came in this year, so I programmed the Mozart and the Mendelssohn and the Bach with him. He is *the* expert on Renaissance, Baroque, and Romantic literature.
- TH: That kind of leads into the next question. What is a typical proportion of styles and genres programmed on a single concert and throughout the year? Fairly even, or would you say there is one that tends to be predominant?
- BE: I would say, probably, the one that tends to be predominant would be living composers, André [Jerome] Thomas, René Clausen, Robert Young, Emma Lou Diemer, Eric Whitacre, the editing that Anton Armstrong does, Steven Sametz out at Lehigh University, the editing Dave Stocker does at Arizona State, John Washburn's editions up at Vancouver are fantastic, and then the recently deceased composers—Moses Hogan.
- TH: So predominant more on the contemporary things being written, but still with a lot of the other periods and genres all mixed in.
- BE: I would say after that would be motets, folk songs, and spirituals.
- TH: Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature? Anything that I haven't asked or touched on?
- BE: If a piece has a soloist, or I can pull in different soloists, that's always nice. That really adds another visual and aural portion to the concerts. If I can bring in violin

accompaniment or string quartet, oboe, or percussion, you know, that also gives a lot of variety to all the colors that people can hear. Humorous ones that are unexpected that make people laugh. Z. Randall Stroope (1986) set Old MacDonald Had a Farm (*Old Horatius Had a Farm*) to Latin and in the Dorian mode. It's a hoot.

TH: Modes are fun. How much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased for that performance?

BE: I would say half. I would say half from our library and half would be new.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript

16 June 2006, 7:00 am

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Sally Schneider

Bio note: Sally Schneider is the choral director at Firestone High School in Akron, Ohio. It has a school population of approximately 1,300. At the time of the interview Ms. Schneider had taught for 24 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

SS: There is a growing trend to consolidate and form larger high schools rather than maintain so many local little high schools, because the populations are changing. I think every urban population is seeing a huge drift to the suburbs for whatever reason. I think it might be more economical to get possibly more kids together, and then still be able to maintain the quality programs and still have a state-of-the-art library, science labs, and performing arts facilities. You just can't afford to do that when you're trying to keep eight schools. Someone's always going to be the leftover stepchild. They're going to have the poor buildings. It depends on how much money there is to go around. In the state of Ohio there's not a lot, because our school funding formula is so irresponsible, not to mention illegal!

TH: I've lived in three states. This is the third state I've lived in, and in every state I've lived in it really stinks.

SS: It's just pathetic. It's amazing. We'll spend money on so many other things, but education is not a commodity you can see and touch. It's a process, and a lot of people don't understand that, or they don't value something you can't hold. It's frustrating. I remember when we performed at the ACDA convention in San Antonio. It was just me and my kids and two chaperones. These other schools, especially the suburban schools, had their vocal coaches, their acousticians that came along, and I just was just flabbergasted at the amount of financial support that the other choirs had. The bottom line is that doesn't make a better musical experience, not does it make a better sound. It certainly lends support to the conductor and the director, but I'll tell you, it was very interesting to me to see the differences in programs and what they had to work with. It was humbling. They had full-time, paid accompanists, assistant directors. I teach six preps. I see 240 kids a day, and it's just me. In a good way, that has forced the kids to take on more ownership as far as discipline and as far as musicianship, and conducting warm-ups, and being autonomous when we go on tour, we go to competitions. It's put a lot more ownership on the kids, and I see that as a win-win situation, because I told the kids, "This is not like a marching band where there's fourteen assistant directors, a field commander, and a flag line instructor. It's just you and me." So that's been kind of nice—real nice actually.

- TH: That would help to do what I call “shadow leadership.”
- SS: Yeah, it’s just incredible. Like I told the kids, “I could roll over from a stroke, and you could still do what you’re doing.” <chuckle>
- TH: Keep on going. Well, you know, when someone asks me what my philosophy of education is, and they mean specifically music education, I say, “Well, it’s my philosophy of education,” and that is that if I’m good teacher I’m teaching them how to get by without me.
- SS: That’s right—how to take charge and take ownership of their art. I’m right there with you.
- TH: All right, since I don’t want to take up too much of your day, the first question is really broad, but just in a nutshell, could you describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature?
- SS: I only believe in good, quality literature. By that I mean something that is either of the collegiate level or has good bones as far as composition technique is concerned. I don’t like to teach pop culture music, even in the face of the argument, “Well, it’s entertaining, and the parents like to hear it.” Garbage—I think that you’ve got to train your audience. The school that I’m at now, I’ve been there twelve, thirteen years, and I walked into an arena of Kirby-Shaw, really watered-down show choir literature, concerts that lasted three hours, and now I’ve got concerts that last an hour, hour and fifteen minutes at max, and they’re doing six- and eight-part *a cappella* literature from the Renaissance all the way to the Contemporary. It took some growing pains. It did, but I think that once you introduce better quality literature that’s harder to listen to, it requires more of the listener, it requires more of the audience, and it introduces the poetry of the piece. I don’t like to talk to them and belabor points, but I do put tidbits in the written program. I do encourage the kids to go home and talk about the literature. When we were really shifting gears, one of the assignments was I had the kids actually have to have a conversation with a parent about one piece that they were really moved by, or that they found really difficult or challenging, a piece that they initially hated, but now is one of their favorite pieces. That dialogue that took place in the homes just before the concert was a segue to a really good experience, not having to do a Broadway medley once again.
- TH: Just kind of as a side question, when you changed your literature and you went through those growing pains, did you lose any kids initially?
- SS: A few. Not many, and I think part of the tag was I got lots of clinicians in. I called every local university. I had established relationships with a lot of those conductors. I said, “Listen, I want you to come in and listen to these kids, and I want you to give them



validation, and I want you to give them notes on what they can do to do better.” It was nice because that made it a little more personal, so as they were, especially the upper-classmen, as they were shifting during those growing pain years as I like to think of them as, it was nice because the kids had a support system. It wasn’t just me provoking change. It was five and six professionals within a hundred mile radius encouraging that and supporting that also.

TH: With your philosophy, can you describe how important your selection is to the over-all success of your program? Can you describe how important it is to you?

SS: You have to think about programming. There is no doubt about that if you’re invited to go to a state or a national convention. You have to have some flow. There have got to be climactic moments in the program. I don’t discount that. There needs to be a show stopper, whatever it’s going to be, a spiritual or some other wacky piece, but really what I think propels the development of the ensemble is the students’ appreciation and ownership of the piece. So I really do try to pick pieces that will serve them as they move on to the collegiate arena, and I tell them that “If you can put on a resume that you have sung in six or seven languages, and this is your repertoire that you have experienced in the last four years, you’ve got to have some meat and potatoes in there, good stuff that’s not going to go out of style as Broadway changes, as the pops 100 change.” Kids understand that. They understand that we’re not singing for today. We’re really working for a life-time of mobilization.

TH: Okay. From where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection?

SS: I received a prosaic music experience at the high school level. It was just very, very provincial, very mid-west. The only Classical choral music that was ever performed was the *Hallelujah Chorus* (see Handel, 1742/1992). Till today I still hate the *Messiah* (Handel, 1742/1992).

TH: Oh, my goodness. That’s interesting.

SS: I can credit my early development as a musician to the Mount Union College preparatory department; they offered amazing training from grade school through high school. I can say that my want to be more sophisticated was because of preparatory lessons in voice and piano from the nearby college in the 1960s. I studied with the professors. It was typical arts-reach-out-to-the-community thing, and it was *not* taught by graduate students. It was taught by people with PhD’s, and they were obligated to teach the youth of the community for a tuition price, and it was that experience with those professors from age five all the way through high school that really cemented that somewhere out there was musical integrity. It might not be my high school / middle school experience, but somewhere it was there. I would go to all the college choir concerts, and just soak it all up, so I ended up going to that college, and of course all of the professors that really were

the movers and shakers all died. It was just really, really strange. They were all in their early 70s, and they were all gone by my sophomore year. They ended up hiring all of these younger professors who were coming in with new ideas and were very transient. I didn't even have a choral lit [literature] class in college.

TH: You know, it amazes me to find out how many colleges don't have a choral lit class.

SS: It's an abomination. I remember being very frustrated my senior year as I was toying between a job offer and taking the GRE and going to graduate school, and I thought, "I still feel dumb as dirt." I needed another two years of grad school so I could get a chance to really ferret out what was going on, and go to a few more ACDA conventions and see, "What's the rest of the world doing?" Kind of get out of my comfort zone.

TH: Okay, so you went on to graduate school, got more of what you had been missing before getting out?

SS: It was being self-taught, unfortunately. Again, it was fueled by, "Somewhere out there I know there is a more sophisticated element going on, and I've got to find it." I wish that I could say I had a premier choral conductor and a premier choral lit program, but I didn't.

TH: That's interesting. I can tell you, when I finished my undergrad, and I went out teaching, I felt like I knew nothing about selecting my literature. So school of hard knocks. What sources do you use to find new literature?

SS: I use the OMEA, the Ohio Music Education contest list. I will get perusal copies from all the different class levels, from the real easy basic to the AA level, so I rely on that a lot. I also take advantage of anything that ACDA puts out. Some of the state publishing houses—there's one in Columbus [Ohio], Stanton's [Stanton's Sheet music]—I'll ask them to pull some perusal packets for me. Also just then whenever I can get to a concert which is pretty rare—I mean, you work full-time, I've got a fourteen-year-old son at home, you know the drill—you're being pulled at different ends, but between concerts and competition lists. You'll go to a convention, and you'll hear something. "Wow, I love that piece. What is that?" That kind of thing.

TH: Okay, what criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature?

SS: It's got to fit the ensemble. If it's the year that I've got 42 guys in the mixed choir, yay. If it's a year that I've got 15, then that's going to drive it.

TH: So it goes by your sections—strength of the voices in your choir?

SS: Yes.

- TH: Past that, how much do you look at programming particular styles and periods, or just, say, aesthetic qualities, those kinds of things?
- SS: Well, I'm still locked into my Morten Lauridsen — Eric Whitacre phase right now. I told the kids, "Hey guys, we've been doing this literature for five or six years now. I think I've exhausted the pieces we can actually pull off." <chuckles>
- TH: Out of the Lauridsen and Whitacre stuff?
- SS: Out of the Lauridsen and the Whitacre pieces, yeah, because there's about five or six from each composer that a really good, competent high school choir can pull off. The rest would just take too much time in a forty-minute high school period to ever get any mileage out of them. I do look at the different time periods. I always do a really cool, polyphonic Renaissance piece. For the more intimate ensembles it would be one type of piece, and go with something bigger then for the larger ensembles. I'm not a fan of the Baroque era, and the Mozart and Haydn, I find them to be boring. I mean B-O-R-I-N-G, boring. <chuckles>. I think they're easy to pull off. It requires an accompanist, and I really try to do at least 80% of the literature *a cappella*. I try to add different instrumentation, some classical guitar or cello, but I don't like to do too much of that. Sometimes I'll go to these conventions, and that's all you'll see, these wacko pieces that might be fun to execute, but they're tragic to listen to. There'll be people banging on drums and banging on chimes, and there'll be this atonal drone of the cello. That's okay for one or two pieces. If you've got to sit at a convention and listen to 45 minutes of that, it's like, okay, where's the motif? Where's the beautiful phrase? It's like, okay, I'm glad that you can show off your atonal capabilities, but I wouldn't even know if you were singing it right or wrong. I want some tension and relaxation. Anyway, I try to involve the kids a little bit in the process, but I don't like to play them models of pieces and then say, "Would you like to do this piece?" I hold back on playing models until they've developed it as their own. In other words, their interpretation, Then I'll say, "Now, I'd like you to listen to Brigham Young [University]'s interpretation of this Whitacre piece," or "I'd like you to hear St. Olaf [College]'s rendition of this Scarlatti. Now, how does their perspective compare to what we've been doing?" They then can start to make some intelligent decisions. They own the piece. I don't like to play recorded models and say, "Do you like this piece? Would you like to do this one?" I refrain from that because I'd rather them just go on hopefully my decent instincts, and we will easily toss out a piece. We'll have enough scores that we can say, "Okay, four weeks into this— are you feeling this? Do you like this?"
- TH: When you're originally pulling out a piece to sing, you aren't necessarily thinking of "like-ability" of the piece by your choir?
- SS: Oh no.
- TH: That's something you look at weeks down the road.

SS: Yeah.

TH: Can you discuss pieces which you've selected for performance in the last year and tell why you chose those pieces?

SS: I love Brahms, and so every year we've been doing something Brahms. A Brahms motet, their harmonic road map is very interesting to the listener, but it's also interesting to the singer. I like German. I like it when the kids sing in a language other than their own. The vowel color that just falls into place, and they're not stuck in this mid-west vowel patterns. They hear things differently because they're singing in a different language. Just the whole Brahmsian phrase and the consideration of the anacrusis and the climax, I love Brahms.

I love Hogan spirituals. I think they're magnificent. I think they're really well written and well-crafted. My school is 48% African American. My top choir, unfortunately, only 15–20% Black, but I like to always introduce a Hogan spiritual at least once a year, because they're well-written, and because they're truly American composition. I mean, I've got Muslims, and Jews, and Jehovah Witnesses, agnostics in that group, but they're all about the human condition, so I appreciate those pieces.

I love [Eric] Whitacre, of course, and [Morten] Lauridsen, and they're very atmospheric, abstract. They're not cut-and-dry, and I love any polyphonic like Renaissance kind of piece. I can't think of composers right off. Some of them are just really obscure, like Byrd (1948) *Sing Joyfully*, pieces that might be 6/8 part even. The polyphony and the mathematical scheme, the form of those pieces I think are cool too.

TH: That's great. How often do you select pieces for educational purposes with no intent of performing them.

SS: Unfortunately, never. I don't think we've ever had the privilege of time to sing a piece that wasn't intended for some performance.

TH: Did you ever start rehearsing a work that you thought was a good choice and then withdrew it because it didn't seem to be working? You've kind of mentioned this, that maybe you might.

SS: A couple of times— Well, there was a Strauss piece, and there have been a couple of other pieces, yes. It was typically one of those situations where we wanted to start the program with a Renaissance piece, and so I had two picked out. We would read through them, and we would kind of fall into which one we thought felt better, you know with the rest of the programming. So, not very often because time is precious; we don't have time to explore too much lit and dump it, but it's not unheard of.

- TH: What consideration, if any, do you give the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment? You've kind of mentioned that accompaniment does have to be a consideration.
- SS: I can't get too involved with some of the [James] Mulholland pieces, because they've got the French horn, and they've got the cello. They've got the piano, and maybe in a conservatory scene we could pull that off, but high school scheduling, and trying to gather resources and get all of the people in the room at the same time enough times to be able to make the piece happen I find to be really difficult, at least at my school. We've got an International Baccalaureate program. We've got a vocational program. Right now we still have a magnet art program. There's so many different tracks of educational programming, it's really hard to pull kids out of classes, and so that has always hamstrung me as far as getting a string quartet or a brass choir together, that sort of thing. I've never been able to facilitate that, and I don't have the resources to pay for outside personnel at all.
- TH: Thinking through those that I've interviewed, I think that you are the first one who doesn't have anyone that they can pull outside resources and money.
- SS: Seriously, we take donations at the door, and we pass the hat so that we can pay our accompanist who is local mom, but she's got her masters in music. She's really good.
- TH: Just so she can come and play at your concert kind of thing?
- SS: Just so she can come in for a couple of rehearsals and get ready for competition. Yeah.
- TH: Wow! What part does festival literature play in your selection of choral music for the school year?
- SS: It contributes. Well, as far as festival, for us in Ohio would mean the OMEA competitions. I really refrain from going to festivals sponsored by travel agents, sponsored by local theme parks, or whatever. I really prefer to go to something where there is a concrete rubric. You know, the kids are really objectively assessed based on the classification of literature. That does impact what I'm going to pick. Absolutely.
- TH: Do you tend to pick it separately at the get-go: "This is my festival literature for the year?" Or do you have your concert literature and pull from it?
- SS: As soon as the list is out, yes. I don't get that information until, golly, the end of October, in the state magazine. I'll have other pieces ready to shuffle around, and then you get a list of six pieces, and you've got to pick two, one for district level, one for the state level if you qualify. Inevitably I've done those other pieces. That list only regenerates every other year, and so I am driven by that list to an extent.

TH: So that list there in Ohio influences your choices?

SS: Oh sure.

TH: You know, each state is interesting, the requirements for choosing off of a list, or there are states that don't require it at all. So there in Ohio you're required to pull from a list?

SS: Yes, there will be a list of six or seven pieces for every category level of difficulty, and you choose one of those, and then you supplement with two selected pieces that you add. So let's say there was a Brahms piece on the required list, then I wouldn't do another Brahms piece, and I probably wouldn't do another Romantic era piece. I would have to fill in the blocks, so to speak, and create a program from that Brahms piece, because you've got to take three pieces to the competition.

TH: So how many categories do you have on your list there?

SS: Double A is really tough stuff. That would be like the harder Whitacre pieces, two-choir pieces, polymetric pieces, things that are in foreign languages. There's class A which is easier, and then there's B, and then there's C, and then there's just comments only. In addition, we have to sight-read, and the sight-reading, once again, you don't see that in advance. It's just thrown at you, but the double A is difficult sight-reading, and the A is easier, all the way down to C.

TH: And do you choose which level you are pulling from? Each choral director in the state gets to say, "I'm going to pull from the A list?"

SS: Yes. It's not driven by the school population or the size in your choir.

TH: Just by the choral director—that's interesting. Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into your program in the future?

SS: Yes, if I get a perusal score, if I get a sample score—I tote around these big, ugly, portable, black filing cabinets which are plastic things. I keep my own personal copy, and even if I don't choose to purchase quantities for my school, I'll keep it in there. So if I'm looking for next year, and I'll just sit and spread out all these scores on the table, and I try to write on the ones that I've done, like "1987," "1993," and the ones that haven't been written on I know that I haven't done yet, but for one reason or another it's in that box because at one point it intrigued me, so I bought a copy.

TH: So you've got a box. . . .

SS: Boxes! I've got to think. When I retire I've got to give them to somebody.

- TH: That's interesting. So you've built it up over the time of your career?
- SS: And I wish I had started sooner. I didn't start doing that—I got that idea from another professor. You know, when it struck me is when I had changed schools for the first time. I realized I couldn't just run to the filing cabinet and start looking for that piece that I really loved. I thought, "Boy, that was stupid," so I started keeping single copies.
- TH: You know, as I read through choral method books, there are very few that mention a way of cataloguing pieces.
- SS: I know. That is the first thing that my student teachers say, "Where do I begin? What do I look at? What if my school library stinks?" and they usually do. Every year I will throw out/ recycle shopping bags full. We don't need 175 copies of *The Sound of Music* (Hammerstein & Rogers, 1959). You need 25 for the archive. It'll never be done again. I mean, never say never, but most likely it will never be done again, at least not while I'm there. There's no sense in taking up valuable storage space and having 175 copies of *The Sound of Music*.
- TH: That's interesting. You will actually just throw it out.
- SS: I actually keep 25, and there will be stuff like from the 70s, like some pop tune. There's no sense in having 200 copies, and I have no place to put this new stuff. I tell the kids that we are going to keep 25 for the archive, because this is our history. This is the history of the school. This is the history of the literature that it's done. Space is valuable. Filing cabinets are expensive. We've got to ditch some of this stuff. <chuckle>.
- TH: I was always afraid to throw things away.
- SS: Oh, I know, and I got past that.
- TH: There just isn't enough room.
- SS: No, there isn't enough room.
- TH: Do you use any particular methods for programming literature for concerts? Do you tend to do chronological or topical or anything like that?
- SS: I tend to do chronological because I think that it's easier for the ear to listen to. If I'm going to do a bigger piece that would even involve accompaniment, or whatever, that doesn't require as much intricate listening skill from the audience, I will save that towards the end, but I think today's audience has forgotten how to listen. I mean that as sincerely as possible. I see that when we do the musical. Everybody's used to going to

their home theaters or the theater complex down the road and having things so loud that they don't have to listen, and you get yourself in a very intimate, strictly acoustic environment with no amplification, and all of a sudden you've got to actively listen to what's going on. I think that could be part of the demise of the choral art form is that we have a whole generation of kids, and adults for that matter, that have not learned how to listen.

TH: I agree. I really agree.

SS: That was another thing that had to change at the school that I had moved to. During the concerts, no one ever got quiet. It was more about neighborhood visitation. People were always up and out of their seats, constant commotion, this constant din of sound.

TH: So you had to educate your audience?

SS: I did. I ended up having the choirs sit in the audience, and while this really upset the principal, she soon saw the value in it, I had all 230 kids sit in the audience in formation rather than having them in a holding pattern back stage. I said, "I want you guys to sit out there and model what you would expect." Then we put a little blurb in the program, "Please disable cell phones," and we had a kid in a tuxedo welcome everybody and say, "This is a chance for us to enjoy this beautiful music, so we want you to sit back and relax, and please refrain from flash photography, and exiting, and transient behavior." It was real quick. It wasn't a talk-down. I told the kids, "If you guys chat and move about, the audience is going to model that, but if you sit there stoically and respectfully and quietly and applaud when it's appropriate, they're going to follow your lead," and they did. To this day we have incredibly quiet concerts. I mean, we can do a vocal jazz piece, and have a kid do a big scat line, or a big solo from impact. They will bring the house down, but then they get quiet again. I told the kids, "That is a success story."

TH: It's one of my pet peeves. I call it the "rock concert / sports mentality." That's how they treat it.

SS: It's an arena. Exactly. I told the kids, and I mention this to the audience, I say, "Thank you for coming tonight. You know that last moment, that pause, when all 900 of us got quiet, that was just as bonding as applauding together." They were all acknowledging that it is, and we all feel that. Getting intimately quiet together is just as uniting as cheering and clapping.

TH: Those moments when everyone just sits there, waiting because, "Do I dare break this up?"

SS: "Do I creak my seat? Do I flutter my program?"



- TH: How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year? Does it drive it?
- SS: It just happens. It's a work in progress.
- TH: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres that you program?
- SS: I would say 50% is 1900 and up, and then the other 50% would be Renaissance, Romantic Era, maybe a Baroque piece if it's on the contest list, and I'm obligated to do it. <laughs>
- TH: <chuckle> You just really don't care for the Baroque and the Classical. I have found the most unused, for one reason or another, is the Classical. Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concerts that I haven't mentioned?
- SS: Well, length. I don't like really long concerts, especially if I'm going to expect everybody to be quiet, so I look at length. I guess the only other thing, I do have six choirs. I'll have the "Y'all Come," [open enrollment, non-auditioned choir] the kids who are 19 or 20 and still trying to get a high school diploma, and they've robbed a couple banks, but they have to get their arts credit. Then I've got the kids who are going to Tanglewood in the summer, and they're getting a full ride to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. I've got a really good, 12-voice vocal jazz group that every year we'll do collegiate level jazz rep. They'll do a classic piece like a Phil Mattson piece or a Gene Puerling chart, but they sing, obviously, with microphones and mixers and all that. I try to put them toward the end of the concert, because, once again, you get into that amplified sound with a digital mixer, and the audience listening skills change. I would never open a concert with them, and I wouldn't want to close a concert with them. I don't want to end with something that's amplified, because I think that that just— People always think "save the best for last." If I'm portraying the idea that amplified music is the best— you see what I'm saying? I try to always end with the big double A mixed choir. They're impressive to look at. They're impressive to hear. It's a nice orchestral-like symphonic sound, and they're good enough that they can follow that jazz group.
- TH: So is that your Symphonic Choir that you have listed here?
- SS: Yes. I'll start with the small group, the Madrigal Singers, because it's typical black tie, or Renaissance costume, whatever they're gonna do, but it's a small group, so they require the most heightened listening skills, because they're small. So I always open with them, and they are very professional. They typically can do some great "welcoming" intro piece, and they have the flamboyancy to pull that off. I'll open with them, and then we can move on to something bigger like the men's chorus. Then I'll squeeze in the "Y'all Come" Choir. Those kids, typically, they'll see those other kids perform, and just in that

half hour of sitting out in the house, suddenly they become a more sophisticated beast. Then I'll move on to the jazz group, and then finish with the big group.

TH: That's interesting. How much of the concert literature you perform each year has been newly purchased for performance?

SS: A lot. I would say at least 50%.

TH: At least half?

SS: Yes, it would be a new piece. Yeah.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript

17 July 2006, 1:15 pm

Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker

Interviewee: Ryan Beeken

Bio note: Ryan Beeken is the choral director at Waukee High School in Waukee, Iowa. It has a school population of approximately 850. At the time of the interview Mr. Beeken had been teaching for 12 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: Describe your basic philosophy for the selection of performance literature.

RB: I would say, in a nutshell, that they have to meet goals that I have for the development of the ensemble. If I'm trying to think of areas that we need to improve on or expand on I want to make sure that the repertoire will help to accomplish those goals. Also, I try to make sure that it comes from a variety of backgrounds, both linguistically—I like to do lots of different languages and cultures—and from different time periods of music history, just try to give them as broad of a base as possible, and then I have to love it.

TH: That's great. From where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection?

RB: Hit and miss.

TH: Practice?

RB: Uh-huh. I would say undergrad education didn't really do a whole lot, other than whatever you happen to perform in your ensembles. Basically, it's just practice, listening to concerts. I spent a lot of time researching and looking on-line at different things, so it's just practice—trial and error.

TH: What sources do you use to find new literature?

RB: I usually go right to the publishers, look through Earth Songs and Santa Barbara and other publishers. Occasionally I'll get ideas from reading sessions and that kind of thing, but usually it's just going to the publishers web pages or mailing lists. I used to be the "Standards and Repertoire" person for Iowa, so I received lots of stuff through the mail. Because I had to review all of that music from all the different publishers, I would learn a lot more about what styles and composers and publishers that I gravitated toward or liked so that usually helped.

TH: So you were the "Standards and Repertoire" person for the whole state of Iowa?

RB: Yes, for high school choirs. That was several years ago. I no longer do that.

TH: That's impressive, especially where it says that you've only taught for twelve years, so you must have done that pretty early on.

RB: Yeah.

TH: What criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature? Are they pretty much the same as what you described in your philosophy?

RB: Probably pretty much the same. It needs to be something that is tangible, that they can feel some success with, but it should be challenging. If they can sing it down in ten minutes then it's not the right piece of music, but primarily what I said before.

TH: As part of that, how much do you consider how much you think your choir will like it?

RB: Rarely at all. It's not about whether or not they like it. Hopefully, if I do my job well teaching it to them, they will gain an appreciation and a like for it.

TH: Do you have to take much into consideration the voices in your choir and in your sections?

RB: I'm pretty blessed that I can do pretty much anything that I want, but often I'll think, if I know that I have a weaker area, I'll take that into consideration, or if I'm concerned that I have tenors who aren't going to be able to handle a certain tessitura then I'll have to think that through. Primarily, the only time I'm concerned about that is if I'm looking at something that has solo work in it, and I have to consider who I have for soloists.

TH: Can you discuss any particular pieces you've selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those pieces?

RB: Tell you how I chose them?

TH: Yes, particular pieces and say why you chose those pieces.

RB: Okay, there is a tune we did a couple of years ago called *Pamugun* (Feliciano, 2002). It's a Santa Barbara Publication. I like things that are very rhythmic, and I was listening to this clip, and it had lots of rhythmic ostinatos piled on top of each other. It grabbed my attention. It was just background music as I was doing other things. In the middle of it there was this blood-curdling scream. People just screamed, and I was just "Oh, my God, what is this?" I looked more into it and got the story and all that, and so that specific piece, I think the reason I picked it, it was just very unique. It gave us some opportunity to do some really complicated 12 and 16 part things with lots of different rhythms and

what-not. It was in a language that we had not explored before, so that was exciting to me. Also, I had not done anything that explored different sound effects and things. They had to imitate birds. It was just as much about challenging them as it was about me stretching myself. It kind of fit in a vein like to have one on every program, at least one kind of, I don't know if bombastic is the right answer, but a tune that's just a little bit out there, and this fit the bill for what we needed. It was a tune that I didn't think very many people would be familiar with which was a plus.

TH: Something new?

RB: Right.

TH: Any other piece in particular that you can think of that you've chosen for a different reason?

RB: Oh, the Rachmaninoff (1988) *Bogoróditse Dévo*. I think that just because it's beautiful, and I love it. It's got great, long legato lines, and an opportunity for a lot of musicality things to happen. Mainly, just because I remember loving to sing it, and kind of having lots of "goose pimply" moments, so that's the main reason I picked that. I'm very selfish when I pick music.

TH: Just in the way that you want it to make you feel and you want to teach?

RB: I want it to teach, but I have to love it. If it's a tune, and it can be a great piece of music, be able to teach lots of things, but if I don't love it, I don't think that I will be very effective in delivering it to my students.

TH: Okay, how often do you select pieces, if at all, for education purposes with no intent of performing them?

RB: In my situation that happens pretty rarely, because our program is very performance oriented. Most of the things we look at we end up performing. I would say that over the course of a year there might be one or two tunes that maybe originally I intended on performing them, but for whatever reason we change our minds and just look at them and don't perform them. Probably 90% of the stuff that we do is performed.

TH: If you do start rehearsing a piece and then withdraw it from performance, what reason might you have for doing that?

RB: Maybe it just didn't fit the program we were putting together, or it didn't teach what I thought needed to be taught to the kids. It could be just a judgment error where, "Whoa, my tenors can't sing this! What was I thinking?" Primarily though it's just because it doesn't fit with what we're doing. I over-programmed.

- TH: What consideration, if any, do you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment? I'm looking, it says you have a paid accompanist. Is that ever a consideration for you, the complexity?
- RB: Yes. The accompanist that I currently have, it is a consideration. I had someone else who could play anything—more of a consideration now than it used to be. I don't play, and so most of the music that I select for the group that has done some things around is *a cappella* anyway. Probably 90% of the music that that ensemble performs is unaccompanied.
- TH: What part does festival literature play in your selection of choral music for the year?
- RB: Our festivals are at the end of the year, so I try to view that as a culmination. That should be the highest level that we're performing at. The highest level of repertoire that we're doing is at the end of the year, so sometimes I'll program backwards. I'll start with that music and then think back to the fall, "What things do we need to do to achieve that?"
- TH: That's interesting? What influences your choices of festival literature? For example, do you have a festival list in Iowa?
- RB: We have a festival list that we have to select one tune from. I don't like that because a lot of the music that I want to do isn't on the list. It's not that it's not there because it's inappropriate; it's just too new, or whatever. So it's not there, or the stuff that I'll do, it's very hard, and sometimes folk songs that are on the festival list are too easy, or the festival lists aren't very updated. There's a lot of stuff that's out of print.
- TH: So you have to choose one off of the festival list, and then you get to choose two on your own?
- RB: Right. There's a ten minute time limit for this particular event, so. . . .
- TH: That's short. That's really short.
- RB: Yeah.
- TH: Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces that you discover and want to incorporate into your program into the future?
- RB: Yeah, not anything scientific. I just have a folder that I put things in that say to me, "Look at me again. Think of doing me someday," or I just write out lists and throw them in my folder.

TH: Okay, so it's just a folder basically that you keep things in.

RB: Right.

TH: Do you use any particular methods for programming literature for concerts, like chronological, topical?

RB: No. I just put a program together of tunes that I want, and I try to organize them in a way that has the best flow I guess. I don't do it chronologically. Rarely is there a message where all the songs are about "hope," or that kind of thing.

TH: When you are programming, do you look at alternating contrasting styles kinds of things?

RB: Yes.

TH: How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year, or is that your programming?

RB: Yes.

TH: That is your programming?

RB: Yes.

TH: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres that you program on a single concert and throughout the year?

RB: On any typical program there will be at least two, for sure, that are multi-cultural types of numbers. I will do mostly *a cappella* music with one accompanied tune, and by accompanied I mean piano. We'll do some with drums and other instruments, typically only one with piano in the program. I usually try to have something that is earlier music, Renaissance, whatever, up to more contemporary. I have a tendency to probably program more contemporary stuff. Obviously I want some things that are legato and homophonic, and some things that are polyphonic. Some are percussive and up-tempo. I try to vary and balance those things.

TH: So you would say that it's quite a bit of Contemporary, leaning on the Contemporary side, with consideration for a lot of contrast in everything that you're doing?

RB: Uh-huh. Right.

TH: As a side note, how long would you say a typical concert is?

- RB: For our over-all concert might be an hour to an hour and a half, but that would involve three to five different ensembles.
- TH: Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature? Anything I haven't touched on?
- RB: I don't think so. You've been pretty thorough.
- TH: The last question, how much of the concert literature you perform each year has been newly purchased for that performance?
- RB: Probably 80%. Sometimes there is music that I only have five copies in my file, so I need to buy 25 more, but for my top ensemble 80% is purchased new every year.
- TH: Is that pretty typical for the rest of your ensembles?
- RB: The younger ensembles we probably purchase 30%. We have other things in our files.
- TH: One last kind of note about your other ensembles, do you do more accompanied stuff with your other ensembles, piano accompanied?
- RB: Yeah, probably. It's more 50-50.

[Closing conversation omitted]



Interview Transcript  
24 July 2006, 12:35 pm  
Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker  
Interviewee: Jack Hill

Bio note: Jack Hill is the choral director at Clearview Regional High School in Mullica Hill, New Jersey. It has a school population of approximately 1,500. At the time of the interview Mr. Hill had taught for 30 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: Can you describe your philosophy regarding the selection of performance literature?

JH: Varied. In the context of a concert, at least one masterwork, or part of one, and at least one cultural piece outside of the US, such as French, Italian, or Canadian. I believe in good literature, but I'm not only conscious of teaching children something, but also providing entertainment for an audience. Sometimes I believe that I've erred in the past, picking everything out to be of such a high quality, oftentimes you are performing over the heads of your audience. You have to kind of consider that. That's basically my philosophy. It's got to be varied. It's got to have a content. But when I go through and think, that's kind of what's in my mind. I've got to have something Contemporary, more of the standard Contemporary, not meaning pop. I don't do any pop period. It's not just my philosophy, but Contemporary piece with some Contemporary poetry so that it's meaningful to the student.

TH: So you are looking more at the choral works that are written, modern, now, but you're looking for something that is quality choral literature written currently.

JH: Right. Also, when I include something Contemporary, in the programming I try to make sure that the poetry has some meaning to young people. Oftentimes, if you do a masterwork, there's only so much you can do to get a fifteen-year-old to attach to an *Agnus Dei* text. There are going to be some texts that they don't connect to, so I'm going to make sure that there are some texts that have something—and I don't mean that it's dumbed down to their level, but it's something that they can at least understand.

TH: Okay, so in essence you're looking at it in the context of a concert, and you're looking at the variety and making sure that you fit in all these different types of pieces within your performance that you look for.

JH: Keep the program moving. It's got to be practical. For example, minor pieces, you don't want to have too many of those. You don't want to have duplicated keys necessarily. If I already have an E Major I won't select another E Major. You know, upbeat, slow, so it's varied, so it keeps it moving. Then you also have to look at having it make some kind of

sense. Now, occasionally I'll do a program where I'm doing two major works, and then that's a whole different story. I just did a program recently where we did the Rutter (1986) *Requiem* and the Bernstein (1965) *Chichester Psalms*. That was the program, so obviously in that case, I can't do what I just described, because there's not enough time within a concert. If I'm doing selections it's that. If I'm doing a masterwork, like that kind of concert, I like to vary. That's why I did the Bernstein next to the Rutter. The Rutter is more traditional, even though it's Contemporary. Bernstein is a little more, even though it's older than the Rutter, it's more . . . you know how that is. It's in a different language, different culture, so it's a contrast.

TH: Well, I like both of those works. Number two: from where did you gain your knowledge of literature selection?

JH: Probably just out of doing it. I remember taking courses in graduate school where I had to design programs, and I don't think that I was thinking the same way that I am thinking now. I think that I was trying to be more impressive to the professor, trying to find esoteric literature. There I was looking for a different thing, and I think as I went through the process, I've swung both ways. I've had times in the past when I did too much Contemporary stuff, and then another where I've done too much traditional. So I just get the feel, but it took me time to get there. As I look at literature through the year, as things come across, I kind of categorize them in my brain, so when I look at literature I do it all in one. I pick all of my literature for the year at one spot. I look at the whole at one time. I think that's better, because if you try to pick things as you're going, you don't end up with necessarily a balanced program.

TH: Throughout the year.

JH: Yes.

TH: What sources do you use to find new literature?

JH: That's always the hardest thing. You know, everybody gets sent a million things in the mail. I belong to Oxford [Oxford University Press] where they send me new things three or four times a year, and I do that because I've learned in the past that Oxford often has more things that I'm interested in. Certain [publishing] houses I usually just discard, like if I get Shawnee Press; I'm not saying Shawnee Press doesn't have good things, and I might end up doing something published by them, but it's not usually been worth my time to go through all of their packets as much as those from other publishers. Alliance [Alliance Music Publishers] is another great publisher that I use a lot. But then a lot of literature I find because I go to a lot of concerts; I listen to repertoire; I go to all the conventions; I thumb through literature. What I do during the year is I pile up things that look interesting. If I get a reading packet I peruse it really quickly, in my hotel room or

wherever I am, and you can tell pretty well what looks interesting, and what doesn't. If it doesn't, it goes in the trash.

TH: You're piling it.

JH: The things that look somewhat interesting I throw in a pile. I just actually brought two boxes home of music that I've put into my pile, then I'll spend the summertime reading through those things, sorting them. Some things I'll say, "Yes." Some things I'll say, "Save." Some things I trash, and I do have things that I will come back to, like maybe things I saved from a previous year, but that's basically it. And then you talk to colleagues too. You know, somebody said, "Try this piece." You can go on web-sites if you have composers, like I love Gwyneth Walker's music. I'll go on her web-site [<http://www.gwynethwalker.com>], see if she has something new—that kind of thing.

TH: Okay, thank you. What criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature?

JH: It has to be good music. I guess that's subjective to the person. It has to have some kind of musical base to it that has interest. Whether it happens to be a rhythmic thing or whether it's a melody, tonality—something that, to me, represents something that's interesting, unique, and that I would consider good. Just as important is text. The text has to be something that's going to be expressive. There's nothing worse than a good piece of music with some trite text. So that's it, and again, if it's a style that I'm looking for it must be true to the style. If it's a folk arrangement it's got to be true to the folk song. It has to use the folk song in a way that doesn't destroy its nature. If it's a spiritual it has to be in the style of the spiritual it represents, so it also has to be true to the type of piece.

TH: Do you have to take into consideration much the strength and quality of your individual voices and sections?

JH: Well, yes. That would be foolish not to, but one thing I don't do, and the mistake I think a lot of people make is they say, "I want to wait to see my choir to pick my music." First of all, that destroys a little of the programming concept we just talked about. The other thing is you have to make certain assumptions that you're going to build your choir to a certain level, not fit them into where you think they are, because in this business the choir in September is never the choir that you see in May—never. Where they go from September to May I think has a lot to do with the repertoire you're doing with them. If you're doing repertoire you think fits them in September, in May they're going to be much closer to where they were in September. If you pick something beyond where they are, something to reach for, you'll see a much higher result. I really believe that that's true. I've seen it happen many times. So you pick things, obviously within reason, if you know that you have a choir where you have 60 women and ten men, then you would be foolish to pick your favorite piece that's got *divisi* tenor part. That would be stupid. You have to be

practical within the process, but I don't think that you say, "It's a young choir, and they haven't done much; they won't understand the rhythm, so I can't pick that piece." It's better to have the piece and have them attain it. It's hard for you in the process, but it pays off. So I think that you do take into consideration the group, and the size of the group too. I have the opposite problem. There's 240 in the high school choir, so there's certain things that you just can't do with 240 people, so you have to look at that too.

TH: Can you discuss a few pieces you have selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose those pieces?

JH: The first piece that comes to mind is called *Stars I Shall Find*, and it's by David Dickau (2003). It's the famous text by Sarah Teasdale that a lot of people have set to music. It's a complicated text, but I think it's a text that can spur some kind of thought in the students, and I picked that piece because when I was programming I didn't have a Contemporary piece that was based on more of a traditional poem, and that was Contemporary in nature. It had beautiful, rich *divisi* harmony, because with the large choir that I have I like to make sure that there's a lot of *divisi*, even in the men because that to me builds independence. It helps and furthers things, so I actually picked that piece for that. It's difficult because it's four-part men and four-part women, and it's also lyric. Sometimes when there's *divisi* when you're big, bombastic, homophonic chords it's a lot easier than when it's a lyric *divisi*, so I picked that piece for that purpose.

The other one I thought of is the Bernstein (1965) *Chichester Psalms* which I picked this year because I was looking for something for my select group that I could do which was short, energetic, and something that they could learn quickly, but would challenge them a little bit rhythmically. Rhythm seems to be the area that they were a little bit weaker in, so that piece just kind of popped into my head. That's why I did that piece. So I usually pick it because there's some kind of a teaching idea in it.

Any more specifics? I have a girl in my choir who is a gifted French horn player. She's also a wonderful singer, so I made sure I picked a piece the last two years that had a French horn solo in it so that she would have the opportunity to show her abilities. This year I did the Paul Basler (1999) *Alleluia*.

TH: Because I attended the University of Florida, he is a professor there.

JH: Oh, he's such a great guy. He's so accessible, because the year before when we were in LA we did that Spanish piece that he has with a beautiful French horn. My French hornist, I encouraged her to just contact him by e-mail, which she did, and then, of course, he became our best friend.

TH: He is that nice of a man.

JH: He came to our rehearsals out in LA, was encouraging, sent e-mails to the kids, sent copies of — he's a very neat man, and I love his music too. That's why I picked that for

her. So if you have a specific talent—I have a really amazingly wonderful baritone this year, and I want to make sure that I have something in the repertoire that will allow him to show his talent. That's part of it too.

TH: That's neat. How often do you select pieces, if at all, for educational purposes with no intent of performing them?

JH: I guess I should be honest and say never. Now that doesn't mean that pieces that I select don't end up being used for that and not performed, because very often I will pick something that's not working, and I will work on it, get through it, but decide, "Nah, not going to perform it."

TH: Can you describe a situation where you withdrew a piece? Or some things for which you might withdraw it?

JH: Because it's too difficult. I won't usually use [the excuse] that the kids hate it. That doesn't usually work because my joke to them is "Everything you say you hate—" I say, "You're not allowed to have an opinion of the piece until you've performed it, and then tell me whether you like it or not," because very often they'll say they hate anything they don't get. Sometimes there'll be things that I know that actually when they say that they hate it, I end up hating it too. <chuckle> I co-teach with another teacher for half of my classes, and so I'll oftentimes, as a joke, say, "You must have picked this piece," and he'll say, "No I didn't. You picked this piece." If nobody likes it we just withdraw it, because either we don't like it, we don't like working on it anymore, it's counter-productive, it's not doing what we want, or it's too difficult to really get it. Too much time spent going over the things that are difficult starts to interfere with other things.

TH: It's not worth your time.

JH: Yes.

TH: What consideration to you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment? I notice on your paper that you wrote students, yourself, and a staff member that accompany, so do you ever have to take that into consideration?

JH: Luckily no, because I have the resources that I need. I even have resources in the community if I have something specific that I need accompanied. You're talking about piano right now?

TH: Yes, because you already addressed type of accompaniment, I think, in addressing your French horn player and your baritone, looking for pieces to highlight some of that, but in terms of accompanist on the piano?

- JH: I don't usually consider that. The only thing that I make sure that I do is think about balancing the repertoire between unaccompanied and accompanied pieces. There has to be a balance. In my brain, for whatever reason, I have this formula: A concert should have no more than one-third unaccompanied music. I think the ear gets tired after a certain amount of time of hearing choral music without accompaniment, so that's a consideration, and that also means trying to include other instruments besides piano, but I usually end up having at least one or two really good high school students that I like to use, but then for the really complex things I have a staff member who plays for [us] well, and sometimes I accompany. I don't discard pieces because of the accompaniment being too difficult. Sometimes I look for it.
- TH: What part does festival literature play in your selection of choral music for the school year?
- JH: What do you mean by festival literature?
- TH: The stuff that you are going to do at your region and those things, where you are going to go be adjudicated.
- JH: Whatever I'm going to do this year, whatever festival or adjudication or special type thing, I'll just choose that repertoire from what I'm already working on, not choose specifically for that. I have talked to some colleagues about doing some combined thing next year, and then, of course, in that respect, I would pick something that we agree together on. I am doing another concert now with a local community chorus in New Jersey that wants to partner with a high school, and we're doing a new premier of a work by a local composer. That would obviously become part of my daily work in the class.
- TH: So in terms of the things that are adjudicated, that, as I understand, or if you're singing in something big like Nationals, that becomes something you really work around? You select separately from your choir literature?
- JH: I don't do adjudications. Well, that's not true. We don't do festivals where you go and you sing, and they pick a winner and give trophies.
- TH: What about region or state?
- JH: I don't do that. Well, our state festival we do have, I guess that is a festival, and it is adjudicated, but there's no—I guess that is what you're talking about. In that case we have to pick three pieces. One has to be unaccompanied. One has to come from a required list. In that case I am having to pick something specific. Usually what I do is I appeal the required list, because I don't think that the required list is extensive enough. I can usually get a substitute piece for the required list.

TH: You are able to do that in New Jersey?

JH: We can do that in New Jersey.

TH: So do you choose those pieces when you are choosing your literature for the whole year? Do you choose them separately and then incorporate them into a concert?

JH: No. I usually just pick from what I have, and then fit it into that.

TH: Do you have a system—now you kind of mentioned this earlier—Do you have a system for cataloguing pieces you discover and wish to incorporate into the future?

JH: I wish I did. No I don't. I have piles, and I write things on music. That's as close of a system as I have.

TH: You make notes on music?

JH: I make notes on the front of the cover, brief notes.

TH: So you can look back at it and see what you thought?

JH: Right.

TH: Do you use any particular methods for programming literature? You've kind of mentioned this. Do you ever use methods of programming like chronological or topical?

JH: No. No.

TH: So, it sounds like you try to have a program with a lot of variety, alternation of styles, those kinds of things?

JH: Right, and I don't feel that I have to do that chronological thing. From what I have I can sometimes do the early piece last if it's the right piece. I know a lot of programs that do that. I don't quite understand that—the chronological thing.

TH: I've seen that even at ACDA festival, concerts performed that way.

JH: You see it a lot.

TH: How much, if at all, does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year, or is your concert programming your literature?

JH: My concert programming is my literature for the year. I always have more than I can probably use, because certain pieces will not make the cut. That is what I'm picking for.

TH: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres you program on a single concert and throughout the year? You've kind of addressed this early on.

JH: I do something from the Classic literature. I don't know what to call it, but you know what I mean. Also, clearly whatever I choose from the Classic literature needs to be primary and not arranged. I tell people that all of the time. "If you are going to do a Haydn piece, find a Haydn piece your choir can perform, not an arrangement of the Haydn piece, because then you're not doing the Haydn, so don't pretend." So something from that—at least one. I do have sort of a formula for foreign languages. My kids like to sing in other languages. I try to include three languages, English being one. So if I include English and Latin, then I at least include German or French, or sometimes something different like Russian in some cases, but some different language that they get exposed to. I try to include that too within a program. I don't really have a formula, but it's just kind of in my mind that it seems balanced.

TH: So if you were to say how much of your music is what we would call Contemporary and how much of it is Classical, what would you say if you were to divide that up—heavier on the Contemporary side?

JH: Heavier on the Contemporary side. The Contemporary will take in the new literature, something like Gwyneth Walker, or if I'm doing a [Morten] Lauridsen piece, something like that. But then something you also include in the Contemporary would be the spiritual and folk song arrangements. That's all Contemporary, so that's why even though the styles are very different, it still kind of falls in that Contemporary.

Another thing I didn't mention that is interesting, I try to include in every program—this is a new addition of mine—at least one piece we learn that is a traditional piece, some kind of cultural base piece that comes from oral tradition and not from written music. So a spiritual that we know the tune from, and we create our own without looking at a piece of music. This isn't an idea that I came up with, but there's a woman by the name of Ysaye Barnwell. She is actually a member of a choral group called "Sweet Honey in the Rock," and it's an *a cappella* women's group, does all primary, cultural, African, and American spiritual, but from it's primary nature. They do a lot of that. It's had some kind of popular success. But she does workshops, and she came to my school. She teaches everything just from the oral tradition. She'll sing something, and then you'll do the call and response. She'll divide people, and then create. Try to do that. It's really the hardest thing to do when you spend your whole life in a piece of music. Even sometimes the kids will say, "Well, let me see it." I say, "No, no. That's not what this is."

TH: I'm not used to doing that.



- JH: Neither am I, so it's really hard. We had her come to our school for workshops, and we took her in the gymnasium. We had all our singers 7th grade to 12th grade, so almost 500 kids in a circle in the gymnasium, and her in the middle, and she worked with them for an hour and a half and had these kids singing in twelve parts, playing instruments. I'm not saying I do it anywhere near as well as she does it, but we try, and she has resource material that you can use. She actually has a CD collection (Barnwell, 1998). It takes you through that same process that she took my kids through, so you can use that even as a starting point, where she'll teach the melody of a spiritual or an African song, and then add parts as it goes through. Just because it has so much about singing that has nothing to do with the printed page, and we spend all our time with our notes and the music.
- TH: Creating is supposed to be a major part of what we do. That's a great way. Are there any other considerations that I haven't hit on that you take into account in programming your concert literature?
- JH: I don't think so. I think you've done a pretty good job. I do think that it works best, and I already said that before, to try to look at it as a whole, because I know some people who will end up piecing together a concert from things that they've picked up along the way. I think that the end result is important as a concert, and that it's a performance, and it's entertaining. It has moments where you are teaching your audience, but it also needs to have, when people leave, have a good feeling about. There's nothing worse than leaving them where they're miserable and can't wait to get out of there, so long and so much the same.
- TH: How long would you say your concerts are typically?
- JH: An hour and a half maximum and that is something that I do consider. That doesn't mean from one group. Within that hour and a half that's the whole concert, so that's the high school choir, the select ensemble, the men's group, the women's group. All the groups do their thing and we're out in an hour and a half. An hour and a half of music is about the maximum. I do the same thing, personally. I go to conventions, and after an hour I'm ready for it to stop, myself.
- TH: No matter how brilliant the music is?
- JH: Exactly. Sometimes less is better, because, you know, you have a wonderful choir. They have twelve wonderful pieces, but you don't necessarily have to do twelve of them. Four of them is fine, and everybody doesn't have to hear every one.
- TH: Yes. How much of the concert literature you program each year has been newly purchased for that performance?

JH: Probably 80% of it.

TH: So a lot.

JH: Yeah. The reason why I do that is for two reasons. Number one, I'm lucky where I have a very good music budget. I can afford to buy music. Number two, you just get so sick of a piece by the end after teaching it, because sometimes I'm teaching the piece to four different choirs every day. I did the Rutter (1986) *Requiem*. I love that piece, but after teaching it to four classes over six months, if I ever look at the cover, I feel nauseous. So it's just for that reason. Occasionally I do a piece that I've done before, but it's got to be like five years since I did it. There are certain exceptions to that. If it's a great masterwork, that's an exception, and that's what makes them what they are. I could do the Mozart (Mozart & Süssmayr, 1882) *Requiem* more than once every five years. So that's really why, and I'm fortunate enough that I have the money that I can purchase that music, that I have that resource, but I'm rarely back in my music library.

[Closing conversation omitted]

Interview Transcript  
24 August 2006, 12:00 pm  
Interviewer: Tracy Hunsaker  
Interviewee: Daniel Earl

Bio note: Daniel Earl is now retired and teaching adjunct at a junior college. He taught at Santa Rosa High School in Santa Rosa, California. It has a school population of approximately 2,000. Before retiring Mr. Earl had taught for 39 years.

[Introductory conversation omitted]

TH: The first [question] is a really broad one. In a nutshell, could you describe your basic philosophy in the selection of performance literature?

DE: I believe that it is important to provide our students with the widest possible exposure to great choral literature. This then will expose them to many styles and musical periods. The success of this is dependant on how many years you have them as your student; one year, two years, etc. And it is further complicated by their skill level. It is then important to ask yourself the question as to “Is this appropriate for my students?” In selecting repertoire you need to determine if this piece is age appropriate, are their skills developed enough to sing this piece and is the text appropriate for this age level.

TH: So you really are thinking of what’s going to suit the students at their age level?

DE: Yes. Everyone will have a slightly different perspective as to what may be “appropriate.” Most of us have numerous choirs for which we have to select literature, from beginning ensembles to advanced ensembles, but the process is basically the same for each choir, only the final selections will be different. The selection of good material is more difficult for the younger or less experienced singing groups.

TH: Trying to pick quality things that aren’t above their age and ability level?

DE: There is a need to select material that is going to “stretch” our singers musically. For me one of my criteria for selecting music for any group and any level is: Do I love this piece? Am I going to be able to come back to this piece, over and over if necessary, to make it “musical?” Or are we all going to be bored or tired of this piece after only 20 minutes of rehearsal?

TH: That it’s going to be worth your time working on it, and that you’re going to enjoy continuing to work on it?

DE: In the singing of great music I don’t think we ever are going to reach “perfection,” but we try to hone those skills, of our singers and ourselves, that provide a significant musical

experience. It goes beyond all the notes, rhythms and tone color. We can perhaps have everything in place; notes, rhythm, intonation with perfect vowels and still have left the music someplace else

TH: How would you say you developed your philosophy? Almost 40 years of experience, would you say it developed over time, or would you say you developed it early?

DE: Certain aspects of what I may call “my philosophy” may have changed over the past 40 years. The knowledge of working with different age groups certainly developed over time, I think, instinctively, through my own experience in high school, college, and so forth. I had a sense of what *I* felt was musicality: something that was musical and worth the energies needed to continue to work on it. I’m sure a lot of it is just time, as you learn more.

When I first started teaching, I started teaching 7th and 8th graders. I was searching for music, and, of course, wanting to do the things I had done in high school or things I had done in college. Of course I found out that doesn’t work. I worked really hard to find age-appropriate literature for them, *age* meaning “maturity of text, maturity of the music.” In fact, when I do reading sessions, or clinics, or whatever, I tell people that “Teaching this age, you’re so lucky. There’s so much more literature out there for you to select from. Of course a problem is there’s so much literature to select from; you have to be very selective because there’s too much.”

But I believe that the central core to my philosophy is the same now as when I first began. I tell my students, my choirs, that “I have sung and conducted music that has lifted my soul to heights that are indescribable. The only way one can demonstrate to someone else the beauty that is so profoundly felt, is to help take them there.” I have often told my choirs that “I have seen, that I have felt and that I have heard the mountain top experience and I want to help lead you there so you too can experience it . . . and so that I can again feel its joy, its exaltation, its spirit of love.”

TH: When I was looking historically at literature it seemed that for years there was the same basic repertoire of classics that were done. The main recommended lists didn’t change much that I found, and then you take the more recent years, and all of a sudden there is a mass coming out.

DE: You have to wade through that, and I think that’s one of the reasons that our reading sessions, at least out here in California and at the recent conventions, are valuable. These presenters are individuals selected who have gained some degree of success. They get to do the bulk of the work of going through all the new octavos, and then they trim that down to a few that they feel will work, and we get to sing through them and select again, which brings in another tier in terms of process.

TH: So you really like the reading sessions to find music?

- DE: I do, and for me it's like, if I find even one piece that I'm excited about for any of my choirs, then I consider it a plus, and sometimes you find two or three, and then you really hit the jackpot. I think part of it is you can't expect to go to one reading session two weeks before school and find your literature.
- TH: While we're talking about reading sessions, what other sources do you use to find new literature?
- DE: Two things: I go to conferences and I go to workshops. In California during the summer we have a conference near Yosemite. At this conference we have notable directors such as: Michael Scheibe, Paul Salamunovich, Henry Leck, Alice Parker, Weston Nobel and many others. They come and teach us their approach to teaching skills and other personal philosophies through the music they present to us. Then there are festivals and competitions. We have one here called the "Golden State Choral Competition." In fact I was one of the founding members that established it. These are great places to find outstanding literature.
- TH: So is that the whole state, or north, or south?
- DE: It used to be one competition for the whole state, but since we are such a large state, that can be difficult for some choirs. For the last four or five years we've had a Southern-Golden State Competition and a Northern-Golden State Competition. You can go to either if you qualify. Sometimes you just want to take a trip to Southern California — after all, Disneyland is down there. In our competition the winner of the previous year gets to select the "required" piece for their division in which they won. We have two divisions; large choir and chamber choir. At this competition everyone is doing their "best music" and you get to hear some extraordinary literature, and sung very well.
- TH: So you really pick up literature hearing all these groups at festivals?
- DE: Yes! Our festival has been going on for fifteen or so years. Before that we had the Concord Pavilion Competition. I am a graduate of Chapman (College) University with Dr. William D. Hall and I did graduate work at San Jose State University with Dr. Charlene Archibeque, each school would host a choral festival and we would often flip-flop and attend their festival every other year.
- TH: So there in California, the festivals that are adjudicated that choirs go to, are they mostly sponsored by different organizations, like a regional festival, stuff like that?
- DE: I would say most universities sponsor their own festival or invitational where they invite choirs from in and around their area.

TH: So the literature requirements, do they depend on university to university or whoever is sponsoring them?

DE: In that case, in the invitationals you do anything you want, basically, but you're not going to be invited back if you're not doing quality literature.

TH: So they are a lot by invitation?

DE: Right. Chapman University has an invitational.

TH: They don't have festivals that are. . . .

DE: Well, we have what is called CMEA, California Music Education Association, and that is an adjudicated festival. It's not first, second, or third, but it's a superior, excellent, good, fair type of thing. The ratings are based on a concept of what is "superior," "excellent," etc. for that level of high school choir.

TH: Does California have a recommended literature list?

DE: Not for the whole state. Southern California, SCVA, does have recommended literature, a list for literature.

TH: SCVA?

DE: Southern California Vocal Association.

TH: So it depends on where you're living.

DE: Correct. I think at one time you actually had to pick your literature from the list.

TH: Some states still operate that way.

DE: I think now that it's a recommended list, but I'm not sure. I never went to SCVA festival, so I really don't know.

TH: From where would you say you gained your knowledge of literature selection?

DE: I think my biggest influence would be these festivals. National ACDA conferences, divisional conferences, and then going to as many conferences as I could over the years, listening to the repertoire of my colleagues, the types of things they were doing.

TH: What criteria, you've spoken a little about it with your philosophy, what criteria are the most important to you in selecting choral literature?

DE: The two that “pop-up” are: the appropriateness of the text and the quality of the music. Then each year you have a “new” choir and you have very specific things that you want/need to work on. For me, initially it would be tone building. Do I have a piece of music that has all the characteristics that will enable me to spend time building the “sound?” And is this a piece that I want them to sing?

TH: So you really do focus on the aesthetic qualities of the music and the difficulty level of the music when you’re looking at it. Do you ever select particular styles or periods or look at your variety in your styles and periods when you’re selecting them?

DE: Yes, I do or at least I try to. I may not always be successful, but if I miss a period one year I might try to make up for it the next year. Since I am looking for music for five or six choirs, I am covering those things in a broad spectrum throughout my choirs. If I take a look at just one choir, I probably don’t do all of those things in a single year. With my chamber group I’m obviously going to be able to do things from the Renaissance that I might not be able to do with by beginning kids, especially my beginning boys. I might not feel that I have the right piece that they can do, but I think if you look through the programs my choirs present, you’ll see a great variety of periods and styles.

TH: How much do you take into consideration the “like-ability,” how much your choir or your audience are going to like a piece?

DE: I don’t do that on everything. I always try to program something that the audience can relate to more easily, but I’ve always felt that part of what I’m doing is trying to build an audience that understands what the choral art really is as well as the kids. It’s through the kids, of course, that we demonstrate it. We try to make a Brahms motet accessible and exciting to the audience by giving them things to listen for. Their appreciation can be developed a little bit more.

TH: Helping them to appreciate. . . .

DE: Most kids come into a choir because they like to sing, not because they know anything about choral music. Many of your people in the audience, Mom and Dad, don’t know anything about choral music. But their son or daughter, Johnny or Susie, likes to sing and they are part of the choir and mom and dad are going to listen. It is up to you as the director and as the “professional” to start building their ears as well as those of your students and help both develop an appreciation for great choral literature and the “choral art.” At the same time most people like to be able to sit back and just enjoy music without having to spend a lot of intellectual energy. Programming effectively with a variety of musical styles enables you to do that. Folk songs are a great way of allowing the audience as well as your students appreciate beautiful music and enjoy the process. Spirituals, a style of sacred music, are always enjoyed by the students and the audience. They have

great energy, are often big, fun, fast and loud and you can teach so many other things through them and everybody enjoys them.

TH: Everybody enjoys spirituals. It's true. Can you discuss a few pieces you've selected for performance during the last year and tell why you chose them? So even pieces you did at your community college or thinking back to the last year that you were teaching high school?

DE: Let's see what I have in front of me. I have my winter concert program of 2002. My Chamber Singers did a piece by [Orlando] di Lasso (1969), *Dessus le Marché d'Aarras*. This is an excellent and fun piece. As I said earlier, if I can't like a piece I can't teach it very well. There are times however when there are required pieces and you have to work through the work. Hopefully you end up at least having an appreciation for it. This piece is a chanson. It is very rhythmic. It's in French and I do look for literature in different languages. If you sing Brahms, you sing it in German. If you are singing Janequin you are going to sing in French. Singing pieces in the language in which it was written helps you build not only variety in your programming it introduces your choir to other periods and styles. This piece has a little percussion: tambourine or small drum. It's a story, like most chansons, delightful, a bit "off-color".

TH: Something that has a fun text.

DE: It does have a fun text, although being in French you need to work not only on your singing but your "acting" skills as well. On this concert Chamber Singers sang five different pieces. On this same concert they also sang an American slave song by Mae Nightingale (1949), entitled *My Child Is Gone*. This is a very poignant piece. The song is the story of a slave mother whose child is taken from her.

TH: A very aesthetically moving piece it sounds like.

DE: It depicts a time in our history that is just horrible.

TH: That will be interesting. I'll have to look for that one.

DE: It's probably out of print, but you should be able to find it. I can always borrow a copy and send it to you. With that we did the Monteverdi (1986) *Sfogave con le Stelle*. I like Monteverdi because it's sort of a beginning of, to me, harmonically, dissonances. I don't usually associate madrigals—I don't know how much Monteverdi you've done—I enjoy Monteverdi. Again, it's a passionate piece there. Of course this is my chamber group that I'm talking about.

We did another piece called *Go, Lovely Rose* by Halsey Stevens (1954). That was actually a required piece for Golden State. It was selected by whoever won the year before.



Again, we did a piece I guess you'd call world music, *Mata del anima sola*. It's about a cowboy, basically. Where is this from? Argentina maybe— [Venezuela] Antonio Estévez (1993). Anyway, the cowboy's out singing to himself. It has lovely tenor solo, and the choir are instruments doing the dance, several different dances of his culture.

TH: That sounds very interesting.

DE: It really is a delightful piece.

TH: It sounds like you select very interesting stories and text and colors.

DE: You need as many of those things as you can. Along with that the Concert Choir did pieces by Heinrich Schütz (1977), *Ehre sei dem Vater*, as well as. Bruckner's (1966) *Christus Factus Est*. We also performed Eric Whitacre's (1996) *Cloudburst*. Concert Choir also performed Alberto Grau's (2000) *Kasar mie la gaji* (The Earth Is Tired). It's a fine piece. We then closed with Josphe Flummerfelt's (1991) *Danny Boy*. Always a favorite of mine.

TH: That's neat. Another question, how often, if ever, do you ever select a piece for educational purposes with no intent of performing it?

DE: I would say that how often is a question. I think what happens every once in a while when I perceive weaknesses in rhythms, intervals, or tuning, and then I would go into my library and say, if I couldn't solve those problems with music that we're doing, is there something in here that would help us work on those issues? If I just wanted something for external work, I'd find something that would help our work on rhythm.

TH: To bring out something with a particular goal of developing a skill.

DE: I must admit that I didn't do that often, because I tried to select music that would work on those skills, but we needed to work on the things I thought we needed.

TH: Did you sometimes start rehearsing a piece and then change your mind?

DE: There was a period in time—I took out a Duke Ellington medley. My kids almost shot me because they didn't think it was worth their time or effort. I just didn't have the energy at that point to prove them wrong.

TH: That does take energy. You're right—to push them through so they can understand it enough to like it.

DE: In that case I gave up, you know. I would say, what I often did, I might pick something out for our debut concert to be sung in October and realize that we just weren't going to

get there in time. We would put considerable work on it, but I would put it away. I wouldn't take it back, then after the winter concert, beginning of the New Year, I'd pull that out again, and I found that oftentimes the music's just had a chance to foment or ferment, and all of a sudden those things that were difficult seemed to work; we had grown. That might be part of it too. We had grown as an ensemble. The things that we are given as challenges and are more than I can deal with, at times, can dissipate. But there were occasions—I think one of the things that you try to do is put as much music in people's folders as possible. You know, if you're going to do five or six things on your opening concert, you know you should be working on seven or eight things. Of course, some of that could be two or three for the next concert.

TH: So you don't want to put in their folders just the literature for that first concert, and when that concert's done swap them out for the next concert?

DE: No, for a variety of reasons. Number one is for variety, so that you can spend focus time on something and shift to something else that perhaps doesn't take the same type of focus.

TH: What consideration, if any, do you give to the literature you select because of the type and complexity of the accompaniment? I read what you put down that you had at high school in terms of accompanist. How much did you have to look at the accompaniment?

DE: First of all, except for my very first year, I didn't have an accompanist that came and played every day, so I started doing everything *a cappella* which had a good part to it, because I think that it really developed ears. I think this is an art form where we continually develop our own skills as we're teaching these kids. I've found that my beginning groups are the ones that required us to do more accompanied pieces. However, every once in a while, I would have this fabulous or really good student, then when I went to reading sessions or festival and heard things, I'd think, "Oh, well, Peter can play this." "Kevin can play this." "Kira can do this."

TH: So as you're listening you're thinking of the accompanist that might be able to play that.

DE: If I like the piece then its, "All right. Do I have someone who might play it?" I can hire someone, and there are many times that I did, but if I could find a place in using the students, that's a lot of fun. Then also I had a lot of band kids, so if I needed a flute player, or someone to play oboe, violin, or something like that, that was good also.

TH: Okay, we talked a bit about festivals, but what part would you say that your festival literature played in your selection of literature for the school year? Did you select it separate from the rest of your pieces, or did you select your concert literature and pull the festival literature from them?

- DE: That's what I would do. I think the other thing that I would say is that almost anything that we sing I would feel comfortable taking to a festival.
- TH: You select a level of music that is already festival level?
- DE: Yes.
- TH: Do you have a system for cataloguing the pieces you discover and want to incorporate into your program in the future?
- DE: Not a very organized one. There was a time when I was going to all of these reading sessions that I made a file and put it "two-part," and "three-part," "chamber," "concert choir," and any type of thing, but I found that I really didn't use it very much. I just felt like I really didn't want to throw things away—hundreds, thousands of dollars of individual sheets, but I've found for me that I can catalog them, but I would never go back to them or sell them unless I can remember, "Oh yeah, there's this piece." So I would say that when I came across something that I would do I would put it in a pile in a bin that I had, then as I started thinking about next year's repertoire, then I would pull out that stack—fairly small, 30 pieces compared to several hundred pieces.
- TH: Do you use any particular method for programming the literature on your concerts? Do you alternate the styles, or do you do chronological, or anything like that?
- DE: Well, when I went to grad school I think one of my projects was to lay out projects for "x" number of choirs over five years. I was very specific. I drew from periods, and I drew from languages, styles. After that year I came back, and I started putting my programs together, using, of course, a lot of the ideas I had gotten out of graduate school, and then realizing, at least for me, that piece doesn't seem to work there, so I'd do something else. But I am aware when I select literature of periods and styles as well as accessibility.
- TH: What is a typical proportion of styles and genres you might program on a single concert and throughout the year? Like, for example, would you say 50% are 20th Century or later, or do you tend to program a lot of Romantic? What would you say is your proportion?
- DE: I would probably be, more than I realize, heavy on the 20th Century, not intentionally, but because of exposure. I would say then probably Renaissance. Baroque would be next. Percentage-wise, it's hard to deal. Invariably there's a Mendelssohn somewhere in the program that year, and a Brahms that year. I do Handel fairly often, but I would do Bach less often.
- TH: Anything Classical? Do you tend to do anything Classical?

DE: Yes. Mozart would be something I would do fairly often. Over the last ten, eleven years we've had the opportunity to sing with our local symphony, so we've had some of our literature chosen for us.

TH: How much does your concert programming affect the literature you select for the year, or is your concert programming the literature you select for the year?

DE: That is the literature.

TH: Are there any other considerations you take into account in programming your concert literature? Anything I haven't asked about?

DE: Do you have a for instance?

TH: For example, do you take into consideration the length of the songs? Total minutes on a concert?

DE: I would say probably yes. One of the things I've strived for, or I've looked for in my beginning groups, is so often their music will be a minute and a half, and so lately I enjoyed trying to give them more extended pieces, something going maybe four or five minutes.

TH: Looking for something that's a little bit longer than your four and a half minute pieces?

DE: Something that takes more focus on their part from beginning to end.

TH: How long is a typical concert for you?

DE: Oh, I'm sure some will say too long. But, I would say that, you know, my kids have worked hard and they deserve to be heard.

TH: So you want to put on all the music that they've worked on?

DE: I would say a minimum of two hours probably.

TH: Last of all, how much of the concert pieces you program each year has been newly purchased that year for performance?

DE: Probably 60 to 70%.

TH: So a pretty good quantity of it was brand new?

DE: Right. Although we have a fairly extensive library, so I find that I did repeat a lot of things.

[Closing conversation omitted]

APPENDIX C  
MUSIC AND OTHER WORKS CITED BY INTERVIEWEES

The following is a list of music or other works cited by the interviewees, arranged alphabetically by composer (except as noted). The number preceding the title of the work indicates the number of interviewees that referenced that piece.

Anderson, Leroy

- 1 *Sleigh Ride*, arr. Hawley Ades, pub. Shawnee Press

Arlen, Harold (composer), Edgar “Yip” Harburg (author)

- 1 *The Wizard of Oz*, pub. Alfred Publishing

Bach, Johann Sebastian

- 1 *Mass in B Minor* (BWV 232), edited Christoph Wolff, pub. C. F. Peters

Barber, Samuel

- 1 *Agnus Dei* (transcribed from *Adagio for Strings*, opus 11), pub. G. Schirmer

Barnwell, Ysaye Maria (author)

- 1 *Singing in the African American Tradition* [CD], pub. Homespun Tapes  
[Note: This is an instruction method endorsed by an interviewee, not a performance piece.]

Basler, Paul

- 1 *Missa Kenya*, pub. Colla Voce
- 1 “Alleluia,” *Songs of Faith*, pub. Colla Voce

Bauguess, David (author)

- 1 *The Jenson Sight-Singing Course*, pub. Jenson Publications  
[Note: This is an instruction method endorsed by an interviewee, not a performance piece.]

Bell, Michael

- 1 *Twisted*, unpublished

Belmont, Jean

- 1 *If Music Be the Food of Love*, pub. Gordon V. Thompson

Berlin, Irving

- 1 *White Christmas*, pub. Hal Leonard

Bernstein, Leonard

- 2 *Chichester Psalms*, pub. Boosey & Hawkes

Brahms, Johannes

- 1 *O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf* (Opus 74, No. 2), available from <http://www.cpd.org>
- 1 “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen” [How lovely is thy dwelling place], *Ein deutsches Requiem, nach Worten der heiligen Schrift* (Opus 45) [A German Requiem, to words of the Holy Scriptures], pub. G. Schirmer

Britten, Benjamin

- 1 *Festival Te Deum*, pub. Boosey & Hawkes

Bruckner, Anton

- 1 *Christus Factus Est*, pub. G. Schirmer

Byrd, William

- 2 *Sing Joyfully*, pub. ECS Publishing

Clausen, René

- 1 *Oh My Luve's like a Red, Red Rose*, pub. Mark Foster

Colwell, Paul & Herbert Allen (composers); Pat Murphy, Paul Colwell & John Kagaruki (authors)

- 1 *It Takes a Whole Village*, arr. Jeff Funk, pub. Alfred Publishing.

Cook, Abraham Isaac

- 1 *Zol Shoyn Kumen Di Ge'ulah* [Let the redemption come], arr. Joshua Jacobson, pub. Transcontinental Music

Daley, Elenor

- 1 *Drop, Drop, Slow Tears*, pub. Lorenz Publishing

David, John

- 1 *You Are the New Day*, arr. Peter Knight, pub. Hal Leonard

Dawson, William L. (arranger)

- 1 *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel*, pub. Neil A. Kjos Music

Dello Joio, Norman

- 1 *A Jubilant Song*, pub. G. Schirmer

Dickau, David C.

- 1 *Stars I Shall Find*, pub. Walton Music

Duruflé, Maurice

- 1 *Requiem* (Opus 9), pub. Durand
- 1 *Ubi Caritas*, pub. Durand.

Effinger, Cecil (composer), Thomas Hornsby Ferril (author)

- 1 “No Mark,” *Four Pastorales* (No. 1), pub. G. Schirmer
- 1 “Wood,” *Four Pastorales* (No. 4), pub. G. Schirmer

Estévez, Antonio (composer), Alberto Torrealba (author)

- 1 *Mata del Anima Sola* [Tree of the lonely soul], pub. Earthsongs

Feliciano, Francisco F.

- 1 *Pamugun*, pub. Santa Barbara Music Publishing

Finzi, Gerald (composer), Robert Bridges (author)

- 2 *My Spirit Sang All Day*, pub. Boosey & Hawkes

Flummerfelt, Joseph (arranger)

- 1 *Danny Boy*, pub. Hinshaw

Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich

- 1 *Poputnaya Pesnia* [Traveling Song], arr. Alexander Ruggieri, pub. Musica Russica

Grau, Alberto

- 1 *Kasar mie la gaji* [The earth is tired], pub. Earthsongs

Grieg, Edvard Hagerup

- 1 *Brothers, Sing On!* arr. & edited Howard D. McKinney, pub. Alfred Publishing

Gruber, Franz Xaver (composer), Josef Francis Mohr (author)

- 1 *Silent Night*, trans. John Freeman Young, available from The Cyber Hymnal,  
<http://cyberhymnal.org>

Hampton, Keith

- 1 *Praise His Holy Name*, pub. Earthsongs

Handel, George Frideric

- 1 “Antiphonal Alleluia,” *Occasional Oratorio* (HWV 62), arr. & edited Patrick M. Liebergen, pub. Alfred Publishing
- 2 *Messiah* (HWV 56), edited Watkins Shaw, pub. Novello



Hanna, William, Joseph Barbera, Hoyt Curtin

- 1 *(Meet) The Flintstones*, arr. Patsy Ford Simms, pub. Alfred Publishing  
[Note: This piece was cited as an example of problems that can arise by ordering music without examining it first to see if it meets one's expectations.]

Hassler, Hans Leo

- 1 *Exultate Deo*, edited John Tebay, pub. Pavane Publishing
- 1 *Tanzen und Springen*, arr. John Leavitt, pub. Shawnee Press

Haugen, Kyle S. (arranger)

- 1 *Lost in the Night*, pub. Augsburg Fortress

Haydn, Franz Joseph

- 1 *Missa Brevis in F* (H22:1), pub. Carus-Verlag
- 1 *Te Deum* (H23c:2), edited Howard Chandler Robbins Landon, pub. Associated Music Publishers

Ives, Charles Edward

- 1 *Sixty-Seventh Psalm*, pub. Associated Music Publishers

Janson, Alfred

- 1 *Tema* [Theme], pub. Walton Music

Johnson, Hall

- 1 *Ain't Got Time to Die*, pub. G. Schirmer

Key, Francis Scott (author) & John Stafford Smith (composer)

- 1 *The Star-Spangled Banner: Service Version*, available from The National Anthem Project: <http://www.thenationalanthemproject.org/aboutthesong.html>

Larson, Jonathan

- 1 "Seasons of Love," *Rent*, pub. Hal Leonard

di Lasso, Orlando

- 1 *Dessus le Marché d'Arras*, edited James Erb, pub. Associated Music Publishers

Lauridsen, Morten

- 1 "O Nata Lux," *Lux Aeterna*, pub. Peermusic Classical

Leontovych, Mykola Dmytrovych (composer) Peter J. Wilhousky (author)

- 1 *Carol of the Bells*, arr. Peter J. Wilhousky, pub. Carl Fischer

López-Gavilán, Guido

- 1 *El Guayaboso* [The Liar], pub. Earthsongs

Mäntyjärvi, Jaakko

- 1 *El Hambo*, pub. Walton Music

Martin, Joseph M.

- 1 *The Forest*, pub. Shawnee Press

Martini, Giovanni Battista

- 1 *Domine Ad, Adjuvandum Me Festina* [Lord My God, Assist Me Now], pub. Concordia Publishing

Mayhall, Bruce. (1994, September).

- 1 The quest for high-quality repertoire. *Choral Journal*, 35(2), 9–16.  
[Note: This article was cited by an interviewee as an example of sources for literature ideas.]

Mendelssohn, Felix

- 1 *Frühzeitiger Frühling* (Opus 59, No. 2), edited R. Carl, pub. National Music Publishers
- 1 *Richte mich, Gott* [Judge me, O God] (Opus 78, No. 2), edited Jerry Weseley Harris, pub. Lawson-Gould

Mendoza, Michael D.

- 1 *Gloria a Dios*, pub. Alliance Music Publications

Monteverdi, Claudio

- 1 *Sfogava con le stele*, pub. Oxford University Press

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus

- 2 *Ave Verum Corpus* (KV 618), edited John Milford Rutter, pub. Oxford University Press
- 1 “Lacrimosa,” *Requiem* (KV 626), pub. G. Schirmer
- 1 “Laudate Dominum,” *Vesperae solennes de confessore* (KV 339), edited Arthur S. Talmadge, pub. E. C. Schirmer
- 1 *Requiem* (KV 626), pub. G. Schirmer

Nightingale, Mae (arranger)

- 1 *My child is gone*, pub. Carl Fischer

Offenbach, Jacques

- 1 “Neighbors’ Chorus,” *La jolie Parfumeuse*, pub. Broude Brothers

da Palestrina, Giovanni Pierluigi

- 1 *Sicut Cervus*, pub. Theodore Presser
- 2 *Tu es Petrus*, pub. G. Schirmer

Parker, Alice (arranger)

- 1 *God Is Seen*, pub. Lawson-Gould
- 1 *Hark I Hear the Harps Eternal*, pub. Lawson-Gould

Pascanu, Alexandru

- 1 “Sarba pe Scaun” [Dance on a Chair], *Suita Scurta* [Short Suite], pub. Musica Romanica

Patriquin, Donald (arranger)

- 1 *J'entends le Moulin* [I hear the windmill], pub. Earthsongs

Philips, Peter

- 1 *Hodie nobis de caelo* [SATB, SATB, organ], pub. Stainer & Bell

Poulenc, Francis Jean Marcel

- 1 *Gloria* [vocal score], pub. Éditions Salabert

Powell, Rosephanye

- 1 *Still I Rise*, pub. Fred Bock Music

Rachmaninoff, Sergei Vasilievich

- 1 *Bogoróditse Dévo, ráduysya* [Virgin Mother of God, rejoice] (Opus 34, No. 6), pub. Earthsongs

Ramsey, Andrea

- 1 *Psalm of Hope*, pub. Colla Voce

Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai Andreyevich

- 1 *Flight of the Bumble-Bee* [SSAATTBB], arr. Ward Swingle, pub. UNC Jazz Press (University of Northern Colorado)

Rogers, Richard (composer), Oscar Hammerstein II (author)

- 1 *The Sound of Music*, pub. Williamson Music  
[Note: This was cited by an interviewee as an example of music purged from their library to make space for new music. The interviewee retained 25 copies for the library and purged the remainder.]

Rutter, John Milford

- 1 *Requiem*, pub. Hinshaw
- 1 *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, pub. Oxford University Press

Sato, Kentaro

- 1 *Kyrie*, pub. Fred Bock Music

Schafer, Raymond Murray

- 1 *Epitaph for Moonlight*, edited Graham Coles, pub. Berandol Music  
[Note: This piece was cited as an example of music the director avoided, specifically because it uses non-standard (i.e. graphical) notation.]

Schieb, Philip (composer) & Marshall Barer (author)

- 1 *The Mighty Mouse Theme* [TTBB], arr. Greg Gilpin, pub. Shawnee Press

Schimmerling, Hans Aldo (arranger)

- 1 *Kde Su Kravy Moje*, pub. Associated Music Publishers

Schütz, Heinrich

- 1 *Ehre sei dem Vater*, pub. Tetra/Continuo Music Group

Schwartz, Stephen

- 1 *Wicked*, pub. Hal Leonard

Smalls, Charlie

- 1 *The Wiz*, pub. Alfred Publishing

Stanford, Charles Villiers

- 1 *Beati quorum via* (Opus 38) [SSATBB], pub. Boosey & Hawkes

Stevens, Halsey

- 1 *Go, Lovely Rose*, pub. Editio Helios, available from <http://www.halseystevens.com>

Stravinsky, Igor Fyodorovich

- 2 *Symphony of Psalms* [SATB, vocal score], pub. Boosey & Hawkes

Stroope, Z. Randall

- 2 *Amor de Mi Alma*, pub. Walton Music
- 1 *Old Horatius Had a Farm*, pub. Mark Foster

Thomas, André Jerome

- 1 *Rockin' Jerusalem*, pub. Shawnee Press

Thompson, Randall

- 1 *Frostiana*, pub. E. C. Schirmer

Ticheli, Frank

- 1 *There Will Be Rest*, pub. Hinshaw Music

da Viadana, Lodovico Grossi

- 1 *Exultate Justi in Domino*, pub. Walton Music

de Victoria, Tomás Luis

- 1 *O Vos Omnes*, pub. Gia Publications
- 1 *Ave Maris Stella*, pub. Gia Publications

Vivaldi, Antonio Lucio

- 1 *Gloria* (RV589), pub. Walton Music

Whitacre, Eric

- 3 *A Boy and a Girl*, pub. Hal Leonard
- 2 *Cloudburst*, pub. Walton Music
- 1 *Lux Aurumque*, pub. Walton Music
- 2 *Sleep*, pub. Walton Music

Wilberg, Mack (arranger)

- 1 *I saw three ships*, pub. Hinshaw Music
- 1 *O Whistle and I'll Come to Ye*, pub. Hinshaw Music

Wilby, Philip (arranger)

- 1 *Byker Hill*, pub. Banks Music Publications
- 1 *Marianne*, pub. Banks Music Publications

Young, Robert H.

- 1 *Annabel Lee*, pub. Fred Bock Music

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tracy Caldwell Hunsaker received her Ph.D. in music education from the University of Florida (UF). While at UF she taught courses in elementary music and was the head graduate assistant to the choirs. She received the Wilmott Prize for Excellence in Music Education at UF in 2003. She currently is the music education specialist at Northeastern State University (NSU) in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Ms. Hunsaker is an Orff Schulwerk certified instructor. She completed Levels I and II at the University of Florida under Jim Solomon and Mary Helen Solomon. She completed Level III at SMU in Dallas under Rick Layton. Ms. Hunsaker received her Bachelor of Arts in music education from Utah State University (USU) at Logan, Utah, in instrumental and choral music education, specializing in both flute and voice. While at USU, Ms. Hunsaker was active in multiple instrumental and choral ensembles. She also performed as soloist with those ensembles, was the drum major of the marching band, and participated in musical theater and opera productions. Her senior year she received the Outstanding Senior Award for the department of music at USU.

Ms. Hunsaker taught middle-school band and sixth-grade music for nine years at Mount Logan Middle School in Logan, Utah. During that time she also received her Master of Education with choral emphasis from USU. For two years she ran an after-school Opera for Children Club, in which students wrote and performed their own operas. She was actively involved in the Bridgerland Honor Music Clinic for seventh- to ninth-grade students in band, choir, and orchestra, serving as president of the clinic for the 2000–2001 year.