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# Perspectives on Choral and Solo Singing: Enhancing Communication Between Choral Conductors and Voice Teachers

Matthew August Ferrell

*University of Miami*, [matthewferrell1@gmail.com](mailto:matthewferrell1@gmail.com)

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

PERSPECTIVES ON CHORAL AND SOLO SINGING:  
ENHANCING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN  
CHORAL CONDUCTORS AND  
VOICE TEACHERS

By

Matthew August Ferrell

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

December 2010

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Approved:

---

Dean J. Southern, D.M.A.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Vocal Performance

---

Terri A. Scandura, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

---

Donald T. Oglesby, D.M.  
Professor  
Department of Vocal Performance

---

Dennis Kam, D.M.A.  
Professor  
Department of Theory and  
Composition

---

Thomas M. Sleeper, M.M.  
Professor  
Department of Instrumental Performance

FERRELL, MATTHEW

(D.M.A., Choral Conducting)  
(December 2010)

Perspectives on Choral and Solo Singing:  
Enhancing Communication Between  
Choral Conductors and Voice Teachers

Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

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Concepts of choral and solo singing diverge among the masses of pedagogues, teachers, and conductors who have differing opinions about healthy vocal technique and training. These differences have generated tension within some university music programs, with choral faculty and voice faculty sometimes on opposing sides. This document presents answers from professional singers who engage in choral and solo singing while maintaining a healthy vocal technique. All subjects interviewed for this document were asked to speak in detail to vocal adjustments made to sing in different styles. In addition, they were asked to identify any vocal faults that may arise from improper vocal production. The goal of this document is to lay grounds for valuable discussion regarding the opposing perspectives found in some academic circles with regard to proper vocal technique and training for choral and solo singing.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In the United States and abroad, concepts of choral and solo singing diverge among the masses of pedagogues, teachers, and conductors who may have differing opinions about healthy vocal technique and training. These differences have generated tension within some university music programs, with choral faculty and voice faculty on opposing sides. In an attempt to attenuate the ongoing debate, this document will review current literature and seek answers from professional singers who actively participate in choral and solo singing.

Howard Swan asserts “authorities do not agree upon a proper vibrato rate for a singer, nor do they think alike concerning the importance of vocal registers, the modification of vowel sounds, and the establishment of a dynamic level to be used by a chorus for most of its singing.”<sup>1</sup> However, Swan finds commonalities between vocal pedagogues and choral conductors with regard to “beautiful singing.” These professionals “will agree that a beautiful tone is not breathy, is sung to the center of a pitch, possesses some degree of intensity, accompanies a sound which is normal in pronunciation and is comfortably sustained.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul Brandvik, former director of choral activities at Bemidji State University, supports the assumption that there is a divide within choral conductors: “Wherever you find two choir directors, you will find three opinions about choral tone.”<sup>3</sup> Conductors

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Swan, “The Development of a Choral Instrument,” *Choral Conducting Symposium*, ed. Harold A. Decker (Englewood Cliffs [NJ]: Prentice Hall), 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Brandvik, “Choral Tone,” *Up Front! Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*, ed. Guy B. Webb (Boston: E. C. Schirmer Music Company Inc., 1993), 147.

develop personal preferences for a variety of choral sounds. These preferences are shaped by understanding of vocal color (dark versus bright tone), rate of vibrato, repertoire, dynamic level, balance of vocal parts, diction (especially vowels), intonation, articulation, range, and resonance.

Research has categorized different schools of choral tone, including Swan's ground breaking study of six schools of American choral sound. Swan asserts, "No two choruses in America sing with an identical sound."<sup>4</sup> He continues, listing four areas where the conductor has direct influence over the choir's tone production:

1. The basic process of singing: phonation, tonal support, resonance, and extension of range.
2. The degree of emphasis upon one or more of the fundamental choral techniques of blend, rhythmic exactness, phrasing, balance, dynamics, and pronunciation.
3. The interpretive and stylistic requirements of the musical score.
4. The personal and technical resources of the conductor which he uses to communicate with his chorus in rehearsal and performance.<sup>5</sup>

In 1970, Carole Glenn embarked on a series of interviews with choral conductors across the United States as part of her M.A. degree research. Glenn continued this project and published *In Quest of Answers: Interviews with American Choral Conductors* in 1991. Glenn provides fascinating and pertinent information in her interviews with well-known and well-respected American choral conductors. Her book provides a forum for choral conductors by offering "glimpses of their individual philosophies, motivations,

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<sup>4</sup> Swan, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8.

and personalities.”<sup>6</sup> The interviews are thorough, and the questions she asks provide an excellent model for this document.

Glenn’s series of questions reflect her subjects’ concepts of choral tone, forming choirs, repertoire/programming, musical philosophy, and future trends. The questions asked, though thoughtful, are broader than the scope of this document. This essay focuses on healthy vocal technique and methods to achieve a variety of vocal/choral sounds, and has sought answers from professional singers regarding vocal adjustments made to sing a variety of repertoire. The document presents a series of questions that reflect the singers’ perspectives on adjustments made when singing in a choral ensemble in contrast with singing as a soloist.

In her book *Choral Pedagogy*, Brenda Smith, a voice teacher from the University of Florida, differentiates choral singing from solo singing in that it “gives little emphasis to the singer’s formant, neutralizing idiosyncrasies of individual singers to create a blend of voices.”<sup>7</sup> Although Smith supports choral singing, these differences in vocalization can sometimes create conflict between choral directors and voice teachers.

Noted pedagogue Richard Miller recognizes the perceived conflict between these two collegiate areas. He believes choirs with trained solo voices should not be handled in the same manner as a choir with only amateur singers.<sup>8</sup> Miller finds fault with many choral conductors’ approaches to teaching proper vocal technique. “Unfortunately, in

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<sup>6</sup> Carole Glenn, ed., *In Quest of Answers: Interviews with American Choral Conductors* (Chapel Hill: Hinshaw Music, Inc., 1991), xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy* (San Diego: Plural Publishing Inc., 2006), 182-183.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 237.

order to find peer approval, many choral conductors prominent in academic choral associations feel compelled to conform to a superimposed, uniform concept.”<sup>9</sup>

Miller asserts that “administrators should enlist the help of teachers of singing in actively searching for a choral conductor who knows how the voice works as an instrument and who has an ear for the potentials of the human voice.”<sup>10</sup> He acknowledges the existence of different vocal techniques, but he does not identify ways to make specific vocal adjustments or to apply his discussion of varying vocal techniques to the choral rehearsal.

Barbara M. Doscher recognizes, in *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, that knowledgeable choral conductors encourage the use of the singer’s formant—commonly known as “ring”—in choral training.<sup>11</sup> She believes choral tone without the singer’s formant is easier to blend, “but the overall sound is flat and non-resonant.”<sup>12</sup> Doscher continues her criticism of choral singing: “Those very characteristics which make some solo voices unique must be subdued in group singing, often to the eventual detriment of that voice.”<sup>13</sup> Her concern for choral singing extends to those students who modify their technique to better “blend” into the sound of the choir. “That singer then may be singing at half-voice, not a condition conducive to functional freedom if continued for any length of time. If the color is altered as well, the voice may never

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 237-238.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara M. Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice* (London: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), 239.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

regain its former ‘bloom.’”<sup>14</sup> Miller is also apprehensive with regard to superimposed concepts of “blend.” He states, “Every voice instructor at the collegiate level groans under this burden...we must not continue to function as a wagging tail to the choral dog.”<sup>15</sup>

Doscher is concerned about, but not opposed to students singing in choirs, as she feels it should be an exciting musical experience for students.<sup>16</sup> She identifies the need for good communication between the voice teacher and the choral conductor: “If the private voice teacher and the choral musician are true professionals and hold each other in high regard, differing viewpoints can be explored and an avenue of communication established.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Justification for the Study**

Choral conductors have written extensively on choral tone, but the singer’s process for achieving a desired choral sound in vocally healthy manner is not widely researched. Perhaps those professional singers who work with choral conductors can explain with more detail how they approach singing in different styles. Voice teachers have strong opinions regarding choral tone and singing in choirs, but, like choral conductors, they possess distinct, yet inconsistent viewpoints. Many voice teachers avoid the subject of singing in choirs all together.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>15</sup> Miller, 237.

<sup>16</sup> Doscher, 239.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 240.

There is little literature that provides exercises and/or procedures to teach varied singing styles. In many cases, conductors strive for different choral tone depending upon repertoire and/or stylistic characteristics of the music. Still, there is little written about how conductors may suggest ways their singers can achieve the different vocal techniques required for diverse choral sounds. In research for this essay this writer made inquiries into singers' processes for arriving at specific choral/vocal techniques.

This document presents answers from professional singers who engage in choral and solo singing while maintaining a healthy vocal technique. All subjects interviewed for this document have been asked to speak in detail to vocal adjustments made to sing in different styles and to identify any vocal faults that may arise from improper vocal production. Finally, the subjects were asked to speak to pedagogical solutions to choral conductors and voice teachers.

This research has attempted to generate discussion regarding the opposing perspectives found in some academic circles. In the collegiate world, students sometimes find themselves in the middle of conflicting vocal instruction from the voice teacher on the one hand and the choral director on the other. This opposition can breed tension between two departments, which becomes worse when collegiality is not maintained. Miller recognizes, in *On the Art of Singing*, the "history of conflict in American academic circles between the training of the solo voice and what is expected of a singer in the choral ensemble." He states, "Such conflict need not exist."<sup>18</sup> In an attempt to alleviate such division, this document will seek to identify specific points of contention while generating fruitful dialogue and presenting possible solutions.

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 57.

## Research Questions

Specific research questions addressed by this study are:

- I. What vocal adjustments are required to alternate between choral and solo singing? What vocal adjustments are required to sing music of different time periods and styles?
- II. What potential vocal problems are identified by professional singers in making vocal adjustments?
- III. In reference to the contention sometimes found in music schools nationwide between choral conductors and voice teachers, what information might be shared to help alleviate such tension?

## CHAPTER 2

### CURRENT RESEARCH

The following literature review presents resources from pedagogues with regard to healthy vocal technique and training. This chapter explores common techniques used by both choral conductors and voice teachers in their vocal instruction to students.

Subsequent pages illustrate disagreement between the two groups and introduce research consistent to the topic in hand: flexible technique for choral and solo singing.

Developing a choir's tone is a personal preference for conductors. No two choirs sound exactly alike, and no two conductors will agree entirely on the process of achieving the ideal choral sound. Paul Brandvik, in his chapter of *Up Front! Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*, extends this concept further by stating, "No two teachers teach exactly alike, and there are many different approaches to the teaching of singing as there are to the directing of choirs."<sup>19</sup>

Brandvik provides the following outline concerning the factors that shape choral tone:<sup>20</sup>

#### Vocal Technique

- Individual Singers: vocal health, flow of breath, resonance, freedom in the vocal mechanism, vibrato, flexibility, endurance, energy
- Choir and Director: intonation, tuning, use of *falsetto*, breathy tone, *sotto voce*, weight of sound
- Music: range, tessitura

#### Mental Attitude

- Individual Singers: ego, nerves, tension, relaxation, self concept, personality, imagination, desire to learn, alertness

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Brandvik, "Choral Tone," *Up Front! Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*. ed. Guy B. Webb (Boston: E. C. Schirmer Music Company Inc., 1993), 149.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

- Choir and Director: common goals ability to concentrate, perceived importance of rehearsals, perceived importance of performance, discipline of rehearsals, ambience of rehearsals
- Music: acceptance of style, willingness to rehearse and perform, confidence

#### Musical Choices

- Individual Singers: knowledge of the music, knowledge of history, understanding of music as communication
- Choirs and Director: balance, blend, strength of overtones, sung consonants, vowel spectrum chosen, diphthongs, balance of vowels and consonants, use of sung consonant, articulation, energy and direction of phrases
- Music: dynamics, tempo, harmonic pull

#### Environment

- Individual Singers: age of singers, musical maturity, general health, intelligence, length of rehearsals, frequency of rehearsals, time of rehearsals, time of performance
- Choir and Director: size of ensemble, singing formation of the choir, conductor's ear, conductor's attitude, conductor's intelligence and imagination, acoustics of rehearsal space, acoustics of performance space, activities prior to and following rehearsal or performance
- Music: style of music, difficulty of music, language, amount and rapidity of text in a piece, existence of choral-speaking, existence of humming, length of piece, texture, voicing, length of phrases

Brandvik stresses the importance of teaching proper vocal technique in the choral rehearsal and recognizes four qualities he regards as essential in all good vocal production: freedom, resonance, energy, and expression.<sup>21</sup> When teaching a free vocal mechanism, we, as conductors, must remind our singers that our instrument is our entire body. Nearly every vocal/choral pedagogue, including Brandvik, supports the need for proper body alignment. Unlike many pedagogues, however, Brandvik identifies the psychological need for good posture. “We must look for ways to build this self-image rather than just repeating *ad infinitum*, ‘sit up straight, now, boys and girls.’ No one,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 150.

including directors, will sit up straight if something inside of them does not feel like sitting up straight.”<sup>22</sup>

George Howerton, author of *Technique and Style in Choral Singing* and former dean of Northwestern University’s School of Music, agrees with Brandvik on the physical need for proper body alignment. Both Brandvik and Howerton devise exercises to achieve correct singing posture.

When the body assumes the proper position, the breath is the next step in assuring healthy vocal production. Howerton’s approach to breathing is consistent with other choral pedagogues. He speaks of a low diaphragmatic breath with an observable expansion of the waistline, but “the activity taking place must arise from actual movement of the breath, not as a mere expansion and contraction of the muscular apparatus.”<sup>23</sup> Ronald Corp, in *The Choral Singer’s Companion*, arrives at the same breathing technique as Howerton, but stresses the importance of diaphragmatic breathing, which occurs when the abdominal muscles relax and the abdominal wall gently expands.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps one of the most important aspects to a healthy vocal sound is freedom in the vocal tract. Brandvik stresses this point and provides ideas to “free” the vocal sound, which includes the concept of vocalizing down. “Strain and tightness in the throat occurs

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>23</sup> George Howerton, *Technique and Style in Choral Singing* (Boston: Carl Fischer Inc., 1968), 12.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Corp, *The Choral Singer's Companion* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1987), 14.

when the chest voice is carried too high”<sup>25</sup> He believes that teaching voice to a group of singers differs from the individual lesson in two ways:<sup>26</sup>

First, you are not able to hear what each individual singer is doing all the time, so you must make suggestions that are healthy and helpful for all singers. Secondly, you must say things in a variety of ways and make numerous suggestions in the hope that at least one idea will find a home in the technique of each singer.

Brandvik continues his discussion on a vocal resonance and training by giving two scenarios for the aspiring student. The first scenario transpires in an unhealthy manner as vocal production is generated without optimum resonance, “resulting in dangerous muscular pressure on the vocal mechanism, tiring, and less-than-beautiful sound.”<sup>27</sup> In Brandvik’s second scenario, vocal production occurs freely without any artificial manipulation to the voice.

To help singers find resonance without tension, Brandvik suggests two approaches: vocalizing downward and humming. Vocalizing downward may improve the range and intonation of the singer and helps to prevent excessive weight being carried into the upper register of the voice. “This technique is not new, but has been used by the greatest voice teachers of the world to train singers for centuries.”<sup>28</sup> Humming, according to Brandvik, helps singers blend a natural resonance into vowels and consonants. Singers can use humming to find a clear and pleasant tone at each pitch of their range.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy* (San Diego: Plural Publishing Inc., 2006), 159.

Brenda Smith works frequently as a guest clinician with many amateur and professional choirs throughout the world. Unlike many studio voice teachers, Smith has devoted much time and interest to choral singing. Smith, in collaboration with Robert T. Sataloff, coauthored the book *Choral Pedagogy*, which deals in topics of vocal health, vocal pedagogy, and approaches to choral music.<sup>30</sup> Robert Sataloff is a medical doctor who specializes in otorhinolaryngology-head and neck surgery; additionally he earned a D.M.A. in Vocal Performance from Combs College of Music.

Smith and Sataloff are not entirely consistent with Brandvik on the use of humming, and find this form of vocalization challenging for the amateur singer. “Many singers find it difficult to maintain an easy position in the oral cavity during humming, noting the increase in resonant sensations when the tongue and jaw are squeezed.”<sup>31</sup> The implication is that humming can create tension and an unhealthy resonance in the amateur voice.

Smith and Sataloff stress the important physiological attributes of good singing posture. They write in length about breathing, specifically inhalation, while devoting a sizable section on “choral breathing.” The authors describe choral breathing as “a corporate feeding of the choral tone...the structure of choral compositions assumes that no one singer will necessarily execute any phrase in one breath.”<sup>32</sup> Their point is choral singers have the opportunity to breathe with more frequency than solo singers, and,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 161.

although amateur choral singers may view the necessity to take more frequent breaths as a weakness, this concept should be trained and encouraged.<sup>33</sup>

After providing exercises to promote good breath management, the authors dedicate a section to resonance. “Resonance for singing occurs when the sound waves produced in the vocal mechanism travel through the higher structures of the vocal tract.”<sup>34</sup> Smith and Sataloff assert the importance for this sensation to occur, particularly in amateur voices. They are consistent to others regarding the importance of vocalizing in downward patterns in order to avoid carrying excessive weight into the upper register of the voice. “The regular study and practice of descending patterns develops consistency in registration and trains the ear.”<sup>35</sup>

After the discussion of vocal technique and training, the authors turn to the concept of blend. “It is a color, quality, and quantity of sound indicative of a particular set of choral forces—the singers and their conductor.”<sup>36</sup> Smith and Sataloff identify four “elements of a blended sound:”<sup>37</sup>

1. *Color*: No individual voices are identifiable. Also, a distinct sound quality typifies each section and the whole choir.
2. *Balance*: Individual choral sections are balanced within the tonal texture.
3. *Tuning*: Voice leading is accurate, resolving points of tension clearly, and pitch is accurate and consistent among sections.
4. *Diction*: Vowels and consonants are pronounced uniformly and can be understood by an audience.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Brandvik has a similar concept of blend, but diverges from Smith and Sataloff on several points.<sup>38</sup>

1. *Pitch*: How close does a pitch have to match to be accurate? Are two singer[s] ever really “in tune” with each other?
2. *Vowel color*: Singers must match not only with the written vowel, but with the exact sound of the vowel. The sound of each singer’s vowel production can be observed only by letting each singer in your choir or section sing individually. Many singers assume they are producing an accurate vowel when, in fact, they are producing another vowel color.
3. *Volume*: A strong voice must exercise control and a smaller voice must sing with as much strength as possible while maintaining a healthy vocal production. (*Be wary of placing smaller voices next to big voices, thereby placing unhealthy demands for volume on the small voice, and causing frustration for the big voice.*)
4. *Rhythm*: It is impossible to have a blended sound if the voices are not moving together. This movement is not just at the beginning and end of phrases, but also all the interior moves from sound to sound in each phrase.

Rhythmic accuracy appears to be a critical aspect of a proper unified sound. It is important for singers to consistently listen, monitor, and adjust to those around them.<sup>39</sup>

Vocal pedagogue Shirlee Emmons and choral conductor Constance Chase collaborated to write the book *Prescriptions for Choral Excellence*. In the book’s section on choral blend the authors identify the following areas to create a healthy concept of blend: “positioning of the singers; upgrading the resonance of weaker voices; teaching the singers to use *forte* without lack of ease and focus, training all singers in vowel modification and the *appoggio*.”<sup>40</sup> As defined by Emmons and Chase, “*appoggio* consists

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<sup>38</sup> Brandvik, 174-175.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>40</sup> Shirlee Emmons and Constance Chase, *Prescriptions for Choral Excellence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150.

of a raised sternum and expanded ribs (shoulders remaining low), maintained from beginning to end of the phrase.”<sup>41</sup>

Emmons and Chase address *forte* singing versus *piano* singing and recognize that a blended sound is easier to achieve at a softer dynamic level. The authors warn against too much soft singing: “Relying upon *piano* singing much of the time from your voices can be injurious to their vocal health, and an injured human voice cannot always be restored to health.”<sup>42</sup>

Emmons and Chase designate a significant section of the book to define a healthy vibrato versus an improper and/or unhealthy vibrato. Vibrato faults include defects of rate (speed of the vibrato), extent (width of the vibrato), or breath energy (causing an inconsistent vibrato).<sup>43</sup> These vibrato defects are harmful to choral tone as well as to the singing voice.

Emmons and Chase speak equally negatively regarding the choral conductor’s preference for a tone without vibrato. “Choir directors should know that, across the profession, voice teachers are very concerned about the vocal debilitation that occurs in their students who sing nothing but early music in groups that shun vibrato.”<sup>44</sup> The authors recognize that singing without vibrato can occur more healthily when the head voice is engaged, but “a debilitation of vocal capability occurs over time when *senza* vibrato singing is the norm rather than the exception, particularly in larger voices.”<sup>45</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 145-146.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 140.

authors suggest that all choral singing include a healthy vibrato. If, however, a director feels strongly about his/her choir singing without vibrato, the authors recommend recruiting singers with smaller voices. “Otherwise, it is a bit like hiring a bass trombonist to cover a clarion trumpet part.”<sup>46</sup>

In an article published in the *Choral Journal*, Gayle Walker identifies other vocal pedagogues who find vibrato a necessary component to a healthy vocal sound. Miller, for example, finds that:

Choral singers should not be requested to remove vibrancy from their voices in the hope of blending them with non-vibrant voices. Rather, the conductor should assist the non vibrant armature, through onset and agility exercises, to induce the natural vibrancy of the singing instrument.<sup>47</sup>

Walker seeks to answer the following questions regarding vibrato in the choral ensemble:

- (1) Is there a desirable standard for vibrato in choral ensembles?
- (2) Can ensemble singers modify their vibrato?
- (3) What effect does straight tone singing have on the choral singer?
- (4) How can conductors accomplish vibrato adjustments in their ensembles?
- (5) With regard to blend, what are some alternatives to vibrato adjustment?<sup>48</sup>

Walker views vibrato as a result of controlled breath release and freedom from unwanted vocal tension. Vibrato and a free vocal mechanism may also be closely associated with resonance. “Thus, singing with vibrato is not only a desirable standard for choirs, it may also be necessary for an energized, resonant choral sound.”<sup>49</sup>

In her discussion of vibrato modification, Walker found research that shows trained adults and college singers are able to modify components of their vibrato.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>47</sup> Gayle Walker, “Vibrato, Science, and the Choral Singer,” *Choral Journal* 47:6 (December 2006), 36.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

“Therefore it appears reasonable for choral directors of singers at those levels to expect that their choirs can modify vibrato. Additionally, it is likely that these vocalists are capable of utilizing a flexible vibrato throughout a piece of music and for a variety of repertoire, during both rehearsals and performances.”<sup>50</sup> This research also shows that singers (soloist or ensemble singers) instinctively adjust vibrato according to genre, emotional expression, and dynamics.

In tackling the concept of non-vibrato singing, Walker found “evidence that continual straight tone singing could compromise developing solo technique and possibly fatigue the voice.”<sup>51</sup> She found, in two studies, that laryngeal tension and pressed phonation were associated with straight tone singing. She asserts, however, that professional singers make use of straight tone singing in a variety of genres without causing noticeable injury their voices.

Vocal pedagogue Jean Westerman Gregg has suggested that professional singers of early music who utilize straight tone have learned to “use just enough excessive adductory force to obtain an artistically produced straight tone...but without allowing the adduction to progress to the very tight pressed phonation.”<sup>52</sup>

Walker recognizes that professional singers have a refined technique that would allow for a healthy, unstrained, and resonant production of singing with minimal vibrato.

The following suggestions listed by Walker may help conductors accomplish vibrato adjustments in their ensembles:

- Before explicitly asking for a reduction in vibrato, consider asking singers for a reduction in dynamics or an overall lightening of sound, being careful to remind them to maintain energized breath support and to keep the tone quality resonant.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

- Instead of asking for a vibrato reduction, ask singers to listen carefully for a balance within their section and across the choir and to respond vocally to what they hear, again, reminding them to maintain proper breath support and resonance.
- When performing early repertoire, jazz, or other genres that require a decreased vibrato, educate students about the sound goal of that particular genre. Renaissance polyphony, for example, requires clarity of each voice part in order for the individual melodic lines to be heard. When singers understand this sound ideal, vibrato modification may automatically result
- If it is necessary to directly ask singers to lessen vibrato, suggest that they “modify” their vibrato, rather than to sing non vibrato or straight tone.
- Vary repertoire so that an entire rehearsal or performance does not require modified vibrato. As a result from good vocal technique, singers should be allowed opportunities to enjoy singing with their natural vibrato.
- Consider the application of straight tone carefully, especially in ensembles that include developing solo singers. Although professional soloists sometimes sing straight tone for expressive purposes without apparent vocal harm, studies seem to indicate that in less experienced singers straight tone can be difficult to achieve and that it might bring about a pressed phonation. If straight tone is musically required for expression, conductors might consider limiting it to short segments of music, rather than strictly applying it to an entire piece of music. Additionally, even for a brief segment of music, a request for straight tone should be accompanied by reminders to use adequate breath flow and support, maintain a resonant sound, and check for laryngeal tension.<sup>53</sup>

Rather than referencing vibrato in rehearsals, conductors may choose to ask singers to be cognizant of balance, tuning, and vowel uniformity. Walker suggests arranging singers in a mixed ensemble formation as to allow for a more accurate and immediate assessment of their individual sound contribution in the ensemble. She concludes by stating choral directors need not only be responsible for shaping the sound and nuance of the choral ensemble, but need to remain conscientious of the vocal health and comfort of the individual singer.

Margaret Olson, an assistant professor and coordinator of vocal studies at Morgan State University, authored “Vibrato vs. Nonvibrato: The Solo Singer in the Collegiate

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 43.

Choral Ensemble,” which was published in the *Journal of Singing*. In her introduction, she identifies the benefits of voice majors’ participation in choral ensembles:

The voice major is exposed to choral compositions of major composers and gains historical context and greater understanding of music styles. This exposure to choral literature can provide the voice major with increased knowledge of future solo opportunities. The voice major learns how to work with a conductor and can use this knowledge in relation to opera, oratorio, or further choral singing. The voice major learns skills of ensemble work and prepares for possible work opportunities in the choral environment. The voice major can benefit from participating in group activity with the feelings of camaraderie and friendship which that situation may yield.<sup>54</sup>

Her article continues by addressing the possible challenges undergraduate voice majors may face if asked to adjust vibrato in the choral rehearsal. “Since a stable vibrato rate often indicates a healthy technique in a trained voice, it is desirable for a singer to cultivate it in the formative years of college.”<sup>55</sup> Olson believes singers may find it difficult to participate in choirs where conductors insist on no vibrato the majority of time.

Olson identifies the danger in “straight tone” singing. “Pedagogically, nonvibrato singing in choir is a significant issue for voice teachers working with college age solo singers...the immaturity of the laryngeal musculature and the lack of established vibrato of college age singer may overtax voices when choral conductors prefer a more mature sound from singers.”<sup>56</sup> She believes singers should avoid non vibrato singing for the following reasons: “undue stress on the vocal mechanism, insufficient air flow/breath

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<sup>54</sup> Margaret Olson, “Vibrato vs. Nonvibrato: The Solo Singer in the Collegiate Choral Ensemble,” *Journal of Singing*, Vol. 64 (May/June 2008), 561.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 561.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 563.

support, incorrect muscle memory, spreading of the tone, pitch inaccuracy, lack of an overtone series, lack of “ring” in the voice, and loss of individual tonal quality.”<sup>57</sup>

Olson mentions the possibility of singing without vibrato in a vocally healthy way. While conducting an interview, Ingo Titze, executive director of the National Center for Voice and Speech, offered the concept that singing without vibrato may be a good exercise for singers.<sup>58</sup>

Olson suggests that voice teachers constantly monitor their students’ techniques. “If the vibrato rate is lessening, it may be an indication that excessive straight tone singing is modifying the natural vocal tendency to fluctuate.”<sup>59</sup> She recommends that conductors create an environment suitable for healthy vocal development without fatigue or tension. “Healthy vocal production balanced with stylistic choices, that influence vibrato rate, need not be mutually exclusive.”<sup>60</sup>

Virginia Sublett tackles the subject of choral vs. solo singing in “Vibrato or Nonvibrato in Solo and Choral Singing: Is There Room for Both?”. The article grew out of “a discussion on differences between choral and solo singing techniques led by a panel of widely respected university choir directors and voice professors.”<sup>61</sup> It focuses on two

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 563.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Virginia Sublett, “Vibrato or Nonvibrato in Solo and Choral Singing: Is There Room for Both?,” *Journal of Singing*, Vol. 65 (May/June 2009), 539.

underlying issues of the choral/solo debate. “The first issue is that of aesthetic preference; the second is that of vocal health.”<sup>62</sup>

Sublett first addresses the concept of non vibrato singing with regard to vocal health. “Although some voice pedagogues believe that non-vibrato singing is harmful, there doesn’t seem to be much research to support their contention.”<sup>63</sup> She cites Nicholas Isherwood whose extensive travels confirmed that singers outside of North America and Europe sing with minimal vibrato. Sublett welcomes more research into non vibrato singing and its possible negative effects to the voice, “but until it is available, we can deal with the issue only from an anecdotal or preferential standpoint.”<sup>64</sup>

Sublett continues in a discussion of aesthetics and early music performance practice:

Since the explosion of research into Baroque and early music performance practice in the last century, some university voice faculty members have found themselves choral colleagues. Many choir directors today, especially those who specialize in early and Baroque music and/or new music, expect their choristers to sing with minimal vibrato. In today’s musical environment, style is crucial, and it is important to learn and master the techniques of the different styles in which one wants to sing, whether as a chorister or as a soloist.<sup>65</sup>

Sublett identifies the growing orchestra and larger concert halls through the late-Classical and post-Romantic eras as the cause for a more continuous and larger vibrato. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, new historic research and new compositional techniques had begun to call for a lighter vocal mechanism and smaller vibrato.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 539.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 540.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 540.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 540.

I am far from saying that twenty-first century singers must be bound by a sound “ideal” derived solely from performance practices of the past. For example, I do not advocate trying to make female sopranos sound like boys simply because female singers were forbidden to sing in European churches and cathedral choirs. . . . That having been said, many (most) students sing in choir during high school and undergraduate studies, and, Margaret Olson notes, there are numerous musical lessons that can learn there. ‘Choral compositions of major composers, historical context, and greater understanding of musical styles. . . skills of ensemble work and [preparation] for possible work opportunities in the choral environment’<sup>66</sup> Other benefits include improvements in sight-reading, pitch recognition, rhythmic abilities, and intonation.<sup>67</sup>

Sublett defends choral conductors’ predilection for a smaller vibrato and identifies the need for voice teachers to help their students achieve that aesthetic. “Beyond the university level, the vast majority of voice students will not go on to become professional opera singers; however, they may become enthusiastic members of a professional, community, or church choir.”<sup>68</sup>

Sublett is not without advice to the choral conductor, suggesting that they eliminate terminology like “straight-tone.” “When people are asked to sing straight-tone, they often respond by tensing the jaw or the muscles that support the larynx, yet there are more efficient ways to achieve the conductor’s desired effect.”<sup>69</sup> She suggests using comments that promote listening, accuracy, and singing at the center of the pitch.

Sublett recommends that voice teachers check in with their students frequently about choir, and remind them to sing in choir with the same breath energy that they use in voice lessons.

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<sup>66</sup> Olson, 561.

<sup>67</sup> Sublett, 541.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 541.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 542.

The teacher's ability to model a pure, spinning, well focused sound with minimal vibrato is one of the best tools for helping a student for whom choral singing is more a chore than a pleasure. The ability to sing lightly without losing the core of tone is an important aspect of technique that most of us want our students to learn anyway, and it is especially helpful for the larger voices in our studios. For these students, vocalizing on an [u] vowel is often useful in helping them to find a cool sound without losing their tonal center.<sup>70</sup>

Brenda Smith believes vibrato is “a vital element in tone and tuning, [and] a major consideration in blend.”<sup>71</sup> She notes that vibrato is made steady and regular through practice and understands that the overall physical condition of a singer may cause an irregular and unappealing vibrato.<sup>72</sup>

Brandvik understands that “the use of vibrato in a choral ensemble is a matter of hot debate.”<sup>73</sup> He points out regions in the world that sing without vibrato, including areas in northern and eastern Europe. Choirs in the United States spread the entire gamut regarding use of vibrato—“some with a straight tone, some with a good deal of vibrato, and some who tailor the use of vibrato to the music being sung.”<sup>74</sup>

Brandvik defines vibrato as a natural occurrence and one that, if produced properly, can be controlled. “A singer who is unable to control vibrato, whether excessive or non-existent, does not have a good healthy technique.”<sup>75</sup> He feels that the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 542.

<sup>71</sup> Smith and Sataloff, 184.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>73</sup> Brandvik, 167.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

director should make careful and informed choices with regard to how much vibrato is used and base those decisions on the following:<sup>76</sup>

1. Vibrato should vary with the dynamics: the greater the volume, the more the vibrato; conversely, the lesser the volume, the lesser the vibrato.
2. Vibrato should vary with the texture of the music. The thicker the texture, the less the vibrato (enabling the harmony to be heard more clearly); conversely, the thinner the texture, the greater the vibrato.
3. Vibrato should be related to the period and style of the music being sung. Renaissance music with its clear lines, sparse texture, and open harmonies demands judicious control of vibrato. Romantic music with vibrant harmonies and full tonal expression often allows for a rich, full-bodied vibrato.
4. Vibrato should be used as an effective tool to delineate the music, ignoring volume, texture, and period. Let the vibrato be expressive of the piece being sung, whether Brahms or Josquin. Should J. S. Bach's *Jesu, meine Freude* be sung with vibrato, with a controlled vibrato, or with no vibrato? Or because Bach used boy sopranos, should the vibrato in the sopranos be controlled, and the alto, tenor and bass asked to sing with more vibrato because these parts were sung by adult men? These are questions that need to be considered in this school of thought.

Vibrato is a controversial subject in matters of vocal training and health. Doscher and others have their concerns that singing in choirs may be detrimental to the voice. They assume choral conductors ask for an unhealthy vocal technique that may not be consistent or conducive to their own thoughts on vocal pedagogy. Some of these concerns may have merit, as suggested by Walker in her research on vocal fatigue and singing with non-vibrato. Other concerns will be discussed in the following chapters while seeking information from professional singers with regard to their concept of vocal pedagogy and concern for vocal health.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

The method for this DMA essay is partially based on Frank Ragsdale's essay, *Perspectives on Belting and Belting Pedagogy: A Comparison of Teachers of Classical Voice students, Teachers of Nonclassical Voice Students, and Music Theatre Singers*. As in Ragsdale's work, this document has sought answers from professional singers regarding styles of singing and vocal health.

The questions used for multiple written interviews are informed by the writings of others and interviews that have previously taken place. Each interview focussed on the subject's concept of vocal technique for choral and solo singing as influenced by repertoire. The subjects used for this study are singers who have professional experience in choral and solo repertoire. The questions converged on practical issues concerning vocal technique, vocal health, performance practice, warm-ups, diction, and vibrato.

#### **Description of Participants**

The subjects used in this study have extensive experience singing as professional soloists and are hired frequently to sing with professional or semi-professional choral ensemble. Conductors of professional choral ensembles, agents, and colleagues have assisted in locating the subjects used for this document. Many of these subjects have sung in professional ensembles, most participants have sung principal roles in opera and/or oratorio, and several are currently voice teachers.

## Data Gathered

The data collected for this document consists of written responses. Each subject answered the following eleven questions, which were created to support the research questions given in the first chapter. In this survey, the research questions are designated by the roman numerals, and the interview questions are listed below each research question.

I. What vocal adjustments are required to alternate between choral and solo singing? What vocal adjustments are required to sing music of different time periods and styles?

1. What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?
2. What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble?

Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas:

- i. Phonation
  - ii. Support/Breath
  - iii. Resonance
  - iv. Dynamic
  - v. Articulation
3. Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?
  4. What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?
  5. What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

- II. What potential vocal problems are identified by professional singers in making vocal adjustments?
6. How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?
  7. How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?
  8. Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?
- III. In reference to the contention sometimes found in music schools nationwide between choral conductors and voice teachers, what information might be shared to help alleviate such tension?
9. How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?
  10. In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?
  11. What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis compares the answers of each participant while seeking similarities and noting differing opinions. The transcripts of each collected survey can be found in the appendixes.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### **What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?**

This question, more than any other, produced a very consistent answer. All participants believe healthy vocal techniques should apply to both styles of singing, “good singing is good singing and bad is bad!”<sup>77</sup> These elements include proper breathing technique, a release of tension, proper body alignment while seated or standing, utilizing a healthy resonance, proper vowel formation, and an engaged mind.

Concept of proper breathing only varied slightly within the participants’ responses. Many identified the need for an energized breath with an expanded ribcage and proper breath management/support. The answers varied slightly in the amount of pressure used to control vocal production.

There was some concern that singers in a choral setting make the mistake of slowing down breath in order to “blend” with other singers, resulting in an unhealthy tone.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, “when singers make major adjustments from solo technique in order to blend with choir, they risk vocal injury.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>78</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

**What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble?  
Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas:**

**Phonation**

Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants believe that phonation should not require adjustment while oscillating between choral and solo singing. “I always phonate. Period. That is not something that anyone should stop doing in a choir. To allow air to pass through the chords without letting the chords come together is asking for a vocal problem. Phonation is not going to make a singer unable to blend or balance in a section,”<sup>80</sup> wrote one participant.

Four participants, however, make slight adjustments to phonation in a choral ensemble. Lynn Eustis, for example, uses an onset that is slightly gentler in choral singing. Stephanie Moore has found it necessary to hold back her natural singing voice in order to blend with other singers. Similarly, Tara Mianulli U’Ren uses “a more controlled, balanced onset of phonation that is timed to match others...I sometimes find myself holding back onset in choral singing and I experience more back pressure at the folds due to singing extremely soft.”<sup>81</sup>

**Support/Breath**

Seven participants believe there should be no adjustments to support/breath between choral and solo singing. “It is very important that this be the same in choral as in solo singing...Singing ‘off the breath’ is a common problem in choral singing.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Tara Mianulli U’Ren, survey response to author, June 20, 2009.

<sup>82</sup> Janet Carlsen Campbell, survey response to author, September 8, 2008.

Lesley Leighton feels similarly: “in a choir, it is other things that should be adjusted, not your breath support!”<sup>83</sup> There was also concern with regard to modifying breath support: “I have not needed to make any adjustments here, and feel that changes here could be detrimental to vocal production.”<sup>84</sup>

Ten participants state that only slight adjustments are appropriate. The most common adjustment identified was the frequency of breaths taken while singing. Taylor asserts, “Choral singing relies less on phrase breathing, and frequently requires ‘staggered breathing’ within the ensemble.”<sup>85</sup> MB Krueger identified the need for frequent breaths in order to avoiding sticking out of the choral sound due to lack of support. Sarah Tannehill also breathes with more frequency because the conductor is in control of the phrase lengths and “because [she is] using more air to keep the tone straight.”<sup>86</sup>

Two participants feel they use less air in choral singing. Martha Sullivan states, “When singing in choir, I can sometimes find more air by relaxing into the group sound. I am also usually not going for such a strong sound in a choir, so it often uses less air.”<sup>87</sup> Rhonda Wallen made a similar statement: “I tend to take bigger breaths and breathe less often in solo work; in large choral groups, you can sometimes get away with less ‘support.’”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Tannehill, survey response to author, July 31, 2008.

<sup>87</sup> Martha Sullivan, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Rhonda Wallen, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

## Resonance

With regard to resonance, nine participants feel singing in a choir requires very little or no adjustment from solo repertoire. Robert Sataloff, for example, feels there is “usually little or no change...however, it is sometimes necessary to slightly decrease the strength of the fifth formant (ring) to avoid having a strong solo voice stand out even within an excellent choir.”<sup>89</sup> He also feels that this adjustment can be done safely.

Several participants find the adjustment is made with vowel formation rather than the lessening of resonance. Tannehill believes more “ooo” timbre is required in choral singing. Jay White also finds vowel modification important: “In choral singing, one must do his/her best to match the tone of their corresponding partners...to blend a specific vowel, say an [a], a singer may have to modify out of his/her optimal vocal tract shape in order for that vowel to blend best with his/her partners.”<sup>90</sup> Virginia Sublett also supports resonance adjustment through vowel modification:

This would vary strongly from singer to singer, depending on the style of choral singing required and the singer’s usual resonance choices. For my own part (soprano), I typically choose a resonance based on [u] or [o]: very cool, forward but not buzzy, for choral work. [a] can tend to spread, whereas [ɑ] can get too dark, forced or hooty in choral contexts. In a piece that requires some intensity, such as the Beethoven Ninth, you need to put steel into the sound: more [i] within the [o] space.<sup>91</sup>

David Gresham modifies vowels in choral and solo singing, but finds its use somewhat different in an ensemble. “I find that I choose a slightly larger opening at the

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Virginia Sublett, survey response to author, June 18, 2010.

front of the mouth for most vowels when singing in a choir. This has the effect of producing a tone with fewer upper partials, and is an easier sound to balance within the group.”<sup>92</sup>

Eustis finds a “headier” resonance lends better to the choral ensemble. Janet Carlsen Campbell believes the concept of resonance should be left to the discretion of the conductor, but finds professional ensembles that allow and encourage individual resonance a more satisfying and a healthier approach.

Nine participants find it necessary to adjust resonance in choral singing. Leighton states, “Yes, this usually needs to be adjusted, unless it’s a light lyric voice, at which time, perhaps not. Because my voice is a dramatic instrument, I shut down formants and resonance in order to blend. This is seriously simple if you have control of your instrument, and is not in any way harmful to the instrument.”<sup>93</sup>

Jo Anne Taylor also finds specific modifications to resonance necessary when singing in a choir:

This is the area of greatest difference between choral and solo singing. Soloists use a broader palette of resonant tone, relying more on the development of ‘formant,’ especially when singing over an orchestra. The choral singer, on the other hand, is frequently asked to suppress formant (again, for the sake of blend in the ensemble). Some choral conductors insist on a white tone or straight tone from choristers, especially in early music. If a straight tone is well-supported, this should pose no problem to the solo singer who already commands a broad palette of vocal tone.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>93</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

Matthew Hoch uses “less amplitude of vibrato and more integrity of intonation”<sup>95</sup> for ensemble singing, and a falsetto register for singing high soft notes; something he almost never uses for solo singing.

### Dynamics

Most participants generally feel that one sings less loudly in a choral setting. Leighton, for example, finds her “*mf* in a chorus is much softer than it would be as a soloist.”<sup>96</sup> Gresham states, “The *piano* I sing in a choir, I find to be a much quieter sound than that of my solo singing. The louder *f* and *ff* don’t differ much between the two settings.”<sup>97</sup>

Two participants, however, find the necessary information concerning appropriate dynamic level already in the score. “I only adjust according to the requirements/needs of the piece—doesn’t matter if choral or solo.”<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Eustis feels that one “should follow the score as appropriate, no change necessary.”<sup>99</sup>

White believes the idiom of “one should only sing as softly or as loudly as lovely” in both the choral and solo setting. He finds that singers in choir often sing “more loudly than necessary and can often sing ‘off the breath’ when singing softly.”<sup>100</sup> White is not the only participant to identify the need for more “support” when singing softly in a

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<sup>95</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>96</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>97</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Rhonda Wallen, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

<sup>100</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

choral setting. Jan Bickel states, “Breath support is even more important when singing at softer dynamic levels, in order to maintain healthy production.”<sup>101</sup> Campbell also uses more support for *pp* choral passages than in solo singing. Krueger finds that “volume has very little to do with airflow and everything to do with the pressure exerted by the vocal folds as they come together; therefore, I try to keep soft choral singing just as well supported as any solo singing.”<sup>102</sup>

Several participants identify the danger of “over-singing” in choirs. Martha Sullivan equates talking on an airplane and singing in a choir. “The lesson is that it is terribly easy to over-sing in choirs, where you have voices making loud sounds all around you.”<sup>103</sup> Tannehill also finds the need to sing less loudly in a choral ensemble. “It’s not necessary to blow your stack! You have other people with you!”<sup>104</sup> Sataloff identifies the danger of over-singing and suggests the following: “A solo singer in a choral setting should think about giving a voice lesson (by example) to the one person on either side and in front of him/her, not trying to sing louder than the entire section.”<sup>105</sup>

### **Articulation**

Most participants believe the articulation of text needs be more precise, more exaggerated, or both in the choral setting. Taylor mentions the need for sharper consonants in choir, especially when singing with an orchestra. Sullivan identifies the

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<sup>101</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>102</sup> MB Krueger, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Martha Sullivan, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

<sup>104</sup> Sarah Tannehill, survey response to author, July 31, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

need for over-enunciated consonants in many varying acoustics. She cautions, however, that this be accomplished without creating tension and without interrupting the musical line. White asserts that “crisp articulation is imperative” in choral singing. “One can get away with less clear enunciation in solo singing, not that it’s ideal.”<sup>106</sup> Eustis finds clean articulation necessary in choral singing also, which she believes helpful to singers in developing good musical habits.

Four participants find there need not be adjustments to articulation when oscillating between choral and solo singing. “I haven’t found that I need to alter articulation really—good choral singing should include good, clear articulation!”<sup>107</sup> Krueger also finds very little adjustment necessary. Bickel and U’Ren both identify little need for change unless the conductor is looking for something specific. “Because resonance and articulation are so intertwined, my solo technique is again similar to my choral technique where articulation is concerned,”<sup>108</sup> Bickel asserts.

### **Do You Make Similar Adjustments When Singing Solo Repertoire of Different Styles or Time Periods?**

The majority of participants make vocal adjustment to accommodate the stylistic requirements of the music. White believes that “each vocal style (classical, jazz, pop, musical theatre) requires various adjustments to vocal production...one who is familiar

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<sup>106</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>107</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>108</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

with the performance practice of different periods within classical music will also make necessary adjustments.”<sup>109</sup>

Eustis believes vocal adjustments should be made when performing stylistically different composers like Bach, Mozart, and Puccini. “To me it is comparable to picking up a different racket...you wouldn’t use a tennis racket and a badminton racket interchangeably.”<sup>110</sup> Tannehill uses a more focused tone with less vibrato when singing early music. U’Ren makes some adjustments for varying styles, but never to the point where it affects resonance or support.

Lancaster teaches many styles of voice including musical theatre, pop, folk, and classical. “Each type of music calls for a different type of resonance and different vocal sound, but I find that the techniques of support/breath, phonation, dynamics, and articulation are more consistent from style to style than they are from solo to ensemble singing.”<sup>111</sup> Taylor uses varying technique as an expressive tool. “Rather than categorizing repertoire, and ‘adjusting’ technique because of time period or style, I try to sing ‘true to my voice’ and use technique to interpret the music as honestly as possible.”<sup>112</sup>

Leighton and Hoch do not make many technical adjustments as solo performers. Leighton states, “While I certainly observe styles and eras in regard to performance practice, and while this might cause some change in my solo singing, the changes are not nearly as much as it is from solo to choral singing: but this is partly due to the fact that

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<sup>109</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> Kim Lancaster, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>112</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

I'm a dramatic voice and not a lyric one. There is a lot of rep that I simply would not sing as a soloist."<sup>113</sup> Hoch observes the following:

I am called upon to sing in few styles in classical solo literature. Medieval and Renaissance solo literature exists, but is usually only performed by specialists. Choirs sing Renaissance music all the time. Also it is necessary to make deeper adjustments in choral singing because one has to blend with other voices and needs even more precise intonation (balancing roots, thirds, fifths, or chords, etc.). In general, I think it is fair to say that much more [is] demanded of the choral singer in terms of vocal adjustments.<sup>114</sup>

### **What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?**

This question elicited some general approaches to warm-ups, but provided very few specific exercises from participants. As Hollinshead puts forward in her opening statement: "this was probably the hardest question to answer in any short way."<sup>115</sup> Her general answer is that each warm-up will assist in one's own understanding of his/her voice. "All exercises can and should be about furthering one's knowledge about his/her instrument, how it works and how it adjusts."<sup>116</sup>

Campbell uses exercises that work vocal flexibility (i.e. melismas and trills) and finds it especially helpful when teaching early music. She also uses longer tones to help prepare long phrases in all musical styles.

Bickel finds agility exercises important so singers are able to move together in fast moving passages. "For excellent control of breath, dynamics and resonance, I use

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<sup>113</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>114</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>115</sup> Barbara Hollinshead, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

*messa di voce* exercises, so that I am able to retain optimum resonance at the softest dynamic levels.”<sup>117</sup> Bickel has her singers hold index cards to their mouths while singing to make sure enough air is being used.

White finds that most emphasis in a choir is placed on “blending skills (resonance, vowel adjustments) and exercises on articulation.”<sup>118</sup> Taylor uses “scales, arpeggios, intervallic leaps and Vaccai exercises for flexibility and intonation... Viardot or Marchesi exercises for expression and phrasing.”<sup>119</sup>

Lancaster takes more care and time in her warm-ups for solo singing. She uses the full range of her voice with various vowels and spends more time using agility exercises. For choral warm-ups she focuses on exercises that relax her throat and jaw, for example humming and sliding through thirds, fifths, and octaves. “I do less warm-ups on my own before ensemble singing because I need to do warm-ups with the choir as well...I just warm-up enough so my voice is ready to sing freely.”<sup>120</sup>

Leighton and Eustis do not warm-up the voice differently from ensemble singing to solo singing. “I think the exercises are essentially the same for warming up the voice, it’s the act of doing it in the group that changes things (for the smart singer as led by the perceptive conductor guiding the sound).”<sup>121</sup>

Sullivan and Hoch also see many similarities between choral and solo warm-ups. Sullivan, however, stresses the importance of coloratura exercises in the choral rehearsal.

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<sup>117</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>118</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

<sup>120</sup> Kim Lancaster, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>121</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

Hoch feels that all good solo exercises should apply to choral singing, but finds that the choral warm-up needs to cover more territory. “Good choral warm-ups also need to address good ensemble singing, blend, and intonation.”<sup>122</sup>

Krueger stresses the importance of warming-up with physical stretches and breathing exercises first. Wallen uses a glissando on “ng” throughout the vocal range. Moore also uses a humming “sirening” technique. Beattie suggests the following exercise, which engages the head voice:

One favorite of mine is doing whine/cry vocal sirens up and down on a triple piano dynamic. My mouth is fully open with my pharynx/soft palette stretched/arched to the max and with my tongue out/relaxed. I do not force the sound or range but take it a mindfully pace being sure to “iron out” any crinkles of vocal fatigue or swelling by slowly sliding the pitch to where it is comfortable that day...It is important to not “sing” but only focus on vibrating the vocal cords with strong abdominal support and “primal-call” or cry intent.<sup>123</sup>

Gresham believes singers should arrive warmed-up to choral rehearsals:

Group warm-ups are far less effective for the individual voice than a few minutes spent by a singer doing exercises that he or she knows will help their voice to be ready for action. Following this, any exercise that gets the ensemble listening to each other is helpful in the process of vocal adjustments. As musicians, there are countless little manipulations we make to our voices to create a balanced ensemble sound. Most of these are unconscious and come from our own musicality.<sup>124</sup>

### **What is your experience in modifying vibrato?**

Bickel is not concerned about modifying vibrato because she is a *mezzo-soprano* “with an ‘even’ vibrato at an appropriate speed.”<sup>125</sup> Hollinshead and U’Ren, similarly,

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<sup>122</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>123</sup> Rose Beattie, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>124</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>125</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

find it much easier to sing with little vibrato in their alto range, although both sing soprano literature as soloists. U'Ren has a difficult time modifying vibrato above E-flat. "I have a big voice and it is difficult for me to sustain a straight tone without doing damage in my higher range."<sup>126</sup>

When teaching private voice, Hollinshead encourages her soprano students to think of singing a lullaby when they are asked to sing non-vibrato. "Make sure you are relaxed from the collarbones up, and, use a steady, gentle airflow."<sup>127</sup> Bickel also teaches vibrato modification to her students:

As a teacher, I have learned that a vibrato that is too fast can be easily modified when the breath control is substantial, and the lower abdominal muscles are balancing well with the diaphragm. Making the singer aware of the breath movement is important here, as well as not locking the abdominal muscles. The body must be active in the process, and all muscles must be in dynamic balance. In particular, support muscles must not become "static" or the vibrato will be inappropriate; it could be either too fast, or too slow. This will cause the voice to "stick out" in a choral situation, and it sounds and feels "uncomfortable" in a solo situation as well.<sup>128</sup>

Taylor believes that proper breath and support are important to her success in modifying vibrato. In a choral setting she finds that vibrato may be somewhat suppressed to improve intonation and blend, but believes a completely vibrato-less tone lacks vitality. "The best choral conductors know this, and encourage singers to sing well, employing good technique and sound musical judgment."<sup>129</sup> Eustis sees many singers decreasing vibrato by skimping on breath and closing the throat. She finds this unhealthy and, instead, uses a "more focused breath stream while making a higher placement of the

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<sup>126</sup> Tara Mianulli U'Ren, survey response to author, June 20, 2009.

<sup>127</sup> Barbara Hollinshead, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>128</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>129</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

soft palette.”<sup>130</sup> Moore also minimizes vibrato with a raised soft palette and a high tongue position.

Campbell, White, and Lancaster all modify their vibrato in various styles of singing. In early music, Campbell often reserves vibrato for “moments of heightened expression.”<sup>131</sup> She tends to alternate more frequently between non-vibrato and vibrato singing in Baroque literature and enjoys having the flexibility to sing with or without vibrato. White often adjusts the amount vibrato he uses “to match the style of the music I am singing and to create an optimal blend in ensemble.”<sup>132</sup> Lancaster has found healthy ways to sing without vibrato in musical genres like jazz, musical theatre, and pop music.

Hoch has been asked to sing without vibrato in the professional choral setting. He learned to do this over time without hurting his technique, but feels this is not a good practice for young singers to follow. Sublett avoids the terminology “straight tone,” but has learned to make certain modifications to her vibrato. “When I sing with period instruments ensembles, their lean, clear tone calls forth a similar sound from me...I simply match what I hear.”<sup>133</sup>

Beattie sees potential vocal harm is asking beginning and intermediate students to sing without vibrato. She does believe it is easier for certain voice types (lighter weight voices) to sing without vibrato and she finds non-vibrato ensemble singing rewarding at

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<sup>130</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

<sup>131</sup> Janet Carlsen Campbell, survey response to author, September 8, 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>133</sup> Virginia Sublett, survey response to author, June 18, 2010.

times. “Feeling the pitch ‘lock-in’ and become as though it is only one voice instead of many feels fantastic and sounds glorious with certain repertoire.”<sup>134</sup>

Sataloff finds the practice of modifying vibrato basically safe, especially for trained singers. “Excellent pop singers do so routinely...classical singers modify vibrato depending upon the composition of an ensemble, and depending upon musical style.”<sup>135</sup> He also identifies “straight tone” singing as an impossible task. “Even when people are singing ‘straight tone,’ instrumental analysis shows that vibrato is still present.”<sup>136</sup> He warns that attempts to modify vibrato may increase vocal tension, which can be vocally harmful. Gresham has learned to make certain adjustments to vibrato, but also sees potential harm:

While I can sing with or without vibrato, I certainly prefer not to limit my vocal production by making the necessary adjustments to remove vibrato. I do, however, think that it is possible to sing in a healthy manner with no vibrato. Unfortunately, young singers don’t often find this to be the case at their level of development. I have noticed in several young singers that the combination of reduction of amplitude and removal of vibrato just means less airflow and tightly adducted folds. I think this is where the real controversy comes in – young singers making inappropriate vocal manipulations to try to come to the sound that a director is requesting.<sup>137</sup>

Leighton, Krueger, and Sullivan find singing without vibrato fairly easy to accomplish. Leighton has a great deal of choral experience and has been featured with the Los Angeles Philharmonic:

Well, I’ve sung for a couple of the kings of “non-vib” so I have had a lot of experience. I don’t think much about it, frankly, it is very easy to sing with a spin as a soloist, or to completely remove the vibrato and sound like a boy. Which I

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<sup>134</sup> Rose Beattie, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

have been asked to do so many times in my life. It has never hurt my singing in any way; a soloist should be able to control the rate of vibrato that he or she is using and it should be accomplished in a way that is healthy to the instrument. I have to say that I have heard a lot of young singers recently who have a frightening amount of vibrato in their voices – I’m talking wobble, not vibrato from kids who are in the age range of 19-27 – this is scary.<sup>138</sup>

Sullivan is also comfortable singing without vibrato as long as the conductor does not ask for a *forte*, non-vibrato sound, which she finds creates an unhealthy amount of tension.

Similarly, Krueger can sing without vibrato as long as everything is relaxed and the airflow is consistent.

### **How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?**

The most consistent answer to this question, which was given by the majority of participants, was proper breath technique. Vocal flexibility was also expressed as important in maintaining proper technique for a variety of styles. White identifies the need to be vocal “cross-trainers,”<sup>139</sup> by consistently singing in many different styles.

Krueger, Tannehill, Sullivan, and U’Ren all reiterate the need to sing without tension. “I really feel it’s the same no matter what the style, and that the key is to always sing without tension.”<sup>140</sup> Sullivan believes that over-singing may be the cause of unwanted tension and poor technique.

Leighton, Moore, Tannehill, Bickel, and Wallen feel that the same basic vocal technique should apply to all styles of singing. Bickel asserts the following:

I truly believe that no matter what style you are singing, and in what situation, you must use the best support, phonation, resonance, and articulation methods

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<sup>138</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>139</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>140</sup> MB Krueger, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

possible. If a choral conductor asks a singer to sing without using his/her best vocal technique, it will be detrimental to the singer as well as the choral sound. Each singer must learn his/her own best practice, and maintain that practice regardless of the situation. Singing with a smaller, more focused tone, as required in some styles, can be accomplished by keeping the breath pressure at the sternum, rather than allowing more of that breath to reach the vocal folds, but at all times Bernoulli Effect must be working.<sup>141</sup>

Leighton agrees that the style of singing should not affect the basic technique. She maintains that adjustments will be made to vowels and balance, but breath support and resonance should not be compromised. Hoch identifies warm-ups as essential, and he consistently relies on good vocal hygiene. He tends to become more fatigued after a lot of choral singing, “but this has more to do with the number of hours singing (three hours rehearsals with no breaks, etc.) than with the style itself.”<sup>142</sup>

### **How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?**

Nearly all participants agree that appropriate use of breath is required for the safe execution of vibrato adjustments. Hollinshead cautions not to use one’s larynx to control vibrato. She also avoids vibrato adjustments in her upper range. Bickel similarly finds it inappropriate to require trained adult voices to sound like English boys, as it requires manipulation to the larynx. “This can be detrimental to the individual singer.”<sup>143</sup> She believes vibrato can be “minimized” safely, but should not be removed completely.

Leighton controls vibrato in a choir through the following means:

First I take out a lot (not all, mind you) of chest resonance, which in my voice is very natural, so to remove some of the nature vibrato, I start there; I also use less sub-glottal pressure (this for dynamics as well); and also with the diaphragm – I

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<sup>141</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>142</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>143</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

hold the muscle still to take vibrato out as opposed to allowing it its more natural function which gives my voice spin. It's really simple and has never hurt my voice in any way.<sup>144</sup>

Many participants identified the need to avoid tension when adjusting vibrato rate and speed. Hoch does not constrict any part of his pharynx, tongue, or jaw in order to create less vibrato. Instead, he sings softly while maintaining a warm color.

“Empirically, I’ve found that there is a huge difference between a ‘warm straight tone’ and a ‘constricted straight tone’...the former is less fatiguing and maps much of the good technique that exists in a full-throated, more resonant solo sound.”<sup>145</sup>

Gresham recognizes the need for time and practice when vibrato adjustments are asked frequently of singers. As a conductor, he rarely addresses vibrato, but as a singer, he makes adjustments accordingly:

The sound “feeling” right is paramount; the airflow (as mentioned above) is crucial; and limiting the length of time spent singing with a changed, or removed, vibrato is important. As a singer who wants to use optimal technique most of the time, I want to make sure that the limited amount of time I spend adjusting my vibrato (for Caccini trill, modern work that calls for some straight-tone passages, or a director that has asked for a delayed vibrato) is done with freedom. Often, a singer employing straight-tone produces an ugly tone because he or she involves too much vocal fold adduction, delivering a pinched sound. To avoid this, one has to find that perfect ratio of tone to air. In my case, when I make these adjustments, the sound I produce *senza* vibrato is not nearly as loud as the sound I could make using vibrato. Rather, I should say that the straight-tone sound I make that feels healthy and doesn’t adversely affect my normal singing voice doesn’t have the volume that my unaltered voice does.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>145</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>146</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

**Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?**

Vocal fatigue is the most common answer to this question, although several participants do not find vocal adjustments harmful to vocal health. Hollinshead only experiences fatigue when singing consistently in her upper range. Sullivan has occasionally suffered from vocal fatigue, but not as a result of vocal adjustments. Instead, her fatigue was provoked by overuse: “singing for 10 hours a day, several days in a row...rehearsing with a choral conductor (an organist rather than a trained vocal guy) who insists on repeating a difficult high section many times in a row until it is perfect, and who refuses to allow the singers to mark or sing down an octave.”<sup>147</sup>

Hoch also encountered frequent fatigue as a young singer, but he attributes that to physical immaturity and technical insecurity rather than vocal adjustments for choral styles. Tannehill and Beattie do not find vocal adjustments harmful unless poor vocal habits are employed to accomplish those adjustments. Tannehill only becomes vocally tired when singing opera for long periods of time.

Eustis avoids excessive non-vibrato singing in her upper register and consistently reminds herself to use proper breath. U’Ren avoids singing too soft for too long in her extreme high and low registers.

**How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner?  
Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?**

Hollinshead learned to make vocal adjustments on her own and by teaching students. “In order to teach something, one must figure out exactly how to accomplish

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<sup>147</sup> Martha Sullivan, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

it!”<sup>148</sup> Krueger credits her teachers and personal experiences, but also came to a deeper understanding when she began teaching students to make healthy adjustments. Tannehill, similarly, “learned a great deal by teaching high school students privately and being forced to explain how this intangible instrument works.”<sup>149</sup> Sataloff studied voice for twenty-nine years with a *bel canto* teacher and has also learned a great deal by teaching students himself.

White learned to make adjustments through discussion with his choral colleagues. Taylor gained knowledge of vocal/choral strategies from her “choral conductors who were also singers.”<sup>150</sup> She feels voice teachers are important in diagnosing bad habits before they become a problem and she finds self-monitoring essential.

Leighton credits her voice teacher and choral conductor for good vocal training:

I learned my solo technique from my teacher, Judith Oas Natalucci, and choral singing technique from Paul Salamunovich – the combination of the two of them was perfect for me. Paul was a professional singer with Roger Wagner...his basic technique and my voice teacher’s are the same. This made learning to make adjustments a lot easier, I think.<sup>151</sup>

Eustis also worked closely choral conductors, William Payn and James Jordan, while studying solo technique. A lot of her learning, however, came from self study. “While I studied at Curtis, my coaches and teachers were very specific about what they wanted stylistically, and it was my job to figure out how to do this healthfully.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Barbara Hollinshead, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>149</sup> Sarah Tannehill, survey response to author, July 31, 2008.

<sup>150</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

<sup>151</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>152</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

Both Wallen and Moore find the Estill method helpful in making vocal adjustments. Wallen learned through the Estill method “the anatomical details of what’s involved in various vocal techniques.”<sup>153</sup> Beattie discovered the benefits of Estill’s method when she was having a difficult time singing Rachmaninoff in a choral situation:

It calls for a very high, controlled, quiet singing. I found myself unable to sing at all, sometimes even mouthing the words. This isn’t much fun to do. I was having a very hard time pulling back the sound on my voice. We had a coach come in and help with the Estill method, and completely won me over. I have learned to make adjustments, I feel much more in control of my voice. I can be loud, I can be soft, I can be controlled and sing very high.

U’Ren also learned mostly through self study, but gives credit to a choral conductor from her graduate degree. Several altos in the choir had a difficult time maintaining a soft sustained tone. “We were over breathing and creating too much back pressure behind the vocal folds.”<sup>154</sup>

White, Lancaster, and Hoch all learned through “trial and error.” Hoch did not learn to make vocal adjustments from specific voice teachers, but by singing with other professionals who consistently navigated various styles without tiring. “I received no formal training on style adjustments because the vocal pedagogy and technique teachers that I had did not address choral singing or know (or care) anything about it.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Rhonda Wallen, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>154</sup> Tara Mianulli U’Ren, survey response to author, June 20, 2009.

<sup>155</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

**In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?**

Hollinshead maintains a very collaborative relationship with the choral conductor at her university. “When one of his choristers is having a problem, he’ll often send the student to one of us for some help.”<sup>156</sup> She identifies two main areas of contention:

1. A too heavy concentration of rehearsals close to the concert date(s). This puts too much of a strain and fatigue on young voices which don’t have the technical wherewithal to cope. My younger singers or singers with any vocal issues (like reflux or allergies) end up totally worn out by the end of those weeks. However, due to scheduling of the concert spaces, some concentration is inevitable.
2. Often assigning voices to inappropriate roles/parts. Example, I have a soprano with a lovely, easy top range who ends up singing second because she is such a strong musician. Contrarily, I have a soprano with a lush voice, but who must work hard (and in just the right ways) for her top notes – and she’s singing first!<sup>157</sup>

Bickel identifies conflicting approaches to vocal production between the choral conductor and the voice teacher as the main area of contention. “I have had students come to me requesting to ‘drop’ choir when we have had a conductor who is asking the exact opposite of what is being taught in the voice studio, and I find this understandable.”<sup>158</sup> Bickel feels that choral conductors who consistently ask their students to sing “straight tone” are the main cause of students’ frustration:

I have found that the choral conductors who are asking for “straight” tone at the undergraduate level are generally not singers, but pianists. If they have more experience singing with a fully supported and resonated tone themselves, they generally have a better concept of the frustration on the part of a young singer attempting to satisfy both the voice teacher asking for “freedom” of production, and the choral conductor asking for a “held” larynx in order to produce a “pure tone quality. It is a difficult situation.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Barbara Hollinshead, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

White also feels that many choral conductors are “ill trained in vocal pedagogy and proper technique.”<sup>160</sup> In some cases, the choral conductor may ask for specific sounds that are in direct conflict with the singer’s vocal progress. He suggests that a conversation should take place between the student, voice teacher, and choral conductor to address any such conflicts.

Taylor sees both sides at fault for creating unnecessary friction. “There always seems to be the diva voice teacher who discourages students from choral singing because the choral director doesn’t allow use of a singer’s full vocal range and resonance.”<sup>161</sup> Taylor has been told by multiple voice teachers to avoid choral singing, “because they think that all conductors insist on straight tone singing.”<sup>162</sup> She sees some dangers for the untrained singer who misunderstands how best to produce a pure tone and feels that conductors who have some vocal expertise best serve those singers.

Leighton also sees both sides at fault and believes there should be more dialogue between the choral conductor and the voice teacher:

Sadly, a lot of voice teachers discourage their students from singing in choirs. Now given the fact that a lot of conductors are CLUELESS about vocal technique might be part of the problem, but I also think it is because some of these voice teachers aren’t teaching a solid enough technique themselves. My teacher, who was at USC when I studied with her and while I was singing in four of Paul [Salamunovich’s] choirs, didn’t encourage choral singing, but didn’t tell me I couldn’t either, and frankly, I think we would both agree that it worked out really well for me...I would like to see a more open dialogue between choral and vocal departments in the collegiate setting, and unfortunately, this is often not what goes on...The reality, and I say this as a professional soloist and as a conductor, is that the two entities need to talk to each other and realize that they could work together and create a partnership that would benefit all of their students.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>161</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

<sup>162</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

<sup>163</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

Hoch recognizes tension between voice teachers and choral directors and he, too, finds both parties at fault:

The voice teachers often do not value choral singing – even professional choral singing—as a legitimate area where many of their students can (and will) work. They do not know the repertoire or the style, and they are unable to help their students approach the music in a healthy way. Few voice teachers allow choral scores to enter their studio—what a missed opportunity to teach about style and adjustment! On the other hand, many college undergraduate choral directors demand too much of their ensembles, especially with regard to time commitment and number of hours on the voice...many college choral directors will rehearse their groups five hours per week, plus sectionals, concerts, recordings, tours, fundraisers, and special events and appearances...Many of our finest undergraduates are in a constant state of vocal fatigue throughout their entire undergraduate careers, and they don't even realize it.<sup>164</sup>

Sullivan learned a great deal about proper vocal technique from her voice teacher, who felt that choral singing may be damaging to the voice. “And it can [be damaging to the voice], if the choral conductor does not encourage his/her singers to sing with freedom and ease.”<sup>165</sup> Krueger has also witnessed situations where voice teachers feel that choral singing is harmful to the voice. She disagrees with that position, although sees potential damage to young singers if they are asked to sing with a lot of tension. She finds herself very fortunate to teach at a college “where the voice teachers and choral directors agree that choral singing is beneficial to the students, and students are taught how to sing well in both situations.”<sup>166</sup>

Sublett sees “straight tone” as the main area of contention:

When I hear other voice teachers complain about their situations, it is usually about the choral director insisting on “straight tone” or a white, unsupported

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<sup>164</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>165</sup> Martha Sullivan, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

<sup>166</sup> MB Krueger, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

sound. I think the first is a terminology issue, while the second may be stylistic. When the second criticism is justified, it often has to do with the issue of “choral blend,” which requires trained singers with beautiful voices to try to match untrained singers in their sections. Sometimes the singers try to restrain their voices so as not to “stick out” in their sections, which is in my opinion the worst and potentially most harmful technical choice they can make. Holding back the voice is always fatiguing because it almost always involves throat and tongue tension. I think voice teachers need to encourage their students to sing with their own voices in choirs, never to hold back or work overly hard to blend with untrained singers. Better to encourage (by example) the untrained singers to sing like the trained ones! However, it’s also important to let the choral conductor know what you are telling your students, and never make it an “us vs. them” situation.<sup>167</sup>

Tannehill feels that voice teachers are generally “too protective of their own interests they have in their singers.”<sup>168</sup> Similarly, Moore feels that voice teachers give added pressure to students’ “need to be in the spotlight,”<sup>169</sup> which acts against their ability to sing as a unit in choral situations.

U’Ren identifies ego as the main area of contention between the voice teacher and choral conductor:

Voice teachers and choral conductors both consider their training to be the most important. . .I have heard voice teachers argue that straight-tone choral singing would ruin an operatic voice and they often encourage students to skip choral rehearsals or not to sing at them, despite the fact that participation in choir was required for the degree by the school. I have encountered choral directors who have a chip on their shoulders and are so defensive that they refuse to listen to students who tell them that they are uncomfortable with the vocal requirements of what they are singing and berate the students instead of helping them develop healthy techniques. The prime point of contention is straight tone vocal production. . .I have seen almost bloody battles about the issue of whether sopranos in choir should sound like boys.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Virginia Sublett, survey response to author, June 18, 2010.

<sup>168</sup> Sarah Tannehill, survey response to author, July 31, 2008.

<sup>169</sup> Stephanie Moore, survey response to author, July 9, 2009.

<sup>170</sup> Tara Mianulli U’Ren, survey response to author, June 20, 2009.

Sataloff has also found conflict between voice teachers and choral conductors, but feels it is sometimes justified. He has seen many choral conductors who have been trained keyboard performers and who have little knowledge about the voice. He identifies long rehearsals and loud singing as impractical methods to healthy vocal production and empathizes with voice teachers' frustration. He also finds fault with solo voice teachers. "They should be teaching the students appropriate singing technique to avoid over-singing and injury...If the solo singing is well-trained, he/she will be able to provide an excellent choral performance without allowing vocal damage."<sup>171</sup>

**What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?**

Hollinshead believes voice teachers should focus much of their students' training on breath control and *messa di voce* exercises. "I often tell my college kids that if I am only able to impart one technical feat during their time with me, I would choose this!"<sup>172</sup> To the conductor she suggests allowing their choirs sufficient time to breathe before singing choral passages and to avoid too much high and soft singing.

Sullivan offers the following suggestions to choral conductors and voice teachers:

To choral conductors: Choose repertoire that allows the voice to move rather than sitting around on the same three notes for pages at a time...If there are high parts that you need to drill to get them right, please drill them an octave low and quietly several times before asking the singers to do the phrase at pitch...Do physical warm-ups to get singers using their bodies freely and easily and also feel free to do a stretch or two mid-rehearsal...Straight tone: please consider letting singers sing with some vibrato...To voice teachers: Tell your students not to push when singing chorally...Straight tone is not Satan. Big, hooty, forced straight tone is not a great idea, but simply changing the color and taking out the vibrato is nothing more than slightly extended vocal technique...Encourage your students to

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<sup>171</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

<sup>172</sup> Barbara Hollinshead, survey response to author, July 1, 2009.

practice choral music as well as solo music...Encourage your students to sing in choirs; it's the best way to get experience and build facility at sight singing.

U'Ren enthusiastically supports the choral art, but dislikes directors who use only one choral sound for varying choral repertoire. She believes that choral directors should seek a variety of repertoire that allows for use of vibrato sometimes. She suggests that voice teachers assist choral conductors with specific ideas in modification techniques.

The overwhelming recommendation in this area was increased dialogue between voice teachers and choral conductors. Krueger believes choral conductors and voice teachers should work together to develop a unified approach to healthy singing. Similarly, Taylor sees the benefit of creating a common language of healthy vocal concepts so students hear the same instructions in the choral rehearsal and private studio. She also addresses collegiality: "Never, ever, ever, criticize a teaching colleague in front of students...always maintain professional dignity and respect for colleagues."<sup>173</sup>

Eustis maintains the importance of communication and respect. She finds fault with conductors who do not seek advice from their voice teacher colleagues. She also finds fault with voice teachers who complain to their students, but do not speak directly to their choral colleagues about their concerns. "Healthy singing is what we are all after, and I see no reason that conductors and voice teachers have to be enemies."<sup>174</sup>

Leighton sees the need for dialogue so both parties can agree that neither style of singing is "evil." "This is often the attitude that I pick-up from both sides-it's the idea that they are on different sides instead of the same one trying to create a win-win for their

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<sup>173</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

<sup>174</sup> Lynn Eustis, survey response to author, July 14, 2008.

students.”<sup>175</sup> U’Ren believes voice teacher and choral conductors should collaborate and devise vocal strategies for struggling individuals. “It is of utmost importance that voice teachers and choral conductors acknowledge that each have a valid viewpoint and that both types of singing are important to producing a well rounded musician.”<sup>176</sup>

Sublett implies that ego adversely affects the relationship between choral conductors and voice teachers. “My primary bit of advice is that neither should assume that they know everything there is to know about singing. If each respects the other’s ideas and keep the lines of communication open, their students’ education will be enriched.”<sup>177</sup> To choral conductors she suggests dropping “straight tone” from their terminology and using, “pure, focused sound” in its place. To voice teachers, “ask what the choral conductors need from your students and strategize with them about how you can help the students achieve it. If it seems appropriate, offer to coach a sectional from time to time.”<sup>178</sup>

White suggests choral conductors witness voice lessons and voice teachers attend choral rehearsals. Beattie believes the voice teacher may be helpful to the choral conductor in achieving varying vocal colors in the choral rehearsal. Hoch, similarly, believes there should be much interdisciplinary collaboration:

Choral directors should join NATS [National Association for Teachers of Singing] and contribute articles to the *Journal of Singing*. Voice teachers should join ACDA [American Choral Directors’ Association] and contribute articles to the *Choral Journal*. We need to work for a synergy and explore the important topic of vocal adjustments, and we may realize that we have more common ground than we think. Both choral directors and voice teachers should do as

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<sup>175</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

<sup>176</sup> Tara Mianulli U’Ren, survey response to author, June 20, 2009.

<sup>177</sup> Virginia Sublett, survey response to author, June 18, 2010.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

much reading in vocal pedagogy as possible so they can speak intelligently and scientifically about the topic.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The previous chapter examined perspectives from singers regarding the differences between choral and solo singing, and the apparent tensions that may be created as a result of those differences. The aim of this document is not to defend a particular side, but to identify the causes of contention that have negatively impacted experiences in secondary education and higher.

This chapter will incorporate a dialogue that took place at the NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) Fifty-First National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah in July 2010. The session titled “Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship” included a panel of seven choral conductors and voice teachers speaking on a topic closely related to this document. In his introduction to the session, Allen Henderson, Executive Director of NATS, identified the need for such a discussion. “This session has grown out of a joint concern and a joint opportunity for us to collaborate with our choral colleagues in ACDA [American Choral Directors’ Association].<sup>180</sup>

#### **Adjusting Between Choral and Solo Singing**

When singing in a choir, adjustments to resonance, dynamic, and vibrato rate and extant were common among the answers of participants in this survey. Less common, although several participants mentioned slight changes, included adjustments to phonation and breath.

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<sup>180</sup> Henderson, Allen. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

The singers' formant, commonly known as "ring," is an area of acoustic strength that allows for maximum vocal resonance. Richard Miller defines a formant as resulting "from the acoustic multiple of the fundamental pitch that originates at the level of the larynx, in response to shapes of the resonator tract, thereby producing regions of prominent acoustic energy distribution."<sup>181</sup> This was identified by several participants as an area of vocal production that should be adjusted in a choral setting.

Soloists train consistently to develop the formant so they can be heard over an orchestra. Some choral compositions, predominantly those written for chorus and orchestra, call for heightened resonance from the singers. The majority of participants, however, agree that resonance, particularly that of the singers' formant must be slightly decreased to avoid a singer cutting through the rest of the choral ensemble.

Scott McCoy, Professor of Voice and Pedagogy at Westminster Choir College, served as a panelist at the fifty-first annual NATS national convention. He spoke on the appropriate quality of the voice for choral and solo singing. "All of us have as our goal, enabling our singers to produce their best possible sounds. Right? Where we disagree is what that best possible sound is."<sup>182</sup> As a teacher of singing, McCoy seeks to develop the students' individual vocal quality, "which enables them to stand out on the operatic stage or the concert stage and sing competitively and cooperatively with a symphony orchestra and a chorus and be heard."<sup>183</sup> He believes that many developing students will only need

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<sup>181</sup> Miller, 73.

<sup>182</sup> McCoy, Scott. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

slight vocal modifications for choral singing, but that as students mature more is required of the solo singer:

I think is incumbent upon us as singing teachers to help our singers do everything that they need to do, and it means that the good ones—well, the more vocally developed ones—are going to really be able to use a different vocal technique when they’re singing as soloists than when they’re singing as choristers. And that’s good. Now I say the more developed ones because we know that there is a point in somebody’s vocal development when the best possible sound that they can make is appropriate equally as a soloist and as a chorister, but then there comes that point in many people’s vocal development where the best solo sound is no longer appropriate in the choral situation and they need to figure out how to take the “me” out of the sound sometimes. That’s okay, and we need to help them do it. So I challenge you. Help them.<sup>184</sup>

When pressed on the issue of what a large operatic voice is to do in a choral ensemble, McCoy made the following suggestion: “What we as opera singers do when we mark in rehearsal is really not all that different from what we might be called on to do when we need to contribute in a different manner in a choral situation. And I think that if we can give and help our students learn those skills it will apply in both directions.”<sup>185</sup>

Many participants identified vowel modification as an effective and healthy way to adjust resonance in a choral ensemble. Although soloists adjust vowels and airflow in order to maintain the ring, those in an ensemble are asked to adjust vowels in order to maintain a unified sound. “Often, bright soloistic vowels will not blend and cannot be used in choral singing; but this is not in any way damaging to the solo instrument, it is simply the shape of the mouth which should be very flexible!”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Lesley Leighton, survey response to author, June 5, 2009.

There was some disagreement regarding the adjustment of dynamic level when singing in a choir. A few participants believe there is no need to adjust one's dynamic level from solo to choral singing. Instead, one should simply follow the dynamic markings in the score. Other participants find it appropriate to sing consistently one dynamic below the written marking in an ensemble. Those in favor of singing under the written marking seem less concerned with the choral sound and more concerned with vocal health and "over-singing."

"Over-singing" was mentioned as potentially harmful to young singers in a choral ensemble. "Unfortunately, many young singers have yet to learn how to 'feel' the production of optimal tone rather than to 'hear' it...learning to manipulate or control the tone is a challenging, physical process and requires one to be completely aware of their vocal limitations. A good choral singer is one who clearly understands his/her voice and the extremes of its tonal spectrum."<sup>187</sup> This understanding comes as a result of vocal training and experience.

Richard Miller writes, "*Messa di voce* is the ultimate exercise for ensuring skill in combining breath management and optimal phonation control." Miller continues:

The *mesa di voce*—beginning the phrase at *p* or *pp* dynamic, *crescendoing* to a *f* or *ff*, returning to *p* or *pp*—is a test of how well breath emission and vocal-fold approximation are coordinated...If early depletion of the breath supply happens before completion of sustained phonation, or if vocal-fold closure becomes slack before the exact moment of release, the tone is breathy and loses vibrancy...*Messa di voce* study should be introduced only after security in breath management has been established...In practicing the *mesa de voce*, divide the process into (1) a *crescendo* from *p* to *f*, followed immediately by (2) an intervening silent breath renewal, and (3) a subsequent *decrescendo* from *f* to *p*. (Use a single pitch in lower-middle voice, later on higher pitches. Each of the cardinal vowels may be used alternately.)<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>Jay White, survey response to author, June 19, 2009.

<sup>188</sup> Miller, 232-33.

Several participants identified exercises in *messa di voce* as an essential tool in developing an understanding of one's vocal ability. This understanding should allow for healthy vocal adjustments between choral and solo singing.

Vibrato is frequently adjusted in many choral settings, which can heighten the contention within some music program. Miller defines vibrato as “pitch variation, the result of neurological impulses that occur during proper coordination between airflow and vocal-fold approximation; a laryngeal relaxant principle characteristic of cultivated singing.”<sup>189</sup> Vibrato rate (number of modulations per second) and extent (amount of variations above and below the center frequency) greatly impact the aesthetic of sound. “Vibrato rates over 7 to 8 seconds are aesthetically displeasing to most people and sound ‘nervous’...vibrato [extent] greater than 2 semitones are usually aesthetically unacceptable and are typical of elderly singers in poor artistic vocal condition.”<sup>190</sup>

Most of the singers who participated in this survey have experience modifying their vibrato in choral ensembles and other performing environments. The majority, however, do not believe singers should completely remove vibrato when singing in a choir. Sataloff identified the complete removal of vibrato an impossible task: “even when people are singing ‘straight tone,’ instrumental analysis shows that vibrato is still present.”<sup>191</sup>

Several sopranos who took part in this document find it easier to modify vibrato in their lower register. “I modify my vibrato frequently in my choral singing...this is

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>190</sup> Smith and Sataloff, 191.

<sup>191</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

made easy for me due to the fact that I am singing in the alto range in choir...I could not modify my vibrato enough to be useful in many choral situations above the *secundo passagio* (for me an E flat and above).”<sup>192</sup>

Singers with a fast vibrato rate may be heard clearly through an ensemble. Discussions between voice teachers and choral conductors should take place to determine proper voice placement for specific singers. Some sopranos will benefit vocally by singing alto in college choirs, and perhaps in community and church ensembles as well.

Years of vocal training and a complete understanding of one’s vocal ability will allow for appropriate vibrato in a choral setting. Several participants believe that a vibrato-less tone is possible and safe, but that ability does not always come quickly or naturally. “Modifying vibrato somewhat is safe and possible, especially for highly skilled singers...In general, attempts to modify vibrato should be utilized only with the greatest caution...Attempts to modify it commonly involve increased tension which can potentially be harmful,”<sup>193</sup> Sataloff asserts.

### **Vocal Adjustments for Varying Stylistic Periods**

Professional singers will make certain vocal modification related to performance practice. Some of these modifications, like those made to resonance and vibrato, relate to the adjustments one might make when singing in a choir. This, however, does not consider the singers’ *fach* and the reality that many professional soloists are not trained to

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<sup>192</sup> Tara Mianulli U’Ren, survey response to author, June 20, 2009.

<sup>193</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

sing both Renaissance and Romantic literature. Hoch asserts, “Medieval and Renaissance solo literature exists, but is usually only performed by specialists.”<sup>194</sup>

Richard Miller defines *fach* as “distinguishing one category of singing voice from another.”<sup>195</sup> Although professional singers adjust technique when singing in different styles, there are few singers trained to be specialists in multiple areas. For this reason, several participants consider choral singing more demanding in terms of vocal adjustments.

### **Vocal Problems**

Vocal tension is an area of concern for singers who make certain adjustments to vibrato. White experienced added tension early in his career when singing without vibrato. Through practice and vocal maturation he has discovered ways to sing with less vibrato without creating tension.

There are singers who believe that choral conductors should not request a non-vibrato quality of sound. Bickel, for example, sees potential harm when undergraduate students are asked to sing without vibrato and believes that any request to make adjustments to vibrato should only occur after students have matured vocally.

I have not personally encountered vocal problems, but I have certainly had students who were in “vocal trouble” because a choral conductor asked them to “turn off the vibrato.” If we teach that vibrato is a natural occurrence when the voice is produced freely, then turning off that vibrato completely means the voice is not produced freely. This will get a singer into trouble - particularly at the undergraduate level. It is essential that singers learn how to control the flow of breath so that the larynx is free to vibrate, and yet not produce a vibrato that is either too fast, or too slow when singing for a choral conductor who wishes to

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<sup>194</sup> Matthew Hoch, survey response to author, June 22, 2009.

<sup>195</sup> Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73.

have a “straight” tone, but this takes time, and undergraduate singers are frequently not capable of doing this until they are late juniors or even seniors.<sup>196</sup>

Fatigue is the most common vocal problem identified by singers in this survey. It seems, however, that excessive singing rather than vocal adjustments is the primary cause of fatigue. Singing softly in a high *tessitura* is another cause of vocal fatigue identified by multiple participants.

### **Ego**

Contention resulting from ego was mentioned by a few participants in this survey. Sataloff and Eustis both identify the need for a learning environment free from ego. “Essentially, providing students with mastery of the craft of singing, the intelligence to understand the sound they are trying to produce before they try to produce it, and the discipline to make the music more important than their personal voice or ego, usually permit safe singing in any style or environment.”<sup>197</sup>

In her book *The Singer’s Ego*, Eustis discusses the sometimes fragile relationship between singers and conductors. “The singer/conductor relationship must be ego-free. The two sides don’t have to know each other intimately, but they must accept one another and agree (usually in an unspoken way) to put the music first because it is bigger than either one of them individually.”<sup>198</sup> Eustis identifies the singer’s need for musical and emotional support from the conductor:

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<sup>196</sup> Jan Bickel, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>197</sup> Robert Sataloff, survey response to author, August 26, 2009.

<sup>198</sup> Lynn Eustis, *The Singer’s Ego Finding Balance Between Music and Life* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2005), 153.

Conductors have a role similar to voice teachers in that they both balance the same two issues. The singer must know both that the conductor will have high standards and that he or she trusts in the singer's abilities. Singers are all too aware when a conductor has low expectations or lacks confidence in their talents. Nothing is worse for singers' mental and physical (i.e., vocal) state than feeling they must prove themselves to a conductor who has no faith in them. I find this to be equally true whether I am a soloist or a member of a large choir.<sup>199</sup>

## **Suggestions**

### *To Choral Conductors*

Terminology appears to be one area of conflict between choral and vocal faculty, specifically terminology identified by vocal faculty as detrimental to vocal progress and health. "Straight-tone" and "blend" are two terms to avoid with singers.

Choral singing is often unified and sung at the center of the pitch, but asking singers to "blend" may not achieve one's desired sound. Much of the frustration from professional singers and teachers of singers seems to arise from loss of "vocal identity" in a choral ensemble; specifically, a trained singer trying to match the sound of an untrained singer. There are many other effective methods in achieving a unified sound. Some of these methods include addressing vowel shape (bright, forward, back, dark), seating formation, voice placement, dynamic, rhythm, vibrato, and vocal technique.

Avoid using the term "straight-tone" in the choral rehearsal. This term may cause unwanted manipulations and tension in the young untrained voice. Gresham asserts, "I have noticed in several young singers that the combination of reduction of amplitude and removal of vibrato just means less airflow and tightly adducted folds. I think this is

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 150.

where the real controversy comes in—young singers making inappropriate vocal manipulations to try to come to the sound that a director is requesting.”<sup>200</sup>

Conductors should remain mindful of vocal fatigue and the overuse of the students’ instruments. Teach students and allow them to mark down an octave when repeating upper *tessitura* passages. Sullivan tells of an experience she once had when singing with Robert Shaw:

If there are high parts that you need to drill to get them right, please drill them an octave low and quietly several times before asking the singers to do the phrase at pitch. Robert Shaw used to run all rehearsals up until the dress rehearsal with certain rules: any note above a D was to be sung an octave low, and dynamics, though proportional, should not exceed mezzo-piano. Wow. That summer I did in France with him, we sang three hours in the morning and then three more hours after lunch, and I never got tired. It was awesome.<sup>201</sup>

There are choral conductors who try to remain constantly aware of students’ vocal health and singing engagements outside of the choral rehearsal. Brady R. Allred, Director of Choral Studies at the University of Utah, adds the following statement to his syllabus:

It is incumbent upon you to use wisdom in the way you care for your instrument (your voice). If you are vocally tired or ill, please do not sing in rehearsal. If you have a performance, recital, or even a voice lesson that day and need to save your voice, please mark in rehearsal or don’t sing at all. I am understanding of your decision not to sing as long as you tell me before rehearsal begins.<sup>202</sup>

This statement is helpful in empowering students to be mindful of their instrument. It will help prevent vocal fatigue and may prove effective in building collegiality between voice teachers and choral conductors.

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<sup>200</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>201</sup> Martha Sullivan, survey response to author, June 16, 2009.

<sup>202</sup> Allred, Brady. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

Continued studies in vocal pedagogy are extremely important for the choral conductor, especially if the conductor's training is in keyboard rather than voice. There are some participants in the survey who find frustration with choral conductors who have little knowledge of vocal pedagogy. This knowledge may help alleviate conflict as choral conductors and voice teachers try to develop a common vocabulary; however, a shared vocabulary will not remove conflict completely as voice teachers and choral conductors seek a different aesthetic. Martha Randall, Professor of Voice and Pedagogy at the University of Maryland, spoke to this conflict at the NATS convention:

Conductors are now taking voice lessons, and at the University of Maryland choral conductors take pedagogy. But as Tim [Sharp] mentioned in a conversation a few days ago, this hasn't eliminated the problems of conflicting instruction being given to the student by the choral conductor and the voice teacher. We voice teachers don't always agree pedagogically or even have the same aesthetic. So it's no surprise we take exception to technical instruction given by a voice teacher in a choral setting. So how do we communicate with each other for the good of the singers?...Children become bilingual easily. Singers can develop skills that satisfy the needs for both solo and choral singing in most cases. We need to be clear in our own definitions, especially until we develop a common language.<sup>203</sup>

Although voice teachers and choral conductors may seek a different aesthetic, it is important that choral conductors maintain a wealth of knowledge on vocal technique and training since the majority of their students are not studying voice privately. Gresham recalls a statement from his former choral conductor. "I have always been motivated by something that Larry Kaptein [Choral Conductor at the University of Colorado at

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<sup>203</sup> Randall, Martha. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

Boulder] said in a lesson with me: ‘I always want students to leave my rehearsal feeling like they are better singers than when they came in.’”<sup>204</sup>

### *To Voice Teachers*

The variety and amount of repertoire to which students are exposed through their collegiate ensemble experience should nourish a professional career as a choral singer and soloist. Many undergraduate, graduate, and professional vocalists maintain paid positions in choral ensembles. “Beyond the university level, the vast majority of voice students will not go on to become professional opera singers; however, they may become enthusiastic members of a professional, community, or church choir.”<sup>205</sup> Those who do become professional soloists will have better sight reading facilities as a result of their choral experience.

Help your students become stronger and more thoughtful choral singers. Brenda Smith suggests being present at rehearsals and concerts. In her statement at the NATS Convention she presents the following ideas:

We need to go forward and take a look at the seats where our students are sitting for hours at a time in rehearsal, and teach our students in their lessons where their feet should be...Choral conductors don’t think about the need to say “would you all please sit with your feet in front you and your weight balanced on the balls of those feet.” They don’t always think about saying, “When you are not singing why don’t you relax in your seat” and...“why don’t you come back to a singers’ posture.” Some conductors do, some don’t think of it because they’re thinking of much bigger issues.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> David Gresham, survey response to author, July 6, 2009.

<sup>205</sup> Virginia Sublett. “Vibrato or Nonvibrato in Solo and Choral Singing: Is There Room for Both” *Journal of Singing*, Vol. 65 (May/June 2009), 541.

<sup>206</sup> Smith, Brenda. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

Other challenges arise when choral conductors find it inappropriate to correct individual students in the choir. It is helpful to maintain a learning environment where fixing individual vowels, colors, and intonation are acceptable. When this practice is not followed, students may unknowingly be overcorrecting for the entire section and possibly creating unhealthy vocal tension or fatigue. Smith asserts, “If the music is being repeated because someone down the row from you [made an error], then you don’t need to be singing as much right then.”<sup>207</sup>

Smith mentions the need to teach a lighter style of healthy singing. “Not many of us think to teach our singers how to mark or sing lightly in choir. Very often we say, ‘try not to sing or look like you’re singing when you’re not’ and actually what we’re creating is a situation where they’re afraid they’re going to get caught. So their tummy is tight, and when the time comes to breathe, they really can’t.”<sup>208</sup>

### *To Choral Conductors and Voice Teachers*

According to those surveyed in this project and the panel of members at the NATS convention, collaboration is the most effective method in alleviating any tension that might arise as a result of differing opinions. Tim Sharp, Executive Director of ACDA (American Choral Directors’ Association), mentioned the need to address “tension” when collaborating with colleagues. “Collaboration is not the absence of

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

tension, but it's the fruitful cultivation of tension."<sup>209</sup> Sharp suggests the faster we address and accept tension the faster solutions will emerge. He referred to a statement by Martha Randall as a catalyst for getting the conversation started. "It is incumbent upon us to communicate with each other, even if we must begin by talking about anything in order to talk about something."<sup>210</sup>

Allred suggests that it is sometimes the student who puts faculty at odds with one another. "Problems like that are solved when faculty communicate with each other. We should assume the best of each other and not jump to conclusions."<sup>211</sup>

Finding a shared vocabulary between choral and vocal colleagues may be one method of alleviating such tension. "Come up with consistent language to describe vocal techniques and tone colors, so students hear the same thing in rehearsal that they heard in the voice studio."<sup>212</sup>

There are some who believe choral singing will slow progress made in the private studio. Choral conductors and voice teachers might collaborate to help students best manage their time in the choral rehearsal and the practice room. Engaging in a respectful conversation with one another about how students should best budget their vocal stamina will benefit all parties involved.

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<sup>209</sup> Sharp, Tim. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

<sup>210</sup> Randall, Martha. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

<sup>211</sup> Allred, Brady. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

<sup>212</sup> Jo Anne Taylor, survey response to author, June 30, 2008.

Conversations like this are becoming more common among choral conductors and voice teachers. Sharon Hansen, Professor and Director of Choral Activities at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, closed the NATS Joint Session with a statement of hope that more collaboration is taking place. She sought the number of articles published in the *Journal of Singing* containing the word “choral” or “choir:”

There were thirteen articles printed in the early days of the *Journal of Singing* from 1948-1959...There was one article printed in the 1960s. There was one article printed in the 1970s. There was one article printed in the 1980s. There were no articles printed in the 1990s. And then there were six articles printed from 2000 until now. So much like ACDA, there was discussion and dialogue about choral and solo singing in the early years of NATS. Again paralleling ACDA that discussion then dies away in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As ACDA enters its sixth decade the interest in and passion about voice is growing. Choral conductors and voice teachers are discovering more and more that dialogue about good and healthy singing can be both, good and healthy.<sup>213</sup>

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This project has been very helpful in gaining ideas for my personal growth and education. Looking beyond this project, one might seek more specific pedagogical methods of navigating between choral and solo singing. Collaboration with vocal/choral colleagues, further studies in vocal pedagogy, and constant monitoring of students’ individual vocal progress will allow for an understanding of healthy techniques in the choral classroom.

The results of the survey infer a concern that some choral conductors are ill equipped in an appropriate understanding of vocal technique. The results also suggest

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<sup>213</sup> Hanson, Sharon. 2010. Solo/Choral Singing: A Symbiotic Relationship. Joint Session presented at the National Association of Teachers of Singing Fifty-First National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT. July 2-6.

intolerance towards choral singing by some voice teachers. Both views are in direct conflict with the education and growth of our students. Recent articles published on the differences between choral and solo singing and a growing partnership between ACDA and NATS show a trend towards mitigating the divide. I look forward to continued collaboration with my vocal colleagues and feel optimistic that much of this tension will dissipate as the channels of conversation expand and develop.

## APPENDIX A

### PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

**Barbara Hollinshead.** The American mezzo-soprano, Barbara Hollinshead, began her vocal studies at her opera-singing mother's knee, and as an adult has studied with coaches in New York, Washington, and with Max van Egmond in the Netherlands.

Barbara Hollinshead has had career high points singing Bach at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Monteverdi at San Marco in Venice and the *St. Matthew Passion* (BWV 244) one-to-a-part with Tafelmusik in Toronto. She has appeared with many of the East Coast's finest early music groups, including Chatham Baroque, Opera Lafayette, the Four Nations Ensemble, and The New York Collegium, and has sung under the baton of eminent conductors such as Christopher Hogwood and Andrew Parrott. Many of Washington's leading groups, including the Folger Consort, Washington Chamber Symphony, and Washington Bach Consort, regularly bring Barbara's warmth, expressiveness and joyful presence to their programs. On the stage she has enjoyed being cast in guises as varied as the triumphant god Juno and Hildegard's sin-seeking soul. She also performs extensively in Manhattan and its environs as a member of the NY-based chamber group ARTEK which received audience ovations and critical acclaim at its performance in the Regensburg (Germany) Festival for Early Music. Recent performances have taken her from New York and Boston to Venice and Vicenza in Italy. Her repertoire covers works ranging from medieval Byzantine chant to 20<sup>th</sup>-century song cycles.

Barbara Hollinshead's discography includes recordings of solo lute songs with lutenist Howard Bass, Renaissance Spanish and Sephardic music with La Rondinella, and works by Mrs. H.H. Beach.

Barbara Hollinshead rounds out her musical contributions with educational endeavors as professor of voice at American University, a leader of master classes on Renaissance and Baroque styles and a cast member of "Bach to School."

**David Gresham** is an Assistant Professor of Music at Brevard College, where he teaches voice and vocal pedagogy. As a performer, he has been most active as an oratorio soloist, performing with several churches, college choruses, and professional organizations, such as the Colorado Music Festival and the Brevard Philharmonic. Having a keen interest in performing works by living composers, he has collaborated with a number of composers for concerts and recording projects. As a scholar and editor, he has published a work for double chorus with a realized continuo by 16<sup>th</sup>-century composer Peter Phillips, and is currently working to publish a set of six solo *romances* from the Spanish Renaissance by vihuelists Luys Milán and Luys de Narváez.

**Degrees:**

B.M., Wingate University

M.M., Choral Conducting, University of Colorado at Boulder

M.M., Vocal Pedagogy and Performance, University of Colorado at Boulder

D.M.A., Vocal Performance, University of Georgia

**Jan Bickel**, Mezzo-Soprano, was born and educated in the Midwest; earning a liberal arts degree in music from St. Mary's College at Notre Dame, a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the Chicago Conservatory of Music under the mentorship of renowned contralto Madame Sonia Sharnova, and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. She has received awards for her singing from the National Federation of Music Clubs, the Musicians Club of Women, and the Foundation for the Arts in Chicago, was a finalist in the National Opera Association vocal artist competition, and a regional finalist in the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist competition.

Dr. Bickel is Professor of Music/Director of Vocal Studies at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, where she has taught in the music department since 1982. As a faculty member at SXU, Dr. Bickel has been awarded the Saint Xavier University Award for outstanding service, the Teaching Excellence Award, the Excellence in Scholarship, and the Excellence in Research awards, has been nominated and listed in Who's Who Among American Teachers in the USA during consecutive years, and has received several faculty research and creative production grants for her work as a singer and researcher. She has received a fellowship for her research project, in collaboration with Professor Martha M. Morris, entitled *Enhancing Flute Tone Through Vocal Tract Resonance*, and has presented workshops and conference presentations nationally on this subject. Because of her expertise in vocal pedagogy, Dr. Bickel is often recommended to student vocalists who have been diagnosed with serious vocal medical issues. During her many years of teaching, she has brought numerous singers back to full vocal health.

As a professional singer, Dr. Bickel has been heard frequently as a recitalist in Chicago at the Chicago Cultural Center, the Xavier Classics at Noon Concert Series, Cantigny Gardens, and for a variety of other organizations. She has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony, Chicago Philharmonic, and Chicago Chamber Orchestras, the Mid-Columbia, Chicago Bar Association, Southwest, Wheaton, and Kankakee Valley Symphony Orchestras, among others. She has performed leading and supporting roles with the Chicago Opera Theater, Chamber Opera Chicago, Chicago Opera Players, Opera Racine, Inspiration Point Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, and others. Some of her roles include Angelina in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, and Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, as well as Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*, and both the 2nd and 3rd Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. She also appeared in the Chicago Opera Theater premiere of Daron Hagen's *Shining Brow*. Dr. Bickel has been heard as soloist in many oratorios and cantatas; including Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, the Bach, Rutter, and Raminsh Magnificats, the Saint-Saëns Christmas Oratorio, Mozart's Requiem, among others. Dr. Bickel

recently recorded a compact disc entitled *An Art Song Excursion*, with pianist, Dr. Dana Brown, which includes songs by Schumann, Poulenc, Saint-Saëns, Rachmaninoff, and Ginastera.

Dr. Bickel is a well-known choral director, and her University Chamber Singers have recorded two compact discs under her baton. Her choral ensembles are known for presenting a wide variety of musical styles and languages from the chants of Hildegard von Bingen to the music of living composers such as Gwyneth Walker, Imant Raminsh and a variety of traditional and non-west composers. The compact disc *Of Wind and Voice* is a recording of music arranged or composed specifically for her University Chamber Singers and the Flutes LTD choir of the Chicago flute choir Flutes Unlimited. Dr. Bickel is a frequent adjudicator at choral festivals and conducts at both the college and high school level in that capacity. Dr. Bickel is a member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Music Educators National Conference, Illinois Music Educators Association, the American Choral Directors Association, and the American Association of University Professors.

**Janet Carlsen Campbell**, mezzo-soprano, enjoys a busy career as an oratorio, concert and chamber singer. She is at home in many styles of music: her concert repertoire ranges from French Baroque cantatas to contemporary American multi-media works. Ms. Campbell's recent solo appearances in concert and oratorio have included Bach's *Messe in h-moll*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Duruflé's *Requiem* and Corigliano's *Of Rage and Remembrance*. She has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras, festivals and professional choral ensembles, including The North Carolina Symphony, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Drottningholm Baroque Orchestra, Santa Fe Pro Musica, Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, San Juan Symphony, Santa Fe Symphony, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Omaha Bach Festival, Berkshire Choral Festival, Music in the Mountains Festival (Durango, CO), Omaha Chamber Music Society, Conspirare, The Washington Chorus (D.C.), Kansas City Chorale, Houston Masterworks Chorus and the Phoenix Chorale (formerly the Phoenix Bach Choir). Ms. Campbell appears on the Phoenix Chorale's Grammy Award-winning CDs, *Spotless Rose: Hymns to the Virgin Mary* and *Passion Week* and was featured on its recordings, *A Southwest Christmas* and *Shakespeare in Song*. She has also recorded with Conspirare, and appears on its CD, *through the green fuse*, as well as on Grammy-nominated CDs, *Requiem*, *Threshold of Night* and *A Company of Voices – Conspirare in Concert*. In 2008, she appeared with the ensemble at the World Choral Symposium in Copenhagen.

Ms. Campbell's sensitivity to the varieties of musical style is the result of careful research and performing experience. She has studied early performance practice at the Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria and has also studied in Stockholm, Sweden, with Baroque scholar Anders Öhrwall. She is an alumna of the Baroque Performance Institute at Oberlin College Conservatory, where she performed as a soloist in Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* under the direction of Kenneth Slowik and studied historical performance practice with Max van Egmond.

Ms. Campbell serves on the founding boards of the Arizona Bach Festival and Omaha Baroque. Ms. Campbell holds the degree of Master of Music in Vocal Performance/Pedagogy from Arizona State University. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a Bachelor's degree in Music Education. Born into a musical family, she received her early training and love of music from her parents. She currently lives in Omaha with husband, Chuck, and children, Nicole and Charlie.

**Jay White**, countertenor, has been hailed by the press as “most impressive”, “displaying beauty and flexibility”, and “a voice with a full measure of passion.” He has enjoyed a variety of performing experiences ranging from the works of Bach to Britten appearing with such ensembles as the Washington Bach Consort, the Folger Consort and Santa Fe Pro Musica as well as with members of the Smithsonian Players, Tafelmusik, and the Seattle and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestras. Sought after as an interpreter of medieval, renaissance and baroque repertoire, he has appeared at national and international early music festivals and has sung under the batons of Christopher Hogwood, Nicholas McGegan, Donald Burrows and Bruno Weil.

Dr. White sang eight seasons with the internationally acclaimed ensemble, Chanticleer, with whom he traveled to over 40 states and 15 foreign countries, appeared in such venues as Chicago's Orchestra Hall, Cleveland's Severance Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NY), the National Theatre of Taipei (Taiwan), performed at the Tanglewood, Ravinia, Interlochen, Schleswig-Holstein, and Brisbane (Australia) Music Festivals, and shared the stage with Frederica von Stade, Dawn Upshaw, Sting, the San Antonio, Atlanta, and Virginia Symphonies, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic.

No stranger to the recording process, Dr. White's discography includes 14 albums with Chanticleer, including two GRAMMY® Award-winning recordings, and recordings on the Angel/EMI, Focus, New Albion, and Teldec labels. He has also been heard on National Public Radio and Public Radio International programs such as Harmonia, St. Paul Sunday, Around New York, Weekend Edition Sunday, and Performance Today as well as radio broadcasts in eight foreign countries.

Having received his training at the Early Music Institute at Indiana University and the School of Music at the University of Maryland, Dr. White has taught at the University of Maryland, Columbia Union College (MD), the University of Delaware, and is currently an Assistant Professor of Music at DePauw University (IN). He is the founder and director of the Carmel (CA) Bach Festival Youth Vocal Workshop, a series of lessons and master classes for high school students.

Dr. White is an active lecturer and clinician on the topics of the countertenor voice and vocal and ensemble pedagogy having presented lectures at Indiana University, Columbus

State University (GA), the University of Maryland, and Morgan State University (MD), among others.

In the area of vocal pedagogy and science, Dr. White has presented a session at the 2009 Voice Symposium in Philadelphia, the 2008 NATS National Conference in Nashville, and a poster paper at the 2006 NATS National Conference in Minneapolis as well as attending workshops and conferences on the subjects. He is also an alumnus of the 2007 NATS Intern Program at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

Always seeking new opportunities to bring contemporary ideas to audiences, Dr. White co-founded the ensemble BERNARDUS which focuses on the music and stories during the time of the Crusades. BERNARDUS' multi-media performances combine visual images, spoken-word, and music to bring to life rarely experienced artistic works. Complimenting his work with BERNARDUS is Dr. White's foray into directing interdisciplinary performances for university students including an evening of opera arias and musical theatre pieces performed to a self-designed plot and with improvised dialogue (*Visual Voice*).

**Jo Anne Taylor** has performed as a soloist with the Kansas City Symphony, the Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, the Kansas City Camerata, and the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphony. She has been a featured soloist with the Oregon Bach Festival (under Helmuth Rilling), the Robert Shaw Festival Singers, the Kansas City Chorale (under Charles Bruffy), the Dale Warland Singers, the National Lutheran Choir, and the Rose Ensemble. Ms. Taylor's solo voice can be heard on recordings by the Kansas City Chorale, the Dale Warland Singers, and the Rose Ensemble. Ms. Taylor has performed as a recital artist and oratorio soloist throughout the Midwest.

In addition to performing, Ms. Taylor teaches vocal music at Minnehaha Academy and serves as Director of Music at Bethlehem Covenant Church in Minneapolis, MN. She has taught applied voice at North Central University, Minneapolis, and currently maintains a private voice studio. Ms. Taylor has conducted choirs at all levels of education, from kindergarten through university. Ms. Taylor holds degrees from Pittsburg State University (Kansas) and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree from Bethel Seminary, St. Paul MN.

**Kim Lancaster** received her BA in church music, majoring in both flute and vocal performance, from Baptist Bible College in Springfield MO. She has spend the last 20 years teaching private voice and flute, focusing on both classical and musical theatre literature. She currently sings with the Ars Nova Singers in Boulder Colorado and enjoys performing in the both mixed ensemble as well as a five-voice jazz quintet. Kim also enjoys musical theatre and has performed in both chorus and leading roles in local community theatres. Music has always been Kim's passion and she loves sharing that with students and listeners of all ages.

**Martha Sullivan's** works have been commissioned by artists including the Dale Warland Singers, the Gregg Smith Singers, Chicago A Cappella, various college and church groups in the Northeast, and Stephen Tharp, the internationally acclaimed organ recitalist. Her choral work has been broadcast over New York's WQXR (and thus worldwide on the Internet) as part of a concert by the vocal quartet Adventori, and in addition, Ms. Sullivan's songs and arrangements have been heard at various festivals, from the New Texas Festival to the Emily Dickinson in Song festival (Amherst, Massachusetts) to the Studio Arsis Workshops (Tokyo, Japan). Her work also appears in the book *Singing for Dummies*. She has received grants from Meet the Composer, and is the winner of the Dale Warland Singers' 2003 Choral Ventures competition. Ms. Sullivan is also a noted singer of new music. She has performed with several groups committed to unusual works, notably the Gregg Smith Singers, New York Virtuoso Singers, Vox Vocal Ensemble, and new-music ensembles at Yale and Boston University. She is a member of Toby Twining Music and sang premieres of Mr. Twining's *Chrysalid Requiem* in Amsterdam and New York (the recording of it is available on Cantaloupe Records); she has also premiered songs by John Zorn at Bargemusic. Ms. Sullivan is also a respected teacher and clinician (having taught in places as close to her home as New York University and as distant as Tokyo) and a sometime choral conductor (having founded two vocal groups in Boston), and she has even been interviewed for the online journal "NewMusicBox". She is always grateful to share music, her own and others', because music always has something new to say.

**Lesley Leighton.** Whether conducting the 95-voices of Los Robles Master Chorale, the 120 voices of Los Angeles Master Chorale, or the New West Symphony Chorus, Lesley Leighton's primary mission remains the same: to nurture southern California's rich choral music tradition. It is a tradition that she herself has been a part of since childhood. A native of Los Angeles, Leighton studied with Paul Salamunovich at Loyola Marymount University, where she earned her BA in choral conducting. She later obtained her MM in vocal performance from the University of Southern California, where she is currently finishing a DMA in choral music with her mentor and nationally-recognized choral conductor, Jo-Michael Scheibe

Leighton's musical activities have taken her across the United States and abroad. A long-standing member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and principal artist for more than two decades, she has performed with many of the world's most eminent conductors, including Pierre Boulez, Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel and Grant Gershon. Her opera credits include principal appearances with New York City Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, K ln Opera, and Glyndebourne.

As a choral conductor, Leighton embraces a broad range of music, from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era, although she is particularly dedicated to twentieth and twenty-first century compositions. In 2009, Leighton was invited to conduct the 240-voice choir at the annual Hollywood Bowl Easter Sunrise Service, duties she will undertake again in 2011. A long-time advocate of music education, she has inaugurated Los Robles Master

Chorale's annual High School Choral Festival in March of 2010, and will launch the High School Choral Leadership Workshop this fall. Leighton began her new post as assistant conductor of Los Angeles Master Chorale in July 2010, in addition to her recent appointment as music director of the New West Symphony Chorus, which will begin its work with the orchestra in the 2010-11 season.

The recipient of a two-year TAship from the Thornton School of Music at USC, Leighton was also honored in 2009 by the university's Remarkable Women Awards, in recognition of her "outstanding accomplishments and endless dedication" in the area of choral music, and was acknowledged by the Thornton School in 2010 with the Chamber Singers Award.

In July 2010, Leighton co-conducted the Los Angeles Master Chorale with Grant Gershon and Gustavo Dudamel at the Hollywood Bowl, and guest conducted the Fauré *Requiem* and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* at the Santa Monica United Methodist Church Annual Summer Sing-along. In addition to her Disney Hall conducting debut in January 2011 with LAMC, Leighton will also prepare LA Master Chorale for Bramwell Tovey and the LA Philharmonic's performance of Bernstein's *Candide*, and later this fall for Esa-Pekka Salonen and the LA Philharmonic on Magnus Lindberg's *Graffiti* at Disney Hall.

**Dr. Lynn Eustis**, soprano, a member of the University of North Texas faculty since 1999, is currently Associate Professor of Voice and Director of Graduate Studies in Music. She holds the Doctor of Music degree in opera from Florida State University, a Master of Music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from Bucknell University, Phi Beta Kappa.

She appears regularly as a soloist with numerous professional organizations. She has been heard internationally with the Hudebni Festival Vysocina and the Američke Jaro Festival in the Czech Republic, the Festival de Opera with the Compania Lirica Nacional (Costa Rica), the Guangzhou Symphony (China), and as a soloist at Chichester Cathedral (UK). Other organizations include the Dallas Bach Society, the Fort Worth Symphony, the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, the San Angelo Symphony, Texas Ballet Theater, Fort Worth Early Music, the Orchestra of New Spain, the Crested Butte Music Festival (CO), the Williamsport Symphony (PA), Tulsa Oratorio, Master Chorale of South Florida, Concert Royal (NY), and the Æxxus Vocal Ensemble (NY). Works include *King Arthur* (Purcell), Handel's *Messiah*, *Requiem*, and *Coronation Mass* (Mozart), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mendelssohn), *Magnificat* (Bach), *The Creation* (Haydn), *St. Matthew Passion*, *St. John Passion*, *Zephyre* (Rameau), and *La Musique in Les arts florissants* (M.A. Charpentier). She has also been heard as soprano soloist with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in *Cantata No. 51* (Bach) and Mozart's *Great Mass in C Minor*. With the Texas All-State Mixed Choir at the 2000 TMEA Convention in San Antonio, she was the soprano soloist for Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de confessore*. Recordings include *Carmina burana* (Klavier Music Productions, 2003), featured soloist with Anam Cara on *Innisfree* (GIA Publications Choral Series, 2007) and the SCI Performers Series

recording *Portraits* (Capstone, 2007). With Westminster Williamson Voices she appeared as the title soloist in the U.S. premiere of James Whitbourn's *Annelies: The Anne Frank Oratorio*. She has been heard at Carnegie Hall with DCINY (Distinguished Concerts International New York) as the soprano soloist for Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de confessore* and *Vesperae de Dominica*.

Dr. Eustis has sung over thirty operatic roles, most notably the title roles in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *The Daughter of the Regiment*, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Olympia in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, and Gilda in *Rigoletto*. In spring 1998, she was the First Place Winner at the Florida Suncoast Opera Guild Competition. She has appeared at the Brevard Music Center (as a guest artist), the National Opera Company (two seasons on tour), the Ash Lawn-Highland Festival, and the European Opera Center in Belgium.

Dr. Eustis is the author of *The Singer's Ego: On Finding Balance Between Music and Life* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), *Finding Middle Ground: Music for Young Sopranos and Mezzo-Sopranos* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2007), and *Finding Middle Ground: Music for Young Tenors and Baritones* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009).

Presentations on this material include the 2010 National NATS Conference in Salt Lake City, the 2005 Hawaii International Conference on the Arts and Humanities, the 2004 Texas Music Teachers Association State Convention, and the 2005 Texoma NATS Artist Series. She is a frequent lecturer on music of the Holocaust, including presentations at the 1999 College Music Society Annual Meeting (Denver), the 2000 Texoma Region NATS Artist Series, the 2001 TMEA Convention, the Bridwell Judaica Lecture Series (SMU), and the 2004 Texas Music Teachers Association State Convention. Her students have been heard with the Salzburg Music Festival, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Central City Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Ohio Light Opera, Opera North, Amarillo Opera, Concert Royal (NYC), Amor Artis (NYC), the Vancouver Early Music Festival, the Boston Early Music Festival, the Brevard Music Center and the Dallas Bach Society.

A native of Long Island, New York, Dr. Eustis was previously Assistant Professor of Voice/Opera at Howard Payne University.

**Dr. Matthew Hoch**, Assistant Professor of Music at Shorter University, earned his BM degree, *summa cum laude*, from Ithaca College with a triple major in vocal performance, music education, and music theory; his MM degree from the Hartt School with a double major in vocal performance and music history; and his DMA degree in vocal performance and literature from the New England Conservatory.

Before coming to Shorter University in 2006, he was Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Wisconsin-Barron. Prior to that appointment, he held part-time teaching positions at Northeastern University, Central Connecticut State University, the Hartt School, and the New England Conservatory.

At Shorter University, Dr. Hoch teaches applied voice, vocal literature, and serves as coordinator of the vocal division. From 2006-2010, he directed the Guest Artist Series and the New Music Series. Dr. Hoch continues to serve as an advisor for several student organizations, and is a member of many committees. He lives in Rome, Georgia, with his wife, Theresa, and two daughters, Hannah and Sofie.

As a vocal pedagogue, Dr. Hoch has been extremely active in the nation's two largest organizations for teachers of singing: the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and the New York Singing Teachers Association (NYSTA). With NATS, he has coordinated the NATS CHATS program since 2006 and currently serves as chair of the Professional Development Program Committee for the National Board of Directors; with SER-NATS, he has served as Repertoire Consultant and on the Musical Theatre Revision Task Force; and has served as Historian, Repertoire Consultant, and Registrar for GA-NATS. In 2010, he adjudicated the final round of the TEXOMA-NATSAA auditions. He is an alumnus of the 2006 NATS Intern Program, where he was apprenticed to National NATS President Dr. Donald Simonson. As a recipient of the 2007 NATS Vocal Pedagogy Award, he studied CCM vocal pedagogy with Jeannette LoVerti at Shenandoah University's Music Theatre Vocal Pedagogy Institute, where he earned three levels of certification in Somatic Voicework Training™ – The LoVetri Method. He will coordinate and host the 2009 NATS Intern Program at Shorter University. Dr. Hoch's students regularly win awards at the annual GA-NATS and SER-NATS auditions. With NYSTA, Dr. Hoch serves as Editor-in-Chief of VOICEPrints (the Official Journal of NYSTA), and is a member of the Board of Directors, the Professional Development Program Committee, and the Internet Technology Committee. He has completed the five-course core curriculum of NYSTA's Oren Lathrop Brown Professional Development Program and has been awarded the NYSTA's Distinguished Voice Professional (DVP) certificate.

Dr. Hoch has performed as a soloist with many organizations, most recently with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra (in Bach's cantatas BWV 56 and BWV 173a) and at the Oregon Bach Festival (in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*). In 2008, he was one of seven national finalists for the Louisville Bach Competition. His professional oratorio experience includes over a dozen works by J. S. Bach, Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Paukenmesse*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Duruflé's *Requiem*, Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, Dvořák's *Te Deum*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Recent operatic credits have included the title roles in Gianni Schicchi and *Dido and Aeneas*, Falke in *Die Fledermaus*, Don Alhambra in *The Gondoliers*, Jupiter in *Orphée aux enfers*, Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Silvio in *Un ballo in maschera*, and Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*. In 2010–2011 he will perform the roles of Melchior in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Horace Tabor in Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. Dr. Hoch has held summer apprenticeships with Ash Lawn Opera and the College Light Opera Company on Cape Cod. From 2003–2005 he was the baritone soloist at historic Trinity Church on Copley Square in Boston.

Also interested in new music, Dr. Hoch can be heard as a soloist on the Navona recording of Kile Smith's *Vespers* with the Piffaro Renaissance Band and the Crossing. At the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall, he studied twentieth century vocal techniques in New York City with Meredith Monk, a workshop that resulted in his solo and conducting debuts in Carnegie's Zankel Hall. His voice teachers have included Larry Weller, Mark St. Laurent, Joanna Levy, Mitchell Piper, Susan Clickner, Carol McAmis, Randie Blooding, and Donald Nally.

As a professional chorister, Dr. Hoch has performed and recorded with some of the premiere choral ensembles of the United States, including the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Conspirare, the Minnesota Chorale, the Handel and Haydn Society, the Woodland Scholars, the Vox Consort, CONCORA, the Cayuga Vocal Ensemble, the Alchemy Project, the Crossing, and the Festival dei due Mondi in Spoleto, Italy. In Spoleto, he recorded Gian Carlo Menotti's *Saint of Bleecker Street* and *Cantatas* under the direction of Gian Carlo Menotti, Richard Hickox, and Donald Nally; both recordings are available on the Chandos label.

He has been a regular participant in the Carnegie Hall Choral Workshops, where he has sung under the batons of Peter Schreier, Charles Dutoit, and Helmuth Rilling. Since 2005, he has been a tenured member of the Oregon Bach Festival Chorus under the direction of Maestro Rilling. This Grammy-award winning group recently completed a complete cycle of Haydn's late masses for Hänssler Classics; the three-disc set was released in 2009.

**MB Krueger** earned her bachelor's degree in music education and voice at Michigan State University (1990), where she was a National Merit Scholar. She received her master's degree in music education with an emphasis in choral conducting from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio (1995). While at Miami, Ms. Krueger founded and conducted a chamber ensemble of women's voices and was chorusmaster for Miami's production of *Le nozze di Figaro*. She began her career in Michigan as a high school choir director, and then went on to teach and direct choirs at Lansing Community College. During her time in Michigan, she also music directed theatre productions for school, community, and equity theatre troupes. Currently, Ms. Krueger is an assistant professor of music at Metropolitan State College of Denver, where she teaches conducting and directs the Women's Choir and Women's Chamber Choir, and has music directed more than 20 theatre productions. She is the Newsletter Editor for the Colorado American Choral Directors Association, and is the faculty co-advisor of MSCD's student chapter of ACDA. Ms. Krueger has also conducted and accompanied a number of church choirs and community choirs. She is a member of St. Martin's Chamber Choir and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Choir, and has also sung professionally with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, the Santa Fe Opera, Ars Nova Singers, Diverse Passions Early Music Ensemble, Early Music Colorado, and the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado.

**Robert T. Sataloff**, M.D., D.M.A., F.A.C.S. is Professor and Chairman, Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Academic Specialties, Drexel University College of Medicine. He is also Adjunct Professor in the departments of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University, the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University; and on the faculty of the Academy of Vocal Arts. Dr. Sataloff is also a professional singer and singing teacher, and he served as Conductor of the Thomas Jefferson University Choir over a period of nearly four decades. He holds an undergraduate degree from Haverford College in Music Theory and Composition, graduated from Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University, received a Doctor of Musical Arts in Voice Performance from Combs College of Music; and he completed his Residency in Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery and a Fellowship in Otology, Neurotology and Skull Base Surgery at the University of Michigan. Dr. Sataloff is Chairman of the Boards of Directors of the Voice Foundation and of the American Institute for Voice and Ear Research. He has also served as Chairman of the Board of Governors of Graduate Hospital; President of the American Laryngological Society, the International Association of Phonosurgery, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery; and in numerous other leadership positions. Dr. Sataloff is Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Voice*, Editor-in-Chief of *Ear, Nose and Throat Journal*, Associate Editor of the *Journal of Singing*, and on the editorial boards of numerous otolaryngology journals. He has written over 700 publications, including 38 books. His medical practice is limited to care of the professional voice and to otology/neurotology/skull base surgery.

**Rose Beattie**, Mezzo-Soprano, grew up in Edgewood, WA and moved to Los Angeles to attend the USC Thornton School of Music where she received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. She has since completed her MM, and DMA at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

In 2009, Ms. Beattie sang Hippolyta/*A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a guest artist for the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program and Santuzza/*Cavalleria Rusticana* with Lyric Opera Northwest. Additionally, the International Festival Society sponsored Ms. Beattie to sing in Austria with TOP Opera. Other opera credits include Madame Flora/*The Medium*, Principessa/*Suor Angelica*, Dorabella/*Così fan tutte* (cover), Mercedes/*Carmen*, and Fate in the premiere of Ian Krouse's *Lorca, Child Of The Moon*.

As a concert soloist in Los Angeles, Ms. Beattie most recently performing Wagner's *Wesendonk Lieder*, Jake Heggie's *Statuesque*, and Berlioz's *Nuit D'ete*. Rose's Los Angeles Master Chorale solos include Ricky Ian Gordon's *Grapes Of Wrath*, and, in December 2009, Handel's *Messiah*.

While in school, Ms. Beattie received UCLA's prestigious "All-Star" concerto competition award, a LA Young Artist of the Future Competition finalist award, and a USC Excellence and Leadership Award. She also taught six UCLA courses including the interdisciplinary course she created entitled, *The Construction of Women in Western*

Opera. In her free time, Rose loves jumping into cool fresh lakes or streams, or trying not to drive a stick-shift too fast on scenic coastal roads, i.e.—she travels.

**Sarah Tannehill**, Coloratura Soprano, is thrilled to find her home in the vibrant Kansas City music scene. Ms. Tannehill has sung with Chicago Chamber Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, North Shore Choral Society, Southern Illinois Symphony, Wichita Symphony, Sheboygan Symphony Orchestra, the Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, the New Ear Ensemble of Kansas City, and the Kansas City Symphony.

On the operatic stage, Sarah has performed leading operatic roles with the Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Opera Omaha, Fort Worth Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Saarländisches Staatstheater in Saarbrücken, Germany. Shortly after Sarah's move to Kansas City in 2006, she received rave reviews for singing her first Ophelia in Thomas' *Hamlet* with the Kansas City Lyric, after only a few hours notice.

Recent performances include *Stabat Mater* by Poulenc with the Liberty Symphony, *Stabat Mater* by Pergolesi with the KC Baroque Consortium, and two world premieres of the music of Forrest Pierce; *Need-Fire*, which she will perform again in Oklahoma this fall, and *The Twelve Kisses*, with the KC Chamber Orchestra. 2009-10 also marked her first season of performances with the Lyric Arts Trio of Kansas City. Upcoming performances can be found at [www.sarahtannehill.com](http://www.sarahtannehill.com).

Sarah received her Masters at the UMKC Conservatory in 1999. She is a member of the Grammy Award-winning Kansas City Chorale and has won three Emmy's of her own for her film work with the Missouri Conservation Department. She teaches voice in Kansas City and at William Jewell College.

**Virginia Sublett**, Soprano, has been a principal artist with opera companies throughout the United States and in France. She appeared as Queen of the Night in *Magic Flute* with New York City Opera, San Diego Opera, and Central City Opera. At Los Angeles Opera she sang Nannetta in *Falstaff* and Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Her European debut was with L'Opéra de Nice, France, as Ismene in *Mitridate*, and she returned there as Servilia in *La Clemenza di Tito*. In November 2008, she appeared with the Fargo Moorhead Opera as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*.

Dr. Sublett has been a frequent soloist with orchestras, oratorio societies and chamber music ensembles throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico, including such groups as Los Angeles Philharmonic, Mainly Mozart, Illinois Symphony, Vancouver Chamber Choir, and Pacific Symphony. Particularly at home in music of the 17th and 18th centuries, she has appeared with numerous period instrument ensembles, among them the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston and the Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra. She is also in demand

as a soloist in repertoire of the 20th Century and has been featured in concerts of new music.

Dr. Sublett holds a DMA in Contemporary Music Performance from the University of California, San Diego. She joined the faculty at North Dakota State University in 2004, where she is now Professor of Music and teaches applied voice, opera theatre, and voice-related academic subjects. She has also taught at the University of California, San Diego, and the University of San Diego.

Dr. Sublett's article, "Vibrato or Nonvibrato in Solo and Choral Singing: Is there Room for Both?" appeared in the May/June 2009 issue of the *Journal of Singing*. It was translated into German by request of the editor of *Vox Humana* and appeared in that journal's February 2010 issue. Dr. Sublett's encyclopedia entries on vocal music appear in *The All Music Guide to Classical Music* (Backbeat Books: San Francisco 2005) and online at [www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com). She has presented research papers and lecture recitals on topics related to 20<sup>th</sup> century vocal music at several national conferences of the College Music Society.

Dr. Sublett's students are active performers and music scholars. They have been featured soloists with the Los Angeles Opera, San Diego Opera, Orquestra de Baja California, and the Festival de Homenage a Augustin Lara, and have appeared as choristers with Opera London and the London Philharmonic Choir. They have gone on to graduate programs at USC, California State University at Fullerton, and Australian Catholic University, Melbourne.

**Stephanie Moore**, soprano, earned her Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Colorado. She has been an active voice and piano teacher since 1995 and sings professionally with the Ars Nova Singers. She has performed several masterworks including Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Brahms's *Requiem*, and Bach's *Coffee Cantata*. She also served as conductor for the St. James Church Choirs.

**Tara Mianulli U'Ren's** voice was described as "remarkable," and "absolutely scintillating," when she was most recently seen as a soloist for the Ars Nova Singers in a recital concert titled "Chanson d'Amor." She serves as alto section leader for the Boulder based group. She received her Bachelor of Music Degree from Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa and then went on to earn a Master of Music degree in performance at Colorado State University. Her roles include Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Miss Todd in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Mrs. Segstrom (Liebeslieder singer) in *A Little Night Music*, and she has appeared as a performer with the Sioux City Symphony, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Fort Collins, Colorado State Opera Theater, and the Colorado State Symphony Orchestra. Her passions include teaching as well as singing, and she is currently the vocal director for Scott Carpenter Middle School in Westminster, where she has grown the choral program to include drama and tripled the number of students and has implemented a fully standards based classroom. Ms. U'Ren currently

resides in Northglenn with her husband Jason, who is a professional trumpet player and instrumental teacher

**Rhonda Wallen** began singing at age 7 in the church choir and has been singing ever since. She studied music at Stanford University with Gregory Waite, while also participating in the Stanford Gospel and University choirs. While in graduate school she sang with the Eastman Choir under the direction of Don Nuen. Upon returning to San Francisco, she studied with mezzo soprano Cathy McKee and joined the San Francisco Symphony Chorus under the direction of Vance George. Rhonda has also performed as a soloist and in small a cappella ensembles, and has been with the Ars Nova Singers for 9 years.

**APPENDIX B**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1. What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?
2. What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas:
  - a. Phonation
  - b. Support/Breath
  - c. Resonance
  - d. Dynamic
  - e. Articulation
3. Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?
4. What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?
5. What is your experience in modifying vibrato?
6. How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?
7. How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?
8. Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?
9. How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner?  
Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?
10. In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

11. What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

#### BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: In short, ALL healthy vocal techniques should be common to both disciplines! I teach a series of lessons called "A Toolkit for Healthy Singing" which for soli gives a foundation for developing the voice, and for choristers provide a basis for understanding how the voice works and finding ways to apply healthy singing in the context of choral rehearsals. Works equally well for both!

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD:

- i. Support/Breath--in choral singing I use more breath flow but with less intense breath pressure (think whispering v. shouting). This works well as long as the larynx is kept relaxed and free--and NOT used to control the breath flow.
- ii. Resonance--hopefully none!! Occasionally a conductor will ask for vowel modification for consistency across the chorus. However, nearly all of my mezzo students who began life as choristers have issues with modifying their focus/resonance (usually employing a darker, less forward sound) when they get to around D5. My theory is this happens because a well-placed mezzo voice really begins to ring up there and conductors constantly tell altos they are too loud.
- iii. Dynamic--depending on the chorus I might pull back a notch or two...or, if I'm employed in a section leader capacity, I might over-emphasize dynamic variation so that the choristers make some difference in dynamics.
- iv. Articulation--as much as needed to match the choir and the conductor's goals--usually this ends up meaning that articulation becomes exaggerated.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: Yes and no... Yes, breath flow and dynamics. No, articulation (unless the words warrant it!)

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: This was probably the hardest question to answer in any short way. On the one hand, any and all vocal exercises--whether for warm up or for technical development--aid and assist in vocal adjustments. This is for the simple reason that if one understands how one's voice works, it is easier to adjust to differing circumstances and vocal demands. All exercises can and should be about furthering one's knowledge about his/her instrument, how it works and how it adjusts. On the other hand, I don't have any specific exercises geared to adjusting to choral singing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: I use a basic, natural vibrato (NOT TREMULO!) as a starting point in my sound no matter what the repertoire or number of colleagues. I use straight-toned singing as an ornament, decoration, or special effect as the music/poetry demands. This is MUCH easier for me to do in a choral context because I sing alto! Conductors may ask altos to "ice up" or straighten a note on a final chord or at a cadence, but seldom do they want straight-toned singing all the time from altos. For my soprano students, I often suggest that they think of singing a lullaby when a conductor asks for straight singing--that is, make sure you are relaxed from the collarbones up, and, use a steady, gentle airflow.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: Basically the same answer as in #5...

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: By using all the muscles involved in breath management to control the breath flow, NOT the larynx. Also, by avoiding singing straight tone at the upper extreme of my range (which I mostly can do since I sing alto).

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: Not really. Mostly easier fatigue if singing a lot in the top of my range.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: On my own. By reading (I love Mr. William Shakespeare's "The Art of Singing"), and, interestingly, by teaching. In order to teach something, one must figure out exactly how to accomplish it!

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: At American University, we mostly have a very collaborative process with the choral conductor. When one of his choristers is having a problem, he'll often send the student to one of us for some help.

The biggest points of contention are:

A too heavy concentration of rehearsals close to the concert date(s). This puts too much of a strain and fatigue on young voices which don't have the technical wherewithal to cope. My younger singers, or singers with any vocal issues (like reflux or allergies) end up totally worn out by the end of those weeks. However, due to scheduling of the concert spaces, some concentration is inevitable.

Often assigning voices to inappropriate roles/parts. Example, I have a soprano with a lovely, easy top range who ends up singing 2nd because she is such a strong musician. Contrarily, I have a soprano with a lush voice, but who must work hard (and in just the right ways) for her top notes--and she's singing first!

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

BARBARA HOLLINSHEAD: For voice teachers: realize that nearly all voice students will find themselves singing in an ensemble at some point (if not most of the time!) during their careers. Knowing how to control the airflow and air pressure in a healthy way are key (exercises in a healthy messa di voce--crescendo, decrescendo--are great for this). I often tell my college kids that if I am only able to impart one technical feat during their time with me, I would choose this!! Breathing is everything!

For conductors: Vocal pedagogy in the context of rehearsals can be tricky. Things I've discussed with our conductor include: allowing time (i.e. with preparatory beats) for a proper breath at the start of a piece, and in rehearsal, when starting a passage; and be careful not to demand too much soft, high singing! At this age it is much more important to be beautiful and non-stressful than soft.

#### DAVID GRESHAM

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

DAVID GRESHAM: I would submit that issues of posture, breathing, and support should be the same in both solo and ensemble performance. So, the basics of healthy vocal production should go unaltered when switching from one venue to the other.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

DAVID GRESHAM: In general, I think that the most common adjustments made by trained singers who are singing in a choral ensemble relate to vowel modification, amplitude reduction, and various types of alterations to vibrato. (There are some great articles related to each of these topics that you have no doubt come across. In the most recent *Journal of Singing*, there is an article dealing with vibrato that might be of interest to you. Also, there is a spate of articles by Sundberg that might be helpful in this regard. Though it is an old one, his “Acoustical Factors Related to Pitch and Precision in Choir Singing” is a great resource, as is Allen Goodwin’s “An Acoustical Study of Individual Voices in Choral Blend.” But, here I think you are asking for my experience so I will just speak from that. I have made all three adjustments I listed above in my own choral singing.)

Vowel modification is something used in solo singing, but in choral singing, it is used somewhat differently. I find that I choose a slightly larger opening at the front of the mouth for most vowels when singing in a choir. This has the effect of producing a tone with fewer upper partials, and is an easier sound to balance within the group.

Regarding reduction of amplitude, the piano that I sing in a choir, I find to be a much quieter sound than that of my solo singing. The louder *f* and *ff* don’t differ much between the two settings.

Vibrato can be a very touchy subject. I have been asked to sing with no vibrato in some ensembles, while in others no mention of vibrato has been made. While I can sing with or without vibrato, I certainly prefer not to limit my vocal production by making the necessary adjustments to remove vibrato. I do, however, think that it is possible to sing in a healthy manner with no vibrato. Unfortunately, young singers don’t often find this to be the case at their level of development. I have noticed in several young singers that the combination of reduction of amplitude and removal of vibrato just means less airflow and tightly adducted folds. I think this is where the real controversy comes in – young singers making inappropriate vocal manipulations to try to come to the sound that a director is requesting.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

DAVID GRESHAM: Not generally. I have, when singing solos within a larger group, been asked to do certain stylistic changes related to vibrato, such as delayed vibrato or straight tone.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

DAVID GRESHAM: When possible, it is best for singers to come to a rehearsal already warmed up. Group warm-ups are far less effective for the individual voice than a few minutes spent by a singer doing exercises that he or she knows will help their voice to be ready for action. Following this, any exercise that gets the ensemble listening to each other is helpful in the process of vocal adjustments. As musicians, there are countless little manipulations we make to our voices to create a balanced ensemble sound. Most of these are unconscious and come from our own musicality.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

DAVID GRESHAM: See above.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

DAVID GRESHAM: Whatever manipulations I make vocally, I always incorporate good airflow. In so doing, I limit the problems that might arise from the subtle changes made. Since my voice is lighter in timbre, and since my vibrato isn't too wide and doesn't fall outside the normal rate, I find that I don't have to make many adjustments as a solo singer singing different styles.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

DAVID GRESHAM: This takes time and practice. The sound "feeling" right is paramount; the airflow (as mentioned above) is crucial; and limiting the length of time spent singing with a changed, or removed, vibrato is important. As a singer who wants to use optimal technique most of the time, I want to make sure that the limited amount of time I spend adjusting my vibrato (for a Caccini trill, modern work that calls for some straight-tone passages, or a director that has asked for a delayed vibrato) is done with freedom. Often, a singer employing straight-tone produces an ugly tone because he or she involves too much vocal fold adduction, delivering a pinched sound. To avoid this, one has to find that perfect ratio of tone to air. In my case, when I make these adjustments, the sound I produce *senza vibrato* is not nearly as loud as the sound I could make using vibrato. Rather, I should say that the straight-tone sound I make that feels healthy and doesn't adversely affect my normal singing voice doesn't have the volume that my unaltered voice does. Because I have not found just cause to spend more time working on vibrato manipulation, I am content with what I can do currently. I imagine that if I were in a group full-time that chose to avoid vibrato, I would learn more about that specific change. (There are a few studies; I think one of them is by Sundberg that show the use of vibrato actually helps intonation in a group of singers. This is one reason that I don't address vibrato much as a conductor. There are moments when I have asked for changes to vibrato, but they are limited. After looking through a lot of discussion on the use of vibrato in Renaissance, and even a little earlier, I don't find much justification for its exclusion in most repertoire.)

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

DAVID GRESHAM: Certainly. Chief among the problems is vocal fatigue. This can lead to a myriad of other issues if not properly addressed.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

DAVID GRESHAM: I learned from past teachers and continued to work on the technique later.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

DAVID GRESHAM: See below.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

DAVID GRESHAM: Other than issues related to vocal technique, which are mostly outside the scope of a choral rehearsal, the most important pedagogical suggestion would be to remember the prime recipe for vocal damage - "higher, louder, longer." If the choral conductor is simply aware of this, and makes the necessary rehearsal plans to avoid putting any part of his or her ensemble in jeopardy, then there really should be no issue. (This knowledge would lead a conductor to allow for vocal rest during a longer rehearsal, practice of high passages an octave down until they are learned, staccato work for precision, etc.)

The only issues that I have witnessed deal with conductors who have not been sensitive to the care of the voice in a collegiate setting, or voice faculty who don't understand the tremendous benefits of a good choral experience for their students. I have always been motivated by something that Larry Kaptein (Conductor at CU-Boulder) said in a lesson with me: "I always want students to leave my rehearsal feeling like they are better singers than when they came in." With conductors who have that kind of a goal, and voice teachers who understand that their singers grow musically, gain valuable experience, and develop new, marketable abilities by singing in choir, there should really be no contention between voice teachers and conductors.

JAN BICKEL

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

JAN BICKEL:

- i. Correct posture and body alignment Diaphragmatic-Costal Breathing so that support is excellent
- ii. Appropriate resonance of the tone regardless of vibrato use
- iii. Use of lips and mouth structure to focus the tone

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

JAN BICKEL: Note: This depends on what the style of the choral music is, and if singing opera choruses, or the works of Romantic composers with an orchestra, there may need to be no adjustments. The size of the chorus comes into play as well. I have always been taught, and teach my own students that you should sing in a chorus as though you were giving a voice lesson to each person singing around you. This will allow you to maintain optimum vocal technical control.

- i. Phonation: I don't believe I make changes in phonation technique when singing with a chorus, but, I don't sing a lot of Medieval or Renaissance music. When singing with choruses, my experience has been primarily with choruses for opera, and/or symphony choruses, where full resonant sound is a necessity.
- ii. Support/Breath: As above, I have not needed to make any adjustments here, and feel that changes here could be detrimental to vocal production. If a conductor is requesting very soft dynamic levels, I adjust my support as I would if I were singing as a soloist, moving the air stream pressure to the sternum rather than allowing all the breath stream to reach the vocal folds.
- iii. Resonance: Also as above. "Resonance is power" for a singer, and maintaining a very resonant sound, even when singing at soft dynamic levels is important for beautiful singing, whether choral or soloist.
- iv. Dynamic: Depending on the dynamic markings and the requirements of the conductor, I adjust my dynamic levels in order to achieve optimum balance. Breath support is even more important when singing at softer dynamic levels, in order to maintain healthy production. When asked for louder dynamic levels, I am still aware of the sounds being made around me, so that I blend carefully with the other singers. The work is with the ears, rather than the vocal folds.
- v. Articulation: Because resonance and articulation are so intertwined, my solo technique is again similar to my choral technique where articulation is concerned. I generally have found it unnecessary to make adjustments when singing with a chorus unless the

conductor is looking for pronunciations other than what I feel are optimal for the particular language.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

JAN BICKEL: The simple answer here is yes. What I do as a solo singer I generally do as a choral singer.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

JAN BICKEL: For excellent control of the breath, dynamics and resonance, I use messa di voce exercises, so that I am able to retain optimum resonance at the softest dynamic levels. Working on agility exercises keeps the vocal folds supple and pliable, which is important for being able to move quickly with other singers on fast moving passages. I create exercises from difficult passages of text articulation, and work them slowly at first, and then more rapidly, to beyond the required tempo of the conductor. Making sure the breath is moving is always important, and in order to check this, I frequently use the [u] vowel, and “buzzing” this vowel on the edge of an index card. This is explained in detail in my book.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

JAN BICKEL: As a singer, I have not had to worry about this generally, as I am a mezzo, with an “even” vibrato at an appropriate speed. As a teacher, I have learned that a vibrato that is too fast can be easily modified when the breath control is substantial, and the lower abdominal muscles are balancing well with the diaphragm. Making the singer aware of the breath movement is important here, as well as not locking the abdominal muscles. The body must be active in the process, and all muscles must be in dynamic balance. In particular, support muscles must not become “static” or the vibrato will be inappropriate; it could be either too fast, or too slow. This will cause the voice to “stick out” in a choral situation, and it sounds and feels “uncomfortable” in a solo situation as well. I do not feel it is appropriate to remove all vibrato from the vocal sound. I am currently completing an article on “the evolution of vocal tone quality,” in which I quote from earliest times about vibrato being present in the sound; both chorally and as a soloist. If the voice is free, there will be vibrato, and the vibrato will not create problems within the chorus, or for the soloist, even in early music styles.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

JAN BICKEL: I think I’ve already answered this question in previous questions. I truly believe that no matter what style you are singing, and in what situation, you must use the best support, phonation, resonance, and articulation methods possible. If a choral conductor asks a singer to sing without using his/her best vocal technique, it will be

detrimental to the singer as well as the choral sound. Each singer must learn his/her own best practice, and maintain that practice regardless of the situation. Singing with a smaller, more focused tone, as required in some styles, can be accomplished by keeping the breath pressure at the sternum, rather than allowing more of that breath to reach the vocal folds, but at all times Bernoulli effect must be working.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

JAN BICKEL: I think I have also answered this question previously. I rarely sing with what I would call the English Boy Choir sound. I do not think it is appropriate for adult trained voices to attempt to utilize this sound, as it requires “holding” the larynx so that the vibrato is turned off. This can be detrimental to the individual singer. The vibrato can be minimized through breath control, but I do not believe that any singer should completely remove vibrato from the classical singing voice production, nor do I think they did this in the music of early periods.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

JAN BICKEL: I have not personally encountered vocal problems, but I have certainly had students who were in “vocal trouble” because a choral conductor asked them to “turn off the vibrato.” If we teach that vibrato is a natural occurrence when the voice is produced freely, then turning off that vibrato completely means the voice is not produced freely. This will get a singer into trouble - particularly at the undergraduate level. It is essential that singers learn how to control the flow of breath so that the larynx is free to vibrate, and yet not produce a vibrato that is either too fast, or too slow when singing for a choral conductor who wishes to have a “straight” tone, but this takes time, and undergraduate singers are frequently not capable of doing this until they are late juniors or even seniors.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

JAN BICKEL: This was definitely part of my vocal training in the studio throughout graduate school. I was not good at making this happen while in undergraduate school. I make it part of the training for my undergraduate students now, because there are choral conductors who wish to have this “straight” tone sound from their choral singers. I generally try to convince these conductors that this technique will be harmful to the singers and they (the conductors) can get the choral sound they want by minimizing the vibrato rather than removing it completely. This has generally worked well on our campus of undergraduate singers.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

JAN BICKEL: The very one you have been referring to throughout this set of questions. I have had students come to me requesting to “drop” choir when we have had a conductor who is asking the exact opposite of what is being taught in the voice studio, and I find this understandable. If the voice teacher in the studio is attempting to free the voice, so the vibrato is freely produced and appropriate to the voice category, and the singer has three or four hours of choral rehearsal in which the conductor is reinforcing the exact opposite technique; i.e. asking for straight tone at all times, the student will be confused and frustrated.

I have found that the choral conductors who are asking for “straight” tone at the undergraduate level are generally not singers, but pianists. If they have more experience singing with a fully supported and resonated tone themselves, they generally have a better concept of the frustration on the part of a young singer attempting to satisfy both the voice teacher asking for “freedom” of production, and the choral conductor asking for a “held” larynx in order to produce a “pure” tone quality. It is a difficult situation.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

JAN BICKEL: Again, I think I’ve probably answered this question above, but to summarize:

- i. Make sure the posture and correct alignment of the singer’s body is always maintained when singing either as a soloist or a choral singer.
- ii. Make sure the diaphragmatic-costal breathing process is utilized by singers in order to have the best control of breath flow and support for voice production.
- iii. Teach the singers to use a well-resonated tone quality at all times; allowing the tone to travel the appropriately shaped vocal tract whether as a soloist or a choral singer.
- iv. Ask the singers in the chorus to sing only as softly as they can still resonate their tone as above, and never to let the breath support drop out of the tone. Ask them to only sing as loudly and/or as softly as they can produce a beautiful and free tone quality.
- v. Ask that all singers utilize the best possible diction, whether as solo singers, or as choral singers, being consistently aware of the onset, resonance, and conclusion of each tone and word of the text, and using the lips and mouth structure to form the appropriate vowels and consonants carefully and appropriately.
- vi. Ask that both the choral director and the voice teacher allow the undergraduate student to work for “freedom” of production, so the production of the tone is “healthy” and will not do harm to the young and inexperienced singer’s vocal apparatus.
- vii. Ask the undergraduate choral conductor to find the “pure” tone quality he/she wishes to hear for some styles and periods of choral music, by reducing, but not completely

eliminating vibrato from these young voices completely. This will save much anxiety on the part of the student singers, and their voice teachers, and will help teach them to control the flow of the breath whenever singing in an appropriate way for the style of the music.

- viii. Be consistently aware of the “healthy” production of vocal tone from all singers in the studio and the choral rehearsal, regardless of the style and period of the music.

#### JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: Active breathing muscles and a relaxed throat are essential to healthy choral and solo singing. Keeping a resonant placement is also helpful in avoiding vocal fatigue.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL:

- i. Phonation: I believe I use more concentration when phonating in a choral setting. Togetherness is crucial to ensemble singing.
- ii. Support/Breath: It is very important that this be the same in choral singing as in solo singing. In pp choral passages I perhaps use a little more support than in solo singing. Singing “off the breath” is a common problem in choral singing. I believe this is often a result of trying to blend/balance and forgetting to stay connected to individual technique.
- iii. Resonance: The concept of resonance can vary greatly according to the discretion of the director. I have found that professional choral ensembles often allow and encourage more individual resonance than amateur ensembles. For me, this is a much healthier and more satisfying approach.
- iv. Dynamic: Depending on the ensemble one could, ideally, make use of the full dynamic palate. Again, in pp choral passages I perhaps use more support than in solo singing.
- v. Articulation: In general, in choral singing I approach many of the consonants with softer declamation.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: In singing solo repertoire of different styles or periods I especially focus on changes in timbre, weight, vibrato and declamation.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: In my warm-ups I try to always include exercises which work flexibility (such as melismas and trills). This is especially helpful in the music of early style periods. I also include warm-ups including long tones to help prepare for longer phrases in all styles.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: In earlier style periods I reserve vibrato for moments of heightened expression. In the late Baroque period I like to incorporate a mixture of straight tone and vibrato, based on the needs of the text and music. Even in music of later styles I enjoy the artistic freedom and flexibility of singing certain notes or phrases without vibrato.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: For me, a constant awareness of the breathing mechanism is the key.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: This is a good question. At this point I just think of what I am trying to produce and the musculature takes care of the adjustments. Non-vibrato requires careful and consistent control of the breath.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: At times it used to be difficult to move from solo singing to ensemble singing (especially in the same concert). If I'm not thinking about support my voice will easily experience fatigue.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

Observation over time and great teachers.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: Often there are disagreements about vibrato and blending with other singers.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

JANET CARLSEN CAMPBELL: Directors – please be open to the ideas of the voice teachers. Most voice teachers do understand the voice and can help you achieve results you are seeking in a healthy manner. Voice teachers – please be open-minded about choral singing. It opens up a whole new palate of possibilities for singers which will be useful in individual expression. Also, a couple of exchanges each semester (director visits vocal master class, vocal instructor visits choir rehearsal, etc) could really help communication and growth. My voice teacher gave me technique which has allowed me to grow as a solo and ensemble performer. A former choral director influenced my artistic thinking which has allowed me to grow as a solo and ensemble performer.

#### JAY WHITE

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

JAY WHITE: The fundamentals of proper breathing, free phonation, balancing of resonators, optimal articulation, and ideal posturing are essential for any kind of singing. There are slight differences within some of these foundations between choral and solo singing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

JAY WHITE:

- i. Phonation – There are no adjustments that I am aware of in phonation.
- ii. Support/Breath – Breath corresponds directly to the intensity in one’s onset and amplitude of tone. In solo singing, the individual is alone in determining the amount of intensity necessary in exhalation. In choral singing, a blend of intensity is necessary to create an optimal onset and amplitude. Very often, ventricular breathing can be a quick substitute in order to “control” the onset of one’s tone.
- iii. Resonance – Again, in choral singing, one must do his/her best to match the tone of their corresponding partners. In order to blend a specific vowel, say an [a], a singer may have to modify out of his/her optimal vocal tract shape in order for that vowel to blend best with his/her partners. Ideally, all singers within one section are coached toward a similar goal.

- iv. Dynamic – The idiom of “one should only sing as softly or as loudly as lovely” should apply to choral singing. Unfortunately, many young singers have yet to learn how to “feel” the production of optimal tone rather than to “hear” it. They sing more loudly than necessary and can often sing “off the breath” when singing softly. Learning to manipulate or control the tone is a challenging, physical process and requires one to be completely aware of their vocal limitations. A good choral singer is one who clearly understands his/her voice and the extremes of its tonal spectrum.
- v. Articulation – In choral singing, crisp articulation is imperative. One can get away with less clear enunciation in solo singing, not that it’s ideal. Precise onsets and releases need to be perfectly in time with every singer within each section.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

JAY WHITE: This question is not clear to me. To what “similar adjustments” is the survey referring?

Each vocal style (classical, jazz, pop, musical theatre) requires various adjustments in vocal production. Ideally, one who is familiar with the performance practice of different periods within classical music will also make necessary adjustments.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

JAY WHITE: This question is not clear to me. To what “vocal adjustments” is the survey referring?

In choral ensembles, most of the emphasis is placed on blending skills (resonance, vowel adjustments) and exercises on articulation.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

JAY WHITE: I have often adjusted the amount of vibrato to match the style of the music I am singing and to create an optimal blend in ensemble.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

JAY WHITE: Good ensemble singers are cross-trainers. Flexibility in the fundamentals is essential for maintaining a healthy voice. The more flexible the instrument, the better.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

JAY WHITE: The speed of one's vibrato is controlled with the speed of one's airflow and adjustments in tension within the larynx. Breath energy management is essential in maintaining enough vibrancy in order for the singer to adjust the amount of vibrato. The less vibrato, the faster the breath must move. There will also be slight adjustments in the vocal tract to maintain an optimal shape for a given vowel whilst changing the speed of airflow for *senza vibrato* or *con vibrato*. One should never think of the former as a "held" sensation. It should feel spacious and free unless the singer is asked for a "reedy" or "nasal" sound.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

JAY WHITE: I am not clear on the question. To what "specific vocal adjustments" is the survey referring?

Early on, singing without vibrato did bring unnecessary tension into my voice. Also, soft singing would often require more breath than I was able to give.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

JAY WHITE: I learned to make adjustments through trial and error and through discussions with my choral colleagues. I did not learn any specific techniques from teachers.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

JAY WHITE: Quite often, choral conductors are ill trained in vocal pedagogy and proper technique. They will require a specific sound and ask their singers to perform that sound however they are able. This may be in direct conflict with an individual singer's vocal progress. Ideally, a conversation with the student, voice teacher, and choral conductor can be had in order to address such conflicts.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

JAY WHITE: There needs to be a dialogue at all times. Choral conductors should be invited to witness voice lessons and voice teachers need to attend rehearsals to hear what is going on. Once we all arrive on a common vocabulary, progress toward better vocal health and production may occur.

## JOANNE TAYLOR

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

JOANNE TAYLOR: Every one! Aligned-spine posture, energized breath management/support, relaxed jaw and tongue, forward tone focus... Healthy singing is healthy singing!

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

JOANNE TAYLOR:

- i. Phonation – none
- ii. Support/Breath – Choral singing relies less on phrase breathing, and frequently requires “staggered breathing” within the ensemble. For the individual singer, this may mean breathing in the middle of a syllable to avoid breathing at the end of a phrase – exactly the opposite breath timing used in solo singing! As a soloist, emphasis is frequently placed on singing long, extended phrases on one breath. Elasticity is the key to living in both worlds – both forms of breath phrasing need to be practiced consistently to be readily available to the “choral soloist” singer.

Support, on the other hand, should remain the same, whether singing as a soloist or singing as a chorister. Too often, choral singers make the mistake of singing with an unsupported tone in an effort to “blend” and the result is fatigue and vocal inconsistency (not to mention intonation issues!).

- iii. Resonance – This is the area of greatest difference between choral and solo singing. Soloists use a broader palette of resonant tone, relying more on the development of “formant”, especially when singing over an orchestra. The choral singer, on the other hand, is frequently asked to suppress formant (again, for the sake of blend in the ensemble). Some choral conductors insist on a white tone or straight tone from choristers, especially in early music. If a straight tone is well-supported, this should pose no problem to the solo singer who already commands a broad palette of vocal tone. Choral singing simply limits the palette to the thinner, purer end of the spectrum.
- iv. Dynamic – Choral singing requires matching dynamic to other singers, a discipline that frequently sets apart the pros from the amateurs. Robert Shaw spoke often about the need to sing no louder or softer than one’s neighbor. To paraphrase him, if you have a choir of 150, and 25 of them are singing louder than the rest, you really have a choir of 25. 150 voices singing pianissimo actually sounds softer than 25 voices singing mezzo-forte. The range of dynamics used in choral singing is not much different than that used in solo singing. The difference is in who makes the dynamic choice – performer or conductor – and how the performer executes that choice is the primary difference between solo and

choral singing. Also note that my mezzo-forte and your mezzo-forte may be quite different from each other. As choral singers, it's our job to find the group mezzo-forte, and how our individual voices fit into that 'sleeve of sound' as Charles Bruffy calls it.

- v. Articulation – Next to Resonance, Articulation is the second most important difference between choral and solo singing. Choral singing requires sharper consonants, often separated by a mute or shadow vowel, especially when the choir is singing with an orchestra (of any size). Solo singing, especially in lieder/art song repertoire, requires a more conversational articulation, greater expressivity of text. Choral singing often requires “spitting the text” while solo singing often emphasizes legato, connected articulation.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

JOANNE TAYLOR: All good musicians use technique as an expressive tool. Rather than categorizing repertoire, and 'adjusting' technique because of time period or style, I try to sing 'true to my voice' and use technique to interpret the music as honestly as possible.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

JOANNE TAYLOR: Scales, arpeggios, intervallic leaps and Vaccai exercises for flexibility and intonation. Viardot or Marchesi exercises for expression and phrasing

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

JOANNE TAYLOR: Ha! I was waiting for this one! A colleague once said, when asked by a student 'How do you make a beautiful vibrato?', 'You don't make one. You sing. Vibrato is just the by-product of a healthy, well-supported tone.' In some choral traditions, vibrato is suppressed as much as possible in the individual, to improve intonation and blend in the ensemble. The key to singing without vibrato, at the risk of sounding redundant here, is to support the breath as well as it is supported when singing with vibrato. In reality, a totally vibrato-less tone lacks vitality. The best choral conductors know this, and encourage singers to sing well, employing good technique and sound musical judgment.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

JOANNE TAYLOR: Sing a lot in different styles! I have a friend who sings in an early music ensemble, a chamber choir, does Bach cantata solos, and also sings in a rock band. She has a lot of fun!

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

JOANNE TAYLOR: Support the tone with good breath management. (See above)

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

JOANNE TAYLOR: None that weren't cured by technique improvement.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

JOANNE TAYLOR: "A mirror is an indispensable aid" my first voice teacher used to say. Likewise, a set of ears other than your own is an indispensable component of healthy vocal development. Good teachers can diagnose problems before they become bad habits and cause damage. Self-monitoring is essential (the mirror, recording, etc.) but cannot replace the help a good teacher provides. That said, I probably learned as much about 'vocal adjustments' from choral conductors who were also singers as I did from teachers. Trial and error also works, but it takes longer and requires more grace than most conductors have time to offer their singers.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

JOANNE TAYLOR: There always seems to be the diva voice teacher who discourages students from choral singing because the choral director doesn't allow use of a singer's full vocal range and resonance. More than one teacher has told me to avoid choral singing because they think that all conductors insist on straight tone singing, and there are many dangers for untrained singers who misunderstand the best way to produce a pure tone. (It's just easier to relax the breath support, singing with a breathy unfocused tone, than it is to manage the breath with discipline to produce a clear, focused, pure tone.) But I think the history of bad choral directing is slowly losing its mythological hold on voice teachers. What was required fifty years ago isn't necessarily still the norm. Here in the Twin Cities, there are several college choral programs that work closely with voice teachers to offer students consistent approaches to good vocal tone. Again, I think it helps if the choral conductor has had some experience as a solo singer, and understands the voice.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

JOANNE TAYLOR: Keep talking. Come up with consistent language to describe vocal techniques and tone colors, so students hear the same thing in rehearsal that they heard in the voice studio. Collaborate often. Students love it when their teachers are on stage as soloists in large choral works. (I will never forget my voice teacher's performance of

Copland's "In the Beginning" when we performed the work in undergraduate school!) Never, ever, ever criticize a teaching colleague in front of students. If you disagree with the person's technique or methods, speak privately to that professor and find some common ground where you and s/he can agree on what to present to students. Always maintain professional dignity and respect for colleagues.

#### KIM LANCASTER

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

KIM LANCASTER: I would say most are in common – a strong rib cage and engaged diaphragm, relaxed silent breathing, good posture, relaxed throat and a fully engaged, thinking mind.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

KIM LANCASTER:

- i. Phonation – nothing I can think of
- ii. Support/Breath – I find breathing in a choral situation sometimes difficult. I try to stagger breathing through long lines as directed, but this sometimes sets up a breathing pattern that leaves me feeling out of breath and having to breathe more often. I work harder to take silent unobtrusive breaths rather than working more on getting enough air to support the sound for the duration of the upcoming phrase.
- iii. Resonance – In choral singing I tend toward a richer, more open sound so that I blend better in my section. In solo singing I could use more range of vocal colors for expression as they best fit the song style.
- iv. Dynamic – I consistently find that I sing softer in an ensemble of 4-40 voices, but make less changes for a group larger than that. In a very large choir (100+ voices) there is little change. I especially feel conscious of dynamics in the higher range so that these upper notes balance with the rest of the ensemble, making the top of the pyramid of sound.
- v. Articulation – I wouldn't say one is more articulated than the other, but they are different. In solo singing, I am concerned about the meaning of the text but seek to express it through the phrasing and expression of the line more than through just the articulation of the sounds. In choral singing I think my focus is more on very clearly and cleanly pronouncing the words and consonants.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

KIM LANCASTER: Somewhat. I sing and teach musical theatre, pop, folk, and classical. Each type of music calls for a different type of resonance and different vocal sound, but I find that the techniques of support/breath, phonation, dynamics and articulation are more consistent from style to style than they are from solo to ensemble singing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

KIM LANCASTER: I work with exercises warming up then full range of my voice and with various vowel sounds more for warming up for solo singing. I spend more time on agility exercises for solo singing, too. I tend to use warm ups that open and relax my throat and jaw, like humming and sliding up and down a third, fifth or octave for ensemble singing. I do less warm ups on my own before ensemble singing because I need to do warm ups with the choir as well. A choir is an instrument just as an orchestra is an instrument. In an ensemble, I am like one key on a piano. To me, properly preparing is best done with all the keys together. I just warm up enough so my voice is ready to sing freely.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

KIM LANCASTER: I sing with much, much less vibrato in all styles of music in a small ensemble and do not modify vibrato as much in a larger choir. I find that vibrato can really hurt a sections' ability to blend unless it is very subtle, especially in the upper registers. I am used to singing straight tones in a healthy manner from also singing jazz, musical theater and pop music. I tend to use the most vibrato in classical solo singing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

KIM LANCASTER: The best resource I have found for this is the Deva Method: a non-classical method for singers <http://www.jeannedeva.com>. This method has enabled me to produce tension free sound in the full range of my voice with little breaks for "registers". I use many of these ideas with my students as well. Properly warming up before singing is a must as well. The Deva Method helped me distinguish between a "warm up," designed to prepare my voice, and an "exercise," designed to train my voice.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

KIM LANCASTER: I really don't know how to explain it. It is something that I have no trouble doing and really have never "worked" on it.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

KIM LANCASTER: See above comments about breathing. I sometimes have trouble moving to a softer dynamic with less vibrato in the higher range and still keeping a rich resonant sound.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

KIM LANCASTER: Both. Trial and error often!

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

KIM LANCASTER: (college was a while ago – I don't really remember!) I would say nothing major – maybe the time of day that rehearsals are held and the length of rehearsals. These factors sometimes contributed to vocal fatigue that affected a singer's ability to practice or perform solo.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

KIM LANCASTER: Make sure all techniques support a basically free, healthy voice and avoid teaching too much to just one style. Most students will go on to sing mostly in ensembles and not be concert performers. Versatility is a wonderful asset. Longevity is a gift that good technique imparts.

#### LESLEY LEIGHTON

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: I am of the opinion that singers should use the same basic technique for solo and choral singing. Breathing, support, and placement is all the same; what changes, at least for me, is resonance and formants, and vowel formation. In a choir, the unification of vowels is very important and is often very different from the brighter vowels that one might use as a soloist; the singer must be able and willing to make these changes in order to blend in a choir. I also shut resonators down when I sing in a choir, which is an easy adjustment and does not hurt my solo voice in any way. My sound in a choir tends to be round and dark, an instrument that helps with the fundamental tone of the section but does not stick out; it gives the lighter voices something to sing into. The other issue is that of formants. It has long been documented by vocal experts that soloists use a healthy dose of formants in their singing, this helps the voice carry; not something that one needs to use in choral singing! I tend to use very little formant when singing in a choral section, if I didn't modify this there is no way that I could blend.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

LESLEY LEIGHTON:

- i. Phonation – I always phonate. Period. That is not something that anyone should stop doing in a choir. To allow air to pass through the chords without letting the chords come together is asking for a vocal problem. Phonation is not going to make a singer unable to blend or balance in a section. Shame on any conductor who tells the singers to stop phonating!
- ii. Support/Breath – This should remain the same, in my opinion. There is just no reason to alter the basic way you use your instrument. In a choir, it is other things that should be adjusted, not your breath support!
- iii. Resonance – Yes, this usually needs to be adjusted, unless it’s a light lyric voice, at which time, perhaps not. Because my voice is a dramatic instrument, I shut down formants and resonance in order to blend. This is seriously simple if you have control of your instrument, and is not in any way harmful to the instrument. For me, switching between solo production and choral production is very easy and should be for any singer. Voice teachers who insist that choral singing is bad for the voice either don’t know how to teach or are teaching very young singers. This is the only time when I think it might be difficult or confusing for a singer to sing with both styles, if it’s a young person who hasn’t studied for a long time and is just learning the basic techniques of good singing. Then I think it might be wise to learn the solo technique alone; however, I am of the opinion that choral singing is outstanding for developing flexibility and for keeping flexibility in the voice as one grows older. Any singer who has a solid technique as a soloist could and should benefit from the challenge of singing within a chorus. For my voice, it has been great – I still have a “young” sound at age 46 and can blend in a very small section with singers half my age. It also is great for keeping the ear sharp in terms of tuning – soloists sometimes begin to experience problems as they get older, less so perhaps for those who continue singing in chorus.
- iv. Dynamic – This is an obvious thing to alter when singing in a choir. My mf in a chorus is much softer than it would be as a soloist. If you are a lyric voice, often you can get away with just altering your dynamics to blend; dramatic voices have to shift much more than just dynamics though, which is why for me, it’s resonance, formants and dynamics that change.
- v. Articulation – I haven’t found that I need to alter articulation really – good choral singing should include good, clear articulation! The only thing that I do change, as I mentioned before, is the shape of my vowels in a chorus. Where I might sing a bright “ee” as a soloist, I modify usually shaping “oo” and saying “ee” in a choir, unless the conductor has specifically asked for a bright “ee.”

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: Not really. While I certainly observe styles and eras in regard to performance practice, and while this might cause some change in my solo singing, the changes are not nearly as much as it is from solo to choral singing: but this is partly due to the fact that I'm a dramatic voice and not a lyric one. There is a lot of rep that I simply would not sing as a soloist.....

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: Well, here comes the wicket: I never warm-up. I am yet to need to. I realize as I get older there will come a time when I will probably have to; however, I haven't hit that age yet. This is perhaps an oddity to my own voice because it is a large instrument, but I have never needed to really "warm-up" unless I am either ill or have had no sleep. At this point, any changes that I need to make chorally or soloistically are automatic for me, and I rarely need to think about them. For younger singers though, this is most likely not practical. Also, because of the amount of singing I do, my voice is pretty much always ready to go. I will say this though, if I were to warm-up my voice to sing in a choir, I would not adjust my warm-up from solo singing in any way – I don't think it's necessary.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: Well, I've sung for a couple of the kings of "non-vib" so I have a had a lot of experience. I don't think much about it, frankly, it is very easy to sing with a spin as a soloist, or to completely remove the vibrato and sound like a boy, which I have been asked to do many times in my life. It has never hurt my singing in any way; a soloist should be able to control the rate of vibrato that he or she is using and it should be accomplished in an way that is healthy to the instrument. I have to say that I have heard a lot of young singers recently who have a frightening amount of vibrato in their voices – I'm talking wobble, not vibrato from kids who are in the age range of 19-27 – this is scary. It makes me think that some teachers at well-known institutions are encouraging flabby vibratos because they think that makes it "operatic" sounding in a young voice. Shameful! This is only going to cause a problem for the singer down the road. I have literally sung next to twenty-somethings who have no idea how to sing without vibrato. There I am at age 46, and it's nothing for me to sing with no vibrato, some or a lot, depending upon the style and what I am being asked to do. My preference if the conductor has not specified vibrato, is to sing with a spin – I don't like removing vibrato, but I certainly can.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: I NEVER compromise my breath support or technique and I ALWAYS sing with core, no matter how softly I am singing. As a matter of fact, I believe that soft singing takes even more support, intensity and core of sound than loud singing whether in a chorus or out front as a soloist. Again, the STYLE of singing should not affect the basic technique. You make certain small adjustments to blend and to unify vowels and to balance in a choir, you do not suddenly remove support, core or your basic manner of singing. As a conductor, I am very aware of singers and singing, and have not really had any issues with voice majors at the large institution where I conduct a women's choir. Sometimes I will let soprano voice majors sing second soprano or even mezzo, although frankly, I do not recommend the latter. As a dramatic soprano, I've had conductors ask me to sing alto in the choir and I have always said no. I feel that singing in a tessitura that is too low for my natural voice is exactly what would damage it; not the changes I need to make technically to blend – these adjustments of resonance, vowels and formant are easy – singing in the wrong tessitura – dangerous! I have allowed it with dramatic voices as a conductor if their voice teacher prefers it, but I so do not agree nor recommend it.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: I control it in a choir through a few things: first I take out a lot (not all, mind you) of chest resonance, which in my voice is very natural, so to remove some of the natural vibrato, I start there; I also use less sub-glottal pressure (this for dynamics as well); and also with the diaphragm – I hold the muscle still to take vibrato out as opposed to allowing it its more natural function which gives my voice spin. It's really simple and has never hurt me in any way.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: No. I have been incredibly fortunate in my life that I had a teacher who built an unbelievably solid technique with me – I was singing as a soloist and in choirs at the time. I did have some trouble while I was learning (in my 20s, and why I say young singers can become confused!), but it had more to do with my age and voice type than anything else. Since turning 40, my voice as a dramatic, has hit a stride. I have zero problems since I've returned to singing full time (about two years ago). I did stop singing for about four years, didn't utter a note! This was age 40-44.....

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: Partly my own thought process while singing in choirs and learning my solo technique in my 20s. I will admit that I am MUCH better at all of it now in my mid-40s. Typical to a large voice, it's much easier now that my cartilage has solidified and isn't moving around in there a little! I am finding that my voice is far more flexible now that it ever has been. I learned my solo technique from my teacher, Judith

Oas Natalucci, and choral singing technique from Paul Salamunovich – the combination of the two of them was perfect for me. Paul was a professional singer with Roger Wagner for a zillion years and has a similar instrument to my own – his basic technique and my voice teacher’s are the same. This made learning to make adjustments a lot easier, I think. A lot of the adjustments are mental with me – I think “no vibrato” and at this point in the game, my muscles just do what is needed. I did have major abdominal surgery in December of 2007, and I have to say that because I have a solid technique, the come back in regard to singing, actually everything, was not difficult. I sang the Britten War Requiem with LAPO in January of 2008 following surgery and while I noticed I was more fatigued than usual, my voice held its own.

**MATTHEW FERRELL:** In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

**LESLEY LEIGHTON:** Oh, lots! Sadly, a lot of voice teachers discourage their students from singing in choirs. Now, given the fact that a lot of conductors are CLUELESS about vocal technique might be part of the problem, but I also think it is because some of these voice teachers aren’t teaching a solid enough technique themselves. My teacher, who was at USC when I studied with her and while I was singing in four of Paul S.’s choirs, didn’t encourage choral singing, but didn’t tell me I couldn’t either, and frankly, I think we would both agree that it worked out really well for me. I have not had trouble with the voice department at SC, but that is possibly because I am one of their own (MM in vocal performance, USC, 1991). I would like to see a more open dialogue between choral and vocal departments in the collegiate setting, and unfortunately, this is often not what goes on. There is a basic cross-purpose at play: the voice teachers think that asking a singer to modify his or her singing in order to blend in a choir is damaging, and the conductor thinks that “soloistic” singing is a danger to his or her choir. It’s a bit of a vicious circle, frankly. The reality, and I say this as a professional soloist and as a conductor, is that the two entities need to talk to each other and realize that they could work together and create a partnership that would benefit all of their students. Solo singing is a great thing, and soloists could benefit tremendously in regard to flexibility if they could compartmentalize the two types of singing that are involved. There is the solo voice, and there is the choral voice. These two voices share a common technique, and let’s face it, good singing is good singing, bad is bad! Both voices should be able to control intonation, tone, vibrato, dynamics, production and use of resonance and formants. You use more of some things in your solo singing, and less in choral singing – it’s really that simple, I swear. I definitely compartmentalize the two sounds – and they are different sounds for sure. My solo voice is used for solo singing, not choral singing, but it has never hurt me to have two different styles of singing, and is the reason my voice is so flexible at my age. My guess is that I will still be able to sing (probably not professionally, mind you) well at age 70 while many colleagues who sang only soloistically might not. Paul Salamunovich is 82 years old, and can still control his vibrato and sing perfectly in tune – his issue at his age is breath control – he has trouble maintaining the air to carry a phrase, but after lung cancer, that isn’t surprising. His voice is NOT that of a man his age, and anyone who has heard him recently can attest to the fact that two types of singing have not hurt him in the least!

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

LESLEY LEIGHTON: Before we even talk pedagogy, they must have an open dialogue and agree that neither style of singing is “evil.” This is often the attitude that I pick-up from both sides – it’s the idea that they are on different sides instead of the same one trying to create a win-win for their students. Seriously! In regard to pedagogy: both should agree that a solo voice technique is the basis for all good singing. The breath support and control that one should be learning as a soloist will only enhance that person’s ability to contribute in a choir. That said, a soloist absolutely cannot sing exactly the same way in a choir. The singer and voice teacher need to understand that vowel modification is necessary in a choir. Often, bright soloistic vowels will not blend and cannot be used in choral singing; but this is not in any way damaging to the solo instrument, it is simply the shape of the mouth which should be very flexible! Amount of resonance and formants used in choral singing is less than in solo singing; again, it’s less, not completely different. This is not harmful and only creates flexibility. An example: as a soloist, I can sing some of the largest rep written for soprano, but I can also turn around and sing the Fauré Pie Jesu in the correct style – why? Because I take a little of what I use for choral singing and apply it to my solo singing. It has made me a far more flexible soloist than I would have been had I not sung in choirs.

This is really not a tough thing, it is a simple thing. It’s sort of like learning in sports that when you’re playing tennis it’s a solo deal and when you’re on the baseball team, you work together. The basic techniques don’t change, but how you approach it does.....

#### LYNN EUSTIS

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

LYNN EUSTIS: I believe that efficient, healthy breath support and purity of vowels are the two things most important to both styles of singing. Many singers make the mistake of slowing down or even stopping the breath in order to “blend,” which results in a thin, unhealthy tone. Good vowels are essential to intonation and proper interaction with the breath.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

LYNN EUSTIS:

- i. Phonation – a bit gentler on the onset in choral singing

- ii. Support/Breath – generally a little faster, to take up the slack where I stop using so much chest resonance in the sound
- iii. Resonance – headier in most cases
- iv. Dynamic – should follow the score as appropriate, no change necessary
- v. Articulation – must be clean here; this is one of the reasons I think choral singing helps a singer develop good musical habits

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

LYNN EUSTIS: Yes – to me it is comparable to picking up a different racket. You wouldn't use a tennis racket and a badminton racket interchangeably. Similarly, you shouldn't sing Mozart, Bach, and Puccini all in the same way with regard to the areas listed in question #2.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

LYNN EUSTIS: I'm not sure what you mean by this question...I think the exercises are essentially the same for warming up the voice, it's the act of doing it in the group that changes things (for the smart singer as led by the perceptive conductor guiding the sound).

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

LYNN EUSTIS: Many singers do this by skimping on the breath and closing the throat, which is wrong. I use a faster, more focused breath stream while making a higher placement of the soft palate.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

LYNN EUSTIS: By retaining the elements that are necessary for all, and being smart about which changes to make. I find it much easier to sing Mozart when I'm NOT trying to sing it like Puccini, and vice versa.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

LYNN EUSTIS: Intonation drives most of my choices with regard to vibrato. The well-focused, supported voice can do this without any damage. It is easier to sing when one "mixes it up." My current voice teacher tells me all the time not to sing, to sing fully only when necessary.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

LYNN EUSTIS: When I do a great deal of straight tone choral singing in a short period of time, particularly if the range stays high, my voice thins out in my other repertoire. I have to be careful to support properly at all times, and to limit my exposure to conductors with tight, angular patterns.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

LYNN EUSTIS: I began to learn this in college (Bucknell University) where I worked with William Payn. I was also fortunate to work with James Jordan at an early age. While I studied at Curtis, my coaches and teachers were very specific about what they wanted stylistically, and it was my job to figure out how to do this healthfully.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

LYNN EUSTIS: Where do I start? Everything from voice classification to scheduling to choice of soloists to philosophy about sound. Communication and mutual respect are vital to working out these problems.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

LYNN EUSTIS: As I said, communication and respect are essential. When conductors act without consulting teachers, this is a problem. It is also a problem when voice teachers complain to their students and voice colleagues but don't speak directly to the conductor about their concerns. Healthy singing is what we are all after, and I see no reason that conductors and voice teachers have to be enemies.

#### MARTHA SULLIVAN

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: Breath. Breathe low, support low, with a minimum of tension, and then other adjustments are easier. What do I mean by low breathing, you ask? When inhaling, let the air simply drop in, down to the bottom of the lungs; imagining that it is dropping all the way down to the bottom of the pelvic floor helps with this. Once one has begun singing out, one can imagine the pelvic floor continuing to drop down, as if the base of the spine and pelvis were a weight, continually sinking down and creating a firm

foundation out of which singing (or dancing or acting or anything else a singer might be asked to do) can rise up.

**Posture/alignment.** When seated, find an alignment and pelvis position that will allow you to sit upright (away from the back of the chair) without working at it. When standing, find a happy medium between an overly forward pelvic tilt (Olympic gymnast position) and overly back one (dog with tail between its legs). Seated or standing, singers can play with finding both extremes and then vacillating between them until they find the right place in the middle.

Free up the various parts of the vocal mechanism at the top of the vocal tract; i.e., try to avoid superfluous tension of the tongue, jaw, palate, lips, or any facial muscles.

**Resonance and placement:** there are probably as many opinions about this as there are singers. What's common to both ensemble and solo singing is that resonance can't be ignored; if a singer fails to energize and open the face and vocal tract, the sound will have no color and will not carry.

**MATTHEW FERRELL:** What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

**MARTHA SULLIVAN:**

- i. Phonation – not sure what you are asking here. Do you mean the initiating of a phonated sound? I mean, chorally or soloistically, you need to be able to control whether a sound starts with a glottal or not ...
- ii. Support/Breath – hmm, ideally one nurtures the same good habits in both situations. However, there are a couple of differences ... when singing in a choir, I can sometimes find more air by relaxing into the group sound. I am also usually not going for such a strong sound in a choir, so it often uses less air.
- iii. Resonance – to create an operatic solo sound, I call on every possible bit of resonance I can find in my skull, and just let the sound come out my cheekbones, my ears, whatever. In choral situations, this would be overwhelming, so although in warming up I certainly remind myself to let the sound visit all the possible resonant areas, I don't pour it on so much in the ensemble. Perhaps I think more about a gentle forward resonance (front teeth, hard palate, sphenoid sinus) more in choral singing, less about the sides and back
- iv. Dynamic – I deliberately sing quieter in most choral situations than in solo ones. Research has shown that humans speak or sing louder when there is more sound in the background. I saw an experiment once when I was in grad school: a doctor got a volunteer to sit in a chair and read aloud from a newspaper and not to change his volume at all. Then the doctor came up from behind, crinkling other papers in the volunteer's ears. The reader read louder the louder the crinkling got, and backed off when the doctor moved away. The volunteer, when asked about it afterwards, had not noticed the volume

changes! The lesson is that it is terribly easy to oversing in choirs, where you have voices making loud sounds all around you. The other lesson is not to talk on airplanes if you can avoid it. ☺ At any rate, when singing in choral situations, I combine a deliberate effort to sing quieter with an effort to sing with as much physical ease as possible. The two ideas work well together.

- v. Articulation – do you mean the production of consonants, or the amount of separation between notes in a melisma? With consonants, a lot of choir directors try to get singers to over-enunciate them, because, let's face it, a lot of acoustics just eat them. The trick is to find a way to do it with a minimum of tension and in a way that they can still be part of the vocal line. It seems productive to ask singers to extend the preceding vowel as long as they can before saying the consonant, so that they are connected. Another way to go about it is to imagine the vowel as a steady stream coming out of the mouth, with the consonants like a little boat riding the stream ... I do that when singing. Now. For a while I was using an aggressive choral approach to consonants that sounded ridiculous in solo works because it did mess up the line entirely. Lately, for solo singing, I have been imagining that I have been RECEIVING the consonants, which makes for a very easy onset of tone as well.
- vi. Articulation – amount of legato in melismas and roulades: for solo singing, I am always looking for the best possible legato (except where the composer asks for something else). Of course different rep will require slightly different approaches: Bach Cantata 51 needs a bit of articulation and would sound silly if you sang it with the same kind of legato that, say, *Sempre Libera* from *Traviata* requires. In choral singing, different circumstances demand different amounts of articulation, too. Fugues in Bach require a fair amount of nonlegato singing; the conductor will have to take into account the size of the group, the instrumentation used, the acoustic of the performance hall, and his or her own personal taste. Later works with fugues, such as Brahms, will need less nonlegato singing, but the considerations I mention still apply. Of course, that wasn't your question. In general, I use a bit more legato in solo singing, a bit less in a choir, because many voices together require a bit more articulation to ensure clarity ...

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: Yes. See the above paragraph. However, do note: the difference between singing solo vs. choral in Baroque music seems a bit greater to me than singing solo vs. choral in a big chorus doing 19<sup>th</sup>-century music (where I use virtually the same techniques for both).

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: Flexibility is the key. My first exercise of the day may be quiet lip trill octave slides, followed by something that's fast and also quiet. I'm writing out some of these for you. I do the same warm-ups for choral or for solo singing; if I were

forced to choose, though, I suppose I would choose something with coloratura for flexibility for my choral warmup. For my solo warmup, if I couldn't do everything I wanted, it would depend on the solo situation: I could get away with a warmup for legato and breath support if the rep were, say, Puccini, but would need to do a flexibility warmup if the solo were a Bach cantata.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: I'm happy to sing straight tone, as long as the person asking me to do so does not want it as loud as I can sing with vibrato! It is possible to make a loud sound with straight tone, but it can require an unhealthy amount of tension. An elegant straight tone can be achieved by singing easily, imitating a flutey sound, keeping it bright in color, and not forcing. Not all singers can do it easily, or are willing to try. A simple exercise for straight tone is to whine; it's hard to add vibrato to a whine. Here's an amusing bit of dialogue from a rehearsal ... Gregg: "Eleanor, sing that with less vibrato!" Eleanor: "Gregg, to sing IS to vibrate!" True enough. But vibrato, or the ability to leave it in or out of the sound as one chooses, is yet another color in the singer's palette, so it's useful to be able to have the option available.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: I simply try to avoid excess tension or oversinging. I also try to keep my face and upper parts of the vocal tract energized and engaged; when one is tired, one can neglect that, and then one slips into a sort of downward, slouchy, unenergized tension, if that makes any sense. And that kind of tension wears out the instrument fast.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: See #5.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: Occasionally I have suffered from vocal fatigue, but that's usually when doing things that provoked physical tension for other reasons than that I was singing chorally or straight tone. Examples: singing for 10 hours a day, several days in a row, at a Western Wind Workshop (fun, but not vocally prudent); rehearsing with a choral conductor (an organist rather than a trained vocal guy) who insists on repeating a difficult high section many times in a row until it is perfect, and who refuses to allow the singers to mark or sing down an octave (this is like pacing on a rug until you wear a hole in the pile) ... Also, in choral situations, it's important for strong singers who are good readers or who have better intonation than others NOT to try to carry the section; that leads to forcing and, potentially, vocal damage.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: I sang in kids' choirs and therefore sang naturally straight tone to begin with. As an adult, I had to teach myself to move between various styles healthily. I have never had a teacher or a conductor who tried to address these issues, I would say. Except perhaps my first children's choir director may have asked us to imitate a flute. Most voice teachers for college-age and older students simply try to dissuade students from singing chorally, but that's not really realistic. The most healthy ways I have learned to negotiate different styles are by working with colleagues who are very good at, say, continuo-based Baroque singing, and singing duets with them or imitating them. Being in the same room with a singer who has a great deal of facility in a certain style is a GREAT education.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: See the anecdote I sent you in my original e-mail with you, the two Oberlin graduates arguing about me: the choral conductor says, "I don't want you ruining Martha's voice!", and the voice teacher says, "Well, I don't want you infantilizing her voice!" The voice teacher in the anecdote taught me A LOT and is perhaps the one teacher I have had who knows the most about how to sing. However, she really did believe that choral singing can be damaging to the voice. And it can, if the choral conductor does not encourage his/her singers to sing with freedom and ease.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

MARTHA SULLIVAN: To choral conductors:

- i. Choose repertoire that allows the voice to move rather than sitting around on the same three notes for pages at a time. (Philip Glass, for example, is a lot easier for violinists to play than for singers to sing.)
- ii. If there are high parts that you need to drill to get them right, please drill them an octave low and quietly several times before asking the singers to do the phrase at pitch. Robert Shaw used to run all rehearsals up until the dress rehearsal with certain rules: any note above a D was to be sung an octave low, and dynamics, though proportional, should not exceed mezzo-piano. Wow. That summer I did in France with him, we sang three hours in the morning and then three more hours after lunch, and I never got tired. It was awesome. It's a way to be like a good investor, never spending the principal, only the interest. And of course the voice is a very important investment for the singers as well as for their conductor.
- iii. Do physical warm-ups to get singers using their bodies freely and easily, and also feel free to do a stretch or two mid-rehearsal. People tense up when concentrating too much, and that compromises their ability to sing healthily. Also note that people pick up on the

physical and vocal quirks of their neighbors, so it's a good idea to keep an eye on how people are doing physically.

- iv. Things you like to do with actual repertoire—dynamic shapes, accents, emotional content, etc.—practice them in warm-ups with your standard scales and arpeggios and whatnot. Singers will find it easier to add those details to the rep if they have been practicing them during the warm-up.
- v. Straight tone: please consider letting singers sing with some vibrato. A bit of gentle vibrato actually helps a section tune better than absolute whiteness, not because vibrato hides pitch but because absolute straight tone can sound dead and flat. Also, it can require a lot of tension (doesn't have to, but it can); I once heard the Hilliard Ensemble live, and although their accuracy was impressive, I felt physically uncomfortable because at least one of the singers was holding an Olympic weight lifter's amount of tension in his chest and shoulders to control the tone. I had trouble breathing. That's not what you want your audience to experience, is it?
- vi. Please give singers complicated music in advance, and also, if there are solos, assign them well in advance, so the singer can practice the music and even coach it with their coach if he/she wants to. Now, I am a fabulous sightsinger and can read almost anything you hand me perfectly, but I will not sing it with the grace and elegance that I can bring to it if I have time to work it into the voice. (I had to sightsing a solo IN PERFORMANCE, no rehearsal at all, in church a couple weeks ago, and although I did fine, it would have been better with a little practice. Really. The organist wouldn't play a prelude without practicing, so why should I sing a solo without?)

To voice teachers:

- i. Tell your students not to push when singing chorally, but to sing into the group sound and let it buoy them up. Tell your students to think about any choral piece they are singing as if it were an aria, and to sing it with the same commitment to breath and to dramatic intent; this will help them keep the vocal mechanism free, which is a necessity. It's easy to forget that freedom when concentrating on the notes and the dynamics and the blend and so forth.
- ii. Straight tone is not Satan. Big, hooty, forced straight tone is not a great idea, but simply changing the color and taking out the vibrato is nothing more than slightly extended vocal technique. It can be learned by imitating a flute or by practicing a gentle whine; the key is gentleness. It will not hurt the voice as long as there is no excess tension in the tone.
- iii. Tell your smart and nurturing-type students that they are only responsible for their own work, so in a chorus, they should not push and try to carry weaker singers. (This is a useful thing to keep in mind in opera work, too; we need to carry our own weight, nobody else's, or else things get messy and we will not have the energy we need to succeed.)

- iv. Let your students know about that we-speak-and-sing-louder-when-our-environment-is-louder problem (maybe even do the crinkly-paper exercise in a group of students). It is CRUCIAL not to oversing in choruses. Or to overtalk in planes, trains, or bars!
- v. Encourage your students to practice choral music as well as solo music (and ensembles in their opera work as well as arias). If they do, they will have more brain space available for thinking healthy thoughts about body alignment and breath and release and emotional content and so forth rather than having to struggle with reading the notes off the page.
- vi. Singers can actually practice healthy vocal technique in choirs. If you've sung the Hallelujah Chorus a zillion times, why not use the zillion and first time to practice whatever you've been working on in voice lessons concerning appoggio or your soft palate or emotional work or whatever? I do that all the time ...
- vii. Encourage your students to sing in choirs; it's the best way to get experience and build facility at sightsinging. And that's useful because once you get good at reading, you can spend less energy on learning notes and more energy on actually making MUSIC while singing. ☺ Also, it can earn you pocket money.

#### MATT HOCH

MATT HOCH: To avoid frequent repetitions of the phrase “in my opinion,” please understand that all of these responses are no more than my professional opinion based on my experiences as a professional voice teacher, choral director, soloist, and chorister.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

MATT HOCH: Technically, everything that is good about classical solo singing also applies to choral singing. The differences are often stylistic, not technical. A good vocal production that is founded on a reliable breath management technique is paramount. A low larynx with complete freedom from unnecessary compensatory tension and seamless register transitions are also essential.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

MATT HOCH:

- i. Phonation – My production and register choices are usually identical, but I am less concerned with resonance in choral singing than I am in solo singing. Having more “core” to my sound (less amplitude of vibrato, more integrity of intonation) is essential, and sometimes it is necessary to have no vibrato at all in the sound. I also sometimes use falsetto (CT register) for high, soft notes, in choral singing. I would almost never use falsetto in classical solo singing.

- ii. Support/Breath – For me, absolutely nothing is different here. I think a good breath management technique (I use the international Italian, Richard Miller “appoggio”) translates to all styles.
- iii. Resonance – (see phonation)
- iv. Dynamic – In general, in order blend effectively, I sing less loudly in choral ensembles. I also sing softer in soft passages (almost “off the voice”) than I ever could (and expect to resonate) as a solo singer.
- v. Articulation – I also use more non-legato singing in choirs. In choral singing, I think legato is less important and rhythmic integrity is more important to achieve good ensemble.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

MATT HOCH: Yes I do, but honestly, I am called upon to sing in fewer styles in classical solo literature. Medieval and Renaissance solo literature exists, but is usually only performed by specialists. Choirs sing Renaissance music all the time. Also, it is necessary to make deeper adjustments in choral singing because one has to blend with other voices and needs even more precise intonation (balancing roots, thirds, fifths, of chords, etc.). In general, I think it is fair to say that much more demanded of the choral singer in terms of vocal adjustments. (I’m assuming that you’re only referring to classical solo repertoire. The singer who sings CCM/musical theater repertoire, of course, would have more stylistic demands thrust upon him or her.)

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

MATT HOCH: The same exercises that would apply to solo singing. These are too numerous and disparate to mention. Additionally, however, good choral warm-ups also address good ensemble singing, blend, and intonation. One does not need to worry about these three criteria as a soloist, so I would say that choral warm-ups need to cover more territory than solo warm-ups.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

MATT HOCH: In professional choral settings, one has to occasionally sing straight tone. (Why? Because at some point, a conductor will demand it, and if the singer wants to get hired again, he or she will have to do it.) The smaller the ensemble, the softer the dynamic, and the more “pure” or “dissonant” the style, the more important it is for the voice to approach straight-tone singing. This is a conundrum for high school and undergraduate choir directors who are also trying to foster good vocal technique, but at

some point, the professional choral singer must find some way to make a straight tone in a healthy, technically sound way.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

MATT HOCH: By warming up, singing with good technique, and relying on good vocal hygiene habits. I do tend to get more fatigued after a lot of choral singing, but this has more to do with the number of hours singing (three hour rehearsals with no breaks, etc.) than with the style itself.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

MATT HOCH: By making sure that I do not constrict to create less vibrato, or have any other compensatory tension in the pharynx, tongue, or jaw. I must make sure to maintain a low larynx. Singing softly and maintaining a warm color is a big part of my personal strategy. Empirically, I've found that there is a huge difference between a "warm straight tone" and a "constricted straight tone." The former is less fatiguing and maps much of the good technique that exists in a full-throated, more resonant solo sound.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

MATT HOCH: Yes, I encountered frequent fatigue when I was younger, but to be honest, my solo singing fatigued me then too. It had more to do with physical immaturity and technical insecurity than vocal adjustments for choral styles.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

MATT HOCH: I learned adjustments through trial and error, by singing in a lot of professional choral ensembles and sitting next to excellent professional soloist-choristers who were able to make adjustments really well, sound great in a variety of styles, and not get tired. I received no formal training on style adjustments because the vocal pedagogy and technique teachers that I had did not address choral singing or know (or care) anything about it. [The work you are doing is very important!]

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

MATT HOCH: There is often tension between voice teachers and choral directors, and I think that—usually—both parties are at fault. The voice teachers often do not value choral singing—even professional choral singing—as a legitimate area where many of their students can (and will) work. They do not know the repertoire or the style, and they are unable to help their students approach the music in a healthy way. Few voice teachers

allow choral scores to enter their studio—what a missed opportunity to teach about style and adjustment!

On the other hand, many college undergraduate choral directors demand too much of their ensembles, especially with regard to time commitment and number of hours on the voice. In addition to often demanding a professional sound from young and inexperienced singers, many college choral directors will rehearse their groups five hours per week, plus sections, concerts, recordings, tours, fundraisers, and special events and appearances. Many BM programs still require four years of ensemble, and in the junior and senior years, many voice majors are also preparing recitals, performing lead roles in operas, and auditioning for summer programs. Many of our finest undergraduates are in a constant state of vocal fatigue throughout their entire undergraduate careers, and they don't even realize it. Choral directors would be wise and ethical to pare back their rehearsal and performance schedules for young singers who are also pursuing a rigorous schedule as a private voice student and soloist. (Note: Too many operatic rehearsals or inappropriate opera roles can also lead to fatigue, but I find that choral directors are usually the greater culprits when demanding too many vocal hours from voice students.)

**MATTHEW FERRELL:** What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

**MATT HOCH:** Choral directors should join NATS and contribute articles to the Journal of Singing. Voice teachers should join ACDA and contribute articles to the Choral Journal. We need to work for a synergy and explore the important topic of vocal adjustments, and we may realize that we have more common ground than we think. Both choral directors and voice teachers should do as much reading in vocal pedagogy as possible so they can speak intelligently and scientifically about the topic. The New York Singing Teachers Association (NYSTA), for example, has a wonderful online five-course vocal pedagogy curriculum, and both choral directors and voice teachers should take advantage of educational opportunities like this.

**MB KRUEGER**

**MATTHEW FERRELL:** What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

**MB KRUEGER:** I believe ALL healthy vocal techniques are common to both – I find in my teaching and my own singing that the most important thing in both is making phonation as effortless as possible. I think about keeping neck, jaw, and tongue as loose as possible.

**MATTHEW FERRELL:** What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

MB KRUEGER:

- i. Phonation – None, I hope
- ii. Support/Breath – I think I tend to breathe more often in choral singing, so that I never stick out of the texture due to lack of support.
- iii. Resonance – None
- iv. Dynamic – In choral singing, everything is softer by one level or so. But I try to keep in mind that volume has very little to do with airflow and everything to do with the pressure exerted by the vocal folds as they come together; therefore I try to keep soft choral singing just as well supported as any solo singing.
- v. Articulation – Very little adjustment

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

MB KRUEGER: Yes, I definitely modify solo singing depending on the style or time period as well.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

MB KRUEGER: For me (and I stress this with my students as well) it is very important to warm up the breathing first so that I can sing with good air flow and support, so I always start with physical stretches and breathing exercises. I find that the phonation comes pretty easily after that.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

MB KRUEGER: I nearly always modify vibrato when singing chorally, and I also do it when singing solo in certain styles (like early music, or certain types of musical theatre or contemporary styles). I find it is very easy to do this if I keep everything relaxed and keep the air flow very consistent. I tend to listen more intently as well when singing with less (or no) vibrato.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

MB KRUEGER: I really feel it's the same no matter what the style, and that the key is to always sing without tension.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

MB KRUEGER: Keep the air flowing for consistent support and sing without tension (especially in the tongue, jaw, and neck).

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

MB KRUEGER: Only when I have not warmed up the breathing properly.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

MB KRUEGER: Both – but most of it became much more clear to me once I started teaching voice myself.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

MB KRUEGER: I have heard and seen some situations where voice teachers feel that choral singing is harmful to the voice – as a singer, voice teacher, and choir director myself, I strongly disagree with this stance. It can be injurious if the singers are taught that choral singing requires them to tense a lot of muscles in order to change their tone quality so that they blend, but I disagree with this approach. I am very fortunate to teach at a college where the voice teachers and choral directors agree that choral singing is beneficial to the students, and students are taught how to sing well in both situations.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

MB KRUEGER: I'd also like to add a PS – I listen to myself differently when singing in a choir than I do when singing solo. In a solo situation, I am listening to my vocal quality and judging whether it is the sound I want. In a choral setting, I am listening to how my voice is fitting into the overall texture, and in a way, the relative beauty of my own vocal quality is much less important.

#### RHONDA WALLEN

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

RHONDA WALLEN: Support (traditionally called breath support) - actually has a few different components – alignment of vocal chords into “thin” folds, anchoring of the head, and sometimes raising of the soft pallet)

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

RHONDA WALLEN:

- i. Phonation no adjustments – for different reasons, enunciation, particularly of consonants is key in both solo & choral singing (unless I am missing the meaning of “phonation” – might be taking this to mean more articulation....)
- ii. Support/Breath – I tend to take bigger breaths and breath less often in solo work; in large choral groups, you can sometimes get away with less “support”
- iii. Resonance – not sure what this refers to exactly but I will generally use more “twang” or pointed-ness/brightness to achieve greater projection in solo work; however, there are instances in choral singing when the part I’m on needs to come out more, in which case the same quality of brightness applies.
- iv. Dynamic – I only adjust according to the requirements/needs of the piece – doesn’t matter if choral or solo
- v. Articulation see “i” above

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

RHONDA WALLEN: different styles call for different adjustments – baroque is less “chiaro-scuro” and lieder is a bit more; higher larynx placement in baroque & renaissance; Opera is a different recipe entirely.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

RHONDA WALLEN: glissando on “ng” throughout the vocal range (low up to high); going from bright to dark with and without adjustments in larynx on aeiou.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

RHONDA WALLEN: I’m not so good at it (my natural vocal quality does not have much vibrato) but I bring this out more in solo singing. To increase vibrato I put more “cry” into my voice.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

RHONDA WALLEN: My vocal techniques discussed above are the same regardless of the kind of singing I am doing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

RHONDA WALLEN: (see #5)

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

RHONDA WALLEN: No.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

RHONDA WALLEN: I learned about how to achieve good breath support from teachers, and then studied the Estill method which shed a lot of light on previous styles learned and taught the anatomical details of what's involved in various vocal techniques.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

RHONDA WALLEN: Mostly what I've seen is that some of those who've learned solo singing under voice teachers learn only one style, which is generally bright with vibrato or outright opera. This is not a good style for choral singing as those kinds of solo-trained voices often stick out and do not blend with other singers.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

RHONDA WALLEN: Learn the Estill method to be able to give all students a better understanding of vocal production; once this is well understood, adjustments and modifications in style are much easier to achieve.

#### ROBERT SATALOFF

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

ROBERT SATALOFF: The vocal technique for solo singing and choral singing is fundamentally the same. When singers make major adjustments from solo technique in order to blend with choirs, they risk vocal injury. In general, if singers sing in appropriate choral environments, drastic technique changes are not necessary. Accepting inappropriate choral positions can result in ill-advised attempts at voice modification. For example, a world-class dramatic tenor with excellent "ring" who accepts a position as a ringer with a small, purely amateur, mediocre choir will have difficulty preventing his

voice from “standing out.” The same singer should have no such difficulty in a higher level choir. In fact, solo singers who are unable to perform in appropriate ensembles probably have technical flaws in their solo technique and training. The same admonition holds true for instrumentalists.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

ROBERT SATALOFF:

- i. Phonation – Essentially no change.
- ii. Support – No change, except for extra care to be certain that it is managed well during long periods of sitting.
- iii. Resonance – Usually little or no change. However, it is sometimes necessary to slightly decrease the strength of the fifth formant (ring) to avoid having a strong solo voice stand out even within an excellent choir. Minor adjustments can be made easily and safely.
- iv. Dynamic – It is often necessary to sing more softly in a choral setting than in a solo setting. Oversinging is a danger in choirs. A solo singer in a choral setting should think about giving a voice lesson (by example) to the one person on either side and in front of him/her, not trying to sing louder than the entire section.
- v. Articulation – Sometimes has to be more pronounced in a choral setting than in some solo settings.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

ROBERT SATALOFF: Yes. There are stylistic differences in the way that voice is used between Wagnerian opera, Verdi opera, Mozart opera, Oratorio, art song, early music, pop music and other styles.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

ROBERT SATALOFF: Warm-up and cool-down exercises should be performed prior to and after solo or choral singing, which include physical (body) warm-ups, and vocal warm-ups, including scales. Cool-downs are essential.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

ROBERT SATALOFF: Modifying vibrato somewhat is safe and possible, especially for highly skilled singers. Excellent pop singers do so routinely (often within a single note); but they also use amplification rather than having to project. Classical singers modify

vibrato depending upon the composition of an ensemble, and depending upon musical style. Many singers and conductors believe in straight tone, for example, for selected early music (although there is virtually nothing in music historical literature to prove that this technique was used during the Renaissance and pre-Renaissance periods). It is not possible to eliminate the vibrato entirely. Even when people are singing “straight tone,” instrumental analysis shows that vibrato is still present. In general, attempts to modify vibrato should be utilized only with the greatest caution. When technique is ideal and muscle tension is minimized, the voice’s natural vibrato is heard. Attempts to modify it commonly involve increased tension which can potentially be harmful.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

ROBERT SATALOFF: Singing technique is essentially the same, only the musical style varies.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

ROBERT SATALOFF: In short, it is as little tension as possible.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

ROBERT SATALOFF: No.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

ROBERT SATALOFF: Twenty-nine years with a wonderful bell canto teacher, followed by many years of learning by teaching students myself.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

ROBERT SATALOFF: There is commonly conflict. Unfortunately, it is sometimes justified. Too many choral conductors (and I say this having conducted a university choir for 39 years) are keyboard performers who know nothing about the voice or healthy singing. They use instrumental rehearsal techniques that are not well-suited for voice-building. They also commonly call upon singers for greater volume, or longer rehearsals without breaks, than is healthy. If solo singers finish choral rehearsals hoarse, their teachers will be appropriately unhappy. This should not happen with excellent choral conducting. However, the solo teachers are to blame, as well. They should be teaching the students appropriate singing technique to avoid oversinging and injury in the choral setting. If the solo singer is well-trained, he/she will be able to provide an excellent choral performance without allowing vocal damage.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

ROBERT SATALOFF: Many of these are in my choral pedagogy book which you already have, and in my two volume book on vocal pedagogy. Essentially, providing students with mastery of the craft of singing, the intelligence to understand the sound they are trying to produce before they try to produce it, and the discipline to make the music more important than their personal voice or ego, usually permit safe singing in any style or environment.

#### ROSE BEATTIE

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

ROSE BEATTIE:

- i. Proper breath budgeting, management. Good posture needed.
- ii. Proper abdominal muscle support accompanying each phonation vs. pushing from the throat or having improper tensions (tongue, jaw, or too many hard onsets/attacks that not conscious and carefully chosen etc.)
- iii. Enlisting resonance tools to healthily beautify, strengthen, and protect the pitch. For instance, the soft palette and pharynx need to be stretched i.e. hardened to become a better acoustical chamber with the tongue relaxed and out of the way. This should be done without unduly lowering ones larynx or unnaturally darkening their tone. Obviously, the larynx should not be too high either but in a nice relaxed non pushed or lifted position.
- iv. Singing on the vowels and generally keeping those vowels focused.
- v. There are many other subcategories of healthy vocal technique that could be mentioned, but in my opinion knowing and practicing healthy piano dynamics (especially in choral singing) is so important. In choral singing your voice contributes to a much larger body of sound so it could be tempting to “come of your voice” in an effort to accomplish the strict measures and discipline it might take to be quiet with more than one voice singing. To protect the voice, it is better not to sing if a section demands piano singing then to sing softer tones unhealthily and or not well supported. It is most important to correctly support piano tones through an awakened resonance space vs. pulling the sound backwards and diminishing proper support.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

ROSE BEATTIE:

- i. Phonation: None. Depending on the style or era, I may enlist more straight tone for choral singing than I do for my solo operatic singing. I must be sure this is accomplished by much healthy vocal support and by generally releasing my throat and neck muscles and imagining I am doing a “siren” sound or a whine/cry sound. The key is to let my “cry/whine” intent coupled with added abdominal muscles do the work vs. allowing neck and throat muscles to grab and “hold” the tone from having vibrato.
- ii. Support/Breath: none
- iii. Resonance: none
- iv. Dynamic: I tend to sing quieter at times or drop out all together if need be (especially when I’m singing in a larger section that must sing ppp or less.)
- v. Articulation: Consonants, like with solo singing, are key. I think I even try to over enunciate when singing with choirs it is easy for them to get lost in the sea of people. Or, maybe I heavily enunciate to make up for those in the choir not properly enunciating – ha! One exception to this (and a pet peeve of mine) is final S’s. No snakes please. They should be short concise and placed at the appropriate time in synchronicity with the rest of the chorus. If a shadow schwa vowel, for instance after a final “n” or “d”, is to be used for added consonant audibility—than let the schwa be more like an [ɪ] for better vocal placement and clarity.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

ROSE BEATTIE: Yes.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

ROSE BEATTIE: One favorite of mine is doing whine/cry vocal sirens up and down on a triple piano dynamic. My mouth is fully open with my pharynx/soft palette stretched/arched to the max and with my tongue out/relaxed. I do not force the sound or range but take it a mindfully pace being sure to “iron out” any crinkles of vocal fatigue or swelling by slowly sliding the pitch to where it is comfortable that day. Eventually when that area with difficulty becomes easier than I can add more to the range with tiny increments of extended range. If there is no fatigue or swelling, then great--I get to do these warm ups easily and quickly in all ranges reminding my self where my proper support comes from and that proper singing is really just healthily produced sound effects. It is important to not “sing” but only focus on vibrating the vocal cords with strong abdominal support and “primal-call” or cry intent. Sometimes I do the same exercise but think of a type of laughing sound. This honestly is nearly impossible to describe with words!

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

ROSE BEATTIE: It is dangerous and uncomfortable if done incorrectly by straining or containing in the throat. I also think that doing it incorrectly is very, very easy to accidentally do if one is not constantly reminding themselves to be mindful of proper release, support and resonance. I think the majority of beginning/intermediate/ and even many advanced singer do not know how to healthily accomplish straight tone. Requesting straight tone of singers that do not have proper technique is potentially harmful to their vocal health. I also think straight tone is an easier for certain voice types (I am guessing lighter weight voices). I also find that straight tone exposes any pitch problems and so can be used to as a tool to help build pitch discipline—or it can really negatively highlight existing pitch problems and unsupported dull tones. With all this said, I find singing healthy straight tone pitches in moderation with other great singers most rewarding!! Feeling the pitch “lock-in” and become as though it is only one voice instead of many feels fantastic and sounds glorious with certain repertoire.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

ROSE BEATTIE: Implementing good technique that works across the board—like what I listed in question #1.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

ROSE BEATTIE: See question #2, i and #5.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

ROSE BEATTIE: Yes, when I compromise or make adjustments to healthy technique to make a certain sound. You can adjust sounds but not your technique. If one cannot make a certain sound by enlisting proper technique, then they should not sing that sound. For instance, once a certain passage called for the women of the chorus I was in to sound purposely very shrill and ugly. I found a way to lean HEAVILY on using added nasal resonance in a very flared/arched position with a sort of snarl feel. This meant the bite, cut, and shrill strength of sound came from a healthy addition of super pinpoint resonance instead of throat strain, pushing, or by taking my chest register too high in an effort to sound ugly.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

ROSE BEATTIE: All of the above. I have had many, many years of vocal instruction, great directors, and I own lots of vocal pedagogy books and have attended at least three vocal pedagogy courses/seminars. My personal favorite pedagogue is Richard Miller.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

ROSE BEATTIE: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors? That the choral conductors generally don't understand good vocal technique as well as yet ask singers (many of whom do not even have a voice teacher) to do many different and challenging sounds.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

ROSE BEATTIE: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another? Maybe they could do joint workshops together where the conductor allows the voice teacher impart how to properly achieve different vocal colors without damaging ones instrument.

#### SARAH TANNEHILL

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I believe that choral and solo singing share many common healthy vocal techniques. No matter what genre of music, singers should always begin with a deep, low, supported inhalation, expanding the bottom of the body cavity with a non-tense breath. There should be no tension or focus on the vocal cords. They have enough to do! One should allow more air to pass through the cords to keep a straighter tone. Not less air.

There is freedom throughout the body and the resonance chambers in the head should all be utilized. That means opening up the mouth by dropping the jaw and making sure almost every vowel has a significant amount of very round "ooo" timbre in it. I have a specific way of looking at this bond between choral singing and solo singing: In its most primary form, there is a very small "mustard seed" of sound that is essentially your most perfect "ooo" timbre. You find that with the right amount of air, no pressure on the cords, and a very small tone. The head voice is king here! Up and down the scale, there would be very little difference in dynamic, and the focus on going up and down changes to staying all on one horizontal line. A very small, round, "ghost-like" tone. From this perfect tone, choral singing does not have to go much further. The singer stays in that tone, with added volume and slight difference with each vowel, but there is always a beautiful, free, "ooo" wrapped around every note. I call it the "ooo" sweater.

That same perfect tone is still in the middle of solo singing. But the sound grows out of it with a spinning, cylindrical vibrato, and more mask-quality is used. But pull back to the embryonic stage of that large tone and you still have that little mustard seed of

perfection. This is why I feel very comfortable going from choral to solo. It starts with the same tone.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

SARAH TANNEHILL:

- i. Phonation – no change. Just possibly more air throughout, to keep the cords relaxed while singing straight tones. Also to help blend with other singers. The beginning of notes that start with a vowel, like “alleluia” should start with a small “h” or soft attack, to have a reliable and smooth onset of the note, to help blend with the other singers.
- ii. Support/Breath – support is the same, but I have to take many more breaths. Partly because I am not in control of how long the phrase will be ~ partly because I need to stagger the breathing, and partly because I’m using more air to keep the tone straight.
- iii. Resonance – more “ooo” timbre is used. Less change in the sound of the vowels, and less mask sound, unless that pointed sound is asked for by the conductor.
- iv. Dynamic – choral singers do not understand how softly they can sing to blend well. There is no need to press on the cords or drive the tone. Forte is different when you have other singers with you. It’s not necessary to blow your stack! You have other people with you! And piano? You are not supporting fully with your diaphragm if you cannot sing at a very small piano dynamic.
- v. Articulation – Consonants are stronger and vowels all take on that “ooo” sweater, as before mentioned. The vowels are manipulated some to keep a nice round, blended sound. But not too much.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I use more mask, or focused tone, when singing early music, as well as a cleaner sound ~ not as much vibrato. In bel canto music, I let it all hang out! Less precision, more portamento, full vibrato, etc.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I warm up with early music when singing heavier coloratura, to remind me to find the balance in my singing. Bel canto tends to push you to be “piggy”. Pulling the “ego” out of the voice helps with all genres. I also warm up my low breathing and find that small “ooo” timbre that I want to have present in all genres of singing. Lastly, I make sure my mask, or focus is intact. Pear-shaped tones!

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I'm pretty sure my original, or most pure tone has no vibrato in it, while other singers have vibrato in their smallest voices. So this may not apply to all singers, but I find that original tone with no added bells or whistles, make sure there's lot of air, but not too much pressure on the cords with that air, keep the support low and stay in that tiny mustard seed of pure tone. I also keep it at a certain dynamic level. There's a level of forte that I cannot cross, because the vibrato will take over.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I make sure everything is balanced. No pressure on cords, low support, good posture, and air always cushioning the note. The vibrato should spin, not wave the note around. I use mask, or focus and make sure my entire instrument is always being used in balance. That means from the bottom of my body cavity, to the top of my head.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

SARAH TANNEHILL: same as #5 and #6

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I am only vocally taxed when I push too much, or pull out of balance. If I do not sing with a nice forward focus, or if I become lazy with my support. I only become vocally tired when I sing a lot of opera.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I learned from myself and my teachers. What they say about solo singing, I apply to all singing. I adjust what they say to fit my specific needs with each genre. I also have learned a great deal by teaching high school students privately and being forced to explain how this intangible instrument works.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I believe that voice teachers are, in general, too protective of their own interests they have in their singers. All singers should learn how to manipulate their voices to fit other genres of music, other than just solo singing. #1 ~ to simply learn more about how the voice works, but more importantly, #2 ~ not many singers out there are going to "make it" in the biz without having to be somewhat flexible. Unless you're

Maria Callas, you're going to need a church job, an occasional oratorio gig, you name it. A lot of these teachers want to baby their students, and teach them to be "stars". These teachers need to BE the reality check for the students, and help them just be good singers, rather than focus on only one type of singing. It's impractical.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

SARAH TANNEHILL: I suggest that choral conductors dive more into teaching the supported diaphragm technique. Take the time. It's worth it. Also, explain the soft onset of vowels, so there aren't 8 sopranos coming in all over the place. A tiny puff of air will softly place that note, even high ones, right where you want it to be. Do choral conductors know that? Choral conductors should promote very soft singing, for the purpose of blend and finding a cleaner tone. This will also save the voice, so the singer does not get as tired.

To work alongside, voice teachers should KNOW what it's like to be a choral singer, and have vocal technique ideas to support both types of singing, rather than just saying, "It's hard. Don't do it." I am a better singer and teacher because I am experienced in all kinds of singing. I find success in my own studio when we work on all genres. We talk about the similarities and they learn much more about their voices because there are different issues and benefits in different styles of singing.

#### STEPHANIE MOORE

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

STEPHANIE MOORE: I have been singing in the last couple of years using some of the Estill teaching techniques. This has been quite an amazing change for me. In the past I had struggled to tone down my singing to fit into a choir. I have really learned to sing in a less harsh manner that allows me freedom with both types of singing. I can easily sing softly, but still have control over dynamics and blend by raising the back of my tongue and raising my soft palette. I am not using my stomach muscles as much or diaphragm. I was working hard at my breathing, it was becoming so labored, but I am trying to breathe normally and it is working. With less push of the stomach and breath, I am able to make the sound, still have the big sound, if I want it, and have control.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

STEPHANIE MOORE:

- i. Phonation – I have really had to struggle to tone back my natural singing voice to blend in with the other singers. Also, I have had to work with my habitual enunciation techniques, because I don't want to stick out.
- ii. Support and breath – I take a lot of liberties while singing with the choir. I breathe all of the time. I make sure to have a big breath at the end of a piece because the director tends to hold the last note for an extended time that if I wasn't prepared – there is no way that I could comply. Sometimes I can feel my upper torso muscles starting to tighten- this is when I am having a hard time controlling the amount of air flow. I try to rest, blow OUT the air and take a normal breath, not too big, and it helps me recover. I try to take my 'catch' breathes in a very unlikely spot, a few notes before the big note, everyone else takes it right before, or in the middle of a run. I feel that I also am pretty good about sneaking in and out of the line. Normal breathing is the key for me. If I try to take a big breath and control it, it is exhausting for me and my sound gets tight and strained.
- iii. Resonance – I have become more aware of my mouth and where the sound is beginning. I try to make space in my soft palette. Normal air flow makes movement and phrasing much easier to accomplish. I have a tendency to make a lot of sound, which I have to resist while I am in a choir setting. If I can control my air flow, I can also enrich my resonance by not pushing and letting the sound flow. Having control of the loudness of my voice also helps me add when I am trying to accentuate phrases and dynamic markings. I guess that I would say that this comes down to air flow also.
- iv. Dynamic – In the Estill techniques, I was taught how to anchor my voice. It wasn't difficult, but now I feel that I have much more control of the volume I produce. By adding a little more air, and stiffening my palette, or my jaw and head, I can increase the sound with minimal effort. It is harder to keep the sound going at a loud level, but most singing isn't loud for a long time. I am also able to release those areas and bring my volume down quickly. Estill really focuses on the quiet singing, which has been so very helpful for me.
- v. Articulation – Here, this is where I really drop the ball. Often, I don't articulate at all. There is so much articulation going on in the group, that I just let someone else do the consonants, and I concentrate on the vowel sounds. This is my confession!! I am working on it and when I know the absolutely correct time to put on a consonant, I do it, but if I am unsure at the end of the line I might back off. Being a solo singer, it is hard to back off from the habit of enunciating all of the syllables. Sometimes, in the choir that I sing with, they don't want strong consonants that I would normally use in solo singing. I write all over my music to remember what it is that is wanted.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

STEPHANIE MOORE: I would make similar adjustments if I was singing period music, or more popular music. It would be hard not to push or sing louder with musical theater

music or opera. I might use my consonants or emphasis on certain notes to help add some volume.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

STEPHANIE MOORE: There is a humming technique that is called sirening. This is very helpful in allowing me to choose how to attack what I am singing. I also enjoy singing on “oo”, this helps me have more line and flow in the phrasing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

STEPHANIE MOORE: With more raised soft palette singing and keeping my tongue high, I am not having as much vibrato in my voice. I am able to control it, somewhat. I can keep it in check in my lower and middle register, but sometimes it sneaks out on the high notes. I try hard to keep it in control so I don't overpower the soprano section and the choir. I have learned to sing controlled on the top notes using the Estill techniques. It seems that I am using my voice more in a humming fashion and not trying to project. It makes singing some high notes much more enjoyable and easy. Sometimes while singing the high notes, I do hum them, or siren. It is often as loud as they need me to be, and much easier for me to do.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

STEPHANIE MOORE: I feel that my different types of singing are starting to intergrate into one type of singing. I am able to make it louder or softer, brassier, or airy, but the whole premise for me is not pushing and stopping when it feels sore or tired. This also goes back to being in control of my volume, my breath, and air flow. This is impossible to do if you have an evening of hard music ahead of you, but learning to scale way back.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

STEPHANIE MOORE: It seems when I want to take out the vibrato I will I try to raise my tongue and stiffen my soft palette, I now find that this is easier to control than the vibrato itself. My vibrato is feeling more and more random and I feel that I tend to use it less.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

STEPHANIE MOORE: Singing high and soft has been very hard for me. My voice will just peter out, or stutter out. It is very embarrassing. I have a similar problem with I sing low. As I have aged, I find that I can't really sing much below middle c, and when I try,

it will crack and stutter out. I can no longer belt, something I could do when I was younger, but I haven't tried to do it much either.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

STEPHANIE MOORE: I was singing Rachmaninoff with my current choir and having such a difficult time. It calls for very high, controlled, quiet singing. I found myself unable to sing at all, sometimes even mouthing the words. This isn't much fun to do. I was having a very hard time pulling back the sound on my voice. We had a coach come in and help with the Estill method, and completely won me over. I have learned to make adjustment, I feel much more in control of my voice. I can be loud, I can be soft, I can be controlled and sing very high.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

STEPHANIE MOORE: I think that all singers, who have been trained, want to be the soloist, or the center of attention. There is a great deal to be learned and gained when you are part of a group and are really taught to work as a unit, something that most soloists struggle with. I wish there were a way to bring about the gloriousness of choral music and tone down the soloist image. There is a lot of opportunity for choral singers, but not as much of an opportunity for solo singing once you leave college. I wish that there were more emphasis in finding joy with your music, rather than feeling that you need to be in the spotlight. I also think that voice teachers, identify with their students, and want to pressure them to be in the spotlight- to get the right part, to act out the image. I wish that there were also more emphasis on what we, as singers, can do to promote music in our communities. I have known many singers who never sing anymore, because they just couldn't find a place to sing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

STEPHANIE MOORE: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?  
I would suggest not pushing the voice, not using the diaphragm as much, and learning to sing lighter. Learn to really listen to the other singers that you are singing with and try very hard not to be a soloist. As a soprano, learning not to punch the high notes, which means that you have a great deal of control, and float the notes more, working on blend and not sticking out. Maybe with the common use of microphones singers should be taught how to control their voice more, and not how loud they can be.

## TARA MIANULLI

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

TARA MIANULLI: Good Breathing techniques, using low and supported breath  
Use of bright vowels and consistent resonance placement  
Use of good posture and spinal alignment

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

TARA MIANULLI:

- i. Phonation – I try to use a more controlled, balanced onset of phonation that is timed to match others. In solo singing, it is more a breath/sing response. I sometimes find myself holding back onset in choral singing and I experience more back pressure at the folds due to singing extremely soft
- ii. Support/Breath – I use the same breath support for both, although since I am an alto in choir and a coloratura mezzo in my solo singing, I have more demands in this area in my solo singing due to the expanded range and flexibility required to navigate the fioratura.
- iii. Resonance – I adjust my resonance more in choral singing depending on the blend and sound required. I have a very resonant voice and sometimes have to work to darken it in a choral setting
- iv. Dynamic – I often sing softer in choral settings so as to not stick out of the group.
- v. Articulation – I adjust my articulations to fit with what the group and conductor are doing. In my solo singing, I am more overt because I have more artistic control over the sound that I am producing.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

TARA MIANULLI: Yes, sometimes. I never adjust to the point where I affect resonance or support of my singing when doing solo work. I will sometimes adjust the timbre of my voice and my use of stylistic devices such as ornamentation and I sometimes will change my vibrato to portray a more spoken quality, especially in recitative, because I frequently sing opera.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

TARA MIANULLI: My fioratura warm-ups are effective in getting me ready to sing in different styles because my voice must be flexible and change through several different placements. I do a series of arpeggios that range from a fifth to an octave plus a fifth at a rapid pace. I also like to use humming while lip buzzing to relieve pressure on the voice and free movement in the voice. I often find that I have a hard time switching ranges spontaneously. I have to warm up for the day either using my low range choral timbre or my lighter, brighter coloratura mezzo timbre in order to stay in that timbre while singing. This is because, ironically, I am required to sing much lower in my range chorally, and once I have opened up my high range (high G through high D) I tend to lose power in the bottommost notes in my range. I rarely use chest voice and so sometimes alto parts are too low for me to phonate. I also have to get my body ready to support my singing, and so I like to bend over the exercise ball or sing warm-ups while I am stretching on the floor.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

TARA MIANULLI: I modify my vibrato frequently in my choral singing, especially since I am singing in a choral setting lately than in solo. This is made easy for me due to the fact that I am singing in the alto range in choir. I have a well-developed middle range that is easy for me to produce and sustain. I could not modify my vibrato enough to be useful in many choral situations above the secondo passaggio. (for me, E flat and above). I have a big voice and it is difficult for me to sustain a straight tone without doing damage in my higher range. I have been an alto in choir through college, grad school, and now in a semi-professional group. All three groups required me to modify my vibrato on a consistent basis, but all my choral conductors made excellent choices of repertoire to show off the powerful voices in our groups and therefore concerts were varied enough to not be fatiguing. This occurred even for madrigal choir!

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

TARA MIANULLI: I maintain consistent breath support when modifying my technique and also I find that keeping energy up and posture consistent is very important. Because I am also a teacher, I find it more difficult to maintain healthy vocal technique when I am speaking than when I am singing, no matter what the style. Most importantly, when I have to make adjustments that take me outside of my comfort zone, I make sure to not oversing and to only produce the amount of sound that I can and still feel vocally free.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

TARA MIANULLI: I largely rely on the fact that I usually only need to adjust in my easy middle to upper middle range. I couldn't do it healthfully as a choral soprano even through most of my operatic training was as a lyric soprano. And even so, it is sometimes difficult to maintain a straight tone during extended long notes. I don't know how I do it, I just do. The main thing that I am conscious of is to place the note further

forward in my mouth, resonance wise, and to support with breath and feel the breath leaving me in a steady stream of forward moving energy. I also use slightly more cover.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

TARA MIANULLI: Yes. Inability to phonate when trying to make a note too straight or too soft. This happens when I have been singing too soft for too long in too high or low a tessitura. I suffer from more fatigue and less flexibility when I sing choral literature on occasion because it is difficult to sing the lower middle range every song, for the entire song, especially when I am not allowed to sing with vibrato or high enough to give my low range a break. This is especially a problem in early Renaissance music where the altos were formerly expected to be male. (Monteverdi kills) My throat often hurts when I am trying to maintain an even tone throughout the vocal line in straight tone. Also, I teach 6 middle school classes per day, and I am less able to phonate on time or straighten my tone when I have talked (or yelled) too much earlier in the day. I do suffer from teacher voice fatigue!

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

TARA MIANULLI: Mainly I figured it out on my own, but I did receive a good tip from my grad school choral conductor at CSU when he discovered that it was difficult for myself and several other altos to maintain a soft sustained tone. We were overbreathing and creating too much back pressure behind the vocal folds. We just took in less air and it solved the problem.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

TARA MIANULLI: Voice teachers and choral conductors both consider their training to be the most important. The voice has a finite number of minutes it can be used per day, and both types of teachers want all of them spent on their type of singing. Often, choral rehearsals are too long, and voice students are too overbooked to permit scheduling that makes sense. I often had an hour long voice lesson, followed immediately by a two-hour choral rehearsal, a short 30 minute break, and then an extensive opera rehearsal (up to 4 hours) afterwards. I have heard voice teachers argue that straight-tone choral singing would ruin an operatic voice and they often encouraged students to skip choral rehearsals or not to sing at them, despite the fact that participation in choir was required for the degree by the school. I have encountered choral directors who have a chip on their shoulders and are so defensive that they refuse to listen to students who tell them that they are uncomfortable with the vocal requirements of what they are singing and berate the students instead of helping them develop healthy techniques. The prime point of contention is straight tone vocal production. Other areas I have heard fought over are resonance/timbre, ornamentation/style, intonation and breathing technique. I have seen

almost bloody battles about the issue of whether sopranos in choir should sound like boys. It seems the fights over sopranos and tenors were the most contentious.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

TARA MIANULLI: Hmm. I have several different angles to approach this from since I am a private voice teacher, a choral conductor, and a professional singer all in one. Primarily, I would suggest that they impart to the student that they need to have many items in their bag of tricks. Allow students to express their concerns and really listen to them. I never had any trouble switching from choral to soloistic singing even in college because I was allowed to sing in different ranges for each. I believe that my choral experiences helped me to develop a marketable middle range that has been my calling card and advantage at times over other singers in finding work. It is helpful if the private voice teacher and the choral conductor can communicate and develop a plan of attack for different situations that a particular student is struggling with. It is of utmost importance that voice teachers and choral conductors acknowledge that each have a valid viewpoint and that both types of singing are important to producing a well rounded musician. I adore choral music and it has always been at the top of my list of most valued experiences, but I will put in a disclaimer here and state that I dislike directors whose choral philosophy is that of producing one choral “sound” to be used with everything. ( I also really don’t believe that adult women should be made to sound like boy choirs.) On the other hand, I do not think that singing with straight tone in choir will result in the total destruction of a students’ vocal potential. Choral directors should seek out a wide variety of repertoire that allows for the use of vibrato sometimes and has lines for all parts that they can sing in a more soloistic production (your altos especially will thank you.) Voice teachers could help by providing guidance in breath support techniques and modification techniques that singers can use in the choral rehearsal to reduce strain on the voice instead of demonizing the use of straight tone production. I believe that every style has its place and that it is useful for students to learn to use all the types of production that are possible for them effectively. I would also suggest that both choral conductors and voice teachers teach students how to recognize bad advice about vocal technique and to make decisions for themselves about what works for them. I don’t believe that every job they will have as a professional singer will be a perfect fit for them and they need to have teachers who will teach them to be confident in their own knowledge of their voices.

#### VIRGINIA SUBLETT

MATTHEW FERRELL: What healthy vocal techniques are common to choral and solo singing?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: All the physical aspects: breathing, posture/alignment, jaw/tongue positioning, open throat, etc.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal adjustments do you make to sing in a choral ensemble? Describe any adjustments you make in the following areas: Phonation, Support/Breath, Resonance, Dynamic, and Articulation.

VIRGINIA SUBLETT:

- i. Phonation—None
- ii. Support/Breath—None
- iii. Resonance—This would vary strongly from singer to singer, depending on the style of choral singing required and the singer's usual resonance choices. For my own part (soprano), I typically choose a resonance based on [u] or [o]: very cool, forward but not buzzy, for choral work. [a] can tend to spread, whereas [ɑ] can get too dark, forced or hooty in choral contexts. In a piece that requires some intensity, such as the Beethoven Ninth, you need to put steel into the sound: more [i] within the [o] space.
- iv. Dynamic—Probably some adjustments here, perhaps one dynamic level below what is written, depending on the size of the ensemble.
- v. Articulation—only as required by the style/time period or as requested by the conductor

MATTHEW FERRELL: Do you make similar adjustments when singing solo repertoire of different styles or time periods?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: Not too much, although with Romantic music I tend to use a warmer and fuller sound, with Baroque and new music, a leaner, pointier sound.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What vocal/physical exercises (warm-ups) assist in the execution of vocal adjustments?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: I can't think of anything specific. I like exercises that feature the [u] vowel, at least at the beginning of a rehearsal. Matching vowels is the key, in my opinion.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What is your experience in modifying vibrato?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: It's a complex topic. When I sing with period instrument ensembles, their lean, clear tone calls forth a similar sound from me. I think of the tone riding and bobbing on the flow of air, the placement gathering on the hard palate and teeth ridge in a little diamond point. I simply match what I hear. Same for new music. I never think of singing straight tone. It's easier to demonstrate face to face than to describe.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you maintain a healthy vocal technique for different styles of singing?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: The technique does not change.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How do you execute vibrato adjustments in a vocally healthy manner?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: See 5 & 6.

MATTHEW FERRELL: Have you encountered any vocal problems when executing specific vocal adjustments?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: No.

MATTHEW FERRELL: How did you learn to make appropriate vocal adjustments in a healthy manner? Did you teach yourself? Did you learn from teachers? Both?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: I learned by listening to period instruments and other singers, as well as by working with certain coaches who specialized in early music. None of my teachers worked in that area.

MATTHEW FERRELL: In the collegiate setting, what areas of contention, if any, have you witnessed between voice teachers and choral conductors?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: I have been fortunate in my university not to have encountered contention between the choral directors and the voice teachers. We work together to try to facilitate each other's work with the students, and always try to keep the students' best interests at the forefront of our decisions.

When I hear other voice teachers complain about their situations, it is usually about the choral director insisting on "straight tone" or a white, unsupported sound. I think the first is a terminology issue, while the second may be stylistic. When the second criticism is justified, it often has to do with the issue of "choral blend," which requires trained singers with beautiful voices to try to match untrained singers in their sections. Sometimes the singers try to restrain their voices so as not to "stick out" in their sections, which is in my opinion the worst and potentially most harmful technical choice they can make. Holding back the voice is always fatiguing because it almost always involves throat and tongue tension. I think voice teachers need to encourage their students to sing with their own voices in choirs, never to hold back or work overly hard to blend with untrained singers. Better to encourage (by example) the untrained singers to sing like the trained ones! However, it's also important to let the choral conductor know what you are telling your students, and never make it an "us vs. them" situation.

When choral directors complain, it is almost always about vibrato, or as they may call it, "wobble." I would encourage them to distinguish between the natural shimmer of a trained voice and the slow vibrato that often comes from a lack of support or a singer's effort to hold back the sound.

MATTHEW FERRELL: What pedagogical suggestions would you impart to choral conductors and voice teachers as they continue to teach alongside one another?

VIRGINIA SUBLETT: My primary bit of advice is that neither should assume that they know everything there is to know about singing. If each respects the other's ideas and keeps the lines of communication open, their students' education will be enriched.

For choral conductors, please stop asking for "straight tone," unless (I suppose) you are learning folk music from the Balkan states. Ask instead for a "pure, focused sound." The result will be much prettier, especially from your soprano section. "Straight tone" singing has two poles, both the result of tension: either a shrill, white, buzz-saw-like whine or an extremely fast vibrato/tremolo. It's all about terminology. Trust me on this one.

For voice teachers, ask what the choral conductors need from your students and strategize with them about how you can help the students achieve it. If it seems appropriate, offer to coach a sectional from time to time.

One of the larger issues that I think might be discussed (calmly!) is the amount of rehearsal time vs. the amount of time devoted to weekly lessons. I don't know when the tradition of daily choral rehearsals arose and how it became so entrenched in the curriculum, but it does not reflect the experience people will have as singers in choral ensembles once they graduate, which is at most one rehearsal a week (more, perhaps, during performance weeks). It reflects only the experience some music education students may have as directors of high school choral groups.

In my professional choral ensemble, we expect singers to be able to learn complex music fairly quickly on their own; no time at all is spent on learning notes. Once a fine young singer who had just received his bachelor's degree complained how hard it was, since in his choral experience, they had spent a full semester learning a program. So I think that is a problem.

## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

#### University of Miami

Perspectives on Choral and Solo Singing:  
Enhancing Communication Between Choral Conductors and Voice Teachers

**The following information describes the research study in which you are being asked to participate. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign if you agree to participate.**

#### PURPOSE:

The goal of this research is to generate valuable discussion regarding the opposing perspectives found in some academic circles with regard to proper vocal technique and training for choral and solo singing. In the collegiate world, students sometimes find themselves in the middle of conflicting vocal instruction from the voice teacher on the one hand and the choral director on the other. The document will seek answers from professional singers and teachers of singing who have experience in ensemble and solo singing.

#### PROCEDURE:

The survey will be sent via email and the responses collected will be used for research in the author's doctoral essay, "Perspectives on Choral and Solo Singing: Enhancing Communication Between Choral Conductors and Voice Teachers." The informed consent form will be mailed or faxed to all participants for their signatures. By signing and returning the informed consent form, the participant agrees to allow his/her responses to be published in the essay.

#### RISKS:

No foreseeable risks or discomfort are anticipated for you by participating. Because this research is being conducted through email, security of your correspondence cannot be guaranteed.

#### BENEFITS:

Although, no benefits can be promised to you by participating in this study, the information gathered and distributed later is intended to bring useful discussion to this controversial subject.

#### ALTERNATIVES:

You have the alternative to not participate in this study. You may stop participating any time or you can skip any questions you do not want to answer. Nothing will happen to you as a result of halting participation.

**COSTS:**

No costs are anticipated for you to participate in this study.

**PAYMENT TO PARTICIPATE:**

No monetary payment will be awarded due to participation in this study.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The participants' identity will be made public unless he/she indicates to the principle investigator that they would like their information to be kept confidential. No identification numbers, phone numbers, or email addresses will be included in the final document.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

Your participation is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw from the study.

**OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

The researcher will answer any questions you may have regarding the study and will give you a copy of the consent form after you have signed it. If you have any questions about the study please contact Matthew Ferrell, co-investigator, at 610-724-8529 or [matthewferrell1@gmail.com](mailto:matthewferrell1@gmail.com) or Dr. Donald Oglesby, principal investigator, at 305-284-4162 or [doglesby@miami.edu](mailto:doglesby@miami.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office (HSRO) at 305-243-3195.

Please print a copy of this consent document for your records.

**I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I am entitled to a copy of this form after it has been read and signed.**

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**Signature of participant**

**Date**

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**Signature of person obtaining consent**

**Date**

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