THE CHOIR SCHOOL OF THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR:
HISTORY AND CURRICULUM
1999–2013

by
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ABSTRACT

The distinctiveness of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (MTC) as a unique American choral ensemble is revealed in a persistent paradox that both underscores its history and sets it apart from other choral organizations. By virtue of its widely distributed television broadcasts, recording projects, and touring schedules, the MTC essentially exists within a professional musical environment, yet the singers who participate are actually a collection of amateur volunteers.

The tension between amateur skill levels and mounting professional musical demands exposed a need to improve the quality of the amateur singers and their preparation for Choir participation. To this end, the MTC instituted a “Choir School,” alongside other institutional changes in 1999, to serve as a training mechanism for promising singers. Since its inception, the Choir School has experienced changes in curriculum content and course format.

The researcher documents an important undertaking in the Choir’s history and preserves the instructional efforts of Choir School faculty. The story of the Choir School is a chronological historical document and also includes a survey of curricular material. This study includes an examination of the following five general areas:

1. The institutional climate and context for the creation of the Choir School
2. Previous attempts at training MTC singers
3. A chronological history of the present day Choir School
4. Impact of the Choir School program on the organization
5. Implications for other community choirs and secondary choral education
Concepts such as evolution and adaptation, the role of musical literacy, musical independence and “responsible singing,” and alignment were emerging themes in the narrative of this study. Elements of this custom-designed choral curriculum, such as preventative score marking and training singers in choral ensemble skills, may provide applications for other volunteer community or church choruses, collegiate choirs, or secondary choral classrooms.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study topic is an outgrowth of the combined experiences of the author’s work as a choral music educator and singer in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (MTC). Over time, through work as both a conductor and a singer in the choir, she wrestled with philosophical questions such as: What constitutes excellent choral singing and what skills are required of high quality choral singers? Why is there not more written concerning what elements constitute choral ensemble skills and choral-specific curriculum? What is the relationship between musicianship skills and high quality choral performance?

As a teacher, observations of other choral colleagues, as well as personal experience, revealed a recurring pattern related to choral curriculum design. When asked to define, improve, or justify the content of their choral curriculum, many choral teachers simply resorted to implementing more sight-singing materials, adding music theory topics, or talking about the history of a piece of music in rehearsal. Other teachers insisted that students would receive choral curriculum simply by participation in a performance-based class. As a university instructor, the author noticed that even students from successful choral programs could not report the specifics of what they learned, even though there was an established record of choral performing success. Often, when the subject came up in casual conversation with colleagues, the author noted that many instructors could not define the tasks and content they wished their students to master.
beyond creating successful performances. A general investigation into choral teaching resources revealed that many books present topics related to choral singing such as conducting gesture, audition procedures, vocal technique, finding age-appropriate literature, or general preparations for secondary educators, but not specific to choral singer skills. The author hoped to find resources that would support the teaching of choral-specific curriculum material. Instead, she found books focused on other specialty topics, books that were too broad in scope, or books that were meant as general textbooks for choral methods courses. Resources for the singers themselves were limited; of those resources, most focused directly on musicianship training for singers or were designed as a choral textbook series for use with a specific anthology.

As a singer in the MTC, the author also noticed a discrepancy between the content of the training program then in place and the recurring tasks required of singers each week in rehearsal. Though much of the Choir School experience emphasized sight singing and basic musicianship, the reasons a conductor might stop in rehearsal had little, if anything, to do with those topics. The conductors coached such topics as ensemble precision, vowel uniformity, or creating a particular tonal color, yet singers spent a large part of the required sixteen weeks of training focusing on their ability to sight-sing with accuracy. Although the skill of sight singing is a quality desirable for new singers, the growing chasm between course content and weekly rehearsal experiences reflected the issues the author encountered related to choral curriculum development with other choral educators.

To the author, it seemed as though a third area of choral-specific topics might be required to more effectively train singers as effective choral musicians with specific focus
for the unique demands of the MTC. These observations and experiences ultimately led to the author’s affiliation with the MTC Choir School. In preparation for this assignment, the author discovered that no single specific choral resource would completely serve the needs of this particular organization; a custom-designed training course would be required to serve the needs of this choral institution.

Mormon Tabernacle Choir Background

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir is a volunteer musical organization operated and overseen by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Choir began in 1847 as a simple group of newly settled emigrants who assembled at the direction of Brigham Young to provide music for local worship meetings. The organization has grown to its present day configuration involving almost 400 singers and additional ensembles within the performing arts “family.” Consisting of an enormous force of volunteer staff and performers, the organization is unique among choral organizations for its size, mission, and performing schedule.

The MTC announced institutional changes in 1999 that resulted in two additional performing entities affiliated with the Choir: (1) a volunteer orchestra called “Orchestra at Temple Square,” and (2) a training choir comprised of newly auditioned provisional singers and volunteers from the larger MTC. Known formally as the “Temple Square Chorale,” this new combination of singers gathered each year in preparation for a concert accompanied by the Orchestra at Temple Square. The annual performance is a partial fulfillment of the training requirements for all new singers. In March 2005, a third ensemble was added to the Choir organization, resulting in a twenty-eight-person handbell ensemble called the “Bells on Temple Square.”
Less visible to the general public, but still a significant institutional change, was the creation of the Temple Square Chorale, simultaneously accompanied by the creation of a formal “Choir School,” designed to assist in the training and preparation of newly admitted singers. The original program was conceived as a recurring academic course accompanying the four-month training period required of all newly auditioned singers. Following the model of a sixteen-week semester, new singers met twice each week for two hours. On Thursday evenings, the class covered material relating to the academic aspects of choral singing preparation, such as music theory, music literacy, vocal training, choral techniques, and related institutional information. These classes were dedicated to more formal study such as lectures and laboratory experiences, and the other evening each week was set aside for applied study in the context of Temple Square Chorale rehearsals. At the conclusion of the academic class, both singing and written assessments were conducted to determine a provisional singer’s official acceptance into the MTC.

To become a member of the Temple Square Chorale and participate in the MTC Choir School, prospective singers experience a several-month-long process from their initial application to final acceptance. The audition process itself involves several phases. First, the singer sends a recording of his or her own voice, following a list of specific instructions. Depending on their desired voice part assignment, singers record a combination of vocalise exercises as well as a specific hymn. Both musical directors listen to the recordings of all applicants and create a list of singers invited to move on to the next audition. These singers are then invited to participate in a formal written exam to determine elements of musical aptitude and music fundamentals such as music theory and music notation. This particular portion of the process involves written and listening
exams in several parts, each scored separately. After averaging the scores on all portions of the written exam, singers with an acceptable mean average are next invited to attend a live audition with the Choir directors. Singers who make the final phase of the singing audition are asked to sing a hymn of their choosing. They also sight-read various musical examples such as short phrases or a particular voice part in a new hymn as part of a solo audition. After considering abilities at all phases of this process, directors make selections relative to the number of openings in each voice part. Singers also undergo an interview with Choir leadership to determine if their personal schedules and commitment are suited to the Choir’s demanding schedule.

All MTC singers volunteer their time, attending a two-hour rehearsal each Thursday evening and Sunday morning rehearsals in preparation for the live recording of their weekly radio and television broadcast, *Music and the Spoken Word*. During concert weeks, recording projects, and in preparation for tours and special events, singers will be asked to attend extra rehearsals as needed. Once the leadership and directors agree on a particular singer’s fitness for the organization, singers are notified of their provisional status and are invited to participate in both the Temple Square Chorale rehearsals as well as the Choir School from January to May of each year.

It is in the Choir School that the organization is able to establish the required standard of behavior, review policies and procedures, and provide the necessary musical training to effectively participate in the MTC. Over its thirteen-year history, the course content has evolved in relationship to changes in directorship, technological advances, and new priorities from Choir and Church leadership. Because of its continued success in
preparing amateur singers to meet demanding musical standards, the training program may serve as a model for other choral organizations.

Purpose of the Study

This study presents an overview of the Choir School of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from its formal beginnings in 1999 to 2013. The goal is to recount the history, related curriculum components, the overall evolution of the program during this period, and to document the impact on both Choir singers and the organization itself. Specifically, the scope of this study includes the following research questions:

1. The institutional climate and context for the creation of the Choir School program:
   A. What events preceded the formation of the CS?
   B. Who was responsible for the formation of the program?
   C. What were the objectives for the formation of the program?
   D. What events or discoveries related to the institutional need for the program?

2. Previous attempts at training singers in the Choir:
   A. What educational efforts were made prior to the formation of the Choir School?
   B. What methods of instruction and materials were used during these attempts?

3. A chronological history of the present-day Choir School program:
   A. What comprises the curriculum content?
   B. Who are the members of the instructional and administrative staff?
   C. What kinds of materials are used and/or created for the Choir School program?
   D. How do the directives of Choir Leadership affect the curriculum content?

4. Impact of the Choir School program on the organization:
   A. How has the curriculum evolved in relationship to changing directors?
   B. What changes, if any, have occurred in the preparation level of new singers?
   C. What have been the Directors’ perspectives of the impact of the Choir School program?
   D. What changes will be necessary to the future success of the program?
5. Implications for other community choirs and/or secondary choral education:

   A. How might a program like this one benefit other related choral organizations?
   B. What discoveries and/or successes of the program might impact the body of choral pedagogy knowledge?

Significance of the Study

Although public relations material on the MTC is readily available, the body of academic writing on the MTC is somewhat small and most often focuses on the directors themselves or trends in repertoire and programming, as discussed later in the literature review. The establishment of the Choir School program in 1999 was documented locally in newspaper articles in connection with the other MTC organizational changes. Except for internal correspondence, there is no formal record of the Choir School history, structure, instructors, curriculum content, program design, or impact on the MTC organization itself.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir is a well-known choral organization with an otherwise extensively documented history as it relates to the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Choir’s contributions as an icon in American choral music. Still, its position inside the choral community is peculiar in that it does not directly exhibit the conventions of a large, professional chorus, a large community choir, or a large church chorus. Nor is it an educational institution that exists primarily to serve music education to its singers. The organization of a formal procedure for the training of amateur singers reflected a specific need within the MTC organization and a pragmatic attempt to fulfill that need. The result was a significant effort by instructors and staff to improve the contribution and quality of the amateur singers who formed the ensemble.
This study serves as an effort to record and preserve these contributions and illuminate an otherwise unrecorded portion of the history of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

Clearly, the MTC is unique from other choral organizations in purpose, mission, and organizational content. However, information about the design, content, impact, and effectiveness of the program contributes to the body of knowledge concerning general choral pedagogy, training for amateur singers, or programs for other volunteer community choirs. Although knowledge of the training program is limited in terms of public relations and promotional materials, both the MTC office secretaries and present Choir School Director have fielded several inquiries about the program itself, whether the materials are available anywhere, and how one could learn more about their training procedures. Requests such as these confirm interest in the details of the training program and indicate that aspects of the Choir School program may provide a model for other choral organizations. It may also prompt other studies and research on the Choir School itself, or generate other similar practices and programs for community, church, or secondary choral organizations.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 is an outline of the purpose and significance of the study as it relates to issues of preservation for the organization itself, general choral pedagogy, training for amateur singers, and possible models for other choral organizations. Chapter 2 is a discussion of literature relevant to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, other choral organizations, and general choral pedagogy materials. The variety of choral materials available at that time did not represent complete, useable material for the pragmatic needs of the MTC in their Choir School. As such, the Choir School required customization to
meet the unique organizational needs of the MTC. Chapter 3 includes the methodology for the research, including data collection and procedures for the study. Chapter 4 is a survey of early attempts at singer training in the history of the MTC. Internal organizational considerations and the climate surrounding the formation of the school are discussed in Chapter 5, followed by a narrative that explains the chronology of the Choir School. The in-service program for current Choir members and future planning is also discussed. Chapter 6 is an exploration of the actual curriculum content used in all three phases of the program. Chapter 7 includes a summary of the findings, a discussion, implications for other community and church organizations, and a conclusion.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature for a history of the Choir School of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir falls under three general subject headings: (1) writings specific to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, (2) literature related to other choral organizations, and (3) resources related to choral music teaching. The chief challenges to the present review include a lack of pre-existing studies of the MTC Choir School program and the fact that much of the material published about the Choir is not scholarly. Existing literature provides historical context for the MTC, as well as general references to the Choir School in press releases and official websites. Until now, there have been no formal studies of Choir School records, contents, history, evolution, or impact. Literature related to the history of the organization itself, conductor biographies, and pieces performed by the MTC comprise the available resources.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

The most frequently encountered writing on the MTC includes condensed histories, quotations, and photographs of the Choir in “coffee table” books, usually written in commemoration of an anniversary of the Choir. More informal than scholarly, these books usually include personal vignettes from singers, historical surveys of the various conductors and organists, reports of touring successes, and celebratory remarks
by notable personalities. Uses for these types of collections include the promotion of the Choir for commercial or cultural purposes, gathering historical chronologies of the choir, understanding the experience of a singer, placing the Choir in cultural contexts, learning about the repertoire, or understanding changes in directorship or in the general organization. *America’s Choir* by Heidi Swinton is the most recent publication,\(^1\) commemorating the Choir’s seventy-fifth anniversary of radio broadcasting. The scope of this text is broad, covering everything from touring to volunteerism to the Tabernacle as a building and its organ. Artistically presented, Swinton’s book includes beautiful photography and chapters organized by their titles, which are derived from significant hymn lyrics. Earlier versions of this same kind of publication are also available. These include Gerald Peterson’s *More Than Music: The Mormon Tabernacle Choir* and *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir* by Jeffrey Calman.\(^2,3\) Both books offer general historical information along with photos, quotes from singers, conductors, and fans—tributes suitable for a golden anniversary celebration. The two 1979 publications commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Choir. Calman’s book includes a list of past and present Choir members as well as a collection of fourteen significant hymns and anthems related to the Choir’s history. The sheet music is published alongside other illustrations and photographs providing additional musical content. J. Spencer Cornwall, principal


conductor of the MTC from 1935 to 1957, wrote another historical portrait of the Choir.\textsuperscript{4} He provides his own commemorative portrait and perspective on the choir’s history in \textit{A Century of Singing}. This work includes rare glimpses into issues surrounding the logistical function of the Choir as well as Cornwall’s philosophy concerning choral tone and his personal vision for the institution.

A few other memorial books focus specifically on the conductor, the organs, or the performing facilities for the Choir. Vicki Alder’s portrait, \textit{Under My Baton: Richard P. Condie with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir}, is an example of a commemorative book that details MTC history during the tenure of Spencer Cornwall’s successor, Richard P. Condie.\textsuperscript{5} Alder recounts the accomplishments of the Choir as well as Condie’s contributions as a vocal pedagogue. Condie’s understanding of vocal technique and ability to teach amateur singers using effective analogies is discussed. His preference for a tone appropriate to the Romantic Italian art song tradition resulted in a sharp departure from Cornwall’s preference for the “purity of children’s voices.”\textsuperscript{6} When asked about his philosophy of choral tone and vocal production, Condie explained, “I was not trying to get a straight tone from them; I did want a good blend, but I wanted a sound with warmth and quality—solo quality.”\textsuperscript{7} Singers who experienced Condie’s rehearsal strategies and approaches to vocal technique share their perspectives in Alder’s book.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{4}{J. Spencer Cornwall, \textit{A Century of Singing: The Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir} (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1958).}
\footnotetext{5}{Vicki Alder, \textit{Under My Baton: Richard P. Condie with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir} (Salt Lake City, UT: Promontory Point Publishing, 2008).}
\footnotetext{6}{Ibid., 43.}
\footnotetext{7}{Ibid., 44.}
\end{footnotes}
John Longhurst, retired senior organist, discusses the concept, design, and construction of the organ at the LDS Conference Center, which is the second home of the MTC. Longhurst also offers insight into the performing facility that houses the organ and serves as the venue for many of the Choir’s performances. The book includes general history, along with photos, stories, and quotes that detail the decade-long planning of the organ construction. An audio CD accompanies this text and includes narratives by the organ builder. In his second chapter, Longhurst provides historical context for the MTC, situates Mormon music within the cultural parameters of the nineteenth century, and discusses music as it relates to Mormon theology.

Another conductor’s biography, though not in “coffee table” book style, is The Children Sang by Ray Bergman. Bergman chronicled the life of Evan Stephens, an early and highly influential MTC conductor. Details included in this semischolarly text provide context for the choir’s history during its formative years and contain references to the first substantive choral training offered by the Choir. Stephens, who authored several singing primers, was known for being an itinerant singing instructor for local youth and also for encouraging extra effort by singers in the Choir, augmented by additional instruction. His influence as a local music educator reached thousands of community members through a series of musical projects and concert performances, as well as a variety of class offerings designed to involve local youth. His collaborations often involved hundreds of singers at a time, and he relished the concept of large, massed

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8John Longhurst, Magnum Opus: The Building of the Schoenstein Organ at the Conference Center (Salt Lake City, UT: Mormon Tabernacle Choir, 2009).

choirs in concert. Under his leadership, the MTC increased in membership size, improved the quality of the musical product, and took its first steps toward national recognition.

Other histories focus specifically on the memoirs of Choir travel and touring, such as *Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir Goes to Europe: 1955*, by Warren Thomas. General musical histories of the Salt Lake City area often include references to the Choir in relationship to other organizations. Marcus Smith provides this contrast by examining local musical activities that occurred *outside* the MTC, especially in the local oratorio society. Also readily available are newspaper articles with concert advertisements or reviews, announcements, press releases, and other local newsworthy items. These artifacts abound especially in local Salt Lake City newspapers or in the cities and venues that host the Choir’s now biennial concert tours. Archival information related to Choir activities includes official MTC correspondence and meeting minutes. Less formal, but still authorized by the MTC is *Keeping Tab*, the informal newsletter of the organization.

Scholarly writing on the MTC is comprised primarily of dissertation studies, with topics ranging from detailed historical information about the Choir to comprehensive biographies of past and present conductors. Of these, two dissertations focus on critical personalities and their influence on the MTC Choir School Program. In his study, Lyle Archibald discusses the expansive and unprecedented twenty-five-year leadership of Jerold Ottley. Ottley’s contributions include the first formal efforts at choral instruction

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for the MTC. Archibald’s concluding pages are the first references to today’s MTC Choir School. Archibald completes his biographical sketch with references to Jerold Ottley’s return to his “educational roots,” noting that Ottley himself authored and taught the first version of the MTC Choir School upon his retirement. Archibald cites several critical innovations and improvements to the MTC under Ottley’s leadership, most notably the “improved musicianship and vocal skills” which occurred under his directorship. In addition, Ottley implemented several policy changes concerning age requirements and leave of absence programs for Choir singers. Archibald also interviews Craig Jessop (MTC conductor 1999–2009) and notes some of the circumstances of the origins of the 1999 changes to the MTC. In this study, the formation of the Choir School program and the Orchestra at Temple Square are referenced from both Ottley’s and Jessop’s perspectives.

In his master’s thesis, Brett Stewart contrasts the early conductor Evan Stephens with Mack Wilberg, the current Musical Director. Stewart’s treatment includes short biographical information, compositional output, musical writing styles, and musical leadership of both personalities. He also describes the influence of both composers on music-making inside the Mormon Church. Stewart highlights the commonalities of both historical and present-day contributions of each influential conductor by selecting and analyzing a sampling of their musical compositions. A unique aspect of his overall discussion is the exploration of the influence each conductor had on the culture and

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trends of music in the Mormon Church. Stephens’s contributions are acknowledged by the inclusion of several of his compositions in the present LDS (Latter-day Saint) hymnbook. Wilberg’s musical influence is evidenced by the wide use of his choral arrangements, especially contemporary treatments of older LDS hymns, many of which are used in the LDS Church’s Annual and Semiannual General Conferences. A much earlier master’s thesis by Mary Musser Barnes attempts to detail the history of the Choir, but is loosely organized. With a 1936 publication date, it is less useful than many of other more recent histories. Still, Barnes presents information related to the Choir’s choral repertoire at the turn of the century.

Writing much more recently, Christopher Redfearn summarizes the choral philosophies, leadership, and instructional strategies of the recent Musical Director, Craig Jessop. The historic institutional changes that resulted in the formation of the MTC Choir School occurred directly as a result of Jessop’s leadership and his formal request for the institution of the Choir School. Redfearn presents information on the core of Jessop’s instructional style through a series of interviews, lecture transcriptions, and rehearsal observations. Redfearn also describes Jessop’s unique career pathway before and after his appointment as director of the MTC. Many of Jessop’s various connections and experiences with Robert Shaw are discussed as they relate to his later leadership of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{Mary Musser-Barnes, “An Historical Survey of the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (MA thesis, State University of Iowa, 1936).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{Christopher Redfearn, “The Choral Philosophies and Techniques of Craig Jessop” (DA diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2012).}\]
the MTC. Interviews with Jessop reveal another brief mention of the Choir School and the ideas surrounding its original conception.\textsuperscript{17}

Studies that focus on the repertoire of the Choir include Fern Denise Gregory’s 1984 dissertation.\textsuperscript{18} She relates information specific to J. Spencer Cornwall’s tenure and also provides larger historical context for the Choir during that time. Under Cornwall, the Choir “performed its first stereo recordings, first television appearance, and first movie soundtracks.”\textsuperscript{19} Her document focuses specifically on the choral repertoire from that time period, comparing Cornwall’s and Condie’s literature selections, and providing a descriptive survey of ninety-eight arrangements by Cornwall. In his dissertation, Mark Porcaro traces the increasingly secular repertoire performed by the Choir from 1949 to 1992. Porcaro writes about the changing cultural climates, musical, and administrative decision making that affected this trend.

In a scholarly work that emphasizes sacred song in America, scholar Stephen Marini references the MTC, but only briefly, as one of several topics represented in his book.\textsuperscript{20} Author Michael Hicks includes a brief examination of the Choir’s history in his book \textit{Mormonism and Music}.\textsuperscript{21} Hicks provides a quick but detailed chronology of the Choir’s history by outlining the successive conductors in the context of the MTC history. Hicks also combines information about national cultural climates, administrative

\textsuperscript{17}Redfearn, “Craig Jessop,” 31.


\textsuperscript{19}Fern Gregory, “J. Spencer Cornwall,” iii.

\textsuperscript{20}Stephen A. Marini, \textit{Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture} (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003.)

decision-making within the LDS Church, trends in American music history, and perceptions of the MTC during these time periods. He creates a well-balanced picture of the Choir in connection with the development of Mormonism.

Other loosely related dissertations or academic writing include biographies on the Tabernacle organists, such as Alexander Schreiner. Daniel Frederick Berghout details Schreiner’s biography as well as his writings, musical compositions, and information related to the MTC broadcasts of *Music and the Spoken Word*, in which he frequently performed.22 His performance repertoire and touring schedules are also discussed. Limited scholarly work on the Salt Lake Tabernacle itself is also available. In a 2005 dissertation, Aaron McArthur researches the importance of “tabernacles” in general as centers of religious and social importance within Mormon communities.23 The role of the Tabernacle on Temple Square is discussed, but only within the context of other religious buildings.

Jay Slaughter discusses music training practices, and materials for use within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in his dissertation.24 Slaughter discusses music education within Mormon culture and explores various aspects of musical training. Slaughter mentions music-training practices within local congregations, Church-owned universities, and the Tabernacle Choir. The Tabernacle Choir is only mentioned briefly in relationship to what kind of support Church leaders were offering to the Choir. The study


24Jay Leon Slaughter, “Role of Music in the Mormon Church, School, and Life” (EdD diss., Indiana University, 1964).
covers a chronological scope of music in worship from ancient scriptural beginnings to the early days of the Mormon Church to modern practices in the 1960s. William Purdy examines general music making within Mormon culture in the early days of the Church from 1830 to 1876 in his dissertation study.²⁵ Purdy places a larger emphasis on music education, on early and influential music educators, and discusses community music making including bands and music in local theaters. Many of the personalities discussed in this dissertation are local music leaders and teachers with ties to the Tabernacle Choir, such as George Careless, Charles J. Thomas, and Ebenezer Beesley. Purdy also examines music literature, songs from the time period, and the development of Mormon psalmody and hymnody.

Brian Bentley discusses the status of Mormon choral music in the twentieth century.²⁶ Although his study focuses specifically on the music of former Tabernacle organist Robert Cundick, he addresses issues of music training within the LDS church with short discussions on the MTC, music education in church-sponsored schools, and music training for local music worship needs. In his discussion of the MTC, Bentley includes a list of LDS-authored hymns that also appear on Choir recordings.²⁷

One dissertation relates issues of music training but in relationship to the study of children’s music within the Mormon Church. Colleen Karnas-Haines investigates the


²⁷Ibid., 15.
history of the songbooks used in teaching young children in weekly worship meetings.\textsuperscript{28} The methods used to teach these are also discussed. The author devotes a portion of the study to investigating the relationship of music to various aspects of Mormon life, and the MTC receives a small mention. The author explains that because LDS hymnody is only a small portion of the literature output of the Tabernacle Choir, “the Mormon Tabernacle Choir recordings should not be viewed as representative of the LDS musical culture.”\textsuperscript{29}

Relatively little scholarly writing on the MTC is available, and it is mostly limited to conductor biographies, examination of literature, and related topics such as the buildings on Temple Square, or the organs. Many of the above-mentioned scholarly studies on music training within the Mormon Church include insights into the larger areas of music training, music education, and music for use in LDS worship services. Of these, most contain short references to the MTC as a peripheral discussion within their study. In some cases, these studies provide context for understanding the cultural background of the singers who choose to audition for the MTC. All of these studies incorporate a general perspective on the evolution and place of choral music in Mormon life. Still, the extant literature does not provide direct information about the current issues surrounding the challenges of training amateur singers for participation in today’s Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Scholarly and nonscholarly histories of the MTC, as well as dissertation biographies of MTC conductors, comprise the literature that is most relevant to the present study.


\textsuperscript{29}Karnas-Haines, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/Mormon Children’s Music,” 32.
Related Choral Organizations

Symphonic and University Choirs

The MTC’s position in the choral community is unique in that it does not wholly conform to traditional definitions of a community, church, or other volunteer choral ensembles. The extant literature about other choral organizations is helpful in understanding how the MTC compares to other similarly sized choirs. Related organizations include large choirs, university choirs, children’s choirs, boy choir/choir school programs, community choral groups, and church choirs.

Keith Raessler briefly summarizes the MTC in an article on the history of choral music.\(^{30}\) The information is succinct—only a page long—but describes the MTC as “probably the most nationally recognized choir.”\(^ {31}\) This short sketch also mentions the formation of the Orchestra at Temple Square as an important institutional change. Raessler also mentions other important historical choral organizations and conductors such as Westminster Choir College, St. Olaf, and the important American choral leader Robert Shaw. Although the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is a “widely recognized institution of American culture,” other large volunteer choruses enjoy a presence in American music-making.\(^ {32}\) Scholarly writing on these symphonic and university ensembles is available in the form of books, articles, and dissertation studies.

The Atlanta Symphony Chorus, founded by Robert Shaw, is likely the chorus most comparable to the MTC. Singers in the Atlanta Symphony Chorus are also adult


\(^{31}\)Ibid., 58.

\(^{32}\)Ibid.
volunteers. Their repertoire is comprised of the choral symphonic canon as well as commissioned works. Interestingly, Craig Jessop, a former MTC conductor, studied and performed with Robert Shaw in various volunteer and professional choruses. The Atlanta Symphony Chorus does not, however, share the religious mission and weekly television broadcast schedule, which is unique to the MTC. One dissertation study examined the impact of Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on the surrounding area’s educational climate.\textsuperscript{33} Shaw’s appointment as director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra was the beginning of many significant choral-orchestral collaborations that would later involve a resident chorus. Earlene Decker Brasher provides biographical information on Shaw and cites several articles on Shaw’s choral influence in her literature review. Brasher discusses the impact of Shaw’s work in a specific geographic location as well as the 1967 development of the Atlanta Symphony Chamber Chorus, which was the predecessor of the present day chorus.

The Chicago and Dallas Symphony Choruses are other examples of auditioned, adult choirs with paid positions and/or a combination of paid and volunteer singers. Stanley Livengood details a history of the Chicago Symphony Chorus in a 2001 dissertation.\textsuperscript{34} The author chronicles the contributions of Founding Director Margaret Hillis to current conductor Duain Wolfe by following concert programs and choral events to the year 2000. The study also includes a description of staff positions, the policies that allow both paid and volunteer singers to participate, and the connection between the

\textsuperscript{33}Earlene Decker Brasher, "The Contributions of Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra to the Educational and Cultural Climate of Atlanta" (PhD diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 1988).

Chicago Symphony Chorus and Orchestra. Livengood’s history is more scholarly than the previously listed commemorative histories, written to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the chorus. Interestingly, although several authors have written the history of Margaret Hillis, there is no extant literature on the history of the chorus itself. In his study, Livengood also highlights seven years of leadership by Duain Wolfe, who has been recognized for his work in outreach and educational programs.

Aside from their differences in purpose, other differences between these symphonic choirs and the MTC are the skill level of the singers and the distinction between volunteer and paid status. For instance, the Atlanta Symphony Chorus requires a classical art song or aria as part of its audition process. The training required to prepare an art song or aria as opposed to a simple hymn presents a disparity in the assumptions of training for incoming singers. As such, interested singers in those locations will likely include a higher percentage of more formally trained musicians. Generally, the skill level of an amateur singer in the MTC does not reflect formal musical study or a college music degree. On the matter of paid singers, organizations such as the Chicago Symphony Chorus do contract their singers and allow for compensation in various positions such as section leader. The MTC does not employ paid section leaders or singers.

Large university choruses that reflect a particular religious mission are found within religiously affiliated institutions, such as St. Olaf College, Pacific Lutheran University, Concordia College, and Brigham Young University, to name a few. An


example of a renowned nonreligious, large university with an emphasis on choral singing is Westminster Choir College of Princeton, New Jersey. In each case, information relative to the choir’s history and mission inside the university is available directly from university websites and other historical documentation in a variety of dissertations, books, and articles. St. Olaf and Westminster are commonly cited as representative college choral programs with long-standing traditions that have influenced “schools of choral tone” as defined by Howard Swan.  

Two histories of the St. Olaf Choir provide context for the development of this influential collegiate ensemble. In his 1921 account, Eugene Simpson depicts the collective community of Norwegian settlers, their musical culture, and the efforts of the College to support a music program for its campus. More recently, Joseph Shaw, a religion professor at St. Olaf, was invited by the music department to author a full history of the St. Olaf Choir. Shaw builds on the work of Simpson, bringing contemporary information about the university and its choral program development into the discussion. Anton Armstrong discusses the impact and influence of F. Melius Christiansen, the founding director of the St. Olaf Choir. In his article, he explores both biographical information and commentary on Christiansen’s philosophy of choral tone, preferences for straight-tone singing, instructional strategies, repertoire, and audition procedures.

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39 Joseph Shaw, The St. Olaf Choir: A Narrative (Minneapolis, MN: St. Olaf College, 1997).

Armstrong also discusses Christiansen’s impact on contemporary choral programs, especially in the Midwestern United States.

Joseph Beck’s article examines the Westminster Choir tradition through its recording legacy and also discusses the influence of conductor John Finley Williamson.41 Beck also includes a useful discography and a discussion of choral tone. Just as the MTC’s choral tone differed under Cornwall and Condie, Williamson’s concept of choral tone was markedly different from Christiansen’s approach. Williamson’s instruction produced a more soloistic sound, emphasizing the development of the individual vocal instrument. This philosophy created an emphasis on the “tremolo” and sometimes resulted in complaints about intonation problems because of obscured pitches.42 Today, under four conductors, Westminster Choir College offers a program with eight choral ensembles, each suited to a particular age, skill, or emphasis on choral repertoire.43

Some authors present comparative studies of these historical choirs. Leonard Van Camp compares the choirs at Northwestern University, St. Olaf College, and Westminster by examining their historical origins and how the choral ensembles were formed.44 Van Camp also investigates aspects of the a cappella choral singing tradition. Other studies include comparisons of evolving choral sound or the general philosophies of choral tone.


in these various ensembles.\footnote{Alan Zabriskie, “Evolution of Choral Sound of the St. Olaf Choir and the Westminster Choir” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2010).} In his dissertation, Alan Zabriskie examines the varied choral sounds between Westminster and St. Olaf choirs. He offers additional detail by reviewing the historic descriptions of the sounds of each choir and identifying common factors in developing choral tone. The major influence on choral tone is the conductor who shapes it in rehearsal; thus, it should follow that choral tone in each ensemble evolves as each new conductor works with a choir. Present-day conductors Joe Miller and Anton Armstrong are contemporary examples of these changing tonal concepts. Zabriskie summarizes this evolution according to the chronological series of conductors and presents their preferences in terms of pedagogical approaches to the voice and rehearsal technique.

Varying tonal preferences influence the pedagogy used by conductors in various choral ensembles. However, many choral ensembles share structural elements that contribute to the overall success of those programs. Jennifer Garrett compares these elements by contrasting St. Olaf College, The University of Southern California, and The Florida State University in a 2010 dissertation study.\footnote{Jennifer M. Garrett, “Elements of Leading Collegiate Choral Programs in the United States” (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2010).} She explores common themes and factors that contribute to the successes of these programs, but does not focus heavily on issues of choral tone. She examines the details of each university’s choral program according to various topics, presented as possible models for other collegiate programs to follow. Ultimately, Garrett identifies attributes such as program longevity, visibility,
positive ethos, and heritage of choral singing as repeated trends in each of the schools in her study.  

Of these related choral ensembles, the MTC shares commonalities such as size of choir, similar choral-symphonic repertoire, leadership of influential choral conductors, and use of adult singers. It also shares a sense of religious affiliation and mission with choirs in residence at church-sponsored universities. In most cases, the literature that discusses curriculum or training within these ensembles is either unrelated (university curriculum and programs are very different from MTC weekly routine) or unavailable (formal training programs are not the standard practice of civic symphony choruses), unless a conductor’s biography addresses the philosophies of a particular director. Still, the skill level of the amateur singer, the frequency of performances, and weekly national exposure sets the MTC apart from these otherwise similar organizations.

Choir School Programs and Children’s Choirs

The tradition of “Choir Schools” as a formal pathway for training young adult males both musically and academically for musical church service is documented in books, articles, DVDs, and scholarly writing. A film documentary on the King’s College Choir explores the cultural, educational, and musical lifestyle of the young male singers in this famous English Choir School program. The film depicts chorister life, including musical and academic training, as well as musical performances. Choristers describe their life in the boarding school program, particulars of the performing demands, and how they

47Garrett, “Elements of Leading Collegiate Choral Programs in the United States,” 156.

48King’s College Choir. The Story of the King’s College Choir: The Boast of King’s. DVD. Directed by Richard Chesterman. Regis Records, 2007.
balance their academic and musical studies. The documentary also includes clips of choral performances that illustrate the choral aesthetic of the English boy choir.

While the documentary film provides a comprehensive look at chorister life, a study by Cynthia Hawkins discusses curricular content and the program design of music education programs for choristers in Church of England Choir Schools. In this study, she examines a total of thirty-six schools and provides rich descriptions of five choir school programs. Hawkins cites excellence, elitism, and endurance as hallmarks of the English Choir School life. A main purpose of her study was to explore the possibility of adapting English choir school programs as possible models for Canadian music education. However, her document offers a valuable and comprehensive review of available literature on this history of the English boy choir programs. Hawkins also reviews contemporary choir school programs along with a survey of historical Choir School practices.

Daniel James McGrath examines the historical context for boy choirs and includes comparisons of the few remaining boy choir programs in America in a 2005 dissertation study. His purpose was to report trends in American boy choir programs to the academic community. McGrath explores two American models of boy choir programs that included an after-school program and choirs affiliated with the parish day

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50 Ibid., 1.

51 Ibid., 3–5.

school. These two models were then compared to a more traditional model, the choir school at St. Thomas’s Church in New York City. This particular program resembles the English model by offering a residential program that prepares singers for performance in worship services affiliated with the church. Singers are trained in academic subjects, and the residential situation allows them to maintain a rigorous weekly performing schedule, in addition to concerts and recording projects. McGrath concludes his study by offering the requirements necessary to develop this type of choral tradition in other Anglican churches.

Other scholarly articles and dissertations contain discussions on American boy choirs as actual case studies. Wallace and Brown discuss the Harlem Boy Choir and its choir academy in a 2006 dissertation study. Of particular interest is their overview of boy choir programs in historical periods from the Renaissance to the present day. The authors also describe the evolution of their training program in various phases. A case study of the Alabama Boy Choir includes detailed information on all aspects of participation in the program from chorister, parent, and administrative perspectives. Gary Patterson discusses instructional strategies for training the adolescent voices of the Texas Boy Choir in a 2007 study. Julian Ackerley discusses the history of the Tucson Arizona Boy Choir in his dissertation study, which also includes a historical overview of


boy choir traditions from antiquity to present-day American boy choirs.\textsuperscript{56} The history of the choir is represented in four decades and augmented by information about three of the choir’s conductors. The remainder of the study contains information related to touring, auditions, rehearsal procedures, and bylaws.

Although available, literature related to the design, instruction, and pedagogy of children’s choir programs is only distantly related to the training of adult amateur singers. Still, the literature offers resources for general choral curriculum or effective choral teaching strategies. Renowned children’s choir expert Jean Ashworth Bartle authored two classic texts in this genre. Both books contain general choral information and instructional guidance for working with this specific age group and type of choir. One publication includes extensive repertoire lists, and the other contains insights into preparing children’s choirs for major choral-orchestral works.\textsuperscript{57,58} A text by Henry Leck, another leading children’s choir conductor, contains a similar approach to children’s choir resources and includes specialty topics such as the changing voice or using Kodaly principles in rehearsal.\textsuperscript{59} He also discusses administrative strategies for children’s choir directors; the book includes a CD-ROM that offers templates of useful forms. Stephanie Mowery discusses curricular aspects of children’s choir programs within the context of a much larger church music education curriculum in her 2009 article. The discussion does


\textsuperscript{57} Jean Ashworth Bartle, \textit{Lifeline for Children’s Choir Directors} (Toronto: Gordon V. Thompson, 1988).


not include specific curriculum content. However, it encourages youth of all ages to participate in various forms of church music education. Kenneth Phillips outlines an entire vocal teaching curriculum for elementary age singers in his well-known text. Divided by age levels, each vocal program contains explanations of exercises, suggested sequencing, and assessment forms for use in choral classrooms. Marie Stultz also presents vocal teaching curriculum and choral rehearsal strategies for young singers at various age levels. In her book, she discusses choral training for elementary age singers and includes specific literature recommendations that coordinate with teaching particular choral skills. A second volume of her widely recognized resource follows in a similar comprehensive format, but focuses on older elementary aged students through early adolescence.

Children’s choir programs exist in many models, both as academic offerings in and outside schools or within community church programs. Formal extracurricular children’s choirs often provide models of comprehensive music education, but are particular to varied philosophical priorities of an institution, a specific conductor, or an overarching academic program. Scholarly writing on boy choirs, choir school programs, and children’s choirs is available in the form of conductor biographies, program histories, or books on effective choral teaching. Although this genre of choral ensembles is somewhat distantly related to teaching adult amateur singers in the MTC, these materials


provide resources and models for program development, curriculum content, and general choral teaching methods.

Community and/or Church Choirs

A body of extant literature related to community and church choirs is available in both scholarly studies and general choral teaching resources. Academic writing includes histories and case studies, many of which examine a particular aspect of the program or describe a participant’s experience in these choirs. Craig Gregory discusses the Turtle Creek Chorale of Dallas in a 2010 dissertation study.\textsuperscript{64} Specifically, Gregory examines factors that have contributed to the longevity and success of the choir. Using models from business literature to organize and explain aspects of the organization’s growth, the study’s findings emphasize the role of specific artistic directors, namely Tim Seelig, as critical components in the organization’s success.

Other qualitative studies discuss actual ethnographies of various choirs, the identity of choral singers, or methods of effective teaching and learning within those organizations. Jean Titcomb examines the church choir as a central place for informal adult learning.\textsuperscript{65} She found that singers in church choirs valued music as a form of worship over performance, a factor that contributed greatly to the organization and experience of the singer. Study findings reveal that various forms and methods of adult learning such as repeated practice, the buddy system, and personal study are present in

\textsuperscript{64}Craig Allen Gregory, “Attributes of United States Community Chorus’ Success and Longevity: A Case Study with the Turtle Creek Chorale of Dallas, Texas” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2009).

\textsuperscript{65}Teri Jeanne Titcomb, “The Social Context of Informal Adult Learning: An Ethnography of a Church Choir” (PhD diss., Temple University, 2000).
the choir culture. Rituals such as sharing joys and concerns or singing the same opening and closing hymn each week also provided structure to the adult learning experience. Janice Coffin authored another investigation of choir participation and longevity in her dissertation study. Highlighting women’s barbershop choruses for this investigation, she offers a list of strategies choruses might consider when seeking to create a more lasting choral culture. Coffin cites efforts such as targeted marketing, creating a supportive environment, using effective conflict resolution tools, and creating opportunities for fun and friendship as important findings.

Several dissertations examine adult choral singing as both recreational activities and a way of continuing one’s education. In her 2009 study, Rachel Rensink-Hoff examines the motivation of singers and the dichotomy between volunteer participation as recreation and the need to apply musical standards in performance. Findings in this study reveal that the aging demographic of community choirs might signal a potential decline in choral interest. Data also show large discrepancies between actual and perceived types of musical and nonmusical success, and that perceived individual enjoyment is a more important factor to singers than group success. Anastasios Aliapoulios provides a much larger examination of adult amateur singers in a 1969

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66Ibid., 93.
67Ibid., 81.
69Ibid., 156.
Aliapoulios adds depth to the discussion of the relationship between music participation and continuing adult education by challenging music educators to reconsider the timelines for music education participation. Instead of assuming singers will end their music education experiences after high school or college, the author encourages educators to support choral music education experiences over a singer’s entire life span. This study establishes the importance of the community chorus within music education. Donald Simmons has also contributed a study related to community choir participation. He concludes that the enjoyment of music participation and public performance are primary motivators cited by singers as reasons for participating in community choirs.

In her 2008 study, Maureen Baird discusses how amateur singers cognize, process, and experience their own choral singing participation in community ensembles, as a way of measuring the meaning of belonging to a choir. In a study that sampled several Canadian choirs, the author found that members of small choirs tend to feel more valued and felt more positively connected to other singers than those in medium-to-large choirs. This study also compares singer populations, which included paid versus unpaid singers, and singers with and without music degrees, issues relevant to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. This study finds that volunteer singers feel a greater sense of satisfaction and elevated moods than paid singers. A final comparison between younger and senior

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members of the choir that reveals older singers feel a greater sense of unity in the ensemble.

Cindy Lauren Bell discusses the gap between amateur choral performance and the field of music education in general in her 2000 dissertation.\(^{74}\) She examines adult amateur singers and adult learning in the context of the rehearsal behaviors of conductors. Implications of this study include addressing conductor competencies for preservice teachers who may interact with adult amateur singers. Data show that adults will likely be successful in lifelong learning if they are self-motivated in both individual and group settings.\(^{75}\) Conductors of adult learners will need to present a combination of competencies in personal, musical, and technical skills to keep singers engaged.

Phyllis Vincent discusses other community choir and music education issues in her 1997 study.\(^{76}\) Vincent identifies various mixed choral ensembles in the state of Kentucky and surveys them to discover demographic data, education levels, motivations for choral participation, and influences and motivations for singing. Findings reveal parents and home environments as the two most influential factors in a singer choosing to participant in a chorus. The demographic for these choirs was consistent with other research on community choirs. Connections between secondary school choral singing and choosing to continue in community choirs imply that consistent participation and meaningful experiences in school programs are critical to community choral singing.

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\(^{74}\)Cindy Lauren Bell, “An Examination of Adult Amateur Community Chorus and Choral Conductor Rehearsal Behavior, with Implications for Music Education” (EdD diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 2000).

\(^{75}\)Ibid., 138.

\(^{76}\)Phyllis M. Vincent, “A Study of Community Choruses in Kentucky with Implications for Music Education” (PhD diss., The University of Kentucky, 1997).
Another aspect of adult learning and choral singing concerns issues of music literacy. In her dissertation Barbara Green discusses music reading and learning for adult singers inside community choirs.\textsuperscript{77} This study finds that (1) adult choirs arouse a participant’s interest in the formal study of music, (2) adults need music literacy as much as language literacy, an invaluable acquisition, (3) chorus members take their participation seriously, and (4) the future of adult community choirs depends both on the longevity of existing choirs and the birth of new ensembles.\textsuperscript{78}

Studies on the development of adult church choirs are also germane to the current study on the MTC Choir School program. These scholarly writings include topics such as general curriculum design, teaching and learning specific to particular organizations, solutions for twenty-first-century training of singers and choristers, or histories of church choir programs. Richard Stanislaw chronicles descriptions of church choirs from various journals and literature.\textsuperscript{79} His findings illustrate that challenges faced by today’s church choir programs may not necessarily be new. Stanislaw draws sometimes-humorous comparisons to nineteenth-century church choir “troubles” such as seating, resisting innovation, avoiding annoyance, and whispering through the service.\textsuperscript{80} That church choir directors have previously and historically encountered these kinds of problems is meant as a motivating reminder that solutions are available and church choirs have continued to thrive despite those types of irritations.


\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 166–170.


\textsuperscript{80}Ibid.
Clell H. Wright offers strategies for developing church choir musicians as a solution for retention problems in church choir programs.\textsuperscript{81} Church choirs that rely on repeated recruiting efforts may experience large turnover if the recruitment plan fails to adequately promote musical growth in the singer. Wright examines strategies for allowing internal motivation to become the primary factor in retaining a singer, though external motivations may be required to attract one. This approach provides interesting context for the church choir conductor and is particularly relevant to the story of the MTC because of the discussion on improving the quality of their volunteer singers. C. Michael Hawn also addresses music training for church choir members.\textsuperscript{82} His 2007 article offers strategies based on his thirty years of experience as a church musician. Personal journal entries cited in his article outline Hawn’s thoughts concerning preparing, training, and teaching church musicians. Hawn encourages a deeper understanding of the relationship of choral music to theology as opposed to a simple knowledge of choral literature. He also offers advice to those who seek professional employment in worship music.

The term “church choir” is a broad label and describes small volunteer choruses of absolute amateur skill level (both singers and conductors), or amateur groups led by someone with limited experience. (The "church choir" label is accurately applied to local choir singing in a Latter-day Saint congregation.) Some church choir programs serve medium-to-large congregations and hire professionally trained conductors to lead any


variety of worship music ensembles for children and adults. Because church choirs vary, the related literature takes on a very wide variety of audiences and topics specific to the denomination, congregation, and the type of church choir program discussed. Dissertations and scholarly writing on church choirs address topics from conductor behavior to singer participation, and specific church choir histories. Other studies and articles focus on literacy and programs to develop the amateur church musician.

The MTC has a religious mission and is, by most definitions, a church choir. Its regular, recurring preparation for weekly “services” is common to other church choral ensembles, although the weekly radio and television broadcast is understood to be non-denominational and does not reflect traditional LDS worship meetings. The MTC also shares features of a typical large, adult community chorus. Choir members, ranging in age from 25 to 60, fit the model of an average community choir singer more than the profile of a paid choral professional. For this reason, information related to the training of adult singers in both community and church choirs constitutes the relevant literature for this study.

**Choral Pedagogy Resources**

A challenge in narrowing the relevant body of literature on choral teaching is that choral singing requires skills across many separate subject areas. Conductors need resources in conducting technique, score preparation, and developing choral tone to build their personal choral skills. They also require materials to address music literacy, aural skills, and vocal pedagogy as tools for achieving a choral product through reading and singing choral music. Additional topics of interest to choral conductors include effective rehearsal strategies, addressing diction in various languages, literature selection, score
marking, or even choral music history. As such, there is a wide body of materials available for choral music teachers, but no one resource exceptionally addresses all the particular needs for any one chorus and its conductor.

To more carefully narrow the literature for this study, the author focused on scholarly publications that addressed aspects of choral pedagogy or teaching choral tone. However, broad-spectrum literature about choral teaching is widely available for both directors and their singers. Of these, general resources for the secondary choral educator, children's choir director, or church choir director make up the largest quantity. These sources mainly include comprehensive textbooks and conductor instructional manuals. Depending on the author’s presentation and perspective, these materials can be broad or more detailed in scope. Generally, these resources address information such as program administration, vocal pedagogy, conducting instruction, literature selection, and rehearsal strategies. Specifically, these may include topics such as vocal teaching strategies, the adolescent voice, music literacy, sight singing, literature selection, auditions, standing formations, music history, and rehearsal techniques.

A literature review that accounts for all types of choral teaching resources would be prohibitive for the scope of this study. Still, many of these general textbooks, DVDs, books, manuals, and teacher aids were helpful to Choir School instructional staff in designing curriculum, and may be of interest to the reader. For this reason, a list of choral teaching resources consulted by the MTC instructors in their curriculum preparations is included in Appendix A.

Scholarly writing specific to choral pedagogy and choral tone is surprisingly less abundant than the hundreds of general textbooks designed to prepare choral teachers. A
few authors have studied choral pedagogy resources in general and offer some insight into trends, pedagogical history, and lists of pedagogical resources over the last several decades. One recent and helpful resource by Sarah Jones is a content analysis of the in-text citations of choral pedagogy texts between 1989 and 2009. She quantitatively examines citations to capture the status of knowledge in the choral teaching field. The study provides comprehensive information related to the available choral pedagogy resources in general, both scholarly and nonacademic. Jones discusses an interesting paradox in the choral teaching world concerning the materials used in preparing choral directors. Her findings confirm the experience of the author in searching for research-driven, scholarly writing related to choral teaching. An exploration of the in-text citation was one pathway to exploring the presence of true research within professional training materials. The study does not signal the inadequacy of these particular resources as helpful tools; it confirms that more research is needed to provide future generations with scientific confirmation of anecdotal and experiential teaching ideas.

A collection of articles and dissertation studies constitutes a surprisingly small body of literature dedicated to issues of teaching choral tone. Bill McMillan discusses the questions conductors must address when determining their overall concept of a preferred choral tone. He references the work of Howard Swan as a point of departure for categorizing important considerations for choral tone such as balance, blend, intonation, diction, and rhythmic vitality. McMillan argues that both new and experienced conductors benefit from a reflective study of their philosophies on choral tone. An article


by Lori Wiest provides additional resources and recommendations for vocal pedagogy resources that will enhance a conductor’s study of the voice.\textsuperscript{85} She argues that the mastery of vocal pedagogy is the best possible pathway to improving the choral tone of an ensemble. This is especially notable considering the high number of amateur singers who participate in choral organizations and may not have access to private vocal instruction. Her article includes a helpful list of vocal teaching resources for the choral educator.

An especially insightful resource on choral tone is a 2013 dissertation by Kira Zeeman Rugen.\textsuperscript{86} She examines shifts in choral tone preferences from the 1970s to twenty-first-century choral ensembles. Interviews with representative conductors of well-known choral ensembles, including Craig Jessop, help codify and categorize preferences in choral tone among varied choral ensembles. The MTC is mentioned specifically as an example of a recognized choral ensemble that has experienced shifts in choral tone. Rugen finds that there is an observable shift in tonal preferences from the 1970s forward, though there is a myriad of opinions about what issues matter most and what constitutes quality in creating one’s ideal choral sound. She explores possible explanations for these perceived shifts over time such as developments in vocal pedagogy, changes in technology, performance practice issues, and emulation of perceived recorded sounds. Her study provides a comprehensive look at the topic of choral tone while also providing contextual information about many recognized choral ensembles and the philosophies of their various conductors.


Another study that highlights the variety of opinions on what constitutes quality choral tone is a study by Donald Martin Rogers.\(^{87}\) In his study, he asked twelve professional choral conductors to adjudicate taped examples of choral performances in relationship to issues of choral tone. Conductors were then asked to offer possible remedies to the issues in the examples. Realizing that a great deal of subjectivity exists within the literature on choral tone, Rogers hoped that if some agreement could be reached, it might influence future teacher training materials on issues of choral rehearsal techniques. The researcher found that there was a high amount of agreement between both the labeling of choral tone issues and the resultant strategies for solving those problems.

Two dissertations examine strategies of achieving beautiful choral tone in educational settings. Sandra Babb explores the methods of four successful collegiate choral conductors in various settings including a state honor choir, a collegiate choral rehearsal, and a community choir.\(^{88}\) To begin, Babb establishes a comparison of Westminster Choir College and St. Olaf Choirs in relationship to their concepts of choral tone. Next, she outlines related issues of voice science and the components of vocal pedagogy as a foundation for definitions and terms. By observing rehearsals and analyzing their methodologies, Babb looked for evidence of verbal, nonverbal, and vocal modeling strategies within the choral rehearsal. She discovered significant differences between the amount of time spent on choral tone in rehearsal as well as the types of

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\(^{87}\)Donald Martin Rogers, “The Level of Agreement Among Adjudicators Concerning Problems and Solutions when Analyzing Taped Examples of Choral Tone” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2004).

\(^{88}\)Sandra L. Babb, “Rehearsal Techniques Used to Build Choral Tone by Four Expert Collegiate Choral Conductors Across Settings” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2010).
modeling used to teach choral tone preferences. A second study took a similar approach to uncovering the rehearsal techniques in a high school classroom. Jenkins examines the choral rehearsal strategies of one particular director with respect to issues of choral tone. An extensive period of rehearsal observations and interviews comprised the bulk of the qualitative data, which sought to explain how the director achieved his choral results. Jenkins isolates specific techniques used by the director in order to determine his overall teaching methods. The author also discusses effective high school teaching practices, vocal pedagogy, choral rehearsal techniques, philosophies on music literacy, and vocal health.

Issues of choral tone are often related to discussions of vocal resonance, intonation, and vocal timbres. Laurier Fagnan discusses the relationship of choral tone and intonation in the context of vocal resonance. He offers specific rehearsal and warm-up strategies to encourage the Italian Bel canto principle of maximizing the best of both warm and dark sounds (chiaroscuro). Choral singers can practice this skill by increasing chiaroscuro resonance during the first page of a song, monitoring the tip of the tongue throughout a series of vowels, and using chiaroscuro exercises in the choral warm-up. Choral effects of resonance balancing include improved clarity in tone and diction as well as an increase in tonal vibrancy. Amanda Quist discusses choral tone and resonance in her dissertation study. Quist concludes that it is possible to teach singers to improve

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89 Bonnie L. Jenkins, “Beautiful Choral Tone Quality Rehearsal Techniques of a Successful High School Choral Director” (PhD diss., University of Missouri Columbia, 2005).


their resonance and increase the presence of upper harmonic partials as a solution to choral intonation issues. According to Quist, choirs that use resonance as a tool in their singing tend to have better intonation, balance, blend, dynamics, and artistry.\(^\text{92}\) She also discovers that choirs with the ability to alter and increase resonance are able to sing without fatigue and work seamlessly in a variety of style periods.\(^\text{93}\)

A discussion on teaching choral tone also involves the basic principles of vocal pedagogy and vocal teaching within a choral rehearsal setting. Lamartine discusses the effect of a regimen of solo vocal exercises on choral tone.\(^\text{94}\) Results indicate that a prepared set of vocal exercises for use in a university ensemble positively impacted the singers’ sound, their understanding of the pedagogical function of the exercise, and ultimately, the overall choral sound.

The age of the singer is another consideration in vocal pedagogy and teaching choral tone. The MTC allows singers to begin as young as age twenty-five and requires that singers retire at age sixty. Singers in the MTC may experience a variety of vocal changes over the course of their participation in the Choir. Two dissertations explore issues surrounding vocal aging and the choral ensemble. Jane Becker examines the physiological effects of aging on the human voice in her dissertation.\(^\text{95}\) Becker also offers a curriculum of exercises and teaching strategies for use in the solo vocal studio as well

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\(^\text{92}\) Amanda Quist, “Choral Resonance,” 35.

\(^\text{93}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{94}\) Nicole Christopher Lamartine, "A Curriculum of Voice Pedagogy for Choral Conductors: The Effect of Solo Voice Exercises on Individual Singer Technique, Choral Tone, and Choral Literature" (DMA diss., The University of Arizona, 2003).

\(^\text{95}\) Jane Becker, “Vocal Aging: Considerations for the Solo Vocal Studio and the Choral Rehearsal Setting” (EdD diss., University of Houston, 2002).
as the choral rehearsal. Becker addresses both musical and psychological issues for community choirs, with practical solutions singers of retirement age. He also lists modifications a conductor might consider in his gestural vocabulary. A quantitative study by John Orr also contains a discussion on issues relative to the aging voice.\textsuperscript{96} He notes that vocal function exercises has some positive effects on issues such as singer phonation length, vocal range, and perceived improvement in the singer’s voice. However, the exercises did not show a marked result in managing vibrato rates. A choral conductor and singer resource by Victoria Meredith also addresses pedagogical considerations for older singers.\textsuperscript{97} Her text is a resource for the aging singer (not necessarily the conductor) and provides a combination of encouragement for lifelong singing and a regimen of exercises to strengthen the vocal mechanism.

Two choral textbook publications by Brenda Smith and Robert Thayer Sataloff offer information on the relationship of vocal pedagogy and the choral rehearsal. \textit{Choral Pedagogy} is a textbook that treats issues of vocal pedagogy in the context of choral rehearsals with the addition of voice science research.\textsuperscript{98} Of special interest to this study are chapters which reference amateur versus professional singers, the aging voice, voice-building for choirs, and choral singing techniques. Although a specific chapter is designated to the relationship of the singing voice and choral tone, the authors do not discuss much more than basic definitions and terms. However, a 2012 book by the same


\textsuperscript{97}Victoria Meredith, \textit{Sing Better as You Age} (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2007).

authors specifically focuses on choral teaching, vocal pedagogy, and voice science for older singers.\(^9^9\) There is some repeated material between the texts, but the 2012 version offers selected exercises and vocalises for older singers that can be incorporated into a group choral warm-up or personal practice. The authors address issues specific to gender and the aging voice. Both books contain chapter questions and summaries, organized by short subtopics within each chapter. *Choral Music: Technique and Artistry* by Charles Heffernan is another choral music textbook with many general topics, and includes a clear and comprehensive discussion on developing choral tone. Heffernan writes brief but detailed explanations and includes vocal exercises and rehearsal strategies for choral conductors.\(^1^0^0\)

**Summary**

This literature review contains sources from three subject areas relevant to this study: (1) Mormon Tabernacle Choir resources, (2) histories of similarly sized choruses and related choral organizations, and (3) materials related to choral pedagogy and considerations of choral tone. Literature specific to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir provides important historical context to the organization. With the exception of a few general mentions inside within conductor biographies, there is no available scholarly writing specific to the MTC Choir School program.

The MTC is a unique choral organization that does not conform to models of university, church, community, or children’s choir programs. The size of the choir, its


rigorous rehearsal and performing schedule, weekly radio and television broadcast program, touring and recording obligations, and use of amateur singers for these professional projects make it difficult to categorize according to traditional choral models.

However, contrasting the MTC with other ensembles clarifies these differences. Though the MTC uses the term “Choir School” as the name for its own training program, and although it seeks to train its singers for their worship music service, there are obvious inherent differences between a formal, comprehensive academic training program for young male singers and the less formal experience of the mixed-voice, adult volunteer chorus. As such, the literature related to these Choir School programs is not relevant to this study beyond the occasional reference to choral pedagogy. In general, the most useful resources within the topic of “other choral ensembles” were the writings and studies on community choirs, adult singers, and the aging voice.

Choral teaching materials for future choral educators abound in large quantities, often including experiential or anecdotal information on a wide variety of topics. Materials that reflect a scholarly approach to choral pedagogy are not as prevalent and reflect an underdeveloped area of choral research. For this study, the author also includes writings that discuss developing choral tone or teaching choral ensemble skills. As singers came more prepared over time with music literacy skills, the MTC Choir School program eventually increased its efforts to provide choral skills and vocal pedagogy for the singers. To this end, music literacy, conductor training, music literature selection, choral materials for children, rehearsal techniques, and sight-singing materials have been excluded from this review.
Curriculum design for the MTC Choir School is an outgrowth of the realization that its program required unique training because of the skill level of its amateur singers. In researching possible materials, program instructors determined that most choral materials were either too broad or too detailed to be useful textbooks for the MTC Choir School. Ultimately, the most relevant literature to the working program of the MTC Choir School includes the sources Choir School faculty referenced as they designed their own portion of the curriculum. In these cases, the range of topics for the materials was vast including all subjects covered by the four instructors. The faculty consulted both scholarly and practical writing including textbooks, journal articles, dissertations, choral curriculum materials, music theory and music literacy materials, as well as information related to the MTC. Instructors worked independently to access the materials that informed their instructional strategies and curriculum content. For the purposes of an academic literature review, a complete investigation of all choral subject areas was prohibitive. As such, a list of the choral materials consulted by MTC choir school faculty is provided in Appendix A. Scholarly materials that reflect an emphasis on the MTC organization, related choirs, or studies on choral tone comprise the literature most germane to this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

An examination of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s Choir School program required various modes of historical research. This study presents a chronological description of events in cooperation with themes and patterns that have emerged over its thirteen-year history. The story of the MTC Choir School is reflected in the processes, problems, challenges, and progress experienced in the course of the Choir’s institutional development. The relationship of the Choir School to MTC leadership changes and increasing musical demands both explained its present form and provided insight into possible future pathways.

In *The Modern Researcher*, Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff contend: “Every speech, report, inquiry, or application begins with the ‘the background’; nothing, it is thought, can be understood apart from a knowledge of what went before.”¹⁰¹ Kenneth H. Phillips affirms the aims of historical research by offering an explanation of its benefits: “The role of historical research has evolved in music education and therapy as a means by which practitioners discover their ‘roots’ and chart their futures.”¹⁰² To more completely understand anything in its present construct, one must examine the events that

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led to its conception, implementation, and evolution over time. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall, historical research is “a process of systematically searching for data to answer questions about a past phenomenon for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of present institutions, practices, trends, and issues in education.”  

Unlike other educational research, which seeks to “create data,” the historical researcher “discovers data through a search of historical sources such as diaries, official documents and relics…the evidence is available before the historian formulates a thesis.” For this study, data were discovered by means of oral history interviews and document review. The power of oral history as a research tool is expressed by Paul Thompson as “a connecting value which moves in all sorts of different directions. It connects the old and young, the academic world, and the world outside. But more specifically, it allows us to make connections in the interpretation of history…That is the unique power of oral history.”

Additionally, a varied collection of documents, including archival correspondence, lecture notes, lesson plan sketches, quizzes, and other course material, comprise the other data in this study. McCulloch validates documentary research with the following: “An analysis of documents has been the most characteristic and traditional method employed


104 Ibid., 645.

in modern historical research.”\(^{106}\) Although the MTC is not a university, the following confirmation by McCulloch endorses the usefulness of these types of documents used in this study: “The changes in curriculum at a university might be appraised through institutional records, lecture notes, and student diaries, where these exist. Moreover, documentary research may frequently be allied to good effect with other research methods in education.”\(^ {107}\)

In the present study, both historical and documentary methods of discovery have proved beneficial. McCulloch concludes that this combination of approaches “offers a means of promoting methodological pluralism which seems especially appropriate in a field as diverse and challenging as education.”\(^ {108}\)

Concerning the organization of a historical study, Gall, Borg, and Gall write, “The particular problem or topic being investigated and the historian’s disciplinary orientation determines how the presentation will be organized.”\(^ {109}\) In the present study, the two methods of organization are (1) chronological order, and (2) topical or thematic organization. The author’s disciplinary orientation as a choral music educator plays an important role in assessing and organizing data related to choral curriculum and instructional strategies.

A chronological approach highlights the events that led up to certain significant discoveries or creations. George N. Heller writes, “…organizing evidence in a historical


\(^{107}\)McCulloch, “Historical and Documentary Research in Education,” 254.

\(^{108}\)Ibid.

investigation is primarily concerned with the passage of time, that is, chronology.”¹¹⁰ However, a singularly chronological detail may exclude important thematic issues that recur within the development of an organization. Those developments may best be understood as themes or topics as important unifying devices within the organization.¹¹¹ This study requires a methodology that presents the data using a combination of both chronological and thematic ideas. This pairing reconciles deficiencies in each, allowing the reader to chart institutional growth in time against recurring thematic ideas and issues in the organization.

**Data Collection**

Sources of data consulted for this study include (1) a series of oral interviews, (2) written correspondence with persons affiliated with the MTC Choir School, (3) related archival documents, and (4) artifacts illustrating both the content of the course, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques.

**Oral History: Interviews**

The primary source of information central to this study was obtained by oral interviews with critical members of the MTC Choir School staff from each instructional phase. (Names are listed on page 54.) Additionally, written correspondence and telephone communication provided ancillary information from present Choir School auxiliary staff and Music Directors, as well as those affiliated with early attempts at training the Choir.


Oral interviews provided both new information and a confirmation of preliminary research that establishes a general timeline of events leading up to the formation of the school. Interview subjects were contacted in advance of their interview appointment to determine willingness to be interviewed and a convenient appointment time. The University IRB (Institutional Review Board) results exempted the study from formal contractual arrangements with the subjects, but permissions were obtained nonetheless. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed as necessary. Interview questions varied for each subject depending on his or her relationship to the Choir School. As information was collected, interview questioning became increasingly specific to the unique role of each subject. For instance, questions to the vocal coach were exclusive to issues of vocal pedagogy within the MTC organization. Questions for the music theory instructors focused on the practical application of music literacy in the MTC rehearsals each week. Directors and administrative staff responded to questions about their overall goals for the program, vision for the course, and their perception of the impact of the Choir School program on the MTC organization. All instructional staff members from the current Choir School faculty were willing to be interviewed.

A group of singers who met the following criteria were selected for personal interviews and email correspondence: (1) representative singers who participated in the Choir School during each chronological phase; (2) amateur singers who represented varied professional backgrounds (though a population of MTC members work as school music teachers or in some professional music capacity, the design of the Choir School program was specifically created to address the challenges of training amateur singers who would not arrive to the Choir with traditional collegiate preparation); (3) singers
who also participated in the recent in-service program, and (4) availability and willingness. Though all indicated a willingness to meet and share information, some declined on account of scheduling difficulties or were available only to provide information via email in lieu of a formal personal interview. All current MTC singers who participated in the first session of the Choir School program were consulted for their insights, memories, and artifacts. Of the thirteen members contacted from that group, four responded with memories, artifacts, and journal entries from that period of time.

Information from the Music Directors includes a compilation of correspondence, staff meeting notes, and personal communications between the author and conductors. The researcher sent interview questions to Mack Wilberg, current Music Director of the MTC, in an effort to provide professional distance and mitigate any possible personal pressure he might feel to respond to the author concerning her own curriculum and teaching. As necessary, follow-up correspondence provided additional clarification.

Singers who participated in recent in-service trainings as well as previous Choir School sessions constituted a much smaller number, but were also included in the interview process. Approximately twelve singers fit these criteria, and seven responded to informal and formal interview questions. Singers who had previously participated in a focus group for the 2007 Choir School session also contributed helpful information to the narrative. Of these, four singers provided responses to general e-mail interview questions.

Oral interviews were conducted with Craig Jessop (former Music Director of the MTC), Jerold Ottley (former Music Director of the MTC and founding director of the Choir School), JoAnn Ottley (former MTC Vocal Coach), Donald Ripplinger (former Associate Musical Director of the MTC), Mack Wilberg (current Music Director of the
MTC), Linda Margetts (Part-time Tabernacle Organist and Choir School instructor), Bonnie Goodliffe (Part-time Tabernacle Organist and Choir School instructor), Rebecca Wilberg (current MTC Vocal Coach), Thomas Durham (former MTC singer), and Karen Hornberger (current MTC singer and Choir School participant). In total, the researcher conducted ten formal oral interviews, and obtained important information from thirteen singers who responded to both live interview questions and e-mail inquiries.

Archival Documents

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains an active archival library in Salt Lake City, Utah, that includes a dedicated section containing information related to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The most relevant set of documents from the formal archives is correspondence between the former MTC Musical Director Craig Jessop and Gordon B. Hinckley, former LDS Church President and long-time advisor to the Choir. Hinckley approved Jessop’s original request for structural changes to the MTC upon the 1999 resignation of Jerold Ottley. It is this authorization that set in motion the formation of the MTC Choir School and other additions to the organization, including the Temple Square Chorale and the Orchestra at Temple Square.

Choir School Artifacts

Artifacts from the founding session of the Choir School and its subsequent phases form tangible evidence to define the chronology and overall development of the course. This information, uncollected and entirely unorganized before this study, was gathered from physical files in the MTC office, as well as from notes, notebooks, handouts, exams, and related instructional material gathered from all the instructional staff and Choir School directors. Descriptive data were found in a variety of formats including test keys,
course outlines, weekly agendas, quizzes and tests, lesson plans, handouts from instructional staff, handouts from guest teachers, video footage of final singing assessments, participant feedback forms, course rosters, editions of the official MTC newsletter, and programs from Temple Square Chorale concerts. An additional storage room in the office contains personnel files for all MTC singers and staff, including Jerold and JoAnn Ottley. These files contain information such as general correspondence with the office, auditions applications, test scores, and leave of absence requests. Although not specifically related to the Choir School, a helpful resource from another office storage room was a bound book of oral history interviews by Craig Jessop of Donald Ripplinger and his daughter, former Choir member Jane Ripplinger Fjeldsted. This collection contains information about Ripplinger’s training efforts for the Choir. Other useful descriptive data, albeit less organized, are the binders, notes, and notebooks kept by both Choir School participants and instructors during each session. The notes and binders of some participants and instructors were available for perusal during interviews or offered for temporary inspection during the study.
CHAPTER 4

EARLY TRAINING ATTEMPTS

Within the natural course of a choral rehearsal, a conductor provides ongoing coaching and correction. Over time, this cumulative process results in the long-term musical training of the singers. Although it may be interesting to track the instructional trends of various MTC conductors in order to further define the impact of this training, such an investigation exceeds the scope of this study. As such, in this study, the researcher looked for evidences of training that transpired outside the normal course of MTC rehearsals.

Historical Attempts

Consistent with the pioneering spirit of the settlers of the American West, early conductors of the Choir were accustomed to working with whatever was available in terms of singers, materials, and facilities. George Careless (conductor from 1869 to 1880) formally studied music in London and was a professional musician by trade. Because of this training, he wrote many of his own compositions and arrangements when printed music was scarce in the new settlement. Before the now-famous Salt Lake Tabernacle was constructed, singers gathered locally in a temporary outdoor structure called the Bowery to rehearse and perform music for worship services. When Careless took over directorship of the choir, he arrived to find just forty singers in an unlit, unheated
Tabernacle in the middle of winter. He immediately requested a stovepipe and an oil lamp, both of which were installed the next week. He also went to work organizing the collaboration of several smaller choirs. This effort resulted in an 1873 performance by a 304-voice choir, a number much closer to the current Mormon Tabernacle Choir membership number of four hundred.\(^{112}\)

Ebenezer Beesley (conductor from 1880 to 1889) succeeded Careless, and understood clearly the tension between performance demands and amateur singers. To illustrate this dichotomy, his grandson Sterling Beesley writes:

> Ebenezer Beesley was keenly aware of the insufficiencies of the Tabernacle Choir, and in this connection experienced the customary delicate dilemma of the leader of nearly every Church choral group: How to harness and blend those very willing, but less than artistically professional, without hurting their feelings? To those less discerning, and not musically sophisticated, the Choir as a whole was splendid; but to the true music critic, it was not peerless.\(^{113}\)

After a performance at the 1884 Annual General Conference, Beesley considered their appearance an “ordeal,” because Church leaders requested too many pieces with insufficient rehearsal time. In addition, Beesley noted an “incapability” among new members who had been referred by other singers. To correct this problem, he “determined to henceforth test the voice and capability of each new applicant.”\(^{114}\)

Evan Stephens followed Beesley as the conductor of the Choir in 1889. A largely self-taught itinerant music teacher, Stephens was experienced in matters of musical training and coordinating large groups of music students. He was responsible for facilitating the Choir’s historic 1893 Chicago World’s Fair performance that launched the


\(^{113}\)Sterling Beesley, *Kind Words: The Beginnings of Mormon Melody* (Salt Lake City, UT: S.E. Beesley, 1980), 403.

\(^{114}\)Ibid.
Choir into a place of national recognition. The prospect of a fledging amateur choir from the newly settled American West performing for a large audience in metropolitan Chicago was daunting. The added stress of a competition created understandable extra pressure as Stephens and the Choir made preparations. Additionally, the late timing of the decision to enter the contest put the Choir at a possible disadvantage from the other entrants. Thomas Griggs, a singer in the choir, recorded the following in his journal: “Have a great many rehearsals to attend. Stephens is working hard but intelligently, industriously, interestingly, and successfully.”\(^{115}\) Bergman also writes, “Evan Stephens had copies of one of the contest selections and telegraphed for the others. The Choir began learning and practicing each separate part at once. Their conductor said his work was continuous, every day and evening, and at the end of two weeks he had no voice left.”\(^{116}\)

Although the extra practices were one attempt to improve musical quality in preparation for the contest, Stephens continued raising musical standards even after the Choir received their second-place ranking in the Chicago competition. He instituted formal courses and selective ensembles as an attempt to raise the standard of musicianship in the Choir. Bergman describes these strategies:

Stephens announced a major series of trainings and classes for present and future Choir members, consisting of three divisions, plus a reorganization of the juvenile choir. The first was a ladies’ chorus, to make a study of the music of the masters for a ladies’ chorus, and to be open to those most advanced musically and possessed of good voices. Next was a male chorus taken from the tenors and basses. Both choruses would work in conjunction, aiming at more advanced work in shading, voice culture, dramatic expression, and a study of the characteristic music of the great masters. Stephens planned a series of “nights with the great


\(^{116}\)Ibid., 118.
composers,” the main feature of the season’s work. Less advanced members would have a preparatory class “no less interesting than the others, but to be in the form of a mixed chorus.” This class would study mainly operatic choruses. New prospective members of the Choir could join by paying an entrance fee of one dollar; classes would [be] free to Choir members.\textsuperscript{117}

From its earliest days, the Choir’s conductors were concerned with meeting the challenge of performances and rising demands with sometimes limited or inadequate resources. Pragmatic solutions then and now resulted in occasion-specific requests for assistance, increased rehearsal time, singer skills assessments, or the development of specialized ensembles. At times, musical directors encouraged increased personal music study or intermittent coursework to increase the proficiencies of MTC singers.

Performance demands for the Choir continued to rise over the course of its history, due in large part to the increase in audience size and the distribution of weekly radio (and later television) broadcasts of \textit{Music and the Spoken Word}. Recording projects and concert touring under the leadership of twentieth-century conductors also added to the increasing demand for improvements in the skills of Choir members. Still, ongoing institutional music training was never firmly established, and collective instruction for singers occurred naturally as a result of participating in rehearsals and responding to conductor requests. Under the direction of Jerold Ottley in the late 1970s, the organization began exploring more specific measures for instructing Choir singers.

\textbf{Twentieth-Century Prechoir School Training Attempts}

In general, contemporary attempts to provide singers with training were essentially need based or specific to a particular musical necessity or skill. In an effort to more permanently improve singer skills, Jerold Ottley took action on two significant

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{117}Bergman, \textit{The Children Sang}, 128.
\end{footnotesize}
projects during his tenure as musical director. First, he wanted to gather evidence in support of his actual experience about the general musicianship level of the volunteer singers. His practical experience led him to believe that many of these willing singers lacked understanding in basic musicianship skills. Information gleaned from some kind of musical assessment would allow the directors to create practical solutions based on the results. Though it made some singers nervous, Ottley followed Beesley’s model of assessing the singers’ skills using a modern-day academic tool. Ottley made an official announcement requiring all singers to take the Aliferis Music Achievement Test. Used more commonly as an entrance exam for college music majors, the test measures knowledge and skills such as pitch, rhythm, and harmony. Many of these test questions reached beyond the normal music literacy of the average MTC singer. Ottley knew his idea would be met with some resistance, but the test results would expose which musical training needs were most pressing and would provide statistical evidence to support their previous instincts about the choir members’ musicianship skills. Donald Ripplinger (former Associate Music Director) reported “…some even sent letters to the Church president complaining about the need for the test, especially those who had been in the Choir a long time.”118 Referencing this same event, Ottley recalled, “Many singers thought they would be kicked out of the choir, but this was not the case.”119 After analyzing the data from these tests, Ottley was able to plan ways for singers to receive help in certain musical areas, prioritizing topics according to test results.

118 Donald Ripplinger, interview by author, 16 December 2013, Alpine, UT.

119 Jerold Ottley, interview by author, 24 September 2013, Murray, UT.
Thomas Durham, a Brigham Young University music theory professor and then-member of the Choir, administered the exam. Using these scores, singers were later divided into groups according to skill level and asked to attend a short series of pre-rehearsal classes for additional instruction in basic musicianship.\(^{120}\) Durham, who was a middle school student of Ottley’s, in his position as an experienced university-level instructor, was a practical choice for providing extra instruction in those music basics. “It made sense. I was in the choir, we knew each other well, had a history, and I was teaching that kind of class all the time.”\(^{121}\) Durham also reiterated Ottley’s memory that the test caused great anxiety for singers who worried they would be “kicked out” if their scores were not acceptable. In the end, the scores were simply used as a baseline to organize singers into groups of similar skill for instructional and logistical purposes. Durham knew firsthand the dilemma of the amateur singer in the Choir. Of his own experience, he observed, “I was often seated in between singers with huge, booming voices…I didn’t have that kind of voice, but I did have other musicianship skills. I could read the music, identify intervals…I could read rhythms really well. Lots of singers had great voices, but not all had those skills. But they were helpful to the Choir.”\(^{122}\) Durham also consulted with Ottley and provided referrals for a possible music theory textbook as a fixed resource for these kinds of classes. This textbook also formed the basis of material to be included in a written exam as part of the audition process for new singers. This text

\(^{120}\) Ottley, 24 September 2013.

\(^{121}\) Thomas Durham, interview by author, 11 November 2013, Provo, UT.

\(^{122}\) Ibid.
is still available in the office for prospective singers to check out in preparation for their Choir audition or as an additional resource for those who may want review.\footnote{123}{Paul O. Harder and Greg Steinke, \textit{Basic Materials in Music Theory: A Programmed Course} (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1995).}

Ottley also standardized the audition process for prospective Choir members—a pattern that is still followed today. Although not a form of instruction \textit{per se}, these improvements impacted the quality of the Choir’s singing. Impetus for these revisions came about after a particularly memorable audition session. Ripplinger noted:

I remember the first audition we had. It was a fiasco. We must have had fifty, sixty, or seventy people, and half of them couldn’t sing. They wanted to be in the Choir, and they would come in and sing just about anything. After that first experience, we both decided we would have to tighten up the audition procedure. Over a period of years we implemented changes in the audition requirements.\footnote{124}{Ripplinger, 16 December 2013.}

Today, after successful completion of a recorded vocal audition, singers are invited to complete a written audition exam. This test measures music aptitude and knowledge of music theory and notation. If test scores meet the standard, singers are asked to attend a live audition for both musical directors. The live audition includes tests of sight-singing ability as well as vocalizing and solo singing. These audition components still form the core of the procedure, with only minor recent adjustments to the written exam. By simply regulating the audition process and including tests that gauge a breadth of musical skills, Ottley gently raised the entrance requirements, which, in turn, had an impact on the quality and preparation of the would-be singers.

A second critical project was a pathway to providing singers extra vocal training by accessing the available talent of Ottley’s wife, JoAnn. An accomplished soprano and voice teacher, she was appointed the first official “vocal coach” for the Choir. She
established a three-week series of workshops for all Choir singers that addressed important vocal skills. She also developed a three-class workshop to teach vocal production “basics” for singers in small groups. Topics such as “breath control, tone production, different styles of singing, and ‘syllable dissection’ were addressed.” More specific topics such as “singing with flexibility” or “agility for melismas” were created specifically when new choral literature presented these kinds of vocal or musical challenges. When Jerold Ottley programmed a piece that required a particular vocal skill or additional technique, JoAnn Ottley exercised her leadership as the vocal coach by offering instructional warm-ups in weekly rehearsals for the whole Choir. Using the particular challenges inherent to a piece of music, she often custom-designed exercises to build necessary musculature, stamina, flexibility, or range extension related to the musical project at hand. She was visible in rehearsals and also available each week for free, private vocal instruction for singers in need. A self-described “vocal mechanic,” she addressed the vocal needs of Choir members experiencing issues such as returning from a leave of absence, women's postpartum vocal issues, recovery from medical surgeries, and vocal problems due to aging. Jerold Ottley said, “If we got a complaint about a singer one time, we let it go, but if we heard about it two or three times, we sent them a note and asked them to visit with JoAnn for a vocal ‘tune up.’” In the early days, singers were sometimes nervous to visit with her, suspecting that if they had some vocal problem, they might be asked to leave the Choir. Jerold Ottley said, “We knew they were nervous, but JoAnn did a wonderful job making them feel at ease. The guiding principle was


126 Jerold Ottley, interview with author, 24 September 2013, Murray, UT.
‘rehabilitation before release.’ We didn’t want to kick singers out; we just wanted them to get help.” JoAnn Ottley explained, “We just ‘played.’ I would say, ‘Let’s see what’s going on here. Let’s experiment and see what we can do to help.’” Over time, singers looked forward to an opportunity to work with her in a one-on-one situation to receive expert vocal instruction. Jerold Ottley conjectured, “When word traveled that JoAnn was offering this free service, it positively affected the reputation of the Choir, as well as providing a recruitment tool for prospective singers.”

Ripplinger also confirmed the value of JoAnn’s contribution to the training experience and, ultimately, to the overall sound of the Choir. He stated:

As the Choir has grown in its musicianship it has also improved in its vocal ability with JoAnn as the vocal coach of the Choir. You can’t discount the importance and the influence of what she has done. As you listen to the Choir, it is obvious that the sound is more refined, much more flexible, and that the Choir can sing anything that is asked of them. It doesn’t matter what it is.

Ripplinger designed and conducted several varieties of singer training, perhaps with more formal involvement than any other director. In the late 1970s, he assisted Ottley with his investigation into the musicianship of Choir members. After hearing several rounds of poor auditions, he and Ottley knew they needed to greatly improve the quality of their amateur singers. He offered the following solution to Ottley as a possible remedy:

During my first year as associate director, I suggested to Jerry that we needed to upgrade the musicianship of individual Choir members. We were spending too much time woodshedding. He asked what could be done. I suggested that we take small groups one at a time and teach them basic theory. Teach them

127 Ottley, 24 September 2013.

key signatures, major and minor scales, intervals, triads and sight singing. We needed to increase the musical ability of each Choir member.\textsuperscript{129}

Ripplinger’s background in secondary choral education was an asset to this kind of undertaking. “You approach it a little differently depending on the age level, but essentially, the information a singer needs to know is the same, whether you’re a high school senior or an adult in the Tabernacle Choir.”\textsuperscript{130} He modified his experiences from the choral classroom and created an ongoing series of prerehearsal classes and review sessions for MTC members.

We determined that if we had each small group for four Thursday nights we could complete the project in about sixteen months. It became obvious that we needed more than one teacher, but we took the entire Choir through a series of classes…Our goal was to make independent musicians of every Choir member.\textsuperscript{131}

Singers were expected to attend one four-session course, though he reports that many singers “took it again and again, just to be sure they had it down…even my own wife took the class…maybe four times!”\textsuperscript{132} The sessions reviewed the basics of notational literacy, sight singing, and vocal training. He continued, “The singers needed to know the basics to be able to recognize what was on a page of music…and to be able to have a common vocabulary so they could interpret what the conductor was asking.”\textsuperscript{133} It took nearly a year before all the singers in the Choir had rotated through the small class. In a sense, this was the very first “choir school,” though it was not called by that title. There

\textsuperscript{129}Donald Ripplinger, interview with Craig D. Jessop, Oral Interview, Salt Lake City, 4 November 1995.

\textsuperscript{130}Donald Ripplinger, interview with the author, 16 December 2013, Alpine, UT.

\textsuperscript{131}Ripplinger, 4 November 1995.

\textsuperscript{132}Ripplinger, 16 December 2013.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid.
was flexibility in the program; sometimes the class lasted up to six sessions if the singers needed additional review. “It really did begin to make a great improvement in the Choir. Soon, the singers were listening better…we could give them an a cappella piece. They were reading more accurately and started to understand what was on the music in front of them.”

Soon after, Ripplinger realized that by separating out the singers into smaller groups and working on different literature, the singers might develop more musical independence and be able to take that experience back into the Choir loft.

The next project required releasing a handful of MTC singers from their weekly broadcast singing responsibilities for a consecutive three-week period. During this time, singers formed small ensembles for a brief, in-service experience. These “furloughed singers” met in the basement of the Tabernacle forming madrigal-like ensembles. Together, they prepared choral repertoire as a small chamber choir. Depending on the skill level of each group, they explored anywhere from one to three short choral pieces and rehearsed them in preparation for a performance. “If they learned quickly, we might get to three pieces. Most did two. But if all they could do was one piece, we worked with them…and they did one piece. I adjusted depending on what they could do.” Here they received more individual attention and coaching specific to their own voices, but within a choral context. At the end of the three weeks, the small ensemble came upstairs to the Choir loft and performed their chamber pieces for the other MTC members to showcase their work. Ripplinger was asked to lead other classes, generally on an as-needed basis,

134 Ripplinger, 16 December 2013.
136 Ripplinger, 16 December 2013.
addressing subjects such as music literacy and general choral or vocal topics. He met with numerous groups of willing and hesitant singers, sometimes in his own home, to give them additional music training, as they required it.

Ripplinger viewed his position as the Associate Director as a supportive arrangement with Ottley and hoped to take away the “constant, enormous pressure” from the Music Director. Applying his knowledge of working with secondary choral students and designing curriculum in his own choral teaching, he was able to logically create the kinds of training opportunities that were needed by the singers at that time. His position as the assistant conductor informed the content of his workshops; he was intimately familiar with flaws in the sound from all of his rehearsal observations. His background as a music educator provided additional insight into useful teaching strategies for chamber ensembles of amateur singers. Although this experiment lasted only a year, the success of the training led the musical directors to suspect that future training programs for the Choir could shift from musical “rehabilitation” to a more preparatory training experience for newly admitted singers. Interestingly, many of the elements of Ripplinger’s curriculum ideas, though unknown to the author during her own curriculum revisions, have been included as essential components in the present day Choir School. Ottley maintains that without Donald Ripplinger’s willingness and expertise, the early attempts to increase singer ability would not have been possible.

On account of the unrelenting schedule of weekly broadcasts and the high volume of choral repertoire performed each year, the most obvious musical need for the singers at

137 Ibid.
138 Calman, 111.
the time was improvement in sight-reading skills. Bonnie Goodliffe, part-time organist and Choir School instructor recalled, “I remember a time when the Choir just couldn’t read. It took a long time to learn new music, so sight singing was definitely one of our immediate priorities.”¹³⁹ Unlike other choral organizations who plan concerts by season or semester-long calendars, the MTC learns and performs anywhere from five to seven pieces per week with only two advance rehearsals. JoAnn Ottley described both the quantity and relentless nature of the choral literature each week as “…going by on a conveyor belt. The music just kept coming, and the broadcasts came each week.”¹⁴⁰ By comparison, an average university choir might prepare a similar number of pieces for a single concert with several weeks of lead-time, rehearsing multiple times in a week. The MTC has earned their present broadcasting distinction as the “longest continuous broadcast in radio history” because of the incessant weekly schedule;¹⁴¹ yet, the nature of this timetable and the broadcast demands create limited lead-time to prepare the music.

To simultaneously raise the musical standards without increasing the usual rehearsal time, the singers simply needed to read their music faster and more accurately. Improvements in sight singing would create more available rehearsal time for refining the repertoire as opposed to correcting errors or engaging in the tedious playing of voice parts.

Subsequently, Jerold Ottley arranged for the purchase of the text A New Approach to

¹³⁹ Bonnie Goodliffe, interview with author, 29 May 2013, Salt Lake City, UT.

¹⁴⁰ JoAnn Ottley, interview with author, 24 September 2013, Murray, UT.

Sight Singing. This resource was used in various ways to help singers practice and improve their sight-singing ability. The charge to improve the underlying music literacy of the MTC singers formed the basis of future Choir School instructional priorities.

\[142\text{Sol Berkowitz, Gabriel Fontrier and Leo Kraft, } A \text{ New Approach to Sight Singing (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).}\]
CHAPTER 5

HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY

Institutional Climate and Context

When it became apparent that Associate Music Director Craig Jessop would succeed Jerold Ottley as director of the MTC in 1999, both men agreed that the impending transfer of leadership might allow for some beneficial modifications of structure within the MTC organization. “We knew there would be a changing of the guard and that this might be the right time to make some adjustments in training requirements.”143 The construction of the new LDS Conference Center—a 20,000-seat performance venue just north of Temple Square—and the participation of the Choir in the highly televised, worldwide cultural events of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City signaled both an immediate increase in visibility and performance pressure for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, as well as the assurance of added concert performances and artistic collaborations inside the new venue.

For the directors, finding the ability to meet new performance expectations with an improved musical product meant balancing short- and long-term priorities. An increase in the number of total rehearsals for added events was an obvious possible strategy, but would not necessarily address the bigger picture of providing singers with

143 Craig Jessop, interview with author, 3 June 2013, Logan, UT.
lasting musicals skills. Additionally, Jessop was sensitive about the limitations already inherent in volunteer singers’ availability for added rehearsals. Jessop desired a more permanent solution in the form of empowering singers with the vocal, physical, and mental tools required to meet new performance schedules and demands by creating a formal way to train them. “It was the musical equivalent of ‘teaching a man to fish.’”

To Jessop, an investment in the singers’ musicianship and vocal skills would equip them for the future, and would likely have more impact on the final product, chorally speaking. He envisioned offering a structured musical training experience—one that could be custom built for the organization.

The idea of assembling a smaller performing ensemble from within the Choir was appealing to Jessop. Foreshadowed by Ripplinger’s in-service furloughs, the context of a smaller choir gave singers the opportunity to experience increased accountability, gather additional feedback, and (presumably) return to the larger Choir with added skills and a refreshed perspective. A smaller choir might also be able to explore a different type of repertoire than was typical of weekly broadcasts. Here, they could prepare additional masterworks in their entirety, work specifically and closely with the Associate Director, and apply their Choir School knowledge by singing in a training ensemble. To test the hypothesis that a smaller choir provided the aforementioned benefits, an “experimental” group of volunteers was assembled from the MTC roster for a performance of Bach’s St. John Passion; this experience would be a prelude to the forming of the Temple Square Chorale (TSC). Singers in this experimental group reported an enthusiasm for having some variation in their experience, a chance to study a masterwork in depth, and a chance

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144Craig Jessop, interview with author, 3 June 2013, Logan, UT.
for a focused learning experience with the conductor.\textsuperscript{145} This positive feedback confirmed to Jessop and Ottley that a smaller performing choir was a necessary next step in the structure of the institution.

Logistically, the possibility of adding another ensemble was problematic; additional performing ensembles already existed on Temple Square, namely, the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus. There was simply not room to rehearse another ensemble and add concert performances within the confines of the calendar and facilities as they stood. Ultimately, the timing of the 1999 retirement of Mormon Youth Chorus director Robert Bowden created an avenue for the installation of a smaller choral ensemble connected directly with the MTC without overburdening the available Temple Square facilities and support staff. “We knew that we wouldn’t be able to add anything until there was a change in those ensembles. There was simply too much happening in the Temple Square facilities…Bob Bowden’s retirement allowed for a natural shift in those ensembles, which allowed us to move forward.”\textsuperscript{146}

The beginning of Jessop’s official directorship in October 1999 aligned effectively with these contextual events and ideas. A “new century” MTC would take on more performance responsibilities and the weekly broadcasts would join the new age of technology by providing options for increased broadcast distribution. Strategic planning revealed that the institution required changes in support, training, facility, and staffing. Eventually, Jessop consolidated the ideas from all the previous Ottley-Jessop discussions

\textsuperscript{145}Craig Jessop, interview with author, 3 June 2013, Logan, UT.

\textsuperscript{146}Ibid.
and placed a large request directly to Gordon B. Hinckley, then-president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and long-time advisor to the Choir.

Jessop’s official proposal included three major institutional changes to the MTC, and Hinckley’s approval set all three items in motion. First, the addition of a volunteer orchestra, to be called the “Orchestra at Temple Square,” was formed. It would provide instrumental accompaniment to the Choir and perform annual concerts. Second, a smaller choral ensemble was created and named the “Temple Square Chorale” (TSC). This ensemble would perform under the leadership of the Associate Director and rehearse for the duration of the training period for new singers each year. Volunteers from the MTC joined a new group of singers to form each edition of the TSC, which would perform its own concert. The TSC’s first concert included varied choral arrangements, including some by Mack Wilberg, who was appointed Associate Music Director in 1999. Eventually, the repertoire expanded to include many well-known choral masterworks.

Third, concurrent with TSC rehearsals, new singers would be required to participate in classes with the official “Choir School” for a second evening in the week. Successful completion of a final performance and Choir School assessments would signal “graduation” into the larger MTC membership. Final assessments for Choir School participants included a written exam covering material from the training program, in addition to a personal singing assessment adjudicated by the musical directors. These changes in structure and requirements for new singers occurred in coordination with a change in conductor leadership, signaling a new historical period for the MTC.

Ottley’s retirement resulted in the appointment of Craig Jessop as the new Music Director, leaving a vacancy in the Associate Music Director position. Mack Wilberg,
formerly of the Brigham Young University School of Music, was selected for the open position, and was given specific responsibility for the newly formed TSC. Barlow Bradford also joined the staff as a musical director, specifically to oversee the Orchestra at Temple Square. Additionally, the entrance age of the singer was lowered from thirty to twenty-five. Despite Ottley’s official retirement plans, he and Jessop continued to discuss the particulars of a new training program. Ottley was asked to devise the content of such a course; his extensive experience and perspective vis-à-vis the skill levels of the Choir members gave him distinctive insight into curriculum needs and possibilities. Jessop recalls, “We always knew we wanted a school of some kind. We needed one…and we talked often about what we might call it. Maybe the Emma Smith Choir School? We tried different names, but in the end, whatever we called it, we knew it was an important step in the whole progression.”

Eventually, they settled on calling the program the MTC “Choir School.”

Historically, the term “choir school” refers to training programs for resident church choirs—boy choirs in particular. In the case of the MTC, the term did not imply the creation of an educational facility or program for anything other than the immediate needs of training future singers. However, the suggestion of a “school” reflected the directors’ desire for a more formal training situation and an understanding that a comprehensive variety of musical and vocal skills should be taught.

In its thirteen-year history, a variety of volunteer staff members have responded to directives from MTC leadership to meet the Choir School’s evolving needs. The

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147 Craig Jessop, interview with author, 3 June 2013, Logan, UT.
solutions to these challenges offered by the volunteer staffers are outlined in what follows: a chronological history of MTC Choir School.

**Phase I: 1999–2002**

The first formal system for training new singers in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was authored and directed by Jerold Ottley in 1999, just three months prior to his formal retirement. Jessop had asked Ottley to share his instructional expertise and years of insight with the organization by spearheading the course. So, after twenty-five years of recognized leadership on the podium, Ottley continued as volunteer staff to help prepare the new singers for their Choir experience. For the next four years, Ottley met with singers on a rotating quarterly basis as part of their preparation for admission into the Choir. Ottley designed the syllabus and course content and was the main instructor, aided by additional visiting staff. During this period, auditions for new singers and Choir School sessions happened twice each year.

One evening each week, new singers rehearsed with the Associate Director as part of the Temple Square Chorale and, on the other evening, attended the academic class. Singers would spend two hours of classroom instruction immersed in a variety of topics including music theory basics, vocal skills, sight-reading, and orientation to full Choir membership. Classes were held in a multipurpose room inside the Joseph Smith Memorial Building or in the basement of the Tabernacle. Occasionally, visiting instructors would help with specialty topics or present workshops. Some specialty topics included visits by guest lecturers such as David Warner, then an administrative leader in the LDS Church Music Department. With extensive experience in musical production and direction, he was uniquely positioned to help prepare singers to perform for cameras
by encouraging them to infuse performances with visual emotion. Mack Wilberg visited
the school to help singers with score-marking ideas that would be useful to them in future
MTC and TSC rehearsals. Dyanne Riley, a former member of the Choir and a local
university choral conductor, assisted JoAnn Ottley in presenting a variety of vocal
workshops, as well as several lectures concerning the spiritual and healing properties of
singing. Jerold Ottley continued to revise and adapt the curriculum in each session in
order to meet changing Choir needs and upon reflection of what components were most
effective. He continued to improve the function of the school, never feeling fully
“finished” with the revisions. Ottley’s academic approach is reflected in his use of course
syllabuses and assessment techniques. His intimate understanding of the amateur singers
who comprised the Choir roster influenced his decision to give weighted emphasis to
music fundamentals as the core of the curriculum. By the second year, he enlisted the
help of part-time organists Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe to assist in teaching
music theory. Classes were sometimes divided into skill levels according to the audition
test results, with Margetts and Goodliffe responsible for teaching the sections for more
advanced singers. Choir School members completed the course by taking a written final
exam as well as an individual sight-singing exam, taken from author Paul Roe, which
required singers to perform an eleven-measure melody with an increasingly complicated
melodic line.148

Phase II: 2003–2006

In 2002, Jerold Ottley accepted a new church assignment to be the bishop
(ecclesiastical leader) of his local LDS congregation. The assignment was labor intensive

enough to conflict with his volunteer work in the School. A letter in Ottley’s file in the MTC office reveals something of the sensitivity he felt about allowing the next generation of leadership to move forward, as well as his desire to rest from his years of service and subsequent volunteer efforts. He expressed a sense of readiness to move on and recognized that his continued presence in the organization could create awkwardness for the new leaders.

By now, the Choir School was operating twice each year, and the Ottleys’ departure created an immediate need for instruction, leadership, and class coverage. The advantage of the Ottleys’ influence was obvious in that no one but the former conductor himself could have brought the same level of understanding to such an assignment. In a sense, the perspective he brought to the situation was irreplaceable. The assignment to direct the Choir School program fell to Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, whose preparation as instructors alongside the Ottleys, in addition to each organist’s expertise in music theory, made them effective replacements. Their long-time history with the organization and pragmatic insight about how the Choir functioned each week in broadcasts and performances made them suitable candidates to continue the Ottleys’ work.

Relying on Jerold Ottley’s materials and overall design, Goodliffe and Margetts expanded the course’s literacy components to include materials they created specifically for the Choir School. They responded to feedback from singers and formal guidance from directors to make sight-reading and music fundamentals the main feature of the second phase of Choir School. This service continued Jerold Ottley’s established efforts to improve the musical literacy and preparation of Choir members. Although neither was a
formally trained vocalist, both women relied on a combination of music education, classroom teaching, and extensive private instruction experience as their guide for the necessary instructional activities. Goodliffe and Margetts continued the practice of inviting guest lecturers to present specialized material that was outside their professional expertise.

**Phase III: 2007–2013**

The third phase of the Choir School began in January 2007 and was unique for several particular reasons. First, newly assigned Choir School Director Cherilyn Worthen performed a comprehensive redesign of the curriculum materials already in progress. Second, the Director was herself a singer in the Choir who continued performing alongside the singers she trained. Never before had a singer inside the organization been asked to coordinate instruction for her peers. Third, Rebecca Wilberg accepted the assignment to become the new official MTC Vocal Coach, providing instruction and supervision. Finally, the General Manager participated more closely as a supervisor and administrator to the Choir School and its faculty. At this time, the Tabernacle on Temple Square was being refurbished, and the classes temporarily met in a multipurpose room in the Conference Center in downtown Salt Lake City, where the Choir was also meeting for weekly rehearsals and broadcasts.

This phase of the history of the Choir School is divided into two segments, based on the leadership and organization of the Choir conductors. From 2007–2008 Craig Jessop was the Music Director of the Choir and main point of contact for Choir School feedback and instruction. Associate Music Director Mack Wilberg’s responsibility was coordinating the training choir experience of the Temple Square Chorale. Craig Jessop’s
2008 resignation resulted in the hire of Ryan Murphy as an Associate Music Director. For several months prior to his official hire, Wilberg operated as Interim Music Director before being officially appointed as Jessop’s successor. These changes heralded the second segment of the Choir School’s third historical phase, with attendant modifications in curriculum and planning. Today, Murphy acts as the main point of contact for Choir School-related planning and any collaboration between Temple Square Chorale (TSC) and the Choir School.

Context

In 2002, the author completed her own training program in the Choir School under the direction of the Ottleys, in what was their last year of the Choir School. Upon successful completion of the training program, she was admitted to the MTC as a second alto (Alto II). During this time, she was working as a secondary education choral teacher in a local Salt Lake City high school. After several months of singing in the choir, she observed an evolving relationship between her choral teaching in the classroom and the experiences of weekly rehearsals in the MTC. Direction from MTC conductors, exposure to new choral literature, and the process of preparing weekly performances of Music and the Spoken Word all contributed to improvements and progress in her work as a high school choral director. Singing in the Choir proved to be a great measure of professional development, and each experience seemed to positively impact the other. As she made progress as both an educator and choral singer, the possibility of future graduate study began to make sense as the next step in her professional development.

In anticipation of that likelihood, the author began drafting a growing list of research ideas and projects for use in application materials and future projects. Many of
these ideas came in the course of weekly MTC rehearsals, notes jotted in the margins of scores or written on pieces of scratch paper inside Choir folders. Eventually, these observations grew into a small notebook, and the lists of ideas ranged from practical solutions for small choral problems to rehearsal strategies and programming ideas.

At this time, the Tabernacle Choir maintained an informal internal policy to not solicit “suggestions” from singers for institutional improvements. With such a large body of volunteers to supervise and a growing fan base, there was simply no way to accommodate the inevitable number of differing opinions and tastes about any number of topics such as wardrobe, attendance policies, literature, etc. Leadership in the MTC organization assumes the responsibility to assess the effectiveness of their programs and create new administrative strategies. Knowing this, the author maintained her growing file of choral teaching ideas with no plans to discuss its potential impact on the Choir itself. Rather, it was a springboard of sketches about possible research ideas for use when a graduate school opportunity presented itself.

In the spirit of gathering more information about graduate study in choral music, the author approached then-Director Craig Jessop for a mentorship conversation about schools and research interests. Because the Choir organization generally does not take suggestions from its members, the conversation centered only on ideas of how to take advantage of local and other professional development, and the author continued adding notes from rehearsal observations to the growing file. By now, the subject possibilities for future research included topics such as working with amateur adult singers, choral pedagogy, choral ensembles techniques, vocal instruction in community choirs, and the function of choral pedagogy at all age levels. Of this list, some ideas were specific to the
MTC itself or working with amateur singers in general. Other ideas related to community choral music making, educational programs, and ideas for secondary choral education improvements. Items specific to the Tabernacle Choir ranged from future in-service training for current singers to creating a staff of qualified instructors for long-term program development. Keeping the list helped the author examine possible solutions to remedy the paradox between necessary increases in singer training and preparation and the second phase of the Choir School curriculum, which had largely excluded choral ensemble skills and extensive vocal training in favor of music literacy priorities.

At the same time, the author was also studying private voice with Rebecca Wilberg, who had been a voice professor at BYU prior to her appointment as the Vocal Coach of the MTC. Weekly lessons were focused on the obvious aspects of solo singing but also related to aspects of music education. Rebecca was not only the wife of the Associate Director, but also a former secondary choral educator herself. Conversations during the lessons often turned to issues of group vocal instruction and the use of the voice in a choral rehearsal. Wilberg’s interest in and knowledge of the demands of the Choir’s performing schedule in combination with the author’s direct experiences as an MTC singer made for lively and informative discussions about choral music education. Often these talks addressed how singers in the Choir might benefit from additional vocal and choral instruction.

Unbeknownst to the author at the time, a private conversation between Craig Jessop and Rebecca Wilberg in the summer of 2006 resulted in an invitation for the author to share some of the notebook ideas specific to the MTC training program with Jessop. At a lunch meeting with Jessop and Rebecca Wilberg present, the author provided
a list of possibilities related to additions and improvements to the training program based on the author’s perception of the growing rehearsal demands each week.

Following a review of these sketches, in early September of 2006, Jessop requested a more formal exploration of these ideas in the shape of a proposal for a semester-long, once-weekly, two-hour course. This proposal was to account for the previous successes and limitations of the first two Choir School curriculum phases. It would also create a pathway to manage the increased pressure for improved amateur singer performance and provide needed training in choral ensemble skills. The proposal also considered the unique aspect of working with singers who were doing more than simply seeking out a musical pastime—they were also fulfilling a volunteer religious assignment. For the author, the challenge of creating such a course was intellectually fulfilling, but the assumption remained that the effort was merely a chance to experiment with choral music course design or possibly to create a more clarified doctoral research topic. The author believed that such a proposal might be used directly by the conductors, passed along for the current Choir School faculty to consider, or given to other volunteer staff.

Eight weeks later, the author attended two formal meetings with both the MTC Music Director and Associate Music Director concerning the content of the proposed course content, graduate school planning, and to share information from a chorister’s perspective about the training needs of the singers. In a surprising moment, at the end of the second meeting, Jessop extended a direct invitation to the author to both formalize the course and assume a new role as the Choir School Director. Margetts and Goodliffe, Choir School instructors from Phase II, continued as associate instructors. New efforts to
improve access to personal vocal training were made with the addition of Rebecca Wilberg as the new official MTC Vocal Coach and Sara Thomas as an assistant vocal coach.

The author accepted the assignment and continued to revise the original proposal for final approval from Directors Jessop and Wilberg. Once the course content was approved, meetings were held with all the instructional staff to begin making adjustments to the new course design. Goodliffe and Margetts offered their notes and materials for reference and expressed a gracious willingness to continue teaching in whatever capacity made sense within the new curriculum structure. By December 2006, a formal announcement was made to the Choir concerning the new staff positions and forthcoming changes to policies concerning singers’ participation in these classes. In January 2007, the Choir School welcomed a class of nearly fifty-five singers to experience a revised third phase of Choir School instruction.

Directives/Instructional Priorities

Because the author had first-hand experience with Ottley’s version of the school, there was common ground from which to work when conceiving a redesigned version of the class. Jessop’s request was to build on the successes of the previous courses, which specifically included the necessary training in musicianship and the orientation of new singers to the Choir itself. Margetts and Goodliffe were organists by training, and JoAnn Ottley had retired. Therefore, there was a need to replace her position as a vocal coach and to include increased attention to vocal skills in the Choir School curriculum. Jessop’s observation was that the singers were making excellent strides in terms of being able to navigate a weekly broadcast as sight singers, and would greatly benefit from instruction
specific to use of the voice. The author’s proposal also expanded the concept of vocal training into a series of lessons and lectures meant to specifically apply these skills within a choral ensemble.

Directors Jessop and Wilberg affirmed that singers tend to feel anonymous in large choir settings. The size of the Choir contributed to this effect within the MTC, especially because many of the singers had been participating for so many years. Curriculum revisions and efforts were made to improve the “culture of correction” within the ensemble. By empowering singers with more skills and emphasizing the need for training and improvement, the musical directors hoped MTC singers would renew their sense of individual accountability in weekly rehearsals. The Choir School and subsequent in-service training classes were designed to have an effect on individual skill development despite the logistical complications associated with large choir singing.

In addition to consulting the resources of choral experts for class materials, another of Jessop’s unique directives was to “also rely on the words of prophets and general authorities [LDS Church leadership] for help in musical instruction.”149 Although these leaders do not claim professional musical training, selected materials provided an additional institution-specific resource that added a spiritual and cultural distinctiveness to the class. Jessop’s request to include materials by LDS Church leadership was not an attempt to exclude any relevant influence of non-LDS experts. Members of the instructional staff, though LDS by requirement for affiliation with the MTC, brought with them a wide variety of educational training and experiences. The influence of non-LDS thinkers and educators was felt by virtue of the unique fingerprint of each instructor’s

149 Craig Jessop, e-mail message to author, December 2006.
personal educational background. Across the faculty and musical leadership of the choir, the combined total of years of experience, degrees held, and institutions attended supports the secondary influence of both members and nonmembers of the LDS Church in the Choir School training program. Mack Wilberg provided another insight that directly affected course planning when he requested that priority be given to “anything that will directly relate to the Thursday night rehearsal process.” He asked that the Choir School create even more immediately practical activities and course material with the express purpose that singers come to the “loft” able to keep pace with the intensive schedule.

Scott Barrick, General Manager of the MTC, was assigned to be the main administrative support and supervisor of the Choir School at that time. As such, other priorities related to the new singer orientation process and changes in singer preparation became a part of the curriculum. This part of the curriculum was not specifically musical but was an important and necessary feature of the training experience. The ongoing dialogue between the Choir School instructional staff and the General Manager improved the quality and effectiveness of the orientation process for each new singer.

To summarize, the instructional priorities for the 2007 version of the Choir School were directed by Jessop and Wilberg and further refined by the author. These continued to be (1) relevance to the weekly rehearsal, (2) increased emphasis on vocal production and choral ensemble skills, (3) creating a “culture of correction” and working toward more individual accountability, (4) increased visibility of the General Manager for new member information and training, and (5) an increased sense of mission and purpose through the addition of Church-specific materials and lessons.

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150 Mack Wilberg, preliminary staff meeting with author, December 2006.
2007–2008

The Choir School program experienced two shifts in design related to corresponding changes in Choir leadership. From 2007 to 2008, the program was in its first trial period under the author’s leadership, reporting directly to Jessop for feedback and support from his position as Music Director. Annual “postmortem” meetings were held with Jessop and Mack Wilberg to provide reports of challenges, successes, singer feedback, and future planning issues. For the first session, the author designed a multifaceted curriculum which addressed five specific areas of instruction: (1) choral ensemble skills; (2) vocal production; (3) music literacy; (4) specialty topics such as new member information, memorization helps, etc.; and (5) issues related to the mission and purpose of the Choir. Initially, the plan was to encounter each of these topics within a separate single evening session, with instructors rotating by area, as assigned. The curriculum was mapped out to include progression over a sixteen-week period, moving across all five areas. The coordinating Temple Square Chorale began rehearsing about five class periods after Choir School was in session. For this reason, the original philosophy was to give the singers as much preparation as possible to come ready to their first TSC rehearsal. During this period, the Choir School classes met in the Conference Center and the TSC rehearsals were held in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square. Activities between the Choir School and TSC rehearsals were quite separate; both the physical space and coordination between instructor and conductor resulted in two distinct experiences each week. To create a connection between the two events, the Choir School Director sang as a participant in the TSC to ensure proximity to the singers, close
observation of Wilberg’s rehearsal instructions and priorities, and to provide any necessary announcements to singers each week.

During the very first installation of the class, the author received permission to allow four singers from the regular Choir membership to participate in the first Choir School class alongside the new singers. Their assignment was to provide intermittent feedback to the director about the usefulness of the material in relationship to the regular Choir experience. They were also able to react to and experiment with new instructional strategies providing a helpful source of needed information and criticism throughout the experience.

Partway through the first year, the remodeling in the Tabernacle was completed and Choir School classes were held in the Recording Room, a new space in the basement of the Tabernacle that now serves as the home of the Choir School and TSC rehearsals. The first practical group assessments were held in this space. Replacing the previous final solo sight-singing assessments, this particular experience required singers in the class to be designated in various test groups to rehearse together and prepare material for the conductors to hear and workshop. This assessment allowed the singers to showcase their vocal skills within a choral context and without overburdening the conductors’ schedules by mandating individual appointments. Each test group prepared two short hymns in advance, rehearsing the music to achieve the best possible performance quality. The musical directors adjudicated the singers’ performance of the music and provided real-time feedback in the form of a choral clinic to each test group.

In the winter of 2008, Craig Jessop announced his resignation from the Choir. Though the decision came without warning to the Choir organization at large, it did not
immediately affect the Choir School schedule. It did impact the TSC, which had to dissolve in order to allow Wilberg to serve as the interim Music Director for the MTC. Choir School continued as previously planned, but the singers did not participate in a separate choral concert at the conclusion of their training experience. Instead, they were swiftly admitted to the MTC rosters. As a result of these leadership changes, the Choir School Director consulted with Choir leadership about the wisdom of taking a sabbatical from the auditions and Choir School session for the following year. At that time, the Choir had begun a search for a new Associate Director, and it seemed appropriate to wait until a new Associate Music Director was available to conduct the TSC before starting another round of admissions. Interestingly, during the previous year, the admissions into the Choir were such that the roster had been essentially overfilled, containing more than enough personnel to “cover” for the unplanned situation. All Choir School staff took a sabbatical that year and reconvened for a 2011 Choir School session after Ryan Murphy was appointed as Associate Music Director.

2009–2013

Murphy’s selection as Associate Music Director resulted in a subtle but important shift in the Choir School trajectory. Murphy graduated from his Master of Music program in choral conducting at BYU at the same time as the author, and both shared coursework together before he left to attend Boston University for doctoral studies in choral music. This mutual experience provided a common point of understanding for both to discuss choral matters and collaborate on effective choral teaching strategies. During his first assignment accompanying the Choir on their biannual summer tour, Murphy and the author consulted during a several-hour-long bus ride. It was there that Murphy was
introduced to the Choir School program itself, its mission, revisions, achievements, challenges, and future planning. To provide additional detail, the author also shared computer files, history, handouts, and other information germane to the Choir School program for Murphy to review.

In his new assignment as the TSC conductor and Associate Music Director, Murphy was able to play a more active role in the Choir School if he desired, thus coordinating the TSC and the Choir School experience. In that he was new to the organization and there were no official “written policies” concerning roles and responsibilities for Choir School work, he was free to determine his level of involvement. Murphy spent his first year observing, taking notes, contributing to discussions, trying vocal exercises, and otherwise participating in the class as his schedule allowed. As a result, he now had first-hand knowledge of the course content and could more effectively experiment with coordinating TSC rehearsals and the Choir School program. The Choir School Director continued to sing as a member of the TSC to keep the emerging collaboration informed on both sides. As a matter of course, conversations about weekly classes and rehearsals started to be a normal pattern and both looked for ways to positively influence the other’s efforts.

These discussions eventually informed improvements in subsequent Choir School sessions. For instance, Murphy advised that the classes become more active, less lecture driven, with as much activity and applied learning as possible. Additionally, the Vocal Coach developed new lecture material in an effort to help singers understand how to produce various choral sounds for the conductors. The Choir School Director modified lecture material to reflect some of Murphy’s and Wilberg’s instructional strategies from
weekly MTC rehearsals. The circular effect of discussing rehearsals and classes together resulted in other points of collaboration. The Choir School Director would often share a “Choir School Moment” for three minutes during rehearsal breaks to remind singers of material from the previous class. This also served to enliven the memory of the second year Chorale singers, who were now officially singing with the MTC, and fulfilling their entrance requirements by singing with the Chorale for a second year. Conversely, Murphy’s opinion was solicited in Choir School classes as an official “word” from the conductor, and he coached many of the small groups in their rehearsals.

The author was occasionally asked to run a sectional during a TSC rehearsal, cover for the conductor if he was away, or provide vocal strategies in rehearsal. The continuing dialogue of what each group of singers seemed to need, what items were most pressing in rehearsals, and how to creatively address those issues served as the impetus for revisions and adjustments. Cooperation ensured that communication between both leaders was secure and that the curriculum honestly reflected the priorities of the musical director. It also added an important piece for the Choir School Director—increasing credibility with Choir members and reinforcing that notion that materials being taught in the program were sanctioned by the Music Directors. As with the previous classes, the final assessments included written exams and a final practical assessment which involved a small group singing material for both directors to demonstrate their improving choral ensemble skills.

In-Service Program and Future Planning

Though included in the original 2006 proposal as a long-term goal, it was not until the summer of 2011 that Mack Wilberg requested to implement in-service training
for current Choir members. This program provided a way for older, current Choir members (many of whom had been admitted to the Choir long before the 1999 Choir School training experience began) to have an experience similar to the training offered to the incoming singers. Wilberg believed that providing all MTC singers with a common experience would both refresh the older singers and create a way for all MTC members to share a common rehearsal language.

Though Wilberg desired this extra training for the current, older singers, he was sensitive to the volunteer service they were already providing. “I’d like for everyone to have a chance to experience some of the new training, without overburdening them. Maybe we can do four, one-hour sessions on nights when they’re already scheduled to be here…it’s not much, but maybe they can get a taste of what’s going on in the Choir School.” 151

These four shorter sessions were not nearly as intense as the four-month program, but the model of recurring in-service needed implementation. A singer may stay in the Choir up to twenty years, or age sixty, whichever happens first. Many singers stay the full twenty years, and a high percentage of others enter the Choir around age fifty. As a result, issues related to the life span of the voice are a reality for the MTC. Without a program to provide additional in-service, a singer might enter the Choir, stay twenty years, and never receive any more individual feedback beyond his or her initial audition. Although lengthy Choir service might yield improvements in sight singing or managing the tasks required in weekly rehearsals, for some, inevitable vocal changes could be problematic. A singer could also develop a small bad habit, which, over many years, could damage the voice

151 Mack Wilberg, personal communication, 10 August 2011.
and/or result in an undesirable choral contribution. Given the size of the MTC, the only way to supervise potential vocal and choral problems would be to routinely instruct groups of singers in a more intimate setting. An in-service program provided a way to monitor individual singers and confirm that Choir members were familiar with the Choir School curriculum content and rehearsal expectations.

For this exercise, Murphy and the author worked together to provide a review of the most essential vocal habits, choral habits, and “responsible singing strategies” specific to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Gayle Lockwood, professor of voice in the Music-Dance-Theater program at Brigham Young University, presented a guest lecture on vocal resonance exercises. Murphy conveyed information about how current MTC sound recording technology influences conductor problem solving during rehearsals.

Following the previous models of providing instruction to small groups, a portion of each class was designated to create small SATB ensembles. Groups were assigned a particular hymn, and were instructed to mark the score relying on their own experience and intuition, paying particular attention to and locating issues of diction and intonation in the music. Singers were given tools and instruction to mark scores and attempt to solve these kinds of issues without conductor assistance (see Appendix D Items 4 and 5). Ideally, a choir of singers who know how to anticipate these issues, and solve them in advance, could save the conductor precious rehearsal minutes. Working with a coach, each group used the score markings and coaching suggestions to create a beautiful small ensemble sound, which was recorded and played back to the group at large for assessment. At the end of the four classes, Wilberg and Murphy would attend rehearsal to hear and assess these small groups in a more “final” and pressurized environment. Though the singers felt
exam-like pressure, the criterion for this assessment was simply singing well enough to meet the Music Directors’ approval. Throughout the assessment, they provided typical choral clinician adjudication on issues such as tone, intonation, diction, and choral blend by offering verbal feedback. As neither musical director was directly involved in the singers’ preparation process, the author provided instructions for them to gain a sense of what the singers were studying and what instructions for the exam were given (see Appendix F Item 4).

Additional goals of the in-service included a continuation of creating a “culture of correction” where singers will be expected to receive and respond well to coaching and individual feedback. Setting the institutional precedent that in-service, in any form, is a recurring part of the total Choir experience provided an avenue to continue to train singers to respond to any forthcoming changes in the Choir’s needs. To date, three complete cycles of in-service have been held, from October through November, following a similar pattern of class presentations and content. By the end of the third cycle, records indicated that almost the entire current Choir membership had been through some form (modified or full-length) of the recent Choir School program. Future planning indicates that continued training may now be effective in terms of focusing in on specific areas, such as addressing issues section by section, or in advance of a particular performance challenge such as extra training for a masterwork or upcoming concert schedule. Regardless of the topic at hand, the pattern for continued training within the ensemble was now established and could be modified in the future, as needs evolved. One singer wrote to express her feelings about the experience in her 2014 in-service class. Although a letter of appreciation might not be unusual, her length of service
in the Choir and the specifics of her letter highlight the need for and value of the content of this experience.

I am an "oldie" in Choir and will soon be put out to pasture... next April...after 20 years of service and 60 years of age. I feel very fortunate that I was able to attend Choir School before finishing my time with the MTC. I think rotating Choir members through in-service classes is invaluable. It's very interesting what happens to the voice over the years...as you listen to your conductors and teachers and try to incorporate their instructions into your own method of singing and as illness and life in general take their toll. I certainly needed some "tweaking" and the small group instruction to give me some course corrections and reminders. It was especially helpful for me to watch you up close and be able to model you as you instructed us. It was also very helpful to listen to our sound production in a smaller group and to hear ourselves recorded. It reminded me that our individual efforts really do make a difference and that seemingly small things are very important. Even at my "advanced stage of Choir life" I am feeling empowered by your instruction and will be a better and more aware Choir member because of this experience.152

During the first 2011 session, a singer wrote to the Choir office with very specific feedback related to the in-service topics. Interestingly, she included all points of the curriculum, providing the staff with helpful feedback by topic:

It's great to have permission and the reminder to reset my instrument/voice whenever I feel I'm not able to respond well. It never takes more than a couple of seconds to do this, but it really helps me, to adjust my posture or to stretch out some stiffness. I try not to distract others when I do it, but it makes a big difference in my ability to continue to pay attention and respond throughout the rehearsal.

I now notice my score in some new ways. I pay attention to it before we start to rehearse, and make markings that help me remember to sing more correctly. I had never thought of making markings that weren't suggested by the conductor, but I find this to be helpful to me. I now have more vowel choices. I loved the demonstrations and the reminders of all the many vowels there are to choose from. I have changed many of my previous vowel markings in scores; I anticipate problems; and I am more aware of pitch problems as they happen. I appreciated the resonance instruction. Though brief, it was a great reminder, and has led me to experiment on my own, to discover ways to modify my own resonance, for a more pleasing and appropriate sound.

152Diana Brown, e-mail communication, 13 November 2014.
I really felt the Spirit in Choir School, helping me to feel engaged, and enabling me to learn quickly. I wanted to retain what I was learning, and I think I have been blessed to do that.

Going directly to rehearsal after each session of Choir School gave us an opportunity to apply what we learned, immediately, and helped me to retain the instruction.

Those four weeks of Choir School were exhausting, yet invigorating. I felt so enthused that I fear I may have over sung in the rehearsal afterward. Maybe a warning to be aware of the tendency to do that would be helpful. Despite the intensity of the schedule, I felt Choir School was very helpful and worthwhile. I am so grateful for the opportunity to participate in it."


In preparation for the upcoming 2014 edition of Choir School, the Choir School Director, the Associate Music Director, and the Vocal Coach convened to discuss potential projects and improvements for the next sessions. Here, feedback from the previous session’s attendants, instructor notes, reports about current trends in the MTC rehearsals, and a host of other data were considered. The dialogue began as a report by the Choir School Director that, upon review, the original intentions and directives of the 2007 Choir School revisions had been successfully achieved. Namely, these included (1) efforts to include a higher percentage of choral ensemble skills and vocal instruction, (2) preparing singers with a mindset about the purpose and mission of the choir, and (3) making lecture activities more directly relevant to the weekly rehearsal process. By all singer and staff reports, it was agreed that the program itself was having a positive impact on singer preparation, and improvements in classroom presentations and activities might yield more vocal improvements and longer-term vocal results. At this point, the current rehearsal trends in the large Choir loft were considered against the curriculum

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153 Patsy Peterson, personal journal, 5 December 2011.
content to look for gaps and places to improve. Associate Director Ryan Murphy spoke plainly and confirmed some of the most pressing musical and psychological issues from the perspective of a conductor. He discussed (1) further clarification on the conductor’s tonal preferences and possible teaching solutions, (2) the need to address individual accountability in the rehearsal context, (3) the most frequently occurring vocal issues in rehearsals each week, and (4) issues relative to sound recording and mixing which continue to reveal singer flaws sometimes not recognized in a live performance.

Creating an “ideal” choral sound is both the privilege and responsibility of choral conductors in general. Achieving this desired tone might occur in a variety of ways, including modeling of both desirable examples and nonexamples of the musical passage, verbal descriptions (both technical or imaginative), or physical cues such as a hand shaping a vowel. Sometimes the ideal sound is simply implied after a singer spends time in rehearsal with a conductor and collects information about the kinds of corrections he or she tends to privilege. Each of these approaches is inherited by conductors as a part of their training or emerges out of their added experience; others are created instantly in an unplanned teaching moment. Depending on the conductor, these tonal preferences are either implied within the context of rehearsals or sometimes discussed openly with singers and colleagues. In the case of the MTC Choir School, tonal preferences were not largely discussed with Directors Jessop and Wilberg in the first phase of the 2007 revisions. Instructing the singers about the desired tonal preferences became important, but was done primarily by observing the rehearsals and corrections, listening to performances, and describing these sounds to incoming singers. As such, staff instructors attempted to “decode” the language used in rehearsal and provide these assumed
translations to new singers in an effort to prepare them to give the conductors a sound they desired, all the while realizing it was neither a perfect science nor a fixed target. Of this preemptive approach, the Vocal Coach explained: “…our job in the Choir School is, essentially, to create the sound of the Choir before they ever enter the loft…It is our responsibility to help the singers learn how to physically create the sound they want…We have to help the singers figure that out.”

For example, one particular strategy used by the Music Director at one time was to use the term “Upper Shelf” as a cue for singers to adjust their vocal resonance toward a brighter vocal placement. As this strategy yielded the result desired by the conductor, it became a frequent tool in the rehearsal to signal a particular vocal adjustment. In this example, the term originated with the conductor in whatever way he came to it, but since it was a useful rehearsal tool for him, the staff made an effort to investigate the context of the phrase and what it might mean to a particular singer in a physiological way. Alerting singers to the use of the term in during training might better enable them to respond in the way the conductor prefers.

Another example of this phenomenon was a term used by Jessop in rehearsals, especially while rehearsing the works of Rachmaninoff. As an illustration for the women, namely the alto section, he often said “sound like Mother Russia” in an attempt to coax a richer, warmer, darker choral tone from the singers. Used in a healthy way, this phrase created an identifiable choral color change. However, assuming an amateur singer is unfamiliar with the Russian choral singing technique, or even simply unaware of how to create this tonal color, a singer can be left to make an assumption. In many cases, smart

154Rebecca Wilberg, interview with author, 14 August 2013, Saratoga Springs, UT.
singers make the connection between the analogy and the desired tonal color. Still, the author noticed a pattern upon hearing the term in rehearsal; many singers overcorrected, darkening the tone so much that it created intonation problems or affected the blend of the section. In response, Choir School staff used the term in class, played recordings of this style, and provided physiological tools for the singers to create the desired tone in a healthy and responsible manner.

In this way, though attempting to be proactive about the training the singers receive, the staff acted reflectively, using conductor language as a fluctuating piece of the curriculum. Ultimately, in both cases, the desired tonal concept was never actually discussed directly with the staff but with observations in rehearsal patterns and strategies, the Vocal Coach, Choir School Director, and Associate Director observed the cue and its resultant vocal changes, and implemented the vocabulary word into some of the vocal lessons of the Choir School. Most recently, in an interview with Music Director Mack Wilberg, he identified the highest priority of the Choir School curriculum to be “helping them gain an understanding of the concept of our sound and why we must do it that way.”\textsuperscript{155} When asked to further clarify his concept of that sound, Wilberg explained that singing with excellent intonation was a priority.

The best choirs sing in tune...if we want to be a great choir, we have to have that same standard...the corrections we give in rehearsal have a lot to do with fixing intonation...We’re able to stop for those things less and less as the singers come with better training. But singing in tune is a priority.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{155}Mack Wilberg, interview with author, 8 April 2014, Salt Lake City.

\textsuperscript{156}Ibid.
Individual Responsibility

Murphy noted the difference between the more intimate experiences in Temple Square Chorale (TSC) and moving into the Choir loft as a full member of the Choir. “It’s just easy to feel anonymous in a choir this size…there is a transition when moving from the small choir to the large choir…but we have to instill a sense of individual accountability.” Recently, Murphy’s strategy was occasionally to ask one or two singers to sing a particular passage alone in the rehearsal. A fairly extreme departure from the normal routine, this unexpected strategy rattled a few singers enough to comment on personal social media sites later that same night. Despite the rattling some singers experienced, Murphy reported it was a very successful strategy on two points: (1) everyone benefits from hearing singers respond to coaching and make positive corrections, and (2) it immediately changed the sound of the section as singers instantly became conscious of their own contribution. Noting that it was not reasonable to move through such a large choir one singer at a time, the idea of keeping singers alert to their personal contribution is appealing to him. “We need to create a culture in the Choir that allows for people to receive feedback and improve.”

Frequently Occurring Vocal Issues in Rehearsal

All three staff members collectively affirmed that the following vocal issues were most frequently encountered in a weekly rehearsal within the past year. Of immediate importance was the habit of some singers to sing “off the breath,” due partly to anonymity in the choir’s large size or perhaps to a subconscious feeling that one’s individual contribution cannot be tracked. Another possible explanation offered was the

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157 Ryan Murphy, Choir School staff meeting, 9 November 2013.
recent emphasis on preparing music for wide distribution through recording devices. Murphy shared a lesser-known reality that the recent implementation of a new type of analog soundboard had resulted in broadcasting a sound that was “warmer, but much more accurate in its representation of vocal flaws” as compared to other recording systems. As such, instruction to the singers about carefully singing for the microphones is now a constant part of the Choir experience. Singers who want to blend or who are working too hard at not being “caught” by a microphone often resort to a sound that is less supported, fearing their vocal flaws, vibratos, or volume will be picked up in a negative way. Without ways to personally police these bad habits, singers need extra training and practice at knowing what their best vocal contribution can be.

Other vocal problems in recent months included a tendency of the singers to find a bright, clear placement which was in tune, but not accompanied by enough “core” or body in the tone—possibly compromised by lack of vowel space and/or the disconnection to breath energy. This particular issue was in stark contrast to the vocal issues of the 2007 Choir School, which were simply to get a more healthy sound happening, and to be sure each singer had a small awareness of his or her natural vocal strengths.

Recording Issues

With the list of specific vocal issues out in the open, it became much easier to strategize about the content of the upcoming Choir School session. Rebecca Wilberg contributed possible solutions for how to go about teaching and reinforcing a more desirable and balanced vocal product. The author kept a more “bird’s-eye” perspective, 

\[^{158}\]Ibid.
looking for patterns and ways to reschedule class content, delivery, and time spent on various topics to achieve the now-discussable and transparent objectives.

The advent of the Choir’s YouTube channel and distribution of recordings has highlighted an issue that most community and church choirs never face: that of constantly recording and distributing your product, especially with significantly reduced preparation time per piece. The new sound system, with its more truthful representation of the singers, continues to create additional pressures unique to the MTC. Murphy, a frequent listener in the sound booths when Wilberg is conducting, knows well that there are differences in the live and recorded performance. “The live sound has the benefit of the space and is more forgiving… As conductors, you don’t always know on the podium if you’re hearing everything that comes through to the people in the sound booth…which is why we give feedback.”

Mack Wilberg offered a similar sentiment. “Unlike other choirs, nearly everything we do is recorded and distributed. Live performances are much honestly much easier, but around here we’re constantly recorded… The singers have to know that our concept of the sound is influenced by this reality.” Occasionally, Murphy or the author will participate as a listener in the booth, sending messages to the conductor if a voice is sticking out or if there is a balance issue that might not be heard live in the hall. Murphy feels this unique negotiation should be part of a singer’s understanding. As part of the Choir School experience, he often provides a lecture for singers which includes recent recording outtakes, explaining what issues made a particular take useable or not.

\[159\] Ryan Murphy, in-service lecture, 12 November 2013, Salt Lake City, UT.

\[160\] Mack Wilberg, 8 April 2014.
A unique outcome of the August 2013 planning meeting was the realization that any changes made to the curriculum for the upcoming sessions ought to revolve around more active, laboratory-type work to simply get singers making a vocal sound that represents the best of healthy production and choral blend of the conductor’s tonal preference. To this end, the largest coming change is that the first five classes in the Choir School curriculum will be devoted entirely to choral ensemble skills and vocal skills, as opposed to rotating all the lecture material into the mix. The improved test scores and overall music literacy scores on the incoming singers signals a new period in Choir School history where the literacy concepts can simply be a short review instead of concentrated instruction. A reinvention of the calendar to “front load” the course with vocal habits will hopefully provide singers with more tools to make the desired choral tone in their very first rehearsals with the TSC. The continuing dialogue between the Choir directors, Vocal Coach, and Choir School Director will undoubtedly yield continuing improvements. At the time of press, Vocal Coach Rebecca Wilberg was planning to participate as a singer for a one full year in both the TSC and MTC, in an effort to more accurately understand the perspective of the Choir singers. A unique strength of the Choir School instructors who have participated as singers or players in weekly broadcasts is their increased understanding of what the singers need to know to be successful.
CHAPTER 6

CURRICULUM CONTENT

The inclusion of curriculum material in this study offers additional evidence about the structure and content of the MTC Choir School program. A chronological review of the course content establishes the guiding philosophies, methods, and materials used by various instructors. This examination reveals the evolution of the program throughout its thirteen-year history. In this study, presenting a complete collection of every teaching resource used in the Choir School is not realistic because of the high volume of available documents. Instead, this chapter contains a survey of Choir School course content and is accompanied by selected samples of relevant class materials.

During each phase of the training program, the Choir School Director is solely responsible for creating and supervising the content of the actual curriculum. However, these decisions are made in cooperation with the musical directors and with assistance from instructional staff as needed. Instructors are given autonomy to present their assigned topics according to their expertise and training. Occasionally, staff members will consult with the Choir School Director about the priority level of certain content based on feedback from the singers or the Associate Music Director.

In every phase, the Choir School experience also serves to educate singers on the procedures and policies governing Choir membership. Over time, the curriculum has shifted from an emphasis on musicianship skills to an emphasis on choral ensemble and
vocal-production skills. Variations in classroom activities, lecture content, and assessment strategies reflect this transformation. The most recent version (as of publication date) of the Choir School program teaches and informs prospective MTC singers using a combination of new member orientation, choral music curriculum, vocal instruction, music literacy review, and discussions related to the mission and purpose of the choir. Information about the course structure, curriculum content, and a survey of Choir School artifacts clarify how the current Choir School program has evolved from Jerold Ottley’s original design.

**Phase I: 1999–2002**

During Ottley’s first version of the training school, the largest percentage of class time was dedicated to reviewing and reinforcing basic musicianship skills. Ottley emphasized notational literacy and sight singing through the use of pitch patterns—groups of notes ordered in various configurations on the musical staff. Singers would improve their sight-reading accuracy by singing short exercises designed to practice the various possible combinations. Appendix B Item 1 shows an introductory handout from Ottley’s 1999 materials that describes the different categories of these possible pitch combinations with guidelines on how to anticipate and accurately decode these melodic fragments. Singers were also given several pages of practice exercises; these materials would allow them to test their knowledge of the pitch patterns in increasingly complicated drills (see Appendix B Item 2.) Another course handout (see Appendix B Item 3) contains a variety of general information such as common and essential musical terminology, which was especially useful for amateur singers. Item 3 also contains an introduction to “count singing,” a choral rehearsal technique for developing rhythmic
precision. Singers encountered the use of this technique in their weekly Temple Square Chorale (TSC) rehearsal. Materials from the first session of Ottley’s course were available for review, but, interestingly, none of the notebooks shared by Ottley or the singers contained a complete set of course materials. Ottley’s notes did, however, contain a Table of Contents from his original syllabus. This document provides a sense of his overall course design, and confirms the emphasis on basic musicianship skills as a main feature in the program. (See Appendix B Item 7.) A collection of journal entries from Patsy Peterson, a MTC member who volunteered to participate in Ottley’s first Choir School class, affirms the emphasis on music fundamentals, the use of pitch patterns for sight-singing, and the time dedicated to these activities within a two-hour class session.\(^{161}\) Her entries also reflect a singer’s perspective on the Choir School experience.

**Thursday, 15 July 1999.** Tonight was my first session of the Tab Choir Training School. I have so much to learn, but they’ve given us papers to work from and if I just do my homework, this is a great opportunity for me to progress. Bro. Ottley did the first hour, which was recognizing different patterns for sight singing.

**Thursday, 5 August 1999.** Wonderful Choir School session today. The first part was on sight singing and rhythm. Then the hour with JoAnn was so helpful. She just fixes me.

**Thursday, 26 August 1999.** At Choir School, we sang Happy Birthday to JoAnn, did more rhythm exercises, had a half hour with JoAnn. I’m thankful for the things I’m becoming introduced to. I need to study them more. Last week, Brother Ottley suggested two hours study for every hour in class. That would be four hours per week on school notes, etc. I’m sure I could use the study.

JoAnn Ottley, the first official vocal coach for the MTC, presented material on singing techniques for MTC singers. During the 2002 sessions, her presentations were divided into four different hour-long sessions. Ottley organized her lecture material by vocal topics including (1) body alignment, (2) breath, and (3) resonance. Other topics

\(^{161}\)Patsy Peterson, personal journal entries, unpublished (August 1999).
such as vocal health, agility, and diction also were also discussed. Ottley would create her own outlines and provided them to singers for study and review. These handouts (see Appendix C Items 1 & 2) contain exercises for practice, explanations of vocal terminology, and inspirational quotes or analogies to illustrate basic vocal concepts. Her instructional approach emphasizes the use of play and imagination. Singers would often be divided into groups charged with the task of practicing vocal exercises and becoming comfortable singing with their peers. She regularly encouraged singers to experiment consistently with the suggested vocal exercises at home in order to reinforce these basic principles of vocal production and become more familiar with their own instruments.

JoAnn Ottley also taught more advanced vocal techniques such as range extension and agility through the use of selected exercises, sometimes specific to the TSC concert literature. Her work as the Choir Vocal Coach informed other beneficial topics such as music memorization strategies, use of vibrato, and cautions about oversinging in rehearsal.

The following journal entries, again from Peterson, confirm JoAnn Ottley’s participation in guest lecturing on vocal topics such as resonance, registration issues, and philosophical thoughts on the importance of singing, in addition to providing evidence of personal appointments and coachings with individual singers.\textsuperscript{162} Peterson’s experience working with JoAnn Ottley in this capacity illustrates the effects of this process:

\textbf{Thursday, 22 July 1999.} Our vocal workshop with JoAnn Ottley was wonderful. She told us the “why” of singing, citing Elder Maxwell as saying, “[The] ‘how,’ ‘what’ and ‘when’ to do becomes clearer when we know the ‘why.’” I was blessed with an opportunity to speak with both Bro. and Sister Ottley in the parking lot after. I always tell them how I appreciate what they do.

\textsuperscript{162}Patsy Peterson, personal journal entries, unpublished (August 1999).
Thursday, 5 August 1999. I finally got the courage to speak to JoAnn about working with me. She said she would add my name to the list of people she was supposed to work with. [At my in-person audition, she had asked me to come and work with her when I had been in the Choir for a while, to follow up on some things she gave me to work on at the in-person audition.]

Thursday, 12 August 1999. I got my pitch pattern assignment back and I missed so many, it really bothered me. I need to work with someone on them, I guess. But JoAnn gave a good presentation on resonance, and we learned about Lingua-Tone.

Thursday, 2 September 1999. JoAnn taught about “passaggio”—being aware of where it is (color point) and preparing for it as we sing.

Friday, 1 October 1999. I walked into Choir late, last night, rushing to get to my seat when Dyanne Riley said, “Patsy, did you check your box? There was a note from JoAnn in there.” Sure enough, she wanted to see me at 9:05. I didn't feel in good voice and wasn't singing great at the rehearsal, but I went and received a blessing similar to when I had my in-person audition. I was able to make lovelier sounds than I normally do. And I received some very fundamental advice: to find my clean, natural, free, vibrant, tonal center—from which I can brighten or darken my tone. Wow. What a neat experience. She always does me good.

Visiting guest lecturers were another feature of the Ottley's curriculum construction. As a complement to JoAnn Ottley’s vocal presentations, Choir member and local otolaryngologist David Palmer occasionally visited, showing videolaryngostroboscopy footage of vocal folds in action, offering visual clarity as to the anatomy of voice while working in real time. Palmer also offered strategies for vocal health and monitoring the voice for potential medical issues when facing problems. Mack Wilberg taught principles of effective score marking for use in the new Chorale rehearsal. (See Appendix E Item 3.) For some singers, this was new information; for others, it was simply an adjustment or amendment to their own patterns of score marking in rehearsal. By addressing issues such as how to mark dynamics, breaths, difficult entrances, moments to focus on the conductor, etc., singers could more easily navigate the large amount of music for weekly broadcasts. Wilberg’s material was more information and
suggestion than it was an official prescription. Singers were now able to connect with him as a new musical leader by incorporating his suggestions for marking their scores. David Warner presented an inspirational message to the singers about connecting the visual presentation of the broadcast to the sacred nature of the musical texts. By promoting more emotionally and spiritually engaging visual presentations on a weekly basis, he believed the singers would be more effective musical ambassadors, which would, in turn, improve the quality of the overall performance. At the time, Warner held a position as an administrator in the Music Department for the LDS Church. The combination of his message and his leadership position contributed to the significance of his visits to each class. Peterson reflects on the intimate nature of his presentation in the following reflection:

**Thursday, 9 September 1999.** Our Choir School session was so good. David Warner gave a presentation about being, enjoying, truly forgetting ourselves as we draw others to Christ through the Choir’s work. Inner hospitality and an ability to receive and be changed by the experience. I guess it could be “becoming as a little child.” I need to ponder on it more.163

Aside from the entire concept and design of the original school itself, Ottley’s specific curriculum innovations included the use of Lingua-Tone (a custom-designed system for language learning written especially for MTC members,) the first written final assessment, a solo sight-reading assessment, and the use of a vocal coach within the school. Jerold Ottley’s solution for helping amateur singers manage a high volume of music in other languages was to collaborate with Dennis Mead, an administrator in the Church’s language and translation department. Mead had developed a system whereby a piece of music in any language could be transcribed into a short system of characters that

163Patsy Peterson, personal journal entries, unpublished (August 1999).
allowed the Choir to pronounce the foreign language—with accuracy and precision—within a very short time period. Developed in the early 1990s for use in the Choir’s international travel, Ottley included the system in the Choir School as an integral piece of the curriculum. In an article published by the *Deseret News*, Mead defines the system in his own words. An interviewer then continues with an explanation of Mead’s process:

“It is, in effect, a phonetic language and uses characters generated on a standard typewriter or computer keyboard to represent specific sounds. The sound for each letter or character never changes, no matter what the language.”

In practice, Mead often provides translations to Choir members so they can gain a greater cultural appreciation of the people whose music they are singing. He uses an electronic optical scanner and a computer to replace the standard texts with Lingua-Tone, and then prints out the sheets for each Choir member. In many cases, he leaves the original language in place for those Choir members who are familiar with it.¹⁶⁴

New Choir members needed training to be able to discern the phonetic text. Though trained singers generally use the International Phonetic Alphabet for lyric diction needs, the Lingua-Tone system was conceived as a strategy to benefit the high percentage of singers who did not have a familiarity with IPA. The Lingua-Tone project is yet another example of a pragmatic educational solution applied to the Choir’s unique mission and schedule. Although the system was effective, by 2002, the Lingua-Tone information was no longer included in the course.

Choir singers’ full membership was contingent upon passing two final assessments. The concept of a provisional training program was also an Ottley innovation that remains in practice today. Singers were not guaranteed admission into the Choir until assessment standards were met successfully at the conclusion of their training experience.

Formative assessments were managed by means of small quizzes or worksheets to reinforce a particular topic along the way. Finally, the summative assessments were twofold: a written exam to confirm mastery of basic musicianship and notational literacy skills, and a final in-person sight-singing assessment. Samples of formative assessments and test preparation guides for summative evaluations are included in Appendix F.

Phase II: 2002–2006

Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe continued the emphasis on notational literacy and sight singing. Classes were divided according to the incoming singers’ skill levels. Each section focused on critical subject areas based on results of the entrants’ audition exams. Students in the highest level spent a great deal of time with the Berkowitz sight-singing textbook practicing individual sight-singing lines, while students in the beginning levels worked more slowly through theoretical concepts such as intervals, scales, triads, and key signatures.

Innovations during this phase included the use of the John Halliday Rhythm Series (see Appendix B Item 4), a set of rhythmic exercises designed to cover all possible rhythmic combinations and patterns in a variety of meters. Permission to use Halliday’s system remains in place, and the rhythm patterns are still in use today on an as-needed basis. Working with singers on interval accuracy resulted in a set of “Interval Tunes,” composed by Goodliffe and Margetts. The interval tunes contained basic intervals by placed in the context of familiar melodies from the LDS hymnal. (See Appendix B Item 5.) The new etudes were a fresh way to process and review intervals for those with an established habit of accuracy—or a new crutch for those who had never encountered any formal mnemonic devices for recalling interval distances.
Goodliffe also prepared a lecture titled “MSW 101,” a veritable playbook of procedures for the weekly broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*. (See Appendix E Item 2.) Goodliffe would present this lecture before the singers participated in their first television broadcast. As part of their training, each year’s new membership of the TSC was scheduled as a guest choir, and was invited to perform alongside the MTC in a broadcast. Goodliffe’s presentation lessened nerves for their first television appearance and gave singers an outline to follow. Her list included details such as suggested arrival times, instructions for obtaining music from the library, and when to eat a snack during the early morning routine. Margetts would then present information to assist singers with their memorization assignments for the broadcast. (See Appendix E Item 1.) Time permitting, occasionally the instructors would show a video that explained details about the famous Tabernacle Organ as a way to inform singers about the instrument providing much of their weekly musical accompaniment.

Assessments used during the second Choir School phase were similar to Ottley’s original configuration. A written music theory exam confirmed singers’ understanding of basic music notation and score-reading concepts. This assessment was paired with a personal, individual appointment to perform the sight-singing exercise used before in Ottley’s course. Both Music Directors were in attendance to lend gravitas to the assessment as well as to screen for any additional vocal problems. The sight-singing exercise began simply and then modulated within a key signature by the time it ended, creating a particular challenge even for experienced sight-readers. Though time consuming, these personal appointments gave the Music Directors a final chance to hear a potential singer alone before entrance into the Choir, allowing a last layer of inspection
before final decisions were announced. In all phases of the Choir School, singers who passed final assessments are sent formal letters of acceptance from the President of the MTC and both Music Directors announcing their “call” to be musical missionaries for the Church.

Phase III: 2007–2014 (both segments)

Certain structural elements from both previous Choir School phases carried over into the third phase. These included the provisional nature of the experience itself, written and practical assessments, visiting guests, literacy training, and the presence of Goodliffe and Margetts as instructional staff. Many of the previous curriculum concepts in the Choir School were also retained, though their presence within the overall construct was adjusted. In the early stages of Phase Three, a distinct separation between the Chorale rehearsal experience and the Choir School academic experience was still in place; little integration existed between the rehearsal and the Choir School classroom. In general, most of the improvements to the curriculum were related to choral and vocal pedagogy.

Innovations for the 2007 class increased focus on vocal training and included a formal vocal assessment and prescreening by the Choir Vocal Coach. Choral ensemble skills constituted the other innovations such as a discussion of choral singing habits and responsible singing strategies. Singers were encouraged to use elements of the International Phonetic Alphabet as a tool in addition to other important preventative score-marking strategies to prepare their music for use in rehearsals. Instructors reformatted lecture material to provide increased practical application to weekly TSC rehearsals. The concluding assessments by the Music Director and Associate Music Director were amended to include evaluations of singers in small groups. Finally,
increased discussion on the importance of the mission of the Choir was adjusted to reflect changing organizational needs. Following an orientation to the MTC Choir School program on the first day of class, the second class period was spent observing a regular MTC Choir rehearsal. Singers traveled to the choir loft in the Tabernacle, watching the rehearsal from multiple places in the building in order to listen from a variety of perspectives. Singers completed observation forms designed to enlarge their perspective about the rehearsal process and sound of the MTC. Another modification to the third phase of the Choir School was the inclusion of anonymous written feedback to the Choir School Director provided by the participants. This information was compiled and shared with the Music Directors during a follow-up staff meeting. Singers provided this feedback in a variety of surveys (see Appendix F Item 5) that informed additional corrections and revisions in later versions of the course. Additional details related to the Phase Three MTC Choir School curriculum additions are discussed below.

Vocal Assessment Form

The original vocal assessment form (see Appendix C Item 6) was created by the author and revised by Rebecca Wilberg, the Choir Vocal Coach. The form details the vocal habits, tone quality, vibrato patterns, register lifts, and other identifying qualities and factors about the singer’s voice. During the assessment, the Choir Vocal Coach would provide exercises and vocalises to test singers’ ranges and listen for patterns in their sound production. When a potential choral problem was identified, the vocal coach would note this on the form and shared the issue with the singer. Then, the Choir Vocal Coach could provide solutions, strategies, and exercises as needed to help the singers improve before the Choir School experience began. Most of the Vocal Coach’s
suggestions reflected ways to improve a singer’s sound for use in the MTC, as opposed to particulars for solo-singing study. Singers with especially problematic issues were invited for a follow-up visit to monitor progress.

The assessment form itself is two pages long and provides a snapshot of the singers’ strengths and limitations. The form and its resultant report are often referred to in the Choir School during classes where vocal instruction occurs. Singers leave the appointment armed with information about how to better use their voices in the MTC choral setting and what challenges they may face based on the assessment itself. Specific information such as vibrato rates, vocal color, mannerisms, and basic vocal habits are discussed and reported. During this phase of the Choir School, obtaining information in vocal assessments proved to be one of the most useful additions to the curriculum. Instructors and the Temple Square Chorale conductor are able to refer singers to those issues and provide strategies for particular voice types. For example, the conductor might say, “If you are a bright voice on the vocal assessment, please don’t alter your tone color. If you’re a darker voice, please make an adjustment toward a brighter sound.” Another example is: “If you have a larger vibrato, according to your vocal assessment, please mark your score and plan to sing this passage with a straighter sound.” The ability to customize instruction according to the singer’s vocal information allowed singers to be more accurate in their own corrections during the rehearsal process.

Choral Habits

Preparation for choral singing requires more than mere notational literacy skills and solo vocal training. Successful choral singers have proficiencies that can be broken down into identifiable habits and behaviors. These skills can be understood as both
concrete concepts as well as tasks that can be applied during rehearsals. With permission from Brigham Young University Choral Music Education Professor Paul Broomhead, the author borrowed his list of Choral Habits (see Appendix D Item 1), which represents (1) a mirror of the process of vocal production, (2) habits and behaviors required of singers in each rehearsal, and (3) instructions specific to individual singing and collective ensemble choral singing techniques. Although Broomhead continued revising these for his own choral instruction, the Choral Habits in their 2007 configuration included the following concepts:

1. Alignment/Posture
2. Breath
3. Tone
4. Long Vowels
5. Expressive Diction
6. Listening for Balance
7. Listening for Blend
8. Listening for Intonation
9. Ensemble Precision
10. Unwavering Energy
11. Engaging Faces.

Whether practicing or performing, choral singers must multitask and are normally expected to execute all of these habits at once. Therefore, the idea to organize skills by concept initially seemed simplistic or even impractical. A singer does not spend two weeks perfecting *posture* before moving on to *listening* or *singing with clear diction*. However, most amateur singers were unfamiliar with these basic principles as concrete skills or behaviors. Even if they did know the definitions of the terms, most had never been formally instructed in how to habitually apply the concepts in choral rehearsals. By organizing these choral actions into concepts and introducing them separately, singers in the Choir School learned the definitions, became familiar with the process of vocal
production, and practiced these choral skills on their own before they were applied in the context of a choral rehearsal. Used over time, this academic treatment of these choral concepts ideas would provide a common point of departure for all singers coming into the Choir. For each choral habit, singers received a brief handout that defined terms, goals for applying the habit within a MTC rehearsal, challenges and obstacles unique to the Choir’s circumstance, and exercises for practice. (See Appendix D Item 2.) Singers practiced these concepts within the course of weekly Temple Square Chorale rehearsals and in various small groups within Choir School classes.

The first five habits in the order follow the process of creating a particular vocal sound and are specific to the individual creating that sound. In class, as a group, singers practiced the particulars of each habit in order by working through a vocal warm-up, which mirrored the sequence of all the vocal habits. By calling attention to this step-wise vocal process, singers were then able to internalize the order of the actions, which subsequently allowed them to design their own exercises and warm-ups. The list of choral habits is designed to focus first on the personal vocal habits and skills of each individual singer. Mastery of the habits would allow a singer to more effectively self monitor his or her own contribution while singing in the large Choir.

The remaining habits focus on issues of ensemble singing and encouraged singers to make a vocal contribution that reflects an awareness of and sensitivity to the total choral sound. First, by making their best personal sound, and secondly, by exercising awareness of those around them. Habits 6, 7, and 8 focus on choral behaviors that involve listening skills. These include listening for balance, blend, and intonation. Teaching
singers to continually balance their personal singing techniques alongside the overall choral ensemble sound is the instructors’ way of reinforcing choral “responsibility.”

Responsible Singing Strategies

In a large choir, singers can rely on one another for help with staggered breathing and the collective ability to create a full-bodied sound. Drawbacks of singing in a choir this size include the inability of conductors to provide immediate and personal feedback to singers. These challenges might result in the tendency of a certain choir member to oversing, another having difficulty detecting errors around him or her, or another still having problems hearing his or her own voice. As such, a primary challenge for amateur singers in a large ensemble is the issue of personal accountability. Professional singers are trained more especially to manage these types of difficulties. Amateur singers in a large choir have no real opportunity for needed personal feedback on their technique, and as a result, are sometimes at risk of developing poor habits.

In the future, overcoming these built-in difficulties within the scope of the MTC might require extensive technological research use and/or the addition of a much larger vocal staff to manage and supervise the population of singers. Without these kinds of solutions, strategies for singers to be more responsible within the large Choir size must be included in the revised curriculum. Beyond the use of the vocal assessment, singers are advised concerning additional obstacles to proper self monitoring that are specific to the MTC. These include rotating seating positions, distance from the conductor, Choir formation in various performing venues, and the added complication of microphones used during broadcasts, performances, or CD recordings.
These complications notwithstanding, singers are encouraged and reminded to
listen more accurately, memorize vocal sensations when making correct sounds, sing
with less volume, or even temporarily stop singing if they suspect a problem. These
strategies are employed within the context of the small group work where singers may
experiment making choral sound assisted by immediate feedback from instructors. A
more psychological approach is for the instructors to reinforce the concepts of making a
personal commitment and giving one’s best in every rehearsal. Also, by clearly
identifying the obstacles of responsible singing, singers have the ability to anticipate such
obstacles and prepare appropriate solutions. The author has identified three concepts as
the most recurring hazardous harbingers of problematic singing in large choirs; singers
are advised to monitor their own vocal contribution in the following areas: (1) volume,
(2) vibrato, and (3) vowel formation. Creating an awareness of these areas has been a first
step in drawing attention to possible pitfalls in the large Choir experience; singers who
practice carefully, checking their own vocal contribution in each of these areas during
rehearsals or Choir School lessons, are generally more mindful of responsible singing
strategies. These choices were influenced by the important information gleaned from the
initial vocal assessment. The experience of singing each week in the Temple Square
Chorale provides a laboratory for singers in which they may experiment with these
solutions in a larger choral context. The continual process of singing, being aware of
potential pitfalls specific to both their own voices and a large choir setting, and
responding to conductor feedback allows singers to apply the Choir School principles in
the Temple Square Chorale (TSC) setting. In an effort to dovetail the issues of individual
singing skills with choral ensemble skills, the Choir Vocal Coach contributes any
necessary additional curriculum material on specific vocal techniques if problems occur during the course of TSC rehearsals. These solutions have traditionally contained a high level of detail, such as discussing pertinent vocal anatomy, building stamina in the voice, or providing specific singers with individual feedback as needed.

Vocal Training Topics

In combination with the choral ensemble skills topics for this curriculum, the Choir Vocal Coach began designing lectures and exercises specific to improving the individual quality of singing by each new member. Realizing that the first five Choral Habits were not simply ensemble skills, but also solo-singing techniques, the author and vocal coach coordinated so that Rebecca Wilberg’s more specific instruction would be delivered in the same topical sequence as the Choral Habits. A common joke between the instructors was that Rebecca Wilberg would take a vocal concept and “blow it up in all kinds of detail, and that Cherilyn would routinely come in with a choral broom and sweep it all up.” Coordinating these two major areas of focus has helped to reinforce each individual singer’s skills, while also keeping the information applicable to the larger choral situation at hand.

Lecture topics presented by Rebecca Wilberg contained specific vocalise exercises, practiced in a lab-like setting, where singers received individual help and then apply the exercises in small groups. She first presents information via class lectures, using handouts and visual aids for clarity. Students then experiment with various concepts and exercises to try them. On the topic of alignment and posture, students have practiced walking while balancing a hymnbook on their heads to reinforce a “noble posture.” Wilberg reinforces basic vocal anatomy to illustrate what a singer’s body
should be doing while creating various types of sounds or vowels. (See Appendix C Item 3.) The use of a Halloween skeleton toy shows singers the various ways their body might react to specific postures. She explains breathing techniques for singing by examining the processes of inhalation and exhalation in great detail. After identifying the basic musculature, singers practice *appoggio* technique by feeling the resistance of an elastic band around their waists while inhaling. Much of this lecture material is rudimentary when compared to entry-level group voice courses or introductory collegiate vocal instruction.

After the first 2007 class, Rebecca Wilberg began to create specialized lectures to address some of the MTC-specific issues in vocal production. Many of these activities reflect similar instruction by JoAnn Ottley in her previous vocal instruction sessions. Although JoAnn Ottley covered much of the same topical territory, Rebecca Wilberg has been given much more time in the overall construct of the course to deliver more frequent presentations. Topics such as vibrato and resonance have become central features of her portion of the curriculum. In a 2010 version of the curriculum, Rebecca Wilberg added a lecture detailing vocal principles employed to execute various choral colors based on the preferences of conductors in recent rehearsals.

As the Choir has experienced changes in conductor leadership, various changes in those conductors’ tonal preferences have also become part of the shift. Rebecca Wilberg and the author consulted about how to best prepare singers for these changes. She defined various types of choral tone, labeling them by regional preferences or as certain types of “American Choral Tone.” By coordinating conductor vocabulary, physical vocal skills, and an increased aural picture of these desired tones, she has been able to provide new
singers with appropriate strategies for achieving a particular kind of choral tone. The wide variety of choral literature sung by the Choir each week also means that choral tone in weekly rehearsals requires adjustment from piece to piece. Wilberg is able to demonstrate changes required for a singer to navigate a British choral anthem as compared to an African-American spiritual or Baroque masterwork. The Choir School Director, Choir Vocal Coach, and other instructors make a coordinated attempt to play various tonal examples for singers, explain the pedagogy of how to make that sound in a healthy way, and to encourage singers to responsibly use their own voices to accomplish these changes. (See Appendix C Items 4 and 5.)

**International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**

*as a Score Marking Tool*

Trained singers spend significant time in lyric diction courses, where the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) serves as a compulsory tool for facility in foreign language pronunciation. Although Lingua-Tone was used previously for Choir members in a similar way, the author has chosen to use IPA in discussing basic vowel sounds and critical consonants with Choir School participants. IPA’s primary use is in pronunciation, but in the Choir School setting, IPA has proved to be another pragmatic problem-solving strategy. After noticing that much of the Choir’s weekly rehearsal process was, again and again, spent correcting the same vowel sounds for both increased diction clarity and vocal placement, the author determined to teach some of these often-problematic vowels to new singers by giving them IPA symbols. By teaching the singers the physical construction of a particular vowel sound and providing an established phonetic symbol for it, the instructor empowered the singers with a corrective (and preventative) tool for use in
rehearsal. This strategy allows new singers to discover and repeat the physical construction of necessary vowel sounds to meet conductor preferences. Solo singers use IPA to help determine and refine correct language pronunciation, but in this case, the practical application is a tactic to encourage vowel uniformity across the Choir as a whole. Using these priorities, it has become necessary to focus only on the basic long and short vowel sounds, along with some specialty vowels such as the schwa (stressed and unstressed), or other recurring consonant sounds such as S, T, and K. Using a brief selection of IPA symbols has allowed singers to combine phonetic training with preventative score marking strategies. In this way, singers already familiar with IPA could apply their knowledge of the system and, in the future, if more detailed uses of IPA became necessary, a basic foundation would be in place.

Preventative Score Marking

Score-marking symbols are used to help singers pay increased attention to a particular musical event. These characters provide a reminder to avoid making an error or to recall a request or decision made by a conductor in rehearsal. As previously mentioned, in earlier curriculum phases, Mack Wilberg would provide a lecture on strategies for effective score marking. In the 2007 curriculum revision, score marking became more than merely a system of musical reminders. Inspired by the process of conductor score preparation and experience with the weekly rehearsal process of the MTC, the author devised a process and series of markings aimed to help a singer identify and prevent musical problems in rehearsal and performance. The combination of limited rehearsal time and a large amount of music performed creates a need for a practical solution to help expedite the weekly rehearsal process.
Named “Smart Score Marking,” singers are trained to visually identify issues related to the text (diction, pronunciation, word stress, etc.) as well as tonal issues (melodic, harmonic, interval size, intonation) that might cause a conductor to stop in rehearsal. By noticing more than just their own notes and rhythms, singers with functional levels of sight-singing ability can demonstrate the capacity to process more information than just their own choral part. In practice, singers have become familiar with lists of “traps” (obstacles) to singing with good intonation or following principles of choral diction. This familiarity has therefore allowed them to foresee potential pitfalls inherent to the musical score. On the instructor’s cue, they would practice scanning, marking, and solving possible problems before they might surface as a rehearsal problem. Although it could not possibly solve every choral rehearsal problem all of the time, the collective effort of singers thinking in this way has begun to expedite the rehearsal process, improve individual accountability, and assist the conductors with their weekly rehearsal responsibilities.

Singers consider issues of diction and tone when marking their musical scores in advance. Three general principles—exaggeration, modification, and syllabic stress—guide singers’ decision making regarding important choral diction issues in the musical score. First, choral singing often requires extra attention to consonants or an exaggeration of vowel sounds in order to be perceived by the audience as clear or natural speech. Second, some words require a concerted modification to be perceived as clear. Sopranos singing in a high register may need to temporarily modify a vowel to accommodate better sound. A vowel on a long held note may require additional space as the note is held. Or, the word *gloria* might benefit from using more of a “k” sound to get the “g” to sound
more clearly. Third, multisyllabic words tend to follow a pattern of stress in order to be perceived clearly. Singers can mark a word as “strong–weak” or “weak–strong” to show the stress pattern of these syllables. A word like “angels” follows a strong–weak pattern whereas a word like “above” has the opposite pattern of syllabic stress. By teaching each guiding principle, singers begin to see diction issues in their own choral scores, and mark the music more preventatively instead of waiting to react to conductor instructions if a problem occurs. A choir full of singers who know the syllabic pattern of a word and take pains to perform it right the first time will ultimately save the conductor an enormous amount of time in rehearsal.

Other kinds of tonal challenges can be spotted and prevented in a similar way if a singer is taught to look for them. Melodically, singers can accommodate ascending pitches by taking or imagining singing with wider steps. Conversely, mentally conceiving executing a smaller step for descending intervals may improve intonation. Within a given melody, repeated notes tend to be sung with increasingly lower in pitch. As a result, if singers identify a passage with repeated notes, they can mark their scores to remind them to adjust pitches as necessary. Harmonically, singers can learn to identify whether their part’s position in a chord is a critical tuning issue. Singers who cadence on the third of a given triad will need to tune their pitch carefully; singers whose part doubles another in octaves can mark that note and pay closer attention when that issue occurs. Other tonal issues such as highly chromatic lines, notes in extreme ranges, descending thirds, parallel thirds, and other melodic or harmonic considerations comprise a list of pitch challenges that can be avoided if singers spot them in advance. Additionally, problematic melodic issues will sometimes occur in combination with a problematic diction issue, creating a
higher probability that rehearsal time will be spent fixing those problems. Singers who realize the potential for these combinations will be more alert and better able to prevent these problems in rehearsal.

In practice, singers assigned to small groups for a laboratory experience in Choir School have been assigned a simple hymn, to be prepared for recording and playback by practicing this process. Singers were given time to scan their music for these potential problem areas and looked for issues inherent in the scores; they added markings in the score in an attempt to preventatively solve the issue. Although the strategy itself is not scientific and allows room for differences in interpretation, the practice of increasing awareness of choral problems and solving them individually in a proactive way is an effective strategy for increasing personal accountability and expanding choral ensemble skills. Singers who practice “Smart Score Marking” are more aware of what choral issues exist in in a particular piece of music, and are able to become more independently involved in the rehearsal process. Typically, professional singers have skills that might influence them to make autonomous decisions about these issues. And many conductors make their rehearsal plans knowing that certain traps will require a solution—and a stop—in the rehearsal process. However, with instruction and practice, the Choir School Director has discovered that many amateur singers are capable of noticing those same issues, and can be empowered to make changes on their own.

Rehearsal Application

The content of the Choir School curriculum continued to evolve, and musical directors urged the instructors to do whatever was necessary to make immediate connections between the training period and the full Choir experience. The sense of
urgency and need for pragmatic solutions resulted from the continual increase in performance expectations against the finite number of classes available during the training period.

Using this directive from Music Directors Wilberg and Jessop, the Choir School Director removed some of the previous material, not for lack of importance as much as for the need to reconcile this pressure with time constraints. Earlier topics such as JoAnn Ottley’s “The Why of Singing,” Goodliffe’s and Margetts’s video showing an inside tour of the Tabernacle organ, and even extended tutoring efforts in notational literacy had to be modified or removed to accommodate the increase in emphasis on choral ensemble skills. In part, these withdrawals were the result of changes in instructional staff as well as changes in the overall curriculum structure. A lessening of focus on notational literacy was also the result of improvements in the preparation of new singers. The more well-prepared the group of new singers, the less they would need instruction or reinforcement in musicianship basics. In weekly Choir rehearsals, it seemed that more time was being spent on coaching vocal sound than identifying correct intervals or drilling rhythms. As such, singers needed to be more equipped to make requisite changes in vocal sounds for each rehearsal, necessitating greater energies in this area for the Choir School curriculum. In general, the constant question of practicality became the guiding philosophy of the Choir School. If it helped, saved time, improved, or otherwise facilitated the weekly rehearsal, then it became a priority in Choir School. Wilberg confirmed the impact of these adjustments from a director’s perspective.

I think before, when we stopped in rehearsal to fix something, we would stop and maybe one out of every four times, we would get the necessary correction from the singers. Now, there are still times when we have to stop for a correction, but when we do, they can correct instantly. We still have to stop from
time to time, but if we do, it’s mostly related to issues of singing sound instead of wrong notes or rhythms… because of the training they receive, the singers are coming more prepared to handle the [MTC] experience.\footnote{Mack Wilberg, interview with the author, 8 April 2014, Salt Lake City, UT.}

Adjusted Practical Assessment

Previously, the Music Directors met each singer personally for a final sight-singing assessment. Although the experience was useful in providing a pressurized environment for the exam as well as a chance to hear singers individually, it became clear that a sight-reading exercise alone was not necessarily an effective measurement of the new Choir School curriculum revisions. Teaching singers to improve their choral ensemble would require an assessment of choral, not solo sight-reading, skills. To this end, the Choir School Director made a change to the final assessments. Singers would continue taking written exams, revised to reflect the specific content from each instructor, to be completed on a separate evening. An additional class period would be scheduled for singers to perform a final singing assessment in small choral ensembles. Singers were assigned to a testing group, created by the Choir School Director based on information gleaned from singing throughout the semester. Test groups would rehearse together and receive help from coaches to prepare two selections for the Music Directors. Hymns or with contrasting styles (something \textit{legato} and \textit{marcato}) would be selected to be sure the singers were versatile in both techniques. One selection would be prepared in advance, and the other would serve as an exercise in sight-reading; singers would also be required to scan music for errors and difficulties essentially “on the spot.” The test ensembles would perform their selections under the supervision of the Choir School Director who was available to coach them and subsequently conduct them in performance. After
listening to the selections, the Music Directors would take time to workshop with the singers. In this scenario, singers might be invited to talk about the score, answer questions about their preparation, or identify a choral singing issue in the music. With these changes, the new final assessments were more closely aligned with the revised curriculum content.

Reinforcing the Mission of the Choir

A portion of the 2007 curriculum was dedicated to discussing the mission of the Choir and making connections between choral singing concepts and a singer’s spiritual life. Following Jessop’s admonition to include the writing and words of church leaders, the author discovered talks and articles on various nonchoral and even nonmusical topics that could be applied to choral-singing principles. For example, as way of reinforcing the Choral Habits of “listening for balance, blend, and intonation,” the author presented three articles on the subject of listening and communication. These articles include discussions of the importance of listening to one’s family members or improving one’s communication skills in daily interactions with others. By drawing parallels between both areas, singers could deepen their understanding of the choral principle as well as improve aspects of their spiritual life. Participants would be asked to write “reflection papers” in an effort to further develop their understanding and application of these choral principles. (See Appendix D Item 3.)

To enhance discussions about the purpose of the Choir, the author added other articles by church leaders. Topics pertinent to fulfilling a singer’s Choir service such as dedication, commitment, responsibility, obedience, and missionary work were added to the curriculum. Letters by Robert Shaw to his volunteer chorus are useful in addressing
related choral issues such as regular rehearsal attendance, the importance of unifying voices in the ensemble, and the impact of choral singing on audiences.\textsuperscript{166} The combination of Shaw’s letters and Church-based articles comprise an important extension to the choral ensemble skills portion of the curriculum.

Technological advances including the use of blogging, social media, and YouTube channels persuaded Choir leadership to revise their original policies on social media use for Choir members. At first, the General Manager would ask Choir members not to discuss the Choir—and especially sensitive information such as the audition process—on personal blogs or social media websites. MTC singers and Choir School participants with a pattern of inappropriate use of social media were at risk of jeopardizing their position in the Choir. Today, although sensitive information is still not appropriate for such public forums, the MTC policy for social media use is much more broad-minded. In fact, the Choir actually began encouraging singers to mention their Choir experiences or alert contacts of upcoming performances. To instruct incoming singers about the revised policy, a new addition to the curriculum was necessary; the class would now include formal training in MTC-specific public relations and social media use policies. The 2012 and 2013 editions of the class included visits by Kim Farah, the Choir’s new Public Relations Coordinator. She addressed the Choir School to educate singers on the responsible use of social media for the organization. In the space of two class visits, she provided additional information about current MTC marketing strategies, and shared how singers might effectively contribute to the mission of the Choir through these new technological avenues. By empowering singers with the key points of the MTC

message and appropriate ways in which to share it, the Choir can benefit from singers sharing information with their extended networks of family and friends.
CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to present an overview of the MTC Choir School program from its official implementation in 1999 through 2013. The narrative includes (1) a chronological recounting of previous attempts at singer training, (2) the context in which the program was conceived, and (3) the evolution of its curriculum to date. These categories also include the directives given by Choir leadership, instructional strategies and curriculum innovations by various staff members, and a sampling of various materials created for the program. The combination of chronological sequence and document review provides a way to organize the study data. As no scholarly writing or other published documentation has explored the Choir School program beyond mention only of its existence, this study provides a founding document for future research. This study also examines ideas that may impact other choral organizations in their attempts to train and improve choral singers, as well as the challenges and recommendations for future versions of the MTC Choir School.

The author experienced a few specific challenges during this study, but none that greatly impacted the results or necessitated large adjustments in the methodology. The author anticipated having many more student worksheets and course files available considering the thirteen-year history of the program. Also, the lack of a central location for all of the materials from each phase created some difficulty in gathering and
reviewing documents from all instructors during any given phase of the program. It was surprising that files from Jerold Ottley’s early versions of the class were scarce, and Ottley himself searched for and delivered a single file folder containing critical course outlines and the syllabus from his original class. Though difficult to organize, enough information was made available to track the evolution of the course. It is the author’s opinion that maintaining at least one file in the MTC office to store the Choir School artifacts would be wise, as a complete collection would be available for others to review. The author recognizes that her relationship to the organization and working relationships with many of those involved in oral interviews could contribute to natural bias inherent to this sort of familiarity. The author’s unique position in the MTC structure has provided unique access to the requisite materials and individuals necessary for gathering the study data. These advantages ultimately outweigh the potential for bias and were considered in advance of the study. Whenever possible, the author has attempted to mitigate this concern by focusing on the historical aspects of the story, as opposed to requesting assessments of her teaching, or criticisms of her own contributions to the program design from MTC supervisors. Ultimately, in spite of these small challenges, this study preserves the efforts of Choir School instructional staff, while documenting an important MTC undertaking that contributes to body of knowledge related to choral pedagogy and training for amateur choral singers.

**Findings**

Within the chronological narrative, four themes emerge and permeate the history of the Choir School. These include the following: (1) evolution and adaptation, (2) the role of musicianship and literacy training, (3) the increased emphasis on musical
independence and responsible singing, and (4) alignment of singers to the mission of the Choir. These four themes are discussed below, followed by information about ideas for further research. Next comes an examination of possible applications for other choral organizations, a discussion of the challenges and recommendations for the MTC Choir School program, and a conclusion.

First, a general but recurring theme is the concept of evolution and adaptation. The priorities, strategies, and practical application of the program are constantly being adapted to match the changing needs of the MTC. Therefore, the Choir School faculty did not adopt any one textbook, system, or educational approach. From the Choir’s earliest days, all Music Directors made brief and experimental attempts to improve the quality of the music by providing singers with additional instruction outside of the rehearsal process. These early attempts at training proved to be more reactive, implemented in relation to a specific event or singular need. Some examples include extra rehearsals in preparation for the 1893 World’s Fair, a designated soprano sectional in advance of the 2005 performance for the National Conference of the American Choral Director’s Association, and the use of the Lingua-Tone system to learn foreign languages before international touring. During the musical leadership of Ottley and Ripplinger, the Choir advanced further by devising training programs for current, and later, incoming, Choir members. These efforts were more proactive than were previous attempts at additional singer training, because the Directors planned to invest in the long-term musicianship of the singers. Ottley’s and Ripplinger’s efforts began with educational experiments such as minicourses, additional vocal training, the addition of a Choir Vocal Coach, and review sessions for music theory and notational literacy. Each of these activities helped to
increase individual musicianship skills, whereas Ripplinger’s work with small chamber ensembles helped singers to review and apply choral ensemble skills under increased supervision. Singer training further evolved when Jessop invited Ottley to be the architect of the first formal “Choir School.” With the assistance of his wife JoAnn, the new program introduced, then established, an expanded calendar and curriculum that built on the previous training supervised by Ripplinger. The directors were pleased with the sudden impact of the newly implemented program. Jessop recalled, “The effects of the new Choir School were felt almost immediately in the loft. There was a sense of renewed commitment from the singers in addition to the help they were receiving in becoming better musicians and singers.”

Under Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, the program continued to evolve. They offered their own innovations to the curriculum in order to reinforce the basic musicianship of new singers. The organists adapted their knowledge of the Choir organization and demands of the weekly broadcasts to their concept of the course. The most recent editions of the Choir School program have evolved to include both reactive and proactive instructional strategies. After her appointment as Choir School Director in December 2006, the author worked to respond to and incorporate directives from both Music Directors concerning their desire for better musical and vocal skills from increasingly responsible choral singers. Like Ripplinger before, the author’s curriculum revisions evolved from the practical experiences of her secondary choral instruction and her personal understanding of MTC needs. Because it resulted in a new coordination between the TSC and the Choir School, the appointment of Ryan Murphy as Associate Music Director, and his ensuing collaboration with the

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author, significantly impacted the curriculum content. This partnership provides a basis for ongoing curriculum adaptations, because both directors are present in the weekly operations of the Choir School and TSC. The information gleaned from the vocal assessment allows a singer to adapt his or her own vocal contribution to meet the conductors’ requests. The present-day reactive and proactive approach to curriculum design has allowed for the MTC to continue evolving and adapting as needed to meet increased performance demands.

A second theme in this study is the role of music literacy and musicianship training. In earlier stages, it was evident to Music Directors that an increase in basic musicianship was needed to make long-term musical improvements in the Choir. Results from musical assessments revealed that the amateur MTC singers had a collective lack of musicianship training and required remediation. Based on this evidence, the majority of early Choir School curriculum (and even historical training attempts) emphasized music literacy and basic musicianship skills almost exclusively. Over time, the focus of the program shifted toward vocal and choral skills in support of the conductor’s tonal preferences. As competition for membership in the Choir increases, so does the expectation that incoming singers will arrive at the Choir School with functional sight-singing and notational-literacy skills. If singers meet this expectation, the majority of time spent in the Choir School can be devoted to improving vocal quality and developing choral ensemble skills.

A third theme that emerges in this study is an increasing emphasis on musical independence and being a “responsible singer,” one who exhibits both vocal and mental awareness during rehearsals. As Ripplinger outlined in his original goal for the training,
“increased musical independence” allows a singer the freedom to manage the high volume of choral literature and to provide a quality vocal product. Musically independent choral singers will be able to spend weekly rehearsal time on polishing music, as opposed to note-learning. The steady reinforcement of music fundamentals and attention to vocal production over time has improved the quality of the musical product despite the constraints of an otherwise demanding performing calendar. Ripplinger summarized the philosophy of the MTC training efforts in this simple sentence: “The improvement is the result of teaching sound principles and the desire to learn.”

LDS Church leader Joseph Smith was known to abide by the following philosophy, which the present Choir School staff takes as a guiding principle of the course design: “I teach them correct principles and let them govern themselves.”

Teaching amateur singers to monitor their own musical contribution continues to be a goal for today’s curriculum. This vocal self-monitoring is encouraged by informing singers as to the conductors’ preferred tonal concept, the singers’ own vocal strengths, and examples of desirable and nondesirable choral sounds. Singers are taught to monitor their own volume, vibrato, and vowel formations to make the best choral contribution. Singers are also instructed to engage independently in the rehearsal process by marking their scores in anticipation of choral problems. Responsible MTC singers practice dedication to their assignment as it relates to their understanding of the mission and purpose of the Choir.

A fourth and final theme in the study is the concept of alignment, as it pertains to musical and organizational demands. The Choir School program is designed to create

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singers who will be able to align their attitudes and skills with MTC mission and purpose.
An aspect of the Choir School training is to align a singer’s vocal contribution with a
conductor’s tonal preference. Over time, it has become increasingly important to Music
Directors that the Choir School curriculum mirrors the pragmatic needs of a typical
Thursday night rehearsal. In the latest version of the Choir School program, logistical and
orientation issues are presented in alignment with MTC organizational priorities. The
General Manager delivers important nonmusical information to new members, which
allows for a smooth transition into an otherwise intense and potentially overwhelming
experience. Visits from an array of volunteer staff such as medical personnel, seating
 coordinators, wardrobe staff, CD sales staff, and public relations director all contribute to
the singers’ preparation in critical ways.

As this study is the first examination of the MTC Choir School, there are many
possible areas of further research. For instance, quantitative measurements of various
teaching practices and their effectiveness might yield more conclusive evidence for
improved strategies specific to the MTC. Tracking a singer’s behavior and skill level
before and after the Choir School experience may reveal whether or how a singer
transfers or retains skills taught during the Choir School experience. Data sets provided
by singers’ entrance exam scores could be compared with other future exams to
determine what improvements a singer makes after various lengths of service in the Choir.
Research may serve to improve the quality of instruction for the institution itself and/or
provide solutions for issues faced by other choral organizations.

Further research may impact other choral organizations outside of the MTC.
Studies might examine best practices for orienting new singers to a community or
secondary choral program. This information may help teachers and conductors more effectively plan introductory and orientation experiences. Whether this occurs as a robust, custom-designed academic course, or a simple one-day retreat, teachers can prioritize and communicate their curricular priorities after examining their program needs. Strategies to help singers continually execute a particular conductor’s preferences with respect to choral tone, diction, and phrasing would be valuable to any choral ensemble. Training to assist a singer in anticipating those needs would result in expediting the process of preparing music in rehearsal. The author’s “Smart Score Marking” system may be a useful choral tool for other choral ensemble settings. The present study offers anecdotal feedback that this rehearsal tool is effective in encouraging independent choral thinking. Still, a quantitative investigation may clarify whether that is actually the case.

The use of recording equipment in a choral rehearsal is not a particularly novel teaching strategy, but its ongoing use for selected small ensembles may provide another area of research. New singers in the Choir School quickly discover a large disconnect between how they perceive their performance (while singing) and what the recording reveals when it is played back to them. Exploring singers’ perception of recorded performances may provide insight into methods for improving singer accountability. Comparing a singer’s solo-voice recordings to those of that same singer in a small group might also provide clarifying data on the differences between solo-singing and group-singing performance. A comparison of recordings such as this may yield information about possible assessment methodologies for use in the choral classroom.

Another possible research topic is the connection between the mission and purpose of a choral organization and whether or how it could be communicated to singers
in the form of required nonmusical training. Many choral organizations exist to celebrate a particular religious, cultural, or other unifying factor. If those values are important to the organization, do they go beyond statements on the choir’s website or concert advertisement? Are there ways to reinforce those beliefs in the form of a preparatory training situation? Would this add value and meaning to a singer’s experience?

Finally, the evolution of the Choir School program reveals the possible results when a choir increases the level of singers’ choral training once the notational literacy of the singers reaches a certain baseline level of acceptability. Further research may clarify what types of skills and proficiencies contribute to such a shift, and how singers might achieve those standards. This knowledge may yield additional time in rehearsal for the development of choral ensemble skills, or an increase in time allocated for polishing a choral performance. Choral conductors and singers in varied community or secondary choral ensembles would benefit from the results of further research inspired by the history of the MTC Choir School.

Applications for Community, Church and Secondary Choral Educators

The most direct benefit for community and church choirs might be the concept of creating a training experience custom-designed to meet organizational needs. Secondary choral educators may benefit from specific elements from the MTC Choir School curriculum. An experience by the author at a recent Chorus America conference illustrates ways in which the Choir School history can be applied to other choral organizations. The author was in attendance at a breakout “roundtable discussion” on the general topic of ways to attract and retain singers in a choral organization. Surrounded by
nearly two dozen choral conductors, many of whom directed well-known community ensembles, the author noticed a trend in the challenges and solutions considered in the exchange.

First, the issue of member retention was considered from a different angle; a lively debate ensued concerning how to deal with singers who need to “age out” of the choir. The discussion also included the issue of what to do when a poor quality singer is also a founding member or a significant donor. Solutions ranged from just “dealing with it” for the sake of funding to reauditioning the whole Choir each year, to sending a personalized letter of thanks and release. The author contributed to the conversation by sharing information about the Mormon Tabernacle Choir age limits and policies—new information to most in the circle. Of greater interest to the author was the secondary line of thinking that emerged when someone asked, “Sometimes we attract interested people with nice voices, but not enough musicianship skills. How do you help a singer with a nice voice, but who can’t read well, or a singer who reads well but isn’t making the best sound?” Directors contributing included professional, community, and university choral conductors. Interestingly, most in the circle were not secondary choral educators, those whose training and experience might have yielded a different outcome. Most seemed genuinely perplexed about what resources they might offer a struggling singer. Conductors asked, “Does anyone know a good sight-singing textbook I could have them use?” and, “Have you considered offering private voice lessons?” Some answered with ideas from their own experience: “Sometimes I have a private teacher offer to help coach them before choir.” “You could purchase music training software to help them.” “Maybe you can pay some section leaders to help them.” The author could not help but notice that
in every case, the problems expressed to the group were issues already being preemptively addressed by the MTC in their training program. Although the previously mentioned anecdote is one isolated experience, it points to a possible need: Community choral ensembles might benefit from prioritizing their own institutional goals in order to create training for the singers suited to those organizational needs.

The concept of creating a custom-designed course to outfit the singers with the skills required of the organization may not be terribly innovative, and yet, does not appear to be standard practice for community choirs. Craig Jessop, now a Dean of the Caine College of the Arts at Utah State University, and the conductor of a large volunteer community chorus, confirmed this suspicion from his own experience: “community choirs don’t have a tradition of training singers. No one has the time for something as intensive as the MTC program, but an in-service training program would absolutely have a very positive impact on community ensembles.”

It is a fairly common practice for secondary school choirs to have a retreat or opening rehearsal or social activity at the start of a school year or season. The dual purpose of these events includes an opportunity for members to socialize and to “jumpstart” the music-learning for the coming school year. A retreat does not resemble a complete training program, but if custom-designed to address specific course objectives, a retreat can serve as a way to train singers according to the expectations of the conductor. In general, academic choral classes consistently build musicianship and vocal training into the choral experience, because schools and/or their music teachers might be obligated to uphold state or national curriculum objectives. Community choral

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organizations may provide extra courses for musicianship as an “a la carte” offering through their program. The Salt Lake Choral Artists organization offers a number of fee-based classes that cover a broad scope of topics such as basic musicianship, group voice, songwriting, or score preparation.\textsuperscript{171} In this case, classes are not required for membership in the ensemble and, conversely, membership in the ensemble is not required for course participation. These class are not integrated into a complete experience as a preparation for joining their various choral ensembles. The classes are simply for-profit offerings to address needs of interested local singers, membership notwithstanding. East Valley Millennial Choirs and Orchestras in Phoenix, Arizona occasionally offers a “boot camp” experience to Choir members as a preparatory event to a new season, involving a single day of rehearsals and vocal instruction as one consolidated occasion.\textsuperscript{172} Their sister organization, Orange County Millennial Choirs and Orchestras in Southern California, comes closer to offering a preparatory, custom-designed training experience by inviting their bass section leader, an experienced vocalist, to offer a series of twenty-five-minute classes before the rehearsal begins each week. New singers become acquainted with general topics selected by the section leader as an introduction to their Choir experience.

During the aforementioned Chorus America roundtable discussion, the author was perplexed that each conductor was looking for a solution to accommodate an individual singer, when the resultant problem had more to do with the singers’ collective impact on the choir. Surely, a voice teacher, a sight-singing book, or computer software may provide necessary support for a struggling singer. If the singer needs this kind of


\textsuperscript{172} Brandon Stewart, personal communication, 5 November 2013.
individual attention to improve his or her basic skills, these strategies may be beneficial. The Choir School history demonstrates that investing in singers (despite a wide variety of skill levels) by providing them with musicianship and choral ensemble instruction may yield a more lasting solution.

The benefits of a custom-designed choral training course include the following:

1. The conductor can identify his/her tonal preference and specifically request certain kinds of training so the singers will be able to create the desired sound; (2) the mission, purpose, and even culture of the Choir can be communicated to participants; and (3) issues per singer such as vocal faults or literacy deficiencies can be identified and reinforced individually or in smaller groups. In the case of the MTC, a four-month training is necessary because of the preparation time required for the Temple Square Chorale (TSC) performance. The program also prepares singers for the intensity and seriousness of their eventual commitment. Once admitted to the Choir, the recurring in-service training provides a way for singers to refresh their skills and collect individual feedback. The concept of ongoing training is not unique to other professions such as education, medicine, and business; these professional fields routinely offer additional training and opportunities for skill development during the normal course of one’s career. The borrowed model of preparing and refreshing singers for their participation in a choral ensemble makes good sense, especially for choral singers who participate in a choir for many years.

Applications of the Choir School program in a school classroom might relate more to curriculum content than the overall course design of the MTC program. Four concepts from the Choir School curriculum may be beneficial to secondary choral
educators: (1) organizing choral training by concept content, (2) preemptive score marking strategies, (3) responsible singing strategies, and (4) recording and playback within the choral classroom.

Many choral textbooks and resources abound for the choral educator, but resources specifically for choral singers themselves are not as prevalent. With so much material to cover, it can be overwhelming to accommodate all aspects of choral music education into one particular resource. The combination of vocal skills, music literacy, and choral ensemble skills creates a large umbrella of topics to address with multiple possible resources inside each category. Many singers are unaware of the connection between these choral concepts and their application. So much more is taking place in rehearsal than mere sight-reading and singing; a successful choral singer should be able to demonstrate both proficiency and understanding in these specific areas. The organization of vocal and choral “habits” normally exhibited by expert choral singers in a given rehearsal provides a point of departure. By categorizing the habits in an order that reflects the process of making sound and a possible hierarchy of understanding, a conductor can continue to reinforce choral and vocal basics for singers of all abilities. As singers learn to attach actions to each of the concepts, they will deepen their understanding of the elements of high quality choral singing. Singers learn that they are responsible for the specifics of choral ensembles skills, as opposed to generally “singing better” or “trying harder” when a conductor wants something changed. Although many effective conductors are aware of these curriculum elements and what is required for high quality choral singing, the extra step of communicating these topics to the singer will
increase the singers’ understanding. Singers who make progress in various choral habits can also chart their own growth in more specific ways.

The idea of preemptive score marking helps to engage singers in the rehearsal process and aligns the singer’s participation more closely with conductor demands. Singers often mark their scores in response to conductor instruction. This may include reminders such as where to breathe, a phrase marking, a dynamic level, or a change in voice part assignments. By teaching singers a more proactive model, they are able to more fully engage in the rehearsal process. A secondary choral classroom would be an excellent place to examine the possibilities of teaching younger singers to identify choral problem areas in advance, thus improving their engagement in rehearsal as well as their ability to follow a choral score.

Conductors’ tonal concepts vary and differ according to their training and personal preferences. Thus, the idea of preparing a singer to make a vocal contribution in support of a particular tonal preference may prove to be useful instruction in secondary choral situations. As conveyed in the MTC Choir School, responsible singing is both an attitude and a skill. Psychologically, thoughtful and engaged singers who keep in mind the larger goal of the choir’s overall tone, conductor’s instructions, and mission of the Choir contribute greatly to the sound and culture of the Choir. In terms of skills, singers in the MTC come from various amateur backgrounds; some are trained vocally, others have better literacy skills, and others demonstrate musical aptitude as reflected in their Choir audition test results. Singers are trained to use their voices in support of the MTC conductors’ tonal preferences, which may be different from their previous choral experience. For some, this could mean singing with more or less volume in a certain pitch
range. For others, this may require changing to a different tonal concept than they experienced with a previous director. To make a responsible contribution, they must understand their own skill sets, vocal strengths and limitations, all within the scope of the overall purpose of the Choir. If necessary, singers could refer to information from their original vocal assessment to guide their future contribution in order to make these adjustments. Secondary choral educators could benefit from this curriculum element by taking the time to assess a singer and explain his or her unique strengths and limitations regarding vocal production. Singers who are more informed about their voices have more tools to be more effective when monitoring their own voices within the choral ensemble.

The most recent editions of the Choir School curriculum have made use of consistent recording and playback of ensemble choral sounds, whether performed in small groups or by the entire class. Audiovisual staff members are invited to assist the Choir School by recording various exercises or pieces. Although the concept of recording an ensemble and playing it back for assessment is not unique, the Choir’s consistent practice of recording and playback in small groups from a choir may be useful for secondary educators or community choir directors. Instructors can hear errors and identify a singer’s individual vocal issues more easily when singers are divided into smaller groups. In smaller-sized ensembles, singers can practice choral ensemble skills with more individual accountability while learning how their voices contribute to the choral sound. Community choir conductors could develop some variation of these recording and playback ideas as a remedy for singers with excessive absences who wish to demonstrate proficiency on their vocal part. Secondary choral educators may find that
recording and playback work effectively as a useful formative and/or summative classroom assessment.

**Discussion: Challenges and Recommendations**

As the MTC moves forward and considers additional improvements, it is possible that other models of a custom-designed course will make more sense than the latest configuration of the curriculum. Comparing the flagship course to that of the present-day sheds light on the truly critical components of the curriculum, regardless of course design and instructor preference. In each phase, Choir School instructors worked to prepare singers musically, spiritually, and pragmatically to be better singers and citizens in the organization. As the Choir is not beholden to educational standards or other accreditations, it has the freedom to design curriculum on a more intuitive level without having to abide by formal standards or objectives. Still, it benefits from models of professional best practices and resources provided by other choral educators. It is clear that entering the Choir with a basic sense of notational literacy is now a standard requirement. The Choir School program should continue to focus on improving the quality of the singer’s voice and ultimate contribution to the collective choral sound. By reinforcing personal vocal production and focusing on choral ensemble skills, singers are now better equipped to enter the MTC. The added benefits of improved communication between conductor and instructors allows for a more integrated experience and the ability to translate the conductor tonal preferences into manageable skills regardless of singers’ previous choral experience. If increased competition or institutional changes advance the general skill level of new singers going forward, curriculum tenets such as choral
ensemble skills, vocal training, ability to respond accurately to conductor demands, and preparation for membership should remain at the core of the curriculum.

Challenges for instructors past and present reflect some of the unique institutional features of the MTC. Acknowledging that time is a finite resource, the preparatory training experience has parameters relative to the TSC performance. With the exception of a small number of full-time employees, the MTC organization is comprised of volunteers, including members of the Choir School staff. Although the present Choir School program does not lack monetary assistance or support, aspects of the program would change if resources of time and money were to be applied differently in the future. Financially, the Choir School Director has been permitted to make occasional requests for necessary support such as purchasing small materials or hiring audiovisual assistance.

Additional support would be required if any of the following circumstances were to be desired by Choir leadership: (1) If instructors were compensated such that their course preparation time became part of a larger career picture, instructors would be able to devote more concentrated allowance of time per week with formal, professional accountability. (2) If a larger Choir School staff were desired, they could operate on a more full-time basis. As such, programs like the in-service experience could be offered more consistently. Within the present structure, it takes multiple years for singers to rotate into the required in-service. Additional increases in vocal coaching staff might provide greater access for individual singers who need vocal support and maintenance. (3) Increased resources for the Choir School could be assigned in such areas as additional books and materials, a library of choral resources, improved use of technology in the classroom, and possible provisions for guest lecturers or special projects. For example,
creating a video archive of classes and online access to Choir School materials (for current Choir members) would allow access to instructor materials especially for those not enrolled in in-service coursework.

As previously mentioned, the Choir Vocal Coach and Choir School Director are volunteer assignments, consistent with the overall philosophy of the organization. In its present context, the possibility of an ongoing experience is likely prohibitive, not on account of financial considerations or lack of administrative support, but simply as a function of considering the extra time required of volunteer singers. Additional requisite training opportunities must be carefully considered, so as not to overburden those who already donate so much time to the regular operations of the Choir. While the lists above and below are simply conjecture, MTC leadership will ultimately determine the viability of any additions or changes as circumstances require.

Adjustments to the length of the preparatory training experience would clearly create differences in available time for instruction. A longer class term would technically yield more time to cover more material. To borrow from economics, the Law of Diminishing Returns may also be applicable here. It is possible that one might reach a point where the preparation for singing in the MTC is sufficient, and an extended early preparation time would not necessarily yield extraordinary results. Conversely, it is also possible that the collective singers’ entrance literacy skills could improve to such a degree that literacy skills are no longer paramount to the overall scope of the course. If this were to occur, other class models could include reconsidering the number of classes necessary to impart choral and vocal material, finding other ways to provide individual vocal training, or experimenting with other scheduling models. For example, at the time
of press, the 2014 version of Choir School experimented with reordering the sequence of instruction by offering only choral and vocal training in the first five sessions. By “frontloading” the course with vocal- and choral-specific preparation and allowing the nonmusical or nonsinging instruction to occur later in the semester, the singers were more prepared to handle the rigors of the Temple Square Chorale rehearsals, as that year’s concert occurred much earlier than normal due to calendar constraints. Though Murphy had concerns about the early concert date, the reordering of the curriculum culminated in a successful performance and improved vocal preparation by the singers. This success will be a discussion point for considering future changes to the sequence and timing of class materials. The course continues to be both proactive and reactive, adapting to a variety of changing circumstances.

Beyond the basic preparation of new singers, the major obstacle in training MTC singers is the challenge of assisting with maintenance and improvements once singers are already members of the Choir. No matter how successful the Choir School may be in preparing singers with skills required in the MTC, the actual transition from the TSC to the large Choir is difficult for some. Graduating to the loft can be challenging for some because of the change in conductors, new seating configurations, increased number of singers, and difficult weekly schedule. Once singers are established in the Choir, many will choose to spend multiple years there. The length of service and average age of the singers combine to create issues of vocal supervision. The MTC must continue allocating time for continued in-service to keep singers in good vocal health. If there are other ways to provide more intensified vocal training without compromising the other necessary components of the curriculum or singers’ weekly broadcast attendance, instructors are
open to making program changes. Possible adjustments for in-service training could include providing assistance for singers in an ongoing capacity. Perhaps a return to Ripplinger’s concept of furloughing singers for a short time to participate in smaller ensembles would provide smaller group instruction and a change to the unrelenting weekly routine of rehearsals and performances. Many singers comment that their time volunteering in the Temple Square Chorale (either as a second-year graduate or a regular MTC volunteer) provides refreshment and perspective away from the weekly singing routine. A recent TSC volunteer noted the following on a social media site after his recent participation in a performance of the TSC:

I will be singing in the Chorale until my time is up with MoTab. I thoroughly enjoy the “personalized training” from the wonderful Ryan Murphy, Rebecca Wilberg, and Cherilyn Worthen. I would say it rivals some of my college music classes. It just makes me sing better.  

Opportunities for continued in-service training may include general reviews of basic choral skills, studies in advanced musical notation, or the targeted remediation of an individual singer. Other possible concepts include the use of sectional rehearsals. Because current singers are now more notationally literate, this sectional work could focus on polishing the overall sound of a section rather than specifically learning a difficult passage of music. Sectionals of this type provide additional coaching toward a directed tonal preference and promote individual accountability within the section. Making time for this type of rehearsal would provide a small change from the weekly rehearsal routine, and singers working together as a section might experience a renewed sense of unity and morale. By combining the instructional availability of two musical

173 Rick Graham, Facebook post 21 March 2014 (1:08 pm)  
directors and Choir School instructional staff, sectional work could become a reality.

Hesitation to incorporate these extra training opportunities results from the pressure of preparing the weekly broadcast as well as concerns related to overburdening the already busy volunteers. Still, as the narrative of the Choir School illustrates, the investment of increased training often generates more desirable long-term musical “revenue” in the form of singer skills. Another possibility might be for the Choir to select various concepts or skills as “targets” to be reinforced during a particular time. For example, a month of rehearsals could be devoted to providing additional emphasis on a particular choral habit, such as breath management. By coordinating with Choir School faculty, conductors could devote attention to this principle during a warm-up period, or make a concerted effort to reinforce the habit within the rehearsal. Handouts, hints, suggestions, or other materials related to the goal or topic could be provided to singers via weekly announcements or within the members-only online website. By changing the goal or the focus from time to time, singers can refresh their own attention to a particular habit and receive a needed reminder to improve their performance. For singers who experience multi-year routines of rehearsal and performance, the simple act of interjecting something new in this process may bring renewed attention to a shared purpose. Such an idea would also allow conductors to coordinate and reinforce Choir School curriculum content to MTC singers, but directed toward the goals of MTC rehearsals.

A change in conductor leadership may also yield additional curriculum changes that might not be foreseeable. Additional considerations for future Choir School program planning include long-term strategizing for changes in staff and the necessary transmission of curriculum content to new staff members. Increased clarity and
coordination between conductors and instructional staff about tonal preferences, priorities, rehearsal challenges, and trends in the weekly rehearsal will allow for continued meaningful improvements.

**Summary and Conclusion**

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir continues to provide professional quality musical performances, both recorded and live, despite its ever-increasing performance demands, scheduling limitations, and use of amateur singers. The Choir School program was created as an additional service to better prepare amateur MTC singers to meet these demands and to participate more effectively within institutional parameters. Early historical attempts at training were usually event-driven and occurred as a specific activity to solve a particular choral problem. Simply put, the Music Directors desired a long-term strategy to more effectively prepare and train the singers.

Relying on the teaching experience, educational backgrounds, content knowledge, and understanding of the organization, the Choir School staff has created and annually executes a custom-designed training program over the course of four months. Content of this curriculum covers a variety of topics including new member protocol, vocal training, choral ensemble skills, reviews of notational literacy, and the mission of the Choir. Singers conclude the training experience with a concert performance by the Temple Square Chorale, as well as two final assessments. A written and a practical exam assess singers’ knowledge and skills, allowing Music Directors to monitor singers’ progress and provide them with final words of encouragement or direction.

The three phases of the curriculum coincide with relation to the Choir School instructional staff and changes in Music Directorship. Although some elements of the
curriculum are common between all three phases of the Choir School program, certain shifts in emphasis and instructional strategy occurred in direct relationship to changes in musical leadership and the combined skill sets of Choir School instructional staff. The overall progression of the course has evolved from reinforcing music literacy basics to improving the overall musicianship of Choir members. In its present configuration, a more in-depth vocal and choral experience takes the place of previously significant, but less imperative, topics. Curriculum activities such as recording and playback and public relations training are pragmatic additions to the newest version of the course. Weekly rehearsals, performance demands, and conductors’ priorities and directives drive the ever-changing curriculum content. Many of the curriculum concepts are improvements or modifications to earlier attempts at training singers before the program structures were formally in place. The recurring subjects of practical application to weekly rehearsals, increased emphasis on singer responsibility and independence, and alignment with conductor tonal preferences permeate the narrative of the Choir School history.

Over time, curriculum changes have been specific to the MTC’s unique constraints and requirements; many of these innovations are applicable to other church, community, and secondary choral ensembles. These instructional strategies may be modeled or adapted to choirs that require training of their singers or who merely wish to improve the overall skill level of their singers. Another application for choral organizations is the possibility of creating a custom-designed training program for newly admitted singers, or an in-service program for continued training. Both types of programs can be created to suit the specific mission of any choir. In its broadest application, concerted efforts to train amateur singers in the basic tenets of musicianship, personal
vocal technique, and choral ensemble skills will return improvements in the quality of the overall choral product.

In its present state, the Choir School program offers a substantive preparatory experience specific to the unique needs of each singer in the MTC. Despite the constraints of a finite number of classes and a volunteer staff with somewhat limited availability, the Choir School provides solid musical and cultural preparation for the newly admitted MTC singer, whether amateur or highly skilled. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir will continue to weigh its institutional demands against the skill levels of applicants, in order to more effectively execute its musical mission and purpose.
Appendix A

Selected Choral Resources

Choir School faculty consulted a variety of resources in their own preparation for instruction. The following bibliography presents a variety of choral teaching resources consulted in preparation for designing and teaching the MTC Choir School curriculum.


APPENDIX B

MUSICIANSHIP MATERIALS

The following documents are examples of materials used in the first two phases of Choir School for teaching elements of basic musicianship. Authored mainly by Ottley, Goodliffe, and Margetts, these varied materials represent teaching aids used to instruct singers in a range of topics such as notation, pitch identification, rhythm counting, musical terminology, intervals, and triads.

Contents

1. Pitch Pattern Categories: Presentation of various “pitch patterns” which, if mastered, assist singers in aural and visual recognition of pitch arrangements in various keys. (2 pages)

2. Pitch Pattern Exercises: Two samples of exercises related to pitch pattern topics. (2 pages)

3. Common Musical Terms: Handout with common musical terminology and instructions for rehearsal count singing. (2 pages)

4. Excerpt from John Halliday Rhythm Series. Used by permission from Halliday’s wife, instructors continue to use these hand-written rhythm exercises for group instruction in rhythm counting.

5. Descending Interval Tune: Goodliffe and Margetts authored tunes to provide mnemonic devices for reinforcing interval distances. Created using familiar LDS hymn excerpts, these tunes provided a unique way to aurally reinforce interval distances.

6. Triad Tune: Class drill to reinforce chord qualities in cooperation with the music theory presentations.

7. Phase I Syllabus Table of Contents: From original syllabus authored by Ottley. Reveals overall musicianship content (along with other specialty topics) in the original Choir School design.
PITCH PATTERNS IN SIGHT SINGING

The pitch pattern approach (to sight singing) is based on mastering a limited number of commonly used pitch patterns and then developing the ability to adopt these patterns in various ways. They may be applied directly to sight-reading problems, especially when the passage is reasonably close to the original form of the pattern. They may be related very effectively to the development of pitch function or tonality, and to the development of pitch distance or intervals.

The pitch patterns that follow have been rearranged and augmented to include their visualization in most keys common to choral music. The beginning reference for pitch pattern singing is the triad expressed as scale numbers over an octave or more: (5 represents the lower octave).

1-3-5-3-1, 1-3-5-8-5-3-1, 5-1-3-5-3-1, and 5-1-3-5-8-5-3-1-5-1

The principle is keep the key tone triad ever present in the mind, relating problem tones to the key tone triad. Sometimes this works for an entire piece, but most often, as the music modulates, a new key tone triad is identified.

PITCH PATTERN # 1

REARRANGEMENT

The original triad arrangement of 1 - 3 - 5 is expressed in all possible combinations and in several common keys. Use them to develop visual recognition of triads in the context of a musical line. When these are mastered they provide a framework for recognition of all other tones that may be inserted into the triadic context.

PITCH PATTERN # 2

FILLING THIRDS WITH STEPWISE MOTION

The thirds of the triad are filled with passing tones in various combinations. To build recognition they are expressed in several common keys and in retrograde motion. These patterns and their variations are found often within melodies and their accompanying harmonic lines.

PITCH PATTERN # 3

NEIGHBOR TONES

In addition to passing tones, melodic lines may also be decorated by tones that are immediately above or below a triad tone. Neighbor tones are especially helpful in changing the direction of a melody. They are expressed here in several different common keys and in retrograde motion.
PITCH PATTERN # 4   PASSING PATTERNS THROUGH THE OCTAVE

The triad can be extended to a full octave. Some of the more common passing tones are included here. Examples (e) through (h) begin on the lower 5th tone of the scale increasing the range of the triad pitch reference.

PITCH PATTERN # 5   NON-TRIAD LEAPS

Even though many leaps within the octave are non-triad tones, one can continue to think of the triad tonally or geographically as a reference. In example (a) the F might be viewed as an upper neighbor to E, thus C (E) F E.

PITCH PATTERN # 6   REPEITION

Any note within a pattern may be repeated. Use the principle of repetition in other pitch patterns to expand visual recognition of triadic structures.

PITCH PATTERN # 7   CHANGE OF MODE

All of the major patterns presented in this series can be changed by using the pattern from the lower tetrachord of the minor mode as illustrated in this pitch pattern and below. The upper tetrachord of the minor modes are illustrated elsewhere.

1 2 3 4 or C D E F
Temple Square Chorale and Training School:
Module 1-3 (TSSS.1-3)
Pitch Pattern #1: Rearrangement

Example in Hymnbook
Due 1-29
Temple Square Chorale and Training School:
Module 1–3  (TSSS.1–3)
Pitch Pattern #2: Filling Thirds with Stepwise Motion
### COMMON TERMS AND TECHNIQUES

**Terms Relating to Tempo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Largo</td>
<td>Very slow and steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave</td>
<td>Solemnly, slower than adagio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lento</td>
<td>Slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>Slowly with great expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Tranquil movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderato</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Lively, animated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivace</td>
<td>Vivacious, more rapid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presto</td>
<td>Very fast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Terms Relating To Style**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accelerando</td>
<td>Gradually increasing rate of speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegando</td>
<td>Growing broader and fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animato</td>
<td>animated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolce</td>
<td>sweetly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espressivo</td>
<td>expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energico</td>
<td>energetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forte</td>
<td>(f) loud, strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortissimo</td>
<td>(ff) very loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forte piano</td>
<td>(fp) loud, then instantly soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forzando or</td>
<td>(fz) hard, stress accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sforzando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandioso</td>
<td>grand, noble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazioso</td>
<td>graceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legato</td>
<td>smooth, graceful, connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leggiero</td>
<td>light, delicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcato</td>
<td>distinct, well-pronounced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meno</td>
<td>less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezzo</td>
<td>medium, half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>(p) soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planissimo</td>
<td>(pp) very soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesante</td>
<td>heavy, ponderous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rallentando</td>
<td>getting gradually slower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritardano</td>
<td>retarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sempre</td>
<td>always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simile: similarly
Sostenuto: sustained and flowing
Staccato: detached
Stringendo: pressing the tempo and dynamic
Tenuto: sustained (single note stress)

Rhythmic Vocalization: (three systems will be used)

(1) Speaking the notated rhythm with the text
(2) Count Singing: singing the pitch line while articulating the rhythmic subdivisions in various combinations as directed. The following system is most commonly used:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\Large{\text{1}} & \Large{\text{2}} & \Large{\text{3}} & \Large{\text{4}} \\
\text{1} & + & 2 & + & 3 & + & 4 & +
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\Large{\text{ee} + \text{uh}} & \Large{\text{ee} + \text{uh}} & \Large{\text{ee} + \text{uh}} & \Large{\text{ee} + \text{uh}} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\Large{\text{lah lee}} & \Large{\text{lah lee}} & \Large{\text{lah lee}} & \Large{\text{lah lee}} \\
\end{array}
\]

(3) Tap singing: tapping the pulses as directed while speaking or singing the text.
Descending Interval Tune

Minor second "Welcome, welcome." Major second "Now rejoice."

Minor third "The Lord my pasture." Major third "Come follow me."

Perfect fourth "Prayer is the soul's"

Diabolus in musica augmented fourth diminished fifth.

Perfect fifth "For unto us" Minor sixth "A prophet's voice."

Major sixth "Scatter sunshine." Minor seventh "The Lord's side, who?"

Major seventh, Perfect octave "Face to face" unison.
Triad Tune

Major triad; minor triad; then diminished; now augmented.

Major triad; minor triad; then diminished; now augmented.

Major triad; minor triad; then diminished; now augmented.
| 1  | Introduction          |
| 2  | Music Marking Symbols |
| 3  | Terms Relating to Tempo |
| 4  | Terms Relating to Style |
| 5  | Rhythmic Vocalization |
| 6  | Resonance Factors |
| 7  | Imagery |
| 10 | Half-step/Whole-step relationships |
| 13 | Major and Minor Thirds |
| 18 | Triads |
| 20 | Fourths, Fifths and Tritones |
| 25 | Larger Intervals |
| 29 | Minor Scales |
| 31 | Tetrachords |
| 32 | Pitch Patterns #’s 1-4 |
| 40 | Pitch Patterns #’s 5-7 |
| 45 | Rhythm Rationale |
| 47 | Rhythm Foreground and Background |
| 48 | Beat and Division Levels of Simple and Compound Meter |
| 52 | Solving Common Rhythmic Errors |
| 55 | Voice Health |
| 61 | Rhythmic Patterns (Halliday) |
APPENDIX C

VOCAL TRAINING MATERIALS

This appendix includes vocal training handouts and a sample vocal assessment form for Choir School participants. From Phase I, JoAnn Ottley’s notes reflect an overview of her selected topics and sequencing. From Phase III, Rebecca Wilberg’s handout demonstrates an attempt to provide technical instruction related to conductor instruction and reflect the level of her instructional detail. Finally, the vocal assessment form created by Worthen and Wilberg demonstrates the information gathered on each choir school singer.

Contents

1. Vocal Training Session Notes: Sample class handout from JoAnn Ottley vocal lecture (2 pages)

2. Vocal Resonance Notes: Additional handout on the topic of vocal resonance from Ottley’s lectures.

3. Vocal Tract Handout: Rebecca Wilberg (graphics by Dale Boman) presentation on the vocal tract.

4. Vowel Formation Handout: Rebecca Wilberg handout (graphics by Dale Boman) showing vocal anatomy in various vowel formations for use in choral rehearsal.

5. Vocal Training Lecture Notes: Rebecca Wilberg class notes/handouts on various vocal/choral topics.

6. Vocal Assessment Form: Authored by Worthen and Wilberg, this form is competed upon each new singer’s entrance into the Choir School and is referred to at various points in their training experience and Temple Square Chorale rehearsals. (3 pages)
NOTES
On Vocal Instruction Sessions

SESSION II

A. Reviews and Reports

"Analysis paralysis":
A centipede was happy quite
Until a frog in fun
Said, "Pray, which leg comes after
which?"
This raised her mind to such a
pitch,
She lay distracted in a ditch
Considering how to run!

II. RESONANCE:

Singer's job: To describe the human condition (color, weight, shape, texture, etc.) Singing as a "tonal analog of life."

Forever nature of study of resonance.

Experiment with "ah" in varied emotional states.

Knowing and doing are not necessarily the same.

III. BREATH:

You can only sing as well as you can breathe. Build panting to 50 x.

Natural, unnatural, or exaggerated natural?

"All art is exaggeration."
Only unnatural part is extension of exhale time, therefore position of chest is a learned skill. ("Breath holding with a slow leak.")
Structure of lungs, front to back, top to bottom.

EXERCISES: Floor exercise, abdomen, arched/pressed back. Back breathing (bend, inhale into back, stand, free shoulders, hiss to exhale) 5-down scale: SSSeee (sense engagement of solar plexus)

III. BODY ALIGNMENT:

Relationship of three major areas (sternum, sacrum, head/neck) to larynx position, and therefore to optimal resonance.

Awareness/Skill
If you are aware of what you need to do and haven't the skill to Carry it out, you basically have nothing.
If you have the skill to do what you need to do and are unaware Of the need to do it, you still have nothing.
WE NEED BOTH.

EXERCISE: First line of "My Country 'Tis of Thee"
Various larynx positions: depressed, raised, unstable, gently Lowered ("wonder" position)

IV. TONGUE/JAW:

Tongue as acrobat with much to do. Primary articulator.
EXERCISE: Point, roll, count teeth, roll r's, la la la
5-tone scale on krree, krree, krree, krre (end krreee)


V. ASSIGNMENT:
Play with the "instrument" as with a new toy. Never be happy with the status quo.
RESONANCE FACTORS
(These suggestions correlate with the visual presentation given in class.)

Revised July 2001

Because choruses come together from so many vocal backgrounds, a common vocabulary regarding resonance is hard to identify. In addition the Tabernacle Choir is exposed to many different conductors who use different vocabularies to describe the tone quality desired. Confusion can be limited by relating to some common imagery that unifies concepts about resonance without tampering too much with individual vocal technique.

Experiments

1. Run the tongue slowly from the front teeth along the roof of the mouth. Feel the extent of the hard palate and be aware of the location of the soft palate.

2. Yawn or take a catch breath to feel the soft palate raise and open the space in the back of the mouth and throat.

3. Close the jaw with teeth together and hum fairly vigorously. Identify the sensations of vibration that go through the bony structures of the face.

4. Keeping the lips closed while humming, slowly open the jaw and make more room in the mouth. Try to retain the sensations of vibration in the face as you open the jaw and lips. Elongate the resonance space in the mouth by opening backward along the hard palate while lifting the soft palate. Always keep the sound pinned forward, buzzing and vibrating in the mask. Regardless of the amount of resonance space used in the mouth and throat, one must focus the sound forward by retaining the sensory vibrations in the face.

5. While experimenting with the above exercises, extend the corners of the mouth forward slightly to keep the sound from spreading.

Principle

The elongation of the backward resonance space along the hard palate, balanced with the opening of the jaw, the depression of the tongue, the raising of the soft palate, and the forward movement of the corners of the mouth give singers a set of tools with which to measure the balance of the resonators. This allows the resonance to be modified to fit the style of the music being sung.
THE VOCAL TRACT

- Sinuses
- Nasal Cavity
- Hard Palate
- Soft Palate
- Passavant's Cushion
- Uvula
- Pharyngeal Arches
- Tongue Base
- Epiglottis
- Laryngeal Framework
- Glottis
Choral Head Voice

To sing with the “Choral Head Voice” means to put "height" in the tone by:

- forcing airflow to the roof of the mouth,
- lifting the mask and pharyngeal arches.
- Put the “ah” [a] in the high jaw position [a] while
- modifying it toward the “oh” [o] position in the mouth which falls naturally right
  under the arches to encourage warmth.
- Use “buffer of breath” throughout the range.

It is important to retain "core" in the tone. When singing high to medium pitches, the
singer should produce a well-supported tone but employ a good amount of "buffer of
breath" (which does not seep into the "core") to maintain relaxation and reduce
unnecessary "bite" in the tone. When singing low pitches, “Choral Head Voice” means
staying out of “chest voice” (for women) and adding a bit of extra breath to prevent any
‘edge’ on the tone (for both men and women).

All this should create a higher, lighter sound because “ah” [a] in its natural open jaw
position pulls down the pitch. “Choral Head Voice” has no correlation to the vocal register
“Head Voice” which employs much more force and encourages an amount of "ring" and
individual projection that usually overcomes the fabric of the choral sound. The
Tabernacle Choir uses the vocal register “Head Voice” only in very loud passages.
THE VOCAL TRACT  (See handout)

Resonance

There are two resonators in the vocal tract. The first is the primary resonator, which is the pharynx—the space directly above the larynx where the sound originates extending to the back of the pharyngeal arches that are the arches you can see in the back of the throat. The secondary resonator is the mouth, i.e., the space in front of the pharyngeal arches to the outer edge of the lips. We have voluntary control of many resonance and vowel-shaping factors in the secondary resonator. We can open or close the mouth, lift or lower the cheeks ("mask"), round ("cover") or release the lips, open or close the soft palate, reshape the tongue or move it forward or back.

The primary resonator is more difficult to alter. We must use the means of illusion to affect a change of shape. As the name denotes, the primary resonator has the most effect on the resonance of the sound. For a sound that is too bright we often say things like “sing out the back of your head” or “sing out the top of the your head” all in an effort to lift the roof of the pharynx and gain more “height in the tone.” To lift the arches we might say, “lift the upper back molars” or “lift the mask.” (The “mask” is a term used by singers to denote the area of the face where one would find the raccoon’s mask, that is, the upper cheeks, eyes and eyebrows.) To create more frontal brilliance in the tone we might try “placing” the tone or “focusing” the tone at the hard palate or the back of the front teeth to narrow the pharynx directly above the larynx.

Tone

A good singing tone is achieved by creating the correct balance between bright and dark elements of the sound. This is known as chiaroscuro (chiaro=bright, scuro=dark). If there is too much bright in the balance the tone may have a shrill or biting quality. This sound often will stick out in the choral blend. If the tone has too much dark the sound can be muffled or swallowed. This sound often causes a heaviness or flat sound in the choral blend. Each of you must look at your vocal assessment and find where your voice naturally resides in the continuum of vocal sound.

Look on your vocal assessment and find the lines that read, “color/resonance,” and “vowel height.” If your sheet is marked in the middle both times (“centered” for “color/resonance,” and “balanced” for “vowel height”) then you need do nothing to alter your basic tone unless the conductor, for a certain section of music or entire piece, requires a specific sound. If you fall outside those ranges you need to work on altering your tone toward the balanced center through some of the techniques outlined above or
through altering your vowel position as described below. Keep in mind that if the conductor requires a darker, richer, rounder, sound and you are already in the dark continuum then you should not alter further but allow those who are “centered” and “bright” to alter. The reverse is also true, i.e., if you are in the bright continuum and a more forward brilliant sound is required then you should do nothing and allow those who are “centered” and “dark” to alter.

Vowels

Vowels are formed by the shape of the vocal tract. The primary force behind vowel shape is the position and shape of the tongue. Of this we have voluntary control to a certain extent. To discover the shape of the tongue for each vowel lightly bite your fingernail and while keeping the lips and cheeks completely relaxed say each vowel in succession from bright to dark ([i, e, a, o, u]). This will demonstrate the natural position of the vowels in the mouth. They start with the bright vowels in the front and move successively back. Analyze the position and shape of the tongue while in each vowel formation. The easiest way to alter the resonance of the tone is to move the vowel position one forward or back to acquire the necessary change in resonance. For example, if you are too bright then pronounce your [i] vowel in the [e] position and so on. If you are too dark pronounce your [u] vowel in the [o] position and so on.

THE VOCAL TRACT handout
CHORAL HEAD VOICE handout
HIGH AND LOW VOWELS handout

Excellent outside sources:


www.voicesource.co.uk/article/151
“The Bernoulli Effect and Vocal fold Vibration,” by Mathew Reeve.

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VOCAL ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: ___________________________________________________________________ Part. #______________________
Assessment #:____________________ Age: ___________________ Date: ___________________
Musical Background: ______________________________________________________________________________________
Voice Part:  (HC)  S1  S2  A1  A2  T1  T2  B1  B2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Tessitura</th>
<th>Passaggio Points (Register Shifts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments:
Consider: Vocal health issues, unique vocal characteristics, unusual register breaks, possible misdiagnosed part placement, intonation concerns, etc.

Personal Vocal Description:

Suggestions made for future improvements:

□ Needs Follow-up  □ No Follow-up  □ Optional Follow-up
### VOCAL MAP:
(Mark where voice falls on the continuum in each category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Continuum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. OVERALL POSTURE:</strong></td>
<td>RIGID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. HEAD/BACKBONE ALIGNMENT:</strong></td>
<td>FORWARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. JAW ALIGNMENT:</strong></td>
<td>PROTRUDED/RESTRICTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. JAW TENSION</strong></td>
<td>POPPING/WOBBLING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. CHEST POSITION:</strong></td>
<td>OVERLY HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. INSPIRATION:</strong></td>
<td>HIGH/SHALLOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. EXPIRATION:</strong></td>
<td>LOOSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. VIBRATO</strong></td>
<td>UNSTABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. VIBRATO RATE:</strong></td>
<td>FAST/NARROW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. SIZE OF TONE:</strong></td>
<td>LARGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. COLOR/RESONANCE:</strong></td>
<td>BRIGHT/NASAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. ONSET:</strong></td>
<td>GLOTTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. VOWEL HEIGHT:</strong></td>
<td>SHALLOW/SPREAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. LARYNX POSITION:</strong></td>
<td>TENSE/HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. TONGUE POSITION</strong></td>
<td>PULLED BACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16. VOWEL/LIP FORMATION:</strong></td>
<td>BRIGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17. LIP POSITION</strong></td>
<td>PROTRUDED/TENSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18. TONGUE TENSION:</strong></td>
<td>TENSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19. FACIAL POSITION:</strong></td>
<td>TENSE/CONTORTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20. FACIAL EXPRESSION</strong></td>
<td>EMERGING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL APPLICATIONS:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. STACCATO MOTION:</td>
<td>DOWNWARD/PULLED</td>
<td>UPWARD/LIFTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. MARCATO MOTION:</td>
<td>TENSE/IRREGULAR</td>
<td>RELAXED/EVEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. STRAIGHT TONE</td>
<td>TENSE</td>
<td>RELAXED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. VOWEL ALTERATION</td>
<td>SLIGHT</td>
<td>MOBILE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. MESSA DI VOCE</td>
<td>CRESCENDO</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SINGER NAME: 

ASSESSOR: 

APPENDIX D

CHORAL ENSEMBLE SKILLS MATERIALS

This appendix includes teaching aids and instructional materials related to choral ensemble skills. Authored by Worthen, this particular curriculum development occurred in the third phase of Choir School and continues to be central to the present-day curriculum. A list of Choral Habits comprises the core of choral-specific content. Explanatory handouts for singers and choral-specific assignments demonstrate the application of these concepts.

Contents

1. Choral Habits List: Handout of “Choral Habits” which comprises the choral curriculum content.

2. Choral Habit Handout: Two sample Choral Habit handouts on Alignment and Breath used by Choir School participants. (2 pages)

3. Sample Choral Reflection Assignments: Participants are asked to make transfers between choral and life topics to deepen understanding of these principles.

4. In-service Program Introduction: Explanation and handout for current MTC members enlisted in the inaugural In-service class.

5. In-service handout: Application of Choral Habits and Smart Score Marking strategies covered in courses for current MTC singers. (4 pages)
HABITS OF GOOD CHORAL SINGING

1 Alignment
2 Breath
3 Tone
4 Long Vowels
5 Expressive Diction
   Listen for
6 Balance
7 Blend
8 Intonation
9 Precision
10 Energy
11 Engaging Faces
HABIT #1: Alignment

“The whole body is involved in singing; your body is your resonating musical instrument. Tension in the body can be heard in the singing voice, so it is vital to develop and maintain good posture. A singer is never too advanced to work on their posture and to develop an understanding of the effect it has on their singing.

In addition to affecting the voice itself, remember that our posture creates an impression on the audience or congregation—a huge amount of our communication to others occurs through our body language, rather than what we actually express verbally.”


The Goal:
A carefully aligned, balanced body that is physically ready for the task of singing. Proper posture will ensure the best possible path for breath to flow and support beautiful tone.

Keep in Mind:
- Your body IS your instrument: carefully assemble it for each rehearsal.
- Deconstruct the “day” and Reconstruct for the “rehearsal.”
- Think “head to toe” and BALANCE your body.
- Six points of balance: Imagine a rod “through” the body not “behind” the body.
- Be vigilant about tension. Release, relax and realign whenever necessary.
- Stretch the spine, keep chest lifted.

Sounds simple, right? Basic?

Real-life Obstacles:
Maintaining proper alignment is a CONSTANT Challenge. WHY?

- We rehearse while seated in the loft.
- We hold folders.
- Rehearsal periods are lengthy—multiple hours.
- We forget!

Exercises:
HABIT #2

Breath:
“The diaphragm is the major muscle of inhalation. Though its effects can be detected, it is not possible to feel it directly. When you inhale, it descends (contracts), pulling the button of the lungs down, creating a vacuum which causes the air to rush in. When the lungs fill with air the lower ribs expand outward, resulting in an enlargement of the body around the waistline. As you exhale, the process is reversed: the diaphragm relaxes (and ascends) being pushed upward by the abdominal muscles—this causes the lower ribs to contract inwards, resulting in a contraction of the body around the waistline.

Breathing is so fundamental to good singing that it affects dynamics, phrasing and tone. Every singer in the choir, even the most experienced can benefit from basic breathing exercises.”


The Goal:
To develop an awareness of and strengthen the muscles involved in the breathing cycle: inhalation and exhalation. Their proper coordination and use results in the energized airflow required for beautiful tone—both individual and collective.

Keep in mind:
• Develop physical awareness of proper sensation of breathing. Habitualize!
• Keep inhalation LOW and EXPANSIVE.
• A proper breath must happen @ time you sing, not just for a long phrase or high note.
• Process of breathing cycle = FAT & SKINNY.
• Force/flow—constantly resolving these two principles.
• “Slow leak” principle: good singing is a well-executed exhale.
• Staggered breathing: tips and ideas.

Real-Life Obstacles:
• Easy to let the “mass” sound fool you into a small, unsupported sound.
• Sight-reading and other rehearsal challenges can be distracting.
• Poor posture/alignment makes effective breathing difficult to execute.
• Temptation to sing everything all the time.
• We forget!!

Exercises:
CHOIR SCHOOL
CLASS #6
REFLECTION PAPER:
“Intonation”

We’ve discussed the importance of intonation as a key to choral success. The issue is so fundamental and yet there are so many potential and complex obstacles!

There is no official “reading” for today, but I’d like you think carefully about the obstacles to good intonation—both in choral singing and in your life. There is a very wonderful parallel between the choral applications and the spiritual implications of this idea. We spend a lot of time in the gospel talking about the importance of being “in tune”!

Please write a thoughtful paragraph about what you find to be the obstacles to good intonation in both areas. You may notice some interesting similarities and perhaps some new ways to think about this subject. Feel free to include any additional anecdotes, stories, scriptures, etc. that illustrate your thinking.
The In Service Challenge:

In response to this prophetic counsel as well as the request of our conductors, this In Service session is an opportunity to refresh skills, clarify instructions, and review basic choral/vocal principles. Realistically, time constraints do not allow a 100% complete review of Choir School curriculum material. However, the objective for our time together will be:

- Improved “Response & Responsibility” in choral rehearsal/performance
- Clarification of rehearsal vocabulary and instruction
- Opportunities for smaller group/individual coaching
- Refreshing the basic habits of healthy vocal production

You are welcome to gather questions you may have about vocabulary used by the conductors in rehearsal, concerns about your individual singing voice, alternative solutions to challenges you face in the loft, etc. as you reflect on ways to improve your vocal contribution. Let us know what we can do to help.

**RESPONSE & RESPONSIBILITY**

**Response:**

The ability of the ensemble to respond to conductor instructions, the sound happening within a section, or markings in the musical score. This involves many relationships: choir-to-conductor, conductor-to-orchestra, orchestra-to-choir, you-to-your section, etc.

**Responsibility:**

Every singer and player is responsible for his/her personal contribution to this process. You contribute to the work of the choir by virtue of your…

1. **Attitude:** positivity/spiritual preparation/flexibility & cooperation
2. **Knowledge:** understanding music literacy, memory work, retention of instructions
3. **Skills:** Vocal technique, choral ensemble skills, accuracy in music reading

Collective choral success depends HEAVILY on personal **responsibility** from each member as well as the collective **response** we give our conductors.
“SMART” SCORE MARKING
Scan it. Spot it. Sing it well.

The choral rehearsal process mainly involves resolving issues of TEXT (the message of our music) & TONE (the overall sound of the choir.) Almost all rehearsal issues fall into one of these two categories. Many of them can be solved in advance by the SINGER who takes personal responsibility for more than just notes and rhythms.

Smart score marking involves more than making sure you have all the “breaths” or dynamics circled. It means preparing your music as a conductor might. They plan rehearsal based on what MIGHT happen because of their knowledge of the pitfalls inherent in the music. Learning to mark your score in a similar way will help you to see and solve issues before they occur. This means spotting “traps” ahead of time, anticipating the issues, planning your solution, and executing the best possible response.

The payoff?

An ounce of PREVENTION is worth…
1. less “non-example” modeling 😊
2. getting to the “music” more quickly
3. less auto-pilot and more mental engagement

To be sure, long hours of advance score study are the responsibility of the conductors. But by learning to quickly scan, spot, and solve some of the common choral “traps”, many of these issues will reveal themselves in a matter of a few seconds or minutes. As you transition between pieces in rehearsal, wait for another section of the choir to rehearse, or arrive an extra minute or two early, there are MANY opportunities to do SINGER score study that will help the ensemble. Imagine if 360 singers worked with that kind of attention to detail!

Look for issues of TEXT & TONE in every score.

Make this a habit.
**TEXT**

The message of our music  
(as related to Diction/Clarity)

TEXT = VOWELS + CONSONANTS + SYLLABIC STRESS

**Three Guiding Principles of Choral Diction**

1. Exaggerate (Choral-ize it. Taller vowels, go toward British accent)
2. Modify (as needed: ex: Sopranos modify in extreme parts of range)
3. Stress or DE-stress syllables (go for natural speech pattern: An-gels?)

**COMMON DICTION PITFALLS:**

1. Diphthong & Triphthongs
2. American “R” sounds
3. “L” sounds: final (as in people, able) or other (with misplaced tongue position, often too far back or curled on sides)
4. UNstressed vowels (Schwa, secondary vowels)
5. Important/Troublesome consonants (King of Kings= extra K)
6. Choral Modifications (words like OF, LOVE, or UNTO move toward a taller “ah”)
7. Vowel choice (as it relates to clarity of text)
8. Melismas (keeping fresh vowel on many notes)

**TONE**

The overall sound of the choir  
(Quality, intonation/pitch accuracy, color)

OVERALL TONE = VOCAL PRODUCTION + VOWELS (quality of resonance)

**Basic Vocal Production Obstacles:**
(Not musical score issues, but must be solved)

1. Poor alignment
2. Shallow breath hook-up
3. Resonance too bright/too dark
4. Singing on end of your air supply
5. Incorrect pitches
6. Overly pressed or aspirate vocal production (we want balanced tone)
Melodically (In your own part)
1. Descending steps/skips are often not small enough
2. Ascending steps/skips are often not large enough
3. Repeated pitches tend to become increasingly low
4. Large-sized intervals aren’t always as performed accurately
5. Pedal points (long-held notes lose support)
6. Half-step/whole-step relationships
7. Neighbor tones & the RETURN (do-re-do)
8. Accidentals can be confusing

Harmonically (Your part in relation to the other voices/accompaniment)
1. THIRDS of chords! (naturally sung low—tune higher)
2. Octaves/Unisons (look for them, use them as anchors)
3. Parallel motion (hard to keep in tune as contour moves)
4. Close harmonies require extra attention/less vibrato

Vowel Choice Obstacles (As they relate to resonance)
1. Vowels placed too far back or covered with too much lip give the impression of poor intonation.
2. Shallow vowels next to a taller vowel formation won’t blend, sound juvenile, and don’t contribute to an open, free tone.

**DOUBLE TROUBLE!!**

*It is possible (and very normal) for pitch traps to happen in combination with a problematic vowels or text issues. When text and tone issues combine, they require extra attention.*

We’re not going to prescribe a uniform score marking system. You’ve all been in the choir long enough to have a system that makes sense to you. However you choose to notate it, scanning your score for trouble spots should become a routine habit during rehearsal. Constantly scrutinize your part to discover what other problems you can identify and prevent.

Use arrows, circles, notes to yourself, abbreviations, etc. to help ID these higher levels of choral score reading. A collective effort to “sing smarter” will allow the conductors to move ahead more quickly in a system that is so pressed for time.
THE INSERVICE CHALLENGE:
1. Assume more responsibility for the rehearsal process: THINK & SING. Stay engaged. Be aware.
2. Scan each piece and look for potential TEXT/TONE issues
3. Spot them and sing it well…the first time!

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK:
Prepare the scores for the following hymns:

1. The Morning Breaks: verse 1
   • Mark ALL possible DICTION issues you see in the first verse

2. Now the Day is Over: verse 1
   • Mark ALL possible INTONATION traps in your own part.

3. Arise, O Glorious Zion: verse 1
   • Mark BOTH diction/intonation issues pertaining to your own part.

Study your scores, marking all the possible diction and intonation issues you can find on your own. Prepare the solutions ahead of time and come back ready to sing in small ensembles and record/playback.
APPENDIX E

SPECIALTY TOPICS

Varied topics such as memorization helps, instructions for singing the weekly broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*, and score marking strategies represent a sample of additional specialty topics covered by Choir School instructors.

Contents

1. Memorization Notes: Presented by Margetts, this handout represents a sample of the discussion on memorization helps for music learning. (2 pages)


3. Score Marking Handout: Instructions for marking choral scores was often presented by Mack Wilberg as a visiting guest in early. This is a sample handout offered during these presentations. (2 pages)
Memorizing Music
Choir School Spring 2013

WHY MEMORIZE?
The poor reasons are external. (impress others, no music to carry, etc.)
The good reasons are internal issues.
1. One’s performance is more convincing (expressive) and you learn more
effectively (you cannot effectively communicate with others a piece you do not
yourself understand)
2. You learn more and more about how music works.
a. Chinese proverb: If it isn’t simple you do not know it.
b. We know the value of scripture memorization and the new levels of
meaning it provides.

“When literacy is rare, memories are good.” Thurston Dart (old paintings show no scores.)

HOW DOES HUMAN MEMORY WORK?
From the environment → sensory store → short-term store
Rehearsal buffer → long-term store

Sensory store contains a huge amount of information but it decays unless it is transferred to short-
term store. Transfer comes as you pay attention.

Short-term store has a limited capacity, perhaps just seven digits and decays in about fifteen
seconds. The short-term store contains a rehearsal buffer whereby things are retained by
repetition, then transferred to long-term memory. Stuff in the short-term store can be transferred
to long-term by rehearsal.

Long-term store has unlimited capacity and is permanently available (varying degrees of stability.)

(A memorized piece of music goes back into short-term store during performance.)

Musician relies on 4 types of memory:

1. tactile 
   (senses touch, sight and hearing)
2. visual
3. aural
4. analytical
   (brain)
   the predominant technique that holds
   all others together

If you have memory slips you are depending too much on the senses (1 – 3 above). You want to
use all the types of memory.

HOW DOES ONE MEMORIZE MUSIC?
A former member of the Tabernacle Choir who is legally blind was often asked how she managed
to memorize so much music. Her first answer among several marvelous suggestions was, “I
invoke the Spirit. I am a missionary, and if I live for it, I am entitled to the enlightenment and
support of the Holy Ghost.” But then she outlined several ways that she worked at the problem.
Scanning a Melody
Key: (major or minor) any change?
Meter: simple? compound? beats, background beats, subdivision of background beats?
Accidentals: are they a result of minor mode? Consistent or changing?
Prevailing note value: what pattern will the conductor beat?
Staring: on the beat, on the upbeat, other?
Melodic line:
   Lowest note? Tessitura?
Tempo: changing?
Articulation:
Accents: changing?
Phrasing:
Volume: dynamics? Changes?
Repetition: rhythm? Melody both? Individual notes? Form?

A recent dissertation* studied “Pitch Internalization Strategies of Professional Musicians”
and came up with 7 metaphors for pitch perception:

1. **Follower** - Found the pitches from other singers or the accompanying instruments

2. **Contour Singer** - relied on going up and down as the music indicated with some
   unevenness in the production of the required intervals

3. **Button Pusher** - were adept at playing instruments and could be seen pushing
   imaginary keys as they sang

4. **Builder** - Knew intervals well and sang from one note to the next calculating the
   spacing

5. **Tonal Thinker** - used solfeggio and relative pitch and calculated the pitches
   according to their relations to the tonic of the key

6. **Pitcher** - used absolute pitch skills and found each note independently from the other
   notes

7. **Chunker** - was able to take chunks of musical information and process it whole

Arrive at Tabernacle in time to park, get dressed in performance clothing, pick up music from your box, and be seated in the loft of the Tabernacle by 7:25 a.m. (Voice somewhat warmed up if possible.) Seating chart near entrance to loft or follow staff instructions.

ALL: Heavy on the deodorant but NO SCENTED PRODUCTS of any kind.
MEN: wear white shirts, black shoes and socks; be clean shaven.
WOMEN: Arrive fully made up with hair styled (no extremes of any kind), wearing your own slip and assigned dress shields; flesh-toned hosiery, low black shoes (closed toe and heel). No decorative items (flowers, ribbons, jewelry, hair clips).

Prayer, announcements, vocal warm-up, business, etc.

Board lists order of rehearsal and broadcast pieces by music numbers. Put your music in order. (Order of rehearsal numbers subject to change.)

Work on the day’s broadcast music or possibly some of next Sunday’s broadcast.

Approximately 8:30 a.m.: full run through of today’s broadcast including count down to start, lights, cameras, spoken continuity, opening and closing themes, etc. Opening theme Gently Raise the Sacred Strain is sung in various keys to match opening number. Hold your folder at your left side. Follow director’s cues to raise, open, close, and lower music.

If choir number following the spoken word has no introduction, the organ fill will end in the key to give your pitches for that number.

After run through, director may rehearse as needed to touch up any problem spots. NOTE: director will announce any changes to be made in performance. Something could be added, dropped, lengthened, shortened—no matter what the already-printed program says or what you have already been told! Pay attention and be flexible!

Sometime around 9:10 a.m. BREAK. Restrooms, water, snacks (nothing messy or drippy; perhaps fruit, nuts, power bar.) No food in the loft ever. No water bottles in loft for performances. DO NOT go into the audience wearing performance clothing. No one in loft from break until 9:20 a.m.

Back in the loft by 9:25 a.m. Do not cut it too close! Your seat may be given away!

During broadcast do not cough, shuffle feet, or flip through music during organ solo or continuity. Caution: you may be on camera even during organ solo. After broadcast ends, Lloyd says a few words to audience then all performers sing 1 verse SATB of God Be With You, without music, without conductor, all directly facing audience. (Pitch is given, but no accompaniment.)

Possible time after broadcast for retakes, special problems, announcements, etc. You cannot leave the loft until dismissed.

Return to basement of Tabernacle. Return music to box (and possibly turn in some.) Change back to street clothes.
MUSIC MARKING SYMBOLS

Breath
...way.
...Though...

No Breath
...praise Thee, O Lord...

Lift
...mountains, ' mountains,' With
hills...

Part Entry
\[ T( \quad S( \]

Consonant Placement
(d), (s), (t), etc. placed on
desired pulse (use parenthesis)

Neutral Vowel
(Schwa)
' Use as explained' to you by the
conductor on weak syllables, and
before/after some consonants

IPA (International
Phonetic Alphabet)
[i], [a], [e], etc. under text as
directed [use brackets]

Glottal Stop
Stop and restart the tone, "what/I"

Mixed Meter
\[ 5/4 = \begin{align*} 3+2 \quad \text{or} \quad 2+3 \quad \text{or} \quad 4+1 \\ \text{or other combinations as directed} \end{align*} \]
\[ 7/8 = \begin{align*} 4+3 \quad \text{or} \quad 3+4 \quad \text{or} \quad 3+2+2 \\ \text{or other combinations as directed} \end{align*} \]
Dynamic Emphasis ($\textcircled{3}$, $\textcircled{2}$, etc., circle the symbol)

Cresc./Decresc. \[\text{Written dynamic markings should be reinforced with symbols}\]

Pitch Location for Problem Entrances \[\text{A, e.g., tenor's pitch sounded by the altos}\]

Intonation Symbols
- Pitch up $\uparrow$
- Pitch down $\downarrow$

Resonance Symbols
- Resonance factor 1 = $R_1$
- Resonance factor 2 = $R_2$
- Resonance factor 3 = $R_3$

Common Performance Symbols
- accent  $\text{'}$ = strong emphasis
- staccato $\cdot$ = crisp, detached
- tenuto  $\text{'}$ = sustained
- separation $\text{'}$ = detached, but not short
- fermata $\text{'}$ = a pause or hold
- caesura $\text{'}$ = cut
APPENDIX F

ASSESSMENTS

Authored by various instructors, this section contains examples and evidence of various methods of assessment used in the choir school. Though not beholden to national music education standards or specific assessment benchmarks, various tools were used to provide instructors with a sense of new singers’ understanding or even feedback on the participants’ experience.

Contents:

1. Pop Quiz: A sample assessment of terms and concepts used in both the Choir School class and the TSC rehearsal of that particular week.

2. Sample Test Study Guides: Instructions for both the Music Theory and Choral Ensemble skills portion of a final exam. List of topics provides insight into the span of topics taught within both categories. (2 pages)


4. Practical Exam Instructions: Singers asked to participate in a practical (singing) final exam were given specific instructions for preparation. This handout provides insight into the requirements for this final assessment.

5. Feedback Surveys: Occasionally, Choir School instructors provided participants with an opportunity to share anonymous feedback about their experience. A sample feedback survey is included.
POP QUIZ!

NAME: ____________________________________________________________

1. What does the word “obscuro” mean?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

2. Which member of a triad is most often sung out of tune?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

3. What is phonation?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

4. What does Ryan mean when he says “Don’t let the resonance drop” or “Don’t let the resonance dampen?”

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

5. What is timbre?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

6. What is vocal “onset”?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________
CHOIR SCHOOL 2010

PREPARATION FOR THEORY EXAM

You will need to know:

1. Key signatures (major and minor)

2. Time signatures (how many beats per measure; what note value gets the beat)

3. Intervals, ascending and descending (2 part identification e.g. P4)

4. Triads – 4 types

5. Triads of the major scale (Roman numeral, type, function)

6. Triad components – root, third, fifth (which voice part sings the third?)

7. Dominant seventh chord

8. Major scale

9. Minor scale (3 types)

10. V- I cadence
Choir Lab Study Guide:
Topics and Ideas for Review

1. Vocal Assessments: Be familiar with yours!
   a. Terminology: passaggio, tessitura, etc.
   b. What things already work well in your own voice?
   c. What suggestions were made to you?
   d. Have you made improvements?

2. Choral HABITS:
   a. Know all 10 habits
   b. Understand/explain their definitions
   c. Describe negative effects of various habits NOT working...
   d. Be able to relate your own Vocal Assessment to requirements of each habit

3. Choral TONE:
   a. Pros and cons of various vocal approaches
   b. Describe effects of different tone choices on the ensemble sound
   c. Refer to listening journal notes from past examples
   d. How to change your own voice to accommodate various types of choral tone
   e. Bright vs. dark tone. Resonance. How do you make vocal adjustments?

4. Choral DICTION:
   a. Made up of vowels/consonants (know basic IPA symbols as given in class)
   b. Guiding Principles: Exaggeration, modification & syllabic stress
   c. String of pearls analogy
   d. Concept: Choral Singing as a Second Language
   e. Dangerous Diction Traps/Expressive Diction
      i. Diphthongs/triphthongs
      ii. Two-syllable words
      iii. American pronunciation issues (Ls and Rs)
      iv. Voiced/unvoiced consonants
   f. “Good diction is borne of a real desire to communicate the text.”

5. Choral INTONATION:
   a. Pitch replication vs. intonation in a harmonic context
   b. Role of listening
   c. Obstacles to good intonation
   d. Common Pitch traps—be able to ID in a score—what are they?
   e. Remedies

6. VOCAL RESPONSIBILITY
   a. Circle of influence: You, neighbors, section, ensemble
   b. Volume, vibrato, vowels
   c. Awareness!!! What is it? How do you get it?
   d. Role of listening

7. CHOIR IN CONTEXT IDEAS:
   a. Choir as missionary service
   b. President Hinckley’s challenge
   c. Listening
1. Which 2 measures have the same rhythm as ms. 1? ______ ______

2. What is the key? ______

3. There are how many beats per measure? ______

4. The dominant triad (melodic form) is found in measure ______.

5. The shortest note value is a ______ note.

6. With regard to dynamics, the piece gets gradually ______.

7. There is a M7 between measure ______ and measure ______.

8. There are numerous instances of B to A#. What is this interval? ______

9. An ascending P5 is found in measure ______.

10. A descending P4 is found in measure ______ (and others.)

Give the name of a hymn where the melody begins with the interval listed, either ascending or descending. You may list any hymn including those in the interval tune.

1. Major 2nd

2. Major 3rd

3. Perfect 4th
**Choir School**
**Practical Exam Instructions**

Tonight we will assign you a new small group that will sing together for Brother Wilberg on Tuesday, April 15th as part of your practical exam. You will finish polishing as much as you can by the end of rehearsal today.

Each group will take their practical exam together and will meet with Brother Wilberg for 30 minutes. The test will have 2 parts:

1. **“Lean on my ample arm”** will be performed from memory (unaccompanied).

   Objective: The ensemble and individuals will demonstrate the mechanics of responsible ensemble singing.

   Brother Wilberg will be listening/watching for choral ensemble skills including:
   
   - Intonation
   - Choral Diction modifications (vowel adjustments, word stress, etc.)
   - Ensemble precision
   - Blend
   - Expressivity (facial expression, emotional connection)

   *Be prepared: After you sing the hymn, he may ask you to go back and try something differently. He may ask sections to sing alone, he may request a different kind of sound, he may ask you to sing without vibrato or adjust your tone color.*

2. **Score Preparation**: Scanning, marking, researching and rehearsing a piece of music that will be given to singers during the exam.

   Objective: Singers will demonstrate their ability to read, think and sight-sing with “choral singer mentality”.

   Singers will be given a copy of music (that they’ve never seen before) and asked to scan and mark for diction modifications and intonation traps. After marking the music, we will engage you in a conversation about what those modifications should be. Brother Wilberg may ask individual questions about your part or anything else worthy of notice in the musical score.

   We will then proceed to sight-read the piece together and Brother Wilberg may rehearse it a bit as necessary. The best way to prepare for this exercise is to review the rules and suggestions for “choralizing” diction and to practice looking for potential intonation trouble spots.
NAME: ___________________________ (optional)

CHOIR SCHOOL
OVERALL EVALUATION
April 2007

1. The most important thing/s I will take away from this experience is:

2. Something I wish we had covered in this class is:

3. Before coming to choir school, I didn’t know:

4. Something I already knew before coming to Choir School and wish we’d spent less class time on it is:

5. After participating in rehearsals with the Choir, General Conference and a few broadcasts, what do you think are the most important skills a member of the Choir needs to have ready to contribute effectively?
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