

*Choral Arts Games*  
A Case Study Exploring Theater Arts Environments and Methodology  
in Secondary Choral Rehearsals

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**Abstract**

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*Choral Arts Games* is an interdisciplinary case study in which I applied theater environment norms and foundational acting training principles from Constantin Stanislavski, Sanford Meisner, and Viola Spolin to my choral rehearsals to explore their impact on chorister development. Former scholarly investigations have predominantly proposed theoretical frameworks for integrating theater techniques into musical settings, yet empirical observations of such applications remain scarce. Any current approaches for incorporating theater practices in choral rehearsals have largely focused on text interpretation, stage presentation, and emotional connectivity. In the research presented here, I will delineate and juxtapose these current approaches with my own direction.

*Choral Arts Games* examines the efficacy of employing musically modified versions of select theater games, pre-existing singing games, and created games using theater method

prototypes from the methodologies above. The games specifically prioritize physical preparation aimed at helping choristers engage their senses and foster organic collaboration among ensemble members to improve vocal technique. To accommodate choirs with a wide range of vocal ability and experience, the games incorporate opportunities for choristers to employ vocal function exercises offered by current vocal pedagogues. Finally, this study investigates how integrating these games influences my choristers' artistic growth and preparation for repertoire in performance.

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## List of Abbreviations

SCS .....	Seattle Christian School
UW .....	University of Washington
ACT .....	Advanced Choral Techniques (a graduate conducting course at UW)
SOVT .....	Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract Exercises

Any vowel or consonant between two forward slashes (e.g., /a/) is referring to the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols for language sounds.

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## **Dedication**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1: Background and Statement of the Problem

Shortly after I had been accepted to the Doctor of Musical Arts Choral Conducting program at the University of Washington, I was pondering my choir and theater programs at Seattle Christian School. I was in the middle of my sixth year of teaching and found myself dwelling on the fact that my theater students were more technically aware and artistically sensitive than my choristers. In analyzing my two programs, I realized that the most likely reasons for these differences may be the learning environment in each program.

In my theater program, I offer an introductory non-performance-centric course divided into units that students and I explore together at their pace. Throughout the semester, they learn to develop their imaginations by playing theater games and taking part in exercises with other students. These games teach problem-solving skills, shared leadership, terminology, and technique as they collaborate in a low-stakes, non-authoritarian environment. This course is a prerequisite for students before they can audition for a play. The goal is to unlock students' artistry in every regard and to give them the space to do so.

In my choir program, students immediately start singing in a performance-based ensemble. They learn musical skills and vocal techniques along the way. In the interest of running an equitable program, the audition process is more of an assessment, functioning as an opportunity for me to determine how I can best help each student assimilate and feel comfortable in our choir—there have been rare occasions in which students are not admitted. Unfortunately, there are no beginning music or singing opportunities for secondary students, so new and inexperienced choristers must conform quickly to the norms of the ensemble. Some enter the

program at random points throughout their middle and high school careers, and many have never sung before. As a patchwork quilt of varying abilities, we program several performances a year, including concerts, chapels, festivals, competitions, and an annual choir trip. Still, this model was not yielding an artistry comparable to my theater students. Interestingly, there are often many actors who join my choir program; never once have I had to convince these students to “go for it.” Their acquired theater knowledge and the confidence they have garnered could certainly be aiding their singing experience for the better—but in which ways and how?

My mind shifted to my own artistic development journey. From primary school through undergraduate programs, I had been equally involved in both music and theater, and I attribute most of my confidence and artistic retention abilities to my theater arts training. Learning was associated with fun, laughter, and relationship building. We focused on developing the senses, which over time, gave us the tools and technique to improvise, create characters and be flexible while working with others. As I grew older and pursued acting in high school and college, these environments were similar—they provided space to work out the craft through exploring technique with other actors. I designed my theater curriculum after these experiences. In light of these observations, I began to wonder if theater arts environments and methodology could supplement my chorister’s artistry. I contacted former theater and choir directors to see if they were aware of theater arts application in the music world. With each phone call and bibliographical search, I found that this topic was grossly under-researched and over the next three years, I devoted much of my dissertation research to this idea.

In the Autumn Quarter at the University of Washington, 2021, Dr. Geoffrey Boers’s Advanced Choral Techniques (ACT Class) students were thoughtfully considering long-standing

teaching practices associated with Western Art Music. By the end of the day, the whiteboard was filled with a list of “things we are calling out/where we need change.”

- Top-down approach vs. shared leadership
- Holder of knowledge vs. sharing knowledge, using culture bearers, student demonstration and making use of other experts in the room
- The podium vs. cultivating a space of equality in learning
- Conductor as authority or facilitator?
- What do our gestures mean? Patterns/exactness/repetitive/“command” vs. Invitation/supportive/creative?
- Prescriptive vs. Collaborative
- Conformity and uniformity vs unity?
- Western thinking vs. global thinking
- How can we rethink:
  1. Accuracy, skill level, performance drivenness?
  2. Assessment – how do we measure success?
  3. Outcomes – there are MANY, not just one.
- Reexamining performance, asking WHY does this music matter? -Storytelling!!
- Key questions:
  1. What are our goals/ what are we actually trying to do? -Who are we performing for and why?
  2. Subscribers, people in retirement homes, the underprivileged, our community, teenagers?
  3. Do we program music that is learned from score only?
  4. What is literacy? Consider all the aspects: reading, artistry, style, tone... -Do we teach in sequence, or in layers?
  5. How often do we address pedagogy?
  6. What is the language we use: “I want...” “Can you do this for me?”
  7. Things that institutions (ACDA, Chorus American, etc.) need to think about: - Access and opportunities for BIPOC
  8. \$ of Education/Monetary motivations
  9. What is our objective, not just multi-cultural programming<sup>1</sup>

My entire music education had been based on the structures that our ACT class was now looking to refine. As the list grew, I identified that my Seattle Christian choral program had been built and supported by many of these structures. Though I have seen successful and positive musical experiences in my choir, I had not considered how any of these structures could hinder

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Boers, “Advanced Choral Techniques: Group Vocal Techniques,” PowerPoint presentation, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, (October 1, 2020).

artistic growth, especially if my program is too narrowly focused on performance agendas. While studying the list on the whiteboard, it occurred to me that theater environments often solve some of these desired changes, especially *shared leadership, equality in learning, pedagogy, facilitator, goals, outcomes, and literacy*.

Later that quarter, my colleagues and I interviewed several international choral music visionaries who shared how they had altered their pedagogy to address these “calls to change” in their own contexts. From our discussions, I noticed several commonalities between their teaching philosophies and the theater experiences I described above. Conductor and human rights activist, André de Quadros, explained how he has “recalibrated” his role as a conductor over the years:

Essentially, music has forgotten about serving the common good. I thought “this is what it is. We’ve forgotten. We’re obsessed with the stage!” I started completely re-framing choral pedagogy. The best way I can think about choral pedagogy is...Choral music has been existing for 70,000 years. If you think about it, anthropologically speaking, people singing together in community, in groups, has existed for 70,000 years at least! We know that; there’s enough evidence. So, this thing we call “choral music” is actually much bigger than what we think it is. It exists in so many societies for different purposes: for transmitting messages, for building community, as protest, as activism. The other thing to realize is that choral music...has also been used as an instrument of cultural elitism...We’ve got this weird idea like, ‘choral music is so good for everybody; it brings people together.’ Well, it’s actually not true at all! Right? Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn’t! We have to be intentional, and we have to be justice-focused, and equity-driven, and then, we might be able to make a difference.<sup>2</sup>

De Quadros’s questions caused me to see more clearly how the habits we had written on the whiteboard were potential areas for missteps in teaching. I began to think about what change could look like in these areas. De Quadros continued:

I was educated to believe that the conductor was the sole authority. If we read the Max Rudolf book, and the main books on conducting...those books say you are the final and sole authority. I grew up with this conducting pedagogy, meaning I was the sole

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<sup>2</sup> André De Quadros, Zoom interview by University of Washington Advanced Choral Techniques Class, Zoom, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, October 5, 2021.

authority. A few things caused me to think differently...The conductor is just a feature of a narrow slice of musical history. So, one of the things that I've been doing is systematically and systemically recalibrating my relationship with the ensemble and recalibrating my relationship with the audience, fundamentally. And I have found that to be very, very difficult: to cede power, in other words, to relinquish power. Because you can't just relinquish it, and then you take it back, and then you relinquish it again, because it doesn't work like that. The more power you relinquish, the less you will have control over...The point is that I was never led to question was where I should be relative to the ensemble. It was taken as given. You have to be *here*, these are your protocols, this is what you do...<sup>3</sup>

De Quadros's words "relinquishing power" and "recalibrate" appear synonymous. *Relinquishing* in this case does not mean an absence of authority, rather that leadership is distributed, and power is wielded differently. He is calling others to consider the physical, tangible frameworks of the *doing*, not just talk about it. De Quadros's discussion addresses many "calls to change" that can happen when we view music making through a global lens, which begins with building healthy, trusting, and collaborative relationships with musicians.

First Peoples musician and University of Washington Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology, Dr. John Carlos Perea, shares de Quadros's philosophy. Perea's teaching methods and curriculums adapt depending on the identities and contexts of his students. Perea says that when teaching he will find out what students' contexts are and then teach from that perspective. "I almost feel like my job in this context, when I'm hanging out with students, is to figure out what their context is and then what relevant learning means in that sense."<sup>4</sup> It is a reminder of the deep need to redesign curricula and adapt to the people in front of you, not for some kind of agenda, but for getting to know the students and their strengths, and then knowing how to build them up to be the best version of themselves, as people and musicians.

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<sup>3</sup> De Quadros, interview.

<sup>4</sup> John Carlos Perea, interview by Advanced Choral Techniques, Zoom interview, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, October 14, 2021.

De Quadros's and Perea's desire to free their singers for more expression and ownership of their craft, as well as their environments, are comparable to those developed by the theater arts innovators of the twentieth century. Whether they are redefining roles to create agency and ownership of a shared experience or looking to understand their context and building content and learning directives from that perspective, these kinds of models provide safe spaces for teachers and students to settle into a non-authoritative exploration of content where learning is less centered on the teacher's own voice and prescribed content and more centered on discovery.

In another choral conducting course at the University of Washington, my colleagues and I were asked to read excerpts from Sharon Paul's *Art & Science in the Choral Rehearsal*, in which she uses the terms "music educator," "conductor," "singer," and "student" interchangeably in her rehearsal environment.<sup>5</sup> By using these interchangeable terms, Paul posits what de Quadros and Perea have stated above in regard to recalibrating roles and has also indirectly highlighted the student-teacher-learner roles in a theater arts environment. By viewing both teacher and student as adaptable in their roles as learners and leaders, a rehearsal can become less authoritarian and more engaging and collaborative. Through Paul's approaches, singers can become increasingly more physically, mentally, and artistically engaged in rehearsal. She gives choristers the space and tools to experience layers of thinking by allowing them to solve musical problems on their own. She writes, "problem solving involves finding a solution to a question, but it also leads singers to rehearse information that we would like them to retain."<sup>6</sup> Her motivation is to find fun and engaging ways of learning that help with long-term retention and create opportunities for

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<sup>5</sup> Sharon J Paul, *Art & Science in the Choral Rehearsal* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), xv.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

agency. Activities such as group score study and engaging the imagination allow them to explore and take ownership of their knowledge. She writes that these activities

...create opportunities for members of our ensembles to be engaged in the rehearsal process through problem solving, self-monitoring, elaborative rehearsal, and collaborative learning. These techniques enrich singers' engagement in rehearsal through constant mental and physical involvement, resulting in a community of singers working together to create artistically elegant and affecting musical results.<sup>7</sup>

These kinds of environments affirm evidence that when students have the agencies described above, there are more positive feelings associated with learning, and a greater possibility for retention.

From the discussion above, I saw that experimenting acting methods in my choral rehearsals could serve as practicing these calls to recalibrate and seek change, and simultaneously offer a unique approach for helping choristers build musicianship, artistry, and agency.

## **1.2: Statement of Purpose**

This study implements theater methods into my secondary choral rehearsals to diversify learning directives, recalibrate conductor and chorister roles, and note how students' artistry changes in the process. I achieved this by exploring vocal pedagogy for choristers through games and exercises as defined and designed in theater arts practices pioneered by Stanislavski, Meisner and Spolin. I adopted theater games and their models to help my students retain vocal technique and solve musical problems on their own during rehearsal. In the end, the goal was to provide

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<sup>7</sup> Paul, 24.

choral directors with practical models and supplemental teaching tools for creating this kind of alternative environment within a rehearsal.

### **1.3: Statement of the Research Questions**

There are three research questions that I will answer in this dissertation:

- How does teaching group singing in a theater arts *environment* affect how my choristers learn?
- Can theater arts games be *musically modified* to help choristers solve singing problems?
- How does the application of these choral arts games to repertoire *impact* the artistry of my choristers?

It is my hope that these questions will guide the answer to an over-arching question:

“what does success look like as a result of these applications?” Ideally, if students study group singing in a theater arts-type environment they should be able to:

- Assess themselves and identify the artistic state of the choir
- Initiate solutions to musical/singing problems
- Retain vocal technique, repeat it, and teach it
- Gain confidence and an increased willingness to explore their voices

### **1.4: Primary Literature Review and Current Practice**

A study such as this requires an in-depth look at theater methodology. Though several methods exist, there are three whose distinct teaching styles, activities, and environments could specifically serve choristers in their pursuit of vocal technique. Constantin Stanislavski, Sanford Meisner, and Viola Spolin are three major theater innovators who devised learning systems for actors in the twentieth century. To speak to the effects and benefits of these methods, I read each of their primary texts. These include three volumes by Stanislavski which are considered the cornerstone of modern acting: *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character*, and *Creating a Role*. Of these texts, *An Actor Prepares* offers the philosophy and preparation exploration design from

which other methods are modeled. I did not include Stanislavski's other volumes because as his method progresses, much of the technique is centered on emotional connectivity, and this is not the direction I am taking with my study. Stanislavski's work is maintained in universities, and in online programs and acting schools created by his students, such as The Stella Adler School of Acting and Theatre in Los Angeles. He laid the groundwork for artists like Sanford Meisner and Viola Spolin to explore these technical processes with partners and groups. Meisner's book *Sanford Meisner On Acting* is a transcription of a fifteen-month acting workshop that shows his process in real time, and Viola Spolin's teacher manual *Improvisation for the Theater* as well as her anthology *Theater Games for the Classroom* offer designs for games, workshops, environments, and teaching strategies for acting training. Both Meisner and Spolin's texts are primary resources (a kind of blueprint) for my study design.

Two Meisner practitioners, Nick Mosely (*Meisner in Practice*) and Larry Silverberg (*Meisner for Teens*) are cited because they created simplified and sequential versions of Meisner technique to clarify exercises and goals. Current Meisner practices live on through acting programs such as the Meisner Technique Studio, a musical theater workshop company called Meisner in Music, and other iterations taught in high school and higher education acting programs around the world. Additionally, texts such as *The Authentic Leader: Using the Meisner Technique for Embracing the Values of Truthful Leadership* and an article called *Meisner for Managers* are referenced for their examples of how his method has transcended theater practice. Viola Spolin's theater games have also been adapted for a variety of settings such as schools, churches, mental health hospitals and businesses. Her website advertises current workshops and testimonials that speak to how her methods and philosophy have endured over the last seventy years. Spolin's templates are used in my study for game creation.

### **1.4.1: A Review of Pre-existing Theater Applications and Correlations in Music Settings**

When considering my research questions, one would expect an extensive bibliography of important theory, pedagogy, and practice texts. There is certainly a plethora written about choir and theater mediums respectively, however, few studies exist that discuss shared methods between the two. In a bibliographical search for acting techniques used in choral rehearsals, I discovered that this is an under-researched area of music education. While there are several instances of theater techniques used in musical environments, these practitioners chose different aspects to focus on than my own. Over the last two decades, there has been an increase in discussions about acting techniques applied to musical performance. From *College Music Symposium* discussions about dealing with performance anxiety using Stanislavski's method, to dissertations about instrumentalists using acting techniques (namely piano performance), to recent discussions about the connection between Stanislavski actor training and music education concepts by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, these instances relay the work done across acting and music mediums thus far, and posit the potential for more diversified application.

In 2019, Andrea V. Johnson wrote a dissertation entitled "The Acting System of Konstantin Stanislavski as applied to Piano Performance." Johnson's experience with acting and familiarity with Stanislavski's methods helped her make connections between acting and piano performance. Her dissertation gives rise to questions about how Stanislavski, or other acting practitioners' work, could be applied in other areas of performance. Her research is an indication of how underapplied these applications are in the United States.

Still more recently, acting coach and music educator Andrew Davidson wrote two articles entitled "Konstantin Stanislavski and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: Historical and Pedagogical Connections Between Actor Training and Music Education" and "The Listening Actor:

Intersections Between the Musicality of Meisner Technique and Ear Training in Dalcroze Eurhythmics.” Davidson makes correlations between Dalcroze’s philosophy and Stanislavski and Meisner acting practices.<sup>8</sup> Though Davidson does not offer any acting exercises for musicians in a rehearsal setting, in another research study he points his audience toward shared activities between Meisner and Dalcroze that initiate responsive listening in their students. I will recall Davidson’s conclusions in Chapter 4 since his research is an example of ongoing discussions of the parallels that exist between acting methods and musical practices.

Ryan Hebert’s article *Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavski in Choral Conducting* and Devin Otto’s *An Interdisciplinary Conducting Curriculum: Selected Theater Games from Viola Spolin’s “Improvisation for the Theater”* describe how conductors can benefit from acting games and exercises to help improve musical connectedness, expression, and gesture. Neither offer any specific exercises for choristers. An interview with Dr. Hebert in Chapter 4 provides insight into the need for more development in this area, especially for choristers.

Aesthetic and presentation is an oft discussed topic in choral rehearsals. One director, Maria Von Nieuwerkerken, seeks to co-create choral performances with her choristers. Her article *All the World’s a (Music) Stage! Theatrical Elements in Choir Concerts: Why? What? And How?* Explains her collaboration with her choristers to create a production aspect to their concerts through memorization, costumes, staging and choreography.<sup>9</sup> Though a valid form of engagement and agency for choristers, this kind of work fits a certain performance preference which is not the goal of my research.

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<sup>8</sup>Andrew Davidson, “Konstantin Stanislavski and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: Historical and Pedagogical connections between actor training and music education,” *Stanislavski Studies* Volume 9, no. 2, 2021.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/20567790.2021.1945811?needAccess=true>

<sup>9</sup> Maria Van Nieuwerkerken, trans. by Susan Pond, “All the World’s a (Music) Stage! Theatrical Elements in Choir Concerts: Why? What? and How?” *The Choral Journal* 57, no. 1 (2016): 57-62.

One example of theater improv games (similar to Viola Spolin's) being used in musical settings is Seattle native saxophonist and teaching artist, Steve Treseler. For the last seven years he has been helping young instrumentalists become accustomed to the demands of musical improvisation. After working with an improvisation theater company, Treseler devised a set of acting-inspired musical improv games. In the way that acting games help unlock artistry in actors, these musical games help musicians practice creativity, play, risk and self-imposed limitations. Though the goal of my research is not to teach students improvisation, Treseler's goals for the games are in-line with Spolin's theater methodology as well as my own, which is that games provide "a gateway to deeper creative practices."<sup>10</sup> Treseler is also the author of *Creativity Triggers for Musicians*, which features unique teaching tools in the form of games, prompts, and exercises for soloists and ensembles. Treseler's games will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

Finally, Tom Carter and Steven Dahlke are the only artists I have come across who directly incorporate acting methods into their choral rehearsals. Tom Carter offers exercises for conductors to try with their choristers in book *Choral Charisma*. He includes a series of questions involving emotional preparation and focus exercises that actors undergo to prepare characters. Results have shown chorister connectivity to the text, story, and music which aids in chorister expressiveness. Carter's work has had positive reception, and he is a sought-after clinician for his methods, however, he admits that his book is not dedicated to vocal technique. My approach for exploring acting methods in choral settings is from a pedagogical perspective rather than an expressive one. I am concerned with young singers learning how to own their vocal technique the way an actor learns technique by engaging activities that aid in content

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<sup>10</sup> Steve Treseler, *10 Improvisation Games for Ensemble* (Steve Treseler, 2017), 3.

retention. Therefore, Carter, as well as the above texts are briefly mentioned now and occasionally throughout this research to differentiate between foci—they are ultimately excluded from my own applications.

Steven Dahlke explains in his article *Once More with Feeling: Enhancing Expression in Choral Singing with Meisner's Repetition Exercise*, that Meisner Repetition can be used in choral settings to help singers develop an emotional connection to their music. After delineating the exercise and its various forms, Dahlke posits that musical modifications of Meisner's exercise are easily made. He observes that choristers' expressiveness improves each time he initiates this exercise. His idea to use this model is the exact integration that I have been inspired by in my own theater experiences. Like Carter, Dahlke uses Meisner Repetition to elicit more expression from his choristers. Again, though this is not the purpose of my study, the reader will see the same kind of partner-based musically modified theater games which specifically aim to improve choristers' vocal technique.

It is important to note that there are pre-existing curriculums that serve as long standing examples for teaching musical concepts in fun and engaging ways. Dalcroze's Eurhythmics (mentioned above) as well as Zoltan Kodály's hand signs and rhythm and movement exercises, and Carl Orff's process that includes imitation and exploration gives children the time and space to learn music through creating it themselves. These are all multi-modal ways of teaching and certainly allow for agency and confidence building, especially when children are given the opportunity to explore sounds and rhythms with each other. However, none of these practices specifically address vocal pedagogy; therefore, once again, it is my prerogative to focus on applying and developing activities in the choral rehearsal that address singers' vocal technique.

### **1.4.2: Borrowed Vocal Pedagogy**

A potential hindrance for singers when exploring singing games might be their limited knowledge about their voice. To train my choir to become mentally and physically aware of their vocal abilities, I turned to a variety of current vocal pedagogues that reinforce exercises for warming-up, breathing, vocal quality, agility, and range including Scott McCoy's *Your Voice: An Inside View* which offers thirty different vocal quality descriptors useful for identifying sound qualities. I also borrowed adduction, onset, and rehabilitation exercises from Kari Ragan's book *A Systematic Approach to Voice: The Art of Studio Application*. For diversified, healthy, and current evidence-based practices that explain and help control the vocal mechanism, I read Jo Estill's *Estill Voice Training Level One: Figures for Voice Control*, and Kenneth Bozeman's latest edition of *Kinesthetic Voice Pedagogy*. Lastly, Dan Anderson's *The Voice in Progress* and Karen Salwen's *The Fear of Singing Breakthrough Program* address beginning and changing voices with exercises and games that fit within the framework of my curriculum design.

## **1.5: Study Scope and Limitations**

### **1.5.1: Brain-based Teaching Acknowledgements**

Before discussing the limitations of theater method application, the reader should be informed that many of the practices described in this dissertation correlate to both anecdotal and scientific evidence seen in brain-based teaching practices, play, problem solving, and ongoing neuroscience research. Curiosity has driven scientists to explore these multi-modal learning environments in educational situations, including acting and singing. Though the last thirty years of research has shown evidence of a change in thinking, action, behavior, or emotion among students in these environments, neuroscientists are still refining their practices and attempting to

draw conclusions. It is encouraging to think that the case study presented in this dissertation may contribute to the ongoing discussions between the neuroscience and the humanities communities. However, since there is no concrete procedure of measuring their effects, I have not included a discussion regarding brain-based teaching tactics, neuroscience implications in educational practices, or a detailed discussion of the benefits of play and problem solving in music rehearsals. Certain artists, including Sharon Paul and Chelsea LeValley, offer some practices that I included in my research as a way of demonstrating how certain environments can give students more agency and opportunities to own their learning. Since choral singing is vulnerable, requiring the singer to hear themselves juxtaposed with other voices, the learning environment can play a substantial role in how a chorister thinks about their own voice. Comparison, judgement, and insecurities are frequent in the minds of young singers. Teachers can help their students combat the oft labeled “inner judge” by establishing norms and situations that focus more on the learner rather than the outcome. These models are posited with the hope that both conductors and singers can find more meaningful connections and possibilities with their voices.

### **1.5.2: Acting Method Foci**

Due to the many aspects of theater training that Stanislavski, Meisner, and Spolin methods cover, I will focus on those aspects that I believe are most conducive for choral singing. Stanislavski’s method will not be overtly used in my study, but he is cited because former researchers have experimented with his acting methods in music for decades and have noted their effectiveness. Meisner and Spolin’s methodologies are mostly cited because they center on building awareness and a working relationship with partners and groups. Partner-based exercises require actors to make observations about each other to train the senses. Problem solving

commences when partners focus on each other instead of themselves. This is an organic way of working that is not based on assumptions and helps the actors become more aware and selfless. Meisner Repetitions are conducive for singing application as they teach acute listening skills and allow for shared leadership, which can instill a trust-centered relationship between singers.

My application of Viola Spolin's work is based on her teaching environment and games. Her method alters the traditional relationship between student and teacher, allowing actors to explore communication with each other through play. Most games do not transfer musically since they are designed to solve acting problems, which are often more subjective in content than the objectivity of singing technique. Since I am not teaching my students improvisation through these games, this poses potential limitations for a game's outcome. A singing game will need to yield an improvement in singing technique. Game designs such *Mirroring* can specifically shift the choral environment and become a framework for exploring aspects of vocal pedagogy. I am most concerned with the environment Spolin created for her games to be played out, and how the games themselves are designed. Except for game content, my choral games will parallel Spolin's models with the conductor taking on a sidecoaching role, and choristers working in partners and other groups as assigned (SATB quartets, their sections, or random groups). A choral game will be defined the way Spolin's theater games are defined: exploration of a problem with partners, while being sidecoached. A game is created with a goal, rules, sidecoaching,<sup>11</sup> and group evaluation. Her non-authoritarian design gives students opportunities to own their learning through problem solving. Further study design will be discussed in Chapter 5.

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<sup>11</sup> *Sidecoaching* is a director's way of inserting themselves into a theater exercise or game in which they call out different foci, encourage, and challenge the actors while they are performing.

### **1.5.3: Case Study Review, Permissions, Certifications, and Consent and Assent Forms**

The University of Washington Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Human Subjects Division determined my study as having “exempt status.” This means that my research is exempt from the federal human subjects regulations, including the requirement for IRB approval and continuing review. The process still required me to register my study with the UW because I interacted with minors. The necessary documentation including permissions, course-work certificates, and student consent and assent forms are included in the appendices of this dissertation.

### **Conclusion**

With the guidance and foreknowledge of this literature review, the delineation in the chapter that follows will expound this research. My readers will read a brief history of theater methods that inspired this new curriculum, the specifics of theater arts applications in musical settings, and interviews with choir directors and theater artists regarding interdisciplinary practices. Finally, readers will discover the study design and data analysis from my qualitative case study with my middle and high school choristers. The case study represents the application of my research; it is a record of my students exploring these ideas with me in hopes of finding more engaging and self-directed ways of growing their artistry based on a need and desire to enhance choral education practices.

# Chapter 2

## Theater Arts Methodology: History and Practice

### Introduction

At the start of the twentieth century, a group of theater artists departed from stylized nineteenth-century melodramatic and vaudevillian practices in search of techniques that would be more true-to-life in representing human interaction and emotional connection. Constantin Stanislavski, Sanford Meisner and Viola Spolin are three theater artists who emerged from this movement, and their pedagogical methods have shaped theater education over the last one hundred years. These three artists developed renown acting methods still used in youth, collegiate, and professional acting training programs worldwide. This chapter presents an in-depth look at their methods and key principles that their students extracted over the years to refine these practices for actors in training. I also confirm which elements from these practices are relevant for my case study.

### 2.1: Constantin Stanislavski's Acting Method

Russian actor and director, Constantin Stanislavski, founded the Moscow Art Company in 1898 and, along with his colleagues, sought to find acting methods suited for the modern world. For forty years the Moscow Art Company experimented with techniques hoping to rid artificial performance from their actors. Stanislavski prepared workshops for the actor to explore their full self and senses. Exercises included mental and physical isolations, emotion memory, adaptiveness to circumstances, and creating inner motives. From these workshops, he introduced a lexicon of terminology—a certain grammar of acting which inspired exploration in other parts of the world, including those in *The Group Theatre* in New York City. Above all, he gave actors

the space to explore, discover, and describe their thoughts, physical gestures, and emotions. These exercises are the foundation upon which actors create characters, form emotional connectivity, and build relationships with other actors. Stanislavski was convinced that his acting technique was difficult to transfer into a practical textbook, and, therefore, wrote his acting texts in a semi-fiction form where he appears as a director with a pseudonym dialoguing with young actors.<sup>12</sup> The text, *An Actor Prepares*, is presented as a narration from the actor's perspective, whose experience allows the reader to see the principles of the technique in working examples.

A noteworthy aspect of Stanislavski's system is the "magic if"—scenarios that challenge the actor to use their imagination; what IF this happened to you? What would you do IF...?<sup>13</sup> He says, "Activity in imagination is of utmost importance. First comes internal, and afterwards external action."<sup>14</sup> He was insistent upon finding ways to increase actors' self-awareness and the natural world. Concentration is, therefore, a major aspect of his technique.

First of all, they must be taught to look at, to listen to, and to hear what is beautiful. Such habits elevate their minds and arouse feelings which will leave deep traces in their emotion memories...such an effort causes you to observe the object more closely, more effectively...<sup>15</sup>

This kind of individual work is essential for the actor to discover true emotion and connectivity in themselves. But, more than the exercises themselves, Stanislavski's philosophy transcends its application in the acting medium. Regarding the effects of his exercises, he said "what was important was not the physical changes themselves but the mental attitude which produced them."<sup>16</sup> By choosing to accept his system, the actor will, over time, become more self-aware,

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<sup>12</sup> Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* (New York: Routledge, 1948), vii-viii

<sup>13</sup> Stanislavski, 70-78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>16</sup> Ryan Hebert, "The Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavsky and Their Relevance to Choral Conducting" *The Choral Journal* 52, no. 5 (2011): 25.

their muscles, their thoughts, their contributions, consequently, help them become more observant in their own lives. This ideology progressed throughout the twentieth century, inspiring many other theater artists to reassess their teaching practices. Stanislavski does not boast in his system as the correct way to grow as an actor. In fact, he is quoted saying, “Create your own method. Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you! But keep breaking traditions, I beg you.”<sup>17</sup> Using inspiration from his system, Stanislavski’s students formed their own methods which both preserve and deviate from his system.

## 2.2: Sanford Meisner’s Acting Method

In 1931, actors Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg founded *The Group Theatre* in New York City. Crawford and Strasberg, along with their contemporaries, Harold Clurman, Stella Adler, Bobby Lewis and Sanford Meisner, emerged as preeminent teachers of what became known as “the Method,” a colloquial term used for contemporary American acting.<sup>18</sup> *The Group* was founded as a conscious diversion from “over-acting” to develop more realistic expression, inspired by Stanislavski’s ideas. Each actor in *The Group* continued to create their own variations of the techniques they learned. Sanford Meisner set out to “impart to his students an organized approach to creating real and truthful behavior within imaginary circumstances of the theater.”<sup>19</sup> This approach consisted of exercises to strengthen the guiding principles he learned in *The Group*—that “art expresses human experience.”<sup>20</sup> His philosophy was that acting is the “reality of doing;” what is done in life is the basis for how characters are created—born from imagination, experience, observation, and preparation. Like Stanislavski, he admitted a

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<sup>17</sup> Actor Hub, 2014, <https://www.actorhub.co.uk/252/stanislavsky-and-his-acting-system>.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis Longwell and Sanford Meisner, *Sanford Meisner on Acting* (New York: Random House, 1987), xiv.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

dissatisfaction with his methods written in book form. His concern was primarily with the fact that the way he transmitted spontaneous, actor-specific ideas did not accurately represent his process.<sup>21</sup> He collaborated with his former student, Dennis Longwell, to transcribe a fifteen-month acting workshop offered in New York City in 1986. The transcription, *Sanford Meisner on Acting*, is the dialogue and coaching that occurs between Meisner and his students regarding his technique and its various demands.

Like Stanislavski, Meisner's process was a series of workshops. His distinct approach simplified Stanislavski's process, which ultimately made it more intellectual, and highly individualized with exercises for two actors working together at a time. Main principles begin with observational and improvisational exercises. The first is the Repetition Exercise in which students develop awareness. Repetition is an exchange between two actors: actor 1 will make a truthful observation about actor 2, and actor 2 will repeat it. The goal is for each actor to let their responses be organic, rather than forced or premeditated. It is rooted in listening and responding naturally, the way one would in real life. The Repetition Exercise is, at first, extremely mundane, but it aids in developing the senses, especially keen observation. An example of the Repetition Exercise is below, with Meisner commenting:

Actor 1: "Your hair is shiny "

Actor 2: "My hair is shiny"

Actor 1: "Your hair is shiny "

Actor 2: "My hair is shiny"

Actor 1: "Your hair is shiny "

Actor 2: "My hair is shiny"

It's monotonous, but it's the basis of something.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Longwell and Meisner, xviii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

Though mechanical, this exercise reveals an actor's listening ability; their response is the repetition of a singular point of view. The goal is to rid any possible pre-conceived or rehearsed idea of how to respond to what is happening. In one class, Meisner clarifies the act of listening during repetition:

Don't pretend to listen, really listen. Listening is the reality of doing. *The doing of the task is crucial, not the results.* Beginning exercises are about trying. Are you looking at me now? As who? Yourself? Can you hold on to that? Can you repeat what you hear absolutely accurately? Simply.<sup>23</sup> (Italics added for emphasis).

Here the reader will notice the words in italics are similar to Stanislavski's: "what was important was not the physical changes themselves but the mental attitude which produced them."<sup>24</sup>

Meisner solves many acting problems by training his students in observation and repetition.

However, the exercise must not go on too long. He says:

This Repetition Game must not go too far. You eventually start doing this exercise from your point of view. It's a shared experience. If you simply do it, you focus on the other person. You're attached to something outside of yourself.<sup>25</sup>

This concept of being "attached to something outside of yourself" is an ongoing theme in Meisner's method: what you do depends entirely on the other person. He trains a "give and receive" kind of artistry; most elements of acting are solved through this kind of focus. Even nervousness is addressed by coaching the actor to focus on their partner:

You're always going to feel nervous thinking that other people will see you as nervous. If you want people to see you as relaxed don't tell them you're nervous because you don't

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<sup>23</sup> Longwell and Meisner, 21-22.

<sup>24</sup> Hebert, "The Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavsky and Their Relevance to Choral Conducting," 25.

<sup>25</sup> Longwell and Meisner, 22.

look nervous. It comes out in a certain indecision about repeating. How do you fix that? *By dealing more with your partner and less with yourself.* (Italics added for emphasis).<sup>26</sup>

Dealing directly with your partner is a shared teaching tactic between Meisner and Spolin. This kind of concentration gets the actor's mind off themselves and leaves no time for them to second guess their actions. Other foci of Meisner's method include isolating instincts and impulses and relying on the other actor before responding. Emotional preparation is a warm-up process, but in rehearsal and performance the actor must live in the moment and receive what their partner gives them. Over time, actors can become organic and flexible, with the end-goal to become an emotionally truthful artist. Practitioners in *The Meisner Technique Studio* in San Francisco believe that Meisner's technique is a solid foundation which holds closely to Meisner's vision for all his students: "to work in any medium, opposite anyone and know what you're doing." Meisner said, "That's what technique is. That's what craft is. It's not needing me anymore and knowing how to work and how to fix it when it's not working."<sup>27</sup> Again, like Stanislavski, Meisner established a way of working that transcends the theater; those who practice his method have improved their self-esteem, confidence, and deep awareness. Books such as *The Authentic Leader: Using the Meisner Technique for Embracing the Values of Truthful Leadership* show how Meisner can benefit communication skills for those in leadership positions. An article titled "Meisner for Managers" is one manager's experience attending a Meisner workshop to improve communication skills. She testified that her own observations, listening skills, and confidence improved.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Longwell and Meisner, 59.

<sup>27</sup> "Meisner Technique," The Meisner Technique Studio, January 9, 2019, [themeisnertechniquestudio.com/meisner-technique/](http://themeisnertechniquestudio.com/meisner-technique/).

<sup>28</sup> "Meisner for Managers," LinkedIn, last modified December 9, 2018, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/meisner-managers-wiebke-k%C3%BCster/>

Over the last three decades, Meisner's disciples have extended his method, clarified terminology, and offered organized and sequential ways of interpreting his technique through books and workshops. Acting teacher and Meisner practitioner, Nick Mosely, says that the technique teaches good human living:

The Meisner Technique, provided it is pursued relentlessly over an extended period of time can offer a solution. Within clear structures and safe exercises, it slowly and methodically reconditions the habits...The beauty of the technique lies in its simplicity and its insistence on genuine, truthful responses. If well-taught, it can permanently affect the way an actor works in the space, often without the actor really being conscious of the changes taking place. Each actor engaging in it [the technique] has to be sidecoached and nurtured through each stage.<sup>29</sup> (Sidecoaching will be discussed in the next section).

Mosely offers these observations in his book *Meisner in Practice*, where through subcategories of the technique, he brings clarity to this step-by-step process, especially breaking down Repetition Exercises, exploring motivation, and movement. These improvisational exercises demand creativity and vulnerability from the actors while using Repetition and observation concepts. Mosely says that Meisner "reconditions the habits."<sup>30</sup> All performing artists, especially in their younger years, are prone to unhealthy habits. The exercises are designed for instilling a change in the way the actor sees, hears, and ultimately responds to another. These are critical habits for any performing artist to develop. As the curriculum progresses, Mosely reminds the actor that Meisner's method requires flexibility. Actors must adapt. Actors also work out their adaptiveness in physical space, a place of possibility.

In an interview with actor and Meisner teacher, Chelsea LeValley, she explains her own classroom norms for teaching Meisner. She facilitates a group understanding of who students are

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<sup>29</sup> Nick Moseley, *Meisner in Practice: A Guide for Actors, Directors, and Teachers* (London: Nick Hern Books Limited, 2012), 122.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

at their core, and that through submitting to Meisner's method they learn to validate a vast array of feelings from love, passion, fear, hurt, anger, and desires for dignity. She says:

The human being is constantly trying to get back to homeostasis, the place where everything is copacetic, and peaceful. Meisner method helps strip away all of our behavioral patterns that we've adopted: behavioral patterns, biases, prejudice, natural reactions, habits, ticks, defenses. . . . whatever is "me" specific I am trying to strip that away to get down to my core self without my ego, without my ticks, without my bias. The process of that is the whole beginning of Meisner training. It is stripping away what is impeding my natural human response that we have used to get through life so that we can do our art.<sup>31</sup>

LeValley, and the other theater teachers named in this dissertation, have not and do not perform brain science experiments, however, LeValley (as well as Mosely and Silverberg) view Meisner's method as a natural way to encourage and establish healthy patterns with their students. By examining and accepting themselves, students can be at peace while they learn the craft of acting, which is often vulnerable and risky. For LeValley, consistently voicing positive self-talk and language in rehearsals contributes to homeostasis and allows the brain to focus more on problem solving rather than on unwanted thoughts and feelings.

Another Meisner practitioner and acting teacher, Larry Silverberg, further simplifies Meisner's method for teenagers in his book, *Meisner for Teens*. His work has helped him understand the challenges, pressures, and demands of secondary school experiences, making Meisner's technique not only useful for acting, but for helping young people become confident and honest. Perhaps the most useful take-aways from Silverberg's text for this dissertation are his Four Fundamental Skills that he extracted from Meisner's technique:

- *Full body listening and availability*. True acting is not a *me, myself and I* form of art. It is a moment-to-moment relationship with our partners and our environment.

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<sup>31</sup> Chelsea LeValley, interview with author, Burien, Washington, July 10, 2021.

- *Being in the present.* The truth is that life, and being alive, only exists in this moment right now.
- *Really doing what you're doing.* All true acting is the reality of doing. When we do something, we really do it, we don't fake it.
- *Becoming instinctively and spontaneously responsive.* True acting demands that we relearn and reclaim our ability to be exactly who we are and that we rediscover our true voice.<sup>32</sup> (Italics added for emphasis).

Even when passed down through his disciples and presented with different organization, Meisner's technique can be summarized as training oneself to be hyperaware and flexible so that actors are positioned to share leadership from a posture of giving and receiving spontaneously, in the moment.

### 2.3: Viola Spolin's Acting Technique

Acclaimed actor, improv teacher, and director Viola Spolin developed her acting methods in the 1950s and 60s, and they have inspired the modern improvisational theater movement ever since. She devised over 200 non-competitive games for the acting workshops that she offered throughout her life, many of which she created on-the-spot to solve her own directing problems in rehearsal. Her book *Improvisation for the Theater* remains an essential theater text to this day.<sup>33</sup> It examines the power of spontaneity, which she defines as “the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with reality and see it, explore it, and act accordingly.”<sup>34</sup> Her method is founded upon the centrality of improvisation and experience, which is, whether directly or indirectly, very similar to Stanislavski's process. A paramount philosophy shared by both is an emphasis on creating an environment for players (actors) to explore. For Spolin, this primarily happens through games, which are partner- or group-based activities centered on solving a

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<sup>32</sup> Larry Silverberg, *Meisner for Teens: A Life of True Acting* (Hanover, NH: Smith and Kraus, Inc., 2010), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Viola Spolin Official Website, “Biography,” last modified May 31, 2023, <https://www.violaspolin.org>.

<sup>34</sup> Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 4.

particular acting problem. The key to exploration is not the goals of the games themselves, although these are important. Rather, experience is what is most powerful. She says,

We learn through experience and experiencing...if the environment permits it, anyone can learn whatever he or she chooses to learn; and if the individual permits it, the environment will teach everything it has to teach. Talent or lack of talent have little to do with it...Experience comes from direct contact with the environment. No one can teach it, you have to trip into it. The only way this can happen is by playing and exploring and being given the chance to try, fail, collaborate. Artistic experiences are not reserved for those who just have talent. Anyone can be intuitive. We have all had moments when the right answer 'just came' or we did 'exactly the right thing without thinking. This means that we just need to provide a space to unlock this and make connection.<sup>35</sup>

Space needs to be created for the workshop procedure in which directors teach, play, and sidecoach games and exercises with their students. It is important to clarify that Spolin believes emotion results from playing a game; it is not something the actor carries with them on to the stage. Once again, we see that even though emotional connection is a vital skill for an actor to develop, it is not the initial goal of Stanislavski, Meisner or Spolin's systems.<sup>36</sup>

Spolin's games are categorized by what they help solve. While not every game needs to be played in a specific sequence, some should be learned before others. Spolin defines key terms for teachers to understand before entering a workshop setting with their students like play, intuition, freedom, and transformation. Some students may already possess a certain intuition or a ready willingness to play, or perhaps one has a natural talent or particularly positive attitude—for others it will come through experience.

The title of this dissertation, *Choral Arts Games*, is inspired by Spolin's book title *Theater Arts Games*. The words "game" and "exercise" are used often in theater environments

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<sup>35</sup> Spolin, 3-4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

and are understood universally by those who are trained in these techniques. However, for those who are unfamiliar, I offer the following definition of a “game.” A game must:

- have a focus (a problem that needs solving).
- be solved with a partner or in groups
- include sidecoaching (from the teacher) and evaluation (from everyone watching and the actors).

Games are often explored in longer stints and are collaborative in nature. Exercises may also be collaborative; however, they are often shorter and used to introduce a concept. Exercises can be viewed as warm-ups, physical, mental, and vocal.

Sidecoaching alters the traditional relationship of teacher and student. Spolin uses this method as a way of holding the actors to a certain focus in a game or exercise if they have strayed from the task. Sidecoaching aids in giving players self-identity within the activity and “allows functioning at a fresh moment of experience, and further, it makes the teacher-director a fellow player.”<sup>37</sup> Examples of sidecoaching include calling out commands, tasks, and reminders as the actors are playing. Spolin clarifies that when students look out inquiringly during their first sidecoaching experience they should be told “listen to my voice but don’t pay any attention to it” or “listen to my voice but keep right on going. Just stay with the problem.”<sup>38</sup> By using this language, the players can engage in new choices or points of focus without breaking their concentration on each other. Sidecoaching may bring to the reader’s mind the kind of teaching that conductors use speaking to their singers while they are rehearsing. However, sidecoaching games or exercises can be likened to the way a private studio teacher instructs their student with individualized instruction, only, in *Choral Arts Games* the instruction is given in front of another

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<sup>37</sup> Spolin, 28-29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 29.

person (a singer's partner) or persons (partners/groups). At times, the sidecoach may even insert themselves into the activity to encourage the players in a certain direction.

One of Spolin's most noteworthy theater games is the *Mirror Game*, which is part of a larger category of games called the Mirror Series.

Mirror games link players by the act of seeing. Players focus when they merely reflect, without interpretation, what their eyes tell them. And so, sidecoaching for this in the mirror games is, reflect what you see, not what you think you see! Keep the mirror between you! The game is called a spontaneous reflection, not imitation. This subtle but a central difference must be observed for mirror games to be effective. Mirror reflection requires and nonverbal, non-cerebral response. In imitation, what is seen is sent through the head for analysis before it is shared. This creates a time lag. That time lag is the space through which theories and prejudices enter the spontaneous moment. In true reflection, time lag is eliminated. There's not time for thinking about playing...the player acts instinctively. An important discovery is made through Follow-the-Follower, the most advanced of the mirror games. When following the follower, players move in accord with one another but there is no leader. All players lead. No one initiates. All initiate. Or reflect. Communication among players is so strong it is difficult to see where the movement begins. Players experience something like collective consciousness.<sup>39</sup>

A major benefit of Spolin's workshops is that they afford a low-stakes environment in which no performance experience is needed. Consequently, her method can easily transfer into environments outside of the theater. As Spolin told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1974, "Theater Games are a process applicable to any field, discipline, or subject matter which creates a place where full participation, communication and transformation can take place."<sup>40</sup>

Students will quickly become accustomed to classroom norms that get them to perform without them knowing they are doing so. This helps the performer become so comfortable in

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<sup>39</sup> Viola Spolin, *Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook* (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1986), 72.

<sup>40</sup> Jewish Women's Archive, "Birth of Viola Spolin, creator of Theater Games," (Viewed on February 16, 2024), <http://jwa.org/thisweek/nov/07/1906/this-week-in-history-birth-of-viola-spolin-creator-of-theater-games>.

their bodies that they trust themselves and their fellow players, which transfers into other forms of communication.

## **Conclusion**

From Stanislavski's initial exploration to Meisner's partner-based exercises to Spolin's group games in a non-authoritarian environment, each contain useful applications worth implementing in choral rehearsals. This research has prompted a new rehearsal curriculum in which norms center on play and exploration; rehearsal directives are driven by key words and concepts from *focusing on partners, really listening, giving space, making observations, sharing leadership, mirroring, sidecoaching, and evaluating*. For this dissertation, Stanislavski's work inspires the intention behind my own workshops: to explore what kind of internal and external awareness is possible by changing the environment for my choristers. Additionally, in a larger bibliographical search, I found one known application of Stanislavski's work in the choral conducting world that will be addressed in Chapter 4. However, there were no Stanislavski exercises applied in choral settings (save for Tom Carter using aspects of Stanislavski's work for emotional connection and creating character and affect for performance).

Nick Mosely's clarifications of Meisner's method aid in bridging the theater and music worlds together; his language can help conductors and ensembles develop trusting and organic relationships as they explore pedagogy and artistry together. One can see that Silverberg's Four Fundamental Skills extracted from Meisner are beneficial for any performing artist. Training a singer for *full body and listening availability* and *becoming instinctively spontaneously responsive* could help a vocalist become more flexible in a vocal ensemble. Meisner and Spolin activities may prove useful for developing artistic awareness early on in singers' experiences.

I found two articles written by Andrew Davidson who made correlations between Stanislavski and Meisner's methods and Dalcroze's philosophy for music education, which demonstrate a commonality in thinking between the disciplines of theater and music. However, none of these practices specifically address vocal pedagogy or vocal function. Steven Dahlke's application of Meisner's Repetition Exercise will be discussed at length in the Chapter 4, since his is the only working example of a musically modified partner and group-based theater exercise used in a choral setting, though again, his purpose is to help singers emotionally connect to the music. Similarly, a Manhattan-based acting studio called *Meisner in Music* is designed to help singers connect emotionally and technically using Meisner's method. Since this is a musical application of Meisner's technique, more will be discussed in Chapter 4, including an interview with the co-founder, Jillian Paige, about her process.

Throughout the course of my research, I only found one instance of Spolin's techniques in group singing. In Sweden, an organization called *Folk Song Lab* teaches *Mirror Singing* as a method for engaging and co-creating with fellow singers. The technique is mainly taught for improvisational purposes. Though unmentioned, the concept, and what it offers the singers who are engaging in this activity, is rooted in Spolin philosophy of giving and receiving. *Mirror Singing* will be discussed further in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Wind conductor Devin Otto has also applied Spolin's games in a musical context, by encouraging conductors to play her improv games to increase their awareness, communication, and spontaneous creativity. I also discuss Otto's application in Chapter 4.

All musically modified theater game templates and testing with students are inspired by Stanislavski, Meisner and Spolin's work, and others who have experimented or suggested cross-

over concepts in the last ten years. My case-study design and implementation, inspired by this research, is fully delineated in Chapters 5 and 6.

# Chapter 3

## Vocal Pedagogy Applications

### Introduction

To prepare students for singing games and discussions about singing in an environment modeled after theater arts classrooms, choristers need to be familiar with vocal techniques and their own vocal mechanism. In order to train my choir to become more mentally and physically aware of their vocal abilities, I turned to a variety of current vocal pedagogues who reinforce exercises for warming-up, breathing, onsets, vocal quality, pitch and intonation, and range. These concepts could be taught in a variety of ways and should be addressed as needed. I will address advice from current voice scientists, professional voice teachers, experts on adolescent voices, and choral directors. Each offers ideas and exercises for training the vocal mechanism which I have adopted into my teaching and can be used as tools<sup>41</sup> for singing games.

### 3.1: Building a Foundation of Pedagogical Language

In her book *A Systematic Approach to Voice: The Art of Studio Application*, acclaimed voice teacher and singer Kari Ragan writes that “pedagogical truths may come from a variety of sources to serve the complex needs of the individual trusting the teachers.”<sup>42</sup> In order to continually develop trust and instill good vocal technique in young choristers, choral directors should be open to a variety of methods which can diversify understanding in a large group. When singers practice pedagogy that is based in science-informed principles of voice production, they set themselves up for a foundation of fundamental singing technique that allows them to

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<sup>41</sup> *Tools* are defined in this dissertation as any vocal function exercise or independent vocal mechanism activity that helps singers engage in aspects of vocal technique. The specific tools I have collected are delineated by the pedagogues in this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> Ragan, *A Systematic Approach to Voice*, 16.

explore genre-specific and stylistic elements and enable artistic integrity.<sup>43</sup> They can, with a knowledge of vocal health and function, learn to be expressive and engaged performers who are able to sing in a variety of styles and genres. This knowledge can be difficult to retain because singers are asked to think about and access something they cannot see. Athletes rely on visible outcomes to confirm their successes; however, singers must rely upon internalized physical sensations. Therefore, kinesthetic singing tools and exercises are necessary for facilitating these sensations and building a kind of sensory vocabulary for singers to rely on.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, Ragan reminds that it is essential to couple vocal training with caring for the student.

The dynamic relationship between the voice teachers and the singer is complex and requires empathy, compassion, and intuition. The teacher holds a position of authority over a musical instrument that resides within the body and impacts closely on the identity and spirit of another human being. Voice teachers have a profound role in the lives of singers who place significant trust in them.<sup>45</sup>

To instill a willingness to engage in exercises and build musical trust with their students, choral directors should consider how they *see* and *hear* their students as human beings and musicians; they should be mindful of what they ask of their singers, how they ask it; and they should consider what a particular student or group of students might need regarding any of these exercises.

Other vocal pedagogy advice in this chapter is often paired with teaching strategies such as asking questions and inviting students to discuss what they are hearing, feeling, and experiencing. To prepare my choir for a variety of musical endeavors (repertoire for concerts, contests, and festivals, and exploring games), I have adopted some key principles of esteemed

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<sup>43</sup> Ragan, 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

vocal pedagogue, Jo Estill. She centers her singing discussions and activities around the question “how am I doing this?”<sup>46</sup> Throughout her workbook *Estill Voice Training Level One: Figures for Voice Control Workbook*, she asks questions such as “What do you hear?” “What do you feel?” “What was moving?” “What was easier?” Through her exercises, Estill hopes that students will develop vocal health and aesthetic freedom.<sup>47</sup> She operates under guiding principles that I believe all conductors should cultivate with their choristers; they affirm that conductors should view themselves as group voice teachers. Two of these have encouraged my direction for facilitating vocal knowledge with my choristers:

- Knowledge is power; understanding how the voice works is a good thing
- Voice production begins *before* the voice is heard; muscle effort makes it happen.<sup>48</sup> (Italics added for emphasis).

To implement this philosophy with my choir, I have taught exercises regarding imagination, breathing, onsets, vowels, pitch and intonation, and audiation. These areas are essential for young singers to practice and repeat regularly so that the language and process of singing becomes engrained in them.

### **3.2: Warming up and Vocal Function Exercises**

Ragan’s systematic process for training the voice includes a large collection of vocal function exercises based on current vocal science practices. She clarifies the difference between a warm-up and a vocal function exercise. Warm-ups prepare for the demands of the tasks a

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<sup>46</sup> Jo Estill, *Estill Voice Training Level One: Figures for Voice Control* (Estill Voice Training Systems International, LCC, 2005), 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

vocalist will cover, whereas vocal function exercises are corrective tasks for development.<sup>49</sup> One metaphor for understanding this further can be related to athletics: warming up is like stretching, vocal function exercises are like working out or isolating muscles and body function, and singing repertoire is like playing the sport. Vocal function exercises are designed spontaneously to train the specific needs of the singer in the moment and are meant to be repeated. She says the choices for how an exercise is devised are “student-driven and teacher prescribed.”<sup>50</sup> Ragan’s work encourages voice teachers (and in this case, choral directors) to be intentional with designing tasks specifically for the student to retain the technique, not just apply a quick fix. This kind of differentiation has been helpful in defining different parts of rehearsal for my choristers. Warming up includes humming, sirens, and physical stretching. However, part of our routine also includes vocal function exercises which address different aspects of the vocal mechanism—these will be discussed throughout this chapter. Certain warm-up routines and vocal function exercises are defined as “tools” in my case study. They are options for solving vocal problems in choral games, which will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

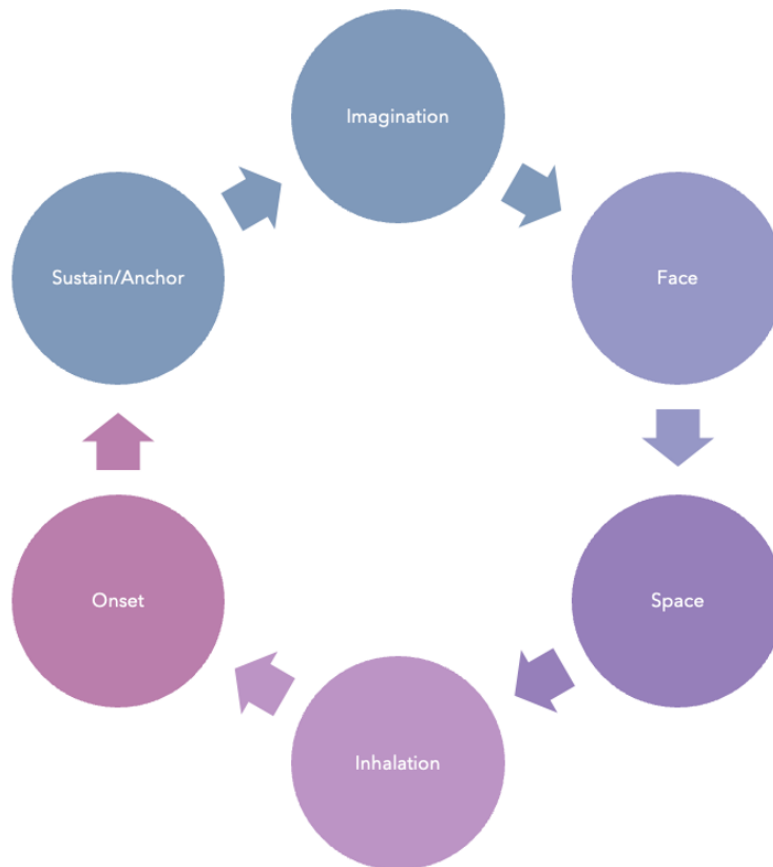
Figure 1 shows a helpful thought process for the repetitious process of singing. Inspired by Estill, *The Recipe: The Cycle of Singing* was created by Dr. Geoffrey Boers as an at-a-glance chart to show this process: imagination, space, inhalation/breathing, onsets/vocal quality, and sustaining or anchoring the sound.

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<sup>49</sup> Ragan, 13-14.

<sup>50</sup> Ragan, 14.

**Figure 1: The Cycle of Singing by Dr. Geoffrey Boers<sup>51</sup>**



When we are warming-up or working on repertoire, we have returned to this chart, especially to reinforce these habits at the beginning of the school year and after long breaks. Specifically, imagination, inhalation (breathing), onsets and anchors are isolated in the following discussion.

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<sup>51</sup> Geoffrey, Boers, “Advanced Choral Techniques: Group Vocal Techniques,” PowerPoint presentation, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, October 1, 2020.

### 3.2.1: Imagination

The first part of *The Cycle of Singing* is imagination. Estill often asks singers to consider and concentrate on things they cannot see. Boers asks this of his choirs and choral conducting students as well. First, a singer must imagine the kind of sound they want, and ask Estill's questions in advance: "What do I want?" "How do I make that sound?" "What do I need to do to make this sound?" *The Cycle of Singing* is helpful because it asks the singer to continue imagining throughout the process and its particulars in the body in before and during singing.

### 3.2.2: Breathing

Jo Estill advises that singers should be listening for and relying on their awareness of muscular effort when they are singing. This begins with breathing. Assigning numbers to different levels of effort can help singers identify if they are working too hard, i.e., 1 could represent hardly any effort and 5 could represent too much, or even forced.<sup>52</sup> In my choirs, we have assigned these numbers to breathing effort. Boers trained his singers to imagine the breath as simple as a snap. The "snap" breath became a term quickly used to identify breath effort which should be simple, in tempo, and low, engaging the intercostal muscles.

Kari Ragan affirms existing practices, such as rib cage expansion and breath exercises. Students must breathe while intentionally accessing the intercostal muscles; they should rely on that sensation and the space below for a healthy breath.<sup>53</sup> I have used her breath depletion exercises which condition the lungs and posture for proper breath control. These exercises train the muscles to delay rib cage collapse near the end of a long phrase when the singer is experiencing depletion.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Estill, 12

<sup>53</sup> Ragan, 30.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

One vocal-function exercise trains both breathing and onsets. Semi Occluded Vocal Tract (SOVT) exercises are a most popular and growing practice among voice teachers and choral conductors. Activities like lip trills and voiced /b/ and /v/ aid in training proper vocal fold adduction and breath control. They initiate smooth onsets, proper effort, and act as a form of vocal massage for tension or exhaustion. Ragan notes that SOVT exercises are not one-size-fits-all. They should be approached with caution until they can be properly executed.<sup>55</sup> In my experience, lip trills often cause a distraction for my singers; some are too tickled by the sensation, and others find it physically difficult. A voiced /b/ is a fine motor skill for inexperienced singers since it requires a foreign posture of semi-occluded/balanced lips. My choristers and I have practiced voiced /v/ as a healthy, reliable alternative. Ragan's SOVT exercise list includes Ingo Titze's popular straw phonation exercises. Using a straw, like the voiced /b/ and /v/, the air flow between the lips and simultaneously humming a pitch brings the cords together in gentle, smooth adduction. I did not purchase straws for my choristers for this study, however, straw phonation exercises can be performed with the voiced /v/, /b/, or /z/. Ragan and Titze recommend these voiced fricatives because they create a sensation in the singer's abdominal wall that is optimal for breath management.<sup>56</sup> Example 1 shows an exercise with alternative voiced fricatives in place of straw phonation. The exercises should ascend or descend by half step.

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<sup>55</sup> Ragan, 84-85.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 84.

### Example 1: Straw Phonation and /v/, /b/, /z/ Substitutions<sup>57</sup>



Example 2 shows an additional exercise that trains breath effort and adduction effort formed by straw phonation into vowel combinations. Again, I use the voiced fricatives as a means of engaging similar adduction, but I modified Ragan’s exercise to alternate from /i/ to /u/ rather than from /u/ to /i/; this modification trains the tongue to come be more forward during the initial phonation.<sup>58</sup>

### Example 2: Straw Phonation Glide to Vowels<sup>59</sup>



### 3.2.3: Vocal Fold Qualities/Onsets

We also daily discuss the three vocal fold onset and offset qualities: glottal, aspirate (or breathy as my students call it), and smooth. Estill offers hand and fingers signs to go with these descriptors, for example, the index finger and middle fingers brought together represents glottal, when they are separated it represents aspirate/breathy, and when the thumb and index finger are

<sup>57</sup> Ragan, 91.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

touching it represents smooth.<sup>60</sup> My students and I have used these signs with slight modifications: we prefer the index finger and middle fingers brought gently together to represent smooth, and then we gently but sharply articulate that symbol to represent glottal, and when they are separated it represents an aspirate/breathy quality. Some sayings and words can help singers associate these signs with these three qualities: “uh oh” for glottal, “hey” for aspirate, with special attention on the /h/, and “you” or “yes” for smooth/on the voice sounds, with special attention to the /j/ glide.

### **3.2.4: Internal Postures: Onsets, Tongue, Palate, Pharynx**

A few exercises are useful for gaining tongue independence. Saying and singing the vowels /i/ or /ji/ lift the tongue to the upper molars. Saying or singing /a/ like you are surprised puts the tongue between your upper and lower molars. Saying /a/ like a doctor is looking down your throat or like you have hot potatoes in your mouth with lower the tongue.<sup>61</sup> For setting up the “anchor” or internal space which needs to be set before sound production, Estill recommends flaring the nostrils to be aware of the palate and airway, pretending to bite an apple to set the pharynx. Estill points out that the singers should feel for effort in four places: behind the upper front teeth, the back of the palate and up into the center of the head, under the ear at the nape of the neck, and a sensation of two columns on either side of the neck.<sup>62</sup> Some of her directives can seem advanced for young singers, so it has been necessary to adapt some of this terminology, for example, an “almost yawn” is useful for lofting the palate, thinking vertically to maintain the space, saying and singing “you” or “yes” a few times helps to set the tongue forward and prepare for smooth onsets, and asking them to imagine where the pitch lives in their body.

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<sup>60</sup> Estill, 25-26.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 82-85

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 105-109.

Regarding pre-singing posture and pharyngeal set up, vocal pedagogue and author Kenneth Bozeman reminds that the vocal tract is a curved vertical tube, therefore internal shapes that are more vertical than lateral/horizontal will yield more successful resonant sounds.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, historic Italian Bel Canto pedagogy recommends inhaling through a smile (internal) to open the throat, a pharyngeal smile which opens the throat, lowers the larynx, and raises the palate. If singers smile in the front (externally) they will raise the larynx and narrow the throat which results in a shallow, spread timbre.

### **3.2.5: Timbre and Placement**

For timbre and placement, I adopted Scott McCoy's familiar, yet subjective terms to describe vocal timbres with my choirs. In the first chapter called "Listening," in McCoy's book *Your Voice: An Inside View*, he writes that language used to describe sound is "rich and varied," and is by no means universal or qualitative.<sup>64</sup> His descriptions are merely convenient for understanding vocal quality because they exist on a continuum of opposites and extremes. At best, they serve to refine listening skills.<sup>65</sup> The following bolded terms and definitions are ones that my students and I have been exploring. I will often ask them what sensation they are feeling and what they hear across these spectra:

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<sup>63</sup> Kenneth W. Bozeman, *Kinesthetic Voice Pedagogy 2: Motivating Acoustic Efficiency* (Gahanna, OH: Inside View Press, 2021), 67.

<sup>64</sup> Scott McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View 3rd ed.* Delaware, (OH: Inside View Press, 2019), 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 2: Scott McCoy's Voice Descriptors<sup>66</sup>**

**Bright**

High overtones  
Brilliance  
Pointed power  
lighter

**Dark**

low overtones  
warmth  
fuller  
heftier

**Twang**

Brassy  
edgy  
narrow/closed  
nasal  
musical theater/pop/country

**Loft**

relaxed  
enlarged larynx  
lifted/lofted palate  
some musical theater, jazz, crooners

**Forward**

front  
teeth/more nasal  
cheekbones  
“in the mask”  
tip of the tongue

**Back**

swallowed  
dark  
throaty  
tension in root of tongue

**Clear**

balanced adduction

**Breathy**

incomplete adduction

**Clean**

Associated with clear  
balanced folds  
gravely  
glottal sounds

**Raspy**

noise, air, phlegm, obstruction  
hissy

**Conversational**

Speech-like timbre  
projection without amplification

**Ring**

high overtones

**Nasal**

[n] [m] [ŋ] and French

**Non-Nasal**

open vowel centric

**Free**

Air supported with  
good management  
Efficiency in air management  
and muscles engagement

**Forced**

taxing  
exhaustion  
not balanced

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<sup>66</sup> McCoy, 3-9.

Freedom of independent faculties:  
Articulators, resonators,  
respirators, and appoggio

**In Tune**

Hitting the correct pitch  
At the correct frequency

**Good Diction**

Proper sounds, dialect  
placement, cadence  
easy and natural

**Stylistically Correct**

written and unwritten rules  
associated with genres and styles  
and performance standards  
centered on honoring  
informed and preserving  
tradition

**Out of Tune**

singing above or below or  
In consistently around a desired pitch

**Poor Diction**

unintelligible  
over doing it

**Stylistically Incorrect**

Not following the rules, either written or  
unwritten  
selfish, exploratory, uninformed

Similarly to McCoy's descriptions above, Estill creates experiments for studio singers to try so they hear difference in sound and focus on the sensations that are created from the tasks within the experiments. For example, singing "Happy Birthday" in four different timbres, placements, and styles, i.e., singing in falsetto verses twang, or a sobbing voice verses opera style, and having students answer prompts about what they heard adds to their understanding about creating and identifying sound possibility and unity.

Another successful tool, borrowed from Sharon Paul from her book *Art & Science in the Choral Rehearsal*, is a placement exercise in which she has singers analyze and experiment with the extremes of their voice by using a spectrum. She writes:

If I would like them [her students] to explore their tone from brightest to darkest, I will move my arms as if it is a dial that indicates traveling from their brightest sound to their darkest while they are singing. Then I will have them move their arms for their own dial

as they sing, stopping where they believe their tone is the most appropriate for the piece at hand.<sup>67</sup>

I have used Paul's spectrum with my students to explore our tone and placement. This tool has resulted in larger discussions about what the vocal mechanism must do to achieve different sounds.

### 3.2.6: Vowels/Diction

In addition to teaching my choir to discern pure vowels and diphthong tendencies, it is advantageous to introduce advanced vowel concepts that, if articulated in a simple manner, are accessible for young singers. Kenneth Bozeman's second edition of his *Kinesthetic Voice Pedagogy* is centered on helping singers become efficient and aware of the acoustic design of the human voice. Chapter 5 in his book, "Vowel Perception, Modification, and Motivation," discusses pharyngeal awareness, tuning vowels, and vowel migration. More specifically, he delineates the concept of the over-vowel and under-vowel, in which the singer accesses sensations in their pharynx, such as smile, joy, mischief, which encourage a ringier timbre, while tender affects such as love, sweetness, empathy, sympathy tend to produce a warmer timbre. The navigation of these sensations aid in a balanced production of color, tone, and tuning. Additionally, a concept called the Two Component Vowel Percept can be explained as navigating two vowels that are working together: singers can explore the clarity and identity of a vowel that needs to be heard, say an /I/ vowel, while providing it with an under vowel that is a combination of warming, rounding, and complementary to the over-vowel, such as /a/.

Dan Anderson's book "The Voice in Progress" is a helpful resource for helping adolescent singers navigate their voices. A tip is to choose one or two vowels to focus on during

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<sup>67</sup> Paul, *Art & Science*, 17.

an exercise; two is often plenty for a teenage voice to think about. If conductors and teachers offer too much information, young singers could become overwhelmed.<sup>68</sup>

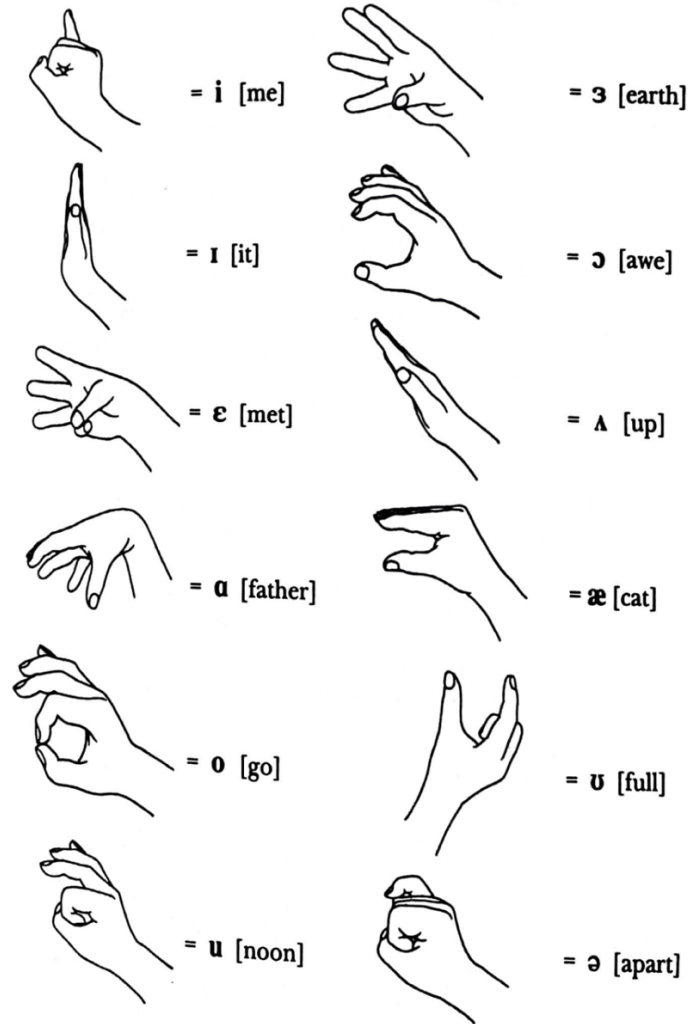
An additional resource called International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) Hand Signs is a diction enhancing hand code system devised by the late Dr. Guy Webb, former Director of Choral Activities at Missouri State University. These hand signs each represent one of the major vowels and mixed vowels present in most Western singing languages—more could be created in other language contexts. They are conducive for formulating the concreteness of a pure vowel with the tongue and pharynx and are also intended to help the chorister memorize these sounds using shapes. The chart is below in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: “IPA Hand Signs” by Guy Webb<sup>69</sup>**

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<sup>68</sup> Dan Anderson, *The Voice in Progress*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard 2022), 31.

<sup>69</sup> Ray Robinson, Timothy W Sharp, Gordon Paine, Melinda O’Neal, Jameson Neil Marvin, Donald Neuen, Paul Brandvik, et al, *Up Front!: Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*, edited by Guy B. (Guy Bedford) Webb, (Boston, Massachusetts: ECS Pub., 1993), 247.



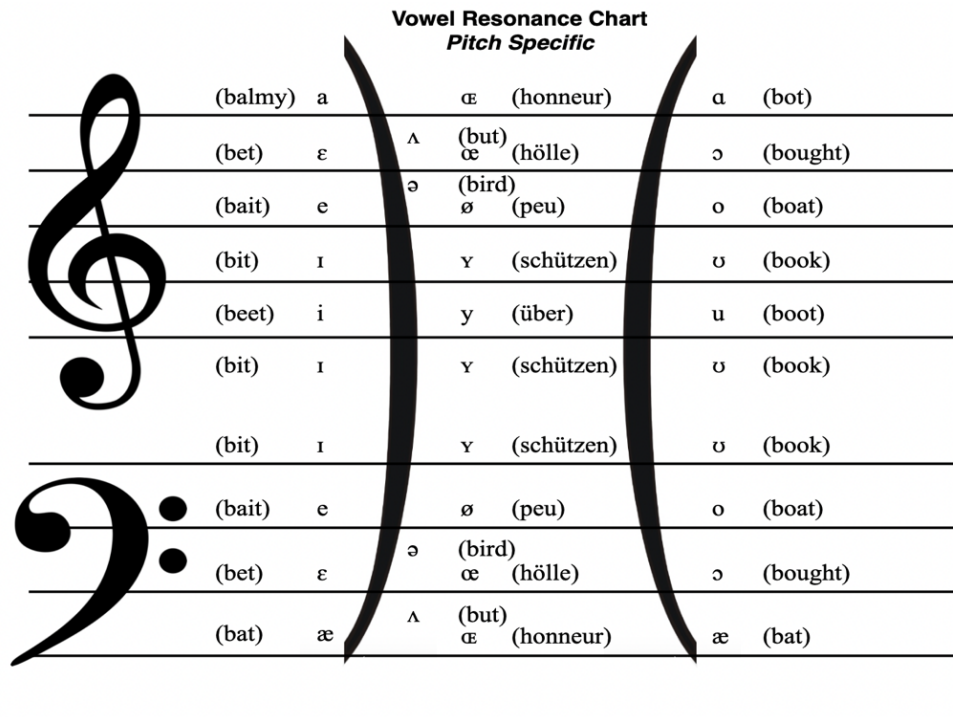
### 3.2.7: Range

When navigating range, Bozeman suggests lifting the head slightly, settling the “underbelly” (relaxing the torso), leaving the chin alone, lifting the inner palate and settling the larynx. Exercises like howling can help with this.<sup>70</sup> Boers has created an at-a-glance vowel chart inspired by Bozeman’s work. The chart aids in quick understanding of proper vowel precept throughout the treble and bass ranges. I gave this chart to my choristers at Seattle Christian

<sup>70</sup> Bozeman, 63.

School, who memorized many of the vowel postures especially associated with extreme registers. This chart is shown below in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Boers’s Vowel Resonance Chart<sup>71</sup>**



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Concerning diction, Bozeman advises that enunciation be centered or forward in the mouth; this reduced tension in the back of the mouth and pharynx and frees them up to help formulate vowels.<sup>72</sup> Regarding lips, he acknowledges excellence in two schools of thought, one centered on facial lift and smile, and the other on relaxed, rounded lips.<sup>73</sup> If poorly executed, lip rounding can dull the timbre and create artificial depth or maturity. The Italian directive “*si canta come si parla*” translated into English as “one sings as one speaks” is Bozeman’s

<sup>71</sup> Geoffrey Boers, *Vowel Resonance Chart*, ed. Jacob Finkle, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Bozeman, 54.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

recommendation for handing lips, diction, and timbre combinations, which train the singer to pre-set their pharyngeal spaces and use moderate expressive affects and articulation modeled after speech. I have taught my students that if they maintain open throats, lifted palates, and fronted, released tongue they will have more options for shaping in the front.

Dan Anderson advises choral directors to give teenagers the time and space to stretch, practice breathing, warm down and warm up to get used to the extreme ends of their voices.<sup>74</sup> A few of his range exercises have been successful for my singers, especially falsetto exercises for male voices; for example, singing scale degrees 8 to 1 with an open throat to increase range.<sup>75</sup> He also recommends connecting female chest and head voices by starting them in a higher range and gradually letting them fall into their chest voice.<sup>76</sup> Sirens are, once again, encouraged for all voice types as well.<sup>77</sup> We also explored a dynamics game called *The Ugly Crescendo*, in which choristers are asked to make ugly, forward sounds and then gradually transfer those focused sensations into a beautiful crescendo.

### **3.2.8: Pitch/Intonation/Audiation**

Since my secondary choirs span a wide range of singing abilities, it has been useful to seek advice from experts on young and inexperienced voices. In her book *The Fear of Singing: A Breakthrough Program*, Nancy Salwen uses layman's terms, ice-breaker games and exercises to explore sounds and vocal mechanism sensations and introduce vocal terminology vocal anatomy. Like Ragan, Salwen designed her exercises and games to solve singing problems. Her chapter entitled "Matching Pitch and Singing with a Drone Note" offers some suggestions for improving

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<sup>74</sup> Anderson, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 19.

this pitch and intonation. She recommends that singers learn to match pitch with a drone and then try to match pitch with a partner who is sustaining a pitch.<sup>78</sup> I had my students sing with a drone and partners to practice “locking in” the sound over an extended period. She also indicates that sliding in and out of the drone note helps the singer create an awareness of what they are doing in comparison to it. Salwen reminds singers to “tune into sensations that are produced (from the experience). One clue is that if we’re on the same note then there will be a sensation of smoothness in the air and it may be hard to tell our voices apart.”<sup>79</sup> She encourages singers and teachers to take their time and enjoy the experience. A second game that aids in developing pitch perception is an audiation game called *The Missing Note* which will be described in Chapter 6.

### **3.2.9: Combining Concepts for Warm-Ups**

Ragan, Anderson and Salwen each address a part or combination of the vocal mechanism through their exercises. In Anderson’s book, there are fifty exercises that deal with combinations like breathing, beginning phonation, warming down, warming-up, resonance, placement, tone quality, vowel unification, diction, agility, and register shifts, and range. Here is an example warm-up in which a choral director could layer concepts:

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<sup>78</sup> Nancy Salwen, *The Fear of Singing Breakthrough Program: Learn to Sing Even if you Think you Can’t Carry a Tune!*, (Keene, NH: Music All Around 2016), 147.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

### Example 3: Anderson Exercise #32<sup>80</sup>



**Purpose:** Warm-up; placement; support; flexibility; dynamics

I love this energetic exercise because it focuses on many important skills. As you teach it, focus on one skill at a time. It functions first as a warm-up exercise; you will want to start in a comfortable key in which your treble voices can use their head voices. As you ascend into their upper range watch for tension. Your young singers will struggle more in their upper range to sing without tension. The “nee” will help focus the initial sound into the mask. The staccato 8<sup>th</sup> notes will help your singers strengthen their support muscles, and focus on the balanced onset. Introduce this exercise slowly so the 16<sup>th</sup> are clean and precise, then gradually increase the tempo. When they are able to sing precisely, with no glottal sounds on the 8<sup>th</sup>s, then add a crescendo over the 8<sup>th</sup> notes.

#### **Tips for Success:**

- Teach slowly until they are able to sing with precision.
- Use the “N” to place the sound forward, and keep the throat open to avoid glottal attacks.
- Descend lightly to avoid flattening.
- The 16<sup>th</sup> notes should be clean, but legato. Don’t let any “H” creep in.
- If you start to hear glottal attacks on the staccato 8<sup>th</sup> notes, have your singers add an “H.” After they eliminate the glottal, have them just think the “H.”
- When they crescendo they may have a tendency to force the sound. Help them keep it open and lifted and not heavy.<sup>81</sup>

Anderson’s descriptions for his exercises resemble a strikingly similar layout as the games in Spolin’s handbook. The model for this layout will be discussed in Chapter 5. Anderson’s work in

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<sup>80</sup> Anderson, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

the meantime has been a quick at-a-glance resource for me to find an exercise that addresses specific vocal problems.

### **Conclusion**

The pedagogical approaches I have surveyed above have created a foundation from which my choristers and I can become more aware of efficient and healthy vocal technique. Since the case study in this dissertation is designed after theater games and methodology which allow for trial and error, game exploration will be more efficient if singers are functioning under similar vocabulary and an understanding of their own vocal abilities. When playing a game, choristers will use this vocabulary, and the ability to produce, imitate, and navigate different vocal qualities. I address the vocal mechanism through exercises that deal with alignment, posture, stretching, breathing, onsets and offsets, vocal quality, vowels, and range, to name a few. Any vocal techniques used during a warm-up intend to reflect the technique needed for the choir's repertoire and are considered a valid exercise that choristers can use when playing a choral game. Ragan's distinction between warm-up and vocal function exercises creates a template for how choral games can be designed. One might notice a similarity to Spolin's game intentions especially when Ragan's says that the choices for how exercise are devised are "student-driven and teacher prescribed." Just as in studio application, there is a need to isolate and navigate vocal problems and offer specific solutions for group singers. As voice teachers diagnose what is needed for their students, so should choral conductors do the same for their choirs, and in due time, teach their choristers how to identify and prescribe vocal issues themselves. In Chapter 6, games with sidecoaching will demonstrate an environment where such learning can thrive.

# Chapter 4

## **Preliminary Research Regarding Theater Arts Methodology for Musicians**

### **Introduction**

The recommendations put forth by music educators and researchers within this chapter are centered on enhancing either conducting proficiency or musician emotional connectedness. Though, again, this is not the direction I am taking with my study, including their research serves to apprise the reader of ongoing discourse in this domain. Each demonstrates the potential effectiveness and influence that theater arts methods may have for performing artists beyond the realm of acting, particularly stimulating dialogues that interconnect acting and musical practices. Except for three instances (Tom Carter, Steven Dahlke, and Jillian Paige), the research presented in this chapter illustrates compelling correlations and potentialities, yet otherwise it falls short of formal experimental or integration of Stanislavski, Meisner, or Spolin techniques with vocal pedagogy tailored for choral singers. This chapter introduces observations and advice from past teachers and colleagues, and two extensive interviews with two educators to clarify their methodologies and research; these interviews were conducted based on these researcher's keen interests in integrating acting techniques with singers.

#### **4.1: Inquiring about Theater Methods in Choral Settings with Past Teachers and Colleagues**

To gauge the existence of a general knowledge about theater arts methods used in choral rehearsals, a few phone interviews with past teachers and colleagues clarified some current perspectives on this topic. In a phone conversation with my undergraduate theater director, Cathy Thomas-Grant, I asked her if she had ever heard of Meisner Technique used to teach singing; she

had not. She encouraged me to explore my ideas through games. “You have to devise games,” she said, indicating that some task needs to be given to the singer the way an actor is given tasks.<sup>82</sup> Her comments prompted me to consider that Meisner’s technique itself might not be transferable, but that devising exercises or games with his system in mind could be successful. My childhood theater director, Kathleen Edwards, recommended the same. Edwards reminded me that all the theater games we played when I was growing up were mostly devised by Viola Spolin. Edwards shared her experience directing these games (sidecoaching): when assessing student actors, she encouraged, “don’t be afraid of being brash,” or asking yourself “who is contributing, and can you tell they are *actually* contributing? Go with your gut and clean the room.”<sup>83</sup> Her statements reveal a certain efficiency in her teaching during the explorative process, in that she does not let students get away with non-effort. If they are not contributing, she will help them be so with different tactics and approaches to the game. By “go with your gut,” Edwards means to feel out the experience; if it doesn’t seem right, change it. If something is working, keep going. “You have to experience a game for longer than ten minutes. Beyond ten minutes, the internal judge gets fatigued. Don’t experience failure because you didn’t do it long enough.”<sup>84</sup> This last advice echoes Spolin’s philosophy, and is a helpful reminder for freeing up my own perspectives about workshops; in giving students the time and space to experience, the game can have an effect.

My undergraduate choral director Dr. Ryan Board shared over the phone that he also was not aware of theater techniques being used to teach vocal pedagogy and he had not heard of Tom Carter’s, Steven Dahlke’s, or Jillian Paige’s work. However, he was familiar with Rudolph

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<sup>82</sup> Cathy Thomas-Grant, phone interview with author, April 10, 2020.

<sup>83</sup> Kathleen Edwards, phone interview with author, July 30, 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

Laban's work, which emerged from dance terminology, and Alexander Technique developed by actor, Frederick Matthias Alexander.<sup>85</sup> Both Laban's system and Alexander's Technique offer artistic avenues that are widely taught and highly researched. My study does not include them, but the reader should note one acting resource called *Actor Training the Laban Way* by Barbara Adrian. This resource contains numerous exercises that utilize Laban's system in the acting world. Adrian includes partner and group exercises that initiate concentration for breath support, tone, range, articulation, alignment, balance, flexibility, strength, and stamina.<sup>86</sup> In a similar fashion to Stanislavski and Meisner, Laban's system begins with practical awareness exercises that help the performer feel connected to their body and become aware of its possibilities. After these connections and awareness are established, a performer's goal to achieve more expressiveness can be enhanced. Ryan Board's knowledge of these methods in conjunction with my own experience studying Laban with Dr. Giselle Wyers at the University of Washington, demonstrate a common knowledge and application of these popular interdisciplinary systems.

The anecdotal evidence of these exchanges suggests that the influence of theater arts pedagogy has been minimal, at best, in secondary and post-secondary music education. Indeed, subsequent bibliographical research confirmed the scarcity of existing educational interdisciplinary methods implementing insights from theater in music, while clarifying precisely what work in this area has been done to date. From the following examples, I was led to a greater understanding of what I can and should consider in light of what others have pursued.

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<sup>85</sup> Ryan Board, phone interview with author, March 13, 2024.

<sup>86</sup> Barbara Adrian, *Actor Training the Laban Way: An Integrated Approach to Voice, Speech, and Movement*, New York: Allworth Press, 2008, 1-6.

## 4.2: Stanislavski Applications in Music

When searching for applications of Stanislavski's work in music, I found several music working applications in which researchers encourage musicians in their field to perform his exercises (as they are) for improving artistry. Acting coach and music educator, Andrew Davidson's article "Konstantin Stanislavski and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: Historical and Pedagogical Connections Between Actor Training and Music Education" reminds that Emile Jaques-Dalcroze was seeking to reconfigure music education practices at the beginning of the twentieth century and that Stanislavski and the Moscow Art Theater were simultaneously seeking new ways of teaching acting.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, each inspired the other.

Dalcroze influenced Stanislavski's principle of Tempo-Rhythm, in which actors explore tempo in the body as individuals and an ensemble. Tempo-Rhythm is an exercise in which actors sync their speed to a number spectrum. For example: 1 may signify the slowest speed and a higher number such as 6 or 10 may signify a quicker or the quickest speed. This provides the actor with a range of physical effort as they experience how their body and brain respond to directives and their environment in association with speed. Stanislavski asks actors to consider their intentions and emotions associated with the given speed.<sup>88</sup> Davidson recommends Stanislavski's concentration exercises, which, within the last decade, have also been acknowledged as a way for musicians to enhance their physical connection to the music as well as their expressiveness.

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<sup>87</sup> Andrew Davidson, "The Listening Actor: Intersections Between the Musicality of Meisner Technique and Ear Training in Dalcroze Eurhythmics," *Theatre, Dance, and Performance Training* vol. 14, No. 1 (2023): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2022.2152483>.

<sup>88</sup> Davidson, 187.

### **4.2.1: Stanislavski Applications in Piano Performance**

In 2019, Andrea V. Johnson wrote a dissertation entitled “The Acting System of Konstantin Stanislavski as applied to Piano Performance.” In her study, she adapted concepts into sixteen activities for undergraduate piano performance majors that address four common challenges: performance anxiety, physical tension during performance, interpretation, and stage presence.<sup>89</sup> Johnson discovered that renown pianists and pedagogues from the Russian school such as Theodore Leschetizky, Rosina Lhévine, Heinrich Neuhaus, George Kochevitsky, and Polish-born pianist Artur Rubenstein, all testified to having been impacted by Stanislavski’s work.<sup>90</sup> It is evident that there are significant and lasting connections between musicians and acting, and Johnson’s dissertation gives rise to questions about how Stanislavski—and even other acting practitioners’ experiments—could be applied in other areas of performance.

### **4.2.2: Stanislavski Application in Choral Conducting**

In his article “The Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavski and Their Relevance to Choral Conducting,” Dr. Ryan Hebert (former director of choral studies at the University of Tampa), observes that conductors, like actors, can become disconnected from their expressiveness when they become mechanical. He draws parallels between the actor and the conductor in that the conductor literally “acts” out the music with physical gestures, facial expressions, and body language, and suggests that they might prepare like an actor by experimenting with spontaneous expression, which Stanislavski’s method trains. Stanislavski’s consciousness activities condition the actor for spontaneous intuitive and emotional creation in a coherent and organized fashion. Since his techniques teach a merging of self and character,

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<sup>89</sup> Andrea V. Johnson, “The Acting System of Konstantin Stanislavski as applied to Piano Performance,” (DMA diss., University of Oklahoma, 2019), 169.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, 170-171.

Hebert draws this parallel for the musician to consider:<sup>91</sup> He wondered if conductors could have a similar experience with technique coming from musical impulse rather than musical impulse coming from technique. He addresses the need for young conductors to increase self-consciousness and that Stanislavski's methods can be a way of improving gestural communication because they are designed to draw actors' attention to their own senses. Hebert posits that choral conductors could study Stanislavski's attention-focusing exercises to explore musical connection and expressivity.

The exercises in his article were adopted from a Stanislavski practitioner, Albert Pia, who wrote a handbook for actors, directors, and theater instructors called *Acting the Truth: The Acting Principles of Constantin Stanislavski and Exercises*. In the book, Pia delineates elements of attention and focus state exercises. He writes that "a major fault shared by many actors is the inability to maintain a strong power of concentration, which completely destroys any form of creative work."<sup>92</sup> These exercises fall into the categories of "Dramatic Quality, Dramatic Action, Focusing of Attention, Tension and Relaxation, Recalling Feelings, Mind Will and Feelings, and Musicality of Speech."<sup>93</sup> Hebert was most interested in the spontaneity that can arise from conductors performing these exercises, and consequently, the possibility of becoming more connected to the music. Example 4 is of one of Pia's Stanislavski-inspired exercises that Hebert suggested for conductors. The exercise is called "From Outside In." The goal is to aid the actor in finding the hidden meaning of a certain text. Hebert proposes that conductors can use this same exercise to experiment with body connection.

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<sup>91</sup> Hebert, "The Acting Principles of Konstantin Stanislavsky and Their Relevance to Choral Conducting," 24.

<sup>92</sup> Albert Pia, *Acting the Truth: The Acting Principles of Constantin Stanislavski and Exercises*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006): 18.

<sup>93</sup> Hebert, *Acting Principles*, 25.

#### Example 4: From Outside In (a Stanislavski-Inspired Exercise)

**Instructions:** An actor goes on stage and is given a command by the director to assume any particular position. The actor assumes the position and holds for a brief period until his inner thoughts begin to put the gesture into a justified action, at which point the actor develops the scenario on his own.

#### Example Exercises:

- Hands extended upward; reaching for a valued object
- On knees; pleading for mercy
- Crouching position; shielding himself from blows
- Fetal position; cringing with fear.
- Hands extended; begging
- Hands over ears; shutting out horrible sounds. Seek variations.<sup>94</sup>

While Hebert did not musically modify this exercise, it is certainly one that could be performed not only by choral directors but singers themselves to develop concentration on text objectives and, therefore, a unified aesthetic or affect for a particular piece. Tom Carter touches on similar exercises in his book *Choral Charisma*, where prompts such as Stanislavski's questions (Who are you? What time is it? Where are you? What do you want? Why do you want it?) are modified to fit the singer's perspective. Carter calls these questions "Power Tools." In discussing story connection between choristers and the music, he says:

In order to build a solid structure, singers can answer the following questions about their story. If they experiment with different possibilities during rehearsals, they will soon be able to settle on one that engages them most completely.

1. Who might you be singing to and what exactly do they look like?
2. How might you be trying to affect this person, entity, or object?
3. What's the time and place; when are where are you singing to the other?...

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<sup>94</sup> Hebert, *Acting Principles*, 24.

6. Are there any obstacles?
7. How does the other respond to you?
8. How does their response make you feel?”<sup>95</sup>

Carter demonstrates these questions in an example where asks his choir to sing “Happy Birthday” three different ways while he (the conductor) leads them. In the first scenario, it is the conductor’s birthday. The singers are directed to perform with good phrasing, crisp consonants, matched vowels, and tuning. In the second scenario, the conductor reads them a fictional prompt in which the person they are singing to has experienced a tragedy. A third scenario invites the choir to invent an intense situation with objectives. At the end of the three explorations, then he asks the choristers to share their process with those around them. Once they have shared with each other, the conductor can initiate a conversation with the whole choir, asking some of the following questions:

1. What did you notice about your own process during the exercise?
2. Did you feel different when you introduced the story and the concept of affecting the other? If so, how was the first rendition different than the other two? How was the second different from the third?
3. How were your thoughts different?
4. Was there any particular moment where your belief in the other was really strong? What was that like?
5. Did you sing differently? How was the choir’s sound affected?
6. Did anyone connect with the obstacle? How did that impact you?
7. How did you make the other person believable for yourself? Did you discover any techniques that worked for you better than others?<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Tom Carter, *Choral Charisma: Singing with Expression* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Music Publishing Company, 2005), 85-86.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-97.

Again, Carter's goal for choristers is emotional connection and, therefore, from his perspective, authentic. His procedure is inspired by Stanislavski's (with indirect correlation to Meisner and Spolin). In the same manner, Dr. Hebert introduced this kind of procedure to improve conductor connectedness. I was curious to know more about Hebert's thoughts on acting techniques in choral rehearsals. I interviewed him to investigate what inspired him to write his article and to learn whether he had any further experience with these ideas or knew of others who were implementing them in choral settings.

#### **4.2.2.1: An Interview with Dr. Ryan Hebert**

Over a Zoom call in Fall 2022, Dr. Hebert and I discussed the inspirations and implications of his article. I told him about my dissertation research plans to pursue a case study that explores acting methods with my secondary choristers to help teach vocal pedagogy.

H: You have stumbled upon an area of choral music... no one has taken it [his research] and gone further with it. Now that I am working with young conductors, I have turned my attention to them rather than to the individual ingredients in the choir."<sup>97</sup>

Dr. Hebert suggested that conductors should take steps in improving their leadership by formulating their rehearsal environments around practices that get them thinking about their own contributions to the choral "team."

H: I really am a firm believer that choral music can somehow be like athletics in that every person on the team has to be evaluated in some way. A football team works together as a group, but you can see the individual growth of each and every person. I think we as choral directors allow people to hide in the ensemble. And acting teachers can get in their (an actor's) face and get the individual to do something. And that's what people take care of in voice studios. But I have been unable to come up with a really good way of positively weeding out dead weight in a choral rehearsal. How do you bring the lowest achiever and the highest achiever to the same level? That's hard! I turned my attention to unwanted body language in the young conductor. I feel that young conductors

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<sup>97</sup> Ryan Hebert, Zoom interview by Tyler Todd Kimmel Zoom, June 21, 2022, Burien, WA.

do not have a grasp on what they are communicating to the choir through their gestures. And that's why I turned my attention to the acting techniques, Stanislavski and those kinds of things. How do you build self-confidence in an ensemble? I have found it easier to do with the individual, and in conducting you have them as an individual. That's a puzzle that I think you've stumbled upon where we need much more information.

T: Thank you for elaborating. You're saying everything I've been thinking in the last year.

H: I've done two workshops for ACDA, and one in Portland on ensemble building. It's very important to me. And it's this whole thing you mentioned earlier. How do you make a gourmet meal? You make a gourmet meal with very good individual ingredients. How do you take the members of your choir and make them each confident and able, and there's a lot to unpack there. Particularly when you have people that don't read well, or cannot produce the right kind of sound. Band directors and orchestra directors are probably a little more versed in this, in that they have their players play individually. For some reason there is this stigma in choral music; you will never have to sing by yourself. And the question is, how do you make that environment inviting, supportive. How would you be able to create something where people could sing by themselves and not think of it as such a deflating experience? That's hard! I wish I could tell you I've figured this out.

T: It's an ongoing process for sure. Can you speak a little bit more about the ensemble building workshops you did?

H: The last one I did was in 2010, and my bibliography would probably be what you would be interested in. There are several things: one of the articles that I really thought was very interesting was by Simon Fisher called *Belief Living the Music*. He's a string player. And he goes into a lot of the things I talked about with Stanislavski. And then I also have found acting books and improvisation books, which you probably are familiar with. The Gavin Leavy book is fun, but I don't know how to make any of that musically related.

T: Interesting. I've been studying Meisner and Spolin because they devised partner-based and group-based games to develop the whole body and the senses. So how do we do that as a musical exercise, but make it meaningful?

H: We don't train choral directors in the field of acting, but more important than that, we don't train choral directors in the field of leadership. There is nothing in the curriculum at the graduate level about leadership. You know, entrepreneurs and CEOs and all these people that are in charge of groups of people, that's part of their curriculum. They have to know how to lead a group of people, how to inspire a group of people, how to get people to do things that they didn't think they could. And choral directors kind of have to learn that as they go. Leadership and teambuilding skills are really missing from the graduate curriculum, in my humble opinion. It is not just about what you do on the podium. It is so much more than that...How do you get a group of people to think like you, to do like you, to be on the same page? And that we just kind of learn as we go, unfortunately.

T: Yeah, that's a really good point, the leadership and teambuilding thing. What's interesting is that I have seen in certain education conferences I've been to, or even in my friends' corporate jobs, they will bring in improv artists from the theater to teach them those things. Why don't we do that in choir?

H: What you're doing is tapping into the creative side of the brain. And choral directors are not always thinking that way. We think notes and rhythms...we got to get this learned. The curriculum is too performance based, and that doesn't give us a chance to experiment on some of these other things. We are too narrowly focused on the outcome. And that can be a huge problem because you cannot get a good outcome until you figure out how to get people to work together at various skill levels and various abilities... when the ultimate goal is really to make a musically satisfying experience, and that comes from teaching people what charisma is, leadership, adding value to people, you're talking about all these things that we don't learn anything about as choral directors, and some people have it and some people don't. And that's where the acting thing really comes into play, in that you get in touch with those parts of who you are – honesty, and opening up, and being real and true...and that's why kids who get access to those things flourish because they are really learning who they are. And choral directors, most of these people would roll their eyes at us for talking about these things. Good research comes out of what seems like absurd things, but it's absolutely true. I wish I could tell you I've taken this further and these are the things that I've noticed have been huge, practical things to do, and the person who contacted me about my article several years ago wanted more information, did I go further with it? And no I didn't. And I regret that. I hope that maybe you can.

T: That was going to be my next question to you. In working with your student conductors, do you ever tap into the things you discussed in the article, or any of the exercises, or is it more like a base level thing, like getting the individual to open up and be authentic?

H: Right, I think for young conductors the biggest thing is inhibition. They don't know how to get beyond the fact that someone is watching you. When we do things alone, we flourish, most people. But it's the old adage of "dance like nobody's watching." There are sometimes where it depends on the student, where you try to get them to do it your way and they just can't and you say now do it your way. What is the ultimate result that you're looking for? And that's a problem! They need to know what they're looking for. So, it goes into being able to get them to talk about it. How do you take what we do and put it into words. So they are on the podium, they're doing something. You have to probe them, you have to ask them all kinds of questions. "What are you thinking here?" "What are you doing?" 90% of the time, they have no idea, no clue. So, a lot of it is extracting their thought process, and that takes some time. You've got to interview them for hours, before you realize they don't even know what they're doing, they don't know that what they're doing with your hands is eliciting a response. It's trying to get the singers to be on the same page as you are. And each individual person has a whole host of baggage to sift through. That's the most eye-opening thing, when you're working with young

conductors. They don't know that what they're doing with their hands and their face and their body actually should be preceded by an intentional musical interpretive foresight.

T: Right, but that prep, what you're talking about is kind of in the actor's blood when they are doing that for a role.

H: Right, well they're doing it intuitively because they've embodied what it means. We talk about staccato, crescendo, yeah, great those are technical things. I often say, "look like the music" and that is often the same as "be the character," feel what they feel. Essentially, what we're talking about is right brain thinking. It's the creative side of the brain. Choral conducting is always technical. I wonder how many things would take care of themselves if we taught students how to think creatively.

T: That to me is the root of this discussion, your article, and what I'm searching for...the director in theater sidecoaches, as you're up there acting the director will shout words every once in a while to get you do something, and that's similar in a many circumstances (in choral rehearsal), but they're (directors) not doing what a choral director does, which is very often prescribing. Like rote teaching. I understand that we should teach diversely, and we have students with many different backgrounds. I'm searching for how to devise new exercises and games even, or tools that the kids can take to own it so that the conductor doesn't always have to do that (prescribe it). Could that even be successful?

H: Well, one of my workshops, was called "Building Ensemble in your Choral Ensemble" and the other one I did was talking about the very thing you were just mentioning and that's individual responsibility. There is a phenomenon, and I remember reading an article about this. I can't think of the name, it's something like passive observance? If you're jogging through the park and somebody collapses and you stumble upon that person on the ground, and there are lots of people around them, most everybody in that situation will have assumed someone has already called the paramedics. It's called deferred responsibility. We think someone has obviously called 911, but the chances of someone doing that are actually very slim. In other words, people will not actually take responsibility because they believe somehow that it's someone else's responsibility. Most people will assume it's not them. The default response for most choirs is "it's not my fault." You have to somehow train your singers to ask, "Am I responsible for this problem?" We need to train our singers to think, "am I doing this? Am I responsible for this problem?" So I will ask individuals in my rehearsals, "Do you hear what's happening here?" Or I will ask my section leader, "what do you hear?" Because what you and hear and what they hear may be totally different. It can be a matter of perception, but it also is the assumption of my responsibility as a singer. I went to LSU, and I remember that attitude was pervasive. The graduate students would think, "oh no, this can't be me. I'm a graduate student." So, how do you create the environment in so much that everybody is absolutely thinking exactly like you, it's not accusatory, it's an open mind. "Okay maybe I'm causing this," "or maybe I am individually singing flat." So, I don't know if it's so much as creating the right environment so that people are open and receptive to it? Do you know what I mean?

T: Part of that is dismantling the current curriculum so that there are new classroom norms. At the University of Washington, Dr. Geoffrey Boers does this all the time. He will ask individual people to sing. And he does not put them on the spot or make people sing if they don't want to and it's not a spot check kind-of-thing, "sing measures 16-20 and if you do poorly you get docked." It's more like, "We're looking for this kind of sound." He'll ask everyone to sing it and then he'll walk through the choir and ask something like "Tyler, will you sing that phrase for us?" And if he likes something I did, he will ask "did you hear what he did there? John, what did he do?" and then there is a discussion, and then he says "ok everyone sing the way Tyler did" and then they do it. But even though over time this has given someone like me more confidence as a singer, not every singer gets a chance to do this.

H: But it's not accusatory?

T: No. But it doesn't give every single person the chance to experience that. And also, not everyone at the collegiate level is willing to play with that. Some people are very set in their ways and don't like when conductors do things like that. But it's also that every day, we have to do it again! It's like starting over because people don't always remember.

H: That is what I remember at LSU. You get it right, it's beautiful, it's exactly like you want. But there is a sort of going back to a default mezzo forte, loud, ugly singing. It's like every rehearsal is new. But that's why I begin my rehearsal with reminders. I never start a piece without saying "can you tell me what we did at our last rehearsal?" And sometimes they really cannot remember. It is a matter of forgetfulness. It's a matter of self-awareness. This is another part of my workshop that I did about building responsibility. A student will say to you, "I'm not going to be at rehearsal, but don't worry, I'm going to look at my part." Again, not only do they think it's not their responsibility, but they don't understand the purpose of rehearsal. They think the purpose of rehearsal is to get the notes and the rhythms. They don't understand that their responsibility is in also making the music. I don't consider myself a singer, I've taken voice lessons and studied voice, but I'm not by nature a singer. But it's very difficult when you're teaching someone in a studio, it's hard for them to think creativity, because they don't think that's their responsibility. They think their responsibility is to get the notes, to be able to play it (sing it) the outcome. We have become so outcome based that we don't realize when the music is actually taking place these are your objectives. Somehow you have to get them to think more like you. Because we are thinking creatively, aesthetically, musically... most of your choral people are not. If things aren't well in rehearsal, I will stop them and ask them "why did I stop you?" And if they can't answer they don't know what their responsibility is, and I haven't taught them what their responsibility is. I am very much an advocate for responsibility. They know. I often will ask, "why are we stopping?" and the hands go up. And that could be a very simple thing. Just asking a question like "what are we doing here?" And they might look at you like "I don't know what we're doing" because they don't know.

T: Well, they're only tapping into one dimension of the artistry.

H: Or zero dimensions! It could be that you might want to look into some resources on personal awareness. What does it mean to get people to pay attention. It could be that their attention is not on the right things.

T: So, you just mentioned resources on personal awareness. Did you have any recommendations based on the workshops you did?

H: Yes. *The Power of Now*. Eckhart Tolle. It doesn't relate necessarily to team building and responsibility, but you'll learn something about brain science, neuroscience. That's where I would go with some of this.

T: Well, yes! Actually, quite a few of my sources, aside from the acting texts, were those. Because it's all steeped in play and creativity and the neuroplasticity that's built

H: Right, and awareness and responsibility. We are getting into areas that people just don't talk about. Leadership, teambuilding, responsibility, awareness...and I think choral directors who are successful don't know how to reverse engineer their success. They couch it under "you're so charismatic." Well, there is also science about that. How do you teach that? How do you reverse engineer it to share it with other people? These are techniques that lead us to a much more rewarding and aesthetically pleasing performance. Choral directors are very secretive. Once they figure out how to do it, they don't necessarily share it.

T: Now, going back to your workshops, were they lecture based, or did you have exercises?

H: I did have exercises and excerpts and rehearsal techniques.

T: Did any of them include any of the Stanislavsky things?

H: No, because the Stanislavsky thing was about studying the gesture of conducting.

T: So, your Stanislavski application never left the conducting discussion?

H: No. There is a link there which I think you could easily explore. If you keep going with this, the sky's the limit. No one is talking about this...you'd be a pioneer on the prairie with some of this. Seriously, it would give you a whole life or career on it that no one else is doing.

T: I'm actually not thinking about this at the collegiate level, although I'm sure it could be beneficial...I'm thinking about these games and exercises for kids who are 11, 12 and getting into the teen years where they're like "who am I?" and really, it baffles me that we allow musicians, except for orchestral and wind musicians, to be picked up and put in a varsity choral situation. That would never happen with an actor. You play semesters of games.

H: And its sequential.

T: It's sequential in performance, but not always sequential in technique because when you're playing the game all sides of the artistry are being developed. Often times in music were like "let's do sightreading, now let's do dynamics..." and it's like, going through those things automatically makes the person who has never been in choir never want to open their mouth. So, some of this is more geared toward a younger audience. I think that maybe it's true that they would be more receptive to it. But, I think people have to see it. I think a lot of people are skeptical because ultimately, it's not efficient.

H: Exactly. Well, it's how you prioritize time. People incorporate music theory and all sorts of things into their choral rehearsal. You're not talking about taking an entire rehearsal to do this. There could be ways of warming up the mind. I really believe that if your choral rehearsal is after 11AM do you really need to warm up the voice? Are there ways to do other kinds of acting warm-ups, that might get people loosened up and focused? You go to an acting class and everyone is wearing comfortable shoes and clothing cause you're going to move your body. You're going to do things. A good acting class is active, not passive. Choral classes are passive for the most part. And so, you're talking about engaging and focusing and those kinds of things...

Hebert admitted that it is doubtful that one could measure the benefits of Stanislavski's exercises on conductors. I asked him about this:

T: One thing that you mentioned in the article, you said, "the ability to measure the physical quantifiable benefits of acting methods (on conducting) is doubtful."

H: Yeah, I think that's true.

T: If you were to put your finger on a reason for why that is, what is the first thing that comes to mind? There are few that come to mind for me, but I'm wondering if there are ways around it.

H: Well, what are you thinking, because I could be missing something?

T: I am thinking that there are scientific elements to everything, but acting is not the same science as music because we're talking about everyone being the same. We're talking about a more exact thing, but the actor is not often asked to be so exact in the way a *group* musician is.

H: Well, I think there is a parallel in that your singers should have some space for spontaneity.

T: For sure! I agree!

H: And acting, dance, and music are recreated art forms. You have to recreate them every single time you do it. They're not going to come out the same each time. But most people think it does. And so most people will do it exactly the same way. Well, that creates a stale performance.

T: Robotic.

H: Yes, what we're looking for is organic, spontaneous. We're looking for something that sounds alive. Something that is organic and alive has a mind of its own. It has some wiggle room to do something we've never done before in very subtle ways. Young kids will feel very unsettled if you do something totally different in performance. But I am of the mindset that there is room in every recreation of music to do something different. In that case, it's on a larger scale than an actor. Actors have more control as an individual, but there are some moments in music, maybe more than we think. Those are lessons you have to teach in your choral rehearsal. This is what actors do! They respond to the moment as the moment comes. And sometimes they get a curve ball. A lot of people are afraid of that kind of spontaneity. A-type personality choral directors want it to be the same every time. That's boring.

T: Where I was going with this is when you're working with individuals which, when you're talking about the Stanislavski stuff for individual conducting students, I feel like it would be easier to see the differences because you're working with the individual. With the choir, were you thinking in your statement that the aural benefits of how the conductor prepares versus how the choir responds, that that is more difficult to measure using the acting method?

H: Well because you can't see the individual. You can't experience what the individual is emitting and emoting.

T: So, then does the ensemble need to keep a journal or have an opportunity to reflect on what has happened?

H: Possibly. Maybe. Because you're only going to get it in the form of feedback. You might be able to do a case study about two different choirs with two different conductors, and you get a survey of some kind. I don't know. I wouldn't know enough about that and how to quantify it. So, I think feedback from singers if you're doing a research project... "what is your perception of the music that is happening?" And figure out how to quantify a particular question would have to come from each individual singer giving you feedback as to what you're trying to answer. You're talking about stuff that is what we are going to perceive. That's hard, but that's what a researcher does. How are we going to get that information.

T: And it could be that people write one thing, but what we heard was not what happened.

H: Exactly. They might think it was the most wonderful thing they'd ever heard, but musically it was crap. So, it's hard to say, because your average singer is often on a different planet than the director. What we're talking about, essentially, is how do you bring the two worlds closer together? It all goes back to the lack of training. I've never had a class in leadership and team building and thinking creatively like this?

T: Did you ever do any acting?

H: Never. But I taught at the Governor's school, a public boarding school in South Carolina. Our viola teacher and our acting teacher were best friends. And we would sit around and talk about these things all the time. "What are you doing here?" and "oh we could do this!" and "I could do this in my choral rehearsal!" And some of them did workshops together, with string players and acting. And Simon Fisher, that article I told you about, making music through the techniques of an actor. So, you could take it one step further, and figure out how to do that in a group context...This is how this whole thing got started. What is the ultimate goal? The ultimate goal is to destroy the ego. Basically. That's what a good acting teacher does. The ego can be thrown out the window and you get this amazing honest performance. So how do you destroy the ego in the choral context? That's hard.

T: That's well said.

H: And very few people would be interested in this. A lot of choral directors will roll their eyes at you. "We've got notes and rhythms to learn, we've got a performance."

T: I think our current culture is screaming for it, but they don't know how to do it. Everyone is advocating for change. Dismantle the hierarchies. Some of this is beneficial, and yet in the performing arts we still need leadership, so how do we do this?

H: And we need people who are thinking on the forefront of these kinds of things. I feel honestly like ACDA and a lot of the organizations have lost their footing. I am all about diversity and inclusion and all social justice. I love all of this. But I think the thing that we are talking about this morning is where we need to go. How do you create a compelling experience for a choral singer, a deep aesthetic experience? Because we as artists are unpacking meaning. And you've just stumbled on a very important question: how do we extract more of what we're doing? And that's a good question to start unpacking because a lot of people aren't paying attention to those questions.

T: Well, I cannot thank you enough! Thank you so much for this! It's inspiring to have these discussions.

H: Absolutely, well keep thinking! And you're great, cause you keep stumbling across something that you're noticing. Keep thinking deeply about what you're doing. Find that link between the two things you're passionate about- acting and choral music. And there will be something to discover there that is going to be very compelling, informative, and

practical for young teachers and young people. You just have to keep thinking as you're chewing on these ideas more.

T: Thank you so much!<sup>98</sup>

As the reader can ascertain, this conversation with Dr. Hebert centered mostly on *leadership* and *responsibility*. Like Estill, Hebert facilitates discussions with choristers leading with the question “what do you hear?” This question is asking choristers to closely examine what they are *actually* hearing as a way of training them in responsibility. Such a question can prompt a conversation about how they might contribute to the choir's sound. He encourages conductors to teach their students the norms needed for this kind of growth, but before that can happen, conductors must experience this kind of observation themselves. Hebert's ideas for Stanislavski in choral conducting aim to draw the conductor's focus toward deeper connectivity.

In the interview, he addressed two common terms in theater methodology: *embodiment* and *awareness*. When an actor becomes aware—really watching, really listening—it is just the beginning of understanding how much responsibility they have, and that everything they do matters as an individual. Even in a group setting. Stanislavski, Meisner and Spolin acting curriculums specifically teach young actors to deal with and dispel what Dr. Hebert describes above as “baggage.” Though this baggage can be technique and preparation related, there are other kinds of baggage that hinder artistic growth, and affect confidence and the senses such as ego, imposter syndrome, the “inner judge,” and anxiety of all kinds. To get past these, actors must give themselves over to new norms in the classroom or rehearsal hall—in the theater, exercises and games are designed specifically to solve these issues and train the brain to develop long term focus that leads to acute awareness. Hebert's recommendations for choral conductors

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<sup>98</sup> Ryan Hebert, interview.

to practice Stanislavski is compelling, yet as he mentions above, there is no sure way to quantify the effects. This conclusion is born from the fact that there is no record (other than Tom Carter's curriculum) of anyone having attempted to quantify the effects. Hebert ultimately did not record any acting experiments with his choral conducting students, but his deep dive into Stanislavski methods allowed him to see the deficit of responsibility and leadership in his own choral experiences. Responsibility and leadership are fundamentals that actors learn through these acting methods, and there is a strong possibility that vocal pedagogy can be taught through theater game models.

### **4.3: Meisner Application in Music**

Each Meisner text I reviewed offers exercises that could be musically modified for singers to explore their craft like an actor. Meisner's Repetition Exercise as well his inspiring discussions on human "doing" and directives to observe the truth to refine the senses, are starting points from which correlations between actors and musicians can be made. Meisner practitioner, Nick Mosely, focusses on the roots of the Meisner method to develop extension exercises. I am inspired by his extensions, knowing that the exercises—Mosely says— "recondition the habits."<sup>99</sup> Actors, singers, all performing artists in their younger years tend to produce unhealthy habits. Meisner and Mosely's language clarifies that the exercises are specific for instilling a change in the way the actor sees, hears, and responds. These are critical aspects of music making, especially for young musicians.

In the same way that he posited correlations between Stanislavski and Dalcroze, Andrew Davidson wrote another article entitled "The Listening Actor: Intersections Between the Musicality of Meisner Technique and Ear Training in Dalcroze Eurhythmics." He reminds the

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<sup>99</sup> Mosely, *Meisner in Practice*, 8.

reader that responsive listening is a shared practice between Meisner and Dalcroze in that both “cultivate responsiveness by training impulse, instinct, and intuition...The student of either practice ends up experiencing *sensation before abstraction, reacting before rationalizing, and doing before thinking.*”<sup>100</sup> After making these connections, Davidson does not offer any hybrid or new practices for actors or musicians in a rehearsal setting, but instead points his audience toward distinct Dalcroze, Stanislavski, and Meisner activities that aid in artistic development which can broaden performing artists’ technical and emotional awareness.

#### **4.3.1: Steven Dahlke and Meisner Repetition for Choir**

The only instance I have found in my research that yielded a musically modified theater exercise for choristers that functions in the same manner as it does for actors is Steven Dahlke’s application of Meisner’s Repetition Exercise. In his article, *Once More with Feeling: Enhancing Expression in Choral Singing with Meisner’s Repetition Exercise*, Dahlke mentions that when using theater games and team building activities on choir retreats, he realized that he often overlooks the emotional side of vocal expression with his choristers.<sup>101</sup> He explains how Meisner’s Repetition Exercise can be used to help choristers find more artistic connection in the music. He gives an example: “Try to sing one note to any student and encourage them to mimic your singing. A teacher can do this by singing any note on an open vowel and extending an arm with an upward palm toward a student as if to say, “Now you.”<sup>102</sup> He calls this gesture an “inviting gesture.” He then offers some tips for performing this exercise such as snapping to keep

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<sup>100</sup> Mosely, 16-17.

<sup>101</sup> Steven Dahlke, “Rehearsal Break: Once More with Feeling: Enhancing Expression in Choral Singing with Meisner’s Repetition Exercise,” *The Choral Journal* 60, no. 7 (2020): 67.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 71

the beat, or singing on the first three beats and then presenting the inviting gesture for the other singer on beat four.<sup>103</sup> Dahlke says,

When students know they are only mimicking and are motivated to respond promptly because of the meter, inhibition in singing will grow. It works well for the instructor to model this mimicking at first, but students can quickly take leadership. For example, one student may begin the singing of one note, and it can be passed from one student to the another, all around the room.<sup>104</sup>

This shared leadership aspect is prominent in Meisner's method and is the exact application that I seek to initiate with my choristers. Dahlke suggests passing a simple vocal phrase from singer to singer in partners or as a large group to establish melodic memory and strengthen emotional content associated with melodic material. Another recommendation is for choristers to experiment with expressive body language to establish connections between physical and vocal expression.<sup>105</sup> Having students perform the exercise in pairs or having students pass an improvised musical tune with a chain of responses around the room and then entering a discussion about how students feel gives students agency and ownership in their learning.<sup>106</sup>

Each time Dahlke has employed the Repetition Exercise he says the results are "extraordinary and immediate."<sup>107</sup> He notes the process,

While doing the Repetition Exercise, students observed aspects of breathing, and reported what they saw. Immediately after experiencing the exercise, the students articulated clearly and in detail how the exercise induced a deep and smooth emotional connection among participants. They were able to enunciate how the group connection illuminated their understanding of an efficient breath cycle and its place in effective tonal onset, *sostenuto*, and release.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Dahlke, 71

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 71-72

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>106</sup> This is a similar concept to another theater game called *Chase*, which I have musically modified. Examples appear in Chapter 6.

<sup>107</sup> Dahlke, 74.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

The spontaneity achieved with Dahlke's work is the same kind of spontaneity and flexibility that Meisner teaches his actors in his text *Sanford Meisner On Acting*, therefore Dahlke's application can be viewed as successful musical modification. When choristers are prompted to really listen and are given the space to articulate the *how* and *why* and *what* is happening when singing, they are showing evidence of improving effective performance habits.

Like Tom Carter, Dahlke seeks more expressive connectedness from his choristers and has certainly achieved this. I seek to go further and posit that, in addition to this musical application of Meisner's exercise, other singing games that stem from this partner-based exploration model can help solidify not only an emotional and relational connection but also may help solidify vocal technique and function.

#### **4.3.2: Jillian Paige and *Meisner in Music***

New York based Meisner teacher, Jillian Paige, co-founded an acting studio for singers called Meisner in Music. Along with several colleagues, she coaches solo singers (mostly musical theater performers) through Meisner's acting exercises and vocal technique. Hers is another example of acting methods used to unlock expressiveness. Still, I interviewed her in hopes that our discussion would clarify her process and possibly give way to ideas for engaging group singers using Meisner's method.

Paige believes singers will sing better if they learn in a safe, exploratory environment and are encouraged to get out of their own way. She said, "I created this [Meisner in Music] because I felt that singers needed a solid acting technique, but what has been extraordinary about this is the vocal freedom lining up of technique that happens when we get out of our own ways."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Jillian Paige, Zoom interview by Tyler Todd Kimmel, July 29, 2020, transcript available on Tyler Todd Kimmel's computer, Burién, WA.

Her process simultaneously trains students how to work out the analytical and creative parts of their craft, including vocal technique and emotional connection. At one point, she explained how much of her work includes helping students access both sides of their brains during rehearsal and performance:

J: Do you know Laura Reilly? She said “you never hear someone say I’m going to manipulate my fingers on my instrument now, you hear them say ‘I’m going to play my instrument.’” Manipulation is left brained, while play suggests a degree of freedom which is right brained, but we have to learn both otherwise the play will have no structure. So of course you have to learn your song as a technician. The truth about humans is that we think we can multi-task, but there is an idea called cognitive inhibition that our brains can only choose to be creative and empathetic or analytical, so when we’re analyzing what our instrument is doing, we have literally closed off the neuropathways that’s being creative and empathetic. I firmly believe that we have to separate the two, and then trust like an athlete, that I’ve done the analytical work on my instrument and I’m a technician in that regard, and now I have to close that off and go toward creativity and empathy and our brains especially as creatives with that openness to experience, we see the whole picture! Someone who is not right brain dominant would look at a brick and say “that’s a brick” but a left-brain dominant person could look at the brick and say “that could be a dolls bed, or a weapon” so we have to train our brains, and Meisner does a beautiful job of training that crazed “I see everything” into “I just see what I’m doing” and just listening to what I need to respond to.<sup>110</sup>

What Paige has ultimately described is taking students through a process that helps them understand what they need to focus on. Since I am working with young students, I anticipated that my own students would be averse or uncomfortable exploring techniques the way Meisner and Spolin do, therefore, I asked Paige about her experiences with students who are unwilling to participate in the exercises:

J: I have taken this to younger kids. With middle and high school, they have not been willing to go there. But these are one day workshops, where I’m a guest teacher, they don’t trust me, and they’re trying in an environment where they are trying to show off for their friends... its interesting how they talk to each other when they’re in the audience and then they come up to me and they’re rigid. I wonder, in the current academic structure we have, there almost has to be a “breaking down” of what they have learned to

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<sup>110</sup> Jillian Paige, interview.

be true before they're ready for Meisner, because it's not pleasant...For middle schoolers, the coping mechanism is to shut down. I wonder if teaching the kids to honor the art... you can joke and be yourself, but when we're in choir we need to learn how to honor and respect.

T: In re-reading the Meisner transcription, I remember the part when he asks a student to leave his class. Now, the kid was in his 20's, and he knew it wasn't for him. I'm not a fan of how Meisner asked him to leave, but I do wonder about this situation. How have you dealt with this?

J: I have had phone conversations with people before (I don't want things to be misconstrued in email), but if someone is problematic, I'll hop on a call and see what's going on...I think that if we don't at least get more artists, we get more empathetic people. I will tell you I have been taking Meisner with my first teacher, and I asked him how he is teaching Meisner to secondary kids, and he said from 6th to 8th grade they are just pills, they're great until 5th grade and then in middle school its crazy. Around 9th grade some are responsive again. Like with religion, I wonder if you grow up with one set of beliefs and then break it down and then come back to what your adult self believes. I hope not, I hope we can be open beings, but I think with art you have to do it rigid and then realize it isn't working. I have made the mistake before of jumping right in. Ego can get in the way. I have a mantra "I am safe, I am full, I am enough." We talk about how "you" are doing as a human today. We are all in this together. The times I have neglected to say that, not a lot of good stuff gets done.

T: So, you might not be able to start doing these exercises until the empathy building has begun?

J nods her head.

T: I wonder if there needs to be a whole month of getting used to a norm, "how are you today?" or starting on a level of the complete foundation of Meisner without using his name. Like reverse psychology.

J: I wonder if you could just set the precedent early on, "we're here for open up, and if you're not down for that, this might not be the right class for you."

T: What do you do with a kid who is like that? Or multiple kids who are like that? If they don't engage in the exercises? Do you let them go? Have you encountered anything with your students where it doesn't work?

J: I think Meisner is for everyone, but not everyone is ready for Meisner. I have had egos come in. I have a code-of-conduct "look this might not be for your toolbox, but I need you to be open-minded and bear with me, I welcome questions, but not negativity about

the technique. The call to action - we are about empathy and opening up. You are called... and then that makes it about them stepping up to the plate.<sup>111</sup>

This part of our discussion was helpful because it yielded two things: first, that one-day workshops are not enough time for Meisner material and procedures to take effect, and therefore whatever I devise (in the manner that Stanislavski, Meisner and Spolin all suggest) needs to be practiced over long periods of time. Secondly, setting norms and creating a welcoming, encouraging environment where students can be authentic is crucial for developing trust, which must happen if training programs like Meisner's (and Paige's) are to be effective.

Again, though my goal is not emotional connectedness, a choral rehearsal environment that shifts from a traditional model will undoubtedly cause choristers to feel vulnerable in new ways, especially if they are asked to sing exposed with another partner or small group. Paige has not musically modified Meisner technique for her singers, but her own procedures, based on Meisner's philosophy, have been useful for processing Meisner terminology and ideas for my choristers, and for creating the proper environment for students to explore their voices in a non-traditional way.

#### **4.4: Spolin Application in Music**

In 2020, a wind band conductor named Devin Otto, wrote an article called "An Interdisciplinary Conducting Curriculum: Selected Theater Games from Viola Spolin's 'Improvisation for the Theater.'" Otto acknowledges that several interdisciplinary teaching methods already exist in conducting curriculums, but that few are published that prove their efficacy.<sup>112</sup> Also, many conducting texts aid conductors in their understanding and personal

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<sup>111</sup> Jillian Paige, interview.

<sup>112</sup> Devin Otto, "An Interdisciplinary Conducting Curriculum: Selected Theater Games from Viola Spolin's 'Improvisation for the Theater,'" SAGE Open, 10 (4), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020954927>.

exploration with the craft, but there is a lack of conducting methodology regarding expression and how it manifests itself as communication in the body.

In his 2008 dissertation, “Conductor as Actor: A Collaborative Method of Training Conductors Through Dynamic Muscularity,” Donald Jay Running concluded that conductors who studied acting techniques at the start of their training did not improve their gesture beyond what is normally achieved in a standard conducting curriculum.<sup>113</sup> Conversely, Otto put forth that Spolin’s games may be more conducive for conducting curriculums since her games offer a unique environment and are played in short amounts of time with distinct goals. According to Otto, to date, no one has conducted a study using theater games in a musical setting, nor has anyone musically modified theater games for choristers. Otto writes that if theater games and other applied acting methods are to be accepted as interdisciplinary pedagogy, a study will need to demonstrate the benefits of their application.<sup>114</sup>

After his own look into Spolin’s games and correlating their relevance to conducting, Otto recommended that a resource on select theater games for conductors may be advantageous. His recommendation is for conductors to experience playing select theater games to unlock their awareness and broaden their understanding of the range of their expressiveness and potential gestures. Not every game is useful, but specific chapters focusing on “Character” (pp. 233–254), “Emotion” (pp. 219–232), and “Acting with the Whole Body” (pp. 135–144) include games that Otto believes are useful, especially if the conductor/player is willing to play and explore. He concludes his article with these observations:

Viola Spolin’s theater games are adaptable to a variety of educational situations, enjoyable for players of all ages and ability levels, and offer immediate feedback and growth to the participants. They stimulate creativity and problem-solving, and perhaps

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<sup>113</sup> Otto, 10.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

most importantly, require the players to be focused, intuitive, and present in the moment, the importance of which cannot be overstated for beginning and experienced conductors alike. Although this is certainly not the only possible method for fostering expressive gesture in conductors, theater games have much to offer, and their potential for stimulating student growth in emotive conducting and engaging rehearsal techniques is nearly limitless.<sup>115</sup>

To show the parallel observations that Otto and I share, I could replace the words *conductor* or *conducting* with the words *chorister* and *singing*. He does not mention anything about the theater games being musically or gesturally modified to include elements of conducting (pattern, posture, breathing, etc.), but this is the direction that I am taking with my choristers. In his study, Otto suggests that graduate conductors could benefit from playing theater arts games to unlock spontaneity and expressiveness. However, in a similar fashion to my ideas, Otto's article describes the benefits of Spolin's game designs, in that they are accessible, easy to learn, played in a short amount of time, and they encourage and can improve communication skills.

#### **4.4.1: Mirror Singing Already in Practice**

Since 2014, an organization called *Folk Song Lab*, based out of Stockholm, Sweden, has cultivated an ongoing music collaboration with folk singers who explore new models for improvisation and traditional folk singing. One of their methods is called *Mirror Singing*. The lab's description of this method is as follows:

Mirror singing means that someone leads the improvisation while the other simultaneously mimics, i.e., sing simultaneous with the lead singer. By gradually building up the interaction from a few improvised tones to complex phrases and sequences through interaction with movement, it turns out that even those unfamiliar with the ideas relatively quickly follow almost simultaneously. It can be seen as an exercise in following, leading, and releasing man's unique ability to mirror each other, acting together. It can be said that, in many ways, it is reminiscent of old choral singing as it is

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<sup>115</sup> Otto, 10.

described in testimony and appears in parish songs. There is also a scientific discussion in neurology if we have neurons with this particular function, so-called mirror neurons, and perhaps this form of singing is an expression of our ability to directly reflect the behavior of others. “Mirror Singing” can also be a joint artistic creation. It has been performed on occasion on stage, both in public and with the audience.<sup>116</sup>

Though Spolin is not credited, *Folk Song Lab* shares a similar purpose for *Mirror Singing* as Spolin’s *Mirror Game Series*. Both aim to develop the skill of co-created improvisation between players/singers. *Folk Song Lab*’s mention of choral traditions reminds the reader that the common goal for large singing group to work together as one, and that methods like mirror singing can enhance the senses for greater synchronization with others. My own ideas for *Mirror Singing* stem from the science mentioned here, not for song improvisation but for hyper-sensitivity in the spontaneous altering of one’s vocal contributions for synchronization with other choristers. The human ability to mimic allows more possibilities for learning and applying through deep observation.

#### **4.5: Musical Games Inspired by Theater Arts Improvisation**

Seattle born saxophonist, teacher and author, Steve Treseler, devised a series of musical improv games inspired by the way theater improvisation artists play games when they rehearse. He studied with W.A. Mathieu, a composer, pianist, author, and first musical director of The Second City.<sup>117</sup> Mathieu led improvising musicians to accompany improvised theater performances. Steve performs and leads creative music workshops around the United States and is the founder of the Game Symphony Workshop, helping musicians unlock creativity through

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<sup>116</sup> “Folk Song Lab,” last updated March 13, 2023, <https://folksonglab.com/skuggsjungning-shadowsinging/>.

<sup>117</sup> The Second City is a 65-year-old comedy organization based out of Chicago, Toronto, New York and Hollywood that offers training to youth and adult actors and provides entertainment for corporate partners, wellness and education programs, television, and film.

group improvisation.<sup>118</sup> He writes, “The purpose of musical games is not to generate a polished product, but to make musicians feel safe, adventuresome, and confident in the creative process.”<sup>119</sup> Though unmentioned, Mathieu’s goals echo what Stanislavski, Meisner, and Spolin have said of their own work. Inspired by the community aspect created from these theatrical environments, Treseler has created his own curriculum, some of which included ideas from Mathieu, composer and improv artist John Zorn, and composer and *Game Symphony Workshop* facilitator, Kaley Lane Eaton. In an email exchange, I told Treseler I was interested in his teaching process and asked him how he created his games and how to play them. He replied:

Yes, I use games all the time, mostly to build community through improvisation, creativity, and also for skill development. Many are adapted from improv theater games, which are much more interactive and community-centered than mainstream jazz pedagogy.<sup>120</sup>

On his website, *Infinite Improv*, he shares the roots of his program in an introductory video:

This all started when I was frustrated with the status of jazz improvisation pedagogy. Often frontloaded with theory and technical exercises that overwhelm students and sometimes never get to the creative part, so I began gathering teaching approaches that are non-intimidating, community based, and help students build skills throughout the process...what Infinite Improvisation provides isn’t confined to one kind of music, so whether you want to level up your jazz playing, or find your voice as a song writer, composer, or digital music producer, creative practices will allow you to channel your skills, experience, and culture into an endless flow of musical ideas.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Treseler, *10 Improvisational Games for Ensembles*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>120</sup> Steve Treseler, email message from author, March 26, 2024.

<sup>121</sup> Steve Treseler, “Infinite Improvisation,” 2023, <https://www.infiniteimprovisation.com/>.

He offers free materials and links to his own books on the website, including a PDF of his games which he sent me in our email exchange. In his handbook he writes that fear and anxiety are the biggest roadblocks to creative music making:

The fears of being put on the spot, making a mistake, public embarrassment, not knowing what to play, and being judged are related to our fear of social rejection. This fear runs deep in our biology – it activates the same neural alarm system as a physical threat. This is why public speaking or performance can feel so terrifying even though they're not actually dangerous.<sup>122</sup>

Essentially, he is reiterating one of the benefits of Stanislavski, Meisner and Spolin's philosophies: training concentration in its varieties will help deal with these issues.

Concentration can be trained through activities, like the previously mentioned Stanislavski exercises, but also by focusing on the other person (as Meisner suggests), and by focusing on the problem (as Spolin added).

Treseler's games each have a goal, though they are not explicitly stated as in Spolin's game models. He gave me permission to duplicate them in this dissertation as examples of how his games work. His explanations are concise and revolve around two principles similar to those found in Spolin's games: connection and focus. He writes:

Collaborative games and activities solve the anxiety problem in two important ways:

- **Connection** – Community-building activities align the practice of improvisation with our deep-seated need for social connection and acceptance. When we have fun making music with our friends, the fight-or-flight response melts away.
- **Focus** – Attainable and novel challenges drive our focus into the present moment.

Too little stimulation leads to boredom, and too much challenge evokes anxiety. Choosing the right game or activity can hit the sweet spot of exhilarating, fully-

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<sup>122</sup> Treseler, *10 Improvisational Games for Ensembles*, 3.

focused flow. Research shows this level of focus shuts off the brain's inner critic.<sup>123</sup>

Example 5 shows selections from Treseler's game handbook entitled *10 Improvisation Games for Ensembles*. I chose to include games 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9 because they represent models and goals that most closely exemplify my own ideas for environment and musician engagement.

### **Example 5: Selections from Treseler's *10 Improvisation Games for Ensembles***

#### **1. Ribbon Game from W. A. Mathieu**

- Arrange the ensemble in an arc or circle
- Designate a starting musician to play/sing a single note (any pitch)
- Moving clockwise around the circle, musicians take turns playing single notes,
- weaving together an improvised melody
- Continue through several cycles

Variations:

- Check In
  - Each musician gives a spoken introduction and then plays a single note that expresses how they are feeling in the moment
- Ordered Cartoon Trades (from John Zorn's game piece Cobra)
  - Ribbon game with silly or novelty sounds
- Pulse
  - Ribbon game in tempo, each musician plays a quarter note
- Two Notes
  - Pulse ribbon game, each musician plays two eighth notes
- Morphing Chorale
  - Pulse ribbon game, each musician enters at forte and gradually fades out so four to five musicians are playing together
- Timed
  - Set a stopwatch and time how fast the ensemble can complete one (or several) cycles of a ribbon melody

#### **2. THX - A musical impression of the THX trailer from the movies.**

- Begin with soft noodling/warm up sounds and gradually transition to a fortissimo concert D over 20-30 seconds
- The noodling sounds and concert D should overlap in the middle

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<sup>123</sup> Treseler, *10 Improvisational Games for Ensembles*, 3.

- Gradual crescendo throughout

### 3. **We Are the Score** - from Dr. Kaley Lane Eaton, composer and Game Symphony Workshop facilitator.

- Arrange the ensemble in an arc or circle
- Musicians may choose to sit, stand, or sit with a raised hand
- Each musician represents one beat of a musical score:
  - Seated musicians are quarter notes
  - Standing musicians are two eighth notes
  - Musicians with a raised hand are quarter rests
- Designate a starting musician
- Count off a tempo, and everyone claps the rhythm in unison, visually scanning clockwise around the circle
- Continue through several cycles
- Play/sing the rhythm in unison or with a predetermined set of pitches

#### Variations

- Musicians who sit on the floor are three eighth note triplets
- Musicians may change positions/rhythmic values in the middle of the game

### 5. **Free Conducting** from Walter Thompson's *Soundpainting* (Shapeline gesture)

- Ask for a volunteer conductor
- The ensemble musically responds to every motion, gesture, and facial expression of the conductor
- The conductor can dance, pantomime, and use props.

### 9. **Channel Surfing**

- Give a volunteer conductor an imaginary remote control
- Each musician is a T.V. channel and plays unaccompanied when directed by the remote
- Only one musician plays at a time
- You may need to describe what life was like before YouTube and Netflix

#### Variation

- Two conductors and remote controls<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Treseler, *10 Improvisational Games for Ensembles*, 4-7.

The reader can see opportunities for students share leadership and develop agency by playing these games; this happens when students are asked to play any pitch or sound they want, take turns leading, respond to creative prompts, and respond to what they hear. Like in Spolin's games, variations add a challenge or new focus once a concept has been learned.

Treseler incorporates play and exploration into his teaching that stems from lasting influences of Stanislavski, Meisner, and Spolin. It also, as previously mentioned, is seen in Dalcroze and other music educators mentioned above who have seen merit in learning skill through exploration. The reader may notice that those who are attracted to this kind of teaching are less concerned with a final product, and mostly concerned with a process that produces a mindset which leads to more confidence, creativity, and ownership. Though I am not teaching my students to improvise for jazz music, all theater games, and consequently Treseler's music games (and my own), seek to teach the foundation of improvisation which Spolin defines as *spontaneity*. An actor's ability to be spontaneous means they are ready for anything; ready to give, receive, listen, and respond with a sense of awareness and change. Treseler's work contributes to the search for these attributes, and is a major inspiration for my own work, and an example of how teaching skills through theater-inspired games is successful.

### **Conclusion**

While not all information gathered directly impacts my research, this review has been necessary to note shared philosophy and integration potential. Whether a suggestion or practical application, the reader can see between Carter, Hebert, Dahlke, Paige, Otto, and Treseler that their instances for integrating theater practices with music are an alternative and positive way for dispelling unwanted tension and distractions while unlocking more creativity and deeper connection to the music. Johnson's 2019 dissertation offers Stanislavski techniques for pianists

to prepare their bodies for intense concentration and dealing with nervousness. Her dissertation is also an indication of how underapplied these applications are in the United States, since Russian pianists through the twentieth century had long been impacted by Stanislavski's work.

Between his two articles, Andrew Davidson shows that Dalcroze, Stanislavski, and Meisner (and consequently, Spolin) share the belief that performers should have time and space to work out their artistry before they encounter repertoire. If young musicians are given pedagogy that builds upon Dalcroze and Stanislavski's shared directives of *sensation before abstraction, reacting before rationalizing, and doing before thinking*, they are receiving a foundation for thinking wholistically about artistry, including technique. Therefore, this model, which has been echoed throughout this paper, is the driving force behind providing singers the time to explore sound and solve choral problems together, which will hopefully challenge them to initiate (take responsibility) as individuals and think and act (lead) like individuals as they contribute to their section and the whole choir.

If choristers are given this space, as Dr. Hebert and Devin Otto propose for individual conducting students, theater practices within musical situations may encourage more possibilities of ensemble building, ownership of skill and engagement. Hebert's mentioning the words *outcome* and *create* (as in co-creation) during our interview reminded me of the list of words on the whiteboard in Boers' ACT class at University of Washington; there can be many desired outcomes for a choral rehearsal. A musically satisfying experience is subjective, but Hebert's research is aligned with Stanislavski's conclusion that this process is ultimately about *the mental attitudes produced as a result of the work*, which can lead to satisfying and successful artistic experiences. Rather than a specific outcome, the exploration becomes a way of practicing (thinking or being) that over time *becomes* the musician.

Through Meisner training, actors are given the space and time to achieve the self-knowledge needed to apply his principles.<sup>125</sup> This concept of self-knowledge is essential for a group singer; it means they possess a certain artistic independence—a technical tool-belt for problem solving and unlocking more artistry in themselves and others. Dahlke’s application is a working example of the kind of iterations I am pursuing. While he admits that addressing the emotional connection with the Repetition Exercise can lead to vocal production improvement, I seek to purposefully narrow my study on improving vocal production. I choose this focus because it is not explicitly addressed in the research in this chapter. Meisner principles like *focusing on the other person*, and *really listening* drive each of my choral arts game designs.

Since Spolin games are accessible and fast, Otto’s recommendations for conductors offer an efficient way to explore artistry possibilities without losing copious amounts of time in a conducting class. Her games do not require anything other than a willingness from the conductors to play, and then enter a musical situation to gauge whether they found it useful for themselves. However, conclusions about this integration are personal and subjective. Like Hebert’s conclusions above, it may be difficult to quantify a conductor’s effectiveness in a rehearsal or performance unless there is direct feedback from the musicians who experienced that conductor before *and* after that conductor’s encounter with the games.

Hebert and Otto’s conclusions about acting method effectiveness for musicians raises questions for my own case study. Just how does one quantify the effects of a game or exercise on choristers? Supposing a conductor, or other non-acting performing artist applied acting techniques to their craft, one may ask how they can quantify whether they have been effective. Hebert assumes that it is doubtful to quantify acting method effectiveness with choristers. To

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<sup>125</sup> Dennis Longwell and Sanford Meisner, *Sanford Meisner On Acting* (New York: Random House, 1987), xviii-xix.

quantify these benefits or note their effects, choristers would have to verify that a certain gesture or expression caused them to sing differently. If so, then perhaps a researcher could conclude that a conductor had benefited from Stanislavski. However, there are many factors to consider, i.e., the willingness of the singers being conducted, and whether the conductor was intentionally applying something they learned from Stanislavski in those moments that choristers noted that they changed as a result of the communication. Questions arise regarding choristers understanding the instructions of the game, whether they have a willingness to consciously apply what they've learned (if they've learned it), and whether or not they carry what they've learned from games into subsequent situations. Answers will undoubtedly be subjective, but the only way to gauge if any of these methods can contribute to choral artistry is to devise a case study and gather data from students who have played games that teach technique in a choral environment.

Departing from suggestions that encourage musicians to play theater games and perform acting exercises in their original forms, I set out to design a case study that fuses environments pioneered by Stanislavski, Meisner, Spolin and musically modified versions from Dahlke and Treseler. With the *Folk Song Lab* having already established the benefits of *Mirror Singing* in their program, I expected these designs to be successful.

*Choral Arts Games* is a series of workshops that provide choristers with musically modified games that address vocal technique and require them to spontaneously use their musical knowledge to solve singing problems. Like theater games and exercises aid in actors' foundational sensory and physical technique, it is my hope that singing games will do the same for my choristers. The following chapter describes my case study model and workshop and preliminary game designs, which are an amalgamation of the theater practices listed above. Once

again, my goal for adapting theater games for singers is not to create a singing “actor” who sings with more expressiveness. Expressiveness, by Stanislavski, Meisner, and Spolin’s definitions, is a result of exploring, but it is not a starting goal. Because choral singing requires individual singers to work toward common goals like onsets, vocal quality, breath, intonation, vowels, diction, dynamics, and phrasing (to name a few), my intention is to initiate situations of exploration intended to help choristers develop ownership in these areas. Technique ownership is, therefore, the primary goal. However, since all areas of music fall under the larger category of artistry, these games could easily address many artistic facets (including expressive elements explored by aforementioned educators). Ownership may be accomplished with games that train the senses and require choristers to explore and problem solve together, in hopes that they can authentically perform with their own understandings, rather than only through imitation of the conductor. Exploration will happen in partners and groups within the choir, with the goal of producing a group of *leaders* who are aware of how to adapt spontaneously in live music situations with each other and the conductor.

# Chapter 5

## Methodological Framework, Procedures, and Devising the Study

### Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to methodology, procedures, and the preliminary ideas for my qualitative case study. The study's purpose is to examine the outcomes of middle and high school choristers exploring group singing in a theater arts-inspired environment. Exploration occurs through playing musically modified theater arts games, borrowed singing games, and co-creating new games to solve problems that arise in choral singing. To explore these outcomes, a case study was necessary.

### 5.1: Qualitative Methodology Design and Rationale

*Choral Arts Games* is a qualitative case study derived from research methods offered by John W. Creswell and Michael Crotty. Qualitative research is considered valid research. As put forth by Creswell in *Educational Research*, "A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. *Bounded* means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries."<sup>126</sup> In this study, all procedures were carried out with two choirs that I conduct at the same school over two class periods. Both choirs met in the same rehearsal space and were tasked with similar exploratory models. No other groups or comparative models were juxtaposed with my research.

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<sup>126</sup> John W Creswell and Timothy C Guetterman, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 6th ed. (Pearson Education Limited, 2019), pages, 465.

From Creswell, I borrowed the recommended format and data collection procedures for a *qualitative scientific approach*, in which I included detailed instructions, findings, and a discussion of those findings.<sup>127</sup> In concert with this format, I adopted a stance as an interpretivist researcher, as described by Michael Crotty in *The Foundations of Social Research*. An interpretivist researcher interacts with the research itself. This stance helped me learn from my data as it emerged during my workshops. Interpretivist roots come from hermeneutics which,

...assumes an affinity of some kind between text and reader—a commonality that provides a basis for the interpretation that is to emerge...Texts...are a means of transmitting meaning—experience, beliefs, values—from one person or community to another... included in hermeneutic theory is the prospect of gaining understanding of the text that is deeper or goes further than the author’s own understanding.’’<sup>128</sup>

Since I will rely on my chorister’s perspectives, their observations and their conclusions about our work, as well as my own, are crucial in my understanding this study’s effectiveness.

Additionally, Max Weber, who posited that human and social sciences are concerned with understanding, contrasted interpretivism from the explicative approach found in the natural sciences. Essentially, natural sciences tend to establish general laws, whereas cultural sciences trace the development of certain phenomena.<sup>129</sup> In my research, an interpretivist stance allowed me to trace its development to determine how the study should progress; this occurred through gathering and reflecting on data organically and spontaneously with my students. All data has led to clarifications, refinements, and realizations during and after exploration that help answer my research questions.

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<sup>127</sup> Creswell, 274-275.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (Sage Publications, 2014), 90-91.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

## 5.2: Institutional Review Board and Human Subjects Regulations

As stated in the introduction, the University of Washington Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Human Subjects Division determined my study as having “exempt status.” This means that my research is exempt from the federal human subjects regulations, including the requirement for IRB approval and continuing review. The process still required me to register my study with the UW because I interacted with minors. The necessary documentation including permissions, course-work certificates, and student contracts are included in the appendices of this dissertation.

In my desire to contribute a case study among pre-existing interdisciplinary practices involving theater methodology in music education, I formulated the following questions as a guide for exploring the outcomes of such an integration with theater and choral singing, primarily the outcomes of using theater games to teach vocal pedagogy and improve artistry (the italicized words drive these questions and my workshops):

- How does teaching group singing in a theater arts *environment* affect how my choristers learn?
- Can theater arts games be *musically modified* to help choristers solve singing problems?
- How does the application of choral arts games to repertoire *impact* the artistry of my choristers?

Creating a new *environment* within a traditional rehearsal setting requires specific instructions for students, this includes how they physically shifted themselves for play and exploration, i.e., how they stood with their partners or groups. *Musical modifications* required forethought to give my students and me something to follow in our experimentation. Spontaneously creating a game based on theater game procedures may come later as we become more comfortable with the process. I prepared how to introduce and teach games, how

sidecoaching should work, how traditional rehearsals would be paused to incorporate a game, and what chorister feedback looks like during this process. The *impact* on their artistry will be revealed as they explore the study directives when rehearsing repertoire.

### **5.3: Research Site and Convenience Sampling**

I chose to perform this study at Seattle Christian School in SeaTac, Washington because my position there as choir and theater director conveniently situated me to conduct my research during scheduled class time. Since this study did not require my students to commit to any part of this study outside of our regular daily rehearsals, it was convenient for them to participate.

### **5.4: Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

To work out the best possible designs and implementation for singing games, the study relied on purposeful sampling to demonstrate an ongoing refinement for game design and search for effectiveness. Data collection occurred in the following ways:

#### 1. Video Recordings:

- The majority of the data for this study has been collected through video recordings, capturing sessions wherein my students and I engage in vocal exercises, games, and discussions before, during, and after our explorative endeavors. These recordings were captured with my iPhone and iPad devices.

#### 2. Documents:

- Students maintained reflective journals wherein they responded to specific prompts and recorded their experiences following workshops.
- I took field notes throughout the study, capturing observations of student engagement and potential areas for refinement, including instructional strategies, game design elements, and implementation. These notes predominantly arose after viewing and transcribing sessions.

#### 3. Discussions:

- There were several points of discussion to clarify game procedures. These interactive conversations revealed how choristers were thinking about and defining our work.

#### 4. Interviews:

- I interviewed choral directors, theater practitioners, and two educators who have seen the merit of acting methods in choral instruction, one of which actively experiments with acting methods in music situations. These interviews were part of my preliminary research above.

#### 5. Focus Groups:

- Upon the culmination of the workshop series, I facilitated two distinct focus groups sessions comprised of six choristers from the middle school choir, and six from the high school choir. These twelve participants were selected to represent a diverse spectrum of skill levels, tenure in choir participation, and viewpoints accrued over the span of the eight-month study. My final questions gave them a chance to casually speak about and clarify their experiences further than their reflection journals and our workshops.

### **5.5: Researcher Roles and Potential Ethical Issues**

When I began preliminary research for this study in 2020, I was a part-time choir and theater director at Seattle Christian School and had just started as a full-time Doctor of Musical Arts student in Choral Conducting at the University of Washington. As a high school director, I observed closely how my theater students were growing more independently in their artistry than my choristers. In analyzing my two programs, I concluded that while both the learning environment and methodology for both subjects were affecting ownership of technique, my theater students had gained independence through play and problem solving which was naturally built into the curriculum. Student independence can be credited to their confidence and increased adaptability that was not as prominent in my choristers; thus, the reason for this study emerged and resulted in the findings presented in Chapter 6.

Within the study, I filmed workshops with my middle and high school choirs thirty-nine times over the course of eight months. Forty-one videos and transcriptions document our work together. In addition, I gave my students paper notebooks in which they answered questions and journaled their reflections about our process. I collected and recorded the journal contents after each session. Additionally, I kept my own journal and field notes (after each video), reflecting on ways I could refine our workshops. Select choristers also practiced in focus groups at the end of our exploration together.

### **5.6: Methods of Validation**

After each video-recorded workshop, I transcribed the videos and wrote reflections on my thoughts and ideas that emerged from each session. The videos are preserved on my iPhone and iPad. I occasionally audio-recorded using the VoiceMemos application on my iPhone when my iPad was not available. I digitally transcribed each of the hand-written reflections offered by my choristers in their journals. The physical journals are preserved and currently stored in my office; they were distributed to my students after certain workshop periods to record their perspectives. Their journals remain untouched other than my recording their responses. Focus groups were also fully transcribed.

Some behavior discussions or redundancy in teaching have been excluded from the transcripts and are marked by the words *transcription pause* or *transcription resumes* along with timestamps. Data that was not used in its entirety in this dissertation are preserved on my personal computer.<sup>130</sup> Each student and interviewee offered their consent and assent either in the form of a contract (for my choristers), or email verification (researchers and educators); these are

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<sup>130</sup> Video, journal, and focus group transcriptions are available upon request. Please contact Tyler Todd Kimmel at [ttkimmel@gmail.com](mailto:ttkimmel@gmail.com).

in the appendices of this dissertation. Once data collection was underway, I used the video and audio files and the digital transcriptions to codify my findings.

### **5.7: Coding**

Coding is a way of making sense of the data a researcher has collected. Creswell defines coding as data divided into text or image segments. Researchers often label segments with codes and examine them for overlap and redundancy, eventually collapsing them into broader themes.<sup>131</sup> It is an inductive process that results in narrowing data into a few major themes with minor themes to support. The process includes selecting specific data that acts as evidence for emerging themes and disregarding data that does not provide evidence.<sup>132</sup> Creswell writes,

...describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development. Not all qualitative projects include both description and themes, but all studies include at least themes.”<sup>133</sup>

I color-coded my transcriptions to note patterns and redundancy. Eventually, larger themes involving process, discussions, demonstrations, impacts, and reactions started to form. From there, sub themes were found based on the kind of discussions we had, behavioral issues, comprehension issues, and other outcomes of our workshops. The findings are presented in narrative form in which I discuss the themes and how they help answer my research questions.

### **5.8: Case Study Limitations**

Case studies offer a unique perspective because they incorporate the subjective views of participants, which often result in detailed reasoning for why, how, or what effect a certain

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<sup>131</sup> Creswell, 243.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 247.

phenomenon has had. Though the data collection process can be rich with detail and potentially reveal common themes and beliefs among participants that shape the continued course of the study, there are uncontrollable factors that may cause the researcher to conclude that the effectiveness of the phenomenon might not be entirely quantifiable. Some limiting factors that could arise during this study are:

- Responses in videos, journal reflections, and focus groups are subjective.
- My students may tailor their verbal and written responses to the researcher (me, their teacher), even if I ask them to tell the truth about their personal experience with our work. Since I work at a private Christian school (Seattle Christian School), where I have had many choristers in class for six years, I have had nine of them in my theater classes at the same time they have been in my choral program. Therefore, for them, this environment is familiar. I co-created the current choir and theater cultures with these students. While they do not receive a grade for participating in the study, they do view me as an authority, and our daily work is tied to elements that they are graded on, and it is likely that my students will want to perform well and please me.
- Case studies cannot always be replicated. This research provides working examples and advice for further research in these areas only. There is always a risk of generalizing the results for larger studies. To avoid generalizing in this study, my conclusions are based on the context of my own classroom only.

### **5.9: Timeline**

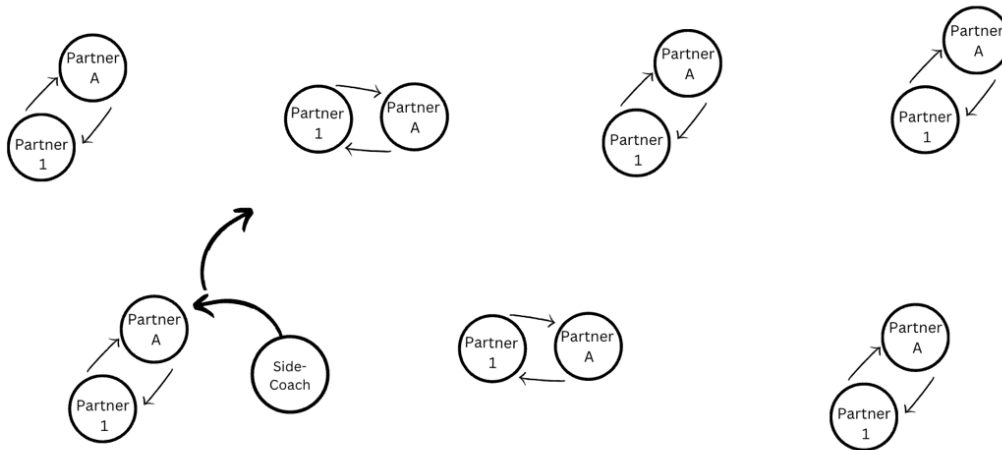
This study was conducted over eight months, between September 11, 2023, and April 11, 2024. By mid-March, 2024, my choristers had experimented with several game trials. Throughout March and April, we discussed refining them, naming them, and gauging their continued use and effectiveness in rehearsal.

### **5.10: Environment**

In a traditional choral setting, sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses usually have their own sections, divided by part or in mixed positions. Formations vary, but a semi-circle or raised rows

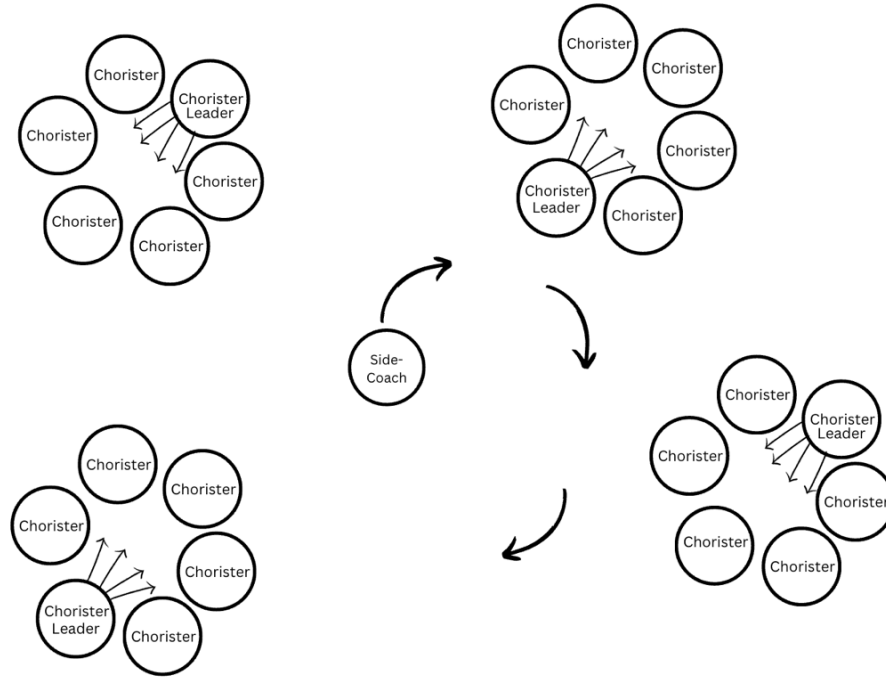
with the conductor at the focal point of the group is common. For choristers to play games with partners or groups, they will need to temporarily leave their traditional positions. Figure 5 shows a model for how choristers will pair-off for exploration.

**Figure 5: Partner Work Positions**



They will also split off into sections, passing leadership roles between each other. Figure 6 shows this model.

**Figure 6: Group/Section Work Positions**



Because theater games are exploratory and they are played whenever the teacher deems it appropriate to do so, there is also a certain flexibility in that games will organically evolve. While the preliminary environmental designs shown above are starting points, other models may arise from exploration. The intention is to model this in my instruction and give students the space (new positions) to explore.

### **5.11: Recalibrating Roles**

To recall previous discussions, it is common for conductors to do most of the talking, leading, and moving in a rehearsal, regardless of how engaged, collaborative, relational, or pedagogy-centered a conductor may be. However, chorister and conductor roles in choral arts

games allow students to focus on owning their vocal technique and their responsibility to each other in alternative, interactive ways. Acting teachers and actors normally sit or stand in a circle when learning games and exploring technique. When actors play together, the teacher often walks around to sidecoach each group. During in-class performance situations, the teacher may sidecoach in the performance space or from an audience-type environment with other actors who are observing. In any situation, theater arts environments are active, and actor and teacher positions and roles are frequently changing; this will be expected for my choristers and me as we redefine our roles and explore this new environment.

### **5.12: Defining a Game**

As explained in Chapter 1, the title of this dissertation is taken from Spolin's book title: *Theater Arts Games* replaced with the term *Choral Arts Games*. A game is often considered a competitive interaction between two or more people in which there are winners and losers; more specifically there may be strategies, incentives, rewards, and penalties. Games could also include physical objects, sequences, time limitations, and elimination. Still, other group games, including some of the theater games listed in Spolin's books are used to help energize or activate the senses. Brian Hoskins, a colleague of mine and choral director from Lindbergh High School in Renton, Washington responded to a question I asked via email regarding a general knowledge or personal application of theater practices in choral rehearsals. He wrote,

I can't think of a specific example using theater techniques to TEACH vocal technique. I do, and have in the past, used theater games as energizers and as a way for my singers to relax their body and move more.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Brian Hoskins, email message to author, March 29, 2024.

In the same manner as Hoskins, I have been in many performance and non-performance situations in which theater arts games have been used as “ice-breakers” or a way to get a group of people to physically connect and release tension. Though theater games are versatile and certainly serve many purposes, my intention for creating singing games is to teach technique, not only “warm up” a group.

The reader may also benefit from recognizing common associations with the word “game” found among Miriam-Webster’s definitions:

- a physical or mental competition conducted according to rules with the participants in direct opposition to each other
- the manner of playing in a contest
- organized athletics
- a field of gainful activity
- any activity undertaken or regarded as a contest involving rivalry, strategy, or struggle
- activity engaged in for diversion or amusement
- a procedure or strategy for gaining an end<sup>135</sup>

These are a few of many definitions that do not connote the nature of theater games. Though some theater games can be competitive, most are generally discouraged. Viola Spolin’s definition of a game falls is centered on exploratory collaboration. Games must:

- have a focus (a problem that needs solving).
- be solved with a partner or in groups
- include sidecoaching (from the teacher) and evaluation (from everyone watching and the actors).

Of Miriam-Webster’s definitions, the last one in the list above, *a procedure or strategy for gaining an end*, comes closest to Spolin’s use of the word. Games are often explored in longer stints and are always collaborative, however, Spolin specifically emphasizes that non-

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<sup>135</sup> *Miriam-Webster Online*, s.v. “game,” 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/game>.

competitive play is specifically effective for growth. Competition usually creates body tension and a shift in motivation and focus. Non-competitive play produces a certain posture in the players, one that has limited power, is non-threatening, and socially collaborative. Therefore, Spolin's games, and mine, are born from this directive.

### **5.13: Defining an Exercise**

Exercises may also be collaborative; however, they are often shorter and used to introduce a concept. Exercises can be viewed as warm-ups, physical, mental, and vocal. These can be scales, vocal-function exercises, and other activities that engage parts or the entire vocal mechanism.

### **5.14: The Conductor as Sidecoach**

As described in Chapter 1, sidecoaching alters the traditional relationship of teacher and student. Spolin uses this method as a way of holding the actors to a certain focus in a game or exercise if they have strayed from the task. Therefore, in a parallel transfer of ideas, the conductor should now view themselves as a sidecoach for singers playing singing games. Throughout my music education, my teachers have taught me that conductors should never talk or shout over their singers while they are singing, as it is viewed as distracting and rude; this view needs to be altered to engage in the activities of my study. Sidecoaching in a musical environment will require the conductor to call out commands, tasks, and reminders as the singers are singing. However, the singers should be directed to listen to the conductor's voice but remain focused on their activity. Essentially, any word or phrase that gets singers to stay focused on their technique (or the goal at hand) is necessary for training the brain to engage the body in proper interactions during the game. By using this technique, the singers can engage in new

choices or points of focus without breaking their concentration on each other. Perhaps the reader is curious how this is different than the way conductors and private teachers already speak to their singers in rehearsal. To clarify, sidecoaching is for partners and small groups. It happens in more intimate sessions, allowing for more individualized instruction. At times, the sidecoach/conductor may even insert themselves into the activity to encourage a singer in a certain direction.

### **5.15: Workshop Format**

A workshop will take place when a singing problem needs to be solved. This could be any problem: for example, an issue with vowels, tuning, vocal quality, dynamics, posture, breathing, to name a few. The conductor will initiate a series of questions, relying on the choir to diagnose any issues they hear. Whatever those issues are, a game for partners or groups will be chosen to explore solutions. In time, I hope that students will call out games that they know can help solve problems. A workshop process is shown in Chapter 6.

### **5.16: Before Introducing the Study to My Choristers**

Before my middle and high school choristers were introduced to the study, I had to assess their vocal knowledge and ability. The youngest choristers I teach are twelve years old. Some have never sung in a choir before, but most have sung in choirs throughout their elementary years and have a working knowledge of a traditional choral environment. The oldest choristers in the high school choir are eighteen, many of whom I have worked with since they were in my middle school choir. There are seven freshman, two seniors, and one junior who have never previously sung in a choir before, and none of my high schooler choristers currently take private voice lessons. Between seventh and twelfth grade, there is a wide variety of vocal techniques

represented; this required me to reinforce vocal function often so they could become accustomed to talking about their voices using common singing vocabulary as discussed in Chapter 3. Warm-ups, vocal function exercises, placement terminology, as well as some sight-reading, solfege, and rhythm exercises were necessary to get my choirs steeped in the same language and norms. As actors who play theater games need to speak the same language, singers need to learn the same musical language to play singing games, if those games are to be efficient and potentially effective.

After a few weeks of establishing a traditional rehearsal model with breathing, stretching, warm-ups, vocal function exercises, basic music theory and teaching some music by rote, I began to introduce the case study. The following and final chapter includes my findings, in the form of video transcriptions, reflections, and interviews that took place during the study.

# Chapter 6

## Findings and Conclusion

In this chapter, I answer my research questions by sharing examples I collected from my workshop video recordings, student reflections, field notes and my own reflections, and wrap-up focus groups. Major and minor themes are indicated throughout the examples. Before sharing the process and examples, the reader should be aware of my students' musical and theatrical experience prior to the case study. In a survey, my students answered questions about their musical and theatrical history. The chart in Figure 7 informs the reader of the variety of students taking part in my study. Choristers' names have been replaced with numbers for confidentiality.

### **Figure 7: Chorister History Prior to Choral Arts Games Study**

CHORISTER NUMBER	Age on Sept 1, 2023	Years of choir experience before Sept 1, 2023	Have you ever taken, or do you currently take private voice lessons?	Years of theater experience before Sept 1, 2023
1	15	3	No	2
2	14	1	No	0
3	17	5	No	4
4	17	0	No	3
5	17	0	No	3
6	17	3	Yes	6
7	15	0	No	0
8	17	2	No	0
9	15	8	No	2
10	12	5	No	4
11	16	8	No	1
12	12	1	No	1
13	14	0.5	Yes, 2	0
14	11	0	No	0
15	17	4	No	4
16	17	4	No	4
17	13	3	Yes	1
18	13	1	No	1
19	14	7	Yes	1
20	17	2	No	0
21	13	2	Yes	0
22	14	1	No	2
23	12	2	No	2
24	15	1	No	1
25	15	8	No	3
26	12	1	No	1
27	14	2	No	0
28	14	2	No	3
29	12	2	Yes	8
30	16	4	No	3

CHORISTER NUMBER	Age on Sept 1, 2023	Years of choir experience before Sept 1, 2023	Have you ever taken, or do you currently take private voice lessons?	Years of theater experience before Sept 1, 2023
31	14	2	No	1
32	12	6	No	0
33	13	1.5	Yes	1
34	16	1	No	0
35	17	6	No	3
26	17	6	No	1
37	16	0	No	6

Out of thirty-seven choristers, five had not sung in a choir before, seven have had some kind of private voice instruction, and ten did not have any theater experience. I am sharing this data with my readers because any of these factors could be a reason for certain chorister responses to our work together.

### 6.1: Themes and Subthemes

From video footage, journals and focus groups, I extracted five major themes, and fifteen minor themes to answer my research questions; they are listed below, along with their abbreviations:

- Learning Outcomes (LO)
  - Awareness Impact (AI)
  - Technique Impact (TI)
  - Successes (S)
  - Points of Confusion (POC)
- Game Process (GP)
  - Demonstration (D)
  - Sidecoaching (SC)
  - Evaluation (E)
  - Tools/Technique Discussion (TD)

- Reactions (R)
  - Positive Reactions
  - Negative reactions
  - No reaction/No response
  
- Challenges
  - Behavior (B)
  - Unclear Teaching (UT)
  - More Instruction Needed (MIN)
  - Adolescent Voices Changing (AVC)
  
- Improvements (I)

All outcomes put forth as evidence in this chapter are indicated by the abbreviations above. Not all themes or subthemes are discussed in every question. This chapter is organized into three large sections, each dedicated to one of the three research questions.

- How does teaching group singing in a theater arts environment affect how my choristers learn?
- Can theater arts games be musically modified to help choristers solve singing problems?
- How does the application of choral arts games to repertoire impact the artistry of my choristers?

Each section includes examples from my data along with analysis that supports the answers to these questions. Chorister names have been omitted for confidentiality; choristers are indicated by a capital first letter of their first name or by “Chorister” and in some cases for complete confidentiality, the letter C (chorister). Conclusions are drawn throughout, but at the end of the findings portion, I offer a general conclusion and my suggestions for future research in this area.

## **6.2: Question 1: How does teaching group singing in a theater arts environment affect how my choristers learn?**

Theater arts environments are designed to put actors through a variety of active learning situations. Exploration and experimentation always center on problem solving through

collaboration and co-creation with partners and groups. Times for reflection and feedback appear in the form of discussions and reflections. Due to this first question referring to environment rather than specific content, I have categorized my findings by themes and subthemes that signify their responses to our learning environment. A limitations section is also included to elaborate on the uncertainty of some data.

### **6.2.1: Themes and Subthemes for This Discussion**

To answer this first question, I noted where students referenced learning experiences as they related to our environment design, i.e., working with partners or groups. I saw larger themes unfolding such as Learning Outcomes, Reactions, and Challenges. Learning Outcomes were often tied to Reactions and are discussed together in my answers. Learning Outcomes are signified by Technique Impact and Awareness Impact. If a chorister experienced noticeable sensations in their voice, ability/vocal function, the subtheme was labeled as Technique Impact, and when a chorister seemed to exhibit a change in their thinking or understanding, this was labeled as Awareness Impact. Reactions, whether positive or negative, demonstrate chorister opinions and feelings. Any behavior, unclear teaching, lack of instruction, or navigating student voice changes were labeled as challenges. Other challenges regarding game design and specific problem-solving moments will be discussed with the next research question.

### **6.2.2: Learning Outcomes and Reactions as They Relate to Environment**

During one workshop, I instructed my middle school choir to listen for problems that arose when they sang “Amazing Grace” and “Happy Birthday” as full group. Then, using their knowledge of vocal technique we had discussed prior, they were prompted to solve these problems with partners in a game called Mirror Singing. Our workshop was spent working on these two songs and then joining at the end to sing them together and note any changes in our

group sound. After the workshop, I asked them to describe their experience in their reflection journals. Some of the responses were as follows:

**Example 6: Middle School Reflection Journals, December 7, 2023**

**P**

A: It was fun.

**P / AI**

L: It was fun. Being able to solve with partners was fun. The group discussion was helpful. Being able to talk about how to improve small things when singing.

**P**

B: It was engaging with other people, matching their voice which went better than ok.

In a focus group, I asked six choristers what they thought of our choral environment over the last eight months. The group was comprised of three new choir members (two who had never sung in a choir before) and two veteran choir members (one who has been in choir for three years, and one for two). Some of their responses are below:

**Example 7: Focus Group with High School Choristers, April 11, 2024**

**P**

K: I liked it. As someone who is new to choir and singing like that, I thought it was helpful...it lined up perfectly for me to try new things and experiment with them cause then for me I felt I was getting a better understanding of what you want us to do instead of everyone being like "Oh we know what he's talking about" it's nice that we're all learning together so that we're helping each other be like "Oh I think this is what he means" or "we could try this" and see if it works.

**P / AI**

W: I think it helps us find and fix problems without singling people out. Cause like, we all do the games and fix the problems, but it's not like "you're singing wrong, fix it." We all work on it together.

**P**

I: I feel like as someone who's not the best at listening and paying attention, just like, a teacher is talking and stuff, I feel like it was a lot better to learn while being engaged and have us all do stuff and activities; It really helped me learn how to do choir cause it was my first year too, and it made it a lot more fun and engaging.

**P / S**

A: For me, it helps to make the task at hand less intimidating, cause I'll hear something and I'm like "oooo I don't know if I can do that." But when we get in group and break it down, it makes it a lot more manageable and I feel like I'm more aware.

**P**

K: It gives us more space to work together... I felt like it connected me with them, not just in a singing way, but also in a trust way. They are there to better me, and also I am there to better them.

**P / AI / TI**

D: ...also getting different perspectives working with people, especially like...ok, J has been in choir for a couple years (turns to K) this is your first year, those are two different perspectives, and two different perspectives that can help me still, cause maybe K will listen to something and point out how I'm sounding, but maybe J can give me a more specific way that I can change it with some kind of deeper knowledge of it. It's also just bouncing ideas off of each other. That's really helpful.

**AI**

I: I think it definitely helps connect with people I don't normally hang out with in choir, like I have no idea what a soprano is supposed to sound like, that's not something I focus on. So it helped me open my ears to not only the whole sound we need to achieve as a choir, but also work with them even if they're in a section all the way across the room from you.

**AI**

K: There wasn't any pressure to be the best you've ever heard. I felt like you gave us time to work as peers. It wasn't like, "Mr. Kimmel is telling me to do this" it was my peers doing this to help me get better.

Words like "fun," "helpful," "engaging," "working together," "less intimidating," indicate that choristers viewed our activities positively. The specific examples above indicate a positive memory associated with learning technique.

In a high school workshop, when asked "what games/exercises have worked for you? How has your ability/skill improved?", one high schooler wrote:

### **Example 8: High School Reflection Journals, January 11, 2024**

**N / P**

R: I think most games we do don't help me but do make me more comfortable with other choir members.

Though this chorister mentions that she is not personally affected by game content, the word “comfortable” indicates positivity when interacting with peers in partners or small group situations.

In another workshop, I asked high school choristers to walk around the choir room at a medium pace while I called out vocalises for them to perform. It evolved into a game in which I prompted them to sing any pitch they wanted, but when I called “freeze” they were instructed to match pitch with someone near them and maintain their agreed-upon pitch while many different pitches were sounding at once. The game continued with choristers walking and freezing, always shifting in their environment. When asked “did anything change in your singing today?” some choristers responded in their reflection journals:

### **Example 9: Student Reflection Journals, January 24, 2024**

**AI**

I: Today helped me. I learned to be less tense while singing and the moving around was cool.

**AI / TI**

E: I feel like the walking helped me get out of my morning voice and better understand how to audiate with other people and match my voice to theirs.

**AI**

M: It helped me look around more at other people.

These responses indicate that these students were aware of tension and how to engage with their fellow choristers. Since they were asked to move around, their ears and eyes were continually being redirected what was changing in the environment.

In another situation, I asked the choir to participate in a competitive game that I devised using Robert Shaw's count singing and audiation technique. Count-singing teaches pitches and rhythms simultaneously and trains singers to share a common pulse. Choristers sing count singing subdivisions on pitch, changing pitches accordingly with the rhythm. Singers should sing the words "one-and-two-and-tee-and-four-and." *Tee* is substituted for *three* to create the simplest diction.<sup>136</sup> In the game, students were prompted to pass fragments of a musical exercise to each person in their group using the count-singing method. They had to keep tempo while passing the count-singing pattern off to the next singer. This game will be explained further with examples. After observing them, I reflected:

### **Example 10: Personal Reflection Journal, December 14, 2023**

**AI**

There seemed to be a lot of humor and good-spirited attitudes surrounding the competition aspect. Though this counteracts Spolin's teaching and even goes against Spolin's advice for children to partake in non-competitive play so that their brain is more receptive to learning, my students seemed to succeed in this situation.

Student reflections seemed to confirm my observations about this game. High school choristers were asked: "Do you have any suggestions for how to improve this game? Or any game we have played? If you have an idea for how something can be better (adding clarification, or another element of competition) please let me know below." Three offered specific feedback:

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<sup>136</sup> Robert Shaw, "Preparation and Rehearsal," <https://robertshaw.website/preparation-rehearsal>.

### **Example 11: Student Reflection Journals, December 15, 2023**

**P / I**

W: I would like more complicated games like the third set we did today, throwing some difficulty in. Failing and growing is important for how we as a choir will adapt. Maybe more competitive somehow, like if someone loses, they have to be an example by next class.

**P**

R: I did like the added competition.

**P / I / AI**

N: I wish we had more time to play out the competition...I understand the concept of a competition because it helps us to be more involved with it, but at the same time I like the thought of us all trying to help out each other instead of competing.

Though I did not introduce another competitive game in our workshops, the positive results of the competition such as smiling, laughing and encouraging each other even in the midst of getting “out,” indicate positive reception. Later, an example from this game will show learning outcomes.

#### **6.2.3: Improvements as They Relate to Environment**

Discussions and evaluations were a major part of our workshop or workshops’ time. Whether in the middle of a game, after a game, or at the end of a workshop, choristers were frequently asked questions that prompted their critical thinking about vocal function, tools they could use to solve problems, and what to really listen for. Discussions gave students the chance to express *how* these things were manifesting themselves physically in their voices and what they were learning. They also gave me a chance to reinforce terminology and technique.

Our group conversations created an environment in which chorister feedback and reflection were valuable and necessary for continuing with or refining a game. For example, ten workshops into the case-study, I noted that my students were often confused about how to solve certain musical problems. In these cases, I initiated a discussion to explain the tools they could

use—often reminding how the vocal mechanism works and what is possible by accessing its different parts. To help illustrate possibilities, I drew a large circle on the whiteboard and divided it up into pie chart and called it “The Wheel of Artistry.” I then asked my students to contribute possible categories on this wheel. With some guidance and definition clarifications, we ended up with thirteen categories under two main areas: vocal technique (specific to singers) and basic musicianship (artistic elements for all musicians).

Vocal Technique:

- Vocal Quality: breathy, smooth, or glottal
- Breathing
- Diction - vowels and consonants/clarity
- Timbre/Placement

Basic Musicianship:

- Posture
- Imagination
- Rhythm
- Tempo
- Pitch/Intonation
- Expression - articulation, phrasing, dynamics
- Aesthetic/Presentation
- Audiation
- Literacy (learning by rote/sight reading / call and response)

Through this conversation, the choristers got to offer their own understanding about these different elements, and I clarified and refined their terminology so we could consistently use common language. After our discussion I wrote in my reflection journal:

**Example 12: Personal Reflection Journal, December 7, 2023**

**AI / I**

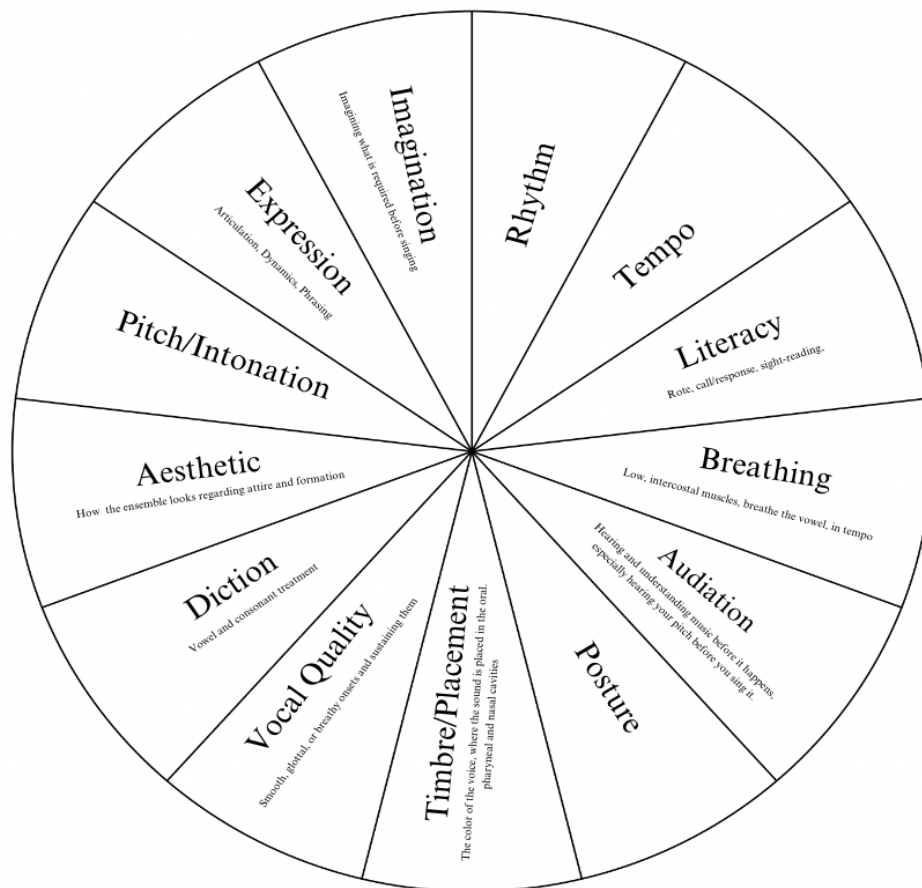
They are starting to use common language and remember how to solve things. But they still need reminders. This will always be. The Wheel of Artistry seems to help categorize aspects of singing for them. In a conversation with a friend, she correlated that these reminders were kind of like reminder cards in a board game, where there is a list of possible functions for your turn. This might be a good idea, to create a “cheat sheet” or “note card” of tricks and tips for problem solving. My plan is to create this for the Wheel of Artistry and other terms over the holiday break.

In order for our choral theater arts environment to thrive, we needed to continually refine terminology and practice identifying the *what* and *how* of singing technique. The Wheel of Artistry Game Card was finished in January 2024, and a preliminary version was given to choristers. Figure 8 shows the game card in its final form. All choristers received a copy to reference during games.

**Figure 8: The Wheel of Artistry Game Card**

# THE WHEEL OF ARTISTRY

CO-CONSTRUCTED BY SECONDARY CHOIR STUDENTS AT SEATTLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AND TYLER TODD KIMMEL



## CHORAL ARTS GAMES

### Games:

Collaborative exploration of a problem in partners or small groups and are side-coached by the conductor and sometimes choristers.

### Exercises:

Used to teach a technique to the whole choir. They are coached too, and often repeated.

### Goals:

Find sameness or unity in your singing with others

### Focus:

Determined by conductor or chorister initiative

### How to play:

As a choir, identify a problem that needs solving. If necessary, use the Wheel of Artistry above to diagnose the problem. With a partner or a small group, take turns offering solutions and leading each other in the goals of the game. When working with partners, decide who is person 1 or person A. In groups, take turns leading, or designate a leader.

### Tools:

Parts of the vocal mechanism we adjust, isolate, and combine to solve problems.

Check to see if any of these can be adjusted to help you

- Breath (low, in time, in the vowel)
- Face/engagement/interest
- Palates (hard and soft palates - lifting/yawning)
- Tongue (forward, up, down, high, flat...etc)
- Onsets (smooth, glottal, or breathy?)
- Posture/body alignment
- Use the spectrum (moving your voice through dark to bright sounds/back, swallowed sounds to forward, nasally sounds to identify placement, and resonance.
- Various exercises

### Some exercises you could use during a game:

Applying any of the following exercises to help you solve the problem(s):

- Sirens for range extension
- Falsetto "oo" for range and air
- Other vocalizes from our warm-ups (leaps or slides...?)
- Voiced "b" or "v" for smooth onsets
- "yeah, yeah, yeah" or "yes yes yes" for smooth/forward sound
- The spectrum (bright vs. dark placement)
- Count Singing 1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ (eighths) for tempo control
- humming for warm forward sound
- yawn to stretch the palates for more space
- Devices/apps:
  - Recordings on (smartphone apps)
  - Drone (for tuning)
  - Metronome (for tempo and rhythm problems)
  - Pitch apps to help you find your pitch/tuning fork

### Tips:

- Slow down
- Isolate sections of the music
- really watch, and really listen
- Be kind and critical

### Challenges:

- Can you do these games without speaking?
- If you can accomplish the initial goal, look for other problems that might need solving and initiate them with your partner or group.

### 6.2.4: Challenges as They Relate to Environment

When choristers encountered obstacles that inhibited their learning, these moments were labeled as challenges. In Example 13, some choristers express their dissatisfaction with partner behavior. The following dialogue is from a focus group conversation. In this example, chorister's abbreviated initials have been omitted and replaced with C (chorister) for full confidentiality. I am labeled as T (the teacher and researcher, Tyler Todd Kimmel).

#### **Example 13: Focus Group with High School Choristers, April 11, 2024**

**AI**

C1: Certain people are better to work with than others.

The choristers laugh.

C2: Here comes the honesty.

**AI / N / P**

C1: Yeah (He laughs). Let's say if I did it with [this student] and not [this student]. I'd probably be able to get more done and focus better with someone who wants to really get it done, seriously.

T: Can you clarify what you mean by "wants to get it done?" What does that look like?

**POC**

C1: Like we both want to grow in our singing ability, and get our parts right, I guess. And do it to the best of our abilities.

In another focus group, one middle school chorister responded similarly.

#### **Focus Group with Middle School Choristers, April 8, 2024**

T: Was there anything you thought was not helpful?

**N**

C: Maybe like our cooperation.

They all laugh.

T: Can you give an example?

**POC / N**

C: When we're all talking, and some people want to do it, some people don't really want to do it. We don't really work together well sometimes.

They laugh and mumble. Some make unintelligible side-comments. "Hmm, well."

**N / P**

C: Sometimes! Not all the time. Most of the time we're pretty good.

From these reflections it seems that choristers' perceptions about our study were influenced by their partners. These two choristers brought up challenges with cooperation. I see similar behavior in my theater classes when students are simply not in the mood to interact. Since theater learning environments are active, transitioning choristers from a less active environment to one that is more active may cause skepticism or nervousness, especially since these games were not part of our classroom norms before this case-study. For clarity purposes, in the contracts that my students signed with their parents located in Appendix 3. I specified that if a student was ever uncomfortable, they would not have to perform any game or exercise if asked to demonstrate. However, no choristers refused to demonstrate, nor did they tell me they were uncomfortable. This leads me to conclude that students wanted to let me know their preferences privately. There are three instances when this nervousness was mentioned. Once again, choristers' names are replaced with C for complete confidentiality.

**Example 14: High School Chorister Reflection Journals, December 8, 2023**

**Question:** Is there a game that makes you feel confused or uncomfortable?

**AI / N and P**

C1: The partner game exposes where we're wrong, and since it's only two of us, it can be uncomfortable. But that's where we can fix the problems.

**N/P**

C2: ...in front of others on the spot would make me uncomfortable. Besides that, no physical discomfort.

**N**

C3: When you make us sing in front of everyone.

I did not ask C2 and C3 to demonstrate alone or with a partner in front of the choir after this.

However, C1's reflection centers on the exposure that comes when working with partners, not necessarily demonstrating in general, and also acknowledges that when with their partner they can solve problems, as if to offer a positive view even in their discomfort. In my observations, this chorister has grown in courageousness and become more comfortable working in this way.

### **6.2.5: Limitations**

When I had difficulty getting students to focus, stop talking, or overcome shyness, I did not equate these challenges to unwillingness or uncooperative attitude. Rather, I noted these as common occurrences in any learning environment. Factors for behavior may include different student learning styles, hormones, timidity, tiredness, or illness, among other things. Any one factor here could have contributed to an unenthusiastic disposition or—if it should be labelled as such—unwillingness. Therefore, I cannot conclude that theater environments in choral rehearsals bring about a certain unwillingness because of the activities. None of my students ever told me “no,” nor did they ever ask leave our workshops or ask to not participate. Though I do not share the same observations as my students above, I validate their desire to work with students who are more enthusiastic. Their comments do posit an important disclaimer: there is no guarantee that students will exhibit positive behavior because of this kind of learning environment, nor will every student experience success in every activity, or in the same way.

## **Conclusion**

My choristers' adaptiveness over the course of our eight-month exploration helped me remain confident that we had enough time to discover successful ways to learn through games. Student demonstration and feedback and my own observations show that, when given the time and space, choristers working in partners and groups provided them musical success. Specific outcomes showed growth in awareness and trust. Multiple students had discovery moments where one a chorister describing sensory experiences helped another realize something about their own voice and, as a result, were empowered to experiment and demonstrate for and with their peers, which, through the examples provided above, signify more depth in the learning process.

### **6:3 Question 2: Can theater arts games be musically modified to help choristers solve singing problems?**

The theater games I assumed could be musically modified were certainly modifiable and, on many occasions, choristers did solve problems through playing the games. Evidence that led to this conclusion lies in the game refinement process. My students and I partook in thirty-nine workshops where we discovered successful game models and procedures that support my conclusions. I will address the evidence by introducing themes and subthemes that emerged during game workshops, share my preliminary work for devising choral arts games from theater games and exercises, and elaborate on the game process. In the interest of time, I will describe three games and their outcomes accompanied by detailed transcript excerpts that demonstrate when solving specific singing problems was successful or challenging.

The theater games I hypothesized would be amenable to musical adaptation were found to be modifiable and often proved useful for solving problems. My students and I actively participated in thirty-nine workshops where successful game models conducive to problem-solving were identified. Outcomes are shown through the game refinement process, which can be observed through workshop video transcriptions. To answer this question, I will expound my initial endeavors in devising choral arts games derived from theater-based activities and delineate the procedural framework. This question is organized into thematic and sub-thematic categories, expounding on the emergent patterns observed during the workshops. In the interest of brevity, I will discuss three games through transcript excerpts. These excerpts serve to illustrate both successful and unsuccessful instances of games wherein students attempted to solve specific vocal challenges.

### **6.3.1: Themes and Subthemes**

Each major theme (Learning Outcomes, Game Process, Reactions, Challenges, and Improvements) supports the answer to this question. Examples are marked with several subthemes that fall into Game Process, such as Demonstration (D), Sidecoaching (SC), Evaluation (E), Responses (positive, P, negative N), and Tools/Technique Discussions (TD) and Applications to repertoire (APP). Once again abbreviations are placed above example excerpts to signify evidence. Successes and challenges follow examples as there were times when games helped solve problems and times when they created more confusion or revealed other problems.

### **6.3.2: The Game Workshop Process**

Before sharing the analysis, some background is required for context. Designing a game to help teach vocal technique through play means that vocal pedagogy elements must be imbedded in the game process for singers to experience growth. Prior to each game workshop, I

warmed-up the choir and addressed singing science by reviewing vocal technique and named vocal “tools” they could use to solve problems (see Wheel of Artistry Chart on page 116). At any time, students could use The Wheel of Artistry Chart if they needed help with terminology, definitions, or solving ideas. My role as a sidecoach allowed me to check in with choristers while they were playing; these moments often turned into private voice lessons and further clarification for individuals, as well as the whole group. The game process always centered on elements of choral singing and refining vocal practice.

Games and their procedures were continually refined throughout our eight-month workshop period. Workshops themselves became a fusion of traditional choral rehearsal methods combined with Meisner and Spolin directives. Example 16 shows the game workshop sequence, after Viola Spolin’s model in her theater arts handbook.

### **Example 15: Game Workshop Sequence**

- **Warm-Up/Exercises:** Rehearsals begin with discussions/imitations between the choir and me about vocal qualities, placement, vowel unity, vocal mechanism parts, breathing exercises, etc. In listening to the choir’s sound, I initiate discussions and exploration of a vocalize or vocal function exercise to refine an aspect of the choir’s artistry. The goal is for the choir to become familiar with singing language and any warm-ups, vocalises and function exercises that can help them. They can suggest ideas too.
- **Diagnosis:** While singing through warm-ups, exercises, or repertoire excerpts I ask the choir to diagnose the sound they are hearing and then ask them how they might solve any issues.
- **Games Part 1:** Choristers are then directed to pair up or form groups<sup>137</sup> depending on the game. They are asked to find a place in the room to work (practice rooms and my office were ok, as long as doors are not closed). Pairs or groups should be comprised of like-voices (tenor-tenor, alto-alto, or depending on the reason for the game, it could be a

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<sup>137</sup> Ideally there will be an even number of people in each section (S,A,T,B) making partners with like-voices an efficient situation. If there is an odd number of choristers (like my middle school choir), groups of three will suffice. In this case, two people will work together while the third watches. After a while, that third partner will take one of the other partner’s positions. When a group game played with more than two people is initiated, group numbers do not matter; leadership can be passed between everyone at some point. Additionally, choristers can sing with anyone (sopranos and tenors can pair up, etc.). However, starting with like-voices will be a natural way to ease into matching sameness for beginning singers.

tenor-bass voice pair and an alto-soprano voice pair). They are asked to remain standing unless that was not possible for the student. If the game requires shared leadership, I ask the partners to decide who is partner A and who is partner 1. They should then solve the problem using their knowledge and the tools we discussed.

- **Sidecoaching:** During games, I take a sidecoaching role, walking around the room calling out suggestions, foci, and giving private instruction when appropriate.
- **Demonstration:** After I visit each group, and/or when I hear a group that has demonstrated something successful, they are asked to demonstrate for the whole choir. If willing, they demonstrate together to show what they solved.
- **Evaluation:** After demonstrations, a discussion follows. Encouragement is especially important at this moment, as well as take-aways for what others can try, pointing out what was successful and options for improvement.
- **Games Part 2:** At my discretion, partners or groups will keep working until I feel it is time to return to the larger group.
- **Return:** The groups will return to normal choir positions and sing the vocalize/ function exercise or repertoire excerpt together.
- **Discussion:** A discussion will follow about what they heard, how it was different, and what was successful or not.
- **Repeat:** I will repeat this workshop process as often as necessary.

### 6.3.3: Musically Modifying Theater Games

Spolin devised games spontaneously for her students to solve acting problems. When games worked, she wrote them down. The reader may recall a similar model mentioned in Chapter 3 by Kari Ragan, who spontaneously created and implemented vocal function exercises for her studio singers which are used to fix whatever problems spontaneously arise in a private lesson. Having played theater games and studied them for years, I have seen what could potentially transfer to at least get my choristers started with experimentation. Because my case study occurred during school hours, I had limited time to experiment, therefore, it was proactive to have some ideas worked out in advance. However, there are instances, like Spolin and Ragan, when my students and I co-created games spontaneously.

My initial ideas from four years ago were inspired by Meisner's partner exercises, which are for two actors at a time. To quickly review, Meisner's workshop actors were given time and

space to work out their communication with Meisner himself (as director) sitting in the audience with other actors making observations, or on stage with them, sometimes inserting himself in the exercise. This model allows for other actors to see and hear the process in real time; it is start-stop, with plenty of chances for students to try again, reflect, and ask questions.

The choral games I designed are modeled after Meisner and Spolin's methodology, namely two concepts: *Repetition* and *Mirroring*. Any game that I spontaneously created or co-created with my students are extensions of these partner-game concepts. Repetition and Mirroring activities lend themselves to musical modifications in that they are designed for imitation, listening, and immediate and spontaneous responses from players. Though Spolin's Mirroring is designed for two actors, many more of her games also require larger groups and sometimes the entire group.

Meisner's transcription *Sanford Meisner On Acting* and Spolin's *Theater Games for the Classroom* (and the revised version, *Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook*) provide working examples for partner and group work for directors and actors to implement in their rehearsals. In her book, Spolin includes game templates which have five components. All musically modified and created game designs followed this format.

- the purpose
- the focus
- a description
- tips for how to improve or approach playing and exploring
- sidecoaching examples or directives
- and evaluation from those observing

### 6.3.4: Choral Arts Games

As stated in the procedures section in Chapter 5, the theater games I believed could be musically adapted for choristers were: Meisner's *Repetition*, Spolin's *Mirror Games* and *Space Walkers*, *Chase*, and two pre-existing musical games *The Missing Note* and *The Ugly Crescendo*. Other Stanislavski and Spolin theater games focus on improvisation and the imagination in ways that I am not focused on for these exercises, therefore, only a limited number of theater activities seemed useful for musical modification for this study. The other choral arts games listed below in Figure 9 were created on the spot, using a similar game format as the one above; sometimes the games were created in collaboration with the choristers.

Each game can have multiple foci if desired, but they all share the common goal of *sameness*, whether for pitch, vocal quality, placement, breath, vowel, dynamic shifts (crescendo or diminuendo) or tempo. Some games aimed to train phrasing, breath control, and audiation. Below is a list of games we adapted and created throughout the case study.

#### Figure 9: Choral Arts Games

- Mirror Singing (adapted from Viola Spolin)
- Repetition (adapted from Meisner, pre-existing model by Steven Dahlke)
- Be My Conductor (inspired by Geoffrey Boers "conduct with me")
- The Isolation Game
- The Audiation Game/Count Singing Game (adapted from Nancy Salwen)
- Vowel Morphing (co-created)
- Sound Walkers (inspired by Stanislavski and Spolin)
- The Ugly Crescendo (adapted from D. Anderson)
- Show The Flow (co-created phrasing/breathe control game)
- Sneak-A-Breath (co-created stagger breathing game)
- Chase Resonance (adapted from the Chase theater game)
- Split Singing (co-created)
- Breath Set (co-created)

In the following, I will briefly describe three games musically modified theater games: *Mirror Singing*, *Sound Walkers*, and *Chase Resonance*. To support their usefulness, I offer transcription excerpts from video reflections and focus groups to demonstrate some of our outcomes.

### **6.3.5: Mirror Singing, borrowed from Viola Spolin's Mirror Game**

Once again, to remind the reader, in Viola Spolin's mirror game actors face each other and interpret what their eyes tell them. Similar to Meisner's Repetition, they take turns leading, though this time the leader makes slow movements and gestures for their partner to "mirror." A mirror game variation called *Follow-the-Follower* occurs when both actors are co-leading and therefore appear as one. Another variation called *Mirror Speech*, which is played for absolute synchronization in speech, requires actors to speak slowly with long vowels, showing sound preparation with their faces and bodies. The description of Mirror Speech, and concept of Mirroring in general, lends itself to a musical variation, one which gives the chorister a practical way to experiment navigating their voice with other singers.

In a musically modified version of Spolin Mirroring, two singers face each other, and one partner will initiate a breath which the other will follow. Then they will navigate a pitch, a vocalize, or excerpt from the repertoire together, with the other singer trying to reflect whatever their partner is doing. Depending on the focus, partners may focus on one goal or multiple goals at once, i.e., posture, breath, pitch, tone, quality, placement, rhythm, diction, and phrasing. By Mirror Singing together and focusing on each other, partners take the attention off themselves and put it toward the goal, which is sameness with the other; this sameness is realized through what their ears tell them and how they adjust in response.

## Figure 10: Mirror Singing Game

- **The Purpose:**
  - To find sameness with another singer
- **The Focus:**
  - Whatever the director or choristers have specified as the issue: pitch, placement, vowel, breath, tempo, etc.
- **A Description:**
  - Two singers will face each other. One singer is “A” and the other is “1.”
  - A and 1 will take turns leading each other in the musical exercise determined before the game- either a sing pitch, a vocalize, or repertoire excerpt, attempting to find sameness in the focus.
- **Tips for how to improve or approach playing and exploring:**
  - Singers can use their game cards which include the Wheel of Artistry and vocal tools to help them navigate solutions.
  - Singers should lead by communicating with their faces, bodies, breath, hands.
  - If sounds are not agreeing, singers should discuss possible solutions.
- **Sidecoaching examples or directives:**
  - “Watch the tongue” “More/less space” “Breathe together” “Where is the placement?” “Think more forward/mid/back” “pure vowel” “use HAND signs” “where is that singers vowel placed?”
- **Evaluation from those observing:**
  - The conductor should initiate conversations during demonstrations from the players, and the full group.
  - Sample questions: “What did you hear?” “How did they achieve that?” “What were you thinking about?” “Where did it differ?”

As I expected, there were several examples of success with this game. The first example below was from our first Mirror Singing workshop. Partners were instructed to work out sameness using a vocalize: /i ε a/ on the pitches *do re do, sol la sol, do re mi re do*. They were asked to look at the other person to match decision making (breathing, facial posture, body posture) and listen for sameness and lean into whatever they were doing to achieve that sound. In the following examples, the reader will see themes and subthemes labeled by bold abbreviations.

### Example 16: Workshop 1, September 11, 2023

Students were in pairs or trios (taking turns mirroring). The purpose of this first day was to get them used to working in partners and get used to sidecoaching from me. Also, having had group discussions with me during warm-ups and learning some repertoire over the last four classes, students were invited to share what they heard and offer suggestions as a part of the game process (evaluation).

T is walking around and listening to groups. Partners are singing the exercise.

#### **D**

T: Okay, everyone listen this is fantastic. J and A are now demonstrating.

J and A sing /i ε a/. They sing the same vowels, but their placement and vowel shape is not matching.

T: Okay, where does it start to differ? Sing it again.

J and A sing /i ε a/ There is some improvement with their onset, but /ε/ and /a/ are not in tune.

#### **SC**

T: Yeah, there's a tongue difference. Can you sing /i/ again?

They sing and hold /i/.

#### **SC - TD**

T: Get your tongues as forward as possible, both of you.

J and A sing /i/. Immediately, there is improvement in placement and pitch, and they sound the same in vocal quality and placement.

#### **E**

T: Was that better?

#### **P**

Choir: Yes!

#### **P**

There are head nods.

#### **SC-TD**

T: Ok, sing that again, and keep your tongue there for /ε/ and /a/. Just change the space in the mouth. (T gives tempo) Two and ready and go.

They sing and there is still not quite agreement on /ε/ and /a/.

**TD**

T: Open a little more for /ε/ and /a/ but keep the tongue the same.

J and A sing /i ε a/. They sound almost like one voice.

T: Do you hear where it starts to agree?

**P**

Choir claps and says “yes.”

**I**

T: Folks, you see the changes that had to be made. Listen minutely with each other for what changes need to be made. If it’s like “oh we’re not quite matching there,” try the tongue. If that is not working, try the space. If that’s not working, maybe it’s an air thing, maybe you’re not breathing the right vowel. Try again.

Groups continue working. When walking around, T comes to D, J, and K. They are a group of three because there was an odd number of students today.

**TD**

D: “We like to use our hands” (she starts showing K how J and her use their hands to show what their voice is doing. Their hands are turning and manipulating, resembling the inside of the mouth.

T watches.

**D**

T: Ok this is great, listen to these three.

The choir stops working and turns where they are to look at D, J and K.

D, J, and K sing /i ε a/

**SC-TD**

T: Love it! Can the upper note on /ε/ ...don’t move anything, just imagine that upper note before you get there.

D, J, and K sing /i ε a/. There is immediate improvement, The /a/ is slightly out of tune.

**E**

T: (to the choir) Offer suggestions?

Chorister start calling out answers: “The /a/.”

T: The /a/? Offer suggestions?

Choristers offer some ideas: “Space.” “Tongue.”

T: Space, tongue? I was going to suggest some space too. Can we try it again? Keep the tongue forward and the space open. Once more.

D, J and K sing /i ε a/ and they have agreement on all three vowels and throughout the range.

**I**

T: It’s getting there. You can do that with a breath cue. That could be the release of your hands, like that’s your lungs. What’s another thing? Breathing in an /i/ vowel. That means that your tongue and mouth inside have to be set in /i/ as you’re breathing. Good. Try one more round and I’m going to come around and listen.

Students keep working.

### **6.3.5.1: Mirror Singing Successes**

In this session, students were given time to work out their sound with partners. Through exploration, sidecoaching, demonstration, and evaluation, each group experienced some success in applying vocal tools (space, tongue, vowel shape, breath) to help them find sameness.

Responses were positive: clapping, offering affirming statements such as “yes” and understanding by head nodding. Students willingly offered suggestions, even in this first exploration.

In their reflection journals, students were asked two questions regarding game effectiveness. In Examples 17 and 18, students were asked to share if games or exercises have helped them understand something more about their voice, and if they have noticed a difference in their voices since playing a game. Many students wrote about mirror singing.

## **Example 17: Reflections about Games from Reflection Journals and Focus Groups**

### **HS Reflection Journals, January 11, 2024**

**AI**

M: 1. Mirror singing has helped me fix vocal qualities and match shape to improve the composite sound of the choir. It's helped my awareness in understanding components of choir and how to match vowels in vocal quality.

**AI / P / N**

E: I feel like mirror singing helped me match other people singing and diction and pronunciation. I feel like I worked more dramatic changes in my ability after I figured out the drill, but after it doesn't stick the same for as long.

### **Example 18: Focus Group, April 11, 2024**

T: Was there a game where you used any of those things or talked about any of those things where it yielded a better understanding of a vocal technique?

A: I think mirror singing was the big one for me.

**P**

They all nod and agree with "yeah and mmhmm"

**P / TI / AI**

A: I know we've said that a lot, but it's been really beneficial. When I first came into choir I wasn't aware of how much your tongue does when you're singing, that was really hard for me to understand, I thought it was all just how your mouth was shaped. So being able to identify where my tongue sits if I need to move it forward or stuff like that. It gave me a better understanding of how the inside of my mouth works, because that was something I had no clue about. So being able to look at someone and match it and replicate it, was really beneficial.

**P**

K: Yeah, I agree with that.

**AI / P /**

D: And you can't always see people's tongue, but it plays into being with people you know, or that have more experience then they can explain it. It's like we've been saying, it's a good, safe, and trusting and accountable environment with mirror singing that you develop a relationship with that person or that little group to be comfortable to have those conversations.

**TI**

I: I like mirror singing, cause when I first came to choir, I never thought vowels and pronunciation would be important, and mouth shape I guess. It really helped me learn that and develop that skill.

### **6.3.5.2: Mirror Singing Challenges**

One chorister above mentioned that his technique does not “stick the same” after playing mirror singing. His comment could indicate that he did not consciously apply the technique throughout the rehearsal, it could indicate a need for further sidecoaching with that student and their partner, or he may need clearer instruction from me. In any case, just like reinforcing vocal technique in a warm-up or beginning rehearsals with reminders, playing a game is not always enough to help choristers solve a problem. In many cases, as mentioned, I have had to reinforce technique through discussions and demonstrations before, during, and after a game.

### **6.3.5.3: Refining Mirror Singing Workshop**

A few months into both high school and middle school workshops, there were times when choristers still struggled to apply vocal knowledge when they were working to solve a problem with partners. After the holiday break, I reviewed the process with them. Example 19 is a workshop where we dissected a game’s function to help solidify their understanding.

#### **Example 19: Workshop 6 with Middle School Choir, January 4, 2024**

##### **GP**

T: Ok, so P and E come up here. They are our brave volunteers. Mirror singing can happen like this. We are trying to refine the process. You just diagnosed a bunch of issues, can the two of you address these just a little bit with each other. Just sing “*jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way.*” Just that far. Now, as they are mirror singing, watch what they do and take note of things.

##### **D**

They start and then begin to laugh.

##### **SC**

T: Try again. You got it, keep going. 1 2 3...

They sing it, but their vocal quality is not the same.

**E**

T: Stop. Now, analyze what you did and see if you can address any of these things. E you put some of these things up here (points to the whiteboard full of ways to solve problems). What are some tools? Can you use a tool to address anything? Do you hear there are different onsets?

Choir: Yeah.

T: I hear that too. Is their tempo and issue?

Choir: No

T: I don't think so. Is their pitch an issue?

Choir: No

T: So, let's address those (the onsets). Whenever you're ready?

They sing it.

T: Ok! What do you hear?

**D**

P and E sing again. They are smooth.

**E**

P: They were smooth.

T: Try it one more time, but breathy.

They sing it breathy.

T: Ok back to what you did. Ready and go.

**D**

They sing smooth and the volume increases, they sound the same.

T: Yeah! And are you purposefully being louder?

**E**

P and E shake their heads no.

T: Ok so what is the difference between the two?

E: I feel like breathy traps your voice more...

T: Ah ok! But describe what happened inside.

E: There was more room.

T: So was your breath different? Try it again?

They do.

T: Where do you hear their sound end up verses here. Breathly 2 3

They sing breathy.

L: First one was more in their throat and the second was more in their face, I guess?

### **TD / GP**

T: Oh ok! Do you agree? Something is happening with their tongue, something is happening with their sound, it's focusing in a different spot. Now, what if you both described what you were feeling when you took the breath? I'm going count you off and you are going to prepare as if you are about to sing, but don't sing. 1, 2, 3 ... what do you feel right there?

### **E**

P and E start using their hands and working out what was inside.

P: Like I was like /I/ or ... /i/ (showing with IPA hand signs)

E: Prepare (She starts moving her hand moving to show an open space in the mouth).

T: Yeah, but you did this E, what is that?

E: Like "jing jing" (and shows her hand moving forward).

Chorister: Tongue.

E: Tongue

T: So, in the imaginative space those things are happening. Now prep a breathy sound. 1 and 2 and 3 (They do). What do you notice the difference between those two preps are?

E: It's like all over the place...

T: Interesting, so maybe the breathy sound is.... less specific?

E: It was more relaxed.

T: It was more relaxed. Interesting. Ok, have a seat. (To the choir). Name the tools they used to solve these problems.

Chorister: They listened to what was said to make it better.

T: What else did they do? What did they apply to their sound to change it?

Chorister: They changed their posture to match each other.

T writes down what they say on the whiteboard.

Chorister: Air

J: Shape

T: Ok. (He is writing). The prep included all of this...there's a big one in there that they said was different.

Someone: Tongue!

T: Tongue placement! And Payton was talking about about /I/ vs. /i/... which are.

P: Vowels

T: Tongue shape, vowel, all these things....

#### **6.3.5.4: More Mirror Singing Successes**

In Example 19, middle school choristers demonstrated their knowledge through a fluid discussion and application through demonstration. Though the game relied heavily on discussion—more so than playing on their own—breaking down the process gave them the agency to analyze and use whatever language they needed to, letting me refine and reinforce terminology when necessary. Middle school chorister reflections and focus group discussions shed light on how mirror singing has helped them become more aware of their own voices over the last several months; some even mention specific technical growth.

### **Example 20: MS Reflection Journals, March 18, 2024**

B: I think mirror singing has helped me because it shows how to match someone to see if you are wrong so you can adjust your mouth or breathing space to match them and their pitch...I also like count singing because it helps people stay on beat or tempo which also helps with timing.

P: Count singing is helpful when you're memorizing a piece of music and where each vowel/word is placed in the song. Steadies your internal tempo so that you can feel the tempo inside of you and not have to count out loud.

E: Vowel morphing. I am better at learning and matching vowels when getting visuals. For example, the hand signs really help me match the vowels and my mouth placement. When we do "ah" I usually find myself trying to match the form of the hand sign for "a." Tongue forward, open mouth.

### **Middle School Focus Group April 8, 2024**

T: Do you have a favorite game that we played, or one that specifically helped you with something? Or you noticed helped the choir?

**P / TI**

B: Mirror singing cause then you know like, if your mouths, like to match the other person to make the same noise with vocal quality and stuff.

T: Do you remember a time when that happened with you and one of the other choristers? Maybe connection?

**TI / AI**

B: I remember doing the mirror singing and I was like mouthing it the same as the other person so I matched them and I came out the same as the other person.

T: Do you remember what you changed in order to do that?

**TI**

B: Um I would say like Vowel placement

T: When you say placement, are you talking about spectrum, space?

**TI**

B: I would say space.

### 6.3.6: Sound Walkers

Sound Walkers was inspired by three theater activities: Viola Spolin's *Space Walker Series*, Stanislavski's *Tempo-Rhythm*, and a popular sound morphing warm-up that I once performed under a different name, but one that Stephen Treseler calls "THX" in his *10 Improvisation Games for Ensembles*. From Spolin's Space Walks series, I took inspiration from her purposes:

- To help create greater sensory awareness
- To discover full body perception of self
- To familiarize players with the element they live in<sup>138</sup> (in the singer's case, relationship with other singers in the choir).

From Stanislavski, I took the tempo-rhythm spectrum, which marks the speed of action on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing frozen and 10 representing sprinting. The THX inspired elements are not replicated in the exercise, rather they resemble an environment of many sounds that singers must focus through to hear their pitch and ultimately agree.

This musically modified versions of Space Walkers and Tempo-Rhythm prompt the singers to move at a moderate tempo and continually address their body as they focus on mapping physical sensations throughout the body, including tension and releasing it, and draw attention to how they breathe. Walking continually changes their environment so their singing tasks are not as predictable as they would be if they were standing next to the same person. Ultimately, the combination of these three activities became a pitch matching and tuning exercise to practice awareness, flexibility, and concentration.

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<sup>138</sup> Viola Spolin, *Theater Games for The Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook*, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1986), 33-40.

## Figure 11: Sound Walkers Game

- **The Purpose:**
  - To find pitch and vocal sameness as quickly as possible, regardless of the quality, vowel, or surrounding sounds.
- **The Focus:**
  - Find, agree, and hold a pitch with a partner as fast as possible, while others do the same with other partners simultaneously.
- **A Description:**
  - Singers walk around the room at the tempo that the conductor specifies on the tempo-rhythm scale (0-10). It is suggested to experiment with slow-moderate speeds (2-4).
  - While walking, the singers will be directed to imitate sounds and perform warm-ups to release their body and find proper alignment and breathing efforts.
  - The game begins when the conductor asks the singers to siren through their voices or create inconsistent sounds. When the conductor counts down (3, 2 1) the singers must find a chorister who is walking near them, freeze and agree on a pitch.
- **Tips for how to improve or approach playing and exploring:**
  - Singers cannot talk.
  - Singers should not work with the same person more than once, if possible
  - Singers should be focused on themselves during the warm-up phase, and on others during the game.
  - Try not to the same pitch sung before.
- **Sidecoaching examples or directives:**
  - “Watch the tongue” “More/less space” “Breathe together” “Where is the placement?” “Think more forward/mid/back” “pure vowel” “use HAND signs” “where is that singers vowel placed?” “Find someone new”
- **Evaluation from those observing:**
  - The conductor should initiate conversations during demonstrations from the players, and the full group.
  - Sample questions: “What did you hear?” “How did they achieve that?” “What were you thinking about?” “Where did it differ?”
- **Variations:**
  - Ask singers to try to match pitch in small groups, two groups and then one large group.

## Example 21: Workshop 24 with High School Choristers, January 24, 2024

T has removed all the chairs from their normal choral set-up and stacked them on the sides of the room, leaving a large open, tiered space for them to walk over. When the choir enters for rehearsal, T asks them to leave their belonging on the sides of the room and have a seat on the tiered areas. They sit and wait for class to start.

**GP**

T: Ok everyone, can you put all your things off to the side we're going to do something a little different today. As we are doing this exercise, please keep quiet and try to take what I'm giving you as serious as you can...If you have clothing that is going to bother you, please zip it up or remove the coat. I would like you to start walking around the room. If you are chewing gum, spit it out on your way. Please don't talk, just walk. I'm going to start talking to you about what you're doing, and I'd like you to put your mind on those things. If 0 is frozen and 10 is sprinting, you're walking at about a 3, maybe a 4. Can you show me a 1. Don't touch people and please don't speak. Show me a 3. No talking, put your hands at your sides. Think of your feet. Put your mind in your feet. Can you feel your feet touching the floor. Next put your mind on your knees. Please don't push or touch each other thank you. some of you are looking at each other and making this goofy, just put your mind on your knees. Walk at a 2. Knees are bending. What does it require. Hands at your sides not in pockets. A 3. Now your hips and your waist...what's happening there. Arms are naturally swaying at your sides. Sleeves rolled up so your hands are naturally free. Put your mind on your shoulders, not so you're uncomfortable or rigid, but so you are standing tall. Your head looking forward. Can you roll your head around a bit, loosen that up. Shake out your arms. Take another deep breath. If this is a 3, go 2.5. Now as you are continuing the walk, you are mostly walking in a circle, but you can walk where you need to walk, just don't run into people. Put your mind on your lungs and notice the kind of breath you're taking. Freeze. Breathe normally. Stand still, staring straight forward. Breathe normally. Shake your arms out a little. Deep breath. Exhale. Release tension in your shoulders. Walk at a 3. I'm going to sing you a phrase and I'd like you sing it back. I'll sing it and then I'll count you off with snaps.

Na ne ni no nu  
1 2 3

They sing.

**SC**

T: Freeze. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being super relaxed and 5 being super tense. Show numbers.

Students show on their hands. There are many 1s, 2s, and 3s.

**SC**

T: As you're walking can you continue to release the tension in your body. Continue to feel tall. Remember the circle of singing as I'm counting you in. What is the circle of singing? Say it?

T is walking through the singers, on the same plane.

**TD**

Singers shout out answers (imagine, space, breath, vq, sustain, repeat).

T sings and then counts them off and they continue with /na ne.../.

**SC**

T: Great, now as you're walking, releasing, looking forward, continue to concentrate on yourself, this is not about others right now.

T sings. 1 2 sing

They sing

**SC**

T: Freeze. The kind of breath you just took is the kind of breath you're taking every time you take a step. Can you take that kind of breath every time, but it's an intentional breath with the circle of singing. You're imaging that space, imagine the vowel, but your breath is that simple. Stay frozen, looking forward, relax

1 2 sing

They sing.

**SC**

T: Pretty good, can you draw your attention to the end of it, and as the circle suggests, maintain that sound. 1 2 sing

They do.

T: Very good. Keep walking at a 3. (They continue walking). Repeat after me as you're walking. (He performs lip trills. They repeat). Some of you are super forceful, can you use more air and less muscle. (He performs a lip trills, they repeat. He does another lip trill higher, they repeat). If that's too hard try a /v/ (T demonstrates on /v/. They repeat it) or a woooo (mini siren, he does it, they repeat it)...Can you do some stretches way up high (woo woo woo), its a pure vowel (they do it). /æ æ/ (They do it), be as gentle as you can on your throat, think more air and space (they do it), good, another deep breath. Some of you are walking to fast, just chill. A 2.5 or a 3.

**GP**

T: Ok, now this is going to be chaos. I'm going to ask you, as you're walking, you to, as you're walking, just kind of siren, your own thing throughout the range of your voice. And when I say 1 2 3 go, you're going to sing whatever pitch you want, and the closest person next to you, find each other, try to match pitch with each other as quickly as possible. Now, this is not about everyone in the room finding the same pitch, it's about finding the same pitch with someone else near me as soon as possible. Here we go.

T does a lip trill, they repeat.

T: Ready, 2 3 1 go

**D / POC**

It is chaos sound, but they try it. They look confused.

T: Stop. (They keep holding the pitch). Stop! (They stop). Keep walking.

They walk.

T performs a lip trill. They repeat.

T: 3 2 1 go

**D**

Everyone finds someone to match pitch with and they sing. This time it's much more varied sound. Singers are finding pitches with each other and holding them.

T: Great, keep going, keep walking.

They do. There is chatter.

**GP / SC**

T: Here's another goal: How big a group can you get? Don't pre-plan it. Don't think about walking with your friends. How big of a group can you get in less than three seconds. Just go. Ready 3 2 1 go.

**D**

Two large groups form within two seconds, and they agree on a pitch within their groups. It takes a few seconds for them to agree with their groups. T stops them.

T: Good! Okay keep walking.

They cheer at their success.

**SC**

T: Keep walking. Ok, this time, a different group of people! Don't always gravitate toward the same. If you have SATB voices all represented in your group, can you find between the octaves which one is best. Maybe you have to flip up... Do some sirens.

T demonstrates sirens and they repeat after him.

T: And 3, 2, 1 go

**D / P**

They quickly run and find a group and sing. Three groups form. It takes a few seconds for them to agree on a pitch. They are laughing and looking at each other.

T: Ok hold.

N: I can't match that (referring to a soprano's note an octave higher than him).

They all laugh.

### **SC**

T: Ah, do what you can! The goal is to find the pitch! I notice people gravitating toward like voices. That is not always going to be the case in our singing. What if M, J and W had something. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to sing the same octave. So, A, you don't have to choose that high note. If you do though, think about your technique.

A: Right

The choir laughs.

### **GP**

T: Can everyone take five or six steps away from who you're standing by right now. Mix yourselves up. The point isn't to do this with a friend. The point is to get the problem solved as quickly as possible. What is the problem?

D: Different pitches

T: Different pitches, find the same pitches as quickly as possible. It's a pitch correction game.

They start walking and lip trilling and sirening.

T: 3 2 1 go

### **D**

They all sing. The whole choir arrives on the same pitch.

### **GP / I**

T: (To a group) Ok, do this again. Good! (To the whole choir). Can you find it in less than two seconds? Spread out (T plays chords on the piano to mix up their pitches). 321 go.

T has chosen to adapt to what the choir is doing.

They sing the same pitch.

### **GP / SC / I**

T: We do keep gravitating toward the same pitch. Can we vary the sound? Siren (they make noises). 321 go.

They quickly find pitches.

**GP / SC / I**

T: Ok, as a mass choir right here (the choir is all around him) I want you to all pick whatever pitch you want, I want you to take 5 seconds and then we are all going to arrive at the same one.

Chorister: Which note?

**I / UT**

T: It doesn't matter which one. You have to listen across. Pick whatever pitch you want, high or low. Don't try to sing the same pitch as someone else yet. I'm going to count you down, when we get to 0 try to be on the same pitch as everybody else.

T counts them down. They all sing and don't change.

**I**

T: No, no, no. Here's the game. Can you slide around? You're going to have to find a like pitch through those 5 seconds, if at the end you're still singing a different pitch as someone else, then you've gotta change. Can we do it? Let's try it.

Levi: I thought we have to do it on zero.

T: By the time we get to zero.

**D**

They count down and mostly arrive on the same pitch. There are two pitches represented.

T: Do it again.

They sing whatever pitches they want. T counts down. They find a pitch.

T: Can you do it in 3 seconds?

They sing whatever pitches they want. T counts down. The group finds a fifth.

T: You're singing a 5<sup>th</sup>.

They laugh.

T: Some people have to join. Do it again. and sing!

They sing whatever pitches they want. T counts down. But they choose one of the same pitches they had before that was in their ear.

T stops them.

T: No, you have to vary it.

They choose random pitches. T counts down. They mostly agree but it takes 4 or 5 seconds.

**E**

T: Ok it took about 4 or 5 seconds. Ok talk to me, how are you changing the pitch? What requires that?

M: Ears.

T: Ears. What else?

J: I feel like listening to others and force myself to actively listen, not just to myself.

T: It's an auditory thing but what else? Alex?

A: I sing a bit and then if I notice something is off, I pause for a second and then listen to someone who is loud near me and I usually move and then get their pitch

The choir laughs.

T: So, he's deferring to someone else.

L: I just listen to them and then sing the note they are singing.

T: Ok I am asking you to sing a pitch though.

L: Yeah.

T: So, are you sliding on the way?

Levi: No, no, no, I like sing my note and then I stop, I listen to them and sing their note.

**GP**

T: Ok! This time there's no stopping allowed.

Levi: Oh!

T: You have to find the pitch as quickly as possible. This is an intonation exercise. How quickly can you tune to someone else?

E: Are breaths allowed?

T: Yes, but not in those three seconds. You shouldn't have to breath in those three seconds. Pick whatever pitch you want. Ready go.

They all sing. T counts down and they arrive on a 5<sup>th</sup> again.

T: We are still fighting. We want to find unison. Once again, siren.

They do.

T: Ok whatever pitch you want.

### **D / S**

They sing whatever pitch they want. T counts down and they arrive unison.

T: Bravo! Someone describe what it is you did.

### **E**

I: We were all in sync.

T: Ok that was the result. But what happened? What did you do?

J: I used more air for the higher note.

T: Ok! What else did you do. N?

N: Vowel shape

T: Vowel shape. Ok everyone slide (he sirens on different vowels throughout his voice, and they imitate). What is going on inside when you do that?

They talk (it's hard to hear so T repeats their answers)

T: What are you feeling?

Choristers are inaudible. But T hears someone say pushing.

T: What are you pushing?

D: Where your tongue is and like also the space.

T: Ok, so as you're navigating something like, don't blindly drive right? You need to be thinking about all the different things it takes to slide to match pitch. M was saying I gotta listen. A was stopping and then listening and then joining back in. This is a good exercise. Sometimes when we're singing four-part harmony or even in unison we don't come in on the right pitch. Or we didn't prep correctly. We have to learn how to correct it

immediately right? So, this is a preparation game for that. How fast can you do it? Can you do it in two seconds. Last one. Siren please.

The choir sirens.

T: Sing whatever pitch you want.

**D / S**

They do. He counts down. The choir changes pitches and it takes at least 3 seconds... Great, if you do any of this (shows straining with jaw and neck), try to fix it with tongue, with space...

### **6.3.6.1: Sound Walker Successes**

When asked to find the same pitch as another chorister spontaneously, singers were mostly successful after given multiple chances; game instructions were continually clarified. Laughter and responses showed engagement, and when asked to form larger groups, choristers were inclusive of other choristers and willing to contribute. While the game could be played with variation, this first experiment demonstrated that directing them to focus outwardly on whoever was in front of them seemed to sharpen their senses as the game went on. After the workshop, students were asked if anything changed anything in their singing. In their reflection journals some wrote:

#### **Example 22: High School Chorister Reflection Journals, January 24, 2024**

**AI / TI**

K: Being able to walk while I was singing was helpful to make me relax. The matching pitch helped me listen across the room to hear what others were doing around me.

**AI / TI**

A: Yes, I would say it did. While we were playing the game at the start of class I felt myself becoming more confident in my ability to match pitch. I had to alter the space in my mouth and adjust my tongue. This improvement carried over into practicing with the larger group and our songs for the women's choir. I definitely noticed a change.

**TI / AI**

L: Im really starting to understand how to audiate with my other choir peers. It was hard for me at first when we did the “trying to all have the same sound.” I think that our choir found the same sound at one point in the game.

**AI / TI**

J: Today when we focused on matching pitches in a group it caused me to be more intentional about listening around the room and about what changes on the inside to be able to produce/change a sound to make it clearer or smoother.

**AI / TI**

A: Today I felt a big change in the space in my body/mouth. When we were walking around the room and you told us to relax and sing a pitch, I felt much richer in sound and less stressed in my throat.

**TI**

W: The walking was good for quickly agreeing, as well as breathing.

**AI / TI**

M: I liked the exercise at the beginning of class when we walked around and had 5 seconds to match pitch with a group of people. It helped me look around more at other people and change my pitch by me fix my facial expression.

### **6.3.6.2: Sound Walker Challenges**

The challenges that arose in our experimentation were mainly points of instructional confusion, which were quickly remedied. However, in a large group game like this, unless I were to specifically isolate any two individuals (from the beginning portion of the game), it is not possible to know if they are achieving the goal. The larger group and full group directives of the game give less for the conductor to assess.

One chorister recalled this game during a focus group discussion. When asked how choristers felt while playing game, this chorister responded:

#### **Example 23: High School Chorister Focus Group, April 11, 2024**

C: There was one where you had us walk around and then you stop where you're at and find pitch with someone that you're around. That one kind of stressed me out a little bit. ...You were saying to help us kind of relax and get loose, but for me, maybe stressful wasn't the right word, but it was too much moving. Then when I stopped, I felt like I had

to reset, or get re-ready to sing, verses if we had just taken a couple steps or something, or shake out, I feel like it was too much moving, cause you had to reset every time. And maybe that was part of the purpose, to help us get ready, if you're not ready. But that one kind of didn't relax me.

Words like “stress” and “too much moving” give me warning when I think about initiating this game or refining it. Though no one else mentioned these effects, it is worth noting so I can be on the lookout for undue tension and distraction. This chorister also brought up what they assumed was the purpose of the game: “to reset” or “help us ready.” While these were not goals, per se, their comments imply that my goals for the game were not entirely clear for them.

### **6.3.7: Chase Resonance, borrowed from the Chase Theater Game**

There is a popular theater game that I know as “Chase” that I played in my youth theater arts programs. Though not credited to Spolin, this game was certainly created with similar goals in mind.

#### **Chase:**

Players stand in a circle. One player is designated to start. They must make a sound and a gesture without thinking too hard about what they are doing (as in, it doesn't matter what they do so long as it is classroom appropriate). Once they make this sound and gesture, the person next to them must do the exact same thing in imitation to the best of their ability. The next player must imitate the previous player and so forth, until the sound and gesture has been “chased” all around the circle. Once it comes back to the original player, the next player will initiate their own sound and gesture. This occurs until everyone in the circle has had a chance to lead.

#### **Some tips:**

- This game should happen as fast as possible. Players should not have the chance to pause or think about how to create the sound or gesture, they need to receive it, and give it immediately.
- When I was younger, my theater director used to stand in the middle of the circle and if the responses were too slow, she would put her hand out and turn around the circle like a clock asking the players to stay ahead of her hand.

A musically modified version of chase is easily achieved with singers in a circle passing a pitch around with a different quality, dynamic, and articulation. Figure 12 shows the choral arts game directions for Chase Resonance.

### **Figure 12: Chase Resonance Game**

- **The Purpose:**
  - To find sameness in resonance through placement, vowel and vocal quality with a group of singers as fast as possible.
- **The Focus:**
  - Whatever the director or choristers have specified as the issue: pitch, placement, vowel, breath, tempo, etc.
- **A Description:**
  - One singer, either chosen because they have demonstrated the desired sound for the group to achieve or anyone can start for experimentation, will begin singing a pitch on a specific vowel and will hold it while other singers join in succession, interpreting the kind of the sound that the singer ahead of them has made.
  - This continues around the circle until all singers are holding the pitch together.
  - This process should repeat, with other singers in the group starting the pitch. The game should continue until they all agree with the foci they are looking for, and can start together from that point of sameness several times.
- **Tips for how to improve or approach playing and exploring:**
  - Singers can use their game cards which include the Wheel of Artistry and vocal tools to help them navigate solutions.
  - The game should go fast so singers can practice quick, spontaneous adjustments.
- **Sidecoaching examples or directives:**
  - “Watch the tongue” “More/less space” “Breath together” “Where is the placement?” “Think more forward/mid/back” “Vowel shape” “use HAND signs” “Where is that singer’s vowel placed?”
- **Evaluation from those observing:**
  - The conductor should initiate conversations during demonstrations from the players, and the full group.
  - Sample questions: “What did you hear?” “How did they achieve that?” “What were you thinking about?” “Where did it differ?”

## Example 24: Workshop 26 with High School Choir, January 31, 2024

T has gathered the Men's Choir to rehearsal a Georgian folk song called *Mok'le Shemodzakhili* that they are preparing for an upcoming contest. They are working on finding a bright, tall, resonant sound that is part of the Georgian folk singing tradition. T has been working with the tenors and basses on tuning and placement for the first note, to set the quality and timbre for the rest of the piece.

### GP

T: Let's do a game. We'll call it chasing resonance. Try to find the same resonance and same placement as someone else. Basses would you get into a circle?

The basses move their chairs to form a large circle in the room. They still sit in their chairs.

T: Let's start with J.

### D

J sings the first pitch and syllable of the song "*wah*," but sings it short.

Everyone laughs.

### D

T demonstrates a long, held pitch on the first syllable. J joins him. T points to everyone going around the circle, until everyone has "chased" the resonance of the singer in front of them.

### GP / I / SC

T: Great, now do it again, don't put too much pressure here (points to his throat), think of the space and the tongue and find it one right after the other.

He points to J. J starts and they each follow suit. The sound is improving, but there is still instability in the tuning and placement.

### SC

T: Can you go faster now? How fast can you get? Chase it.

They sing again and speed up the reaction time, but the pitch is getting flat.

T: Now, it starts to sink. Stand.

They stand.

### I / SC

T: Now let's take turns, J is going to start, you're going to go all the way around, and then J, once Eamon starts then stop singing. Then A's going to start. Everyone will get a chance to start it because we are practicing grabbing that pitch out of nowhere. J go.

Josh holds /wa/. They all chase it. They start laughing toward the end.

T draws attention to one chorister who is over pronouncing the "w" consonant in the syllable.

**SC**

T: A, less W. It's simple. Restart.

They do.

T: So, the question is, as you're playing this, how quick can you agree? Be quick to agree. And don't start until he agrees (pointing to the next person).

They start again.

T: Go faster.

They progress through the circle, each chorister getting a chance to start to the sound. It is getting faster and cleaner. Sometimes they still laugh when their friends make a forced sound.

T: Quicker. Go quicker to the /a/.

They try. Some of them are laughing.

T stops them and gives one chorister another chance.

T: Adjust your posture. M go one more time.

M starts, and the next singer joins, but they start to laugh.

T gives M another chance.

T: M go.

They start. He stops them.

T: It's slightly under, you have to think of the pitch before you start.

**D / SC**

M starts and when the sound gets to J he is not matching the sound that has gone around.

J's sound is spread and nasally in comparison to the other singers. T gives instructions for J to be taller in his sound.

T: Once we get here (points to a certain area of the circle) the pitch starts to sink a bit, so you have to get the right breath. We are trying to lock in right away. This is something you can do on your own, or in the hall (referring to when they are given time to work on their own in the hall)...Find the resonance so you can memorize how it starts. What are you feeling when you're starting that?

**TD**

M: Vowel shape

E: Space

T: Ok you start it together, go without me

They are talking at once. T backs up.

**D**

They sing. It is a strong, loud sound, but the intonation is still suffering.

**SC**

T: Now, can it correct faster? So, what are you using to solve it? It is tongue, space? And when you hear it click, take note of what you did.

They start and it goes around the circle.

**I / SC**

T: So, when its starts to agree, someone raise your hand and tell me what you're doing... did anyone shift anything?

**P**

M: Can we do it again?

T: Yeah!

They do. T stops them immediately.

**SC**

T: So, its starts very forcefully, use the /a/ more that then /w/

They start again and they laugh.

T: It ok, we just gotta get past the laughter. Is it people's faces?

N: Look at the ground!

M: But I'm trying to mirror sing!

T: Great so rather than look at someone else, look at something else. I'm looking at... N you and me go.

T sing and N sings after him.

T: So, what I was doing was watching his mouth do this (shows) and his tongue do that (shows).

**D / S**

They sing again. Pitch, resonance and quality are matching.

T: And we correct it really fast. If I look at A's eyes, his eyes aren't the pitch. Yeah, he can look interested, but if he's distracting you look at something else, if you don't wanna look at someone, don't, but use your ears. And what are you adjusting?

**S**

They all sing it. They are correcting faster and finding sameness in multiple areas.

T: Ok, now tenors get into the circle and sing yours.

Everyone sings and chases the resonance of the person in front of them. The sound is getting cleaner. Rehearsal continues with the tenors and basses in the circle. They are working on conducting together/ starting together. As they sing, T reminds them to chase the sound. They are improving. You can tell they are searching for the sound.

### **6.3.7.1: Chase Resonance Successes**

Chase Resonance gave each chorister a chance to share leadership and allow them to practice adjusting their sound quickly and spontaneously. Because this game is played quickly, singers were forced to be engaged and prepared to offer the next starting pitch and quality when it was their turn. After several rounds, choristers voiced their thinking and how they were altering their voices: "vowel shape," "space." One chorister was searching for the right onset while trying to overcome laughter. After a few attempts, he asked if he could try again, showing determination and confidence. By the end of the workshop, I recalled what my former theater director, Kathleen Edwards said, "don't experience failure because you didn't do it long

enough.” This game was played for eighteen minutes. By the end they were no longer amused or laughing at each other but focused and determined to get a unified sound.

Some choristers wrote about their experience with chase resonance in their reflection journals after playing the game multiple times over several weeks while preparing for both the contest and a concert:

### **Example 25: High School Student Reflection Journals, March 13, 2024**

M: Chasing Resonance has helped me a lot on certain songs to help with starting pitches especially on *Mok'le*. I think it also helped us and a group identify where we were with our pitch.

E: When we did the chasing resonance game it helped me find my notes with the other guys

N: Chasing resonance helped people match vowels, so it was a more together sound. It also makes people match pitch and tone.

### **Conclusion**

From the examples given to support this research question, my conclusions are that the theater arts game I assumed could be modified were certainly modifiable and proved to be useful for exploring solutions to singing problems, but only *when* the instructions, engagement, evaluations, and further applications were clear, simple, and continuously guided.

Demonstration is always necessary before a game so that students see the practical and logistical applications for their vocal technique, and the steps for playing. When students demonstrate during the games, other students can identify successful outcomes which gives them more insight into how the game can be navigated. Through observations and interactions during games, students activated their understanding and gained more confidence to search for solutions with their partners or groups.

Maturity and experience contribute to chorister ability to independently manage a game. Since my students are not authorities on vocal pedagogy, my presence in most partner exploration is mandatory (like with the middle school choir in Example 10) to ensure they followed the right steps and so that I could confirm successes—they are not always able to confirm success. Since this case-study presents a curriculum in its experimental stages where many choristers are learning these kinds of problem-solving games for the first time, it did not yield many situations in which choristers solved problems entirely in partner or small group situations without my help. However, it is important to note that even in theater games, the director always needs to be present for sidecoaching and to step in when necessary; the goal for future experimentation is that choristers would become so used to the games that they know how to play without as many reminders or, in some cases, needing to be led step-by-step through the game.

The evidence above suggests that *Choral Arts Games* might best be described as teaching catalysts through which choristers can develop their senses, especially listening, and become more aware and thoughtful about their vocal contributions to the choral sound.

#### **6.4: Question 3: How does applying Choral Arts Games to repertoire impact the artistry of my choristers?**

To answer this question, I must break it down into its qualifiers. *Applying choral arts games to repertoire* refers to the specific use of repertoire as content for the games, i.e., using phrases or isolated spots of chorister's repertoire in place of vocalises, other vocal function exercises, or vowel sequences. *Artistry* refers to anything on the Wheel of Artistry that could be impacted by playing a game, i.e., vocal technique or aspects of basic musicianship. The intention is that playing a game would not only help choristers solve singing problems and help them get

to know the possibilities of their voice, but that they also would help choristers enhance their artistic contributions while singing their repertoire.

I will share three examples, two successful applications and one challenging outcome as an example of how game application impacted my choristers' artistry. My answer for this question is again supported with examples from workshops, reflections and focus groups that feature chorister responses to repertoire application.

#### **6.4.1: Themes and Subthemes**

Any time I, or a student, initiated game for repertoire, I labeled these instances an application (APP) under the larger theme Game Process. Subthemes from above questions are still prominent throughout the examples here, and again indicated with a bold capital letter.

#### **6.4.2: Challenges When Applying Games to Repertoire**

Game exploration requires an organic exchange with the players to find what is successful and not. Example 26 shows an excerpt from a game exploration that taught us a lot about how and when certain games should be introduced. This game initiation ultimately fell short of the goals because choristers were not ready for this kind of game. The excerpt below is halfway through the workshop.

#### **Example 26: Workshop 9 with High School Choir, November 20, 2023**

T is working with the high school tenors and basses on *Veni Veni Emmanuel* for their upcoming concert. The arrangement is a cappella, mostly unison with three-part harmony in the refrain. At the beginning of the workshop, the tenors and basses called out some problems in this song that they would like to work on; T wrote them on the whiteboard: tempo, connectivity, diction, and breathing. Throughout this workshop, T initiated mirror games with them, reviewed Italianate Latin and their pitches. It is evident that the choristers do not know their pitches very well. Some are rushing; vowels and harmonies are misaligned.

M: So, should we try it exaggerated, slower?

**UT**

T: How about that?! There's a game. Go solve it.

M: Should we go out there?

T: No, go right there.

T points to the left corner of the room, 10 feet from him.

M leads a sectional with the baritone. T is working with the tenors briefly on vocal quality and tuning, and then comes back to observe the baritones. The baritones are standing in front of the iPad.

I: We're supposed to go slower on purpose.

E: I did!

M shows that they are supposed to relax the lower pitch.

M counts off: "321!"

**D**

They try again, but they are not focusing on shaping the same vowels, they are just singing slower.

**SC**

T: Good, now sing "nascetur prote" just sing your pitches on my cue.

The baritones sing after T's gesture: "na ————— sce—————tuuuuuu"

**TD**

T: /tu/ is not correct. Let's arrive at the same pitch.

They sing it again on his cue.

**TD**

T: So, in order to get that pitch you have to think higher.

**SC**

T takes them through each vowel in isolation.

T: Yeah, so, in order to tune it that's what you have to do.

T calls the basses to join the baritones.

**I**

T: If you go slower, you can figure that out. Ok listen. We are going to go through each pitch separately. In this game, everyone is going to take a free hand and conduct together. And you're going to make sure that the shape of the vowel is together with the hand change. So.. (he demonstrates "na——- sce——tu" And once you tune it move on to the next one. Can you lead it?

**D**

Basses attempt this and it falls apart.

T: Yeah, you have to memorize that in your body so you can do it in tempo, do it again cause it's solving the problem. Keep playing! If you feel like it's not tuning, show the shape of the vowel you should be doing. You know them yeah? (He shows them the IPA signs as a view).

Basses start again. They don't start on the right pitch. One chorister (A) sings them the right pitch. They argue about which pitch is correct. They laugh and look a little confused.

**E**

T: So, is it tuning? Yes or no?

I: No

T: No. So, you're probably going too fast. You have to wait until its solved, then you can speed it up.

T lets them struggle through it and then steps in

T: No, that one is consistently wrong. (Referring to /na/.)

**SC**

T starts singing with them. They all sing /na/.

T: Now that is consistently low. Be interested, you have to think higher. Tenors come join us. If you breathe in the /a/ it will help.

Tenors join. T leads them vowel by vowel, pitch by pitch in isolation.

**E / GP / I**

T: You hear how it tunes? Tenors can you intersperse yourselves throughout here. Let's try that again, that's a good exercise. Ok, so here's how the game is played, if we're not in tune — this is a tuning game — this is where someone has to conduct or you all conduct, and you can hear when it's wrong right?

Basses: Yeah

**E**

T: You can hear when it doesn't agree, so if it's not in agreement make sure you show the vowel. Let's try it together. Forte. And breathe the vowel.

**SC**

He conducts. They do not come in correctly.

In this example, I was premature in introducing this game. I reflected in my journal after this workshop:

**Example 27: Personal Reflection Journal, November 20, 2023**

The games are too advanced for them right now. I am needing to lead them through things to show them how to lead. In reviewing this footage, I'm realizing that I am teaching them how to be (a coach and leader) to themselves. They have to learn the terminology, and it's just not a part of their rhythm yet.

Even though in warm-ups and previous rehearsals they have seen me demonstrate and I have pointed out the tools they can use, it was evident in this workshop that I needed to spend more time isolating pitches with them and showing them how to tune using that tool, instead of trusting them to work it out after a short demonstration. Their recalibrated role as conductor needs to be discerned more carefully before they are given leadership responsibility. An additional challenge that hinders game success is if choristers do not know their pitches. The basses did not know their pitches well enough to focus on solving other artistic issues with a game; this was an oversight on my behalf. We could have either played a different game that focused-on pitch, game or spent time with each section learning their pitches by repetition.

While there were some successes in the example above, my choristers were successful because I stepped in and ran a more traditional rehearsal model. This does not mean that the rehearsal was altogether unsuccessful, but it does mean the game did not positively impact my

student’s artistry for this piece. Therefore, I offer the following advice before implementing a game:

- When applying games to repertoire, choristers should know their pitches and text from memory—at least the portion that they are practicing.
- Demonstration should happen multiple times before conductors let students share leadership with each other.

Exploration reveals the riskiness of spontaneity. Spontaneity feels counter intuitive to a lesson plan regarding a group activity like a game, but should not be regarded as a waste of time. When I did not keep the game procedure in mind while being spontaneous, or if the choristers were not brought into the brainstorming session, then exploration, like the instance above, could end up more chaotic and confusing than necessary.

### **6.4.3: Successes When Applying Games to Repertoire**

#### **6.4.3.1: The Audiation Game/Count Singing Game**

*The Audiation Game*, also known among my middle and high school choirs as *The Count Singing Game*, was inspired by Nancy Salwen’s *The Missing Note*.

#### **The Missing Note:**

Choose a song you are very familiar with, say “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” or “Happy Birthday,” or a simple song from your childhood...Sing it out loud two or three times as best you can. Now sing it again but leave out the last note. If you can’t sing well enough to do this, ask a friend to sing it, stopping before the last note...How do you feel? You might have a sense of agitation, an actual craving to hear that last note. If you don’t sing it, but rather spend a few moments noticing what’s happening in your mind, you might find that you are actually finishing the song in your head; singing the last note silently. If you don’t find yourself singing it silently in your head automatically, try doing it on purpose. That’s audiating!<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Nancy Salwen, *The Fear of Singing Breakthrough Program: Learn to Sing Even if you Think you Can’t Carry a Tune!* (Keene, NH: Music All Around, 2016), 150.

I combined Salwen's *The Missing Note* with Robert Shaw's well-known pitch and rhythm exercise called count-singing (1+2+ti+4+ etc), turning it into multi-faceted game in which choristers were instructed to pass a pre-composed count singing pattern between members of a group of four. To sound like one person singing the exercise, choristers were challenged to audiate and think ahead. During exploration, a first pass at the instructions were written on the whiteboard:

Game: Count Sing in Groups

- Each person gets one note in the exercise, taking turns until the exercise is done.
- If you miss a rhythm, the count singing pattern, or the note, you're out!

Tips:

- Look and think ahead
- Audiate
- Sing through everything
- Sing everything through everything together first

Goals:

- Be consistent with the tempo and rhythm
- Get the right pitches
- Practice conducting-getting the tempo from breath.
- Be together! Hopefully, no one gets out.

The following examples are excerpts from two explorations with this game, one with high school choir and one with middle school choir.

**Example 28: Workshop 14 with High School Choir, December 14, 2024**

Choristers were given twenty minutes to practice three different exercises on the whiteboard.

**I**

T: Alright can I have your eyes and ears? The point is to the transfer this into our music. So, internalize what we're doing. Pick which one you want to do, or go through all of the exercises. Find a place in the room where someone is not blocking you, make sure you can see read this. (T point to the whiteboard musical examples. T gives a pitch). Practice a few times as a group looking at the board. And then we'll try it out.

They continue with their groups. T sets timer for 5 minutes for them to work it out and practice. T is walking around sidecoaching, answering questions, listening. The students are conversing and deciding how to divide it up. Some students are going to the board and pointing to the notes. Many choristers are using their hands. T helps one group get the pitches by singing solfège first.

After five minutes:

**GP / E**

T: Okay here we go. Elimination round. Quiet please. Everyone's going to do it.

T chooses a group to go first.

T: Got your pitch?

The four choristers in this group look at each other. J cues and begins to sing:

J: 1 and...

E is the next chorister in the sequence. He does not sing.

T: Out!

The choir laughs. T sees that maybe they needed more clarity.

T: Are you ready? Make sure everyone is ready.  
Here we go.

J starts again, starting on *do*:

J: 1 and

E sings the same pitch.

E: 2 and (it should have been *re*)

T corrects him.

T: Two and (on *re*)

The choir laughs. E is confused.

J starts again, starting on *do*:

J: One and

E sings the same pitch again:

E: Two and (it should have been *re*)

T: So, E you should go up. Choir sing it.

The choir sings “One and two and” (*do* and *re* and).

T: One more shot E.

E: Can I just be out?

Choir members chuckle.

T: The goal is to get it! Try once more. You shouldn’t want to be out, that defeats the purpose.

J starts again. The group sings and makes it through half of the exercise. When it is E’s turn to sing again, he misses it.

He laughs, and the choir laughs.

T: Ok E sit.

E: Yes!

T: Ok, J, D and L. Now you have to improvise on who gets what syllable.

The group begins to sing again. They make it to three. J misses the syllable. He is out.

T: Out. Ok Ready and go.

D and L continue. They make it through.

T: Ok, still in the game. These four (he points to N, I, W and K).

**S**

These four sing. N forgets the and of 4. Once they finish they cheer.

T: Now we’ll play again, but technically you have to finish one and two and three and four AND...

I: ohhhh N! (jokingly frustrated).

Choir is chuckling and murmuring. The murmuring gets louder.

T: Quiet please. Ok listen to this group up here.

**D**

L, L, N, and J are standing up on the stop step of the raised rehearsal room. L starts singing but the rest of the group is not ready.

**SC**

T: Ok, hold on make sure your group is ready.

N: Yeah, don't start when we're talking.

L: Well don't talk then.

T: Hold on, as a group, as a conductor you're all responsible for making sure everyone is ready.

L: Alright.

T: Try it again.

L: You guys ready?

**D**

They start and stop a few times. They should be out. T is letting them work it out because they seem nervous. They try again and make it to "four and" but J misses the pitch.

**SC**

T: We have some nebulous pitch right now, let's agree. Last time and its elimination.

**D**

They try again and make it to "four and" but J misses the pitch.

T: No J sit!

He and the choir laugh.

**SC**

T: What is the note? Sing it after me. One and two and three and

Choir: Four and (they sing and correct pitch)

T confirms the pitch.

T: Yeah (to J, you're singing way to high). These three.

**D**

L starts again, but the next chorister, L, misses the next “One and”

T: Sit L.

**D**

They start again, there is some talking in other groups, and they get confused.

**SC**

T: It was a little slow. (Turns to the rest of the choir). There’s also a lot of talking.

**D**

L and N do it.

**E**

T: Ok, it’s pretty shaky. You’ll stay in, but listen the pitch is equally important. So, what do you have to do while the other person is singing?

Choir offers: Audiate, imagine.

T: Audiate, imagine. You have to prep. You can’t relax and check out. Ok, this group over here. Let’s go. Quiet please.

They sing the first exercise and make it through, but they each sang “and” with the other person. There is some clapping.

**I**

T: ...Now they did something really smart, but they’re cheating.

The choir laughs.

T: They are picking up the “and” of the other person (He demonstrates by accenting the “and”). You have to audiate that! That’s good problem solving, but audiate it. You should be able to start wherever in the melody. Once more.

**S**

Andrew starts. They make it through and it is much more stable.

T: Bravi! These three. You got it!

Later in the rehearsal, I asked them to sing through Michael McElroy’s arrangement of *Hark the Herald Angel’s Sing* that we were about to sing for a school event. In our concert the week

before, the choir rushed the tempo, and I was interested to know how this game could impact their internal sense of tempo for this song.

### **Example 28 Continued: Workshop 14 with High School Choir, December 14, 2024**

T: Now, let's get into a large circle. I'd like to sing this in a circle today. Alright, now I'm gonna be on the outside of the circle. You are going to count sing and keep the beat together. Go from "joyful." (Replays pitches) One two ready and...

**S**

They sing from "Joyful all ye nations rise." Tempo is more consistent. They are watching each other intently. The spaces between the pitches are more rhythmic. Some students are looking around at each other and conducting, using hand gestures, especially on the longer notes.

**SC**

T: Good job!

They use their hands to conduct each other at the end. Their breathing is more in time as well.

T: Ok that was maybe the most successful time we did it!

In their reflection journals, two high school choristers commented on their experience.

### **Example 29: High School Reflection Journals, December 15, 2023**

A: I definitely felt improvement personally from when I sang it in performance. I was able to prep the space better and hold the vowels longer.

D: Seeing how the choir was able to improve on *Hark the Herald* from a simple game was really cool. There was still some speeding up of our tempo, but it was less than before.

#### **6.4.3.2: Be My Conductor/The Isolation Game**

Another successful game application in repertoire was *The Isolation Game*. This game evolved from a mirror partner game when middle school choristers were taking turns conducting the other, which we called *Be My Conductor*. The goal was for both partners align their singing

in tempo. While sharing leadership, there were opportunities for players to change speed, challenging the follower to be right in sync with the leader's hands, regardless of whether they kept consistent tempo or not. We came up with a variation called *The Isolation Game* which we used for sections in our music that needed particular attention. The instructions are as follows:

### **Figure 13: Be My Conductor/The Isolation Game**

- **The Purpose:**
  - To refine transitions between beats.
- **The Focus:**
  - Whatever the director or choristers have specified as the issue: pitch, placement, vowel, breath with tempo in mind. The focus will be isolated out of time (with a fermata).
- **A Description:**
  - In partners or groups. One person is designated as the conductor.
  - They will conduct in simple patterns from side to side to represent one beat going to the next. For example, regardless of the time signature, the conductor will show the time relationship from one beat to another by going from the right side of their body to the left, and so forth.
  - Tempo should be moderate, but when it is time to isolate the issue, the conductor should freeze their gesture (fermata) so the follower(s) can refine it.
  - Over time, the focus should become refined from isolation, and when the conductor resumes tempo, the change should remain in effect.
- **Tips for how to improve or approach playing and exploring:**
  - Singers can use their game cards which include the Wheel of Artistry and vocal tools to help them navigate solutions.
  - Conductors should be very clear with their beat divisions and use their faces and bodies to help engage the follower(s) in paying close attention.
  - Follower(s) should watch the conductor intently. Any speeding up or slowing down or fermata should be followed with exactness.
  - When working in a group, pay attention to vowel sameness, placement, and tuning.
- **Sidecoaching examples or directives:**
  - “Watch the tongue” “More/less space” “Breath together” “Where is the placement?” “Think more forward/mid/back” “Vowel shape” “use HAND signs” “Where is that singer’s vowel placed?” “Watch their tempo.” “Hold the vowel until they move their hand.”
- **Evaluation from those observing:**
  - The conductor should initiate conversations during demonstrations from the players, and the full group.

- Sample questions: “What did you hear?” “How did they achieve that?” “What were you thinking about?” “Where did it differ?”

In Example 30, the middle school choristers were rehearsing *Christmas Star* by John Williams and Leslie Bricusse. In the refrain the choristers sing quarter notes on the text “Star light, shine bright, see me through the dark night.” Between the words “star” and “light,” and “shine” and “bright,” and “dark” and “night,” there was a tendency for choristers to slide to their next pitches. After a few unsuccessful attempts as a group, we employed *The Isolation Game* to see if we could solve it.

**Example 30: Workshop 7, with Middle School Choristers, November 2, 2023**

Choristers are working in partners, some are in groups of three due to an odd number of students. They are taking turns conducting each other using the above format.

**D**

B conducts J. There is no sliding. J conducts B. There is no sliding.

**SC**

T: There you go, you got it. Now do it together. Both of you conduct.

T arrives at P, M and E. M is conducting P and E.

T: Fantastic. Someone conduct M.

**D / S**

P conducts M and purposefully delays her hands at times to see if he is watching. M watches intently and succeeds.

T: There you go! You got it!

T comes to L and A.

**D**

L and A conduct together. A misses a pitch and laughs.

T: Ok let’s try it...

A: Well, we were doing it together.

**SC**

T: I know, let me see you do it alone first.

A tries to lead L but is distracted by the group next to her.

**C**

A: I can't think.

T turns to the group next to them.

**I**

T: You're doing great, can you hold on one second? Let me just hear them.

**D**

L conduct A. It is successful.

T: Brava.

T turns to C1 and C2 (name abbreviations are eliminated for complete confidentiality).

T: Ok let's hear it.

**D**

C1 conducts C2. They are not together. C2 is not following C1's tempo and there is still sliding.

**SC**

T: Wait, wait. If you breathe together, it will be better. One of you conduct and one of you sing, switch, and then do it together.

C1 laughs trying to breathe.

T: So, breathe together, you still breathe with her.

C2: So, are you conducting?

C1: Yes

C2: Let me get the pitch. Let me breathe.

They sing the pitch.

T: That's right C2.

C2 has been struggling with pitch. They are a hard worker and fearless about trying. They have also owned this problem and are aware that they need extra attention on it.

**D**

C1 breathes and C2 sings, but still slides between the words.

**E**

T: (To C2) Yeah, so do you hear you're still sliding?

C1: Yeah...

C2: C1 we did that like five times.

T: So do this...

**SC**

T puts the camera down to help them. He gives some instructions about how to not move pitch until C1's hand has completely moved to the other side.

T: The idea is, only move when they move. Try that.

C1: Alright.

C1 starts to conduct and C2 immediately slides.

C1: Don't slide!

T: C2 you conduct C1 and see what happens.

**D**

C2 breathes and leads C1 through the whole phrase. It is successful.

T: Bravo. Now switch and see if you can do it just like that.

**GP / P / I / AI / S**

In the background you can hear the whole group singing together. They have left their groups to form a large circle. T pans the camera over.

M: Slay all day!<sup>140</sup>

**P**

Choir: Slay!

They are excited.

T: Hey, that was pretty cool what you did! Let's hear it. Who was conducting? M?

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<sup>140</sup> *Slay* is a Gen Z term that means "doing well."

M: No.

T: Well, let's hear it.

M counts them off.

M: Three, two, one...

**D**

They sing through the phrase as a group. They are all conducting and watching the alignment together. E and R watch with T. The large group is successful: here is no sliding and consonants are aligned with the beat.

**SC**

T: Ok, we solved it! Let's solve it over here.

M: One, two, three slay!

**P**

Choir: Slay!

They all laugh.

T turns to C2.

T: You can do it.

C2: (To the choir). You guys I'm the problem.

T: (To the choir). Continue to look at your music, I'll be with you in a second.

C1: Alright let's go.

C1 starts conducting C2.

**S**

The choir starts singing the same background with her. C2 is much more successful. C2 is watching C1 much more closely.

**P**

T: Yes, that was much better, C2!

**AI / P**

C1: C2 actually, yeah I can hear C2 did much better.

**GP / P**

In the background, M is conducting the rest of the choir. They are repeating and practicing.

**GP**

T introduces a sliding game to see if C2 can match pitch more accurately.

T starts to slide up to the note. C2 mirrors him. C2 finds the note.

T directs C1 and C2 to play *The Isolation Game* again.

**GP**

T: Go with C1's fingers, watch only their fingers (hands). C1 begins to conduct C2. C2 sings the whole phrase on pitch and without sliding.

**P / S**

C2 is successful.

C2: I'm out of breath.

T: Yeah, but that's the idea (referring to the way she played the game). Do it again.

**D**

C1 starts conducting but decides to slow down the tempo and isolate vowels longer.

C2 didn't sing the right pitches this time, but was successful holding vowels and not sliding. C2 will get the pitches in time.

T: That's it, you did it!

T decides to end the game, knowing that C2 will continue to improve on pitch.

**APP**

T: Great let's come back together. M is going to conduct, and I'd like you to do the exercise you just did, just do it all together as a group. Let's hear it. M when you're ready.

M: 3, 2, 1

**S**

The choir sings it successfully. There is no sliding, and the consonants are aligned.

**I**

T: Now hold on. That was pretty good. Can you, M, can you give a firm "this is when we arrive" and everyone else, you don't move your note until he gets to the next one.

T gives them their pitches.

**SC**

T: Show me the vowel, the IPA hand sign?

They all show their IPA hand signs /a/ for the breath.

S

M leads them in the phrase again. They are much more together. They are using their bodies to represent the beat.

#### **6.4.3.3: Be My Conductor/The Isolation Game Successes**

My middle school choristers effectively navigated three facets of artistic expression in a game: tempo, diction, and phrasing. After playing this game, with our concert one month from this workshop date, they rarely struggled with sliding in this song again, and when they did, we played the game to fix it. Another success arose during this game when smaller groups converged to form a larger ensemble under a student conductor. In this instance, choristers demonstrated remarkable agency and leadership skills in their collaboration, thereby minimizing the necessity for my sidecoaching. In fact, this exemplifies what affect the games can have on students taking leadership. With enough exposure and retained technique, students should eventually be able to lead each other and become sidecoaches themselves.

#### **6.4.3.4: Be My Conductor/The Isolation Game Challenges**

An inherent challenge associated with partner games is choristers' exposed voices. Since the partner game process involves active engagement in sharing leadership while actively problem solving and receiving sidecoaching and subsequent evaluation, choristers are susceptible to public scrutiny. This experience inherently brings about a sense of vulnerability among participants. However, my choristers have seemingly exhibited an increased willingness to demonstrate. Moreover, since many of my choristers are friends, there is a heightened willingness to engage in collaborative play, thereby fostering a supportive environment conducive to our artistic exploration.

The choristers in Example 30 above, renamed as C1 and C2, are friends; my observation is that they feel comfortable working together. C2 is aware of their inconsistency matching pitch and is willing to work it out. There is a benefit for those observing C2 work through vocal issues; observing the vocal process can illuminate vocal function possibilities for others, especially in navigating solutions. It also gives students agency to encourage their peers and practice teaching; this was demonstrated in the above example through C1 never giving up on C2 during the game. Though C2 did not experience success in every area, they did solve the sliding issue which is why the game was employed in the first place.

There are no working examples or reflections from students who appeared discouraged or overly pressured when working through games like C1 and C2. Still, the situation in Example 30 should give teachers caution for all experimenting. Games should be encouraging, and players and sidecoaches should celebrate successes when they occur. All involved should also look out for instances when playing a game may cause anxiety or pressure in ways that inhibit more artistry. This game allowed for all involved to feel successful, but conductors should consider replacing a game with a different one if choristers seem distressed or if artistry is not improving.

## **6.5: Final Conclusions**

### **6.5.1: Expected and Unexpected Outcomes from Workshops**

I anticipated that my choristers would engage actively within our new dynamic environment, however, I was pleasantly surprised by the specificity with which certain choristers articulated their experiences during discussions and focus groups. Comments ranged from a sense of “comfort” within our environment, to a heightened awareness of their own vocal mechanisms gained through exposure to various perspectives during partner and group interactions. However, my expectations regarding reflection journals were not consistently met.

Despite repeated instructions to provide detailed and honest reflections, some students appeared to rush through the prompts, misunderstand the directions, or mistakenly believe they had provided details when in fact they did not. This is evidenced by one-word answers such as “yes” or “no” and partial responses such as “it was helpful,” and even some cases where questions were left unanswered.

Nevertheless, many chorister responses, whether positive or negative, have proven invaluable in gauging the impact of my research. They offered diverse and personal perspectives, shedding light on individual learning preferences and outcomes. This, in turn, provides insight for guiding future directions in my work with my students specifically, i.e., we know which games work for us, we know how fast we can play a game, and I know which concepts are appropriate or too advanced for my singers, and therefore know what is worth exploring as a game verses a traditional choral teaching method.

### **6.5.2: Recommendations for Further Research**

While the analysis for this study has ended, it is important to acknowledge that research exploring interdisciplinary models between choral and theater mediums warrants continued attention. The potential synergies between these disciplines offer opportunities for advancing choral education. What I have offered in this dissertation is a convenient sample in my classroom environment at Seattle Christian School. Though my thirty-seven students offered multiple perspectives, our experiments were limited due to age, musical ability, and time. Therefore, further investigation is necessary for enhancing pedagogical approaches for choristers. Some possibilities are listed below:

1. An in-depth study of two choirs: one choir should function traditionally, and one should function under theater arts methodology. The researcher could note the differences between these two choirs over a period of time while they learn the same

concepts using different approaches. Choristers could offer multiple perspectives on learning outcomes in their respective environments and the research could note any differences.

2. In parallel with the aforementioned study, a comparative investigation involving two choirs, each comprising members who participate exclusively in a traditional choral setting and a theater arts-inspired choral setting. A subset of individuals engaging in both, could be observed over an extended period. By examining the perspectives of participants who exclusively learned within one environment and those who learned in both, nuanced insights into potential advantages and disadvantages may be gained and offer more insight for refining practices. This approach offers the opportunity to discern differential impacts, facilitating a deeper understanding of the interplay between choral and theatrical pedagogies and their implications for educational outcomes.
3. Exploring studies that include diverse age demographics, such as elementary, college, and adult choristers, could offer insights into game design and content tailored to varying developmental stages and levels of vocal ability. Different age groups or proficiencies require distinct levels of vocal instruction. Feedback from such studies could potentially help game designers create frameworks for games and establish environmental norms that are congruent with the specific needs and capabilities of each age group or ability level. A tailored approach such as this could also enhance engagement and learning outcomes across diverse age groups within choral education settings.

In conclusion, I offer insights drawn from my personal experience that researchers pursuing this kind of work should not be deterred by chaotic atmospheres, abandoning certain ideas, or the evolution of their perspectives. Experimentation implies that the researcher must relinquish their current definitions of “conductor” and “chorister” and be willing to continually adapt to organic circumstances. Engaging in experimentation that has dynamic environments and requires a willingness to embrace uncertainty and fluidity, as in the exploration that Stanislavski, Meisner and Spolin undertook, entails, at times, abandoning conventional definitions of roles such as “conductor” and “chorister” and deciding to be receptive to continual adaptation in response to organic circumstances. By cultivating an open-minded and flexible approach, researchers can effectively navigate the complexities that arise in interdisciplinary investigations and in doing so, perhaps stumble upon new or improved ways of pursuing these domains.

### 6.5.3: Closing Remarks

In my *Choral Arts Games* case study, I have put forth an interdisciplinary experiment using choir and theater methods with evidence shown in practical working examples.

Researchers who implemented theater arts practices in music prior to this study had not proposed interdisciplinary methodology to teach vocal pedagogy specifically. However, after analyzing the outcomes of this study, I propose that it is not only possible, but effective, to teach group singing using games in a theater arts environment and applying them for improving artistry for repertoire. In the following, I will summarize the findings above into final, concise answers for my research questions.

#### 6.5.3.1: Research Questions and Condensed Answers

- How does teaching group singing in a theater arts *environment* affect how my choristers learn?

According to most of my middle and high school choristers, teaching in this kind of environment (with partners and groups playing games) mostly helped them feel safe and less intimidated when learning a vulnerable craft like singing. It strengthened their awareness of their own voices and increased their retention of vocal technique and singing terminology. It also gave them space to practice their senses and be more sensitive and responsive in our work throughout the eight-month process.

- Can theater arts games be *musically modified* to help choristers solve singing problems?

I only experimented with games that I saw as potentially useful for teaching vocal technique and basic musicianship: *Mirror games*, *Space Walks*, *Chase*, and *Meisner Repetition*; in terms of these games, yes. Other games in this study were designed both ahead of workshops and spontaneously during workshops; they followed Spolin's theater game procedures as well as pre-existing musical games or exercises.

- How does applying choral arts games to repertoire *impact* the artistry of my choristers?

When applying these games to repertoire, certain games had a positive impact on artistry: namely *Mirror Singing*, *Chase Resonance*, *The Audiation Game/Count Singing Game*, *Show the Flow*, and *Vowel Morphing*. Other games, such as *The Isolation Game* had some successes, but challenges proved that games can also detract from improving artistry, and there is proper order to introducing a game.

Evidence for the answers above is mainly shown through my students' learning outcomes. Subthemes under the larger theme of Learning Outcomes, labeled Technique Impact (TI) and Awareness Impact (AI), were the most consistent data for determining environment and game effectiveness. My choristers experienced notable advancements in their ability to grasp and retain vocal technique essential for group singing. In transitioning from an environment where choristers primarily face me to having choristers face each other, they fostered more frequent, interpersonal singing relationships. Through these relationships, choristers have demonstrated a heightened capacity to collaboratively address singing issues expediently and exhibit technique retention. By imbedding problem solving through games, I have given choristers ample opportunities for collaboration and agency. My singers have naturally assumed different identities by leading, following, observing, evaluating, and demonstrating. In these identities, they have also accomplished the desired goals I shared in my introduction. I hoped that they would be able to:

- Assess themselves and identify the artistic state of the choir
- Initiate solutions to musical/singing problems
- Retrain vocal technique, repeat it, and teach it
- Gain confidence and an increased willingness to explore their voices

Undoubtedly, the most compelling and tangible evidence that students met these goals lies in congruent observations shared by both my choristers and me. Chorister's responses in journals and focus groups demonstrate this case-study's positive effects. Words like "learning together," "without singling people out," "we all work on it together," "more fun and engaging," "less intimidating," "more aware" "more space to work together," "different perspectives," "comfortable," "connect," "trust," "wasn't any pressure," and "time to work" are signs that choristers felt good and made positive memories associated with their learning. Specifically,

words like “less intimidating,” “comfortable,” and “trust” exemplify outcomes seen in Meisner practitioners and the non-authoritarian approaches in Spolin’s games.

Many solutions came from employing vocal pedagogy advice from the voice scientists and teachers from Chapter 3. Kari Ragan, Jo Estill, Scott McCoy, Kenneth Bozeman, Geoffrey Boers, Nancy Salwen, and Dan Anderson provided directives, terminology, exercises and teaching models through which we could experience pedagogical success in the games. They can quickly diagnose sounds, “mirror” sounds, and offer fixes to vocal problems. The games have indeed been catalysts for choristers to grow in their vocal technique, sharpen their listening skills, and instill a hyper-awareness and improved consciousness about their contributions to our choir sound. Through engaging with partners, choristers have improved their perceptiveness, both visually and aurally, fostering a heightened state of alertness. Choristers strengthened their eyes and ears for alertness; through mirroring especially, they observed postures and actions and heard sounds that kept them engaged and, as a result, gave them a context through which they could develop a sense of self and group evaluation. Their ability to assess is evident in their discussions with each other during game play and in our post-game discussions in which their critical thinking and creativity even led to co-creating games. The combination of hyper-awareness coupled with a willingness to explore artistic possibilities, at least demonstrates that our work cultivated a transformative mindset, useful for any singer.

Even in our successes, the choral arts game curriculum is not meant to replace any existing choral methodology. Rather, it simply offers a set of tools for exploration, and contributes to the ongoing search for more refined educational approaches. Not every instance in my study demonstrates efficiency, but it does demonstrate chorister ownership, leadership, and agency. My choristers and I have become Sharon Paul’s interchangeable terms discussed in the

introduction: we are now simultaneously “music educator,” “conductor,” “singer,” and “student” and, therefore, an example of André de Quadros’s “recalibrated role” that he so passionately encouraged the UW Advanced Choral Techniques class to consider three years ago.

Searching for best practices is not unusual in educational professional development, however, it is difficult to implement these practices and make them a consistent habit. As Kathleen Edwards advised, “You have to experience a game for longer than ten minutes. Beyond ten minutes, the internal judge gets fatigued. Don’t experience failure because you didn’t do it long enough.”<sup>141</sup> I frequently reminded myself of her advice, as discouragement can set in quickly if a game does not appear successful in a limited timeframe.

Recalibrating takes preparation time, research, intricate planning, and training oneself to be flexible, and, as André de Quadros did with his choirs, defining and redefining functional models and roles in learning environments. Despite my daily participation as a sidecoach in my theater classes at Seattle Christian School, it took me some time to adjust to this role with my choristers. It would behoove choristers to understand the nature of this role as well, since calling out instruction and inserting oneself in a game can be a sudden experience, and at first it may be distracting. It is advisable for choristers to know the significance of the sidecoaching role and receive frequent reminders regarding its purpose. Finally, when games commence, it is imperative for the sidecoach to swiftly transition between groups to mitigate the possibility of unruly or unfocused conduct. While games may be played for extended periods of time, my observations are that an undue allocation of time to one partner group or small group would invariably lead to a decline in attentiveness among other groups.

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<sup>141</sup> Kathleen Edwards, interview.

When looking at the outcomes, my mind is drawn to the list of “things we are calling out” that the UW ACT class put on the whiteboard—some of the things we were looking to improve upon were *shared leadership, equality in learning, pedagogy, facilitator, goals, outcomes, and literacy*. As previously correlated, theater arts environments and their activities offer practical solutions for shortcomings in these areas. As a result of my study, I conclude that implementing theater methods to teach vocal technique is a valid way of addressing these shortcomings.

For conductors and choristers who submit themselves to new rehearsal norms, they should be advised that playing singing games once or twice is not always a sure way to gauge effectiveness. To personalize Meisner practitioner Nick Moseley’s words: *Choral Arts Games*, provided they are “pursued relentlessly over an extended period of time can offer a solution. Within clear structures and safe exercises, [they] slowly and methodically recondition the habits...”<sup>142</sup> As choristers’ habits are reconditioned, they can become closer to finding what Dr. Hebert and I discussed in our interview from Chapter 4. Hebert imagined his choir like a team, and helping choristers develop self-confidence and contribute to this team is hard work. My study helps address how this can be done, and ultimately provides a working example of pursuing what Hebert and I are looking for; something “...organic, spontaneous. We’re looking for something that sounds alive...”<sup>143</sup> The musical relationships that are built through problem solving with games reconditions chorister habits so they can become more pliable and open for artistry as individuals and as a members of a choral team.

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<sup>142</sup> Moseley, *Meisner in Practice: A Guide for Actors, Directors, and Teachers*, 122.

<sup>143</sup> Hebert, interview.

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# Appendices

## **Appendix 1: Case Study Review, Compliance, and Certifications**

This appendix includes:

- The Determination for “exempt status” from the Institutional Review Board and the Human Subjects Divisions at the University of Washington.
- The Compliance Form for Use of Human and Animal Subjects for UW Graduate Student Theses and Dissertations.
- The Certificate of Completion for the University of Washington’s IRB 101 Tutorial

### DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

June 22, 2023

Dear Tyler Kimmel:

On 6/22/2023, the University of Washington Human Subjects Division (HSD) reviewed the following application:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Choral Arts Games for Secondary Choristers
Investigator:	Tyler Kimmel
IRB ID:	STUDY00018140
Funding:	None

#### **Exempt Status**

**HSD determined that your proposed activity is human subjects research that qualifies for exempt status (Category 1).** This determination may or may not be based on the Limited IRB Review process.

- This determination is valid for the duration of your research.
- This means that your research is exempt from the federal human subjects regulations, including the requirement for IRB approval and continuing review.
- **Depending on the nature of your study, you may need to obtain other approvals or permissions to conduct your research. For example, you might need to apply for access to data or specimens (e.g., to obtain UW student data). Or, you might need to obtain permission from facilities managers to approach possible subjects or conduct research procedures in the facilities (e.g., Seattle School District; the Harborview Emergency Department).**
- HSD does not make determinations on behalf of other institutions. If other institutions are involved in the research, they may need to make their own determination or they may decide to be guided by our determination.

If you consider changes to the activities in the future and know that the changes will require HSD review (or you are not certain), you may request a review or new determination by submitting a Modification to this application. For information about what changes require a Modification, refer to the [GUIDANCE Exempt Research](#).

HSD does not review or approve consent plans and consent materials for exempt research. Researchers are still responsible for providing subjects with information about the research prior to their agreement to participate. Refer to the [GUIDANCE Exempt Research](#) for details about what

information should be provided. You may wish to use the optional [TEMPLATE Consent Exempt Research](#) as a guide.

Thank you for your commitment to ethical and responsible research. We wish you great success!

Sincerely,

Marya Kinsler, MS  
Administrator  
206-543-0471  
[maryaj@uw.edu](mailto:maryaj@uw.edu)



## USE OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL SUBJECTS FOR UW GRADUATE STUDENT THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

This form is completed when a graduate student's thesis or dissertation supervisory committee is constituted and must have original signatures of both the faculty committee chair and the graduate student. The original copy is retained in the student's departmental file and be available upon request. Do not return this form to the Graduate School.

Tyler Todd Kimmel

2025897

Student name

Student number

*The following statement must be signed by the advisor indicating concurrence before the student's committee is formed:*

"I certify that this student has been advised of the need to be fully in compliance with the University of Washington Human Subjects Division and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee's requirements for University of Washington researchers, and that research being conducted for this student project under my supervision will be in compliance. The rights and welfare of human and/or animal subjects will be safeguarded during the conduct of master's/doctoral research. The student has further been advised that review by these boards must take place prior to any activity that involves human subjects or animals for the work to be accepted as a valid master's thesis or doctoral dissertation."

GEOFFREY PAUL BOERS

06/13/2023

Name of Committee Chair [printed]

Signature

Date

*The following statement must be signed by the student before the committee may be formed:*

"I certify that I have been advised of the need to be fully in compliance with the University of Washington Human Subjects Division and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee's requirements for researchers. I further certify that I will complete (or have completed) required training in the relevant category and that I will submit (or have submitted) my IRB and/or IACUC application for review prior to any activity that involves human subjects or animals so that my work can be submitted as a valid master's thesis or doctoral dissertation."

06/12/2023

Signature of Student

Date

For further information, you may go to the following sites:

<http://www.washington.edu/research/hsd/> (Human Subjects Division)

<http://depts.washington.edu/iacuc/> (Animal Care Committee)

Rev. 10/07

# CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING



This certifies that

TYLER TODD KIMMEL

has successfully completed the University of Washington's IRB 101 tutorial.  
This tutorial covers:

- the history of the abuses of human subjects in research;
- the ethical principles at the foundation of IRB review;
- determining whether an IRB application is required;
- submitting an IRB application at the University of Washington; and
- informed consent.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Malone  
HSD Director

05/09/2023  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Save

## Appendix 2: Permissions

This appendix includes:

- Permissions from interviewees (choral directors and theater artists) whose words and advice are cited in this dissertation.
  - Jillian Paige
  - Ryan Board
  - Chelsea LeValley
  - Ryan Hebert
  - Cathy Thomas-Grant
  - Kathleen Edwards
  - Steven Treseler
  - Brian Hoskins



Tyler Todd Kimmel &lt;ttkimmel@gmail.com&gt;

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**Meisner in Music Talk**

19 messages

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**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
 To: ttkimmel@gmail.com

Tue, Jul 14, 2020 at 6:46 AM

Hi, Tyler!

I'm Jillian and I was so excited to read your email last night and even more so rereading it this morning.

What you're working on to benefit choral singers sounds incredibly special and I'd love to talk with you about what's worked in my application of this work. I'm sure you've found, like I have, that the incredibly freeing Meisner technique is so valuable for musicians who have a tendency to get stuck in our intellects, *especially* singers. Finding ways to incorporate Meisner's exercises and concepts into singing has been quite a journey and I'd be honored to discuss what I've found and hear your thoughts.

Would you be available for a call next week on Wednesday afternoon ET?

So looking forward to it!

--

**Jillian Paige Schafer**
 Founder, Meisner in Music  
 @MeisnerinMusic  
 MeisnerinMusic.com

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
 To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 14, 2020 at 5:42 PM

Hi, Jillian,

Thank you so much for getting back to me and I'm so glad you were excited! My schedule next Wednesday is a little tight, so I could meet between 9am and 10am PT (so, 12 to 1pm ET). Does that work for you? If not, are there other days and times that work? Also, would you prefer a phone call or a Zoom call? Up to you! Either works for me.

Thanks so much for making the time! I look forward to talking with you soon!

 Tyler  
 [Quoted text hidden]

---

**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
 To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 15, 2020 at 8:27 AM

Tyler, let's do a different day if Wednesday's tight!

I could also do:  
 Saturday 7/25 1:30 - 6:00pm ET / 10:30am - 3:00pm ET  
 Wednesday 7/29 12:00 - 6:00pm ET / 9:00am - 3:00pm ET

9/21/23, 11:06 AM

Gmail - Meisner in Music Talk

Do either of those work better for you? Let's Zoom, I'd love to feel like we're e-meeting.  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 15, 2020 at 6:44 PM

Jillian,

Thanks for being flexible! Let's do Wednesday, July 29 at 10am PT, so...1pm ET? Does that work? From your schedule in the last email it seems you are free from 12-6pm ET... did I understand that correctly?

Thanks so much, again!

Tyler

On Jul 15, 2020, at 08:28, Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 7:01 AM

1:00pm ET / 10:00am PT on 7/29 is perfect, Tyler! I'm so looking forward to it.

Talk to you then!  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 8:12 AM

Thank you Jillian! Me too!

Tyler

On Jul 16, 2020, at 07:01, Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:42 PM

Jillian,

Clarifying our meeting on Wednesday at 10 PT / 1 ET...

Looking forward to it!

Tyler

On Jul 16, 2020, at 08:12, Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com> wrote:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=f20ba81b25&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1672200194011870517&simpl=msg-f:167220019401187051...> 2/5

9/21/23, 11:06 AM

Gmail - Meisner in Music Talk

Thank you Jillian! Me too!  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 28, 2020 at 6:16 AM

Confirmed! Should I send you a Zoom link?  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 28, 2020 at 7:54 AM

Yes! That would be great!

Tyler

On Jul 28, 2020, at 06:16, Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 29, 2020 at 6:26 AM

Wonderful! See you then.

Jillian Paige is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Tyler Todd Kimmel DMA Meisner Discussion  
Time: Jul 29, 2020 01:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://livekick.zoom.us/j/94990354442>

Meeting ID: 949 9035 4442

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 29, 2020 at 11:20 AM

Jillian,

This was fantastic! I am so happy we could connect, and very grateful for your time. My goodness, you are so very encouraging and I am inspired by your work!! Thanks for the organic dialogue and empathy, too. You are clearly a gifted teacher, and I'm looking forward to future collaborations!

Here is my phone number, in case that makes future contact easier:  
206-658-7806

Would also love to watch our call so I can take some notes! Would you mind sending that whenever is convenient for you?

I wish you the best with your upcoming classes!  
Many blessings to you!

Tyler  
[Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=f20ba81b25&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1672200194011870517&simpl=msg-f:167220019401187051...> 3/5

9/21/23, 11:06 AM

Gmail - Meisner in Music Talk

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**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Fri, Jul 31, 2020 at 8:06 AM

Hi, Tyler! Our talk made my week. Thank you also for being so open and willing to immediately get to the juicy stuff with a stranger. You are a gift and your students are so lucky to have you!

The link to our talk is here  
The password is: 0\*YU@hns

My number is 502-377-4195. I'll save yours and we'll be in touch! Please let me know if you have any other thoughts or questions, as I love talking about this stuff with like-minded empaths.

Have a beautiful weekend!  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Sun, Aug 9, 2020 at 10:39 PM

Jillian,

Do you happen to still have the link for the video? I think it might have expired? Are you able to send it to me as a file? If not, no worries, I just have not been able to watch it and take notes yet...

Let me know!

Thanks!  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 10, 2020 at 11:50 AM

Hi, Tyler! Of course - just sent the video via WeTransfer. Let me know if you have any issues receiving it!  
[Quoted text hidden]  
--



Meisner *in* Music

**Jillian Paige**  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 13, 2020 at 12:41 PM

Got it! Thank you Jillian!  
[Quoted text hidden]

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**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Fri, Aug 14, 2020 at 10:56 AM

You are so welcome!

I was looking for the study I told you about in which they concluded that theatre students were more empathetic than others. I couldn't find the exact source I originally read but this article references the study.

Have a beautiful weekend!  
[Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=f20ba81b25&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1672200194011870517&simpl=msg-f:167220019401187051...> 4/5

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 17, 2020 at 10:08 PM

Fantastic, Jillian! Thank you so much!  
[Quoted text hidden]

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Meisner in Music <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>

Sun, Apr 23, 2023 at 11:47 AM

Jillian,

Tyler Kimmel here - we Zoomed a few years ago about your Meisner in Music program and my ideas about integrating Meisner concepts into choral arts. I am getting ready to write my dissertation and enter into final presentations. I realized I neglected to get written consent from you. Do you give me consent to cite you in my dissertation? None of what I am doing in for sale, it is all for presentation and for further research. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hope all is well in New York,

Tyler  
[Quoted text hidden]

**Meisner in Music** <meisnerinmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Mon, Apr 24, 2023 at 9:24 AM

Hi, Tyler! It's so good to hear from you. I give my consent. Would it be possible for me to read it when you're done? Many congratulations!  
[Quoted text hidden]

--  
*Grace & gentleness for oneself are top priorities at our studio. To help us maintain these, your kindness in giving us two business days to respond is greatly appreciated.*



**Meisner***in*Music



**Jillian Paige** (she/her)

Founder  
MeisnerinMusic.com  
@MeisnerinMusic

9/21/23, 11:03 AM

UW Mail - Permission to Use Interview In Dissertation



Tyler Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

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## Permission to Use Interview In Dissertation

2 messages

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@uw.edu>  
To: ryan.board@pepperdine.edu

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 8:32 PM

Hello Ryan,

I am writing to obtain consent from you regarding the interview we had for my dissertation. Do you give consent to my crediting you and mentioning your name, along with any teaching advice, pedagogy, and imagery you provided?

Thank you again for your generosity and time,

Tyler

Tyler Todd Kimmel  
University of Washington  
DMA Choral Conducting Student

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**Ryan A Board** <ryan.board@pepperdine.edu>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 9:51 PM

Yes, I approve. Good luck with everything Tyler!

[Quoted text hidden]

--

Ryan Board, DMA  
Professor of Music  
Director of Choral Activities  
Pepperdine University

9/21/23, 11:03 AM

UW Mail - Permission to use Interview in Dissertation



Tyler Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

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## Permission to use Interview in Dissertation

2 messages

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 8:38 PM

To: "chelsealevalley@gmail.com" <chelsealevalley@gmail.com>

Hi Chelsea!

I hope all is well! Remember the Meisner interview we had two summers ago? I am writing to obtain consent from you regarding the interview we had for my dissertation. I am finally compiling everything and need to officially have consent from all the interviewees. Do you give consent to my crediting you and mentioning your name, along with any teaching advice, pedagogy, and imagery you provided?

Thank you again for your generosity and time!

Tyler

Tyler Todd Kimmel  
University of Washington  
DMA Choral Conducting Student

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**Chelsea LeValley** <chelsealevalley@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 19, 2023 at 2:06 AM

To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

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See <https://itconnect.uw.edu/email-tags> for additional information. Please contact the UW-IT Service Center, [help@uw.edu](mailto:help@uw.edu) 206.221.5000, for assistance.

Aloha Tyler,

You have my consent! And thank you for including me in your incredible work!

Thanks,  
Chelsea

On Apr 18, 2023, at 5:39 PM, Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]



Tyler Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

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**Permission to use Interview in Dissertation**

2 messages

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@uw.edu>  
To: Ryan Hebert <rhebert@ut.edu>

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 8:19 PM

Hello Dr. Hebert,

I hope all is well! I am writing to obtain consent from you regarding the interview we had for my dissertation last fall regarding theater arts methods and choral singing. Do you give consent to my crediting you and mentioning your name, along with any teaching advice, pedagogy, and imagery you provided?

Thank you again for your generosity and time,

Tyler

Tyler Todd Kimmel  
University of Washington  
DMA Choral Conducting Student

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**Ryan Hebert** <RHEBERT@ut.edu>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

Wed, Apr 19, 2023 at 3:36 AM

Sure! No problem

---

**Ryan Hebert, DMA**

Associate Professor of Music and Department Chair

Director of Choral Studies and University Organist

(813) 257-3344

rhebert@ut.edu

401 W. Kennedy Blvd.

Department of Music, Box 92F

Tampa, FL 33606

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**From:** Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 18, 2023 at 11:20 PM  
**To:** Ryan Hebert <RHEBERT@ut.edu>  
**Subject:** Permission to use Interview in Dissertation

9/21/23, 11:02 AM

UW Mail - Permission to use Interview for Dissertation



Tyler Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

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## Permission to use Interview for Dissertation

2 messages

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 8:36 PM

To: "cathy.thomas-grant@pepperdine.edu" <cathy.thomas-grant@pepperdine.edu>

Hello Cathy,

I hope all is well with you! I am writing to obtain consent from you regarding the interview we had for my dissertation. Do you give consent to my crediting you and mentioning your name, along with any teaching advice, pedagogy, and imagery you provided?

Thank you again for your generosity and time,

Tyler

Tyler Todd Kimmel  
University of Washington  
DMA Choral Conducting Student

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**cathy.thomas-grant@pepperdine.edu** <cathy.thomas-grant@pepperdine.edu>

Wed, Apr 19, 2023 at 6:35 AM

To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

Yes of course!!!! Your almost there.

Cathy Thomas-Grant  
Pepperdine University  
Professor of Theatre

Sent from that tiny screen on my phone.

Please forgive any typos!!!

On Apr 18, 2023, at 8:36 PM, Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]



Tyler Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>

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**Permission to Use Interview in Dissertation**

2 messages

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@uw.edu>  
To: kathleendirects@yahoo.com

Tue, Apr 18, 2023 at 8:33 PM

Hello Kathleen,

Hope all is well with you and the Hi-liners! I am looking forward to seeing the upcoming show!

I am writing to obtain consent from you regarding the phone interview we had for my dissertation two summers ago. Do you give consent to my crediting you and mentioning your name, along with any teaching advice, pedagogy, and imagery you provided?

Thank you again for your generosity and time,

Tyler

Tyler Todd Kimmel  
University of Washington  
DMA Choral Conducting Student

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**Kathleen Edwards** <kathleendirects@yahoo.com>  
Reply-To: Kathleen Edwards <kathleendirects@yahoo.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@uw.edu>, Tony Curry <tcurry51@msn.com>

Wed, Apr 19, 2023 at 2:18 PM

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See <https://itconnect.uw.edu/email-tags> for additional information. Please contact the UW-IT Service Center, [help@uw.edu](mailto:help@uw.edu) 206.221.5000, for assistance.

I do give consent, and I've included Tony in this so that you will have his email address.

Kathleen Edwards  
Artistic Director  
Hi-Liners Musical Theatre  
206-499-5564

[Quoted text hidden]



Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

**Jazz Improv Games**

7 messages

**Haley Smith** <haleysmithn@gmail.com> Sat, Mar 16, 2024 at 8:59 PM  
To: stevetres@gmail.com, Tyler Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Hi Steve,

I've cc'd Tyler here - he'd love the chance to pick your brain on the idea behind your jazz improv games that I've described to him. Thanks for the chance to connect! He'll reach out!

Haley

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com> Sun, Mar 17, 2024 at 7:35 AM  
To: Haley Smith <haleysmithn@gmail.com>  
Cc: stevetres@gmail.com

Hi Steve!!

I've heard a lot about you from Haley! It sounds like we have a lot in common, and I would love to hear more about what you do. Haley said you studied improv from a Second City Music director?

Long story short- I teach choir and theater at Seattle Christian School and have been a professional actor in Seattle for about nine years. Im currently finishing my DMA at UW. My dissertation is a case study in which I am musically modifying theater arts games for singers to play during choral rehearsal to see how it affects the way they learn how to sing and to see if it affects their artistry.

I hear you play games with your students to teach them musical concepts (namely improv yes?). How does this work for you? Did you create these games or did you borrow them? Would love to hear a little bit about what you do and how you teach. And if you can, would you describe how to play some of the games you use?

Feel free to write me back in an email form, or we can chat on the phone: 206-658-7806.

At any rate, because this is for my dissertation, would it be OK if I recorded your responses and use them in my document as an example of people who are using and experimenting with this kind of work? Also, if anything you have taught is your creation, and I see that it could possibly work for my choristers, would you allow me to try it with them so long as I give you credit?

Thanks for any help, Steve!

Tyler

Sent from my iPhone

> On Mar 16, 2024, at 8:59 PM, Haley Smith <haleysmithn@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> Hi Steve,

[Quoted text hidden]

**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com> Tue, Mar 26, 2024 at 3:20 AM  
To: Haley Smith <haleysmithn@gmail.com>  
Cc: stevetres@gmail.com

Hey Steve!

6/6/24, 7:22 AM

Gmail - Jazz Improv Games

I know you must be really busy this time of year, before Spring break. Let me know if there is any chance for a phone call in the next week or two?  
Or if that's not possible, would love anything you can provide!

Thanks so much!

Tyler

Sent from my iPhone

> On Mar 17, 2024, at 10:35AM, Tyler Todd Kimmel <[ttkimmel@gmail.com](mailto:ttkimmel@gmail.com)> wrote:

>

> Hi Steve!!

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Steve Treseler** <[stevetres@gmail.com](mailto:stevetres@gmail.com)>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <[ttkimmel@gmail.com](mailto:ttkimmel@gmail.com)>  
Cc: Haley Smith <[haleysmithn@gmail.com](mailto:haleysmithn@gmail.com)>

Tue, Mar 26, 2024 at 9:51 AM

Hi Tyler, thanks for reaching out! Sorry for the slow reply, had a wild week of gigs and headed to NOLA and Houston next week!

Yes, I use games all the time, mostly to build community through improvisation, creativity, and also for skill development. Many are adapted from improv theater games, which are much more interactive and community-centered than mainstream jazz pedagogy. I studied a bit with W.A. Mathieu, composer, pianist, author, and who was the first musical director at Second City who led a group of improvising musicians to accompany improvised theater. I attached a pdf of some of the games I use, and you can see a few in action on my site: <https://www.infiniteimprovisation.com/>

I'm free for a video or phone call tomorrow between 9-noon or just about any time on Friday. Otherwise the weekend of the 6? And yes you're welcome to record.

Look forward to it!

Steve Treseler  
Saxophonist | Teaching Artist  
[stevetres.com](http://stevetres.com)  
Conn Selmer Artist

[Quoted text hidden]

---

 **10 Improvisation Games 2017.pdf**  
6162K

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <[ttkimmel@gmail.com](mailto:ttkimmel@gmail.com)>  
To: Steve Treseler <[stevetres@gmail.com](mailto:stevetres@gmail.com)>  
Cc: Haley Smith <[haleysmithn@gmail.com](mailto:haleysmithn@gmail.com)>

Tue, Mar 26, 2024 at 10:15 AM

Thank you Steve!! In NYC this week. Will get back in touch soon.

Appreciate it,  
ttk

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 26, 2024, at 12:51 PM, Steve Treseler <[stevetres@gmail.com](mailto:stevetres@gmail.com)> wrote:

6/6/24, 7:22 AM

Gmail - Jazz Improv Games

[Quoted text hidden]  
<10 Improvisation Games 2017.pdf>

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**Tyler Todd Kimmel** <ttkimmel@gmail.com>  
To: Steve Treseler <stevetres@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 4, 2024 at 8:03 AM

Steve,

I actually think what you gave me is really useful, and not sure that I need to call at the moment. However, can you clarify two things?

1: Can I cite you in my dissertation? Use this email and its content?

2: Can I "copy and paste" some of your material as examples of how other musicians have done this kind of work - I will not alter any of the material.

Thanks for your help!

Tyler  
[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Steve Treseler** <stevetres@gmail.com>  
To: Tyler Todd Kimmel <ttkimmel@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 9, 2024 at 9:47 AM

Sure, fine with me. Thanks.

Steve Treseler  
Saxophonist | Teaching Artist  
[stevetres.com](http://stevetres.com)  
Conn Selmer Artist

[Quoted text hidden]

On Mar 29, 2024, at 5:06 PM, Brian Hoskins <[Brian.Hoskins@rentonschools.us](mailto:Brian.Hoskins@rentonschools.us)> wrote:

Hey Tyler-

Sorry to take so long on this. I can't think of a specific example using theater techniques to TEACH vocal technique. I do, and have in the past, used theater games as energizers and as a way for my singers to relax their body and move more.

Not sure if this helps – best of luck on your project and dissertation. I know it's so much work – that's why I didn't do it! NYU asked me to stay all those years ago and I just knew I was done with school/university. Hats off to you!!

Brian

### Brian Hoskins

Choral Conductor

Lindbergh High School | 16426 128<sup>th</sup> Ave SE Renton, WA 98058

☎ 425-204-3291 | ✉ [brian.hoskins@rentonschools.us](mailto:brian.hoskins@rentonschools.us)

Instagram: [lhseagles\\_choir](#)

Check your student's attendance & grades at: <http://family.renton.wa-k12.net>

<image001.jpg>

**The EAGLE Way!**

**Respect ~ Responsibility ~ Effort ~ Kindness ~ Honesty**

Instagram: [lhseagles\\_lind](#)

"The music master familiarizes children's minds with rhythms and melodies, thus making them more civilized, more balanced, better adjusted in themselves, and more capable in whatever they say or do, for rhythm and harmony are essential to the whole of life." - Plato

**From:** Kimmel, Tyler <[TKimmel@seattlechristian.org](mailto:TKimmel@seattlechristian.org)>

**Sent:** Thursday, March 14, 2024 3:50 PM

**To:** Joshua (Josh) Viles <[joshua.viles@rentonschools.us](mailto:joshua.viles@rentonschools.us)>; [brownl@kennedyhs.org](mailto:brownl@kennedyhs.org); Brian Hoskins <[Brian.Hoskins@rentonschools.us](mailto:Brian.Hoskins@rentonschools.us)>

**Subject:** Question regarding some research I'm doing...

**WARNING:** This is not from a RSD email address. Use caution prior to responding, opening attachments, following links, or providing personal information. If you believe this is a phishing attempt, please forward it to [phishing@rentonschools.us](mailto:phishing@rentonschools.us).

Hey Josh, Lindsay and Brian,

Long story short... I'm finished my DMA at UW this year (God willing), and some of my research for the dissertation has been centered on shared pedagogy between different performing arts mediums. Have any of you heard of choral

directors using theater arts methods to teach vocal techniques before? If so, in which contexts. Have you personally experimented with anything like this? I know that many (including myself) have borrowed certain theatrical practices to help their choir become more emotionally and physically connected to music making, when appropriate, but have you ever heard of choristers playing acting games or performing acting exercises in a musical context?

Any kind of response is helpful, just gathering some data and general consensus among my choir colleagues in the Seattle area.

Thanks for any help,

ttk

**Tyler Todd Kimmel**

*High School Choir Director*

Seattle Christian School

206-246-9066 (ex: 1255)

**From:** Brian Hoskins  
**Sent:** Monday, April 1, 2024 12:12 PM  
**To:** Kimmel, Tyler  
**Subject:** RE: Question regarding some research I'm doing...

Go for it 😊

**Brian Hoskins**

Choral Conductor  
Lindbergh High School | 16426 128<sup>th</sup> Ave SE Renton, WA 98058  
☎ 425-204-3291 | ✉ [brian.hoskins@rentonschools.us](mailto:brian.hoskins@rentonschools.us)  
Instagram: lhseagles\_choir  
Check your student's attendance & grades at: <http://family.renton.wa-k12.net>



**The EAGLE Way!**  
**Respect ~ Responsibility ~ Effort ~ Kindness ~ Honesty**  
Instagram: lhseagles\_lind

"The music master familiarizes children's minds with rhythms and melodies, thus making them more civilized, more balanced, better adjusted in themselves, and more capable in whatever they say or do, for rhythm and harmony are essential to the whole of life." - Plato

**From:** Kimmel, Tyler <[TKimmel@seattlechristian.org](mailto:TKimmel@seattlechristian.org)>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 29, 2024 2:11 PM  
**To:** Brian Hoskins <[Brian.Hoskins@rentonschools.us](mailto:Brian.Hoskins@rentonschools.us)>  
**Subject:** Re: Question regarding some research I'm doing...

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Brian, thank you!

Would you mind if I quote you in my dissertation.  
Not the personal stuff, but the part about how you've used theater arts games?

Thanks again!

Tyler

Sent from my iPhone

### Appendix 3: Consent and Assent Forms

This appendix includes:

- Choral Arts Games Case Study Consent and Assent Form Template
- Choral Arts Games Case Study Consent and Assent Form signed by my choristers and their guardians, agreeing to participate by the expectations of the study.
  - William Aaby
  - Isaiah Alvis
  - William Alvis
  - Kayla Anderson
  - Jack Battin
  - Kyla Bell
  - Alexzander Bork
  - Madison Davenport
  - Amanuel Ereda
  - Liyou Ereda
  - Natalie Finne
  - Avianah Flores
  - Rachel Gillihan
  - Benjamin Goodrich
  - Nathaniel John Goodrich
  - Jordan Gramann
  - Emily Horton
  - Darlene Kajoka
  - Layla Kanis
  - Richard Eamon Koehler
  - Elvira Kundilovski
  - Levi Lane
  - Presley McNatt
  - Wyatt McNatt
  - Reagan Minami
  - Lucy Muturi
  - Micah Nelson
  - McKinley Oldright
  - Liliana Pompeo
  - Isabella Seumae
  - Noah Sobrepena
  - Inessa Sushchik
  - Payton Tipp
  - Elijah Ward
  - Joshua Watson
  - Andrew White
  - Abigail Young

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
ASSENT/CONSENT FORM**

**CHORAL ARTS GAMES CASE STUDY**

**Researcher:** Tyler Todd Kimmel, director of choirs and theater at Seattle Christian School, and DMA Choral Conducting student at the University of Washington. [tkimmel@seattlechristian.org](mailto:tkimmel@seattlechristian.org), [tkimmel@uw.edu](mailto:tkimmel@uw.edu), cell: 206-658-7806

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Geoffrey Boers, [boersg@uw.edu](mailto:boersg@uw.edu)

**OVERVIEW**

As a part of my doctoral program at the University of Washington, I am required to complete a dissertation. My dissertation topic is a qualitative case study with secondary students (from ages 12-19). Qualitative research is a study in which the researcher (Mr. Kimmel) pursues a question- in this case "how do theater arts games and methods effect the artistry, technique and confidence of secondary singers in choral rehearsal?" In order to answer this question, I would like my middle and high school students (roughly 60 students between classes), to partake in a curriculum/rehearsal system I have devised, centered around musically-modified theater methods, games, and exercises. They will work with partners and in groups to solve musical problems in choral singing. They will keep a reflection journal where they can document their experience. Together, we will see what works and what does not- the students are allowed to give feedback and help modify games and exercises, in fact, their input is essential to qualitative research. The case study is a part of a larger umbrella of social-emotional learning and co-constructed learning- where THEY get be a part of the teaching and developing curriculum.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to perform a case study, hopefully yielding positive and applicable practices that we can continue to use in our performing arts classrooms at Seattle Christian School, and expand singing curriculums as a whole. The data collected from this study could be shared with other institutions and teachers for their benefit. This study is also pursued for completion of Tyler Todd Kimmel's Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Washington.

**STUDY PROCEDURES**

A sample of the procedure for this case study is below.

The process will consist of the following: Students will be given a musical example from the teacher (Mr. Kimmel); this example could be a warm-up exercise, a technique exercise that addresses vocal function (laryngeal and pharyngeal spaces, the tongue, the nasal cavity, or oral cavity). Call and response methods will be used to identify understanding of the technique. Any problems that arise, such as vocal quality, pitch, rhythm, expression will be solved with a theatrical game or exercise that has been modified using the musical example.

Here is a sample of the procedure for an exercise called MIRROR SINGING:

- Teacher sings a vocal exercise
- Class imitates the vocal exercise
- Teacher asks students to identify the kind of sound that the teacher has made
- Using words that the students describe, along with pre-existing vocal/singing terminology, two students will be asked to come forward and be demonstrators for the teacher. As the teacher coaches these two

students, other students see what the game/exercise is, and they will get a chance to practice with partners as well.

-These two students will face each other and, using their eyes and ears, work together to find a unified sound, which encompasses the kind of breath they took, the posture they have, the shape of the inside and outside of their mouths, their eyes, the tongue position, and placement (in the front/nose/teeth/lips area, mid-mouth, or back of the mouth).

-Once the students demonstrate this successfully, we will have a Partner Break-Out: other students will pair off and explore their sound. The goal is to find sameness of sound- unity of technique, and expression.

-After a few minutes of "playing," students will return to the larger group and sing together. This could begin with their section (soprano, alto, tenor or bass), or like-voices (bass voices or treble voices). It could also look like two contrasting voice types working together to find blend and balance. As the students observe each other and get a chance to demonstrate (willingly) with each other/getting a chance to teach the class, the hope is that they will retain information as individuals and then as a team.

This is ONE exercise, but the format will be similar for all games: teacher demonstration, student volunteering to play/demonstrate back, partner exploration, co-teaching, and group application. Other games and exercises are borrowed from theater literature and theater curriculum authors: Sanford Meisner Viola Spolin, and Konstantin Stanislavky.

### **RECORDING**

All games/exercises will be audio/video recorded by iPad/iPhone and Tascam recorders. Students who do not wish to be on camera do not have to be in the shot or can be edited out. Footage will be shown to my dissertation committee at the University of Washington. If students prefer that certain footage not be shown, the footage will be for my viewing only to document the effects of the process.

### **RISKS, STRESS, DISCOMFORT**

The only discomfort that a student could experience is being asked to sing alone in front of a group of people, OR demonstrate with their partner in front of the class. If a student does not wish to demonstrate, they do not have to, but it is expected that they work in partners and participate to the best of their ability, willingly.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY**

Students who do not wish to play a particular game, may remove themselves from the room, or the space where the game is taking place. Students will be able to study their music and/or other course materials, but it is not a study hall for other subjects. The techniques we learn in class are also able to be learned without the games and exercises that I have devised. The curriculum is simply another way of presenting pre-existing material. All students will receive course credit.

Students will have the right to dismiss themselves from any of the activities even if they give assent, but I will ask them to talk with me after class, if possible, to inquire about any issues. It is expected that there will be collaboration to modify an exercise to make it more comfortable, inclusive, or clear. In this case, students will see new games or exercises arise in front of them and they will be able to have input.

Participation in the research will not affect their grade either way.

## **BEHAVIOR**

If a student has behavior issues, I will address those as I would normally in classroom situations. I will ask them to kindly participate with respect and to give their best. If they cannot follow instructions or they are purposefully causing a disruption, I will ask them to step out of the room. An administrator will be informed. My classroom rules and Seattle Christian School rules will apply during this study.

## **STUDENTS WITH IEPs**

Any of my students with IEPs, medical conditions, or diagnoses that cause them concern will be encouraged to talk to me with their parents or an administrator. No one will be excluded from this project, however, should the student and their parent(s) feel it is not best, their grade will not be effected and their learning experience will not be hindered- again, all the content in these games and exercises can be learned in other ways.

## **BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY**

Benefits: play! As demonstrated in neuroscience studies, play helps students make stronger connections to enjoyment and learning, it helps them build neuroplasticity, which is crucial for retaining information and understanding. By playing these games and experimenting with exercises, students can gain confidence in exploration with each other. Overtime, repeated use of theater games/methods have proven to create norms and habits among theater students, they build individual skills and learn teamwork simultaneously.

## **FINANCIAL INTEREST**

While I am not necessarily selling a commercial product, it is possible that a book or curriculum could be devised, and that I could travel to present these findings for compensation. However, I am receiving no compensation for this study, and no compensation will be given to my students. Their names will be included in my dissertation (unless they would rather their name be omitted), and there will be a "thank you" page dedicated to them.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Student records are confidential. Their reflections and the video and audio footage will be for my purposes only. It will not be sold or put online (without seeking further permission first).

## **USE OF INFORMATION**

All research will be presented to my dissertation committee and the final document will be published by the University of Washington and remain in their archives and library systems for academic purposes. Videos, audio-recordings, and any reflections or interviews that students would prefer me not to include can be removed.

## **DATA SHARING PLANS**

I will communicate my results to my students through discussion and playing our videos in class when necessary. However, a presentation and final paper (dissertation) that delineates the application of theater arts games in choral singing will include all of the data collected from this study. My dissertation committee consisting of four professors and a potential small audience of up to 12 people will be in attendance.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, Nathan Watson parent(s) of Joshua Watson, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Nathan Watson, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Elizabeth Ann, parent(s) of Will Ann, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Will Ann, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

Elizabeth Ann 8-31-23

Will Ann 8-31-23

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Matt Alvis, parent(s) of Isalah Alvis, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, ISAH ALVIS, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

v | a I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

v | a I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Matt Alvis, parent(s) of William Alvis, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, William Alvis, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

n/a I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

n/a I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Kristina Anderson, parent(s) of Kayla Anderson, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Kayla, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, Kristina Anderson parent(s) of Kayla Anderson, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Kayla, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, LEAH BATTIN, parent(s) of JACK BATTIN, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, LEAH BATTIN parent(s) of JACK BATTIN, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Jack Battin, give assent to continue ~~this~~ study once I turn 18 years old.  
-JACK BATTIN

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

~~I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent(s) of Kyla Bell, give consent for my child to participate in this study.~~

~~I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to participate in this study~~

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, Andrea Bell parent(s) of Kyla Bell, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Kyla Bell, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

*Andrea Bell*

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Lawrence Bork, parent(s) of Alex Bork, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Alex Bork, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Paul Christ, parent(s) of Maddison Davenport, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Mrs. Christ, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

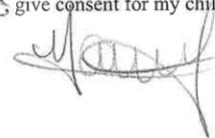
**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Yammy Ereda, parent(s) of Amanuel Ereda, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Amanuel Ereda, give assent to participate in this study



If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Jamrot Faleke, parent(s) of Lijon Ereda, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, [Signature], give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Alycia, parent(s) of Natalie Finne, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Natalie Finne, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Corina Flores, parent(s) of Anayah Flores, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, ~~Avianah Flores~~, give assent to participate in this study  
Avianah Flores

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Elizabeth Gillihan, parent(s) of Rachel Gillihan, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Elizabeth Gillihan, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, Elizabeth Gillihan, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Amy Goodrich, parent(s) of Benjamin Goodrich, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Ben Goodrich, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

X I, Nate Gradstein give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

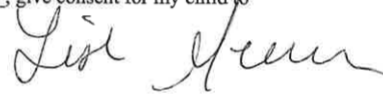
**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Tisha Gramann parent(s) of Jordan Gramann, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Jordan Gramann, give assent to participate in this study



If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, *[Signature]*, parent(s) of *Emily Horton*, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, *Emily*, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

~~I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.~~

~~I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.~~

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

~~I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.~~

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

~~I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.~~

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Mary Kajoka, parent(s) of Darlene Kajoka, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Darlene Kajoka, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Diana Hood, parent(s) of Layla Kanis, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Layla Kanis, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Carlin O'Connor, parent(s) of Eamon Kochler, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Eamon Kochler, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Oksana d Vitali Kundilovski, parent(s) of Ellie Kundilovski, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Oksana K, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Ralph Lane, parent(s) of Levi Lane, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Levi  
Ralph Lane, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, MELIA McNATT, parent(s) of PRESELY McNATT, give consent for my child to participate in this study. *Melina McNatt*

I, Presley McNatt, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, <sup>EW Mc</sup> ~~Chad~~ <sup>McNatt</sup> parent(s) of Wyatt McNatt, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, ~~Chad McNatt~~, give assent to participate in this study

<sup>EW Mc</sup> ~~Chad~~ <sup>McNatt</sup>  
If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Quinn Minami, parent(s) of Reagan Minami, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Reagan Minami, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Ira muturi, parent(s) of Luay Muturi, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Ira muturi, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Derek Nelson, parent(s) of Mical Nolda, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I,  Mical Nolda, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Jennifer Oldright, parent(s) of McKinley Oldright, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, McKinley, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Bud myn, parent(s) of Liliana Pampw, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, [Signature], give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Allison Semke, parent(s) of Jasbena Semke, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Jasbena Semke give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Kara Sobrepem, parent(s) of Noah Sobrepem, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Noah Sobrepem, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Lana Sushchik, parent(s) of Emma Sushchik, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Lana Sushchik, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Shari L. Tipp, parent(s) of Payton L. Tipp, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Payton L. Tipp, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Melanie Ward, parent(s) of Elijah Ward, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Elijah Ward, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Nathan Watson, parent(s) of Joshua Watson, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Nathan Watson, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, Nathan Watson parent(s) of Joshua Watson, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Nathan Watson, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Bayson White, parent(s) of Andrew White, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Bayson White, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, Bayson White parent(s) of Andrew White, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Andrew White, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.

*Please read carefully*

**ASSENT/CONSENT SIGNATURES:**

**Assent is for those who are under 18. Consent is for those who are over 18**

If the student is **under** the age of 18 years old for the study:

I, Jennifer Young, parent(s) of Abigail Young, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, Abigail Young, give assent to participate in this study

If the student will turn 18 years old **during** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, give consent for my child to participate in this study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give assent to continue this study once I turn 18 years old.

If the student is 18 years old **before** the study:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give consent to participate in this study.

**DISSENT SIGNATURES:**

If you dissent (meaning you do not wish to partake in this study), please sign below.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, dissent from this study.