

Singing to Empower:
Pedagogical Frameworks and Strategies for Restructuring Power Dynamics in Choral Ensembles

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Abstract

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Singing to Empower combines Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, Anti-Oppressive Practice, and Critical Pedagogy to develop an instructional design for restructuring power dynamics in the Western education choral ensemble. Drawing on these frameworks from education and social work scholarship, this research develops a different model of choral leadership to replace the existing state-of-the-art practices that promote obedience and subservience among choristers. Existing scholarship on critical pedagogy in music primarily focuses on understanding the educational theory behind the methodology. This work connects the methodology with existing praxis-based scholarship to model critical pedagogy in practice.

Singing to Empower defines and examines the power structure present in the educational choral ensemble. It builds on Frank Abrahams' existing scholarship on conceptualizing Paulo Freire's pioneering work in critical pedagogy for addressing inequity in music education. It

addresses criticisms of anti-oppressive work by developing systems to establish psychological safety and build measurable, transferable musical skills. Each pedagogical strategy used to model tenets of critical pedagogy in practice is measured by its efficacy in developing more autonomous, agentic, and empowered choral artists. The result of this work was a new instructional design for performance-based learning that enables Western-trained conductors to integrate it into their choral ensembles.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1: Background and Statement of the Problem

In the Spring of 2020, during my first year teaching, I transitioned my middle and high school choirs and orchestra to virtual learning due to the lockdown. The school I worked for served a community that was made up primarily of students of color, with a large portion of them being from first-generation immigrant families. When I started my job, over fifty percent of my students were failing. After many failed attempts to change this statistic, I chose to examine the broader curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade. I noticed a concerning theme in the curriculum: only white men created knowledge and works worth learning. It was no wonder that my students were not successful in my classes. They were inundated with music that had nothing to do with their lived experiences, and were told that the artistic expression that had value and meaning in their lives held little merit in school.

Two months before the lockdown, I decided to abandon the established curriculum and create a new curriculum for my students. It taught musical literacy through the lens of music that students liked. They got to create performances of music that aligned with the musical skills they wanted to learn. They retained the musical information, and classroom management shifted completely. When it was time to submit quarter grades for review, 90% of the students in my classes met or exceeded the minimum requirements for their learning objectives. I collected this data, scheduled a meeting with the administrative team, and presented my rationale for why we needed to rethink the music curriculum. I demonstrated that I was meeting the objectives

outlined in the original curriculum while honoring my students' lives. What felt exciting and empowering to me resulted in being put on a performance-based probation because my curriculum was “insubordinate.”

During the lockdown, I was in the heart of Minneapolis. The city entered into a period of civil unrest after the murder of George Floyd. I spent my days teaching on Zoom, and my evenings volunteering and protesting as a part of the Black Lives Matter movement. An uncomfortable juxtaposition began taking shape. My mornings were spent teaching “high art,” and I was demonstrating my curricular obedience to administrators. In the evenings, I saw what my students' lives looked like in this time of incredible fear, sadness, and uncertainty. I identified a fundamental issue that needed to be addressed, which I couldn't resolve from inside the classroom. I left my job and decided to go to graduate school to learn how to create a performance environment that could transform music education toward a more inclusive future.

As I embarked on an admittedly bold, overly simplified, and idealistic goal, my beliefs about music education were largely met with apathy. Luckily, I landed in places that could embrace what I had to offer musically for their program. When I began my doctoral studies, I had two lingering questions I wanted to explore: 1) how to make the choral arts more accessible and inclusive, and 2) how to develop more effective rehearsal strategies where musicians in an ensemble setting leave with transferable skills. In my initial endeavor, I treated these two ideas as separate. As I continued to work through these questions, I started to see the convergence of the ideas. The metaphorical Venn diagram of methodologies for more inclusive practice and for developing critical thinking skills overlaps more than it diverges. The strategies that support restructuring power in education are also backed by research on learning that emphasizes transferable skills.

One of the core problems with this work was deciding whether to address the system or the people who are trained to perpetuate it. It amounted to a “chicken or the egg” problem. Should I start by addressing how conductors are trained to lead ensembles, or should I find a way for conductors to apply methodologies to address power inequity on their own? The systemic impacts on how choirs operate within an educational institution are far more complex to address. So then the answer became empowering conductors with tools to consider and reconstruct power in the spaces where they are given authority.

1.2: Glossary of Key Terms

To make this document more accessible to its audience, I have created a glossary of important terms that will appear throughout this dissertation. Having an awareness of these words will be crucial in understanding the purpose, impact, and outcomes of this research. All of the terms are defined within the context of the Western education choral ensemble.

Agency: The singers can solve musical problems and make artistic meaning on their own.

Autonomy: The singers are engaging in consent practice and have choice in the rehearsal process.

Collective Power: The ways a Western European Art Music (WEAM) - based music school informs the histories, values, beliefs, and practices that inform the preparation and performance of music in Western educational choral ensembles.¹

¹ William J. Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility* (New York: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2025), 111.

Dictation: The act of dictating how, where, when, and why singers make music; in an autocratic manner.

Empowerment: A chorister's ability to use and name pedagogical and expressive tools that will advance their musicianship.

Facilitation: The act of leading and teaching ensembles through collaborative rehearsals.

Hierarchical Power Structure: The system that assigns authority and agency to a few individuals over a larger group of people.²

Individual Power: The histories, values, beliefs, and practices that inform how an individual conductor rehearses and leads a Western educational choral ensemble.³

Institutional Power: The ways WEAM has informed the histories, values, beliefs, and practices that define the School of Music's mission, vision, and goals for music instruction within the institution.⁴

Oppression: The act of an individual using their power to make another obedient or subservient.

Positionality: This reflexive process, where an individual works to name and understand critical power dynamics present in their work.⁵

² Frank Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*, Edited by F. Abrahams and P. Head (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17-19; André de Quadros and Emilie Amrein, *Empowering Song: Music Education from the Margins*. 1st ed. Vol. 1. (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2022), 30; Simon Hill, "Critical Pedagogy and the Choir," *The Choral Journal* 61, no 7 (2021): 6-11; Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 68; Marissa Silverman, "Critical Pedagogy as a Pedagogy of 'Love.'" *Visions of Research in Music Education* 40 (Winter 2022): 66; J. Vodicka, "The Impact of Critical Pedagogy on a High School Choir" (Unpublished master's thesis, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, 2009), 2.

³ Coppola, *Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 111.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Henry A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* (South Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey, 1983).

Power: The cultural and/or professional attributes that situate an individual at the top of a structural power hierarchy.

Re-traumatization: When an individual is exposed to stimuli that provoke the physiological sensations of the original trauma to recur as if it were new.⁶

Safety: Established consent to engage in the “acceptable risk” involved in the choral ensemble.⁷

Systemic Power: The histories, values, beliefs, and performance/compositional practices that inform the performance, preparation, and construction of the bodies of work that make up WEAM.⁸

Transformation: The act of learning changes a singer’s perception of what they already know. A singer can identify how new knowledge has transformed old knowledge or beliefs.

Trauma: When the brain signals that a threat is present, and an individual is not able to mobilize and escape or avoid the possible harm.⁹

Trauma-Response: (also referred to as a state of dysregulated arousal) The physiological response to stimuli that remind the body of existing trauma.

1.3: Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is threefold: to examine and define the hegemonic power hierarchy between conductors and singers in Western educational choral ensembles; to establish

⁶ Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 206.

⁷ Laura Rikard and Amanda Rose Villarreal, "Focus on Impact, Not Intention: Moving from 'Safe' Spaces to Spaces of Acceptable Risk," *Journal of Consent-Based Performance* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1-16.

⁸ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 111.

⁹ Kait Ahlschwede, “The Body Keeps the Score Workbook,” 2022. 28.

methodological approaches for restructuring power dynamics in the choral ensemble; and to provide accessible tools for conductors to implement core tenets of the methodology into their teaching. In this work, I conceptualize trauma-informed pedagogy, anti-oppressive practice, and critical pedagogy in the context of choral music and connect their methodological frameworks with practical tools for conductors. These serve both to restructure power within the choral ensemble and to support learning modes that foster singer empowerment, agency, and autonomy.

1.4: Statement of the Research Questions

The two research questions that I will answer in this dissertation are:

- How can Western-trained conductors restructure hierarchical power structures in their choral ensembles?
- How can teaching music in a choral ensemble setting help develop more agentic musicians?¹⁰

Aside from the central questions of this work, I set out to achieve a series of goals that helped frame the scope and limitations of this work:

- All of the pedagogical tools would be created by and for Western-trained choral conductors.
- All of the work is framed with the singers' psychological safety in mind.
- In considering power, the conductor's new function becomes that of a facilitator, maintaining the core responsibilities and accountability that come with the role.
- The conductor is not "villainized" but rather seen as a component of a larger systemic problem, and this resource empowers them to effect change.
- The tools are specific to choral ensembles, and they are not specifically meant for any historically marginalized community in the choral arts.

¹⁰ Agentic meaning: Able to accomplish results with autonomy. I distinguish this from 'developing agency' here because it is more than an ability to operate independently. It is the ability to independently achieve an agreed-upon outcome.

1.5: Limitations and Scope of Research

This research uses critical pedagogy as the methodological framework for restructuring power in Western educational choral ensembles. Critical pedagogy is not meant to be a series of praxis-based approaches to create new power structures in a classroom. It is a methodology to apply to one's teaching.¹¹ The purpose of connecting it to existing pedagogical strategies is to model for the conductor how to begin restructuring power in their ensemble. This dissertation is intended for the conductor who was trained in an educational model that told them to be a sole authority, but who felt the negative impacts on their singers. It is meant as the start to the vital and ongoing work of making choral music in schools transformational for all.

This research considers one hierarchical power structure (WEAM in education) within a broader history of group singing traditions in Western culture. It examines the power dynamics within the choral ensemble between the conductor and the singers (Collective Power and Individual Power).¹² The critical pedagogy methodology examined in this dissertation was developed by music educator Frank Abrahams and is based on Paulo Freire's original formulation in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation state.¹³

¹¹ Henry A. Giroux, *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 114.

¹² The structure is based on the definition of structural power in the Western music training from Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 111.

¹³ P. McLaren, "Che: The Pedagogy of Che Guevara: Critical Pedagogy and Globalization Thirty Years after Che." *Cultural Circles* 3 (1998): 45.

With this definition of critical pedagogy in mind, we will address the transformation of relationships as it pertains to classroom teaching, the choral rehearsal, and the production of knowledge. This research situates individual and collective power within the context of the institutional and systemic powers present within Western classical music education.¹⁴ We will examine how external systems of power shape what happens within the ensemble.

Another goal of this dissertation is accessibility. Academic writing offers practices for earning a reader's trust by proving, citing, and connecting information. However, the long-form writing with dense methodological descriptions is antithetical to the purpose. For that reason, the more dense components of this research are paired with moments of reflection, personal accounts of the tools' applications, and first-person narrative. Additionally, I have adapted Frank Abrahams' Instruction Design for Critical Pedagogy in Music Education for performance-based choral music education. This body of writing and instructional design summarizes and contextualizes key components of critical pedagogy and transforms methodology into rehearsal strategy. These tools are meant to begin the work and open the conductor up to discovery as they go deeper. It will hopefully allow them to see what is possible and feel empowered to create, add to, and expand on what this dissertation is meant for – getting the ball rolling.

1.6: Preliminary Literature Review and Current Practice

Critical Pedagogy, developed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, became one of the most influential resources in education during its time.¹⁵ It draws on critical theory and

¹⁴ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 111.

¹⁵ P. Allman, "Paulo Freire's contributions to radical adult education." *Studies in the Education of Adults* 26, no. 2 (1994): 157.

Marxist ideas of class oppression, and was inspired by Freire's experiences as an educator in Brazil.¹⁶ In the text, Freire separates his work in addressing the cultural impact of class disparity from that of Marx's work towards economic liberation from the class oppression brought on by capitalism.¹⁷ Freire did not align himself or his work with any political agenda. He was active with the revolutionaries of his time and developed his teaching based on what the oppressed student class needed for empowerment.¹⁸

1.6.1: Critical Pedagogy as Defined by Freire

In Freire's original work, he identifies three core tenets of Critical Pedagogy that serve as the foundation for teaching and learning. The first being that "learners exist in a cultural context and as such must learn to reflect on their situation." (Abrahams,12) Pedagogues have expanded on this concept, stating that students need to be able to address the political nature of their education and the inherent unequal power dynamic between those who supply knowledge and those who receive it.¹⁹ The second tenet outlines two factors that determine whether or not learning has occurred: 1) that learning changes a student's perception of what they already know. (the students can draw connections between new knowledge and transform old knowledge)²⁰ 2)

¹⁶ P. Freire, and D. Macedo, "A Dialogue with Paulo Freire," *In Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, Edited by P. McLaren and Leonard, (London: Routledge), 1993. 170.

¹⁷ R. Mackie, "Contributions to the Thought of Paulo Freire." *In Literacy and Revolution, the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire*, Edited by R. Mackie, (London: Continuum Publishing), 1981. 93–119.

¹⁸ J.D. Holst, "Paulo Freire in Chile, 1964-1969: Pedagogy of the Oppressed in its Sociopolitical Economic Context," *Harvard Educational Review* 76, no. 2 (2006): 243–270.

¹⁹ Henry Giroux, *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life*; P. McLaren, "Che: The Pedagogy of Che Guevara: Critical Pedagogy and Globalization Thirty Years after Che," 45.

²⁰ K. Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1988), 18.

That the new information the instructor has gathered from students' lived experiences challenges their own knowledge.²¹ The final tenet of critical pedagogy is one of empowerment. In Freire's work, he refers to this as "conscientization," or more colloquially, "[the students] know what they know."²²

This second tenet is where critical pedagogy takes inspiration from constructivist ideas of learning.²³ Dating back to the 18th century, constructivism affirms that students draw on their cultural identities and lived experiences to construct meaning. As they learn new information and engage new perspectives, the students adapt and shift their construction of knowledge.²⁴ This contradicts the approach to education that views students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge and meaning as defined by the teacher.²⁵ The final tenet demonstrates Critical pedagogy's influence from Piaget's model for experience-based learning. In this model, Piaget invited teachers to facilitate experiences where students are encouraged to make meaning from

²¹ A.M. Rose, "Music Education in Culture: A Critical Analysis of Reproduction and Hegemony" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1990), 47.

²² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans., 30th anniversary ed.). (London: Continuum, 1970/2000), 17.

²³ Frank Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," *Applications of Research in Music Education* 23, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 2005): 14.

²⁴ L. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of the Higher Psychological Processes*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1978; J.L. Shively, "A Framework for the Development and Implementation of Constructionist Learning Environments for Beginning Band Classes" (DMA Diss., University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign, 1995); R. Yager, "The Constructivist Learning Model, Towards Real Reform in Science Education." *The Science Teacher* 58 (1991): 52–57.

²⁵ Frank Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," 14.

exploration, experimentation, and questioning.²⁶ The knowledge they gained was then shared through dialogue that informed and transformed the perspectives of their peers.²⁷

In Abrahams' initial work on critical pedagogy, he reviews its proponents and critics and notes that there has been little examination of its application to music education. He offers a general review of criticisms of the application of Freire's work in modern education, many of which remain relevant today. One of the biggest criticisms of this work is that it amounts to no actionable change at the systemic level.²⁸ Rather, it produces a pessimistic view of the world that relies too heavily on a simplistic and idealized version of what education should be.²⁹ Beyond this, critics state that attempting to hold the kind of dialogue that would be needed to form a critical interpretation of knowledge is inherently impossible because of the systemic oppression

²⁶ Frank Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," 14.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ L. Bartlett, "Dialogue, Knowledge, and Teacher-Student Relations: Freirean Pedagogy in Theory and Practice," *Comparative Education* 49, no. 3, (2005): 344-364; S. Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); S. Chambers, "The Politics of Critical Theory," *In The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*. Edited by F. Rush, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 219-247; E. Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review* 59, no. 3, (1989): 306; Knight, and Pearl, "Democratic Education and Critical Pedagogy," *The Urban Review* 32, no. 3 (2000): 205; D.P. Liston, *Capitalist Schools: Explanations and Ethics in Radical Studies of Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 119; Q. Wheeler-Bell, (2019). "An Immanent Critique of Critical Pedagogy," *Educational Theory* 69, no. 3, (2019): 265-281.

²⁹ D. Hayes, "Against Critical Thinking Pedagogy," *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 14, no. 4, (2015): 318-328; J.J. Kaufmann, "The Practice of Dialogue in Critical Pedagogy," *Adult Education Quarterly* 60, no. 5, (2010): 456-476; T. Knight and A. Pearl, 205.

that a single classroom operates in.³⁰ Another pressing issue is that its lack of practical and measurable tools means there is no way to test its efficacy in educational settings.³¹

These criticisms serve as the motivations for the scope of limitations of this dissertation. Critical Pedagogy's perceived inefficacy in addressing systemic power dynamics is why this research examines only interpersonal power dynamics. To address its immeasurability, the methodologies are paired with pedagogical tools for use in rehearsals. It will create opportunities for conductors to measure their efficacy in reconstructing power in their spaces. It acknowledges that power is assumed and therefore cannot be dismantled while still operating within hierarchical systems.³² However, it can be a device to empower students to be more agentic musicians. (addressed in Chapter Three)

1.6.2: Current State of the Art of Choral Music

Despite criticisms of bringing critical theory into the classroom, the choral ensemble presents a specific power inequity that researchers posit can be effectively addressed with Critical Pedagogy.³³ This power imbalance is not specific to choral music but persists in the training of conductors in Western cultures. The current practice of choral rehearsing situates the

³⁰ A. Cook-Sather, "Resisting the Impositional Potential of Student Voice Work: Lessons for Liberatory Educational Research from Poststructuralist Feminist Critiques of Critical Pedagogy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 28, no. 3, (2007): 389–403; Ellsworth, 297–324; R.N. Hao, R.N. (2011). "Rethinking Critical Pedagogy: Implications on Silence and Silent Bodies." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 31, no. 3, (2011): 267–284; D. Hayes, 318–328; J. Hess, "Critiquing the Critical: The Casualties and Paradoxes of Critical Pedagogy in Music Education," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 25, no. 2, (2017): 171–191; Kaufmann, 456–476.

³¹ Ellsworth, 298; Knight and Pearl, 221.

³² Hao, 267–284; Hess, 171–191, Kaufmann, 456–476.

³³ Frank Abrahams "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy." *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*, Edited by Frank Abrahams, and Paul D. Head. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 25.

conductor as the holder of all knowledge who wills groups of singers to reproduce their image of the music. This usually takes the form of brief pieces of feedback, followed by practice, and rarely does anyone speak other than the conductor.³⁴ Criticism of this learning model is fairly unified, but the motivations for naming the concern vary.

One argument against this teaching model is that it is ineffective at developing independent musical thinking. The research demonstrates that performing music in a choral ensemble setting that operates in this manner does not create any meaningful growth in the musicians, and for some, is an actual deterrent to learning.³⁵ Researchers agree that this method prioritizes creating obedient musicians rather than self-sufficient ones.³⁶ In Sharon Paul's work, she identifies this phenomenon as "learned helplessness." That, as a result of the conductor consuming so much control in the space, the singers become conditioned to believe they cannot do anything without the conductor saying so.³⁷ Hilary Apfelstadt affirms this in her work, referring to the outcomes of choral music as developing "mindless drones" who never learn to think critically or independently about their own musicianship.³⁸ Educational psychologists state that this model results in students being conditioned to think of learning as "[wanting] what the

³⁴ Hill, "Critical Pedagogy and the Choir," 8; Vodicka, "The Impact of Critical Pedagogy on a High School Choir," 2.

³⁵ Geoffrey Boers, "From the One to the Many: Teaching the Ensemble through the Individual." *The Choral Conductor's Companion: 100 Rehearsal Techniques, Imaginative Ideas, Quotes, and Facts*, Edited by Brian J. Winnie, (Chicago: GIA Publication, 2015), 33–34; Andrew C. Last, "Encouraging Musical Choice in the Choral Ensemble." *The Choral Conductor's Companion: 100 Rehearsal Techniques, Imaginative Ideas, Quotes, and Facts*, Edited by Brian J. Winnie, (Chicago: GIA Publication, 2015), 122–123.

³⁶ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," 17–19; Vodicka, "The Impact of Critical Pedagogy on a High School Choir," 2.

³⁷ Sharon J. Paul, *Art and Science in the Choral Rehearsal*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 149–150.

³⁸ H. Apfelstadt, "Musical Thinking in the Choral Rehearsal," *Dimensions of Musical Thinking*, Edited by E. Boardman. Reston, (VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1989), 73–82; Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," 20.

teachers want them to know,” rather than wanting to know the information for musical agency and independence. (Matusoc and Kayumova, 429)

While these pedagogues focus on the learning impact of this teaching model, many others argue that this way of depositing knowledge upholds a system of oppression. In this case, the conductor is the oppressor and the singers are the oppressed.³⁹ Critics of this teaching model raise concerns about prioritizing systems that reward obedience in music learning. One of the foundational critiques of the Western conductor comes from Christopher Small in his work *Musicking*. In this piece, he equates the orchestra conductor with a “repressive autocrat.” (Coppola, 123) Additionally, he addresses the systems within western ensembles that intentionally, and literally, silence musicians from questioning the conductor.⁴⁰ Further criticism of this power dynamics is that, come performance time, the conductor will have willed musicians to bring to life their artistic vision, using humans as devices for which they take credit, but bear little responsibility for.⁴¹ André De Quadros and Emilie Amrein expand on Smart’s original description of the power wielded by the conductor and compare it with the Foucaultian concept of “symbolic violence.” Wherein, the conductor represents an autocratic figure and therefore carries with it a symbolic representation of the violence that impacts communities of people at the hands of autocratic leaders.⁴² This symbolism is further supported by modern music education scholars who acknowledge that modern performance-based music education has

³⁹ Silverman, “Critical Pedagogy as a Pedagogy of ‘Love,’” 66.

⁴⁰ Small, 68.

⁴¹ Bruno Nettl, *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music Urbana*, (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 35.

⁴² de Quadros and Amrein, 30; R.A. Breault, “Dewey, Freire, and a Pedagogy for the Oppressor,” *Multicultural Education* 10, no. 3, (2003): 2–6.

military roots and is built on an authoritarian model.⁴³ Despite this history, modern pedagogues have acknowledged that music education, while currently upholding oppressive practices, is positioned to be a catalyst for meaningful change.⁴⁴ They acknowledge that when paired with the tenets of critical pedagogy, a reconstructed music education can be a beacon of empowerment.⁴⁵

1.6.3: Critical Pedagogy in Music

Frank Abrahams is the leading scholar in the application of critical pedagogy in music education. To address the concerns of critics of critical theory, Abrahams builds on Bernice McCarthy's experientialist work to create an instructional design for music teaching that takes into consideration Freire's critical theory work and the pedagogical goals of constructivism as outlined by Vygotsky and Rodriguez.⁴⁶ His pupils at the Westminster Choir College continued his work in this area. Most notably, Jason Vodicka examined and strategized how to transfer the application of critical pedagogy from classroom music to the choral classroom.⁴⁷ Vodicka and

⁴³ Andrew Goodrich, "Developing Trust and Empathy Through Peer Mentoring in the Music Classroom," *Oxford Handbook of Care in Music*, Edited by Karen S. Hendricks, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 280–291; Karen S. Hendricks, *Compassionate Music Teaching* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 1.

⁴⁴ R.E. Allsup, "Transformational Education and Critical Music Pedagogy: Examining the Link Between Culture and Learning," *Music Education Research* 5, no. 1, (2003): 5–12; M.W. Apple, "Critical Education, Critical Theory, and the Critical Scholar/Activist," *Educational Policy* 33, no. 7, (2019): 1171–1179; Kelly Bylica, "Critical Listening and Authorial Agency as Radical Practices of Care," *Oxford Handbook of Care in Music*, Edited by Karen S. Hendricks, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 484–485; de Quadros and Amrein, 23–25.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," 18; Bernice McCarthy, "About Teaching: 4MAT in the Classroom," (Wauconda, IL: About Learning, Inc, 2000); Bernice McCarthy, "The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Styles with Right and Left-Model Techniques," (Barrington, IL: Excel, 1987).

⁴⁷ Vodicka, "The Impact of Critical Pedagogy on a High School Choir," 2.

Abrahams' work in "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy" provides a rationale for sharing rehearsal tools to model critical pedagogy as praxis in a performance-based music education.

Simon Hill affirms the need for the restructuring of power in the choral ensemble. He defines this process as entering into musical solidarity with the singers.⁴⁸ Here, he helps conductors redefine their role through the lens of their training and examines the state of critical pedagogy's application in the 21st-century choral ensemble.⁴⁹ William Coppola also examines the application of critical pedagogy in his book, *Ego, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*. He examines the impact of musical humility on the core functions of critical pedagogy. Similar to Hill, he affirms the state of the art and addresses its impact on student learning, both from an equity and a learning efficacy perspective. A common theme among modern scholars advocating a shift in power dynamics in music education is the emphasis on trust-building. This verbiage is vague, but Coppola offers a clearer description of "trust building" in music education. He states that music environments need to prioritize psychological safety.⁵⁰ What the scholarship lacks is concrete tools to define and provide psychological safety in the rehearsal space. For this reason, this dissertation includes research that synthesizes and demonstrates how to integrate trauma-informed pedagogy and anti-oppressive practice in the choral ensembles.

⁴⁸ Simon Christopher Hill, "Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community" (DMA Diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2024), 85.

⁴⁹ Simon Christopher Hill, "Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community" (DMA Diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2024), 110–191.

⁵⁰ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 187–188.

1.6.4: Situating this Research

Considering the literature on critical pedagogy and music education within the defined scope, this dissertation will expand on existing research on restructuring social power hierarchies and the pedagogies that support these efforts in the Western educational choral ensemble. This research pairs trauma-informed care in education, the anti-oppressive framework, and instructional design for critical pedagogy in music education with existing pedagogical strategies used by choral conductors. In concluding this work, I develop a new instructional design for performance-based music education that integrates these methodologies and models how to evaluate the efficacy of rehearsal pedagogies. The goal is for Western-trained conductors to use this resource to begin critically examining themselves and their work in practice. Ultimately, this will bring about effective, efficient change that empowers the musicians in their ensembles.

Chapter 2

Changing the Culture

“Dialogue cannot exist...in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself.” - Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*⁵¹

2.1: Introduction to Care in Music

In this chapter, we begin by addressing one of the largest gaps in the present research on addressing power hierarchies in the choral ensemble: the need for psychological safety. There is a great deal of vulnerability in artistic experiences. The choir presents a unique challenge because the singers use their own bodies to create the art. This underscores the need for greater care when making music in a choral ensemble. We will discuss two social work frameworks for establishing safety in choral rehearsal: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy (TIP) and Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP). TIP provides a rich framework that is highly influential on the systems that underpin an ensemble. It offers a lens that, at a structural level, shapes how conductors set intention for singer care, empowerment, and collaboration. AOP will serve as the framework that bridges TIP and Critical Pedagogy, given its role in care practices and its attention to power hierarchies. Establishing how to care for and engage with singers is foundational in the work towards empowerment and agency. This chapter will define psychological safety in the context of an ensemble, provide a framework for assessing and evaluating our ability to create anti-oppressive spaces, and outline strategies for making this shift in our choral culture.

⁵¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 89.

2.2: Dynamics of Power, Trauma, and Safety in a Conductor-Singer Environment

In the last five years, there has been increasing dialogue in music education and performance about establishing practices for psychological safety. Before we can begin creating transformative educational spaces, there needs to be a foundational shift in our musical culture. If we wish to establish an environment of critical and creative thinking emerging from critical pedagogy, we must first understand our responsibility to create a space where singers feel safe. Safety can feel elusive to conductors who may not understand why their rehearsal environments are unsafe. While the likelihood of physical harm is relatively low, we will examine safety through a psychological lens. For any well-meaning choral conductor beginning the journey of examining power structures within their ensembles, empowering singers can still carry the risk of traumatizing and re-traumatizing.

Trauma is “when the brain signals a threat is present, and the person is not able to mobilize and escape or avoid the possible harm.” (Ahlschwede, 28) Re-traumatization is when a person is exposed to stimuli that provoke the physiological sensations of the original trauma to recur as if it were new.⁵² In a rehearsal environment where there is vulnerability, collaborative art-making, and challenging issues of oppression, there is greater potential for a singer to access trauma and risks of re-traumatization.⁵³ In more specific terms, trauma responses refer to any time the body enters a state of dysregulated arousal.⁵⁴ Being aware of these signs will help guide group work that is regulating and, to the best of our ability, avoid re-traumatizing singers. This is

⁵² Van der Kolk, 206.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

not to say that the experiences of singing in a choir are intrinsically harmful or traumatic.⁵⁵

However, I would be remiss to ignore how abuses of power have played out in music ensembles and caused significant harm to the singers.⁵⁶

One of the leading mental health professionals in the field of the somatic implications of trauma, Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, helps illuminate the ways our bodies present trauma responses in his book *The Body Keeps the Score*. David Treleaven synthesizes some of this work and identifies the following common external indicators that someone is in a state of dysregulated arousal:

- Muscle tone is extremely slack
- Muscle tone is extremely rigid
- Hyperventilation
- Exaggerated startle response
- Excessive sweating
- Noticeable dissociation (person appears highly disconnected from their body)
- Noticeably pale skin
- Emotional volatility (enraged, excessive crying, terror)
- Disorganized speech or slurring words
- Reports of blurred vision
- Inability to make eye contact
- Reports of flashback, nightmares, or intrusive thoughts⁵⁷

All of these physical signs of trauma responses are inherently adverse to the experience of singing in a choir. Being aware of these physical indicators of dysregulation is important because a singer in a dysregulated state loses some of their executive functioning skills.⁵⁸ Later in this

⁵⁵ Emily Jaworski Koriath, “When Music Makes the Wound,” *Trauma and the Voice: A Guide for Singers, Teachers, and Other Practitioners*. Edited by Emily Jaworski Koriath, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 123–139.

⁵⁶ Small, 68; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 123; de Quadros and Amrein, 30.

⁵⁷ David A. Treleaven, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing*. First edition, (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2018), 101–102.

⁵⁸ Van der Kolk, 45.

chapter, we will discuss how these signs of dysregulation can appear in the sounds we hear from singers. This can guide a conductor's work by helping them determine whether a sonic concern is musical or safety-related. Our job is to be prepared with resources to connect singers with, not provide mental health care, because that is outside our scope of practice and not a safe decision.

Another way to think about safety is on a spectrum. This is beneficial because it helps frame the idea that music involves some amount of risk-taking. Therefore, it would be nearly impossible to avoid some form of dysregulation. In her work teaching Van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score*, Kait Ahlschwede helps frame safety in three parts:

1. Ventra Vagal (Social Engagement): Feeling support from those around us will regulate our nervous systems
2. Sympathetic Activation (Mobilization): Fight or Flight is where adrenaline pumps through our bodies to fend off potential danger
3. Dorsal Vagal (Immobilization): Freeze or collapse, the body feels as though it does not have the tools to feel safe and will shut down to expend as little energy as possible⁵⁹

Considering our work through this lens is admittedly complex. Perhaps surprisingly, the data shows that trauma is highly common and that most people have experienced trauma responses.⁶⁰ Further, it could be nigh impossible in any setting to make it so safe that one would never enter a state of dysregulation. For instance, the feeling of being nervous on stage is a state of dysregulation. The body is experiencing an adverse reaction due to fear of a poor performance, sensing danger, and responding accordingly. We cannot make natural responses cease, but we

⁵⁹ Ahlschwede, 37–38; Heleen Grooten, “The Polyvagal Theory and Voice Disorders.” *Trauma and the Voice: A Guide for Singers, Teachers, and Other Practitioners*. Edited by Emily Jaworski Koriath, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 33.

⁶⁰ Shannon Davidson, “Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education: A Guide.” *Education Northwest* (2017): 5. <https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/trauma-informed-practices-postsecondary-508.pdf>; Vivian Barnett Brown, Maxine Harris, and Roger Fallot, “Moving Toward Trauma-Informed Practice in Addiction Treatment: A Collaborative Model of Agency Assessment,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 45, No. 5 (2013): 387; Deborah Bradley, “We Are All Haunted: Cultural Understanding and the Paradox of Trauma,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 22, no. 2 (2020): 4.

can create an environment where singers have agency, autonomy, and a greater sense of voice and possibility for success. To avoid this type of trauma, we, as conductors, need to focus our work on the components of that performance that make it a positive experience rather than a re-traumatizing event.⁶¹

2.2.1: Dysregulation and the Voice

Before diving into how dysregulation negatively impacts singing, it is worth noting that a necessary first step is identifying the difference between a safety issue and a pedagogical one. For example, imagine you hear a great deal of tension in the singing from a particular section. You offer a perfectly sound approach to release some of the muscular tension, and on a second go, you hear nothing has changed. The issue might not be a singing one. Muscular tension, especially when it impacts fine motor skills, is also a sign of dysregulation. What can make the experience that much more frustrating, when perceived through a purely pedagogical lens, is that one of the first things your body does in a state of dysregulated arousal is shut down executive functioning.⁶² Not only can the singers not make the changes you are asking for, but they also lose the ability to name what is happening in their bodies in that moment.⁶³

The effects of the voice across the three levels of safety (1. Safe, 2. Fight or Flight, 3. Freeze or Collapse) provide conductors with aural indicators that might prompt them to ask whether or not a singer is in a state of dysregulated arousal. In the safest state, level one: socially connected and feeling secure, the voice may sound relaxed, flexible, breathing is regulated, and

⁶¹ Van der Kolk, 214.

⁶² Ibid., 45.

⁶³ Ahlswede, 21.

we can identify regular eye contact from the singers.⁶⁴ A relaxed voice is easier to identify when someone is speaking rather than singing, because a truly relaxed singing voice requires extensive training. Aurally, a better indicator is the voice's adaptability. When a pedagogical tool is provided, the voice changes when the singer applies it, demonstrating that they have access to their fine motor skills and executive functioning. When the singer enters level two: fight or flight, the singer may produce sound with increased muscular tension. There might be rushing, singing too loudly, irregular shortening of musical notes, or sudden syllabic emphasis that seems out of character. The breathing can also quicken or become erratic. There may also be tension in the tongue and masseter muscle, a key muscle when opening the mouth and forming vowels.⁶⁵ In level three: freeze or collapse, the muscles slacken. When speaking, the voice may sound lower, a little flat or monotone, and the speech may soften and slow. During singing, this might sound like singing chronically below pitch, singing quietly, or singing too slowly. Their breathing can also become very shallow. Their general demeanor may also seem very distant, and they may have trouble focusing. In both level two and three, you might also observe a greater sensitivity to sound.⁶⁶

2.2.2: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

In music scholarship, there has been a growing interest in applying the Trauma-Informed Care framework to the study of music. Referred to as Trauma-Informed Practice or Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, this framework encourages professional musicians and teachers to consider

⁶⁴ Grooten, 35.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 35-36.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 36.

how trauma manifests in the lives and studies of musicians. The framework includes six principles:

- Safety
- Trust
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Cultural Competence.⁶⁷

Safety refers to the work of maintaining or establishing someone's physical and emotional well-being. *Trust*, or transparency, refers to clarity in communication, the development of norms, and the consistency of expectations and established boundaries. *Choice* refers to establishing autonomy for those involved and requires more boundary work. *Collaboration* refers to making decisions together and being conscious of shared power within the collaborative environment. The goal of *empowerment* is to offer tools that create agency. *Cultural competence* is the awareness of how cultural identities relate to the dominant hierarchical structures present in society and how those impact our lives.⁶⁸ These principles are not laid out as steps, but rather as interconnected values that interact to create spaces that minimize opportunities for retraumatization.

⁶⁷ Zahabiyah Yamasaki, *Trauma-Informed Yoga for Survivors of Sexual Assault*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 5.

⁶⁸ “What is Trauma–Informed Care?” The Institute on Trauma and Trauma–Informed Care (ITTIC), University of Buffalo Center for Social Research, <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html>.

2.2.3: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in Music Education

Trauma-Informed Practice provides an excellent foundation for developing psychological safety in the music classroom. In the introduction to their book, *Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and the Post-Secondary Music Class*, Kimber Andrews and Kristy Swift explain the need for such a framework in the study of music. They offer more specific examples of fear responses in education by naming six observable behaviors: flock, flee, fight, freeze, submit, and fawn. Flock looks like cheating off others or gossiping, and is a response to a need for social connection. Fleeing is seen in procrastination, attendance, and other avoidance strategies. Fight is more overt as the student becomes combative. Fawn is a mindset that a student needs approval or validation to make decisions or go about their work in the classroom. Through the lens of the three levels of safety, these four responses would be descriptors of level two. Freeze can be observed as dissociative behaviors in the classroom, having little memory of things they did in class, and submit looks like absence either physically from class and/or through forms of communication.⁶⁹ These are clear examples of level three.

Music Educator William Sauerland synthesizes TIP in the context of the choral classroom. His work helps establish habits that foster the principles of TIP and offers choral conductors a more specific approach to examining how their pedagogical strategies influence the culture of their ensembles:

- Empowerment.
 - Employing culturally-responsive pedagogy
 - Co-creating the musical space with singers
 - Teaching resilient self-talk strategies
- Choice
 - Practicing student-centeredness

⁶⁹ Kristy Swift and Kimber Andrews, *Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and the Post-Secondary Music Class*, Edited by Kristy Swift and Kimber Andrews, (New York: Routledge, 2025), 14.

- Offering options for physical activities, such as bodily stretching and riser arrangements
- Collaboration
 - Including choral stakeholders in a commitment to a compassionate and caring community
 - Adding support staff, such as counselors and therapists, to your choral leadership team
- Safety
 - Ensuring safety protocols include emotional and physical well-being
 - Nurturing inclusive and supportive language
 - Selecting safe and secure rehearsal and performance venues
- Trustworthiness
 - Communicating guidelines and expectations with transparency
 - Acknowledging, responding to, and mitigating known trauma triggers⁷⁰

In Chapter 6, many of Sauerland’s strategies are integrated into the Performance-Based Instructional design (Figures 6.2 and 6.3). The pedagogical strategies discussed in Chapter Five are not inherently trauma-informed. To mitigate this, his work is integrated into the teaching model to connect the pedagogical motivations discussed in Chapters Four and Five with the principles of TIP.

2.2.4: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and Recentering Music Learning

Dr. Midori Samson also applies social work principles to develop a framework for Music Education in her dissertation, “Recentering Music Learning: Operationalizing Social Work Principles as Anti-racist, Anti-Opressive, Socially Just Music Praxis.” (RML) She developed this framework to address and reclaim the oppressive past connected to the musical study relevant to her area of study, bassoon performance.⁷¹ She draws a connection between her work and Paulo

⁷⁰ William Sauerland, “Sound Teaching: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in Choir,” *Choral Journal* 62, no. 3 (2021): 41.

⁷¹ Midori Faye Samson, “Recentered Music Learning: Operationalizing Social Work Principles as Anti-Racist, Anti-Opressive, Socially Just Music Praxis Theoretical Perspectives and Calls to Action” (DMA Diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2021), 27–28.

Freire's work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* towards addressing oppression in educational systems.⁷² Her's are specific to music learning and can be applied to performance-based music learning.⁷³ RML establishes ten tenets to address power imbalances and center trauma-informed pedagogy in the music classroom.

1. Artistry: Musicians' best tool is their artistry, so music and the arts are the vehicle for implementing all of the other tenets that follow. In the case of teaching artistry, musicians don't teach learners to be artists; encouraging a career in the arts might not be ethical or appropriate if the learner is in a location or community that can't support a stable arts career. Rather, musicians teach learners how to think like artists,⁷⁴ by using music to nurture the social emotional learning (SEL) skills that artists utilize.⁷⁵
2. Trustworthiness: Musicians behave in a professional and trustworthy manner to protect the well-being of learners and colleagues, and in order to participate in successful collaboration. When working with youth, professionalism refers to following child protection guidelines set out by the partner.
3. Diversity: Musicians champion pieces that represent diverse composers and creators. They collaborate with diverse colleagues and create an environment where diverse colleagues and learners can thrive.
4. Equity: Musicians curate experiences that allow equitable participation and appreciation, regardless of their learners' or listeners' prior experiences.
5. Access: Musicians eliminate as many barriers as possible that make engagement with music difficult for learners and listeners. Barriers might include socio-economic status, geographic location, and prior needed or expected experience.
6. Collaboration: Musicians are partners who collaborate with their constituents. Rather than make music *for* or *at* learners and listeners, musicians make music *with* others. They curate musical experiences that meet the needs of learners and listeners, and they determine needs by communicating with partners, rather than presuming.
7. Agency: Musicians provide learners and listeners with opportunities for agency over their musical experiences.
8. Experimentation: Musicians nurture learning and listening environments where play and experimentation are encouraged. Musicians prioritize process over perfection.

⁷² Samson, "Recentered Music Learning: Operationalizing Social Work Principles as Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive, Socially Just Music Praxis Theoretical Perspectives and Calls to Action," 27.

⁷³ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁴ Original citation from Samson's dissertation: Mary Speed, "The Art of Change: Broadway Musical Director Mary-Mitchell Campbell Helps Underserved Communities to Think Like Artists," Live Happy, August 22, 2019, accessed May 22, 2020.

⁷⁵ Original citation from Samson's dissertation: "Social Emotional Learning," Overview of SEL, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), accessed May 1, 2020.

9. Validation: Musicians validate individuals' interpretations, experiences, creations, and opinions. They curate musical experiences that do not require specific or correct responses.
10. Self-Reflection: Musicians use all interactions with constituents as feedback. They use feedback as an opportunity to reflect and improve upon their ability to meet the needs to learners and listeners.⁷⁶

Midoria states, "In a music landscape where all ten tenets are being operationalized in their purest way...classical music does not mirror oppressive society as a whole, as Freire described."

(Samson, 30) Unlike the principles of TIP, RML is a cyclical process. Samson created the following flow chart to describe the framework's cycle:

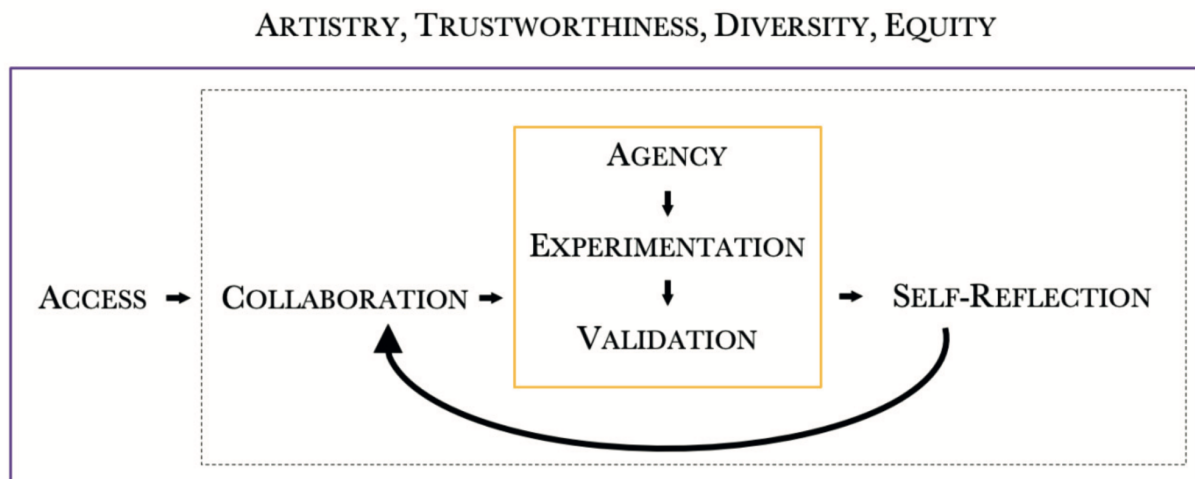


Figure 2.1 – “Recentering Music Learning”⁷⁷

Similar to Sauerland's work, this additional layer in understanding TIP in music education is referenced in the Performance-Based Instruction design in Chapter 6. (Figures 6.2 and 6.3) The cyclical nature of her design also supports the cyclical components of a choral rehearsal

⁷⁶ Samson, “Recentered Music Learning: Operationalizing Social Work Principles as Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive, Socially Just Music Praxis Theoretical Perspectives and Calls to Action,” 28–30.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 33.

sequence and were essential in drawing the connection between care frameworks and the critical pedagogy frameworks used in this dissertation.

Another motivation for integrating her work into this research was its inclusion of artistry, diversity, and equity. The remaining seven components are closely related to and inspired by the principles of Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and Anti-Oppressive Practice.⁷⁸ Diversity and equity might be assumed in “cultural competence.” Still, more specific language helps to define this in practice and connect it to “critical assessment of singers’ experience of oppression” from Anti-Oppressive Practice, which is discussed later in this chapter. Additionally, the other methodologies do not address artistry. They were not designed with artistic spaces in mind, but many of the frameworks discussed in this dissertation work for or have been built for application in educational settings. This made them welcome tools for the choral classroom. Including RML keeps artistry central in the learning processes of a choral ensemble.

2.2.5: Consent Practices to Establish Safety in Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

In search of how best to address the vital role safety plays in trauma-informed pedagogy, I turned to Tonya Ingerson’s work on developing key principles of consent-based practices in the choral rehearsal. She draws on various artistic mediums to outline how consent can be established in choral ensembles in ways that align with the principles of trauma-informed pedagogy.

1. Consent is contextual, conditional, and dynamic.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Samson, “Recentered Music Learning: Operationalizing Social Work Principles as Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive, Socially Just Music Praxis Theoretical Perspectives and Calls to Action,” 27–33.

⁷⁹ This is the original footnote from Ingerson’s thesis where she directly pulls the first principles from Emily Rollie and Jamie Pringle’s “TIE: Best Practices.” Emily Rollie and Jamie Pringle, “TIE: Best Practices,” Zoom workshop provided by Theatrical Intimacy Education, Zoom, July 13, 2024.

2. Leaders in any group setting hold power, and this power dynamic affects the group's (and each member's) relationships, boundaries, and consent.
3. The language used within any given situation affects how information is received and how the situation is perceived.
4. Boundaries are information that merits a socially neutral response.
5. Consent-based practices are most effective when used as proactive, culture-building tools, rather than as reactive measures aimed at simply mitigating the impacts of harm.⁸⁰

In her work, she draws on Laura Rikard and Amanda Rose Villarreal's efforts to move away from the term "safety." Rather, they offer a new consent language where one chooses to enter into a "space of acceptable risk."⁸¹ By applying these consent practices, conductors can establish an environment where singers can self-determine, monitor, and manage whether they have the necessary tools to navigate their own physical and emotional safety within an artistic context.⁸² She notes that leaders in these creative spaces have a responsibility to provide the necessary information to inform singers of the tasks at hand, but beyond that, they should not assume the responsibility of a mental health professional in navigating the intricacies of establishing safety for each student. Safety looks different for every person, and what feels safe to one could feel unsafe to another.⁸³ A conductor's role in this context is to communicate clearly and effectively and to respect and honor the boundaries their students set. Honoring boundaries in this context means treating "[them] simply as information that helps define the space in which their artistry and creativity can occur." (Ingerson, 25) Establishing what consent practices to

⁸⁰ Tonya Ingerson, "Less Fear, More Joy: Consent-Based Practices in the Choral Classroom" (MM Thesis, Western Washington University, Bellingham, 2025), 17.

⁸¹ Laura Rikard and Amanda Rose Villarreal, "Focus on Impact, Not Intention: Moving from 'Safe' Spaces to Spaces of Acceptable Risk," *Journal of Consent-Based Performance* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1-16.

⁸² Ingerson, 18.

⁸³ Chelsey Morgan, "Visions for Justice and Critiquing Consent: On Taking Performativity Out of Performance," *Journal of Consent-Based Performance* 1, no. 2 (2022): 82.

engage in is a crucial step to implementing the framework of TIP into the choral ensemble, because without it, you cannot establish any of the six principles with success.

2.3: Anti-Oppressive Practice

Anti-oppressive Practice shares many of the same goals as the trauma-informed framework and as critical pedagogy.⁸⁴ I have used this framework to move from the structural environment with which my singers make music to the practical rehearsal strategies we discuss later in Chapter Five. As we move towards examining critical pedagogy in the context of choral music, a shift in how we assess our individual impact on the singer's emotional well-being comes into focus. The anti-oppressive framework was built to specifically examine the power dynamics present in social work practice.⁸⁵ This framework is beneficial in the choral context because it helps name and separate assumed power from purpose. In our work as conductors, we are not the people equipped to provide individuals with tools to overcome systems of oppression outside the context of music. That is where social workers and other mental health providers come in, and that is outside of our scope of practice. With that in mind, we are the people uniquely equipped to empower singers in their musical lives through Anti-Oppressive Practices.

2.3.1: Principles of Anti-Oppressive Practice

There are five key principles of anti-oppressive practice:

⁸⁴ “Definition, Core Assumptions, Values and Principles, Strengths, Limitations,” The Social Work Graduate: Resources for Social Work Graduates, Last Modified April 12, 2024. <https://www.thesocialworkgraduate.com/post/anti-oppressive-practice>.

⁸⁵ J. Allan, “Theorising New Developments in Critical Social Work,” *Critical Social Work: Theories and Practices for a Socially Just World*, Second edition. Edited by J. Allan, L. Briskman, and B. Pease, (London: Routledge), 30–44; Karen Healy, *Social Work Theories in Context: Creating Frameworks for Practice*. Second edition, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

- Engaging in critical self-reflection
- Critical assessment of singers' experience of oppression
- Empowering singers⁸⁶
- Working in Partnership
- Maintaining minimal intervention⁸⁷

We will discuss broadly what each of these steps entails, and then we will examine them more closely through the choral lens later on to explore what they might look like in practice. Critical reflection of self in practice refers to the work that those in power (the conductor) do to name and address biases that can result from power imbalances in their spaces. This is also the first step in Critical Pedagogy work, and the specifics of this work, as it relates to power in the choral ensemble, will be addressed in Chapter Four. A critical assessment of singers' experiences of oppression examines how systemic oppression creates adverse experiences in their musical studies. Here, consider Coppola's description of systemic power in music study.⁸⁸ When engaging in critical dialogue with the singers, the conductor can learn if and how they have been negatively impacted by studying Western Classical music in a school, department, or conservatory of Music. This information is what conductors define as the "access barriers" for their singers. Empowerment occurs by providing the singers with tools to overcome the impacts of access barriers in their ensemble experiences. In either context, social work or choral rehearsals, working in partnership will involve an ongoing dialogue around singers' experiences and the application of their tools. The final component, minimal intervention, has been the hardest to conceptualize, but ultimately helped me transform a core component of critical

⁸⁶ The original language was, "critical assessment of service users' experiences of oppression" and "empowering service users," in the context of social work, but I have chosen to adapt both of these for the choral context and changes "service users" to "singers."

⁸⁷ The Social Work Graduate.

⁸⁸ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 111.

pedagogy and my anti-oppressive work. In the context of this work, the aim of minimal intervention is to help conductors balance the amount of time they are dictating what singers do in a rehearsal. It will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. This framework allows conductors to put their practice into a context that will enable the intent and the impact to connect.⁸⁹ By creating more opportunities for singer agency in their learning, the conductor can avoid another site of oppression.⁹⁰ AOP can also guide conductors in recognizing systems and experiences of oppression, minimizing their potential for oppressively wielding power, and working towards empowering their singers.⁹¹

2.3.2: Anti-Oppressive Practice in the Context of Choral Music

For Critical reflection of self in practice, as further discussed in Chapter Four, the conductor engages with the values and biases they have established from their training, lived privilege, and assumed power. Specific care will be given to the paradox of how this training necessitates some “unlearning” before being able to achieve many of the goals of anti-oppressive work.⁹² A critical assessment of singers’ experiences of oppression in the context of choral music means developing an awareness of systems and sites of oppression inside and outside the ensemble through dialogue.⁹³ A great way to conceptualize this is William Coppola’s definition

⁸⁹ Bylica, 100–101. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 137.

⁹⁰ The Social Work Graduate.

⁹¹ Allan, 30–44; Healy.

⁹² Bylica, 482–493.

⁹³ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 114–129.

of structural power in WEAM.⁹⁴ It is crucial, however, not to observe a single experience of oppression as a collective one. That can lead to other forms of oppressive actions, in which you assume a lived experience and, as a result, can make a singer feel othered. This is why opportunities for dialogue remain crucial in the choral context. Only through understanding each individual can you begin to understand how they have experienced access barriers in their life and start the work, alongside them, to overcome those.⁹⁵ Some examples of overcoming access barriers include: demystifying audition processes, providing musical tools to help them solve musical issues on their own, and/or connecting them with voice teachers who can guide them on their singing journey. At the heart of AOP, critical pedagogy, and much of what we examined from TIP is working in partnership. In the context of the choral ensemble, this will take the form of various kinds of dialogue. The remainder of this work will focus on collaboration strategies. Before this collaboration, how we hold singers in space together, how we hold ourselves accountable in the process, and the intentions we set for our collaborative music making are crucial.⁹⁶

2.3.3: Minimal Intervention in the Choral Rehearsal

Minimal intervention, as mentioned, is the principle I initially struggled to contextualize. It was not until I put it into the context of what Simon Hill refers to as the “directive rehearsal.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 111.

⁹⁵ Olúfemi O. Táíwò, *Elite Capture : How the Powerful Took over Identity Politics (and Everything Else)*, (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2022), 71–81; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 131–144.

⁹⁶ Latasha Thomas–Durrell, “(Re)Imagining Intersectionality: Holistic Acceptance in Music Education.” *The Oxford Handbook of Care in Music Education*, Edited by Karin S Hendricks, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 168–169.

⁹⁷ Hill, “Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community,” 115.

Here, Hill describes rehearsals in which conductors retain all the authorial agency to command group music-making. These practices are what I define as “maximum intervention in the choral rehearsal.” This can look like the director names a problem, offers a direction for correction, and then repeats the section to look for improvement. In contrast, minimal intervention would look like a run-through with no feedback (although it is not technically nonintervention, since the conductor’s gesture is, in its own way, a form of feedback and communication). When examining intervention, we can see that conductors are trained to provide a constant maximum amount of intervention, often in the name of efficiency.⁹⁸ This is why there is such an emphasis on the conductor’s ability to name errors, be decisive about solutions, and have such a clear image of the score.⁹⁹ Their training in these areas becomes even more important when operating with less intervention, but the means to achieve the outcome change drastically.

In the anti-oppressive framework, it does not dismiss the need for directive rehearsals or maximum intervention. Instead, they are used only when deemed the most effective way to achieve the goal at hand. Another argument for its use is that singers might request such feedback because they want your perspective to help them achieve the goal. In this case, using directive rehearsal strategies is entirely appropriate and effective, and it affirms the singer’s sense of choice and collaboration in the music-making process. A key component of collaboration is your own participation, and your training and musical perspective should be active in the space, without suppressing another’s.

⁹⁸ Coppola, Egotism, *Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 123; de Quadros, André. “Zoom interview by University of Washington Advanced Choral Techniques Class.” Zoom, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, October 5, 2021; de Quadros and Amrein, 23–24.

⁹⁹ de Quadros and Amrein, 23–24.

In my own practice, this comes up more often when I have a new singer from another choral culture. At the outset, they might feel collaborative rehearsals are inefficient and ask for a solution to a musical problem. Some of this fades over time, but there will be moments when, through the singer's invitation, we will work through a musical idea in a more directive way. Afterward, however, I like to invite moments of reflection on the music we just made. Allowing the singers to engage in some critical thinking after a directive rehearsal not only helps cement the work we just did, but also reopens the dialogue after a period of one-sided feedback.

2.4: Reflection on Love

In my approach to creating spaces that empower singers, love has become synonymous with care. I have been very guilty of holding rehearsal spaces that intentionally situated me as the foremost authority in the room. I know singers have left my rehearsals feeling small and unheard. Moreover, despite sage guidance from trusted peers and mentors, it took me far longer than I would like to admit to understand what empowerment in the choral setting looked like. I have felt fortunate to have a circle of people who have been gentle and patient as they have helped me understand how my role is impacting people in ways I cannot always see. Beginning this work required a change of heart. Looking at an art form that I love so deeply as a site of harm did not happen immediately, and it was not without hesitation. It is not easy to hear about or think of yourself through the lens of an oppressor, but it is vital to understanding what is at stake, and maybe more so what is now possible.

The purpose of including love as a foundational component of a conversation about pedagogy in choral music is not to assume the role of a mental health professional, but to reorient ourselves toward a mindset of care, empathy, and compassion. Doing the work of creating

trauma-informed spaces and teaching through an anti-oppressive lens can lead us to postures of humility. Ultimately, offering our singers a musical experience that will transform them and all the lives they touch with their art. Once we have, metaphorically, stepped down from the podium and situated ourselves in a place to truly welcome, affirm, and empower any human who enters our rehearsals, we are emboldened to, as Freire says, “[create] a world in which it will be easier to love.” (Freire, 40)

Chapter 3

Critical Pedagogy in Context

“Based on Freire’s pedagogy of love, the music teacher should be decentered. However, when teachers ‘decenter’ themselves, they do not fade completely into the background or conceal their views from students. Teachers and students are co-creators of knowledge, as well as “co-workers and co-researchers in deconstructing received wisdom, common sense, and the lived experiences of the students.” - D.J. Elliott and Marissa Silverman *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education*¹⁰⁰

3.1: From Dictation to Facilitation

As discussed in Chapter One, the motivation for developing a musical critical pedagogy is to move the Western music ensemble away from an authoritarian model of dispensing knowledge.¹⁰¹ In *Compassionate Music Teaching*, Karin Hendricks echoes the critical pedagogy scholarship in music, advocating for a transition away from this role and its militaristic symbolism.¹⁰² I colloquially refer to this shift as going from “dictation,” as in “one who dictates,” to “facilitation.” One of the most crucial steps in reconstructing the power dynamics of the modern-day conductor is to examine positionality. This reflexive process is the primary step for both anti-oppressive practice (Critical Reflection of Self in Practice in Chapter Two) and Critical Pedagogy (“Who Am I?” in Chapter Four). By the nature of the role of a conductor, you assume a certain amount of privilege whenever you don that title in an ensemble. Regardless of whether or not we wish to yield such power, all conductors are, in some regard, the benefactors

¹⁰⁰ D.J. Elliott and M. Silverman, *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education*, Second edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 138.

¹⁰¹ Hendricks, *Compassionate Music Teaching*, 1.

¹⁰² Ibid., 2.

of it.¹⁰³ The conversation of power is one of the most challenging parts of doing this work. Recognizing our power as conductors does not come without trepidation. But, as discussed in Chapter Two, adopting the principles of trauma-informed pedagogy and anti-oppressive practice allows us to posture ourselves with the humility and empathy needed to carve a new path.

3.1.1: Assumed Power and Musical Humility

One of the most significant distinctions I have made in doing this work was moving away from the idea that anti-oppressive practice and critical pedagogy aim to deconstruct power dynamics. Instead, these methodologies address power as ever-present (assumed power) and make the work one of reconstruction.¹⁰⁴ Removing the conductor from the equation altogether would not be effective because that role serves a key musical function in the Western choral ensemble. So many aspects of the role of conductor are crucial for the success of musical performances for ensembles that rely on a focal point to create a unified performance.¹⁰⁵ The concept of deconstruction removes the essential elements of responsibility and accountability from the function of a conductor in Western ensembles.¹⁰⁶ The goal, then, becomes removing the methods of autocracy in favor of methods of humility.

Humility is central to the reflexive work necessary when addressing adverse power hierarchies in choral ensembles. In grappling with the concepts and theories in *Pedagogy of the*

¹⁰³ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10–11; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Here we are drawing from Fricker’s idea that, “power exists even while it is not being realized in action.” Fricker, 10.

¹⁰⁵ De Quadros and Amrein, 23-24.

¹⁰⁶ Bylica, 491.

Oppressed, music education scholar William Coppola unpacks humility in Western music education.¹⁰⁷ He identified five components of musical humility:

1. Collaborative Engagement
2. Other-orientedness
3. Non-superiority
4. Owning Limitations and Shortcomings
5. Low Self-Focus¹⁰⁸

Musical humility, like trauma-informed practice, critical pedagogy, or anti-oppressive work, is not a series of strategies to restructure power or a one-size-fits-all approach to situating ourselves within an ensemble. Coppola offers this sentiment that transformed the way I examine myself in this work: “Maybe humility is simply the shared acceptance that we are all differently participating in the messy process of working toward an uncertain future.” (Coppola, 257)

Coppola also wisely notes that simply doing the work of collaboration is not a means to achieving musical humility. Humility involves an ever-changing reflexive process in which we consider the needs of those we collaborate with.¹⁰⁹ He does, however, offer strategies for learning musical humility:

1. Intrapersonal Strategies¹¹⁰
 - a. Practicing Ego-Skepticism
 - b. Practicing Grace and Self-Compassion
 - c. Practicing Awe and Gratitude
 - d. Interrogating the Sources of our Anger, Envy, and Frustration

¹⁰⁷ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 235.

¹⁰⁸ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 173–189. These were developed from the original five components of musical humility: musical engagement and collaboration; other-orientedness; a lack of superiority; an acknowledgment of shortcomings and learnability; and healthy pride from Coppola’s original body of work on musical humility: William J. Coppola, “Musical Humility: An Ethnographic Case Study of a Competitive High School Jazz Band” (PhD diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2018), 66.

¹⁰⁹ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 242.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 225–228.

2. Interpersonal Strategies¹¹¹

- a. Playing, Working, and Studying with Musicians That Challenge Us
- b. Centering the Lives of Others
- c. Leaning into Accountability

The ultimate goal of this work is not to remove the ambiguity, but rather to model how musical leaders can reconstruct the systems that promote inequitable power dynamics. “The friction is the learning; the friction is the doing. Humility reminds us that we won’t always get it right, but that it is always worth the effort.” (Coppola, 258–259)

3.1.2: Power Over vs. Power To

Centering musical humility within the broader anti-oppressive work helps us navigate one of the most important facets of restructuring power hierarchies in artistic space. It allows us to transition from “power over” to “power to”. “Power over” refers to when those in positions of power situate themselves as the holder of all knowledge and wield it in an oligarchical manner that aims to make the receivers of knowledge small and submissive.¹¹² This concept is addressed throughout the scholarship on critical pedagogy, where it is referred to as “education banking.”¹¹³ Critical pedagogue and music educator, Marissa Silverman, summarizes this function of power, stating, “Teachers are oppressors who possess knowledge as if it were a gift [where students] are conditioned to believe that if they are docile, unquestioning, and unassuming, the teacher will deposit the gift of knowledge [to them].” (Silverman, 66)

¹¹¹ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 228–229.

¹¹² Anna Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, First edition, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2019), 129.

¹¹³ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 17–19.

Critical pedagogy, as a methodology, works to restructure the power dynamics that promote “education banking.” Coppola addresses another philosophical understanding of the assumed power referred to as “power to.”¹¹⁴ This view of assumed power comes from feminist scholarship, which situates those who have assumed some hierarchical power as able to enact change, empower, and lead.¹¹⁵ Coppola notes that this concept of power is an expansion on Philosopher Hannah Arendt’s definition of power as, “[humans’] ability not just to act but to act in concert.” (Arendt, 44) This approach to assumed power is why adopting anti-oppressive practice is critical. It offers a framework for navigating an environment where one cannot remove power, but can use it as a tool to embolden those with whom one collaborates.¹¹⁶

Critical pedagogy removes the narrative that, as a conductor, you have to be all-knowing. Our job becomes discovering what others know, and then using our power to empower and uplift. This repeated act is what allows us to gradually remove the oppressive hierarchies present in our shared ensemble spaces. Our assumed authority as conductors and teachers shifts from “power-over” to “power-to.” We become advocates for our singers, agents of transformational teaching that empowers, and engage in counter-cultural practices that can fundamentally shift the historically oppressive narrative surrounding the art form.

¹¹⁴ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 68.

¹¹⁵ Johana Oksala, “Feminism and Power,” in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry, Serene Khader, and Alison Stone (New York: Routledge, 2017), 680; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 68.

¹¹⁶ Bull, 129.

3.2: Critical Pedagogy as Anti-Oppressive Practice

Up to this point, the larger conversation around restructuring power in the choral rehearsal has been reserved for the interpersonal work of the conductor. This reflexive process is shared among anti-oppressive work, culturally responsive work, and critical pedagogy. As addressed in the literature review, this initial step is often and intentionally vague.¹¹⁷ Trauma-informed pedagogy, anti-oppressive practice, and musical humility provide frameworks for entering into this work. As we move from theoretical understanding to practice, it is vital to understand what critical pedagogy looks like in the context of the choral rehearsal.

In the fields of music education and choral music, Frank Abrahams led efforts to adopt a pedagogical methodology derived from the philosopher Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this text, Freire introduces the concept of "Critical Pedagogy." His work takes concepts of critical theory and applies them to education.¹¹⁸ The ultimate goal is to remove the hierarchical knowledge-sharing structure in education.¹¹⁹ In Freire's life, he was applying this pedagogy in his literacy work with adults in Brazil in the mid twentieth century.¹²⁰ He was challenging a teaching model that situates the teacher as the sole holder of power and knowledge. This student-teacher dynamic, referred to as the "mentor-apprentice" relationship, shapes a student's ability to achieve mastery of the content relative to the teacher's mastery. This approach

¹¹⁷ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 242; de Quadros and Amrein, 68–85.

¹¹⁸ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," 14.

¹¹⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 160.

¹²⁰ The illiterate adults Freire was teaching Portuguese too where 'the oppressed' in his work. Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning," 3; Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

is not inherently oppressive, but historically, this power dynamic fosters an environment where the mentor only posits knowledge when the apprentice exhibits some kind of subservience.¹²¹

Critical pedagogy works to restructure these power dynamics by taking the form of an ongoing dialogue between teacher and student about the content and their shared learning experiences.¹²² The ultimate goal being that the students could create, “[bridges] for new learning” (Abrahams, 14) between the material and their understanding of the world as developed by their lived experiences.¹²³ Freire did not develop specific teaching techniques, but rather a theoretical approach to shifting power in education.¹²⁴ Critical Pedagogy means being “*Not* directive of the *students*, but directive of the *process*...As director of the process, the liberating teacher is not doing something *to* the students, but *with* the students.” (Freire, 46) Adopting this methodology, while daunting a task, offers a deep foundation of hope that in reexamining our relationship to one another, committing to anti-oppressive work, and centering empowerment in the learning process, we can construct a world that was not yet possible.¹²⁵ If we think of the arts as a metaphorical mirror, critical pedagogy offers us the opportunity to show audiences a reflection of what is possible when we recognize our shared humanity.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Silverman, “Critical Pedagogy as a Pedagogy of ‘Love,’” 66.

¹²² F.A. Abrahams, “Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy,” *Music Educators Journal* 92, no. 1 (2005b): 62.

¹²³ Frank Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators,” *Visions of Research in Music Education* 7, no. 1 (2007): 2.

¹²⁴ Frank Abrahams, 2007. “Musicing Paulo Freire: A Critical Pedagogy for Music Education.” In *Critical Pedagogy: Where Are We Now?* Edited by Peter McLaren and Joe L. Kincheloe, (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 223–237; Giroux, *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life*, 114.

¹²⁵ Elliott and Silverman, 138.

¹²⁶ Marissa Silverman, a pupil of Abrahams, has gone on to forge a path in critical pedagogy in music education and offers a reflection on “Critical Pedagogy as a Pedagogy of Love.” In her scholarship draws in the connection Freire made in his work between the mission of critical pedagogy and love, offering his sentiments that to him love is,

3.3: Critical Pedagogy and Higher-Order Thinking

Critical pedagogy works to solve issues of power disparity in learning. An added benefit of rehearsing through this framework is that knowledge becomes transferable. The current state of the art values teaching by rote or memorization. This approach allows singers to present music in a sequential manner that is quickly reproducible for performance. It does not foster understanding or the ability to apply that information outside the context in which it is used.¹²⁷ Facilitated problem-solving activities are the most effective way to create learning that results in transference; the ability to apply their new knowledge in other areas of their music study.¹²⁸ In neuroscience, this process is called “elaborative rehearsal.”¹²⁹

It is not enough to offer a piece of musical feedback and practice it in the context of the music to create a strong neuro pathway for transference. The singer needs to find or be given the information they need, then draw the connection to the music on their own. Opening up the ensemble environment to include dialogue and problem-solving activities will strengthen the new knowledge and reinforce old knowledge.¹³⁰ For example, one might tell an ensemble they are out of tune and present the solution. The choir can fix it in that context, and may or may not be able to return to that information in the future. They will likely need a reminder. Instead, by creating an environment where students listen to intonation, identify the problem, and find

“when teachers are committed to shared humanity,” (Silverman, 68) and that critical pedagogues are agents of, “the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love.” (Freire, 40)

¹²⁷ David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2011), 93.

¹²⁸ Patricia Wolfe, *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2010), 134.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Paul, 2–3.

solutions to address it on their own, they can form the neurological information they need to address intonation problems outside that one musical context. All of the tools we will examine in Chapter Five will align with the tenets of critical pedagogy and serve as models for engaging in the kind of problem-solving needed to make learning transferable.

3.4: Critical Pedagogy in Music

If we compare the state of education during Freire’s literacy work in Brazil in the twentieth century with the modern-day state of the choral art as discussed in Chapter One, we can identify that these learning models are quite similar.¹³¹ Frank Abrahams, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, was a pioneer in bringing critical pedagogy into the choral classroom. His time leading the music education program at the Westminster Choir College was foundational to the budding scholarship and cultural shift in the art form.¹³² And, despite its limited application, his work remains a guiding force in anti-oppressive efforts in the choral arts.¹³³

He designed countless activities that modeled this transition of power, and those moments have influenced the approach of thousands of educators shaping music education in schools and universities today. Frank’s scholarly work throughout his career has conveyed this redistribution of power in giving voice to those who have been historically overlooked, silenced, or oppressed. His work embodied the “...advocacy and activism on behalf of those who are the most vulnerable in classrooms and society” (Wink, 165) that is a hallmark of a critical pedagogue.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 13-16.

¹³² Ryan John, “Honor Their World: Advocacy in the Work of Frank Abrahams,” *Visions of Research in Music Education* 40 (Winter 2022): 17.

¹³³ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 25.

¹³⁴ John, 17-18.

Despite research showing that this model of teaching is effective at elevating the critical consciousness of singers and emboldening singer agency, it has not changed the standard practices of Western choral arts.¹³⁵ Abrahams interprets Freire's work for the music classroom and develops a methodology that centers collaboration and aims to "combat the marginalization of singers, the pressures of politics, and the misguided and inappropriate uses of power" in the music ensemble. (Abrahams, 13-14) Abrahams synthesized five key principles from Freire's work and contextualized them for music teaching:

1. Music education is a conversation.
 - a. "Students and their teachers pose problems and solve problems together. In music classrooms, this means composing and improvising music in styles consistent with who the students are and the contexts in which they live." (Abrahams, 3)
2. Music education broadens the student's view of reality.
 - a. "For Critical Pedagogy Music Education (CPME), the goal of music teaching and music learning is to affect a change in the way that both students and their teachers perceive the world. In this model, students and their teachers view the world through the lens of the urban experience and the music that defines that experience." (Abrahams, 3)
3. Music education is empowering.
 - a. "When students and their teacher 'know that they know,' one can claim that the phenomenon of 'conscientization' has occurred. Conscientization implies a knowing that has depth and goes beyond the recall of information and includes understanding and the ability to act on the learning in such a way as to effect a change.¹³⁶ In this view, music is conceived as a verb of power.¹³⁷ It evokes critical action and critical feeling by engaging students in musical activities that are both significant and consistent with what musicians do when they are making music.¹³⁸ (Abrahams, 3)
4. Music education is transformative.

¹³⁵ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," 25.

¹³⁶ Original Footnote from the quote: Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

¹³⁷ Original Footnote from the quote: Schmidt, P. (2002). Looking for a broader road: College music education curriculum through social lenses. Paper presented at the Mayday Group, Columbus, OH.

¹³⁸ Original Footnote from the quote: Regelski, T. A. (2004). *Teaching general music in grades 4-8: A musicianship approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- a. “For those teaching a CPME approach, music learning takes place when both the teachers and the students can acknowledge a change in perception. It is this change or transformation that teachers can assess.” (Abrahams, 3)
- 5. Music education is political.
 - a. “There are issues of power and control inside the music classroom, inside the school building, and inside the community. Those in power make decisions about what is taught, how often classes meet, how much money is allocated to each school subject or program, and so forth. Those who teach the CPME model resist the constraints that those in power place on them. They do this first in their own classroom by acknowledging that children come to class with knowledge from the outside world and, as such, that their knowledge needs to be honored and valued.” (Abrahams, 3-4)

Many of these principles work to achieve the goals and values identified in anti-oppressive work.

Abrahams’ work effectively reimagines the potential of choral arts to support the overall development of singers.¹³⁹ Critical pedagogy opens the rehearsal environment to one that can make considerable contributions to an individual singer's development. The ability to think critically about the music-making process through collaborative, teacher-facilitated work is what empowers students with the agency to create transferable musical skills.¹⁴⁰ It involves a conscious effort to move beyond recruiting a roster of gifted singers to produce a conductor’s artistic vision, and towards one where conductors identify the potential of each singer and work to empower their artistic growth.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Here we are returning to the state of the art conversation that addresses the current culture of pedagogy that value obedience over the development of transferable skills, and the breadth of research that references that singing in a western choral ensemble does not create any considerable growth for singers in their musical development. Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 17–19; Vodicka, “The Impact of Critical Pedagogy on a High School Choir,” Boers, 33–34; Last, 122; Paul, 2–3; Paul, 149–150.

¹⁴⁰ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 20; Apfelstadt, 73–82.

¹⁴¹ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 25.

Abrahams identified four central questions to guide musicians leading ensembles in their critical pedagogy work.¹⁴² These questions help situate the conductor in a position of humility and encourage reflection on how to identify musical potential in the learning process.

Central Questions of Critical Pedagogy:

1. Who am I?
2. Who are we?
3. What may they become?
4. What might we become together?¹⁴³

To further frame these questions in music education, he developed an instructional design that defines eight steps of critical pedagogy and aligns with the guiding questions. Additionally, he offers four areas of empowerment that aim to support different learning styles. Chapter Four will define each step, further explore each of the central questions in the context of the choral rehearsal process, and break down student empowerment in the rehearsal. Abrahams' Instructional Design is as follows.

¹⁴² Developed from Critical Theorist Habermas' work in critical pedagogy. J. Habermas, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982).

¹⁴³ Abrahams, "Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy," 63.

Critical Pedagogy	Empowering Musicians	Lesson Steps
Who Am I?		
Who We Are?	Engaging Musical Imagination	1. Honoring their world
		2. Sharing the Experience
Who Students May Become?	Engaging Musical Intellect	3. Connecting their world to the Classroom
		4. Dialoguing Together
		5. Practicing the Concept
Who We Might Become Together?	Engaging Musical Creativity	6. Connecting School Music to the Students' World
		7. Assessing Transformation
	Engaging Musical Celebration through Performance	8. Acknowledging Transformation

Figure 3.1: Abrahams' Reduced Critical Pedagogy in Music Instructional Design¹⁴⁴

3.5: Love, Hope, and Solidarity in Critical Pedagogy

Drawing on the first principle of critical pedagogy, “education is a conversation,” there needs to be an open dialogue between singer to singer and singer to conductor regularly throughout the rehearsal process.¹⁴⁵ In Chapter Five, the pedagogical strategies for integrating

¹⁴⁴ Abrahams, “Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy,” 65–66.

¹⁴⁵ Abrahams, “The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning,” 3.

dialogue into the rehearsal model how to create structure and efficiency when engaging in small- and large-group discussions. This foundational component makes all of the other components of critical pedagogy possible. In Freire's work, love was the product of dialogue.¹⁴⁶ Through conversation, students and teachers begin to see each other's shared humanity. In a Freirian sense, love is the act of centering humanity in the learning process.¹⁴⁷

Marissa Silverman, a pupil of Abrahams, unpacks this concept of love. She draws on scholarship in critical pedagogy and identifies three characteristics of dialogue that support its role in creating a more loving world. The first trait, humility, allows conductors and singers to see each other's perspectives, foster relationships built on understanding, and allows them to foster empathy among those who have not shared the same lived experiences.¹⁴⁸ The second trait is hope. Through dialogue, students and teachers can imagine a better world than the one they live in. Hope is also foundational in a conductor's ability to see singers' potential. Conversation invites participants in learning to answer the question, "What is now possible?"¹⁴⁹ This final trait is solidarity. Solidarity comes from the critical pedagogues' values of co-creation and empowerment in the learning process. When we lead our ensembles with humility, hope for a more empowering and inclusive musical landscape, and stand in solidarity with our singers, we are primed for a transformational musical journey.

Before dialogue begins, when the conductor is doing their interpersonal work, they must center on hope. Hope in themselves that their musicianship and teaching skills are effective

¹⁴⁶ Silverman, 68.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 69.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

enough to function in this new model of learning, but also that their art form can contribute to a greater good.¹⁵⁰ At the interpersonal level, there is a great deal of work to be done in examining systems of oppression in music-making, examining our own biases and privilege, and histories of harm. Without hope of another path forward, one could easily not make it past this point in the process. Hope is vital in overcoming critical pedagogy's critics who say that all it amounts to a pessimistic view of the world.¹⁵¹ In my own journey as a critical pedagogue, André de Quadros and Emilie Amrein's work has been vital in holding the duality of challenging my own contributions to harmful music cultures and finding hope in the choral arts as a force for positive change in our society.

In *Empowering Song*, de Quadros and Amrein call for a revolution in ensemble music-making. They do not shy away from addressing how conducted ensembles promote conformity rather than transformational autonomy.¹⁵² de Quadros is keen to acknowledge that despite challenging histories of exclusion, "choral music, in particular, may well be on the crest of a new wave, the 'new normal' as he puts it, where mission, purpose, vision, goals, repertoires, locations, geographies, and social dynamics are questioned, challenged, subverted, and dismantled." (de Quadros and Amrein, 29) These changes can and should begin with how we prepare our conductors and music educators to create the "new normal." However, it will first take the dedicated efforts of conductors and educators to challenge their training, invest in anti-oppressive work, and center hope to forge a new path forward.

¹⁵⁰ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," 25.

¹⁵¹ Hayes, 318–328; Kaufmann, 456–476; Knight and Pearl, 205.

¹⁵² de Quadros and Amrein, 23–30.

The concept of “musical solidarity” helped me understand how to reframe the conductor's role in an ensemble. Simon Hill expands on this idea in critical pedagogy work, and reorients the role of conductor from “dictator”¹⁵³ to facilitator:

Entering into musical solidarity with the singers does not mean abandoning interpretive authority, the art of programming, or directive rehearsals. Musical solidarity means that students should be provoked into thinking more deeply about these same issues and not simply told how to navigate them. Singers should be part of the process of making musical decisions, considering alternatives, and be given the opportunity to take ownership for a musical creation that would not otherwise exist without them.

It can feel challenging to disrupt the training that so firmly established our identity as a conductor. However, adopting principles of critical pedagogy, championing singers' autonomy in the choral rehearsal, and reconstructing power do not mean we give up our contributions to this beloved art form. Critical Pedagogy enables us to better serve our singers, build stronger ensembles, and create transformative musical experiences.

3.6: Reflection on Power

There was a singular moment in my career that made me rethink everything I was working towards as a conductor. I had it in my head that I wanted to be a professional conductor. I would travel the world, stand in front of an ensemble someone else prepared, lead them in performance with my one-of-a-kind perspective, and have a professional choral ensemble of people who showed up fully prepared. Still, without me at the helm, they could not perform the music successfully. I wish wholeheartedly that I was kidding about these aspirations. At that

¹⁵³ Here, the term “dictator” is referencing the opening of this chapter and considering the function of a conductor in the authoritarian model addressed earlier. This specific verbiage does not appear in Hill’s work, but moving from the authoritarian model to a facilitation model does.

point in my career, I was well aware of the narrative I was living out, called out at times, and still I clung to this vision of artistry as if I were the savior of music.

The single moment that shifted my perspective: I was in an audition and conducting one of the musical pillars of the choral art form. There were no singers; there was no rehearsing. It was only me, waving my arms and audiating this score. It went on for about an hour. At the end, after some coaching, I was offered this piece of praise: “You could be the Van Karajan of modern choral music.” At the moment, I was flattered by the idea that someone could hold my work in such high regard. About an hour passed, and that praise was still sitting with me. What started as relief turned to panic. What about the way that I just demonstrated my knowledge of that piece made this person connect me with an infamous tyrant? I had done what I was trained to: I was authoritative, decisive, and unwavering in my interpretation, and commanding in my presence. My humility was imperceivable.

Dramatics aside, from that moment on, I was committed to forging a new path for myself. It was not without difficulty that I reoriented myself. When I first began this research, it took about a year for my intellectualizing about critical pedagogy to translate into meaningful change in how I led a choral rehearsal. Then it took another year and a half before I was truly achieving the actual goals of critical pedagogy in practice. Interestingly enough, the authoritarian presence was the easiest to drop, but what I struggled to remove from my internal narrative was, “they can’t do it without me.” I was engaging in very performative humility. I presented myself as the caring, compassionate teacher, but inside, there remained that feeling that without me, there is no beauty. Again, I wish I were kidding. The more I practiced humility and kept the dialogue open with my students, the more I realized how often I was actually getting in their way. It was both deeply troubling and liberating to me how little they needed me. Once I got comfortable with

this, it opened my eyes to something far more beautiful than I had ever imagined possible. I felt transformed.

Understanding our power is not easy work. Especially when maintaining power is so integral to our understanding of success as conductors. The purpose of this is not to shame or belittle, but to address that, without naming it, we can't truly transform our rehearsal spaces. What changed most for me in doing this was that our performances went from beautiful to powerful. Hearing that a student felt proud of their performance meant more than the performance itself. A world where I work to stay open to a student transforming my own life is far more rewarding than living each moment worried that someone might challenge my authority and knock me off my metaphorical throne.

Chapter 4

Connecting Central Questions and Steps of Critical Pedagogy in Music

“Expansive listening requires coming into a relationship with an intentional posture of humility that recognizes the vastness of what we do not yet know about being human. This unknowing can be disconcerting and disorienting within a professional field of practice that values decisiveness, expertise, and authority. Perhaps the greatest lesson is for us to learn to take risks, compassionately, and to create open-ended activities that allow for deep listening as part of the journey of vulnerability.” - André de Quadros and Emilie Amrein, *Empowering Song: Music Education from the Margins*¹⁵⁴

4.1: “Who Am I?” Situating Ourselves in the Narrative

A vital tenet of critical pedagogy is the first of the central questions, “Who Am I?” This resembles the first principle of anti-oppressive practice, “critical reflection of self.”¹⁵⁵ The positionality work at the beginning of each process, as mentioned in previous chapters, is intentionally ambiguous.¹⁵⁶ There is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing values, cultural identity, and the experiences that shape our musical aesthetics. From research in critical pedagogy, three key areas of reflection can help conductors answer the question, “Who Am I?” in their anti-oppressive work: Positionality in Lived Experience, Positionality as a result of Musical Training, and Positionality in The Conductor’s Role in an Ensemble.

Positionality work is more than identifying the ways we represent or uphold inequitable power dynamics in our work. It can also be to celebrate and honor what we bring to artistic

¹⁵⁴ de Quadros and Amrein, 101.

¹⁵⁵ The Social Work Graduate; Abrahams, “Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy,” 62–67.

¹⁵⁶ Abrahams, “Musicing Paulo Freire: A Critical Pedagogy for Music Education,” 223–237; Medina, 48; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 257.

spaces. It is important to hold the duality of both naming who feels affirmed in our work and the ways our experiences have created biases. An example of what this has looked like in my own work is, as a nonbinary person, creating welcome spaces for LGBTQIA+ folks in the choral rehearsal comes more easily because my lived experience offers me that perspective.

Understanding my positionality means celebrating that work while also recognizing that I have work to do in other areas. An area of growth for me has been addressing the financial barriers to access in a choral ensemble. Naming this has helped me adapt how I measure attendance, recognizing that students commuting on unreliable public transportation may be late. Another example is considering that students facing barriers to affordable healthcare may need more time to recover after illness. Naming what you do not know about another person's experiences does not solve the problem. It does, however, situate yourself in a position of humility to enact change if access barriers are identified in spaces you hold power.¹⁵⁷

4.1.1: Positionality in Lived Experience

In *Empowering Song*, André de Quadros and Emilie Amrein reference the interpersonal positionality work as “situating oneself in the narrative.”¹⁵⁸ Framing this work in that way helps separate systemic power from agentive power. Systemic power is that which we are given in our role as a conductor, and agentive power is how we use that power in our work. Naming our lived experiences means understanding how our identity relates to the dominant hierarchical structures in society. We did not create these systems, but our goal is to ensure our actions do not perpetuate them. Common considerations when situating ourselves in a socio-cultural narrative

¹⁵⁷ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 142-143.

¹⁵⁸ de Quadros and Amrein, 68–85.

include: family-life/upbringing, race, ethnicity, religion, disability status, economic status, education, gender, sexuality, etc.¹⁵⁹ By naming these elements of our identity, we can begin to understand how our lived experiences map in structural systems in relation to our singers.¹⁶⁰ Being willing to acknowledge and challenge how you represent power hierarchies outside of your classroom can only create fruitful opportunities for you to reconstruct power dynamics within it.¹⁶¹

4.1.2: Positionality as a result of Musical Training

Once we have situated ourselves within a socio-cultural narrative, we must examine how musical training has shaped our views of musical aesthetics, educational strategies, and values in the music-making process. As has been discussed, the western choral ensemble historically operates on a rigid hierarchy that situates the conductor as the holder of knowledge.¹⁶² Additionally, most Western music schools teach through the perspective of Western European Art Music (WEAM).¹⁶³ While not inherently bad, this has created an aesthetic hierarchy that situates WEAM as the most desirable of musical traditions.¹⁶⁴ Out of this tradition, there has

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Sieck, *Teaching with Respect: Inclusive Pedagogy for Choral Directors* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2017), 16–24.

¹⁶⁰ de Quadros and Amrein, 68-85.

¹⁶¹ Jason D. Vodicka, "Critical and Culturally Sustaining Music Pedagogy." *Visions of Research in Music Education* 40, no. 11, (2020): 98.

¹⁶² Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy," 17-19; Silverman, 66; Hill, "Critical Pedagogy and the Choir," 9–10.

¹⁶³ Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega, "What Should the Music Education Profession Expect of Philosophy?" *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, Edited by Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 114.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

been the development of the “perfect sound.”¹⁶⁵ Conducting pedagogue James Jordan begins his conducting text, *Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting*, by addressing the plight of the “perfect sound” on the conductor. He goes as far as to say that, when unchecked, conductors envy a lack of this sound in their ensembles. The “bad sound” quickly morphs into the people in the room “being bad.”¹⁶⁶ From this observation, listening becomes one of the most essential functions of a conductor to reexamine.¹⁶⁷

Conductors work to conceive an ideal sound in their imagination and then, through directive rehearsals, instruct groups of people on how to make the sound they desire.¹⁶⁸ De Quadros and Amrein refer to William Cheng's work in this area, affirming Jordan's concerns that choral conductors are more concerned with sounding good than being good.¹⁶⁹ They offer another way of listening in this context, helping conductors reorient their ears from a “power over” mindset to a “power to” mindset.¹⁷⁰ They refer to it as “Expansive Listening.”¹⁷¹ Expansive listening challenges training that promotes an all-knowing, authoritative being and adopts a posture of humility. Later in this chapter, we will explore what expansive listening looks like in practice, but as conductors, we have to start by reexamining how we listen. When

¹⁶⁵ James Jordan, *Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting*, Second edition, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009), 12.

¹⁶⁶ Jordan, 13.

¹⁶⁷ de Quadros and Amrein, 23–24; Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 20.

¹⁶⁸ Hill, “Critical Pedagogy and the Choir,” 9.

¹⁶⁹ de Quadros and Amrein, 23. In reference to Cheng's work in W. Cheng, *Loving Music Till it Hurts* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁷⁰ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 484–485.

¹⁷¹ de Quadros and Amrein, 101.

we do, we open ourselves to the potential of a communal understanding of excellence where the singers and conductor alike get to co-create and determine the value of their music-making.¹⁷²

4.1.3: Positionality in The Conductor's Role in an Ensemble

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the most important components of power to address in our positionality work is “assumed power.” It does not need anyone to wield it to foster inequity.¹⁷³ It is systemic and placed upon those who step into the role of the conductor. The systemic oppression that is prevalent in the study of music is often not one that a conductor can reconstruct in the confines of their rehearsal spaces.¹⁷⁴ However, they are a representative figure of the system itself. Naming and addressing the structures of power within the institutions and organizations they operate in is the final step in addressing their positionality.

The kinds of questions that will likely arise at this step might include: What am I expected to do in my role in this institution; what about the singer/student experience is in my control to change; how do I engage with differing approaches to music education that singers may encounter outside of my classroom? As with the other components of positionality, these questions will have different answers for each conductor. Ultimately, one has to define which institutional factors within their control create access barriers within the ensemble. The task then becomes to use the assumed power to remove these barriers as they arise.¹⁷⁵ Additionally,

¹⁷² de Quadros and Amrein, 101.

¹⁷³ Fricker, 10–11.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph Michael Abramo and Cara Faith Bernard, “Barriers to Access and University Schools of Music: A Collective Case Study of Urban High School Students of Color and Their Teachers,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 226 (2020): 7–26.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

identifying the barriers outside of their control helps inform how to empower singers and help them achieve authorial agency in their artistic study.¹⁷⁶ One cannot control the teaching that happens in other classrooms, and beyond advocacy work, cannot change the institutional expectations of the singers. However, through dialogue in the rehearsal, the conductor can use their expertise to help singers become aware of these systems and help them navigate them outside of the ensemble space. Positionality work, paired with the humility work from Chapter 3 and the anti-oppressive work from Chapter 2, allows conductors to empower and transform singers' experiences in and outside of their rehearsals.¹⁷⁷

4.2: “Who Are We?”

Up to this point, we have addressed systems of care in music, systems of power in music, a methodological concept for restructuring power in education, and the interpersonal work that situates us with a posture of humility. These concepts are ever-evolving throughout the rehearsal process, but they are necessary for a strong foundation to create the “new normal” in the choral arts.¹⁷⁸ In the “Who Are We?” stage of critical pedagogy in music, we begin the part of the process that involves student-teacher interaction. Abrahams identifies the first two steps of critical pedagogy within the context of this central question: Step 1, Honoring their World, and Step 2, Sharing the Experience. He qualifies these two steps as “Engaging Musical Imagination.”¹⁷⁹ In the context of a performing ensemble, there is often a component unique to

¹⁷⁶ Bylica, 491.

¹⁷⁷ Táíwò, 71.

¹⁷⁸ de Quadros and Amrein, 23–30.

¹⁷⁹ Abrahams, “Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy,” 64–65.

this environment that calls for an additional step before “Honoring their World.” Typically, in a music ensemble, one or more kinds of pre-assessment take place before music learning begins: auditions, ensemble placements, and/or voicing. Here, the conductor needs to do “expansive listening”¹⁸⁰ by listening for potential rather than product.¹⁸¹ I refer to this step as “Entering into Discovery.”

4.2.1: Entering Into Discovery

The first time conductors engage with their singers is often in an audition, placement, and/or voicing scenario. These are also times when one can expect the singers in front of them to be in some state of dysregulation. As discussed in Chapter 2, being aware of how this appears and how it affects someone's ability to sing and regulate is important. It will be necessary to create an environment of “acceptable risk” where the conductor is in an ideal place to discover the voices of each of the singers.¹⁸² When I position myself in the discovery phase with singers, I return to Marissa Silverman’s work, “Critical Pedagogy as a Pedagogy of Love.” Specifically, I access her interpretation of the five principles of critical pedagogy (she added a sixth) in the context of her own teaching:

1. All learners possess potential.
2. We are all learners and teachers.
3. Personal experience is knowledge.
4. Learning showcases feeling, thinking, and doing.
5. Knowledge is power.

¹⁸⁰ de Quadros and Amrein, 101.

¹⁸¹ Silverman, 69; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 18.

¹⁸² K.B. Purvis, D. R. Cross, D. F. Dansereau, and S. R. Parris. “Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma.” *Child & Youth Services* 34, no. 4 (2013): 360–386.

6. Self-knowledge is empowering.¹⁸³

The first time you hear a person sing, you may immediately want to make a to-do list of problems that need to be fixed. Entering discovery means transitioning from “fix-it” to asking questions, “What are they telling me they know?” “What is important to them?” “What are they telling me they need?” Collecting this information reveals a lot about what they value musically and the skills they have developed and invested time in.¹⁸⁴ These tools become vital when you begin to rehearse because they are how you can “honor their world.” All other information gathered in this moment can be compiled on a list that will be saved for when the students work to identify their “need to knows.”¹⁸⁵

4.2.2: Honoring their World

Honoring their world, in the context of Abraham's works, refers to the initial moments of learning in a music classroom. Here, the teacher facilitates activities where the students identify what they do know and what they do not yet know.¹⁸⁶ In Freire's work, he called this “conscientization.”¹⁸⁷ In the original context of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, this is how the students develop the critical consciousness that they are oppressed.¹⁸⁸ For the purpose of the choral rehearsal, the process of “conscientization” becomes their point of entry for problem-

¹⁸³ Silverman, 63.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas-Durrell, 168–169.

¹⁸⁵ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 5–6; Hill, “Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community,” 116.

¹⁸⁶ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

¹⁸⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 104-124.

¹⁸⁸ Hill, “Critical Pedagogy and the Choir,” 7.

solving musical issues. It will return in steps seven and eight when they assess whether or not learning and transformation have occurred.¹⁸⁹ Honoring their world starts with honoring what they bring to the learning.¹⁹⁰ It helps them identify within themselves which knowledge to tap into and how their strengths play into the learning process. In the context of the choral rehearsal, “honoring their world” happens when beginning a new piece of music or introducing a new musical idea. Abrahams refers to this as “the teacher presents a need to know.” (Abrahams, 6) It may be challenging at first for singers to live into their identified strengths, especially if they are coming from a more hierarchical rehearsal environment. There may be some initial guidance from the teacher to help them navigate their first experience having this kind of agency in a choir rehearsal.¹⁹¹ Guiding in affirmation-based reflection will become vital in maintaining the singer's psychological safety, and that will help maintain a willingness to engage in this new learning style.¹⁹²

4.2.3: Sharing the Experience

Sharing the experience is an intentional moment of dialogue where the singers and conductor discuss their identified strengths and areas of growth, or, as Abrahams puts it, the

¹⁸⁹ Vodicka, "Critical and Culturally Sustaining Music Pedagogy," 98.

¹⁹⁰ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 232.

¹⁹¹ David K. Sherman, Mohini Lokhande, T. Müller, and Geoffrey L. Cohen, “Self-Affirmation Interventions,” in *Handbook of Wise Interventions: How Social Psychology Can Help People Change*, Edited by Gregory M. Walton and Alia J. Crum (New York: Guilford Press, 2021), 63–99.

¹⁹² Geoffrey L. Cohen and David K. Sherman. “The Psychology of Change: Self-Affirmation and Social Psychological Intervention,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 65 (2014): 333–71. Jordan also shares in *Evoking Sound* that the best way to contradict the conductors envy of the “perfect sound” is by functioning as an “Affirming Soul.” He developed this idea based on the teachings of Weston Noble. Jordan, 14.

“need to knows.”¹⁹³ This dialogue can take the form of intention-setting for the music learning process, or could include general feelings about the music after first exposure, among other possible avenues. At the core of the “need to know” dialogue is a shared understanding of why learning that skill is valuable to the singers and the conductor. Knowing this information at the outset will be important when returning to assess for transformation in step seven. In Chapter Five, we will discuss specific dialogue strategies for this step. In my experience, especially when it comes to a new singer, giving them space to reflect and step into their agency in the learning process can provoke some fear and trepidation. This is another time when, as the conductor, you can use your assumed power to reaffirm what they are capable of and enter into another period of discovery. Learning why they may or may not believe they are capable of achieving the goals they set together is valuable in this process.¹⁹⁴ Here, Nel Noddings’ four stages of Moral Development can guide how to navigate this environment with a singer.

Noddings identified the following four stages of moral development:

1. Modeling
2. Dialogue
3. Practice
4. Confirmation¹⁹⁵

When you first enter dialogue around musical skills and goal-setting, modeling affirmation and constructive critical self-reflection for the singers is crucial. This can take the form of how you

¹⁹³ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

¹⁹⁴ Ryan John reflects on how Frank Abrahams catalysed his critical pedagogy work in order to advocate for his students and the most marginalized in the American music education system. While this work does not specifically address advocating for the needs of our students in hierarchical systems outside of the music rehearsal, it can be important to consider this work alongside the pedagogical in order to more holistically affirm a musician's potential. Addressing what makes them feel small outside of the classroom may be what it takes for them to step into their agentive authority in the classroom. John, 16–23.

¹⁹⁵ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), 21–27.

talk about yourself and your conducting in a rehearsal.¹⁹⁶ This can also be modeled in how you talk to students one-on-one or how you address the ensemble. Dialogue leaves space to learn about where people are coming from. It helps the conductor offer feedback on what to affirm and how to approach constructive criticism, whether to ourselves or in a collaborative environment. Then, the singers need consistent practice in offering different kinds of feedback and engaging in collaborative work before they can feel successful navigating it on their own. The final stage is confirmation. Here, the singers will receive from either the conductor, or better yet, they can identify for themselves, confirmation that they have grown in their ability to contribute positively to the collaborative learning environment.¹⁹⁷

4.3: “Who May They Become?”

The third question, “Who May They Become?”, taps into many of the same themes as the previous question. It is deeply rooted in a singer's potential and their ability to make meaning of and find autonomy in the music learning process. Question two centers on relationship work, trust building, and establishing community. In contrast, question three outlines the steps of the music learning process. Here, students begin applying their musical knowledge to the rehearsal and engage in problem-solving strategies to address the identified areas for growth. “Who May They Become?” contains steps three, four, and five in the critical pedagogy in music process: Connecting their World to the Concept, Dialogueing Together, and Practicing the Concept. Abrahams refers to the work as “Engaging Musical Intellect.”¹⁹⁸ In a rehearsal sequence, it is

¹⁹⁶ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 216.

¹⁹⁷ Noddings, 25.

¹⁹⁸ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

important to note that applying these steps will not always be linear. Once a conductor enters these next three steps, they will likely occur cyclically for a period of time before moving on to steps six through eight. This process may involve developing multiple skills. Repeating steps three through five will be necessary until you have achieved the technical goals you are working towards, before moving on to step six.

4.3.1: Connecting their World to the Concept

In Abraham's work, this step helps bring the students' knowledge from their lived experiences into the classroom. The goal is to create the “bridges to new knowledge” between what they know and the “need to know” they identified in steps one and two.¹⁹⁹ That could look like knowing what music they listen to in their free time and drawing a connection between that and the repertoire, or it could be relating past singing experiences with new music. If you have worked with the singers before, taking some time to draw connections between previous musical experiences and your new repertoire is key.²⁰⁰ In Chapter Five, we will discuss this in more detail, but in a typical rehearsal sequence, this step is where vocal pedagogy work takes place. A part of the singer's lived experience is a connection to their body and their understanding of their vocal mechanism. Investing in vocal pedagogy work as it relates to the “need to know” is another way to conceptualize this step in practice. Naming sensations and experiences of singing

¹⁹⁹ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 14.

²⁰⁰ Here, we are referring to Abrahams drawing a connection to research that demonstrates a lack of critical thinking leads to an inability to draw connection between old and new learning. Therefore, in the case of performing, if the singers don't start by engaging in a critical thinking process where they are drawing connections between learned and new repertoire the work from the previous rehearsal cycle won't be applied to the new music. They teacher would then need to offer directive rehearsals and do some “education banking” drawing the connection for the singers. Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 13-30; Vodicka, “The Impact of Critical Pedagogy on a High School Choir.”

as the jumping-off point to explore new vocal techniques will be a common theme in the pedagogical strategies for steps three, four, and five.

4.3.2: Dialoguing Together

In the classroom setting, this step looks like the teacher presenting information relevant to the “need to know.” The students, then, use those tools to solve “the problem” together.²⁰¹ In a rehearsal setting, this could look like the conductor introducing a new vocal technique or pedagogical strategy to achieve a specific musical goal. Then the singers figure out how to apply it to the music. The ultimate goal of this step is for students and teachers to co-create a path forward that sets up the next step, “practicing the concept.” The singers and conductor identify the plan to solve the musical problems in real time.

4.3.3: Practicing the Concept

Step five is likely the one that will feel the easiest to tap into for a conductor with Western music training. The ensemble and conductor work through the musical section or piece with the strategies they have identified in the previous steps. This is a step that will feel familiar, which means it is also the one where it will be easiest to fall back into “education banking” habits. The traditional rehearsal model involves a lot of practice and a lot of conductor feedback.²⁰² One of the most important components of this step is to continue opening up dialogue. In Chapter Five, many of the pedagogical strategies we will examine will combine

²⁰¹ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

²⁰² Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 14-15.

steps four and five. The components of dialogue and practice will alternate, and the singing will occur in concert with conversation.²⁰³

4.4: “Who We Might Become Together?”

The final question of critical pedagogy consists of three steps: connecting word to world, assessing transformation, and acknowledging transformation. Abrahams refers to steps six and seven as “Engaging Musical Creativity,” and they are distinguished from the final step, “Engaging Music Celebration through Performance.”²⁰⁴ Central to each of these is the ability of the conductor and singers to identify and name two vital goals of this work. One, that the information learned is transferable; that the skills developed over the course of the rehearsal cycle can be applied to new knowledge in the future.²⁰⁵ Two, that both the singers and the conductor were transformed in the process.²⁰⁶ Transformation, in its simplest form, means that an individual can identify that they are better off for having engaged in that collaborative learning.

4.4.1: Connecting Word to World

Step seven, “connecting word to world,” is a step that, at its core, answers the question of “why?” Ideally, some of the “why?” is addressed in step two before the singers and conductor embark on the process of mounting a performance. For this question to be relevant to critical

²⁰³ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 22–23.

²⁰⁴ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators,” 6.

²⁰⁵ Here, is where we see a return to Freire’s concept of “conscientization,” and students and teachers ability to name what they now know. The learned content is identifiable and can be applied to new learning. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 104–124; Abrahams, “Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy,” 63.

²⁰⁶ Abrahams, “Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy,” 62.

pedagogy, it must address how something about the music-making process will affect the singers' and conductors' experiences outside the classroom.²⁰⁷ Central to this step is the key principle that education is empowering.²⁰⁸ Ultimately, from this process, those participating in the learning should be able to go out into the world with new tools, perspectives, or purposes that they feel they can employ in their own lives.²⁰⁹ Empowerment will look different for each individual, and assessing empowerment can only come from consistent dialogue throughout the broader critical pedagogy process.²¹⁰

4.4.2: Assessing and Acknowledging Transformation

When I first encountered steps seven and eight, I thought that for ensemble music, they should be swapped. I had it in my mind that transformation could only occur after a performance. The more I did this work, the more I realized that I was holding onto a belief system that prioritized “sounding good” over “being good.”²¹¹ The purpose of transformation is not the final product, but rather what one gains through the learning process. A key component of this step is that both singer and conductor can identify the ways transformation occurred.²¹² The conductor needs to be able to name what they learned from their singers and how their own musicianship

²⁰⁷ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

²⁰⁸ John, 17.

²⁰⁹ Vodicka, "Critical and Culturally Sustaining Music Pedagogy," 98.

²¹⁰ Vodicka, Jason. "Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal." Edited by Brian J. Winnie. *The Choral Conductor's Companion: 100 Rehearsal Techniques, Imaginative Ideas, Quotes, and Facts*, Edited by Brian J. Winnie, (Chicago: GIA Publication, 2015). 217.

²¹¹ Here, I am referring back to the positionality work of developing expansive listen as it is described in *Empowering Song*. de Quadros and Amrein, 23. In reference to Cheng.

²¹² John, 17.

developed throughout the rehearsals.²¹³ Identifying transformation opens up performance to being a celebration of learning rather than to an assessment of musical ability.

The final step of the critical pedagogy process connects the themes of love, humility, and empowerment. Acknowledging transformation is, “[singers] and their [conductor] celebrate the new learning through [performance].” (Abrahams, 6) From a posture of humility and a commitment to valuing and empowering each individual in the room, the performance of music can feel celebratory.²¹⁴ When the purpose of learning becomes discovery, and performance becomes sharing what we know, the need for perfection and the fears of failure can begin to dissipate. Morso, as we repeat this process, we can start to build a community of trust and welcome that can lead to a fundamental shift in who feels welcome in a choral ensemble.²¹⁵

4.5: Framing Student Empowerment in the Choral Rehearsal

In Abraham's construction of central questions and steps for critical pedagogy in music, he adds a component for framing the process. Throughout his instructional design, there are markers of empowerment. He defines four areas of empowerment in the process: Engaging Musical Imagination, containing steps one and two; Engaging Musical Intellect, containing steps three through five; Engaging Musical Creativity, containing steps six and seven; and Engaging Musical Celebration Through Performance, containing step eight.²¹⁶ When Abrahams constructed this framework, he identified these areas of empowerment to address and affirm

²¹³ Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 242.

²¹⁴ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 25.

²¹⁵ Thomas–Durrell, 171.

²¹⁶ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators,” 5.

different learning styles as defined by Bernice McCarthy.²¹⁷ Engaging musical imagination is meant for students who learn best through dialogue-based learning; engaging musical intellect is meant for learners who thrive in analytical learning environments; engaging musical creativity is meant for students who learn best by doing or creating; and engaging musical celebration is meant for learners who grow through performing.²¹⁸ The purpose was to allow students to engage in their preferred learning modality for at least a quarter of the process.²¹⁹ Abrahams notes that his instructional design can and should be adapted to meet the needs of different learning methods.²²⁰ For this reason, the empowerment goals will be reframed within a rehearsal context. Understanding what empowerment can look like in the choral rehearsal is vital for identifying pedagogical strategies to achieve these goals.

4.5.1: Engaging Musical Imagination

For the initial steps in Abrahams' critical pedagogy instructional design, the goal is to engage dialogical learners while inviting the lived experience into the classroom.²²¹ Not much about this step will change in a choral rehearsal. These tools will empower the ensemble to achieve "conscientization." They will identify what they already know from their lived experience, and use that to build a bridge to new musical ideas.²²² Additionally, they will identify

²¹⁷ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 5.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Abrahams, "The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review," 7.

²²⁰ Abrahams, "Transforming Classroom Music Instruction with Ideas from Critical Pedagogy," 64.

²²¹ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 5.

²²² Ibid.

the “problem” that needs solving.²²³ In this case, it is not so much a problem as the technical skills or musical devices that need to be learned to bring the music to life in performance.

For example, the conductor hands out a new piece of music. The singers look through the score, read the liner notes (which may include information about the composer), and listen to some recordings of performances. The singers discuss both what tools they have to perform the music and what in the music is unfamiliar. The singers note that, through solfege, they can sing the pitches with little difficulty, but that the rhythm and language are unfamiliar to them. From here, the conductor can create lessons that affirm their strengths, apply them to the music, and dive into the “need to know.” In this case, strategies for breaking down the unfamiliar rhythms and providing tools for learning the language.²²⁴ We will continue to explore this example, not as an all-encompassing model for critical pedagogy in the choral rehearsal, but as one of many ways this process can take shape.

4.5.2: Engaging Musical Intellect

Engaging musical intellect is meant for analytical learners.²²⁵ This is one of the more complex forms of empowerment to conceptualize in a choral rehearsal. In its original form, a teacher might offer a traditional lecture on the “need to know” and present the information students will use to solve a problem. For pedagogical strategies that engage musical intellect, there are a few key components to look for. First, the conductor introduces the tool or technique for working through a new musical concept. Then, they facilitate an activity in which the singers

²²³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 104–124.

²²⁴ Hill, “Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community,” 161–168.

²²⁵ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators,” 5.

apply the new knowledge and work through the musical concept independently. As discussed in Chapter Four, rather than separating connecting their world to the classroom, dialogue, and practice, the pedagogical strategies examined will include all three steps cyclically as the singers work through musical problems.

If we continue with the previous example, the conductor might introduce analytical tools to break down the piece's rhythms and relate them to modern musical examples that feel more familiar to the singers. For the language component, they could collaborate with a culture bearer to record the text for the singers to use to work through the language on their own. From here, the conductor facilitates an activity in which singers apply the tools to their own technique, practice the skills, and dialogue together about successes and struggles. This could take place in a sectional environment or through partner work before bringing it all together in a full ensemble setting.²²⁶

4.5.3: Engaging Musical Creativity

Engaging musical creativity is meant for those who learn by doing.²²⁷ At this point, there has already been substantial experiential learning. In the case of the choral ensemble, this can mean applying the strengths identified in steps one and two, along with the skills developed in steps three through five, to the music they will perform. This can involve the singers preparing the music in a full ensemble setting, problem-solving along the way, and naming how their journey has impacted their growth as musicians. It will be key to keep the dialogue open as the singers apply their knowledge to the music, rather than creating an environment where the

²²⁶ Hill, "Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community," 161–168.

²²⁷ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 5.

conductor simply reminds them of what they know. A critical component of “assessing for transformation” will be the singer’s ability to name how they applied their learning to the music.²²⁸

Returning to our previous example a final time, the singers have been working on their technique and are ready to dive into the music. The conductor guides the singers through sections of the music and invites conversation about the strategies they are using. The singers pair their strengths with solfege and their rhythmic work to identify incorrect pitches and rhythms. Afterward, they might speak together through rhythm and text, continuing to correct the rhythm and coach the diction. Then they put it all together. Afterwards, the singers can address how they have grown and what they have learned along the way.²²⁹

This very simplified, somewhat reductive example of how singer empowerment unfolds throughout a rehearsal cycle is only one way to use Abrahams’ instructional design to bring critical pedagogy into the choral ensemble. In this case, we only examined its use for the technical components of music. A conductor could repeat this process, incorporating discussion of musical interpretation or the cultural significance of a piece. In this case, the singers have the technical skills to perform the music correctly. Still, they may need to develop skills in interpreting dynamic, vocal timbre, and stylistic devices, to name a few. They might also discuss how to present the piece to their audience if it comes from a culture they are less familiar with. They could craft program notes, integrate other cultural components into their performance, and continue partnering with culture bearers to devise an authentic celebratory performance of the

²²⁸ Heather Battaly, *Virtue and Vice: Moral and Epistemic* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 99; Coppola, *Egotism, Elitism, and the Ethics of Musical Humility*, 177.

²²⁹ Hill, “Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community,” 161–168.

piece.²³⁰ The pedagogical strategies explored in Chapter Five will expand on these possibilities for bringing critical pedagogy into the choral rehearsal. The options are endless and adaptable, but what remains true with each strategy is that the singers maintain their agency and feel empowered by what they know and their identified potential. Ultimately, they get to create something that would not have been possible without them, and name their impact and growth in the music-making process.²³¹

4.6: Reflection on Empowerment

Measuring empowerment in the choral rehearsal has frequently evaded me. I am investing in a long-term goal that will not be clear until my singers are out in the world, reflecting on whether I offered them tools to improve their music-making experiences outside my rehearsal space. And, while this is definitely one way to consider empowerment in the context of a choral ensemble, empowerment can be much less elusive. Reframing empowerment in the present has helped me do this work. Finding music that meets the needs of my singers, not just from a musical perspective, but a personal one. Finding the stories my ensembles want to tell makes them feel like our experience of making music together has empowered them to find a new way to use their voice.

At the beginning and end of each quarter, singers complete a “welcome” and an “exit” form for me to collect data that does not appear in the standard professor review feedback offered by most colleges. In these, I like to collect information about why people want to sing, why they came to choir to do so, what they are taking away from their experiences, and, more

²³⁰ Hill, “Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community,” 161–168.

²³¹ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 20; Apfelstadt, 73–82.

importantly, what they want to see in their choral experiences going forward. Without this data, I would not be able to identify what stories they want to tell, how they want to use their voices, and what art will feel transformative to them. Understanding pedagogical methodology and instructional design is valuable, but breaking down the complexities of restructuring power in the choral ensemble can start with asking more questions. Investing in small moments of empowerment is a great springboard for enacting meaningful change that can create the kind of empowerment outside of rehearsal for your singers.

Chapter 5

Pedagogical Application of Critical Pedagogy in Choral Music

“When all participants possess the same power, when their feelings have meaning, when their different ways of knowing and being are taken into account, then a new classroom emerges, new ways of understanding can emerge and grow because trust has been established” - Latasha Thomas-Durell²³²

5.1: Restructuring Power and Transferable Knowledge

The methodology that Freire pioneered and the instructional design created by Abrahams are not meant to serve as a monolithic set of teaching tools.²³³ Rather, they serve as guiding principles or frameworks for applying critical pedagogy in a learning environment. The goal of this chapter is to model assessing existing rehearsal practices for their alignment with the goals of critical pedagogy. As discussed throughout previous chapters and the literature, conductors are not being trained with the tools to reexamine power dynamics in their rehearsals.²³⁴ They are being trained to perpetuate them.²³⁵ These pedagogical strategies can help empower conductors with the tools to begin doing the reconstructive work in their rehearsals. Abrahams models this in “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” by demonstrating different teaching strategies that employ this framework in practice.²³⁶

²³² Thomas–Durrell, 168–178. In reference to: Hendricks, *Compassionate Music Teaching*; Hendricks, “Authentic Connection in Music Education,” 237–253.

²³³ Giroux, “Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life,” 114; Abrahams, “Musicing Paulo Freire: A Critical Pedagogy for Music Education,” 227.

²³⁴ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 13–20.

²³⁵ Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucía Frega, 28; de Quadros and Amrein, 23.

²³⁶ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 23–24.

In Simon Hill's work on critical pedagogy, community, and the collegiate choral ensemble, he measured the application of power restructuring strategies in college choirs using the following criteria:

- Inviting students to share repertoire knowledge in rehearsals
- Creating space for dialogue/reflection about a piece's text
- Facilitate ensemble discussion about the repertoire during rehearsal time
- Taking student repertoire suggestions into consideration when programming
- Creating opportunities for collaborative ensemble programming
- Allowing students to create program notes and engage with the audience during a performance
- Creating opportunities for peer teaching
- Facilitating student-led rehearsals
- Allowing students to figure out notes and rhythms on their own
- Dialoguing in rehearsal about technical and musical concerns
- Discussing the role of the singer and conductor in each piece, rehearsal, and performance
- Regularly creating space for reflecting on rehearsals and performances.
- Creating opportunities for off-campus performance in partnership with community members
- Collaborating with students on bringing music into their communities outside of campus.
- Facilitating opportunities for students to do community outreach through your music program²³⁷

Here, Hill outlines some ideas of how critical pedagogy can show up in the choral ensemble.

These, in combination with the steps of critical pedagogy, serve as the foundation for exploring the rehearsal strategies in this chapter. All of the tools being explored come from conductors who have found ways to reconstruct power in their ensembles and have prioritized making learning in a rehearsal setting transferable and empowering. The following helps singers to understand themselves, their voices, their bodies, and their musical perspectives quickly, effectively, and playfully. These tools will help singers feel more agency and develop a shared vernacular between the conductor and the singer, leading to transformative rehearsals and performances.

²³⁷ Hill, "Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community," 161–168.

5.2: Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal

Central to all of critical pedagogy work is open and ongoing dialogue between the teacher and the students. Steps two, five, and seven, in Abrahams' Instructional Design, serve as intentional moments of dialogue. In "Sharing the Experience," the singers and conductor set intentions, gain awareness and appreciation for music, establish goals, and discover why they are embarking on a musical journey with their ensemble. In "Dialogue together," the singers are actively problem-solving, often in a way that pairs with practice. In "Assessing Transformation," the singers and conductor reflect on how they have grown, what they've learned, and live into why they make music together.²³⁸ The following pedagogical strategies offer successful examples of inviting and facilitating balanced and efficient dialogue in rehearsals that can help conductors achieve the goals of steps two, five, and seven.

Jason Vodicka, a pupil of Abrahams, offers a few ideas to bring dialogue into the rehearsal. He models these on practices chamber musicians employ because they operate entirely in a collaborative, dialogue-based environment.²³⁹ He offers suggestions that would be beneficial to use at any of the three dialogue steps in Abrahams' Instruction Design. Discussion tools one through four have been adapted for application to steps two and seven. The final three are dialogue tools that would work for step five.

²³⁸ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

²³⁹ Vodicka, "Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal," 217.

Discussion Tool:	Example for Application:
1. Talk to the person beside you	Work with a partner to identify what looks familiar or possible in a new piece of music. Read the composer's notes, the text, and listen to a recording. Talk through what tools you already have to bring the piece to life. At either the beginning or end of the rehearsal cycle, the singers could identify the meaning and relevance of the piece in a program. ²⁴⁰ Abrahams offers a version of this for problem-solving dialogue. ²⁴¹
2. Was I Right?	Have singers look over a new piece of music and identify what will be challenging. Sing through the piece and discuss afterwards where they correct. Use this to set intentions around rehearsal goals. This could also be a general reflection on the rehearsal process as a whole. “Were the intentions set at the beginning what we needed to prepare this music?” ²⁴²
3. Journals	Either in paper or electronic form, singers can respond to reflection questions about new music or music they are about to perform. They can use this space to collect research to bring into rehearsals. These can be great when they are in a form that allows a conductor to respond and start a one-on-one dialogue with the singers. ²⁴³

²⁴⁰ This is one of the strategies that has been adapted from Vodicka’s original work. Vodicka, “Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal,” 218.

²⁴¹ Abrahams’ version of a partner work activity involves creating two concentric circles. The pairing are created with one person from the inner circle and one person for the outer circle. They review the music and identify challenges and work through possible solutions together. They offer these to the conductor and the full group. Alongside the conductor they strategize how they can implement the solutions offered and they apply them to the music. They try out their ideas and sing through the section or piece they are working on. Then there is time to reflect and identify what worked and what didn’t. Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 24.

²⁴² This is one of the strategies that has been adapted from Vodicka’s original work. Vodicka, “Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal,” 218.

²⁴³ Ibid.

4. Repertoire Committee	Groups of students can be assigned guidelines for programming and collect and submit repertoire selections for the choir to select. This could happen either at the beginning of a new rehearsal cycle or at the end of one, depending on when it makes the most logistical sense to be picking new music. ²⁴⁴
5. A, B, or C?	Attempt a music idea in three different ways. Either with the conductor demonstrating or the choir trying them in a musical phrase. Poll which one the singers liked best, have them discuss and justify their decision as it relates to music, and establish a group consensus. ²⁴⁵
6. Take a Stand	Identify a music skill, an important phrase, or a textural component of the music, and have the singers stand whenever they encounter it in their part. They will be invited to engage in a nonverbal musical dialogue with other members of the section. ²⁴⁶
7. Sectional Conductors	Nominate conductors to lead a sectional. Identify a small section of the pieces, and have them use gesture to communicate musical ideas or goals within their section, while the entire group runs through the section together. Afterwards, invite conversation about what was effective and what changed in the music. ²⁴⁷

Figure 5.1 Vodicka’s Tools for Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal

From these seven dialogue tools, singers can employ eleven of the fifteen ways Hill measures critical pedagogy’s application in the choral arts during the choral rehearsal. Journaling is also an

²⁴⁴ Vodicka, “Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal,” 218.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid; This also resembles a game from Abrahams in Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy called, “That’s Me.” Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 24.

²⁴⁷ Vodicka, “Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal,” 218.

effective way to open up one-on-one dialogue between the conductor and the singer. Sharon Paul offers options for bringing journaling into the choral ensemble in her book, *Art & Science in the Choral Rehearsal*. In the chapter, “The Write Choice,” she developed a series of writing prompts to open up dialogue at different points in the rehearsal process. These are great tools to use when time doesn’t allow for large or small-group discussion during the rehearsal.

The first few options are meant for writing at the beginning of class. Here, the goal is predictive work that prepares the singers for the kind of critical thinking they will encounter throughout the rehearsal.²⁴⁸ If the warm-up time prepares the voice for singing, these writing prompts prime the mind for the thinking work. She offers three examples of this kind of predictive thought work:

- In the last four pages of [x piece], the story resolves unhappily. Do you think [it] will stay in the same key?
- In what way will your personal musical contributions make a positive impact during today’s rehearsal?
- What kind of progress will we accomplish on the [x piece] today?²⁴⁹

Aside from their benefits for engaging in critical thinking, some of these are also effective tools for fostering positive self-affirmation in the choral rehearsal. Paul also uses this time to connect current learning with past learning. The opening prompts can be used to answer questions from a previous rehearsal. Here, students are being asked to draw a connection between their learning. These prompts serve as a great tool for measuring knowledge transfer within a larger rehearsal process.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Paul, 158.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

Paul's examples of mid-rehearsal writing are meant to redirect or refocus during a rehearsal. She identifies three kinds of mid-rehearsal writing: anonymous reflections about the music, meta-cognition exercises, and the use of a "T chart." The purpose of the anonymous reflection is to engage with the social-emotional side of the musical experience. Here, students are offered a specific prompt about a component of the music that they need to make meaning of for themselves. They can submit their answers anonymously, and then these reflections can be shared in the choral rehearsal to reframe or re-energize.²⁵¹ It is a very effective tool to center other ideas about musical intention that don't come from the conductor. Similar to "beginning of the class writing," meta-cognition writing is meant to invite singers into spaces where they are thinking about their thinking. Paul uses these prompts to connect the work they may have done on a previous piece to new music or identify skills from a previous rehearsal that the singers will want to use in their current rehearsal.²⁵² The "T chart" exercise involves students listening to a piece of music and responding to it. In the left column, they reflect on what strengths they can bring to that piece, and in the right column, they identify what elements still need work.²⁵³

The goals of Paul's end-of-rehearsal writing are to 1) reinforce and encourage the retention of new learning that occurred during that rehearsal and 2) prepare for new learning in later rehearsals.²⁵⁴ Here is another moment when the conductor can use dialogue to gauge the transfer of musical skills. She refers to these as "exit cards."²⁵⁵ They are quick electronic or

²⁵¹ Paul, 159-160.

²⁵² Ibid., 160-161.

²⁵³ Ibid., 161.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 162.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 161.

physical responses to a prompt that the conductor can collect and use to measure singer growth and set intentions for upcoming rehearsals.²⁵⁶

Some examples of exit card prompts include:

- What was your favorite part of rehearsal today?
- If you could change one thing about today's rehearsal, what would it be?
- What would you like me to know about you?
- Change the end of the story in one of our songs and describe the impact on the character or plotline involved. Might this change the musical expression?
- What pop song might be a good pairing with one of our [x] songs?
- What was the muddiest point made in rehearsal today that you would like clarified?²⁵⁷

Another opportunity to invite dialogue into the choral ensemble is through collaborative programming. Janet Galván has created tools to facilitate conversations about co-created programs with choristers. She outlines four different ways conductors and singers can collaborate on programming. The first idea involves programming a concert with a theme, but leaving one spot blank. Here, the conductor sets guidelines for which musical characteristics would work well for that spot in the program, shares music resources, maybe includes a rubric for music selection, and asks singers to research ideas. The singers present their repertoire ideas, discuss whether they would be a good fit as a group, and then elect an option to complete the program. Her second idea is to collect student suggestions. When singers ask, "Have you heard this piece?" or identify a song they performed that they loved, record these, and when you can, integrate them into your programs. A third option can be explored if students attend conference or festival performances. Have them listen for something they think the choir would like to sing and collect their ideas. And the final suggestion is to show an unfinished program. Have more pieces than you need, share what you are considering, and have those students listen through and

²⁵⁶ Paul, 161-162.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 162.

offer their feedback.²⁵⁸ In Galván, Paul, and Vodicka's examples of conductors facilitating dialogue in the ensemble, they demonstrate how to empower agency in their singers through their choir experiences and create opportunities for the transfer of musical learning. All of these dialogue strategies can also be used in conjunction with the pedagogical tools described later in this chapter to keep dialogue open during praxis-based activities.

5.4: Developing a Shared Vernacular for Musical Expression in the Choral Rehearsal

Beyond dialogue, bringing students' lived experiences into the classroom is another core tenet of critical pedagogy.²⁵⁹ In Abrahams' instructional design, steps one, three, and six serve as opportunities for students to bring what they know into the learning environment.²⁶⁰ As in Freire's work, learning in a choral rehearsal can be literacy-based. Developing a shared musical vernacular is key to creating a point of entry for singers to bring their lived experiences into the choir rehearsal. Giselle Wyers develops this shared vernacular using the work of Rudolf Laban. Laban was a 20th-century choreographer who developed a system for notating and describing all human movements. Laban developed a language of expressivity that serves well as a highly accessible tool in the choral rehearsal. One of the ways Laban categorizes movement is through eight efforts that make up what he calls the "action drive." These eight efforts are qualified based on their weight, time, and space.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Janet Galván, "Involving Students in Repertoire Selection," *The Choral Conductor's Companion: 100 Rehearsal Techniques, Imaginative Ideas, Quotes, and Facts*, Edited by Brian J. Winnie, (Chicago: GIA Publication, 2015), 78–79.

²⁵⁹ Vodicka, "Critical and Culturally Sustaining Music Pedagogy," 98.

²⁶⁰ Abrahams, "Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators," 6.

²⁶¹ Giselle Wyers, "Incorporating Laban Actions in the Rehearsal," in *Music for Conducting Study: A Companion to "Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting"* (Chicago: GIA Publication, 215), 168–169.

These are excellent tools for adopting critical pedagogy in choral rehearsals because they can describe all human movements, not just those related to music.²⁶² Wyers effectively introduces this concept in her chapter, “Incorporating Laban Actions in the Rehearsal,” in James Jordan’s text, *Music for Conducting Study*. Having students explore the gestures with a conductor in rehearsal helps them develop a critical consciousness of a conductor’s gesture.²⁶³ Additionally, Wyers describes how she has her conducting students create an “effort bank,” in which they must identify how Laban’s actions are reflected in movement from their daily lives. For example:

Action Effort	Effort Elements	“Effort Bank” Examples
Float	Sustained, light, and indirect	Playing with a sparkler
Glide	Sustained, light, direct	Smoothing a piece of paper
Press	Sustained, strong, direct	Operating a bike tire pump
Wring	Sustained, strong, indirect	Tightening a heavy screw
Dab	Quick, light, direct	Pressing a button
Flick	Quick, light, indirect	Swatting hair off your face
Slash	Quick, strong, indirect	Tearing a baguette in half
Punch	Quick, strong, direct	Knocking loudly on a door

Figure 5.2 Laban Efforts Bank

By doing this exercise with singers, they can begin to think critically about expressivity in their music-making. They can use Laban to dissect a musical phrase and discern how the efforts change as a phrase builds and decays; determine how to interpret an articulation marking;

²⁶² Wyers, 168.

²⁶³ Ibid., 170.

address vocal timbre in warm-ups; or determine various kinds of onsets and offsets.²⁶⁴ With this tool, students can examine a piece of music, begin thinking critically about their musicality, and no longer need to rely solely on the conductor to make musical decisions. They develop a vernacular to describe gesture in relation to their singing.²⁶⁵ Using Laban would also be a useful tool to explore before the “section conductor” exercise described earlier in Vodicka’s work. Ultimately, singers can be more flexible with the meaning of gestures, allowing choral performance to be more co-created and less prescriptive.²⁶⁶

5.4: Practice as Play in the Choral Rehearsal

Modes of play are very effective for inviting collaboration and exploration into the choral rehearsal. Strategies for integrating play allow conductors to facilitate the cyclical effect of steps three through five in Abrahams’ Instructional Design. In all three of the following examples of play in the choir, the singers are tapping into their skills, engaging in dialogue about musical and vocal development, and practicing the skills they are exploring. They can all be used interchangeably to address whatever skill you are working on and to create structured activities for students to solve problems independently.

Abrahams offers an option for play in the choral rehearsal with his two-part activity, “Catch Me Being Good” and “So You Think You Can Sing?” For the first step, the conductor listens to which member of each section is singing the music the most successfully. Once they have been identified, the conductor invites them to join a committee to serve as the judges for

²⁶⁴ Wyers, 170-197.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 170.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 209.

part two, “So You Think You Can Sing?” The “judges” listen to the choir as they sing through the music. Then, each must offer a piece of positive feedback, a piece of constructive feedback, and a possible solution for the identified area of growth. This activity touches on a few key elements of critical pedagogy. It celebrates what each individual brings to the group, invites choir members to engage in critical thinking, and provides the conductor with an opportunity to facilitate a student-led rehearsal.²⁶⁷

Sharon Paul also utilizes play in her work, calling it “the role of imagination in a choral rehearsal.” One of the concepts she draws on is the importance of novelty in spaces that require predictable routines for efficiency. A choral rehearsal needs clear expectations for everyone in the room to work together effectively. But, as we saw in Chapter Two, expectations and the predictability in a rehearsal are also key elements in prioritizing singers' psychological well-being. Paul notes that it is important to offer novel components in a rehearsal because the brain is built to identify new things.²⁶⁸ When those things are identified as useful, the information can lead to the formation of a new neuropathway.²⁶⁹ This offers a scientific justification for using play as a way to develop transferable knowledge in the choral ensemble. She offers the following games to integrate into a choral rehearsal to achieve novelty in the learning process:

²⁶⁷ Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy as Choral Pedagogy,” 24.

²⁶⁸ Wolfe, 115.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

Game Title:	Game Premise:
“Magic Disappearing Syllable” or “Where’s My Syllable?”	Sing through a phrase, but audiate the final consonant to work on syllabic stress in the rehearsal. ²⁷⁰
“Identity Crisis”	Sections stand in a circle. When their part matched another sections they’d need to join circles and separate again if the parts became dissimilar. Another version of this would be to have the singers raise their hand, or point to another section, when they identify that they sing an octave or unison with another part. ²⁷¹
“Red light/green light”	An audiation game where, when the singers see a “green light,” they sing, and when they see a “red light,” they must audiate their parts and be prepared to start singing again when the “green light” reappears. ²⁷²
“Forbidden Passage”	In a similar vein as “red light/green light,” the choir sings through a passage of music, but is asked to omit and audiate a certain part of it. ²⁷³
“What’s my life like?”	A game where singers have to quickly research different elements of the music, its text, the time period of the music, the composer, and the composer's life. ²⁷⁴
“Roving solfège gangs”	Singers start by walking around the room, improvising on “Do” (the tonic of a major scale). While they walk, if they connect with another singer, they become a pair and improvise on “re,” and so on as they add more

²⁷⁰ Paul, 133.

²⁷¹ Paul suggests that for these activities, performing that music at a slow tempo is most effective. The musical goal becomes on of ensemble tuning, so removing one musical elements to prioritize another remains effective in this case before speeding back up to performance tempo. Paul, 133.

²⁷² Paul, 133.

²⁷³ Ibid., 133-134.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 134.

	people to their “gang.” Singers can also disconnect and go back to “do.” ²⁷⁵
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Figure 5.3 Sharon Paul’s The Role of Imagination in the Choral Rehearsal

There is also a wealth of modes of play that can be applied to vocal pedagogy work in the choral ensemble. Tyler Kimmel’s *Choral Arts Games* explores the relationship between theater arts environments and secondary choral rehearsals. Choral arts games make vocal pedagogy accessible during choral technique segments of a rehearsal and help students better understand the processes and functions of their voices. Similar to Laban, choral arts games create an accessible language or colloquial vocabulary that gives students agency to think critically about their voices. Singers can also enter periods of self-discovery in their singing. They begin to make meaning of their sound and what their voices are capable of.²⁷⁶ Kimmel offers the following Choral Arts Games (inspired by theater art games):²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ One of the elements in Abrahams’ Instructional Design is the integration of improvisation. Steps six and seven in his initial construction were meant to explore different forms of improvising with the knowledge the students had obtained. Here, Paul offers a way to bring improvisation into an artform that rarely has opportunities for it. Paul, 134.

²⁷⁶ Tyler Todd Kimmel, “Choral Arts Games a Case Study Exploring Theater Arts Environments and Methodology in Secondary Choral Rehearsals” (DMA diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2024), 33–35.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Choral Arts Game:	Origin:	Pedagogical Concerns Addressed:
Mirror Singing	Adapted from Viola Spolin	Creating unity in pitch, vowel placement, vowel shape, breath, tempi, etc. ²⁷⁸
Repetition	Adapted from Meisner, a pre-existing model by Steven Dahlke	Students vocalize in pairs (either a shared exercise or ones they make up) and coach with another student to create unity in technique and “relational connection.” ²⁷⁹
The Isolation Game		Addressing any musical concerns that relate to points of transition in the music. ²⁸⁰
The Audiation Game/Count Singing Game	Adapted from Nancy Salwen	Students are challenged to sing one note in an exercise and to recreate the entire exercise with a larger group. Students fine-tune a group’s rhythm, develop heightened audiation skills, and address onsets and offsets in group singing. ²⁸¹
Vowel Morphing	Co-created	Using kinesthetic models for addressing vowel shaping. Students develop skills in talking about resonance spaces, tongue shape, vowel formants, the vocal tract, etc. ²⁸²

²⁷⁸ Kimmel, 120.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 73-74.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 168.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 162.

²⁸² Ibid., 137.

Sound Walkers	Inspired by Stanislavski and Spolin	Finding unification as quickly as possible regarding tone quality and vowel shapes while changing the sonic atmosphere. ²⁸³
The Ugly Crescendo	Adapted from D. Anderson	Exercise that addressed crescendo and decrescendo pacing and accessing different resonant spaces and qualities. ²⁸⁴
Chase Resonance	Adapted from the Chase theater game	Singers pass a single pitch around a circle of singers to find unity in resonance, vocal quality, and vowel shape. The goal is to find unity as quickly as possible. ²⁸⁵

Figure 5.4 Tyler Kimmel’s Choral Arts Games

Similar to the principles in *Empowering Song* and Critical Pedagogy, these games place students at the center, challenge how choir directors hear and listen to ensembles, and promote agency and self-discovery. Moreover, they are all backed by brain and vocal science. Utilizing modes of play in the rehearsal allows singers to have autonomy over their musicianship and voices. As they explore, they are encouraged to name what they are feeling.²⁸⁶ In Kimmel’s words: “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.” (Kimmel, 156) Through these games, Kimmel can, as he calls

²⁸³ Kimmel, 138-139.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 49.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 150.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 33-35.

it, “recalibrate his role” as a conductor. It situates the conductor in a different role in the room, supporting and creating space for student learning through game facilitation.²⁸⁷ Using games in the choral rehearsal is an effective and joyful way to invite singers into learning spaces where they bring their experience and knowledge, work collaboratively within their ensembles, and practice the content. Kimmel, Paul, and Abrahams have conceptualized strategies for engaging music imagination, intellect, and creativity. Games, albeit intentionally silly at times, serve as a very effective empowerment tool in the choral rehearsal.²⁸⁸

5.5: Collaborative Problem Solving in the Choral Rehearsal

One of the core functions of Abrahams’ Instruction Design for critical pedagogy in music is that students are engaging in problem-solving throughout the rehearsal process. This is vital in ensuring the knowledge learned in a rehearsal is transferable. To some extent, each of the pedagogical strategies discussed so far allows singers to engage in active problem-solving. The strategies discussed in this section will help prime students for problem-solving activities. They offer approaches that likely require more direction from the conductor for efficiency and efficacy. The clear structure of each helps conductors achieve this while still championing singers’ autonomy. If we consider the range of minimal intervention, these approaches can be more hands-on than some previous ones and may involve a more directive approach.

In *Art & Science in the Choral Rehearsal*, Paul outlines nine different strategies to facilitate student problem-solving in the rehearsal. The first, “Begin your rehearsal with a problem to solve,” is meant to prepare the singers to engage in critical thinking, either by

²⁸⁷ Kimmel, 99-100.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

answering a priming question for that day's rehearsal or a recall question that connects this rehearsal with a previous one.²⁸⁹ Paul's examples of these kinds of questions include:

- Would you please take out the song where fire is used as a metaphor for passion for passion?
- In the [x piece], we are going to begin at the climactic moment.
- [Play a pitch] here is "do" (the tonic) please find your notes in your chord at bar [x].
- We are going to rehearse the piece where dissonance is used as the primary expressive tool on the first page.
- Please take out the piece in [x key]
- Be prepared to discuss [x] in piece [y]
- Be prepared to solfège a [x scale]²⁹⁰

She continues with her second problem-solving device: "Provide tools, such as technical and interpretive guidelines," in which you provide a piece of information at the start of the rehearsal that the singer can use to solve a problem in the music. This tool can serve as preemptive work to support the introduction of a new concept. An example she uses resembles that of Abrahams' "That's Me" and Vodicka's "Take a Stand," in which students physically embody their understanding of the function of their part in a polyphonic texture.

Some other examples of providing tools include:

- Technical guidelines:
 - Place slight lifts at any textual punctuation.
 - Notes should never be static—any note value longer than the pulse of
 - The piece should either grow or decay, or do a combination of both,
 - Depending on the note's length and function in the phrase.
 - Never breathe after a word ending in "S" unless given permission.²⁹¹
- Interpretive guidelines:
 - According to the rules of rhetoric in the Baroque era, if text is repeated, it is likely for emphasis or contrast. In the following passage in the Schütz,
 - please apply these rules of rhetoric as you sing.

²⁸⁹ Paul, 6-7.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 7.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 8.

- If a fugue is well composed, singing the shape of each phrase properly
- will allow enough transparency in the texture for each fugue subject to
- come appropriately to the foreground. Please arch your phrases in the
- following passage in the Handel while keeping this idea in mind.²⁹²

Her third problem-solving technique has singers use tuning forks to identify their starting pitches. This helps when developing audiating skills.²⁹³ The fourth tool encourages self-monitoring during rehearsal. She offers suggestions like: raise your hand if you make a mistake, ask singers to study their part when working with a different section, or put rehearsal comments or questions on post-it notes that they can turn in to the conductor at the end of rehearsal. Using these tools helps singers establish ownership and agency during a directive rehearsal.²⁹⁴ The fifth tool, “Analysis and Experimentation,” resembles some of Kimmel’s choral arts games. It explores the extremes of musical ideas or techniques to find sounds and tools that will help solve musical issues.²⁹⁵ Tools six and seven: “Provisions for Follow Up” and “Reflection” leave room in the rehearsal to set technical or interpretive intentions. In either case, the conductor poses a question that helps the singers call upon knowledge they’ll need to approach a musical goal or engage in interpretive work.²⁹⁶ Tools eight and nine offer varying approaches to collaborative problem-solving between conductor and singer. “Working Socratically” involves posing questions about the music during a rehearsal and fielding student answers, trying their ideas, and identifying what was successful. This differs from tool nine, “Collaborative Problem Solving,”

²⁹² Paul, 9.

²⁹³ Ibid., 11–12.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 14–16.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 16–17.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 8.

where the choir divides the collaborative work. Rather than quick questions and answers, this allows for small-group work that contributes to the whole. Paul outlines what this could look like in a choral ensemble:

Group 1—Define	Unfamiliar words Expressions and turns of phrases Sentences with unusual structure ²⁹⁷
Group 2—Summarize	Taken as a whole, what is the purpose/function/gist of this text? Does the text fit a poetic genre with particular features of rhythm, rhyme, or meaning? Is there other background information that would be helpful to the singers and audience? ²⁹⁸
Group 3—Act	Present a 2-minute skit which expresses the text • Include everyone in your group This can be one big skit or you can break down the text into smaller chunks Feel free to consult with the Summarize or Define groups ²⁹⁹
Group 4—Identify	What are the essential elements that give this piece its identity (that make this piece “work”)? This could include style markers of the era or composer, distinctive elements of rhythm, melody, and harmony, aspects of the text in terms of diction (accuracy/clarity/expressiveness), and meaning (context/irony/symbolism) For all of the above, consider general techniques and specific moments ³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Paul, 22.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

Group 5—Describe	How would you explain this piece to someone who had never heard it before? How do elements of mode, rhythm, texture, and/or style relate to the text to generate meaning? Explain any text painting How is this piece like/unlike other related pieces?³⁰¹
Group 6—Prescribe	What’s already working, and what are the next steps? What technical challenges are holding the ensemble back? What specific rehearsal techniques would take this piece to the next level? What creative/expressive possibilities have not yet been attained?³⁰²

Figure 5.5 Sharon Paul’s Strategies for Collaborative Problem Solving

Another strategy for a more directive problem-solving activity that promotes singer autonomy comes from Geoffrey Boers’ development and utilization of the concept of “one-to-one” teaching. The goal of this model is to create opportunities for experiential learning. It can be helpful to share the parameters of the one-on-one process with the choir ahead of the rehearsal. Share with them the steps and goals so that when they are asked consent questions, they have full knowledge of how they might be engaging in this process.

The process of “one-to-one” teaching can look like:

1. Tell the students at the beginning of the class that you want to do some “one-to-one” learning and lay out the following plan.
2. Have them close their eyes (for anonymity), and offer them the prompt, “On a scale of one to five (one being no, five being yes), who would be willing to serve as a

³⁰¹ Paul, 22–23.

³⁰² Ibid., 23.

demonstrator in our class today.”³⁰³ Emphasize that this doesn’t mean they have to sing if they are called on, and that they always reserve the right to decline; it will be respected.

3. Take note of who is an affirmative five!
4. As you are rehearsing the passages you want to work on, try to identify any of your 5’s who seem to be successful, or if not entirely successful, enthusiastic.
5. Ask one of them if they would be willing to demonstrate for the class. (They may have said earlier they were willing to, but their answer could have changed. It’s important to check in again.)
6. If they are willing, before they demonstrate, offer the class a prompt that draws their ears into a technique, a musical goal, etc., and have them listen for “what they love about how [singer] does [skill]?”
7. Have the singer demonstrate and then field questions from the singers. Keep track of the language they use, and leave space for additional prompts to get to the technical goals you’re thinking of
8. Once they identify it, say, “Let’s all sing [x] the way [singer] just taught us to,” while weaving in the language that the students used in their affirming reflections from their peer’s demonstration.

In the one-to-one model, a conductor can utilize many tenets of Critical Pedagogy. Students get to use what they already know and build on that through peer-led learning; they develop a vernacular around emerging technical or musical skills and use their critical skills to advance their musical potential. And, as a bonus, a singer in the choir gets the opportunity to sing in front of their peers and receives a myriad of affirming pieces of feedback from fellow choristers. When done well, one-to-one rehearsing can be a tool for building community and solidarity within a choir. However, this process can seem scary in some choirs at the onset. Boers has also developed an alternative, which he calls “Be My Teacher.”³⁰⁴ It is based on tenets similar to those of the previous model, but in this instance, the teacher serves as the demonstrator, and the students are tasked with solving a problem.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ This could also be a simple yes or no question, but the one to five scale can also offer you as the conductor to gage singing confidence in your choir on any given day. This can be a helpful tool for you when considering singer engagement and energy in a rehearsal.

³⁰⁴ As an alternative: In Tyler Kimmel’s case study of choral arts games, he adapts this and refers to this process at “Be My Conductor.” Tyler Todd Kimmel, 126.

³⁰⁵ Boers, 34.

In “Be My Teacher”,

- The teacher models a musical concept, either correctly or incorrectly (incorrectly can be fruitful in the process)
 - i. If modeled incorrectly, have the singers coach the teacher to the desired result.
 - ii. If modeled correctly, have them identify what was successful.
- Keep track of the language being used and leave space for additional prompts to reach the technical goals you’re aiming for.
- Once they identify it accurately, say, “Let’s all sing [x] using the tools you just identified,” or “Let’s all sing [x] using the tools you just taught me,” while weaving in the language that the students used in their affirming reflections from their peer’s demonstration.

This model is less experiential for students, but they are still encouraged to think critically about the singing process. This approach also lets the conductor in on how singers think about self-feedback. Whereas the “one-to-one” teaching method centers on affirmation, the opportunity to offer constructive feedback in the “Be My Teacher” model lets conductors know how critical singers may be of themselves.

The pedagogical strategies outlined in this chapter only represent those published in scholarly articles or praxis texts. These tools represent a narrow slice of a much larger pedagogical puzzle. Still, they are excellent resources for conductors seeking accessible ways to turn their conservatory-based learning into effective tools for implementing critical pedagogy in their classrooms. These pedagogical approaches can be the first step in a conductor’s creative journey to reconstruct power in their ensembles and begin the transformative work of reimagining what is possible in the choir. These are not the means to an end, but the beginning of a much messier and experimental future towards a more inclusive and empowered culture in the choral arts.

5.6: Reflection on Transformation

Once I felt like I had really grasped how critical pedagogy could look in a rehearsal, I was excited to dive in. I constructed a 15-minute mini-rehearsal segment covering steps 3-8 of the process outlined in this chapter. The singers were dialoguing, practicing, applying their knowledge, and celebrating each other, but when it came to assessing for transformation, they could not. As the conductor, I could see all the ways they affected the music, but they could not name it for themselves. When I reframed the question of transformation as being about their peers, they suddenly saw how change had occurred. It was then that I realized there was a larger issue present in the culture. The singers were on board with the process, but 15 minutes was not long enough to unlearn the idea that their music-making is not a product.

Compressing this process to dive in was not effective. The way singers learn to be so critical can be detrimental to their artistic growth. After that rehearsal, I realized I had one goal: stop trying to sound good and try harder to “be good.” For the remainder of the rehearsal process, about two weeks before our concert, all I had the singers do was identify success. Once they could name what worked, then I asked them to reflect on what about it was working. We invested the rest of our rehearsal time breaking down the processes of things that they were already successful at. If someone had asked me, before doing this work, how I would have felt about investing time in naming the processes of already successful singing, I would have promptly told them it was a waste of time.

I wanted their concert to feel like a celebration of what they know and not a reminder of what they could not yet do. What I did not expect was that, during their performance, they used the knowledge of their successful processes to self-adjust in the moment. They were transferring old learning to new musical moments. Without me saying or doing anything, they took over,

transforming the piece of music. It was then that I realized how little time we take to think critically about what we do well. When we skip over this, assuming that if we've been successful, it will automatically transfer, we lose our ability to replicate the processes in music that led to our success. There was still work to be done in helping the singers name that they were doing this. They were so used to only receiving critical feedback, but that moment transformed me as the conductor. My training in error detection, while definitely still needed, must come second to using my ears to find what works. Once we know what we know, we can begin to transform what is possible in our artistry.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

“[I am] *not* directive of the *students*, but directive of the *process*, in which the students are with me. As director of the process, the liberating teacher is not doing something *to* the students, but *with* the students” - Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*³⁰⁶

6.1: Performance-Based Instructional Design

I have developed an Instructional Design for choral ensemble-based learning, drawing inspiration from Abrahams' approach to critical pedagogy, to achieve my goal of making this research accessible to conductors for use in their rehearsals. As a leader in the field of music education, Abrahams empowered a generation of young educators with the tools to break down complex teaching methodologies and championed the voices of those silenced by arts education.³⁰⁷ His design for critical pedagogy in the music classroom helped bridge the gap between Freire's pioneering work and the preparation of music educators. (Figure 6.1) This serves as inspiration for the development of my own instructional design, geared towards performance-based education spaces. This tool is meant to support and guide conductors in the work of restructuring power in their rehearsal through the practice of their art form. Further, it addresses two key concerns of this work: maintaining efficiency in collaborative rehearsal environments and developing effective facilitation skills in a rehearsal. It is constructed to mirror the traditional rehearsal cadence from the introduction of new music, through the rehearsal and learning process, and ending in performance.

³⁰⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 46.

³⁰⁷ John, 17–18.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	EMPOWERING MUSICIANS	LESSON STEPS	NATIONAL STANDARDS	LESSON FORM	TAXONOMY	RESEARCH BASE
Who we are	Engaging musical imagination	1. Honoring their world: Teacher engages the students in problem solving by creating an experience that presents a need to know.	Experiencing music (National Standards 6 and 7)	Exposition	Marzano: Cognitive Systems Level 1; Bloom: Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4	Freire (1970); Gardner (1983, 2000); McLaren (2003); Shor (1985)
		2. Sharing the experience: Students and their teacher process the experience. They share feelings and reflect.			Marzano: Cognitive System Levels 1, 2, and 3; Bloom: Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4	Vygotsky (1978); Hooks (1994); Darling-Hammond (1997)
Who students may become	Engaging musical intellect	3. Connecting their world to the classroom: Teacher connects the experience using comparable concepts from the other arts, culture, or student out of school experiences.	Connecting music (National Standards 8, and 9)	Development	Marzano: Cognitive System Levels 3 and 4; Bloom Levels 1, 2, and 3	Gardner (1983; 2000); Freire (1970); Giroux (1997); Bourdieu (1986; 1987)
		4. Dialoguing together: Teacher presents the lesson content. Students gather the evidence they need to solve the problem.			Marzano: Cognitive System Level 1; Bloom: Level 1	Freire (1970); Saranson (1996); McNeill (2000)
		5. Practicing the content: Teacher provides students with an opportunity to practice the content. A homework assignment or quiz might be included at this step.			Marzano: Cognitive System Levels 3 and 4; Bloom: Level 5	McNeill (2000); Freire (1970); Giroux (1997); McLaren (2003)
Who we might become together	Engaging musical creativity	6. Connecting School music to the students' world: Teacher invites students to find alternative solutions and new ways to use the information presented. Students have the opportunity to create something new.	Creating music (National Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7)	Improvisation	Marzano: Metacognition Levels 5 and 6; Bloom: Levels 3, 4, and 6	Freire (1970); Habermas (1982); Bourdieu (1986; 1987); Vygotsky (1978); Apple (1982)
		7. Assessing transformation: Students and their teacher reflect and evaluate the work completed. An assessment rubric may be applied at this step.			Marzano: Metacognition Level 5 and Self-System Level 6; Bloom: Level 6	Darling-Hammond (1997); Saranson (1996); Orfield (2001);
	Engaging musical celebration through performance	8. Acknowledging transformation: Students and their teacher celebrate the new learning through presentation, exhibition or other form of demonstration.	Performing music (National Standards 1 and 2)	Recapitulation	Marzano: Self-System Level 6; Bloom: Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6	Freire (1970); Saranson (1996); McLaren (2003); Giroux (1997)

Figure 6.1 Abraham's Original Critical Pedagogy in Music Instructional Design

In the performance-based instructional design (PBID), I have added important steps that address the function and value of the interpersonal and cultural work that conductors need to undertake in this process. Additionally, each step is paired with a column that addresses its alignment with the principles of Anti-oppressive Practice, Recentring Music Learning, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy. This encourages conductors to ensure psychological safety is addressed throughout the restructuring of power in their ensembles. Two columns connect each step with the tenets of Critical Pedagogy and Abrahams' original Critical Pedagogy Instructional Design. (Figure 6.1) The purpose of including these is not to say that by following each step, the principles of these frameworks will be achieved, but rather that these principles should guide one's work at each step.

For example, I included a column outlining the range of intervention at each step of the process. This column functions as a means of reflection for conductors as they transition from leading entirely directive rehearsals to inviting more co-creation into their spaces. If they attempt one of the steps meant for "minimal intervention" and find, in practice, that it resulted in "maximum intervention," that should prompt them to reflect and revisit. Another example of how these guiding principles work is in step four, "What's the 'Why'?" A component of this step involves repertoire selection. If you look under the column, "Tenets of Recentring Music Learning," you'll see the marker "Diversity" at this step. This means that representing diverse musical voices in the program should be considered at this step. The reason you've chosen to uplift those voices in the program becomes part of the dialogue that empowers the singers to invest in performing the music.

The rightmost column is meant to be interactive and acknowledge the ongoing nature of this work. As discussed in Chapter One, the purpose of this dissertation is not to create a one-

size-fits-all collection of tools for empowering singers in a rehearsal. I include all of the pedagogical tools discussed in Chapter Five in this column to demonstrate the various ways they can be integrated into a rehearsal sequence. (Figure 6.2) However, the chart leaves this section blank so that conductors can write down pedagogical tools they uncover in their professional development, at conferences, masterclasses, at festivals, and of their own creation. (Figure 6.3) Here, conductors can collect ideas, jot them down, explore, and test. I hope that the interactive component of this resource will empower conductors to go beyond what is discussed in this dissertation to transform their ensemble spaces.

This tool will feel most effective at a moment of ensemble reset (i.e., a new school year or a new semester/quarter). It works best as a way to strategize, with great intention, an entire concert cycle. It might be worth reserving more experimental rehearsal styles for a single piece of music, but the components of this work that require a cultural shift must be embedded into the entire process. If the entire process isn't mapped out or considered before the first interaction with singers, it can still be effective, but it won't do much to alleviate concerns about efficiency. That is not to say that there won't be unpredictable moments or paths of new discovery that will arise in this process. The PBID allows the conductor to enter those moments of unpredictability, feeling equipped to be more effective in their ability to facilitate and guide. A metaphor I like to use for this process is that it should "feel like bowling with the bumpers up." It doesn't guarantee a strike every time, but you'll definitely knock down a few pins. This instructional design won't guarantee that you or the singers get everything right on the first try, but it can balance the fear of a new rehearsal process with trust that in the end, you'll have created a beautiful piece of art. And that, in the end, you'll have taken meaningful steps to provide a music education that is transformational and empowering.

Singing to Empower: Instructional Design for Restructuring Power in the Choral Ensemble							Pedagogical Tools* (demonstrated below) (add ideas of what's worked or what you'd like to try!)	
Steps for Restructuring Power:								
Goals for Each Step:								
- Establishing cultural positionality - Establishing structural positionality - Naming Power and Centering Musical Humility - Establishing a culture of consent - Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback - Being transparent with guidelines and expectations - Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) - Expansive Listening - Help define their gifts - What do they want to know? - Why is the music on the program? - What do we gain from performing this music? - Consentification: Do they "know what they know?" - Establishing processes they do well (they develop a positive relationship with being in their body during singing) - What are the "need to knows?" - Introduce important vocal technique concepts that relate to the "need to know" - Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know" - Introduce important musical expression work that relates to the "need to know" - Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know" - Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself - Singers name the problem - Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem								
- Conductor begins an experiential exercise, outside of the musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7 - Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit								
Once the singers master the skill out of context, apply to the music								
- The singers continue to practice the skills in context of the music, keeping dialogue open (when necessary revisit a skill builder or a problem-solving activity) - If they get stuck again – continue to prioritize their ability to name sensations and functions of their technique/musically/literacy) - When the conductor identifies the successful application of the skill(s), the singers name what they did to be successful (Their ability to name the application of successful processes is crucial for the information to cement) - Share prepared music through performance								
- Conductor and singers reflect on how they've grown throughout the rehearsal process and what is now possible. - If there is another concert cycle, this can replace steps three and four before starting the process over with new music!								
Repeat as Needed								
Principle of Critical Pedagogy							Abrahams' Instructional Design	
Principle of Critical Anti-Oppressive Practice							Tenets of Recentering Music Learning	
Level of Intervention							Trauma-Informed Pedagogy	
Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection							Cultural Competence	
Empowering Singers							Equity	
Critical Assessment of Singers' Experience of Oppression							Trustworthiness	
Minimal Intervention							Equity	
Minimal Intervention							Access	
Minimal Intervention							Diversity	
Minimal Intervention							Equity	
Minimal Intervention							Agency	
Minimal Intervention							Collaboration	
Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)							Artistry	
Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)							Connecting their World to the Classroom	
Minimal - Moderate Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)							Trustworthiness	
Minimal - Moderate Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)							Agency	
Working in Partnership							Dialoguing Together	
Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality							Agency	
Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality							Experimentation	
Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality							Self-Reflection	
Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality							Agency	
Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality							Artistry	
Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality							Agency	
Working in Partnership							Collaboration	
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Empowering Singers								

Singing to Empower: Instructional Design for Restructuring Power in the Choral Ensemble											Pedagogical Tools* (add ideas of what's worked or what you'd like to try!)	
Steps for Restructuring Power:				Goals for Each Step:		Principle of Critical Pedagogy	Principle of Anti-Oppressive Practice	Level of Intervention	Trauma-Informed Pedagogy	Tenets of Reentering Music Learning	Abrahams' Instructional Design	
1. Conductor Positionality Work					• Establishing cultural positionality • Establishing structural positionality • Naming Power and Centering Musical Humility • Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts • What do they want to know? • Why is the music on the program? • What do we gain from performing this music? • Consistentization: Do they "know what they know?" • Establishing processes they do well (they develop a positive relationship with being in their body during singing) • What are the "need to knows?"	Education is Political	Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection	No Intervention	Trust	Equity		
2. Establish Ensemble Culture					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is Empowering	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Trust	Access		
3. Entering Into Discovery					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is Political	Critical Assessment of Singers' Experience of Oppression	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Equity		
4. What's the "Why?"					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is Empowering	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Choice	Diversity	Honoring Their World	
5. Collaborate to Intention Set					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Safety	Validation	Sharing the Experience	
6. Instructor Presents Critical Information					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality	Empowering Singers	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Artistry	Connecting their World to the Classroom	
7. Facilitate Problem-Solving Activities					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal - Moderate Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Collaboration	Agency	Dialoguing Together	
8. Practice Skills					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality	Working in Partnership	Minimal - Moderate Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Choice	Experimentation	Practicing the Content	
9. Apply Skills to the Music					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Collaboration	Agency		
10. Open Dialogue about Successes and Struggles					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Self-Reflection	Connection Word to World	
11. Reflect and Name Successful Processes					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Collaboration	Validation	Assessing Transformation	
12. Celebrate Successes Through Performance					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is Transformative	Empowering Singers Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Artistry	Acknowledging Transformation	
13. Reflect on the Experience What is now possible?					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is Transformative	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Self-Reflection		
					• Establishing a culture of consent • Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for constructive feedback • Being transparent with guidelines and expectations • Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) • Expansive Listening • Help define their gifts	Education is Transformative	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Equity		

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Figure 6.3 Performance-Based Instructional Design (Blank)

6.2: Answering Central Research Questions

Central to both of the research questions I set out to answer in this dissertation was providing singers with a music education centered on affirmation and empowerment. For question one: “How can Western-trained conductors restructure hierarchical power structures in their choral ensembles?” The answer to this question begins with a foundational shift in the way the conductor sees themselves and their singers. By addressing the cultural and systemic hierarchies that shape their own identity, they can begin to see how these power dynamics adversely affect their singers. By fundamentally shifting their concept of a conductor from an all-knowing authoritarian to a facilitator who centers humility, they can enter into solidarity with their ensembles. From there, prioritizing dialogue, inviting students’ lived experiences, and affirming their gifts builds trust and safety. Once these have been established, conductors can create and employ pedagogical strategies that empower their singers to be more agentic musicians. They can make decisions on their own, and leave with the tools they need to build a musical future for themselves; all the while celebrating and honoring new learning. Once conductors acknowledge the power they have as “power-to” rather than “power-over,” they can transform the lives of their singers.

For the second question: “How can teaching music in a choral ensemble setting help develop more agentic musicians?” The conductor has to begin by looking inward and see value, affirmation, and trust in themselves. They have to believe the tools they offer their singers will reshape their musical abilities. This contrasts with their training, which promotes quick fixes to achieve efficient solutions for musical performance. Once a conductor feels ready to enter this process, they center dialogue to gauge understanding. They invite and facilitate problem-solving, where the singers make meaning and find solutions on their own, building strong, transferable

skills. The conductor celebrates and focuses on successful processes. They guide singers in transferring that knowledge to new music and new learning. Simultaneously, taking in what the singers are teaching them and finding ways to demonstrate how they've learned and grown through this collaboration.

Celebration cements the success of restructuring power in choral ensembles and building more agentive musicians. Success looks like the ability to name how we have grown and what we have accomplished together. The purpose of the work of choral artists becomes that of joy. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that changing how learning and belonging occur in a choir is a time-consuming process. However, what you sacrifice in short-term results, you get back in a transformational, foundational shift in both musicianship and accessibility in your choral ensemble. To echo what has been explored throughout, success in this process is not simplicity or ease, but rather complexity and mess. The conductor, trained to seek and love control, needs to center on the idea that they will need to know less to learn more and to control less to achieve more.³⁰⁸ This new tool will help provide structure and support for organizing and conceptualizing a messy situation.

6.3: Recommendations for Further Research and the Future of the Art

This research was conducted with a specific scope in mind to demonstrate how to connect philosophical and educational methodologies with functional pedagogies to inspire a praxis-based field towards inclusivity and empowerment. My recommendation for further research is to revisit the same research questions, with a different scope and set of limitations in mind. If we consider the second question: “How can teaching music in a choral ensemble setting help

³⁰⁸ Dag Jansson, “Choral Singers’ Perceptions of Musical Leadership,” *The Oxford Handbook of Singing*, Edited by G.F. Welch, D.M. Howard, and J. Nix, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 881–882.

develop more agentic musicians?” can the same goals be achieved by applying them to choral ensembles outside an educational context? How can conductors in community, non-profit, faith-based, and professional settings address and restructure power in their work? Since these musical ensembles do not always have an educational mission, I would rethink the second question more broadly: How can making music in a choral ensemble setting help develop more agentic community members?

Considering the first question: “How can Western-trained conductors restructure hierarchical power structures in their choral ensembles?” This dissertation was written to address the power between conductor and singer. Additional research on how to challenge or reshape the power structures that affect the accessibility of music education is critical to creating systemic change for music students. It also addresses one of the main criticisms of critical pedagogy and anti-oppressive practice. Whereas these frameworks acknowledge but don’t solve the problems of systemic oppression, finding solutions to the issues of systemic power is a worthwhile pursuit.³⁰⁹ An area that I find myself increasingly curious about, and could potentially be the next direction I explore in this work, is the training of conductors. Whereas this research addresses how to empower them after their education to restructure power, I want to explore how those empowerment values can be integrated into their training.

6.4: Closing Remarks

My own lived experience heavily inspired this research. However, it is also important to situate this dissertation and its value in the context in which it was conducted. Currently, the United States is seeing another set of national protest responses to the federal I.C.E.

³⁰⁹ Hill, “Going beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community,” 20–21.

(Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents' deportation efforts and the murder of innocent citizens. We are seeing civil disobedience to counteract authoritarianism. Our work as conductors to create artistic spaces that don't uphold "systemic violence" by de-emphasizing obedience and restructuring power remains vital. Another factor to examine is the increasing prevalence of A.I. (artificial intelligence) in our society. As jobs in science and technology are automated, the need for critical and creative thinkers is growing. While this work did not address the socio-political implications of civil unrest on music education or the impact of A.I. on our ability to think critically, it is important to note that these are growing concerns in the lives of the students I see day to day. In these closing remarks, it feels important to examine this work outside of the vacuum with which it was created.

André de Quadros and Emilie Amrein were wise to make the claim that choral music and choral ensembles are uniquely positioned to be real change-makers in our society. When we restructure the systems of power in choral ensembles to value welcome, belonging, and co-creation, conductors become agents of empowerment. Those unheard and vulnerable voices who have been excluded from the art form's history can begin to see the choral ensemble as a place to celebrate and discover their artistry. What begins in the choral classroom may be able to affect real change within a larger institution or community. The choral arts can become more than a place to produce beautiful and inspiring music; they can model and uplift some of the very best qualities of society and be a cultural leader towards a new landscape of radical welcome and acceptance.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Glossary of Key Terms

Agency: The singers can solve musical problems and make artistic meaning on their own.

Autonomy: The singers are engaging in consent practice and have choice in the rehearsal process.

Collective Power: The ways a Western European Art Music (WEAM) - based music school informs the histories, values, beliefs, and practices that inform the preparation and performance of music in Western educational choral ensembles.

Dictation: The act of dictating how, where, when, and why singers make music; in an autocratic manner.

Empowerment: A chorister's ability to use and name pedagogical and expressive tools that will advance their musicianship.

Facilitation: The act of leading and teaching ensembles through collaborative rehearsals.

Hierarchical Power Structure: The system that assigns authority and agency to a few individuals over a larger group of people.

Individual Power: The histories, values, beliefs, and practices that inform how an individual conductor rehearses and leads a Western educational choral ensemble.

Institutional Power: The ways WEAM has informed the histories, values, beliefs, and practices that define the School of Music's mission, vision, and goals for music instruction within the institution.

Oppression: The act of an individual using their power to make another obedient or subservient.

Positionality: This reflexive process, where an individual works to name and understand critical power dynamics present in their work.

Power: The cultural and/or professional attributes that situate an individual at the top of a structural power hierarchy.

Re-traumatization: When an individual is exposed to stimuli that provoke the physiological sensations of the original trauma to recur as if it were new.

Safety: Established consent to engage in the “acceptable risk” involved in the choral ensemble.

Systemic Power: The histories, values, beliefs, and performance/compositional practices that inform the performance, preparation, and construction of the bodies of work that make up WEAM.

Transformation: The act of learning changes a singer’s perception of what they already know.

A singer can identify how new knowledge has transformed old knowledge or beliefs.

Trauma: When the brain signals that a threat is present, and an individual is not able to mobilize and escape or avoid the possible harm.

Trauma-Response: (also referred to as a state of dysregulated arousal) The physiological response to stimuli that remind the body of existing trauma.

Appendix B

Tables and Figures

ARTISTRY, TRUSTWORTHINESS, DIVERSITY, EQUITY

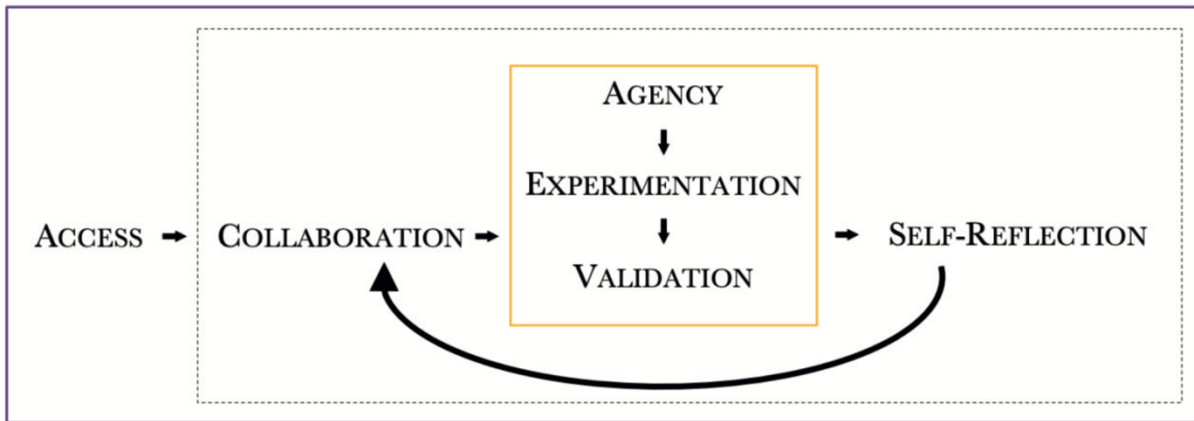


Figure 2.1 – “Recentering Music Learning”

Critical Pedagogy	Empowering Musicians	Lesson Steps
Who Am I?		
Who We Are?	Engaging Musical Imagination	1. Honoring their world
		2. Sharing the Experience
Who Students May Become?	Engaging Musical Intellect	3. Connecting their world to the Classroom
		4. Dialoguing Together
		5. Practicing the Concept
Who We Might Become Together?	Engaging Musical Creativity	6. Connecting School Music to the Students' World
		7. Assessing Transformation
	Engaging Musical Celebration through Performance	8. Acknowledging Transformation

Figure 3.1: Abrahams' Reduced Critical Pedagogy in Music Instructional Design

Discussion Tool:	Example for Application:
1. Talk to the person beside you	Work with a partner to identify what looks familiar or possible in a new piece of music. Read the composer's notes, the text, and listen to a recording. Talk through what tools you already have to bring the piece to life. At either the beginning or end of the rehearsal cycle, the singers could identify the meaning and relevance of the piece in a program. Abrahams offers a version of this for problem-solving dialogue.
2. Was I Right?	Have singers look over a new piece of music and identify what will be challenging. Sing through the piece and discuss afterwards where they correct. Use this to set intentions around rehearsal goals. This could also be a general reflection on the rehearsal process as a whole. "Were the intentions set at the beginning what we needed to prepare this music?"
3. Journals	Either in paper or electronic form, singers can respond to reflection questions about new music or music they are about to perform. They can use this space to collect research to bring into rehearsals. These can be great when they are in a form that allows a conductor to respond and start a one-on-one dialogue with the singers.
4. Repertoire Committee	Groups of students can be assigned guidelines for programming and collect and submit repertoire selections for the choir to select. This could happen either at the beginning of a new rehearsal cycle or at the end of one, depending on when it makes the most logistical sense to be picking new music.
5. A, B, or C?	Attempt a music idea in three different ways. Either with the conductor demonstrating or the choir trying them in a musical phrase. Poll which one the singers liked best, have them discuss and justify their decision as it relates to music, and establish a group consensus.
6. Take a Stand	Identify a music skill, an important phrase, or a textural component of the music, and have the singers stand whenever they encounter it in their part. They will be invited to engage in a nonverbal musical dialogue with other members of the section.
7. Sectional Conductors	Nominate conductors to lead a sectional. Identify a small section of the pieces, and have them use gesture to communicate musical ideas or goals within their section, while the entire group runs through the section together. Afterwards, invite conversation about what was effective and what changed in the music.

Figure 5.1 Vodicka's Tools for Exploiting the Power of Dialogue in the Choral Rehearsal

Action Effort	Effort Elements	“Effort Bank” Examples
Float	Sustained, light, and indirect	Playing with a sparkler
Glide	Sustained, light, direct	Smoothing a piece of paper
Press	Sustained, strong, direct	Operating a bike tire pump
Wring	Sustained, strong, indirect	Tightening a heavy screw
Dab	Quick, light, direct	Pressing a button
Flick	Quick, light, indirect	Swatting hair off your face
Slash	Quick, strong, indirect	Tearing a baguette in half
Punch	Quick, strong, direct	Knocking loudly on a door

Figure 5.2 Laban Efforts Bank

Game Title:	Game Premise:
“Magic Disappearing Syllable” or “Where’s My Syllable?”	Sing through a phrase, but audiate the final consonant to work on syllabic stress in the rehearsal.
“Identity Crisis”	Sections stand in a circle. When their part matched another sections they’d need to join circles and separate again if the parts became dissimilar. Another version of this would be to have the singers raise their hand, or point to another section, when they identify that they sing an octave or unison with another part.
“Red light/green light”	An audiation game where, when the singers see a “green light,” they sing, and when they see a “red light,” they must audiate their parts and be prepared to start singing again when the “green light” reappears.
“Forbidden Passage”	In a similar vein as “red light/green light,” the choir sings through a passage of music, but is asked to omit and audiate a certain part of it.
“What’s my life like?”	A game where singers have to quickly research different elements of the music, its text, the time period of the music, the composer, and the composer's life.
“Roving solfège gangs”	Singers start by walking around the room, improvising on “Do” (the tonic of a major scale). While they walk, if they connect with another singer, they become a pair and improvise on “re,” and so on as they add more people to their “gang.” Singers can also disconnect and go back to “do.”

Figure 5.3 Sharon Paul’s The Role of Imagination in the Choral Rehearsal

Choral Arts Game:	Origin:	Pedagogical Concerns Addressed:
Mirror Singing	Adapted from Viola Spolin	Creating unity in pitch, vowel placement, vowel shape, breath, tempi, etc.
Repetition	Adapted from Meisner, a pre-existing model by Steven Dahlke	Students vocalize in pairs (either a shared exercise or ones they make up) and coach with another student to create unity in technique and “relational connection.”
The Isolation Game		Addressing any musical concerns that relate to points of transition in the music.
The Audiation Game/Count Singing Game	Adapted from Nancy Salwen	Students are challenged to sing one note in an exercise and to recreate the entire exercise with a larger group. Students fine-tune a group’s rhythm, develop heightened audiation skills, and address onsets and offsets in group singing.
Vowel Morphing	Co-created	Using kinesthetic models for addressing vowel shaping. Students develop skills in talking about resonance spaces, tongue shape, vowel formants, the vocal tract, etc.
Sound Walkers	Inspired by Stanislavski and Spolin	Finding unification as quickly as possible regarding tone quality and vowel shapes while changing the sonic atmosphere.
The Ugly Crescendo	Adapted from D. Anderson	Exercise that addressed crescendo and decrescendo pacing and accessing different resonant spaces and qualities.
Chase Resonance	Adapted from the Chase theater game	Singers pass a single pitch around a circle of singers to find unity in resonance, vocal quality, and vowel shape. The goal is to find unity as quickly as possible.

Figure 5.4 Tyler Kimmel’s Choral Arts Games

Group 1— Define	Unfamiliar words Expressions and turns of phrases Sentences with unusual structure
Group 2— Summarize	Taken as a whole, what is the purpose/function/gist of this text? Does the text fit a poetic genre with particular features of rhythm, rhyme, or meaning? Is there other background information that would be helpful to the singers and audience?
Group 3— Act	Present a 2-minute skit which expresses the text • Include everyone in your group This can be one big skit or you can break down the text into smaller chunks Feel free to consult with the Summarize or Define groups
Group 4— Identify	What are the essential elements that give this piece its identity (that make this piece “work”)? This could include style markers of the era or composer, distinctive elements of rhythm, melody, and harmony, aspects of the text in terms of diction (accuracy/clarity/expressiveness), and meaning (context/irony/symbolism) For all of the above, consider general techniques and specific moments
Group 5— Describe	How would you explain this piece to someone who had never heard it before? How do elements of mode, rhythm, texture, and/or style relate to the text to generate meaning? Explain any text painting How is this piece like/unlike other related pieces?
Group 6— Prescribe	What’s already working, and what are the next steps? What technical challenges are holding the ensemble back? What specific rehearsal techniques would take this piece to the next level? What creative/expressive possibilities have not yet been attained?

Figure 5.5 Sharon Paul’s Strategies for Collaborative Problem Solving

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	EMPOWERING MUSICIANS	LESSON STEPS	NATIONAL STANDARDS	LESSON FORM	TAXONOMY	RESEARCH BASE
Who we are	Engaging musical imagination	1. Honoring their world: Teacher engages the students in problem solving by creating an experience that presents a need to know.	Experiencing music (National Standards 6 and 7)	Exposition	Marzano: Cognitive Systems Level 1; Bloom: Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4	Freire (1970); Gardner (1983, 2000); McLaren (2003); Shor (1985)
		2. Sharing the experience: Students and their teacher process the experience. They share feelings and reflect.			Marzano: Cognitive System Levels 1, 2, and 3; Bloom: Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4	Vygotsky (1978); Hooks (1994); Darling-Hammond (1997)
Who students may become	Engaging musical intellect	3. Connecting their world to the classroom: Teacher connects the experience using comparable concepts from the other arts, culture, or student out of school experiences.	Connecting music (National Standards 8, and 9)	Development	Marzano: Cognitive System Levels 3 and 4; Bloom Levels 1, 2, and 3	Gardner (1983; 2000); Freire (1970); Giroux (1997); Bourdieu (1986; 1987)
		4. Dialoguing together: Teacher presents the lesson content. Students gather the evidence they need to solve the problem.			Marzano: Cognitive System Level 1; Bloom: Level 1	Freire (1970); Saranson (1996); McNeill (2000)
		5. Practicing the content: Teacher provides students with an opportunity to practice the content. A homework assignment or quiz might be included at this step.			Marzano: Cognitive System Levels 3 and 4; Bloom: Level 5	McNeill (2000); Freire (1970); Giroux (1997); McLaren (2003)
Who we might become together	Engaging musical creativity	6. Connecting School music to the students' world: Teacher invites students to find alternative solutions and new ways to use the information presented. Students have the opportunity to create something new.	Creating music (National Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7)	Improvisation	Marzano: Metacognition Levels 5 and 6; Bloom: Levels 3, 4, and 6	Freire (1970); Habermas (1982); Bourdieu (1986; 1987); Vygotsky (1978); Apple (1982)
		7. Assessing transformation: Students and their teacher reflect and evaluate the work completed. An assessment rubric may be applied at this step.			Marzano: Metacognition Level 5 and Self-System Level 6; Bloom: Level 6	Darling-Hammond (1997); Saranson (1996); Orfield (2001);
	Engaging musical celebration through performance	8. Acknowledging transformation: Students and their teacher celebrate the new learning through presentation, exhibition or other form of demonstration.	Performing music (National Standards 1 and 2)	Recapitulation	Marzano: Self-System Level 6; Bloom: Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6	Freire (1970); Saranson (1996); McLaren (2003); Giroux (1997)

Figure 6.1 Abraham's Original Critical Pedagogy in Music Instructional Design

Appendix C

Physiological Signs of Dysregulated States

Common external indicators that someone is in a state of dysregulated arousal are:

- Muscle tone is extremely slack
- Muscle tone is extremely rigid
- Hyperventilation
- Exaggerated startle response
- Excessive sweating
- Noticeable dissociation (person appears highly disconnected from their body)
- Noticeably pale skin
- Emotional volatility (enraged, excessive crying, terror)
- Disorganized speech or slurring words
- Reports of blurred vision
- Inability to make eye contact
- Reports of flashback, nightmares, or intrusive thoughts

Safety in three parts:

1. Ventrals Vagal (Social Engagement): Feeling support from those around us will regulate our nervous systems
2. Sympathetic Activation (Mobilization): Fight or Flight is where adrenaline pumps through our bodies to fend off potential danger
3. Dorsal Vagal (Immobilization): Freeze or collapse, the body feels as though it does not have the tools to feel safe and will shut down to expend as little energy as possible

Appendix D

Principles of Methodological Frameworks

6 Principles of Trauma-Informed Care:

- Safety
- Trust
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Cultural Competence.

William Sauerland's TIP in the Context of the Choral Classroom:

- Empowerment.
 - Employing culturally-responsive pedagogy
 - Co-creating the musical space with singers
 - Teaching resilient self-talk strategies
- Choice
 - Practicing student-centeredness
 - Offering options for physical activities, such as bodily stretching and riser arrangements
- Collaboration
 - Including choral stakeholders in a commitment to a compassionate and caring community
 - Adding support staff, such as counselors and therapists, to your choral leadership team
- Safety
 - Ensuring safety protocols include emotional and physical well-being
 - Nurturing inclusive and supportive language
 - Selecting safe and secure rehearsal and performance venues
- Trustworthiness
 - Communicating guidelines and expectations with transparency
 - Acknowledging, responding to, and mitigating known trauma triggers

Ten Tenets of Recentering Music Learning:

1. **Artistry:** Musicians' best tool is their artistry, so music and the arts are the vehicle for implementing all of the other tenets that follow. In the case of teaching artistry, musicians don't teach learners to be artists; encouraging a career in the arts might not be ethical or appropriate if the learner is in a location or community that can't support a stable arts career. Rather, musicians teach learners how to think like artists, by using music to nurture the social emotional learning (SEL) skills that artists utilize.
2. **Trustworthiness:** Musicians behave in a professional and trustworthy manner to protect the well-being of learners and colleagues, and in order to participate in successful collaboration. When working with youth, professionalism refers to following child protection guidelines set out by the partner.
3. **Diversity:** Musicians champion pieces that represent diverse composers and creators. They collaborate with diverse colleagues and create an environment where diverse colleagues and learners can thrive.
4. **Equity:** Musicians curate experiences that allow equitable participation and appreciation, regardless of their learners' or listeners' prior experiences.
5. **Access:** Musicians eliminate as many barriers as possible that make engagement with music difficult for learners and listeners. Barriers might include socio-economic status, geographic location, and prior needed or expected experience.
6. **Collaboration:** Musicians are partners who collaborate with their constituents. Rather than make music *for* or *at* learners and listeners, musicians make music *with* others. They curate musical experiences that meet the needs of learners and listeners, and they determine needs by communicating with partners, rather than presuming.
7. **Agency:** Musicians provide learners and listeners with opportunities for agency over their musical experiences.
8. **Experimentation:** Musicians nurture learning and listening environments where play and experimentation are encouraged. Musicians prioritize process over perfection.
9. **Validation:** Musicians validate individuals' interpretations, experiences, creations, and opinions. They curate musical experiences that do not require specific or correct responses.
10. **Self-Reflection:** Musicians use all interactions with constituents as feedback. They use feedback as an opportunity to reflect and improve upon their ability to meet the needs to learners and listeners.

Five Key Principles of Consent-Based Practice

1. Consent is contextual, conditional, and dynamic.
2. Leaders in any group setting hold power, and this power dynamic affects the group's (and each member's) relationships, boundaries, and consent.
3. The language used within any given situation affects how information is received and how the situation is perceived.
4. Boundaries are information that merits a socially neutral response.
5. Consent-based practices are most effective when used as proactive, culture-building tools, rather than as reactive measures aimed at simply mitigating the impacts of harm.

The Five Key Principles of Anti-Oppressive Practice:

- Engaging in critical self-reflection
- Critical assessment of singers' experience of oppression
- Empowering singers
- Working in Partnership
- Maintaining minimal intervention

Five Components of Musical Humility

1. Collaborative Engagement
2. Other-orientedness
3. Non-superiority
4. Owning Limitations and Shortcomings
5. Low Self-Focus

Strategies for Learning Musical Humility

1. Intrapersonal Strategies
 - a. Practicing Ego-Skepticism
 - b. Practicing Grace and Self-Compassion
 - c. Practicing Awe and Gratitude
 - d. Interrogating the Sources of our Anger, Envy, and Frustration
2. Interpersonal Strategies
 - a. Playing, Working, and Studying with Musicians That Challenge Us
 - b. Centering the Lives of Others
 - c. Leaning into Accountability

Frank Abrahams' Five Key Principles of Critical Pedagogy

1. Music education is a conversation.
 - a. "Students and their teachers pose problems and solve problems together. In music classrooms, this means composing and improvising music in styles consistent with who the students are and the contexts in which they live." (Abrahams, 3)
2. Music education broadens the student's view of reality.
 - a. "For Critical Pedagogy Music Education (CPME), the goal of music teaching and music learning is to affect a change in the way that both students and their teachers perceive the world. In this model, students and their teachers view the world through the lens of the urban experience and the music that defines that experience." (Abrahams, 3)
3. Music education is empowering.
 - a. "When students and their teacher 'know that they know,' one can claim that the phenomenon of 'conscientization' has occurred. Conscientization implies a knowing that has depth and goes beyond the recall of information and includes understanding and the ability to act on the learning in such a way as to effect a change. In this view, music is conceived as a verb of power. It evokes critical action and critical feeling by engaging students in musical activities that are both significant and consistent with what musicians do when they are making music. (Abrahams, 3)
4. Music education is transformative.
 - a. "For those teaching a CPME approach, music learning takes place when both the teachers and the students can acknowledge a change in perception. It is this change or transformation that teachers can assess." (Abrahams, 3)
5. Music education is political.
 - a. "There are issues of power and control inside the music classroom, inside the school building, and inside the community. Those in power make decisions about what is taught, how often classes meet, how much money is allocated to each school subject or program, and so forth. Those who teach the CPME model resist the constraints that those in power place on them. They do this first in their own classroom by acknowledging that children come to class with knowledge from the outside world and, as such, that their knowledge needs to be honored and valued." (Abrahams, 3-4)

Central Questions of Critical Pedagogy

1. Who am I?
2. Who are we?
3. What may they become?
4. What might we become together?

Marissa Silverman's 6 Principles of Critical Pedagogy

1. All learners possess potential.
2. We are all learners and teachers.
3. Personal experience is knowledge.
4. Learning showcases feeling, thinking, and doing.
5. Knowledge is power.
6. Self-knowledge is empowering.

Nel Noddings' Four Stages of Moral Development:

1. Modeling
2. Dialogue
3. Practice
4. Confirmation

Appendix E

Pedagogical Tools

Simon Hill's Critical Pedagogy Rehearsal Strategies in College Choirs:

- Inviting students to share repertoire knowledge in rehearsals
- Creating space for dialogue/reflection about a piece's text
- Facilitate ensemble discussion about the repertoire during rehearsal time
- Taking student repertoire suggestions into consideration when programming
- Creating opportunities for collaborative ensemble programming
- Allowing students to create program notes and engage with the audience during a performance
- Creating opportunities for peer teaching
- Facilitating student-led rehearsals
- Allowing students to figure out notes and rhythms on their own
- Dialoguing in rehearsal about technical and musical concerns
- Discussing the role of the singer and conductor in each piece, rehearsal, and performance
- Regularly creating space for reflecting on rehearsals and performances.
- Creating opportunities for off-campus performance in partnership with community members
- Collaborating with students on bringing music into their communities outside of campus.
- Facilitating opportunities for students to do community outreach through your music program

Sharon Paul's Writing Prompts:

- Beginning of Class Writing:
 - In the last four pages of [x piece], the story resolves unhappily. Do you think [it] will stay in the same key?
 - In what way will your personal musical contributions make a positive impact during today's rehearsal?
 - What kind of progress will we accomplish on the [x piece] today?
- Exit Card Writing Prompts
- What was your favorite part of rehearsal today?
- If you could change one thing about today's rehearsal, what would it be?
- What would you like me to know about you?
- Change the end of the story in one of our songs and describe the impact on the character or plotline involved. Might this change the musical expression?
- What pop song might be a good pairing with one of our [x] songs?
- What was the muddiest point made in rehearsal today that you would like clarified?

Sharon Paul's Questions to Facilitate a Problem-Solving Mindset in Rehearsal

- Would you please take out the song where fire is used as a metaphor for passion for passion?
- In the [x piece], we are going to begin at the climactic moment.
- [Play a pitch] here is “do” (the tonic) please find your notes in your chord at bar [x].
- We are going to rehearse the piece where dissonance is used as the primary expressive tool on the first page.
- Please take out the piece in [x key]
- Be prepared to discuss [x] in piece [y]
- Be prepared to solfège a [x scale]

Sharon Paul's Examples of Technical and Interpretive Guidelines

- Technical guidelines:
 - Place slight lifts at any textual punctuation.
 - Notes should never be static—any note value longer than the pulse of
 - The piece should either grow or decay, or do a combination of both,
 - Depending on the note's length and function in the phrase.
 - Never breathe after a word ending in “S” unless given permission.
- Interpretive guidelines:
 - According to the rules of rhetoric in the Baroque era, if text is repeated it is likely for emphasis or contrast. In the following passage in the Schütz,
 - please apply these rules of rhetoric as you sing.
 - If a fugue is well composed, singing the shape of each phrase properly
 - will allow enough transparency in the texture for each fugue subject to
 - come appropriately to the foreground. Please arch your phrases in the
 - following passage in the Handel while keeping this idea in mind.

Geoffrey Boers' Process of One-to-One Teaching:

1. Tell the students at the beginning of the class that you want to do some "one-to-one" learning and lay out the following plan.
2. Have them close their eyes (for anonymity), and offer them the prompt, "On a scale of one to five (one being no, five being yes), who would be willing to serve as a demonstrator in our class today." Emphasize that this doesn't mean they have to sing if they are called on, and that they always reserve the right to decline; it will be respected.
3. Take note of who is an affirmative five!
4. As you are rehearsing the passages you want to work on, try to identify any of your 5's who seem to be successful, or if not entirely successful, enthusiastic.
5. Ask one of them if they would be willing to demonstrate for the class. (They may have said earlier they were willing to, but their answer could have changed. It's important to check in again.)
6. If they are willing, before they demonstrate, offer the class a prompt that draws their ears into a technique, a musical goal, etc., and have them listen for "what they love about how [singer] does [skill]?"
7. Have the singer demonstrate and then field questions from the singers. Keep track of the language they use, and leave space for additional prompts to get to the technical goals you're thinking of
8. Once they identify it, say, "Let's all sing [x] the way [singer] just taught us to," while weaving in the language that the students used in their affirming reflections from their peer's demonstration.

Geoffrey Boers Process of "Be My Teacher:"

1. The teacher models a musical concept, either correctly or incorrectly (incorrectly can be fruitful in the process)
 - a. If modeled incorrectly, have the singers coach the teacher to the desired result.
 - b. If modeled correctly, have them identify what was successful.
2. Keep track of the language being used and leave space for additional prompts to reach the technical goals you're aiming for.
3. Once they identify it accurately, say, "Let's all sing [x] using the tools you just identified," or "Let's all sing [x] using the tools you just taught me," while weaving in the language that the students used in their affirming reflections from their peer's demonstration.

Appendix F

Performance-Based Instructional Design

Singing to Empower: Instructional Design for Restructuring Power in the Choral Ensemble													Principle of Critical Pedagogy		Principle of Anti-Oppressive Practice		Level of Intervention		Trauma-Informed Pedagogy		Topics of Recurring Music Learning		Approaches to Instructional Design		Pedagogical Tools* (demonstrated below) (see ideas of what's worst or what you'd like to try!)	
Steps for Restructuring Power:					Goals for Each Step:					Education is Political		Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection		No Intervention		Cultural Competence		Trustworthiness		Equity		The White Choice - Paul				
1. Conductor Positionality Work					• Establishing cultural positionality	• Establishing structural positionality	• Naming Power and Centering Musical Humility	• Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for rehearsal feedback	• Being transparent with guidelines and expectations	• Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers)	• Expansive Listening	• Help define their gifts	Education is Political	Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection	No Intervention	Cultural Competence	Trust	Trustworthiness	Equity				The White Choice - Paul			
2. Establish Ensemble Culture					• Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for rehearsal feedback	• Naming Power and Centering Musical Humility	• Prioritizing Affirmation and defining best practices for rehearsal feedback	• Being transparent with guidelines and expectations	• Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers)	• Expansive Listening	• Help define their gifts	Education is Empowering	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Choice	Trust	Access	Equity					The White Choice - Paul			
3. Entering Into Discovery					• What do they want to know?	• Why is the music on the program?	• What do we gain from performing this music?	• Consolidation: Do they "know what they know?"	• Establishing processes they do well (they develop a positive relationship with being in their body during singing)	• What are the "need to know's?"	• Introduce important vocal technique concepts that relate to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Political	Critical Assessment of Singers' Experience of Oppression	Minimal Intervention	Cultural Competence	Empowerment	Safety	Agency	Collaboration			The White Choice - Paul			
4. What's the "Why?"					• What do they want to know?	• Why is the music on the program?	• What do we gain from performing this music?	• Consolidation: Do they "know what they know?"	• Establishing processes they do well (they develop a positive relationship with being in their body during singing)	• What are the "need to know's?"	• Introduce important vocal technique concepts that relate to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Choice	Trust	Access	Equity				The White Choice - Paul			
5. Collaborate to Intention Set					• What do they want to know?	• Why is the music on the program?	• What do we gain from performing this music?	• Consolidation: Do they "know what they know?"	• Establishing processes they do well (they develop a positive relationship with being in their body during singing)	• What are the "need to know's?"	• Introduce important vocal technique concepts that relate to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Safety	Agency	Collaboration					The White Choice - Paul			
6. Instructor Presents Critical Information					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
7. Facilitate Problem-Solving Activities					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
8. Practice Skills					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
9. Apply Skills to the Music					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
10. Open Dialogue about Successes and Struggles					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
11. Reflect and Name Successful Processes					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
12. Celebrate Successes Through Performance					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			
13. Reflect on the Experience What is now possible?					• Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself	• Singers name the problem	• Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem	• Musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7	• Utilize play or reflection time to maintain the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know"	• Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"	Education is Empowering Singers	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Collaboration	Artistry					The White Choice - Paul			

Figure 6.2 Performance-Based Instructional Design (Demo Model)

Singing to Empower: Instructional Design for Restructuring Power in the Choral Ensemble						Pedagogical Tools (add focus or what's worked or what you'd like to try)
Steps for Restructuring Power:	Principle of Critical Pedagogy	Principle of Critical Anti-Oppressive Practice	Level of Intervention	Trauma-Informed Cultural Competence	Tenets of Reclaiming Music	
1. Conductor Positionality Work	Education is Political	Engaging in Critical Self-Reflection	No Intervention	Trust	Equity	
	- Establishing cultural positionality - Establishing structural positionality - Naming Power and Centering Musical Humility			Choice	Truthworthiness	
2. Establish Ensemble Culture	Education is Empowering	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Trust	Access	
	- Establishing a culture of consent - Prioritizing Affirmation and setting best practices for constructive feedback - Being transparent with guidelines and expectations			Safety	Diversity	
3. Entering Into Discovery	Education is Political	Critical Assessment of Singers' Experience of Oppression	Minimal Intervention	Cultural Competence	Equity	
	- Welcoming lived experience (getting to know the singers) - Expansive Listening - Help define their gifts			Empowerment	Access	
4. What's the "Why?"	Education is Empowering	Empowering Singers	Minimal Intervention	Choice	Empowerment	Honoring Their Word
	- Why is the music on the program? - What do we gain from performing this music?			Cultural Competence	Diversity	
5. Collaborate to Intention Set	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Equity	Sharing the Experience
	- Establishing processes they do well (they develop a positive relationship with being in their body during singing) - What are the "need to know's" - Introducing important vocal technique concepts that relate to the "need to know"			Safety	Validation	
6. Instructor Presents Critical Information	Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality	Empowering Singers	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Empowerment	Artistry	Connecting their Word to the Classroom
	- Introduce important musical literacy work that relates to the "need to know" - Introduce important musical expression work that relates to the "need to know" - Introduce important historical or interpretive context that relates to the "need to know"			Collaboration	Truthworthiness	
7. Facilitate Problem-Solving Activities	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal - Moderate Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Collaboration	Agency	Dialoguing Together
	- Create a situation where a "need to know" presents itself - Singers name the problem - Singers connect the information from step 6 to the problem					
8. Practice Skills	Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality	Working in Partnership	Minimal - Moderate Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Choice	Experimentation	Practicing the Content
	- Conductor begins an experiential exercise, outside of the musical context, that allows singers to apply the knowledge from step 6 to address the problem identified in step 7 - Using the knowledge and information from the positive relationship with body, mind, and spirit			Collaboration	Self-Reflection	
9. Apply Skills to the Music	Education Broadens the Student's View of Reality	Working in Partnership	Moderate - Maximum Intervention (depending on pedagogical strategy)	Collaboration	Artistry	
	Once the singers master the skill out of context, apply to the music:				Agency	
10. Open Dialogue about Successes and Singers	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Collaboration	Connection Word to World
	- The singers continue to practice the skills in context of the music, keeping dialogue open (When necessary revisit a skill builder or a problem-solving activity if they get stuck again – continue to prioritize their ability to name sensations and functions of their technique/musicality/iteracy)			Trust	Truthworthiness	
11. Reflect and Name Successful Processes	Education is a Conversation	Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Collaboration	Validation	Assessing Transformation
	- When the conductor identifies the successful application of the skill(s), the singers name what they did to be successful (Their ability to name the application of successful processes is crucial for the information to cement)				Self-Reflection	
12. Calibrate Successes Through Performance	Education is Transformative	Empowering Singers Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Artistry	Acknowledging Transformation
	Share prepared music through performance					
13. Reflected on the Experience What is new possible?	Education is Transformative	Empowering Singers Working in Partnership	Minimal Intervention	Empowerment	Self-Reflection	
	- Conductor and singers reflect on how they've grown throughout the rehearsal process and what is now possible. - If there is another concert cycle, the can repeat steps three and four before starting the process over with new music.				Equity	

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Figure 6.3 Performance-Based Instructional Design (Blank)