

accent

The Official Newsletter for the Arkansas Chapter of AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION October 2012

LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT AND CHORAL MUSIC INVOLVEMENT, PART 1

KEITH HEARNSBERGER

"Music gives soul to the Universe" — Plato

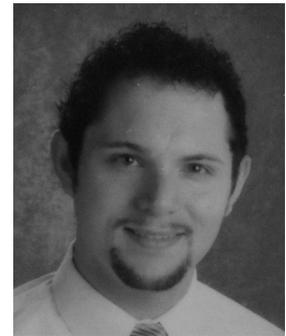
During my time as a middle school and high school educator, I realized that American education is going through dramatic change in the beginning of the 21st century. The way children are educated is constantly evolving. Public schools, private schools, parochial schools, charter schools, and even higher levels of educational institutions are affected by various federal and state regulations now more than ever. The students, teachers, and educational leaders in these institutions are consistently affected by regulations, increased academic demands, and an ever-changing educational landscape. The educational administrator and the choral director at every level are inclined to examine all possible reasons and rationales for success in our institutions of learning while **maintaining** a commitment to **musical excellence**.

The concept of a connection between music and literacy goes back to the time of Plato and the ancient Greeks. The cognitive process behind learning and retaining literacy skills are the same for the transferring of musical knowledge. Researchers such as Michael Mark and Charles Gary [*A History of American Music Education*, 2007] have long established the evolutionary path of American music education. Mark and Gary's work serves as a fundamental music education text that should be studied and reviewed by all choral directors, as it paints a clearer picture of where we are as a profession within the realms of music education, and gives insight to the fact that we are training the amateur musician. This term "amateur musician" is what we must understand in order to fully help equip our students with the skills necessary to produce **musical excellence**. As we transfer these skills to our students, have we ever pondered on

how these same skills could be used in other academic contexts?

When I was a high school teacher in a school that was in year seven of school improvement according to the Arkansas Department of Education, I was intrigued by how I could shape my choral students' academic achievement, especially in literacy. The choral program was experiencing great growth and truly was a bright beacon of light as to the achievement possibilities of the student body. The beginning of the 2009-2010 school year was a year of tension and of demanding that academic achievement must improve within the learning community. During the "beginning of school" professional development, the literacy coach presented the end of course (EOC) format for the 11th-grade literacy exam. I was compelled to explore different instructional strategies that were suggested and implement them into the choral literature that I was teaching that academic year. As the year progressed and the EOC occurred in the spring, when the results came back not only did 11th-grade students who were involved in choir do well, but 98% scored proficient or advanced. I was amazed at this result! This is how I became intrigued about the connection between choral music and literacy achievement and decided to write my doctoral dissertation on this correlation.

The relationship between music education and academic achievement has been discussed in numerous contexts. In this article, a glimpse of my doctoral dissertation, the relationship between participation in choral music and academic achievement in relationship to literacy achievement, based on data from five high schools is explored. In this correlation study, research demonstrates evidence that



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students with a prolonged involvement in a choral music program in grades 8-11 have a statistical advantage in literacy achievement when compared with those students who do not participate in choral music programs.

The methodology behind my study included an ANCOVA (a fancy statistical term that basically means comparing two groups while examining an outside constant). The eighth-grade "Benchmark" exam scores and the 11th grade EOC literacy scores were used as the variable of achievement. Factors that were considered were social economic status, race, gender, and a minimum of one full academic year (two consecutive semesters) of choral music involvement between grades 8-11.

Stay tuned for part II, in the spring edition of *accent*. The results of the study will be shared, as well as the literacy teaching techniques that can be used to implement in your rehearsals for all level of choral directing!

**ArACDA Hot Springs
Conference -
July 29-31, 2013**

ARTICLES FROM CHORTEACH, ACDA'S ONLINE JOURNAL

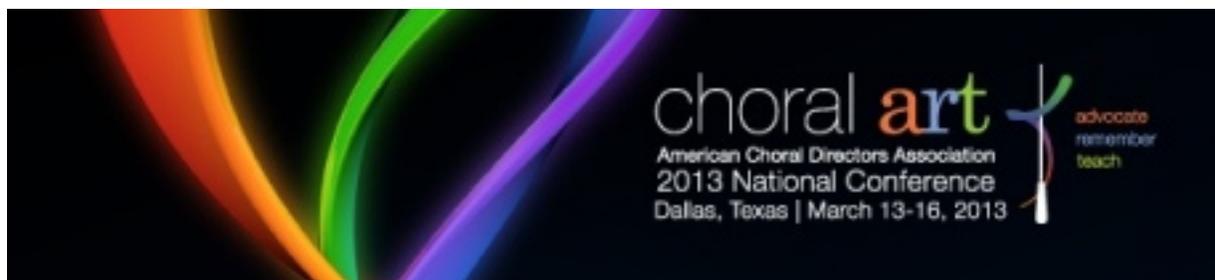
As the editor of ChorTeach, Terry Barham is responsible for gleaning articles from state and division online websites and print newsletters around the United States and from submissions by seasoned choral directors with topics germane to the profession. The name ChorTeach is derived from the German word for chorus, *chor*. It is pronounced like the word "core."

ChorTeach's articles will be a breath of fresh air for you and provide you with ideas or techniques that give you a lift and help your singers reach the goals you have set. ChorTeach is designed for those who work with amateur singers at all levels. If you have written an article and believe it would be of interest to ChorTeach readers, send it to Terry in Word.doc format. Have you read an article from an ACDA newsletter you think would be beneficial to ChorTeach readers? Send Terry the details and he'll check it out. Email Terry at tbarham@sunflower.com

Contents of the Fall 2012 issue:

- Developing Tone Quality in Middle and High School Choral Ensembles by Karen Willie (Utah)
- Jam Sessions—Informal Music Making That Can Enrich Your Choral Program by Craig Denison (Florida)
 - Men's and Women's Choirs: How Different Are They? by Amy Hughley (Georgia)
 - The Singer in the Prison by Rich McKinney (Missouri)
 - Rehearsal Strategies and Rubrics for Choirs by Genevieve Tep (California)

MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND THE ACDA NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN DALLAS, MARCH 13-16, 2013



**CONCERTS, MUSIC READING SESSIONS,
INTERNATIONAL CHOIRS, INTEREST SESSIONS,
HONOR CHOIRS, MUSIC IN WORSHIP FESTIVAL CHOIR, STUDENT
CONDUCTING COMPETITION, FELLOWSHIP, AND MORE ENCOURAGEMENT
AND REFRESHMENT THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE!**

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

VICTORIA'S GREAT MOTET

CECIL SAMS

It's one of our favorite Renaissance choral works, the "O magnum mysterium" of Tomas Luis da Victoria (1548-1611). Born in Spain, Victoria proved himself an outstanding music student early and moved to Rome in 1565, where he succeeded Palestrina as the musical director at the Roman Seminary.

There is no documented evidence that Victoria studied with Palestrina, who was about 23 years older than the Spaniard. But Victoria absorbed what he heard in Rome, and by the time that he returned to Spain in 1587 he was a master of the Counter-Reformation style.

Nevertheless, Victoria never relinquished the passionate mysticism of his homeland, and there are persistent elements in his style that distinguish his music from that of Palestrina.

We'll take a brief tour through this motet, noticing how it demonstrates this mysticism and observing some important issues regarding its performance.

The J.W. Pepper web site shows 19 editions of Victoria's "O magnum mysterium"; CPDL gives another 15. So one of a director's initial choices is that of deciding which edition to use? Obviously, there is an advantage to those that are freely available on CPDL. The disadvantage is that of having to print, compile, and put the copies into a usable format.

The piece originally began in the key of D minor and ended on a G major chord. Modern editions may be in the same key, or they may be as much as a minor third higher. Why? Isn't it most authentic to perform a work in its original, intended key? The answer is a qualified "yes," with a few complicating factors.

One issue is that choral pitch was in the sixteenth century approximately one full step lower than pitch is today. Pitch has crept upwards over the centuries, and the process continues. Although A=440 is our common standard, many contemporary orchestras tune to A=442, or 444, or even 445 in order to produce a brighter and more "exciting" sound. So, in order to perform our piece as it was originally heard, we'd actually have to sing it with an opening tonality of D minor and a final chord of F major. And a low note of double E-flat for the basses and baritones!

But we can't accept this pitch as being an absolute one. A century before Victoria, Johannes Ockeghem had written Masses and motets with bass notes descending to a C or B-flat below our bass staff. Musicologists assume that this demonstrates a sense of relative pitch; the works were written in a key that seemed appropriate for notation, yet the actual performance might be done at a pitch higher than notated.

And, of course, Victoria's music, like Palestrina's, was composed for male choirs, with male falsettists or boys singing the soprano and alto parts. So, even though the second alto note in the original key is a G below the treble staff, that presented no difficulties for the singers. How many of you intend to perform this with all-male groups? Not many, I suspect. The men of my choir actually sang the motet last year, but it's not a common practice.

So choose your own key for the performance, and feel free to move the pitch up or down slightly to accommodate the resources of your own group. There is no "right" key for this piece.

In choosing an edition, we should also note that any dynamic or interpretative marking you find in the music belongs to the editor, not to Victoria. Before Gabrieli's "Sonata pian'e

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forte” of 1597 there were no dynamic markings at all in music. And during the seventeenth century there were very few, including almost no indications of crescendo or diminuendo. The best approach to take toward the interpretation of the work is to listen to a number of reputable performances of this and other Renaissance selections, absorb the style, and then use your own discretion regarding dynamics and tempo.

If you examine a few editions, you may notice some chromatic variants among them. And you may find that sometimes accidentals are placed above, rather than in front of, the notes, as in this example, showing measures 8 and 9.

The reason for this is that composers usually, but not always, wrote the actual notes that they expected to be performed. A centuries-old practice, called “false music,” or *musica ficta*, thoroughly understood by composers and performers, dictated where accidentals were to be inserted in performance in order to make melodies flow more smoothly or to produce proper cadences. Modern editors generally agree on the application of this practice and supply appropriate accidentals. When these are placed above the note, it is an indication that the composer did not insert the accidental but would have, according to the editor, expected the singers to modify the note as they performed the work.

Note the repeated notes in the soprano line in measure 8. Some editors have actually changed the two repeated quarter notes of F to a half note, like this —

—demonstrating that they have no understanding of Renaissance style. This use of repeated notes, especially at the beginning of a cadence, was a hallmark of sixteenth-century music, and it requires a “repercussion,” a re-sounding of the note.

Some editions will indicate this repercussion by inserting a breath mark, thus —

Actually, a full breath is inappropriate—but a slight articulation is required.

Editions also differ in some textual underlay details, because it was not a common sixteenth-century practice to put text syllables under the notes with which they were sounded. Instead, it was customary to write a phrase of text at the beginning of its corresponding musical phrase, leaving it to the director or to the singers to determine where words and syllables were to fall. Again, it is appropriate to sing through various editions before deciding which textual underlay sounds and works best.

Note that most of the word placement is obvious, and it is important to recognize that the text helps to give shape to the work’s melodic lines. Choirs often interrupt phrases inappropriately, rather than allowing the beautiful long phrases to speak properly. For example, it is absolutely improper to breathe between the words “magnum” and “mysterium,” between the words “admirable” and “sacramentum,” between the words “animalia” and “viderunt,” between the words “beata” and “Virgo,” or between the words “meruerunt” and “portare.” These pairings—“great mystery,” “admirable sacrament,” “animals beheld,” “blessed Virgin,” and “was worthy to bear” need their unity both textually and musically. Be sure you have a literal translation, such as that found in Jeffers’ outstanding *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire: Volume I, Sacred Latin Texts*, published by earthsongs.

Victoria’s colorful mysticism is demonstrated in ways that would not have been approved by Palestrina. Palestrina was conservative, and his practices have been codified by a number of analysts, most notably in Jeppesen’s *The Style of Palestrina and the Dissonance*. Victoria’s toleration of chromatic cross-relationships gives delightful color to the motet. Observe, for example the first appearance of the major mediant in measure 10, after the preceding nine measures in a minor mode. Or the F-sharp in the soprano in measure 11 followed by an F-natural in the alto’s measure 12 —

F-sharp cross-relationship between bass and tenor in measure 20 —

Palestrina would not have tolerated this ambiguity. Victoria rejoices in it.

Victoria also engages in deliberate archaisms, of two varieties. Two cadences—in measures 19 and 53—lack the third, employing the old sound of the open fifth, which had been generally abandoned three generations before Victoria wrote this motet.

And in measure 37 he places a series of first-inversion chords in the upper three voices, reminiscent of fifteenth-century fauxbourdon or English discant -



Finally, Victoria concludes the motet with a delightfully unanticipated triple-meter dance of delicate sensuality, preceding a short return to duple meter and a final chord with a Picardy third. When you perform this piece, be sure to let this dance be delightful. And let the energy and joy of the dance set the tone for the concluding eight measures. The extended final cadence must be assured and energetic—neither rising to an overly dramatic climax nor sinking into sluggishness.

We musicians share an art that allows us to share deeply rewarding experiences with those who lived centuries ago. The more we know about their understanding of this art, the richer the sharing of this experience. Victoria’s works continue to inspire us four hundred years after his death.

ARKANSAS ACDA FAMILY MATTERS

The next **Arkansas ACDA Summer Conference** will be held in Hot Springs, July 29-31, 2013.

If you have suggestions for **interest sessions**, please contact Cliff Ganus - ganus@harding.edu

ArACDA offers a \$500 scholarship to an Arkansas choral teacher who is enrolled in a graduate program with the intention of teaching choral music in the state. Applicants must be 10-year ACDA members. The application deadline is June 1. For application information, contact Cliff Ganus - ganus@harding.edu

Remember the ACDA Life Member option.

Any 10-year ACDA member can pay the total \$2,000 fee in \$200 installments. And when the payment is complete, never pay dues again.

REMIND ME AGAIN - WHAT AM I DOING?

Today is the first day of the rest of your year

It's a few weeks into the fall semester, and I've been feeling good about my Chorus this year. I've drilled them on tone, diction, line, performance and rehearsal demeanor, standards, energy—all of those things that make for an excellent ensemble. And, indeed, they've sung very well, in rehearsals and in concerts.

So I've been feeling good about my Chorus this year.

Until today.

I've been moving quickly, challenging the more talented and experienced in the group to push themselves, operating under the trickle-down theory that if the best can get it, everybody else will be pulled along eventually. And, as a group, these students have been responding enthusiastically, developing a pride in how quickly the group is learning and how good we're sounding.

And I've been feeling good about their singing this year.

Until today.

After rehearsal, one of the freshmen asked to talk with me. He had a lot to say. He's got a wonderful voice, but he's less experienced than some of the other members, and he's having a hard time learning the music. He has no confidence. He's singing very softly, so he won't be caught in a mistake, and he doesn't think he's contributing anything. He doesn't know many of the other members. He walks in as the bell rings, we rehearse, and he leaves when the bell rings, without much chit-chat.

He has actually asked a couple of the others in his section about getting some help on the notes, but they don't have time or don't know just how to help him. And I've generally avoided section rehearsals so far this year, because they're not the most efficient use of our time.

I've wanted to use our time efficiently because we have a lot of music to learn and because we want to sing it as well as it can be sung

And I've been feeling good about our progress this year.

Until today.

Because today I'm reminded that progress can be measured by more than one standard. And I'm reminded that, as a teacher, my responsibility to my students is even more important than my attention to the subject matter. And I'm reminded to recognize that this young man is not the only one who's struggling, not the only one that doesn't know the other group members, and not the only one who has a problem to tell me but hasn't been able to find the courage or opportunity to approach me.

In the teaching profession, kids trump procedure every time.

So I'm planning for a bit of priority shifting.

Sure, it's important to hold to high standards, to accomplish as much as possible, to lead students to the highest artistic levels.

But it's also important to train all of the members, not just the most accomplished. And it's important to teach and to nourish in all areas, not just the musical ones. I have a little speech that I sometimes make to the Chorus members in which I assert that we have multiple goals: we're 100% musically oriented; 100% spiritually oriented; 100% socially oriented; and 100% educationally oriented. The math may be wrong, but the intent is deliberate. That's why it's a bit embarrassing to have a freshman very kindly and humbly remind me that I've forgotten the equation.

As choral teachers, we operate under the mandate, so far as possible, to Leave No Singer Behind. In last fall's accent, Suzanna Callahan reminded us that sometimes we need to open our eyes to see our choir members not as means to accomplish our CPA ambitions, but as young people with cares and needs, whose direction in life might well be determined by the way that we deal with them.

I'm grateful that I've been reminded of that today.

And, beginning now, I'm going to remember that my primary goal is to continue to insist on musical excellence. And my primary goal is to help my group be a family, helping and supporting each other. And my primary goal is to help each of the members of the group in their spiritual walk (and I can actually say that out loud, since I work in a private institution). And my primary goal is to be an excellent teacher, to help students learn to understand information about the music and how to develop in their understanding at their own pace, depending on their own experience and ability.

It's been a good day. I'm feeling good about my Chorus this year. And tomorrow I'm going to be feeling even better.

How about you?

FAMOUS ONE-LINERS

A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.

He who hesitates is probably right

The hardness of the butter is proportional to the softness of the bread.

To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism, to steal from many is research.

Two wrongs are only the beginning.

A clear conscience is usually a sign of a poor memory.

If you must choose between two evils, choose the one you've never tried before.

Change is inevitable . . . except from vending machines.

A fool and his money are soon partying.

Plan to be spontaneous tomorrow.

Always try to be modest and be proud of it.

If you think nobody cares about you, try missing a couple of payments.

If you believe in telekinesis, raise my hand.

I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Everybody repeat after me: We are all individuals.

Don't be sexist; chicks hate that.

Love may be blind, but marriage is a real eye-opener.

Eagles may soar, but weasels aren't sucked into jet engines.

Borrow money from pessimists; they don't expect it back.

Half the people you know are below average.

99% of the lawyers give the rest of them a bad name.

42.7% of statistics are made up on the spot.

If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving is not for you.

IDEAS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SUCCESS

At last summer's Hot Springs Conference a group of junior-high directors discussed ideas that had proven successful in their programs. Here are a few that they wanted to share.

FOR ALL-REGION PREPARATION AND AUDITIONS

- Start preparing early in the year with after-school rehearsals.
- Have mock tryouts before the real tryouts take place.
- Program region music on your fall concert.
- Bring in a clinician to rehearse your students.
- Join with other schools to rehearse the music together.

MOTIVATION

- Have a bowling night for students who make region choir.
- Have a point system with a prize for incentive.
- Sing for the school board.
- Have speakers from older classes talk to the younger groups.
- Set up a facebook group for choir members only.
- Have students pay clinic fees early and give it back to them for snacks when they show up.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

- Let students know you believe in them.
 - Eat lunch with students, go to football games and other sporting events, talk to them in the hallways.
 - Put posters in the choir room that connect with kids.
 - Share personal stories, put up pictures of your family.
 - Have a ceremony when boys "graduate" to bass or baritone.
 - Give prizes – "King of the Low Notes," "Queen of the High Notes," "Sultan of Sightreading."
 - Put up pictures of students in the choir room.
 - Put students' birthdays on the J&B calendar, let them pick the style in which the class sings Happy Birthday (country, opera, etc.).
 - Have a Wall of Honor; the student of the day gets to sign the wall.
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