

IMPROVISATIONAL TEACHING IN THE CHORAL REHEARSAL:
CASE STUDY OF AN EXPERT CONDUCTOR-TEACHER

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Music Education

2011

ABSTRACT

IMPROVISATIONAL TEACHING IN THE CHORAL REHEARSAL: CASE STUDY OF AN EXPERT CONDUCTOR-TEACHER

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With the intent of exploring how an expert conductor-teacher navigates among rehearsal strategies to monitor student learning and take full advantage of the musical opportunities in the choral rehearsal context, the purpose of this research was to explore how an expert conductor-teacher navigates among rehearsal strategies in the moment of teaching. This phenomenological case study traced the “*improvisational teaching*” choices of one expert conductor-teacher in a variety of choral rehearsal settings. The researcher served as participant-observer and data collection methods included video documentation of the expert conductor-teacher in multiple choral rehearsal settings, formal and informal interviews with the expert conductor-teacher, and participant-observer field notes. The specific research problems include: 1) What specific rehearsal choices does an expert conductor-teacher make during improvisational teaching in the choral rehearsal context?, and 2) How does an expert conductor-teacher navigate from desired outcome to final product during a choral rehearsal?

Video and interview data were transcribed, and all data were categorized into emergent codes and themes. The expert conductor-teacher’s improvisational teaching included the following five themes: 1) Verbal Rehearsal Strategies to describe and assess during rehearsals, 2) Active Rehearsal Strategies, including modeling and embodied movement, 3) Building Connections, Building Vocalism, and Conductor-Teacher Education in the context of rehearsals, 4) Interactive Response to Sounding as the “intersection” of improvisational teaching, including

critical listening, making musical rehearsal choices, and always being aware of vocal tone, and
5) Building Relationships through connecting with and affirming the ensemble members.

The findings of this research suggest that music teacher educators can prepare pre-service conductor-teachers to think like an expert during teaching/rehearsing through the following:

1) Continue to emphasize pre-service conductor-teachers' growth in foundational musical skills, including score study, audiation, and critical listening, 2) Provide pre-service conductor-teachers with opportunities for exercising improvisation during teaching/rehearsing in a safe environment, and 3) Encourage pre-service teachers to “unlock” their thinking, so that they remain open to all of the possible rehearsal strategies during practicum teaching and when observing/interning as a pre-service teacher.

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This dissertation is dedicated to Mildred, Sue, and Christina—three incredibly strong women in my life, without whom this journey would be incomplete. Thank you for your continual prayers, modeling steadfast perseverance, and for your constant encouragement.

These words only begin to express my heartfelt gratitude.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My studies at Michigan State University and this culminating dissertation have transformed who I am as a life-long learner, music educator, and musician. Sincere and heartfelt thanks go to the members of my Committee: Dr. Mitchell Robinson, for his never-ending encouragement, his long talks in person and over the phone—full of wisdom and answers that led to more questions, and for his quiet but persistent reassurance that this topic and project was “right” for me and for our profession; Dr. Cynthia Taggart, for helping to mold me as a researcher and writer, for her generous edits, and for modeling (along with other committee members and professors) a healthy and collaborative working/learning environment; Dr. David Rayl, for opening my eyes, ears, and mind more deeply to the musical score and composer’s intention, and for providing the ultimate doctoral studies experience in blending choral conducting and music education; and to Dr. Judy Palac, for her thought-provoking and heartfelt comments, about this project and throughout my studies.

I am extremely thankful to the participant in this study, and my choral conducting-teaching mentor, Dr. Sandra Snow. This dissertation topic and my research would not have been possible without her inspiration and generous sharing of time and ideas. Thank you for “inviting” me to immerse in your choral rehearsals and music education classrooms as participant-observer, and for paving the way as a choral conductor-teacher educator, connections- and relationships-builder, mentor, and friend.

Next, I am indebted to former music educators who have influenced my life-long music learning and teaching, including: Madge W. Hunt, Milton Pullen, Dr. Steven Demorest,

Dr. William May, Michael O’Hern, Dr. Andrew Megill, Joseph Flummerfelt, and Dr. Jonathan Reed, plus many others too numerous to name. My sincere gratitude goes to my support system of incredible friends across the country: Dyan, A’ngela, Liz, BettyAnne, Marissa, Jenny, Brandi, Jennifer, and Kristina. And, special thanks to Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, Rev. Dr. Rob Carlson, and to Kathy, Nancy, and the Presbyterian Church of Okemos Chancel Choir “family.”

Next, I wish to thank my music education, choral area, and School of Music colleagues and mentors at Texas Tech University, including Richard Bjella, Dr. Janice Killian, and Director William Ballenger, for making it possible to “live the dream” in a collaborative community of musicians, teachers, and learners. I am blessed to have begun my career as part of this esteemed and talented faculty.

Sincere thanks to my parents for providing every possible path and supporting all of my endeavors over the years, including moving across the country (twice!). I would not be the woman I am today without your constant love and your individual influences on my life and work. And, to Christina and Will, thank you for the encouraging phone calls, emails, text messages, and prayers.

Lastly, I am extremely thankful to my incredible husband, Rob, who has stood by my side and provided immeasurable love, patience, and support throughout this project and our lives together. I share this accomplishment with you, and look forward to our continued journey ahead, as “it’s never too late to be what you might have been.”

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak... those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:29, 31)

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The bell rings to signal the start of 3rd period. As the final member of Concert Choir rushes to grab her folder and find her seat, Ms. Carter motions for the choir to stand for warm-ups. The spring concert is only three weeks away, and rehearsal intensity levels have increased. Today's agenda is in green ink on the dry erase board behind her:

- 1. Warm-ups and Sight-singing*
- 2. Dance on my Heart – m. 13-28 & m. 42-57*
- 3. Am Strande – review German text p. 2-4; learn German text p. 5-6*
- 4. Heaven-haven – solidify voice parts in section 'C'*
- 5. Announcements & sign-ups*

As the rehearsal begins, Ms. Carter is pleased with the warm-ups. She thinks to herself, "The women sound wonderful today... this is going to be a fantastic rehearsal!" Her plan is going well, and when rehearsing the Brahms, reviewing the German text on pages 2 to 4 and learning the new text on pages 5 to 6 proves to be an easy task for the choir. Putting the text together with the voice parts takes place naturally for the singers, and Ms. Carter decides to veer away from her previous rehearsal plan. She and the choir members delve into a discussion of the poetic phrasing as it relates to Brahms' musical shaping in the work. How does the poetry affect Brahms' musical decisions in the vocal writing? What is the connection between the accompaniment and poetry? What is the nature of the relationship between the vocal writing and the accompaniment? These questions spark an in-depth discussion about the many possible musical decisions the women could make to enhance their performance of the composition. The singers take turns making suggestions of various phrase shapings and other musical ideas relating to the poetry and the vocal lines, trying out each new idea after its proposal. Ms. Carter

is acting as facilitator; instead of “teaching” the singers to incorporate certain musical ideas into their singing, she is providing a path for the students to create their own understanding of the complex musical structure of Brahms’ work.

The profound discussion and experimentation of musical ideas continues and “light bulbs” are going off all over the room. Each new musical idea generates enthusiasm for another interpretation. All of a sudden, Ms. Carter is shocked when she realizes that there are only four minutes remaining in the class period. Where did the time go? She wraps up the discussion and experimentation time by asking the singers to write down at least three of their musical discoveries about the composition and the poetry-music relationship in their choir journal. After a few quick announcements, the bell rings and the singers go their separate ways – to geometry, French, biology, and other courses. The meaningful musical experiences shared during this 50-minute class period have been set aside until the following day, when the choir will continue to build upon them with new musical experiences and interpretations.

The ability to navigate among instructional strategies in the moment of teaching is a foundation of expert teacher behavior (Berliner, 1988). Many ensemble conductor-teachers plan excellent rehearsals that facilitate unique and meaningful learning experiences, but an expert conductor-teacher is able to improvise his/her teaching plan to maximize students’ learning opportunities during ensemble rehearsals. This idea of “improvisational teaching” allows the conductor-teacher to monitor student learning and take full advantage of the musical opportunities of an ensemble rehearsal. Making in-the-moment decisions about teaching strategies and techniques takes place seamlessly, and without hesitation (Berliner, 2004).

In the vignette, Ms. Carter displayed improvisational teaching when she decided to stray from her original plan and embark on a different rehearsal activity. She recognized that the learning environment was ripe for a comprehensive discussion of the poetry, vocal writing, accompaniment, and the ways in which these musical elements interact and she provided a pathway for in-the-moment application of these ideas to the students' performance of the work. Ms. Carter improvised her teaching plan to take advantage of a unique learning opportunity.

Expert conductor-teachers choose among teaching strategies instantly and effortlessly during rehearsals, based on deep understanding of the musical score and a willingness to facilitate meaningful musical experiences. They invite students on a journey of inspired musicianship and continually monitor, adapt, and assess instruction. This study will focus on the act of conducting-teaching as a rich form of improvisation, and will explore the decision-making process of an expert conductor-teacher. As an expert conductor-teacher, we can assume that Ms. Carter has a thorough knowledge of the musical score(s), prepares for rehearsals with specific musical goals and teaching strategies in mind, and is aware of the learning styles and musical development levels of her students. Reflection on previous rehearsals helps her prepare for subsequent rehearsals, including reflection on the specific teaching strategies and their musical outcomes.

In this chapter, I will describe three personal experiences as a middle school and high school choral conductor-teacher. These "Personal Snapshots" are exactly what the phrase represents—individual portraits illustrating what I know now to have been various stages in my development as a conductor-teacher. In the moment of these teaching segments, I was making instructional decisions based on the knowledge and prior experiences I acquired as a choral music education student and my personal experiences as a member of middle school, high

school, and college choral ensembles. In between the personal snapshots, I will outline philosophical perspectives as they relate to choral music education and will include a detailed description of the skill development continuum, from novice to expert. This chapter will close with the specific purpose statement and problem questions that will guide my research.

Personal Snapshot: The Novice Teacher
First Festival Performance

The stage lights are shining brightly on the young women in the choir, illuminating various shades of gold, caramel, & chocolate on the tops of their heads. Silence falls on the ocean of blackness in the auditorium, except for the occasional cough from an audience member and the haunted house-like creaking sound from one of the risers on the stage. “This is the Lake Highlands High School Women’s Choir, under the direction of Carolyn Cruse,” proclaims the announcer from somewhere in the distance. “They will be singing, ‘What Sweeter Music,’ by Eleanor Daley, ‘My True Love Has My Heart,’ by Eugene Butler, and...” Suddenly my hearts begins racing and thoughts cloud in my mind. “What if I miss the first breath cue?” “Did I rehearse the ‘B’ section of the first piece enough?” “I hope the choir remembers to sing with more musical shaping on the second piece.” Then in the blink of an eye is the moment of truth; after a lifetime of piano lessons and singing in choirs, four years of music education classes, one semester of student teaching, and three months as a new teacher, what seems to be the pinnacle demonstration of talent and skill as a choral conductor-teacher is upon me. The decisions I made in teaching and rehearsing the music have a direct impact on today’s performance. Before raising my arms and cueing the

accompanist, I take one more cleansing breath and smile at the bright, shining faces in front of me. They smile back and I see trust and composure in their eyes. We have created a lasting bond in this brief moment of vulnerability. Then, the music begins...

Philosophical Perspectives

Music education philosophy has convened around two competing approaches over the last decade: aesthetic and praxial. Reimer's philosophy of music education centers on the aesthetic qualities of music (1970, 1989, 2003). He says that musical sounds construct and share meanings that are only available from such sounds. He relates the body, mind, and feelings to the music that human beings experience and believes that they are co-dependent. The meanings that arise out of musical experience are to him what make the experiences valuable.

Elliott, who writes extensively about the paraxial approach to music education philosophy, suggests that the value of music is through experiencing the singing, playing, conducting, and improvising of the music (1995). To him, musicians are making creative decisions about the music while learning to sing, play, conduct, and/or improvise. The focus is on the "doing," instead of the "passive experiencing" of the music. Students learn about the musical works they are performing through the act of performing them. In other words, they are coming to know the musical works in deeper ways than is possible only through the feelings that the works evoke.

Both philosophical opinions are important to consider in the context of the choral music classroom. Students participate in the act of singing musical works, and it is through learning and rehearsing the works that their musical knowledge is developed. The mind and body are also important aspects of choral singing, as singing is primarily a physical activity. Singers

make more meaningful connections with the music they learn and perform by combining the physical acts of singing and performing with the mindful acts of constructing meaning through their choral music experiences. As illustrated in the opening vignette, when Ms. Carter spontaneously chose to facilitate connections between Brahms' musical decisions in the vocal writing and accompaniment and the poetic phrasing, the conductor-teacher has the ultimate role of finding a balance between teaching his or her students to perform the music they are learning and helping them to construct meaning through their performance.

Personal Snapshot: The Advanced Beginner
Making Lists and Checking Them Twice

It is the beginning of October—the first five weeks of the school year went by so quickly! The air has turned crisp, and the leaves on the trees outside the choir room windows are just beginning to turn shades of crimson, burnt orange, and yellow. The Fall Concert was a huge success: no one tripped on their way up the stage steps or as they ascended the risers; the choir students behaved appropriately from their seats in the cafetorium while listening to their peers in other choral ensembles perform; all of the singers showed up in the specified choral uniform (except one young man who tried to wear white socks – thank goodness for the bag of miss-matched black socks left in the choir room over the years!); and not even one singer fainted during the performance. *Whew!*

My mind races as I begin to plan for the next few weeks. So far, so good with the planning and activities on my “choral program checklist” for the year. Next on the choir calendar: Solo & Ensemble Contest and the Winter Concert. I already chose the Winter

Concert repertoire for each choir, and the binder of 7th - and 8th-grade solos (from which the students may choose a piece) is ready to go on top of the piano. Check, check. All I need to do is post a Solo & Ensemble sign-up sheet with before- and after-school time slots for the students to choose their solos. I think I'll assign students that are interested to ensembles from within each class period – this idea worked well last year, and will give the students plenty of in-class time to rehearse. When I describe the solo and ensemble experience and benefits, I can't forget to mention the cool medals! Check, check, check!

Now, for tomorrow's lesson plan...

1) Warm-ups

2) Sight-singing – p. 15-16

3) Introduce Winter Concert piece #1

- Listen to recording
- Number the measures; label solfege syllables m. 1-24
- Individual voice parts on solfege, m. 1-16
- Sing together, m. 1-16

4) Solo & Ensemble Contest description and information

5) Other announcements...

The Continuum of Skill Development

David Berliner, one of the pioneering researchers in the field of teacher effectiveness, outlines five stages of skill development toward expertise in teaching (1988). He draws these stages from a skill acquisition model proposed by Berkeley professors Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus (1986). The stages in the Dreyfus & Dreyfus model are: 1) novice teacher, 2) advanced beginning teacher, 3) competent teacher, 4) proficient teacher, and 5) expert teacher.

Novice or beginning teachers are seldom strangers to the classroom environment. The years spent in elementary and secondary school as students, combined with university courses and pre-service teaching experiences establish a strong foundation in classroom culture and general procedures for new teachers. Once established in their own classroom, novices are most concerned with learning predetermined rules and procedures of the school and for their curriculum (Bell, 1997). In an ensemble setting, these context-free rules and procedures include activities such as beginning each class period with warm-up activities, preparing daily lesson plans, and creating seating charts. Beginning teachers often get caught up in issues of student discipline and classroom management, while neglecting to monitor student learning and assessment (Carter, Cushing, Sabers, Stein, & Berliner, 1988). In the case of beginning choral teachers in performance settings, the emphasis is often on pitches, rhythms, and breath marks, as in the ‘Novice Teacher’ vignette above, instead of building connections between the ensemble members and the compositions they perform.

Teachers in the advanced beginner stage behave similarly to novices in that they are still classifying contexts and labeling events within the classroom. However, they differ from beginning teachers in that they are developing “strategic knowledge—when to ignore or break rules and when to follow them” (Berliner, 1988, p. 3). Advanced beginners are gaining experience, but do not yet have the skill of knowing what is ultimately most important in the context of a class period or rehearsal. This idea is illustrated in the ‘Advanced Beginner’ vignette, as the conductor-teacher is focused on issues related to the choral calendar and the upcoming Solo and Ensemble Contest with the ‘cool medals,’ making sure that music is ready to distribute, and reflecting on the young man who wore white socks to the most recent concert.

The competency stage describes an experienced teacher who is able to make individual decisions and take personal responsibility for his/her instructional choices. A competent teacher, according to Berliner, has “learned through experience what to attend to and what to ignore” (1988, p. 4). In a secondary ensemble setting, a teacher exhibiting competency traits might choose to begin the class with only a few warm-ups, and continue warming up through sight-singing activities or with one of the octavos for an upcoming concert, instead of following a specific set of warm-ups at the beginning of each rehearsal period. Competent teachers have experience, which affects their actions and decisions, but they are still unable to distinguish completely between the essential and the trivial in the learning environment. For example, a competent teacher may focus so much attention on an individual student’s lack of participation that she neglects to assess and adapt instruction for the remainder of the class.

Proficiency is the next stage of skill development. Intuition and the ability to identify similarities among different events are two character traits that separate proficient teachers from competent teachers. Intuition in the ensemble classroom includes knowing when to switch gears and rehearse a different musical composition during a class period, even if the ensemble did not reach specified rehearsal goals for a particular piece. Considered “experienced non-experts,” proficient teachers are more in control of their instructional choices, and do not focus on rules and procedures as do teachers in the competency, advanced beginner, and novice stages (Bell, 1997). Identifying similarities across contexts is another proficiency trait. For instance, a proficient ensemble conductor-teacher is able to recognize similarities in form and style, regardless of the number of voice parts and/or instrumentation of a composition, and can use this detection skill to her advantage when introducing new pieces of music.

An expert teacher has gone beyond the rational thinking and planning of the novice, advanced beginner, and competent stages, and has surpassed the intuitive state of the proficient teacher. Experts in a particular field are “acting effortlessly and fluidly, behaving in ways that are not easily described as deductive or analytic” while going about their daily work (Berliner, 1988, p. 6). Expert ensemble conductor-teachers are able to build upon their foundational knowledge of both the musical score and their students’ abilities, and use various techniques from a large “bag of tricks” to foster the creation of meaningful musical experiences. There is fluency in their teaching that allows a negotiation of ideal strategies and techniques in the moment. Just as an Olympic swimmer does not need to count the number of strokes between the flags and the wall before executing a flip turn, expert teachers do not stop to think about the next step that they should take while in the middle of a lesson. They “improvise” through a sequence of learning activities, while constantly monitoring their students’ learning and reinforcing their construction of knowledge.

Improvitational “teaching-in-the-moment” is not the same as extemporaneously teaching without previous planning and preparation. Expert teachers use their foundational knowledge to navigate through the best learning activities for their particular students during the particular class/rehearsal. Berliner concludes his discussion of the expert skill level by noting that when things begin to go awry, the expert takes deliberate, methodical courses of action. However, when all is well, the expert rarely allows himself/herself to be reflective in the moment of teaching (Berliner, 1988). In the following vignette, the conductor-teacher illustrates these ideas by choosing specific strategies to work through the difficult measure, and by remaining “in the zone” during the rehearsal segment, instead of becoming reflective about the choir and/or strategies.

Personal Snapshot: Proficiency
Experience Generates Intuition

“Turn to p. 36 in your musicianship books. Take a look at line one, and raise your hand when you have figured out the key signature. Good! Here is ‘do’ [singing ‘do’], now let’s get into the key [choir sings: ‘do – mi – sol – mi – do – sol₁ – do’]. Let’s audiate the line together, using solfege handsigns. Here is your tempo – ‘one, two, three, and...’ ” The choir begins audiating the eight-measure phrase and I notice that things are going smoothly until measure five, where there is a dotted rhythm and the melody skips from ‘mi’ to ‘la’ at the same time. Measures 6-8 are a free-for-all, and only four of the 32-student 7th-grade treble choir makes it to the end in tempo and with correct solfege handsigns. I choose to isolate measure five, and give the choir 20 seconds to figure out the solfege with handsigns. After asking a few “volunteers” to chant the measure aloud, the choir joins in chanting the measure in solfege, then in audiating the measure with correct solfege handsigns. I know that the skip from ‘mi’ to ‘la’ will come as a surprise in the middle of the phrase, so I lead the choir in a few solfege patterns before we begin singing the example. I make sure to include patterns such as, ‘mi – sol – la – sol’ and ‘mi – la – sol – mi,’ but intersperse them with tonic patterns so that the singers keep audiating where ‘do’ is during their singing. Now, we are ready to sing the entire phrase. I ask the students to “check your posture” and “check your alignment” before leading them in getting into the key. We sing the starting pitch together, then I conduct a full measure, giving a nice low breath on beat four to facilitate a healthy sound as the choir comes in on ‘do – ti₁ – do-re – mi...’

Purpose and Problems

Improvisation-in-action on the podium is at the core of expert conductor-teacher behavior. Master teachers continually re-direct, modify, and refine their teaching strategies based on their knowledge of the abilities and learning styles of the ensemble members and the organic flow of rehearsals (Berliner, 2004). The purpose of this study is to explore how an expert conductor-teacher navigates among rehearsal strategies in the choral rehearsal context.

The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

- 1) What specific rehearsal choices does an expert conductor-teacher make during improvisational teaching in the choral rehearsal context?
- 2) How does an expert conductor-teacher navigate from *desired* outcome to *final product* during choral rehearsals?

As a phenomenological case study of an expert conductor-teacher's improvisational teaching-in-the-moment, this dissertation will provide timely and valuable information for current conductor-teachers, pre-service conductor-teachers, conductor-teacher educators, and researchers in music education.

CHAPTER II

Related Research

The introductory chapter included an outline of David Berliner's (1986) research and his Continuum of Skill Development toward expertise in teaching. In an effort to summarize the theoretical foundation of expertise, the first part of this chapter focuses on theories of expertise and literature that illustrate the behaviors, characteristics, and attributes of expert teachers, and then segues into the important themes and main findings from studies of expertise in general education and music teaching disciplines.

Under the umbrella of teacher expertise, the second part of the related research for this dissertation includes the following four sub-categories: 1) Experience levels of teaching and their relationship to perceptions of teacher expertise and effectiveness, 2) The development of expertise through deliberate practice, 3) Pedagogical decision-making and interactive (i.e. improvisational) teaching, and 4) Case studies of expert teachers. This chapter will conclude with a short summary of research carried out through a phenomenological lens.

Theories of Expertise

Amirault and Branson's (2006) seminal chapter traces the history of theories and models of expertise in educational contexts from the ancient times of Socrates and Plato through the end of the twentieth century. In concentrating on the chapter's inventory of theories and models since World War II, the trend migrated from the militaristic *general systems theory* in the early 1960's to that of *constructivism* in the late 1980s-early 1990s. The authors divide teaching that leads to expertise into three areas that have varying learning requirements: *school subjects*,

criterion performance, and *outstanding expertise* (Amirault & Branson, 2006). *School subjects* refers to academic and co-curricular courses, such as math, history, and music ensembles.

Instruction that allows many “students” to reach a certain performance goal and possibly become certified, such as pilots, lawyers, and real estate agents, is the area of *criterion performance*. The field of *outstanding expertise* is the one-on-one type of training, such as with an Olympic coach or private lessons instructor. Amirault and Branson (2006) make the point that, although each generation has “found ways to reject prior wisdom and strike out on a new direction” in educational expertise, the fact that there are differences in students’ learning requirements has remained constant over time (pp. 82-83).

One central theme of the chapter is that the conflict between “instructivist” and “constructivist” perspectives is not necessarily valid for all types and stages of learning toward expertise in a particular field. For instance, a constructivist learning environment is optimal if the intention is to prepare students for life-long learning, but an instructivist learning environment can be beneficial in preparing law students to pass the bar exam. Amirault and Branson’s (2006) chapter closes with a short discussion of research into expertise as a phenomenon at the end of the twentieth century. The authors point to Ericsson’s (1996, 2005, 2006) empirical research exploring the term *expert performance*, the “consistent, measurable, and reproducible performance of the world’s premier performers in a wide variety of domains” (in Amirault & Branson, 2006, p. 83). They discuss the technique of *deliberate practice* (outlined in depth later in this chapter), and indicate that newer research, with its emphasis on “objective and verifiable assessment of skill levels,” is the principal line of inquiry into the acquisition of expert performance at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Two articles identifying the characteristics of master teachers, although published a decade apart, have similar themes and outcomes (Brand, 1990; Cutietta & Thompson, 2000). Both articles list the desire for excellence in the classroom and intuition as important qualities of expert teachers. The most common thread between the two articles is the belief that music teaching must be student-centered. In connecting this idea to Berliner's continuum of developmental skill, expert teachers must have the ability to accomplish specific learning outcomes while continuing to center instruction around the students' needs. A novice, advanced beginner, or competent teacher would most likely continue to focus on the *content* of the instruction instead of intuitively analyzing the ways students *respond* to instruction.

Gobet's (2005) article applied two computational theories based on chunking models, the original "chunking theory" (Chase and Simon, 1973) and the revision of the chunking theory, or "template theory" (Gobet and Simon, 1996), and he disclosed their implications for education. Chase and Simon's (1973) chunking theory was based on two computer programs, one that proposes learning occurs through the growth of a discrimination system allowing immediate access to long term memory. The other computer program was developed to explain the characteristics of attention and perception in chess. Gobet (2005) defines chunks as "groups or pieces forming perceptual and semantic units" (p. 185). The idea that chess experts have acquired more and larger chunks than weaker players, and they can memorize chess positions presented for only a few seconds better than non-experts, is the foundation of chunking models.

A few of the educational principles derived from the template theory for teaching the game of chess include:

- Teach from the simple to the complex
- Teach from the known to the unknown

- The elements to be learnt should be clearly identified
- Use an ‘improving spiral,’ where you come back to the same concepts and ideas and add increasingly more complex new information
- Encourage students to find a balance between rote learning and understanding
(Gobet, 2005, p. 193)

Although the curriculum sequence may vary between educational domains, expert teachers apply these educational principles in their classrooms on a daily basis. Gobet (2005) suggests that further inquiry into chunking models might provide a more expansive explanation of motivation, and the ways in which experts apply the educational principles.

Studies of Expertise and Teaching

Ericsson (2005) states that recent empirical research into the nature of expertise is “motivated by the goal of studying expertise as a means of improving the training of less skilled individuals” (p. 238). He continues by asserting, “Our growing understanding of what aspects distinguish experts from novices should translate into more effective training” (Ericsson, 2005, p. 238). Studying expert and elite performers in music and chess, according to Ericsson, will offer improved awareness and discernment of the methods by which experts achieve optimal sustained improvement and maintained expert performance (Ericsson, 2005, p. 239).

Other studies have investigated expertise in various teaching fields. Burry and Bolland (1992) studied the characteristics of expert science teaching. The authors set out on a 3-year project to develop a composite description of the expert science teachers in their study, with the intent of using the composite to create an evaluation model “with accompanying assessment instruments” (p. 313). Participants in the study included forty-six excellent science teachers in

grades four through eight, who were nominated by school district and state department of education officials. Burry and Bolland's data collection methods consisted of a classroom observation, pre- and post-observation interviews with the expert teacher, an interview with the school principal, a focus-group interview with a random sample of students from the observed science class, two self-report instruments on grading practices and higher-level thinking skills, and a short student survey about the observed science class. During data collection and analysis, the goal of the project was to focus on the science teacher as *facilitator* of the learning process

Initial findings included the following characteristics and behaviors that describe the excellent science teachers as facilitators of the learning process:

- Has excellent knowledge of the subject matter
- Guides students through the lesson
- Knows what student outcomes should occur
- Models what a scientist is
- Is able to facilitate the students' reconstruction of scientific misconceptions
- Is enthusiastic about teaching science
- Provides clear student expectations
- Is able to weave together knowledge of content and pedagogical skills (Burry & Bolland, 1992, p. 317)

Complete results of the Burry and Bolland (1992) study, along with a description of the development and theoretical premise of the Expert Science Teaching Educational Evaluation Model (ESTEEM), were the focus of an article by Burry-Stock and Oxford (1994). The findings of Burry and Bolland's (1992) study, combined with the draft of the *National Science Education Standards: An Enhanced Sampler* (1993), provided a framework for the ESTEEM assessment

rubrics. The assessment instruments were designed to provide information on five aspects of expert science teaching:

- 1) Classroom observation of teaching and student behaviors
- 2) Recall and conceptual student outcomes for one lesson
- 3) Recall and conceptual student outcome rubric, used at the end of a particular unit of study
- 4) Teacher's self-report of teaching practices, and
- 5) Teacher's self-report of his or her grading practices (Burry-Stock & Oxford, 1994, p. 277-278).

The assessment instruments are rubrics, composed to describe the ideal behaviors of expert science teachers from a constructivist and expert teaching perspective, and utilizing a Likert-type rating scale to measure the teaching practices at five-point intervals.

The authors analyzed data from the forty-six participants including the variables of teacher and student demographics, time spent on various teaching activities, and teachers' cognitive levels. They suggest that this result indicates the pool of expert participants were deficient in constructivist teaching activities. One limitation of the study that the authors noted was they did not always know on what basis the suggested participants were considered "expert." They contend, "We have learned from this study that expert teachers are defined by the criteria on which they are evaluated [in various school/district settings]" and not necessarily on how well they facilitate learning.

These findings are important for educational domains across the curriculum. An assessment model that provides information about what takes place during a specific lesson and offers enlightenment about

“what the students have learned, how the teacher perceives his or her own teaching, how the teacher evaluates student learning and provides feedback to students, the ability of the teacher to reflect on his or her teaching practices and professional habits, and how the teacher assembles content and materials to facilitate student learning of [a subject matter’s] process and content skills” (Burry-Stock & Oxford, 1994, p. 279)

is a valuable tool for any domain. To effectively measure the teaching and *learning* in a particular setting would provide greater insight about a teacher’s practices and abilities and would help to identify the teacher’s position along the skill development continuum. This type of information could prove helpful in identifying expert teachers to serve as mentors in their field and to discern which teachers fall into the competent or proficient categories, in an effort to help them become experts.

In a study investigating the role of subject matter expertise on pedagogical content knowledge, Manross, Fincher, Tan, Choi, and Schemmp (1994) interviewed 10 physical education teachers. Each participant had “demonstrable expertise in at least one subject area in physical education (i.e., a sport or physical activity)” (p. 5), and was teaching in public elementary or middle schools at the time of the research. The authors interviewed each participant four times following Grossman’s (1990) previous research on pedagogical content knowledge. During the first interview, the authors determined the participants’ experience with and participation in physical activity, and assigned an expert and non-expert subject area to each informant. The second interview was a planning session—each participant developed two hypothetical middle school units, one in the area of their expertise, and one in the non-expert subject area. The content of the third interview involved the teaching of a particular middle school level skill lesson in both expert and non-expert subjects. In the fourth interview, the

participants recalled details about a recently taught unit, with the intent of comparing the hypothetically-designed lessons and the informants' actual teaching.

The authors presented the study's findings in the context of similarities and differences in pedagogical content knowledge associated with teachers' level of subject matter expertise.

Grossman's (1990) definition of pedagogical content knowledge includes the following four components:

- 1) Knowledge and beliefs about the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels
 - 2) Knowledge of students' understanding, conceptions, and misconceptions of subject matter,
 - 3) Knowledge of curriculum materials available for teaching a subject and knowledge of horizontal and vertical curricula for the subject, and
 - 4) Knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics
- (Manross, et al., 1994, p. 6).

In the grade level component, the results indicated that the beliefs and purposes about student learning were constant, regardless of subject matter expertise. The participants classified students as beginning, intermediate, or advanced owners of the subject, apart from their grade levels. The teachers' level of subject matter expertise also appeared insignificant in their analysis of the students' previous knowledge (understanding) of subject matter. Both subject matter experts and non-experts perceived their students as having little comprehension of or previous experience with physical education subject matter, regardless of the curriculum area.

Manross, et al. (1994) identified the following significant differences between teaching expert and non-expert subject matters: a.) detection of problems in student learning and

perception, b.) comprehensively planning and organizing subject matter, c.) contentment and enthusiasm for teaching, and d.) modification strategies to accommodate a range of learner skills and abilities. An understanding of the influential role that subject matter expertise plays in pedagogical content knowledge is one implication of this study. Capitalizing on how experts think about and prepare for teaching in their domain of expertise can help mentors and teacher educators train non-experts. Similarly, teachers in a certain domain who consider themselves expert in one area, but non-expert in another area, can aim to transfer their conceptions and teaching practices to the non-expert area, thus making the most of their expertise in a certain field.

Snow (1998) investigated ways to improve the preparation of preservice conductor-teachers for “real-world teaching experiences” (p. 6) and assist their development of expertise in teaching. The primary goal of her study was to develop an alternative process for rehearsal planning in the choral teaching context, and “whether [the] alternative process ... would yield improved planning practices by novice conductor-teachers” (p. 201). Six undergraduate students enrolled in a secondary choral methods course served as participants in the study. Snow played the dual role of teacher and researcher (teacher/researcher) in the context of the choral methods class, which allowed her to have close, personal proximity to the participants and construction of rehearsal planning processes.

Data were collected throughout the semester and consisted of participants’ choral score analyses, rehearsal plans for teaching segments, written assignments, self and peer reflections on conducting and conducting-teaching segments, and teacher/researcher field notes and personal reflections. The primary form of data, rehearsal plans for teaching segments, transformed into a visual model of brainstorming, or webbed planning, for teaching. Snow (1998) used an open

coding procedure to analyze teaching plans individually, and then as a collective chunk of data. In organizing the coding results, she divided the collective coding information into three categories: 1) characteristics of teaching plan, including dimensions, mode, and imaginings; 2) teaching ideas incorporated into student visioning/brainstorming, to uncover the participants' pedagogical knowledge; and 3) relationship of the teaching plan to impending teaching, including whether participants' planning is related to the specific teaching segment and the presence of assessment embedded in the plan.

In her summary, Snow (1998) provides several implications for preservice conductor-teacher training. The participants showed an expansion of teacher thinking and “far richer imagining and visioning for teaching” (p. 204) with the brainstorming model. They also showed evidence of a greater linking between “musical content knowledge and growing pedagogical knowledge” (p. 204), due in part to the emphasis of score analysis in the process of the teaching plan. Snow states that a principal observation during the project was the increase in the number of prospective teaching strategies and connections between musical knowledge and teaching decisions. “The class began to think of the brainstorming process as a form of improvisation...” (p. 208). The brainstorming/webbed planning model of rehearsal plans facilitated a deeper understanding of musical knowledge, a growing awareness of pedagogical knowledge, and a bonding of the two ideas in the participants' teaching.

Experience Levels of Teaching Related to Expertise

Experience Levels in General Education Settings

In one of his earlier studies, Berliner showed slides of teacher-student interactions including various classroom activities, a class set of tests, textbooks, and student information

cards to three groups: master teachers, novice teachers, and experts in other fields without teaching experience (1986). He found that expert teachers had the ability to recognize evidence while viewing the slides and make correct inferences about the tasks taking place, and of capabilities of the students. The novice teachers and experts from other occupational fields focused their attention on specific student information and attempted to draw connections between the various activities inferred by the slides. The expert teachers exhibited the ability to label the classroom environment through deductive reasoning based on their previous experience, while the novice teachers and non-teachers were only able to analyze the slides in a literal sense.

Henry (1994) studied the instructional decision-making processes of academic classroom teachers in different stages of development, from preservice (novice) teachers to expert teachers. The results showed that expert teachers tended to rate the enhancement of student understanding and motivation higher than do teachers who fall into the competent and proficient stages. The expert teachers in this study also listed “compatibility of the instruction to their own philosophy and experience of success” as being an important characteristic of effective teaching. Advanced beginning and competent teachers rated colleague support and external approval of teaching higher than did their expert teacher peers. Henry concluded with the hypothesis that there may be quantitative differences in characteristics of teaching between expert teachers and non-experts who have been teaching for 15 or more years. A topic for future research might include the factors that allow “experienced non-experts” to remain in the competent and proficient stages, instead of moving up the continuum to the expert stage.

Experience Levels in Music Teaching

Several studies have focused on music teaching and various levels of teaching experience, the topics of which include: comparing the perceptions of varying experience levels (“expert” versus “novice”) of music conductor-teachers include the use of a rehearsal frame as an instructional tool (Irwin, 2006); the focusing of attention compared to number of years of teaching experience (Madsen & Cassidy, 2005); and the perceptions of factors affecting expertise in teaching (Sogin & Wang, 2002; Standley & Madsen, 1991; Szabo, 1989).

Anderson-Nickel (1997) compared and contrasted six “less experienced” and six “more experienced” elementary general music teachers to identify characteristics of teacher expertise. The author used Berliner’s continuum of developmental stages to observe the ways in which these teachers organized musical and instructional knowledge. Emergent themes of teacher behavior included responses in the classroom, discipline, use of routines, student involvement, pacing, concern for student learning, planning, adapting the lesson to meet the students’ needs, music objectives, evaluation and assessment, and teacher preparation. One would expect to find differences in the ways teachers with varying levels of experience respond to the list of teacher behaviors. An important finding of this study was that teachers on both ends of the developmental stages continuum were effective in the areas of lesson planning, pacing, and eliciting student participation. Anderson-Nickel identified teacher reflection as a behavior that separated the advanced beginner and competent teachers from the proficient and expert teachers in expertise.

In several studies, researchers compared preservice teachers’ perceptions of expertise in teaching to those of experienced teachers. Teachout (1997) provided a list of specific teacher skills to preservice and experienced teachers, and asked them to rate the skills based on their

perceptions of the most important skills teachers need during the first three years of teaching.

Seven out of the ten top-ranked skills were common to both groups:

- Be mature and have self-control
- Be able to motivate students
- Possess strong leadership skills
- Involve students in the learning process
- Display confidence
- Be organized, and
- Employ a positive approach (p. 45).

Of the seven skills ranked in the top ten of both groups, “Be able to motivate students” was ranked second by both the preservice and experienced teachers, and “Display confidence” came in third and fourth by the experienced teachers and preservice teachers, respectively. Teachout’s list of teacher skills contained 40 items, and both groups ranked “Possess proficient piano skills” and “Singing skills” as 39th and 40th, respectively. The results of this particular study indicate that teacher educators are doing a good job of exposing preservice teachers to the skills they need to be successful during the first few years of teaching.

Perceptions of Teaching and Teacher Effectiveness

Researchers have investigated students’ perceptions of teachers and teachers’ perceptions of their colleagues in relation to expertise in teaching and teaching effectiveness. Clarridge & Berliner (1991) studied perceptions of student behavior from the perspectives of expert, advanced beginner, and novice general academic teachers. They found differences in the ways that the teachers discussed classroom behavior and handled misbehavior, but there were

similarities in how the teachers of varying career levels predicted future classroom behavior. The expert and advanced beginning teachers tended to view classroom behavior as a greater indicator of effectiveness than did the novice teachers.

Another study evaluating teacher effectiveness utilized four groups of participants: 1) 6th-8th grade stringed instrument music students, 2) 9th-12th grade stringed instrument music students, 3) undergraduate stringed instrument music students, and 4) experienced stringed instrument music teachers (DeFreitas, 2005). The variables included correct/incorrect teacher sequential instruction patterns, effective/ineffective behaviors of teacher delivery style, and on-task/off-task student behaviors. Participants rated their perceived teacher effectiveness and provided written comments to support their rating. Results from the written data showed that all four groups were more likely to identify the ineffective teacher behaviors and off-task student behaviors than effective teacher behaviors and on-task student behaviors. From the results of this particular study, it is possible that secondary school and undergraduate students know when a teacher is *ineffective*, but may not be accurate when asked to determine a teacher's effectiveness. In a similar study using the same subject groups, Madsen (2003) found that teacher delivery was the most important variable when determining teacher effectiveness. In fact, when the class was attentive and the teacher was participating with a "high" delivery style (fast-paced and energetic), the teacher received high effectiveness ratings, even when imparting inaccurate knowledge.

Hamann, Lineburgh, and Paul (1998) published a study that investigated the relationships between teaching effectiveness scores and ratings of social skills. They found several positive relationships between teachers' social skill levels and teaching effectiveness among preservice

teachers, including nonverbal communication skills, receiving and interpreting nonverbal communication of others, and social control, or the ability to guide the direction and content of communication in social situations. In predicting the potential for teacher effectiveness, the results of the study suggested that, “preservice teachers who are emotionally sensitive to and can accurately interpret emotional cues of others should tend to be effective teachers” (p. 97).

Fox and Beamish (1989) investigated the “potential to be effective” by identifying the music teacher competencies perceived as necessary for success in teaching New York’s state-implemented high school general music course. The first phase of the study was the compilation and evaluation of a list of recommended teaching competencies. In the second phase of the study, New York high school general music teachers had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire, which solicited their opinions of the compiled list of competencies. The 39-item competency list included a 5-point Likert scale and requested demographic information, including length of teaching experience, gender, and date of college graduation. From the 102 survey responses, the resultant rankings of teaching competencies by category were (1 is the highest ranking; 5 is the lowest ranking): 1) personal characteristics; 2) classroom management; 3) curriculum and instruction; 4) basic musicianship and knowledge; 5) technology, and 5) applied music. Flexibility, creativity, a sense of humor, and knowledge of student interests formed the specific comments under the highest-ranked “personal characteristics” competency category.

The authors list several implications from this study in the fields of teaching and teacher education. First, preparation for teaching high school general music should be included “as an integral function” of preservice teacher training programs (Fox & Beamish, 1989, p. 34). Second, when identifying and appointing experienced teachers to a high school general music

course, personal qualities seem to be the most important criteria. The authors further point out that “successful general music teaching cannot necessarily be predicted by previous success in conducting ensembles” (p. 34). The third implication from this study is the potential for further research and curriculum development in the area of high school general music. Many states, including New York, have adopted a one-year fine arts course requirement. When students have not been playing or singing in organized music ensembles since elementary or middle school, a high school general music course is a prime opportunity to reach students through music and allow them to explore their musical potential.

Preservice music teachers frequently serve as subjects in research related to teacher effectiveness. Butler (1999, 2001) investigated the relationship among preservice teachers’ perceptions of teaching effectiveness, microteaching experiences, and teaching performance. Results provided support for the microteaching experiences that take place in most undergraduate music education courses, even though many colleges and university preservice teachers do not participate in the act of teaching until the junior year. Butler’s qualitative results shed light onto how preservice teachers form ideas about teaching effectiveness. “Their conceptions of an effective teacher incorporated elements of role, image, and personality to create a more cogent and tangible view of effective teaching” (Butler, 2001, p. 268).

Specific Behaviors Related to Effectiveness in Music Teaching

Since the inception of empirical research into expertise in teaching and teacher effectiveness, researchers have focused on various behaviors exhibited by expert teachers in varying domains, including music teaching. Yarbrough and Madsen utilized undergraduate music majors as subjects in their study on the presence or lack of specific teaching behaviors of expert teachers (1998). The authors listed the 10 categories of student and teacher behavior as

time use, musicianship, accuracy of presentation, student attentiveness, student performance quality, enthusiasm, intensity, pacing, personality, and overall effectiveness. Results showed that the highest rated behaviors included less off-task student behavior, a higher percentage of teacher praise (approvals), more eye contact by the teacher, more activity changes, and the average length of both teacher and student activities was 5 to 6 seconds. When the subjects rated the teacher's "intensity" at a high level, they also tended to rate the use of rehearsal time and performance quality as better, and enthusiasm as higher, even though these attributes fall into separate categories.

Several studies have evaluated music teacher effectiveness using variables such as patterned instruction, student attentiveness, and teacher delivery. Bowers (1990) studied the connection between specific sequential patterns of instruction to overall teacher effectiveness. The results revealed significance between the teacher effectiveness ratings and four variables related to reinforcement and accurate teacher delivery, but no significant difference in teacher effectiveness scores based on amount of instruction in sequential patterns.

Additional research exclusively about the behaviors of expert music teachers has concentrated on teacher-conductors' use of time during rehearsals (Arthur, 2002; Davis, 1998; Goolsby, 1996; Pence, 1999; Witt, 1986; Yarbrough, Dunn, & Baird, 1996); verbal instruction (Goolsby, 1997); score study and preparation for rehearsals (Crowe, 1996; Goolsby, 1999; Lane, 2006; Snow, 1998); and on eye contact during rehearsals (Harden, 2000).

Deliberate Practice and the Development of Expertise

Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch- Römer (1993) coined the term *deliberate practice* to signify "a regimen of effortful activities designed to optimize improvement" across a wide range

of domains (p. 363). In their seminal article, the authors suggest that deliberate practice has a direct influence on the attainment of expert performance, or expertise, in a particular field, and that characteristics once believed to indicate natural talent are actually the result of diligent practice activities. According to Ericsson, et al., deliberate practice is more than simply going through the motions of repetition or the casual rehearsal of a given task. It includes activities based on the performer's existing knowledge and skill level and is designed to advance performance capabilities on a single, specific skill. An expert participates in deliberate practice activities with the specific goal of maximizing performance; the practice is effortful and demands full attention, it is not necessarily enjoyable, and unlike professional performance, does not lead to immediate social or financial rewards (Ericsson, et al., 1993).

Baker, Côté, and Abernethy (2003) interviewed expert and non-expert athletes in an effort to identify training activities that help in the development of expertise in decision-making sports. The authors also examined differences between the type and quantity of the training activities in which the expert and non-expert athletes participated. The expert group consisted of 15 Australian national team athletes (eight men and seven women), each nominated by their team coaches as being among the best decision-makers in their sport (including netball, field hockey, and basketball) worldwide. Non-experts were athletes with more than 10 years of experience in their sport, but with participation at the state level. The non-expert group included seven men and six women. Both groups participated in an extensive structured interview that questioned various aspects of the athletes' practice histories.

First, for each year of association with their sport, the experts and non-experts listed all activities related to the sport in which they participated. The athletes then indicated whether they participated in various activities from a researcher-developed list:

- Indirect involvement (e.g., watching games on television or live)
- Organized games with rules supervised by self and peers,
- Organized games supervised by coach(es) or adults(s)
- Individualized instruction,
- Self-initiated training (e.g., skill training alone that is initiated by the athlete)
- Organized competition in groups supervised by adults(s) (Baker, et al., p. 343)

The participants specified the number of hours per week and months per year of their involvement for each activity, and they rated each of the specific training activities (i.e. deliberate practice activities) on a Likert-type scale based on their supposed effectiveness in developing “essential component skills in perception, decision making, movement execution, and physical fitness” (p. 343).

The researchers found that, not only did the expert athletes report spending more time in training activities, but they also allocated more time to participating in certain specific activities that they and nonexperts considered most effective in developing the essential component skills for expert performance. The athletes identified video training, organized team practice, individual instruction with the coach, and competition as the most important activities for developing expertise in their particular sport. In addition, the results were consistent generally with those of Ericsson, et al. (1993), who suggested that deliberate practice is the most effective form of training for developing expert performance.

Baker, Côté & Abernethy’s findings (2003) are significant in relation to deliberate practice activities in the discipline of team sports, but they also have implications for the deliberate practice activities and expertise development of choral conductor-teachers. Research about the various practice activities in which choral conductor-teachers participate and the

amounts of time spent doing them could reveal specific practice behaviors that are more important to the development of expertise than other practice activities. For example, Snow (2009) suggests choral conductor-teachers practice the vocal parts of a choral work by singing one vocal part and simultaneously playing another vocal part on the piano. This type of deliberate practice may be more helpful in the development of expertise than practicing the vocal parts one-at-a-time, even though the conductor-teacher is ultimately learning all of the vocal parts with either practice activity.

According to Ericsson (2005), research findings are consistent in their indication that differences in levels of expertise are entirely attributable to the magnitude and quality of deliberate practice. Schempp and Johnson (2006) echoed this mantra and suggested, “to improve in teaching, teachers must deliberately practice their teaching skills” (p. 32).

Pedagogical Decision-Making and Interactive Teaching

Inquiry into teachers’ pedagogical decisions and the interactive, or improvisational, nature of teaching most often interweaves into one category of empirical research. Studying the decisions that teachers make in the moment of teaching leads to an examination and discussion of the interactive nature of the learning environment. In an early review of literature pertaining to teachers’ pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions, and behavior, Shavelson and Stern (1981) used a behaviorist approach to formulate “models” of these behaviors and made recommendations for future research, including:

- The need to develop a taxonomy of critical teaching decisions, which link these decisions to their consequences in the classroom;

- The need to intervene and alter teachers' plans and decisions in our research, as well as describe them, with the goal of improving teaching; and,
- The need to link recommendations based on research to the implementation of them in practice (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, p. 455).

Using a less behaviorist approach, Yinger (1977, 1986, 1987) set out to study and describe teachers' thinking-in-action. In describing the theoretical conception of teaching as improvisational performance, Yinger (1987) draws comparisons between improvising in the moment of teaching and traditional oral poetry, improvisational theater, musical improvisation, and conversation as improvisation. Citing examples of the Yugoslavian oral song/poems and Serbo-Croatian oral songs, he uses the phrase "composition-improvisation" to describe the oral poetry tradition (p. 9-10). The oral poetry performances are not based on recalling the songs from memory, but are reconstructed within certain performance limitations. Similarly, improvisational theater is built around a set of "rules" or a certain plot/scenario organization of which each actor is aware, allowing the improvised performance to be played out on stage.

Musical improvisation has its own set of "rules" or parameters that a musician must follow. Yinger (1987) writes, "[musical] improvisation is grounded in well learned pathways and techniques providing formulaic and thematic guidance to composition/performance" (p. 20). A musician must have a thorough knowledge of the melody and chord structure of a particular tune, so that the performance becomes "patterned thought so embodied in action that it is experienced as 'ways of the hand'" (p. 20). Conversation often is portrayed as "improvisational action conducted within generally specified, social, and culturally organized boundaries" (p. 22). Comparing "improvisational teaching" to the idea of "conversation as improvisation" is perhaps the most effective way to describe what takes place in a classroom in-the-moment of instruction.

Erikson (1982) depicts classroom lessons as “partially bounded situations in which teachers and students follow previously learned, culturally normative ‘rules’ and also innovate by making new kinds of sense together in adapting to the fortuitous circumstances of the moment” (p. 166). He says that a classroom culture is made up of “academic task structures,” or parts of a lesson that characterize the learning environment, and “social participation structures,” or the configuration of all the roles of all the collaborators in the interactional event (Erikson, 1982). These comparisons of improvisational teaching to other forms of improvisation allow teachers to view teaching episodes as “structured conversations” during which they can skillfully navigate through teaching strategies and content knowledge (Yinger, 1982).

In a descriptive article about pedagogical decision-making, McNergney, Lloyd, Mintz, and Moore (1988) revealed the use of “new” methodological and technological developments to “enhance the pedagogical knowledge and skills of preservice teachers” (p. 37). The authors describe two “microcomputer” programs designed to simulate teaching situations—an Interactive Teaching Simulation and a Preactive Teaching Simulation. In the Interactive Teaching Simulation, a preservice teacher faces a video monitor displaying “students” and teaches them a short lesson, while an operator serves as the “voice” of the students, providing answers to the teacher’s questions (from a pre-determined list) and entering codes for each action of the teacher. The authors assert that studies of the simulated teaching sessions reveal an increase in participants’ ability to provide suitable instructional techniques, such as “praising appropriate behavior and ignoring inappropriate behavior” (p. 40).

The Preactive Teaching Simulation, called Preactive Decision Exercises (PreDEx), takes into account that the decisions teachers make are generally categorized as *preactive*, or planning, decisions and as *interactive* decisions made in the moment of teaching. During the PreDEx

simulation, preservice teachers come across problems designed to investigate their abilities to think through “realistic classroom situations requiring action” and to choose from supporting knowledge to make planning decisions, or “to find relevant facts about the situation, to interpret them, and to use their professional training to forecast a reasonable course of action” (p. 40-41). Design and use of both the Interactive Teaching Simulation and PreDEx were efforts to make the most of the new technological developments at the time to provide simulated teaching experiences for preservice teachers, while concurrently developing methods of experimental interactions to assist in the acquisition of professional knowledge.

Borko and Livingston (1989) examined pedagogical expertise by comparing the planning, teaching, and postlesson reflections of three student teachers with those of their cooperating teachers. The study took place over one week of instruction in a mathematics classroom (two secondary and one elementary), and the data collection methods included observation of the lessons and pre- and post-lesson interviews. The authors analyzed differences in lesson preparation, teaching, and reflection between the student teachers and cooperating teachers through the lens of “perceiving teaching as a complex cognitive skill” and as “improvisational performance” (p. 474-475).

The cross-case analysis revealed certain patterns in the area of improvisational performance, or “interactive teaching.” While the expert teachers (cooperating teachers) displayed differences in teaching style (i.e. presenting new information), all three kept the lesson on track and accomplished their objectives, while at the same time encouraging students’ questions and observations to be springboards for further discussion.

“When problems were needed to illustrate or reinforce concepts and skills, they successfully generated them on the spot ... [and] achieved a balance between content-

centered and student-centered instruction with what appeared to be minimal use of written plans or textbooks” (Borko & Livingston, 1989, p. 481).

One of the expert participants described his interactive teaching as looking like a tennis match:

“I sort of do a little and then they do a little. And then I do a little and then they do a little...

And it depends upon their action what my reaction’s going to be” (p. 484). Borko and

Livingston (1989) point out that the expert teachers’ ability to provide quick examples or illustrations of concepts and draw relationships between students’ comments or questions and the lesson’s goals determined the success of their improvisational teaching.

As one may expect, the novice teachers’ (student teachers) interactive teaching was not as successful or seamless as that of their cooperating teachers. The results showed that the novices’ planned objectives and teaching moves were consistently clear and easy to follow, but the novices ran into difficulty during the lessons when students asked questions that were not part of their preconceived plan. Significant problems occurred when the student teachers attempted to give additional explanations and/or clarification of concepts without linking them to previous knowledge.

The authors concluded by offering recommendations for student teacher programs to enhance preservice teachers’ interactive teaching abilities. One such recommendation was to limit the amount of full-time teaching responsibility during the student teaching semester. By reducing the number of classes/courses that the student teacher is required to handle full-time, the novices would be able to focus on comprehensive pedagogical content preparation. Borko and Livingston (1989) made the point that novices are still creating schemata for all aspects of teaching, including skills such as classroom management and organization of instructional activities, skills that their cooperating teachers already have refined. With less time on their feet

teaching and more time to enhance pedagogical content knowledge, including brainstorming all of the possible ways of teaching a particular lesson or concept, and reflection skills, student teachers may be able to improve their improvisational teaching.

Hornbach (2005) studied the nature of teacher initiatives and children's responses in early childhood music classes. She discovered that responses from the teacher and/or child sometimes became an initiative for the child and/or teacher, and used the phrase, 'interactive response chain' to define these initiatives and responses (p. 107). Hornbach (2005) used the analogy of improvisatory theater to describe the intuitive interchanges between the teacher and children, and called the interactive response chain an "improvisatory musical conversation between the teacher and child" (p. 112).

The purpose of Lobman's (2006) study was to use improvisation ('improv' in her words) as a lens for observing and describing teacher-child interactions. Lobman (2006) defined improv as "an activity where the players work collectively to create an unscripted scene or story" (p. 456). She asserts that, when improv is used as a lens to view elementary and secondary classrooms, researchers have discovered that expert teachers begin with an idea or plan for learning outcomes, but the moment-by-moment activity unfolds during the class and in collaboration with the students.

An experienced early childhood teacher served as the participant, and the research took place in a play-based classroom of 14 children between the ages of 21- and 38-months. Data collection consisted of participant observations and interviews and took place over 16 weeks. One major finding from the analysis of the teacher-child interactions through the lens of improv is the suggestion that "responsiveness was a two-way street, and involved the teachers and children using each other's words and gestures to create something together" (Lobman, 2006, p.

461). This idea of interactional teaching, or interactional “allowing,” proves to be an important feature of a student-centered environment.

Sawyer (2004) uses the phrase, “disciplined improvisation” in his literature review on the nature of improvisational teaching. He first pointed out that the “teaching as performance” metaphor of the late-1970s and early-1980s emphasized important teaching skills such as “presentation, delivery, voice, movement, and timing,” but implied the teacher role as that of a solo performer “reading from a script, with the students as the passive, observing audience” (p. 12). To replace the phrase, “teaching as performance,” Sawyer provides a theoretical foundation and examples of empirical research that support “teaching as improvisational performance.”

In one study of improvised theater dialogues, Sawyer (2003) compared classroom discussion and theater improvisation, calling them emergent because it is not possible to predict and outcome in advance, and collaborative because “the outcome is collectively determined by all participants” (p. 13). His implications state that a successful classroom discussion emerges from classroom discourse and is not notated by the lesson plan or by the teacher’s predetermined objectives; Sawyer (2004) labeled the interaction of classroom discussion as *collaborative emergence*.

Sawyer (2004) states that disciplined improvisation recognizes the need for a curriculum and that some sense of structure is still necessary in the classroom environment. He compares disciplined improvisation in teaching to that stage performers and jazz musicians: improve actors use boundaries and plot organizations to govern their performances, while jazz musicians use the melodic skeleton and chord structure of a particular tune to guide their improvisation. He says, “In disciplined improvisation, teachers locally improvise within an overall global structure” (p. 16).

In his conclusions, Sawyer (2004) lists five implications of the “disciplined improvisation” metaphor for education:

- 1) “Teaching as improvisational performance” provides a foundation for a constructivist learning environment
- 2) New empirical research is beginning to explore the moment-to-moment processes in which constructivist learning is the outcome of collaborative discourse (i.e. this dissertation)
- 3) Studies of classroom learning activities have shown the benefits of collaborative discussion over lecture lessons
- 4) Novice teachers need routines, but need to practice early and often how to apply them with variation and embellishment, and
- 5) Novice teachers need also to learn how to implement “ground rules” of effective classroom discussion while allowing disciplined improvisation to continue (p. 17-18)

One final implication offered by Sawyer (2004), specifically for teacher education, is that preservice teacher training programs can take advantage of techniques and learning strategies taught to aspiring improvisational actors, to help improve their “in-the-moment” skills.

Case Studies of Expert Teachers

Many researchers have used case studies to identify characteristics related to expertise in teaching (Fiocca, 1986; Dolloff, 1994; Hamann, Baker, McAllister & Bauer, 2000; King, 1998; Smith, 1999; Snow, 1998; Tyson, 1988; and Worthington, 1992). While the discipline areas vary from mathematics to physical education and from music ensembles to science, one common thread is the desire to “bottle up” whatever it is that makes an expert teacher “expert” and share it

with all teachers so that they, too, may become more like experts. This section will describe four case studies of expert teachers: one in a general education setting, one in a band ensemble setting, and two in a choral ensemble setting.

Smith's (1999, 2004) descriptive case study utilized a prototype view of teaching to interpret, analyze, and describe the behaviors and verbal responses of three expert classroom teachers. Citing Sternberg and Horvath's (1995) assertion that no distinct standard characterizes all experts, and that, "Experts bear a family resemblance to one another, and it is their resemblance to one another that structures the category 'expert'" (p. 9; in Smith, 2004, p. 358), Smith explored the idea of family resemblance among expert teachers.

Smith (2004) derived the "prototype" concept from Sternberg and Horvath's (1995) research about expert teachers. Their definition of a prototype is "the central tendency of feature values across all valid members of the category" (p. 10; in Smith, 2004, p. 359), and Smith calls the prototype model an artificially created framework meant to stimulate research and debate. Smith (2004) lists the following benefits of the prototype model in the research of expertise:

- Allows a richer, more descriptive, and inclusive understanding of teacher expertise without making everyone a presumptive expert;
- Provides a basis for understanding "general factors" in teaching expertise; and
- Provides a basis for understanding and anticipating social judgments about teaching expertise (p. 359).

Of the three expert teachers who served as participants in the study, one was National Board certified in the Early Adolescence/English Language Arts area, and two were certified in the Middle Childhood/Generalist area. Smith (2004) collected data in the form of interviews, audio recordings of lessons, lesson plans, participant surveys, field notes, and artifacts containing

documented accomplishments. Six “central tendencies” forming a prototype view of expert teachers emerged from the data: 1) self- and professional-confidence, 2) view of classroom as community of learners, 3) personal and working relationships with students to maximize student learning, 4) student-centered learning environment, 5) school- and community-wide leadership and service, and 6) expertise in content area. The findings related to central tendencies five and six seem to emphasize the participants’ well-developed understanding of the social and political contexts of teaching. Smith took an “exploratory and generative” (p. 370) approach by using the prototype model to describe expertise in teaching. She suggests that continuing to study teachers in the environment of their classroom and school is may help refine the prototype of expert teachers’ central tendencies.

King (1992, 1998) conducted a case study of an exemplary band conductor-teacher. He collected data over a full school year including participant observations, interviews, ethnographic field notes, and other artifacts. King sought to immerse himself in the participant’s teaching environment and produce “a rich, thick description of the personal and professional qualities of a well respected music educator” (King, 1998, p. 57). The principal themes that emerged from the King’s data were:

- High level verbal and non-verbal language is essential to become an exemplary teacher
- Routines and organization provide the framework for artistry in teaching
- Humor is essential for exemplary teaching
- A quality environment is conducive to quality teaching and learning (p. 62-68)

The participant, a 28-year veteran in a single band ensemble setting, believes that “the teacher’s role is one of facilitation” (King, 1998, p. 70). King noted that the participant has high

expectations for his students and has been able to help his students attain high standards consistently throughout his career. An implication of this naturalistic case study is that the contextual information learned from the teaching environment can supplement information from other studies about experts from within other domains.

In a longitudinal descriptive case study, Dolloff (1994) observed and documented the learning experiences of 23 junior and intermediate division choral conductor-teachers over three years of in-service clinics and workshops with a master choral conductor-teacher, with the intent of providing a model for the development of teachers' professional expertise. The in-service workshops (i.e. choral development project) offered a rich opportunity to observe a "multi-layered, intensive example of in-service teacher education" (p. 267).

Data included field notes, video recordings of the participants' practicum experiences and from teacher seminars, rehearsal/demonstrations, and concerts, and participant questionnaires. Dolloff (1994) defined several significant features that contributed to the preparation of expert teachers: 1) the longitudinal nature of the teacher in-service project, 2) the "masterclass" setting of a conductor-teacher observing a master teacher with her own students (and participant-observing in the same setting), and 3) the alternation of practicum and instruction. A key component of the development of expertise in teaching in Dolloff's study was the opportunity for the teacher-conductors to put their learning into immediate practice with their own students. The participants watched a model of expert teaching, had the opportunity to model expert teaching with guidance from the master teacher, and then went back to their own school environments to put the modeled teaching into practice.

Modeling and verbal instruction played significant roles in the growth and development of teacher expertise of participants in this study. Another significant finding of Dolloff's study

was the interaction, or “interconnectedness,” of the three choral project components: teacher seminars, teacher implementation, and rehearsal/demonstrations. Dolloff recommended the following avenues for future research: 1) replication of the study in the context of another in-service development project; and 2) exploration of the in-service framework as an enhancement of preservice conductor-teacher education.

Worthington’s (1992) seminal study about expert decision-making used an ethnographic methodology to describe two successful high school choral music conductor-teachers’ interactive decision-making (IDM), and compared the IDM of these teachers to existing models (Shavelson and Stern, 1981; Fogarty, Wang, and Creek, 1983). She set out to address two main objectives: 1) to investigate the nature of the interactive thoughts, decisions, and actions of high school choral music teachers in the rehearsal setting, and 2) to describe the thoughts, decisions, and actions, synthesizing them into a visual representation of those teachers’ interactive decision-making strategies. Worthington employed comprehensive selection criteria to choose the two “successful” participants in the study, stating that each participant should have:

- A minimum of ten years’ experience teaching choral music
- Taught in the current teaching position for at least five years prior to the study
- Received good festival performance ratings for two years before the study, and
- a documented positive and caring classroom manner, citing that “research on effective teaching identifies a positive and caring attitude as an attribute of an effective teacher (Fiocca, 1986; in Worthington, 1992, p. 53).

The researcher observed each informant four times, and administered a pre-observation interview and a post-observation viewing of the rehearsal during each observation. The purpose of the pre-observation interview was to allow the conductor-teacher to discuss his plans for the

rehearsal and to enable the researcher to determine if the participant's plans were "mental or written" (Worthington, 1992, p. 58). During the post-observation viewing of each rehearsal, the conductor-teachers participated in a stimulated recall procedure so that the researcher could uncover each informant's thought processes at each instructional decision point viewed on a videotape.

Worthington (1992) used checklists to compare the decision-making of the participants with the existing models. Analysis of the results revealed that both conductor-teacher's IDM was "embedded in the philosophies, beliefs, and routines that they brought to their teaching" (p. 122). She makes the point that, while individual decisions and consequential actions were spontaneously in-the-moment of teaching, "they were guided by preexisting notions that the teachers held, such as the purpose of music education, the abilities of their students, the ideal choral sound, the importance of certain musical and technical concepts, and the effectiveness of specific teaching techniques" (p. 122). One implication of her study involves the teaching of decision-making strategies to preservice choral conductor-teachers. Worthington suggests, "a knowledge of interactive decision-making could help preservice teachers understand the importance of developing skill in the identification of musical and technical problems" (p. 126).

Although Worthington (1992) acknowledges that the participants' IDM were grounded in their personal philosophies and teaching patterns, she does not draw a connection between a thorough knowledge of the musical score and IDM. The purpose of the study was more concerned with comparing the participants' IDM to previous models and creating a hybrid model of the conductor-teachers' decision-making, and did not go into detail about the participants' preparation for rehearsal, knowledge of the musical score(s), or familiarity with their students' varying learning needs and styles.

Phenomenological Inquiry

Phenomenology is a broad term that can signify a philosophy, a method of research, or a theoretical framework. As a method of research, phenomenology is the study of “conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view” (Smith, 1995, p. 1). Phenomenology also can signify a certain paradigm of empirical research used to guide inquiry. When researchers use phenomenology as a research paradigm, the focus is on the persons involved in the research. Researchers set aside their own beliefs and familiarizations to the life-world so that they can pay attention to the ways in which others construct their own individual life-worlds (Emmanuel, 2002). The objects of phenomenological research are “persons” instead of “subjects,” to highlight the uniqueness of human beings (Bresler, 1995).

One of the pioneering researchers to use the method of phenomenological inquiry, Max van Manen (1990) suggests that when phenomenology is considered a type of action research, the result is intimacy between research and the life-world. He writes, “if we think of phenomenology as a kind of action oriented research, then an intimacy between research and life immediately suggests itself” (van Manen, 1990, p. 156). Findings of phenomenological research can include the development of specific values, attitudes, relationships, and work habits, and in particular can reveal information about participants’ relationships and interactions with others. The purpose of researching through a phenomenological lens is to reveal personal meaning instead of trying to fit data into pre-arranged categories (Bresler, 1995).

The principal means of data collection in phenomenological research are open-ended interviews and journals. Bresler (1996) points out that these are not naturalistic activities because they are strategies intended to facilitate reflection. Researchers using phenomenology as a guide often play the role of “participant-observer.” They include their own “personal lived

experiences” and the significances resulting from those experiences (Emmanuel, 2002). The difficulty in phenomenological research is in deducting (or reducing) previous beliefs about experiences and things so that the researcher can be in the life-world of the experience. The views of the participants become the “worldview,” because in their immediate world, there is no other reality.

Younse (2004) used phenomenology to signify a method of research. His study included four narratives from separate periods of his own teaching career in his phenomenological study of the transformation of teaching in the high school choral music context. He examined the following phenomena: 1) changes in the way he viewed teaching and learning; 2) his interactions within the classroom environment; and, 3) specific types of experiences in the choral classroom in which he and his students found themselves involved. Through the lens of phenomenology, he looked at the processes of learning and constructing “self” through active engagement. He examined varying roles of “teacher” and “student,” defining the role of “teacher” as mediator of interaction and as a model for learning and the role of “student” as constructor of knowledge and as a model for other students. Younse surmised that students and teachers are both learners; they are both continuously constructing “self” and “knowledge.”

One of the benefits of a phenomenological research design is that the participant-observer can personally witness a shift in the traditional roles of “student” and “teacher” in the moment of the experience(s), without pre-determined labels, explanation, and/or reasoning. Younse’s (2004) investigation of his personal life-world experiences helped him to reveal that a classroom can become a place where the individual constructions of knowledge and of “self” and dialogues between student-learner and teacher-learner can commence. Jorgensen (1991) suggests that this type of classroom creates a “messy environment” in which there is constant redefining of goals

and procedures based upon specific individuals within the classroom and their specific needs for making meaning of their lives through the study of music. Phenomenological inquiry is like a “zig-zag” of information. One starts at the beginning, goes a certain distance, then returns to the beginning and applies what was learned to start the process over again.

Summary

This chapter began with an outline of several theories of expertise and a summary of empirical studies examining the behaviors, characteristics, and attributes of expertise in teaching in various contexts and learning environments. The next section included review of research related to varying experience levels as connected to expert teaching. Perceptions of teacher effectiveness also has been of interest to researchers, particularly in the area of specific behaviors in the context of classroom teaching and conducting-teaching.

Deliberate practice has been investigated as a way to develop expertise in a range of domains, including team sports and individual musical performance. Descriptive articles and studies about pedagogical decision-making and interactive (improvisational) teaching were discussed, highlighting the emergent nature of a collaborative learning environment. The final section included a review of four case studies of teacher expertise and/or expert conductor-teachers, followed by two studies incorporating phenomenological inquiry. These topic areas and examples of prior research set the stage for the present study about improvisational teaching in the choral rehearsal context.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Design

This phenomenological case study traced the rehearsal strategy choices of an expert conductor-teacher in a variety of choral rehearsal settings. Following a qualitative paradigm, the researcher served as participant-observer, and the research strategies included observations, interviews, participant-observations, and conducting a think-aloud protocol to collect data.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a way of looking at an experience in its raw, original form, before it is tainted with theories and/or constructs of science or physical nature. It is a person's perception of an experience as she is living in the moment of the experience, before labels, explanation, and/or reasoning. A phenomenological approach attempts to get at "what a person experiences and how he/she experiences it" (Pike, 1974). Another way to describe this philosophical lens is that it describes a perception from the insider's point-of-view, as a person is actively involved in the experience.

Phenomenology is separate from traditional philosophy in that it does not use the reasoning of science to describe an event. The event, or personal encounter of what a person hears, sees, and/or feels in the moment, is her "lived experience" as she is directly involved in the personal encounter. A person's lived experience is the essence of research conducted from a phenomenological perspective. The lived experience is a "description of how the world is experienced by the person in the world" (Alerby & Ferm, 2005, p. 178).

Phenomenological research has implications in relation to teaching and learning. In Regelski's (1983) idea of action learning for music educators, an action will reveal to us the phenomena that only we will know as our reality. Teachers cannot make instruction meaningful; they can only encourage action by their students in order for them to construct knowledge for themselves (Regelski, 1983). Through phenomenological inquiry, researchers can investigate ways in which students and teachers successfully learn through action.

This study observed an expert conductor-teacher during choral rehearsals, in the moment of the rehearsal experiences, with the aim of developing a rich understanding of the interactions between the conductor-teacher and ensemble members during rehearsals. A phenomenological lens provided an avenue for collecting data that is rich in description and constantly evolved over the course of the study/data collection period. The result of observing and collecting data through a phenomenological lens is intimacy between research and the life-world (van Manen, 1990).

Case Study

The phrase "case study" has several definitions throughout the research literature. A case study can be a certain method of qualitative inquiry, or the phrase can mean the study of a specific "case." Merriam defines a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (1998, p. 21). Another author says a case study is "the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is—at least in part—to shed light on a larger class of cases" (Gerring, 2007, p. 20). In delineating the essence of a case study, Creswell says the "case" must be a "bounded system"; the single event, phenomenon, or thing has boundaries, including time and place, that allow the researcher to delimit what she wants to study (Creswell, 1998).

Case studies can be intrinsic or instrumental. In an “intrinsic” case study, the researcher is interested in learning more about a specific case, event, or problem. The case is assigned, or is part of an existing responsibility, and it is the researcher’s task to learn more about the particular case. An “instrumental” case study examines a specific case in order to understand a broader picture (Stake, 1995). This study is an “instrumental” case study, in that it used the case (an expert conductor-teacher in choral rehearsals) as a means to understand a certain phenomena (improvisational teaching during choral rehearsals).

Rationale for Selection of Research Techniques and Strategies

Case studies are by nature exploratory, and this method of inquiry encourages the researcher to utilize a broad palate of investigative tools. The case study strategy as conducted within a phenomenological tradition allowed me to observe the expert conductor-teacher in action and track rehearsal decisions in the moment in which they were made. I played the role of “observer as participant” (Creswell, 2003, p. 186) in one of the research settings, where I collected data while participating as a member of the ensemble. My immersion in the choral rehearsal activities allowed me to observe, hear, and participate in the rehearsals on multiple levels. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the participant-observer places herself in the research setting and takes on an interpretive, naturalistic approach to her surroundings. I served as an observer of choral rehearsals in the remaining two research settings. The combination of a case study method of inquiry through a phenomenological lens provided me the opportunity to collect rich, descriptive data about how the expert conductor-teacher improvised and interacted with singers in the moment of teaching during choral rehearsals.

The Researcher's Lens

Music and singing has been a part of my life since I was very young. My mother is a music educator and, through the span of her career, she has taught various levels of general music and choir. She also maintained a private voice and piano studio in our home, and often allowed (or, more accurately, *strongly encouraged*) me to sing and/or play the piano on her student recitals. Mom was my first piano teacher, and I think it is safe to say that I learned to play “My First Waltz” well before attending Kindergarten.

When I was seven, mom took a maternity leave for my younger brother's arrival; her “short” leave of absence turned into a three-year sabbatical. She finished her Master of Music Education degree, increased the size and involvement of her private lesson studio, and let me have “supervised” practice time while she cooked dinner. The turning point of my mother's career and the impetus for my own career path came in the form of a phone call during my second week of the fourth grade. One of the high schools in the district needed an “emergency accompanist” to fill in during the school day until the principal could locate and hire a new assistant choral director. She reluctantly said yes, agreeing to help the choral program *only* until they found a full-time choral teacher. As the saying goes, ‘the rest is history.’ Mom continued to teach choir and serve as the accompanist at the school for nine years. She transferred to another high school within the district and taught an additional eight years before retiring from public school teaching.

My mother's career as a music educator was an incredible influence on me. I remember playing with Colorforms® and keeping busy with activity and coloring books on a blanket in the back of her music room when I was unable to go to school or during after-school rehearsals. She toted me along to countless district and region meetings, and I attended more than my fair share

of music teacher conventions before graduating from high school. Although some of the meetings and rehearsals were boring, others were entertaining, especially when I was the designated page-turner or could sit next to the soundboard at the back of the auditorium. I was immersed in high school choral activities in the same way that a newborn/toddler is engrossed in language during the first years of life. Music, choral singing, and school ensemble activities were a part of my daily life, even before I became a member of the choir programs in junior high and high school.

My experiences in school choir activities helped to build upon my strong musical foundation. The school district and community was supportive of the arts and provided many opportunities to participate in musical activities, including band, choir, and orchestra ensembles. My high school choir director was somewhat of a living legend within the state; he had been teaching high school choir for almost 20 years, and was a past-president of the state's music educators association. The 250-plus member choral program participated in large concert productions, in- and out-of-state performance trips, and numerous performances throughout the community each year. I did not know this at the time, but the most important aspects of my high school choral experience included the emphasis our conductor placed on music theory in the context of daily rehearsals, and the masterful way he instilled a desire for musical excellence in his students, both collectively and individually.

It seemed a natural decision to major in music education as an undergraduate in college. I continued to have positive formative musical experiences and was on the "fast track" to becoming a choir director. Four years of course work and a semester of student teaching breezed by and I became a real, bona fide choral music educator. My first job as an assistant choral director, at both a high school and a junior high school in the same school district, was a perfect

starting point for my career. The position was a bridge between my student teaching experience and being the *only* teacher of a choral program, and the mentors with whom I worked were experts in the field of choral music education.

After one year as an assistant choral director, I transferred to another junior high school within the district, where I was the school's *only* choral teacher. I spent four years at the junior high and another four years at a 9th- and 10th-grade high school in another district. Anyone who has taught in a school music program knows that it is not “all about the music.” Bus duty, committee service, mounds of paper work, countless faculty meetings, assembly-planning, and professional development to help school-wide test scores improve are just a few examples of the many non-music activities that distract teachers (ALL teachers, not only music educators) away from lesson preparation and actual teaching. However, expert teachers, and specifically expert music educators, are able to accomplish all of these non-teaching activities and still create meaningful musical experiences for their ensembles.

Over the course of my nine-year journey in the junior high and high school choral classroom, I became fervently interested in my own growth as a choral conductor-teacher. I wanted to do all of the things that I was *supposed* to do in the classroom, and do them proficiently—sight-singing instruction, choose appropriate and diverse repertoire for each concert, assess and modify instruction according to varying learning styles and ability levels, provide an assortment of performance opportunities for my students, monitor vocal development and foster healthy choral singing. But somewhere along the way, I realized that, if I focused on creating and facilitating meaningful musical learning experiences during each choral class period, the other “busywork” would fall into place. Once I chose appropriate repertoire and sight-singing materials, spent time getting to know my students’ musical abilities and learning

needs, and planned ahead for concerts and other outside-of-school activities, the foundation was in place and I could concentrate on the day-to-day learning environment. Rehearsals became more productive and focused on the *process* of musical growth and learning, instead of creating a specific *product* for a concert or festival performance.

This interest in my own conducting-teaching development led me to questions about traditional teaching methods in music ensembles. If conductor-teachers follow the status quo, teaching from concert to concert, checking off musical skills in an assembly-line fashion, what are their students *really* learning? When a conductor-teacher micro-rehearses, or stops the rehearsal to “fix” each note or rhythm mistake, command certain dynamic markings, or instruct a specific phrase shaping, what ownership do the singers have over their musicianship? What, if anything, are students able to express about their concert performance experience besides regurgitating the titles of three choral compositions (in itself a difficult task for many students, and the composer is rarely known by name), each in a different language and musical style?

As I considered the topic of this dissertation, I realized that I was most interested in studying the ways in which expert conductor-teachers engage their students in the rehearsal/music learning process. I also was interested in how these expert conductor-teachers prepare for rehearsals so that they are able to facilitate students’ ownership of their learning. One way to isolate this process of facilitating musical learning is to look at the decisions made *in the moment* of teaching, or the improvisational teaching that occurs during rehearsals. What is it that experts do during choral rehearsals to facilitate meaningful musical experiences for their students? What kinds of “in-the-moment” decisions are they making that influence the rehearsal atmosphere? How can all choral conductor-teachers think more like experts, regardless of their stage of development?

Selection of Participant

I purposefully chose the participant of this study based on three decisive factors: 1) her national reputation as an expert choral conductor-teacher, 2) her skillful and consummate manner of improvisational teaching in the context of choral rehearsals, and 3) her willingness to participate in the study.

Dr. Sandra Snow (SS) was in her fourth year as an associate professor of music education and choral conducting at Michigan State University (MSU), and her 13th year of teaching at the university level. Prior to her appointment at MSU, she held choral music education positions at the University of Michigan and at Northern Illinois University. Her national reputation as an expert choral conductor-teacher was evident in the numerous national and state choral clinic, workshop, and convention headlining invitations she received (and continues to receive) each year. A university-wide MSU Teacher-Scholar Award recipient, SS had received recognition for her scholarly contributions to choral rehearsal techniques methods and innovative rehearsal planning strategies.

Two key areas of research and development in SS's career include the technique of visually mapping rehearsal strategies (also called webbed planning) and improvisational teaching. She coaches pre-service choral conductor-teachers to brainstorm all of the musical elements within a choral composition, and guides them to explore as many ways as possible to facilitate teaching/rehearsing each of those elements. After creating a "web" of musical ideas and teaching strategies, and devising a general rehearsal plan, SS's choral methods students begin developing the skills needed to monitor rehearsal progress and improvise in the moment of teaching.

SS's idea of "teaching as improvisation" allows adjustments to the general rehearsal plan according to the ensemble's learning needs, collaborative decision-making about the music, and any number of "surprises" during a particular rehearsal or class period. She believes that "artistry can be thought of as rich imagination-in-action," and she challenges conductor-teachers to use their imagination in teaching to "convert musical images into a solid rehearsal that cultivates musicianship and active participation by ensemble members" (Snow, 2009). SS demonstrates through her own teaching and rehearsing that improvising in the moment of teaching can effectively happen when the conductor-teacher has a thorough knowledge of the musical score, has brainstormed musical ideas and teaching strategies *away* from the choral rehearsal (i.e., during preparation for teaching), and has a complete understanding of her students and their musical abilities.

I had the opportunity to observe and participate in SS's conducting and teaching in various settings at MSU. Her teaching responsibilities included undergraduate choral methods, undergraduate and graduate conducting classes and coaching, and philosophy of music education. In addition to these courses, SS conducted the Women's Chamber Ensemble (this ensemble is described in detail in the Research Settings section). In each of these settings, her conducting-teaching was a motivating experience and radiated with musicianship in conjunction with a sense of collaboration.

SS has been and remains a constant inspiration to her students and fellow colleagues. When in her presence, one is immediately absorbed with her passion for life-long learning. Perhaps what sets SS most apart from other expert conductor-teachers in the field is her view of the conductor-teacher as *facilitator*, inspiring students to take ownership of their learning and/or ensemble experience, and her unending quest for innovative ways to challenge students to think

critically about the learning/teaching/rehearsing processes. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to Dr. Sandra Snow as ‘SS’ throughout the remaining of this and the following chapters.

Research Settings

Combined Choral Festival

In the spring of 2008, SS served as the clinician for a combined choral festival in a large Northwestern city. An auditioned choir of young women in grades 8 through 12 from another large Northwestern city was the invited highlight performance group. Three additional choirs from the immediate area participated in the festival: A youth choir of young women and men in grades 7 through 12, the choir from a local middle school, and the host choir—an auditioned choir of young women in grades 5 through 12.

Over 160 choristers participated in the two-day event that took place in the Sanctuary of the First United Methodist Church, downtown in the large Northwestern city. Large enough to hold the choristers and several hundred additional parents, siblings, and concert attendees, the inside of the Sanctuary boasted ornately carved wooden pews and a large chancel area with the same type of walnut or cherry-type of wood, finished with a smooth and shiny lacquer. Thick red carpeting lined the aisles that gently creaked under foot, and faded red pew cushions lined the pews; the cushions looked as though they had thinned over time, and no longer provided the plush, pillowed comfort on top of the hardwood seats.

The choirs first met on Saturday morning for rehearsals with SS and a meet-and-greet with the composer of one of the combined compositions. Rehearsals with SS continued on Saturday afternoon, and the day concluded with each choir taking turns to rehearse their “individual” repertoire in advance of the concert the following day. Social time for the choir

members to mingle and meet each other was built into the day's rehearsal schedule. On Sunday afternoon, the choirs returned to present a joint concert for the community. The highlight performance group presented a twenty-minute segment, the three visiting choirs each performed two to three choral octavos, and all of the choirs combined to form a massed choir for the final three selections, conducted by SS.

University Choral Ensemble

SS conducted (and continues to conduct at the time of publication) an auditioned, all-female choral ensemble at Michigan State University. The Women's Chamber Ensemble (WCE) ranges in number between 28 and 35 members, depending on the number of auditioning students and the needs of the selected repertoire. SS created the chorus upon her arrival to MSU as a second ensemble for female music majors; all students majoring in music must first be a part of a curricular ensemble within the Choral area, and then may choose to audition for WCE. Her concept of the ensemble is to provide a place for musically talented women to come together in a collaborative environment to rehearse and sing varying choral repertoire, with an emphasis on 20th - and 21st -century compositions. The women of WCE come from diverse backgrounds but possess a collective passion for excellence in choral music.

WCE rehearses for one hour and 20 minutes, twice a week. Rehearsals took place on the stage of the 365-seat auditorium in the music building. The women stand in two rows, using as much space as possible on the stage during the rehearsals. The atmosphere is one of trust, creativity, teamwork, and musical excellence. A collective desire to sing challenging repertoire with talented women peers permeates the rehearsal atmosphere. The ensemble has performed for the Michigan Music Conference (2007), the Central American Choral Directors Association Divisional Convention (2008), the American Choral Directors Association National Convention

(2009), and as a featured ensemble in Carnegie Hall (2011). Each of these performances was the result of an invitation and came with distinction and honor for the WCE and MSU Choral area.

High School Choral Clinic

Local high school and middle school choral conductors frequently invited (and continue to invite) SS to work with their choirs, taking full advantage of having a nationally renowned choral conductor in their community. Sometimes high school conductors bring their choirs through town during choir tours or to visit the university and observe choral rehearsals and/or attend concerts. The third setting for this research was one such occurrence.

SS led a high school choral clinic with a choir travelling from another Midwestern state on a college tour. The thirty-four member mixed ensemble included students in grades 10 through 12, and took place in the choir room of a local church. The clinic lasted two and a half hours on a cold and overcast morning. After performing each of their selections, the choir and their conductor worked interactively with SS to enhance their understanding of the music and the overall performance experience.

Procedure and Data Collection

This qualitative and descriptive study included four main sources of data: 1) video-recordings, 2) field notes, 3) a think-aloud interview, and 4) a formal interview with the participant. I observe the participant during nine rehearsals—five with the university choral ensemble, three during the combined choral festival, and one with the high school choral clinic.

The first data source was video-recordings of SS in the context of choral rehearsals with the WCE, during the Combined Choral Festival, and during the High School Choral Clinic. I fully transcribed one video from each setting, and documented rehearsal strategy choices used by

SS, and the sounds and results produced by the choir. I took notes while watching the remaining videos, transcribing SS's important in-the-moment decisions and strategies and the choir's response. The video camera that I used in this research and playback was a Canon Digital Video Camcorder ZR500.

The second data source consisted of field notes taken during observations, participant-observations, and think-aloud interviews to keep track of specific rehearsal events, titles of the choral repertoire during the rehearsals, and observations of the rehearsal environments and sounds the choirs produced. I kept the field notes in a spiral notebook and transcribed them into a Word document after each rehearsal or interview event.

The third data source included a think-aloud interview with the participant. This form of stimulated recall elicited SS's descriptions of the thinking in action that took place as she made decisions in the moment of teaching during rehearsals. According to Ericsson and Simon (1993), this type of verbal report is reliable, because the participant focuses exclusively on the cognitive processes of the activity that is in his/her predominant awareness. In this case, the participant in my study focused on her decision-making process in her improvisational teaching as I prompted her to recall rehearsal decisions and the choir's sounding from selected choral rehearsals.

The fourth data source consisted of a formal interview with the participant. I recorded the interview using a Sony ICD-P520 digital voice recorder, and the procedure included a statement of the purposes of the study followed by previously determined questions for the participant. While I adhered to an interview outline (see Appendix B), which I shared with the participant one week in advance of the interview, I remained flexible during the interview process in the event that an answer from the participant inspired additional questions.

Analysis and Trustworthiness

Communicating a deep, profound understanding of a particular case is the goal of data analysis in case studies (Merriam, 1998). Collected data for this study were videos of choral rehearsals, field notes during rehearsal observations, and transcriptions of think-aloud and formal interviews with the participant. Observations and analysis of rehearsal video transcripts focused specifically on the participant's in-the-moment improvisational teaching and interactions with the ensemble members, while additional data from field notes and the formal interview provided a bridge between the participant's rehearsal preparation and her implementation of various teaching strategies. As the researcher, I served as the instrument of data collection, and I interpreted the "reality" of the research settings and collected data directly through my observations, participant-observations, and interviews. This ethnographic technique of putting the researcher directly into the research settings allowed me to have an enhanced understanding of the context and realities of the experiences (Yin, 1993). Rich, thick description aided my illustration of the realities of the participant and ensemble members in the moment of rehearsals. According to Creswell (1998), "Thick description is necessary to make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied" (p. 197).

Following Huberman and Miles's (1994) suggestions of qualitative data analysis, I categorized, also called 'coding,' collected data for emergent themes, both alongside the collection process, and at the conclusion of data collection. All of my coding took place in paper-pencil format; meaning, I printed the Word documents of rehearsal and interview transcripts (see Appendix C and Appendix D) and field notes, and underlined, circled, and 'starred' anything within the material that seemed important to SS's improvisational teaching decision-making and my research questions (see Appendix E). I then went back through the

printed data and began assigning words or phrases (i.e. tags or labels) to give meaning to corresponding “chunks” of data (Huberman & Miles, 1994). After immersing in the data a third time, I began grouping similar codes under the same umbrella, or theme. For example, I categorized codes such as ‘vocal pedagogy instruction,’ ‘breath,’ and ‘mind/body connection’ under the theme “Building Vocalism.”

While many authors of texts on research methods agree that validity, and in some form, reliability, are important to establish in qualitative inquiry (Bassey, 1999; Bresler, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995), varying perspectives on the nature and process of validity and reliability in qualitative research exist. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the concept of *trustworthiness* to illustrate “the ethic of respect for truth in case study research” (in Bassey, 1999, p. 75). Other terms Lincoln and Guba use to describe validity and reliability are “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “confirmability” (p. 300). They recommend techniques including “prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data of sources, methods, and investigators to establish credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; in Creswell, 1998, p. 197).

Merriam suggests a researcher can use six strategies to strengthen trustworthiness within a study. They include the following:

- a) Triangulation
- b) Member checks
- c) Long-term observation
- d) Peer examination (peer review)
- e) Participatory or collaborative modes of research
- f) Clarifying researcher’s biases (Merriam, 1998, pp.204-205)

This study included all six of Merriam's (1998) suggestions to establish trustworthiness. The process of triangulation uses "multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation of interpretation" (Stake, 2005, p. 454). Stake (1995) suggests that triangulation can a.) confirm the credibility of collected data, b.) improve the credibility of the data interpretation, and c.) reveal the consistency of statements or assertions relating to the data. Triangulating the data allows for additional interpretations of meaning, rather than limiting the analysis to a single understanding of the phenomena.

Member checks of think-aloud and formal interview transcripts gave SS an opportunity to make edits to her statements or interpretations of thought processes during rehearsals. I observed and video-record approximately 25 hours of choral rehearsals and spent a large amount of time with the recordings, transcribing the rehearsal events and coding the data. The think-aloud and formal interview with the participant included approximately four hours of audio recording. This long-term observation period and prolonged exposure to the phenomena helps to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study. I facilitate a collaborative approach to this research by involving the participant in each stage of the study, including the formulation of the problem questions, choosing the research settings, and interpreting the data into meaningful understanding. The participant received email attachments of the narratives, and I provided her the opportunity to make comments and/or suggestions to the findings during each stage of writing. I will discuss the final trustworthiness strategy used in this study, acknowledging the researcher's bias, in the Limitations of the Study section below.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the qualitative nature of this case study, any generalizations to other conductor-teachers or broad-spanning choral rehearsal settings are not appropriate. The results of this study, however, may be considered alongside the limitations. In my role as observer and participant-observer, I will be the sole collector of data for the study. Therefore, my personal biases, both known and unknown, may affect the collection, coding, and interpretation of the data.

Because of my membership in the university choral ensemble in which part of this research took place, my dual role of “participant-observer” was especially poignant. Jorgensen (1989) suggests that participant observation is most appropriate when, “the phenomenon of investigation is observable within an everyday life situation or setting” (p. 13). My observation and video-recording of the participant in this setting was non-intrusive since I was already a member of the ensemble, and the data were saturated with personal meaning and significance.

As mentioned earlier, it is not my intention to generalize the results of this study to other conductor-teachers or choral rehearsal settings. This study aims to investigate the improvisational teaching of one expert conductor-teacher, including the expert’s rehearsal choices and navigation from *desired* outcome to *final product* during choral rehearsals. I will use my results of the data analysis to provide implications and make suggestions choral music educators and those involved in pre-service music teacher development.

CHAPTER IV

Beyond “Teacher Talk”: Verbal Rehearsal Strategies

“...there are all sorts of adjustments, and decisions, and refinements, and choices that can be made, that can be stimulated from the perspective of the conductor-teacher, and some of those are verbal...”

(SS, Formal Interview)

The first major question for this study was: What are the specific rehearsal choices made by an expert conductor-teacher during improvisational teaching in the choral rehearsal context? When I began analyzing the data, two divisions of SS’s rehearsal strategy choices immediately jumped off the pages of transcripts, field notes, and video summary forms: 1) everything that was “verbal,” and 2) anything done during rehearsal that was “non-verbal.” In the early stages of my analysis, “verbal” included modeling (singing and/or chanting), syllabic and word stress practice, vowel and consonant work, specific use of language during instruction, and finally, assessment and constructive feedback. However, as my analysis evolved, the seemingly “clear” category of verbal strategies during choral rehearsals became more clouded—a separation developed between rehearsal choices that were spoken “verbally,” and various forms of “participatory” rehearsal choices, including those that are more “verbal” than “non-verbal,” such as all forms of modeling.

This chapter will focus on SS’s verbal strategy choices during rehearsals, which I divided into two themes: Describing and Assessing. While it is not the purpose of this study to count the number of verbal strategies used, or calculate a percentage of rehearsal time SS spent in “verbal

activities,” her specific verbal rehearsal choices are important in that they are constructed carefully to maximize her singers’ musicianship and facilitate learning.

For the purposes of this and subsequent chapters, I will label excerpts of data according to their source: Rehearsal Transcript (including transcripts taken from video of multiple rehearsal settings), Field Notes, Think Aloud (including formal and informal think-aloud sessions), and Formal Interview. Selections from the rehearsal and interview transcripts will be written according to the following:

SS = SS

C = Choir

Bold text = SS’s un-pitched chanting voice or singing voice

Regular text = SS’s speaking voice

Italics text = Explanation of what is taking place, including SS’s movements and chanting/singing choices, and descriptions of the choir singers’ sound.

Describing

“Do you like caramel? HOT caramel on top... of fabulous ice cream?”

There needs to be more caramel in your sound...”

SS uses several verbal strategies during rehearsals that describe her aural image of desired vocal sound, her realization of the composer’s ideas, and her overall musical goals. The describing strategies that emerged in this study include: 1) Description, 2) Discussion, 3) Example, Comparison, Imagery; and 4) Summary. This list of ***Describing*** codes represents ways in which SS utilized words and statements during rehearsals. Conductor-teachers of all

experience levels use words and phrases at various times and for various purposes during choral rehearsals. However, as an expert in her field, SS chooses ***Describing*** words/statements and when to use them in a purposeful way—to avoid simple “teacher talk,” and to evoke the most musicianship from singers.

Rehearsal Snapshot

SS: That’s so interesting, that he [the composer] wrote those things in. So, this composer is really interested in angularity, right? Let’s see if we can get sensitized to the color notes, and we’ll go back and do it in time. Would you sing legato, **Ho-san-na—** (*singing starting pitches*), and just be ready to stop. Ok? Ready – and – sing— (*choir begins singing; SS gestures a release after four measures*). There’s some creative composition going on... (*speaking while smiling*) That’s actually a very intuitive mistake to make, because that’s the root of the chord. It’s a smart mistake. If you’re gonna make a mistake, it’s a smart one.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Propositional Knowledge

Musicians in all contexts spend a great deal of time describing sound and musical concepts. These descriptions relate to the form of knowledge known as propositional or descriptive knowledge. Propositional knowledge in music is the “knowing about” type of knowledge—the “nuts and bolts” about a particular composition (Stubley, 1992). Examples of this kind of knowledge within a musical composition include knowing the composition’s time signature, key, tempo, dynamic markings, and articulation markings. In addition to the previous list, propositional knowledge in choral music includes understanding the *meaning* of concepts

such as vowel and consonant sounds, specific entrances and releases, syllabic/word stress, and text pronunciation. SS's describing strategies within this chapter are ways in which she cultivates propositional knowledge *about* the choral compositions she is rehearsing.

Description

SS: ...‘tone, tone, tone’—he wants there to be a rich sound in the low voices...

SS: ... he [the composer] sets up those inversions – triads in inversions, do you know the word *inversion*? Where you take the root, and you flip it up somewhere else, right?

An inversion—and then he’s got the cool “color” notes.

SS: You need more ‘shadow vowels.’ Do you know that term, ‘shadow vowel?’ Or, voiced consonants...

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

The above excerpts from rehearsal transcripts demonstrate several ways in which SS's use of words and phrases describe musical ideas, her aural image of sound, propositional knowledge, and compositional features. In the first excerpt, the phrase “rich sound in the low voices” is a direct request of the Altos in the choir to sing with a “rich sound.” Other descriptive words that SS uses in her rehearsals include:

vibrant	warm	rounded	color	spacious
golden	shimmer	shape	magical	

This list represents a small sample of SS's vocabulary that *describes* abstract concepts such as sound and vocal tone quality. When a certain word does not produce the desired effect, she adds instantly another word and/or additional phrases to her description—an in-the-moment decision that aids in communicating with singers.

The second excerpt describes the word “inversion,” a form of propositional knowledge. SS realized that not all singers might have understood the word, and therefore used this as a teachable moment about the musical term. She continued in this segment with the phrase “cool ‘color’ notes”—this is an example of SS bringing certain pitches to the singers’ attention with a descriptive phrase, but allowing the singers to decipher the meaning of “color.” Her use of description is not always explicit when making verbal rehearsal choices, to allow singers the freedom to apply their individual meaning to the description.

SS describes another musical/vocal term in the third excerpt: “shadow vowel.” The best way to describe or teach this term may be with chanting or modeling, and indeed, this particular rehearsal segment included SS modeling the voiced consonants she wanted to hear. Her choice of description or defining the term verbally in this moment is an example of using multiple strategies to reach singers of multiple learning styles—verbal and non-verbal.

Discussion

SS: One of the things that I think about as a singer a lot, is how Western culture has such an impact— our culture has such an impact on our idea of sound, and of singing—that’s a very natural thing. We live in a time that values *what?* What’s valued in your schools right now? What are you REALLY worried about in school? Grades, right? And tests, and scores, right? We have this HUGE emphasis on the cerebral. We don’t have much of an emphasis or even the acknowledgement of what it means to be *soulful*.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

There are times during SS's rehearsals when she uses the opportunity to discuss a musical concept, an idea, or in the case of the excerpt above, our culture's "emphasis on the cerebral." I consider the discussions during SS's rehearsals to be elaborated or embellished descriptions. The short snippets of rehearsal last longer than a simple one-word or single phrase description, but are not as in-depth as a lecture, or lesson during which SS would expect students to take notes or make markings in their music.

The discussion of what in her opinion our culture "values" right now—grades, tests, and scores—is not of specific importance to the music being rehearsed. Taken out of context, this 45-second discussion may seem like "filler" or "teacher talk" to the outside observer. However, this particular dialogue took place following a segment of rehearsal that combined physical movement with singing, inspiring SS to mention "what it means to be *soulful*." The discussion served to align the choir members' minds with their bodies, and to recognize that this practice is not emphasized in schools as much as the "cerebral."

Other discussions during rehearsals serve to highlight musical concepts, as in the following excerpt:

SS: You have had the experience I'm sure with instrumentalists—the only way that you're going to cut through a brass section that's playing with you, is with articulation. It can *never* be volume...

... the only way I think you can make each of the parts here really come forth, is to think about articulation. All right? So, we're gonna do that [articulation work], and we're gonna work on tone for just a little bit.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The musical concept in this passage is articulation. SS discusses why articulation is important and sets up the next rehearsal segment by stating that the choir is going to work on articulation, in combination with tone.

SS uses verbal strategies often to discuss musical phrasing during her rehearsals. Here is one example:

SS: Ok—a quick lesson in phrasing. Phrasing happens *always*, in my view, at *least* on two levels, maybe more. Two levels—macro and micro, alright? You are very familiar with the idea of “macro,” which is that most phrases have shape of some kind, right? The most common one would be— (*drawing an arc in the air with her right hand/arm, up to a point, then back down*), right? Ok. That’s macro. Let’s make that the umbrella (*showing with both hands/arms the shape of an umbrella in the air*). “Micro” is every single, special syllable of every special word. Be-ne-DIC-tus, qui VE-nit, in NO-mi-ne, DO-mi-ni (*speaking; stressing important syllables; using both arms in a circular motion to show emphasis on the syllables in all caps*). All right?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

This example combines verbal discussion with arm movements to convey the concepts of “macro” and “micro” within musical phrasing. Embodied movement such as depicted in this excerpt will be discussed at length in Chapter Five of this study. The verbal portions of this example include an introductory statement: “...*a quick lesson in phrasing;*” a discussion and labeling (propositional knowledge) of the two levels of phrasing: “*Phrasing happens always, in my view, at least on two levels, maybe more. Two levels—macro and micro...*,” and concludes with a verbal demonstration of the micro level of phrasing: “Be-ne-DIC-tus, qui VE-nit...”.

Example, Comparison, and Imagery

There are many instances during SS's choral rehearsals when she uses words to give examples, set up comparisons, and conjure imagery.

SS: ...if you're an arranger, and you were gonna *assign* instruments to the 'hosanna,' what would you have play it? (*one singer answers, "trumpet"*) Trumpet... (*nodding along, agreeing with the answer*). What I would love to find is the quality of articulation that you think, in fact, would match trumpets, were they to be the ones singing that, all right?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In this excerpt, SS uses trumpets as an example of the "quality of articulation" desired for the particular phrase. It is common practice for choral conductor-teachers to refer to instruments during rehearsals as examples of timbre, tone quality, and as in this excerpt, articulation. SS intuitively guessed that most of the singers would know what a trumpet sounds like and would be able to compare the articulation of a trumpet to the vocal line in the particular piece during this moment of rehearsal. The improvisational move to ask the *singers* what instrument they would assign the voice part, and then "go with" the given answer—trumpet, makes the verbal example a more meaningful learning experience for the choir.

SS uses comparison as another form of verbally describing her aural image of sound and musical ideas. Metaphors compare two disparate objects or concepts, such as in the following examples:

SS: Yeah, this is rock music right here. Trap set.

SS: You're a fantastic cello section in a *major* orchestra. (*speaking directly to lower voices*)

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

In the first phrase, SS compared a section of the choral piece to “rock music.” The piano accompaniment and “feel” of the bass line prompted her toward this comparison and the mention of “trap set.” The second metaphor example compares the lower voices of the choir to a “cello section.” Similar to the example of trumpets mentioned previously, choral conductor-teachers refer often to the cello section of an orchestra when asking for rich, lyrical vocal lines, especially from the mezzo-soprano (or alto) section of the choir.

The following simile is an example of SS comparing a musical phrasing idea to a parenthesis, using the word “like:”

SS: You're sort of like parenthesis, or you're just narrating...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

This phrase gives the singers a “role” to play, in addition to comparing a musical idea to something non-musical. By making comparisons between her desired concept of sound, or sought-after final product, and instruments or non-musical objects/ideas, SS helps give clearer musical meaning to the composition and individual voice parts.

Another form of verbal rehearsal strategies that SS uses to *describe* during rehearsals is that of imagery. When making rehearsal choices in the moment, SS is able to summon creative and colorful imagery pertinent to the composition being rehearsed and the aural image for which she is aiming. Here are two specific moments of imagery:

SS: You wanna keep that burnished golden thing in the middle of your sound... you want, in other words, *core* in the sound.

SS: Caramel. Do you like caramel? HOT caramel on top... of fabulous ice cream?

There needs to be more *caramel* in your sound...

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

SS uses the vibrant image of a “burnished golden thing” to describe “core” in the singers’ sound. In the second excerpt, she compares the desired sound to hot caramel, complete with an appetizing portrayal of an ice cream sundae. This form of verbal description—using imagery taken from anything that comes to mind, including every day experiences, prior knowledge, and the outside world at large—is successful in SS’s rehearsals, because it is always relevant and to-the-point.

CC, Field Notes: “I remain in awe of the amount of imagery SS uses, even in one single rehearsal. The singers “read” her imagery and sing exactly as how she describes... if their sound does NOT change, she finds another image, and another—until she discovers what works for the choir.”

(April 10, 2008)

There are instances during rehearsals when SS chooses to highlight an example or make a comparison *within* the music, without the aid of metaphors, similes, and/or imagery. She sets up an example or comparison with a short, verbal “introduction,” as in this example:

SS: Let me sing two different ways... right on the first entrance with me... just listen...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

This verbal introduction is not the actual example or comparison, but by stating her intentions, SS draws in the singers to the example/comparison that follows. In my role as participant-observer, I noticed that the times SS “set up” verbally an example or comparison I was more attentive and focused when she provided the actual example/comparison. Her in-the-moment

decision to introduce with words the following rehearsal act encourages singers to sharpen their discerning ears. I have categorized this type of introductory statement as a “verbal strategy,” and the specific modeling and aural strategies that follow the introductory statement will be addressed in Chapter Five.

Summary

SS: So, we have several things we’ve decided. First of all, it’s “Ho-san-na,” so it needs articulation. Secondly, they’re all different... so that you’re setting up the last one. And thirdly, that you have “crunch” notes.

SS: You just have a little work to do on pitches there in that section. The D^b though is the color note, alright? Because it clashes against the E^b – that’s the color note.

All voices together, and we’re just gonna finish this right now, at pickup to 114.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The above excerpts are two ways in which SS summarizes various rehearsal segments. She remains constantly aware of what the choir has rehearsed and often states the accomplishments before moving on to new material. At times, the summary statement outlines work that remains, as in the second excerpt: “You just have a little work to do...” SS mixes up the *summary* statements by being specific, as in the first example above, with paraphrasing, such as:

SS: Thank you! *Fabulous* work! What piece shall we work next?

Portrait of Verbal Strategies: *Describing*

<i>Discussion</i>	SS: Let's talk about what specific, or interesting musical gestures that the composer writes into the score... There're several different kind of <i>feels</i> in this piece. It would be so great if you could bring the listener in to your understanding of that...
<i>Description</i>	...there are times when you use all your voice, and there's times when you
<i>Comparison (setting up)</i>	don't. Let me sing two different ways... right on the first entrance with me... just listen... (<i>gestures accompanist to begin in m. 3, where voices enter...</i>). There is a song, sleep-ing in all things—, sleep-ing in all things... (<i>beautifully singing precisely the pitches, rhythms written in the score</i>).
<i>Description</i>	OK? Right rhythm, right pitch, right vowel, some diction. All right, now
<i>Comparison</i>	how is this different? And... (<i>again gestures accompanist to begin in m. 3...</i>). There 'is a song, sleep-ing in all things— (<i>ends singing</i>). Do you hear where I'm going with that? What words did I bring out? C: Song... (<i>several voices heard chiming in</i>). SS: Song... and...? C: Sleeping... (<i>several voices together</i>).

<i>Imagery</i>	SS: Isn't that a magical word? Sleep-ing in... (<i>with a rocking motion forward on 'sleep' and back on 'ing'</i>) Sleep-ing in... (<i>same movement as before</i>)
<i>Description</i>	The difference between, Sleep-ing in all things... (<i>chanting, with equal emphasis on each note and syllable; "painting" motion with right</i>
<i>Description</i>	<i>arm/hand</i>). Same, same, same... or, <i>sing</i> where the important part of that word is... would you do that? There 'is... (<i>modeling entering pitches</i>).
<i>Discussion</i>	And, by the way, you need a little glottal stroke, right? It's not, There—is (<i>eliding "There" to "is"</i>), but it's There 'is a... (<i>separating "is" with a small glottal</i>)
<i>Description</i>	There 'is a... hear it? A little bit of a glottal stroke? (<i>choir begins singing...</i>) ... Now <i>that</i> had some architecture to it; that had some structure that said to
<i>Summary</i>	me you were thinking about what those words were.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Assessing

“Space plus ‘ping’ makes a really beautiful woman sound...”

The second predominant theme of verbal rehearsal strategies that emerged from this study is **Assessing**. SS is assessing constantly in the moment of rehearsals. Tone quality, articulation, breath energy, musical phrasing, and singers’ connection with the text—these are only a few examples of the many areas in which SS assesses moment by moment while conducting-teaching. The following codes emerged under the theme of **Assessing**: 1) Assessment, 2) Constructive Feedback, 3) Questions, and 4) Tasks.

Rehearsal Snapshot

- SS:** Would you say, **Ho-san-na!** (*chanting with VERY tall [a] vowels and right arm jabbing forward on each syllable*).
- C:** (*echoes*) **Ho-san-na!** (*chanting; [a] vowels are not as tall as SS’s*)
- SS:** **Ho-san-na!** (*chanting with both palms on cheeks, to remind the singers to use more yawn space*).
- C:** (*echoes again*) **Ho-san-na!** (*chanting; [a] vowels are still not as tall as Dr. Snow’s*)
- SS:** The articulation is fabulous! That’s so much better. The vowel is not as fabulous, ‘cause I hear, **Ho-san-nah/uh -- ’ah /uh -- ’ah/uh...** (*chanting; ah/uh = [ə])*
- Ho-san-na!** (*chanting, back to full, rich, tall [a]). Ready, go...*
- C:** (*echoes*) **Ho-san-na!** (*chanting, this time with a fantastic full, rich tall sound*)

SS: I like that a lot. Now, let's do it musically—three times, all different, to set up the last change. Conduct... and chant. Here we go... 1 – ready – go...

C: **Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na!** (*conducting and chanting*)

SS: No, I heard “aeh” ([æ])... did you? It was on the last vowel. “Ho – sAH”... great, and then “naeh”... not so great. “Ho – sAH – nAH” (AH = [ɑ]).
Here we go... 1 – ready – and...

Procedural Knowledge

Procedural knowledge in music is the “knowing how” form of knowledge. This includes choral singers’ ability to transfer their propositional knowledge into the actualization of singing that which is written in a musical score. Elliott (1995) maintains that most ‘musicing,’ or the act of making music, is fundamentally procedural in nature. In a choral ensemble setting, procedural knowledge would include knowing how to apply various articulation, dynamics, and other markings within a score, pronouncing correctly the text of a composition, and applying appropriate vocal technique to the pitches and rhythms that are to be sung, including vowel sounds and tone quality. SS strengthens singers’ procedural knowledge in the choral context through assessing during rehearsals. Her assessing strategies are ways in which she addresses the singers’ “knowing how” to perform a composition.

Assessment

Assessment is an important component of any teaching-learning environment. When the assessment’s focus is more abstract in nature, such as vocal tone quality or musicianship, the specificity of the assessment is of extreme importance. I have separated SS’s specific “phrases

of assessment” from the “constructive feedback” that sometimes follows the assessment, to show that her in-the-moment verbal assessment choices do not always include constructive criticism. When she stops the choir or reaches the end of a rehearsal segment, her assessment is specific and she conveys it in a positive way:

SS: That’s a really beautiful tone and you did some better listening that time.

SS: I like that sound a lot. That has both space—and ping. Space plus ping makes a really beautiful woman sound, right?!?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Each excerpt includes a specific comment (“better listening,” “space—and ping”), combined with a positive observation (“that’s a really beautiful tone,” “I like that sound a lot”).

When SS’s assessment choices are to point out something that is incorrect, or is a “different choice” from the composer’s wishes, she remains specific and positive:

SS: There’s some creative composition going on... Altos, **you’re up on this pitch...**

(singing the words on the Alto’s written pitch)

The altos in this segment were singing a different pitch than the one written in the music; SS points out the “creative composition,” instead of saying “that note is wrong,” and she then sings the written pitch on the words, “*you’re up on this pitch.*” She followed this assessment by saying:

SS: It’s a smart mistake... if you’re gonna make a mistake, it’s a smart one. I like that.

Again, SS shares a specific comment (“smart mistake”), and closes the statement with a positive phrase (“I like that”).

Constructive Feedback

SS's verbal constructive feedback is specific and positive. After assessing the singers' tone quality, articulation, and/or musical phrasing (for example), she typically follows the assessment with a specific constructive comment, as seen in this example:

SS: I know I'm being picky, but you're SO good, and you're so responsive... **HO-saeh**
(*singing the syllables*) falls out of line...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In this moment of rehearsal, SS pointed out to the singers that the second syllable of the word "Ho-san-na" fell out of alignment with the first syllable, i.e. the second vowel sound was not as pure as the first. She initially complemented the singers and then pointed out the specific vowel that needed adjustment.

SS often acknowledges that she is being "picky" with her constructive comments. Her choice to recognize verbally this "pickiness" or her high standards during rehearsals seems to help the constructive comments that follow stay in a positive light. For instance:

SS: ... I'm gonna be picky again... here's something, and I'm going to exaggerate, but here's something that I hear, or I sense. When you're breathing in this way, keep the space open as you make the first sound...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

She is not speaking negatively to the singers, but stating that in an effort to be thorough she would "exaggerate" what she had heard, and followed this statement with the specific constructive feedback.

One trend that I noticed in SS's constructive comments is that of phrasing the critique in such a way that it becomes a question—eliciting agreement between her and the singers.

SS: So ‘number 2,’ the second example is too bright and brilliant, and spinny for that moment, would you agree? (*the singers had just finished singing twice the same short phrase*)

(Rehearsal Transcript)

This excerpt includes a specific constructive comment, followed by the phrase, “would you agree?” When shared in this way, SS’s constructive feedback invites the singers to join her in agreeing with her assessment of the sound. It is important to mention this practice here, as a *verbal* rehearsal choice; however, the idea of sharing ownership and decision-making with the ensemble members will be discussed at length in Chapter six.

Questions

Asking questions is an important part of assessing during choral rehearsals. SS makes use of this strategy by asking questions in multiple ways, including open-ended questions and leading or specific questions. Here is an example of each:

SS: How would you describe in your mind, the *ultimate* color of sound for this? (*open-ended*)

SS: What words did I bring out? (*specific*)

SS: ... how long do you hold that? Does it go all the way to the downbeat of 29? (*leading*)

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

SS’s various questioning strategies assess whether the singers are “present” in the moment of rehearsals, and she uses them as a form of facilitating learning among ensemble

members. Open-ended questions engage singers to consider their individual opinions or judgments about a certain musical phrase or their vocal tone quality, among other areas.

SS: What did you hear different in that sound?

SS: What does ‘Hosanna’ say to you?

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

The first open-ended question relates specifically to the singers’ listening to their own sound. By asking the ensemble members “what a word [or phrase] says [or means],” as in the second question, SS is able to assess on multiple levels, including the singers’ understanding of musical meaning. When ensemble members answer these types of open-ended questions, SS makes in-the-moment choices of what to do next in rehearsal and/or of how to make the most of answers given combined with rehearsal goals.

Specific and leading questions are exactly as their labels assert—their purpose is to ask for a specific answer and/or *lead* the singers toward a specific answer. Here are three examples:

SS: ... how long do you hold that? Does it go all the way to the downbeat of 29?

SS: What words did I bring out?

SS: ... what else did you HEAR in the sound? You should have a real feeling of openness, right?

The first two questions ask for specific answers— 1) what is a particular pitch’s rhythmic value, and 2) which words did she stress (*in a modeling segment*). The third question asks for a specific answer, but SS follows up with a “leading” question; she was interested in hearing one specific answer to the particular question—“openness,” or variations of what the singers may consider an open sound.

The focus of this study is the improvisational nature of SS's rehearsal choices, and one important way in which she makes in-the-moment decisions is by asking the same question in multiple ways. The following are four sets of questions, each quoted directly from her rehearsals:

SS: What does 'hosanna' say to you? How would you characterize the quality of that, of the 'hosanna'? What does it *sound* like to you?

SS: How would you describe in your mind, the *ultimate* color of sound for this? What's the *quality* of the sound in this section?

SS: What *one* syllable actually fell out of that color? Which *one* didn't stay in the "globe"?

SS: What did you hear different in that sound? Or, what did you FEEL different in the sound?

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

In each of these examples, SS asks a main question, and follows up with a 'qualifying' question, or in some cases, a more specific question. Asking the same question in multiple ways aids SS's assessment of the ensemble's learning and/or progress by . She captures the singers' attention with diverse uses of imagery and through discussion to make her points, after asking 'main' questions and 'follow-up' questions.

Tasks: Musical, Written, and Kinesthetic

The final form of assessment as a *verbal rehearsal strategy* is that of tasks—requesting ensemble members to complete/perform musical, written, and kinesthetic tasks. These forms of instruction go one step further than "telling" the choir what needs to be done or how their sound

needs to change; asking or inviting the singers to DO the musical, written, and/or kinesthetic task engages learning and gives meaning to the verbal instruction. Many studies about choral conductor-teacher behavior calculate the *time spent* in various rehearsal activities, such as “instruction,” (Arthur, 2002; Davis, 1998; Goolsby, 1996; Pence, 1999; Witt, 1986; Yarbrough, Dunn, & Baird, 1996; Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998) but the *choices* SS makes when delivering such instruction is an important aspect of her verbal rehearsal strategies.

SS: ... let’s see if you can sing the difference between that and the first idea...

SS: Let’s feel like the music together. Here we go...

SS: Everybody sing the middle line...

SS: Let’s have more articulation.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Each of these examples includes SS instructing the choir to perform a musical task. She begins often with the word “let’s” in instructional phrases during rehearsals, and, from my experience as a member of her ensemble, I believe that this small four-letter contraction has a huge impact on rapport and the learning environment. Inviting her ensemble members to “join” her in a specific task is an important aspect of SS’s *building relationships* with the choir, a theme in this study that will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The specific verbal task-instructions made by SS during her rehearsals remain respectful and positive—never demeaning or worded negatively. The following examples are requests for a kinesthetic task, and a written task, respectively:

SS: Conduct with me, please. Would you go, down—; right—; up—... floor—; wall—; ceiling—... (*conducting a three-beat pattern*)

SS: Get your pencils out... thank you... Would you underline ‘DI’ of ‘dic-tus.’ Would you underline ‘VE’ of ‘ve-nit.’

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

Including “please and “thank you” are ways of showing respect within an instructional request, and while SS does not use these clauses *every* time she makes a request, she scatters them throughout her verbal instruction to maintain the respectful and positive rehearsal environment.

SS often asks the choir to perform certain tasks by beginning her request with “would you,” as in the following examples:

SS: ... would you do that?

SS: Would you do this... ?

SS: Would you just sing after me, or say after me... ?

SS: Would you take, and just let it go this way (*modeling an embodied movement*) when you get there?

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

Each of the questions above ask the singers to do something specific—singing, echoing, embodied movement, and/or refining one of more of these actions. By asking, “would you...,” or in some instances, “will you...,” SS shows she believes that the singers are ABLE to do the particular task and is *inviting* them to join her in the actual task.

CC, Personal Notes: “SS begins many of her questions for specific rehearsal tasks with ‘would you’ and ‘will you’ – I have never really considered the significance of this short phrase until now. As an ensemble member, I feel more empowered by hearing “would you...” before an instruction than I do from hearing the instruction as a statement, or an “order,” if you will. As a conductor-teacher and teacher educator, I purposefully stay

away from asking for tasks with the phrase, “can you...,” and guide the preservice teachers to do the same. I wonder if asking “would you...” may have an impact in my own rehearsals...”

(September 9, 2008)

Sometimes SS uses her speaking voice when asking for a task, and sometimes she sings the instruction on a particular pitch. When an instruction is sung, the pitch usually is the starting pitch of the phrase being rehearsed (if the phrase is in unison), or she divides the instructional phrase and sings part of it on each of the starting pitches for multiple voice parts.

Portrait of Verbal Strategies: *Assessing*

As this rehearsal scene begins, SS has just taught the singers to conduct a three-beat pattern...

<i>Task</i>	SS: Take your pencils... this is now your baton (<i>conducting the three-beat pattern as demonstrated earlier, and now chanting along in rhythm...</i>) Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san-na (<i>chanting and conducting</i>).
<i>Task</i>	Would you chant it? Only use your chant voice! (<i>chanting, as demonstration</i>). Here we go... 1 – ready – go... C: Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san-na (<i>chanting and conducting</i>)
<i>Question</i>	SS: How are they different? You have how many of them? Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, Ho-san—na, (<i>speaking softly in rhythm and counting the number of ‘hosanna’s’</i>) three... and then you get, Ho-san-na (<i>singers chiming in</i>)
<i>(Summary)</i>	

Question	Ok. Can you conduct and chant in such a way that every single one of them has a distinct identity? They can't be the same.
Task	Try it... 1 – ready – and... C: Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san-na (<i>chanting and conducting; each enunciation of 'hosanna' has a different sound</i>)
Assessment	SS: Fabulous! And if you had a choir in front of you... which of those do you think is the most? One, two, three, or new idea? Or new rhythm?
Question	(<i>several reluctant but audible guesses from the choir...</i>)
(Discussion)	Right! Because the composer sets you up! Oh... this is the coolest thing, right? The composer sets you up to expect, Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na... (<i>chanting as a whisper and conducting; each syllable sounding the same</i>). Doesn't he?
Question	(<i>several singers are heard voicing their agreement...</i>)
(Discussion)	'Cause you've done it three times. But, no... NO! He goes, ho-san-na! (<i>chanting and conducting</i>)
Task	So make it playful. Here we go... Conduct – and – chant... C: Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san-na! (<i>chanting and conducting</i>) ...
Task	SS: Would you say, Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting with VERY tall [a] vowels and right arm jabbing forward on each syllable</i>). C: (<i>echoes</i>) Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting; [a] vowels are not as tall as SS's</i>)

Task	SS: Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting with both palms on cheeks, to remind the singers to use more yawn space</i>). C: (<i>echoes again</i>) Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting; [a] vowels are still not as tall as Dr. Snow's</i>)
(Imagery)	SS: What if we use... THIS is our trumpet (<i>using two hands; gesturing to lowest abdominal muscles</i>). THIS is our trumpet! C: (<i>choir breaks out into giggling...</i>)
(Description)	SS: Alright? So, this is where you're gonna have the articulation, so you get... Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting in rhythm; with arms open in "beach ball" position, and thrusting downward, showing energy on each syllable</i>). Ready – go – and...
Task	C: (<i>echoes</i>) Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! SS: (<i>gesturing with two arms while the choir chants, with a sort of "whipping" in and out on each syllable</i>)
Assessment	The articulation is fabulous! That's so much better. The vowel is not as
Constructive feedback	fabulous, 'cause I hear, Ho-san-nah/uh -- 'ah /uh -- 'ah/uh... (<i>chanting; ah/uh = [ə]</i>)
Task	Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting, back to full, rich, tall [a]</i>). Ready, go... C: (<i>echoes</i>) Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting, this time with a fantastic full, rich tall sound</i>)
Assessment	SS: I like that a lot. Now, let's do it musically—three times, all different, to set
Task	up the last change. Conduct... and chant. Here we go... 1 – ready – go...

	C: Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! Ho-san-na! (<i>chanting and conducting</i>)
Constructive feedback	SS: No, I heard “aeh” ([æ])... did you? It was on the last vowel. “Ho – sAH”... great, and then “naeh”... not so great. “Ho – sAH – nAH”
Task	(AH = [ɑ]). Here we go... 1 – ready – and... C: Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san-na! (<i>chanting and conducting</i>) SS: (<i>conducting the choir, with a jab/punch on each beat for rhythmic energy; the plane lowers for each successive “Ho-san—na,” then is higher and with joyful energy on the last “Ho-san—na”</i>).
Task	Sing it! Sing and conduct. Here we go... 1 – ready – and... C: Ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san—na, ho-san-na! (<i>singing and conducting</i>)
Question	SS: Thank you. Are you singing ‘AH’ or ‘aeh’? Do you hear it?? ...
Assessment	SS: There’s some creative composition going on... (<i>smiling as she scans the</i>
Constructive feedback	<i>alto section</i>). Alto’s, you’re up on this pitch... Ho-san-na— (<i>singing on their pitch</i>), not down here... (<i>singing the pitch a 5th down from the written pitch</i>).
(Description)	Ho-san-na— (<i>singing again on the written pitch</i>). That’s actually a very intuitive mistake to make, because that’s the root of the chord. It’s a smart
Assessment	mistake... if you’re gonna make a mistake, it’s a smart one. I like that.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Summary of Verbal Rehearsal Strategies

The verbal choices made by SS during rehearsals include *Describing* strategies and *Assessing* strategies. Describing strategies that emerged in this study include words and phrases that describe, engage discussion, conjure imagery, and provide a summary. The assessing strategies are assessment, constructive feedback, various forms of questions, and requesting musical, written, and kinesthetic tasks. SS's verbal choices are respectful and positive, and she chooses specific words carefully while in the moment of rehearsals.

CHAPTER V

Modeling and Movement: Active Rehearsal Strategies

The rehearsal choices made by an expert conductor-teacher in the moment of rehearsing remain the focus of this study. In addition to the verbal strategies that SS employs during rehearsals, active strategies emerged as a main theme. Choral conducting-teaching is by its very nature “active” therefore, it is no surprise that, as an expert conductor-teacher, SS often gravitates toward active strategies during rehearsals. The particular nature of the active strategy choices she makes along with when during rehearsals she implements the choices are two factors that contribute to her improvisational teaching expertise.

While the aim of this study is not to calculate a percentage of time spent in active versus other strategies during rehearsals, the data collected under the “active” umbrella are more extensive than the data collected for verbal strategies. I enjoyed the luxury of observing-participating in hours of rehearsals with SS—my account of her *active* strategies will reflect the lived experiences in the moment of rehearsals in which I participated and observed. This chapter is dedicated to exploring these *active* rehearsal strategies, the two themes of which are *Modeling* and *Embodied Movement*.

Modeling

“Would you echo after me? Just listen: ‘Be-ne-dic-tus—, qui ve-nit’—” (*singing with an open, spacious, and connected sound*).

Modeling emerged as an important part of SS’s active rehearsal strategies. Whereas verbal strategies describe musical ideas and assess learning, modeling is the vocal and/or aural representation of what words are sometimes unable to depict. SS remains constantly connected with and aware of the ensemble members during rehearsals so that she is able to make in-the-moment decisions of the needed strategies, including *how* and *when* to use modeling.

Two main codes developed from the data in the modeling category: chanting and singing. *Chanting* includes all forms of modeling using a “chant,” or unpitched voice, and *singing* includes demonstrating and modeling with the singing voice. A third main code emerged that provides a “bridge” between the modeling and embodied movement themes: movement *while* modeling. Two sub-codes emerged within the data: Chant-singing as a sub-code under the *chanting* theme, and modeling desired versus undesired sound as part of the *movement while modeling* theme.

Chanting

The goal of chanting in choral rehearsals is to situate the voice in a “high and forward” placement—that is, “high” in pitch, and “forward” in the resonant space of the singers’ head. To put the high and forward placement into perspective, “speaking” voices tend to settle in a mid-to-lower space within the pitch and resonance spectrum, without much airflow or the ability to add shape or dimension to a phrase of text. Chanting, when carried out properly, uses nearly the

same breath energy as singing and provides the opportunity to rehearse vowel shape, consonant attacks and releases, and musical phrasing. Choral conductor-teachers refer to chanting affectionately as a “Mrs. Doubtfire” voice, or as a “Julia Child” voice (and thanks to the 2009 feature film, “Julie and Julia,” [Columbia Pictures, Inc.] the reference is alive and well).

SS uses chanting during rehearsals as an active strategy for several purposes and in various forms. Here is one example:

SS: Say, **NOH-mi-ne—** (*chanting*)

Choir: **NOH-mi-ne—** (*chanting; echoing*)

SS: **DOH-mi-ni—** (*chanting*)

Choir: **DOH-mi-ni—** (*chanting; echoing*)

SS: exactly right.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The words are “nomine,” and “Domini.” This is a “model and echo” form of chanting or “call and response.” In this excerpt, SS is aiming for stress on the first syllable, and “unstress” on the second and third syllables, or STRONG – weak – weak. By chanting the words in a high and forward placement, the singers are practicing the correct syllabic stress, with the correct vocal placement, but separate from the actual pitches.

The following is an example of modeling through chanting *without* asking the choir to echo:

[The text in the following excerpt is: “and on, and on, and on.”]

SS: ... if you don’t put the schwa sound there, you’ll actually get a ‘T.’ It will come across as a ‘T.’ **An-ton, an-ton, an-ton—** (*chanting*) your friend “Anton” will come out. **An-DUH on, an-DUH on, an-DUH on—** (*chanting*).

You actually have to overdo that.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS chose to model this using her chanting voice, instead of singing the phrase at pitch, to show emphasis on the schwa sound, or shadow vowel, between the words “and” / “on.” Later in the rehearsal segment, she initiated the chanting/echoing strategy when the shadow vowel was not yet solid.

Two additional purposes of chanting during rehearsals surfaced repeatedly in the data. One purpose is to encourage spaciousness in vowel sounds, and the second is to teach and/or reinforce musical phrasing.

- Chanting for spaciousness in vowel sounds:

SS: ... so this (*showing arm/hand crown-forward movement*) is just to remind us to keep the space really open. **Zō—** (*chanting in a “high and forward” placement, while modeling arm/hand crown-forward movement*).

- Chanting to reinforce musical phrasing—in this example, a suspension:

SS: And where’s the interesting... suspension? **A so— ng—** (*chanting, with left arm pressing forward then back, modeling strong versus weak, or ‘pressing into’ then ‘release’ of a suspension*) right, on the ‘C’?

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

In both of these examples, SS used movement as a visual cue to reinforce her chanting. With or without movement, chanting specific words or a portion of text is a rehearsal strategy she uses when she hears the choir lose spaciousness in their singing. By reinforcing the high and forward placement of chanting and encouraging “more space” inside the mouth, SS prepares the choir for spacious vowels during singing.

Chanting is useful to teach and/or reinforce musical phrasing, as in the second example above, with the suspension. As mentioned previously, the technique used for chanting—when performed properly—is similar to proper singing technique. When SS leads singers in *chanting* a phrase with the appropriate and desired musical shape, the singers most often then *sing* the phrase with the same desired musical shape.

Chant-singing

One form of chanting that was present in several rehearsals is “chant-singing.” SS chose at times to chant on a certain pitch, in a pseudo “Sprechstimme”—from German: “speech-voice.” Here is one example:

SS: (*chant-singing, “Sprechstimme”-style, on one pitch*) **I’m gonna be so completely picky—you can’t change the pitch of the shadow vowel. You can’t make it lower, it can’t be “an – dih – on” (*with a lower pitch on “dih”*). (*chant-singing again*) It has to be, “an – dih – on,” the same exact pitch, try it—**

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In this particular rehearsal segment, chant-singing played an important role in modeling the shadow vowel concept. SS’s in-the-moment choice to chant-sing her constructive feedback made a difference in the subsequent rehearsal segment when the choir went back to singing the section of music that includes the shadow vowel.

Singing

Modeling in the form of singing played a significant role in SS’s teaching. Modeling with her singing voice was her “go-to” form of demonstrating many musical ideas, including articulation, syllabic stress, phrase shaping, and vowel sounds, just to name a few. I witnessed

SS's personal "confession" during one rehearsal, when she discussed her own instrument and her insecurities about her singing (Field Notes, November 8, 2007). However, through my lived experiences in many of SS's rehearsals in multiple contexts, her vocal modeling strategies were successful repeatedly. She has in her mind an aural image of the desired sound and is able to improvise during rehearsals to model whatever sound, vowel, articulation, and/or musical phrasing (etc.) the singers need to hear.

As is the case with chanting, SS's use of singing as a modeling strategy takes many forms. The following is a bulleted list of specific forms or types of singing as modeling, each with an excerpt from a rehearsal demonstrating the strategy.

- Modeling where in the music she wants to begin a rehearsal segment:

SS: Would you look at page 6? **Ho-san-na, ho-san-na** (*singing the rhythmic pattern on one voice part*).

- Modeling an entire phrase after the choir participates in a written task—underlining strong syllables and working on syllabic stress:

SS: So we get, **There is a song, SLEEP-ing in... SLEEP-ing 'in 'all things...** (*singing with appropriate syllabic stress and glottal stops*) other places to put glottals. Here we go, three-and, four-and—

- Modeling on a neutral syllable instead of the text:

SS: Would you do, **b – b b – b b – b – b b – b b** (*singing the neural syllable "b" on the pitches:*) [D^b C B^b C A^b G]

(*singing every 8th-note, instead of holding "b" on the written quarter notes*). Pulse every 8th-note, all right?

- Modeling the phrase shaping of a vocal line on a neutral syllable instead of the text:

SS: Just listen again... **b – b b – b b – b – B b – b b** (*singing the same phrase again, pulsing every 8th-note; this time crescendoing toward the high point of the phrase: B*).

See how he leads to that A^b?

- Modeling a more spacious sound:

SS: Now, let's experiment with space. Go, **Nnjeeoh— nnjeeoh— nnjeeoh—** (*singing, with more profound difference in the space inside her mouth, especially between the “ee” and “oh”*).

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

I listed each of the “singing as modeling” strategies above with a particular rehearsal moment. These specific strategies are not limited only to these particular compositions in these particular rehearsal settings. SS uses the various strategies when rehearsing all types of choral music and in every choral rehearsal setting. She models the phrase shaping of a vocal line when rehearsing a 21st-century composition, as well as when she rehearses a composition by J.S. Bach. One defining factor of her improvisational teaching expertise is the way in which she applies the specific modeling strategies, and the rehearsal moment(s) during which she chooses to include them within the rehearsal. SS recognizes in the moment of teaching/rehearsing what form or type of modeling the singers need to hear, and inserts the modeling along her and the choir's collective navigation from *desired* to *final* product.

Movement while Modeling

Movement plays a significant part in SS's rehearsals, and is the focus of the latter part of this chapter. Movement *while* modeling emerged as a separate and important component of modeling, and this code provides a connection between the modeling and movement rehearsal strategies. Many of the rehearsal examples in the *chanting* and *singing* sections of this chapter include the use of movement, but the focus in prior sections was on the specific chanting or singing strategies, and not the actual movement that may have accompanied them.

Here, I consider "movement while modeling" an extension of SS's modeling strategies. Movement generally accompanies her modeling (chanting/singing), but at the same time, she is *modeling* the movement for singers to replicate.

In the following excerpts, each instance of movement includes modeling with chanting and/or singing:

- Modeling movement while singing:

SS: ... for me I feel like I'm shooting that sound right out of here (*pointing to the center of her forehead*). Would you do, **Be-ne-DIC-tus**— (*singing, while modeling "pulling a string" from her forehead*), and just pull it from right there.

- Modeling movement while chanting:

SS: Would you say, **Koon**— (*chanting*)

C: **Koon**— (*chanting; echoing SS's modeling*)

[*The following is a series of SS chanting, and the choir echoing:*]

SS: **Khhh**— (*chanting*)

Khhh— (*chanting; sharper sound, with a karate chop hand motion forward and back*)

No, that's still **kh**— (*chanting; 'whimpy' sounding, with a limp hand motion*)

Khhh— (*chanting; sharper sound, again with a karate chop*)

Khhh— (*chanting; now using a punch gesture, forward and back*)

Khhh— (*chanting; using the punch again, but this time even sharper forward and back*)

That's cool...

Khhhun-ga-la— (*chanting*)

- Modeling movement while singing:

[The following is a series of SS singing, and the choir echoing and mirroring movements:]

SS: Ho-san-na (*singing on highest voice part*)... Go!

Ho-san-na (*singing on same pitch, with left hand “cupped” in front of her face*).

Hoh— (*singing on same pitch, with right arm/hand moving over head, from back to front*).

Ho-san-na (*singing on same pitch, with both arms “flicking” from forehead out forward in front of her head*).

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

The various forms of movement in these examples are specific to the singers' in-the-moment needs. For instance, in the first example, SS modeled for the choir to “pull a string from their foreheads” while holding the syllable ‘tus;’ the vocal tone needed more resonant direction—something I call a “laser beam” resonance—and the “pulling a string” movement helped the choir achieve the desired sound. SS did not stop the choir to say, “Please add more resonant direction to your sound on ‘tus;’” instead, she modeled the movement and asked the singers to, “just pull it from right there.” Similarly, SS modeled “karate chops” to help produce a crisper, sharper ‘Khhh’ sound in the second example, and she included three different

movements to facilitate a more spacious- and forward-resonant-sounding ‘Hosanna’ in the third example. These examples illustrate that adding movement while modeling, and encouraging singers to participate in the movements when they sing assists in facilitating embodied singing, or more connection between the body and singing voice. Singers do not have a distinctly tangible instrument that they can hold physically, adjust by twisting components, or fine-tune by twisting string adjusters. Movement strategies assist singers in “hooking-up” the body with the voice and, therefore, assist in building vocalism. I will discuss at length the theme of and strategies for ‘building vocalism’ in Chapter Six.

Modeling Desired versus Undesired Sounds

Singing or chanting a musical phrase, articulation, and/or vowel production with a *desired* sound compared to an *undesired* sound emerged as a secondary code under modeling. SS makes this choice to emphasize—and sometimes *over-emphasize*—the difference between what she hears the choir singing and what she *desires* to hear in the choir’s sound. Here is one example:

- Modeling the undesired musical shape, followed by modeling the desired musical shape; note the size difference of the neutral syllable “b” between the first and second modeling of the phrase:

SS: Yes, now—I’m gonna exaggerate. I promise it didn’t sound like this, BUT, I hear a little bit of this: **b - b— b— b - b— b** (*singing syncopated phrase; rhythmically and musically “square,” with equal weight on each syllable; without shape/movement on longer notes*).

(immediately following) b - B— B— b - B— b (singing same phrase again; more musically, with “shape” on the longer notes).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS did not pause between modeling the undesired and then desired phrase shapes; she first modeled an exaggeration of the undesired phrase shape, then immediately modeled the same phrase with the desired phrase shape.

Sometimes SS chooses to model desired and undesired sounds within the same singing example. She “migrates” between the desired and undesired sounds while singing and holding one particular pitch. SS uses this strategy most often as a way to model vowel sounds, spaciousness in tone quality, and resonance.

SS: I hear **zo/ah— [sol – fa – mi]** *(singing; showing “flyaway” hands/arms)*

zo— o/ah— o— *(singing; migrating between desired and undesired vowel sounds; moving hands/arms from “flyaway” to full “o” shape in front of her torso/head, back and forth with the corresponding desired and undesired sounds)*

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In the preceding example, SS modeled the difference between a “pure” and “unpure” vowel sound, “ō.” This next example uses the same strategy, but instead of migrating while holding a particular vowel, SS repeated the syllable for each desired and undesired sound:

SS: Listen... **Beh—** *(‘beh’ from ‘be-ne-dic-tus;’ singing first syllable of the word with a bright, thin sound; showing “flyaway” arms)*

BEH— *(singing with a warm, rich sound; showing “dome” arms)*

Beh— *(singing with a bright, thin sound; showing “flyaway” arms)*

BEH— *(singing with a warm, rich sound; showing “dome” arms)*

Alright? And – uh – one... *(conducting preparation breath)*

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Movement played a role in both of the rehearsal excerpts above. SS showed a certain movement, or gesture, to go along with each of the desired and undesired sounds that she modeled. In these particular moments of rehearsal, she did not indicate for the choir to repeat what she had modeled. However, SS did at times model desired and undesired sounds with movement, and she asked the choir to mirror her singing and movement.

- Modeling desired and undesired sounds, with movement:

[The following is a description of SS singing the [i] vowel sound on a particular pitch, and the choir echoing each vowel sound and movement:]

i— *(singing with a full, rich, and focused sound; hands/arms making a V-shape, moving forward away from her body, positioned slightly above her head).*

i— *(singing with a dark, and swallowed sound; hands/arms going down in V-shape).*

ni— *(singing with a full, rich, and focused sound, with one arm/hand in motion like “laser beam” away from her head).*

ni— *(singing with a bright and nasal sound, with “flyaway” arms on either side of her head).*

ni— *(singing again with a bright, nasal, and flat sound; hands/arms making a “flatline” horizontal motion in front of her body).*

ni— *(singing with a full, rich, and focused sound; hands/arms making a V-shape, moving forward away from her body, positioned slightly above her head).*

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Portrait of Active Strategies: *Modeling*

Active Strategy:	SS:	Choir:
	Would you echo after me? Just listen...	<i>(echoing modeled sounds and mirroring modeled movements)</i>
<i>Singing</i>	Be-ne-dic-tus—, qui ve-nit— <i>(singing, with an open, spacious, and even sound).</i>	EE—
<i>Chanting with movement</i>	Say, EE— <i>(chanting with a rounded and spacious sound; modeling hands tossing forward from cheeks).</i>	EE—
<i>Chanting with movement</i>	EE— <i>(chanting with an even more rounded and spacious sound; modeling hands angling forward from cheeks in sort of “dome” shape).</i>	EE—
<i>Chanting with movement</i>	VEH-nit <i>(chanting; modeling one hand moving forward from mouth on strong syllable “veh,” then back in on weak syllable “nit”).</i>	VEH-nit
<i>Chanting with movement</i>	Be-ne-DIC-tus <i>(chanting with a rounded and spacious sound; modeling hands/arms again moving forward on strong syllable and back on weak final syllable).</i>	Be-ne-DIC-tus
<i>Chant-singing with movement</i>	Be-ne-DIC-tus <i>(chant-singing, again with a rounded and spacious sound; modeling hands/arms moving forward in dome-shape on “DIC”).</i>	Be-ne-DIC-tus

<i>Chant-singing undesired sound with movement</i>	Be-neh (<i>chant-singing with a bright, thin sound; modeling “flyaway” arms on “neh”</i>).	Be-neh
<i>Chant-singing desired sound with movement</i>	Be-ne-DIC—tus (<i>chant-singing with a warm, rounded sound; modeling hands/arms moving forward in dome-shape on “DIC”</i>).	Be-ne-DIC—tus
<i>Chanting desired sound with movement</i>	qui VEH—nit (<i>chanting with a noticeably rounded and spacious “veh” sound; modeling right arm pointing forward away from her body on “veh”</i>).	qui VEH—nit
<i>Chanting desired sound with movement</i>	VEH— (<i>chanting, again with the noticeably rounded and spacious “eh” vowel sound; modeling hands/arms moving forward from forehead in dome- shape</i>).	VEH—
<i>Chanting undesired sound with movement</i>	veh— (<i>chanting with a bright, thin, closed-off “eh” vowel sound; modeling “flyaway” hands/arms</i>).	veh—
<i>Chanting desired sound with movement</i>	VEH— (<i>chanting with a rounded and spacious “eh” vowel sound; modeling hands/arms moving forward in dome-shape</i>).	VEH—
<i>Chant-singing desired sound with movement</i>	in NOH—mi-ne (<i>chant-singing with a warm, rounded, spacious sound; modeling right arm pointing forward away from her body on “NOH”</i>).	in NOH—mi-ne
<i>Chant-singing desired sound with movement</i>	DOH-mi-ni (<i>chant-singing with a warm, rounded,</i>	DOH-mi-ni

*Singing with
movement*

*spacious sound; modeling right arm “rainbowing” up
and over on “DOH”).*

Be-ne-DIC-tus— qui VEH-nit— *(singing the
phrase on the written pitches; modeling left hand/arm
moving forward on strong syllables “dic” and “veh;”
modeling hand brushing forward from lips on “tus”
and “nit”).*

Be-ne-DIC-tus—

Embodied Movement

Rehearsal Snapshot

Choir: nu— *(singing the syllable in unison on an ‘A’)*

(While the choir is singing, SS first has the back of each hand on either of her cheeks, then begins making small, fast circles in front of her mouth with her right hand and first finger, refining the ‘oo’ shape.)

SS: Do this— *(while still making circles in front of her mouth, SS motions for the choir to mirror her in making the circles).*

Choir: nu— *(continues singing, now mirroring the circles).*

SS: Listen to the difference *(while the choir is still singing, SS motions for the singers to alternate from large circles in slower motion to small circles in faster motion).*

Both are useful— both are useful for different moments.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

When I began working with the data and sorting through SS’s improvisational rehearsal choices, the instances of embodied movement grabbed my attention immediately. Movement during rehearsals recurred in every choral setting in which SS led. Her movement choices seemed analogous to building vocalism, working on musical phrasing, and rehearsing articulation—like a “two-for-one” package deal in choral rehearsals.

At first, it did not seem important to separate the actual movements I observed and in which I participated from the modeling strategies. However, instances of movement that are separate from modeling emerged as significant features of SS’s in-the-moment rehearsal choices.

The three codes under *embodied movement* include conducting gesture, illustrating movement, and movement during the choir's singing.

Throughout this section, my descriptions of SS's embodied movement choices will focus on the movements themselves, and will not include detailed information about what the choir is singing *during* her movements. The goal here is to describe as fully as possible SS's specific movements and the ways in which she implements the movement choices.

Conducting Gesture

SS chooses certain conducting gestures and decides when to use them during rehearsals according to the specific needs of each composition she rehearses, and in response to the learning needs of the choir. As a form of movement, conducting gesture for SS becomes a rehearsal strategy. She does not “direct traffic,” showing only entrances, releases, breath cues, dynamic shapings, and etc. While these items certainly are important to communicate in performance, SS uses conducting gesture as a tool in the music learning process, and her gesture assists in providing singers the opportunity to experience the music in its fullest extent.

In the following example, SS has taught the singers to conduct a three-beat pattern, and she is coaching their articulation to be more similar to that of the music that they are rehearsing:

SS: I can do this, I can go... (*conducting a 3-beat pattern, pressing/punching downward on each beat*). That's heavy, and accented, right? Does it have any life to it though?

Ick! Right? So, you're touching a hot stove, and you're gonna go— (*conducting a 3-beat pattern with more bounce and rhythmic energy; saying, “uh – uh – uh; ouch,*

yikes...” as if saying ‘ouch’ after touching a hot stove on each beat). Would you do it?

Here we go, 1 – ready – go— (*conducting several measures while making the ‘sound*

effects’ on each beat; walking back and forth in front of the choir, making visual contact with all students, assessing their conducting). You’ve got a little bit of rebound here—dancing...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The singers continued mirroring SS’s conducting gesture, and began singing the section along with their conducting. This strategy had a profound effect on the choir’s internalizing of the desired articulation; their singing was more buoyant and embodied rhythmic energy.

Another way that SS uses conducting gesture as a rehearsal choice is to purposefully “get out of the way” by making her gesture smaller in size and lower vertically, as in this example:

[In the following excerpt, SS conducts an eight-measure phrase that includes a repeated word and rhythm pattern, with the intent of ‘drawing in the choir’ to the rhythmic energy and musical phrase shaping.]

SS: Here we go, 1 – ready – and— *(conducting with the jab/punch on each beat for rhythmic energy; lower vertically and smaller in size for each repeated rhythm pattern; then higher and with ‘joyful’ energy on last measure of the phrase).*

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The warm-up sequence is as important to SS as the remaining rehearsal time, and she includes conducting gesture in various ways during warm-ups.

SS: **zi— [sol – fa – mi – fa – sol]** *(one arm makes a “laser beam” gesture, then begins conducting spaciouly above her forehead). All right, breathing in, and— (choir echoes; SS is conducting with her hands/arms in a large, spacious way, slightly above her*

forehead; as the choir holds the last pitch, she mirrors yawn space by her cheeks with the back of both hands/arms).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Following is an example of “mixing up” conducting gesture within the context of a single phrase. This was an “Ah-ha!” moment for the choir, and I believe that SS’s conducting gesture was the motivation behind the singers’ connection with the music.

[In the following excerpt, SS conducts the choir in singing a phrase that includes three repeated motives—each with the same rhythm, pitches, and text.]

SS: What if you made a crescendo through the long notes? Why don’t you stand, actually. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4— (*preparation breath gesture*).

(conducting gestures while the choir is singing: minimal conducting pattern; her arms are open and jabbing forward on the last [strong] syllable the 1st and 2nd times, then she makes a parallel “swooping” motion with both arms on the 3rd time).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Something about the “parallel swooping motion” connected with the singers in such a way that the phrase came alive. SS’s improvisational choice to mix up her conducting gesture in this moment was the catalyst of the singers experiencing the music in a new way.

Illustrating Movement

SS: It’s a different feel, right? And it’s more of this (*moving right hand/arm in a counterclockwise circular motion, mimicking “stirring”*).

SS: And you’re breathing in this shape (*showing a “dome” hand/arm position with right*

hand/arm, placed by cheek and forehead) as they're [another voice part] singing...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

One embodied movement strategy that reappeared often in multiple rehearsal settings is something I call “illustrating movement.” As the examples above demonstrate, SS accompanies a description of sound or musical idea with a visual “illustration.” I observed two types of “illustrating movement.” First, SS uses this strategy as an aid to clarify a verbal description of the desired sound, articulation, musical phrase shape, etc., *without* asking the singers to mirror the movement (as in the examples above). The second way she uses this strategy is as a way to describe how to mirror the movement in order to supplement the singers’ sound, articulation, musical phrase shape, etc.

Here are two examples of SS using “illustrating movement” in a manner that describes how to mirror the movement with the purpose of supplementing their sound:

SS: So, this time when you sing, would you go— (*inhaling while extending both arms to the sides of her torso and bending her knees*), and sink in when you take the breath in, so we get— (*illustrating the inhalation movement again*).

SS: When you get to the long note, would you just take, and do this— (*making large circles with her hand/arm on the right side of her head, near her temple and slightly in front of her forehead; reminding the choir of “spin” and continuous space that she had just described*), spinning to build that connection and space, alright?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Both of these examples exhibit a verbal description of the movement and serve to supplement the choir’s sound with the embodied movement. By incorporating this active strategy of illustrating

movement, SS reaches both kinesthetic and verbal (aural) learners, and the visual description of the movement helps connect singers with the “abstractness” of vocal production.

As stated previously in this chapter, movement is helpful in reinforcing embodied singing, and therefore building healthy vocal production.

Below is one last example of SS illustrating movement to the choir. This time, it displays a combination of both types of illustrating movement—clarifying a verbal description of the desired sound, and describing how to mirror the movement:

SS: What if you take “vit” each time, **qui veh-ni—** (*singing*), and I want you to take, and just lift and “offer” it this way— (*circling both hands/arms palms up, toward her torso, up, around, and forward, ultimately “offering” the sound in front of her*). **qui VEH-nit—** (*singing again, illustrating the same movement*). Do those three pitches with me, go— (*giving preparation breath*)...

(“illustrating movement” gesture while the choir is singing: “offering the sound” movement on “vit;” She holds “vit” for several seconds, longer than the actual note value, and begins wiggling her fingers while the choir continues to sing the pitch)

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Movement while the Choir Sings

The opening *rehearsal snapshot* of this section about embodied movement is a definitive example of SS’s “movement while the choir sings.” Here is the excerpt once more:

Choir: nu— (*singing the syllable in unison on an ‘A’*)

(While the choir is singing, SS first has the back of each hand on either of her cheeks, then begins making small, fast circles in front of her mouth with her right hand

and first finger, refining the ‘oo’ shape.)

SS: Do this— *(while still making circles in front of her mouth, SS motions for the choir to mirror her in making the circles).*

Choir: nu— *(continues singing, now mirroring the circles).*

SS: Listen to the difference *(while the choir is still singing, SS motions for the singers to alternate from large circles in slower motion to small circles in faster motion).*

Both are useful— both are useful for different moments.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

To be meticulously clear, this is the specific series of movements made by SS during the excerpt:

- places the back of each hand on either of her cheeks
- begins making small, fast circles in front of her mouth
- invites the choir to join her in making the circles
- indicates for the choir to make large circles in slower motion
- indicates for the choir to follow her in alternating large and small circles

All of these movements took place while the choir was holding a unison pitch on an ‘oo’ vowel sound. These embodied movement choices in this particular moment of rehearsal served to enhance the choir’s vowel sound and the singers’ individual body/voice connection.

The following excerpt is from a similar rehearsal moment, with SS making different movement choices while the choir holds a unison pitch:

SS: Do something to keep air moving, like this— *(moving hands/arms in a free, fluid, open, circular manner; utilizing all of the space in front of and to the sides of her body).*

Slowly— *(continues making the free, fluid hand/arm movements; changes movement to*

both hands stroking her cheeks with her palms, from the back of her jaw and forward; gestures this movement directly to far right side of choir—altos).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

While it is not the purpose of this chapter, it is necessary to mention that SS makes these in-the-moment embodied movement choices based on her “response to sounding,” the focus of Chapter Seven. This chapter remains dedicated to isolating and describing SS’s active rehearsal strategies, including her choices of movement while the choir sings.

SS often uses both of her hands on or near her cheeks to encourage purer vowels while singing. In the earlier “rehearsal snapshot” example, she used the back of her hand to touch both of her cheeks—there is something about putting the back of the hand up to one’s cheek that causes an automatic “dropped jaw” response. This strategy seems to work for SS in every setting in which I participated and/or observed. In the second example, just above, she used her hands in a forward stroking or brushing movement. SS gravitates toward this sort of movement when the vowel sounds need to be rounder or purer.

Another movement that SS uses to encourage purer vowels is that of “fish lips,” as seen in the following examples:

- Circles in front of her mouth, followed by “fish lips:”

(movement while the choir sings: SS is listening intently, moving her right hand in quick circles in front of her mouth; changes movement to take both hands up to her mouth to remind singers of “fish lips,” pointing her fingers forward as if they were a megaphone)

- “Fish lips,” right hand circles, then fingers rubbing together:

(movement while the choir sings: left hand thumb and forefinger are near her mouth/lips, encouraging “fish lips” by brushing from the sides of her lips, and moving forward and out

from her mouth; begins moving her right hand/arm in circles near her temple and slightly in front of her forehead; begins rubbing together fingers of both hands, mimicking a lively and energetic sound)

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In all of the examples of “movement while the choir sings,” SS makes improvisational teaching/rehearsing choices of what specific movements to use and about how to adapt the movements to individual moments of rehearsal.

Portrait of Active Strategies: *Embodied Movement*

Active Strategy:	SS:	Choir:
	What that requires for you, because we’re all kind of “sopranos” in some form, is all kinds of vowel.	
<i>Singing with movement</i>	Space. Song — (<i>singing with a spacious sound on the specific pitch; hands/arms showing an “inflating a beach ball” movement</i>).	
<i>Singing undesired sound with movement</i>	Instead of, song — (<i>singing the same pitch with a pressed/heavy sound; hands/arms pushing in a downward motion</i>).	
<i>Singing undesired sound</i>	that’s sort of here on the throat — (<i>singing on the same pitch and pointing to her larynx</i>).	

<i>Singing desired sound with movement</i>	But, song — (<i>hands/arms showing an “inflating a beach ball” movement</i>).	
<i>Singing desired sound with movement</i>	there is a song — (<i>singing the alto voice part, with the “beach ball” motion on ‘song’</i>).	
<i>Illustrating movement</i>	Do this along with me—allow your arms to open this way— Can I hear those people [the alto voice part]?	
<i>Conducting gesture</i>	And—a—sing— (<i>preparatory breath</i>).	There is a song—
<i>Movement while choir sings</i>	(movement while choir sings: <i>showing “inflating beach ball” movement while the altos sing ‘song’</i>).	
<i>Movement while choir sings</i>	(movement while choir continues singing: <i>left hand/arm rising/gliding upwards; showing facial expressions: mouth is open extremely tall, modeling ‘song,’ while her right hand is making a vertical movement below her chin</i>).	a song—
<i>Movement while choir sings</i>	Vowel, open it— (movement while choir sings: <i>hands/arms moving in large circles; back of her right palm moves to touch her right cheek</i>).	a song—

Summary of Active Rehearsal Strategies

SS's active rehearsal strategies include *modeling* and *embodied movement*. Her forms of modeling consist of chanting in a "high and forward" placement of pitch and resonance, chant-singing on a particular pitch, singing demonstrations of desired and undesired sounds, and adding movement to chanting and/or singing. Embodied movement strategies that emerged in this study include specific uses of conducting gesture, illustrating movement to describe concepts of sound and musical ideas, and using movement while the choir is singing. SS improvises during rehearsals by integrating these active strategies based on her observations of the choir's learning needs and by using them to assist the singers toward achieving an aural image of desired sound.

CHAPTER VI

Building Connections, Building Vocalism, and Conductor-Teacher Education

Chapter IV—Verbal rehearsal strategies, and Chapter V—Active rehearsal strategies both served to answer the first major research problem of this study: What specific rehearsal choices does an expert conductor-teacher make during improvisational teaching in the choral rehearsal context? Several additional themes surfaced throughout my coding and analyzing the data that assist in answering the first research question and the second research question: How does an expert conductor-teacher navigate from *desired* outcome to *final product* during choral rehearsals? These themes include building connections, building vocalism, and conductor-teacher education.

Building Connections

I think it's really important that they [singers] make the link that a composer is a living, breathing, human being, you know? Especially when we are working with music of living composers. I want them to feel like they can have access to that person and their thoughts. (SS, Formal Interview)

SS builds relationships with singers while making in-the-moment rehearsal choices and navigating from her desired outcome to the final product during choral rehearsals (the topic of Chapter Eight). In addition, she *builds connections* in the context of rehearsals—connections

that assist her in reaching rehearsal goals and that contribute to her developing in singers skills that foster life-long musicianship. These connections are connecting with the composer, connecting with the text, connecting with the music from the ‘inside-out,’ and connecting with the listener.

Rehearsal Snapshot

SS: The ‘hosanna’— What does ‘hosanna’ say to you? How would you characterize the quality of that, of the ‘hosanna’? What does it *sound* like to you?

One singer: Like joyful praise, rejoicing.

SS: Rejoicing— *(pause; allowing for additional suggestions by choir members)*

Another singer: Praise.

SS: Praise— right. What about the *feel* of the gesture as the composer wrote it?

(rehearsal segment continues with answers/suggestions from choir members)

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Connection with the Composer

SS mentions frequently the composer and his/her ‘ideas’ during rehearsals. When I first began coding the data, I perceived a separation between the ways in which SS made connections with the composer, as opposed to the ways she built connections with the composer’s compositional ideas, or motives. But as the data were coded, it became clear to me that SS’s discussions about the composer and the compositional motives were similar, and she rarely mentioned one without somehow including the other.

I used the label, ‘composer’s intention’ throughout the data to describe instances during rehearsals when SS’s discussion or questioning turned to speculating about the composer’s compositional ideas. Here is one such example:

SS: Right, but if you’re thinking like a composer there— if you’re thinking like a composer, you know that the *interesting* note is not the first note, but the “what” note?

Choir: the second— (*one voice speaking softly, as if from a distance or hesitant*).

SS: The *second* note, and then finally that resolution to the ‘E,’ which is really fantastic. Would you sing that with more intention please?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS uses the word ‘intention’ in this excerpt, drawing a direct connection with the composer’s possible wishes and the singers’ performance of a certain phrase of the work. She also used the phrase, “think like a composer,” challenging the singers to not only meet her desired expectations, but to honor the composer’s intention by “thinking like” him or her.

In this portion of our formal interview, SS shares some insight into her score study methods, which assist her in focusing on the compositional motives and the composer’s possible intentions in a particular composition:

SS: ... it’s trying to discover what the special characteristics of a piece of music under study—what sorts of things make the piece hang together. I talk with students [pre-service teachers] a lot about finding the “musical DNA:” what are the musical gestures that are embedded, that make this piece worthwhile? Why did I make the choice to do the piece in the first place? What do I want students to be able to experience as a result of interacting with this music? So, the process that I use is a hybridization of things that I’ve picked up over the years, but primarily the work of Margaret Hillis, and the kind of

structural analysis that takes a look at the whole piece and breaks it down as much as possible into smaller parts, so that you kind of uncover the compositional process by the composer. You try to figure out how it gets put together. And I think once you identify what the special characteristics of the piece are, then you can start thinking about how you're going to teach the piece. But first you have to develop your own idea about how you want this piece to sound...

(Formal Interview)

She calls this a 'discovery process' of the composer's possible intention:

SS: ... it's much more about the experience of the repertoire itself, and uncovering what the composer has in mind. And, that's a discovery process. We are, in fact, re-creators of somebody's work of art.

(Formal Interview)

As illustrated in the quote at the beginning of this section about *building connections*, SS is continuously thinking of ways to remind singers that the composer is (or was at one time) a living, breathing, human being, and that he/she has made specific choices in composing the music they are rehearsing. The following three rehearsal excerpts demonstrate this practice:

SS: No, he loves you more than that (*gesturing for the choir to stop singing mid-phrase*).

The composer loves you more than that, low voices. He wants you to sing *into* your sound.

SS: Let's talk about what specific, or interesting musical gestures that the composer writes into the score...

SS: There're several different kind of *feels* in this piece. Somebody describe that opening— (*begins singing the opening motive as a model of where in the music the singers should turn their attention*).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS builds connections with the composer and his/her compositional ideas with verbal strategies—describing, discussing, asking questions, and etc., and she also incorporates active and/or aural strategies to connect singers with the composer/composition. In the following excerpt, she plays blocked chords on the piano of the harmonic progression within a certain section of the work she is rehearsing.

SS: Listen to what happens— (*SS walks over toward the piano and stands behind the keyboard, preparing to play chord progressions for the choir*). Listen to what happens— (*she plays the I chord*). Ok, got that sound? Listen— (*SS begins playing a progression of chords on the piano; each of the roman numerals and chord qualities represent her playing that particular chord; her descriptions of the chords follow in plain text.*) *bVII^{M7}*—more interesting. *I*—home. *bVII^{M7}*—cool. *I*—home. *bVII*—consonant. *bVI^{M7}*—cool. *bVII*—consonant. *bVI*—consonant. *bVII*—consonant. And THEN what? *bVI^{M7}*—, *I*—. That's so interesting, that he wrote those things in. So, this composer is really interested in angularity, right? He's interested, because he sets up those inversions—triads in inversions... and then he's got the cool 'color' notes. Let's see if we can get sensitized to the color notes, and we'll go back and do it in time.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS labeled the various chords as ‘home,’ ‘more interesting,’ ‘cool,’ and ‘consonant,’ using descriptors to which the singers can relate, and drawing them in to a connection with the composer’s harmonic progression choices in this section of the music. It was a powerful moment during the rehearsal, and the singers’ minds and ears concentrated more on the compositional motives in the music through the remainder of the rehearsal time.

Connection with Text

SS: ... there’s something about the *poem*, or the poetry, that the composer gives you the clue, sort of, of how he uses this text. ‘There is a song [*pause*], *sleeping* in ALL things that will dream *on* and ON’ (*speaking as if she were giving a poetry reading*), right? And so, it would be *fantastic* if we could make that opening section more about that poetry.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS facilitates connections between the singers and the text(s) they perform. She draws attention to the poetry and to the composer’s choices of how to set the text to music. In addition, she discusses frequently the poet or author of a text (particularly if the poet/author is different from the composer), and gives biographical and/or historical information about the poet/author and his/her work.

One of SS’s *musical rehearsal choices* when responding to sounding during rehearsals is that of ‘syllabic and word stress’ (discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). Building a connection with the text of a composition and with the text’s poet/author goes several steps further than focusing on the syllabic and/or word stress of a text by facilitating deeper thinking and musicianship of the ensemble members. SS discussed during our formal interview the

appropriateness of an “extended conversation” during rehearsals about the text and poetry of a work:

SS: When I see extended conversations between a conductor-teacher and the choir where they’re [conductor-teacher] trying to get students to make decisions about the music, that may have its place in certain cases, for example if you’re going to look at the meaning of text and poetry—that everyone might have a chance to talk about what they think the words mean, or develop an interpretation.

(Formal Interview)

Connection with Music from the ‘Inside-Out’

SS: I just want students to be a part of that discovery process, opposed to simply approaching it from an outside-IN way, so that we learn the notes, and we learn the rhythms, and then we talk about where to crescendo, and then we [etc.]... none of those things are meaningful. None of those things are lasting. They don’t transfer.

(Formal Interview)

SS refers often to the non-linear or “non-traditional” way of teaching/rehearsing as from the ‘inside-out.’ As mentioned in the interview excerpt above, the opposite of an ‘inside-out’ way of teaching/rehearsing is conducting rehearsals from the ‘outside-in’—looking first at the notes, rhythms, dynamic markings, etc., without connecting musical meaning along with the teaching/rehearsing process. Making or facilitating connections between the singers and the music they are rehearsing from the first reading through performance of a composition is more meaningful and can transfer along the path of life-long musicianship.

SS aims to facilitate connections between the singers and the music they are rehearsing, always from the ‘inside-out.’ She spoke during our interview about her first realizations that she could involve singers in the music learning process, and the impact this idea would have on her conducting-teaching:

SS: Once I had the model shown to me, or demonstrated, that singers could be so involved in the re-creation process that has to do with making choral art—not that we’re talking about the verbal kind of interaction, but a much deeper kind of interaction where students are thinking inside the music as much as possible. For me, I began to consider what that meant as far as my role as a conductor-teacher...

(Formal Interview)

Teaching/rehearsing from the ‘inside-out’ is not necessarily a specific rehearsal choice, nor is it a quantifiable way of navigating from *desired* outcome to *final product* during rehearsals; it is an overall philosophy or lens through which SS conducts rehearsals with multiple ensembles in varying settings. Her final thoughts about facilitating singers to “think inside the music”—in this particular excerpt, she discussed All-State/Honor Choir settings:

SS: ... it’s [rehearsing with an All-State or Honor Choir] a crystallization of the process that one uses with one’s own ensemble. And, I would say, it becomes incredibly important in that first rehearsal with a guest choir to draw them in, to establish right away that we’re going to be working from inside the music... the first move that I’m going to make is going to be to require them to think inside the music in some way which establishes an expectation for how the rest of the weekend is going to go.

(Formal Interview)

Connection with Listener

SS builds connections with the composer and his/her compositional motives, with the text, and with the music from the ‘inside-out’ in the context of choral rehearsals. The final connection that surfaced as part of the *building connections* emergent theme is building connections with the ‘listener.’ SS connects singers with the ‘listener’ or audience member by simply drawing their attention to the listener—something that I had never considered until my observing of and singing with SS. Here are several examples of connecting the singers with the listener:

SS: Let the listener in on that word, otherwise it goes right by them— ‘The magic word’ (*speaking; indicating where the choir will begin singing*). The **MA – gic** word (*chanting; right hand/arm moving out on ‘MA’ and back in on ‘gic’*).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS: There’re several different kind of *feels* in this piece. It would be so great if you could bring the listener in to your understanding of that. Somebody describe that opening— (*begins singing the opening motive; proceeds with eliciting descriptive words from the singers, illustrating the opening vocal line of the piece*).

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS: But you know what? The listener, the audience never hears that (*describing overly-articulated diction*). It doesn’t come out as overly done to the audience. It comes out as, “oh, I hear text!” So, would everyone please sing...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In each of the above excerpts, SS includes the listener/audience member in the rehearsal process. She brings to the singers’ awareness the idea that their ‘listener’ wants to experience

the music and the composer's intention right along WITH the choir members. This thought process transforms the ways in which singers connect with and perform their music.

Portrait of *Building Connections*

CC: Commentary and reflections

CC & SS: Think Aloud Interview

CC: The question, "Why did the composer do that?" or, "What do you think the composer was thinking when he/she made that choice?" If you would, please, talk about this phrase or question—what does this phrase mean to you, and why do you make the choice so often to include it during rehearsals? And, how have you seen and/or experienced that question or phrase make an impact on the choir?

Connection with composer

SS: First of all... I want them to know that this is not something sterile on a piece of paper, that there's something magical about getting inside the head of someone and trying to connect with what their ideas were.

Connection with compositional motives

Multiple possibilities of musical ideas

And it doesn't mean necessarily that we're gonna come up with 'A' right answer.

I use that [phrase] a lot when I don't feel they're connected with

<i>Connection from the inside-out</i>	how the piece is unfolding, and particularly when I feel they're
<i>Connection with text</i>	not connecting with the <i>meaning</i> of the words. So, to make the
<i>Connection with compositional motives</i>	connection between the poetry or the language and how the
<i>Connecting with the composer, compositional motives, text, and from the inside-out of the music transforms the choir's singing.</i>	composer set it is a way to have them think inside the <i>connection</i> between the music and the words. It doesn't take very much, but as soon as they think in that way, they sing it differently... there's no question.

Building Vocalism

... it may be 'building vocalism,' but I can't separate that from identity-building...

(SS, Think Aloud)

When I began organizing and labeling the data from rehearsals and interviews, I was convinced that “vocalism” of some sort would end up being a significant theme in this study. It seemed as though SS’s improvisational decision-making during rehearsals centered on “building vocalism,” because she always focused on building the singers’ voices. However, as I continued working with the data, categorizing and shifting various teased-out codes and ideas, it became clear to me that SS focuses on aspects of *vocal tone*—vowel sounds and tone quality—within her improvisational rehearsal choices (the specifics of vocal tone will be discussed at length in

Chapter Seven). The theme of *building vocalism* is a result of the rehearsal choices SS makes regarding vocal tone.

When I asked SS during a Think Aloud interview about her perceptions of her own “building vocalism” in the context of rehearsals, she had this to say:

SS: It’s another form of... it may be ‘building vocalism,’ but I can’t separate that from *identity-building*. I can’t separate that from what it feels like to... As a singer, if I’m singing the harmony, and I’m already limited by virtue of that role [such as the Alto voice part], I want to feel like I matter in the texture. And that seems like a small thing, but it’s not—because as soon as you turn that around and you let them use their full instrument, we can’t separate that from who we are. So they feel more confident, I think.

In answer to my inquiry, she articulated that she does not separate “building vocalism” from “building identities,” which one could categorize as part of *building relationships*. She cultivates identity in the ensemble members *through* the building of their vocalism.

SS turns to certain aspects of vocalism throughout her rehearsals and reinforces vocal technique along the way toward building identity within the voices of singers. These main areas of vocalism are **vocal pedagogy instruction, reminding of breath, and aligning mind and body**. For the purposes of the *building vocalism* theme, I kept all of the data intact and in rehearsal transcript form. The left side of the page includes the coding labels and my commentary/reflections regarding SS’s building vocalism during the rehearsals.

Portrait of *Building Vocalism*

CC: *Commentary and reflections*

Vocal pedagogy

Vocal pedagogy

Modeling and describing yawn space—keeping the soft palate high during singing

Verbally reminding of breath

SS always takes time to conduct a full preparation breath before the choir begins singing

Vocal pedagogy – discussing resonance

Aligning mind and body, in thinking about vocal resonance

SS: Rehearsal Transcript excerpts

SS: So, I'm breathing in, and I'm going, **zi**— (*singing on a single pitch*), right? There's that nanosecond, that's really stopping, actually, your vocal folds. We want to keep those vocal folds open, so, when you're doing that, when you're breathing in this way, keep the space open as you make the first sound...

SS: What happens, if I can be really technical, is that soft palate is just a little bit collapsed, so this (*modeling hand/arm crown-forward movement*) is just to remind us to keep the space really open...

SS: Take a breath and sing that beautifully in tune, and— (*conducting preparation breath*).

SS: All right... there are *hundreds* of places on the body, physically, where tone resonates. We think about, you know, where does the voice ring or sound, and we think about maybe

here (*placing both hands on her cheekbones*), cause we're always looking for that in the sound... or, maybe even here (*touching one hand to her forehead*).

SS points out that vocal resonance does not only happen in the cheeks or forehead, but throughout the body

It's everywhere—it's *hundreds* of places (*using both hands to touch her face and the sides and back of her head*).

The head (*running both hands from her forehead to the back of her head as she speaks*), and even down though the body (*touching both hands to her shoulders, ribs, middle abdominals, and the top of her thighs*) is where pitch resonates.

Aligning mind and body

SS: Good... let's stand this way (*bending her knees, to model more 'connectedness'*). We're not quite yet connecting our body-breath to our tone... we're going to gather the breath like this, and breathing in (*modeling a 'gathering' gesture, scooping down and hands/arms toward each other*).

Reminding of breath—in this case, breath energy under the sound

SS: Right, you have to work like a dog, really, to get that out... to really get that out, and it happens here— (*pressing both hands on lowest abdominal muscles*). **Khh—, Khh—, Khh—,** (*chanting; breathing in between each consonant sound, while*

Encouraging singers to connect with their lowest abdominal muscles to avoid the throat/larynx taking over

both hands remain on lowest abdominal muscles, showing where the 'work' happens).

	If I don't add that to it, I'm gonna be stuck here— (<i>touching her throat/larynx to show where tension will occur if the abdominal muscles do not engage</i>). We don't want that, right?
Reminding of breath	SS: You have all this... this is your breath, this is your breath, this is your breath— (<i>moving hands/arms in rapid circles as she says, 'this is your breath;' gesturing in front, to her sides and all around her torso</i>), and it's coming out of your voice like this— (<i>continuing to make rapid circles all around her torso</i>).
Visually demonstrating breath with rapid circles, and portraying it as everywhere around the singers' torso	
Vocal pedagogy	SS: ... very important in this world music to keep the throat open—keep it open all the time, right? (<i>Speaking with an open throat and limited consonants—'mushy' sounding, to make a point about keeping the throat open; hands/arms making "open" motions near her throat/mouth, with relaxed hands—mimicking a 'la' handsign</i>)
Going 'overboard' to model an openness in the throat	
Reminding of breath	The work comes from here (<i>patting/pressing on her lowest abdominal muscles</i>), never comes from here (<i>touching her larynx</i>).
Vocal pedagogy; Reminding of breath	If you start to feel tired here, you're using the throat to do that, instead of the breath (<i>still touching her larynx to show where the</i>

*Sophisticated technique =
using abdominal breath
energy instead of the throat
Continual reminders of
keeping the throat open and
relaxed*

singers should NOT be tired). It's a very sophisticated technique.

SS: Ok, does that feel different, when you think of it this way—

(modeling open, beach ball hands/arms), as opposed to right

here— *(touching her larynx; nodding while asking the question)?*

Eek— *(chanting a quick “pressed-sound” from the throat)*,

that's right on the throat.

Aligning the body

Open the body, open your feet underneath your hips, be wide

here— *(gesturing to her upper torso, shoulders, ribs, and middle
abdominal muscles; reminding the choir to think wide and open)*.

Here we go, 1 – 2 – 3 – 4—...

Reminding of breath

SS: And you're breathing in this shape [*showing “dome”
arm/hand position up by cheek and forehead*]

Aligning mind and body

SS: So, it's a really *healthy* thing I think to connect up the body
to the sound.

Conductor-Teacher Education

...for me, it's most critical NOT that they [pre-service teachers] have 200 separate tricks in that bag we were talking about, but that they 200 times have been asked to think of a different way. (SS, Formal Interview)

The third theme in this chapter is conductor-teacher education. A significant part of SS's appointment at MSU includes preparing pre-service teachers to be choral conductor-teachers. Throughout this section, I will use the term "pre-service teachers" to describe undergraduate music education majors in their upper-division level of courses—generally, juniors, seniors, and student teachers.

SS's philosophies about and methods of preparing pre-service teachers do not answer specific questions about improvisational teaching or making in-the-moment choices during rehearsals. However, her role as "teacher of future conductor-teachers" informs her own rehearsal preparation and reflection and challenges daily her own musicianship and "teachership."

SS: ... this [improvisational teaching] is something I might come to intuitively, but how then do I coach students, and what do I want them to know? How do I want them to approach teaching? I certainly don't want them to be carbon copies of me... there are people who have different ways of knowing and learning, and some people need far more structure and sequence.

(Formal Interview)

I derived three codes from the data related to conductor-teacher education: trust, skill development, and brainstorming-for-teaching.

Trust

When discussing the topic of conductor-teacher education, SS uses frequently words such as ‘openness,’ ‘vulnerability,’ and ‘trust.’ She believes that music teacher educators should encourage pre-service teachers to trust themselves more, and she invites them to remain ‘open’ during teaching segments (and/or ‘on the podium’). This idea is in direct contrast to many philosophies of pre-service music teacher education, namely, that pre-service music teachers should first learn to write a lesson plan, and, next, practice following the lesson plan verbatim, and so on. SS agrees that planning for rehearsals is important, but she advocates openness and receptivity in the act of teaching, both of which require the pre-service teacher to trust him/herself.

SS: ... it’s a mystery for a lot of people... developing teaching skill from where there was none. And there are certainly many valid approaches to planning for instruction, and carrying out instruction, but lots of times the answers are right there within the student—they just haven’t been invited to think about it.

(Formal Interview)

I asked SS if she has noticed a transformation in certain pre-service teachers, from aligning with a linear, inflexible approach to that of being more open and learning to trust themselves:

CC: Have you seen ‘light bulbs’ go off in students that feel like they need to have the structural, linear plan, and maybe [they] morph into being able to be more spontaneous in

the teaching process?

SS: Yes, I have, and it's very empowering for them because a lot of the rigidity I find is based in fear. They don't trust themselves, and they don't trust their musicianship. So, when they learn that they actually have quite a bit of developed musicianship by this point, and their 'teachership,' if you will, that's what's new—it's making that bridge for them. And to just confirm for them that they really can't do it wrong.

(Formal Interview)

SS's final statement in the excerpt above—"they really can't do it wrong"—is a difficult concept for pre-service conductor-teachers to take to heart. Yet, SS believes passionately that having an 'open' and 'risk-taking' state of mind allows improvisational teaching to take place in the choral rehearsal (and in the pre-service practicum arena), as exemplified in the following interview excerpt:

SS: ... one of the things that I emphasize with new teachers is this idea of improvisation as being a state of mind, as being open to doing something different, and for a lot of students that's uncomfortable, because they want to know what every move is going to be. But you can't know what every move is going to be as a teacher. So again, it's a risk-taking adventure to be able to do that.

(Formal Interview)

Skill Development

SS refers to several primary skills that she feels pre-service teachers must develop if they are to be successful improvising while teaching choral music, including score study, listening

and audiating capabilities, and a sense of openness, or risk-taking. This portion of our formal interview best describes these skills:

CC: Commentary and reflections

Skills that conductor-teachers (including pre-service) need to develop in order to improvise while teaching:

Score study system

Listening in the sound

Audiating through the musical texture – all voice parts and the accompaniment (if present)

Openness; risk-taking

Vulnerability

CC & SS: Formal Interview

CC: ... what types of skills... need to be in place before a conductor-teacher can effectively improvise while teaching?

SS: They have to develop a system for score study, so that they can develop a musical interpretation. If you don't have an idea, you can't teach it. They have to at least be on the way to being able to listen in the sound, and that requires the ability to audiate.

So, it's important to exercise the ability to audiate, which means more than hearing just your vocal part – learning to hear inside the texture.

They have to be able to stand in front of a group and be a risk taker, because again, teaching is a highly vulnerable act, and sometimes students are ready for it, and sometimes they're not. You have to assess how that's going to happen. Those are the three key things in my mind.

SS continues discussing the concept of ‘perceptive listening,’ (or critical listening, as will be mentioned in Chapter Seven), and the methods/exercises she incorporates to build listening skills in pre-service teachers:

CC: Commentary and reflections

Building ‘perceptive listening’ skills in pre-service teachers:

First step = learning to hear/audiate vocal parts

In-the-moment rehearsal choices indicate listening ability

Prescribed teaching = pre-service teachers NOT listening in the sound

CC & SS: Formal Interview

SS: ... when I’m working with new teachers in a choral methods class, for example, I use a series of exercises that just try to separate out the listening component, and take it from that very elementary level... because it was a surprise to me to realize how many students actually aren’t even able to hear vocal parts, to audiate vocal parts. So, in some ways one starts at the very bottom floor.

CC: What are some ways that you can tell that a student or a conductor-teacher is truly listening perceptively and hearing what is going on?

SS: The best assessment for me as the teacher to tell that is if they’re teaching on their feet; I can tell that almost immediately by what they choose to rehearse. I mean, if they’re just— if their teaching moves in no way relate to the sound, that’s a big clue to me that they’re not listening very well. But— *(pause)*

If rehearsal choices are 'scripted' without relating to the sound, they are most likely NOT listening to the choir's sounding

'Play and sing' exercises to build listening/auditating skill

Piano skills = another challenge for many pre-service teachers

For students without piano skill—skip from one voice part to another

Hearing harmonically = listening for and thinking of the texture outside their own vocal line

CC: If it sounds 'scripted,' what they plan to do?

SS: Right. And, you know, there are much more tangible ways of measuring that when I have them actually perform the listening exercises, so things such as: All right, you're going to play the soprano part in your right hand on the keyboard, and you're going to sing the alto line. Are they able to do that? So, I can set up those kinds of tasks and tell [if they are able to listen perceptively]. And, that happens early enough in the semester that you can very quickly learn who struggles and who doesn't. Of course, piano skill even creates a whole other level of challenge, and for some students without piano skill, you know, just to have them sing their own part, and then to try to jump and sing another person's part, if they're unable to do that [play the piano at the same time]. So, part of that issue is a harmonic issue—they have never thought of the texture outside of their own line, so they're not hearing harmonically.

SS finds "teachable moments" during rehearsals to assist in developing pre-service conductor-teachers' skills. In the following rehearsal example, SS discussed with ensemble members various reasons why the rehearsal was unsuccessful, specifically highlighting the skill of hearing harmonically through the texture, and entrances of voice parts:

SS: Putting on your teacher hat, let's understand WHY this piece was a challenge for us today. How are the entrances structured?

Choir: ...staggered ...like a canon (*several voices heard giving various answers*)

SS: Yes, it's like a canon. Are the pitch relationships the same?

Choir: (*one ensemble member answers*) No— because the starting pitches are different.

SS: But is the pitch contour of each line the same?

Choir: ...yes ...uh-huh (*several voice heard in agreement; some choir members nodding*)

SS: So, the challenge is that the phrases feel very much the same to sing but we have to hear the RELATIONSHIP between each canonic entry, yes?

So, future teachers—and anyone, really— if you were to come in front and rehearse this, what is one way you could help sections with the pitch alterations?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The question at the end of the above example was directed toward the “future teachers” in the ensemble, but SS opened the question to all members in asking what they would suggest to help the voice parts with their entrances. She weaved through the compositional fabric of the piece to point out why the ensemble was having difficulty (connection with music from the ‘inside-out’), and then she asked ensemble members how they would rehearse the composition if they were in the conductor-teacher role.

I would like to offer an additional thought about skill development, according to SS, in relationship to pre-service conductor-teacher education—the acts of ‘noticing,’ and of the ‘humanity’ of conducting-teaching in the choral context. SS mused about this concept during

our Think Aloud interview. The questions she asks are rhetorical, but bring up a topic worth exploring:

SS: Part of our practice as teachers is to be “noticers.” That’s a really interesting idea... You can go through your entire undergraduate degree, and no one’s even talked with you about the humanity of what we’re doing... And is it “teachable?” Can you teach empathy?

(Think Aloud)

Within the pre-service music education conductor-teacher curriculum, the course of study generally places emphasis on aspects of musicianship and the students’ developing ‘teachership,’ including areas such as how to write a well-rounded lesson plan, classroom management strategies, and program organization. However, conductor-teacher educators neglect the importance of preparing pre-service teachers for the human element of teaching—being empathetic to their students, and remaining ethical in their daily teaching and decision-making. SS believes that conductor-teacher educators tend to disregard the areas of empathy and humanity in their methods courses, because they are ‘gray areas,’ and difficult to discuss. Pre-service conductor teachers need to be made aware of the humanity of their future profession, so that they may remain empathetic in relating to students, parents, and colleagues, and so that they may make a difference in the profession of music education.

Brainstorming-for-Teaching

The third code derived from the emergent theme, conductor-teacher education, is SS’s ‘mental mapping system,’ which she calls *brainstorming-for-teaching* (Snow, 2009). This process involves brainstorming (away from the actual rehearsal) all of the possible musical ideas

that a conductor-teacher could teach and all of the various strategies that the conductor-teacher could use to teach all of the possible musical ideas from a particular composition. She labels brainstorming-for-teaching as a way of “exercising improvisation”—away from the rehearsal, and via an inside-out view of score study, mental mapping, and imagination of various teaching strategies.

SS described *brainstorming-for-teaching* in her interview.

SS: So, in order to prepare someone to improvise on their feet, I think that you can use this brainstorming, or mental work that I described earlier as a way of preparing for that. So, the system that I developed for use with young, new teachers, is a mental mapping system, and the first level of the map is that they have to describe as fully as possible the musical interpretation that they have developed about the piece under study. They’re basically outlining their own interpretive decisions. They may... if the special DNA of the piece includes an articulation in a motive, they’re going to describe what choices they’ve made... and this is on paper now, or in a computer program. Or, they’re going to describe where the motive moves from part to part. They’re going to draw as complete a mental picture of the music as they can. But the important step is the second dimension of the map, which is how they connect those to their imagination regarding teaching strategy. So, if they have an articulation in mind, then they have to develop three—I usually coach them to find three to five ways that they could possibly teach that idea. And this is where assessment is very useful for me as the university teacher, because I can see right away whether they’re able to a. generate any strategies, b. whether they’re more verbal or non-verbal, whether they’re action-oriented or whether they’re passive, whether they’re telling—teacher-telling, or whether they involve students in the decision-

making. I can see all of that written out on paper and really can help coach for that. So, what they do is they are using their imagination outside of live action, outside of the teaching moment, if you will. You take it out of that pressure situation, and you give them the ability to brainstorm. And for me, that is a way of exercising improvisation. That's exactly what you do on your feet, only on your feet it's in real time and you're under the gun. Take it out of real time, let them muse about it, let them ponder it, and if they can only come up with one strategy this time, tell them next time 'you've got to think about two different ways that you can get at this.' What that does is it unlocks that orientation I referred to earlier. It unlocks the ability to reach out as opposed to reducing all the possibilities to a single strategy. Now, does that teach them sequence? Um, not directly. Does it teach them how to put together an effective rehearsal that is paced well, that balances challenge with things that are... it doesn't do any of those things. So, there's still the need for teaching that as well. But, it's a very useful process for at least making connections for students between their musical understanding, their emerging understanding of different ways of teaching, and then putting that in real time.

(Formal Interview)

In summary of SS's description of this process, and the benefits for pre-service teachers, brainstorming-for-teaching:

1. "unlocks the ability to reach out as opposed to reducing all of the teaching possibilities of a certain musical idea to a single strategy;" and,
2. is a valuable process to facilitate making connections for pre-service teachers between their already-established musicianship, and their developing "teachership."

SS describes providing pre-service teachers the opportunity to respond to the choir's sounding:

SS: I also want to challenge them to be able to react authentically to what they hear, to stop the action, and to find a different way to do in, rather than just following the plan blindly. And you CAN stop and exercise that. There's no reason you can't coach for that in the context of a teaching experience.

(Formal Interview)

In addition, in the following excerpt, she cautions against pre-service teachers developing an expected pattern of selecting the same strategies during rehearsals:

SS: While it's important for students to—I'm thinking new teachers now—to develop a wide variety of teaching strategies, and maybe lots of those are borrowed from other people, they have to also be able to evaluate WHY they're making the choice, so that they don't develop a routinized response. So, if the sopranos are sharp, if they each time select the same approach to try and fix the problem, or explain the problem, then what they do, they begin reducing the possibilities in their own mind, rather than always reaching out for another way to get at the experience.

(Formal Interview)

In the following rehearsal example, the choir is not transferring from their previous rehearsal experience with a specific composition. SS asks an ensemble member to suggest three rehearsal strategies to provide the ensemble with a 'big picture' of the piece:

SS: Whoa! Didn't we rehearse this last week? It's as if we've never seen the material before! Who would like to volunteer to wear their 'teacher hat'? Which future conductor-teacher would like to see if they can affect change in this piece? (*several*

ensemble members raise their hand; SS chooses 'M' – a sophomore music education major)

SS: *(speaking directly to M, loud enough for all ensemble members to hear)* Ok, you're on a desert island. You get three teaching moves to make in order to give singers the biggest possible picture of the music—a mental map, if you will; a way for singers to move ahead. What are the three most important structural aspects of this music?

M: *(silence... then, a small nervous smile)*

SS: Give me one. What is one special feature of this section that makes it interesting?

M: Well— the scale has a raised fourth and it makes it sound sort of exotic. *(lots of giggles from choir members)*

SS: Fantastic! How can we get a feel for the scale?

M: Um— we could sing it by itself?

SS: Great! Can you come up with a way to sing the scale that might function as a warm-up before we get to rehearsing the piece?

M: *(silence... she begins fidgeting)*

SS: Anyone? *(SS is gently touching M on her right shoulder, indicating for the ensemble to help her come up with a warm-up for the piece)* How can you devise a warm-up with this special interval in mind?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The above rehearsal excerpt is one example of how SS incorporates pre-service teachers in the decision-making process during rehearsals. In this particular snapshot, M suggested a structural idea, and then SS turned to the ensemble members to help M create a warm-up based on her own idea. SS facilitated learning on several levels—that of the pre-service teachers

among the ensemble, M's skill development, and the ensemble as a whole in encouraging them to brainstorm a warm-up based on M's structural idea of the composition.

SS spoke during our interview about those who would doubt that pre-service conductor-teachers could learn to improvise on their feet, in the moment of rehearsals, and swiftly negates these apprehensions:

SS: Some professional conversation that I've had with other people, you know, have been things like, 'this is not something that novices can do, this is something that people who are more experienced can possibly do. You can't take, for example, a choral methods class, and expect them to be able to improvise on their feet.' So, I really had to think about that, and I would disagree. I think what one does is set up the process, or *unravel* the process for them, in that they can improvise in their own way against their own levels of experience. But it doesn't mean they can't do it...

(Formal Interview)

Summary

The three emergent themes described in this chapter are building connections, building vocalism, and conductor-teacher education. Along with verbal and active rehearsal strategies, these themes are significant components of SS's choral rehearsals and of her conducting-teaching philosophies. She builds connections with the composer and his/her compositional motives, with the text of a composition, with the music from the inside-out, and with the listener. SS is continually building vocalism during rehearsals, and in the process hopes to build identity

through teaching vocal pedagogy, reminding singers of breath, and facilitating ensemble members' aligning their minds and bodies.

Finally, SS focuses on conductor-teacher education, in the context of choral music education courses and in choral rehearsals. She fosters trust within pre-service teachers, encourages their skill building in the areas of score study, perceptive listening, audiation, and risk-taking, and teaches future conductor-teachers to improvise in the moment of rehearsals through the brainstorming-for-teaching method of mental mapping.

CHAPTER VII

Interactive Response to Sounding: Intersections of Improvisational Teaching

What it requires is a constant reaching out, and you reach out in relationship to the sounding.

So, you hear something, you're making an internal evaluation or assessment, and

then... find some active way for the singer to improve or to experience the music

in the way that you have in mind. (SS, Formal Interview)

The second problem question of this study is: How does an expert conductor-teacher navigate from *desired* outcome to *final product* during choral rehearsals? The short answer to this question is, “by responding to the choir’s sounding.” SS, as an expert conductor-teacher, is constantly listening critically during rehearsals to the choir’s singing/chanting, vocal tone, and/or musical expression choices. She then makes in-the-moment decisions about “what to do next” according to her prior score study and aural image of the composer’s ideas, but most importantly, toward a mutually developed vision of the composition, through a collaborative process between her and the singers.

A longer, more complete answer to the research question involves the *ways* in which SS responds to what she hears in the choir’s sound. This chapter will describe SS’s *interactive response to sounding* in the moment of choral rehearsals, the main themes of which include critical listening, musical rehearsal choices, and vocal tone. As mentioned in Chapter One, the purpose of this study is to explore how an expert conductor-teacher navigates among instructional strategies, and to develop a rich understanding of the interactions between the conductor-teacher and ensemble members in the choral rehearsal context. These interactions, or

the conductor-teacher's *responses to the choir's sounding*, are the *intersections* of improvisational teaching.

Response to Sounding

Before delving into the main themes of this chapter, it is important to describe further the idea of “response to sounding.” The concept itself—listening during rehearsals and making informed choices of “what to do next”—is not foreign to ensemble conductor-teachers; however, choral conductor-teachers do not acknowledge frequently enough the skills necessary to be constructive and formative in the act of “responding to sounding.”

Hornbach (2005) coined the term, “interactive response chain” to describe teacher and child initiatives and responses in early childhood music classes. The initiatives and responses by both teacher and child were interactive, and it was the teacher's improvisatory responses to the child's initiatives (and/or responses) that propelled musical conversation between the teacher and child. Similarly, responding to sounding in choral rehearsals is interactive, and is based on the choir's performance during rehearsal and the conductor-teacher's skills and openness of mind to successfully respond to sound.

SS lays out these skills and the mindset needed to respond effectively in the moment of the sounding:

SS: What it requires is a constant reaching out, and you reach out in relationship to the sounding. So, you hear something, you're making an internal evaluation or assessment, and then you're saying to yourself, ‘Ok... I could do this, we could go down THIS path. We could chant it, we could move it, we could step it,’ ... find some active way for the

singer to improve or to experience the music in the way that you have in mind.”

(Formal Interview)

The first component she mentioned is a “constant reaching out... in relationship to the sounding.” An ability to *reach out constantly* during rehearsals is part of *building relationships*, the topic of Chapter Eight. When the conductor-teacher cultivates relationships with his/her singers, “reaching out in relationship to the sounding” becomes a natural part of rehearsals.

SS’s next requisite of “responding to sounding” in the quote above is *listening*—“you hear something,” and then making a choice of what strategy would best fit the moment of rehearsal—“making an internal evaluation or assessment.” Interactively responding to sound in the moment of rehearsals is the essence of *improvisational teaching*. SS elaborates further this idea of improvising in rehearsals in combination with the conductor-teacher acting as a facilitator:

SS: ... to ‘facilitate’ really just means to lead or to guide—it means not to dominate.

It means to allow for possibility. It means to be willing to stop and reorient action in relationship to what you’re actually hearing in a sound, or what’s being presented by the ensemble members.

... someone who is an expert facilitator is by definition an improviser, because you have to do that [improvise in the moment] in direct relationship to what is being experienced as opposed to a pre-set agenda.

... you may get through ‘number 1,’ [in a rehearsal plan] and something in the sound is demanding that you go a different way.

(Formal Interview)

Responding to sounding and improvising in the moment of rehearsals, according to SS, does NOT mean that a conductor-teacher should forgo planning and preparing for rehearsals. She spoke in our interview about this issue in direct relation to conducting in an Honor or Festival Choir setting. Yet, the concept also transfers to a conductor-teacher's "home choir" setting:

SS: ...if you have the whole view in mind, you're going to have to be improvising in relationship to what you're presented with, and you never know what you're going to be presented with. So you have to be able to quickly evaluate where it is that THAT particular group needs to work and go, and then you just 'wing it.' And by 'winging it' I don't mean you're not prepared.

... [planning for rehearsals requires] really thinking about what the students are producing, what they need, what kinds of warm-ups or exercises can be developed to support something that you hear that's a struggle or a challenge...

(Formal Interview)

The purpose of this study is to explore SS's in-the-moment rehearsal choices and her interactive response to sounding in choral rehearsals. However, I believe that the early stages of her developing these ideas in her own conducting-teaching bears significance to her current level of expertise. She spoke at length during our interview about how these ideas began evolving in her own thinking and teaching:

SS: I think I had a fairly intuitive approach to teaching. It didn't come hard for me those first few times up in front of a group, whatever the context. So, for whatever reasons, I was at least open in the early stages to feeling successful as a teacher. [My choral methods professor] was very good at sequencing and organizing instruction in both the

short-term and long-term sense. So, I have good roots there, but I began to feel early on some tension in my own teaching because I was more intuitive, and I didn't respond, I don't think, structurally in a linear sense the way my teacher did. That was the early seeds of discontent for me, for my way of knowing. I guess I began to understand that there are different approaches to teaching, and I just didn't happen to fit very comfortably in what I'd call the objective-spaced model that has dominated our profession, so that you're really focusing on developing concrete skills. It's not that I had an aversion to developing skills, but I didn't come at it from the same way. So, I can't say that I was overly reflective, at that point, about how and why it was different, but I began to feel uncomfortable a little bit in that situation. And, that came up most often when I was asked to submit lesson plans, and I would find that I was unable to execute a plan that I had carefully prepared, thought through deeply, but I would get into it and I would respond to something in the moment that I heard, and I would go a different way. And then when, you know, we would assess and evaluate how my teaching went, since I didn't follow the plan through, that was something that I "needed to work on." I began to develop some questions at that point, at least as it related to me. I certainly wasn't in a position to think about down the road [as related to her current ideas of improvisational teaching]. And so, what I ended up doing was developing a [particular] approach to my coursework—I did what I was supposed to do—but then, when I had my own teaching opportunities, I was very different.

... I really had a tremendous amount of respect for what I was learning there [in the choral methods course], and it was good for me to have to think through things like step A, step B, step C; it wasn't as if it was irrelevant to me. But, I did have to practice how I

could carry out that plan. I had to actually practice that sometimes out loud to myself because it was so counter to the way that I came at teaching from just an intuitive approach.

(Formal Interview)

SS continues describing the “transformation” in her ideas about teaching and specifically aligns this transition in thinking with her experiences of conductor-teacher education:

SS: I think the transformation that took place over time had to do with— OK, this is something I might come to intuitively, but how then do I coach students, and what do I want them to know? How do I want them to approach teaching? I certainly don’t want them to be carbon copies of me, and if anything, my undergraduate experience and master’s experience taught me that there are people who have different ways of knowing and learning, and some people need far more structure and sequence... [These questions] really required that I think about *how* I wanted to be involved in teacher training, and what kinds of experiences I wanted students to have, and to try and find ways to reach as many students as possible.

(Formal Interview)

In summary, SS’s ideas about *response to sounding* include remaining open and receptive during rehearsals, so that she may listen intently to the choir’s sounding and interactively respond in the moment with appropriate rehearsal choices, based on her developed idea of the composition and the collective understanding and “bringing to life” of the music between her and the choir. Her first conception about responding in the moment to the choir’s sounding began intuitively, and she further refined these ideas through her experiences in the university classroom with pre-service conductor-teachers.

Critical Listening

... if you're an artist and you're experimenting with colors and you don't like the way it looks, you start a new picture. But the idea is, you have to be willing to listen inside the sound.

(SS, Formal Interview)

One of SS's "signature" rehearsal activities is something that I call "cluster chord focused listening." She begins by asking the entire choir to sing a unison pitch on a neutral syllable—usually an 'A,' and on the syllable [nu]. Once she hears that the singers have opened their ears and are completely listening in the sound, she turns toward a portion of the choir and indicates for them to change the pitch they are singing, while the remaining singers stay on the original pitch. Sometimes she moves half of the singers to the new pitch, and sometimes she moves one-third of the choir to the new pitch—depending on the setting and the musicianship level of the singers.

After SS perceives that the choir is really listening in the sound while singing the two pitches, she then indicates one or two further divisions of the voices, creating a 3- or 4-note cluster chord. For my purposes in describing this activity, imagine that the choir started out singing an 'A.' SS indicates for half of the choir to switch to an 'F[#],' while the remaining singers continue to sing the 'A.' She then turns back to the 'A' group, and motions for half of the singers to move to 'B,' followed by an indication for half of the 'F[#]' group to switch pitches to 'E.' Thus, the cluster "chord" she has created is: 'E – F[#] – A – B.'

The choir continues singing the cluster chord while SS "plays" with the balance and colors of the chord. She uses gesture to bring out various pitches to sound louder than one

another, and/or she asks the singers to “listen toward” certain pitches while they remain singing their own pitch. I have participated as a singer in and witnessed as an observer countless times this fascinating and effective activity. I am always impressed by the way in which the singers truly listen in their own sound and to the sounds around them.

‘Listening in’ is a much deeper form of listening than ‘listening to’—when a singer is truly ‘listening in’ her own and the collective ensemble’s sound, she becomes completely immersed in the harmonic texture, and the pitches in this particular activity seem to ‘bleed’ together. Singers begin to challenge themselves to listen more thoroughly and deeply within the texture, and overtones are heard often within the rehearsal space. It would not be possible for SS to facilitate such an activity if she were not able to listen fully through the musical texture, to know which voice part (or pitch) needs attention, and/or when to bring out certain pitches over others in the sound.

Interactively responding to the choir’s sounding involves critical listening—not only “hearing” the choir’s sounding, but listening deeply to be fully aware of the sound, and listening for discernment of “what to do next.” Critical listening is the thread that ties together all of the possible rehearsal choices and decisions. Listening critically in the sound is the glue that connects the choir’s sounding with a conductor-teacher’s interactive responses.

SS applies critical listening, or ‘listening in’ the sound, in various ways during her rehearsals. She listens through the texture vertically, as in the cluster chord activity described earlier. Listening to individual voice parts in the context of the full choir’s singing is another form of her ability to listen critically. She is constantly listening to assess what/how the choir is singing compared to an aural image—that she developed through score study, and that emerges from the rehearsal process and collective decision-making— for the particular composition

and/or the ability level of the choir. From the vantage point of critical listening, she makes rehearsal decisions and choices among verbal strategies, active strategies, and when/how to build connections and vocalism, among others.

SS describes her ideas related to critical listening best in her own words:

SS: I think listening is a skill that can be developed, and one that is probably underused by most of us—learning to really listen in the sound. So, in initial stages, it's as elementary as being able to identify vocal parts independently and audiate them accurately, and produce them back. You see it [in the score], you hear it, you can sing it back—that's the ground level. But, as one matures as a listener, one's able to also [take in] much more information. For example, the color of the sound, tone, and so, you're able to evaluate, 'does that match what my idea is about the piece, or do we want to coach for something different?' Well, those are subtle kinds of listening challenges that take, I think, many years to develop. Listening involves the perception of articulation, and as one gets more experience, that [perception of articulation] becomes more and more acute. So, it's not just short / long, smooth / not smooth, but that you can develop very refined ideas about articulation. Learning to hear in different contexts is an issue. So, one might be able to hear in the choral sound—to begin hearing in the choral sound, but if you were to add a small chamber orchestra to the mix, that completely changes the listening experience for the teacher. There are certainly degrees of challenge and skill embedded in that process. Now, when I'm working with new teachers in a choral methods class, for example, I use a series of exercises that just try to separate out the listening component, and take it from that very elementary level that I was describing earlier, because it was a surprise to me to realize how many students actually aren't even

able to hear vocal parts, to audiate vocal parts. So, in some ways one starts at the very bottom floor.

(Formal Interview)

She lists the following as examples of important elements for which a conductor-teacher should listen inside the sound: vocal color, tone, perception of articulation, and texture. And, SS clarifies that listening becomes more “acute” or the ability to listen deepens with experience.

When I asked SS during a think aloud interview to describe her concept of critical listening further, and to discuss why she would skip over certain passages that may need her attention in favor of continued listening, she replied in this way:

SS: It’s a form of discipline as a teacher to let the wrong stuff go, and you have to practice letting some of the “sloppy” stuff go because if they can’t see the broad gestures in the pieces, they’re never gonna get past that. So, it takes discipline on the part of the teacher. That doesn’t mean that I don’t hear it—doesn’t mean that it doesn’t annoy me sometimes. And it doesn’t mean that you’re not gonna go back and do it again, fix it. It’s a funnel, and the big part of the funnel is to be those overarching ideas, and once that’s in place, then you can filter down and pick up some of the other stuff. As far as why would I choose to do that in *that* moment [asking the choir to hold their voice part on a particular chord in the composition], I think I’m trying to set up a sense of expectation, so that the next time they come to that the listening’s going to turn on because they’ve just done it. And I would argue that that carries over—now they’re thinking inside the sound, and that’s gonna carry over into what I choose to do for the next few minutes, because you’re gonna continue to choose tasks that require them to

think inside the sound.

(Think Aloud)

This last excerpt from our formal interview summarizes SS's viewpoint about the significance of listening "inside the sound," and aligns critical listening with her ideas about interactive responses during teaching:

SS: ... if you're an artist and you're experimenting with colors and you don't like the way it looks, you start a new picture. But the idea is, you have to be willing to listen inside the sound. Some of that, of course, is a different set of skills that have to do with opening the ear—that is a musical issue. But once that's in place, then, I think it's very possible for even rigid people to view teaching in a different way.

(Formal Interview)

Musical Rehearsal Choices

I think in our situation, it is the constant toggling between your developed idea, or interpretation, of how the music should sound, against bringing those ensemble members to that understanding. (SS, Formal Interview)

Previously in this study, I described SS's rehearsal strategy choices, including verbal strategies, active strategies, and the ways in which she builds connections and builds vocalism in the choral rehearsal context. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate SS's interactive response to sounding, including critical listening and the *musical rehearsal choices* she makes in the moment during rehearsals. There are countless specific musical choices available to a

conductor-teacher during the course of a rehearsal. However, four definitive musical rehearsal choices emerged from my observing of and participating in SS's rehearsals: articulation, musical meaning and phrasing, syllabic and word stress, and "other musical elements"—pitches, rhythms, dynamics, et al.

Articulation

Articulation is one of SS's "go to" musical elements during choral rehearsals. She responds to the choir's sounding by listening for their articulation choices and by refining further for the singers her ideas of the composer's articulation choices.

SS: I think over time my view has widened to include things like—a much keener sense now of articulation that I did in the early days when I was really tied to doing exactly what marks I saw in the score without really reflecting on why the composer would make such a choice. I feel more free than I used to because I can look at, say, an articulation marked in a score, and I can evaluate whether I think that the marking is accurate, or I think it's really representative, of what the composer had in mind.

(Formal Interview)

Rehearsal Snapshot

SS: Would you look at page 6? **Ho-san—na, ho-san—na—** (*singing the repeating rhythmic pattern on one voice part*). What I would love to find is the quality of articulation that you think, in fact, would match trumpets, were they to be the ones singing that, alright? So start on that entrance right there— Here we go, 'hosanna' (*chanting in rhythm*). 1 – 2 – 3— (*conducting preparatory breath*).

Choir: Ho-san—na, ho-san—na— (*singing on their individual voice parts; this section of the music continues for 8 measures*).

SS: Fabulous. Everybody sing the middle line—Here we go! 1 – 2 – 3— (*conducting preparatory breath*).

Choir: Ho-san-na, ho-san-na— (*all members singing only the soprano II voice part; music continues for 8 measures*).

SS: Thank you. Conduct with me, please. Would you go, down— right— up—, floor— wall— ceiling— (*continues modeling conducting gesture; turns her back to the choir so that they can follow her conducting pattern with the same arm*). Now we're gonna find the same quality of articulation [in the conducting gesture]...

(Rehearsal Transcript)

In the rehearsal excerpt above, SS has in mind a certain articulation for the rhythmic passage—one that would match the sound of trumpets. Her interactive response to sounding in this short rehearsal segment follows this path:

- Verbally asks the choir to sing the passage and match the articulation of trumpets.
- Asks all singers to sing on one voice part, for better clarity of their articulation choice.
- Engages the choir in conducting along with her, finding the same quality of articulation in their conducting gesture.
- Eventually asks the choir to sing along with their conducting gesture, with the “trumpet articulation” in their voices as well as in their gesture.

This sequence of rehearsal choices focuses on the musical idea of articulation. SS utilized several strategies in response to what she heard in the sound, on the way toward her desired idea of articulation in this particular passage. She based her musical rehearsal decisions on her

mental image of how she envisions the piece will sound against the real-time sounding of the singers during this rehearsal segment.

Musical Meaning and Phrasing

The second anchor of SS's musical rehearsal choices is the two-in-one concept of musical meaning and phrasing. She aims toward and facilitates these ideas both individually and in combination. For instance, the *musical meaning* of a certain section of a composition may encompass the desired *musical phrasing* of the voice parts and/or accompaniment; however, there are times when she separates musical meaning from musical phrasing.

Most often, SS's interactive response to sounding choices include first "going after" the musical meaning and/or phrasing of a composition before focusing on other 'procedural' items in the music, such as pitches, rhythms, and dynamics (the "other musical elements). She describes this in the following quote:

SS: For me, I want them to—by the time we're done [rehearsing a composition], I want them to experience the very most wonderful qualities about each of these pieces, and I want them to understand them [the compositions]. So, it may mean that some of the, you know, cut-offs and releases get ignored for the larger musical ideas. And, it takes some time to be able to do that, because it's easy to get bogged down with making everything perfect and not letting them sing through ideas, that sort of thing.

(Formal Interview)

In this next rehearsal segment, SS outlines her ideas of macro and micro levels of musical phrasing:

SS: Ok—a quick lesson in phrasing. Phrasing happens *always*, in my view, at *least*

on two levels, maybe more. Two levels—macro and micro, alright? You are very familiar with the idea of “macro,” which is that most phrases have shape of some kind, right? The most common one would be... *(drawing an arc in the air with her right arm, up to a point, then back down)*, right? Ok. That’s macro. Let’s make that the umbrella *(showing with both arms/hands the shape of an umbrella in the air)*. “Micro” is every single, special syllable of every special word. Be-ne-DIC-tus, qui VE-nit, in NO-mi-ne DO-mi-ni *(speaking; stressing the important syllables; using both hands/arms in a circular motion to show emphasis on the syllables in all-caps)*. Alright?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

She followed this particular segment of rehearsal by focusing on syllabic stress in the same section of the music; syllabic and word stress is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

SS incorporates several additional “response to sounding” choices when focusing on musical meaning and phrasing during rehearsals:

- Experimenting with balance in the harmony of vertical chords.
- Using embodied movement while the choir sings, evolving with different gestures for each hand/arm.
- Asking the choir to auditate a certain vocal line or musical phrasing.
- Stopping the choir mid-phrase when their sound relapses back to an unmusical or note-to-note phrasing.

Through the musical rehearsal choice of emphasizing musical meaning and phrasing, SS hopes to share with her singers the “organic” elements of each composition she rehearses. She discusses this in the context of score study—an essential component in being able to respond

interactively to the choir's sounding:

SS: ... in essence, it's trying to discover [through score study] what the special characteristics of a piece of music under study – what sorts of things make the piece hang together. I talk with [music education] students a lot about finding the “musical DNA.” What are the musical gestures that are embedded, that make this piece worthwhile? Why did I make the choice to do the piece in the first place? What do I want students to be able to experience as a result of interacting with this music?

(Formal Interview)

Syllabic and Word Stress

SS: ...not all syllables are created equal! ... it's not an egalitarian society at all.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The third cornerstone of SS's musical rehearsal choices involves word stress and syllabic stress *within* words. The following is a continuation of the previous rehearsal excerpt, which focused on macro and micro levels of phrasing individually, now with the two ideas combined for more syllabic and word stress emphasis:

SS: Now, I can still do that [micro-phrasing] within the sense of macro. I can go, Be-ne-
DIC-tus, qui **VE**-nit, in **NO**-mi-ne, **DO**-mi-ni (*speaking; adding a crescendo through the macro-phrase while stressing the important micro-syllables*). I just made two different levels of phrasing—did you hear them? One's this (*showing a larger arch with her right hand/arm*), and one is this (*showing smaller arches with her left hand/arm*), that has to do with syllabic stress. Ok. So, we want to bring that out firstly. Then—not all

syllables are created equal! Even stressed and *unstressed* syllables—they’re not created equal... So, of that text... what’s the most important word... of ALL those words?

(begins leading the singers through speaking phrase again, with the micro and macro levels of phrasing; the singers chime in and come up with “DO-mi-ni” as the most important word of the entire phrase). Exactly right. Alright?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Other examples of SS’s syllabic stress and word stress choices include: asking singers to underline the strong syllables and/or words of a certain phrase; asking singers pointed questions about the meaning of words in relation to syllabic and word stress; and, inviting a volunteer from the choir to read the text in a theatrical way, or as if they were participating in a poetry or dramatic reading. One such instance I observed involved a text in a foreign language. SS asked for a singer/volunteer who was fluent in the foreign language to read aloud the text to the choir. She then asked the volunteer to read specifically the “juicy” words. I asked SS during a think aloud interview if she noticed a change in how the choir thought about the text following the volunteer’s reading of the text and isolating the “juicy” words:

SS: I think before, it was a lot of text they [the choir] had to learn, and then when they heard it read like that, it became a poem, it became art. *(following a short pause)* You know where I got that? [“juicy” words] My child’s kindergarten teacher. They talk about that when they’re teaching reading—they want the kids to go a little further, to challenge them, so they talk about “juicy” words.

CC: The singer went immediately to several [juicy words]...

SS: She knew exactly what they were, because for HER it’s more apparent. I’m sure

that those students feel honored by doing something in their language, so I'm sure she looked at that poem, I would guess.

(Think Aloud)

“Other Musical Elements” – Pitches, Rhythms, Dynamics, et al

Although I have listed “other musical elements” as one of SS’s four main musical rehearsal choices, my intention in is to point out that this area comprises a very small portion of her interactive response to sounding during rehearsals. Addressing pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and other items of procedural knowledge within the music she is rehearsing is last on SS’s “shopping list” of interactive choices. This idea is opposite of the culture of learning choral music that exists in many settings. One such model is that when a new composition is distributed, the students should first write in their solfege syllables. Then, they should learn to sing the piece on the solfege syllables, with handsigns. When the solfege is perfect and they have memorized the handsigns, the choir members may sing on the written text of the piece. Finally, if all goes according to “plan,” the conductor-teacher is free to add in a few dynamic and musical phrase shapings, but only in small doses.

Instead, SS emphasizes articulation, musical meaning and phrasing, syllabic and word stress, and other musical ideas, such as the meaning of the text and the relationship between the vocal lines and the accompaniment, FIRST in her conducting-teaching. She starts with the end in mind, to ensure that singers develop a relationship with the musical score, and in the process come to *know* the music in a way that is deeper and broader than the traditional model of choral conducting-teaching. Her approach is organic, from the ‘inside-out,’ and creates more meaningful experiences for individual singers and for ensemble performances.

SS spoke openly during our interview about her internal struggle between focusing on the singers' *experience* of the music during the music learning process, versus aiming toward a "technically perfect performance:"

SS: Actually, I worry a lot, myself, about the tension between having high artistic standards—wanting to have a performance that sounds spectacular against that idea of what the students are getting from the experience. And sometimes, having a technically perfect performance is really not what is meaningful to the learner, to the singers. It's what they experience in the process along the way. Sometimes I worry that we are so concerned about flawless technique or the final product that we miss the experience along the way, and I think that we all have to juggle that, because we do have public performances... that have been part of our tradition.

(Formal Interview)

When she focuses specifically on procedural items such as pitches, rhythms, and dynamics, I observed SS making the following choices based on the choirs' sounding:

- Asking the choir to sing their voice part on a neutral syllable.
- Isolating individual voice parts to check for correct pitches.
- Asking the choir to sing all together on one voice part.
- Instructing the choir to conduct along with their singing.
- Asking the choir to sing on a neutral syllable with a staccato articulation.

One way that SS facilitates the choir rehearsing for correct pitches and/or rhythms is to model vocally the correct pitches, rhythms, etc. Further, she sometimes models the incorrect pitches/rhythms, followed by modeling the correct pitches/rhythms—similarly to modeling undesired then desired sound (i.e., tone quality). In summary of SS's "everything else" musical

rehearsal choices, she always finds a way for the singers to *experience* the music from the “inside-out.” She facilitates their learning, instead of “telling” or “instructing” with words and long-winded directions how the choir should sing, and/or how she envisions the music to sound.

“You have *woman-color* in your voice:” Vocal Tone

As one matures as a listener, one’s able to also take in much more information, for example, the color of the sound, tone, and so, you’re able to evaluate, ‘does that match what my idea is about the piece, or do we want to coach for something different?’

(SS, Formal Interview)

Interactive response to sounding in the context of SS’s choral rehearsals includes *critical listening* and making *musical rehearsal choices*. The third component of SS’s responding in the moment to the choir’s sounding is *vocal tone*. SS is always making choices related to vocal tone, both within the full choir and among the individual singers in every ensemble in which she conducts/rehearses. She listens intently to the choir’s sounding, and, in the midst of many possible musical rehearsal choices, her aural image and the combined perspectives and decisions between her and the singers continuously guide the ensemble’s vocal tone.

During my initial analysis of rehearsal transcripts, field notes, and interviews, it seemed as though “vocal tone” would evolve into a separate theme, or a stand-alone chapter in this study. However, I chose to include vocal tone under “interactive response to sounding” because I believe that SS’s *responses* to the choir’s sound and the choices she makes about vocal tone in the moment of rehearsals is a large part of the reason why she is an expert choral conductor-

teacher. She goes beyond challenging the full choir's vocalism and exercising individual singers' voices within the rehearsal context—she challenges vocalism and exercises voices while at the same time strengthening singers' musicianship skills and guiding choir members toward greater musical understanding.

Rehearsal Snapshot

SS: Hmm. Caramel. Do you like caramel? HOT caramel on top— (*short pause for dramatic effect*) of fabulous ice cream? There needs to be more caramel in your sound.

There is a song— (*singing on the alto part; using hands/arms in an “inflating beach ball” type of movement*). What that requires for you, because we're all kind of “sopranos” in some form, is all kinds of vowel. Space. **Song**— (*singing on the specific pitch with a spacious sound; hands/arms “inflating beach ball” again*). Instead of, **song**— (*singing the same pitch with a pressed/heavy sound; hands/arms pushing in a downward motion*). **That's sort of here on the throat** (*chant-singing on the same pitch with a pressed/heavy sound; pointing to larynx*). But, **song**— (*singing with a spacious sound; hands/arms inflating beach ball again*). **There is a song**— (*singing the alto part again; hands/arms inflating beach ball on the word ‘song’*). Can I hear those people [altos]? And – a – sing— (*conducting preparatory breath*).

Choir: There is a song— (*SS's gesture while the altos sing: “inflating beach ball” gesture when altos sing on the word ‘song’*)

Choir: a song— (*SS's gesture while the altos sing: left hand/arm rising and gliding upwards; right hand is vertical below chin; SS's facial expression: mouth open extremely tall, showing the word ‘song’*)

SS: Vowel, open it— (*speaking while the altos are singing*)

Choir: a song— *(SS's gesture while the altos sing: hands/arms in large circles; after a few seconds, the back of her right palm touches her left cheek)*

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Vowel Sounds

SS's response to sounding choices about vocal tone fall generally into two categories—vowel sounds and tone quality. The rehearsal excerpt above is all about the Alto section's vowel sound on the word 'song.' SS uses many different strategies to encourage a tall, spacious, open, and rounded vowel sound during the Altos' singing, including verbally describing the sound, modeling the desired sound, modeling the undesired sound followed by the desired sound, and using a plethora of embodied movements *during* the Altos' singing. As mentioned in Chapter Five, SS's embodied movement choices are in direct response to what she hears in the sound; she moves her hands/arms and uses facial expressions based on her critical listening to the choir's singing. In addition, she allowed the Altos to sing through the phrase while encouraging the desired tall, spacious, and open sound, instead of stopping the Altos if their first attempt at the vowel sound did not match her desired sound.

SS and I shared a particularly memorable phenomenological moment related to vowel sounds during the warm-ups one rehearsal that I observed. She rehearsed for a solid three minutes the choir's [o] sound, as in 'boat'—there was too much [aw] in the sound, as in 'saw,' and she reminded the singers to keep their soft palates lifted throughout singing the [o] vowel. After she was satisfied with the choir's [o] sound, she kept the same vocalise pattern and changed the vowel to a tall, open, and spacious [a], as in 'father.' Immediately after the choir sang the first note on the [a] vowel, SS looked at me knowingly. We acknowledged non-verbally

from across the room that she would have to start over on the [a] vowel, even after all of her work on the [o] vowel. The singers did not “transfer” the same concepts from the [o] vowel to the [a] vowel.

Rehearsing for “transfer” is an important element within SS’s interactive response to sounding during rehearsals. She rehearses a specific concept or incorporates a specific rehearsal strategy always with the intent of that concept or strategy “bleeding over” into another composition, another rehearsal, and/or another performance. Vowel sounds is one specific area in which SS rehearses for transfer, but she also encourages singers to transfer concepts related to articulation, musical meaning and phrasing, syllabic and word stress, and vocalism. One such example involves SS asking the choir to “think like a composer:”

SS: Right, but if you’re thinking like a composer there— if you’re thinking like a composer, you know that the *interesting* note is not the first note, but the “what” note?

Choir: the second— (*one voice speaking softly, as if from a distance or hesitant*).

SS: The *second* note, and then finally that resolution to the ‘E,’ which is really fantastic. Would you sing that with more intention please?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

As mentioned in Chapter Six, SS builds connections with the composer, and she intends for this concept to transfer across all compositions that an ensemble rehearses/performs.

Tone Quality

The idea of transfer bridges nicely from vowel sounds to tone quality, within the larger picture of response to sounding. SS listens to and assesses vowel sounds, with the overall goal of molding and shaping singers’ tone quality. Her ability to listen deeply in the sound—in the

moment of the choir's singing—allows her to meet the singers where they are vocally, and assists her in choosing among rehearsal strategies that facilitate a collective aural image of the desired sound.

SS: ... really thinking about what the students are producing, what they need, what kinds of warm-ups or exercises can be developed to support something that you hear that's a struggle or a challenge, or if you're working on developing tone, which is what we all work on. Trying to take them from where they are and finding ways to make tangible for them where you're headed [in the sound].

(Formal Interview)

SS uses phrases during rehearsals such as 'vocal color,' 'core in the sound,' and 'woman-color,' along with words such as 'gold,' 'pure,' and 'warm' to describe tone quality, and she frequently asks singers what they 'hear' and/or 'feel' in their sound or in their voice. She spoke briefly during our interview about vocal color:

SS: I think over time my view has widened to include things like, in my ears already listening for color, and making choices about color—vocal color, I'm talking about.

(Formal Interview)

Additional strategies and ways in which SS rehearses tone quality include the following:

- Pointing out when the choir is singing the desired sound versus when they sing an undesired sound.
- Changing embodied movement choices based on the choir's tone.
- Affirming the desired sound once the singers have experienced it.
- Describing her idea of color in relation to the composition the choir is singing.
- Reminding singers to breathe more fully "into their sound."

- Asking the choir to add “arch” to their sound.
- Using the “pull a string from your forehead” movement strategy.
- Asking singers to describe their idea of vocal color choices within certain sections of a composition.

Portrait of *Interactive Response to Sounding*

*CC: Commentary,
reflections, and questions*

*Reflection between
rehearsals is essential for
musical growth.*

*Rehearsals do not progress
linearly if the conductor-
teacher is truly responsive
in the sound.*

*Improvising in the moment
during rehearsals requires
openness.*

SS: Formal Interview

SS: [when planning for a rehearsal] ... one is comparing what happened in the most recent rehearsal against the reminder of where one wants a piece to develop and grow, and trying to make adjustments in pedagogy, more than interpretation...

... while we all want to be prepared for a rehearsal, the experience of teaching from the podium really never matches the rehearsal plan, at least not in a linear way. So, what does it mean to be thinking on your feet...

... what do I mean by improvisation in teaching form?

... Improvising on your feet in teaching is really the in-time version of brainstorming. But what it requires is a constant reaching out, and you reach out in relationship to the sounding.

Critical listening...

*Making rehearsal choices
based on the choir's
sounding...*

*Improvisational teaching =
desired sound or mental
image of sound + various
options of rehearsal
strategies + deciding
how/when to use them in
response to the choir's
sounding.*

So, you hear something, you're making an internal evaluation or assessment, and then you're saying to yourself, 'Ok... I could do this, we could go down this path, we could chant it, we could move it, we could step it,' ... find some active way for the singer to improve or to experience the music in the way that you have in mind.

So, when you improvise, really what you're doing is taking that mental image that you have, taking the teaching strategies that you've developed, and deciding on your feet how you're going to deploy those."

Summary

SS's interactive responses to the choir's sounding during choral rehearsals includes critical listening, making musical rehearsal choices, and focusing on vocal tone in the midst of making decisions about "where to go next" in the music. She listens intensely through the musical texture, and turns her ear towards which voice parts or to what sections in the music need her attention most. She selects from articulation, musical meaning/phrasing, and syllabic/word stress as her definitive musical rehearsal strategies, and refrains from working specifically on notes, rhythms, dynamics, etc., unless these areas are in desperate need of her focused rehearsal. Finally, SS makes decisions about how to improve the singers' tone quality and achieve desired vowel sounds based on what the choir needs from her during any particular moment of rehearsal.

CHAPTER VIII

Outside the ‘Lines and Spaces’: Building Relationships during Rehearsals

... we are human beings and we are a constantly emerging being.

That’s true for both the new teacher and for the experts. ... first, it’s about relationship-making. Music is relationship-making. Making music together, right?

(SS, Formal Interview)

Chapters Four and Five focused on SS’s verbal and active strategy choices during choral rehearsals—concrete approaches to improving sound and rehearsing musical ideas. Chapters Six and Seven described the ways in which SS builds connections, builds vocalism, her viewpoints and ideas about conductor-teacher education, and the ‘thread’ that bonds all themes to her improvisational teaching—interactive response to sounding. In contrast to these tangible and distinguishable rehearsal strategies, a theme emerged in SS’s rehearsals that is less concrete, but perhaps more influential than any of the strategies mentioned thus far: *building relationships*. To SS, the process of “relationship-building” is the essential foundation of choral rehearsals in any context. Unless the conductor-teacher establishes a positive, inviting, “circle of trust” relationship in rehearsals between the singers and her/himself, music making is artificial and stagnant.

This chapter focuses on SS’s relationship-building as part of her improvisational, in-the-moment teaching in choral rehearsals. The two main themes that emerged from “building relationships” are *Connecting* and *Affirming*. SS connects with singers during rehearsals through creating a safe environment, relating to singers as persons, and sharing ownership with choir

members. The ways in which SS affirms singers during rehearsals include affirmation/appreciation, complements and praise, and humor.

Connecting

... so on another evening, go to that room, turn out the lights, and sit in a circle.

It's a really cool way to learn how to do it— to at least approximate that [aboriginal singing]. Will that be fun? Yeah, it would be totally fun.

We're all idiots as singers, aren't we?!? (spoken with a saucy smile)

We're choral nerds, we get excited about the strangest things...

(SS, Rehearsal Transcript)

SS has a way of *connecting* with singers that is unlike most choral conductor-teachers whom I have observed and/or with whom I have sung as an ensemble member. Her connection seems to begin instantaneously as she steps on the “podium” or as she is in front of an ensemble for the first time. SS creates a sense of immediate relationship with the singers—a connection that is organic, centered, and grounded in empathy.

The three subcategories under *connecting* that emerged in this study include creating a safe environment, relating to singers, and sharing ownership. From my perspective as a participant-observer, these aspects of SS's relationship-building are not necessarily “choices,” but rather they are innate characteristics within *her* and within her conducting-teaching and in-the-moment rehearsing. SS makes rehearsal decisions that *build relationships* intuitively, based on what she senses in the moment of rehearsing.

Creating a Safe Environment

SS: And we're gonna just slide it up and over, (*modeling the movement*), all right?

Yeah, it's [moving while singing] really helpful, even though it's kind of silly— (*speaking softly and as if she is telling a secret*) that's why the door's closed (*smiling mischievously*).

SS: ... support like you would in a Pilates class— not like you're gonna bear down on it [lower abdomen] or anything weird like that, nothing ***weird***— no weirdness, only ***goodness*** (*spoken with a comforting smile*).

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

The two examples above illustrate moments in which SS contributed to creating a safe rehearsal environment for the singers. The choir in the first excerpt was not accustomed to adding movement to their singing. They were reluctant to join SS in the specific movement she was modeling. After she acknowledged that the movements might be “silly,” but that they could be helpful, she concluded with, “that’s why the door’s closed.” This was another way of her saying, “It’s alright to experiment with movement in this *safe environment*, because no one is going to watch our rehearsal!”

Breath energy and the singers using their lowest abdominal muscles was the topic of the rehearsal segment in the second excerpt above. Some anxiety crept up surrounding “abdominal muscles” during this moment of rehearsal. SS seemed to ease the singers’ hesitation with her “no weirdness, only goodness” comment. She sensed the apprehension in the room, recognized with empathy the singers’ anxiety, and used the moment to assure that the rehearsal would be a safe place for them to sing, learn, and experiment.

The following example of SS creating a safe environment for rehearsals includes her asking the singers to sing the pitch ‘A’ on a neutral syllable, “from [their] own pitch memory.” This request was extremely “out of the box” for this particular choir; however, SS approached the singers’ insecurity with compassion and poise:

SS:	Choir:
Good... would you sing, from your own pitch memory, would you sing an ‘A’ on the syllable nu — (<i>chanting</i>), together? Alright, you’re gonna breathe in, just think about it— (<i>conducts a preparatory breath, and gestures for the choir to sing; begins making small circles with right index finger in front of her mouth</i>)	<i>no one sings... awkward silence... giggling, quiet embarrassed laughter</i>
Somebody be brave— (<i>smiling as she invites the choir to sing again</i>)	nu — (<i>one voice emerges alone at first, then others begin chiming in; the actual pitch is ‘B’</i>)
Thank you. (<i>gestures a release</i>) Is that too high or too low do you think?	Too high— (<i>several voices heard chiming in</i>)
Too high? Ok, re-think it— (<i>conducts a preparatory breath</i>), And—	nu — (<i>more voices join in singing than in the original attempt; actual pitch is ‘G[#]’</i>)
(<i>gestures a release</i>) Too high or too low? It’s close, isn’t it?	<i>Singing stops</i>
Where is it? (<i>conducts a preparatory breath</i>)	nu — (<i>about the same number of voices heard singing as in the second attempt; actual pitch is ‘A’</i>)
(<i>begins nodding her head in encouragement and begins singing ‘nu’ with the choir</i>)	(<i>all singers join in after SS begins nodding her head</i>)

(Rehearsal Transcript)

SS's calm persistence allowed the singers to be successful eventually in this "finding a pitch" exercise. She smiled throughout the rehearsal segment, and conducted preparatory breaths with confidence, thereby allowing the singers to feel safe while exploring their own "pitch memory."

In this final example related to *creating a safe environment*, SS encourages the singers to "unlock [their] thinking," and gives the example of a vowel sound in order to demonstrate the "unlocking."

SS: Are you singing 'AH' or 'aeh' [as in 'apple']? Do you hear it?? So, what you do, is you have to kind of "unlock" your thinking around that. So, if I were to say to you, "Dear friends, you're singing 'aeh,' [as in 'apple']," you would know, just to make *the hug*, and it will sound beautifully. *(she conducts the choir in singing the phrase once more, and shows the 'hug' movement when the choir sings the 'ah' vowel sound)*

That's SO much better! That's a TON better! Now, let' make it all the way from 'better' to 'spectacular'!

(Rehearsal Transcript)

During this segment of the rehearsal, the choir's 'ah' vowel continued to improve. SS created a safe environment in which the singers were able to make mistakes (or, sing sounds that were less than desired), experiment with "unlocking their thinking" and adding movement to their singing, and ultimately improve their sound. This safe environment in various rehearsal contexts allows SS to connect with choir members in a profound way, deepening the relationship between conductor-teacher and singer.

Relating to Singers as Persons

One of the most poignant moments I observed during a rehearsal involved SS talking to the choir about the “cerebral” verses what it means to be “soulful.” She asked the choir to sit, and she pulled up a chair to face the choir, and sat down as well. She leaned forward, rested her forearms on both thighs, hands in a relaxed folded position, and began talking to the choir as if she were having a one-on-one conversation:

SS: One of the things that I think about as a singer a lot, is how Western culture has such an impact—our culture has such an impact on our idea of sound, and of singing— that’s a very natural thing. We live in a time that values *what?* What’s valued in your schools right now? What are you REALLY worried about in school? Grades, right? And tests, and scores, right? We have this HUGE emphasis on the cerebral. We don’t have much of an emphasis or even the acknowledgement of what it means to be *soulful*. That’s the reason you do music, I’m guessing, right? And in terms of voice production, I think that there’s sometimes— that we actually can *renew* ourselves from using the entire body as our instrument, and really stay in that cerebral place.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

The main idea of this spontaneous heart-to-heart chat was to connect the “cerebral place,” valued in schools and society, with using the entire body in singing, or embodiment. SS used this narrative to encourage the singers to tap into their “soulful” side—“the reason [they] do music,” with the body-voice connection. The rehearsal space during her time of sharing was intensely quiet, and everyone in the room was motionless; the singers were hanging on her every word.

SS *relates to singers as persons* in a way that is sincere, genuine, perceptive, and current. She does not pretend to be their “friend,” but communicates in a down-to-earth way that is the

ultimate in respect. In this excerpt, SS relates to the singers in a musical way, sharing with each voice part their special role in the section of music the choir is rehearsing:

SS: Wow, now he layers three ideas—three different ideas, right? Measure 32—
(facing and speaking to Sop 1's). **There is a S—, Song—**, *(singing)* back to that kind of
initial idea. But, *you* have all the color low voices *(facing and speaking to Altos)*, so you
have, **Song— a ‘tone, tone, tone’** *(chanting)*, love my ‘tone, tone, tone’ *(speaking and
smiling)*. He wants there to be a rich sound there, right? What are you doing in the
middle? You’re sort of like parenthesis, or you’re just narrating, **There is a song—**
(singing), and this is what’s happening around you— *(motioning to the upper and lower
voice parts, indicating the Sop 1's and Altos are providing the melody and ‘rich sound’ to
accompany the Sop 2's ‘narration’)*, alright?

(Rehearsal Transcript)

She relates to and gives each voice part validation of their function within the musical texture, taking time to speak directly to each individual section of the choir.

Silliness and adolescent singers are two terms that go hand-in-hand. SS understands the silliness that sometimes arises in rehearsals, and she is not afraid to act silly, herself:

SS: Yeah, and the bass is going— *(playing “air string bass,” while making ‘bum’
sounds; lots of giggling from the choir)*. Or, I don’t know— *(switching to “air electric
bass,” but she is not quite sure exactly how it’s supposed to look, which hand goes
where, etc.; eliciting lots of laughter!)*

(Rehearsal Transcript)

A few additional examples of SS's building relationships in rehearsals by *relating to singers* include two "one-liners," and an energetic invitation for the women to *sing* like

WOMEN:

SS: You're doing great work— I feel like a kid in a candy store today!

SS: 'Less volume, more space'— that should be on a bumper sticker!

SS: You know, you're *women*— right? RIGHT? This is *women*, we're *women*! You have *woman*-color in your voice! **Ho-san-na!** (*chanting*) Ready, go—

(Rehearsal Transcript)

She complemented the singers in the same breath as mentioning 'candy,' turned her "less volume, more space" request into a bumper sticker slogan, and connected with the *women* in a way that only a woman conductor-teacher could.

Sharing Ownership

SS: Once I had the model shown to me, or demonstrated, that singers could be so involved in the re-creation process that has to do with making choral art— not that we're talking about the verbal kind of interaction, but a much deeper kind of interaction where students are thinking inside the music as much as possible— for me, I began to consider what that meant as far as my role as a conductor-teacher...

(Formal Interview)

SS describes in this section of our formal interview her "A-ha!" moment of coming to recognize that singers could take part in bringing music to life—that she could *share ownership* of the music making process with ensemble members, as a way to build stronger relationships

with singers. She calls this idea “conductor-as-facilitator” and describes how it contradicts “traditional” models of conducting-teaching:

SS: [It’s] about re-orienting the teaching process so that the learners are far more engaged in decision-making than in traditional models— “top-down” models of teaching.

(Formal Interview)

Sharing ownership of the music making process plays a large role in SS’s empowering singers to make decisions about their own musicianship and/or their interpretations of the composer’s intention(s).

SS: ... [I intend] singers to feel somehow empowered by the experience. And that comes through their own growth, from challenging them very deeply, from expecting a lot from them, and from having them interact with really great music, which, you know, can be very moving— can be life changing for students.

(Formal Interview)

SS discusses at length her personal thought process about what it means to be a “facilitator” in the choral rehearsal context:

SS: There’s a lot of talk right now in the profession about what it means to have a democratic classroom, or in our case, how could there be a democratic process in the choral ensemble, and it’s somewhat misunderstood, because when one facilitates it does not necessarily mean that you have to move outside the music and into the domain of talking about things... it does not mean that the majority of rehearsal time should be spent voting on musical decisions. What it DOES mean, as a facilitator, is that you’re the one, the [conductor-]teacher is the one who has studied the score, and has experience to lead and guide the learning process, but that it’s fundamentally about the students’

experience, and to facilitate in OUR context, I think, involves finding as many ways for the students to engage in musical decision-making in the act of music as possible... So, to “facilitate” really just means to “lead” or to “guide;” it means not to dominate; it means to allow for possibility; it means to be willing to stop and reorient action in relationship to what you’re actually hearing in a sound, or what’s being presented by the ensemble members. I think we’ll talk more about the idea of improvisation from the podium, but in fact, someone who is an expert facilitator is by definition an improviser, because you have to do that in direct relationship to what is being experienced as opposed to a pre-set agenda.

(Formal Interview)

In my observations of SS’s sharing ownership during rehearsals, I noticed that she does this most often in the form of questions. She asks singers to describe how sound feels or what a section of a composition means to them. Sometimes she asks the choir if they “liked” their own sound. In addition, she asks choir members if they agree with her about a certain sound or musical idea, and always leaves the floor open for a different voice of opinion. Below are examples of SS’s sharing ownership of music making and/or “facilitating” during rehearsals:

- Facilitating a crisp consonant sound:

SS: And as you do that, do you hear how the “K’s” get less and less crisp? Right, you have to work like a dog, really, to get that [consonant sound] out— to really get that out, and it happens here (*pressing on her lowest abdominal muscles, showing from where the energy needs to come*). **Khh—** (*chanting; followed by a breath*), **Khh—** (*breath*), **Khh—**. If I don’t add that to it, I’m gonna be stuck here (*touching her throat/larynx*). We don’t want that, right?

- Sharing ownership of what the singers heard and/or felt in their sound:

SS: What did you hear different in that sound? Or, what did you FEEL different in the sound? Yeah? (*motioning to one singer, who was raising her hand*) Was there more “o” in the sound? It was “ohier”? (*repeated the singer’s answer, with a small chuckle along with choir members*) Yeah, what else did you HEAR in the sound? Open (*nodding her head in agreement with a singer’s answer*). You should have a real feeling of openness, right?

- Facilitating a rhythmic accent and non-legato singing:

SS: Thank you— and when you do that accent in bar 14 upper voices, that’s gonna be so *fabulous*, it’s gonna be rhythmic: **1— 2— (rest) dah!, 1— 2— (rest) dah!** (*chanting*), alright? One more time, letter ‘B,’ non-legato. See if you can look up, non-legato— no-connecting. 1— 2— ready— and— (*conducting a preparatory breath*).

- Sharing ownership with questions:

SS: Did you hear that?!? Do you like it?!?

SS: That’s FABULOUS! Do you like that sound?

SS: Did you love the “crunch”?

- Facilitating singers’ continued focus during the rehearsal:

SS: You work with fatigue when you are an artist—it’s part of being an artist (*spoken with a compassionate smile*).

Portrait of *Connecting during Rehearsals*

SS: My first year teaching, I swear this is the truth—I’m not exaggerating. I taught in the south, which is where I’m from, in North Carolina, and I had a children’s choir, and my *goal*, after the first two weeks—my single goal for the year was to get them to sing, “**oo**” (*chanting a spacious, rounded “oo” vowel*). Like, I thought I would die and go to *Heaven* if they could do that, because I would go, **Nooo—** (*singing; modeling her desired sound on a single pitch*), and they’d sing back, **Newww—** (*singing; modeling the undesired sound on a single pitch, lacking space and with a nasal quality*). And I’d go, **Oooo— ; ewww— ;** (*singing back and forth several times between desired and undesired sounds*). They totally thought they were giving me exactly what— [she had modeled]. And at the last concert of the year, I went— (*conducting a preparatory breath*), and they went, **Nooo—** (*singing a rounded, spacious “oo” vowel*). And I just about fell down, right?!? I was like weeping, and I was so excited that they sang that vowel. But, what that tells you is that your inner hearing, or your inner perception, is not always accurate. So, what you do, is you have to kind of “unlock” your thinking around that. So, if I were to say to you, “Dear friends, you’re singing ‘*ae*h,’” you would know, just to make *the hug*, and it will sound beautifully.

(Rehearsal Transcript)

Affirming

It's all about you right there— that's all about you.

Don't you love it when it's all about you?

(SS, Rehearsal Transcript)

The first half of this chapter concentrated on SS's *Connecting* with singers as she builds relationships in choral rehearsals. The second theme that emerged from her distinctive way of “building relationships” during rehearsals is *Affirming*. SS affirms ensemble members by showing affirmation/appreciation during rehearsals, complementing the singers, sharing specific and non-specific praise, and with humor.

Affirmation/Appreciation

CC: What is going on in your mind at the time you think of doing these types [relationship-building] of activities? What “triggers” you to move outside the rehearsal?

SS: It's in response to a form of assessment that I think is ongoing all of the time. So, we can think about assessment in musical or pedagogical ways, but this is another layer of assessment which has to do with their level of confidence, their sense of “self.”

Affirmation. Wanting to set up deliberate ways to celebrate the little mini-successes that they're having. I would certainly never deliberately *plan* that, but I get an intuitive sense sometimes of, ‘Ok—I just need to take this moment, and I need to say, “Wow! Look at what you're doing.” Putting the mirror up. I've never thought of it that way

[analytically], but I know that I'm always thinking, or *sensing* more than thinking— So, they can look at themselves to say, “I just met this challenge. Not only did I meet it, but I

exceeded it, and that feels really good. I feel good about myself right now.” To me, there’s nothing more rewarding in a rehearsal than people feeling like that.

(Think Aloud Interview)

This excerpt describes fully SS’s impulse for choosing to segue during rehearsals into a relationship-building moment, including the ways in which she affirms and shows appreciation toward singers. She admits openly that she does not specifically “plan” these moments, but that she allows intuition to be her guide. Her *affirming* “strategies,” or approaches, take several forms. One of the forms is mentioned in the excerpt above—affirming the successes singers accomplish during rehearsals, whether small steps or giant leaps. In addition, SS is talking about affirming *human beings* that are part of her rehearsals, meaning, not only does she feel it important to affirm the choir members’ achievement(s), but to commend the individuals, or the living, breathing *beings* with whom she is sharing music-making.

Other forms of SS’s affirming singers during rehearsals include the following:

- Affirming while the choir is singing, that they know the music well enough to look up:

SS: Three-and, Four-and— (*conducting a preparatory breath*). [Speaking while the choir is singing:] Yeah—; Eyes—; Eyes— You have that memorized!

- Affirming improved breath energy connection, instead of the “press” [on the throat]:

SS: There it is! (*conducts a release*) There it is—so you don’t need so much “press.”

- Affirming connection between text and music:

SS: Now *that* had some architecture to it. That had some structure that said to me you were thinking about what those words were.

- Affirming the singers when they seem unsure of their efforts:

SS: Can I have those two parts? (*chant-singing on one specific pitch; asking the choir to sing two pitches in a half-step interval*) Go— (*conducts a preparatory breath*). Yeah, you got it. You totally have it (*smiling gleefully as she affirms their “crunch” of the half-step interval*). **A and B^b together—** (*chant-singing on the specific pitches as she says the letter names*), go— (*conducts preparatory breath*).

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

SS expresses her appreciation during rehearsals, literally by saying “thank you.”

Sometimes she speaks this phrase concurrently with conducting a release gesture, and other times she says “thank you” at the end of a rehearsal segment, before moving on to a new idea:

SS: Thank you (*conducting a release gesture*). Is that too high or too low do you think?

SS: Thank you—I don’t hear the ‘K’ yet, as a *sharp* instrument.

SS: Thank you. Wow, now he layers three ideas, three different ideas, right?

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

Compliments and Praise

One reason why SS is successful in building relationships during rehearsals is that she sets up an environment in which singers are eager to “please,” or they want to do whatever it takes to accomplish her objective(s). Affirmation, appreciation, and the sharing of compliments generate a “snowball effect.” SS affirms and compliments singers during rehearsal, the singers want to please her and work hard to achieve her goals for them, which in turn brings additional affirmation and compliments.

SS compliments choir members in several ways, including giving compliments to the full choir and complimenting certain sections of the choir and/or individual singers. Her compliments range from addressing the sound/singing to the choir's or individuals' effort during rehearsal. Below are representative compliments from various rehearsals:

- Complimenting an individual singer:

SS: Good! Very nicely said.

- Complimenting the choir for having pencils ready to go:

SS: Would you take your pencils—do you have pencils? Yes, of course you do.

- Complimenting the full choir—"smart women:"

SS: Alright, smart women, how is that motive, that *moment*, that *gesture* different?

What would you say about it?

- Complimenting the full choir following a rehearsal segment during which sound improved:

SS: I like that a lot.

(This particular compliment was followed with 'what' she liked about their sound—an assessment.)

- Complimenting the full choir on their responsiveness:

SS: I know I'm being picky, but you're SO good, and you're so responsive— *(spoken with a warm smile)*.

- Complimenting five particular singers, chosen from a 200-member honor choir; SS asked the singers to come to the front of the risers and face the full choir:

SS: Every time I look at these singers I see focus, intensity, character...

(She continued in this moment with additional motivational words about being a leader,

discussing what it takes to be part of an Honor Choir, and encouraging each singer to follow the model of the five students.)

(Rehearsal Transcripts and Field Notes)

SS's compliments during rehearsals affirm singers and the collective membership of ensembles, and, in so doing, strengthens her relationship with choir members. Rehearsals remain positive reinforcements of not only the singers' musicianship and work ethic, but of the *individuals* participating in the ensemble.

SS also builds relationships through the use of praise during rehearsals. She is quick to praise the choir—both the full ensemble and individual singers—for successes and efforts toward achievement. Similar to that of constructive feedback and assessment discussed in Chapter Four, SS's praise during rehearsals is conveyed immediately in-the-moment. Sometimes the praise is specific, and sometimes the praise is non-specific, as displayed in the following excerpts:

- Specific praise:

SS: That's a great sound. That's a *fabulous* sound!

SS: That's great. I like that idea a lot.

SS: That's a really beautiful tone and you did some better listening that time...

SS: You're doing great work...

SS: The articulation is fabulous...

- Non-specific praise:

SS: That's SO much better!

SS: Totally was better.

SS: ...oh, it's SO good!

SS: ... there it is!

There are other times during rehearsals when SS praises the choir *while* the members are singing. Most choral conductor-teachers would agree that speaking to the choir during their singing is not the best choice, because the singers are not really able to hear what is being said. However, SS's use of this affirming strategy is successful as a motivator for the ensemble members. She does not give detailed instructions during the singing, nor does she "shout" out suggestions; her praise is spoken in an encouraging manner, and the choir's response is always positive. Here are a few examples of praise that she shares with the choir during their singing:

SS: Good... longer!

SS: ...yeah!

SS: ...better! Keep going!

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

Humor

As mentioned earlier, SS did not hesitate to act silly during rehearsals, if and when the moment was right for silliness and/or humor. She continued to build relationships by using humor, no matter how over-the-top "corny" or soliciting a simple laugh.

SS: **An—DIH on, an—DIH on, an—DIH on—** (*chanting; over-doing the shadow vowel between "and on" in the text*). You actually have to overdo that. When I first started trying to do those kinds of shadow vowels, I felt like I was stuck in some Swedish movie.

SS used humor in this excerpt to draw attention to the shadow vowel, "dih," between the words "and" / "on." Her humor lightened up the moment of rehearsal, and she at the same time acknowledged that she felt weird when first attempting similar shadow vowels.

In the following two examples, SS accompanies her humor with movement:

SS: When you have a “crunch” note, you sing into the “crunch,” agree? And if you aren’t the “cruncher,” you listen for the “crunch.” Sounds like a yoga class...

[demonstrating movement of mock-yoga poses].

SS: This has to have breath underneath it *[dangling her right hand downward; fingers are moving quickly, as if to “energize” the sound]*. **Ni—** *[singing with spaciousness and breath; hands/arms begin moving slowly in circles, then gradually speed up in a rolling motion in front of her body; her voice crescendos, THEN begins wobbling with “molto vibrato”—eliciting lots of laughter]*.

(Rehearsal Transcripts)

After these types of humorous interjections, choir members seem to respond to SS more readily and with even greater loyalty. She allows singers to see her “lighter” side, and in so doing, builds stronger relationships in the moment of rehearsals.

Summary of Building Relationships during Rehearsals

An essential element within SS’s choral rehearsals is relationship building, the two categories of which are *connecting* and *affirming*. She connects with ensemble members by creating a safe rehearsal environment, relating to singers as persons, and sharing ownership of the music learning process with her role of “conductor as facilitator.” SS affirms choir members with statements of affirmation and appreciation, with compliments and praise, and with humor.

SS’s relationships with the full ensemble and with individuals among the choir are continuously evolving—connecting with and affirming singers builds initial relationships;

singers become more open and receptive to SS's musical ideas within rehearsals; deeper relationships emerge between SS and the singers. In closing, her quote from the beginning of this chapter is the ultimate summary: "... it's all about relationship-making. Music IS relationship-making."

CHAPTER IX

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

...when you improvise, really what you're doing is taking that mental image that you have, taking the teaching strategies that you've developed, and deciding on your feet how you're going to deploy those. (SS, Formal Interview)

Overview of the Study

Purpose and Problems

The purpose of this study was to explore how an expert conductor-teacher navigates among instructional strategies in the choral rehearsal context, and to develop a rich understanding of the interactional response to sounding that takes place between the conductor-teacher and singers' performance during rehearsals. The research questions were:

- 1) What are the specific rehearsal choices made by an expert conductor-teacher during improvisational teaching in the choral rehearsal context?
- 2) How does an expert conductor-teacher navigate from *desired* outcome to *final product* during choral rehearsals?

Emergent data revealed the ways in which an expert conductor-teacher builds connections with composer, compositional motives, text, and the listener, and the strategies used for building vocalism during rehearsals. Viewpoints about conductor-teacher education also emerged as an important theme in this study, as pre-service teacher preparation continually informs the expert's rehearsal planning and strategy choices.

Method

Following an instrumental case study design, I used a phenomenological lens to collect data as a participant-observer in multiple choral rehearsal settings. My lived experiences in the process of data collection created greater intimacy between my research and the life-world of choral rehearsals (van Manen, 1990). The primary forms of data collection included extensive observations and video recordings of the conductor-teacher during choral rehearsals, rehearsal transcripts (see Appendix 'x'), and a formal interview (see Appendix 'x'), with think-aloud interviews and informal discussion with the conductor-teacher also providing data. To establish trustworthiness throughout my research, I employed triangulation of the data, member checks, a participatory manner of research, and peer review (Merriam, 1998).

After transcribing the video recordings of choral rehearsals and audio recordings of interviews, I began sorting the transcription and field notes data into codes and watched for emergent themes (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Seven themes emerged from the final coding of the data: 1) Verbal Rehearsal Strategies, 2) Active Rehearsal Strategies, 3) Building Connections, 4) Building Vocalism, 5) Conductor-Teacher Education, 6) Interactive Response to Sounding, and 7) Building Relationships.

Findings

The findings of this study outline the specific rehearsal strategy choices made by an expert conductor-teacher during improvisational teaching, and the ways in which the expert navigates from desired outcome to final product during choral rehearsals.

Verbal Rehearsal Strategies

SS uses verbal strategies to describe and assess the choir's sound continually during rehearsals. Her describing strategies illustrate her aural image of desired vocal sound, clarify her realization of the composer's ideas, and annotate her overall musical goals. The describing codes include the following: description; discussion; example, comparison, and imagery; and summary. These methods of describing serve as a form of propositional knowledge, or "knowing about." SS chooses describing words and/or statements and when to use them in a purposeful way—to avoid simple "teacher talk," and to evoke the most musicianship from singers.

The verbal strategies that SS uses during rehearsals serve also to assess singers' performance during rehearsals. Tone quality, articulation, breath energy, and musical phrasing are examples of musicianship areas that SS assesses in the moment of rehearsals. The assessing codes include assessment, constructive feedback, questions, and asking the choir to perform musical and non-musical tasks. Assessing during rehearsals is a form of procedural knowledge, or "knowing how," and is instrumental in SS's decision-making among possible rehearsal strategies in the moment of rehearsals.

Active Rehearsal Strategies

SS's choices of active rehearsal strategies fall under two themes: modeling and embodied movement. Modeling during rehearsals encompasses chanting—all forms of modeling using a high and forward resonant speaking, or "chant," voice, and singing—demonstrating and modeling with the singing voice. A third code emerged under modeling that provides a "bridge" from the modeling theme toward the embodied movement theme: movement *while* modeling.

Sub-codes include *chant-singing* under the chanting theme, and *modeling desired versus undesired sound* as part of the movement while modeling theme.

Embodied movement during rehearsals occurred in every choral setting in which SS led a rehearsal. Her movement choices always correspond to musical rehearsal choices such as building vocalism, working on musical phrasing, and rehearsing articulation. The three codes under embodied movement include SS's conducting gesture, her illustrating movements, and the ways in which she uses movement during the choir's singing.

The particular nature of SS's active strategy choices, along with when during rehearsals she implements the choices are two factors that contribute to her improvisational teaching expertise. She remains constantly connected with and aware of the ensemble members during rehearsals, so that she is able to make in-the-moment decisions of the needed strategies, including *how* and *when* to use modeling and embodied movement.

Building Connections, Building Vocalism, and Conductor-Teacher Education

SS builds connections among and between the singers and the composer, the composer's compositional motives, the text and its author, the music from the 'inside-out,' and the listener/audience member. These multi-faceted connections assist her in reaching rehearsal goals and contribute to her developing in singers life-long musicianship skills.

Building Vocalism during SS's rehearsals includes vocal pedagogy instruction, constant reminders of appropriate breath and breath energy, and aligning of singers' minds and bodies. SS states that she does not conceptually separate "building vocalism" from "building identities." She cultivates identity among the ensemble members *through* the building of their vocalism.

Conductor-teacher education continually informs SS's choral rehearsals. SS is a conductor and a teacher, but she is also a "teacher of future conductor-teachers." Her pre-service conductor-teacher preparation methods inform her own rehearsal preparation and reflection, and challenge daily her personal musicianship and "teachership." She focuses on facilitating trust and openness within the young teachers, she cultivates their developing score study, listening, and audiation skills, and she teaches them a process she calls *brainstorming-for-teaching* (Snow, 2009). SS labels brainstorming-for-teaching as a way of "exercising improvisation"—away from the rehearsal, and via an inside-out view of score study, mental mapping, and imagination of various teaching strategies.

Interactive Response to Sounding

As an expert conductor-teacher, SS listens critically during rehearsals to the choir's singing/chanting, the singers' vocal tone, and their musical expression choices (among other choral singing and musicianship aspects). She then makes in-the-moment decisions about "what to do next" on the path toward her idea of the desired sound, articulation, phrasing, tone color, and etc., in the composition she is rehearsing, and for the long-term needs of the ensemble members. SS responds to the choir's sounding in an interactive way, through critical listening, by making musical rehearsal choices, and by always being aware of vocal tone.

Interactive response to sounding in the choral rehearsal context supports Hornbach's (2005) labeling of an "interactive response chain" in early childhood music classes. Hornbach (2005) states, "The teacher's initiative inspires the child to respond, and his/her response becomes an initiative for the teacher. This interactive response chain is inextricably intertwined with teacher improvisation..." Interactive response to sounding is the intersection of

improvisational teaching during SS's choral rehearsals; response to sounding intertwines verbal strategies, active strategies, and building relationships during rehearsals. She immerses in the choir's sounding, and makes in-the-moment improvisational decisions about which strategies and musical rehearsal choices to implement during rehearsals.

SS's ideas about interactive response to sounding include that she remain open and receptive during rehearsals, so that she may listen intently to the choir's sounding, and interactively respond in the moment with appropriate rehearsal choices. Her first conception about responding in the moment to the choir's sounding began intuitively, and she refined further these ideas through her experiences in the university classroom with pre-service conductor-teachers.

Critical listening is the thread that ties together all of the possible rehearsal choices and decisions. SS applies critical listening during her rehearsals by listening through the texture vertically, listening to individual voice parts in the context of the full choir's singing, and by listening to assess what/how the choir is singing compared to her aural image of desired sound for the particular composition and/or the ability level of the choir.

From the vantage point of critical listening, SS makes rehearsal decisions and choices among verbal strategies, active strategies, and when/how to build relationships. The musical rehearsal choices that emerged from my observation of and participation in SS's rehearsals include choices about articulation, facilitating the choir's understanding of musical meaning and phrasing, focusing on syllabic and word stress, and finally, other musical elements—pitches, rhythms, dynamics, et al. Her musical rehearsal choices focus primarily on the first three areas above, and not on the pitches, rhythms, and dynamics of a composition. This is another example of her expertise as a choral conductor-teacher.

The final theme of SS's interactive response to the choir's sounding is vocal tone. SS is always making choices related to vocal tone, both within the full choir and among the individual singers in every ensemble in which she conducts/rehearses. She listens to and assesses vowel sounds, with the overall goal of molding, shaping, and developing singers' tone quality. Her ability to listen deeply in the sound—in the moment of the choir's singing—allows her to meet the singers where they are vocally, and assists her in choosing among rehearsal strategies to facilitate the singers' achieving the ultimate vocal tone for their ability/maturity, and in realizing an appropriate aural image of tone quality for the ensemble.

Building Relationships

SS builds relationships during rehearsals, and to her, the process of “relationship-building” is the essential foundation of choral rehearsals in any context. The two main themes that emerged from building relationships are connecting and affirming. SS connects with singers during rehearsals through creating a safe environment, relating to singers, and sharing ownership with choir members. The ways in which SS affirms singers during rehearsals include affirmation/appreciation, compliments and praise, and humor.

When SS includes in a rehearsal one or more of the relationship-building approaches mentioned above, it is not necessarily a rehearsal “choice;” she does not always consciously make a decision such as, “now I’m going to work on building relationships by offering a compliment to the choir...,” etc. Instead, her ways of connecting with and affirming singers are innate characteristics within her, within her general conducting-teaching style, and within her in-the-moment rehearsing. Building relationships during rehearsals is a phenomenon in which SS makes rehearsal decisions intuitively, based on what she senses in the moment of rehearsing.

Summary

The expert choral conductor-teacher in this study is able to navigate seamlessly through various rehearsal strategies in the moment of choral rehearsals. She remains open, vulnerable, and is not afraid to take risks when making rehearsal choices. She knows the musical scores being rehearsed from the inside-out. In addition, she exercises constantly her critical listening and audiation skills, so that she may respond to the choir's sounding—in-the-moment, and based on her aural perception of how she thinks the composition and ensemble should sound. Choral conductor-teachers can benefit greatly from studying SS's improvisational teaching, and score study, critical listening, and conductor-teacher education strategies. She is an expert choral conductor-teacher in even more ways than I have articulated in this research, and choral conductor-teachers are lucky to have an opportunity to learn from her.

Implications for Choral Conductor-Teachers

It is not the intention of this study to generalize the findings across the field of choral conducting-teaching. However, several implications exist that may individually and/or collectively assist choral conductor-teachers sharpen their improvisational teaching skills. In order to improvise in the moment of teaching, conductor-teachers should:

1. Possess a thorough knowledge of the musical compositions they are rehearsing.

Conductor-teachers should utilize a refined system of score study in order to acquire a clear picture of their musical interpretation of a score and a mental image of composer's wishes. Successful improvisation of teaching strategies during rehearsals can only take place with a comprehensive understanding of the musical score.

2. Brainstorm, imagine, and prepare for rehearsals outside of the musical sounding.

Through the process of brainstorming and ‘imagination in action’ outside of the actual rehearsal, a conductor-teacher is able to fully consider all of the possible musical ideas that he/she can teach/rehearse within a composition, and all of the possible rehearsal strategies that he/she can implement to teach/rehearse the musical ideas. Brainstorming should include verbal and active strategies, ways of building connections with composer, compositional motives, text, and listener, and ways of building vocalism. Brainstorming away from the rehearsal allows seamless navigation of rehearsal strategies in the moment of teaching.

3. Listen critically in the actual sounding and through the texture of a composition.

Because ‘response to sounding’ is the connective tissue between and among rehearsal strategy choices, conductor-teachers should continue to develop and exercise critical listening skills, including audiation of individual vocal lines and of the vertical musical texture. When engaged in deep listening, a conductor-teacher can make appropriate choices between rehearsal strategies, against his/her aural image of the desired sound, articulation, musical phrasing, and other areas of the composition he/she is rehearsing.

4. Remain open and vulnerable, and be willing to take risks when in front of an ensemble. Conductor-teachers should accept and embrace that each rehearsal is a living, breathing, and continuously emerging experience, just as human beings are living, breathing, and constantly emerging beings. To expect that a rehearsal will progress exactly according to the rehearsal plan, and/or that a specific desired outcome would take place within a set rehearsal period is to limit the possibilities of various musical, relationship-building, and life-changing opportunities that may take place during a

rehearsal. Teaching/rehearsing with a mindset of openness, allowing one's self to be vulnerable, and taking risks with the music and/or ensemble members can unlock possibility within a rehearsal, and unleash improvisational teaching capability.

5. Engage in various forms of reflection between rehearsals.

By reflecting after a rehearsal about what strategies were successful, what teaching choices were not as effective, and the choir's sound as compared to an aural image of the desired product, conductor-teachers can better prepare themselves for making in-the-moment decisions during subsequent rehearsals. SS suggests two forms of 'active mental reflection' between rehearsals. Informal reflection includes studying the musical score and audiating intensely through recent rehearsals while spending time with the score. Formal reflection includes playing through the score at the piano, and/or singing, sounding, and listening to a recording of the composition. SS calls these areas of formal reflection 'actualizing' or 'sounding' through the most recent rehearsal. Formal and/or informal reflection following a rehearsal, and prior to an upcoming rehearsal strengthens improvisational teaching ability in-the-moment of rehearsals.

Implications for Conductor-Teacher Education

In order to prepare pre-service conductor-teachers to improvise successfully in the moment of sounding during rehearsals, and to encourage these young teachers to begin thinking like an expert earlier in their teaching development, conductor-teacher educators should:

1. Continue to emphasize pre-service teachers' growth in foundational musical skills. From my personal experience as a conductor-teacher educator, critical listening, audiation, and piano skills tend to be in the early- to middle- stage of development during

the one or two years prior to student teaching. Conductor-teacher educators should continue to emphasize these skills. One way to accomplish this task is giving assignments such as playing one voice part and singing another, conducting while singing various voice parts, and functional piano exercises—including warm-up passages, blocking chords of vertical voice parts, and playing a ‘skeleton’ of the accompaniment of an octavo.

2. Provide opportunities in a safe environment for exercising improvisation during teaching/rehearsing. Conductor-teacher educators can set up improvisational teaching experiences for pre-service teachers by providing for them the opportunity to make in-the-moment decisions within a safe and nurturing practicum environment. All class members can explore within the same context their individual and collective ideas about improvisational teaching and making choices based on the choir’s sounding, thereby increasing the opportunities for learning.

3. Encourage pre-service teachers to remain open to all of the possibilities during practicum teaching and when observing/interning as a pre-service teacher.

Conductor-teacher educators have the unique opportunity to mold and ‘shape’ young teachers in their thinking and preparations for teaching. By encouraging pre-service teachers to remain open to all of the possibilities during practice teaching experiences, instead of incorporating a “bag of tricks” response, the pre-service teachers have a better chance of taking risks and making successful in-the-moment decisions as a novice, beginning, and even advanced-beginning teacher.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study examined the improvisational teaching choices of an expert conductor-teacher in the choral rehearsal context. The participant in this study is a university professor who serves as a conductor-teacher of a collegiate ensemble, in addition to having conducting opportunities with honor choir and All-State ensembles, and as a clinician with high school and middle school choirs. Replicating this study with expert middle school and/or high school choral conductor-teachers serving as participants may provide additional insight into the nature of improvisational teaching choices, and the ways that in-the-moment teaching differs between the university, middle school/high school, and/or honor choir/All-State settings. The results of this kind of study would perhaps provide more information about what experts do and what choices they make in the choral rehearsal context.

The process of score study, a thorough knowledge of the musical score, and rehearsal preparation proved to be important ‘enablers’ of improvisational teaching in this study. Further research could explore the score study and rehearsal preparation methods of expert middle school and high school choral conductor-teachers, in an effort to provide suggestions of score study methods and rehearsal preparation strategies. This information would be particularly valuable to current middle school and high school conductor-teachers, who must cipher through paperwork, school and school district bureaucracy, endless forms of documentation, school district and state policy implementation, and who press forward to teach human beings music as the number-one goal of their classrooms.

This research provided the suggestion that pre-service conductor-teachers should have many opportunities to exercise improvisation in a safe and nurturing practicum environment. Additional research could investigate the perceptions of pre-service conductor teachers, prior to

and following instruction and opportunities for practice in improvisational teaching. Findings of such research would serve to inform conductor-teacher educators of the best practices involved in teaching/facilitating improvisational teaching strategies.

Finally, foundational musical skills such as critical listening, audiation, and functional piano skills emerged in this study as important elements of being an ‘expert’ choral conductor-teacher. Future research could investigate and compare the foundational musical skills and improvisational teaching practices of ‘experienced non-expert’ and ‘expert’ choral conductor-teachers. Results would perhaps assist the ‘experienced non-experts’ improve their foundational musical skills, and develop further their improvisational teaching ability allowing them to think and teach more like experts.

Closing Snapshot

CC: In a way, I'm thinking that... all of this that we're talking about with different score study ideas and how the piece designs it's own way to be taught, it's as if we're taking care of human beings in the best way possible.

SS: I like that very much.

CC: Or, a catering to the fact that we are human beings and we are a constantly emerging being.

SS: That's true for both the new teacher and for the experts. All that it's... first it's about relationship-making. Music is relationship-making. Making music *together*, right? And, you can just overly objectify the process. And, it's a mystery for a lot of people, you know, how you develop... teaching skill from where there was none. And, there are certainly many valid approaches to planning for instruction, and carrying out instruction, but lots of times the answers are right there within the student—they just haven't been invited to think about it.

(Formal Interview)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Participant Consent Form

Title of project: Inspiration in the Moment: A Case Study of an Expert Conductor-Teacher's Improvisational Teaching in the Choral Rehearsal

January 25, 2008

Dear Potential Study Participant,

My name is Carolyn Cruse, and I am a Doctoral student in music education at Michigan State University. For my dissertation, I am studying the improvisational teaching that takes place during choral rehearsals. The title of my study is "Inspiration in the Moment: A Case Study of an Expert Conductor-Teacher's Improvisational Teaching in the Choral Rehearsal." I am pleased to invite you to participate in this research as the subject of my study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics and behaviors of an expert conductor-teacher in a choral rehearsal context, and to track the conductor-teacher's improvisational teaching during rehearsals. Therefore, I am asking permission to videotape your teaching during choral rehearsals and choral clinics/workshops. The videotaping would not visually record any members of the choral ensemble. In addition, I am asking you to participate in an interview and think-aloud process about your rehearsal preparation, score study techniques, and the improvisational decisions that you make during choral rehearsals. I would like to audio tape the interview for transcription, and expect the interview to last approximately two hours. You have the right not to answer any particular question in the interview and think-aloud session. When I complete transcribing the video and audio data, you will be given a copy to read to ensure it is an accurate representation of what was said and what transpired.

As the participant in this study, you have the potential of benefiting from the data analysis of your improvisational teaching during choral rehearsals. This project will attempt to provide suggestions as to how "experienced non-expert" conductor-teachers can develop the skills and behaviors necessary to move into the "expert" category of teacher expertise, thereby providing you as the participant an additional benefit from participating in the study. The potential risks of your participation in this study are minimal, and may include the videotaping of rehearsals that do not progress as planned, and listening to and/or watching video of rehearsals

that are less than superior. Every effort will be made to minimize potential risks of participating in the study.

This is a request, and participation in the study is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate, and may withdraw at any time without penalty. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. All video and audio recordings, as well as any identifying information, will be stored under secure conditions. In the written field notes and transcriptions of the video and audio recordings, you will not be identified. The results of the study may be presented and published in papers, scholarly journals, and/or presentations that would be of interest to music educators, and if you voluntarily choose, you will be identified as the participant in this study.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact Dr. Mitchell Robinson, primary investigator for this study and Associate Professor of Music Education at Michigan State University, 102 Music Building, East Lansing, MI 48824, mrob@msu.edu, 517.355.7555. If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the MSU's Human Research Protection Program at 517.355.2180, Fax 517.432.4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration!

Sincerely,

Carolyn Cruse

Doctoral Student in Music Education

Michigan State University



Participant Consent Form

Study Title: Inspiration in the Moment: A Case Study of an Expert Conductor-Teacher's
Improvisational Teaching in the Choral Rehearsal

Responsible Project Investigator: Dr. Mitchell Robinson

Secondary Investigator: Carolyn Cruse

Department: Music Education

Please check one and sign below. Return this form to me, and keep the first pages for your records.

Thank you!

Carolyn Cruse

_____ I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

_____ I understand that my identity will remain confidential at this time. I understand that I have the option of revealing my identity at any time during this research and will request this change in writing in the event I choose this option.

_____ I will NOT be participating in this study.

Participant's Signature

Participant's Printed Name

Date

APPENDIX B

Formal Interview Guide

1. What is your current university position and job description?
2. Tell me about your college music education experiences and your preparation as a choral conductor-teacher.
 - In what skills/techniques did you feel competent?
 - What skills/techniques do you wish you had learned and/or been better prepared to teach?
3. How has your conducting and teaching evolved over your career and through the various university positions you have held?
4. Describe the phrase “conductor-teacher” that you use to illustrate a choral music conductor and as used in your *Conducting/Teaching* DVD.
5. What do you consider to be the foundational qualities of an expert choral conductor-teacher?
6. Describe your idea of “conductor as facilitator.”
 - How has this idea emerged, or evolved, during your conducting-teaching career?
7. What are your personal score study techniques?
 - On average, how much time do you spend with a score before the first rehearsal?
 - Between rehearsals?
8. How do you prepare for regular SWE rehearsals?
 - Do you have a formal, written “rehearsal plan?” Please explain.
9. How does your choral rehearsal preparation change when you prepare for an event where you are the invited conductor (All-State, Massed Festivals, etc.)?
 - How do you prepare to lead a choral clinic/workshop?

10. Describe the phrase “Teaching as Improvisation.”

- What is the origin of this idea?
- How has the phrase emerged, or evolved, during your conducting-teaching career?

11. What skills must be in place before a conductor-teacher can effectively improvise while teaching?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share? Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX C

Example of Interview Transcript

Dr. Sandra Snow

Formal Interview – September 19, 2008

CC = Carolyn Cruse

SS = Sandra Snow

CC: You had mentioned that knowing the score is so very important to this process. So, talk just a little bit about your own personal score study techniques and specifically a follow-up question to that is how much time do YOU spend with a score before the first rehearsal, and between rehearsals? How does [the amount of time spent with the score] change between before the first rehearsal, and between rehearsals, on average?

SS: In terms of score study, I see that as a life-long journey, learning to look more deeply into the music. I didn't have a system for score study when I came out of college, and I'm guessing lots of people don't. I didn't encounter that until later. So, I think for me, in essence, it's trying to discover what the special characteristics of a piece of music under study – what sorts of things make the piece hang together. I talk with students a lot about finding the “musical DNA” – what are the musical gestures that are embedded, that make this piece worthwhile; why did I make the choice to do the piece in the first place? What do I want students to be able to experience as a result of interacting with this music? So, the process that I use is a hybridization of things that I've picked up over the years, but primarily the work of Margaret Hillis, and the kind of structural analysis that takes a look at the whole piece and breaks it down as much as possible into smaller parts, so that you

kind of uncover the compositional process by the composer; you try to figure out how it gets put together. And I think once you identify what the special characteristics of the piece are, then you can start thinking about how you're going to teach the piece. But first you have to develop your own idea about how you want this piece to sound, and I've found over the years that my ideas have deepened with time; I look for different things, I hear different things, because I've spent longer doing it. In the early stages, I would say I focused more on technical components of a composition, like identifying the motive, and countermotive—

CC: So tangible, something that can be seen—

SS: Seen, right—things in the architecture of the composition. And, I think over time my view has widened to include things like, in my ears already listening for color, and making choices about color—vocal color, I'm talking about. Or, a much keener sense now of articulation that I did in the early days when I was really tied to doing exactly what marks I saw in the score without really reflecting on why the composer would make such a choice. I feel more free than I used to because I can look at, say, an articulation marked in a score, and I can evaluate whether I think that the marking is accurate, or I think it's really representative, or what the composer had in mind.

CC: So, instead of honoring the articulation markings simply because they're in the score—

SS: Exactly. So, I would say, in a nutshell, the score study process is the development of one's musical interpretation; those are the same things. So, the subparts of your question about how much time that I spend... Ideally, I spend time in the summer before an academic year begins, just with the initial ideas generated about musical interpretation, and so that's a time to look deeply into the score and have the flexibility to do that,

because once the year starts it's hard to get those large chunks of time one needs. I do visit scores between rehearsals. On a good day, if I can have an hour before a rehearsal, I feel like that's really terrific. In a very busy day, it might be fifteen minutes, but I am going to spend some time before I walk into a rehearsal with the score. In those cases, it's a different function, because then, one is comparing what happened in the most recent rehearsal against the reminder of where one wants a piece to develop and grow, and trying to make adjustments in pedagogy, more than interpretation. Although, I would say I think that grows along with the rehearsal process based on what you hear in the sound, what kinds of singers you're working with, what level they're working.

APPENDIX D

Example of Rehearsal Transcript

Dr. Sandra Snow, clinician
Portland Symphonic Girlchoir ~ March 3, 2008
Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center, Portland, OR

Snow = Dr. Sandra Snow, participant
Choir = Portland Symphonic Girlchoir

Snow	Choir	Researcher's Comments
I hear zo/ah... : sol – fa – mi <i>[showing flyaway arms/hands]</i> (then migrates back to...) zo... o/ah... o... – <i>[moving arms/hands from flyaway to full “o” shape in front of torso/head, back and forth with corresponding sounds]</i> Hear the difference? Alright, so we’re gonna take the sound, we’re gonna <i>[turning so that back faces choir]</i> pull it right over our... like it’s a cat... zo – zo – <i>[each with arm/hand moving from crown of head toward front of forehead, facing back]</i> Ready, go... Can I be picky with you? Do you hear in this sound zo – <i>[singing on single pitch, unfocused, thin, bright]</i> this is unformed... What happens, if I can be really technical, is that soft palate is just a little bit collapsed, so this <i>[showing arm/hand crown-forward movement]</i> is just to remind us to keep the space really open... zo – <i>[high, forward chant voice; arm/hand crown-forward movement]</i>	<i>several choir members giggling</i> zo – <i>[on single pitch, arm/hand stroking motion from crown of head to front of forehead]</i> <i>several choir members chime in, “yes” or “yeah”</i>	

Say it... o – <i>[high, forward chant voice with two arms/hands crown-forward movement]</i> o : sol – fa – mi – fa – sol <i>[two arms/hands crown-forward movement]</i> Go <i>[breath]</i> ... <i>[making circle in “o” shape right at head/mouth with arm/finger while students sing]</i> What did you hear different in that sound? Or, what did you FEEL different in the sound? Yeah, <i>[motions to one singer, raising her hand]</i> was there more “o” in the sound? It was “ohier”? <i>(small chuckle)</i> Yeah, what else did you HEAR in the sound? Open <i>[head nodding]</i>. You should have a real feeling of openness, right? Good, so now let’s change the vowel and go, za : do – mi – sol – mi – do <i>[full, rich [a] as in ‘father,’ pointing arm/finger forward from head on highest pitch]</i> Breathe... Sing what you see... sing that vowel again... Sing what you see, go <i>[breath]</i> ... <i>[Showing flyaway arms at sides of torso]</i>	zo... <i>[echo with movement]</i> o... zo : sol – fa – mi – fa – sol <i>[modeling movement]</i> some singers quietly calling out indistinct words/phrases... za : do – mi – sol – mi – do <i>[sound is thin, unspacious, soft palate not raised]</i> za : do – mi – sol – mi – do <i>[thin, wide, unspacious sound]</i>	Snow looks at me knowingly, as if to acknowledge that she will have to start over on the [a] vowel, even after all of the work on the [o] vowel – there isn’t any “transfer.” Choir inadvertently raised key a half-step
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Good, again... <i>[Showing arms still at sides of torso, but hands faced in, like holding a very wide beach ball]</i>	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do; <i>[slightly fuller, more space in sound]</i>	
Sing what you see... go <i>[breath]</i> ... <i>[Showing arms/hands moving from sides toward each other in front of torso on each pitch]</i>	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do <i>[warmer, fuller, richer sound]</i>	
Same key... go <i>[breath]</i> ... <i>[Showing flyaway arms at sides of torso]</i>	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do <i>[thin, wide, unspacious]</i>	
Good, sing what you see... go <i>[breath]</i> ... <i>[Turning to side/profile, arm making circular motion from in front of body, up and around by head and back out in front of head]</i>	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do	richest, warmest, MOST spacious sound yet...

APPENDIX E

Example of Rehearsal Transcript with Codes

Dr. Sandra Snow, clinician
Portland Symphonic Girlchoir ~ March 3, 2008
Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center, Portland, OR

Snow = Dr. Sandra Snow, participant
Choir = Portland Symphonic Girlchoir

Snow	Choir	Researcher's Comments
I hear zo/ah... : sol – fa – mi [showing flyaway arms/hands] (then migrates back to...) zo... o/ah... o... – [moving arms/hands from flyaway to full “o” shape in front of torso/head, back and forth with corresponding sounds] Hear the difference? Alright, so we’re gonna take the sound, we’re gonna [turning so that back faces choir] pull it right over our... like it’s a cat... zo – zo – [each with arm/hand moving from crown of head toward front of forehead, facing back] Ready, go...	Modeling desired vs. undesired sound movement while modeling imagery several choir members giggling zo – [on single pitch, arm/hand stroking motion from crown of head to front of forehead] several choir members chime in, “yes” or “yeah”	embodied movement while modeling
Can I be picky with you? Do you hear in this sound zo – [singing on single pitch, unfocused, thin, bright] this is unformed... What happens, if I can be really technical, is that soft palate is just a little bit collapsed, so this [showing arm/hand crown-forward movement] is just to remind us to keep the space really open... zo – [high, forward chant voice; arm/hand crown-forward movement]	connecting modeling undesired sound (instead of “telling”) illustrating movement movement while modeling	voiced pedagogy / building vocalism

FIGURE 1 – Rehearsal Transcript with Codes, A

Say it... o – [high, forward chant voice with two arms/hands crown-forward movement] o : sol – fa – mi – fa – sol [two arms/hands crown-forward movement] Go [breath]... [making circle in “o” shape right at head/mouth with arm/finger while students sing] What did you hear different in that sound? Or, what did you FEEL different in the sound? Yeah, [motions to one singer, raising her hand] <u>was there more “o” in the sound?</u> It was “ohier”? (small chuckle) Yeah, <u>what else did you HEAR in the sound?</u> Open [head nodding]. You should have a real feeling of openness, right? Good, so now <u>let’s change the vowel and go,</u> za : do – mi – sol – mi – do [full, rich [a] as in ‘father,’ pointing arm/finger forward from head on highest pitch] Breathe... Sing what you see... sing that vowel again... Sing what you see, go [breath]... [Showing flyaway arms at sides of torso]	zo... [echo with movement] o... zo : sol – fa – mi – fa – sol [modeling movement] za : do – mi – sol – mi – do [sound is thin, unspacious, soft palate not raised] za : do – mi – sol – mi – do [thin, wide, unspacious sound]	chanting with movement movement while modeling movement while choir sings affirming some singers quietly calling out indistinct words/phrases... assessing affirming assessing for transfer Snow looks at me knowingly, as if to acknowledge that she will have to start over on the [a] vowel, even after all of the work on the [o] vowel – there isn’t any “transfer.” Choir inadvertently raised key a half-step
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FIGURE 2 – Rehearsal Transcript with Codes, B

Good, again... [Showing arms still at sides of torso, but hands faced in, like holding a very wide beach ball]	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do; [slightly fuller, more space in sound]	
Sing what you see... go [breath]... [Showing arms/hands moving from sides toward each other in front of torso on each pitch]	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do [warmer, fuller, richer sound]	
Same key... go [breath]... [Showing flyaway arms at sides of torso]	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do [thin, wide, unspacious]	
Good, sing what you see... go [breath]... [Turning to side/profile, arm making circular motion from in front of body, up and around by head and back out in front of head]	za : do – mi – sol – mi – do	richest, warmest, MOST spacious sound yet...

→ praise

→ movement while choir sings

→ breath prep

→ changing movement based off response to sounding

→ movement while choir sings

→ changing movement while choir sings

→ Response to sounding -- continuing to work on and reinforce vocal tone

FIGURE 3 – Rehearsal Transcript with Codes, C

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