Sight-Singing Systems in Collegiate Choral Curricula: An Examination of Conductors' Best Practices at Degree-Granting Institutions of the National Association of Schools of Music

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SIGHT-SINGING SYSTEMS IN COLLEGIATE CHORAL CURRICULA:
AN EXAMINATION OF CONDUCTORS’ BEST PRACTICES AT DEGREE-GRANTING
INSTITUTIONS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the current state of sight-singing pedagogy in choral ensembles at degree-granting institutions in the United States accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. A survey of collegiate choral conductors was designed and distributed nationwide. In total, 33.3% (N = 363) of those invited to participate responded. Substantial data were collected from conductors who indicated they occasionally integrated a sight-singing system into their choral rehearsals for specific purposes (n = 137) and those who indicated they frequently used a sight-singing system as a key rehearsal tool (n = 114). In addition, interviews with three survey participants were conducted for a more in-depth examination of their unique philosophies and practices.

Survey data revealed that there was no significant difference between the number of choral conductors who did not use or very rarely used a system for music-reading, those who occasionally integrated a sight-singing system into their rehearsals for specific purposes, and those for whom a sight-singing system was a key rehearsal tool that they used frequently. However, among respondents in the latter two categories who did not hold a degree in music education, there was a significant (p = .018) preference for occasional rather than frequent use of a sight-singing system. Among those who occasionally or frequently used a system there was a significant preference for movable-Do solfège for major-key tonal solmization (p < .001), movable-Do solfège (tonic is “La”) for minor-key tonal solmization (p = .001), and instrumental counting (“1-e-&-a 2”) for rhythmic solmization (p < .001). Among those who frequently used a system, the data showed a significant decline in both the number of days per week they provided sight-singing instruction at the beginning of term, at the middle of term, and at the end of term (p < .01) as well as between the number of minutes per rehearsal they provided sight-singing
instruction during those three periods of the semester ($p < .01$). Among those who frequently used a system, choral literature being prepared for performance was the significant first-choice, selected by 88%, of materials used to teach sight-singing. Among the same participants, 14% individually assessed their students’ sight-singing, 44% sometimes did, and 43% did not.

For conductors who frequently used a system, the most important perceived benefit of doing so was enabling their choirs to learn music faster. The attitude statements about which conductors agreed most strongly were that sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral singers and that sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles. Conductors who occasionally used a system agreed significantly more strongly with the latter statement than those who frequently did ($p < .04$), while conductors who frequently used a system agreed significantly more strongly with the statement that students generally enjoy instructional time devoted to sight-singing than those who occasionally did ($p < .001$). Music educators felt significantly stronger that empowering their students for lifelong music-making and improving performances were benefits of systematic sight-singing instruction than non-music educators did.

Conductors contacted for interviews emphasized the importance of fostering choral rehearsal cultures in which complete musicianship and musical literacy are valued and provided philosophical and practical reasons for doing so. They outlined possible challenges to instituting choral sight-singing at the collegiate level as well as potential solutions to those difficulties. They also discussed the effects of sight-singing instruction on relationships with music theory and music education faculty.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The ability to read music is among the most important skills music educators can impart to their students. In 1994, the National Standards for Arts Education stated explicitly, “Every course in music, including performance courses, should provide instruction in creating, performing, listening to, and analyzing music, in addition to focusing on its specific subject matter” (MENC, p. 59) and mandated in its fifth content standard that students “sightread, accurately and expressively” (MENC, p. 61). With the more recent implementation of the Common Core Standards Initiative (NCCAS), teachers are encouraged to focus even more strongly on individual assessment and are held even more accountable for the individual achievement of their students (Zhao, 2009). Therefore, music-reading skills are not only the key to empowering students with independent musicianship but also one of the fundamental objectives of music education (Demorest, 2001; Dettwiler, 1989; Fitchhorn, 1983; Gregory, 1972; Henry & Demorest, 1994; Lynch, 1983; McCoy, 1989; Phillips, 1984; Roby, 1962; Towse, 1985; Wright, 1984).

Despite this breadth of consensus among the scholarly literature that music educators must teach their students the concepts and skills of music literacy, especially reading, much of the research indicates that teachers themselves do not translate the importance they may philosophically place on sight-reading into time and attention devoted to it in their curricula. Daniels (1988) acknowledges both the real-world situation and the reasons it is unfortunate: “The development of competency in sight reading is a subject that is frequently neglected in the field of choral music. Yet, the importance of sight-reading ability to the overall musical growth of the individual choir member, and thus the ensemble as a whole, is difficult to ignore” (p. 22).
This state of sight-reading education prevails not only at the K-12 level (Demorest, 2004; Johnson, 1987; Norris, 2004; Szabo, 1993), but also in higher education (Myers, 2008).

That educators so neglect sight-reading is not only highly unfortunate but also completely unnecessary when one considers the amount of easily accessible research on sight-singing available to both scholar and practitioner alike. The scholarship covers research of and practices for elementary students (e.g., Apfelstadt, 1984; Gerringer, 1983; Ramsey, 1983), intermediate students (e.g., Lucas, 1994; Killian, 1991), secondary students (e.g., Dwiggins, 1984; Signaigo, 2004), college/university students (e.g., More, 1985), and even church choir members (Kittley, 2009). There is research on how students perceive and learn pitch and rhythm and their notation (e.g., Gordon, 2004; Johnson, 1998; Stewart, 2005), on individual success in sight-singing learned within the group ensemble context (e.g., Bennett, 1984; Henry & Demorest, 1994), and on the correlation of preexisting factors and sight-singing achievement (e.g., Daniels, 1986; Demorest & May, 1995), as well as basic “how-to” strategies for improving students’ sight-singing (e.g., Bertalot, 1993; Bertalot, 2004; Brown, 2003; Middleton, 1984). Mishra’s (2014b) meta-analysis of 92 different experimental and quasi-experimental studies found significant positive effects on sight-singing performance for treatments categorized as “Aural Training,” “Controlled Reading,” “Creative Activities,” and “Singing/Solfege.”

Despite this easily accessible wealth of knowledge, however, music educators may not know exactly where to begin. A central tenet to the purposes of and justifications for research in sight-singing is the notion that sight-singing can be taught and students can improve in their sight-singing abilities given the proper instruction. Experimentation provides a uniquely powerful tool to test the effectiveness of specific sight-singing instructional strategies, and researchers have investigated the effects of a number of factors on sight-singing performance.
Of particular interest to music educators at all levels is practical guidance on the teaching of sight-reading within the context of a choral rehearsal or choral classroom. Demorest reviewed the available research on teaching sight-singing in the rehearsal setting in both article (1998b) and book (2001) forms. In the latter (Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal), he also surveys (a) the history of sight-singing instruction in the United States, (b) offers advice on methods of teaching sight-singing, including systems of instruction, lesson models, assessment procedures, and ways of integrating sight-singing into the choral rehearsal, and (c) reviews the published materials available to teach sight-singing. One way to integrate sight-reading into the choral rehearsal is through vocal warm-ups (McCoy 1989). Dettwiler (1989) proposes a six-level sequence of vocal exercises that is compatible with developing aural skills reflecting Gordon’s (1977) Music Learning Theory. Gordon (2004) believed strongly in the intrinsic connection between music literacy and aural skills.

Compared with the sight-singing research written on and materials devised for other age groups, relatively little has been written on sight-singing in higher education, and almost none of what has been written is about sight-singing in the context of the collegiate choral rehearsal. The research has instead tended to focus on music education or approaches to training pre-service music educators to teach sight-singing (e.g., Abrahams, 2000; Baumann, 2010; Chandler, 2012).
or on sight-singing instruction in the private voice studio (e.g., Burwell, 2006; Crouch, 2010; Mitchell, 2007). Researchers have also investigated practices related to the pedagogy of curricular music theory or ear-training classes (e.g., Brink, 1980; Casarow, 2002; Collins, 1979; Hutchcroft, 1985; Jones, Shaftel, & Chattah, 2014; Karpinski, 2000; Kazez, 1992; Krueger, 2011; More, 1985; Pembrook & Riggins, 1990; Penny, 2012; Perron, 1974; Rogers, 2004; Taggart & Taggart, 1994). Experimental studies on sight-singing have used college students as subjects but have not been related to the choral rehearsal (e.g., Danfelt, 1970; Furby, 2008; Rodeheaver, 1972). Some of the literature has focused on choral rehearsal systems used by specific, limited collegiate populations, but with little attention to sight-singing (e.g., Canaan, 1986; Lacy, 1985). One reason for this dearth of research on sight-singing in the collegiate choral ensemble might be that it happens only in the rare circumstance. Van der Vat-Chromy (2010) recorded only one of 133 university participants who sight-sang outside of the choral rehearsal, although several others reported that, while sight-singing was not taught systematically in their collegiate choral ensemble(s), singing in a choir had made them a better sight-reader.

Although Scott’s (1995) perspective is more that of an impassioned practitioner than of an objective scholar, he makes some compelling observations in his article on sight-singing in the college-level choral program, one of the few of its kind in all the related literature. He begins by acknowledging the proverbial elephant in the room:

Many professional choral musicians consider college-level sight-reading to be of substandard quality. It is not unusual to find singers with fine voices, a command of languages, and excellent studio technique having difficulty singing a hymn or simple chorale at sight. The average college-level chorus often lacks the ability to read music at a level commensurate with their overall musical and vocal capabilities. (p. 68)
Scott continues to bemoan the sight-singing ability level of collegiate choristers: “It is fairly obvious that by the time a singer auditions for a chorus at the college level he sorely lacks sight-singing skills. What specifically prevents, inhibits, and discourages the college choral singer from sight-reading excellence? Why can’t Johnny read?” (p. 68). Thus he points out a main thrust of my own research, as outlined below.

Need for the Study

In 2008, Myers surveyed conductors of the undergraduate choral ensembles of colleges and universities in the Southern Division of the American Choral Directors Association, modeled after Smith’s (1998) survey of high school choral directors. This study documented that although a majority of respondents across eleven states reported they were proficient sight-singers (97.2%) and proficient teachers of sight-singing (87.2%) and felt that sight-singing instruction should be a part of the collegiate choral rehearsal (93.4%), only 64.5% currently teach the skill in a choral ensemble. Additionally, nearly an equal number (61.5%) responded that they have difficulty finding enough class time to teach sight-singing, and 59.1% of respondents indicated a level of agreement with a statement that rehearsal time should be spent preparing performance literature rather than instructing students in musicianship.

Taken as a whole, then, the research unites on several points. First, sight-singing seems to be universally acknowledged as a skill that is at least valuable and perhaps crucial for musicians at all levels. Second, despite increased testing and assessment in sight-singing, instruction in music literacy is inconsistent at best among all ages. Third, although sight-singing instruction is lacking among many teachers, the research literature contains a plethora of empirically tested techniques for improving sight-singing. Fourth, a possible cure for this absence of connection between practice and research can be found in the college choral curriculum: If excellence in
sight-singing instruction is modeled for students in their collegiate choruses, those who become more literate musicians may go on to a lifetime of choral music-making and those who go on to careers in music education may be better equipped to empower their own students with fluency in music-reading.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study, in its broadest terms, can be expressed as twofold: First, it sought to describe in detail the current state of sight-singing pedagogy in choral ensembles at degree-granting, accredited institutions in the United States. Second, it examined the sight-singing methods of three selected collegiate choral conductors to provide a more complete understanding of the “best practices” in our discipline related to this set of skills.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided the design and implementation of this study’s exploration were:

1. What share of collegiate choral conductors have adopted a “systematic” approach to music-reading and sight-singing in their ensembles?
2. What solmization systems are currently being employed in collegiate choruses? How prevalent is each?
3. How much time is being spent on sight-singing instruction in collegiate choral ensembles?
4. What materials are being used to teach sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles?
5. What assessment measures are being used to evaluate sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles?
6. What are the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors toward sight-singing instruction?
7. Are there any correlations between the sight-singing practices or attitudes of collegiate
choral conductors and their training or education?

8. What are some of the unique approaches being successfully employed to improve music
literacy among collegiate choristers?

Definition of Terms

Music Literacy. Just like language literacy, music literacy involves reading, writing,
creating, and improvising. However, for the purposes of this study, sight-singing, which is
actually only one component of holistic musical literacy, is sometimes used synonymously with
music literacy. Additionally, the terms sight-singing, sight-reading, and music-reading are
handled interchangeably and refer to decoding written musical notation into the sounds it
represents with the human voice. In other contexts sight-reading may refer to reading music at
sight on a musical instrument and music-reading may have yet broader definitions.

Systematic Instruction. When raised in this study, a sight-singing system or systematic
instruction in sight-singing refer to the various methodologies that music educators and theorists
have developed to assign verbal associations (i.e., vocabulary) with musical sound, either tonal
or rhythmic. The assignment of verbal syllables to pitch or rhythm is solmization. The present
study focuses heavily on solmization systems because they are musical vocabularies that enable
many students to become fully literature musicians (Middleton, 1984; Rogers, 2000). While
these systems may be associated with the methodologies of particular music pedagogues such as
or Carl Orff (1895–1982), for our purposes we will treat them independently of the philosophical
implications of these various approaches to music education.
S solmization Systems. Here are definitions for the particular tonal/melodic and rhythmic solmization systems mentioned on the following pages.

Fixed-Do solfège. The syllables Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So(l), La, and Ti represent not scale degrees but rather fixed tonal/melodic pitches. C is always Do, D is always Re, E is always Mi, etc. Although this system has been altered to accommodate chromatics (e.g., F♯ is “fi,” G♭ is “se(h”), the original form of the system used only the seven basic syllables for all pitches (e.g., F♯ remains “Fa,” G♭ remains “So(l)”).

Gordon. A beat-function rhythmic system, all downbeats are chanted as Du regardless of meter. In simple meters, the four subdivisions of the beat use the syllables Du-ta-de-ta; in compound meters, the six subdivisions of the beat use the syllables Du-ta-da-ta-di-ta.

“Instrumental”/counting. Prominently used by Robert Shaw in his count-singing method for rhythm, this system uses beat numbers and the syllables “e-and-a” for the sixteenth-note subdivisions of the beat. There is no uniform method of syllabifying compound rhythms.

Kodály. The syllable used for the rhythm is notation- or sight-based. All quarter notes are “ta,” all eighth notes are “ti,” etc.

Letter names. The name of each tonal/melodic note (A, B, C, D, E, etc.) on the staff is represented by a letter. Sharps and flats alter how each letter-name is pronounced (e.g., F♯ becomes “Fis,” G♭ becomes “Ges”).

McHose-Tibbs. Developed at the Eastman School of Music, this rhythmic system uses beat numbers “instrumental” counting but has devised two different syllabifications for simple and compound rhythms. In the 4/4 meter, four sixteenth notes on the downbeat would be chanted “1-ta-te-ta”; in the 6/8 meter, six sixteenth notes on the downbeat would be chanted “1-ta-la-ta-li-ta.”
Movable-Do solfège. The syllables Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So (or Sol), La, and Ti represent the notes of the major scale. Chromatic pitches alter each syllable (e.g., Do♯ becomes “di,” Mi♭ becomes “me(h”)”. Within this system, there are two ways of providing solmization to the minor scale:

- **Do-based minor**: The tonic note remains Do, emphasizing the relationship of the major scale to its *parallel* minor, and syllables are altered to represent the different whole-step/half-step relationships of the scale. Therefore, the natural minor scale would use the syllables Do, Re, Me(h), Fa, So(l), Le, Te.

- **La-based minor**: The tonic note is La, emphasizing the relationship of the major scale to its *relative* minor, and syllables of the natural minor scale do not need to be chromatically altered: La, Ti, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So(l).

**Neutral syllables.** Technically not a “system” at all, this approach assigns a single syllable such as [du] or [ta] to all notes.

**Scale-degree numbers.** Arabic numerals represent the diatonic notes of the major or minor scale (“one” is sung for the tonic note, “two” is sung for the supertonic, “three” for the mediant, etc.). There is no uniform way to represent chromatic pitches, although the words “raise” for sharps and “low” for flats is common.

**Takadimi.** Invented by Hoffman, Pelto, and White (1996), Takadimi is a beat-function system in which all downbeats are chanted as Ta regardless of meter. In simple meters, the four subdivisions of the beat use the syllables Ta-ka-di-mi; in compound meters, the six subdivisions of the beat use the syllables Ta-va-ki-di-da-ma.

**Audiation.** Finally, *audiation* is the process of internal hearing—of perceiving and understanding musical sound inside one’s mind without external stimuli (Gordon, 2004)—and
may also be referred to as *auralization* (Karpinski, 2000). Gordon’s (2001) most basic definition is “the ability to hear and to understand music for which the sound is not immediately present or may never have been physically present” (p. 3).

**Delimitations of the Study**

In order to ensure appropriate scope and breadth, (a) non-collegiate choral conductors/music educators and (b) collegiate choral conductors who teach at institutions not accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music were excluded from this study, and (c) collegiate choral music education professors who do not conduct a curricular choir were excluded from this study. Additionally, only a single data point was sought from study participants who do *not* address sight-reading in their choral rehearsals. Therefore, the study was unable to address fully the reasons sight-singing instruction is not more prevalent in higher education. Instead of explaining why sight-singing is such an uncommon occurrence among collegiate choral conductors, this study instead sought to illuminate the best practices of those collegiate choral conductors who *are* providing sight-singing instruction to their choirs. In this way, the intention of the project was to further the choral field’s understanding of the relationship between music literacy, lifelong music-making, and collegiate choral performance.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study was designed to examine the practice of sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles. A nationwide survey was distributed to faculty at degree-granting institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music who conducted at least one curricular choir. It asked whether they included sight-singing as a component of their rehearsal processes, inquired about the systems, methodologies, materials they used to teach and assess sight-singing, and measured their attitudes toward sight-singing. In addition to analysis of quantitative survey data, this study also sought to outline qualitatively the best practices of committed sight-singing pedagogues through survey free-response items and in-depth conductor interviews.

This chapter reviews the scholarly and pedagogical literatures cogent to the study, inclusive of the definitive early studies of sight-singing from the mid-20th century through the most recent meta-analyses from 2014, but not the various sight-singing methods and texts that basically serve as anthologies of sight-singable musical examples. It approaches the topic from the five vantage points of (a) music education, (b) music theory, (c) the research literature, (d) connections between music literacy and lifelong music-making, and (e) choral sight-singing in higher education.

Music Education Perspective

Standard Expectation. In the field of music education, it is expected that middle and high school choral directors will teach their students to read music and to read music at sight. Justus (1969) asserted that the single greatest indicator of a musician’s talent is the ability immediately to decode printed musical notation in a beautiful and accurate manner. This is not
just a current expectation but a historical one, as well. Davenport (1992) recounted that American music educators have been teaching students how to sight-sing for more than 250 years. Regarding the job responsibilities of music teachers in the 1800s, she wrote that their primary mission was to teach students to sing well and to read music. For a more contemporary example, Brendell (1996) observed 33 high school choral rehearsals and found that sight-reading accounted for an average of 22.2% of the warm-up time (i.e., prior to rehearsing literature) in them. She also discovered that, at a mean of 9.22%, the share of minutes students exhibited off-task behaviors was lower during sight-singing than during any other warm-up activity. Similarly, among 66 elementary and middle school choral directors and general music teachers in suburban northeastern Ohio school districts, Conrad (2007) found that the majority of teachers instructed students in sight-singing at least weekly.

Much has been written describing the pedagogical approaches various master teachers use to address the need to train students to sight-sing. Cappers (1985) suggested that a unification of goals, especially in sight-singing, between choral directors at different grade levels is the best way to ensure that high school choristers are literate musicians. He professed that the first objective for conductors of beginning choirs should be to train their students in foundational skills that they can transfer to later singing experiences. In his opinion, middle and high school conductors should continue to employ the principles of various systematized pedagogies such as Kodály, Orff, and Tometics that are so prevalent in elementary grades. The problem, as he put it, is that high school and college choir conductors often abandon these methodologies because they view them as “elementary” and believe that rote teaching is faster. However, he went on, while rote teaching may be more expedient, because it diminishes the learning of music in favor of mere singing, it is in the end less efficient. Collins (1999) likewise bemoaned that most of the
good sight-reading methods available are directed at students in elementary school. Giles (1991) posited that, rather than being limited to use in the elementary grades, Orff and Kodály techniques can most certainly be used to make secondary choral students better music-readers. She concluded that although the techniques developed by Kodály and Orff have profoundly influenced music educators everywhere, they are under-utilized by teachers outside the elementary setting. If choral conductors at higher levels would use them, she trusted that they would be convinced of their legitimate place in choral curricula when their choirs developed better sight-singing skills.

In providing an explanation for a lack of improvement on music achievement tests by high school students, Colwell (1963) explained that a lack of emphasis on the fundamentals of music-reading in favor of rote-teaching and the preeminence of performance may have been to blame. Sadly, one study found that chorus-only music students who had earned equivalent scores on the Gaston Test of Musicality as their instrumental peers when they were in the fourth grade had significantly lower scores than them by the time they reached junior high school (May & Elliott, 1980).

**Declining Standards.** Despite the accepted assumption that music literacy is among the highest of priorities for K–12 music educators, that common expectation would appear to be in decline among many (Wright, 1984). As long ago as 1938, Grace wrote that choral festival judges would agree on three observations to that effect: (a) the standard of sight-singing is not high enough, across all grades, (b) many music educators undervalue sight-singing, with some even being prejudiced against it, and (c) sight-singing is made unappealing by how poorly it is taught and realized. After stating that the main purposes of music educators is to train students to be musically literate and sensitive, Jordan-DeCarbo (1986) similarly lamented that the profession
has fallen short of fulfilling that mission. Daniels (1988) added that sight-reading competency has been severely neglected by choral practitioners.

Johnson (1987) provided evidence that sight-singing standards are in decline when she found that choral conductors in the North Central United States devote comparatively little time to sight-reading. Von Kampen (2003) found that 52% of Nebraska choral educators did not teach music reading at all. Correspondingly, in her survey of elementary and middle school teachers, Conrad (2007) found that although a majority of teachers taught students sight-singing at least weekly, for almost 40% of them, that weekly time devoted to sight-singing instruction was ten minutes or less. Casarow (2002) learned in a survey of Arizonan choral teachers that 70% believed sight-singing should be taught to all their students, but only 37% considered sight-singing instruction a principle educational objective of their programs; as many as 59% did not offer any sight-singing instruction to their advanced choral ensembles. Such lack of instructional time in sight-singing might account for the 38% mean accuracy Henry (1999) obtained on the initial pilots of the Vocal Sight-Reading Inventory among high school students in Phoenix, Arizona.

Davenport (1992) offered technology as one possible explanation for the declining sight-singing standards in choral music education. She expounded that reading printed music has less incentive for children today than it used to due to the proliferation and ease of access to recorded music, with which they can easily mimic popular music by rote, thus circumventing the difficulty of music-reading. Demorest (2001) offered another explanation for deteriorating standards in sight-singing: the rise of the American *a cappella* movement in the 1920s. With the ascendancy of a choral model epitomized by the St. Olaf Choir of Northfield, Minnesota, many public school music teachers began to emphasize singing from memory an endlessly rehearsed repertoire of
fewer pieces. As Demorest put it, because choral directors prioritized beautiful and disciplined performances over almost all else, they abandoned music-reading in order to teach through sectional drilling and rote repetition.

However, a performance-, memorization-, and rote-learning-oriented approach to choral music education may rob students of a valuable educational experience. Panciera addressed the transfer of learning concept in his 1998 dissertation, and because music-reading is one of the most transferrable (applicable in the widest variety of situations) of all musical skills, he is worth quoting at length:

Effective choral pedagogy should be concerned with more than the next performance. Conductors who hope to enable the efficient development of performance skill must design instruction that induces transfer on a conceptual level. As singers develop meaningful conceptual knowledge, their ability to incorporate new learning into existing knowledge is enhanced. Moreover, conceptual understanding enhances the comprehensibility of new learning tasks. Conductors interested in transfer must implement short and long-term instructional goals designed to develop ensembles whose members can appropriately transfer existing knowledge to future settings. (Panciera, 1998, p. vii)

Demorest (2001) also placed some of the blame for the decreased priority of sight-singing in contemporary music teaching on the educational philosophy known as “comprehensive musicianship,” which emphasizes teaching literature instead of teaching music through literature. He worried that, under this model, the necessity of sight-singing skills is sometimes not lucidly linked with the role of performance. Foltz (1976), on the other hand, viewed sight-singing as an imperative segment of comprehensive musicianship. Many of the
sight-singing materials and music theory textbooks used in undergraduate curricula were influenced by the concepts of comprehensive musicianship (Hutchcroft, 1985).

Asmus (2004) stated that music-reading is one of the most important goals of music education and was troubled that many music teachers, in his estimation, had lost that vision. The ability to read music literately was once, he said, the “supremely held content of music education” (p. 6), but that no longer seems to be the case. Because many music festivals have abandoned sight-reading requirements, many teachers have discontinued instruction in sight-reading. Instead, they rely on the oral/aural method of rote teaching that emphasizes drilling notes until students can reproduce them. This flies in the face of the general public’s expectation that music teachers are training students to read music.

Asmus’s (2004) claim that many music festivals have abandoned sight-reading requirements can be verified by the research: Norris (2004) found that less than half of all U.S. states included sight-singing in their large-ensemble festivals, with even fewer including sight-singing ratings in contest scores. It has been suggested that an increase in sight-singing assessment at festivals may increase the amount of time choral directors devote to sight-singing instruction (Johnson, 1987). Crowther (1993) agreed that many choral directors are neglecting to teach choral concepts in favor of focusing instead on the preparation of individual performance pieces. Dwiggins (1984) approved of this interpretation, blaming the lack of time conductors spend teaching sight-singing on an overemphasis on performance. Lynch (1983) felt that because of the pressure to perform, high school choral conductors are often demoted to the task of vocal coaching. Smith (1987) admitted that conductors’ responsibility to pass along the ability to read printed music to all generations of choral students is frequently neglected because they have neither the time nor the pedagogical resources to do so.
Impediments to Reading. Nolker (2001) evaluated 220 subjects in both individual and ensemble settings and found that when sight-singing tasks were undertaken in the choir, students performed better than when they were alone. Accordingly, Bennett (1984) outlined typical ways in which students can appear to be reading music without actually doing so, including (a) relying on classmates around them, (b) relying on unintentional visual cues from the teacher, (c) relying on aural, visual, and kinesthetic memory, and, (d) for instrumentalists, responding to the musical notation with nothing more than applying the correct fingering. She offered four suggestions to ensure that students in group settings are actually reading the music individually: (a) allowing them a personal study time before group-reading of the musical notation, (b) incorporating individual and small-group reading into lessons, (c) having instrumental students sing their music, and (d) using familiar music that has been slightly altered to assess whether students are actually reading or rather relying on aural memory.

Others have written about an over-reliance on the piano as an impediment to successful sight-singing, since a cappella rehearsals can foster a sense of musical independence (e.g., Bertalot, 2004; Voth, 2006). Guelker-Cone (1998) specifically spoke of the potential of unaccompanied rehearsals to develop choral sight-singing achievement, as well as students’ response to the conductor, sense of ensemble, and intonation. These philosophies align with those of Zoltán Kodály, who insisted that children’s early experiences in music education be vocal only.

Assessment. Though researchers have reported about the sorry state of sight-singing pedagogy in many choral classrooms, they have also offered solutions in the forms of methodologies and interventions. In order to know whether improvement has occurred, though, teacher-conductors must be able to assess the results of sight-singing performance.
Unfortunately, the state of assessment in high school choral classrooms is anything but consistent. McClung (1996) surveyed 81 choral directors, 615 choral students, and 117 school principals in Georgia to describe their assessment and grading practices. McClung found that teachers most often assigned grades through class participation and performances, with a relative dearth of individual testing occurring.

*Ad hoc* tests were developed for many of the studies below to assess the results of sight-singing performance, but there has also been a great deal written on standardized assessment procedures specifically for sight-singing. Demorest (2001) devoted an entire chapter to such procedures, distinguishing between group, diagnostic, and individual evaluations and then providing teachers with options for scoring systems, feedback, and grading. Some studies suggested a positive correlation between individual sight-singing performance and individual testing (Demorest, 1998a; Killian & Henry, 2005).

Henry (2001) developed the *Vocal Sight-Reading Inventory* (VSRI), an individualized sight-singing assessment instrument that provides normative data, reliability, and validity, evaluates both formatively and summatively, and can be administered within the time constraints present for high school music teachers. The VSRI presents 28 tonal sight-reading skills of various difficulty levels representative of the musical material found in choral literature appropriate for secondary choirs. It was later tested by 93 high school students in northeastern Ohio, the results of which further established its reliability (Henry, 2003).

**Practical Methods.** There are many different practical approaches to teaching students to read music. Bertalot (1993) proposed a twelve-step process grounded in five “wheels” of teaching as outlined in Table 1. He offered a similar process for instructing adults to sight-sing (Bertalot, 2004). Likewise, Boyd (1975) provided a sequence that begins with the process of
Table 1

*Bertalot’s (1993) 5 Wheels and 12 Steps to Successful Sight-Singing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five “Wheels”</th>
<th>Twelve Steps to Successful Sight-Singing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have a passion for teaching sight-singing and everything else you do. Be</td>
<td>1. Sing one note.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiastic and the children will catch the enthusiasm.</td>
<td>a. Learn about pulse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Work in small groups so each child has your complete attention at all</td>
<td>b. Learn about the staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>times.</td>
<td>c. Learn singing techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teach one simple step at a time and then combine it with the next</td>
<td>2. Increase the notes, one by one, until you get a great scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step.</td>
<td>Sing and name each note, one at a time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Every theoretical point must be made practical and <em>vice versa</em>.</td>
<td>3. Point out short stepwise melodies from the great scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever note the children sing, they can see; every note they see, they</td>
<td>Also use repeated notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing.</td>
<td>4. Clap simple rhythms correctly and precisely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The driver steers the car, not <em>vice versa</em>. The teacher must be in</td>
<td>5. Clap simple rhythms from printed music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control.</td>
<td>6. Play the melody as students clap rhythms from the printed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Sing pitch from the score, but without rhythm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Sing pitch and rhythm from the score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Combine pitch, rhythm, and words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Teach everything else!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Repeat the first eleven steps again and again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cappers (1985) believed that with consistent practice in solfège, sight-singing instruction would be successful when teachers adhere to three premises: (a) the choir meets at least twice weekly, (b) less choral literature or choral literature of a less advanced level is used, at least initially, and, (c) the teacher makes the music enjoyable for the students. Justus (1969) added that choral directors must select appropriate materials and establish rehearsal routines in order to be effective sight-singing pedagogues.
Kersten (1980) concurred that one of the keys to sight-singing success is daily practice and instruction.

Demorest (2001) offered a series of model lessons in his text devoted to sight-reading, along with strategies for more fully integrating sight-singing into the choral rehearsal rather than viewing it as an extra thing to do in addition to choral repertoire. Xiques (2014) likewise made the case that music-reading be fully integrated into the choral rehearsal by using choral literature to reinforce all concepts taught through solfège. Regardless of the particular method chosen, Daniels (1988) explained that all of them essentially fall into one of two categories: teaching sight-singing apart from choral literature intended for performance, or teaching it through choral literature intended for performance.

Henry and Brittain (2001) suggested that teaching music literacy through choral literature can be complicated. They devised a 30-item quiz on music symbols and notation contained within a piece of music that had been performed by 57 members of a high school non-auditioned women’s choir in Texas. All questions on the quiz came directly from the octavo score and covered items identified in *Performance Standards for Music* (MENC, 1996). The overall mean score was approximately 33%. While several factors, most especially students not understanding the quiz tasks, explained this low score, it is nonetheless a warning to teachers who would choose to use choral literature alone to foster complete musicianship.

**Sight-Singing as Literacy.** Just as a child must learn to speak, read, write, and converse in his or her native language in order to be considered literate, musicians must do the same with the language of music. Middleton (1984) upheld that music educators should teach tonal and rhythmic *vocabularies* in order to improve students’ competence in music-reading. Rogers (2000) found that when trained musicians associated musical pitches with verbal representation
labels in the form of solfège syllables, their overall musical memory was improved and their performance on a pitch-pattern recognition task was enhanced.

Murphy (1962) defended the claim that ear-training, sight-singing, and music-reading—in short, music literacy—are of primary importance for choral singers because hearing must precede singing. He believed that it was impossible to exaggerate the importance of internal hearing, much in line with Gordon’s (2001, 2004) emphasis on audiation. In her discussion of vocal warm-ups and how choral conductors have historically used them to develop students’ aural skills, Dettwiler (1989) helpfully codified the similarities between various well-regarded pedagogical methodologies into six concepts (Table 2) for developing maximum skill in audiation and sight-singing, which are transferrable to all choral settings at all levels. Like Dettwiler, Phillips (1996) and Szönyi (1973) recommended many elements of the Kodály method to teach tonal patterns. They believed that sight-singing should be an integral component of choral rehearsals.

In contrast to a music-centric approach to music literacy, Johnson (1998) proposed a literacy-centric approach, borrowing many concepts from the field of language acquisition. Based on them, he offered fifteen practical steps, displayed in Table 3, to improving choral sight-singing. Edwin Gordon (1971, 1977, 1980, 2004) likewise emphasized the similarities between musical development and language development, since both deal before all else with aural stimuli. According to his Music Learning Theory, we go through the same steps of discrimination learning in acquiring musical literacy as we do in acquiring language literacy: (a) aural/oral, (b) verbal association, (c) partial synthesis, (d) symbolic association, and (e) composite synthesis (Jordan-DeCarbo, 1986).

Another approach to music literacy is that of Émile Jacques-Dalcroze. While many
Table 2

*Six Sight-Singing and Audiation Concepts (Dettwiler, 1989, p. 15)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Methodologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sound Before Sight</td>
<td>Music is an aural art; therefore, music learning should proceed from the enactive (action) mode to the symbolic (visual) only after extensive musical experiences.</td>
<td>Glover, Curwen, Mason, Kodály, Jaques-Dalcroze, Orff, Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Singing and Speaking Experiences</td>
<td>Musical understanding should begin with musical experiences based on rote singing and speaking.</td>
<td>Glover, Curwen, Mason, Kodály, Orff, Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tonal Solfège</td>
<td>Solmization syllables based on relative solfège, primarily the system of movable-do with la-based minor, are a part of the learning procedure.</td>
<td>Guido, <em>Fasola</em>, Shape-note, Glover, Curwen, Mason, Kodály, Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tonal Elements Separate from Rhythm</td>
<td>Individual students often display wide variances between pitch and rhythmic aptitude. Learning rhythm patterns apart from tonal patterns will develop skills in each area at a faster rate.</td>
<td>Curwen, Mason, Kodály, Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rhythm Syllables</td>
<td>Rhythm syllables are incorporated into the learning of rhythm patterns.</td>
<td>Curwen, Kodály, Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kinesthetic Experiences</td>
<td>The inclusion of physical movement through stepping and tapping helps students sense rhythmic flow.</td>
<td>Mason, Kodály, Jaques-Dalcroze, Orff, Gordon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3


1. Help musicians learn from whole to part.
2. Use repetition to help musicians learn.
3. Attend to musicians’ musical knowledge base.
4. Include a wide section of examples to increase sight-reading fluency.
5. Emphasize an aesthetic response.
7. Use the elements of effective instruction.
8. Keep director talk to a minimum.
9. Recognize the limited capacity of short-term memory.
10. Use explicit instruction to teach theme and pattern recognition.
11. Use explicit instruction to teach the elements of good sight-reading.
12. Validate the successful approximations of initial efforts.
13. Attend to ability levels.
15. Select music within the zone of proximal development.

associate him with his movement-inspired eurhythmics music pedagogy, the second component of his methodology was the *Solfège-rythmique* approach to ear-training. In this approach, any solmization system can be used for sight-singing (although some of his disciples have advocated most strongly for fixed-Do solfège), but creative and active participation along with kinesthetic involvement are emphasized (Henke, 1984). Regardless of the system chosen, some of the research has suggested that, for greatest achievement in sight-singing, a consistent pedagogical approach should be used throughout a student’s musical education (Casarow, 2002; Oliva, 1982). Music educators must also be cautious not to confuse subject matter—music—with the techniques used to teach it—systems. Solmization systems are not the content of music education nor even an adequate approach to music education; rather, they are tools that should serve a music educator’s chosen pedagogical process (Jordan-DeCarbo, 1986).
Music Theory Perspective

**Advocates for Particular Systems.** Winnick (1987) outlined the available melodic sight-singing methods, dividing them between “traditional” and “hybrid” systems, displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

*Traditional and “Hybrid” Melodic Sight-Singing Methods (Winnick, 1987)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Traditional Methods</th>
<th>The “Hybrids”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Repetition/rote teaching, which is not actually a system</td>
<td>1. Movable-Do with the syllable <em>Do</em> as the tonic of the minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Numbers with the number 6 as the tonic of the minor</td>
<td>2. Numbers with the number <em>1</em> as the tonic of the minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fixed-Do (also called stationary-Do)</td>
<td>3. Fixed-Do with incorporation of altered syllables for chromatic pitches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intervallic</td>
<td>4. Numbers with syllabic accommodation for chromatic pitches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Movable-Do plus pivot (the <em>pivot</em> allows for modulation within a piece and therefore accommodates non-tonal musics) with the syllable <em>La</em> as the tonic of the minor</td>
<td>5. Contemporary composition numbers as a method for sight-singing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Music theorists and educators have long debated the advantages of particular sight-singing systems over others. Rogers (2004) considered a theory teacher’s choice of syllabification system one of the most controversial issues they would face. Bentley (1959) reminded that *all* systems are but teaching tools, not subject matter. Demorest (2001) wrote that neither historical nor empirical research has yet been able to demonstrate any one system as superior to its alternatives. He therefore reached two conclusions: (1) There is no single best way to teach sight-singing and (2) all sight-singing methods are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. In philosophical rather than research-oriented discussions of the matter, though, some writers (e.g., Winnick, 1987) argued that there *is* a superior method and that all should adhere to it.
Bentley (1959) distinguished between movable-Do, which he called *tonic solfa*, and fixed-Do, which he called *solfège*. He evaluated the “international solfeggio” or *safa* system of Siler (1956), a modified fixed-Do system, and concluded that although it is an improvement on solfège, the mental processes involved for both are more complicated. He advocated for *tonic solfa* because of its adaptability to all keys. He maintained that when taught imaginatively and within the context of pedagogically sound process, it is the best system for music-reading and aural training, especially for vocalists without a background in instrumental music. Rogers (1996) claimed that movable-Do is superior to fixed-Do because the system inclines the cognition of music in musically nuanced ways, especially of melodic and harmonic tendencies. He believed that movable-Do solfège ingrained an awareness of tonal bearings and a sensitivity to musical context in ways that other systems failed to do. Among others, Harris (1918), Martin (1978), Multer (1978), Smith (1991), and Surace (1978) all provided philosophical arguments for movable-Do solfège.

Middleton (1984) did not believe movable-Do solfège to be the best system and instead made the case for fixed-Do, as seen in Table 5. Middleton did concede that movable-Do and scale-degree numbers work well for children, but felt that as students progress they must graduate beyond a tonic-centered system to a more theory-based one.

Henry and Demorest (1993, 1994) tested for the difference between individuals’ sight-singing performance in two Texas high school choirs that were recognized for excellence in group sight-singing. One teacher taught movable-Do solfège while the other taught the fixed-Do system. Their study found no significant difference in individual sight-singing performance between students trained in movable-Do versus those trained in fixed-Do. Killian and Henry (2005) likewise found no significant difference in their study between the mean sight-singing
Table 5

*Eight Arguments for Fixed-Do Solfège (Middleton, 1984, p. 32)*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The names of notes remain consistent in syllables just as they do in English letter names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sharps, flats, and accidentals have specific names that remain constant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The regular use of a consistent syllabic identification merges English with the Latin syllables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The merging of the languages in note identification results in the actual naming of the notes whether singing with the English letter names or with the Latin syllables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Key changes and modulations do not affect the names given to the notes or syllables. For example, D♭ is always called <em>ra</em> and C♯ is always called <em>di</em>. The reader does not have to constantly shift the names of the syllable to fit new keys and modulations as is the case with movable <em>do</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>As note names and syllables merge into a common language, total attention of the reader can be devoted to correct pitch and intonation, unhampered by a constantly shifting identification process incurred by modulations and key changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Use of constant syllable identification reinforces theoretical concepts and knowledge of keys, chords, and voice leading as the actual names of notes are realized and sung.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Constancy of verbal identification of notes with pitch accelerates the aural skills of singers in the development of approximate, if not absolute, pitch placement. Movable <em>do</em> tends to thwart this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance scores of high school students who used different systems. In a 2012 study, however, Hung found that student music majors in California who had been trained in fixed-Do solfège scored significantly higher at every level of diatonic and chromatic difficulty than those who had been trained in movable-Do solfège on a pitch accuracy sight-singing evaluation that included three levels of diatonic complexity and three levels of chromatic complexity. This contradiction with previous research (e.g., Holmes, 2009) could be explained by the different populations from which subjects were drawn or by a difference in task difficulty.

Adler (1997) was ambivalent about the adoption of any particular sight-singing system, although he advocated for fixed-Do solfège in musical material that is nontonal or modulatory. His preferred systems for rhythmic solmization were numbers and neutral syllables. Some
proponents of movable-Do solfège concede that their system is not as well-suited to highly chromatic or non-tonal music as is fixed-Do, but still believe movable-Do is the most powerful system for the overwhelming majority of musical types (Houlahan & Tacka, 1992). Brown (2003), on the other hand, submitted that all solfège systems require more class time for students to understand because they are an entirely musical language, in contrast with other systems such as letter names and numbers, the vocabulary of which is already familiar to students. Brown hypothesized that this alternative approach is better-suited to the needs of teaching literacy skills in our diverse society. McCoy (1989) similarly advocated for scale-degree numbers as the fastest means of developing an inexperienced choir’s aural skills. Smith (1991) wrote about why one might choose each of the systems available before advocating for movable-Do solfège, then later considered the commonalities between solmization systems (Smith, 1992).

Regardless of the music-reading system used, the research suggests some advantages to employing active learning techniques rather than passive ones in theory and aural skills classrooms (Brink, 1980). Concept mapping and the use of computer instruction has also been found effective (Scandrett, 2005).

Smith (1998) conducted a survey of choral directors in the state of Florida who taught ninth- and tenth-grade students. She reported a remarkable response rate of 75%, and more than half of respondents indicated that their training to teach sight-singing was inadequate. Eighty percent reported that they desired additional training in sight-singing pedagogy. Of all their college coursework, respondents noted that their ear-training classes were the most helpful to them as teachers of sight-singing, but 60% reported that they used a different system than was taught to them in those classes. Movable-Do solfège with La-based minor was the system used by the most respondents, followed by catch tunes to learn intervals and scale-degree numbers.
Standard Texts. Among the most important texts for music theorists and instructors of university-level aural skills, ear-training, and sight-singing coursework is *Aural Skills Acquisition: The Development of Listening, Reading, and Performing Skills in College-Level Musicians* by Gary Karpinski (2000). Beckman (2011) devoted a major section of her thesis to summarizing his methodologies, noting that his work is the only book-length treatment of the subject. Although Karpinski shrewdly avoided outright advocacy for any one tonal system over another, he did stress the need for *auralization*—internal hearing—and believed sight-singing is an effective tool to evaluate students’ aptitude for it. Additionally, while his text was firmly geared toward music theorists and teachers of music theory, the strategies he proposed for the instruction of sight-reading are easily transferrable to the choral rehearsal.

Focused more broadly on teaching the whole of music theory, Rogers’s (2004) text is one of the most common used in the training of theory pedagogues. After surveying the goals and purposes of music theory and orienting the reader to philosophical considerations in teaching it, he began his discussion of thinking and listening, which included a 37-page section on ear-training, of which sight-singing is granted the greatest detail. He insisted that sight-singing is crucial because it allows a teacher to test a student’s internal hearing. Because his words are directly applicable to the present study, I quote Rogers’s advice on melodic solmization and the teaching thereof at length:

Many teachers prefer to avoid syllables altogether because the investment in time (usually considerable) does not always seem to pay dividends. Some teachers and many students feel that syllables are more trouble than they’re worth by clogging the sightsinging process with one extra layer of problems. Solfege takes time to develop and
only those who are earnestly committed philosophically and willing to give the system a chance to crystalize should pursue such an approach.

A halfhearted effort with syllables (or anything else) is a waste of time. Teaching theory is more than teaching content. It involves the power of belief and the ability to sway students toward accepting that belief system—and its implied set of strengths and values. I have seen immensely successful sightsinging programs both with and without syllables, but the common feature is always the force of personality that convinces students that results will be forthcoming if they follow the prescribed routines. (Rogers, 2004, p. 135).

**Research Literature Perspective**

**Reviews of Literature and Meta-Analyses.** Various reviews of academic literature and meta-analyses related to sight-singing have appeared in the scholarly press. Hylton (1983) surveyed the research in choral music education published between 1972 and 1981, but did not note any studies devoted exclusively to sight-singing. Grant and Norris (1998) surveyed the research in choral music education published between 1982 and 1995, noting that a large number of studies focused on curricular issues related to sight-singing, but that few attempted to comprehensively inspect the entirety of choral curricula. They mentioned a total of 15 studies, both experimental and descriptive, published during that timeframe. Turcott (2003) continued the work of Grant and Norris, reviewing the scholarly literature in choral music education published between 1996 and 2002.

Sloboda (1984) reviewed experimental studies of music-reading. He dealt with the “skill effect” of better readers as compared to weaker readers as well as the ways the research pointed to music-reading as a form of music perception. Stebleton (1987) also reviewed the available
literature on private lesson experience, previous musical experience, music aptitude, academic achievement and cognitive music skills as factors that predicted successful sight-singing.

Brittain’s (1998) review focused specifically on the pedagogy of sight-singing and offered practical applications of the research to methods within the classroom, especially for high school choral music educators. Demorest (1998b) likewise wrote a review of the research that focused on sight-singing in the secondary choral ensemble. He divided his review into descriptive studies, predictive studies, and experimental studies. The descriptive research examined the instructional time devoted to the teaching of sight-singing, the materials and methods used to do so, and the sight-singing achievement of students across various levels. The predictive research looked at the effect of various variables related to group and individual achievement on choral sight-singing. The experimental research tested the effects of various interventions on sight-singing achievement. He concluded his review by offering suggestions for future research in the area. Demorest later published a revised version of this review of literature as chapter 2, “What Research Offers Teachers,” in Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal (2001). Although not a review of literature per se, Karpinski (2000) began each section of his text by surveying many of the studies relevant to the area of aural skills acquisition he was about to address. He skillfully wove appropriate research from the disciplines of music theory, music education, and music psychology. Especially useful are his inclusion of studies from the field of music theory that are often passed over in reviews of literature by music education specialists.

Hodges’s (1992) review of literature on the acquisition of music-reading skills remarked on the research conducted on music-reading, the teaching thereof, and error detection, then made several comments on trends and possible future directions for research. In her review of literature
on advances in music-reading research, Gudmundsdottir (2010) asserted that researchers in music education have too often forgotten the importance of reading musical notation and implied that more thorough research on music-reading principles was vital to advancing better music-reading teaching. She highlighted studies in music perception, cognition, education, and neurology that contribute to our knowledge of improving music-reading pedagogy.

Stewart (2005) reviewed the research literature on music-reading from a neurocognitive perspective. She posited that because many people cannot read music but are eager to learn to do so, it is oftentimes easier to study music literacy acquisition than it is to examine language literacy acquisition. In her review of other studies, she investigated how written notation is decoded within the brain and external musical responses evoked. Stewart submitted that the presence of the written musical note is just as mandatory for music literacy as the presence of the written word is for language literacy.

In her meta-analyses, Mishra (2014a, 2014b) concluded that sight-reading is not simply a visual/motor decoding process but rather a musical skill that improves with the musicality of the performer. She reached this conclusion after comparing 92 research studies (125 individual analyses) that paired sight-reading with another variable. She coded the 92 studies’ 597 variables according to construct and then performed separate statistical analysis on each construct. The constructs that proved significant factors related to sight-singing accuracy across studies were improvisational skills, ear-training ability, technical ability, and music knowledge. The constructs that were not significant predictors of sight-singing accuracy across studies were attitude and personality. Among experimental studies in which a treatment was an independent variable, the treatment types that significantly affected sight-reading accuracy were those classified by Mishra as aural training, controlled reading, creative activities, and singing/solfège.
Not only do these meta-analyses serve as a valuable means of comparing data between multiple studies and experimental designs, but Mishra has also provided us with an exhaustive review of the literature related to sight-singing accuracy.

**Perception and Cognition.** Gerringer (1983) randomly selected 72 ethnically mixed preschool children and 72 fourth graders from public schools. First, all participants took a pitch-discrimination test, the scores from which were used to divide each age group into three ability-level groups. Next, all participants were scored on a vocal pitch-matching test. Although analysis of the data revealed a moderate correlation between mean scores on both tests among the high-ability fourth-grade students, otherwise the data demonstrated no significant correlation between pitch discrimination and pitch matching. Gerringer concluded that training and development may be necessary to acquire an interrelationship between pitch matching and pitch discrimination, or it could be that they are just two aptitudes independent of one another. Apfelstadt (1984) found that with kindergarten students, imitation and kinesthetic, visual, instrumental, and verbal reinforcement improve vocal pitch-pattern accuracy better than a traditional, non-conceptual approach, while imitation is better than either reinforcement or a traditional approach at improving rote-singing accuracy.

Ramsey (1983) designed a study in which 91 three- to five-year-old children were pre-tested using the Preschool Singing Ability Level Test (PSALT); high- and low-scorers were separated into groups. During six half-hour meetings, students were provided either instruction with instruments or instruction without instruments. After completion of this task-song training program, the children were again tested on the PSALT. Analysis of post-test scores revealed significant differences between age levels in students’ perception of (a) melodic rhythm, (b) melodic contour, and (c) melodic interval as well as a significant difference between high-ability
and low-ability singers on those three factors plus (d) tonal center. No significant difference was
found between the instrumental and non-instrumental treatment groups. Ramsey concluded that
children do perceive the rhythm, contour, and interval aspects of melody.

**Effects of Factors on Sight-Singing Achievement.** Many studies have been conducted
examining the effects of various pre-existing factors on sight-singing achievement. Among the
most basic assumptions—indeed, the one that allows evaluators to recognize outstanding
achievement in sight-reading—is that some music is more difficult to sight-read than others.
Henry tested and found this assumption true for both pitch skills (2001, 2003) and rhythm skills
(2009). Then in 2011, she tested this assumption to examine pitch and rhythm tasks occurring in
combination simultaneously; 252 high school singers from a summer choral camp served as
study participants. She found that, regardless of other factors, rhythm skills and pitch skills
maintained their relative levels of difficulty. However, subjects were much more likely to sing
pitches accurately and rhythms inaccurately than they were to sing rhythms accurately and
pitches inaccurately, leading her to conclude that rhythmic success is much more closely
connected to pitch success than *vice versa*; in this study, vocalists seemed to prioritize pitch over
rhythm.

Colwell (1963) administered the Aliferis Music Achievement Test, the Farnum Music
Notation Test, or the Knuth Achievement Tests in Music to elementary, intermediate, and
secondary students to test their performance on various music skills. Among fifth- and sixth-
grade students, the highest scores on the Knuth test were earned by instrumental students with
piano training, followed by vocal students with piano training, followed by instrumental students
without piano training; vocal students without piano training scored the lowest. Results for
seventh-grade students on the Farnum test were similar. Interestingly, the study also observed
strong correlations between music achievement tests, grade-point average, and intelligence quotient, in line with other research (Cooley, 1961; Rodeheaver, 1972; Salis, 1977). Klemish (1970) also observed that students with the highest academic achievement in other areas were the best sight-singers in her study of first-graders. In addition, she noted the significant effect of socioeconomic status: students from high-income households scored better on both pre- and post-tests of sight-singing than those from low-income homes. She explained that children from families in higher socioeconomic brackets are afforded more opportunities for artistic enrichment, preparing them better than their socioeconomically disadvantaged peers for learning experiences.

Daniels (1986) conducted research on twenty different high school auditioned choruses and their teachers, administering questionnaires and a sight-singing test to search for correlations between various factors and sight-singing achievement. The questionnaires were designed specifically to reveal variables related to (a) the school the students attended, (b) the school music curriculum available to students, (c) the students’ music teachers, and (d) the students themselves, in terms of their various demographic classifications. Daniels’s analysis revealed that, of these variables, the strongest predictors of sight-singing achievement were, in order from highest correlation to lowest, (a) the ethnic composition of the student’s school, (b) the share of pupils in that student’s school choir who had a piano in their home, (c) attending a rural school, (d) an occasional use of rote procedures to teach music in the student’s school chorus, (e) the share of pupils in that student’s school choir who had been selected for an all-state festival, (f) the share of pupils in that student’s school choir who played a musical instrument, (g) attending a large school, and (h) having a choral director who places an emphasis on sight-singing instruction in rehearsals.
Boyle and Lucas (1990) had students in first-, third-, and fourth-semester college ear-training classes sing eight melodic sight-singing excerpts both with and without a harmonic accompaniment; observers then scored each performance. By comparing pre- and post-test scores, they found that such harmonic context significantly improves sight-singing performance, especially among students in the first-semester course. Furby (2005) designed an experiment in which 26 high school students were divided into control and treatment groups. Both groups completed a pre-test and then were taught sight-singing using movable-Do solfège with harmonic support. The experimental group also received instruction in tonal harmonic music theory. Following ten weeks of instruction, a post-test was administered to both groups, which demonstrated no significant difference between groups but did reveal a significant pre- to post-test gain in both groups. This contradicted earlier research (Ottman, 1956) which correlated subjects’ high scores with their ability to recognize modulation and concluded that harmonic context did have an effect on sight-singing performance.

Lucas (1994) studied the effects of harmonic context on 71 beginning middle school choral music students’ sight-singing skill. Students were randomly assigned to one of three groups and then pre-tested to determine their sight-singing ability; pre-tests showed no significant differences between groups. For 15 minutes per day for 15 weeks, each group received specialized instruction: Group 1’s sight-singing was done in two parts with half the group singing each part and switching parts on the exercises, Group 2’s sight-singing was homophonic melodies with harmonic support from the piano, and Group 3’s sight-singing was homophonic melodies unaccompanied. All 71 students were then post-tested on four different conditions: (a) singing melody only, (b) singing with piano accompaniment, (c) singing the upper part in a two-part texture, and (d) singing the lower part in a two-part texture. Three judges
graded the recordings of each student’s sight-singing for pitch accuracy only and post-test results indicated that all three experimental groups scored highest when singing melody only, contradicting the findings of Boyle and Lucas (1990) with college students. Lucas also found that, of the three experimental groups, Group 3 (melody only, unaccompanied) had the highest mean score, which was significantly higher than Group 1 (two-part harmony).

In 1995, Demorest and May administered individual sight-singing assessments to 414 choral students from four high schools in Texas and had each answer questions related to their musical experience. They found that the strongest predictor of successful sight-singing performance for individuals was the number of years of school choir experience, followed by years of private piano lessons, years of private instrument lessons, and years of private voice lessons. They also found significantly higher mean scores for students who were randomly selected to sing the easier of two excerpts compared with those who were selected to sing the more difficult one. Harrison, Asmus, and Serpe (1994) found that among undergraduate music theory students, the most significant predictor of strong aural skills as measured by grades in ear-training and sight-singing classes is musical aptitude, followed by academic ability and music experience. Motivation for music did not have a significant effect on the aural component of students’ music theory grades. These results are consistent with other research (Henry, 2003, 2011; Henry & Brittain, 2001; Henry & Demorest, 1994; Rodeheaver, 1972; Tucker, 1969).

**Effects of Tonal Systems.** Cassidy (1993) tested the effects of various sight-singing strategies on the pitch accuracy of non-music elementary education majors. She found that subjects who received instruction in any system had a significant pre- to post-test increase in performance, but that those who used movable-Do solfège and solfège with Curwen hand signs performed significantly better than those who used letter names or a neutral syllable.
Additionally, this study revealed that no systematic approach to sight-singing had any demonstrably positive effect on pitch accuracy of a familiar children’s song, suggesting that sight-singing instruction did not improve recreational singing.

Henry (2004) found that targeting specific pitch skills that emphasized harmonic function and scale degree was an effective tool for sight-singing instruction. Using movable-Do solfège over a twelve-week period, 67 high school students were given instruction with targeted skills in scalar, cadential, and chordal tasks using either familiar melodies or newly composed ones. Pre- to post-test gains indicated significantly higher mean scores, but no significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that such instruction is effective using both unfamiliar and familiar melodic materials.

In their study of Texas high school students, Demorest and May (1995) found a statistically significant advantage in the mean sight-singing scores of those who were trained in movable-Do solfège over those who were trained in fixed-Do solfège. However, because this finding contradicted previous research, they interpreted it with caution due to various complicating factors that could have skewed results. Henry (2013) examined the effect of key on vocal sight-reading achievement among 280 high school choral camp students and found no significant effect. One possible explanation for this was that, of those 280 participants, 224 used movable-Do solfège, in which the difficulty in solmization between keys is theoretically negated.

Holmes (2009) investigated the relative effects of movable-Do and fixed-Do solfège on the development of the sight-singing skills of 181 seven- and eight-year-old children. Subjects were assigned either to the control group, which participated in music-reading and singing activities but did not receive any training in solfège, an experimental group that received training in movable-Do solfège, or an experimental group that received training in fixed-Do solfège.
After the completion of ten instructional sessions, students’ sight-singing was assessed for contour and pitch accuracy. Both experimental groups achieved significantly higher scores than the control group, and the group that received training in movable-Do solfège scored significantly higher than members of the fixed-Do group. This contradiction with Hung’s (2012) research could be explained by the different populations from which subjects were drawn.

**Use of Tonal Systems.** May (1993) surveyed 927 Texas high schools and received usable responses from 192 choral directors. He found that movable-Do solfège with La-based minor were the most frequently used systems. Majorities of teachers reported practicing sight-singing 31–36 weeks per year, four to five days per week, and six to ten minutes per rehearsal. The most frequently used sight-singing materials were choral octavos, hymnals, and self-composed exercises.

McClung (2001) surveyed the members of senior-high all-state choirs in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee ($N = 2,115$). Only one question was asked: “In which sight-singing system have you received the most instruction?” Unlike all other surveys, this one found that scale-degree numbers was the most popular system, with 58% of total responses. Of the six states surveyed only Louisiana, where movable-Do solfège was favored, used another system more frequently.

In a 2003 survey of 152 middle school choral directors’ sight-singing instructional practices in Florida, Kuehne found that sight-singing was taught significantly more consistently in suburban schools than in rural or urban ones. These same schools used the piano and published sight-singing methods less often and solfège syllables more frequently than their smaller counterparts. She also found that most directors’ pedagogies align most closely with the Kodály methodology, including the use of movable-Do solfège.
Farenga (2013) surveyed 86 high school choral educators from the state of Arizona via an online questionnaire and found a significant difference between the importance teachers placed on sight-singing instruction according to how much time they spent doing it. She also found a significant difference between the importance teachers placed on sight-singing instruction according to level of teaching experience, with those who had been teaching for 20 or more years indicating a higher-than-average priority on sight-singing. Eighty percent of respondents used movable-Do solfège for tonal sight-singing, and of those, 66% use La-based minor. Only 3.5% of participants indicated that they did not use a system altogether. These findings contradicted von Kampen (2003), who found that more than half of choral directors in Nebraska had not adopted a consistent system, and Casarow (2002), who reported that up to 59% of advanced high school choirs in Arizona did not receive systematic instruction in sight-singing.

**Effects of Rhythm Systems.** Bebeau (1982) compared the effects of traditional, mathematically based rhythm solmization based on Boyle’s (1970) work and of a new simplified speech-cue method on rhythm reading. Twenty-seven third-grade children of similar socio-economic backgrounds who had not received group instruction in rhythm-reading were given a pre-test, then received instruction in one of the two solmization systems. A post-test in which they played or clapped written rhythms was then administered and the mean scores compared. The analysis suggested the relative superiority of the speech-cue method.

Colley (1987) outlined eight different rhythm solmization systems, which appear in Figure 1. She provided training in three systems—Kodály, Gordon (1980), and “Word,” a combination of various verbal-association systems—to 160 second- and third-grade students in Maine, who were then tested on their ability to recognize, dictate, and perform a series of twelve rhythm patterns in 4/4 and 6/8 meters. For the recognition task, the Gordon and word systems
were better performed than the Kodály system. For the dictation task, the word system was Gordon method, which was superior to the Kodály system. For the performance task, the word system was superior to the Gordon method, which was superior to the Kodály system. For all three tasks, there was no significant difference between the pre- to post-test gains of the Kodály system versus the control group. That Kodály’s system was least effective could possibly be explained by the fact that it is a spiral curriculum; that is, it grows slowly and may require more time than the study allowed to reap its full benefits.

Figure 1. Rhythm solmization systems according to Colley (1987).
Recently, an innovative rhythm solmization system called Takadimi has evolved based on Kodály’s principles. Developed by Hoffman, Pelto, and White (1996), it is a system that sought to lead to accuracy and musicality in performance, aid in the understanding of rhythmic structure, and adapt easily to many musics and applications for musicians of all age levels. Just as solfège provides a solmization to both hear and perform melodic material, an increasing number of music educators and theory professors see Takadimi as a common vocabulary for rhythm. The system has risen in popularity because of its alignment with sound-before-sight music methodologies and compatibility with what new research has uncovered about the cognition of rhythm. Although he did not press the issue of a particular melodic sight-singing system, Karpinski (2000) celebrated Takadimi as a functional system of rhythmic solmization that helps listeners perceive aural stimuli according to meter and pulse relationships. Unfortunately, Takadimi is too new for any experimental studies to have yet tested it.

**Effects of Other Interventions.** One of the earliest experimental studies of sight-singing was conducted by Hutton (1953). She divided fourth-grade students into a control group that was taught sight-singing without the use of visual materials and an experimental group that was taught with various visual aids. Scores on a pre-test indicated no significant difference between the groups, but after the intervention was delivered, scores on a post-test revealed significantly higher mean scores for the experimental group than for the control group.

Kyme (1960) designed an experiment to test the relative effectiveness of shape-note singing versus more conventional methodologies. Using 183 fourth- and fifth-grade students from several schools, he devised four experimental situations in which four different experimental groups were trained in shape-notes and compared with four different control groups: (a) solfa using traditional staff notation, (b) numbers, (c) instrumental-only instruction,
and (d) instrumental-only instruction with the control group also comprised of instrumental students. Members of all groups received 15 consecutive half-hour lessons and then recorded a sight-singing post-test for the researcher. Results from the post-test revealed significantly higher mean scores for the experimental groups across all four conditions, leading Kyme to conclude that shape-note singing is a highly effective method for teaching students to read music.

At least three studies (Christ, 1966; DiFronzo, 1969; Hammer, 1963) have found the tachistoscope—a device that uses a transparency projector equipped with a mechanical shutter in order to display an image for a specific amount of time—to increase sight-singing achievement test scores significantly over traditional blackboard learning when instruction was properly delivered. However, such equipment is no longer in wide use, and Stokes (1965) did not find it an effective intervention anyway.

A study by Kanable (1969) compared self-delivered programmed instruction with conventional classroom teaching of sight-singing. Thirty high school students were divided into control and experimental groups; the experimental group was given A Program for Self-Instruction in Sight Singing, which included an aural component recorded on tape. After twelve daily training sessions lasting 50 minutes each—self-guided study for the experimental group and traditional classroom instruction for the control group—a post-test was administered to both. No significant difference in post-test mean scores was found between the control and experimental groups, although the experimental group showed more growth from pre-test to post-test than the control group. Ramsey (1979) developed a similar programmed-instruction trainer for error-detection in instrumental music and determined it to be significantly effective.

The use of hand signs with pitch solmization began with the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians and continued with the work of Guido d’Arezzo and the Guidonian hand (McNaught,
1893). They were further developed by the English music educators Sarah Glover (1785–1867) and John Curwen (1816–1880) before becoming an integral feature of Zoltán Kodály’s (1882–1967) methodology. However, some research has found that these hand signs are ineffective (e.g., Klemish, 1970). Autry (1975) administered sight-singing pre-test and post-test scores to control groups in which instruction was conducted with solfège alone and experimental groups in which instruction was conducted with solfège plus Curwen hand signs. Although sight-singing improvement could be demonstrated, Autry found no significant difference between the control and experimental groups. Martin (1991) likewise observed no significant correlation between the use of hand signs and sight-singing achievement, noting that only sight-singing aptitude was a reliable predictor of sight-singing achievement among the first-graders in the study. Another study found a specially designed manual of Kodály-like sight-singing “drills” effective in improving sight-singing achievement (Cutietta, 1979). Regardless of its effectiveness, Kodály’s method serves as a signature pedagogy for many music educators, especially at the elementary level (Baumann, 2010).

Grutzmacher (1987) tested not sight-singing but sight-reading in beginning instrumental students. She designed an instructional program that stressed tonal concept development using tonal patterns such as Do-Mi-So, Do-Re-Mi, La-Do-Mi, and La-Ti-Do as content with vocalization and harmonization as teaching techniques. She administered it to fifth- and sixth-grade woodwind and brass players for 14 weeks. The control group received equal instructional time with the researcher, but content was based on a traditional lesson book and did not include tonal patterns nor did training include harmonization or vocalization. After the course of study, the experimental group scored significantly higher on both melodic sight-reading and aural identification post-tests than the control group.
A quasi-experimental study by Demorest (1998a) examined the effect of individual testing on sight-singing performance. He administered pre-tests to 306 high school students in the state of Washington who sang in choirs whose director gave group instruction in sight-singing. Students assigned to the control group were not tested again until the end of the semester, when they were given the post-test. Students assigned to the experimental group were tested three times during the course of the semester and then given the same post-test as the control group at the end of the semester. Data analysis compared pre- and post-test scores and found that the experimental group achieved significantly greater gains on major-key tonal sight-reading compared to the control group. On minor-key tonal sight-reading, however, no significant difference was found. In his 2001 book, Demorest provided a number of sight-singing assessment procedures applicable to both the research and the classroom.

Killian and Henry (2005) investigated various effective strategies shared by successful high school sight-singers and various ineffective strategies shared by unsuccessful high school sight-singers. After administering a sight-singing performance test to 198 subjects, they analyzed video recordings of the tests. They noted significantly higher scores for participants who were allowed a 30-second practice period before being evaluated, and they observed that high scorers vocally tonicized the key of the excerpt, used hand signs, sang out loud during practice, and kept the beat physically significantly more frequently during the practice period than did low scorers. In addition to comparing the observed behaviors of high- and low-scorers, they also correlated demographic data and found that high scorers were significantly more likely to have sung in a region or state honor choir, studied voice or piano privately, played a musical instrument, been a member of an instrumental ensemble, practiced sight-singing outside of class individually, and been taught by a conductor who administered individual sight-singing assessments.
Because sight-singing in the ensemble setting can mask poor performance, it has been suggested that small-group instruction is more effective than that in large groups. Braucht (2007) tested 63 students in intermediate and advanced high school women’s choirs, giving each subject two treatments: large-group instruction led by the teacher and small-group instruction led by students. Each participant was recorded singing the sight-reading examples individually but within a choral formation. Braucht found that mean sight-singing scores were significantly higher after the small-group instruction than after the large-group instruction, suggesting that small-group learning may improve sight-singing accuracy.

Klemp (2010) designed a study in which 46 high school choral musicians were matched according to their experience in an instrumental ensemble and whether they had studied piano privately for at least one year; they were then placed in control or experimental groups that were equivalent based on these factors. During 300 minutes of instruction over the course of six weeks, the control group was taught in a vocal-only approach to sight-singing while members of the experimental group received instruction using both keyboards and their voices. On pre-test sight-singing scores, Klemp found a significant difference between students who had studied piano and those who had not, but not between students who had experience in an instrumental ensemble and those who had not. On the post-test, both the control and the experimental groups made significant gains over their pre-test scores, but there was no significant difference between groups. Klemp concluded, in line with prior research (e.g., Colwell, 1964; Daniels, 1986), that piano experience had a particularly powerful positive effect on sight-singing achievement.

**Error Detection.** Related to the area of sight-singing is the aural skill of error detection, that is, a subject’s ability to identify when the heard sound does not match the written score. Error detection is generally considered an essential skill for conductors (Grunow, 1980). In one
of the earliest error-detection studies, Hansen (1961) used actual four-part choral literature, a magnetic-tape recording of which was slightly altered to mimic pitch-reading mistakes an amateur chorus might make. Two hundred sixty musicians were then given the printed music of the choral excerpts and asked to identify the errors while listening to the recordings; scores on the error-detection tests were analyzed for various factors. Hansen found that subjects with two or more years of music theory coursework had significantly greater error-detection skills than those with one year. Additionally, pianists and organists scored significantly better than non-keyboardists, as did participants who conceptualized the music vertically (harmonic chord quality) rather than horizontally (melodically). Gonzo (1971) developed a test to measure subjects’ abilities to detect choral pitch errors and gave the test to both undergraduate music education majors and experienced high school choral directors. There was no significant difference between the mean scores of each group. Analysis also found a significant correlation between high grades in undergraduate theory courses and ability to detect pitch errors.

One study found no significant relationship between error detection ability and various predictor variables such as ability in other aural skills like sight-singing and ear-training, achievement in music theory, years of instrumental training, and experience in musical ensembles (Brand & Burnsed, 1981). However, another study found that instrumental music education students receiving 50 minutes of instruction per week in contextual sight-singing and ear-training were better able to detect pitch and rhythm errors in both homorhythmic and polyrhythmic examples than similar students who did not receive the training. This suggested that training in sight-singing and aural skills does have an effect on error-detection abilities, at least in the short term (Sheldon, 1998). Forsythe and Woods (1983) tested the effects of
conducting on instrumental conducting students’ ability to detect musical errors, and found that conducting significantly impeded their error-detection scores compared with listening alone.

Other studies have been less conclusive. DeCarbo (1984) designed two different approaches to enhancing college undergraduate instrumental students’ error-detection skills, one based on conducting experience and the other based on programmed instruction. Following 16 class sessions in one of those two approaches, subjects were given a conducting test and a written test. On the conducting exam, the mean scores of students who received conducting-based instruction were significantly higher than those whose classes were in programmed-instruction format. On the written exam, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of both groups. Deal (1985) examined the effectiveness of programmed instruction on error detection of both pitch and rhythm. Subjects were pre-tested, matched, and then assigned either to a control group, which used the non-computerized Program in Error Detection, or to an experimental group, which used the Computer-Assisted Program in Error Detection, a programmed-instruction application. After completing their respective programs, the Test in Error Detection was administered to both groups, results from which indicated no significant difference between those who received computerized instruction versus those who had not, but did show significant gains from pre-test to post-test in both groups.

Killian explored the relationship between error-detection and sight-singing accuracy in a 1991 study of 75 seventh- and eighth-grade vocalists in Texas. First, students took a sight-singing performance test. Next, they took an error-detection test where they listened to recorded excerpts while circling the errors they heard on a musical score based on the same musical examples from the first evaluation. Students were separated into high-, medium-, and low-scoring groups according to their scores on the sight-singing performance test. Analysis of both
tests found no relationship between error-detection ability and sight-singing performance among high- and medium-scoring students but did demonstrate that low-scoring sight-singers scored significantly higher on the error-detection task, suggesting that error-detection ability is a separate but related skill from sight-singing and that it may be somewhat less difficult to acquire. This finding did not hold true in similar research of undergraduate music majors, which found significant relationships between the melodic aural skills of sight-singing, dictation, and error-detection (Larson, 1977). Ottman (1956) obtained a coefficient of .73 between error-detection and melodic sight-singing. There did appear to be a stronger relationship between dictation and error-detection than between sight-singing and error-detection (Larson, 1977).

**Music Literacy and Lifelong Music-Making Connections**

One possible reason for the importance of training in music literacy is its effect on lifelong participation in choral singing and music-making. The *Chorus Impact Study* found that more Americans participated in choral singing than in any other form of the performing arts. Approximately 42.6 million Americans sang regularly in choral ensembles, and at least one family member was a chorus member in more than 20% of American households. Among these non-professional choristers, language literacy was important: 87% of chorus members responded that they had read a book in the previous month, while only 59% of the general public did. Sixty-one percent of chorus members daily read newspapers, while only 48% of the general public did (Chorus America, 2009).

Since the population of adults who sing in a chorus is such a literate one, one might wonder why more are not comfortable with systems of music solmization. According to Davenport (1992), one possible reason is the variety of systems in use today, from movable- and fixed-Do solfège to numbers and beyond, which could cause frustration for singers who move
from school to school or chorus to chorus and never master any one approach. In the early
nineteenth century, by contrast, a four-syllable tonic solfa system was nearly universally in effect
in America’s singing schools. Today, not all music educators are agreed on the usefulness of any
system, or even that a systematic approach is best. Solmization is integral to Kodály’s (1962)
approach, but Nye and Nye (1985) advocated for neutral syllables instead of pitch syllables,
Nordholm (1966) viewed solmization as a tool best reserved only for particularly troublesome
musical passages, and Hoffer and Hoffer (1982) believed students should graduate beyond the
use of pitch syllables by the sixth grade.

Regardless of the difficulties in becoming a literate musician, Middleton (1984) declared
that doing so empowers one for lifelong music-making. He wrote that choral directors prepare
students best for lifelong participation in community choral activities by providing them with
committed training in the fundamentals of music. He believed that all students deserve a legacy
of instruction that leads them to musical competence, and that students who receive such
instruction owe their teacher-conductors much gratitude.

With many implications for lifelong learning and participation in choral singing, van der
Vat-Chromy (2010) examined safety, identity, transmission, and enculturation as aspects of
fostering choral “cultures” in undergraduate choirs. She surveyed 154 students from seven choral
ensembles at three universities in the United States. Students provided telling responses to her
qualitative, free-response survey questions. Relevant responses have been extracted below in
Table 6. As can be seen from these sample responses, these nine students felt passionately about
the value of the sight-singing skills they were learning in their choirs. They viewed becoming a
stronger sight-reader as affecting their lives, impacting their identities, affecting their self-
concepts, and impacting their future careers. Although they represented only six percent of all
Table 6

*Student Responses Related to Sight-Singing (van der Vat-Chromy, 2010)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participation in this choir has affected my life in terms of: (p. 187)</td>
<td>40. I feel that now that I have participated in this ensemble, I am a better sight-reader and sing better in an ensemble setting. (p. 199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51. Enhancing my musicality, advancing my technique of both tone production and sight-reading, brought a sense of meaning to many choral works, been responsible for the creation of many friendships. (p. 201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/108. Friendship and excellence. I have gained more friends in this choir than most of my other classes combined. I have also improved my sight-reading abilities as a whole. I have also learned how much really goes into perfecting a choir, from teamwork to blend to attitude. (p. 212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/110. Singing ability and sight reading skills. Also ability to communicate in a large group. (p. 212)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My identity has been impacted through this choir by: (p. 188)</td>
<td>6/62. Making me a stronger musician in terms of sight-reading and musicality. (p. 204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Participation in this choir has affected my self-concept as a choral/vocal musician due to: (p. 188)</td>
<td>10. It is expected in the choir to be able to sight read decently and to be able to learn the music quickly. This has transferred out into other areas of my singing. (p. 195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel that participation in this choir will have an impact on my future career path in the following ways: (p. 189)</td>
<td>3/65. Learning better choral techniques, improved sight-reading. (p. 204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8/129. I have definitely become a much better musician through participation in this group. I feel I listen better in ensembles, and my sight-reading and vocal technique have been much improved. (p. 216)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

respondents, their voices speak compellingly of the potential for music literacy to empower lifelong music-making.
Choral Sight-Singing in Higher Education

**Ill-Prepared Students.** Asmus (2004) noted the increasing number of students who audition for undergraduate music programs who cannot read music as a troubling phenomenon. He contended that although a legitimate case for a rote-based music curriculum can be made at the elementary level, by the time prospective music majors audition for college, they are expected to be literate sight-readers of musical notation. Those students who enter bachelor’s degree programs in music and are weak music-readers are at an instant disadvantage that often remains throughout their entire education and, if they become music educators, may have negative repercussions for the next generation. The solution he offered was for ensemble conductors simply to address this need in every rehearsal.

Furby (2008) examined the sight-singing backgrounds and achievement levels of 40 self-selected high school graduates who had not yet begun college music study but were entering a collegiate choral ensemble at a large university in the Midwest. All but one of these students had experience in at least one high school choir; 84.6% had received previous instruction in sight-singing, with 75% reporting the use of movable-Do solfège. Subjects sang a newly composed melody at sight and their performances were graded, the scores of which were analyzed. This analysis revealed the strongest predictor of sight-singing success to be years of participation in high school choirs, followed by years of participation in instrumental ensembles. In addition to these findings, Furby also noted the generally low level of sight-singing achievement across all variables of pre-college music students.

After reviewing the relevant research, Crouch (2010) concluded that the music literacy skills of college voice majors were especially deficient in comparison to their instrumental colleagues. She blamed these deficiencies on pre-existing weaknesses not remediated before
commencing college music study which are then exacerbated by the immediate expectations of achievement in written theoretical analysis before singers are fully literate in the language of music. She suggested that separating music theory from music literacy in collegiate curricula would help alleviate these discrepancies, and proposed an approach to music literacy similar to that for second-language acquisition.

**Inconsistent Standards.** Compared with the high school choral classroom (Brendell, 1996), sight-singing instruction in the collegiate choral setting is far less prevalent and consistent. Collins examined attitudes and trends in the teaching of sight-singing at NASM-accredited schools in 1979, analyzing survey data from 233 different institutions. She found wildly varying methods of aural skills training across higher education, in terms of integration with written music theory curricula, semesters of coursework offered and required for different majors, number of hours of instruction per week, class size, curricular content and materials, assessment tools, methodologies, and even whether the instructor was a faculty member or a graduate assistant.

Taggart and Taggart (1994) conducted another survey of aural skills, ear-training, and sight-singing professors at American colleges and universities. From the response of 183 institutions, they found that two-thirds of music theory departments use a common sight-singing system department-wide. Among the third of departments that do not, faculty disagreement was cited as the most common reason that a consistent sight-singing system had not been adopted. The most frequently used solmization system was movable-Do with La-based minor solfège, followed by movable-Do with Do-based minor solfège, followed by scale-degree numbers.

Danfelt (1970) suggested that one of the key discrepancies in collegiate sight-singing coursework was whether music for sight-singing was drawn from actual music literature or
contrived specifically for sight-singing pedagogical purposes. Foltz (1976) added that much of the reason for the change is the relatively recent need for the incorporation of non-tonal music into ear-training and sight-singing coursework, along with solmization systems that accommodate it. He offered that movable-Do solfège can be of little use for atonal music, even if it is tremendously helpful for tonal music. He strongly recommended intervallic conceptualization for non-tonal music and suggested several exercises that can aid in developing skill in thinking intervallically. Some of the newest college-level texts (e.g., Jones, Shaftel & Chattah, 2014) have taken heed of many of these suggestions and incorporated multiple types of music that, when properly taught, can encourage varied conceptualizations.

In response to the 1994 National Standards for Arts Education (MENC), Abrahams (2000b) conducted a survey of institutions of higher education accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) to assess whether their curricula for music education majors had been altered to accommodate the new standards. He found that 36% of respondents had changed the training they provided pre-service music teachers to align more closely with the national guidelines. Likewise, he noted the curricular and program adaptations for pre-service music teachers prompted by the national standards in a qualitative study of two schools of higher education (Abrahams, 2000a). However, to demonstrate that music education curricula were anything but uniform from one institution to another, despite the presence of a shared “standard,” even at NASM-accredited schools, Abrahams reported that during one 1998 site visit, many ensemble conductors complained that students could not sight-read. This observation came in spite of the fact that sight-singing classes apparently met the content requirements outlined in the national standards. He speculated that the reason could be inconsistencies in the teaching of sight-reading, with some professors using solfège while others used scale-degree numbers and
some teachers using alternative systems. In the words of Pembrook and Riggins (1990), the
attitudes toward aural theory coursework in American colleges and universities may best be
described as, “Send help!” (p. 239). Many scholars describe a situation in which aural skills
instruction is undervalued by administrators, faculty colleagues, and students alike (Collins,

Not only are standards inconsistent between schools, but often even within schools
educational expectations differ between the instrumental and vocal areas. At one university in the
United Kingdom, a study found that singers and teachers of singing use more imaginative and
metaphoric language than their instrumental counterparts and also tend to focus on technique
while instrumentalists prefer to emphasize musical interpretation. Some instrumentalists believed
they can do this because they are the “musicians” while vocalists are the “singers,” but it is
likelier that the preparation and training of music students simply differs whether one is an
instrumentalists or vocalist (Burwell, 2007). Some previous research suggested that instrumental
experience has more powerful effects on the development of some musical skills than does
choral experience (May & Elliott, 1980). Whatever the reasons, various studies have found that
choral singers with experience in instrumental music consistently perform better on sight-singing
assessments than those without a background as an instrumentalist (Casarow, 2002; Colwell,

Despite the inconsistent standards in ear-training and sight-singing evident across the
higher education landscape, it is apparent that familiarity with the content and skills of aural
music theory is nevertheless a consistent expectation in formal collegiate music study. Costanza
(1971) stated that basic musicianship courses in sight-singing and ear-training were a uniform
requirement for the training of undergraduate conductors because of the need to develop aural-
visual discrimination. Costanza’s concern was that these basic musicianship courses, at least as traditionally taught, are insufficient to the task.

**Pre-Service Teacher Preparation.** Not only is sight-singing instruction inconsistent across most music curricula, but inconsistent standards exist even among the content of choral methods classes at various institutions in the United States. Chandler (2012) conducted a nationwide survey of the instructors of such classes at institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music and found that 25% of them do not even offer a course dedicated to secondary choral methods. Of the remaining schools, he found considerable variance in the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge covered by coursework.

Most textbooks written for music education majors’ choral methods classes emphasize the importance of sight-singing. Floyd and Haning (2014) examined the content of ten popular choral methods texts to determine which elements of sight-singing pedagogy these resources include and found that although most of them address sight-singing, most do so in a limited fashion that does not emphasize the need to train students’ internal hearing and ability to audiate. They also concluded that most choral methods texts do not fully address curriculum development or assessment in this area. Brinson and Demorest (2013) devoted a chapter to sight-singing in *Choral Music: Methods and Materials*, addressing materials, sequential instruction, and assessment. Collins (1999) also devoted a chapter to sight-reading methods. Under “Choral Techniques,” Phillips (2004) committed a chapter to teaching sight-singing skills, covering historic precedents, practical pedagogy, scheduling time for instruction, and recommendations of assessment tools. In Holt and Jordan’s (2008) *The School Choral Program*, only ten pages were
committed to choral sight-reading, but Jordan (2007) sprinkled another text with music literacy concepts throughout.

**Effective Interventions.** In addition to providing regular opportunities to practice sight-singing in the ensemble setting (Asmus, 2004), the research has examined other countermeasures to remediate college students’ poor aural skills. Costanza (1971) evaluated the effectiveness of programmed instruction in score-reading as based on a score-reading test and found that aural-visual discrimination is improved by such training. He recommended that such instruction be incorporated into traditional aural theory classes to encourage transfer between future conductors’ coursework and real-world score-reading. Behmer (1988) found that the *Music Research Instrumental Score Reading Program* (Froseth & Grunow, 1979) was effective at improving college students’ scores on the *Visual-Aural Discrimination Test* (Grunow, 1980), which examines students ability to detect errors in performance. As previously mentioned, aural skills training is effective in increasing students’ error-detection abilities (Sheldon, 1998), and thankfully aural skills coursework is mandated of music education majors at a variety of institutions, both accredited and non-accredited (Canaan, 1986; Reddick, 2006).

**Choral Sight-Singing.** Very few studies have researched choral sight-singing at the collegiate level. Scott (1995) anecdotally alleged that collegiate sight-singing standards are deficient in the view of many professional choral musicians. Although Scott blamed this dilemma on poor training at the elementary and high school levels, he did not excuse college professors from responsibility, stating that they must remediate if their students cannot sight-sing accurately and efficiently.

Building on work by Phillips (1984), More (1985) surveyed the historical antecedents and contemporary alternatives to movable-Do solfège and found them lacking in every case.
Instead, he advocated for Kodály’s system of relative solmization for university-level sight-singing and ear-training. Addressing both choral conductors and aural theory professors, he argued that ear-training should be integrated across the disciplines, and that fundamental musical skills must be emphasized even in higher education. He explained:

It must be clear that Kodály’s view of musical training was much more “populist” than “elitist” at all levels. His main slogan was, after all, “music belongs to everybody.” . . .

The question remains, however: does the North American university music program have a similar responsibility to serve all of its students to the best of its ability or only to serve the elite who are able to “decode” the divergent approaches and “obscurum per obscurius” of our current theory programs? Do we continue to turn out music graduates, a disturbingly high percentage of whom are, from the standpoint of aural skills, musically illiterate, or do we strive to prepare the largest percentage possible for the responsibilities of their musical world? (More, 1985, p. 21)

Even among “elitist” college students who are already fully independent musicians, a need may exist for the incorporation of music literacy into the choral curriculum. As Palkki (2010) put it, it is not the task of college music professors to teach students the rudiments of reading music, but it is their revered duty to model how to teach music literacy for students who will one day have to do so themselves.

Demorest (2004) examined the methods and materials of music educators who were actively teaching music literacy to their students by expanding on the Web-based survey he conducted for and reported in his 2001 book. The expanded version included responses from 94 additional participants and the report of its results limited data to those collected from middle and high school choral directors. In all, the data of 221 middle and high school teachers who
actively provide instruction in choral sight-reading were collected and analyzed. Seventy percent of respondents reported teaching sight-singing to each of their ensembles, 52% in nearly every rehearsal and 28% in every rehearsal, for an average of 9.5 minutes per rehearsal. A majority reported teaching sight-singing separately from choral literature. The survey displayed a minor-key, common-time two-bar musical example to its participants and asked them to indicate on what syllables they would teach their students to read it. Forty-seven percent of the teachers chose movable-Do, La-based-minor solfège, with 17% choosing movable-Do, Do-based minor. There was less uniformity for rhythmic solmization, with 47% indicating counting and 21% choosing other. The survey also asked conductors what sight-singing materials they used, how they assessed students’ individual sight-singing performance, how much of students’ grade was comprised of their sight-singing assessments, and questions related to the role of choral contests on sight-singing instruction. This survey was a model for the survey instrument developed for the present study.

Finally, in research most like the present study, Myers (2008) surveyed choral conductors in the eleven states of the American Choral Directors Association’s Southern Division. The survey was created for five purposes with each respondent: (a) to ascertain whether the conductor provided sight-singing instruction in a collegiate choral ensemble, (b) to consider the sight-singing system used in the conductor’s undergraduate curriculum, (c) to determine the conductor’s self-perception of his or her own sight-singing ability, (d) to determine the conductor’s self-perception of his or her own ability to teach sight-singing in the choral rehearsal context, and (e) to establish whether the conductor assessed his students’ sight-singing and, if so, what measures he or she used. Attitudes toward sight-singing in collegiate choirs were also investigated.
Myers (2008) discovered that, among collegiate choral conductor respondents who hold a doctorate, 63.8% provide instruction in sight-singing to at least one ensemble. Of those conductors whose undergraduate sight-singing coursework had used movable-Do solfège with Do-based minor, 36% always used that system with their choral ensembles and 40% often did. Of those conductors whose coursework had used movable-Do solfège with La-based minor, 40.6% always used that system with their choral ensembles and 28.1% often did. Of those conductors whose coursework had used fixed-Do solfège, 20% always used that system and 40% often did. Of those conductors whose coursework had used scale-degree numbers, 19.4% always used that system and 45.2% often did. Of those conductors whose sight-singing coursework had used a neutral syllable, 16.7% always and 50% often did likewise. Further results from this study will be examined in chapter five’s discussion of connections to previous research. Like Demorest’s (2004), Myers’s survey was a model for the survey instrument developed for the present study. Although surveys of collegiate aural theory professors have been conducted (Collins, 1979; Killam, 1987; Taggart & Taggart, 1994), Myers’s work is important in that it is the only study of the sight-singing practices among collegiate choral conductors prior to this one.

**Summary**

Because professional organizations have mandated it and because most professionals believe in the importance of music literacy, music educators are expected to provide their students with effective instruction in how to read printed musical notation and sing it at sight. However, there are many signs that this standard is in decline or not being met. For many music teachers, especially at the high school and college levels, the pressure to perform often outweighs the responsibility to give their students a well-rounded musical knowledge and skill set. This need not be the case, though. The research and pedagogical literatures offer teachers a multitude
of resources on methods, materials, and assessment: Figures such as Zoltán Kodály, Carl Orff, Émile Jacues-Dalcroze, and Edwin Gordon have developed entire methodological systems designed to train students to be musically literate; music theorists have devised a range of tonal and rhythmic solmizations to aid in the teaching process; and music researchers have examined the cognition of music-reading, the factors that contribute to successful sight-singing performance, and the effectiveness of various interventions.

If music educators want to encourage students to continue participation in singing over the course of their lifetime, one of the most important skills they can impart to them is the ability to sight-sing. Unfortunately, many students enter college with music literacy deficiencies, and may never have the opportunity to remedy them after finishing their degree. Therefore, it would seem, professors of music in colleges and universities have the same obligation as their colleagues in K–12 education: to endow their students with the skills of holistic musicianship, sight-singing perhaps most of all. Combined with excellent repertoire, outstanding pedagogy, and positive musical and social experiences, training in music literacy could be a hallmark of the highly effective collegiate choral conductor.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to describe the current state of sight-singing pedagogy in choral ensembles at degree-granting, accredited institutions in the United States. Participants ($N = 363$) were faculty members in departments, schools, and colleges of music accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) who conducted at least one curricular choral ensemble at the collegiate level. They responded to survey prompts designed to identify the prevalence of systematic approaches to sight-singing pedagogy, the relative use of different sight-singing solmization systems, the time spent on and materials employed with, the assessment tools used to measure individual student achievement, and their attitudes toward sight-singing instruction in the context of the collegiate choral rehearsal. A secondary purpose of this study was to describe unique approaches being successfully employed to improve music literacy among collegiate choristers. Toward this end, I interviewed the Directors of Choral Activities at three NASM-accredited universities and recorded their responses to thirteen interview prompts.

Participants

Participants in this study included respondents ($N = 363$) to a nationwide survey of collegiate choral conductors at degree-granting institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. From that pool, 114 participants responded that they “frequently” use a sight-singing system with their students. Of those 114 participants, 50 indicated that they were willing to be contacted to participate in a detailed analysis of their work in the area of sight-singing. Three conductors who volunteered had published research on sight-
singing so were chosen for more in-depth follow-up interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their unique approaches.

**Selection of Participants.** The population chosen for this study was choral conductors at degree-granting departments, schools, or colleges of music in the United States accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). NASM provides a complete list of its institutional members, as well as links to their web sites, at http://nasm.arts-accredit.org/index.jsp?page=List_Accredited_Members. At that page, I clicked through to each member’s web site; in some cases, NASM linked directly to the department, school, or college of music homepage, but in many cases I had to browse or search the web site of the college or university of which the music area is a part in order to find the departmental homepage.

Once at the music homepage for any institution, I employed several methods to find the names and e-mail addresses of each conductor of a curricular choral ensemble at the school. First, the music faculty listing page (if available) was consulted; second, the performing ensembles page (if available) was consulted. If neither was available, or if faculty conductors listed did not have available e-mail addresses, a search of the faculty directory for the umbrella college or university was conducted to obtain contact information. In some instances, contact information could still not be located, in which case the researcher searched Google and social media for alternate means of contact (e.g., if the conductor was involved in a community chorus, his or her e-mail address through that organization).

Only those faculty members who were listed as the actual conductor of a curricular choral ensemble at the college, university, or conservatory were chosen. This included conductors of all types—men’s voices, mixed voices, treble voices, auditioned ensembles, non-auditioned ensembles, and specialty ensembles (e.g., chamber, early music, gospel, jazz/pop/show,
liturgical, madrigal, symphonic, and world music). The only professors who were sometimes listed as choral conductors who were not included were (1) choral music education or choral methods instructors who did not presently conduct an actual curricular ensemble at the collegiate level and (2) conductors of opera and musical theatre who did not conduct any other kind of ensemble.

In all, 1,179 names and e-mail addresses from 657 member schools were collected. They were noted in a spreadsheet with the Microsoft Office Excel 2013 software, along with the name of the school at which they taught, the state in which they taught, and, if readily available, their position title or job description (e.g., the name of the ensemble(s) they conducted).

**Participant Demographics.** The total number of survey participants was $N = 363$. To encourage response rate, those conductors who do not use or very rarely use a “system” for music-reading in their choirs ($n = 112$) were asked to indicate that and only that. Therefore, the majority of this study refers only to the other survey participants ($n = 251$), those who indicated that they “occasionally” or “frequently” integrate a sight-singing system into their rehearsals. Respondents were not required to provide any data after the initial question about how often they use a sight-singing system in their choral rehearsals, so many of the statistics below are based on the smaller number of respondents to each survey question rather than the total number who participated.

Since the survey was distributed to collegiate choral conductors who teach in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, it is appropriate that respondents represented a geographically diverse population. Table 7 displays the number of respondents from each state as well as the percentage of survey participants that number represents. The nine states from which no replies were received were Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Vermont, West Virginia, and
Wyoming. It is important to note that the response rates listed here reflect only the 227 participants who indicated that they occasionally or frequently integrate a sight-singing system into their collegiate choral rehearsals, not the total 363 conductors who responded to the survey.

Not only did respondents represent a truly nationwide population, but they also came from a diversity of institution types, as presented in Figure 2. The institution classifications used in the survey are those published by the National Association of Schools of Music in their accredited institutional members directory list. Worth noting is the fact that survey participants represented all of the eight different institutional classifications used by NASM. In addition to coming from a variety of institution types, respondents also came from a variety of institution sizes. Table 8 shows the number and percentage of participants by the size of their music division, as measured by the number of majors in their department, school, or college of music. Table 9 shows the number and percentage of participants by the size of their entire college or university, as measured by the number of students studying full-time at their institution as a whole.

Likewise, participants were the conductors of diverse types of collegiate choral ensembles, as seen in Figure 3. (Respondents were asked to select all types that applied.) Fifty-six percent (n = 127) of respondents indicated that their department, school, or college of music offered a graduate degree program in music, while 44% (n = 100) taught at a school without a graduate degree program in music. Of the conductors who taught at a school with graduate music students, 74% (n = 93) answered that there were graduate music students in at least one of the choral ensembles they conducted, while 26% (n = 33) indicated that they did not conduct graduate music students in any of their choirs. Forty-one respondents indicated both that they conducted graduate music students in at least one of their choirs and used a sight-singing
Table 7

Survey Respondents by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Surveys Sent</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<td>7.9%</td>
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<td>22.8%</td>
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<td>18.8%</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
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<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
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<td>California</td>
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<td>4.8%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
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<td>4.0%</td>
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<td>26.5%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.5%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.2%</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
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<td>1.8%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
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<td>South Carolina</td>
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<td>1.3%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
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<td>1.3%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>1.3%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 7 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Surveys Sent</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>227</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Survey participants (N = 227) by institution type.
Table 8

Survey Respondents by Size of Music Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Music Majors</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49 or fewer</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-149</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-199</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-249</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-299</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-399</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-499</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-599</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-749</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750-999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 or more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

Survey Respondents by Size of Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Full-Time Students</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000 or fewer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000-1,999</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000-2,999</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000-3,999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000-4,999</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000-9,999</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-19,999</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000-39,999</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,000 or more</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>223</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“system” as a key rehearsal tool, and of that number a remarkable 100% \(n = 41\) responded that they taught sight-singing to the ensembles they conducted of which graduate music students were members.
Participants were also diverse in their levels of experience and backgrounds. Table 10 shows the amount of experience respondents indicated, as measured by the number of years they had taught in higher education.

### Table 10

**Survey Participants by Experience Teaching in Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 or fewer</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>227</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 displays the level of education respondents indicated. After indicating their level of education, all respondents who specified that they had at least one degree in music were asked if
any of their degrees were in music education. Seventy-seven percent \((n = 173)\) answered “Yes”; 23% \((n = 52)\) answered “No.” Of those 173 respondents with a degree in music education, 154 (89%) indicated that they had taught choral/vocal music at the primary and/or secondary levels, while 19 (11%) had not. Eighty-nine percent \((n = 154)\) of those with experience teaching choral/vocal music at the K–12 level answered a follow-up question about how many years they did so. Their responses are recorded in Figure 4.

**Interview Participants.** Following the collection of the numerical/quantitative data, three experienced collegiate choral conductors were contacted for in-depth Skype or telephone interviews to document their sight-singing practices with the collegiate choral ensembles they conducted. Each subject provided demographic data, which is presented below by letter, identifying each subject as “Conductor A,” “Conductor B,” and “Conductor C.”

- Conductor A was a Director of Choral Activities at a small, public comprehensive university in the Midwest who was transitioning to a new, similar position at a mid-size,
public comprehensive university in the Southeast. In addition to working as a choral conductor, Conductor A is active in giving music literacy workshops and has published a book on sight-singing. (Appendix B contains the transcript of this conversation.)

- Conductor B is the Director of Choral Activities at a large, comprehensive public university in the South Atlantic. (Appendix C contains the transcript of this conversation.)

- Conductor C has been Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at a small, public comprehensive university in the Northeast for 25 years. Conductor B’s Concert Choir has appeared regularly at state, regional, national, and international choral conventions. (Appendix D contains the transcript of this conversation.)

**Survey Development**

Consulting surveys used by Demorest (2004), Myers (2008), and Smith (1998) and literature on questionnaire research (Patten, 2011), I designed the survey instrument used in the study, using my institution’s subscription to Qualtrics Survey Software. Qualtrics is a Web-based survey development and distribution platform. My survey is reproduced in Appendix E.
Compared with its models, this new instrument (1) takes advantage of improved survey research technology that has become available in the seven years since the most recent model was published, (2) provides great flexibility in participant response, and (3) replaces some questions on conductors’ personal sight-singing ability and training with inquiries designed to measure conductors’ (a) perceived benefits of their approach and (b) longitudinal practices related to sight-singing and systematic instruction on concert literature over the course of a semester.

Divided into three sections (“blocks”), this survey was unique in that the first question, “Do you address sight-reading in your choral rehearsals?” offered subjects a single-response “opt out”—if their answer was “No”—while still providing us with a highly relevant data point. This was done in the hopes of achieving a relatively high response rate from survey participants. Those participants who answered “Yes” to this initial question were taken to the rest of the survey.

In the first block, subjects were asked to provide consent. The Consent to Participate form was copied from the human subjects consent form template provided by the Institutional Review Board at Florida State University and modified as necessary for this study. In the second and third blocks, participants were asked a variety of multiple choice, matrix table, slider, rank order, and free response questions. Importantly, the survey was programmed to ask questions of participants depending on their responses to earlier prompts. In this way, each subject avoided irrelevant or redundant queries. The second block focused on questions related to sight-singing practices, including systems of solmization, amount of time spent on sight-singing and sight-singing instruction, materials and assessment measures used, perceived benefits of sight-singing in the choral rehearsal, and conductor attitudes toward choral sight-reading. The third block requested a variety of classification data, including location, type of institution, teaching
situation, type of choir(s) conducted, and conductor training and experience. The survey also asked volunteers who would be willing to contribute to the study by being interviewed or observed to provide their name, institutional affiliation, and e-mail address.

**Procedure**

**Committee Approval.** A prospectus detailing this methodology was approved by the researcher’s supervisory committee on October 7, 2014. The members of the committee suggested changes to the survey instrument to simplify it for respondents. The researcher revised the survey instrument (the final version of which appears in Appendix E) and then applied to the Florida State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Subjects Committee for review. The IRB Human Subjects Committee approved the researcher to conduct survey research and follow-up interviews with selected participants. The human subjects research approval memorandum appears in Appendix A. The interview prompts approved by the Human Subjects Committee and used with selected participants in follow-up interviews appears in Appendix F.

**Survey Distribution.** On May 17, 2015, a cover letter (Appendix G) and the survey were sent to the 1,179 e-mail addresses on the subjects list via Qualtrics Survey Software. Of those 1,179 members of the population invited to participate, 88 e-mails immediately “bounced,” i.e., their servers rejected them. Therefore, the overall population from which survey participants were drawn was determined to be 1,091 (1,1179 – 88 = 1,091). During the next week, Qualtrics recorded 201 complete responses. After one week, on May 24, 2015, a follow-up letter (Appendix H) was sent to each subject that had not yet responded (as reported by the tracking algorithms in Qualtrics), requesting their participation. Between May 24 and June 7, 2015, another 98 subjects recorded complete responses to the survey. On June 7, 2015, a second follow-up e-mail—a final reminder (Appendix I)—was sent to all who had still not responded,
stating that the survey would be open for only two more days and requesting their participation. During that time, an additional 64 participants responded to the survey, for a total of 363 participants. On June 9, 2015, the survey was closed at 11:59 p.m.

The response rate was 33.3% (363 participants ÷ 1,091 invited). Each participant who successfully completed the survey was sent an automatically programmed thank-you e-mail via Qualtrics, which appears in Appendix J.

**Interview Protocol.** Survey participants who indicated that a sight-singing system is a key rehearsal tool for them (n = 114) were invited as a part of the Qualtrics survey to provide their contact information if they were willing to be contacted to participate in a detailed analysis of their work in this area. Ninety-two subjects responded to this prompt, 54% (n = 50) in the affirmative. Of those 50 survey participants, three were selected for follow-up interviews based on their published research on sight-singing:

- Conductor A was interviewed via Skype on June 15, 2015. The interview was one hour, eight minutes in duration.
- Conductor B was interviewed via telephone on June 17, 2015. The interview was one hour, two minutes in duration.
- Conductor C was interviewed via telephone on June 18, 2015. The interview was 30 minutes in duration.

The thirteen IRB-approved interview prompts (Appendix F) were e-mailed to each conductor prior to our interview for their review and preparation. At the beginning of each interview, each participant verbally granted me permission to record our conversation. The Skype interview was video recorded using the two-way mode in the “Free Video Call Recorder for Skype” app by DVDVideoSoft, version 1.2.28. For the telephone interviews, subjects were put on speakerphone
and the entire conversation was recorded using the “Sound Recorder” app for Microsoft Windows, version 6.1.

Using the digital recording files of these interviews, I transcribed each into Microsoft Word documents in script format, then edited each to anonymize each response (i.e., remove any identifying data). Each interview participant was e-mailed the edited version of their transcript. Conductors B and C replied with several revisions and clarifications which were incorporated into the final versions of the transcripts; these appear in the appendices.

**Data Analysis.** The data collected were summarized and analyzed, the results of which appear in the next chapter. Computation was done on VassarStats (Lowry, 1998). Data were organized graphically where practical to aid in interpretation (American Psychological Association, 2010). The $\chi^2$ Test for Multiple Independent Samples was used to test for significant differences between nominal data collected and a Two-Factor Analysis of Variance with Repeated Measures on One Factor tested for significant differences and correlations between ordinal data collected. For one-way analysis of ordinal data, the Mann-Whitney $U$ test was chosen (Madsen & Moore, 1978). For all data analyzed, frequencies, means, and standard deviations were reported as appropriate. For all statistical analysis, an *a priori* alpha level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was assumed for establishing significance.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study was designed to describe the current state of sight-singing pedagogy in choral ensembles at accredited American departments, schools, and colleges of music. A survey of collegiate choral conductors was designed and distributed nationwide. In total, 363 responded, a 33.3% response rate. Substantial data were collected from conductors who indicated they occasionally integrated a sight-singing system into their choral rehearsals for specific purposes ($n = 137$) and those who indicated they frequently used a sight-singing system as a key rehearsal tool ($n = 114$). In addition, interviews with three survey participants were conducted for a more in-depth examination of their unique philosophies and practices. The data collected and analysis thereof appears below, structured by the eight research questions from chapter one.

Research Question 1

What percentage of collegiate choral conductors have adopted a “systematic” approach to music-reading and sight-singing in their ensembles?

To answer Research Question 1, all survey respondents were asked, “Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing ‘system’ (e.g., solfège, scale degrees, letter names, etc.) in your choral rehearsals?” and given three options from which to select (Table 12). While those who occasionally integrate a sight-singing “system” into their rehearsals slightly outnumber those who fall into either of the other two categories, the chi-square test for multiple independent samples showed no significant difference between the three conditions, $p = .201$. 


75
Table 12

Respondents & “Systematic” Approach to Sight-Singing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not use or very rarely use a &quot;system&quot; for music-reading with my students.</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I occasionally integrate a sight-singing &quot;system&quot; into my rehearsals for specific purposes.</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently use a sight-singing &quot;system&quot; with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me.</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a later section of the survey, participants were asked, “To what groups do you not teach sight-singing systematically?” Only the 114 respondents who answered that they frequently use a sight-singing “system” with their students were shown this prompt, and 89 (78.1%) replied this follow-up question; 79.8% (n = 71) answered that they taught sight-singing to all of their choral ensembles.

Research Question 2

What solmization systems are currently being employed in collegiate choruses?

Only respondents who answered that they “occasionally” or “frequently” integrated a sight-singing “system” into their rehearsals were asked the questions about their sight-singing practices that follow—the survey’s second block. Survey participants who conducted more than one collegiate choral ensemble were asked to generalize their responses for what they considered their “best practices.”

Tonal/Melodic Solmization. Participants were asked, “What solmization system do you most often use for major-key, tonal sight-singing?” Of the 230 respondents, 186 (80.9%), reported that they most frequently use movable-Do solfège. All other responses were selected by 6% or fewer of participants. Responses are represented graphically in Figure 5. Analysis of these
data suggest a highly significant preference for movable-Do solfège, \( \chi^2 = 684.77, df = 5, p < .001 \).

**Figure 5.** Use of major-key tonal solmization systems \((N = 230)\).

Options reported by eight of the ten respondents who selected *other* mostly included clarification that those conductors’ adoption of particular systems is situation-specific, using some combination of movable-Do solfège, fixed-Do solfège, scale degree numbers, letter names, and neutral syllables. Of the free-response items provided, only two offered a system other than the five pre-selected options. One said, “The formal study of sight singing happens in specific classes designed for that purpose and administered by the theory department.” The other answered that he or she did not use a formal solmization system but had singers use tuning forks to find their pitches.

Participants were asked, “What solmization system do you most often use for minor-key, tonal sight-singing?” One hundred twelve out of 228 total respondents (49.1%) indicated that their most frequent solmization system is movable-Do solfège with “La” as tonic. The next most preferred system was also movable-Do with “Do” as tonic, preferred by 68 (29.8%) of participants. These data are presented graphically in Figure 6. Analysis again suggested that in
comparison to other systems, there is a highly significant preference for movable-Do solfège (tonic is “La”), $\chi^2 = 396.84, df = 7, p < .001$. If all other choices besides movable-Do solfège (either “Do”- or “La”-based) are removed, there is still a significant difference in the preference for tonic is “La,” $\chi^2 = 10.28, df = 1, p = .001$.

Figure 6. Use of minor-key tonal solmization systems ($N = 228$).

Options reported by 13 of the 14 respondents who selected other mostly included clarification that those conductors’ adoption of particular systems is situation-specific, using some combination of movable-Do solfège (tonic is “Do”), movable-Do solfège (tonic is “La”), fixed-Do solfège, neutral syllables, and letter names. Several participants clarified that their choice of Do- or La-based minor depended on whether the piece tonicized the relative or parallel minor key, or on whether the piece was functional (Do-based) or modal (La-based). The one free-response item provided that did not align with any of the pre-selected options again noted the use not of a formal solmization system but rather of tuning forks to find pitches.

**Rhythmic Solmization.** Participants were asked, “What solmization system do you most often use for rhythmic sight-reading?” Just as the data demonstrate a significant preference for one tonal solmization system in both major and minor modes over all other systems, they
likewise suggest a significantly higher frequency of use of a single rhythmic solmization system: “instrumental” syllables (“1-e-&-a 2”). Of the 230 respondents, 137 (59.6%) preferred this system, while two systems—note value names and Orff—garnered not a single response. Therefore, calculations for the chi-square “goodness of fit” test excluded those two options and found that $\chi^2 = 404.26, df = 6, p < .001$. Figure 7 shows the data for rhythmic solmization systems.

![Figure 7. Use of rhythmic solmization systems ($N = 230$).](image)

*Other* was selected by 9.1% ($n = 21$) of respondents. Interestingly, many chose to type in options that had been included in the pre-selected options, perhaps because they did not recognize the label used in the survey (e.g., “Shaw count singing” equates to the survey’s “instrumental”). Some explained that they used multiple systems. Seven respondents provided systems not offered as pre-selected options:

1. “Clapping, stepping”
2. “Down-ups: Down-Ee-Up-Ee”
3. “I invent one as suggested by the given rhythmic gestures of the piece at hand”
4. “My own systems which uses [*sic*] arabic numbers to account for each subdivision”
5. “None”
6. “Speaking the text in rhythm”
7. “Tometics 1 neh 2 neh 3 neh 4 neh; 1 nah nee 2 nah nee, etc”
From the data, then, we can conclude that although there is no significant difference in the number of collegiate choral conductors who use a system (a) never, (b) occasionally, or (c) frequently, among those conductors who do use a system, either occasionally or frequently, there is a significant preference for movable-Do solfège in tonal reading and instrumental syllables (“1-e-&-a 2”) in rhythmic reading.

Research Question 3

How much time is being spent on sight-singing instruction in collegiate choral ensembles?

Only respondents who indicated that they “frequently” employ a sight-singing system in their choral rehearsals (n = 114) were shown the prompts designed to answer this question. Participants were asked, “How many days per week do you provide sight-singing instruction in a collegiate choral ensemble?” and asked to provide a datum for beginning of term, middle of term, and end of term. Figure 8 shows the mean responses for each: 3.115 days per week at beginning of term, 2.489 days per week at middle of term, and 1.88 days per week at end of term. Since Figure 4 suggests that the number of days per week these conductors devoted a part of their time to sight-singing decreased over the course of the typical semester, a one-way correlated analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the significance of this decrease. Because only 83 of the 114 (73.7%) participants who were asked this question provided data for all three periods in the term, only their responses (i.e., n = 83 for Beginning of term, n = 83 for Middle of term, and n = 83 for End of term) were considered so a weighted-means ANOVA for equivalent samples could be used. Results of this test showed a significant difference between these three values, $F(2, 164) = 59.11$, $p < .001$. The post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated a
Figure 8. Number of days per week sight-singing instruction is offered over the course of a semester.

difference between all three means (i.e., beginning of term vs. middle of term, beginning of term vs. end of term, and middle of term vs. end of term) at the $p < .01$ level of significance.

Having been asked about the number of days per week they provide sight-singing instruction in a collegiate choral ensemble, the same 114 conductors were next asked, “On average, how many minutes per rehearsal do you spend on sight-singing (including singing concert repertoire at sight or using pitch or rhythm syllables)?” Figure 9 displays the mean responses and again suggests a steady decline over the course of the semester. Eight-six of the 114 conductors (75.4%) provided responses for all three periods of the term, so their data was extracted and another one-way, weighted-means, correlated ANOVA was used to test the difference. The test found significance, $F (2, 166) = 68.02, p < .001$. The Tukey HSD test suggested a significant difference between all three values, $p < .01$.

Research Question 4

What materials are being used to teach sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles?
Again for these questions, only the respondents who indicated that they “frequently”
employ a sight-singing system in their choral rehearsals ($n = 114$) were shown the prompts
designed to investigate this query.

Participants were asked, “What materials do you use to teach sight-singing?” A total of
97 (85.1%) replied; Table 13 displays their responses.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choral literature being prepared for performance</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choral literature not intended for performance</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published sight-singing materials</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-created sight-singing materials</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprinted exercises or drills</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Respondents were asked to select all options that applied, so percentages equal
greater than 100%.

Thus it is apparent that a large majority (88%) of conductors who frequently use a systematic
sight-singing approach in their rehearsals use choral literature being prepared for performance to
teach sight-singing and their system. All other materials were used by a minority of collegiate choral conductors. If we assume that each of the six options would be used equally, the chi-square test finds that this is a significant difference, $\chi^2 = 88.16$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$.

The responses of the eight conductors who selected other were:

1. “All of the above”
2. “Bach Chorales”
3. “Chorales”
4. “Exercises from Hindemith’s Elementary Training for Musicians”
5. “Hymns”
6. “Kodaly hand signs embedded into conducting”
8. “Self-composed performance literature”

Next, the 114 conductors who regularly use a sight-singing system were asked to rank, via a “drag and drop” prompt, the materials they use to teach sight-singing: “Please ‘drag and drop’ the materials you use to teach sight-singing to indicate those you use most often, with those you use most frequently at the top and those you use least frequently at the bottom.” For our purposes, responses were coded, with materials ranked at the top equaling 1 and those at the bottom equaling 6.

![Figure 10. Conductors’ rankings of sight-singing materials.](image-url)
Although only 46 conductors (40.4%) chose to respond, their answers provide an insight into the relative importance of different sources of sight-singing material. As Figure 10 shows, more conductors agreed that choral literature being prepared for performance was their most-often-used source of sight-singing instructional material than agreed about any other data point.

Conductors who indicated that they used published sight-singing materials were asked to specify the ones they used regularly. Their responses included:

1. Bach cantatas
2. Bach chorales
3. *Bicinia Hungarica* (Kodály & Young, 1962)
4. *Elementary Training for Musicians* (Hindemith, 1946)
6. *The Folk Song Sight Singing Series* (Crowe, Lawton & Whittaker, 1933)
8. *Melodia* (Cole & Lewis, 1909)
11. *Music Reading Unlimited* (Munn, 1997)
14. SightReadingFactory.com (Gracenotes)
15. SightSing.com (Masterworks Press)
18. *Solfège des Solfèges* (Danhauser, 1891)
20. TotalChoirResources.com (Hopkins & Mulgrew)

**Research Question 5**

*What assessment measures are being used to evaluate sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles?*

Again, for these prompts data were sought only from those conductors (*n* = 114) who indicated that they frequently used a sight-singing system.
In order to find insight into this, the Qualtrics survey first asked this of participants: “Do you individually assess your students’ sight-singing?” Table 14 displays the responses of the 96 (84.2%) subjects who answered. Analysis of these data demonstrate a significant difference between these frequencies, $\chi^2 = 16.94$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$.

Table 14

*Individual Assessment of Students’ Sight-Singing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine what assessment tools were being used by these conductors, those who answered “Yes” or “Sometimes” to the previous prompt ($n = 55$) were next asked, “What sight-singing assessment measures do you use?” One hundred percent of respondents to whom this prompt appeared provided a response. Figure 11 shows their responses; note that respondents were asked to select all that applied.

*Figure 11. Use of sight-singing assessment measures.*
These data (except the four respondents who answered *other*) were analyzed and demonstrated a significant difference, $\chi^2 = 72.1$, $df = 7$, $p < .001$. Three of the four who answered *other* specified that they evaluated sight-singing achievement during auditions and one specified that he or she assessed sight-singing in duets.

**Research Question 6**

*What are the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors toward sight-singing instruction??*

To provide insight on this research question, two different populations were queried: only those who frequently use a system ($n = 114$) were asked questions about the perceived benefits of a systematic approach while both those who frequently use a system ($n = 114$) and those who occasionally use a system ($n = 137$) were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of attitude statements ($N = 251$).

**Benefits of Systematic Approach.** The survey asked, “What are the benefits of a ‘systematic’ approach to music-reading or sight-singing in your rehearsals?” and provided respondents with eight pre-selected options of which they could choose all that applied and offer their own response in the *other* category. Ninety-five conductors (83.3%) responded (Table 15). A chi-square test was again used to test for significant difference between these responses. Because so many conductors selected so many of these options as benefits of their system, the differences between them was non-significant.

However, the survey anticipated that this might be the case and asked participants to rate these benefits on a 7-point Likert scale on which 1 equaled *not at all important* and 7 equaled *extremely important*. Table 16 displays the number of responses each statement received and the mean importance-level value assigned to each, along with the standard deviation from the mean. A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference in these data. The Tukey HSD test
Table 15

*Perceived Benefits of a “Systematic” Approach to Music-Reading*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It enables the choir to learn music faster once the system is learned.</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is important for future music educators to see systematic</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sight-singing instruction in action.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A common sight-singing system makes our rehearsals more efficient.</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe a common sight-singing system is important for my students</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for pedagogical reasons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It empowers my students for lifelong music-making.</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many of my students do not already possess good music-reading skills</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and my approach improves them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It reinforces the method used in the students’ aural skills/ear-</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training/sight-singing coursework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A common sight-singing system improves our performances.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Participants were allowed to select all that applied; thus, percentages equal more than 100%.

showed the greatest difference between Statement B ("It enables the choir to learn music faster once the system is learned") and Statement G ("A common sight-singing system improves our performances"), but at $p = .213$, this was insufficient to establish significance. Figure 12 graphically demonstrates the mean scores of each perceived benefit. Since the scale in Figure 12 extends from 5.8 to 6.7, it is useful for reference to know that the value of 5 equated to *somewhat important*, the value of 6 to *very important*, and the value of 7 to *extremely important* on the Likert scale measurement. Refer to Table 16 a legend for the statement categories in Figure 12.

All 14 respondents who indicated *other* perceived benefits of a “systematic” approach to music-reading or sight-singing in their rehearsals offered specific additional advantages:

1. "Although the first rehearsals with sight-singing or sight-singing preparation slow the rehearsal, it helps novices understand that they can learn to read, and encourages more participation from everyone in the ensemble”
2. “Choral tone is improved by solmization”
3. “Ear-training/intonation skills improved (e.g. high leading tones)”
4. “Ensemble tuning, tone development”
5. “Intonation”
6. “Intonation improves; use multiple keys simultaneously”
7. “It allows students to recognize patterns across different keys and begin to conceive of music harmonically and theoretically, rather than naively”
8. “It complements/lays a foundation for more sophisticated assessments of theoretical/compositional components of choral literature”
9. “It improves intonation, rhythmic unity, and blend”
10. “It improves the accuracy of the music we learn!”
11. “Moveable do solfege improves intonation and musicality”
12. “Much more readily moves us out of technical mastery and into performance and flow states”
13. “Solfegge [sic] system greatly improves intonation”
14. “They like it!”

### Table 16

*Ratings of Perceived Benefits of a “Systematic” Approach*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>6.393</td>
<td>1.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6.582</td>
<td>1.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>6.366</td>
<td>1.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>6.296</td>
<td>1.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6.222</td>
<td>1.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6.253</td>
<td>1.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>6.081</td>
<td>1.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>6.122</td>
<td>0.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.500</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents for whom a sight-singing system is a key rehearsal tool (*n* = 114) were also offered
Figure 12. Mean scores of perceived benefits of sight-singing systems.

the opportunity to elaborate on the benefits of the particular systematic approach to music-reading that they used. Forty-one (36.0%) participants provided free-response data for this query; their responses appear in Appendix K. Additionally, when given opportunity “to make any remarks, notes, or clarifications for the researcher,” 46 participants left free responses, which appear in Appendix L.

**Agreement with Attitude Statements.** Seeking to gauge the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors toward sight-singing instruction, the survey next asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). As previously noted, unlike the prior series of questions, this task was presented to both the 114 conductors who specified they frequently employed a systematic approach to music-reading in their ensembles as well as the 137 conductors who indicated that they would
occasionally integrate a system into choral rehearsals for specific purposes, for a total $n$ of 251. Of these, 225 (89.6%) respondents provided data for each statement; the means of their responses are represented graphically in Figure 13. Table 17 displays the total number of responses for each classification from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* for each statement, as well as their mean values and standard deviations.

![Figure 13](image.png)

*Figure 13. Level of agreement with sight-singing instruction attitude statements.*

Two separate two-factor ANOVAs with one between-subjects variable and one within-subjects variable were used to analyze the data presented in Table 17. For the first, the four statements with the highest standard deviation were extracted: (a) “The sight-singing system taught in theory classes at my institution is ideal for transfer to the choral rehearsal” ($SD = 1.73$); (b) “Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for all collegiate choral ensembles” ($SD = 1.70$); (c) “The aural skills/eartraining curriculum at my institution is excellent” ($SD = 1.63$); and (d) “Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles” ($SD = 1.33$). The means for each of these statements separated by conductors who occasionally use a sight-singing system ($n_1 = 132$) versus those who frequently do ($n_2 = 93$) appear in Figure 14. A two-way ANOVA with repeated measures allowed for multiple comparisons between
Table 17
Sight-Singing Instruction Attitude Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for all collegiate choral ensembles.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students generally enjoy instructional time devoted to sight-singing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sight-singing system taught in theory classes at my institution is ideal for transfer to the choral rehearsal.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aural skills/eartraining curriculum at my institution is excellent.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral singers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The values in the top row represent Likert scale level of agreements (1 = “Strongly Disagree”; 2 = “Disagree”; 3 = “Somewhat Disagree”; 4 = “Neither Agree nor Disagree”; 5 = “Somewhat Agree”; 6 = “Agree”; 7 = “Strongly Agree”)
these data. First, it compared the attitudes toward sight-singing instruction of conductors who occasionally teach it in their choral rehearsals versus those who frequently do and found a significant difference in level of agreement between the four attitude statements, $F(1, 224) = 4.34, p < .04$. It also indicated a significant difference within subjects, i.e., between the levels of agreement with the four attitude statements, $F(3, 669) = 130.14, p < .001$. Finally, the analysis revealed a significant interaction between factors, $F(3, 669) = 4.2, p < .006$. As is obvious from Figure 14, of these four attitude statements, conductors who occasionally use a system had the most significant difference with conductors who frequently use a system over whether sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles. The mean score of those who occasionally use a system indicates that they roughly agree that sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles, while the mean score
of those who \textit{frequently} use a system indicates that roughly they \textit{neither agree nor disagree} with that statement.

Since calculations demonstrated significance between the first four attitude statements and between the two groups, a second two-way ANOVA was used to measure significance between populations on the final two attitude statements, (a) “Students generally enjoy instructional time devoted to sight-singing” and (b) “Sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral singers.” The means for each of these statements separated by conductors who occasionally use a sight-singing system ($n_1 = 132$) versus those who frequently do ($n_2 = 93$) appears in Figure 15.

![Figure 15](image)

\textit{Figure 15. Additional attitude statements: “Occasional” vs. “frequent” system users}

Again, a two-way ANOVA determined significance both between and within subjects as well as significance in the interaction between the two. Analysis revealed a significant difference
between subjects, i.e., occasional versus frequent system users, \( F(1, 224) = 26.44, p < .001 \). Within subjects, i.e., the difference in agreement with each attitude statement within each group, analysis showed \( F(1, 224) = 291.23, p < .001 \). For the interaction between groups and the repeated-measures variable, \( F(1, 224) = 13.93, p < .001 \). In other words, significance was found (a) between these two attitude statements, (b) between the two samples on each statement, and (c) in the interaction between variables. It is interesting to note that confidence of significance is even greater on these measures than on those from Figure 14, despite these two attitude statements possessing smaller standard deviations when the entire pool of \( n = 225 \) was considered.

Research Question 7

Are there any correlations between the sight-singing practices or attitudes of collegiate choral conductors and their training or education?

To examine whether there was a difference in the sight-singing practices of collegiate choral conductors based on their backgrounds in music education, first the conductors who indicated that they possessed at least one degree in music education were compared with those who indicated that they did not. Among those with a music education degree (\( n = 172 \)), 95 (55.2\%) used a sight-singing system occasionally and 77 (44.8\%) used one frequently. Among those without a music education degree (\( n = 52 \)), 35 (67.3\%) used a system occasionally and only 17 (32.7\%) used one frequently. This is represented graphically in Figure 16. For those with at least one degree in music education, a chi-square test found no significant difference between the number who occasionally versus the number who frequently employ a sight-singing system in their choral rehearsals, \( p = .195 \). For those who did not have a degree in music education, however, the same test revealed a significant preference for occasional integration of a sight-
Figure 16. Sight-singing practices, music educators vs. non-music educators.

singing system into the choral rehearsal rather than *frequently* doing so, $\chi^2 = 5.56$, $df = 1$, $p = .018$.

Next, the populations were separated according to importance value they placed on the six perceived benefits statements from Table 16. Table 18 below reproduces the data with populations separated. (For remaining tables, figures, and discussions, *music educators* refers to participants with at least one degree in music education while *non-music educators* refers to those who do not have a degree in music education.) Because the sample sizes differed so drastically and because the data were ordinal, not intervallic, in nature, an ANOVA was deemed inappropriate, so eight separate Mann-Whitney $U$ analyses were conducted to test for difference between music educators versus non-music educators on each of the eight perceived benefits statements (analysis was not attempted for the seven total participants who rated *other*). For
Table 18

*Ratings of Perceived Benefits of a “Systematic” Approach, Music Educators vs. Non-Music Educators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Music Educators</th>
<th>Non-Music Educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A I think it is important for future music educators to see systematic</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sight-singing instruction in action.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B It enables the choir to learn music faster once the system is learned.</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C I believe a common sight-singing system is important for my students</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for pedagogical reasons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D A common sight-singing system makes our rehearsals more efficient.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E It empowers my students for lifelong music-making.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Many of my students do not already possess good music-reading skills</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and my approach improves them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G A common sight-singing system improves our performances.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H It reinforces the method used in the students’ aural skills/ear-training/</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sight-singing coursework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Underlined means denote significant difference, music educators vs. non-music educators.

Statement E there was a significant difference, $U = 343$, $z = 1.78$, $p = .038$, and for Statement G there was a significant difference, $U = 287$, $z = 1.76$, $p = .039$, but for all other statements, no
significant difference between the two samples could be found. Therefore, we can conclude that on the perceived benefits of systematic sight-singing instruction in the collegiate choral rehearsal, music educators and non-music educators feel roughly equivalent, except that music educators feel more strongly that such instruction empowers their students for lifelong music-making and improves choral performance.

Finally, the populations were separated according to their level of agreement on the six attitude statements from Table 17. Their mean scores are reported below in Figures 17 and 18. For the four attitude statements in Figure 17, a two-way ANOVA with one between-subjects variable and one within-subjects variable indicated a significant difference within subjects, i.e., between each attitude statement compared with the others, $F(3, 672) = 845.22, p < .001$, but

![Figure 17. Attitude statements: Music educators vs. non-music educators.](image-url)
found no significant difference between subjects, i.e., between music educators compared with non-music educators, nor any significant interaction between variables.

For the two additional attitude statements in Figure 18, significance could not be established between subjects, i.e., music educators versus non-music educators. However, a two-way ANOVA with repeated measures on one factor did find significance within subjects, i.e., between the two attitude statements, \( F(1, 225) = 1,360.5, p < .001 \), as well as a significant interaction between factors, \( F(1, 223) = 27.95, p < .001 \).

![Figure 18. Additional attitude statements: Music educators vs. non-music educators.](image)

**Research Question 8**

*What are some of the unique approaches being successfully employed to improve music literacy among collegiate choristers?*
In order to explore the final research question, we move away from the survey results and look to the follow-up interviews that were conducted with three of the survey participants. These subjects, anonymously identified by letter, were:

- **CONDUCTOR A:** A Director of Choral Activities at a small, public comprehensive university in the Midwest who was transitioning to a new, similar position at a mid-size, public comprehensive university in the Southeast. In addition to working as a choral conductor, she is active in giving music literacy workshops and has published a book on sight-singing. (Appendix B contains the transcript of this conversation.)

- **CONDUCTOR B:** The Director of Choral Activities at a large, comprehensive public university in the South Atlantic. (Appendix C contains the transcript of this conversation.)

- **CONDUCTOR C:** A Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at a small, public comprehensive university in the Northeast for 25 years. Her Concert Choir has appeared regularly at state, regional, national, and international choral conventions. (Appendix D contains the transcript of this conversation.)

Their unique approaches were explored via 13 interview prompts (Appendix F), which is how we will structure the data that illuminate this study’s final research question.

**Interview Prompt 1.** *Describe your approach to establishing a reading program in the collegiate choral setting.*

CONDUCTOR A emphasizes the necessity of making students realize “that they need to read.” In addition to helping them realize that need, Conductor A motivates students by explaining to them how much more rewarding an experience choir can be when all singers are musically independent, instead of reliant on leaders who are. In her words, “They have to believe
it is something that will enhance their lives.” She also relates musical literacy to linguistic literacy.

Because Conductor A equates musical literacy with linguistic literacy, her process to establishing a reading program is similar to the process a language arts teacher uses to educate a fully literate reader of language. At its most basic level, her process includes:

1. Neutral (teacher) to neutral (students)
2. Syllable (teacher) to syllable (students)
3. Neutral (teacher) to syllable (students)
4. Improvisation
5. Games
6. Dictation
7. Physical motioning and activities

In her men’s and women’s training choirs, she teaches these skills all semester long, often beginning the semester with a “boot camp” to familiarize students with the systems they will be using over the course of the semester. She also pairs weaker students with stronger ones who can guide them when they are struggling and answer their questions. She emphasized the need to select easier music when students are first learning these skills so they can be successful with them.

CONDUCTOR B, like Conductor A, identified one of the keys to establishment of a collegiate choral reading program as first helping students to see that they were not as proficient musically as they thought they were. After she demonstrated that they needed to become better readers, she worked to convince students that a “culture of literacy” was necessary for them to perform “at par with the top performing ensembles in the U.S.”

In order to achieve “an audatorially literature culture” “based on audiation and internal hearing,” Conductor B met her students at their level of achievement and began with easier music with which they could be successful, another strategy she shares with Conductor A. In
addition to tailoring her repertoire choices to her pedagogical goals, Conductor B also constructed her warm-ups according to the principles of Kodály’s methodology. By the time Conductor B programmed her first masterwork—the Brahms Requiem—as Director of Choral Activities at her university, her students learned every note of the piece on solfège. “It made them a little crazy,” she says, “but I didn’t care. . . . We had to do this music without a huge margin of error” and solfège promoted pitch accuracy. Part of fostering success in reading music in this way was to foster a culture of safety, in which students feel safe to make mistakes and eventually become “fearless” at trying to read on syllables. For Conductor B, “solfège and sight-reading is always a first step of the process” because “auditory thinking and behaviors” must become habit before work on advanced concepts such as intonation and blend can be achieved.

CONDUCTOR C confessed that she does not “have a methodology in terms of teaching them how to [sight-sing] from square one, step-by-step.” Instead, she relies on the musical leadership of the students in her choirs who are taking or have taken music theory and aural skills classes: “I take advantage of the fact that many are in the theory program.” However, she emphasizes that she is a process-driven conductor, and use of sight-singing systems is an important part of her process. She assigns a graduate student in music or senior music major to tutor non-music majors who do not have access to formal theory and sight-singing coursework and are uncomfortable reading music with solfège.

**Interview Prompt 2. What is your “belief system” about the importance and relevance of teaching reading to music majors and non-music majors?**

CONDUCTOR A says that for a conductor not to teach music literacy to choral students sends three messages: (a) that the conductor doesn’t think the students can learn to read, (b) that he or she doesn’t deem students worthy of the time and energy it will take to teach them to read,
and (c) that it is not his or her job to teach music literacy. Conductor A’s philosophy about the importance and relevance of teaching reading is based on a fundamental disagreement with those three messages. For her, then, teaching reading to her choristers is “essential,” as essential as linguistic literacy is to an educator in the language arts. Because of her belief that producing literate musicians is a crucial component of her job as a choral conductor, she feels just as strongly about instilling the same skills in non-music majors. She blames a lack of musical literacy for the decline of church and community choirs, and sees college as the final opportunity most students will have to acquire the skills she so highly values. She therefore feels that it is her responsibility as a college professor to remediate until all of her students are capable and competent sight-singers.

CONDUCTOR B emphasized the need for a systematic approach to music-learning for the sake of a developmental hierarchy and so students can transfer skills between pieces. Her students take great pride in their reading, she says, and once they are competent in them according to their standard process, the “margin of error in terms of musical decay” between rehearsals is greatly minimized. For Conductor B, music literacy is a priority because she feels it is her “job to create competent singers who can go out into the world and sight-read”—a crucial skill in professional choirs. Indeed, she mentioned that during her chamber choir’s most recent tour, students needed to demonstrate that they had become truly independent musicians: she sent them of to do solfège work on one of their pieces. She also feels it is important for her to model a developmental sequence of music-reading pedagogy to her students who are future music educators. She says, “I’m super-enthusiastic about this approach. It changes everything.”

CONDUCTOR C considers systematic sight-singing instruction important because of her belief “in engaging the mind through reading activities and not teaching everything in the music
all at once.” Her primary sight-singing materials are concert repertoire, and she always begins
the semester by engaging her students’ intellect through music they can be immediately
successful sight-reading—music “that is easily count-singable.” For her, using a systematic
approach to music-reading is about engaging “the intelligence of the musician by imposing a
system on what they’re reading,” not allowing them to play “a guessing game” with pitches and
rhythms. She finds “that the result is much more precise” than a non-systematic approach.
Because high-quality performances are important to her and because non-music majors
contribute to the precision (or lack thereof) of her choral ensembles, she finds a systematic
approach equally important for them.

**Interview Prompt 3. Expound on the reasons for choosing the particular approach that
you use.**

CONDUCTOR A uses movable-Do solfège with La-based minor for tonal solmization
and Takadimi for rhythmic solmization. She emphasizes, however, that these systems will be
only “marginally successful” unless they are taught in a “sound before sight before theory”
process.

Her reasons for choosing movable-Do solfège include (a) its ability to accommodate all
of the modes, (b) the way it encourages functional harmonic conceptualization and thus enhances
choral intonation, and (c) its incorporation of separate syllable patterns for all diatonic triads,
including secondary dominant and augmented-sixth chords. Her reasons for choosing Takadimi
include (a) its flexibility to include both simple and compound meters and asymmetrical beats
and rhythms, (b) its ability to teach feeling of *meter* rather than just beat, (c) its incorporation of
identical vowel sounds for polymetric rhythms, (d) and the ease with which one can label beat
subdivisions with it, even across beats borrowed from other meters.
CONDUCTOR B has learned a number of different sight-singing systems during her career and has chosen to use movable-Do solfège with La-based minor for tonal solmization and Kodály-inspired beat-function syllables for rhythmic solmization. (She mentioned that she began using Kodály rhythm solmization just this past year, having used “instrumental” counting before that. About this change she says, “I had the most magnificent jump in acquisition from the rhythmic reading because of the beat-function syllables.”) She also avoids the piano as much as possible in favor of having students use tuning forks to find pitches. At the beginning of the process of introducing music literacy skills into the choral rehearsal, she allowed students to use whatever system with which they were most comfortable, so multiple systems were being used simultaneously. However, as the process has continued, she has enforced her own systems because she wants students thinking about the music in the same way, which affects pitch generation in a positive manner. Just as Conductor A emphasizes a “sight before sound before theory” pedagogy, Conductor B believes in Kodály’s process of “prepare, present, and perform.”

Conductor B also mentioned that she modifies the system with which students learn music according to the musical selection they are learning. If, in her opinion, a piece would be better served by fixed-Do solfège, she does not hesitate to use it; likewise, if a piece emphasizes the parallel rather than the relative minor, she will use Do-based minor. In complex music, she will frequently have the choir change keys during the piece. In her words, “Whatever that piece needs, we will do that solfège.” In addition to using a systematic approach to most of the music, she will program one piece for every concert that she will teach entirely by rote—i.e., without scores. She describes her approach as “totally utilitarian, but . . . totally auditorily based.”

CONDUCTOR C uses movable-Do solfège with Do-based minor for tonal solmization and a system called Tometics for rhythmic solmization. Tometics uses beat numbers and the
syllables “neh” (for simple subdivision) and “nah-ni” (for compound subdivision) to count rhythm. Her reason for choosing movable-Do solfège with Do-based minor was as straightforward as her desire to align with the theory curriculum at her institution. She also believes that it better addresses chromatics and develops interval and functional relational thinking better than fixed-Do does. In her opinion, “movable-Do enhances the aural process.” She can trace her use of Tometics back to her training using Robert Shaw’s count-singing method, but her preference for the more “singer-friendly” subdivision vowels.

**Interview Prompt 4. What responses and reactions to your approach do you receive from students at all levels of study?**

CONDUCTOR A mentioned initial resistance to her systems, but asserted that students who are resistant to it now quickly become “envious of what the other students [can] do” and quickly do whatever it takes to develop the systematic skills she uses in rehearsal, even if the rigor of her approach earns her the affectionate title of “Solfège Queen.”

CONDUCTOR B also mentioned initial resistance, but mentioned that now, four years after becoming the Director of Choral Activities at her university, written student reflections often comment on how much they enjoy the incorporation of solfège into choral rehearsals, with remarks such as, “You really taught me how to be a better musician and I really appreciate it.” As she puts it, “In the end, they all get it, everybody gets it, and they’re grateful for that skill.” When they understand, she asserts, “students love it and they feel competent, and then they feel brave.”

CONDUCTOR C, who came to her present institution 25 years ago, admitted that she does not clearly remember any resistance to her approach when she began using it. She stated that the transition was very smooth between her predecessor and her because he was using many
of the same music-reading systems that she chose to use and continues to use 25 years later. She finds that the students who dislike her approach the most are the weakest musicians—often those in the Festival Chorus, her “y’all come sing” group—who are unaccustomed to an intellectual approach to music-learning.

**Interview Prompt 5. Do students who are already independent musicians willingly accept a specific approach possibly different from what they’ve already learned?**

CONDUCTOR A’s approach is to make students who are proficient in other systems switch to hers. Her justification for this is that they inevitably have “holes” in their knowledge and skill sets, which she points out to them if necessary. Once students realize that they have not truly mastered the system they were using, they are more amenable to adopting new ones. In Conductor A’s words, she tells these students, “Humor me. We’re going back to the beginning.”

CONDUCTOR B gives a similar reply to her students who are already strong readers: Whatever non-organized sight-reading system that you have, it will break down at some point when the theoretical demands become greater than your level of aural learning. You will need some system to do that level of difficulty of music. . . . We need to systematize our auditory language.

Therefore, she requires that her students master movable-Do solfège, since it is in her opinion the sight-singing systems adaptable to the most different types of music. She did admit that, for a tiny minority of the most talented students, a system is unnecessary, but that for the rest of the student population, it is essential to “teach them audiation.” Anecdotally, she mentioned that some of her students with perfect pitch nevertheless appreciate her frequent use of solfège because it helps the choristers by whom they are surrounded sing better in tune and helps them “relax.”
CONDUCTOR C often does not force students who are strong readers in another system to adopt her own. For example, when exchange students come from Asia or Europe who are well-versed in fixed-Do solfège, she allows them to retain their system in her ensembles. However, for most students, she humorously asserts, “There isn’t really an opportunity to argue about it.”

**Interview Prompt 6. Do you purchase sight-singing materials or do you self-create? Do students buy a textbook?**

CONDUCTOR A, although she has published a book on sight-singing, does not require students in her choirs to purchase any sight-singing materials. Instead, she projects music on screen and assigns students work from the online companion to her textbook to accomplish independently.

CONDUCTOR B uses choral literature as her primary source of sight-singing material and will then create exercises, both written and non-written, based on music being prepared for performance. She believes, “The music is teaching you how to teach it,” so her goal is to help students understand the structure and harmonic progression of each piece. She also creates sight-singing materials of various difficulties for annual choral auditions, so students are never reading the same material across multiple auditions.

CONDUCTOR C self-creates her materials. She will often use the board to do specific drill-work on difficult intervals in the music she will teach in rehearsal.

**Interview Prompt 7. What are the challenges associated with implementing a reading system in the collegiate choral setting?**

CONDUCTOR A began by discussing the difficulty of leading choristers to believe that they need to become fully literate musicians. For Conductor A, leading them to accept this
conclusion begins with instilling in them the belief that they can do it, and that if they do they will contribute to a better, more efficient choir.

CONDUCTOR B agrees with Conductor A that the first challenge in implementing a reading system at the collegiate level is deconstructing students’ belief that they can already read. The way she did so was to begin with a fact they already acknowledged: that their university’s choral program was not at the level of the premiere programs in the country. She worked to convince them that increased attention to music literacy through the use of solfège was one of the ways she would raise their standard of expectation. In her words, “You have to curricularize it and you have to set a level. It is not saying they’re terrible, but I’m not going to lie to them and tell them that we’re sight-reading at the level of the top choral programs in this country if we’re not.”

CONDUCTOR C feels that the primary challenge in implementing a reading system in the collegiate choral setting is “the different levels of ability of the people that come to you,” noting that some new students are truly unprepared for the rigor of college music study.

Interview Prompt 8. Reflect on the variance in skill among your graduating students. Do they all leave with a similar level of musical independence?

CONDUCTOR A believes her students are independent musicians by the time they are ready to enter her auditioned choir, regardless of their academic major.

CONDUCTOR B says that while some students are naturally stronger than others, they have all reached a level of competence so she can feel proud sending them onto graduate programs, teaching careers, and non-academic singing experiences.

CONDUCTOR C thinks that her students graduate with a “similar” level of musical independence, “some of them . . . really good . . . and others less good.” One of her tools for
encouraging individual musical independence is the expectation that students in her Concert Choir are rehearsing in quartets outside of rehearsal, gaining experience with one-voice-per-part singing. She will also evaluate students in her choirs by having them sing into tape recorders during rehearsals; often, they are singing on solfège or count-singing for these assessments.

**Interview Prompt 9. With which choirs do you use your approach?**

CONDUCTOR A uses her approach with each of her ensembles, including her community choir of adult amateur singers.

CONDUCTOR B likewise uses her approach with each of her ensembles, including her choirs that perform major choral-orchestral works. The other choral conductor at her school has also adopted a similar, Kodály-inspired systematic approach to sight-singing, so all the choral ensembles at that university, from the non-auditioned women’s choir to the premiere chamber choir, are learning music in a similar manner. In her words, “We are always doing solfège, with every group.”

CONDUCTOR C uses her systematic approach with all of her ensembles, but noted that she uses it most heavily with her auditioned Concert Choir. With her non-auditioned Festival Chorus, she compromises and uses neutral-syllable singing more often than she does in the auditioned choir setting.

**Interview Prompt 10. What is your relationship with the music theory faculty? Is there any conflict between the system used in theory/eartraining courses and your choral ensembles? Do students have the opportunity to transfer skills between theory and performance curricula?**

CONDUCTOR A has published a book on sight-singing and feels that as a result many of her music theory colleagues feel threatened by her. She emphasizes that for the sake of her relationships with theory faculty, she removes herself entirely from their work and focuses on
her own as a choral conductor, regardless of the overlap in content and skills. To her, the reason for her success as a teacher of sight-singing is her experience as a public school music educator, where she learned how to remediate. Because so many college students come to her in need of remediation, she feels her pedagogical strengths are well-suited to the population she serves, whereas the pedagogical strengths of music theorists may not be suited to students who require remediation.

In situations where the systems being taught in music theory and aural skills coursework differed from her preferred systems, Conductor A simply “taught it my way.” For her, this worked well in the choral context, whether her theory colleagues modified their instruction to match hers or not. She noted that she would not confront theory faculty directly but chooses instead to let her students’ improvement speak for itself; in several circumstances, theory faculty have adopted her systems because they see how successful they have been with students in her choirs.

CONDUCTOR B mentioned that when she first began using a systematic approach to sight-singing in the choral rehearsal, students would comment that it differed from the approach they used in their theory classes, but that now they often comment that they wish the theory curriculum used the same systems she does. For her, though, the principle of academic freedom makes it important not to intrude on the theory faculty’s work—and likewise for them not to intrude on hers.

CONDUCTOR C feels that the fact that she uses the same solfège systems as the theory department at her university is a “win-win”: her students get extra practice using her systems outside of rehearsal, and the extra practice they get in rehearsal makes them the strongest readers in the theory program. She would describe the opportunity for transfer from the theory classroom
into the choir and from the choir into the theory classroom to be “significant.” Her theory faculty colleagues do not use her Tometics rhythm solmization, but she has “dropped the idea” of convincing them to adopt it in their coursework; “I don’t even go there,” she says.

**Interview Prompt 11.** Do you encourage your music education majors to use your system when they do fieldwork?

CONDUCTOR A clearly expects that music education majors will be teaching the skills of music literacy in their fieldwork, and expects that they will use her “sound before sight before theory” process and systems. She remarked that her former music education students presently employed in the field have been so successful that her current students are often sought out for positions by administrators who want teachers to use the same process and systems.

CONDUCTOR B makes it clear that music education students are to employ a systematic approach to music literacy in their choral rehearsals. In fact, she says that one of the most important reasons she has adopted the approach she uses is as a model for them. She shared the story of a music education intern she observed who was not incorporating any of the principles she taught into his lesson who she had firmly to reprimand. She tries to demonstrate to her choral music education method classes that if they have mastered the systems they use every day in the choral ensembles at her university, they *already* know how to help their own students when they “don’t know how to read the music or they can’t hear something.”

She tells her students, “It is my job to save you from five years of errors as a first-year teacher,” and teaching students to be fully independent musicians is a crucial component of that self-imposed responsibility. She motivates her students by asking them:
Is it your job to turn out ineffective and highly incompetent students? Is that why you are doing a music education degree? Is this what you are going to make your career about? Is that your job? Or is it about turning out highly effective and highly competent students?

CONDUCTOR C states, “I do believe that music majors need to have these systematic approaches; I think it engages their intelligence, and gives them tools” they can use in their own classrooms. However, noting that her university is in a rural area and that often student-teachers are sent to choral programs that are less than stellar, she encourages interns to use the same model as their cooperating teacher, even if it is not based on music literacy. Of student teachers and sight-singing instruction, she says, “They have to realize that there’s a sequential aspect to learning this and they might have more success when they have their own program” as opposed to when they are guests in another teacher’s classroom.

**Interview Prompt 12. Please describe any negative reactions to your incorporation of sight-singing instruction in the choral ensemble.**

CONDUCTOR A shared the story of a former college student who was incredibly resistant to her systematic approach to music literacy in the choral rehearsal. He was so resistant that he earned a failing grade in choir. When she last saw him, though, he was finishing his master’s degree in music and told her, “I’ve been teaching Takadimi and movable-Do and it works.” She related another anecdote of a former student who was resistant while in school but asked for her help once she was teaching in the classroom herself.

CONDUCTOR B described resistance when she first began incorporating music literacy into her choral rehearsals. “Students didn’t like it,” she says. She feels that since that initial resistance, though, students have become deeply appreciative of the skills with which she is empowering them.
CONDUCTOR C explained that she may lose some students in her Festival Chorus because the music-learning process is “too intellectual” for them. She feels, however, that it is worth losing a small number of students in order to enhance the experience and education of those who remain. Otherwise, she gets no push-back to her approach.

Interview Prompt 13. Please share any relevant issues that you have not already shared via the survey or these prompts.

CONDUCTOR A’s words speak for themselves:

Call me strange, call me whatever, but I’ll take less of a performance if my kids can pick up a similar piece of music and do it without me. Then there’s been teaching. [The] definition of learning is that there has been a change of behavior that’s observable. That means I can observe them do it on their own, which means if there’s been learning, there’s been teaching. If they can’t pick up that same piece of music without me, and can’t do it without me, then there’s been no learning. And if there’s been no learning then there’s been no teaching, right?

CONDUCTOR B shared her belief that good sight-singing pedagogy is very much a part of every successful choral conductor’s job responsibility, because they are an essential element of highly effective musical behaviors. If you combine highly effective social behaviors with highly effective musical behaviors, she says, “then you’re giving your students what they need to survive and transform . . .” For her, providing a complete college education, of which becoming a fully literate musician is a part, is “giving your students themselves.”

CONDUCTOR C emphasized that, for her, the issue of sight-singing instruction is one of process and product. As she explains,
Some people are more process-oriented, and they very much care about how systematic things are, going through sequences of learning and they don’t care quite so much about the product. But then there are those who are more product-oriented, and all they care about is running through the music until it’s learned and they don’t care how the singers get there. And I’m one who says you have to be both. If you do the process correctly and choose the right level of music, the product will be great.

Summary of Results

Survey data showed that there was no significant difference between choral conductors who did not use or very rarely used a system for music-reading, those who occasionally integrated a sight-singing system into their rehearsals for specific purposes, and those for whom a sight-singing system was a key rehearsal tool that they used frequently. However, among respondents in the latter two categories who did not hold a degree in music education, there was a significant preference for occasional rather than frequent use of a sight-singing system. Among those who occasionally or frequently used a system, though, there was a significant preference for movable-Do solfège for major-key tonal solmization, movable-Do solfège (tonic is “La”) for minor-key tonal solmization, and instrumental counting (“1-e-&-a 2”) for rhythmic solmization. Among those who frequently used a system, the data showed a significant decline in both the number of days per week they provided sight-singing instruction at the beginning of term, at the middle of term, and at the end of term as well as between the number of minutes per rehearsal they provided sight-singing instruction during those three periods of the semester. Among those who frequently used a system, choral literature being prepared for performance was the significant first-choice of materials used to teach sight-singing. Among those same conductors, 14% individually assessed their students’ sight-singing, 44% sometimes did, and 43% did not.
For conductors who frequently used a system, the most important perceived benefit of doing so was enabling their choirs to learn music faster. The attitudes statements about which conductors agreed most strongly were that sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral singers and that sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles. Conductors who occasionally used a system agreed significantly more strongly with the latter statement than those who frequently did, while conductors who frequently used a system agreed significantly more strongly with the statement that students generally enjoy instructional time devoted to sight-singing than those who occasionally did. Music educators felt significantly stronger that empowering their students for lifelong music-making and improving performances were benefits of systematic sight-singing instruction than non-music educators did.

Conductors contacted for interviews emphasized the importance of fostering choral rehearsal cultures in which complete musicianship and musical literacy are valued and provided philosophical and practical reasons for doing so. They outlined possible challenges to instituting choral sight-singing at the collegiate level as well as potential solutions to those difficulties. They also discussed the effect of sight-singing instruction on relationships with music theory and music education faculty.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

I engaged in this study to describe the reported pedagogy of choral sight-singing in higher education in the United States. Focusing specifically on the choral rehearsal setting at departments, schools, and colleges of music that were full members of the National Association of Schools of Music, I designed a survey and distributed it to collegiate choral conductors nationwide. A total of 363 responded, and substantial data were collected from 251 conductors who indicated they occasionally or frequently used a sight-singing system in their choral rehearsals. I then conducted follow-up Skype and telephone interviews with three respondents to gain a clearer picture of the unique approaches and best practices they used.

Summary and Conclusions

Research Question 1. What share of collegiate choral conductors have adopted a “systematic” approach to music-reading and sight-singing in their ensembles?

The research revealed that 31% of collegiate choral conductors had adopted a “systematic” approach to sight-singing in their ensembles. Another 38% occasionally integrated a sight-singing system into their rehearsals for specific purposes while 31% did not use or very rarely used a system for music-reading with their students. There was no significant difference between the number of conductors who reported these three approaches to sight-singing systems.

Since essentially equivalent proportions of the collegiate choral conductor population reported low, moderate, or strong commitment to systematic sight-singing instruction, it would be interesting to know why conductors in each category make that choice. Because those who never or rarely use a systematic-approach to sight-singing provided only that datum, it is impossible to know what similarities they share. (The survey was deliberately designed to end
immediately for those who indicated they never or rarely used a sight-singing system in hopes of obtaining a higher return rate.) Perhaps the majority of those conductors reflect a particular age group, or have a specific professional background, or are located in a particular geographical region, which could explain their reasons for selecting the music-reading approach they have chosen.

**Research Question 2. What solmization systems are currently being employed in collegiate choruses? How prevalent is each?**

The vast majority of collegiate choral conductors who use a sight-singing system (80.9%) chose to use movable-Do solfège. For minor-key tonal solmization, the most commonly used system was La-based movable-Do solfège. Of those who used movable-Do, 62.2% tonicized La in minor keys (49.1% total). For rhythmic solmization, 59.6% of respondents preferred instrumental counting (1-e-&-a). For each of these systems, a significantly greater number of respondents chose them than alternatives at the $p \leq .001$ level of significance.

Although many teachers and theorists vehemently defend their melodic solmization system of choice, I can draw no definitive conclusions from the research about the superiority of one over the others. The case is slightly different for rhythmic solmization, however. All of the pedagogies that emphasize “sound before sight” such as Kodály would argue *against* the instrumental counting system (“1-e-&-a”) as a “sight before sound” approach. That is, to put it in Gordon’s terms, the counting approach requires theoretical cognition, which does not promote music literacy *unless* the student has first mastered the aural/oral, verbal association, partial synthesis, and symbolic association stages of the discrimination skill learning sequence. Therefore, a system like Takadimi would seem to be the solution: Not only does it adapt well to all rhythms, meters, and types of music, but it also meets the criteria of a sight-before-sound
pedagogy. Some college choir conductors may feel that their students already comprehend the other stages of a holistic music learning sequence and are ready for the instrumental counting approach, which does promote composite synthesis of previously mastered knowledge and skills. Others may believe that only a counting system is appropriate for college-level musicians, feeling that the other approaches are too juvenile. (They would share this in common with many supporters of fixed-Do solfège.) Still others, perhaps because of Robert Shaw’s influence on choral music, may simply adhere to the counting method because it is traditional.

Research Question 3. *How much time is being spent on sight-singing instruction in collegiate choral ensembles?*

Among conductors who frequently employ a sight-singing system in their collegiate choral rehearsals, they spent instructional time on sight-singing an average of 3.12 days per week at the beginning of the term, 2.49 days per week at the middle of the term, and 1.88 days per week at the end of the term. This represents a statistically significant ($p < .01$) decline in the number of days per week that sight-singing instruction was offered over the course of a semester. The same respondents reported that they spent an average of 26.22 minutes per rehearsal at the beginning of the term, 16.74 minutes per rehearsal at the middle of the term, and 9.69 minutes per rehearsal at the end of the term on sight-singing. This also represents a statistically significant ($p < .01$) decline in the number of minutes per rehearsal that sight-singing instruction was offered over the course of a semester.

These results match what common sense might tell us. Considering that the respondents indicated that choral music intended for performance is the most frequently used source of sight-singing material for these conductors, it is perhaps obvious that as choral ensembles move closer to public performance, they will spend less time _sight_-singing and more time singing. What is
remarkable, though, is the amount of time being spent on sight-singing in the collegiate choral rehearsals of the 114 conductors who frequently employ a sight-singing system. Even at the end of the semester, the average conductor in this group still uses a sight-singing system at least one day per week; even at the end of the semester, the average conductor in this group still spends almost ten minutes per rehearsal on systematic sight-singing activities.

**Research Question 4.** What materials are being used to teach sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles?

Eighty-eight percent of collegiate choral conductors who frequently incorporate sight-singing into their rehearsals used choral literature being prepared for performance to teach sight-singing. Next most-used were self-created sight-singing materials, with which 42% of respondents reported working. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between the number of conductors who chose different sight-singing materials at the $p < .001$ level of significance.

While aligning with Myers’s (2008) research, the amount of time collegiate choral conductors spend on sight-singing exceed that of the middle and high school conductors Demorest (2004) surveyed. A possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that collegiate choral conductors may broaden their definition of sight-reading, so that, for example, they consider warm-ups that use solfège syllables or the singing of concert repertoire using solmization to be sight-singing. Respondents to Demorest (2004) reported that they separate sight-singing instruction from choral literature, so perhaps conductors of pre-college choirs tend to separate activities more than collegiate conductors, so that time devoted to sight-singing instruction is less connected with the other activities of the rehearsal. If then, it is not surprising that choral literature intended for performance is the overwhelmingly preferred source of sight-
singing materials for college choral conductors, because it lends itself so readily to transfer and integration of rehearsal skills such as sight-singing.

**Research Question 5.** *What assessment measures are being used to evaluate sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles?*

Of the conductors who indicated that they frequently use a sight-singing system, 14% reported that they assess their students’ sight-singing, 44% reported that they sometimes assess their students’ sight-singing, and 43% reported that they do not assess their students’ sight-singing. Analysis of the data revealed a significant difference between the number of conductors who indicated each of these options at the $p < .001$ level of significance. Of those conductors who did or sometimes did evaluate their students’ sight-singing, 64% did so in quartets, octets, or small groups during the rehearsal.

This finding leaves some ambiguity as to collegiate choral conductors’ exact assessment behaviors. We do not know the precise meaning of “sometimes” for the 44% who chose that response. How often do they assess? For that matter, how often do the 14% who reported that they always assess evaluate their students’ performance? We also know neither their exact assessment behaviors and procedures nor the amount of a student’s grade that is determined by their sight-singing evaluation. All of these are potential inquiries for future research.

**Research Question 6.** *What are the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors toward sight-singing instruction?*

Conductors who frequently use a sight-singing system scored a series of eight statements about the perceived benefits of a systematic approach to music-reading in the choral rehearsal on a scale from *not at all important* to *extremely important*. The statement “It enables the choir to learn music faster once the system is learned” received the highest mean score and the statement
“A common sight-singing system improves our performances” the lowest, but no significant difference was found between their means.

Because the mean score for all eight perceived benefits statements was greater than six on a seven-point scale, we can conclude that conductors perceive *multiple* benefits to a systematic music-reading method, though there seems to be no one reason that is measurably more important to collegiate choral conductors than another. It is likely that conductors who have adopted such a methodology did so with great intentionality; they did not simply “fall into” it. Therefore, perhaps they have considered their pedagogical philosophies somewhat more deeply than conductors who do not use a systematic approach.

Conductors who frequently and those who sometimes used a sight-singing system rated a series of six statements about their attitudes related to collegiate choral sight-reading on a scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Conductors from both groups rated the statement “Sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral singers” the most highly and the statement “Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for all collegiate choral ensembles” received the lowest rating. Analysis divulged that conductors agreed significantly more strongly about the former attitude statement than the latter at the *p* < .001 level of significance. Analysis also revealed a significant difference in the strength of agreement with attitude statements between conductors who frequently employed a sight-singing system versus those who occasionally did at the *p* < .04 level of significance.

As might be expected, conductors who frequently use a sight-singing system indicated less agreement with the statement “Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate choral ensembles” than did their counterparts who only occasionally use a system. Perhaps this is one of the reasons they have adopted a more frequent systematic approach in the
first place—because they do not or cannot expect every student in their auditioned ensembles to be a competent sight-reader before they enroll. Surprisingly, conductors who occasionally use a sight-singing system agreed more strongly that the sight-singing system taught in the theory classes at their institutions is ideal for transfer to the choral rehearsal and that the aural skills and ear training curricula at their institution are excellent than did their counterparts who frequently use a system. Although one might presume that the more highly a conductor regards the theory training his or her students are receiving, the more likely he or she would be to use it in the choral rehearsal setting, the opposite appears to be true. Perhaps conductors who believe their students are receiving excellent written and aural theory training feel that they do not need frequently to employ a system because their students are already good sight-readers due to their academic coursework, such that students simply transfer rather than learn another reading system. Alternatively, perhaps these conductors genuinely teach at institutions where aural skills are taught so well in the classroom that they need not be retaught or reinforced in a choral rehearsal.

**Research Question 7.** Are there any correlations between the sight-singing practices or attitudes of collegiate choral conductors and their training or education?

Among collegiate choral conductors who used a sight-singing system and held at least one degree in music education (henceforth *music educators*), 55.2% used a sight-singing system occasionally and 44.8% used one frequently, a difference that is not statistically significant. Among choral conductors who used a sight-singing system and did not have a degree in music education (henceforth *non-music educators*), 67.3% used a system occasionally and 32.7% used one frequently, a difference that is significant (*p* = .018). Analysis also demonstrated that music educators agreed more strongly that use of a sight-singing system empowers their students for
lifelong music-making and improves choral performances than their non-music educator counterparts at the \( p \leq 0.039 \) level of significance.

It is not surprising that music educators would be more likely to adopt a systematic approach to sight-singing and music-reading. With backgrounds in methodologies such as Kodály, they are likely better versed and more apt to use systems that align with the philosophies they were taught and to which they may adhere.

**Connections with Previous Research**

The two studies chosen for comparison to the current project were Demorest (2004) and Myers (2008); as was mentioned in chapter three, these studies were important sources in designing the survey instrument for this document. It should be noted that Demorest surveyed middle and high school choral directors and Myers surveyed collegiate choral conductors in the American Choral Directors Association’s Southern Division, so neither population matches this study exactly. In addition, not all data overlap, so a total comparison of all results is impossible. Where surveys do correspond, however, a comparison can be made. (It should be noted that a meta-analytical approach to data comparison is beyond the scope of this project, so data are instead simply presented side by side for ease of comparison.)

**Prevalence of and Time Devoted to Sight-Singing Instruction.** In his consideration of conductors who held doctorates, Myers found that 63.8% instruct at least one choral ensemble in sight singing. This is slightly lower than the 69% of respondents from this study who indicated they occasionally or frequently integrate a sight-singing system into their choral rehearsals. (The present data do not exclude those conductors without a terminal degree.) Myers also examined the frequency that conductors provide sight-singing instruction in their choral rehearsals. He found that 14.3% of collegiate choral conductors teach sight-singing one day per week, similar to
the 14.6% I found that do at the end of the term. He found that 14.3% of collegiate choral conductors teach sight-singing four or five days per week, similar to the 15.9% I found that do at the beginning of the term. However, 44.6% of Myers’s respondents indicated that they teach sight-singing two or three days per week; the closest figure I obtained was that 29.1% of collegiate choral conductors who teach sight-singing two or three days per week at the middle of the term. In Demorest’s study, he reported that of the majority of respondents who replied that they teach sight-singing all year, 28% taught sight-singing in every rehearsal and 52% in almost every rehearsal. Because I asked participants to report the number of days per week they offered sight-singing instruction in any ensemble, not the number of their ensembles’ rehearsals during which they taught sight-singing, a direct comparison cannot be made.

In terms time spent per rehearsal devoted to sight-singing, Myers reported that respondents with a doctorate spent five to 25 minutes teaching sight-singing in their choral rehearsals. This is slightly lower but in line with the mean number of minutes per rehearsal devoted to sight-singing as reported in Figure 9, which shows the mean number at the end of the term as 9.69 minutes per rehearsal and the mean number at the beginning of the term as 26.22 minutes per rehearsal. Demorest reported a lower 9.5 minutes per rehearsal as the average spent among his respondents. This discrepancy could be due to Demorest’s (a) population being K–12 educators, not collegiate choral conductors, (b) survey question that separated sight-singing instruction from singing repertoire at sight, or (c) a combination of factors.

**Materials and Methods Used.** Myers found that 80.2% of respondents used choral literature for sight-singing instructional material, whereas I found that 88% do. Of Myers’s participants, 31.4% use a published textbook or sight-singing materials; 33% of mine do. Because both Myers and the present study demonstrate that choral literature is such an important
component of sight-singing instruction at the collegiate level and because Demorest does not offer it as one of the materials used for that study, no comparison to Demorest is attempted.

Myers does investigate some of the methodological approaches to sight-singing, but does not provide enough data to allow comparison with the present study. Demorest, on the other hand, is directly comparable. In that study, Demorest identified the tonal solmization system used by each respondent in a minor-key excerpt. His findings, side by side with those of the present study, appear below in Figure 19.

![Figure 19](image)

**Figure 19.** Use of minor-key tonal solmization systems, Demorest (2004) vs. present study.

While the similarities in the prevalence of each system between middle/high school and collegiate choral conductors is noteworthy, there are several interesting discrepancies to note. An even greater share (72%) of college choir conductors use movable-Do solfège, either La- or D-based, than middle and high school teachers do (64%). Middle and high school conductors
ranked scale-degree numbers with tonic 6 as the fourth most chosen option, whereas not a single collegiate choral conductor chose it. Curiously, an even smaller share (2%) of collegiate choral conductors employed fixed-Do solfège than did middle and high school teachers (4%).

A similar comparison between the rhythmic solmization systems Demorest found in use versus those in use according to the present examination cannot be made because the options available to respondents did not align.

**Assessment Tools.** Finally, I examine the sight-singing assessment measures reported by Myers and Demorest with those found in the present study. Whereas Myers determined that 27.1% of collegiate choral conductors currently use a method to assess an ensemble’s sight-singing skills, Demorest found that 83% of middle and high school choral directors administer some kind of sight-singing test during the year. The present study observed that 58% of collegiate choral conductors at least sometimes individually assess their students’ sight-singing, a number somewhere between the findings of Demorest and Myers. Table 19 lists and compares the use of sight-singing assessment measures examined by each study.

A comparison on one perceived benefits statement from Myers’s study to one from the present study is possible. Myers found that 88.6% of his respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Sight-Singing instruction in my choral rehearsal has improved my ensemble’s ability to learn new repertoire faster” (p. 51). In the present study, the corresponding statement (“It [a ‘systematic’ approach to music-reading or sight-singing in rehearsals] enables the choir to learn music faster once the system is learned”) was selected by 95% of respondents as a perceived benefit of incorporating sight-singing into the choral rehearsal. Indeed, of the eight perceived benefit statements offered in the present study’s survey, this one achieved the highest level of importance by respondents (6.58 on a 7-point scale).
Table 19


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone for the teacher/professor</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone for a teaching assistant</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone in rehearsal</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In quartets/octets/small groups in rehearsal</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In quartets/octets/small groups for the teacher/professor</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In quartets/octets/small groups for a teaching assistant</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone on recording</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In quartets/octets/small groups on recording</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Percentages listed are of those conductors who indicated that they *do* assess sight-singing, not all conductors total. Percentages may equal more than 100 because respondents were allowed to select more than one assessment measure.

**Professional Implications**

Hopefully, music educators at the secondary level will encourage their students to continue singing throughout adulthood, starting in college. Because their students will move to varied higher education schools, the findings of my study would imply that the best preparation music teachers can provide for collegiate choral singing is some degree of competency using the movable-Do with La-based minor and instrumental counting solmization systems. Students would then have the best chance of continuity between the systematic instruction they
experienced in high school and that they receive in college. This seems applicable not only to prospective music majors but also to students who will pursue other academic disciplines, since many respondents to this survey indicated that they conduct non-auditioned mixed, men’s, and treble choirs.

At the college level, my research would support greater alignment between choral and theory curricula. Considering the positive influence that both areas can have on the effectiveness of the other’s work, when there is limited or no integration or transfer, students likely suffer the consequences. Choral rehearsals benefit from their members’ knowledge in music theory and skill in sight-singing and systems of decoding musical notation. Theory and ear-training classes benefit when their members come to them having practiced what they are learning in a real-world setting and seen its application to performance.

Finally, I wonder if and how students would benefit from more collegiate choral conductors adopting a systematic approach to sight-singing. Because the college choir rehearsal can be a link between singing in high school and singing for a lifetime, it may be counterproductive for collegiate choral conductors to assume that students come to them as skilled sight-readers. If sight-singing is not tested, how do we know if students can? If we do not structure their learning, how will they improve? I am not sure that merely hoping students are acquiring the skills of a literate musician elsewhere is an effective strategy. Even if our music majors are receiving an exceptional aural education, how can we also foster growth among our non-music majors? Lastly, if collegiate choral conductors do not teach musicianship in the choral rehearsal, where will pre-service music educators see such pedagogy in action? Those future music teachers will not have the luxury of relying on the theory instructor to teach “that stuff” and a collegiate conductor could serve as a powerful model.
Suggestions for Further Research

One delimitation of this study was that conductors who do not use a system were asked that and only that. I designed the survey this way to strengthen its response rate, but the obvious follow-up question to the 31% of conductors who do not use a music-reading system with their collegiate choirs is, “Why not?” I recommend that future research explore this inquiry so we can understand conductors’ reasons for not employing a systematic approach to sight-singing. Indeed, a study of similar design could be conducted to focus only on the 31% of conductors who eschew a system, to ascertain their perceived benefits of such an approach and their attitudes about sight-singing.

A potentially fascinating qualitative study waiting to be done would compare the music-reading approaches of three high-profile collegiate choral conductors, one of whom does not use a sight-singing system, one of whom uses one occasionally for specific purposes, and one for whom a system is a key rehearsal technique. How would their approaches differ and how would they be alike? Since the sight-singing process is so systematized for 31% of choral conductors, it may be safe to assume that the music-reading process is similar every time they put a new octavo in front of their students, but what does that process look like for the 31% of conductors whose approach is deliberately unsystematic? Does the music, rather than a pedagogy, structure the approach? What tools and techniques (e.g., the piano, independent sectional work, etc.) do those conductors use to enhance their students’ learning of the music?

Another way of examining this subject would be to examine different populations in the same or similar ways. This study was intentionally broad (indeed, nationwide) in scope, which may have limited its depth somewhat. In the future, perhaps surveys on sight-singing practices and attitudes will be distributed to college choral conductors only at community colleges, or at
liberal arts colleges, or at major research universities. One particularly fascinating angle would be to survey only the best conductors on their teaching of music-reading, perhaps by distributing it only to college professors who had an ensemble perform at a national convention of the American Choral Directors Association in a specified number of years.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL MEMORANDUM & CONSENT FORM

Florida State University

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 • FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 01/12/2015
To: Adam Potter
Address: [REDACTED]
Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL
From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair
Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Sight-Singing Systems in Collegiate Choral Curricula: An Examination of Conductors' Best Practices at Degree-Granting Institutions of the National Association of Schools of Music

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 01/11/2016 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00006446.

Cc: Judy Bowes [REDACTED] Advisor
HSC No. 2014.13952
Consent to Participate
Sight-Singing Systems in Collegiate Choral Curricula

You are invited to be in a research study of collegiate choral conductors' sight-singing practices. You were selected as a possible participant because you are named as the conductor of a choral ensemble on the web site of a degree-granting institution accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. If you no longer conduct a collegiate choral ensemble, please do not proceed. Otherwise, please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Adam Potter, a Ph.D. candidate in choral music education at Florida State University College of Music.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine the pedagogical approaches to sight-singing used in collegiate choral ensembles, as well as the rationales for and perceived effects of the approach(es) used by collegiate choral conductors.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
- Answer a series of questions regarding the sight-singing practices used in the collegiate choral ensemble(s) you conduct
- Provide a variety of classification data

The entire, one-time survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You may volunteer to be contacted for a follow-up interview or observation, but are under no obligation to do so.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:
The study has no risks to you as a participant.

The benefits to participation are contributing to our discipline's understanding of the music-reading and sight-singing practices used in collegiate choral ensembles. Results of this study may aid collegiate music educators and choral conductors in developing methods and materials for advancing music literacy among college, university, and conservatory choristers.

Compensation:
You will receive no payment for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible
to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Adam Potter. If you have any questions now or later, you are encouraged to contact him at [redacted] or [redacted]. This study is being advised by Dr. Judy Bowers, who you may contact at [redacted] or [redacted].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you are encouraged to contact the FSU Institutional Review Board at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu.

Statement of Consent:
By clicking the ">>" button below, you are indicating your agreement with the following statement:

"I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I still have and, if I have done so, have received answers. I consent to participate in the study."
Conductor “A” was a Director of Choral Activities at a small, public comprehensive university in the Midwest. When this interview was conducted, the subject was transitioning to a similar position at a mid-size, public comprehensive university in the Southeast. In addition to working as a choral conductor, Subject A is active in giving music literacy workshops and has published a book on sight-singing.

Interview conducted by Skype on Monday, June 15, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. (ET)

AP: The first question I wanted to ask you is just to describe your approach to establishing a reading program in a collegiate choral setting, to establishing that program, especially in your first year with your college choruses.

CK: Well, obviously, part of it is to get them to feel the need that they need to learn to read. And one of those is to have them take a relatively simple piece of music, and no piano, and if it bombs then you have to approach it with, “Well, I think we have some work to do.” And I also approach it with, “Well, I could let this go and teach you by rote,” but then that sends some messages I’m not sure you would want me to send. One, it says I don’t think you can learn to read, so why would I waste my time? And two, I don’t think you’re worth my time and energy to teach you to read. And three, it’s not my job. And since I don’t agree with any of those, I believe that if they got to me and can’t read then I have to teach them but I have to get them to want to. So one of them is to make that feeling happen for them, that they see the necessity. And I also enjoy trying to get them to see within a short period of time that they can do it, and if they do it then it will take less rehearsal time.

I also sometimes approach it with, “How many of you have ever been in a choir?” I want them to relate to me their experiences in a choir, where it took forever for someone to learn a part, and even up until the moment of the performance, there were kids singing wrong notes or rhythms. I then like to enlighten them; it’s because they don’t hear it as wrong. And because they don’t have the vocabulary, consequently that mistake will happen over and over again.

I will also ask, “Do you ever feel like you’re pulling the rest of the choir, or pushing it up a hill?” I will usually get a lot of comments back. Then I’ll say, “Well then, let’s get about the task of teaching everyone in this classroom.” So, part of it is showing them that there is a need for it, that teaching them by rote is dumbing them down and treating them like animals. “Polly want a cracker? Polly want a cracker?”

AP: Would you say that that is a big part of your motivational technique for making them want to do it?

Absolutely. Because if they don’t, I’m going to waste my time. They have to see the need to learn to do it. They have to believe it is something that will enhance their lives.
AP: What are some of the specific things you tell them about **why** being a literate musician will enhance their lives, enhance their choral music-making experience?

I go back to linguistic literacy. “Can you imagine not being able to read?” Or let’s talk about when you learn to read IPA. You learn to read it, but you don’t know what it means. You’re not comprehending any of it. So if I teach you only decoding music, then you are just an IPA person. You can’t comprehend it, you can’t use it, you are absolutely without much in your life. Then I go back to the linguistic reading. “If you couldn’t pick up that book and read it on your own, imagine what your life would be like!”

Then we talk about when they are in language arts. They read out loud. They have to read and answer questions that test their comprehension. We make them write and take vocabulary to make stories. We also ask them to take notes. The same thing has to happen in music for you to be literate. If you were only taught decoding of that note, then you’re not comprehending. You can’t improvise with it, and you really have only one of the tools. Then I ask them, “Do you find taking dictation difficult?” “Well, yes.” “Then you never learned how to write a sentence.” Then we go into when you are a child. You don’t read yet . . . You are having conversations with others, which is improv. So if you cannot improv the total language . . . and you can only decode, you are only one-quarter literate. We would call [that] illiterate in linguistic literacy, so you are also illiterate in music literacy.

**AP:** What is your belief system about the importance and relevance of teaching reading to music majors? (Let's focus on them first, and then I'll ask you about non-music majors.)

Of course, I believe it is essential. Too many students finish with their undergrad, master’s, and doctorate and are not literate. They cannot improvise, they have terrible times with dictation, they really cannot create with it, because they don’t own the language. At best, most of them are decoders, and that’s why they continually make mistakes. (So to Re, they miss it all the time, because they don’t hear it.) If you go listen to a reading session at ACDA—if the piano wasn’t playing, and even with the piano playing, there are grave mistakes that we would never accept in linguistic literacy. So, I believe that we have to work together, the theory department, the sight-singing/ear-training, the voice faculty. I believe the voice faculty should have them reading their pieces *a capella* with them, with no piano playing, because it [the piano] creates detrimental problems. I don’t think we should ever put a kid out there, any degree, BM, BA, music ed, who is not literate at least at an eighth grade level. And I taught at the doctoral level long enough in my life to know that I really seldom have a student who reads at the eighth grade level, in all areas.

**AP:** What would you say to that same question in regards to non-music majors? A belief system about how important music literacy skills are to them?

Same exact. How could I ever look at a kid and say, “I’m not going to waste my time with you”? What would we say to an English teacher who did that? To me, that child will be enriched, they will have a better aesthetic experience with music, they will want to do it all the time, and they will love it. Instead, what we see are too many kids who do not stay singing. Our church choirs are dying, our community choirs are dying, and I think it’s strictly related to how we have never
taught them to be literate. Therefore, they can’t do any of it on their own, they don’t practice on their own. And can you imagine, this is what I would say to them, “Can you imagine picking a book and not being able to read it on your own after twelve years of public education? Well honey, here we are with twelve years of public education in music, and you can’t do it on your own. Someone stole it from you, and it’s time we give it back to you. You are in college now. This is probably your last opportunity to learn how to do this. Shame on me if I don’t take the time to teach you, and you don’t take the time to learn.”

AP: Thank you. That will definitely be a quoted paragraph, because it is a huge motivation for my interest in this subject—because I feel like the music-reading process is so intimidating to our average chorister that I think it is a huge impediment to keeping people singing for a lifetime.

Of course, I agree, totally. But it needs to start in elementary, middle, high school. And when the chain is broken, wherever that may be, we must step in and remediate. What would we do for a kid who couldn’t do basic math in college? We would make them stay here until they got it done. It would just be a sin to put them out there any other way. I would come back and ask: Where are our ethics amongst our music educators? I would question their motivations. Is it about them? Is it about the student? Is it about the music? And for me, it is about the music and the student. I am the last thing on the plate.

AP: Tell me this. You talk about the need for remediation. In your experience as a collegiate music educator, have you ever not had to remediate?

No. And one of the coolest things you can do, there are … skills tests of achievement out there. And they’re very interesting. And when I did teach sight-singing/ear-training at the collegiate level, I gave a fourth-grade exam, and no one passed it. And I also gave that fourth-grade exam when I don’t teach. I give it to my music ed kids in conducting or in choral methods. And mind you, they are done with the theory sequence and everything, and they still fail. The fourth-grade test.

AP: And which exam is it that you use?

CK: It’s the Iowa Basic Skills of Music—not the Aptitude test, the Achievement test. It’s basically aural. It’s very much like the AP Music Theory exam but it’s at a fourth-grade level.

When I teach music, when I teach ear-training, I give that test as a motivation. I want them to know it is not me. I want them to know this is an acceptable standard for a fourth grader. And if they didn’t get it, then we’re going to get about the task of remediating. Because I don’t want to be the bad guy.

AP: So the two systems that you use according to the survey are moveable Do solfège and Takadimi. Let’s talk about some of the reasons for choosing each of those.

Let’s start with Takadimi. Takadimi goes into rhythms further than any other system, so why would I choose any other system? It takes me to professional level rhythms, in some cases. It has stuff for groups of six and seven and eight and all the weird ones, the ones that my piano teacher
would say, “Oh, . . . just try to fit it in there somehow.” It does all of that. The other thing is that it teaches feelings of meter, rather than the beat being pounded equally, which is what happens in most other systems. It also allows you to do polymetric rhythms so one group can be in simple meter and the other group can be in compound meter and they still meet at the halfway point. No other system does that.

It is also, for me, based on “sound before sight before theory.” I want them all to be able to hear it. Now the system itself does not mean that you have to do that. There’s a process that I believe in strongly that needs to be applied with all of these systems or they will only be marginally successful, so that has to be kept in mind.

I also believe in physical activities that have to take place with it, so that they can see the down and the up of every beat (there are so many things added into it). But Takadimi itself helps students relate between the two meters easily. For example, if you’re in simple meter and you have a three over a note, that is a borrowed beat. It is borrowed from compound meter. So the students know that it becomes a Takidu. And when you’re in compound meter and there’s a two, they now know it becomes a Tadi, because it’s borrowed from the simple meter. And it really helps with metric feeling, as well as knowing the parts of the beat from beat to beat, from subdivision to borrowed beat in each of the two basic kinds of meters. Another thing is that it allows you to teach asymmetrical meters very quickly, so that you can teach 5/8 and 7/8 and those kinds of things. But it also does several other things.

When you are in subdivision of simple meter, the bottom two beats will be connected by the vowel, Ta and Ka, but they have two different consonants. The up part of the beat becomes Di, and is Di and Mi. Therefore, you know where the two parts of the beat land and you can label it, unlike the other ones that are confusing with labels. They call two different parts of the beat the same thing, which makes it very difficult. It’s like saying to a kid, “That could be a duck, or it could be a goose.” They have two different sounds, and so you’ve got to label them with two different things.

The same thing happens in compound meter, so I use Ta, Ki, and Du with the blessings of the three people who developed it (so it’s Ta-va-Ki-di-Du-mu). So that none of them overlap, the vowels are all different. They too realized that that was a shortcoming in their system, so I changed it quite a while ago and last summer I finally worked up the nerve to contact them and that was acceptable to two of the three.

So it lends itself beautifully to “sound before sight before theory,” because the sound of the system is set up so beautifully. Let’s put it this way: After kids begin to understand the system and they hear a new rhythm, they’ll tell you what it is just from the sound, because it makes common sense as to which part of the beat is coming up.

AP: Before we talk about the advantages of moveable-Do solfège, talk a little bit more about that “sound before sight before theory” process.

Alright. For me, I do a neutral to neutral—it’s Gordon’s process, basically, is what it is, even though I wouldn’t say I’m a Gordonite, at all. But I do believe that he took what Pestalozzi did
back in the late 1800s, and the same thing that Kodály was going after. In fact, you probably
know, Kodály’s mother was a trained Pestalozzian teacher. And so, it’s been around since Guido
of Arrezzo, and is basically a neutral to a neutral. If I don’t do it in a neutral, when they hear it in
some other form, they won’t know what it is. And then I am going to do syllable to syllable. I’m
labeling it, just like I would do with a child. Kitty says, “Meow, meow.” It isn’t long before I go,
“Meow meow?” and they go, “Oh, that’s a kitty!” So now we’re working in two directions. And
then I do it on a neutral and they give it back to me on the syllables. That’s when I know they
comprehend it.

Then I immediately go to improvisation with them. Because just like a young child would
improvise a conversation with you, I do that with them too. And I start it very simply. They only
know a few of those labels and sounds, so I start with four quarter notes. And I say, “We’re
going to do quarter notes, half, and eighth notes.” And so we talk about what you can put in each
beat. I simply start with four quarter notes and the next person has to change it. Change just one
beat. The next person has to change that person’s beat, and so on.

The next part, obviously, would be to play lots of games with them. Take two different patterns,
you tell me if they are similar or different. And then I take it even further than that. “I’m going to
do a pattern, and tell me if it contained a downbeat and an upbeat or if it didn’t.” “I’m going to
do a pattern, did it contain a dotted quarter eighth?” “I’m going to do a pattern, did it do . . .” I
want them to identify with their ears whether it was or not. I play “Family Feud,” it’s a game that
I do with them. And it’s all aural, and we have a bell and we ding and have two people fight each
other. And I even do that with the college kids. I say, “Do you mind being third graders today?”
That kind of stuff with them.

I also immediately begin to do dictation with them, sometimes before I teach them the actual
notation, because there are several things about notation. Notation doesn’t show you the strong
and weak beat. Four quarter notes are just four quarter notes. It doesn’t show you which ones are
strong and weak. I have a whole lot of things I do about meter and what the strong and the weak
is. And I use physical motions. So this is strong, weak, strong, weak [motioning]. That’s for two.
Meter of three is strong, weak, weak, strong, weak [motioning]. Then I do four. Strong,
weak, semi-strong, weak [motioning]. And by doing the weak motion you cross the bar line
before you ever see a bar line, and you teach them to move forward with it.

So there are just lots of things I do with the sound, not just saying and doing the patterns. There
are so many musical activities I can use; I can use balls, we tap each other’s hands. So one
person is doing the beat, another person is doing the division of the beat, another person is doing
the subdivision, another person is doing the triplet or the borrowed beat. And we trade off back
and forth long before we see any notation, so we feel the parts of the beat, and they have to really
think hard to hold their part against someone else. But, let me tell you, it’s a wonderful things to
do. Sometimes we even do canons in the hands and things like that. You’ll find out who’s got it
and who hasn’t got it. We do a lot of moving, so that there is a shift in the body, because without
it they will not internalize, as you probably know, with the vestibular system in the inner ear.
And so it is very, very important. But then I also use this large patsch [motioning] so that they
can see the down and the up. It has to be silent, the beat should never be audible or you won’t
know if they’ve internalized it or not. There are just so many things I see happening in the classroom, and I just say, “Stop, stop!” because they’re actually shooting themselves in the foot with what they’re doing, because they don’t know.

And then the question is, “How did they get out into the classroom, without knowing?” They come to us needing remediation, but that’s not an excuse for us to put them out there, incorrectly, I believe.

AP: To follow up on what you just said, you talked about dictation. Do you do dictation with your choir?

Oh yes, some, somewhat, as much as I can. I wish I could do more. When I taught public school, I did it all the time. It was just a natural part of everyday. And in college, I see some of my kids only twice a week, and so I show them what dictation is, but if they can do neutral to syllable back to me, I know they do understand. I know they hear it, at least. And then the process of writing it down on paper is really not all that. That’s just an easy step, actually.

I do use three different methodologies of teaching dictation. I use popsicle sticks and I can make just about every rhythm you could name. [I do this] because tactile, for some kids, helps. And then I also use 3x5 cards, and I have them all on the computer, so the teacher only has to print them off and cut them. And then everyone gets their baggy with stuff and they lay them out and I do the rhythms and they have to grab them quickly and put them in order. And then I do a shorthand that I teach. It’s in the back of the book and every rhythm you could possibly know is done so that they can write it as fast as they hear it. And in that shorthand, they can see the strong and the weak beats, because they lay them out themselves. And in compound meter they do the strong beat big, and then two little. But the first one is . . . that I teach them. So when they draw it out, it’s a big bold line then two little lines, then a not-bold line then little lines [motioning]. So iconically what is taking place would be [Jerome] Bruner, iconically what the music is doing, because the notation itself does not show that. So in some ways the iconic is important, when it has to be done in tandem with the other in order for them to really understand notations.

AP: How long do you spend at the beginning of each semester really teaching skills?

A lot. In my men’s and women’s, I’m teaching skills all semester long. I mean, they’re my training choirs. And I’ve gotten to the point where I don’t put anybody up to the other choir unless they’ve been through those training choirs. Only every now and then will I get a kid who reads perfectly and has unbelievable ears, then I will put them into that top group as a freshman. But I get a lot of transfer students who don’t go into that group because I don’t have as much time here. We read everything in Takadimi, very quickly, and I expect . . . And if I do get a couple of kids in there, then we do “boot camp” in the fall of the year. I pair anyone who is weak with someone who is strong and I have them do a lot of the teaching. So I’ll do an overview; we’ll do all the practices in groups of two or groups of four. That way, I’m reinforcing skills.

The same thing, if I’m teaching a piece, if we’ve got a problem I say, “I want Group A to turn to Group B and tell them what that rhythm is and explain what it is.” I do a lot of that with, what I would call, peer teaching. I also assign them a “mama” or a “papa.” And the kids are very
serious about taking that new kid and working with them. Sometimes I give them more time in the choir room and they go outside and sit, but usually they go up to the practice rooms. And they let me know what they’re doing and they catch that person up, because when you’re in that top performing group . . . The first couple years you can’t do a lot of—you’re really hamstrung with it. But you have to decide if you’re going to make that commitment and, if you do, you will have to pick easier music, you will have to take longer to teach it, and I don’t touch the piano, I never break one of my rules, and get them to do it. But I’ll play things, but eventually they won’t want me to touch the piano at all. They’re insulted when I do that, but that takes a while.

In the men’s and women’s choirs, you just have to put the performance on the backburner for a while. But if you do, even the second half of the semester, oh my . . . the literature that they can read and do! But you’ve got to pick literature at their level, or slightly above. You cannot give them something they’re going to fail at. That would be like the teacher here at the college teaching basic math, or what we would call “Math for Dummies.” But they really want to be doing trigonometry. That teacher would be in deep trouble if they went into that classroom with trigonometry work. But that’s what music teachers do.

AP: I love your discernment!

So, is that what you’re looking for? How I deal with it?

AP: Yes.

In my community choirs, I do the same thing. I have two community choirs, and I start easy with them, but I pick literature that they can do. We do lots of drills. They were interesting because, after my first year and they saw the progress my college kids made, they actually asked me to start the community choir earlier. I start it 30 minutes before, and anyone who wants to get a lot better at it, they come then. I have homeschool people who are now coming with their kids to my community choirs and they are actually becoming reading monsters. They’re really great kids. I have one 82-year-old lady, and she is the solfège queen! I’m telling you, she practices at home, because she knows it helps her mental facilities. And after our spring concert, a whole bunch of the older folks, and even one guy who fought me at first, he came down after that concert. We had learned Gershwin and everything, and all of these 7th chords. We had done the Messiah at Christmas, learned it all a capella, no piano. And he came down and just gave me the biggest bear hug. And he said, “You’re going to be the reason I’m not going to be in a nursing home so quick.”

I has so many side-benefits. I just don’t know why everyone wouldn’t do it.

AP: Do you think (and it’s alright if the answer is no) there are any disadvantages to Takadimi or moveable-Do solfège?

Probably the only disadvantage that I can think of for Takadimi is that there are a lot of people still out there that are uninformed and so they “poo poo” you right away. But it was developed by theorists for instrumentalists. Eastman School of Music, all of the instrumentalists use it and do it. I mean, all over the country, it’s taken over. But I do think there are people who are rigid out there who won’t open their minds. And yet, if I get them I usually can change them, because
Takadimi is the only system that helps with instrumental tonguing. And none of the other ones really do that. So why would I teach “1 & 2 & tee &” when I could teach them something that will actually help their tonguing, which they complain about all time? So why don’t I kill two birds with one stone?

**AP: Alright, let’s talk about moveable-Do solfège.**

OK. Obviously, once you teach the relationships of a major scale, they can sing in any mode: major, minor, Dorian, Phrygian, everything, and you can begin to build their ears. And also, you teach function if you teach moveable-Do. Just think, when you teach fixed-Do, there are twelve sets of syllables for every one of the scales major, twelve sets for every minor, twelve sets for Dorian; well it’s not going to happen. And if they would teach theory by solfège, the kids would learn what’s in a major [triad] immediately. They wouldn’t have to think Ab-C-Db; they’d see it immediately, and they’d learn voice-leading so quickly, it would be incredible, because function is what we do. It’s absolutely perfect.

Fixed-Do didn’t come about until much later, as you probably know. And it didn’t work, so they had to take stuff from moveable-Do, sharps and flats, so why am I reinventing the wheel? It doesn’t teach relationships in any way, shape, or form. It is actually just decoding. If I were going to teach that, I would instead teach the alphabetic letter name. “A Bes, Ces, Des” for the sharps and those, that’s what I would teach. “Fis, Gis, et cetera.” So then you don’t have F♯, you just have “Fis.” I would teach that. Why even teach the solfège? That would be a waste of my time. If they’re doing letter names in theory, than they can do letter names here, too. But I think it doesn’t teach our kids function. So they don’t hear I and V when I play or sing a little melody and I want them to tell me where the I chord and the V chord is. They don’t hear tonic and dominant. That has to be taught now, because they don’t hear both vertical[ly] and linearly. So I think it’s really important.

I also believe strongly in La-based minor, because I can teach my kids minor who have never had minor because their teachers were afraid of it. I know why the theory people do it [Do-based minor]. They teach one set of chords for the I, IV, and V; Fa, So, Do. But if they would do it the other way, and they would teach La, Re, Mi they would now hear those relationships and they would begin to hear secondary dominants with no problems at all. In fact, when I finished the I, IV, V seven chords in Major and Minor, my kids know every solitary diatonic chord there is. So why wouldn’t I do that? And then I could teach them chord function, and then hearing the I, IV, V⁷, then hearing the I, ii, [etc.].

And you probably haven’t seen this; this will be coming out with the next book. There will be all the chords and harmonic charts and graphs. I’ve done secondary dominants, I’ve done augmented-sixth chords, I’ve done all of them. And then it goes directly to the paper, where they can do them. Because we need to be teaching our kids harmonically as well. How can they ever tune a chord? How can they ever be a great choir member if they aren’t going both directions?

Let me say one more thing. I also have a problem with teachers who do a Bach chorale every day and call it their sight-reading. Well, the problem with that is we don’t know if they can keep a beat, we don’t know if these kids can keep tonic, there’s no way for us to know. On top of that, if
you’re singing the alto part you’ll be singing “Mi Fa Fa Mi” forever, and you’ll get the hang of it. Tenors will do something else. The basses are going to get leaps. If I’m going to do that, I want everyone to sing the bass part. I want everyone to sing the tenor, alto, soprano part, and then we’re going to mix it up. Altos, you’re singing the bass, bass, you’re singing the soprano, and on I go, because if they don’t hear where those notes are going, they’re oblivious to it when they’re singing. And worse, when I get them in Conducting, they only hear their voice part. They do not hear the other parts. Consequently, they have terrible times really fixing things on the podium. And so we just stole their education from them. And if we had done the other, they would be incredible at what they do. I mean, we are an aural art. What else can I say? We’re not a visual art.

So fixed-Do, no way; moveable-Do, yes. There are multiple reasons. I wish we could change that “old conservatory” [model] of Nadia Boulanger.

Something else I hear people say is, “If you don’t teach that, they’ll never be able to sing twelve-tone series.” But that’s wrong. If they’ve ever gone and looked at the studies, the studies tell them that we don’t hear them as isolated pitches. Instead we hear them as groupings of pitches, which is perfect for moveable-Do because you just move it all the time. You don’t know where it’s going to be. But if you’re in fixed-Do, you’re screwed if you miss one, but that’s not the case in moveable. My kids can sing, without a problem, those kinds of pieces. Look, even in high school . . . I came home after an audition with [my daughter], and there was a whole-tone piece, and it was seven-part women and then the next page went to a new whole-tone scale, and not with the half-step, oh no, no! They learned it in five days flat. Sang it all, a capella, never touched the keys, went in and blew the judges away. They just couldn’t believe it. They didn’t have any problem because they heard them as patterns. The way I may hear it may be different from my neighbor, but as long as it’s correct in my mind and it’s correct in their mind, away we go. It’s just like a movie. I may have envisioned it [as] something slightly different, but it’s still a good chase scene.

(I feel very sorry for you. You have someone who is very passionate about this. I can’t wait to read the study, because I expect to see lots of thing.)

**AP: We suspected a little of this was going on at the collegiate level, but now we have some data.**

… But I wonder how many were honest with you.

**AP: The ones who didn’t respond at all may be the ones who didn’t want to be honest.**

Right, yeah, I could guess that. You know, all you have to do is let me have their kids for about 15 minutes and I’ll tell you. And so when you do auditions, boy, do you learn.

This is a true story: When I was at [a previous university position], we were doing auditions, [my colleague] and I. And [he] would say, “Oh, this kid’s going to be great. He’s from such and such a school.” So the kid came in and we gave him the sight-reading thing, it was seven measures, and it was just all over creation. So I made him stop, made him sing up and down Do through So, and try it again, and it was just terrible. So I look over, and the music was upside down. So I had
to turn it right-side up. That happened three more time that day. Yes, so I’m here to tell you that that teacher wasn’t doing a good job at all. Not at all. That kid was just following what the group had done. And you know from your studies already that unless you test individually, you don’t know what they can do.

I do make my kids come and read for me periodically. And I would like to get to the point where I can do more online, where they go sing me the vocal pitch exercises and send it to me in a snippet, 30 seconds long. You know, read this part, [etc.]. I know there needs to be more. With changing jobs, I know it’s going to be a real tough year, tough two years, maybe three years before they like anything that I do, probably. There will be those who don’t want to be taken out of their comfort zone. And there will be those who will be glad to be taken out of it. …

AP: You talked a little bit about the citizens of your community choir, how they react to this kind of training. What is the range of reactions from college students?

Same thing. It really is. It’s easier now, when 75% of my choir reads and does this. It’s a piece of cake now, to bring somebody in. They may resist me, but it won’t be long until they are envious of what the other students do. But when you first walk in, it is really tough at any level other than middle school. They don’t know any difference. And the eighth graders, well just kiss them goodbye. Do your best with them, but they may not want it. High school is the same. Ninth graders are going to be easier and the older kids will be the hardest. It really varies. Sometimes it means I have to talk to people individually. Sometimes I have to take those who did come from a program where they were doing a lot of this, and say, “Did you notice that Adam over there—” (And that’s true, one of my kid’s is named Adam. He was just awesome. He came from a school where everything was solfège and everything, just awesome.) And I say, “He’s not a music major, and he’s whooping everybody’s butt in the room.” I said, “Is it because he’s smarter? Or is it because he’s had experiences?” Well, let’s get about the task of the experiences then. I can tell you the number of kids, in the whole spectrum, is directly proportional to how well I convince them that they really want to learn this.

I get “Solfège Queen,” I get all kinds of stuff. When you’re the only choral director it’s good because you’re running the program. It’s much harder when you get a colleague who won’t do it, especially if your kids are feeding into him. He’ll knock you and it’s just awful. But it’s also not good the other way, if the person is feeding into you. It doesn’t do it either. It’s really better for the kids to pick a poison and go for it. But if it’s out of their comfort zone, you cannot dictate to another faculty member.

AP: Speaking of faculty relationships, what’s your relationship with the Music Theory faculty?

Here, I stayed out of it from the beginning. But I will tell you I’ve lost many a job at big schools where I never got asked one choir question, nothing about the voice. [Instead] I got interrogated by the theory faculty. I can list them for you. I mean, I just wanted to go home. And I said, “No, I’m not going to stick my fingers in your pot at all. I will be strictly in mine, don’t worry.” Many times it’s the fact that I have a theory publication and there are very few of those out there in the sight-singing world. And so I become a threat to them when I shouldn’t be at all. But then I have
other places like [a university in the South] who brought me in this year, and I worked with all of their theory and ear-training faculty. Of course, they all use my book. But they flew me in. So I get a wide variety. Here, there’s not much taking place in either our theory or our sight-singing program, so much so that at the end of my first year, my department chair came to me and told me that the choir kids were coming to him and telling him that sight-singing/ear-training class was “A Cappella Choir Lite”!

I just stay in my hole, I don't stick my nose in, I say nothing. I just try to be neutral and not a part of it. But I know he’s greatly—he’ll probably be glad to see me go. I’m a threat to him. And everyone on the faculty comes to me for questions; they don’t go to him. And everyone talks about how their kids have so improved, and the instrumentalists are trying to get their kids in choir with me.

When I was [a graduate teaching assistant], I was only supposed to teach the vocalists, but the percussion guy saw me teaching near his room and he instantly sent me his kids. Eventually what happened is there was a revolt, because none of the private teachers wanted their kids with the theory faculty. And I couldn't teach anymore. But that just goes to show you. This is what I say to them. I say, “Look, part of this is my bad because I’ve had to teach from bottom up, and all the ages. You went to teach college theory, and they got here, and they’re not on that level. Why would know how to go back and remediate?” I think if you engage in the conversation, you have to come right out and say, “This is only because I spent so much time in the public school, and I had all these kids in front of me, and I had to teach them for all-state and everything else, their exams.”

And I don’t think there’s enough accountability at the collegiate level. We don’t do proficiencies in sight-singing and ear-training. If we did, everything would change. Just like we do the piano proficiency. If we did an ear-training and sight-singing proficiency, it would change. I also believe we should do proficiencies in conducting, because that would change too. You as a teacher wouldn’t put them through by an administrative promotion, or say, “I think they’ll get it down the road.” You would hold them back …

AP: Have you ever been in a situation where the systems used in the ear-training sequence are different than yours? How do you handle that?

Oh yeah, several. I just taught it my way, because I got the freshmen, and eventually the person [above] switched to mine because the kids came in and were just . . . Look, at the end of one year, my kids were doing better than the sophomores. In some cases, it wasn’t a big deal. When I was at [a previous university position], it happened really fast. In fact, he was so open-minded at the sophomore level, that eventually I taught all of them. Now he’s . . .

Every now and then I’ll get someone who says to me, “I’m too old to learn new things.” And usually, it’s almost an apology. “I’m sorry, . . . I can see that this is good, but I am just too old to learn something new. I’m going to retire in five years,” at which point, I want to say, “That’s five years of your students.” Then what I do, I just be me, and I joke about things: “I want to learn something new today! I don't want to be drooling out the side of my mouth!” Crap like that, and
then sometimes they come around, especially when they see my community choir doing it. Then they often go, “Maybe you’re not too old to learn.”

But you can’t force anything down anybody’s throat, and I’m the last one to do that. I’d like to think I lead by example and role model, and if they are moved to see the difference in what the kids are getting, OK. You just have to go back to Do-minor, okay. And if that was the only thing I ever had to compromise on, I’d do it easily. I don’t think it’s bad for the kids to be able to read La-minor from Do-minor. But the deal with Do-minor is this: even if there are some sounds and you call that a borrowed chord, when you go from C major to C minor, and they also call it a color tone. They themselves don’t give it a lot of ... because most music goes to the relative minor, and not to the parallel. Like I said, I stay neutral. I don’t have a degree in theory; I just have a degree in the hard knocks of life, of kids who come to me with nothing. And I’m well-read and I read the *Journal of Theory*, and that’s where I learned about the Takadimi system ...  

AP: What about kids who might be really well-versed in another system? Whether that be scale degree numbers or ...

Oh no, I make them switch. Here’s what I tell them: “I guarantee you have holes.” Immediately I say, “Take this down in dictation,” and they can’t. And then I say, “Well, I want you to improvise with this. I’m going to play a melody and I want you to tell me the chord structure underneath,” and I get nothing. There’s been a lot of changes in what we know about the brain and how it works, system developments, so humor me. We’re going back to the beginning. And by the way, I go back to the beginning with everyone every fall. We may work quickly through it, but I’m not going to go back without it.

AP: I have a really practical question: Do you ask your students to purchase your book?

No, I don’t. My kids are very poor here, very, very poor. I have it all scanned in and in some rooms I have a document camera. But a lot of my teaching tools are because I have nothing in the choir room. So it’s very, very difficult. Where I’m going I have a similar ... My kids have to do a lot online, because there’s a lot on the website. So, no. Now when I taught sight-singing and ear-training, they all did, and I do make my music ed kids, when they take Choral Methods with me, they have to buy it because they’ll be teaching out of it, because it literally takes you from Pre-K all the way through.

So it becomes their Bible, for the spiral, and then you match your literature to it. You also take a look at that literature: What are the vocal requirements? What are the harmony skills that are being taught? What kinds of skills have you spiraled? There’s a spiral for those too. I want that done with them. There are three circles with literature in the middle: musicianship skills, vocal or instrumental skills, and choral or harmony skills, and your literature should reflect that. And then your score study means that you do task analysis. But what I see is a lot of people might do task analysis, but they never can really tell me what are the patterns and the reinforced patterns and what are the patterns out of sequence that you’re going to have to teach in this piece.

And so ... I break things down like that. And they often get that in their private classrooms. After I do all the ear things, they get that before they even see the piece of music. Eventually
they get good enough that they can hear just the tonal line—all sing the soprano tonal line, all read the bass tonal line, and then rhythmically and then we go . . .

**AP: I love this!**

You must be going, “Oh my God.”

**AP: I really do. It’s so true.**

Well, you'll have to come to a workshop someday. I’m actually rather funny, because you have to approach it with humor. Most teachers are afraid of this, so I just talk about all the things that I did wrong, and all the things I didn’t know, like teaching "C" stands for common time, when it doesn’t. There are just so many things I didn’t know, still don’t know! I’m still learning! It’s what they’re hopefully going to write on my tombstone: “Solfège Queen quietly drew her last breath”!

I would like to think that when I am energized about teaching, my kids are energized about learning. And I think the more games I play . . . I swat with big fly swatters, I have all kinds of crazy stuff, especially when I teach middle school and high school and collegiate sight-singing, or when I teach Choral Methods. They learn all of those things, because they need to walk out well-armed with tools and as a baby teacher walk in and convince somebody, who thinks they already know “Every Good Boy Does Fine” and FACE and you have to do that.

**AP: Talk about those student-teachers of yours. I assume that they are doing the same kinds of activities with their students.**

Yup. Correct. But I was lucky when I moved here, because I was a well-known entity already in the state and people knew my work before I came, so I had a huge flock of graduate students come in. I was running about eight or so graduate students. Some of them are right here in the area. They had already, some of them, seen me before. And a couple of them who had lived for a while up in the Dakotas had seen me there, too, and had been to some of my workshops. So I did a workshop that very first summer, and I think I had 50 or 60 people. It was those folks that I started to build upon. And then there were districts who wanted me to come in and teach everybody, which I did. And some of them have their whole district doing it. Right here, I was lucky enough to get an elementary teacher, a guy right outside . . . K-12, and the middle school gal got on board right away. The high school gal—she’s iffy with—she has the best intentions, but is very, very scattered all the time. I ended up with some really good placements. The first year, the teacher was learning with the student teacher, and the student-teacher didn’t know all that much because I had only had her for one class before she went out. But by the second, third, and fourth year, those kids were really good. So I could send them to the really, really good teachers who were doing it in the public schools. They could see it, they just walked right in. It was like manna from heaven! . . . But for the most part, that has really helped.

The guy who did K-12, he is going to an elementary school here in town, and the student-teacher he had this year, my [student], has the job. They didn’t even look at anyone else, because they knew she knew all of it. And I have actual schools that come and ask me who I have, because they want one. And if they don’t get one of mine, they send them to a workshop and pay for it.
All over the Carolinas it’s like that, Virginia, et cetera, even Tennessee. If they hire a new person in the district, they’ll send them to the workshop because they want them to use the same process, so I think it’s been a plus-plus for my students, too. The other thing is that they get lots of teaching with me. I have them come in, and I’ll work with my men’s and women’s choirs, and I have them in full view so they can see they don’t know anything. What do I do with them? I have them do a lot of teaching. And they do a lot of teaching with the community choir and sectionals, too. They’re not ready to go to a big group, they’re just babies, they’re in their first class in their junior year with me. By the time they’re seniors, and they’re walking up, they would put a lot of teachers to shame, because they actually understand the process and do it. Probably the only thing they still struggle with when they get out there is discipline. You have to know how to teach like the back of your hand.

I’ve got so many people in the Carolinas who were my undergrad and graduate students. All the teachers want to put their student teachers with them, because they know what they’re doing. [In one city,] there are five or six colleges up there [that] want in with those people, because their own college teachers don’t know how to do it, which is sad. But it’s grassroots, and that’s what you’re doing. If you get every college to teach it, even in methods, . . . we would solve a lot of problems.

AP: One last question for you. And that is just, as a human interest subject, any great stories about resistance to this approach?

Oh yes, yes I have one. In fact, I might be able to dig up the email. I just got it in the last six months or so. Actually, I saw him at [the] concert [of a mutual acquaintance]. . . . He had just finished his master’s . . . and he told me that when I got him as a freshman he said, “I thought I knew everything.” He came out of a performing arts high school. “And I was going to prove you wrong,” “that Takadimi was crap,” and all this other stuff. And he really was tough; he was a very hard child. For everyone there, not just for me. He refused to do things . . . Well, I failed him. He got an F. He got an F in choir too. And I’m not ashamed to tell that because he didn’t do what he needed to do. When he saw me at [this] concert, he came up and began to tell me that. He then went on to say, “I’ve been teaching Takadimi and movable-Do and it works. It works so well, and the cool thing is I start with those kids and I tell them what a jerk I was to you and how much I missed out on it because I didn’t go and I wasn’t open-minded to learn.” So if you really want to contact him, let me know, and he’ll tell you. He will be very happy to tell you what a stinker he was. Brilliant, brilliant, he could do so much, but he had big holes all over, lots of them. (He was the same way with voice, and now he’s had his comeuppance and the voice is finally starting to go where it should have gone.) But it’s that attitude of “I know it all,” “You don’t know anything,” and “I’m not going to do what you tell me to do.” Yes, he had to repeat my classes, and even then he said, “I was just not going to give it up. Now I use Takadimi all the time.” ([He] just got married this weekend. You go on Facebook, he’s at . . . I think he’s going to start his doctorate. I really think he should go teach for a while but that’s my opinion.)

Do I get them? Oh yeah, and it’s real fun when I get the email saying, “I’m so sorry, I treated you like a jerk.” I get those all the time. And you sometimes just have to let it go. I had a hardcore girl like that here. And last year when she started her teaching, about six weeks into the
year, she called me and said, “Mama, . . . could you come out and help me? I'll understand if you
don’t because I was absolutely awful to you.” And I said, “No, I’ll come out.” So I went out and
the kids were doing to her what she did to me. She told the band director just how bad she was,
because she was bad. Really bad. And there she was having the same things done to her. She
said, “At first I didn't want to admit you knew something, because I liked the old choral director.
Then I realized you did know something, you knew a lot, but I wasn’t going to show you that.”
Because she's that kind of girl—everyone knew [she] was—she wore the big “B” with pride, for
everyone in this school. Then she said, “I was teaching it, doing it, but I still didn’t want to say
thank you.” And she didn’t until the fall.

But you know what? It’s OK, I have broad shoulders. I know what I’m doing for them is the best
that I can do, and far better than they would get from most. I want them to go out and be the best
teachers. I want them to go out and love singing. I want them to pick up a piece of music, sit
under a tree, and learn it, even though they’re not a music major. How awesome would that be?
Right? And then we have put forth real musicians who are literate and can absorb music as only
they, personally, can do, and color it with their own thoughts and emotions and experiences
rather than me spoon-feeding them my interpretation of it.

And how much neater to have a group, and I say, “What do you think we ought to do with this
phrase? Who’s got an idea?” “Alright, that’s valid. Who else has got another idea?” “Who else?
Alright. Which one do we think fits this best?” “Then would you write that in your music? Josh’s
idea.” Then the next day, if they come in and they don’t do it correctly I go, “No, no. Don’t
thumb your nose at Josh. Josh did a really good job yesterday.” And suddenly, they don't screw
that one up, ever again. That's ownership. That’s respect for each other, and respect for music
and what that composer put on that page.

So, call me strange, call me whatever, but I’ll take less of a performance if my kids can pick up a
similar piece of music and do it without me. Then there’s been teaching. [The] definition of
learning is that there has been a change of behavior that’s observable. That means I can observe
them do it on their own, which means if there’s been learning, there’s been teaching. If they can’t
pick up that same piece of music without me, and can’t do it without me, then there’s been no
learning. And if there’s been no learning then there’s been no teaching, right?

(You might not want to play this for some people out there. Although, I go do these at national
conventions and I say this. You know, put the shoe on if it fits, and if not, I guess you’ll be
leaving my session early. And I know some people who have left early, and I make sure I walk
up afterwards and say, “Hi! How are you?” Well, I know how you teach.)
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: CONDUCTOR B

Conductor “B” is the Director of Choral Activities at a large, comprehensive public university in the South Atlantic.

Interview conducted Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. (EST)

AP: So my first question is to talk about your approach in establishing a reading program at the collegiate level. What do you do at the beginning of the school year? What did you do at the beginning of your tenure at [your] university?

When I came to [my] university, there was a belief system in the school that the vocal students were better readers than they actually were. Thus, what had to happen is that a culture of literacy had to be established that was at par with the top performing ensembles in the U.S.; as well as was based on audiation and internal hearing rather than theoretical knowledge. So my approach is that it needs to be an auditorially literate culture; that’s what I did.

I started where they were. So for the first year I chose somewhat easier music and I introduced solfège by keys; I just went really, really fast. “This is C major, C is Do [etc.]”. All the warm-ups were done in the Kodály system, taking some materials out of the pieces themselves and making them warm-ups and then transferring them back into the music itself, with everybody’s reading every part. There was a lot of resistance at the beginning; students didn’t like it. Some of that first year was rote teaching and “drilling and killing,” as it were; all the things you do when you have to get through the music.

However, when we did the Brahms Requiem (the first masterwork in my planning as DCA), every single note of that was solfèged by that choir. Everything. It made them a little crazy, because developmentally they weren’t ready to do that, but I didn’t care. We had to go and we had to do this music without a huge margin of error; yet, they were initially quite slow at acquisitioning that information.

We just did it! My belief system is that if you’re not teaching tone production and music literacy in terms of audiation in the choir, what are you doing? You’re just “drilling and killing,” and that’s an old, old system. It does work somewhat but there’s no transfer and no developmental hierarchy for success. There’s also so much decay—tonal and emotional and musical decay—between rehearsals. The margin of error in terms of musical decay is something I really work on and talk about, especially in our advanced choirs. After four years now, they finally get it. Some of the students who were more recalcitrant have graduated out and now everybody loves this. “Oh, we can read.” They absolutely understand. They love it now because they are proud that they are competent in their skills. That’s the point.

I came into the business of teaching sight reading because I think it is my job to create competent singers who can go out into the world and sight-read, which is one of the audition points in
professional choirs. . . . Especially in my top choir, what we talk about from the beginning of the year, we approach it as a professional choir. “This is the way it is in the real world. Many of you are going to be doing this in your lifetime. So get ready. And if anybody thinks that this choir is too hard, then you don’t need to be here.” I say that to them very clearly, and they get it. “I want you to be here but if this is not your speed—literally—then there is another choir that is just as good but they work a little bit less, do a little less music.” . . . It’s been a pretty “straight ahead” thing. Solfège and sight-reading is always a first step of the process. Auditory thinking and behaviors become habit structures, and then you can work on tuning, blending, changing pitch centers and utilizing different tuning systems and moving into other things.

I have really seen this in my top group; they are really doing great because they have that solid basis that they hear everything. On our last tour, we did 65% of the music without an audible starting pitch. Everybody has tuning forks, and seven of the eleven songs had no audible given pitch sounded at the beginning of the piece. That only comes from years and years of going through a program that constantly asks you to be generative about pitch.

AP: You’ve covered sort of your philosophical reasons for making music literacy so important. So, now tell me some of your reasons for choosing your approach.

One of the reasons is that I was also a French horn player for a very long time, and I was never taught any of this in high school so I never had any experience in real auditory sight-reading. The French horn is a troubling instrument because everything’s an open partial on that instrument. So you have got to read and truly hear what you are doing. Further, horn players constantly transpose; in a Mozart opera you’re doing 14 transpositions in three hours. You’re constantly having to audiate; so what you’re looking at is not what you’re playing. It’s just ridiculous.

So I learned from hard experience. I taught myself solfège. I was a graduate assistant during my master’s degree in solfège because I had taught myself all of that stuff. I was just like, “I have to be able to read this.” And I used some of the French Kodály system as well as the Hungarian method.

My whole life I’ve been picking up bits of different solfège systems, but I really love that. Now I know them all, and I can adjust our solfège use to what best fits the piece we are working on. “So in this piece, we’re going to . . .” They teach do-based minor in ear-training classes here; well, I don’t really like do-based minor. But, my take on that is that here they’re learning it in one class one way and I’m asking them another way, but we just made a joke about it: . . . “As musicians you have to be able to do all sorts of things.” A couple of times at the beginning of this transition to music literacy, rather than have a disagreement about which minor solfège system to use, I would sometimes say, “OK, if you want to do Do-based minor, sing it in Do-based minor, if you want to do it in La-based minor, sing it in La-based minor. . . . We are going to sing both systems together. Ready, go.” We laugh and laugh at those kinds of moments!

The point is, “I don’t care what you’re using.” (I actually do care—but at that point I had to say that—because when everyone is thinking the same way the pitch generation is different in an ensemble.) But I said, “This is only training wheels on the bicycle. They’re going to fall off, and
what has to happen is that you have to internalize and concretize that pitch and that piece aurally in your head. So they got it.

Thus, part of my system of sight-reading developed from French horn. Then there’s the comment that “instrumentalists are better musicians than good singers.” My response is, “Really? No, they’re not!” It’s a completely different developmental process. Because you cannot manipulate your vocal folds by moving your hands or moving your lips (every instrumentalist is always manipulating something), in the end instrumentalists don’t have as good of pitch acuity as singers because they don’t have to and the ones that do really do. So it is just a different way at getting at the center. But there are so many places along the instrumental side where you can shut down your audiation partially and not improve. I have seen it my whole life. . . . I’ve been in orchestras for years. . . . And you can watch these people’s careers sideline because of that. There isn’t the understanding of auditory acuity needed to advance to the uppermost levels of performance skills.

Singers have the same issue, but what happens? They sideline a lot earlier because, developmentally, they are going to bottom out sooner when they are not doing this auditory work that’s driving their technique. . . . I was so aware of that when I started at [my] university. But, I thought, “I can fix this.” And we did. They can really read now! They can really, really read.

Two years ago I put everybody in the top choir on tuning forks, and a year and a half ago I put everybody in the masterworks ensemble on tuning forks and this year it was unbelievable what they did. In that group, they are doing Brahms and Carmina and all big masterworks repertoire. So it had to drip through.

My colleague here at our school has three levels of Kodály certification now; he has actually gotten it since he has been here. He is a very strong Kodály educator. The Kodály certification is actually a beautiful teaching pedagogy: prepare, present, and perform. It is a huge system. It’s beautiful and every summer I say I’m going to do my Kodály level one. But I haven’t done it because I’m a DCA and I’m crazed and I’m running three camps . . . But I’m going to do it at some point, but in a way I don’t need it because I’m doing it anyway. Even friends of mine who have Kodály certification say, “Well, you don’t need it but there are just some little things that you would love.” And they’re like, “Oh, come take it with us; it’d be great!” It is a funny thing that you can get all of that another way.

So my colleague is getting the lower auditioned choir and the non-major, “y’all come,” general choir. And he’s doing the same thing. In addition, I actually have the non-auditioned women’s choir and that group is, it’s like the Women’s Glee Club at [the university where I did my doctorate], 80 to 90 girls that are non-majors. We always put our undergraduate women in that group for at least a semester . . . no pressure for them because it is an easy course and there’s easier music. And this women’s chorus sounds amazing. They’re great! The solfège that we do—and I see it on their reflections: “I loved this.” “I didn’t know I could sing like this.” “You really taught me how to be a better musician and I really appreciate it.” So you just make it fun: we are always doing solfège, with every group.
We went on tour with our top ensemble recently and the day we left to go on tour I said, “We need ten minutes of solfège on this piece in your section. Go. Fix it.” And it worked. . . . We talked about decay. It was the most stable tour I ever had for lots and lots of reasons. Part of it is just this: it’s just that the acuity level, the culture of speaking and hearing and working like this is so strong now.

I want to put this in: When we do, if it is a really contemporary piece, like we did the Penderecki “Agnus Dei” then we did . . . A-flat major, F minor, even though it modulates to crazy things, right? We do pieces in fixed-Do and there are pieces where it doesn’t matter. We’ll change keys in the middle of pieces; I try to model that for my music education students, so that when they go out, this is the way they’re going to do this, too. Whatever that piece needs, we will do that solfège. If it means Do-based minor, we’ll do it. If Do Re Mi is truly better, I do it. I try, not only at the collegiate level, to have some kind of developmental sequence for adding in all of the syllables. And it’s not perfect, but my top group has all the altered syllables and I’m really proud of that.

So, I say to myself every summer, “You should take Bach chorales, and have review sheets for everybody in the two top choirs and I never have. I never have time, so we just do it on the run, but I have a really clear pedagogical system. . . . They get it. My music education students really get it. They see the whole process of where it fits in and when you move up and why, and when you move down and why. And they love it. So, my approach is my approach. It’s totally utilitarian, but it’s totally auditorally based.

I have a master’s student who is a wonderful high school director. His master’s thesis is—he’s done a whole-year study with his high school choir—called, “Developing New Tricks: Integrating Kodály into a 15-Year Choral Educator’s Musical Journey,” something like that. In other words, he had to learn it mid-stream. He learned an auditory-based sight-reading system in the middle of his career. As a strong pianist, he had never had it. He saw what it was like from a student teacher that was using it when I was observing her. She was doing her lessons very differently than he was and he loved it. Eighteen months later, he came and he started his master’s with me. And he said, “That’s what I want to do. I don’t understand how your student-teacher got such good results. I want to learn that.”

He was just telling me yesterday about his results. He hasn’t crunched all his numbers, but what happened is that he got unexpected results and one of them was that the whole school’s sight-reading better now and everybody liked it. So I’m really proud of him that he was brave enough to change midstream from his pedagogy and his approach to choir, knowing that it could be better. And he’s great anyway! He’s a great guy, a great teacher. So, again, you can tell I’m super-enthusiastic about this approach. It changes everything.

AP: Let’s next talk about: How do your students react to your approach to sight-singing, whether that reaction is positive or negative or a little bit of both?

Well, as I said, in the beginning they were a little bit more negative. Sometimes they get a little grumpy: “Oh gosh, we do so much solfège.” I just smile and say, “Yes, I know. Don’t worry.” But in the end, they all get it, everybody gets it, and they’re grateful for that skill. So I just talk
with them. There was a period when they were like, “Well we do it this way in theory or this way” . . . Well now they say, “Oh, I wish we could do it the way you teach in theory and ear-training classes .”

Actually, my colleague began a conversation with one of the ear-training teachers a few years ago about switching to our approach because he saw my colleague teach and was very impressed . . . and had the same revelation that we should not be teaching it this way but teach it this way . . . but he didn’t have the money to take the Kodály courses, and he’s an adjunct professor so he didn’t have the leverage to change the whole theory/ear-training curriculum. Nothing ever happened about it.

That gets to your Question #10: “Are there any conflicts?” I didn’t make it a conflict. I made it, “This is the way it is.” What did I learn? “1-e-&-a 2-e-&-a.” That is what I learned because I was an instrumentalist. So for me, it is really easy. Then I did different Kodály systems and now I teach beat function syllables “Ta Ta, Ta-ti, Ti-ti,” instead of numbers, which I initially found to be far too easy and basic. However it really works as everything on a beat starts on Ta. I had the most magnificent jump in acquisition from the rhythmic reading because of the beat-function syllables. So I was like, “OK, I was wrong,” and I changed.

So this is what I say to students: Sometimes I say, “So pick your favorite counting system, whatever you want. Go, go, go.” . . . What I say to my methods classes, these are second-semester juniors or seniors and they’ve been in your program and they haven’t realized what they have been getting this for the two and a half to three years. Then they say, “Oh, Dr. [X], that’s why you do that and that and that!” And I say, “See, you have been learning this the whole time. All you have to do is continue what your pattern is.” And then the student teachers you have every once and a while, they go back and they don’t do that, and I’m like, they go back into that old, I’m so keen on this . . . about how are they increasing as middle school and high school students, because you can be the best college teacher in the world, but they are going to fall back on that right when they leave you. Because that’s in there, and so I talk to the teachers and I said to one of them in particular, “I feel like I completely failed you as a teacher.” And he was like, “Why?” I said, “You have done nothing in this lesson plan that I have taught you. Let us look at how highly ineffective this lesson is.” . . . He was upset. He went back to his high school teaching. You know, no direct instruction. I said, “How much did you talk at them? What did I teach you the very first day about direct instruction and minimal teacher instruction and maximizing student on-task behaviors?” He was like, “Oh . . .” So we had to deconstruct his programming. And that happens all the time with student teachers—in my methods class too—so now I really talk about it. I know that at least when they get out they’re going to know what to do with their students when their students don’t know how to read the music or they can’t hear something.

Also, and I didn’t say this in the other question, we try to do a rote song with every choir. My colleague is very good with that. He did more of the Kodály studies, spending weeks and weeks singing with other people by rote. He’s great, so I have to work a little harder on that so I try to find a rote song that we can do together in a concert that we taught them the whole piece by rote. Then the students that aren’t comfortable in a system, it helps to get them reading.
You know how it is: Develop a sequence, hierarchy . . . And of course I feel like I am making it all up or developing my own thing, which is really working. However, it’s all based on the research. I am not going to settle for students thinking that what they’re doing is not the highest level of audiation and musical presentation if it isn’t. I can get them there, I can get them there, and I will get them there through this method. Then they can go, “Oh, I was really listening and hearing this well, but I can’t do this here,” or, “I was thinking about something else,” or “I was mad at my boyfriend,” or whatever. And they come out with these wild things like, “Why did I count this on the eighth note?” And I’m like, “Well, OK, let’s change that!” You know, crazy, crazy, crazy. I want my students to go out and function in the world of music, and not be one of those people of whom people think, “Oh they’re not that good of a musician.” That’s really my goal, and it’s working here at [my] university. I’m lucky that my colleague really believes that. We both work in a very parallel way and everybody is very comfortable and happy. We are both very accepting: “Oh you want to count with numbers? That’s fine.” We get them there in the end.

So, students love it and they feel competent, and then they feel brave. Last year, in the choral ensemble auditions, I gave the seniors the graduate audition sight reading examples. They did so well! If they end up using “Nu, nu, nu,” in their choral auditions, I will say to them afterwards, “I was really disappointed in your audition. It was just G major solfège! Why did you use to ‘nu, nu-nu’? Can you explain that to me?” They’ll say, “Oh, I was just so nervous.” So we work on it. . . . It’s a constant conversation. However, for the most part the students are very, very happy about it, across the board they are very grateful for it.

My seniors are sight-read better than most of our incoming vocal graduate students. We have students going on to graduate school at the University of Maryland, Cincinnati Conservatory, Ohio State and I’ve said to all three of them, “You sight-read better than you realize. So if you have to sight-read in your auditions, just be happy, be proud. Do what we trained you to do.” Moreover, they always write back and say, “People think I’m a really good reader.” There you go, they’re going into a new program knowing what people think of them. Yay! So over time, I’ve been four years as DCA, and five years at [my] university, and now we have people out there working at other levels. We feel like we’re doing a good job.

AP: Do students who are already independent musicians willingly accept a specific approach possibly different from what they’ve already learned?

The piano students who are such good pianists that they already can sight-read really well, we get them in choir and they say, “Why do we need to learn this?” I have great answer for them: “I’m going to tell you point-blank that whatever non-organized sight-reading system that you have, it will break down at some point when the theoretical demands become greater than your level of aural learning. You will need some system to do that level of difficulty of music. So let’s start building it now, even though you can sight-read this F major piece or this C minor piece easily, let’s do it, let’s just do it. Just buckle down and don’t panic about it and do it. By the end of the semester they all get that. It’s true: every non-organized system breaks down at the highest difficulties of music. That’s why we need to systematize our auditory language.
Consider, for example, Phyllis Bryn-Julson . . . This woman is an anomaly. Her ear is off-the-charts brilliant, and she has perfect pitch. We have one student in our school that is like that; whom we think is that talented. She could be the next Phyllis Bryn-Julson. This girl came in her freshman year, never had a voice lesson in her life, and she sang the Queen of the Night aria. And I’ll tell you, she absolutely killed it. . . . I remember her audition; it was unbelievable. . . . She has perfect pitch and has an unbelievable music auditory memory. This girl has an unbelievable, one-of-a-kind talent. For the rest of your students, what do you do? You teach them audiation, right?

Even if they have perfect pitch, and I have several of them, and my top group tends to go sharp, they get excited and they tend to go sharp, they never go flat—it’s great! . . . Two of them that have perfect pitch, they look at me when the choir goes sharp and I’m like, “I know, I know.” Even those students tell me, “This is just so helpful, because I can relax.” I don’t have perfect pitch, I have great relative pitch, but I don’t have perfect pitch, so I don’t know what that means for them to be able to “relax,” but that’s what they tell me. Isn’t that great?

AP: That is fantastic. Let’s move on: Do you purchase sight-singing materials or do you self-create?

I know my colleague uses the Kodály 333 exercises, . . . but that book is only in terrible clef and that’s a drag. Why all these years they haven’t transposed it into bass clef, or I haven’t found it . . . Anyway, he uses that and some Kodály materials and sometimes I do, too, but I kind of make-up exercises. We have a great room that we rehearse in, so I use the projector and make exercises. Like when we did Will Todd’s “Vidi Speciosam” and what I did, I said to my graduate students, “This is what I want you to do. I want you to make a chart of the harmonic flow of this piece in whole notes.” And I did that with that piece and it was really smart. And it was two and a half pages long, alone. And then we went through, because it’s tri-tonal in some places . . . we went through that document for two full rehearsals—“this is this and this is this and you have to pick this out of the air, get your tuning forks”—and worked really hard on that document which was basically all in whole notes. Then when we went back to the piece—unbelievable! We were done. [We had to] fix the mixed meter, get the text inflection, check vowels and stuff, but we were done, because the Schenker skeleton. (I had a great Schenker class at [the university where I did my teacher certification]; I think very much in the Schenkerian way of underpinning.) In a huge, tri-tonal, multi-meter piece like that where you’re picking notes out of the air, you need to understand the Schenker middle levels of development of the piece. And once you have that in your ear and in your subconscious, then you can pile the rest of the developmental information on top of that.

AP: So really your main source of sight-singing material is repertoire.

Yes, exactly, so I pull things in and I create things out of repertoire . . . . I’ll also always map the development of the chordal structure through the piece, so that students are . . . OK, let’s sing in A-flat major here . . . You don’t always start at the beginning. “OK, start at measure 74, this is the easiest section of the piece, now let’s go and hook it into this.” The music is teaching you how to teach it, I think. What I try to do in terms of creating materials is try to get a developmental sight-reading system for the auditions. Over four years, over eight auditions,
they’ve had sequentially harder stuff. . . . Students will also self-select what they want to do. They’ll tell you when it’s too much. They’ll tell you when it’s not enough. “Dr. X, we really need to go back and solfège that because the tenors and the basses . . .” I’m like, “OK, OK.” And what they want to work on . . . they are picky in some parts that we never went over, so we go back and do them; it’s awesome. There’s so much skill, and they are not judgmental about it either.

That’s the other thing. My colleague and I have worked really hard to foster, “Mistakes are safe, go for it, we’ll fix it.” And they really do; they are fearless now when it comes to solfège. They’ll jump right in. . . . Here’s a good story: My first two years I was here, I’d ask, “Do you want to count this first or do you want to solfège it first?” They’d say, “Oh, we want to count it.” But now . . . with the masterworks choir, “Do you want to count this or solfège it?” “Oh, solfège!” . . . However, with the top auditioned chamber ensemble they want to jump right in and sing it. What that says to me is that the top auditioned chamber ensemble have acquisitioned all those layers of developmental information and they are ready to jump right in and try it. Further, all the top choirs have passed the developmental stage of rhythmic counting—the counting’s internalized and they’re going to do well on that. That’s been fun to see.

AP: That is really fun. You have such a great program established there, so what were the challenges when you first started implementing reading system in your choirs?

Well, again, deconstructing that belief that their level was high enough as music readers. And, also, that it was important that the rehearsals sound concert ready. We just don’t save it until the performance.

AP: How did you demonstrate that their reading skills were a lot less than they thought they were?

My second year, when the choral auditions were done and the choirs’ rosters were set, I presented my syllabus, what we’re going to do and what is our schedule and what are our main masterworks, etc. I stated my goals of improving sight-reading skills, with the goal that this university will be sight-singing at the top collegiate level within two years. Everyone was shocked. I looked at them and I said very, very seriously, “Because you know we’re not. Everybody’s got that? We’re not there yet. So let’s get working.” That was all. . . .

I give student reflections to complete at mid-semester and the end of the semester, so I have much data. I always ask, “Solfège has been one of our throughlines in sight-reading and music literacy, one of our throughlines for our work this semester. Tell me what is your growth and acquisition in this area? What are your main strengths and things you still have to work on?” Students reply, “I used to really hate this but now I love it,” “I really prefer rhythmic and my melodic is a little bit slower,” “I’m not so afraid of large intervals and this seems to be meshing with my technique better,” things like that. Yay!

You have to curricularize it and you have to set a level. It is not saying they’re terrible, but I’m not going to lie to them and tell them that we’re sight-reading at the level of the top choral programs in this country if we’re not. It doesn’t mean we are not performing at that level. The
school is very well known, it’s very well-staffed, it’s very well-funded, and we draw a lot of students from a great choral state, so if we’re not functioning at that level then something is wrong. But it’s not going to be me! That’s my job; I’m the DCA. This is my job to get this organization functioning on that kind of level. This is how we do it in a very fun way. And they do have a lot of fun; we laugh all the time. It’s a great place to be; I love being here; it’s a great school, in a great choral state, too. I have 20 students, more than 25 students, out there teaching in the state. That’s awesome, that’s really awesome.

A year ago last fall I said to them, I think we’re at the level, and people *cheered*. The choirs were like, “We did it, and we made it!” You just make everything happy. It’s all about competency and beauty and skills - these create intrinsic motivation. When you curricularize that kind of learning and you assess it so students can measure their improvement, the intrinsic motivation really shifts, and that is part of that longitudinal developmental hierarchy of all the big transfer skills. I’m trying to do what we learned, what you’re doing now, what we learned at [the school where I did my doctorate] every day. It’s awesome.

**AP**: I can hear how much you care; it is awesome to talk with you. Tell me about your graduating students. Have you succeeded in creating a uniform competence among all of them? Are they all musically independent by the time they leave you?

I think they are or pretty close. I think there are levels; there are levels of students that leave. There are some students at our school that never make it into the top ensemble, the top auditioned chamber ensemble, because they don’t have either the practice ethic or the technique is not quite stable enough or their pitch isn’t quite stable enough.

Yet, we need to be aware that if students don’t transfer, then their own individual levels of musical literacy will suffer. This is something we talk a lot about transferring—I just say to them, “Would you answer this question please? If you’re not transferring the way I’m teaching you in this ensemble, in your practicing with your repertoire and your recital music, are you practicing in a highly effective manner? Say ‘No.’” And they laugh, because they don’t, and they know it. They say, “No,” and I say, “If you don’t transfer this into the rest of your musical career, it won’t take you to the top level of your own work.” They all get it. I’m not in charge of their practice, but I am trying to teach them how to practice. I say, “If you walk into a practice room . . . and just bang out the notes on the piano so you can learn it and the text right away, then is it a developmental learning experience for you?” They say, “No.” So I say, “Good for you, that you understand that.” I think that that is when you have students coming out of high school . . . they’ve never learned how to practice. I’m not insinuating that the top high school programs do this. The top programs are really, really good. But all of the people who are struggling with the counselors and schedules and getting students into their programs, and have budgets being cut, then they are just “drilling and killing” and trying to get students to be in the program because they like to be there. That’s hard. That’s really, really hard for music teachers. But we do get freshmen that are really good students, talented and love music, but not developmentally ready. But can they catch up? Some of them don’t. But interestingly our school is getting a lot more transfer students then ever in the last two and a half years, so I have two students that went right into the top auditioned chamber ensemble. One is from upstate New York and said, “Oh, this is great, this is the way we did it in New York.” There you go: there are people out there
teaching like this at the collegiate level. And when those people transfer to us, they get right into the top and they feel right at home. Yay! And that’s the point. . . .

**AP:** We touched on your relationship with the music theory faculty. Can we go more in depth on that? Do you and your choral colleague tend to just stay out of their world and they stay out of yours or is there any sense of collaboration?

I have said that academic freedom is a very important factor of teaching in the Academy. It is really important. I’m not a theorist by any means, I’m not a theory teacher and I would never say to them anything about it. However they have noticed the change in their students in regards to their ability to read because of the choral program in their classes. I try very hard to make transfers to theory and ear training classes. If the theory faculty came to me and wanted to talk about pedagogy in terms of teaching ear training and sight-reading, I would say to them exactly what I just said to you. If they ever wanted to have the discussion, this is the exact discussion I would have with them, and then we’d see what would happen. But in terms of making an overarching pedagogical approach to ear training and sight-reading that matches the vocal area, no. Do I think it would make the school better in every way? Maybe. But respect for the autonomy for different areas to teach according to what best practices are for their research area is very important as well.

**AP:** We talked about when you observed a student teacher who was not using tools that you had taught to him, so the expectation, I assume, is that your students will be using a sight-reading system with their choirs in field work.

Absolutely, and that is not only from me but it is from everybody in the music ed area. So the fact that this young man did this . . . I think it was a blind spot, he got nervous and he went to those early memories of what his less former teacher would have done. [This became an] opportunity to deconstruct some of the less effective ways of doing things. There is another thing I do with my music ed students. I draw a graph line that starts and goes up to a gradual arc of improvement. Then I draw a line that goes down low to a point, and I have one that accelerates and goes up quite a bit, and I talk about “standard behavior,” “less than highly effective teaching behaviors,” and “highly effective teaching behaviors and student growth.” And we talk about, “If you’re a highly effective teacher,” [then] students . . . “If you’re a less than effective teacher,” [then] students . . . If you are doing . . . behavior, you are going to know because of your students’ growth. And I always say to them, “It is my job to save you from five years of errors as a first-year teacher. That’s my job.” . . . Then I say to them that horrible statistic that 50% of people in the first five years no longer want to be in music. If you change careers, that’s OK, I will totally honor that. You have to follow your life path, but it is not going to be because you were not ready and it is too hard for you. Then it is my fault. I don’t want that karma; I don’t want to go into music education jail! I tell them to call me if they get into trouble in the first five years and I’ll help them out of it—and they do! . . .

That is what I love about teaching. They gain a long-term relationship with their mentors and you become a resource, and you keep those relationships open. “Call me when it’s good, call me when you need me.” . . . And I say to them, . . . “Is it your job to turn out ineffective and highly incompetent students? Is that why you are doing a music education degree? Is this what you are
going to make your career about? Is that your job? Or is it about turning out highly effective and highly competent students?" They don’t know what to say! I’m not messing around with this. This is serious business here; we have to get them ready for success!

Going back to my graph and connecting it to my research on classroom culture; the curricularization of the academic and the social creates a classroom culture that is highly effective, one that creates flow experiences. Then we can go back to the graph and I say to them, “Now lets work on the social skills that will create a better classroom culture.” And soon they realize that that is what I do, and they get it. And now they can do it in their own classroom. And I’ve had students as first-year teachers who walked into terrible situations. I have one young man teaching in a school with a minority of Caucasian students, with predominantly African-American and Hispanic students; he has one men’s choir in which he speaks no English. It’s a really racially polarized school, but I told him, “You go in there and really change that culture.” He said, “I know, Dr. [X], but I’m scared.” I said, “I’m scared, too. The difference is, you know what to do. You have to go slow and everything you do that’s successful you’ve got to be happy about it. . . . It’ll take three to five years to do it. . . . While you’re there, this is what you do.” He’s still there!

I seriously just had a text from one of my students this morning and I’ll read it to you, it’s so wonderful. She sent me a scan of something that one of her students wrote . . . “Ms. [X], what can I say? You’re amazing and really made my year. I really love you. I want to thank you for making me feel safe and loved.”

AP: Oh, that’s so beautiful.

I think so too! And she sent that to me this morning. And she sent me another one: the seventh-graders write a note to the future seventh-graders in the choir. “I promise that when you start Chorus, your friends will call you lame and you’ll probably believe them but I swear it will be the best experience of your life. There’s no other class where you will feel safer and comfortable to be yourself. Have as much fun as you can and listen to Ms. [X].” Can you believe that!? 

AP: That is awesome.

It’s unbelievable. She wrote me this text and said, “I want to thank you, Thinking of you and what you said about flow and culture. Thank you for teaching me how important those things are.” So it’s all of this stuff. . . . She put up a video of her students’ choral assessment on YouTube and . . . they sounded amazing! She’s doing the whole thing. That’s when I feel like, OK, my life has purpose. . . . My students at . . . University are going out and doing good work. They’re ready to handle the problems. So, yay!

AP: That’s right: “Yay!”

Your research is very much a part of that half of that, the highly effective musical behaviors, and if you add highly effective social behaviors then you’re giving your students what they need to survive and transform these schools that are tough and do really, really, really well.
AP: Thank you. Let’s wrap up. Is there anything else that you’d like to share that you haven’t already?

No, I think I’ve talked a lot! [laughter] No, thanks for letting me share; I think you can hear the enthusiasm. I love this opportunity to be a collegiate educator, it’s so much fun . . . You’ve helped train them in a highly effective way. You’re giving your students themselves. How wonderful is that? What a great career path we have.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: CONDUCTOR C

Conductor “C” has been a Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at a small, public comprehensive university in the Northeast for 25 years. The subject’s Concert Choir has appeared regularly at state, regional, national, and international choral conventions.

Interview conducted by telephone on Thursday, June 18, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. (ET)

AP: The first thing I want to talk about is simply your approach for establishing your sight-singing system with your college choirs, how do you do that, first of all, at the beginning of the year and then we’ll talk about how you did that when you began teaching at [your university].

OK, well, first of all, I incorporate sight-singing through the music that we’re working on and I have count-singing systems and through the theory program they teach movable-Do solfège with Do-based minor, and most of the people in the Concert Choir, my auditioned group, are in that program. Now, the Festival Chorus is a college-community chorus, so some of them don’t know how to sight-read, but I always give them the opportunity to sing on “du du du” or “la la la” if they’re not comfortable. So I don’t have a methodology in terms of teaching them how to do it from square one, step-by-step. I confess that. I take advantage of the fact that many are in the theory program. But with count-singing, anybody can count to four or five, so they catch on with that pretty quickly.

AP: Right . . . . I should state for the record that your survey responses indicate that this is a regular practice for you, a key rehearsal tool, correct?

Yeah, that’s part of my process. I absolutely believe in engaging the mind through reading activities, and not teaching everything in the music all at once. I never start with text, unless it’s like a patter song in which the text really leads the rhythmic patterns. My process includes addressing tonal issues through solfège—if it’s solfège-able, because sometimes it is not easily solfège-able. And that’s where I might rely on count-singing or we might do it on “du du du.” But I always establish the key center so their minds are centered on the key; then they can kind of gauge their intervallic reading through that thought process.

When I came to [my university], they were doing moveable-Do and Do-based minor. I was more into La-based minor when I came here and I still see some advantages in that, but they did Do-based minor, and I readily went that direction. I was a count-singer through Robert Shaw’s method, and of course he used, “1 & 2 & tee &” and the first semester I was here, a trumpet teacher came to me and he gave me his count-singing method, which uses “1-neh 2-neh tee-neh 4-neh” and “1-nah-ni 2-nah-ni tee-nah-ni 4-nah ni” and I immediately fell in love with it. I thought it was so much more singer-friendly. And it wasn’t until this year that I really found the source of that. It is called Tometics. Their book is still published and the method uses the “neh”
and the “nah” as the divisi. But then I was speaking with Richard Grunow at Eastman—who of course is into the Gordon Learning Theory and is teaching this methodology full time. He wrote an article on the history of solfège and count-singing. And it was Gordon, actually, who started the Tometics approach, but then he dropped the numbers; he didn’t want them to sing so visually. So he adjusted the syllables to “Du-de, Du-da-di.” Of course that matches “1-neh 2-neh” … So he was the one who started Tometics, but then some of his students continued this approach and developed the Tometics method and published a book. I don’t know if other people use it. It’s so much more singer friendly, because the “1 & 2 &” uses the glottal so much.

AP: Right. So would you say that since that system was already in place when you came to Mansfield, did you feel like it was a smooth transition, that you didn’t feel much resistance in introducing your system?

Well, it’s been a long time! The fact [is] that the trumpet [professor] used it but I could not convince the theory people to use incorporate it. They still use the “1 & 2 &” and it’s partly because the band director, who’s a percussion teacher as well, really insists on keeping “1 & 2 & tee &,” so that’s what they do in theory. We begin by doing the words in warmups, [singing five-note scale] “1-neh 2-neh tee-neh 4-neh, 1-neh 2-neh tee,” so we feel the syllables in our mouths, and I think that they really accept that it is a better system than singing with the glottals. …

AP: Yes, right. Let’s talk now about your belief system, your philosophy about how important it is to teach music reading in a systematic manner to your students. Let’s start with music majors. Why do music majors need to be comfortable with this systematic approach to music learning?

Well, it engages the mind more when they look at a piece of music. And of course I know that Kodály and Gordon . . . keep saying, “Sound before sight, sound before sight,” but I just jump right into sight . . . [by] choosing the literature that’s in our packets, something that is easily count-singable, with beat patterns and not with a lot of sixteenths and dots and that sort of thing, so they can feel successful. I think these systems engage the intelligence of the musician by imposing a system on what they’re reading. Otherwise, they’re doing more robotic learning, it’s more of a guessing game. You find that the result is much more precise, especially rhythmically. I mean, this is Shaw. Shaw was the count-singer of all time and I just really believe—and people say that he did it for big choirs, but I do it for small choirs too—because it immediately cleans things up. Yes, I do believe that music majors need to have these systematic approaches; I think it engages their intelligence, and gives them tools.

AP: Right. Now what about non-music majors? How important is it for them to master these tools?

Of course non-music majors are singing in the ensemble, and the ensemble needs that precision. So, I had a couple of students last year that weren’t even looking at the music when they were singing. So I knew we were kind of in trouble there, so I got a tutor for them.

AP: OK, tell me more about that.
Well, I had a grad student at the time, and so he was assigned to them, and I also had some senior students assigned to teaching them. And they tried to incorporate reading music and get them to at least be knowledgeable about key signatures and solfège and simple things, melodic lines, solfège and also count-singing. So at least they could kind of follow their line. And I know, like I said, for the non-music majors that are in the ensemble course, that I give them the option of saying the count-singing or saying the solfège, or “du du du.” But I still think they follow their music line better knowing that they’re supposed to be thinking that way.

**AP:** Yes, great. . . . We’re now on the third interview prompt, if you’re following along with the questions I sent you. What are the advantages of moveable-Do solfège?

Well, we have students who come to us, particularly from Asia or Europe, that do fixed-Do. And it was a little bit of a struggle for them to try to do moveable-Do, and sometimes I didn’t even force them. I mean they’ll only be here a year, they can do their own system, you know. But the other systems don’t address the chromatics, and I think the moveable-Do sets up more interval relationships, the 5th’s and 4th’s and 3rd’s, whether it’s major or minor. But fixed-Do builds, almost, a relative pitch, where they can kind of guess where the pitch is, but they’re not looking at the relationship as much. So I think the moveable-Do enhances the aural process better.

**AP:** Great, thank you. Let’s talk then a little bit about how your students react to this systematic approach to music learning. First of all, do a lot of your students come into collegiate study comfortable in a music reading system?

Well, like I said, the Concert Choir has to audition with sight-reading in order to audition. Most of them have had some sort of system. And most of them are in music theory from day one, and they’re learning solfège. They know the fact that I use it in choir really helps them in theory, so it’s a win-win there, because they’re some of the best readers in the theory classes as a result. But in the Festival Chorus, the “y’all come sing chorus,” I have people coming to me to say, “I don’t read music.” Granted, sometimes I lose some students because the rehearsals are more of an intellectual approach and they were used to learning by rote and doing quote-unquote “fun music” and some of them drop out. But I do have people that tell me at the end of the semester, “You know, I read better.” I don’t get a lot of push back from them.

**AP:** That's great. Since you mentioned the fact that most of the students in the Concert Choir are in Music Theory class, I want to skip down to prompt ten for just a moment, and ask about your relationship with the Music Theory faculty. How is that?

Well, we’ve had a lot of turnover, unfortunately. Now, we just had a new freshman theory teacher who comes to us as a composition major. And he’s using these techniques but I almost sense that he tries to go too fast for them. I observed him and he was in the middle of the first semester theory and he was doing fourth species counterpoint and I was quite shocked. Our new freshmen were really overwhelmed. So, I made the comment to the head of the theory area that they really need to mentor him a little bit to go a little slower. He needed to realize that some of our students were coming here with no background in music theory. So, it’s a good relationship, but we’ve had some turnover in that area. I have dropped the idea of trying to get them to do the rhythm Tometics, so I don’t even go there.
AP: OK. But you and the Theory faculty are both using moveable-Do solfège, Do-based minor, correct?

Right.

AP: And you would say that the opportunity for transfer, both into the choir, and from the choir into the theory classroom, is significant?

Yes, definitely.

AP: Great. Good to know. Thank you so much. Let’s move back up the page now, back to prompt five. Do any students come to you who have learned a different system besides moveable-Do? You mentioned students from Asia and Europe who use fixed-Do. Do you encounter any resistance from any other systems?

I think that some have done numbers for tonal reading and they’re used to that. But again, it’s not an option, so there isn’t really an opportunity to argue about it. And I think they also—I mean, what has amazed me about it is, sometimes there are *a capella* groups that form on their own, and it’s amazing, particularly for men: They won’t work any other way than solfège in their own private little tutor groups. Like in Phi Mu Alpha, they’re making them learn with the solfège. It’s interesting that the males are a little better sight-readers than the females.

AP: Yes, isn’t that interesting? Do you purchase sight-singing materials or do you self-create? I know that you use mostly literature for performance, correct?

Right. When I teach my Choral Methods class, I show them the Audrey Snyder sight-singing series. I try to get them aware that there are these series out there. Nancy Telfer is another one. We don’t really have a series. (And I know I was going to ask our theory people what books they use for their aural sight-singing before you called, and I forgot. I got delayed in Chicago two nights, not being able to get back. I just got back last night, so I didn’t get to do that. So I don’t know what book they use.) I guess I would say I self-create. I often put a scale on the blackboard . . . and we play games singing. I point to the different pitches and I try to do a couple intervals that are tricky that are in the music we’re going to sing, so we kind of review those. So, I guess the answer would be self-create.

AP: Alright, great, thank you. Can you just talk about what you perceive as the challenges associated with implementing a reading system at the collegiate level?

The different levels of ability of the people that come to you. And of course that’s more noticeable in my “y’all come sing” choir. But even in our theory class, we give a test to the music majors who are coming in. Some of them have to do a Fundamentals course before they go into Basic I, so it’s the background of singers when they come to school, whether they know concepts. But some of them come from schools that are really good at it. So, different levels of ability is a challenge.

AP: Yes. Now would you say that by the time your students graduate, by the time they leave you, have they all achieved a similar level of musical independence?
I would say similar. Some of them are really, really good at it and others are less good. [In] the Concert Choir, they’re supposed to practice outside of class in sectionals with their section leaders. They also sing in quartets, so that experience of having to sing one-to-a-part, private little rehearsal makes them stronger. And then I also have evaluations, like if they’re supposed to have all of the pitches and rhythms of a piece learned by a certain day, then I pick a number from 1 to 12, because that’s usually the number of quartets we have, and I have tape recorders, and they sing into the tape recorder as the choir rehearses. And sometimes they’ll count-sing it or sing it on solfège. So, yes, they do have to get to a certain proficiency in order to accomplish that.

**AP:** Great, great. When you observe student teachers doing their field work, do you expect that you will see the same systems that you use in place in their teaching?

Well, of course they’re supposed to follow the co-op’s model, so they try not to turn the elephant around too far when they go to student-teach. But again it depends on what school they’re in. You know, we’re in a rural area and sometimes we have to travel a ways. I don’t observe student-teachers anymore; I used to. They come back sometimes a little disillusioned because they tried some of these things—it wasn’t their own choir and with new material—so, it didn’t go over so well. They have to realize that there’s a sequential aspect to learning this and they might have more success when they have their own program.

**AP:** Yes. A question related to that. Do you find that a lot of the cooperating teachers to whom you send teacher interns are teaching music literacy at a high level in the high schools in your area?

Um, no. In fact, in a sense the music education chair and I are a little bit in disagreement, because I would like these kids to go to stellar programs, and see what can happen. And she says that I need to prepare them more for the “real world,” so when they go out, they realize they just can’t expect to do this without a plan for starting at square one. So that’s a little bit of a conflict within our program here. I’m not so sure how to resolve it, because unfortunately a first-year teacher doesn’t always get the best job in the world and they have to face the reality of where their kids are. Maybe I don’t do a good enough job of helping them assess how to start from square one.

**AP:** Hm, okay, thank you for being so candid about that, I appreciate it. Let’s just talk about potential negative reactions. You obviously expect your choirs and all of the singers in your choirs to have these skills, to use these tools, to be literate and independent musicians. What are the negative reactions to that?

Like I said, we might lose [some]. I have maybe a hundred in the Festival Chorus, and we might lose four or five that drop out in the first several weeks because it’s just not what they’re used to, or not what they like, or whatever. It’s too intellectual. But I don’t think that’s a bad percentage. They don’t come to me and complain. I mean, we have a lot of instrumental majors in the Festival Chorus, so they know they have to learn their stuff. So I think, frankly, they appreciate being able to practice their music theory in a real situation. I can’t say that they come to my door and say, “I hate this” [or] “Can we not do this?” Occasionally, my grad assistant will pick up a
little bit like they’re thinking they might be doing too much solfège or too much count-singing right now, and maybe they want to go on to “du du du” or whatever. There does come a time when it becomes an impediment. I always want the students to feel successful and feel like they’re moving ahead in their musicianship. Occasionally I will sense that the counting or the solfège is getting in the way. They’re trying to analyze it too much and if I just trust them, go to the next level, to a syllable—“du du du” or “la la la” or “na na na” or “ta ta ta”—then it comes together. And sometimes a piece of music will have a more tonal section and then it will have another section that changes keys a lot, that’s a lot harder to solfège, so I’ll use the solfège on the tonal sections; that will ground them in the key. And then we might do “du du” on the next section. Some of these kids, some of these guys particularly, love to solfège. They’ll solfège the hard section too. They just want the challenge. If it’s bogging down the choir then I’ll back off.

AP: Okay. Talk just a little bit about the signs that it is bogging down the choir. How do you tell when it's time to abandon, at least temporarily, the system?

Well, if it's solfège, if they struggle to maintain tempo—of course I rehearse under tempo obviously—but they’re just not succeeding at keeping a certain tempo going, and I can tell if they’re flubbing syllables, and they’re looking at their music appearing frustrated, I’ll back off. I might try count-singing once, to see if that makes it better or easier. Then I might even try to do “du du du,” or I’ll break it down. I’ll say, “All men on bass, and all women on alto.” So that it is less complicated; see if that helps.

AP: Great, thank you.

You know that working with a choir—there’s a big psychology to it. You have to read your singers, and watch their body language, and listen to the sounds they’re making, whether or not they’re grasping the concept, whether or not they’re excited about the process or they feel good about the process. And if it’s not working by what you’re seeing and hearing then you dumb it down—two parts at a time, one part at a time. I always talk about teaching to success, so that they feel like they’ve accomplished something.

AP: Are there any other thoughts you have related to everything that we've talked about today, that you'd like to share?

Well, let me see. I’ve made some notes here, let me see if I’ve covered it. I’m going to be giving an interest session [at a convention] on “Process to Product.” Some people are more process-oriented, and they very much care about how systematic things are, going through sequences of learning and they don’t care quite so much about the product. But then there are those who are more product-oriented, and all they care about is running through the music until it’s learned and they don’t care how the singers get there. And I’m one who says you have to be both. If you do the process correctly and choose the right level of music, the product will be great. I think I’ve covered just about everything.
APPENDIX E
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Sight-Singing Systems in Collegiate Choral Curricula

Q1.0 Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solfège, scale degrees, letter names, etc.) in your choral rehearsals?

- I do not use or very rarely use a "system" for music-reading with my students. (1)
- I occasionally integrate a sight-singing "system" into my rehearsals for specific purposes. (2)
- I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. (3)

If I do not use or very rarely... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q1.1 Thank you for volunteering to participate in this survey. The purpose of this study is to examine the pedagogical approaches to sight-singing used in collegiate choral ensembles.

The survey is comprised of three sections. In the first, you will provide your consent to participate. In the second, you will be asked about the sight-singing practices used in the collegiate choral ensemble(s) you conduct. In the third, you will be asked a variety of classification questions. The entire survey is estimated to take, at most, approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your time and careful attention to each item are greatly appreciated.

Please click the ">>" button below to continue.

Q1.1a Thank you for volunteering to participate in this survey. The purpose of this study is to examine the pedagogical approaches to sight-singing used in collegiate choral ensembles.

The survey is comprised of three sections. In the first, you will provide your consent to participate. In the second, you will be asked about the sight-singing practices used in the collegiate choral ensemble(s) you conduct. In the third, you will be asked a variety of classification questions. The entire survey is estimated to take, at most, approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your time and careful attention to each item are greatly appreciated.

Please click the ">>" button below to continue.
Q1.2 Section 1: Consent to Participate
Sight-Singing Systems in Collegiate Choral Curricula

You are invited to be in a research study of collegiate choral conductors’ sight-singing practices. You were selected as a possible participant because you are named as the conductor of a choral ensemble on the web site of a degree-granting institution accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. If you no longer conduct a collegiate choral ensemble, please do not proceed. Otherwise, please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Adam Potter, a Ph.D. candidate in choral music education at Florida State University College of Music.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine the pedagogical approaches to sight-singing used in collegiate choral ensembles, as well as the rationales for and perceived effects of the approach(es) used by collegiate choral conductors.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
  • Answer a series of questions regarding the sight-singing practices used in the collegiate choral ensemble(s) you conduct
  • Provide a variety of classification data
The entire, one-time survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You may volunteer to be contacted for a follow-up interview or observation, but are under no obligation to do so.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:
The study has no risks to you as a participant.

The benefits to participation are contributing to our discipline’s understanding of the music-reading and sight-singing practices used in collegiate choral ensembles. Results of this study may aid collegiate music educators and choral conductors in developing methods and materials for advancing music literacy among college, university, and conservatory choristers.

Compensation:
You will receive no payment for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible
to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Adam Potter. If you have any questions now or later, you are encouraged to contact him at [email protected] or [phone number]. This study is being advised by Dr. Judy Bowers, who you may contact at [email protected] or [phone number].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you are encouraged to contact the FSU Institutional Review Board at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu.

Statement of Consent:
By clicking the ">>" button below, you are indicating your agreement with the following statement:

"I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I still have and, if I have done so, have received answers. I consent to participate in the study."
Q2.1 Section 2: Sight-Singing Practices
In this section, you are asked about the practices related to sight-singing that you use in the collegiate choral ensemble(s) you conduct. If you conduct more than one collegiate choral ensemble, please generalize your responses for what you consider your "best practices."

Q2.4 What solmization system do you most often use for major-key, tonal sight-singing?
- Letter names (2)
- Fixed-Do solfège (4)
- Movable-Do solfège (3)
- Neutral syllable(s) (6)
- Scale degree numbers (1)
- Other (please specify): (7) ________________

Q2.6 What solmization system do you most often use for minor-key, tonal sight-singing?
- Letter names (4)
- Fixed-Do solfège (3)
- Movable-Do solfège (tonic is "Do") (11)
- Movable-Do solfège (tonic is "La") (12)
- Neutral syllable(s) (9)
- Scale degree numbers (tonic is "1") (1)
- Scale degree numbers (tonic is "6") (2)
- Other (please specify): (10) ________________

Q2.8 What solmization system do you most often use for rhythmic sight-reading?
- Gordon ("Du-ta-de-ta Du") (3)
- Instrumental ("1-e-&-a 2") (1)
- Kodály ("Ti-ka-ti-ka Ta") (6)
- McHose-Tibbs ("1-ta-te-ta 2") (2)
- Neutral syllable(s) (9)
- Note value names ("Six-teen-six-teen Quart") (4)
- Orff ("Al-li-ga-tor Bear" or other speech cue) (8)
- Takadimi ("Ta-ka-di-mi Ta") (5)
- Other (please specify): (10) ________________

Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected
Q2.9a Please provide the syllables you would have your students use to read the above musical example.
   - Rhythm syllables (1)
   - Tonal syllables (2)

Q2.10b How many days per week do you provide sight-singing instruction in a collegiate choral ensemble?
   - ______ Beginning of term (1)
   - ______ Middle of term (2)
   - ______ End of term (3)

Q2.10c On average, how many minutes per rehearsal do you spend on sight-singing (including singing concert repertoire at sight or using pitch or rhythm syllables)?
   - ______ Beginning of term (1)
   - ______ Middle of term (2)
   - ______ End of term (3)

Q2.11 What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.)
- Choral literature being prepared for performance (1)
- Choral literature not intended for performance (2)
- Published sight-singing materials (3)
- Self-created sight-singing materials (4)
- Unprinted exercises or drills (5)
- Other (please specify): (6) ____________________
Q2.11a Please "drag and drop" the materials you use to teach sight-singing to indicate those you use most often, with those you use most frequently at the top and those you use least frequently at the bottom.

If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Choral literature being prepared for performance Is Selected

______ Choral literature being prepared for performance (1)

If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Choral literature not intended for performance Is Selected

______ Choral literature not intended for performance (2)

If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Published sight-singing materials Is Selected

______ Published sight-singing materials (3)

If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Self-created sight-singing materials Is Selected

______ Self-created sight-singing materials (4)

If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Unprinted exercises or drills Is Selected

______ Unprinted exercises or drills (5)

If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Other (please specify): Is Selected

______ Other (6)

Answer If What materials do you use to teach sight-singing? (Please select all that apply.) Published sight-singing materials Is Selected

Q2.12 What published sight-singing materials do you regularly use? (Please list all that apply.)

Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected

Q2.13 Do you individually assess your students' sight-singing?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ Sometimes (2)

☐ No (3)
Q2.14 What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.)
- Alone for a teaching assistant (2)
- Alone for the professor (1)
- Alone in rehearsal (3)
- Alone on recording (7)
- In quartets/octets/small groups for a teaching assistant (6)
- In quartets/octets/small groups for the professor (5)
- In quartets/octets/small groups in rehearsal (4)
- In quartets/octets/small groups on recording (8)
- Other (please specify): (9) ____________________

Q2.15 Please "drag and drop" the sight-singing assessment measures you use to indicate which you use most often, with the measures you use most frequently at the top and the measures you use least frequently at the bottom.

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) Alone for a teaching assistant Is Selected

- Alone for a teaching assistant (1)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) Alone for the professor Is Selected

- Alone for the professor (2)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) Alone in rehearsal Is Selected

- Alone in rehearsal (3)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) Alone on recording Is Selected

- Alone on recording (4)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) In quartets/octets/small groups for a teaching assistant Is Selected

- In quartets/octets/small groups for a teaching assistant (5)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) In quartets/octets/small groups for the professor Is Selected

- In quartets/octets/small groups for the professor (6)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) In quartets/octets/small groups in rehearsal Is Selected

- In quartets/octets/small groups in rehearsal (7)

If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) In quartets/octets/small groups on recording Is Selected

- In quartets/octets/small groups on recording (8)
If What sight-singing assessment measures do you use? (Please select all that apply.) Other (please specify): Is Selected

_____ Other (9)

Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected

Q2.16 What are the benefits of a "systematic" approach to music-reading or sight-singing in your rehearsals? (Please select all that apply.)

- A common sight-singing system improves our performances. (2)
- A common sight-singing system makes our rehearsals more efficient. (7)
- I believe a common sight-singing system is important for my students for pedagogical reasons. (3)
- I think it is important for future music educators to see systematic sight-singing instruction in action. (6)
- It empowers my students for lifelong music-making. (13)
- It enables the choir to learn music faster once the system is learned. (14)
- It reinforces the method used in the students’ aural skills/ear-training/sight-singing coursework. (5)
- Many of my students do not already possess good music-reading skills and my approach improves them. (1)
- Other (please specify): (4) ____________________

Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected

Q2.17 Please rate the benefits of a systematic approach to music-reading/sight-singing you selected.

- 1 = Not at all Important
- 2 = Very Unimportant
- 3 = Somewhat Unimportant
- 4 = Neither Important nor Unimportant
- 5 = Somewhat Important
- 6 = Very Important
- 7 = Extremely Important

Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected

Q2.17a1 What are the benefits of the systematic approach to music-reading/sight-singing that you use? (optional)
Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected

Q2.17a Are you willing to be contacted to participate in a detailed analysis of your work in this area?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2.17b Thank you for your willingness to contribute to this important research! Please provide your contact information below.
- Name (1)
- Institution (2)
- E-mail address (3)
- Phone number (4)

Q2.20a Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The aural skills/eartraining curriculum at my institution is excellent.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sight-singing system taught in theory classes at my institution is</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideal for transfer to the choral rehearsal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for auditioned collegiate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choral ensembles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight-singing ability should be a prerequisite for all collegiate choral</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensembles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students generally enjoy instructional time devoted to sight-singing.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 = Somewhat Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

Q2.21 Before moving on to the final section of this survey, if you would like to make any remarks, notes, or clarifications for the researcher, please do so below (optional):

Q3.1 Part 3: Classification Data
In this third and final section of the survey, you will be asked questions about your teaching situation. This data will be used to classify your answers from Part 2. Please provide the response that best describes you.
Q3.2 In what state do you teach?

- Alabama (1)
- Alaska (2)
- Arizona (3)
- Arkansas (4)
- California (5)
- Colorado (6)
- Connecticut (7)
- Delaware (8)
- Florida (9)
- Georgia (10)
- Hawaii (11)
- Idaho (12)
- Illinois (13)
- Indiana (14)
- Iowa (15)
- Kansas (16)
- Kentucky (17)
- Louisiana (18)
- Maine (19)
- Maryland (20)
- Massachusetts (21)
- Michigan (22)
- Minnesota (23)
- Mississippi (24)
- Missouri (25)
- Montana (26)
- Nebraska (27)
- Nevada (28)
- New Hampshire (29)
- New Jersey (30)
- New Mexico (31)
- New York (32)
- North Carolina (33)
- North Dakota (34)
- Ohio (35)
- Oklahoma (36)
- Oregon (37)
- Pennsylvannia (38)
- Rhode Island (39)
- South Carolina (40)
- South Dakota (41)
- Tennessee (42)
- Texas (43)
Q3.3 At what type of institution do you teach?
- Community/junior college (8)
- Comprehensive university, private (2)
- Comprehensive university, public (1)
- Conservatory of music affiliated with a college or university (6)
- Conservatory of music, independent (7)
- Liberal arts college (5)
- Research university, private (4)
- Research university, public (3)

3.4aa How many curricular collegiate choral ensembles do you conduct?
- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- More than 7 (8)

Q3.4 What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.)
- Men's voices, auditioned (3)
- Men's voices, non-auditioned (12)
- Mixed voices, auditioned (1)
- Mixed voices, non-auditioned (13)
- Treble voices, auditioned (2)
- Treble voices, non-auditioned (14)
- Chamber (4)
- Early music (6)
- Gospel (8)
- Jazz/pop/show (9)
- Liturgical (11)
- Madrigal (7)
- Symphonic (5)
- World music (10)
Answer If Which of the following best describes your approach to using a sight-singing "system" (e.g., solf... I frequently use a sight-singing "system" with my students; it is a key rehearsal tool for me. Is Selected

Q3.5 To what groups do you not teach sight-singing systematically? (Please select all that apply.)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Men's Is Selected
- Men's voices, auditioned (1)
- Men's voices, non-auditioned (2)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Mixed voices Is Selected
- Mixed voices, auditioned (3)
- Mixed voices, non-auditioned (4)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Treble voices Is Selected
- Treble voices, auditioned (5)
- Treble voices, non-auditioned (6)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Chamber Is Selected
- Chamber (7)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Early music Is Selected
- Early music (8)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Gospel Is Selected
- Gospel (9)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Jazz/pop/show Is Selected
- Jazz/pop/show (10)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Liturgical Is Selected
- Liturgical (11)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Madrigal Is Selected
- Madrigal (12)

If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) Symphonic Is Selected
- Symphonic (13)
If What types of collegiate choirs do you conduct? (Please select all that apply.) World music Is Selected

- World music (14)
- I teach sight-singing to all of my ensembles. (15)

Q3.7 How many students are majors in your department, school, or college of music?
- 49 or fewer (1)
- 50-99 (2)
- 100-149 (3)
- 150-199 (4)
- 200-249 (5)
- 250-299 (6)
- 300-399 (7)
- 400-499 (8)
- 500-599 (9)
- 600-749 (10)
- 750-999 (11)
- 1,000 or more (12)

Answer If At what type of institution do you teach? Conservatory of music, independent Is Not Selected

Q3.8 How many students are studying full-time at your institution as a whole?
- 1,000 or fewer (1)
- 1,000-1,999 (2)
- 2,000-2,999 (3)
- 3,000-3,999 (4)
- 4,000-4,999 (5)
- 5,000-9,999 (6)
- 10,000-19,999 (7)
- 20,000-39,999 (8)
- 40,000 or more (9)

Q3.9 Does your department, school, or college of music offer a graduate degree program in music?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Does your department, school, or college of music offer a graduate degree program in music? Yes Is Selected

Q3.10 Are there graduate music students in any of your choirs?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Q3.11 Do you teach sight-singing to the ensemble(s) you conduct of which graduate music students are members?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q3.12 How many years have you taught in higher education? (Please include years of experience teaching at any degree-granting institution, not just your present position.)
- 4 or fewer (1)
- 5-9 (2)
- 10-14 (3)
- 15-19 (4)
- 20-24 (5)
- 25-30 (6)
- 30 or more (7)

Q3.13 What is your highest level of education?
- Bachelor's degree in a field other than music (1)
- Bachelor's degree with a minor in music (2)
- Bachelor's degree with a major in music (3)
- Coursework beyond a bachelor's degree that did not result in a master's degree (4)
- Master's degree in a field other than music (5)
- Master's degree in music (6)
- Coursework beyond a master's degree that did not result in a doctoral degree (7)
- Doctoral degree in a field other than music (8)
- Doctoral degree in music (9)
- Academic work done in a post-doctoral program after completing a doctorate in music (10)

Q3.14 Is your degree in music education?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q3.15 Is your degree in music education?
Q3.14a Are any of your degrees in music education?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Is your degree in music education? Yes Is Selected Or Are any of your degrees in music education? Yes Is Selected

Q3.15 Have you ever been a primary and/or secondary school choral/vocal music teacher?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Have you ever been a primary and/or secondary school choral/vocal music teacher? Yes Is Selected

Q3.16 How many years did you teach (or have you been teaching) choral/vocal music at the primary or secondary levels?
- 4 or fewer (1)
- 5-9 (2)
- 10-14 (3)
- 15-19 (4)
- 20-24 (5)
- 25-30 (6)
- 30 or more (7)

Q3.X Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your time and attention are valued and appreciated! Please click the ">>" button below to submit your responses.
APPENDIX F

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW PROMPTS

1. Describe your approach to establishing a reading program in the collegiate choral setting.
2. What is your “belief system” about the importance and relevance of teaching reading to music majors and non-music majors?
3. Expound on the reasons for choosing the particular approach that you use.
4. What responses and reactions to your approach do you receive from students at all levels of study?
5. Do students who are already independent musicians willingly accept a specific approach possibly different from what they’ve already learned?
6. Do you purchase sight-singing materials or do you self-create? Do students buy a textbook?
7. What are the challenges associated with implementing a reading system in the collegiate choral setting?
8. Reflect on the variance in skill among your graduating students. Do they all leave with a similar level of musical independence?
9. With which choirs do you use your approach?
10. What is your relationship with the music theory faculty? Is there any conflict between the system used in theory/eartraining courses and your choral ensembles? Do students have the opportunity to transfer skills between theory and performance curricula?
11. Do you encourage your music education majors to use your system when they do fieldwork?
12. Please describe any negative reactions to your incorporation of sight-singing instruction in the choral ensemble.
13. Please share any relevant issues that you have not already shared via the survey or these prompts.
APPENDIX G

SURVEY LETTER 1: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Send Date: May 17, 2015
Subject: Survey of Collegiate Choral Conductors

Dear collegiate choral conductor:

Greetings! I am a doctoral candidate at the Florida State University College of Music and am conducting research on the sight-singing practices of collegiate choral conductors in degree-granting departments, schools, and colleges of music accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). Because you are listed as the conductor of a choral ensemble or ensembles at a NASM member institution’s web site, your participation is requested in this study.

If you do not use or rarely use a consistent “system” per se in the music-reading process in your collegiate choirs, your participation will be as simple as answering a single question. Those who occasionally integrate a sight-singing “system” into their rehearsals for specific purposes will be asked questions that will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. If your approach to choral sight-singing is highly systematic, it will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete this survey. Please note that even if you do not use or very rarely use a “system” for music-reading with your students, your single-response participation in this survey is crucial. Your responses are completely anonymous and data collected will be used only in aggregate.

Your time, especially during the summer months, is extremely valuable, but of even greater value is your expertise as a choral conductor at an accredited college, university, or conservatory. It is my hope that this study will benefit our discipline by describing the best practices of excellent collegiate conductors. If you have any questions or would like to receive a copy of the study upon its completion, please contact me at aap12b@my.fsu.edu. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,
Adam Potter
Ph.D. Candidate
Florida State University

Follow this link to the Survey:
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}"

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}"

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}"
APPENDIX H

SURVEY LETTER 2: FOLLOW-UP INVITATION

Send Date: May 24, 2015
Subject: Sight-Singing Systems in Collegiate Choral Curricula

Dear collegiate choral conductor:

Last week, you received an invitation to participate in a study examining conductors’ best practices related to sight-singing in collegiate choral ensembles at institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. Your participation in this project is vital to ensuring that it accurately reflects the current methods and materials employed by excellent choral conductors in higher education.

If you do not use or rarely use a consistent “system” in the music-reading process in your collegiate choirs, your participation will be as simple as answering just one question, but your single-response participation is still crucial to obtaining an adequate sample size to validate the data collected. For conductors whose approach to music-reading in collegiate choral ensembles is more system-oriented, your participation will require only 5 to 15 minutes to complete. Your responses are completely anonymous and data collected will be used only in aggregate.

If you have any questions, please contact me at aap12b@my.fsu.edu. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,
Adam Potter
Ph.D. Candidate in Choral Music Education
Florida State University

Follow this link to the Study:
${!://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${!://SurveyURL}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${!://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}
Send Date: June 7, 2015  
Subject: Final Reminder: Study of Collegiate Choral Sight-Singing

Dear collegiate choral conductor:

Last month, you received two invitations to participate in a survey of your sight-singing practices. You are receiving this final e-mail reminder because you are listed as the conductor of a choral ensemble on the web site of a degree-granting member of the National Association of Schools of Music and have not yet participated in the survey. The deadline for completion is **Tuesday, June 9 at 11:59 pm (ET)**. Your participation is needed and valued and will take no more than 15 minutes (most participants finish in far less than that).

If you have any questions, please contact me at [adam.potter@fsu.edu](mailto:adam.potter@fsu.edu). Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,
Adam Potter  
Ph.D. Candidate in Choral Music Education  
Florida State University

**Follow this link to the Survey:**
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}
Dear participant,

Thank you for completing the survey on sight-singing practices in collegiate choral ensembles. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will contribute to our field's understanding of the music-reading methods and techniques taught in the collegiate choral setting.

If you would like to receive the summary results of this survey upon their completion, please contact Adam Potter via e-mail.

Sincerely yours,
Adam Potter

Adam Potter
PhD Candidate in Choral Conducting & Music Education
Graduate Teaching Assistant for Choral Music
The Florida State University College of Music
122 North Copeland Avenue | Tallahassee, FL 32306-1180
Office: Kuersteiner Music Building 446-F | E-mail: aap12b@my.fsu.edu
Phone: 850.644.5084 | Fax: 850.644.2033 | Web: www.music.fsu.edu

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### APPENDIX K

**PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF SPECIFIC SYSTEMS FREE RESPONSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to learn quickly contemporary music often use simultaneous keys</td>
<td>A few weeks, my students’ ability to figure out problem spots by themselves improves dramatically. I get regular comments from students that they became better musicians because they used solfege so regularly in my choirs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a few weeks, my students’ ability to figure out problem spots by</td>
<td>Because we use literature that we are preparing for concert, we lose no time preparing, and we can focus on difficult sections and break them down into solos, duets, trios and quartets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themselves improves dramatically. I get regular comments from students</td>
<td>Fully graded from whole notes through complex near-insanity. Clearly organized for la-based minor. Melodies actually those within a vocal/choral context (not generated by a non-singing theory prof sitting at the piano keyboard, writing everything in C - I am not proud that my colleagues use Dannhauser). When challenge is needed, move to Bach chorales, read in parts (not necessarily SATB; scramble voice assignments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that they became better musicians because they used solfege so regularly</td>
<td>I do not know that I can support the idea that my system has advantages over others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in my choirs.</td>
<td>I find the students’ aural skills are greatly improved. In addition to improved skills in deciphering the printed music, they are much better able to tune to each other and to hold difficult parts in our literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a few weeks, my students’ ability to figure out problem spots by</td>
<td>I love the rhythm syllables of Tometics. Using the N preceding the vowels is very singer friendly and creates a nice legato line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themselves improves dramatically. I get regular comments from students</td>
<td>Improves aural acuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that they became better musicians because they used solfege so regularly</td>
<td>It's consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in my choirs.</td>
<td>It creates better musicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a few weeks, my students’ ability to figure out problem spots by</td>
<td>I teach sight singing through choral warm ups each and every day. They hear tones and sing back in solfege and sing as individuals as well as in small groups. All of which builds pride and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themselves improves dramatically. I get regular comments from students</td>
<td>It enables us to get to the advanced aspects of the repertoire faster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that they became better musicians because they used solfege so regularly</td>
<td>It gives the students less to think about while they are reading. They only have to think about the intervalic and rhythmic solfege, as opposed to the text in whatever language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in my choirs.</td>
<td>It helps make the student responsible for learning the notes and rhythms. It takes them further than the &quot;rote&quot; approach or just singing back what you hear. It makes them much more aware of the way the music is put together and helps them to begin to equate intervals and sounds into the learning process. They are much more aware of the relationship of note to note. It vastly improves their intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a few weeks, my students’ ability to figure out problem spots by</td>
<td>It is a logical approach which builds on previously learned skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themselves improves dramatically. I get regular comments from students</td>
<td>It works well for those students who are music majors and those who have a limited understanding of music notation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that they became better musicians because they used solfege so regularly</td>
<td>I use sight-singing/music-reading exercises also for intonation, vowel unification, and tone production. They sing the &quot;o&quot; and the &quot;a&quot; in the same place, with the same lips, same use of the tongue, and an opportunity to talk about and demonstrate fine points of intonation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in my choirs.</td>
<td>I would rather used fixed do, but since the theory/aural skills classes at my school use movable do and do based minor, I use that in rehearsals. My graduate conducting students are required to use fixed do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowing what each note is NOT is equally important to knowing which note it IS. Other benefits are the social bonding between neighbors and within sections. I do test SS in auditions, not to keep people out but to establish initial standing orders putting good readers by pre-readers, strong voices by developing voices, and personality mixes to each others' benefit.

La-based minor is, to my mind, a better system for engagement in modal music, which constitutes an important part of the repertory and mission at our school.

La based minor held intonation. Moveable do held singers understand form and harmonic analysis in tonal music. Rhythmic count-singing allows singers to stay in the music at first read. It is also easier to sing in time. Takadimi is great for figuring a rhythm out but not as effective in sight singing. If the music is world music (based on oral tradition). And highly complex, I do not use count singing. Although, I generally use la based minor moveable do and count singin, what I use is based on the music. All music is not the same. It is important to have flexibility based on the music -to have a variety of tools including kinesdyhtic work on reading rhythm. (sometimes we sing as we tap the eighth nite). Music is different. While a systematic approach works on a great deal of Western European music that is tonal, score study needs to guide the teaching of music. A variety of tools-like the old saying, "if all you have is a hammer, you think everything is a nail." I have other tools besides a hammer in my tool chest.

Learning music this way is long-lasting. Learning by rote is very short-lived.

Movable "Do" allows singing in any key without major adjustments in syllables, singing on actual numbers when count singing allows for a common language and is most common in the professional world if students decide to perform professionally after school, the music is understood at a deeper level and the underlying structure of the music is more easily revealed, moving to the stage in rehearsal where other elements, expressive elements of the music, sooner creates a better and stronger ensemble that sings with musicality, neutral syllable and solfege singing allows the singers to focus on intonation and intervals or rhythms by taking away text, text can then be focused on as become expressive instead of a hindrance to the "music"

Movable do does reinforce the work they are doing in sight-singing class. We use the "Westminster system" (pronouncing "do" as [du], "re" as [ri] and "sol" as [sul]), which also improves the ensemble's intonation. I also dictate passages to them in letter names, as well as giving all tonic information in homework assignments in letter names (i.e.: mm. 1 - 16, Gis=do)

Moveable Do (La-based minor) is the most pragmatic and useful system in the music during which I choose to employ it -- tonal music. The syllables can be sung with beautiful tone due to the vowels employed, the relationships of the scale degrees remain consistent, there is no automatic alteration in the minor, memorizing one set of key signatures always tells you where DO is whether or not you are in a major or minor mode...the list goes on.

Moveable do helps students understand tonal patterns and intonation

Our approach is centered on: •in the air •on the board •from the page and focuses on helping students to learn to think and hear in solfege before they attempt to read it. We use hand signs, which provides a kinesthetic approach that enhances their learning. Hand-sign solfege also assists with tone quality development and enhances their awareness of articulations and phrase shape as well.

Sequentially and pedagogically conceived.

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Singers' ownership of the rehearsal learning process, improves tonality and intonation by using system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfege - better intonation and knowledge of where they are in the scale at any given time. Numbers - much more precise rhythmic accuracy and steady tempo.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solfege is better than numbers because: 1) it is more &quot;singable&quot; 2) every scale degree and chromatic alteration has a syllable and 3) it doesn't confuse the beat names, making transitions to count-singing better. La-based minor is more efficient than do-based minor since it is: 1) easier to learn (one set of syllables per key signature) and 2) doesn't require shifting do when minor mode invariably modulates to relative major.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solfeggio is a tool that reinforces tonal music both linearly and harmonically (vertically). It also aids students in singing in tune.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TaKaDiMi Promotes extremely well-articulated rhythm accuracy Facilitates the generalization of identical patterns from one meter to another Assists in the aural identification, labeling and accurate performance of different meters; Connects very efficiently with the aural syntax of music, allowing learners to easily link syllables to patterns before encountering notation; Links musical symbols in a practical and intuitive manner Appropriate for all ages Beat orientated; Surpasses most other systems by assigning specific syllable to each subdivision; subdivision syllables are the same, even between simple and compound meter; Related subdivisions share the same vowel Each syllable begins with a consonant, optimizing rhythmic accuracy; the system varies these consonants to ease enunciation; Additional syllable for quintuplets and septuplets Syllables for variable-beat meters; A coordinated mid-point in both simple and compound meter is labeled with the syllable 'di'. Moveable-Do: La Minor Sound based rather than visual based; Relative solemnization system also determines its function in tonality Appropriate for all ages Promotes quality singing Allows students to quickly sing in major, minor and all modes. Every pitch has it's own name which is far less confusing that fixed do. If you teach tonic, dominant and subdominant chords in major (do chord, so chord, fa chord) and in minor (la chord, mi chord, re chord) the singers will hear secondary relationships as well as aurally and visually know all of the chords built on a diatonic scale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching students skills to be able to participate in life-long musical experiences. Musical literacy is the gift of a lifetime.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The only reason I chose move-able Do is because I want to reinforce what is being done in their theory and aural skills classes. I believe any system will achieve the above answers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| To elaborate on my answer for "other" on the previous page of this survey: I frequentlly tune chords in tonal music in the order: root, fifth, third, seventh, ninth (if applicable). Using moveable do solfege makes this go much faster because the students are already thinking in terms of scale degree relationships. (I may have to retonicize a particular chord for this to work). Also, making students aware of how a given scale degree tends to resolve (e.g. ti to do, or fa to mi) makes their singing more expressive. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transferable skills to enable singers to learn any music they encounter.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using a movable-do system for both major and minor keys, allows for a better understanding and facility in singing modal music. (We warm-up with modes in every rehearsal.) We also work on interval recognition/singing without reference to tonality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using movable Do is a flexible system that helps students learn the importance of harmonic context. We also integrate the Curwen hand signs to give them a kinesthetic component. Solfege makes students think about staying in a key.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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We have moved to a beat function rhythmic system this year and it has made a HUGE jump in acquisition. Combining beat function counting and a flexible use of solfege (moveable do when needed, fixed do when needed, la based minor when needed, do based minor when needed, etc.) has lead to very strong sight reading, and even more importantly, very little 'decay' in concert preparation while aiding in longer term musical retention.

While I indicated moveable do, I've used every system, and feel strongly that the most important thing is working to connect functional thinking (moveable solfege, scale degrees, etc...) with a pitch thinking (letter names, fixed do, etc...) so that students learn to go instantly from page to function to sound and vice versa. For a detailed explanation of this, see William Marvin's extended discussion on it in “A Comparison of four Sight-Singing and Aural-Skills Textbooks” Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy 22 (2008): 131-148. [see esp. pp. 137-9].
APPENDIX L

REMARKS, NOTES, AND CLARIFICATIONS FREE RESPONSES

At almost all institutions, there are non-auditioned ensembles. Sometimes people who can actually sight-sing will not sign-up for an ensemble simply because they are afraid to make errors or they have test anxiety. I believe it is our responsibility to have opportunities for people who wish to have singing in their lives to provide an opportunity to be in a large ensemble where their skills can improve and they can have a satisfying musical experience. Because most of my students are music majors, actual work with sight-singing is a minimal part of our rehearsals. On the other hand, the development of a concept of "ensemble tonality" is VERY important to me. To do that, I use modified Gordon Learning sequences along with some scales. These, in addition to some sight-singing exercises move us ahead in efficiency as well as performance quality.

Dr. Richard Hoffman, a co-inventor of the Takademi system, is a colleague. Students are quite successful sight-singing rhythms with this system. Furthermore, it has become a valuable tool when learning complex rhythms in music. Faculty in our Music Education and Music Theory areas do not employ the same systems for sight-singing. I use the choral rehearsal to demonstrate the validity of each system where appropriate.

Fixed Do is not good, it should be abandoned by anyone who uses it. I have found movable and Do minor to be the best for training the ears, any other system pales by comparison. I even teach movable Do modes, works every time. Lydian is D R M Fi S L T D, for instance.

I'm of the "educational" camp, in fact a music education professor given the position to "practice what I preach" by having the most entry-level choir, yet I've also managed different levels of reading ability in an extremely select vocal jazz ensemble. University is still an education, and my philosophy is for lifelong music learning and music for all by having a variety of ensembles. I also take exception with the notion of "audition" which literally means "to hear", so yes my ensembles are all auditioned, yet to know my singers' abilities and vocal quirks and qualities in a range of style "fits" so I can both fit music to the voices and stretch voices educationally to new vocal styles (e.g. Classical to jazz, gospel, World Music, etc.). The voice is a multi-colored instrument after all, and to learn different vocal timbres gets you right into topics of culture, life experience, history, etc.

I also use moveable Do solfege in sightreading along with neutral syllables. I believe that it is part of our job to help students grow in literacy regardless of the students background. Students tend to be happiest when participating in ensembles of like ability so a variety of ensembles at a variety of levels can be helpful for students as they work to improve literacy skills.

I believe that sight-reading can be presented in a music theory curricular setting where students see how essential this skill is to their development as musicians. When the assimilation is complete between the classroom and rehearsal room, then enjoyment takes place.

I conduct an ensemble where students are auditioned, but sometimes I have accepted students who have little music reading experience or have never sung in a choir before. I require a
short sight-reading exercise during the audition because the group meets only one night per week for two hours. This schedule necessitates a fast pace for learning repertoire, so I need to know if a student can follow a notated musical line. Sometimes I admit students into the ensemble provisionally, and they help determine whether they think they can keep up at that pace or not after trying out one or two rehearsals. If they are willing to learn, I believe I can help them.

I don't have much of a system beyond the Kodaly hierarchy. I start with Sol-Mi and add on from there. I just make up exercises before class starts and write them on the board. We typically do rhythm and pitch reading separately at first, and eventually I make the rhythms harder on the pitch exercises.

I do not generally do a sight-singing component for admission into men's choir.

I do not require students to sight-sing in an audition unless they are auditioning for the top choir. The Men's Chorus and Women's is a non-auditioned ensemble. Once the students are enrolled in the ensemble, however, they are engaged daily in sight-singing. Many later will eventually audition for the top choir, and they are thereby prepared for the sightreading portion of the audition.

I do not use sight singing with our non-auditioned groups. We want them to sing the highest quality music possible for their skill level. Students generally are in these choirs to sing, not necessarily to develop their sight singing skills - for many of the students, they have never been taught solfege, so it would very difficult for these performance-based choirs to retain students if the focus was on developing sight singing skills. It is different for our auditioned ensembles - comprised mostly of music majors who have developed these skills.

If a students desires to sing in a collegiate ensemble and the singer isn't an independent musician then the director is obligated to teach music literacy in the choral setting. Rote teaching isn't appropriate at the collegiate level.

I love how you allude to how sight singing should be a prerequisite to all choral ensembles. I couldn't agree more with you. I am a Hungarian-born (and raised) Kodály specialist from the Liszt Academy in Budapest, having the misfortune of teaching complete amateurs at a CA tech school. I'm running my own aural skills program here, but even with that it is pretty hard to use musical means to teach the material due to the influx of students and the level at which they are. I have a somewhat auditioned ensemble, lots of non-majors and the level of music always surpasses my students' abilities therefore there is a great deal of rote-learning. There's also the "dealine" nature of the concert.

In asking about how many days per week we work on sightsinging, you did not consider that we only rehearse 3 days per week.

In Montana there has been no sight-singing requirement at state-sponsored adjudicated choral events. We are piloting sight-singing requirements this year and next year. Because of this shortcoming almost none of the students coming in to choirs at the college level across the state have any systematized sight-singing experience. Therefore, it has been my goal since coming to Montana, to implement a top-down approach to spreading music-literacy across the state. I try to build sight-singing ability here and stress it's importance in our future teachers, who will then go out into Montana schools and teach it to their students, who will then sing at the college level and build on what they already know, thereby hopefully increasing the overall level of music-reading in the state.

In regard to your last statement...."students generally enjoy instructional time devoted to sight-singing" naturally depends on how imaginatively and effectively this time is used!!!!!!
Additionally, am baffled by the 2nd to last statement..."sight-singing ability is an important skill for all collegiate choral singers". This is the language we profess to speak....if you cannot read music, you are an impostor. On a more practical level...how else do singers expect to get work in the professional world if they can't sight-sing?

I require my non-auditioned ensembles to cheer whenever I tell them we are going to sing on solfege. :)

I teach Gospel Choir at [University]. The students in this ensemble are not necessarily classically-trained so I incorporate a variety of methods, the most common method being teaching by ear.

I train singers who perform with Chanticleer and singers who have never been in a musical ensemble in their lives. To the former, the ability to read anything, at sight, musically, is a career essential. To the latter, I feel the first and most important thing is teaching them why we sing and how to sing, and then when they develop a hunger for learning better or more complicated literature, they understand the importance of reading and musical literacy.

I use movable do based sol-fa as a means of problem solving. I rarely have them sing from the first measure through the end until we can "get to" add text. I use it in a contextual way, setting up voice-leading to help singers sort out pitch relationships. In other words, the system I employ does not happen outside the repertoire.

I utilize different systems based on the choir with which I am working and on the specific piece in rehearsal.

My institution has a non-auditioned choral ensemble composed of many non-music majors which would be difficult to staff if sight-singing ability were required. The sight-singing classes at my institution use numbers for sight-singing education. I prefer solfege; therefore, transfer to my choral rehearsals is not ideal. However, transfer to other choral rehearsals may be easier, especially if the conductor also uses numbers.

Not all good singers auditioning for choral ensembles are music majors or had been exposed to these systems. Students can react negatively to using systems – they just want their part played for them, so training in the choral rehearsal with a standardized system is important. Some students reject using a particular system because it is different from what they learned in pre-higher education experience. The difficulty in requiring sight singing system as a prereq is because it assumes a standardized method is in common practice. Even then, not all systems are used correctly or consistently. Note: Having single-choice answers in your survey may limit the scope of your study. More than one answer is often applicable. I use a combination of systems depending upon the situation. They ALL fall short when music becomes complex with mixed simple & compound divisions of beats combined with tuplets.

Our aural skills program uses numbers instead of solfegge. the choir tunes better with solfegge, so we spend time transferring skills developed singing numbers into a solfegge based choral rehearsal.

Our theory professors use moveable "Do" for sight-reading with Do being the tonic. However, we are preparing music educators who will go into a system (in Texas) that uses moveable "Do" that is La-based for minor. Despite the requests of the choral and education faculty, the theory professor hold to the research that states it's better to us Do-based minor. We continue to advocate for them to align their methodology with the professional out-comes that we are attempting to foster. Ultimately, the use of two systems is just confusing to our students.

Regarding the first statement above, about the excellence of my music department's aural skills curriculum, I am thankful that they teach moveable-do solfege, but I would prefer la-based minor rather than do-based minor, which is what my students learn so I feel obliged to use do-
based minor in rehearsals. Also, I have the impression that my music majors gain little facility singing by interval in their aural skills classes. For them to become more successful at sight-singing, I feel they should practice both solfege and singing raw intervals (out of context).

Sight-singing is, in my opinion, an essential tool, used to great effect, for students intending to perform, teach, and/or conduct music in a professional or semi-professional capacity. It is also an essential skill to students who wish to participate in classically oriented choral ensembles after college, regardless of their current subject of study. I believe that college students should have access to curricular choral experiences that do not require the heightened degree of literacy that I associate with consistent sight-singing practice and training. Or, at the very least, non-proficient sight-singers should be encouraged to improve their literacy skills in regards to sight-singing without being compelled to do so for a better grade.

Sight-singing must not be used as a weapon of exclusion. It is a tool to facilitate more efficient learning.

Sight-singing taught in aural skills classes stresses solfege and does not take into consideration such things as recognition of skips within an arpeggio vs. leaps when the harmony is changing. They "learn" by memorizing songs that involve the interval in question and fail to deal with singing in context while the pulse is moving forward. They also spend very little time with the rhythmic aspects of sight-singing.

Sight singing is something that is not up for discussion in my rehearsals. It just is part of the fabric of what we do, who we are. Students do now question what is built into the culture of the ensemble. Students are constantly asked to strive for improvement on an individualistic level. To get better than they were the day before.

Since I consider sight-singing a one-time activity (it's not sight-singing after the first time), I always sight-sing without accompaniment or without accompaniment when the voices are singing. It is important for them individually and as an ensemble to sight-read with minimal rhythmic and tonal mistakes. I hold the bar high for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th attempts to achieve close to 100% correctness on pitches and rhythms before moving on to the next rehearsal point.

Some students are very resistant to learning to sight-read and never enjoy it. The majority learn the basic skills and seems to enjoy reading in a group setting. Only a handful seem to enjoy doing it alone.

The acceptance level of sight-singing practice generally tends to vary with the skill of the singers. If the singers are generally unskilled or lacking in choral experience, they may initially consider learning sight-singing skills as an impediment to musicality or the "fun" part of singing. Once they become acclimated to looking ahead at their music, it becomes more palatable to them, especially in approaching musical styles with which they are not familiar. More skilled singers usually welcome sight-singing development as an asset to their performance abilities.

The choir I conduct rehearses two days per week. The question regarding "how many days per week do I include sight-singing instruction" is a bit skewed... I answered 1.5 - 2 days per week, but this means every rehearsal.

The ensemble I conduct is an auditioned, highly-skilled chamber chorus of 25 singers. They all come with significant vocal and musical training. Our exercises incorporate the singing of whole tone and octatonic scales, singing by interval from a given pitch (usually the A of a tuning fork), and performing very complex contemporary repertoire. Needless to say, it is not necessary for me to teach sightreading to these students at all (for the most part), but to give...
them the tools to realize musically at first sight, instead of performing pitches and rhythms and then "adding expression/dynamics" -- how can we be musical at first read, that is my goal.

The final statement about students enjoying time devoted to sight-singing depends on time of year. Early on, I would estimate that 90% of the students do not understand it and do not appreciate it. By the end of the year, I would say that 50% or more actually enjoy it and even those that do not like it can often see the benefit of using sight-singing tools.

There should always be an ensemble option available for any student, regardless of ability, just as there should always be an option for the excellent, highly-trained students.

To say that they enjoy it is a bit strong, but they participate and are on task. One thing this survey has not asked is if I teach more than one choir, and if the methods are different for an auditioned ensemble as opposed to a non-auditioned ensemble. I spend much more time teaching sight singing in the non-auditioned men's chorus, and I apply it more in the Concert Choir. The auditioned concert choir is required to sing on syllables at any time if note issues arise without prep and instruction, and the men are asked to do it as part of their musicianship in class as needed.

We are a liberal arts college, with a wide range of abilities and desires in the curriculum. Therefore, there is likewise a wide range in abilities for sight-singing, and even desires within the choral curriculum for sight-singing to improve. Among our majors, there is a high degree of ability, natural intelligence, and a desire to sight-sing at high levels, using all methods articulated in this study (numbers, solfeggio, and the like).

When I have implemented melodic/rhythmic portions from repertoire we are working on for the semester into the warm-up, I find that my students find great satisfaction in acknowledging the patterns I have directly pulled from the score, when they read the material with greater ease and build upon successful runs through sections within the score.

While I do agree that sight singing is a very important skill, I disagree strongly that it should be used in an exclusionary fashion for participation in choral music.

Will be curious to know where your research on this leads -- it's an area I've done an enormous amount of thinking on, having begun my college career teaching Aural Skills at Eastman. Good luck!

Your rhythm system choices are limited. See Movable Tonic, McClung, GIA, Pages 241-251. You may find it helpful.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A versatile musician, Adam Potter is the newly appointed Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Music at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. He holds a Ph.D. in choral conducting and music education from Florida State University, where he served as assistant conductor for the University Singers and Women’s Glee Club, tours manager for the University Singers, Chorus Master of Florida State Opera, teaching assistant for undergraduate choral conducting, and accompanist of the Chamber Choir. During his time in Tallahassee, he was also Director of Music at the First Presbyterian Church of Quincy, Florida. He earned Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in vocal music education and choral conducting from the Greatbatch School of Music, Houghton College in New York, where he was a Presser and Presidential Scholar. His choral music mentors include Judy Bowers, Kevin Fenton, Brandon Johnson, and André Thomas.

From 2009 to 2012, Mr. Potter was Director of Vocal Music at Dansville (NY) High School, overseeing thriving and growing vocal music curricula. During the summers, he conducts choirs and teaches voice at the Csehy Summer School of Music. He has also taught at the Interlochen Arts Camp, Houghton College, and Genesee Community College, in addition to presenting clinics for Alfred State College, Mansfield University, the Orpheus Chorale of Hornell, the Florida Vocal Association, the New York State chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), and the New York State School Music Association. His research interests include sight-singing pedagogy, music education in rural school settings, group vocal technique, and applications of the servant-leadership model to conducting music ensembles.

Mr. Potter is an active member of ACDA, the Choristers Guild, Chorus America, the Florida Music Educators Association, the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, the
National Association for Music Education, and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. He is also a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society and Pi Kappa Lambda, the American honor society for musicians.