

Program Notes
Discussing an Overview and Analysis
of a
Graduate Conducting Recital

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

Choral Conducting

By

Claire Ma

2014

Graduate Conducting Recital Program Order

Coro D'Angeli

Rob Shepherd, piano

Vivos Voco

Joan Szymko

Michael Ababio, Daniel Carmignani, Alexander Day, Bob Demaree, T.J. Herbers,
Andrew Jones, and Adam Steiger, handbells

The Last Rose of Summer

arr. Earlene Rentz

Beau Soir

Claude-Achille Debussy

arr. Linda Spevacek

University Singers

Lucas Ensign, piano

From Misa Criolla

Ariel Ramírez

Sanctus

Abigail Colby, Megan King, and Cody Wisman, percussion

“Ah, se intorno”

Christoph Willibald von Gluck

from Orfeo ed Euridice

Singing Pioneers

Rob Shepherd, piano

From Finian's Rainbow

Burton Lane

How are Things in Glocca Morra

From The Lion King

Elton John

Can You Feel the Love Tonight

Chamber Choir

Lucas Ensign, piano

Though Amaryllis Dance in Green

William Byrd

"Let thy hand be strengthened"

George Frideric Handel

Coronation Anthem No. 4

Philip Bergman, cello

Otoño Porteño

Astor Piazzolla

Vivos Voco

Music: Joan Szymko

Text: a combination of Medieval Virtutes and Julian of Norwich 14th century

Joan Szymko (b.1957) was born in Chicago, IL. She was the youngest of five children in a strongly devout Catholic family. Even as a small child the high values of the Catholic faith as well as arts and education as a whole were instilled in her. She grew up listening to a wide variety of music. Her home was filled with the voices of Joni Mitchell, the Beatles, Rodgers & Hammerstein, as well as Mussorgsky, Benjamin Britten, and Leontyne Price. Exposure to such a wide range of voices instilled within her a lifelong interest in exploring different styles of music.

Her musical curiosity is evident from the diverse styles, ensembles, movements, and rhythms present in her compositions. Many of her compositions are based on traditional songs from around the world. *Adama*, based harmonically on a traditional Israeli melody while mimicking various rhythms found in Israeli folk songs, is a beautiful example of her innate ability to incorporate diverse concepts into a masterpiece. Szymko studied piano and participated in choirs through high school. She received a B.S. in Music Education with an emphasis on vocal/choral education from the University of Illinois. She then traveled the world and found a new home in Seattle, Washington. Soon after, she started directing women's and church choirs in the area.

As she searched for repertoire for her progressive ensembles, she discovered that there was a need for literature in ethnic genres. She found herself filling this need by arranging and composing music for her own choirs. Through her experiences she became a self-taught

composer. In 1993, she was invited to Portland, Oregon to work with a women's chorus. Aurora Chorus is a non-auditioned 100 voice women's community chorus which she still directs today.

Discussion of Text

This text has two sources and is very dramatic. The first source is from, *Virtutes*, literally "moral virtues." This is the title of the short statements that are inscribed (usually in Latin) on the tower bells at the top of ancient churches. Bells that rang were thought to chase away evil spirits that were believed to hover over rooftops. The ringing was then propelled toward the heavens as prayers.

The second source is from Julian of Norwich who was on her deathbed at the age of 30 when she suddenly recovered and received visions of the Passion of Christ. For the rest of her life, she meditated, prayed, and wrote on these visions. Julian of Norwich is generally accepted as the author of the first book known to be written by a woman in English. The impact that her text displays has crossed the centuries and still speaks to our modern times; "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Teaching Methodologies

One technical aspect of the piece that is challenging is the 6-part division. With 30-35 voices, this requires each musician to be independent and more advanced in terms of hearing the divisi chords and singing their assigned part accurately.

Additionally this selection provides the opportunity to include a bell choir. The bell players will support the tintinnabuli style of the choir.

Tintinnabuli is a compositional style promoted by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Throughout the piece, both the choir and the bells demonstrate this style. This is evident beginning in measure 22 where a call and response texture starts. The upper soprano starts the phrase along with the upper alto voices and a measure later the lower voices repeat the same phrase. This mimics the tolling echo of church bells as they ring in the distance.

This piece is an effective resource when teaching more advanced independent musicianship skills. The women sing in cluster chords which are more difficult to hear. The students must be independent with their melody and also with their rhythms in the middle section of this piece. Beginning at measure 40, the composer utilizes the tintinnabuli style to imitate the ringing of multiple bells. Polyphony demands the singers to be independent musicians and requires us to work on this skill by layering in the voices 1 – 2 at a time. This allows the students to understand how their own part functions within this polyphonic section as a whole.

There are also frequent changes in meter. The changes of meter shift the division of strong and weak beats in the measures. This can be challenging for younger musicians as they have to consistently be counting as well as being conscious of the changing word stress.

In addition, this piece calls for a more mature women's sound. It starts out with a declamatory cry to the heavens. Even though it was originally written for children's choir, provides instantaneous fullness of sound and that timbre supports this passionate text. If I had younger singers singing this piece, I would want a rather large ensemble (50+) of voices to achieve the rich, dramatic sound that this piece needs. As technical aspects are more advanced, I believe that this selection would be a challenge for most young musicians.

To introduce the various sections in this piece and make it a more successful learning experience for students, I started teaching this piece at measure 40. It begins in unison, expands into 2 parts and then into 5 parts. However, it primarily uses the same rhythms and melody that are passed through each voice. The challenge is that each voice must count correctly to enter at the right time. Moving through measure 66 to the end, it is essential that students are aware of the meter changes as well how and where the music divides into three parts and five parts. Once the students sang that section successfully, I chose to go back to the beginning and work through the multitude of structural and metric changes that are prominent in this song.

The Latin text should be performed with a full and supported sound. Measure 12 demonstrates contrast and effective text painting as the choir sings in parallel octaves that are exposed and raw as they plead to the heavens. The choir continues the Latin text in measure 22 but now there are multiple parts functioning in call and response format.

As the poetry discusses the “driving away the overcast sky”, the voices and bells join as they seem to push away the clouds. With the change of language in measure 40, the simplistic writing of the unison “All shall be well” demonstrates the calm and parting of the heavy clouds that were evident in the beginning of the piece. Measure 74 through to the end interweaves the Latin melody of chaos and anxious feelings with the English message that “All shall be well.”

The Last Rose of Summer

Music: Irish Air

Arranged: Earlene Rentz

Text: Thomas Moore

Earlene Rentz is a contemporary composer and arranger who was born in 1956 in Georgia. Rentz earned her bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of Montevallo in Alabama and taught at the elementary, junior high and high school levels for seven years in Habersham County. She then moved on to teach music education students at California State University-Long Beach, The University of Texas at Austin and Baylor University. Rentz frequently serves as a speaker and clinician on choral music education techniques. Her clinics focus on behavior modification techniques and developing supplements for the rehearsal to support student choral music learning.

Rentz has composed more than 300 secular and sacred choral publications. She writes her music for a wide variety of ensembles including elementary, middle school, high school and church choirs for several publishers including Hal Leonard and Shawnee Press.

Discussion of Text

The lyrics were taken from a poem by Irishman Thomas Moore (1779-1852). Written in 1805, it was set to music by Sir John Andrew Stevenson two years later. However, a German composer by the name of Friedrich von Flotow has erroneously received credit for this song because he used it in his opera *Martha*.

Flotow is not well known in the music world and only *Martha* is regularly performed today. *Martha* was extremely popular opera in the mid-19th century and included *The Last Rose of Summer*. Due to *Martha's* reasonable popularity, it perpetuated the "Irish air." Flotow eliminated the third verse of the song, leading many to believe that the piece only had two verses. However, even today its popularity endures as this Irish song has been used in several

films and recorded by several artists including the Celtic Women, Judas Priest, Charlotte Church and Kanye West.

Teaching Methodologies

The primary goals for the choir in this piece are the creation of beautiful phrasing and voice balancing. As we worked through this piece, we discovered that it can become somewhat tedious or repetitive because many of the strophic phrases tend to be sung exactly alike. Depending on the ability of the ensemble, the conductor might decide to keep the breaths and phrasing the same throughout each. An inexperienced ensemble will find success by keeping the phrasing consistent. Maintaining consistency helps inexperienced singers perform more effectively. However, I decided that the women's ensemble could understand and appreciate varying the phrases and breath points. We decided that in some phrases we would be sensitive to the commas while at other times we would sing through the phrase points creating longer expressions of text.

The singers must be aware of when they are singing the melody or harmony throughout this piece, which is a challenge because the melody is passed between the voices quickly. At times the melody is only sung in the voice for a couple of measures and then it is passed to another voice. The student singers will need to listen and balance with the other voices so the melody is always heard. Measures 21 through 24 clearly display this challenge of the melody bouncing between different voices.

Another challenge in this piece is making it sound effortless. There are longer phrases that swoop into the higher tessitura range for the sopranos and can easily become flat and

lackluster due to a lack of breath support and overall energy. The phrasing and direction of the fluid line should imitate the character of the lilting Irish air.

The Irish air is the foundation of this song and students should discover how and when this melody is passed between voices. The rhythmic figures and harmonic language are repetitive in this piece, which allows students to focus on their line and phrasing as they learn this arrangement.

Beau Soir

Music: Claude Achille-Debussy (1862 – 1918)

Arranger: Linda Spevacek

Text: Paul Bourget

Debussy was born in St. Germain-en-Laye, a town close to Paris. He started studying piano at age 8. By the age of 18, he was teaching piano to the children of Nadezha von Meck, a wealthy Russian widow who was supporting and championing the music of Tchaikovsky. Debussy spent several months with the widow and her children in Russia during 1861 and then in 1862.

“In opera, there is always too much singing”

– as quoted in *Debussy* (1989) by Paul Holmes, p. 36

Debussy composed only five choral works that have been completed and published: *Trois Chansons de Charles d’Orléans*, *Trois Nocturnes*, *Salut Printemps*, *La damoiselle élue*, and *Le martyr de St. Sébastien*. Scholars debate the term “impressionist” when discussing Debussy’s style. Debussy himself opposed the label to his music saying, “I am trying to do ‘something different’ – an effect of reality. What the imbeciles call ‘impressionism’, a term

which is as poorly used as possible.” (As quoted in *The Lives of the Great Composers* (1997) by Harold C. Schonberg, p. 464) However, others say that Debussy was reacting to the definition of impressionism at that time and would agree more with the present definition of impressionistic works.

Beau Soir is a French mélodie thought to have been written around 1878 when Debussy was 16 and was studying at the Paris Conservatoire. Even though composing vocal music is not what brought Debussy fame, his talent was clearly depicted in the gentle flowing rhythms of *Beau Soir*. Debussy paints the picture of the poet's words of one's desire to be happy and enjoy life on a gorgeous evening, even though death is inevitable. Looking at measure 33 through to the end one can see the clear decay of the piano voice as the text says, “*we to the tomb*” painting the qualities of death.

Discussion of Text

Paul Bourget was a French novelist and critic during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Pre-World War I, he was considered a molder of opinion within the realm of the French conservatives. Along with *Beau Soir*, Debussy set 8 poems from the collection of poems entitled *Les Aveux* by Bourget.

The singers begin with a gentle melody painting the ease of the setting sun and the slight breeze that rushes through the wheat fields. There is no sense of hurry but there is an evident feel of forward motion. This is demonstrated by the use of rubato throughout the phrase in combination of the eighth note rhythms in the piano and voice parts and the attention to appropriate word stress. There is a clear climax at measure 26 as Debussy demonstrates the plea for the beauty of life to be never ending. However, as the song ends, the voices slow their

forward motion to depict Bourget's words "*For we pass away, as the wave passes; The wave to the sea, we to the grave.*"

Teaching Methodologies

Students who can sing in three part harmony can successfully perform this piece. The tessitura is fairly easy for all the voices. However, a difficult interval occurs in measure 26, especially for the top soprano part. The minor 7th descent is difficult to hear and takes most singers from head to chest voice through the passagio. What worked best for this group was to put in a slight lift after the G to take a bit of a breath and separate the descending interval.

As the conductor /teacher, one must also listen to the original art song to understand how this choral arrangement was constructed. The use of *andante, ma non troppo* (fast, but not overly so) is the tempo that should really shine at the beginning of each phrase then the phrase should slow at the end with a *ritardando*. This shaping is indicated within the first 4 measures; however, the editor does not indicate this shaping again until measure 19. I believe that this use of rubato needs to be continuous throughout the phrases as is heard in multiple recordings of the original French *mélodie*.

There are some liberties taken when performing this piece that are not indicated in this arrangement. For example, the text in measures 21 through 27 indicates joyous and youthful spirit. In contrast, measures 28 until the end demand a more pensive and sad character moment as the poem indicates that with the passing of time we all pass to the grave. The students have to perform this piece with a forward pull and sense of anxiousness to appropriately adhere to the text. To educate the students about these different interpretations I would use listening examples that would model the solo *mélodie* that is the foundation of this arrangement. Through

discussion of these interpretations, the students and teacher will form a sense of phrase and line that they all agree on and one that is based on research and artistic sensibilities.

Although there is not a large amount of French text, a younger ensemble might feel better if they had sung in French before. One such introductory piece might be *J'entends Le Moulin*, which features repetitive melodic and rhythmic themes as well as repetitive text. This type of folk song allows the students to experience and have quick success when singing in French. One phrase that presents a challenge is measure 13 through 20 because of its gentle eighth note rhythms and a different French word for every note. As the singers are working on this phrase they have to perform the French and the moving eighth notes as legato as possible while moving forward but not rushing tempo.

Introducing a foreign language to young choirs may be daunting; however, when students find success quickly and easily they are more open to sing in that language again. If a teacher has students who can sing three part women's music, then the challenge will be the French and vice versa.

Misa Criolla "Sanctus"

Music: Ariel Ramírez

Libretto: Traditional liturgical Latin text

Ariel Ramírez was born in 1921 and passed away in 2010. He was an Argentinian composer, music director and pianist. As a young man, Ramírez was drawn to the folk music of local gauchos and creoles. He studied music at the National Conservatory in Buenos Aires, and traveled to Madrid, Rome, and Vienna for additional study. However, even with all of his

exposure and studies from different countries he retained his interest in folk music. He supported the study of folk music through his founding of Compañía de Folklore Ariel Ramírez.

Misa Criolla (Creole Mass) was written in 1963-64 following his visit to Germany after World War II. While he was in Germany he encountered a group of nuns, which led him to consider writing a “spiritual piece” that would eventually become the *Misa Criolla*. The mass is based on South American folk music, focusing on the melodies and rhythms of Argentina.

Misa Criolla is a liturgical setting of the five portions of the Roman Mass Ordinary plus the *Ite missa est*. Traditionally, the celebration of the Catholic Mass was in Latin and understood by very few worshippers. When Ramírez wrote his version of the traditional mass, he was presenting a new form of worship including both language and music of the common people which embraces a greater lay person participation in the liturgy and worship. This was endorsed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) which was known for its renewal of the Catholic doctrine in a modern timeline and perspective.

Discussion of the Libretto

This Creole (meaning native) mass is significant as it is one of the first masses in the national Argentinian language, Spanish. The mass celebrates not only the language of the composer’s home country but also the musical rhythms and dances of Argentina. The *Sanctus* envelops this idea using Bolivian folk rhythms, the carnival cochabambino. The carnival cochabambino has a marked beat that is restrained and intimate but evident. This type of rhythmic texture is evident in measures 26 through 30 in the solo voice. The combination of the 3/4 meter and the 6/8 is an example of this folk rhythmic style.

Teaching Methodologies

Presenting sacred literature is a good discussion point. Ramírez defined himself as a Catholic; however, he took the traditional Catholic Mass and changed it to support the lay people in their understanding and relation to the liturgy.

It is important for the teacher to have an educationally based conversation about this religious text. One can discuss different Sanctus movements and compare and contrast them in a musical sense. The choir can discuss different time periods, composer nationalities, and melodic and rhythmic tools used in the piece. Discussion of the music as a performance art form will deter any students or community members' arguments that the motivations behind teaching this text is in the support of Christianity as a form of religion. The emphasis should be on the functionality that Christianity has had on the development of western choral music. This piece could be artistically paired with Sanctus movements from other masses. The evolution of western choral music can be explored by comparing how different composers in different eras treated the Sanctus movement of the mass!

The original scoring requires a four-voiced choir, a tenor soloist, piano or harpsichord, *bombo* (type of percussion), guitar, double bass, *charango* (Andean snare), *quena* (Inca flute), and *siku* (Andean pipe). Having many different timbral colors in this piece, allows it to become a more relaxed version of what can sometimes be thought of as a “stuffy” Sanctus.

If I were to do this movement again, I think I would use a quartet in place of the solo and duet sections. For me, solo work is a great opportunity to highlight and provide a higher level of musicianship for students. As a teacher, I want my students to understand that a solo is as much about their abilities as a singer as it is about their attitude an ensemble member. A solo singer needs to be an independent musician who counts rhythmic passages accurately and is confident

in their melodic line. They need to have mastered the basics of appropriate vocal production such as breathing, vowel modification and ensemble blend and balance techniques.

To successfully perform this piece, one needs to have male voices that can sing in an a cappella situation. In order to provide vocal power for the line “Hosanna!” at measure 81, I would use the entire men's section rather than the solo. The women’s angelic voices provide a beautiful contrast to the boisterous singing of the men. If I performed this piece again, I would like to pair it with one more movement from the work. Adding the *Agnus Dei* would provide a deeper level of understanding and flow as it is the movement that follows the *Santo*. By performing multiple sections of a large work, students will be able to draw similarities in how the composer writes and have a deeper understanding of the music as a whole.

“Ah, se intorno” from Orfeo ed Euridice

Music: Christoph Willibald Gluck

Libretto: Ranieri de' Calzabigi

Christoph Willibald Gluck was a composer of the Classical era. Born in 1714, Gluck was one of six surviving children. In 1737, he traveled to Milan where he studied with Sammartini. Even though Gluck’s teacher was not really an opera composer, the fact that he was in a city that was supporting a vibrant opera scene at the time enticed Gluck to focus on opera. In 1762, the first performance of *Orfeo ed Euridice* with music by Gluck and libretto by Calzabigi was given. This piece shows the beginnings of Gluck’s attempts to reform *Opera buffa* and *Opera seria*. *Opera buffa* had become something that was too ornamented, according to Gluck. The singers would effectively stand and sing these extremely decorated vocal lines that were so vibrant that

the audience would no longer be able to recognize the original melody. In *Orfeo*, Gluck tried to make the story more important than the technical abilities of the singers.

Thus, *Opera seria* had strayed from its original noble and serious style. Gluck drastically cut back the possibilities for the singers to apply any virtuosic ornamentation that was so prominent from the principal singers in that era. Gluck also wanted to unify the drama, dance, music and theatrics. The strong influence of French opera in his works encouraged Gluck to move to Paris. Gluck fused the traditions of Italian opera and the French national genre into a new synthesis. This reform, which focused on returning opera to its origins, influenced the famous composer Mozart. This is particularly evident in Mozart's opera *Idomeneo*.

Idomeneo is an Italian language *Opera seria* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed in 1781. There are many compositional techniques used in this opera that parallel what Gluck had previously composed in his operas. The shipwreck scene towards the end of act 1 is almost identical to the construction of a similar scene in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*. There are also similarities between the sacrifice and oracle scenes to Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* and *Alceste*. Mozart took this mixture of French and Italian opera and moved away from Gluck and France and returned opera to its more Italian, *Opera seria* roots.

Discussion of the Libretto

Orfeo ed Euridice is an example of an opera that belongs in the genre of *azione teatrale*, meaning that the opera is based on a mythological subject and incorporates choruses and dancing. *Orfeo ed Euridice* begins with Orpheus mourning the death of his beloved wife Eurydice. Orpheus finds out from Amore that he can go to the underworld and rescue his wife.

Act 2 begins with Orpheus' conflict with the Furies, the gatekeepers of the underworld. The Furies refuse to admit Orpheus to the underworld and they warn of Cerberus, who is the canine guardian. However, Orpheus wins the Furies over with his singing and harp playing. Once Orpheus is in the underworld, he employs other spirits to bring his wife's spirit to him and they do. As Orpheus and Eurydice are traveling back to earth, Eurydice complains about Orpheus refuses to look at her. She takes this as a sign that he does not love her anymore and refuses to go back to Earth as death would be better. Orpheus finally turns around to proclaim his love and, just as the Furies warned, Eurydice dies again. The opera ends with Orpheus singing the famous aria "*Che farò senza Euridice?*" describing his grief of losing his love again.

Gluck's arias incorporate small, emotional recitatives throughout. This concept was completely radical at that time, but later composers, like Mozart embraced it.

Teaching Methodologies

This piece is about a lover holding his dying wife in his arms and allows the teaching of long beautiful lines and dynamic contrast that should inspire a deep sighing and moaning in the singers' body. This is demonstrated by the conductor with long deep gestures to inspire a deep breath in the student singers and can allow the singer to hone in on deep and measured breathing. This is a homophonic four part work that does not have many harmonic or rhythmic surprises.

The contrast of mood is evident in how the composer uses dynamics. For example, in measures 34 through 37 the composer writes for pianissimo which reflects the text description of laments and sighs. The contrasting ideas presented in measures 49 through 52 reveals the heartbroken cries of the unhappy husband.

When teaching this piece, it would be most beneficial to have it paired with another opera chorus to show the evolution of this style. The choir will be challenged by the language if they haven't sung in Italian before. However, this piece is about the different colors and moods that the choir can create to portray the emotion of the story. There is a clear gesture of the crippling and intimate grief that wrecks Eurydice's body and the cry up toward the heavens in passionate grief-stricken rage. When the comment, is more intimate it is sung at a pianissimo dynamic level and when the rage must reach the ears of the gods, it is sung at a forte.

The ensemble must focus on musicianship with this piece. If the students have mastered the notes and rhythms, this is a great piece to work on line, phrase, and emotion. There is also an opportunity for a small female solo.

How are Things in Glocca Morra from Finian's Rainbow

Music: Burton Lane

Arranger: John Purifoy

Libretto: E.Y."Yip" Harburg

An American composer and lyricist, Burton Lane was born in 1912 in New York City. Lane studied classical music through piano performance as a young child. The theater producers at the Shubert Theater commissioned the 14 year old Lane to write songs. This revue catapulted him into writing for his first musical; a genre he soon felt drawn to and wrote for, along with film, for the rest of his career.

E.Y. "Yip" Harburg was convinced by Lane to write the libretto for *Finian's Rainbow*. Before *Finian's Rainbow*, Harburg had been very active in film working for Paramount studios.

His best known lyric writing is for the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. He won an Academy Award for Original Song for “*Over the Rainbow*”

Discussion of Text

Finian's Rainbow debuted in 1947 and has since spawned 4 revivals and a film starring Fred Astaire as Finian. The story takes place in Rainbow Valley, Missitucky and involves an Irish immigrant, Finian McLonergan. Finian puts all of his efforts into stealing a crock of gold. He would like to bury the gold which he is sure will make him rich. A leprechaun, intent on recovering what was stolen from him, follows Finian and his daughter Sharon from Ireland to Missitucky to steal his gold back before he is completely turned human. Things get even more complicated when a bigoted and corrupt U.S. Senator gets involved as wishes are inadvertently made over the hidden crock.

The song “*How are Things in Glocca Morra*” is a piece about homesickness and nostalgia for the place they used to know. The song is first sung by the character Sharon and then is recapped at the end of the musical by the full cast as they wave good-bye to Finian. The original opening line of this famous song was “There’s a glen in Glocca Morra”. However, Harburg insisted that the line needed to be more personal so he changed it to “How are things in Glocca Morra.” Glocca Morra is a fictional town in Ireland, but there is a real town spelled Glockamara, which is pronounced the same way.

Teaching Methodologies

This piece allows a men’s choir to sing with sensitivity. Too often, men’s music gets stereotyped as boisterous war music or sea shanties. This selection is divided into three sections, the first part an introduction verse that feeds into the main chorus and then a coda. The

challenge is to keep the repetition of the chorus interesting to both sing and listen to. The a cappella texture allows flexibility with the ensemble. This allows a forward motion backed by a rubato throughout different phrases. We were able to take artistic liberties with the piece that not only made the music come more alive but also allowed more emotional sensitivity to the text.

The melody that is presented in measure 11 through measure 18 recurs through the piece. The students are able to learn a small section relatively quickly and then feel instant success as they practice and apply that melodic/harmonic knowledge to the rest of the song. The beginning section should be sung with gentle ease and never rushed. This can be displayed in the choir as the students shape the phrase with a push toward the peak and a rubato toward the end of the phrase. Students should note which words are stressed and unstressed or important in the line and add a bit of tenuto to them. This inflection provides interest to an otherwise simple eighth note phrase.

Can you Feel the Love Tonight from *The Lion King*

Music: Elton John

Arranger: Mac Huff

Text: Tim Rice

Elton John is an English singer-songwriter, pianist, and record producer. Born Reginald Kenneth Dwight he grew up with parents who were both musically inclined. His father had been a semi-professional trumpet player. His mother was a great advocate of music and would play songs by Elvis Presley, Bill Haley & His Comets, and other popular singers of the day in the evenings. Dwight started playing piano at the age of 3. At the age of 15, he was working as a weekend pianist at a nearby pub. By 1967, Dwight started using the name “Elton John” and was

on staff at Dick James's DJM Records as a songwriter. Sir Elton John did not have the formal compositional guidance or schooling that many other composers had. However, he has sold more than 300 million records, making him one of the best-selling music artists in the world.

Originally an animated film, *The Lion King* was released in 1994 produced by the Disney studio. The story then moved to the Broadway stage and opened in Minneapolis, Minnesota in July, 1997. It was an instant success and premiered on Broadway at the New Amsterdam Theater in October that same year. It has since moved from the New Amsterdam Theater and is now housed in the Minskoff Theater where it is still running after more than 6,700 performances. It is Broadway's fourth longest-running show in history and the highest grossing Broadway production of all time. Like another well-known Disney musical, *Beauty and the Beast*, the show adds more songs to its stage version than the movie including another choral work "*Shadowland*."

Discussion of Text

The story is about a pride of lions in Africa and was influenced by the biblical tales of Joseph and Moses as well as the Shakespearean play *Hamlet*. As the sun rises, Rafiki the mandrill calls the animals to come see the new prince at Pride Rock. As time passes, Simba, grows into a lively young cub. One day, after being warned not to do so by his father, Simba and other young cubs go to a graveyard and begin to explore. They are quickly in danger as they are confronted by three hyenas who intend to eat them. Mufasa, Simba's father, is disappointed by his son's recklessness. The hyenas report back to Mufasa's brother, Scar, and they learn of Scar's plan to kill Mufasa so he can become king. At Scar's signal, the hyenas start a stampede headed right towards Simba and his father. Mufasa saves Simba but fails to save himself. Simba is convinced by his Uncle Scar that the rest of the lion pride will not understand what happened

and they will blame Simba for his father's death. Simba runs away and encounters Timon and Pumbaa, who become his friends. Back at Pride Rock, Scar has taken over and the lands, which were once plentiful and balanced, are now full of tumbleweeds and dried earth. Nala, a female cub who grew up with Simba, runs away to find help to save Pride Rock. In the jungle, Nala is hunting Pumbaa to eat when she is confronted by Simba. They recognize each other and soon fall in love. *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* is sung by Timon as he laments the end of Simba's bachelorhood and the brotherhood they have all lived.

Teaching Methodologies

This piece is a homophonic 4-part men's piece with opportunities for solo work. This piece is a cappella allowing for the ensemble and teacher to large sections as well as individual phrases as they would like. This allows the flexibility to sing the music in a way that the students most relate to as well as what pedagogically works best for the ensemble. For example, the chorus repeats multiple times throughout this piece. As there are not specific indications made by the composer, I asked the ensemble about ways in which we could differentiate the choruses from one another. We decided on small changes with dynamics and slight tempo changes for performance.

Another benefit to this arrangement is that it allows the men to sing in an intimate and sensitive way. This quality of singing supports breaking down the stereotypes men's choirs suffer. The repetitive rhythmic and melodic themes will allow students to learn the music quickly and allow for more exploration of dynamics and phrasing to enhance the emotion of the text.

In addition, there are also different aspects that mimic African music qualities. In measure 9, the lower voices have a syncopated rhythm which is common in African music. The singers must sing these very native and driving rhythms with a legato and ballad quality.

There is also a call and response method that is evident in measure 14 between the upper voices and the low bass. As the song progresses, the use of call and response is interlaced with syncopated rhythms. With the last recapitulation of the chorus leading into measure 42, the two inner voices of the 4-part chorus rises up a half step. This proved a slightly difficult bridge for the students. However, when the parts were demonstrated individually and the students could read the parallels, they were able to sing those 2 measures more successfully.

Though Amaryllis Dance in Green

Music: William Byrd

Text: Anonymous authorship

William Byrd was a Renaissance English composer living during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. During her time on the throne, Queen Elizabeth oversaw stabilizing of the Anglican Reformation. During this same time, Byrd was forced to write in English for the new church rather than the Latin of his beloved Roman Catholicism.

Throughout his life, Byrd remained faithful to the Catholic religion. While Queen Elizabeth ruled England as a moderate Protestant, she retained a fondness for elaborate ritual, and was also a music lover and keyboard player herself. The Queen was fond of her two resident Catholic composers, Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, yet they were not allowed to openly practice their Catholic faith. Byrd's home was searched twice and he and his family were accused of being sensitive to the Catholic cause and were subsequently heavily fined. However,

there were concessions made probably by Queen Elizabeth herself. Byrd's music was regarded as acceptable by reforming Protestants, including Queen Elizabeth. His music (sacred and secular) is still sung today and some argue that the Elizabethan partsongs are among the finest choral works ever written. Byrd published a song book in 1588 entitled *Psalms, Sonnets and Songs of Sadness and Piety*. Despite the mention of Psalms in the title, the collection includes secular lyrics and unnamed poets. Today these Elizabethan verses are scrutinized for hidden political and social commentary.

Teaching Methodologies

This piece provides an opportunity for a more advanced choir to lighten the mood. This is truly chamber music as Byrd mimics a small instrumental ensemble with one player or voice on a part. The piece divides into five parts, providing a challenge to a smaller chamber ensemble. Not only is the part division difficult but the parts themselves overlap in the inner voices making it much harder to hear and understand how each line functions. Voice crossing commonly happens throughout the piece and can be seen in measure 5 between the altus and tenor voice. For less experienced singers, this can become very confusing. If the singers can read and understand the music vertically, this will be much easier for them. By reading vertically, the students will understand when they are the important voice or when they are secondary to another voice. Students will also develop a deeper understanding of the function of the piece as they notice when they are in duet or canon with voice part.

The choir must have a strong sense of independent musicianship to successfully perform this piece. The ensemble should be able to perform a cappella music of the madrigal style. They should start this process with a piece that has more homophony within its texture. By having a simple texture, the choir is reassured when they are singing a section correctly and are

immediately aware when they are incorrect. Having a previous experience with this style of music with an easier piece would be an appropriate stepping stone before selecting to study and perform this piece. Another aspect that could present a challenge for an ensemble would be the juxtaposition between a 3/2 and 6/4 meter. The musicians must focus to keep their quarter note constant for accurate rhythm as they sing through their line. The different peaks of phrases and word stresses throughout need to be agreed on by the ensemble and practiced as the piece moves forward. This attention to the text will create the kind of text painting that the composer desired.

Let thy hand be strengthened, Coronation Anthem no. 4

Music: George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Text: Bible; Psalm 89:13-14 (paraphrased)

Handel was born in Halle, Germany. He spent his childhood studying music theory, organ, harpsichord and violin. At age 21, Handel went to Italy and began composing operas, oratorios, cantatas, and Latin motets for many of the most important venues and arts patrons throughout the country. In 1710, Handel became Kapellmeister to German Prince George who would later become King George of Great Britain. Handel decided to permanently settle in England in 1712 with a yearly income of £200.

Handel is best known for his contributions to the oratorio. Most of his oratorios were composed late in his career as the English taste was transitioning from Italian opera to English oratorio. Handel had started replacing his Italian singers with English ones and performances were given without costumes and action. The main reason for this change from the extravagant Italian opera to a simpler, and seemly, English version of opera was the dwindling financial

returns from the English people for Italian opera. The English had grown bored listening to music they did not understand.

Handel wrote 21 oratorios and it is evident that this genre interested him greatly. He also composed 3 Latin Psalm settings, at least 1 Passion, 10 Odes and 4 Coronation Anthems.

In 1729, King George I of England granted British citizenship to Handel and named him “Composer of Musick for the Chapel Royal.” Only one year later, George was dead and Handel found himself writing his first official music for the crowning of the new monarch. These 4 Coronation Anthems were Handel’s first royal commission. The original order of the anthems, as laid out by Handel, was *Zadok the Priest, Let thy hand be strengthened, The King shall Rejoice, and My heart is inditing.*

Handel wrote one anthem for each major division of the service. The service begins with the entry of the king and his recognition by the people. The second section is the consecration of the king by anointing, followed by the investiture ceremony (the actual crowning of the new king) and ending with the enthronement of the new monarch.

These four anthems were enthusiastically received and one or more of them has been performed at every British coronation since 1727. Even though *Let thy hand be strengthened* was written to be the second of the four it was performed first. In modern times, *Zadok the Priest* is sung first, followed by *Let thy hand be strengthened.*

Discussion of Text

These anthems were meant to inspire celebration in the assembly of people for the coronation of the King. The text that Handel chose for this celebration is from the Book of Psalms. Specifically, chapter 89 verses 13 and 14 are paraphrased and used by Handel which he

divided into three parts. The first section introduces the listener to a light, cheerful and buoyant quality in G major. The melancholy mood in e minor follows in the second section as the text confers judgment day. The movement ends back in G major with an animated Alleluia.

Teaching Methodologies

When compared to the other three anthems, *Let thy hand be strengthened* is more modest with its vocal and instrumental demands. This lends itself to being more accessible to choirs and can be performed with just a keyboard accompaniment. When preparing this piece, it is appropriate to have the ensemble sing with a buoyant and slightly disconnected style. The choir should understand the difference between Baroque style singing and our more modern, lush, style of singing.

The modern western choral sound is based on a *bel canto* style of singing. This style strives for singers to develop a full purity of tone, a legato line, and phrases which feature *portamento*. For this Handel piece, the choir must sing consistently in the Baroque style highlighting the quick decay of sound and lines full of buoyant light tone.

The ensemble also needs to be made aware of the entrances of each new theme. In the Baroque style, one or a pair of voices may start a theme and it will be followed by other voices a few measures later. This is evident in the first movement measures 25 through 27 where the alto voices start the theme with the tenor and bass following with their entrance 1 measure later. The soprano voice claims the theme a measure and a half after that. The students have to know when they should bring their voice to the forefront of the ensemble and when they are the supporting role.

The ensemble, instrumentalists and vocalists must also understand the importance of phrasing in this piece. The line will have peaks and decay of the entire color of the ensemble. The singers also need to be aware of where word stresses are as they do not always align with the strong and weak beats of the meter.

This piece is divided into three different movements. The first movement is a declamatory cry of strength. This is followed by the legato and pensive second movement. The anthem finishes off with the third movement which is buoyant and joyful.

Handel specifically asks for an *allegro* tempo marking and begins with 2 pages of instrumental introduction. The instruments set up the buoyant and moving quality of this first movement. The singers and instrumentalists have to always be thinking of performing with a light quality but also being aware of the long phrases in this movement. These long phrases can easily become heavy and when that happens the texture is not as transparent as Handel intended. The singers must remember to move through the phrase and not note to note or downbeat to downbeat.

The second movement is much more pensive and Handel asks for *larghetto* or moderately slowly to contrast with the first movement. This *larghetto* is not to drag the tempo but it is a change of character and creates more dynamic shading. This second movement demonstrates the weighty feel of the word stress as Handel set the text to take advantage of the strong and weak beats. This movement also utilizes hemiolas and is the only movement that uses this technique in this anthem. A hemiola is a specific rhythm that uses three beats of equal value in the time normally occupied by two beats. This is evident in the alto 1 voice measures 17 through 21 where this is a feel of 3/2 rather than the written meter of 3/4.

The final movement is based solely on the word “Alleluia.” This section should be light and buoyant just as the first movement was since Handel indicated *non legato e con spirito* which is “not smooth and with spirit.” Clearly this is in contrast to the weighty tone and spirit that is used in the second movement and the lightness that should be evident in this final movement should imitate what was sung in the first movement of this anthem. To begin the teaching of this piece, I would start with a light warm up and carry that style concept to the piece. This would include specific demonstration of Baroque singing style as well as the subdivision of hemiolas. Singers want to sing through lines in a very legato and connected line. However, In the Baroque era, singers would have been imitating instruments in a separated and buoyant quality. Therefore, they will have to be reminded to create some space in the sound yet connect their phrase. It is also a challenge for the students to keep a well supported and mature tone while moving through different parts of their registers. This discipline is something that will have to be monitored and the teacher will need to remind the students of this quality as they go through the lines.

Otoño Porteño

Music: Astor Piazzolla

Arranger: Oscar Escalada

Astor Piazzolla was a native of Mar del Plata, Argentina born in 1921. He was a bandoneon player as well as an Argentinean Tango composer and arranger. While studying piano with a disciple of Rachmaninov, the young Piazzolla first fell in love with the writings and music of Bach. Playing in several tango orchestras as a young bandoneonist led him to discover his love of the tango. He later became the arranger for the orchestra of Anibal Troilo. In 1954, Piazzolla traveled with his wife to Paris to study with the great compositional teacher Nadia

Boulanger. He began their first meeting by playing a number of his classically inspired pieces for her. When he played his tango, *Triunfal*, she immediately encouraged him to pursue this career in tango writing.

His “*Nuevo tango*” approach of writing a tango mimicked chamber music writing. Boulanger made him study only 4 part counterpoint written for string quartets for 18 months. She was teaching him a structure that he would incorporate into his manipulation of the classic tango. His tangos outlined the use of a small ensemble, no singer was needed and jazz-like improvisations were widely explored. Traditionalists disliked the audacity he displayed within his use of harmony and polyrhythmic motives. He ended up as an innovator of the Argentinian sound so much that most traditionalists did not accept his music.

Piazzolla took the traditional dance tango as his point of inspiration for four songs. The tango began in the blue collar neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Even though the tango as we know it today developed in the mid 19th century, there are earlier written records of tango dances in Cuba and Spain. Initially the tango was one of many different types of dances that were enjoyed by the Argentinean people. However, it soon became popular throughout society and spread from the suburbs to the working-class slums which were filled with thousands of European immigrants. The evolution of the tango incorporated influences from many different cultures of the people that came together in Buenos Aires. The tango is cultural music of these immigrant people.

In 1965, Piazzolla began to compose tangos to represent each of the four seasons. *Verano Porteño* (Summer) was the first tango to be completed and was written in 1965. Piazzolla then put the tangos away until 1994 when he wrote the last three: *Invierno Porteño* (Winter), *Primavera Porteña* (Spring), and *Otoño Porteño* (Autumn)

One charming aspect of *Otoño Porteño* is that the lilting phrases and chromaticism seem to paint the image of leaves falling, swaying side to side as they drop to the ground. There is also a sharpness at times that quickly fades to the background again. This might imitate the frost and slight chill that can be felt in the air at autumn time as the season changes.

Teaching Methodologies

This piece mimics a jazz band ensemble, so there are many sophisticated harmonic progressions using blues scale outlines. The singers have to have mastered the ability to discern a half step and whole step because they are moving from pitch to pitch melodically while rooted in cluster chords. The bass line in this piece imitates the upright bass that one might find in a jazz band. Students can find similarities between the two functions as it lays the foundation of the tempo and the harmonic movement. Having the ensemble do a warm-up which incorporates some chromatic movement as well as some syncopated rhythm would be ideal to prepare the students for a successful understanding of the piece.

The constant use of the blues scale and the modification of that scale is an ongoing challenge in this piece. Except for the bass line, all of the voices are harmonically and rhythmically different and difficult. For the upper voices, it is difficult to find sections which are logical to rehearse two voices together for even a 2 phrase section. The voices function independently throughout the piece. A good starting point for the ensemble is measure 30 starting the bottom of page 7. This section is at a slightly slower tempo and isn't as dense harmonically as the rest of the piece. This allows students to gain a beginning understanding of the performance style needed.

The ensemble should find similarity in the rhythms of the voice parts. This will allow them to draw connections about how the song is built to encourage a deeper understanding of the literature.

The tessitura for the soprano voice is a significant challenge in this piece. A voice that is asked to remain within a limited range tires more quickly than a voice that is asked to move up and down over a greater range. Beginning at measure 30, the soprano voice is asked to sing a combination of whole and half steps as they ascend and descend. These motives function through a soprano's passaggio and this coupled with the combination of half and whole steps is a challenge for even an advanced level group.

Voice crossing is also a challenge between the inner alto and tenor voices. Measure 55 begins a section which asks the tenor voices to split as well as the upper voice crossing or in unison, at times, with the alto voice.

Conclusion of Growth in Teaching Methodologies

As a conductor/teacher, the primary directive that leads to success is to first identify the stylistic and technical needs of each individual piece and then develop the pedagogy which allows the ensemble as a whole and the singer as an individual to internalize the meanings and intents of the piece. Simply stated, you must first work through the disciplines of the music before you can add the aesthetics.

To support the learning of a piece the conductor/teacher must do appropriate and in depth research. This research should encompass the many facets of what goes into appropriately

performing the piece that has been selected. The conductor/teacher will be able to effectively teach the student musicians when he or she has a full awareness and understanding of the music.

Conducting a background study of the piece that will be performed is imperative to understanding the composer. The conductor/teacher should research the life of the composer and other works that were written by that composer. Understanding the performing practices is important when deciding how to present a piece in the most effective and accurate way. Asking questions having to do with the instruments and the styles that were used during the composer's lifetime will allow the teacher and students to better authentically understand the components that went into this work. Handel's *Let thy hand be strengthened* would have been performed with a harpsichord rather than the modern day piano as the piano was not invented until the late 19th century. Handel also had the Chapel Royal choir to use for these pieces. This choir was accompanied by an orchestra which was perhaps composed of 160 people.

The work of analyzing the poetry of a piece is also an important step in studying choral music. The conductor/teacher needs to understand the language of the text through the translation and appropriate pronunciation. The students will need to practice the annunciation of the poetry in conjunction with the rhythms in the piece for both syllabic and word stress within the musical phrase.

The overall structure and flow of the poetry will be mimicked in the composers' writing. In *Vivos Voco*, this technique of text painting is used specifically in measure 40. The text switches from Latin to English to the words "all shall be well" in unison and simpler harmonies. This is in contrast to the text and complex harmonies before in measures 35 through 39. The use of the driving rhythms in measure 35 with the text describing the "driving away the overcast sky" is a representation of text painting within one phrase.

Another aspect of learning the composition is the analysis of the technical aspects of the piece. This involves the outline of the harmony, texture, and rhythmic structures utilized in the piece. Understanding these components will assist the conductor/teacher in structuring the lesson plans to best support the learning of the composition.

When studying *Though Amaryllis Dance in Green*, the harmonic structure parallels the ABA form with the A sections in C major and the B section in D major. Understanding the cadence points at the end of each section will help the students' comprehension as to where the sections begin and end. For example, the beginning A section is joyfully youthful with its discussion of love. The B section begins when talking about "chill love no more" or the idea of not finding or having a harsh love. The last A section has come full circle back to C major indicating that there is not a need for this "chill love" therefore, there will be "chill love no more" as the piece has arrived back to the original key.

The texture of this piece is also of interest as it is in an Italian madrigal form although it is written in English. The piece begins with homophonic 3 part writing; however, beginning at measure 3, the piece becomes more polyphonic, incorporating 5 part writing. This is challenging for even advanced choirs as it demands that each singer have rhythmic independence as they usually do not begin a phrase at the same time as another voice part.

As mentioned previously, rhythmic structures are advanced in this piece as it demands the singers to become independent. However, another aspect that is difficult with the rhythm in this piece is not simply the vertical entrances but also the use of time horizontally in the voices. The peaks and decays of the phrases and the clear indication of word stress and strong and weak beats is different vertically in this piece. Referencing measure 14 the upper 3 voices can be conducted in 2 whereas the bottom 2 voices are felt in 3. This is a challenge to the

conductor/teacher and students as all must decide what conducting style is most appropriate at that spot in the piece.

Conducting gesture along with teaching methodologies are two of the most important tools used by a conductor/teacher. The ability to appropriately give breath, demonstrate the tempo, dynamics, articulation and phrasing is what conductors communicate without using words. The personal work to improve these skills will help support different levels of students as they seek to discover many different kinds of music.

A successful conductor uses smooth gestures and patterns as well as full, deep preparatory beats. This invites the singers to breathe fully and understand the intent and communication of the conductor. In contrast, giving a tight, quick, and articulatory breath will cause the student singers to tighten their bodies and take a quick, non-deep breath. This type of gesture should not be used as it does not inspire a supported and full breath or sound from the singers.

Using an appropriate size of conducting square along with the correct use of the space and bringing the elbows away from the body will address the need for a deeper preparation gesture which inspires a deeper breath. This type of breath is especially used in *Vivos Voco* as the choir begins the piece in a full declamatory way. The singers must be inspired to take a deep inhalation to support their sound and prepare them to exhale out all of their energy into the first phrase. Having that kind of support and feel in the body allows the singers to not only serve the music with their sound but to do that in a healthy way.

Using a light and buoyant gesture will inspire the singers to feel lifted and light in their tone and style. *Though Amaryllis Dance in Green* is an example of a completely different conducting style than the previously discussed *Vivos Voco*. The dance quality is achieved with a much lighter use of the gesture. The trained singer will still take a quality breath that will

support the sound; however, the phrases in this piece are relatively short and should be sung in a light way. These qualities allow the singers to take a breath where needed and to concentrate on the lighter singing quality.

The successful conductor/teacher needs to be able to appropriately manage the tempo and metric aspect of the music. This is apparent in *Vivos Voco* between measure 30 through measure 40 where the composer has indicated 3 different metric changes as well as a tempo change. The conductor must know how to guide the singers through this section and be able to strongly demonstrate this through gesture.

Dynamic levels are indicated by the size of the beat pattern from the conductor/teacher. The intensity of the conducting gesture and use of the left hand are also tools and techniques used by the affective conductor. By varying the size of the pattern, a conductor/teacher can draw attention and provide support for the dynamic shift that is needed at that point in the music. A very soft dynamic level is demonstrated by a small gesture that is mostly through the wrist and hand movement. With a larger dynamic level comes a larger pattern with the full arm and shoulder. *Ah! Se intorno* demonstrates these two techniques multiple times throughout the piece. At measure 32, the conductor/teacher must show a controlled *pianissimo* gesture followed by a strong, but not rushed *forte* gesture in measure 34.

The conductor/teacher must be able to differentiate between different styles of articulation. The style of articulation will be shown by the shape of the beat pattern and the speed of the arm movement. For example, in a legato style there should be very fluid and round beat patterns opposed to the staccato style where the pattern is pointed, angular, and quick. When leading the students through *Otoño Porteño*, the conductor/teacher will have the challenge

of demonstrating the differences between the explosive rhythmic passages and the more legato sections of the piece.

Understanding the phrase structure of a piece is imperative in understanding of the structure of the music. Taking that information and translating it into gesture for the student musicians is another challenge. Part of score analysis for the conductor/teacher is to discern the phrase structure of the piece or movements within the piece. The determination of whether there are long or shorter phrases within the music will affect the conducting gesture. The gesture will be shorter/quicker and will stay within the conductor's square with shorter phrases. However, with longer phrases the choir will need the support of the conductor with longer gestures and encouragement of keeping the breath continuous through the long phrase. The phrase length and structure will be indicated with the horizontal plane of the conductor's gesture. This is an evident skill in *How are Things in Glocca Morra* with the gentle ebb and flow of each phrase. The gesture must demonstrate where the peaks and decays of the phrases lie as well as the beginning and end of the phrases as indicated by breath. In measures 23 through 29 the indication of where the long phrase is going is not obvious in the music or the text. The conductor must show the word stress as well as the decay in the phrase at measure 26 as well as a breath at the comma.

Through the appropriate score study the conductor/teacher will successfully lead the student musicians in correct breath, tempos, dynamics, articulation and phrasing without using words. The conducting gesture along with strong teaching methodologies will support student learning and musical success to their fullest.