THE HIGH SCHOOL A CAPPELLA CHOIR;
ORGANIZATION, TECHNIQUES,
AND PROGRAM

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC EDUCATION

By

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Galena Park, Texas
August, 1950
The Need for This Thesis

More than 90 per cent of the American people must depend upon the human voice—their own and that of others—for their contact with music. A search of any good music library will reveal, however, a preponderance of instrumental literature, or instrumentally accompanied vocal music. John Finley Williamson has occupied a place of prominence among American musicians for almost four decades and has been identified with the world-famous Westminster choir for twenty-eight years. The writer specifically asked Williamson for a text which treated to any extent the a cappella choir as a medium of musical expression; his reply was "As far as I know, there is no such text." Later, in a personal letter to the writer, Williamson, who, as Choral Editor of Etude, had begun in April, 1950, a series of articles concerning the technique of the a cappella choir, again remarked, "Except for the one I am writing, there is no other book which covers this approach."
The rapid growth of the educational influence of the a cappella choir and the paucity of material which treats this ensemble as a unique medium of choral expression and art attest the need for more research and writing upon every phase of the subject. This thesis will be confined, of course, to the a cappella choir in high school.

The bibliography of this work contains pertinent material—books, pamphlets, and publications from the following libraries:

- North Texas State College
- Texas State College for Women
- University of Texas
- Dallas Public Library
- Houston Public Library

Other material not found in libraries is offered as a result of interviews with choral conductors, music supervisors, and high-school administrators.

It is the hope and belief of the writer that this thesis will make available in concise form much information which the ambitious director of a high school a cappella choir would be unable to obtain without expending considerable time and energy.
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this thesis is to encourage the formation of a cappella choirs in high schools by discussing successful techniques of organization and instruction and, finally, by submitting a program of a cappella choir music which will offer to its listeners entertainment and inspiration equal in value to the product of a good symphony orchestra.

A cappella singing occupies an important position in the development of music; however, the a cappella choir, especially in America, is a comparative newcomer to the field of concert music.¹ The rapid rise of this type of entertainment to popularity in the concert halls of this country and the world attests the fact that it has met a long-felt need in the art of musical expression. Some of the more obvious results of this choral revival are the following:

1. A stimulation of research into the great choral music literature of the past;

2. The development of modern schools of choral composers who have found in the a cappella choir a refreshing new vehicle for their inspiration;

3. A vigorous new approach to the teaching of music in the schools and colleges.²

The term "a cappella" applies particularly to a style of singing practiced by liturgical choirs prior to and including the sixteenth century. In modern usage the term includes broadly all unaccompanied singing.³

Despite the rapid growth of interest in choral music in the twentieth century, the painful fact remains that few concert choirs have attained the standard of excellence reached by many concert orchestras.⁴ That this state of affairs need not exist is a belief shared by many outstanding musicians in the choral field. A majority of the musically loving public accepts the a cappella choir as a medium of musical expression decidedly inferior to the symphony orchestra. According to Percy Grainger,

The main impression (left by statements pleading the all-importance of the Symphony Orchestra) is that this type of organization gives us the widest possible representation of all that is great in "classical" music. But nothing is further from the truth.⁵

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²Ibid.


The position is hereby taken that much of the responsibility for the position of secondary importance now held by the choral art must be assumed by the choral musicians themselves—singers and conductors. Virgil Thomson, a foremost music critic, writes,

Now choral music is not a stuffy literature, though the performances of many an oratoric society, including New York's own, may have pretty systematically given out that impression. Nor is the chorus an insensitive instrument; indeed, it is almost too sensitive.

There is the challenge. If choral music is to take its rightful heritage, then performing choirs must give it means of claiming that heritage. There is no doubt that the American public will always applaud something which is good. The answer to the challenge, consequently, is "Let us give them something worthy of their applause," for:

Unaccompanied choir singing when well done, has a powerful effect upon a congregation or audience. Most people prefer the sweet tones of the human voice to those of any instrument made by man.

In discussing the primary artistic medium of pure music, the author takes into account the three essential factors of the art:

... first, the tonal relationships of pitch expressed in a scale; second, the qualitative.

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6 Carol M. Pitts, "Intonation," *Etude*, LXII (February, 1944), 124.
8 Noble Cain, *Choral Music and Its Practice*, p. 15.
9 F. W. Wodell, *Choir and Chorus Conducting*, p. 45.
characteristics of the timbre of different instruments and different human voices; and third, the quantitative variations of intensity, duration, and tempo. The first of these factors is basic to all formal structure in music, the second is the chief source of musical 'color,' i.e., of its sensuously qualitative character, and the third is the basis of musical rhythm. 10

These factors are quoted because they form a basic criteria of music evaluation.

It might be worthwhile to observe that nowhere in the essay from which the preceding quotations were taken is choral music regarded as a distinct art, nor even as a major branch of the art of music. There is a paragraph on the primary and secondary raw material of music with words 11 in which choral music is treated as the result of combining the raw material of literature with the primary and secondary raw material of music. The implication is that the only distinction of the human voice in music, aside from sounding like a human voice, is that it can make use of words. If that be true, then the conclusion can be drawn that the human voice can be employed correctly only in the most objective sense, that is, for sound effects like the braying of the jackass in Mendelssohn's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The premise taken by exponents of choral art is that the human voice is capable of expressing all emotion—with

10 Theodore M. Greene, The Arts and the Art of Criticism, p. 50.
11 Ibid., p. 49.
or without the use of words. Upon examination of an orchestral score it is apparent that no one orchestral instrument is expected to do this; an instrument in the symphony orchestra is valuable not only by its judicious use in certain passages, but by its equally judicious omission in other passages. The heroic sound of the trombone, the pastoral sound of the English horn, the "flesh-and-blood" tone of the French horn and the ethereal quality of the flute—each dominates its own sphere in the tonal spectrum and seldom intrudes upon the province of another. If, for instance, the heroic quality of the trombone is unwanted, it is not necessary to change its tonal character; the trombone will be omitted and an instrument will be chosen which can express more explicitly the desires of the composer.

The choir, at its best, is capable of as much variety and depth in musical expression as the symphony orchestra. That it has not exploited these capabilities is a matter of record; that it must do so to gain recognition in the music world is a just and honest conclusion. The growth of the a cappella movement in high schools and colleges has been called the "phenomenon of the age." It is there that the first steps toward building a new regard for choral music

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14Finn, op. cit.
must begin. The high-school choral director is in an especially strategic position. Daily he is associated with the future composers, conductors, performers, critics, and listeners of all kinds of music. His opportunities for raising the standards and appreciation of his profession are bounded only by his ability and his faith in the choral art.

The problem for this thesis has been stated earlier in this introductory chapter. A solution will be given according to the following outline:

OUTLINE

Chapter II

I. Organization of the high-school a cappella choir
   A. The director
   B. The administration
   C. Factors necessary to a successful choir

II. Auditions
   A. Preliminary classification of voices
   B. Selection of the choir personnel
   C. Choral balance and size of the choir
   D. Final classification of voices

Much of the information contained in this chapter has of necessity been drawn from contemporary sources, including personal experience in the field of high-school choral music and interviews with choral directors and school administrators.
The purpose of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for the physical organization of the choral group.

Chapter III

I. Vocal and choral techniques
   A. Intonation
   B. Tone vowels
   C. Rhythm--diction
   D. Dynamics--intensity

The material for this chapter has been obtained from all available sources. The purpose is to consolidate choral problems so that the choir director may organize his rehearsal time more effectively.

Chapter IV

I. The selection of a program
   A. Three general types of program arrangement
   B. The Westminster program
   C. Factors involved in selecting and interpreting an a cappella choir program
   D. The program
   E. An analysis of the program

The program submitted in this chapter was arrived at by study of many hundreds of a cappella choir programs representing performances by high-school, college, and professional groups. The program is designed to offer continuity, contrast, variety, and interest to audiences of all levels of musical knowledge and appreciation.
The purpose of this chapter is to climax the solution of the problem which has been offered by demonstrating as definitely as possible through the medium of words how an a cappella choir program can be as interesting and as inspirational as a program by a symphony orchestra.
CHAPTER II

ORGANIZATION

The successful organization of an a cappella choir in high school may be founded upon the following tangible factors:

1. The musicianship and general choral knowledge of the director. The choral director must be able to classify voices properly, and he must be able to hear all vocal parts in their proper perspective. Nothing is so conducive to classroom disorder in a choir as a conductor who does not have a clear and concise idea of the result he is working to attain. He must have a general interpretive knowledge of music of all schools of composition, and, furthermore, he should be an adequate vocal performer in his own right. Other qualities of a good director will be discussed later in this chapter.

2. The ability and willingness of the administration to find a regular time in the curriculum schedule for a class of select choral voices. Music is for everybody and

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every choral director should do the utmost in his power to bring music to all students within his sphere of influence. The a cappella choir is a highly specialized organization; and, if it is to make a worth-while contribution to the participants, to the school, to the community, and to the art of music, some provision must be made to select those students who have the ability to grasp and to enjoy strenuous musical activity. To attempt to use all students in an organization of this kind with no regard for native talent may very well create a situation which will make it impossible for any student to derive the maximum benefit from music. The student with little talent will suffer because he is striving to do something which is extremely difficult for him and which gives him no real sense of satisfaction; the talented student suffers because he is retarded and thwarted in his effort to express himself through music.

These first two factors may be called essential in the successful formation of a choral department. The director is responsible for the first; the school administration is responsible for the second.

Other items which are the responsibility of the school but are of secondary importance include the following:

1. The availability of adequate funds for music, portable risers, uniforms; fees and minimum expenses for clinics, contests, festivals, and music conventions. This item may not be called essential because the ingenious director can devise means of raising money for uniforms and trips.
A school should, however, be able to furnish the minimum physical requirements of the choral department. These include adequate music and a set of satisfactory risers. Later on, the equipment should include records, record player, and recording equipment. The director should insist upon a budget whatever the circumstances might be regarding funds.

2. An adequate place to rehearse. Many great choirs have rehearsed on auditorium stages and in makeshift rooms. The school should provide a place, in any event, which is well ventilated, well lighted, well heated in cold weather, and free from outside disturbances. Acoustical difficulties can be overcome by the use of drapes and various commercial sound-proofing materials.

3. The willingness of the school to permit the choir to make a number of concert appearances. An audience is essential to the progress of any musical organization. The home audience is not sufficient. Although music may be learned technically in the classroom, the great lessons this art has to offer are subjective, that is, of an emotional and spiritual nature, and are best attained through numerous performances to appreciative audiences.

Other factors necessary in the organization and maintenance of a good musical organization are concerned

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chiefly with the director. These factors are of no less importance than those mentioned previously as being essential to the successful organization of a choir but will be discussed at this point because they are subject to modification.\(^4\) Karl Gehrken's lists the following traits as distinctive of the successful conductor:

A sense of humor, creative imagination, organizing ability, and finally, a sense of leadership that combines among other things such qualities as personal magnetism, confidence in one's ability and knowledge, clearness of speech and expression, poise, enthusiasm for one's work, and the ability to think clearly and definitely.\(^5\)

Certainly one of the most important traits which a music teacher should develop is a spirit of cooperation. Theodore F. Norman states that the music teacher now and again

\[\ldots\] is confronted by a hostile clique among teachers, who will occasionally view music as an upstart in the academic family, an extra that has forced its way into an already overloaded curriculum. Many of these differences of opinion arise through ignorance of the objectives of music education and a lack of friendliness and cooperation on the part of the music teacher.\(^6\)

However, Norman emphasizes this point:

The surprising thing is that the teacher of academic subjects often supports the music program with considerably more whole-hearted enthusiasm than the music instructor exhibits for the rest of the school program.\(^7\)

\(^4\)Theodore F. Norman, *Instrumental Music in the Public Schools*, p. 29.


\(^6\)Norman, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

\(^7\)Ibid.
Some specific examples of cooperation which the choral director might practice include the following:

1. Students should not be called out of other classes unnecessarily.

2. Rules of eligibility for choral participation should be observed. A ruling might be considered which allows no student to miss school on a choir trip unless he is passing all his other work. This might not be feasible in some instances; however, there are important reasons why a ruling of this nature may be worth-while:

   a. The principal criticism of making trips with a high school choir is that other subjects are neglected. This rule should eliminate much of that criticism.

   b. Students who represent the school in any capacity should be good school citizens and should personify the best that the school has to offer.

   c. Some students need added incentive in order to do good work in school. One of the best ways to prove to a doubtful faculty that the music department is doing a worth-while job is to show in a practical way that one of the objectives of the department is to create incentive for raising general scholastic standing.

3. Unnecessary conflicts with other organizations in the school should be avoided. It is advisable to use a calendar system of scheduling all school events. No activity should be scheduled without the sponsor's first consulting
the calendar, and, as soon as an engagement is accepted, a notation should be made so that other organizations will not schedule an event on the same date.

4. The choir director should be an active citizen of the community in which he teaches. One of his important duties is to help raise the standards of music appreciation in his community. Methods may include the organization of a choir boosters club; appearances before the P. T. A., study clubs, and civic groups; leadership in the forming of fine arts associations; and the directing of combined community choral groups in seasonal renditions of cantatas and oratorios.

Auditions and the Preliminary Classification of Voices

When a director accepts a position, after first examining its possibilities in the light of its tangible factors, he can in no wise expect that a full-sized, balanced choir will be waiting for him when he opens the door of his classroom on the first day of school.

Arrangements should be made for auditions well in advance of the beginning of school. Notice can be given through articles in local newspapers, by letters to students, by telephone, and by announcements in churches. Many students who have had no previous interest in music will attend the auditions through curiosity and thus give the director an opportunity to present his program in such a way that the
students will become enthusiastic about the new choir. Enthusiasm is contagious, and, as it grows, will generate the inspiration which is absolutely necessary for the practice and the performance of choral music.

For the primary auditions only a general classification of voices will be necessary; i.e., soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Some of the students may have had no previous choral experience, and others may have been singing parts which are wrong for their particular voices. Some singers are sensitive about being changed from one vocal part to another, and tact should be exercised in their reclassification. John Finley Williamson tells of an occasion when he was directing a massed chorus of church choirs. The first soprano section consisted of more than half the total number of singers, and, when he found it necessary to request that a number of the women take another vocal part, many of them began to weep. An exact classification of voices at this time might prove discouraging to some; in any event, the results are likely to be misleading. For the preliminary auditions the following procedure is recommended:

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1. Use a card index system. Issue each student a card and have him write in the information requested on the proper side. (See Fig. 1).

2. First, try the student on matching tones from the piano with his voice. This is sometimes difficult for boys, especially basses, and in the case of a student having this difficulty, the director may use his own voice in giving tones to match; or, if an exceptional student with a similar voice has been previously auditioned, he can be used.

3. Test the ear further by having the student sing major, minor, diminished, and augmented triads, first with the assistance of the piano and then with no assistance if he is able.

4. Check next for highest and lowest tones. This may be done by having the subject sing five tone patterns throughout the vocal range.

5. Fill in or underline the information on the reverse side of the student's card. (See Fig. 2).

When all of this information has been obtained from every available student, the next step is to take the cards to the principal's office and choose a balanced choir. Students should be checked through the principal's office records to help in the elimination of those who are very poor scholastically and whose reputation shows them to be trouble-makers. Of course, those who have no musical ability are
Fig. 1.--Front side, Musical Classification Card

Date__________________________
Name_____________________________________
Address_____________________________________________________________________
Grade in School_________________ Age________________
Telephone Number__________________________________________________________
Previous Musical Experience__________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Pitch Accuracy: Superior____ Excellent____ Good____
Fair____ Unsatisfactory____
Tone Quality: Superior____ Excellent____ Good____
Fair____ Unsatisfactory____
Caliber: Very Large____ Large____ Medium____
Small____ Very Small____
Vocal Range: Highest Tone____ Lowest Tone____ Lift____
Vocal Classification: Soprano____ Alto____ Tenor____ Bass____
Remarks:___________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Fig. 2.--Reverse side, Musical Classification Card

Date__________________________
Name_____________________________________
Address_____________________________________________________________________
Grade in School_________________ Age________________
Telephone Number__________________________________________________________
Previous Musical Experience__________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Pitch Accuracy: Superior____ Excellent____ Good____
Fair____ Unsatisfactory____
Tone Quality: Superior____ Excellent____ Good____
Fair____ Unsatisfactory____
Caliber: Very Large____ Large____ Medium____
Small____ Very Small____
Vocal Range: Highest Tone____ Lowest Tone____ Lift____
Vocal Classification: Soprano____ Alto____ Tenor____ Bass____
Remarks:___________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Fig. 2.--Reverse side, Musical Classification Card
automatically eliminated.\(^{10}\) Make a list of the selected students and see that they are scheduled for the a cappella choir period. Several additional members may be expected later; i.e., students who are transfers from other schools and others who were unable to audition. These students may be contacted and auditioned during the registration period.

The size of the choir may vary according to many circumstances: the number of students in school, the size of the rehearsal room, the teaching load of the director, (he should never overload his choir at the expense of his other music classes and feeder groups), and the musical taste of the director. The Westminster Choir contains forty voices;\(^{11}\) however, for a high school group, forty singers might be too few. The important objective is balance and sonority, and this cannot be attained except by actually hearing the ensemble.\(^{12}\)


\(^{11}\)Ibid.

"Williamson experimented for many years with the size of the choir and finally concluded that forty voices was, in every respect, the most ideal number with which to work. He found that the extra voices did not add to the sonority of the choir, but rather that they took away from its flexibility. He also realized that the intonation of the choir was definitely better when not more than forty voices was used."

It will certainly be advisable to add extra voices in each section for the following reasons:

1. It will create a spirit of competition which will facilitate the learning of music.

2. The performing choir will always be uniform in number.

3. As the individual voices develop, the choral balance will be affected from time to time and the extra voices will enable the director to improve the ensemble effect of his organization.¹³

4. As the choir improves from year to year, the director should require more previous experience from his new a cappella choir members. The long step between junior high school choral groups and the senior high school a cappella choir will be bridged by using a system of substitutes or alternates in the latter organization. This will help to develop immature voices and will enhance the morale and loyalty of the group by making the status of regular choir membership a pinnacle of success for the high school choral student.

When the choir has worked together for three or four weeks and has learned something of voice technique, it may be necessary to classify the voices more accurately into eight sections, including first soprano, second soprano,

¹³Williamson, op. cit., p. 58.
first alto, second alto, first tenor, second tenor, first bass (or baritone), and second bass.

There are, in general, three types of voice classification:

1. Classification by quality.--Voices with heavy quality should sing lower choral parts than voices with light quality. Used alone, this system is unreliable because an inexperienced singer through false tone placement is likely to use a quality either lighter or heavier than he should use with his individual vocal equipment.

2. Classification by vocal range.--This method used alone is also unsatisfactory, particularly with girls' voices. Many first sopranos are able to sing tones as low as an alto part is normally written, and with a fairly strong quality. Altos, on the other hand, can usually sing well up in the soprano range with a light head-voice.

3. Classification by "lifts."--John Finley Williamson describes the lift as

   a place in the range of the voice where it is necessary to use less breath. The lift is the place where the voice becomes easier to produce and where the singer senses a spontaneous buoyancy in ascending scales.\(^{14}\)

The location of the lift can be established by vocalizing the student on five tone scales, ascending chromatically after

each exercise. The point of lift for the various classifications of voice will be approximately as shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

**VOCAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND POINT OF LIFT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls' Voices</th>
<th>Point of Lift</th>
<th>Boys' Voices</th>
<th>Point of Lift</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Soprano</td>
<td>e'' to f#''</td>
<td>First Tenor</td>
<td>e' to f#'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Soprano</td>
<td>c#' to d#''</td>
<td>Second Tenor</td>
<td>c#' to d#'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Alto</td>
<td>b'' to c'</td>
<td>First Bass (Baritone)</td>
<td>b'' to c'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Alto</td>
<td>a'' to b''</td>
<td>Second Bass</td>
<td>a'' to b''</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: c' is middle "c".

It is interesting to observe that the lift is found at the same point in each voice as the highest tone in the "safest and best tessitura" for that voice as agreed upon by the American Academy of Teachers of Singing.\(^{15}\)

A little practice with this type of voice classification by the director will assure excellent results. He will then not be misled by false tone quality but can confidently place the student in the section which his voice is physically adapted for, with the knowledge that no harm can come to the voice as a result of singing the wrong part.

\(^{15}\)Krone, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
CHAPTER III

VOCAL AND CHORAL TECHNIQUE

Three essential factors of the musical art have been stated as follows:

1. The tonal relationships of pitch as expressed in a scale.

2. The qualitative characteristics of the timbre of different human voices.

3. The quantitative variations of intensity, duration, and tempo. ¹

These characteristics may better be applied to the choral art by redesignating them as follows:

1. Intonation

2. Tone (vowels)

3. Rhythm (diction) and dynamics

Intonation

Any choral rendition must be based on good intonation. "Unless the intonation is excellent, the result is excruciating to singer and listener." ² One of the strongest arguments for

¹Greene, op. cit., p. 50.

²Carol M. Pitts, "Style and Interpretation," Etude, LXII (November, 1944), 630.
the unaccompanied choral art is its almost unique ability to sing in just intonation.³ There is considerable evidence that the music of Palestrina, D. Lassus, Arcadelt, and others of that great period of choral composition was interpreted and performed in that way.⁴ The great German physicist, Helmholtz, stated that the development of the tempered scale, which was greatly responsible for the development of the organ and all the instruments of the orchestra except those of the viol family, has jeopardized the future development of the musical art.⁵ His explanation is that when the consonant chords ceased to be perfect in intonation, their various inversions and positions ceased to have meaning; consequently, it was necessary

. . . to use more powerful means of maintaining interest, to have recourse to a frequent employment of harsh dissonances, and to endeavor by less usual modulations to replace the characteristic expression which the harmonies proper to the key itself had ceased to possess.⁶

The a cappella choir, then, has an inherent ability—a distinct point of superiority over any other type of musical ensemble. If this point of superiority is to be developed, it must be rehearsed; and a group cannot rehearse just intonation by using a tempered key-board instrument as a guide.

⁴Ibid.
⁵Herman Helmholtz, Sensations of Tone, p. 327.
⁶Ibid.
The Baroness Georg von Trapp, of the internationally famous Trapp Family Singers, has this to say about practicing with an instrument:

... in following such an instrument, the singer gradually loses his accuracy of ear, his natural ability to produce these pure, absolute tones... for this reason we keep away from the piano in our practicing.7

In discussing the practical problems of a cappella singing, the Baroness states that

... the most important problem is ear accuracy so that the singing may be kept within the scope of the absolute intervals for which the music was written. Actually, the ear prefers these natural intervals and can readily perceive them, if given the chance, and what the ear perceives the voice can follow.8

Even if no great stock is placed in the importance of just intonation as an aim for the high school choir, it stands to reason that the choir can perform only in the way it has been rehearsed, and if it sings unaccompanied music it should rehearse unaccompanied. It is pretty evident that, in music, most people prefer the sound of the human voice.9

Some specific technical reasons for a choir's singing out of tune and methods for correction are listed below:

1. Inability to sustain without sagging. An a cappella choir should be able to stagger breathing in such a manner that no one voice will have to sustain a tone to the point where support gives out. Practice the stolen breath, with good posture and an open throat.

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8Ibid.
9Wodell, op. cit., p. 45.
2. Too heavy a tone quality carried too far into the upper register. Vocalize easily downward from the upper register—use lighter quality on higher notes.

3. Throat stricture—forced, harsh tone. Vocalize as recommended above. Relax tongue, correct head posture and work on breathing from diaphragm.

4. Inadequate breath foundation. Keep chest high, back straight, with back ribs out. Use muscles of diaphragm and stomach both in inhalation and exhalation.

5. Inaccurate hearing. Tune to the tonic and to the chord. Sing parts on different vowels and at other dynamic levels.

6. Intervals too wide descending, too small ascending. This is a matter of habit. Each ascending and descending passage should be checked thoroughly and faulty intonation pointed out the moment it occurs.

7. Starting below the pitch, or scooping to the tone. This is a very prevalent fault of soloists, and one which must never be permitted in a choir. Consonants must be voiced on pitch—support must be supplied to the tone before it is audible.

8. Fatigue, mental sluggishness, anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty, poor memory.

9. Foul air, inadequate ventilation, excessive heat. Numbers 8 and 9 are similar in treatment. Remove the causes for number 9 and most of number 8 will be remedied. Confidence in the director and a knowledge of the music will relieve anxiety, nervousness, and uncertainty.

10 Helmholtz, op. cit., p. 279.

"... it is not so easy to learn to strike the proper tone by a knowledge of the interval between to adjacent tones ... as acknowledgment of the mental effect produced by each tone of the scale in relation to the tonic."

11 Carol M. Pitts, "Intonation," Etude, LXII (February, 1944), 90.
Tone

Of all the fundamental elements of music, the matter of choral tone--its color and quality--is the most confusing. Hardly any two choral conductors can agree completely on the virtues of a given tone, for "there is hardly any sound which a group of persons singing together can produce that does not appeal to some conductor."\(^{12}\) The author of that quotation, Archibald T. Davison, goes on to assert, "I have heard choruses which seemed to me to be literally parodying the human voice; yet there was no escape from the fact that that effect had been deliberately sought."\(^{13}\)

When disciples of true choral art realize the relative status of choirs and symphony orchestras on this question alone, the conclusion might be drawn that we have barely penetrated the surface of progress in our attempts to gain a real and permanent acceptance for the a cappella field. The tragedy of this state of affairs is that this factor is the one by which the a cappella choir should be able to surpass completely its instrumental colleague. "All musical effect is based upon tone."\(^{14}\) Man's first conception of tone came about through the medium of his voice, and his

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\(^{13}\)Ibid.

first attempts to produce sound by mechanical means were suggested by, or were imitations of, his voice.\(^{15}\) In spite of the marvelous sound range of present-day musical instruments or their expressive fluency in the hands of virtuosity, their claim to human consideration is based upon tone.\(^{16}\) "It cannot be stated too often that the ultimate test of musical performance is the quality of tone produced by players and singers."\(^{17}\) "When beautiful tone is used as the instrument through which a worthy thought is expressed, the audience does not 'walk out,' no matter how untrained it is in music,"\(^{18}\) because "tone" is the one real link between performer and hearer.\(^{19}\)

The proper physical technique of producing a vocal tone can be found in a number of reliable text-books. This technique is almost purely a physical one, involving the abdominal muscles which control the breath which controls the tone, and the opening of the cavities which serve to amplify and enrich the tone. The course here will be to discuss the more subtle matter of tonal coloration.

\(^{15}\)ibid. \(^{16}\)ibid. \(^{17}\)Ibid. \(^{18}\)Mabelle Glenn, "A New Goal in Ensemble Singing," *Music Supervisors' Journal*, XV (December, 1929), 87. \(^{19}\)Fowles, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
Robert Shaw lists as a cardinal sin of choral singing a "fixed, inflexible, and therefore monotonous, tone quality." At the time of the renaissance of choral music, previously called the "a cappella movement," a critic commented on a performance by a famous Russian choir as having "almost as much variety of tone color as a symphony orchestra." If that is the best that can be said now, we cannot be elated over our progress, but that it probably is as true today as it was thirty years ago can be assumed from a statement by a well-known contemporary music critic, Virgil Thompson, about two decades later, "... choral music, ancient and modern, is as extensive and beautiful as instrumental literature. Not to perform it more than we do is a mistake. To perform it the way we usually do is unfortunate." The "unfortunate" way we perform choral music might be summed up in a quotation by a recognized music educator and choral director, Carol M. Pitts:

How often do choirs and soloists sing entire programs with the same tone color, a procedure as unsatisfactory and disappointing as an entire painting or exhibition done in drab grey—which would be meaningless and uninteresting.

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20 Robert Shaw, "Choral Art for America," Etude, LXIII (October, 1945), 564.
21 Rauschelbach, op. cit., p. 561.
24 Carol M. Pitts, "Tone--The Glory of a Fine Chorus," Etude, LXII (June, 1944), 360.
In the final analysis, the harm is not in the individual conductor's conception of a single tone quality or color but rather in the prevalent idea that tone is a fixed medium. Robert Shaw explains it more fully:

Many choirs, I find, make the mistake of trying to develop a single fixed color of their own, as a sort of hall-mark. I think it is better to avoid any fixed norm and to try for as great a variety of color as possible.\textsuperscript{25}

Now, in brief, what can be done about the problem of tone, its color and quality, by an a cappella choir in high school? In general, it may be said that no one tone is entirely incorrect. Carol M. Pitts is more explicit in this explanation:

Tonal color comes only through the feeling and imagination of the singer aided by the conductor. If the singer has neither, he still may sing, but will never express any real meaning. If these qualities are absent in the conductor, he may be a good technician or workman, but will never inspire his group. All singing is an expression of emotion and the tone color employed must coordinate with the meaning of the text.\textsuperscript{26}

All choral conductors know of choirs which are well known for their "dark" tone, or "light" tone, or even their "natural" tone. One can understand the first two terms as representing the extreme ends of a color spectrum which includes all musical colors.\textsuperscript{27} Henry Coward, world-famous English choirmaster,

\textsuperscript{25}Shaw, op. cit., p. 564.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27}Henry Coward, Choral Technique and Interpretation, p. 2.
refers to the third term, "natural," in this manner, "a person's natural voice is not unalterable, like the color of his eyes, but is subject to control by the will of the singer."\textsuperscript{28}

It may be concluded, then, that the type of tone which is to be used must be governed by the composition. Archibald T. Davison, Professor of Choral Music, Harvard University, recommends the "subjective" tone.\textsuperscript{29} This tone is described as being capable of diverse and sensitive coloring for any textual requirement; it destroys idiosyncrasies and produces from the choir one magnified choral voice. Technically, this type of tone is produced by approaching each vowel through "o" as in "lot," the "o" being abandoned as soon as the vowel is attacked. The jaw is relaxed, the face long, and the throat open. The resulting tone is somewhat covered and is easily controlled. The "subjective" tone results from and is an inseparable component of the whole musical situation of which it is but a part.\textsuperscript{30} The antithesis of the "subjective" tone is the "objective" tone, which Davison says is most generally in use. This type of tone utilizes "technical detail which is independent of other features. It is an audible vehicle of the words."\textsuperscript{31} In rehearsing a high-school choir (or a choir at any level) for the development and realization of tone, the director must approach the problem from the standpoint

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid. \hfill \textsuperscript{29}Davison, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 58. \hfill \textsuperscript{30}Ibid. \hfill \textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
of "matching" and "blending." The procedure, to the student, will not be different from that involved in building good intonation, the difference being in the extent of the objective. "Matching" takes place within the section, and the student is asked to listen for intonation and then for quality. "Blending" is that effect which occurs when all sections contribute in such a manner as to produce the "one magnified choral voice," previously described by Archibald T. Davison. Davison is more specific concerning the role of the individual voice when he uses the description "distinguished mediocrity," the quality which assumes distinction when combined with other voices.

"Singing, or the sustaining of tone, is done upon vowels." For this reason, any approach to the development of tone in a choral group must be done through vowels. There are acoustical reasons why certain vowels will blend better than others. A pitch sounded upon a bright "ah" vowel, for example, will contain upper partials which are foreign to the fundamental of the tone being executed, and when this pitch is sounded in conjunction with a consonant interval such as a third, the upper partials will be harshly dissonant.

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32 Carol M. Pitts, "Intonation," Etude, LXII (February, 1944), 62.
33 Davison, op. cit., p. 58.
34 Wodell, op. cit., p. 136.
35 Helmholtz, op. cit., p. 206.
When the vowel is changed to "o" as in "no" the dissonance in the upper partials disappears. In other words, the conclusion is evident that as a vowel assumes brightness its blending qualities decrease because of the disturbance in the upper partials; as it assumes darkness, its blending qualities increase because the upper partials are not so prominent. 36

For the sake of a broader, richer tone quality in singing, vowels may be somewhat modified, as compared with their use in speech. Where two pronunciations have equal authority, that having the broadest vowel should be chosen for singing. 37

For the sake of blending, then, a recommended procedure would be to use the vowel "o" as a basis for tonal training. "Singers are apt to change the color of the tone when they change the vowel;" 38 therefore, after the vowel "o" is established satisfactorily, the other vowels should be practiced, with the objective that all vowels keep the tonal characteristics of "o", while, at the same time, retaining enough individuality to be clearly understood. 39 "All vowels can be colored dark or bright, clear or sombre, or one of many shades between these two extremes," 40 but in all cases there must remain a uniformity of coloring among them.

36 Ibid.
37 Wodell, op. cit., p. 133.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Other aspects of tone must be considered from the standpoint of interpretation. In tone,

There may be joy, reverence, sublimity, worship, awe, dignity, hatred, anger, fear, revenge, sorrow, gaiety, tenderness, love; the love of the mother for her child, the love of the Heavenly Father for His own, idyllic love, unrequited love (as in many madrigals), pastoral simplicity, the force and beauty of nature, and many others.\textsuperscript{41}

There must be also characterization of tone

... to exemplify the sob, the exclamation, the snarl, the laugh--playful, mocking, derisive, or fiendish--the shout of triumph, etc. In fact, the whole gamut of dramatic emotion has now to be portrayed by the subtle shadings of the tone quality of the voices.\textsuperscript{42}

It is in the province of the choral conductor, working through the medium of his singers, to produce the quality or qualities of tone which will give a composition the most interest and meaning; but he can do this only after the most careful analysis of the text and music.\textsuperscript{43}

Rhythm - Diction

I am convinced that rhythm in singing can be attained only through good, clear diction; that they are, in the final analysis, one and the same thing. That is the way I approached the problem of rhythm in my last year's choir, and that choir had more precision than any other choir I have ever conducted.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41}Carol M. Pitts, "Tone, The Glory of a Fine Chorus," \textit{Etude}, LXII, (June, 1944), 360.
\textsuperscript{42}Coward, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{43}Hubert Brown, \textit{The Principles of Expression in Song}, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{44}Interview with Wilfred C. Bain by writer, October, 1948.
Noble Cain states, "It is possible to have diction without eloquence, but it is impossible to have eloquence without good diction."\textsuperscript{45} Cain goes further to give a short definition of diction: "Diction is the delivery of words, phrases in proper clarity."\textsuperscript{46}

Words are made of vowels and consonants. The use of vowels controls the quality of tone; the use of consonants controls the intelligibility of the words. Or as Carol M. Pitts writes, "Consonants are the intellect of speech, vowels are its color, beauty, emotion."\textsuperscript{47} Consonants, then, are the chief vehicle through which rhythm and, therefore, phrasing are possible in choral music. The principal points to remember about the use of consonants in choral music are these:

1. They must be articulated in unison.

2. They must be articulated on pitch.

3. They are not sustained--whether the composition be slow and legato, or fast and stacatto, the consonant is released rapidly.

4. They must proportionately be as loud as the vowel. Inexperienced singers are apt to amplify the vowel, but neglect the consonant in singing.

\textsuperscript{45}Cain, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{47}Carol M. Pitts, "Diction," \textit{Etude}, LXII, (September, 1944), p. 510.
5. Final consonants must be heard. Releases must match attacks, "style for style and accent for accent."\(^48\)

Archibald T. Davison suggests that a "careful pronunciation of final consonants will often, but not always, yield all that is necessary by way of phrasing."\(^49\) Robert Shaw recommends a "diligent practice of rhythmical phonetic speech,"\(^50\) in which the final consonant is considered the beginning consonant of the following word: "Thi-si-zuh-luh-vle-dance."\(^51\)

The choral director must find the inner pulse of the music and keep it constant and inviolable. The weak beats should be regarded as beats of surge and movement, not of relaxation—each measure being approached in terms of rhythmic accuracy of its smallest component parts. Rests should be recognized as being dramatically significant as moments of recoil and preparation. An attack must never be late; if necessary, time should be borrowed from the preceding note.\(^52\)

The most constant vigilance must be observed by the high-school choral director in order to obtain rhythmic accuracy for his choir. As Carol M. Pitts tells us, "Few

\(^48\)Shaw, op. cit., p. 564.
\(^49\)Davison, op. cit., p. 64.
\(^50\)Shaw, op. cit., p. 564.
\(^51\)Ibid.
\(^52\)Ibid.
singers bring to the choir the listening attitude or the technical equipment of the average instrumentalist."53 This section can be summarized in the words of Archibald T. Davison, "Good choral singing is impossible without unremitting attention to small details, heartlessly, but tactfully insisted upon."54

Dynamics - Intensity

In any serious attempt at an evaluation of the possibilities of the a cappella choir with the object of suggesting means by which the choral group can equal or surpass the offerings of the symphony orchestra, it would be understood that from the standpoint of sheer power and mass of sound the orchestra occupies a place which cannot be approached by human voices. In addition, it must be remembered that contrasts of intensity (piano, forte) are comparatively new to the choral art, and, for that matter, to the art of music in general.55 Certainly, a search of the methods of the old masters of the "schola cantorum" reveals no mention of volume of sound.56

53 Carol M. Pitts, "Intonation," Etude, LXII (February, 1944), 62.

54 Davison, op. cit., p. 69.


56 Ibid.
From the "Motis Profrio [Pope Pius X, 1903]" as well as documents written four hundred years prior to it, are found these general canons:

1. A symmetrical style of singing is required, also special skill in the rendition of dynamics.
2. Dynamics must be analogous to the text, and must deepen the content of the underlying affection. Since there were no hints in the manuscript such as 'piano' or 'forte,' only very well educated and capable singers could recognize the dialogue and echo effects from the music itself, and incorporate all the contrasts suggested by the polyphony.

The interpretations of Gregorian Chant by the monks of Solesmes (France) are characterized by "the almost complete absence of contrasts of intensity (piano, forte), the voices moving along, quite impressively, in a subtly shaded mezzo-piano."

Historically, then, the use of dynamics has not played a great part in the development of choral music; this, however, should not indicate that a sensitive use of dynamics is not absolutely essential to a good choral performance. That dynamic effects in choral music are many times in poor taste is evident from this paragraph by Kathryn Sanders Rieder:

One has only to listen to the exaggerated choral effects on some radio programs to note the startling, ill-placed crescendi and decrescendi, sprinkled at

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57 Frederick Dorian, The History of Music in Performance, p. 40.
58 Ibid.
60 Glenn, op. cit., p. 67.
random through the selection. There seems to be no purpose, other than to display the effect itself.\textsuperscript{61}

It has been stated that the choir cannot approach the symphony orchestra at one dynamic extreme (fortissimo). This fact indicates the objective for which a choral director, especially in high school, must strive: to develop the finest possible pianissimo. The important point to remember in the development of a wide range of dynamic intensity in a choral group is that every tone, whether it be soft or loud, must be supported actively by the breath. The choir should rehearse tones on every vowel, increasing in intensity gradually until it has reached the maximum volume and then decreasing the amount of sound until the softest possible tone is reached. Great care must be exerted to see that the vowel remains absolutely the same at both extremes. These extremes, regardless of their interval, must be regarded as the fortissimo and the pianissimo of the choir; all other levels of intensity are found in between.

John Finley Williamson gives an adequate summary of the choral objective in intensity. "Softness should be the result of control rather than devitalization. Even the most subtle passage should be alive and moving."\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61} Kathryn Sanders Rieder, "Elementary Interpretation for the Choir," \textit{Etude}, XV (February, 1942), 93.

\textsuperscript{62} Schmoyer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 52.
CHAPTER IV

SELECTION AND ANALYSIS
OF A PROGRAM

Although there is evidence that good choral music, if well performed, will be well received by the average listener, regardless of his musical information, this fact should not deceive the alert choir director into being careless about the order of selections for any performance. There are several accepted methods of arranging a program of choral music. Nobel Cain lists three:

1. The chronological
2. The mood and spirit of the text and music
3. The contrast

Cain prefers the third method because, "The modern urge is to get great variety." There can be no doubt that monotony is one of the greatest faults of the conventional a cappella choir program.

The Westminster Choir follows a method of program building which is designed to offer great interest to a large number of people. A typical Westminster program will contain the following five groups:

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3. Ibid.
1. Bach motet
2. Latin motets (sixteenth century)
3. Seasonal numbers (Christmas)
4. Music from the modern school
5. Folk songs and spirituals

Evidence that the Westminster method of program building may be considered by some choral directors too challenging for high-school singers may be assumed from this statement by Nobel Cain:

"Especially in high schools . . . young people have capacities for learning which is far in advance of what is usually thought possible."\(^5\)

Cain is more specific in stating his belief in the capabilities of young singers to perform difficult music:

"Now and then it is the experience of a conductor that training a choir on a more difficult number at the outset will make it more proficient and faster moving when it is introduced to the remainder of the program. A case in mind is that of Bach's Motet, 'Jesu, Priceless Treasure.'\(^6\)

In selecting the high school a cappella choir program to be submitted in this chapter, the following criteria have been observed:

1. Only worthwhile music has been considered. Each number has been performed in concert by one or more of these well-known choral organizations:


\(^6\)Ibid, p. 57.
a. The Westminster Choir
b. The North Texas State College Choir
c. The Robert Shaw Chorale

2. The program offers variety. Each succeeding number differs from its predecessor in style, key, and tone color.

3. The length of the program is variable. Four groups have been submitted instead of the five used by the Westminster Choir. Whole groups may be omitted, or additions may be made from the optional list.

A suggested high-school a cappella choir program is as follows:

First Group
Jesu, Priceless Treasure . . . . . . Johann Sebastian Bach

Second Group
O Magnum Mysterium . . . . . . Tomas Luis Victoria
Create in Me, O God, A Pure Heart. . . . . . Johannes Brahms
Mother, I Will Have A Husband. . . . . . Thomas Vautour
Salvation Is Created . . . . . . . . . . . Tschesnokoff
The Coolin . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Samuel Barber

Third Group
Christmas Bells. . . . . . . . . . . . George L. Osgood
Christmas Song . . . . . . . . . . . H. von Herzobenberg

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8 Cain, op. cit., p. 57.
Hodie Christus Natus Est
Mary Had A Baby
Fourth Group
Listen to the Lambs
Ezekiel Saw de Wheel
I Wonder as I Wander
Listen to the Mocking Bird
Old Black Joe

Simply to design a program of good choral music with the avowed intention of offering a varied and interesting musical fare is not sufficient reason for assuming that an artistic performance will result. John Finley Williamson compares the art of choral singing to the art of weaving a beautiful tapestry. He has this to say:

You have the intertwining of threads of vibration that convey to the listener all colors, but this intertwining the choir singer rarely hears. His problem is the perfecting of his own thread of tone. For this reason we need a conductor who can hear as well as weave these threads of tone. If the weaving is done so that all these threads, each one beautiful in itself, intertwines and makes patterns that unite the performer and the listener in aesthetic realization, great art has been achieved.9

Beautiful threads of silk may not become an artistic tapestry except through the skilled hands of the weaver, nor may a

program of choral music reach artistic proportions except through skillful interpretation by the director. Interpretation has been defined as:

Representation in performance, delivery, or criticism, of the thought and mood in a work of art or its producer, especially as penetrated by the personality of the interpretor.¹⁰

In preceding chapters some essential factors pertaining to the art of music have been enumerated and discussed, with the specific objective of applying them to the high-school a cappella choir. These factors might be called "tools" of the art, their application to a given composition by the choir and the conductor may be considered "interpretation," and the manner of this application may be considered "style."¹¹ Style has been defined as:

The quality which gives distinctive excellence to artistic expression, consisting especially in the appropriateness and choiceness of relation between subject, medium, and form, and individualized by the temperamental characteristics of the artist.¹²

Style, then, is the focal point of interpretation, and in serious music at least, the appropriate style of each number may be decided upon only after a careful study of the composition, text and music. "It is the responsibility of the conductor to

¹¹Ibid.
¹²Ibid.
leave no stone upturned in discovering what the composer's intentions were."¹³ Style in music, however, is subjective¹⁴ and it should be understood that it cannot be re-expressed successfully through the medium of words. "Though the emotions suggested by a composition may be apparent to most men, it is well nigh impossible to describe them in words acceptable to all men.¹⁵

In approaching the task of describing and analyzing the submitted program, it is with the realization that no conclusion can be reached regarding the final effect of the performance upon the hearer. However, in the words of Roy Dickenson Welch,

It must be risked if a report of the whole experience is to be complete in important details. The emotional may not be ignored . . . even though it can at best be merely suggested. . . as one man sees it.¹⁶

The purpose of this analysis is not to offer conclusive evidence of the correctness of a style of interpretation, but merely to point out ways in which a suggested program may offer the maximum in musical interest.

The analysis of the first group, Johann Sebastian Bach's "Jesu, Priceless Treasure," will be presented from the

¹³Krone, op. cit., p. 89.
¹⁵Greene, op. cit., p. 333.
standpoint of a technical choral interpretation. In each succeeding number the purpose will be to show contrast through a discussion of the emotive content, mood, and style of the composition.

For the sake of clarity the following system of abbreviating will be observed:

Small letter enclosed by quotation marks. . . . "l" - letter of a word, e.g., unless

Capital letter enclosed by quotation marks. . . . "A" - section of composition

Capital letter unenclosed B - refers to pitch name

mm 90 - metromome tempo of 90 beats per minute

p - piano

pp - pianissimo

MP - mezzo-piano

MF - mezzo-forte

F - forte

FF - fortissimo

Major - always capitalized

minor - never capitalized

SSA - soprano, soprano, alto

CTB - contralto, tenor, bass
Jesu, Priceless Treasure

Johann Sebastian Bach

H. W. Gray & Company, Inc.

The first measure is marked piano. It would be better to begin at a more diminutive level in order to provide a wider latitude of dynamics. The tempo should be about 96mm for a quarter note. For the sake of the phrase line ignore the comma at the end of the second beat. Use the eighth notes in the tenor and alto as vehicles for a slight crescendo on the word "priceless." All voices should use good exaggerated attack on the consonants. Place the sibilant in "price" immediately before the "l" in "less" and hold over the "ss" to begin the word "treasure." Basses should not rush the eighth note in the last of the first measure. The second beat of the second measure should be retarded very slightly, giving prominence to first the alto with an E to D# against the soprano F, and the tenor against the B in the bass. Make the most of this dissonance by creating a very slight suspension of rhythm with a diminuendo before the voices settle on the E minor chord at the fermata.

"Source of Purest Pleasure," third and fourth measures in order to vary the monotony of the two bar phrases, should be approached without a breath from bar two. The tenor, alto, and then the bass have a descending passage with coupled eighth notes; the second notes of these couplets should be let down slightly while the soprano carries a steadily mounting phrase line, climaxing on the first syllable of "pleasure."
The soprano and the tenor decrescendo after the first beat while the alto and bass ascending progression takes prominence up to the tenor-bass dissonance before the pause. The phrase ends about mp.

The next phrase, "truest friend to me," is the climax of the first page; it is marked forte but should be approached mf with a slight crescendo. In "Ah, how long I've panted," be sure that the "Ah" comes in on the breath, (with a slight "h" if necessary). Do not over-emotionalize by breaking after "Ah". The "h" in "how" should be well defined. Emphasize the "ng" in "long," and strive otherwise to hold the phrase together with uniform consonant attacks. The next four measures are identical with measures 3, 4, 5, and 6. In "Thine I am 0 spotless lamb," begin PP and take full advantage of the nasalized consonants in "thine," "am," and "lamb." In "I will suffer naught to hide thee," begin a crescendo and emphasize the "f's" in "suffer." "Naught" begins the climax of the phrase; "hide" begins a decrescendo. Give prominence to A# in alto resolving from the B which is in dissonance with the soprano C. Give a slight suspension to the latter half of the fourth beat and emphasize the E in the tenor which is dissonant to the F# in the bass. Sustain the chord full but soft. (The chord is B Major). The phrase "Naught I ask beside thee" is pp, but maintain intensity and let the consonants carry through; without special
care the final "t", "k", and "d" will be lost. The voices take prominence in this order: tenor, soprano, alto, and tenor. There should be a slight retard before the final E Major chord.

Second Chorus:

This chorus is in five parts and is marked adagio 3/2 with a mm of about 76. With a moderate-sized chorus of high-school voices this could be increased to about mm 80, because care must be taken to maintain a firm, smooth phrase line. In "So there is now, now," the first part of the phrase is forte; the echo is piano. Be sure that both "now's" are held a full beat. The phrase "Now no condemnation unto them which are in Jesus Christ," should begin softer than the forte which is marked. Give attention to the nasalized consonants in this phrase, using them to build the desired crescendo, which culminates on "Jesus Christ." Make sure that the first syllable of "Jesus" gets more stress than the second. This same phrase is repeated with different chordal treatment, but with the same dynamics.

The first part of the phrase, "Them who walk not by the flesh corruptly . . . but as the Spirit leads," is treated contrapuntally beginning with the tenors. It is marked "F" but this should apply only to those voices which are carrying the phrase. Beginning with the letter "A" the sopranos have a crescendo climaxing in the next measure and giving way to the tenor line, which immediately decrescendos. Each voice
takes a turn in the development; the basses entering seven bars after Section "A", at which point care must be taken that they are not overbalanced by the higher voices.

In the twelfth measure after Section "A" the altos have an ascending passage in eighth notes. It should be noted that this passage is not slurred, and consequently each tone should be approached with an "h". This phrase will lose effectiveness if sung too loudly. Bring the other voices down as far as necessary to give the altos prominence without forcing. The basses have a syncopated passage beneath the alto phrase; each tone must be approached with as much buoyancy as possible—firmly but not heavily. In the next measure the basses have two slurred quarter notes; release the second of these two tones cleanly; if necessary, shorten the time value. All the vocal work for four measures occurs on the short "u" in "corrupt." This vowel should be broadened into an "ah" of "awl" for fuller quality.

"But the Spirit Leads," is marked FF; make sure that the last syllable of "Spirit" is treated discreetly. The next section is a development and recapitulation of the first. At Section "B" the first sopranos should not overbalance the more delicate second soprano phrase. From a textual standpoint the second soprano is more important, but the effect should be a sustained line above a more detached melody. Five bars from the end of the chorus the tenors have the equivalent of the previously discussed eighth note passage
in the alto part. It should be treated similarly. "But as
the Spirit Leads," is FF with a slight ritard on the last
beat of the next-to-last measure. Hold the final E Major
chord generously.

Third Chorus:
The third chorus begins as a gentle chorale. The tenors
have the motion in the first two measures which should repre-
sent the rocking of a cradle. The measure signature is 4/4
about 70 mm. The distinguishing feature here is the cradle
motion begun by the tenors. Stress each first note of the
couplets with the idea of leaning into it, releasing the
second note with finesse. Midway of the chorus the thought
changes with the phrase, "Fires may flash and thunders crash."
The tenors have definite prominence on the first beat because
of the syncopation in that voice. The rest of the phrase
and the next, "Yea, and sin and hell assail me," should offer
no problems of interpretations. The last phrase is rallentando
and PP and resumes the cradle motion as in the first part of
the chorus.

Fourth Chorus:
The fourth is a very thoughtful and expressive chorus
of SSA voices. It is a straight-forward acknowledgment as
is expressed in the text, "Thus, the law of the Spirit of
life in Christ abiding hath made me free from the law of sin
and death." The measure signature is 3/4 with a tempo of
andante, about 90 mm. The fact that the highest and lightest
voices are used here indicates that the purest part of human nature is being expressed. The phrases in this chorus are the longest engaged in so far. Great care should be exercised to keep them sustained and unified. The sentiment changes from a simple statement to one of exultation on the phrase "Now hath made me free." Other phrases are well marked with crescendos and decrescendos. The final cadence exemplifies simplicity with the octave B instead of a chord.

Fifth Chorus:

The fifth chorus has a measure signature of 3/4 and should be slightly slower than the previous chorus. The first chord on "Death" is an E Major chord with an added seventh (D) in first inversion. It is a quarter note forte with a sharp diminuendo. It should be expressed on the breath. At the third measure "F" the basses begin a long passage of sixteenth notes, legato. This type of phrase is difficult because it requires legato without sloppiness. The volume should be kept down, and the tempo must be kept exact without too much accent on the first of each group of four. Make sure that the voices on the upper parts with the staccato "Rising" detach the notes without accenting the second syllable. In the fifth bar the basses should hold the D# B E progression to the full value of the notes. The next few bars are FF with no particular prominence to any one voice. There are some sharp crescendos and some that are gradual; a distinction should be made. First, there is passiveness manifested
by the organ-point E in the bass for three bars on the word "death." Then there is a sudden forte followed by a gradual decrescendo for two bars, followed by a mood of resignation with the sopranos sustaining the E against moving parts. A four-measure crescendo begins with alternating passages in thirds, first between two sopranos and then between basses and tenors. This crescendo is climaxed with a FF on "He that reigns will rend my chains," and then more quietly "Earth may vanish," "earth" being attacked like the first chord in the chorus. On the last page of this chorus the eighth note progressions on the short "e" of "ever" should not be disconnected—neither should they be slurred. Each should be firmly placed and held until the next tone should begin in order to keep a well-rounded phrase line.

Sixth Chorus:

Chorus number six begins with a pure fugue as only Bach could write them.\(^{17}\) The tenors begin "Ye are not of the flesh but of the Spirit," with a long progression of sixteenth notes on the short "i" in "spirit." The sixteenth notes are an accompanying figure and are marked decrescendo at the entrance of the altos. Since the legato line is in the shorter notes, the original theme of eighth notes may be more detached than is ordinarily permitted. The vowel

\(^{17}\) Phillip Spitta, *Life of Bach*, p. 609.
color should remain the same and the tempo even throughout the long phrases. A complete change of mood and tempo takes place at the fifth bar after "m". This section is marked molto moderato, and a yearning, evangelistic mood is indicated. In "If Jesu's Spirit be not yours, ye are not his," the coupled eighth notes are leaned into building the second tones on ascending passages and executing a natural decrescendo on the descending passages. Even though there are a few wide skips here, the phrase line is still most important, and all the words and syllables of a complete sentence should be securely tied together.

Seventh Chorus:

The "cantus firmus" in the soprano is accompanied by contrapuntal figures in the other voices. The soprano line should remain firm throughout, with one note carried into the next. The work is carefully edited so that the crescendo in the other voices takes place at the weak points in the soprano phrase line. Do not make too much of the sibilant on the accompanying "Hence, Hence." The trills written in several places for alto on the tone A should be ignored unless done by one capable voice. It is evident that Bach's vocal writing here is affected by the organ. It will be difficult to keep the lower voices from overpowering the soprano line; however, at places such as the third measure after "o" "Told with tempting voice," the motion is supposed
to represent disturbance. Two measures later at "Pain or loss or shame or cross, shall not from my Savior move me," there is still another treatment of the coupled eighth notes. All the three lower voices have the notes of equal value with one voice always moving in an opposite direction and the other two in thirds or sixths. The last note of the couplets should be almost imperceptible, while the soprano on quarter notes builds right on through, crescendoing between the final consonant of each word and the consonant of the next word.

Eighth Chorus:

CTB Andante 12/8 about 60 mm to a dotted quarter note. This is a very difficult chorus because of the long phrase line and the necessity of maintaining constant intensity between the stress of the quarter notes and the relatively unimportant eighth notes, sometimes with skips of a fourth or more. The fact that the tenors are in their upper register much of the time will tend to make the three-part chorus unbalanced if care is not taken. If necessary, let the second sopranos assist the altos. The sixteenth notes should be treated as mentioned before, smoothly and subservient to the voices with the text. The chorus begins in C Major, but there are many wide skips, especially in the bass part, which will be very hard to tune because of the

18 Arthur E. Hull, Music - Classical; Romantic; Modern, p. 48.
chromatic alterations. The fact that this is written for low voices indicates that Bach was using the darker color to illustrate the text, "If therefore Christ abide in you then is the body dead because the Spirit liveth." The natural somberness of the low voices should be darkened still more in the early part and only lightened on the sixteenth notes indicating the "spirit."

Ninth Chorus:

This chorus is marked allegreto 2/4 at about 86 mm and is scored for SSAT voices. The alto has the chorale cantus, and the other voices are treated similarly to the accompanying figures in "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring." For eight measures a mood is set by the other three voices, and then the text is announced in the alto marcato. See that the accompanying voices are light in color and that the alto color is dark. The altos must descend to A below the staff, and volume alone will not permit them to be heard. The tone should not get "gutteral" or "hooty." The tenors have a long passage to execute on the last syllable of the word "Abhorred." Lighten this vowel to contrast with the alto.

Tenth Chorus:

This chorus is very similar to chorus number two, and the same general treatment can be observed. It is the largest chorus in the motet from the standpoint of massiveness and volume and should be attempted with young voices only with extreme care. The very slow tempo can be increased and the
dynamics can be cut down a third. This number is the climax of the entire motet and therefore the dynamics in all the other choruses should be reduced at the same ratio.

Eleventh Chorus:

Chorus number eleven is identical with number one except for the text. Give a more pronounced ritard at the end of the number and make the pp on the last phrase as soft as possible.

Second Group

O Magnum Mysterium
G. Schirmer & Company

Key signature F Minor (Modal)

The Latin motet of the sixteenth century is a contrapuntal outgrowth of ancient church modes. The vocal technique for all voices should be one of motility rather than dramatic emotion. Bar lines and time signatures are modern additions and should not be used to indicate rhythmic stress. Great care should be taken with the entrance and development of phrase lines in each of the vocal parts. The tone quality, traditionally, may be called impersonal; however, present-day choirs add a vibrant quality to the choral tone by the use of vibrato.
"Create in Me, O God, a Pure Heart" represents the German school of choral writing. The style is more deliberate and metrical than in the preceding Latin motet, although the phrase line is pre-eminent, especially in the contrapuntal sections. Chiefly, the vocal techniques involved are those of dynamic control rather than fluidity of execution, as in the preceding composition. The predominating tone quality is rich and emotionally vital. Care should be taken to avoid abruptness in the dimuendi and crescendi.

"Mother, I Will Have a Husband" is an English madrigal of the early seventeenth century, and it requires an interpretative approach peculiar to this type of composition. Traditionally the madrigal was performed by a few singers as a means of social recreation for the participants. As in the Latin motet, the bar lines and time signatures are

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19 Frederick Dorian, The History of Music in Performance, p. 41.
to be used for convenience in reading and should not restrict textual freedom. The style of the madrigal reflects the habits and customs of the period and may be described as manifesting exaggerated politeness and flexibility. The tone quality should remain light in color, and in this particular madrigal should express flippancy and saucy impudence.

Salvation is Created
J. Fischer and Brothers

Key Signature - B minor, D Major

Russian music is chordal rather than contrapuntal in construction and is based on a thorough foundation in the male voices, especially the bass and contra-bass. Much of the beauty of this particular number, "Salvation is Created," will be lost unless there is in the choral group at least one bass who can sing the low tones; however, the composition may be raised one half-step in pitch without altering the general effect. In style this composition reflects rugged, expansive strength; and the tone color, always intensely devotional, should contain an element of emotional power even in the pianissimo passages.

20 Carol M. Pitts, "Style and Interpretation," Etude, LXII (November, 1944), 630.
The Coolin (Opus 16 No. 3)  
Samuel Barber  
G. Schirmer & Company  
Number 8910

Key Signature F Major-D minor  
(Somewhat atonal)

"The Coolin" represents a modern school of choral composition. This type of music is difficult to perform because of the many chromatic alterations and the near absence of a true tonal center.\(^{21}\) The style is generally contrapuntal, and in that respect bears a resemblance to choral music of the sixteenth century.\(^{22}\) The tone quality might also be compared to that used in performing music of the earlier period in that it is impersonal and ethereal rather than warm and objectively emotional. There is no further basis for comparison, however, because the chords in "The Coolin" are sometimes strikingly dissonant and the vocal effects weird and abrupt.

Christmas Bells  
George L. Osgood  
Oliver Ditson Company  
Number 703

Key Signature - D Major

"Christmas Bells" is a modern composition with interesting, if not startling, innovations in rhythmic and harmonic content. In fact, the melody is so quaintly attractive that it might well be a traditional folk number. The style is of a tripping, dancing nature; and in tone quality the effect is light and bell-tones, except in the lento section, which assumes the breadth and dignity of the chorale.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.  
\(^{22}\) Krone, op. cit., p. 115.
"Comest Thou, Light of Gladness" or "Christmas Song" is a mixture of German and Italian schools of choral writing; i.e., the stately dignity of the German chorale is here combined with the contrapuntal imitations of the Latin motet. The mood is one of solemn supplication, and the style is a slowly surging legato. The text and style indicate that the tone color should express prayerful contemplation and resignation to the belief that there is no joy except through the coming of the "Light of Gladness."

"Hodie Christus Natus Est" is a modern treatment of a Christmas antiphon. The style is that of a fanfare except in the organ-like antiphonal sections. The tone quality might be described as expressing brilliant exultation and festive splendor.

"Mary Had a Baby" is a Christmas number arranged in the
best tradition of the Negro spiritual. In style, the composition ranges from quiet sublimity to intense exultation. The tone color suggests awe at the mystery of the Incarnation, but at the same time reflects a warm human intimacy, revealing the personal nature of the Negroes' religious character.

Listen to the Lambs

G. Schirmer & Company

Key Signature - F Major

"To my mind, Mr. Dett's, 'Listen to the Lambs,' as sung by the Hampton Singers, is an unexcelled example of the Negro spiritual."  

From the standpoint of style and tone quality the composition, "Listen to the Lambs," can be divided into three contrasting sections. The first section is marked "weirdly," and the tone quality reflects an attitude of tense quietness. Emotion is gradually built through repetitions of the text, "Listen to the Lambs, All a'Cryin';" however, before a climax is fully reached the air of hushed tenseness begins to prevail again, and the first section ends in the same spirit as it began.

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23H. E. Krehbiel, Afro-American Folk Songs, p. 6.

The second section, which is introduced by a soprano solo, is predominated by an air of warmth and security. The spirit expends to a semi-jubilant climax but closes with a mood of dreamy reflectiveness, developed through repetitions of the phrase, "In His Bosom."

A short ejaculative interlude introduces a recapitulation of the first section, but this time the emotion is too great to be subdued, and the third section breaks forth volcanically as the climax of the entire number. The final "Amen" closes the composition in the same dark, mysterious style with which it began.

Ezekiel Saw de Wheel

William L. Dawson

Tuskegee Choir Series

Key Signature - B flat Major

"Ezekiel Saw de Wheel" is a traditional spiritual of the joyous exultation type. Rhythm is the predominating feature in this style of composition, and consonants are emphasized vigorously in a manner which utilizes their rhythmic context. Prevailing elements in the tone quality may be described as wonder and awe, these moods should be approached through a tone color of uniform darkness which will facilitate a choral blend and alleviate a tendency toward thinness and shrillness in climactic passages.
"I Wonder as I Wander" is an Anglo-American folk number which bears a distinct relationship to a musical age antedating the present system of major and minor tonality. As in the Negro spiritual, only an approximation of the traditional interpretation can be approached; however, it might be said that the style is melodic, harmony parts having been added as an unobtrusive support. As in early church music a regular metrical pattern is not desirable in performance; but a freer association of text and melody may be achieved than is usually permissible in music of a later age. The text indicates a sense of loneliness; the tone color is light and in quality may be described as lyrical and plaintive.

Choral Scherzo on a Well Known Tune

(Listen to the Mocking Bird)

Southern Music Publishing Company, Inc.

This "Choral Scherzo on a Well Known Tune" is full of fun and impudence despite the mournful tone of the text. The performing indication, "precisely and without sentimentality," is an accurate clue to the tone of this kidding, light-hearted piece. Although the melody of this composition

is familiar, the harmonic and melodic treatment is unusual and modern. In tone color and quality this composition may offer no great attraction, the listening interest being maintained primarily by the exaggerated dynamic contrasts and syncopated effects commonly associated with the idiom of jazz.26

Old Black Joe

Carl Fischer, Inc.

That this arrangement of Stephen Foster’s "Old Black Joe" by David Hugh Jones may be accepted as one which will exhibit to purposeful advantage the qualities of the composition may be deduced from the following preface to the number as arranged for the Westminster Choir for its second European tour in 1934. The style of this number may be described as one of simple sincerity. If this style is combined with a tone quality, tender and restrained, free of any artificiality, the effect upon an audience will be to arouse the strongest and deepest emotions.

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