CARO CARAPETYAN
HIS CHORAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

THESIS

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By

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The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the convictions about choral conducting as held and applied by Caro Carapetyan which may have contributed to his superior choral work. The primary source of information was a series of personal interviews with Carapetyan.

The report was organized into five sections. The first part supplied background material. Subjects covered in the report include philosophy, the relationship between conductor and singers, the conductor's knowledge of music history and literature, rehearsal planning, conducting technique, the selection of singers, choral tone, blend and balance, diction, intonation, rhythm, and dynamics. Each of the chapters in Parts II, III and IV includes a summary and some comparisons with other choral music sources. The fifth part is a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Recommendations for choral conductors and future researchers are included.
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PART ONE: Preliminary Material
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The art of choral conducting involves both obvious and intangible elements. Learning even the most complex beat patterns is a challenge which can be met by most individuals, with some practice. It is far beyond this point that the exceptional choral conductor's understanding and skills must lie. Indeed, the acquisition of such tangible skills as beating patterns was but a starting point from which the outstanding conductor began to gain the often illusive skills and insights enabling him to train and challenge a group of singers to produce fine musical results.

In his comparative study of Bev Henson and Lloyd Pfautsch, Bogle notes that neither of these two highly acclaimed choral conductors had retained many of their university-acquired choral concepts.¹ Both thought apprentice-type study situations were most influential in their musical development. And so it often is, that the most effective learning experiences come from observation of the masters.

Many have recognized Caro Carapetyan as an authority on choral music. His choirs have been acclaimed for their clarity of diction, near-perfect intonation, ease of production, blend and superior musical quality. Reviewer Herbert Elwell noted years ago specific qualities of a group conducted by Carapetyan.

"Obviously the choir deserves grade A on all points such as balance, blend, intonation, enunciation, rhythmic precision and clarity of parts. All this, as well as shading and other secrets of choral discipline, was of professional calibre."²

Another critic made a similar observation:

"Tone quality of the kind projected by the choir last night, doesn't just happen, for it must first exist in the mind of the conductor who balances, weighs and measures the living vocal stream of his chorus with precision and delicacy, even as he must make allowances for the human equations in his ever-changing material. Director Carapetyan does not stop with tone achievement alone, but adds to it wonderfully smooth-flowing rhythms, shaded dynamics and a song text that reveals meaning."³

Many claim that the music produced by Carapetyan's groups goes beyond the technical aspects of music-making. In a review of the North Texas State College Choir, while under the direction of Carapetyan, W. L. Underwood wrote:

"Those who heard the A Cappella Choir sing under the mesmeric command of Caro Carapetyan rightly could depart feeling that they had been bathed in

²Herbert Elwell, "A Cappella Group Does Work of Exceptional Merit--Shows Expert Training," Cleveland Plain Dealer, 24 April 1948

glory. Even before the first magnificent song of worship had been completed, it was obvious that this ensemble of 49 good voices had been transformed by a master into a musical agency of exciting capacities."

Hugh Porter, Director of the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary:

"It was a pleasure to have Mr. Carapetyan and his choir sing here in our chapel in Union Theological Seminary on April 7. From the first note of their first number it was evident that the choir was not only thoroughly trained in all the intricacies of a cappella singing, but that they were imbued with the spirit of a gifted and magnetic conductor."  

Carapetyan's programming has at times been criticized for inaccessibility.

"The attempt to hold the interest of an audience through a complete program of unaccompanied choral singing, unvaried by any solo work, is an ambitious undertaking, particularly since the best literature for this specialized tonal medium dates from the 16th century, and are regrettably remote from us in feeling and artistic aims."

Among those who have expressed respect for Carapetyan's work was George Szell, conductor of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. He concluded a personal letter to Carapetyan with the following statement:

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4W. L. Underwood, "NTSC Choir Gives Superior Program," Wichita Falls Record, 1951

5Hugh Porter, Director of the School of Sacred Music, Union Theological Seminary, to Dr. George A. Bowman, 1950

6Elwell, "A Cappella Group Does Work"
"... I must tell you again how very much I admired your work with your choir."7

For many years Carapetyan has discouraged the reporting of his teaching practices in written form. He points out the difficulty of effectively communicating in writing the requisite practical skills and understandings in fine choral conducting.

The writer acknowledges this very real problem. Printed words can never replace the teacher-student or mentor-apprentice relationship and the process of learning, the refining of technique, and the attainment of musical skill which it generates. It is the opinion of this writer, however, that a systematic reporting of Carapetyan's methods and views would make a valuable contribution to choral knowledge and practice.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the convictions about choral leadership held and practiced by Caro Carapetyan, under the following headings:

1. The philosophical ideas and beliefs Carapetyan holds about the nature of music and its role in today's society.

2. The relationship between a conductor and choir members Carapetyan sees as being most conducive to artistic achievement.

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7George Szell to Caro Carapetyan, 29 April 1949
3. The knowledge of music history and literature Carapetyan feels the choral conductor must possess.

4. The choral practices Carapetyan uses to realize his artistic goals.

Definition of Terms

1. The term **conviction** refers to strong beliefs having to do with all aspects of choral leadership.

2. **Philosophical ideas and beliefs about music** refers to the motivating reasons behind musical practices.

3. **Choral practices** indicates all efforts made, both in rehearsal and in performance, toward the eventual artistic outcome.

   a. **Tone quality** refers to a quality of sound achieved by a choral group.

   b. **Diction** refers to the clear and accurate formation, production, and projection of the sounds of language, and the combining of these sounds into fluent sequential patterns which are suited to the expression of both the words and the music.\(^8\)

   c. **Balance** refers to the proportionate amount of sound produced by each of the individual sections in a choir.

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d. **Blend** indicates the degree to which the voices in a choral group are fused to form a unified group, avoiding the sound of the individual voices.

e. **Intonation** refers to the accuracy or inaccuracy of pitch employed by a choral group.

f. **Rhythmic precision** refers to the degree of exactness with which a choral group performs rhythmically.

g. **Dynamics** indicates the degree of, and the contrast between loud singing and soft singing.

h. **Interpretive style** refers to any distinction which might be made in the performance of works from different periods of music history.

i. **Rehearsal preparation** deals with the planning of rehearsals.

j. **Rehearsal conduct** refers to specific activities within the rehearsal itself.

k. **Technique** refers only to the actual vocal production. A discussion of solo or choral technique implies no reference to stylistic considerations.

4. **Relationships between a conductor and choir members** refers to human interaction (sociological and psychological) both in and out of rehearsal situations.
Basic Assumptions

It was assumed that the truth about Carapetyan's conducting practice could be obtained through interview.

Delimitations

1. This study does not pretend to be biographical. Personal background is included only when incidental to the presentation of the material.

2. This study is basically descriptive, avoiding evaluation.

Methodology

All information for this study has been acquired through interview with Carapetyan and through analysis of all interview conversations. A format of questions, outlined in Appendix C, served as catalyst for the conversations. All interviews were tape recorded, the written transcription of which is included in Appendix E.

Material obtained through the interview conversations has been re-organized and presented in a descriptive format. A summary of major concepts and ideas at the end of each chapter includes selected ideas of other conductors which either differ or concur with those of Carapetyan.

A list of names of individuals who have sung under Carapetyan was presented to the graduate committee. From this list, three names were selected as readers of the manuscript.
They were asked to judge the contents of the paper, based on their experience under Carapetyan's direction, for the purpose of verifying the accuracy and clarity of presentation. Their comments have been included in Appendix B.

Presentation of Material

This report is presented into four parts. Part I contains such preliminary material as the statement of the problem, and biographical and literary background. Part II presents Carapetyan's general concepts and beliefs, dealing specifically with philosophy of music, and the relationship between conductor and choir members. Part III explains Carapetyan's ideas about the training necessary for a choral conductor. Part IV presents Carapetyan's actual choral practices. A final chapter summarizes the findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings.
CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

In order that any subject of study be adequately approached, it must be observed in its proper context. Literature relating to the subject must be researched and digested before actual research begins, thus providing a frame of reference within which judgments can be made and conclusions drawn.

Background information necessary for the present study can be divided into three areas: 1. biographical material on Carapetyan, 2. similar studies of other choral conductors, and 3. texts on choral conducting. This chapter is divided accordingly.

Biography

Caro Carapetyan was born in New Julfa-Isfahan, Persia (now Iran), on 14 January 1903, of Armenian parents. It was the Shah Abas of late 16th century Persia who imported thirty to forty thousand Armenians from Julfa, Armenia, for the purpose of stimulating commerce, the arts and architecture. The newly-settled community across the river from Isfahan, was called New Julfa. Within the purely Armenian community were Armenian schools, churches, libraries and museums.
Carapetyan's father was an English teacher in one of the Armenian schools, and a great lover of music. He played and taught violin, and organized an orchestra and a band. The Carapetyan youngsters were constantly exposed to music. Carapetyan recalls playing the flute about the house at a very early age. He later picked up the clarinet and violin and played in the musical ensembles at school. There was little opportunity to hear music being performed--only rarely, when touring groups came through town. Carapetyan remembers standing outside the British Legation with his brothers under a window, straining to hear music from a gramophone which had been brought in. "It was really a tremendous desire on our part to come in contact with music."

There was very limited access even to printed scores. Music had to be copied by hand. Then the Carapetyan family would play. "We were always making music in the family... We had to make our own music. It was never a passive sort of listening to music. We made music, always."

After graduation from the Armenian school, Carapetyan went to an American high school in Tehran. It was there that his desire to come to America was aroused. Caro and Haig Carapetyan left home in 1922, with $35.00 between them.

The general manager of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, where they worked to earn their passage to America, offered to
send them to England to study if they would promise to return to work as musicians for the company. But their minds were set on America. By way of India and France, they arrived at Providence, Rhode Island, in 1923, where they were admitted as the last two in the quota of admitted immigrants from Iran. They immediately set out to find jobs.

Once study could begin, Haig Carapetyan plunged into his life-long desire to become a medical doctor. For his older brother, a choice of career was not as clear. Music was his love, but in his family it had always been felt that music was a fine hobby, but no way to earn a living. The decision was finally made to study for the ministry. Music was put entirely aside in order to devote all time and energy to this chosen field of service.

After a year it became evident to Carapetyan that his service of God must be through music. He resumed private study of the violin with several teachers at the New York College of Music, and later, at Juilliard. Meanwhile, he was teaching strings and string ensembles in a college in Nyack, New York. The following August, shortly before school was to open, the vocal/choral man informed the dean that he would not be returning. Having heard Carapetyan sing, the dean asked that he assume the vocal/choral duties in addition to his instrumental teaching. He refused, feeling inadequately prepared in this area. The dean asked that he try, in spite of the deficiency,
thus beginning an all-consuming search for understanding of the voice and of choral work which would last a life-time.

Carl Jörn accepted Carapetyan as a voice student. At $15.00 per half-hour lesson, Carapetyan did a lot of humming. He studied choral conducting through whatever books he could acquire. He recalls that, "When school opened, I kept myself a little ahead of the students." In spite of feelings of inadequate preparation, he found that the students' response was good. Gradually, "The violin began to play second fiddle--and then no fiddle."¹

During this period, Carapetyan's search for understanding of the vocal instrument became almost obsessive, and increasingly frustrating. He studied with many teachers--"all of them fine singers, and fine people." But he had great difficulty understanding what it was that they wanted. He couldn't do what he thought he should be able to do. When he asked questions, they had no answers, simply telling him to do what they said and all would be fine. Finally, at his wits' end, he completely stopped his private vocal study. He began to read whatever he could find on the subject. The more he read, the more confused he became. He remembers listening outside the vocal studios in Steinway Hall and the Metropolitan Opera Studios, trying to hear what different instructors were doing and

¹All quotations of Carapetyan in this section are direct quotes taken from an interview conversation with Carapetyan on November 21, 1980.
trying to make some sense out of it. Occasionally, he would hear something which seemed to make sense and he would try to discover the purpose behind it. He was constantly experimenting with his own voice. All the while, he was teaching voice and choir, and was very much concerned that he do the right things for his students. He recalls, "That's how I learned: through my teaching and through my own experimentation. I lived it day and night. As I experimented and experienced it, I understood it better."

After Juilliard, Carapetyan studied at the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary. Looking back, he can see that the influence upon him of Dr. Clarence Dickinson was strong. A master's degree from Columbia was completed in 1938, after which he assumed a position as head of the music department at Shelton College in New York City. The years 1941-45, were spent at Houghton College in New York, where he taught voice and choir. In spite of the almost complete absence of men during the war, Carapetyan felt that much was accomplished musically. This limitation led him, of necessity, to explore the wealth of literature from the Renaissance period for treble voices. The last two summers in New York were spent at the Eastman School of Music, in advanced study in musicology. The strict religious views held by Houghton College were often at odds with Carapetyan's artistic and personal goals. After four years, it was time for a change.
In 1945, Carapetyan accepted an invitation to head the voice department and conduct the choirs at Kent State University. He describes the six years spent at Kent as "very productive years." Much music was premiered by the A Cappella Choir, especially music from the Renaissance period. Carapetyan performed in public with his choirs regularly. Many critics reviewed his work and his reputation began to build. Herbert Elwell’s review of a concert is one example:

"The singing of the Kent State University A Cappella Choir . . . provided ample evidence of superior ability and high artistic accomplishment. Fine vocal quality, good balance and pitch maintenance, as well as clean phrasing and clear diction, characterized the work of these 80 singers, who could not have obtained these objectives without painstaking and intelligent guidance. This was supplied by the director, Caro M. Carapetyan, a conductor of exceptional talent and sensitivity." ²

It was upon hearing a concert by the same group that the Dean of Trinity Cathedral remarked: "There is no better chorus singing in public today." ³

In the wake of what Carapetyan describes as ugly campus politics, he took a year's leave of absence to accept an invitation to serve as interim choral director at North Texas State College. When he arrived, he found that the school, which was still small, had a smaller vocal department than he had

² Herbert Elwell, Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 12, 1947.

³ Chester B. Emerson, Dean, Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio.
expected, and that many of the more capable singers had graduated the previous year. Nevertheless, the good student response and the opportunity to work with musicologist Dr. Otto Kinkeldey, who was then on faculty at NTSC, made the year a good one. A performance of the choir at the Music Teachers' National Association was described as follows:

"The A Cappella Choir, directed by Caro M. Carapetyan, sang music chiefly religious, displayed fullbodied tone, flexibility and sensititivity."\(^4\)

It was for the musicology session of this same convention that a chamber group, under Carapetyan's direction, gave a first performance of Brumel's *L'Homme Arme Mass*, edited by his brother, Dr. Armen Carapetyan of the American Institute of Musicology.

Previously, while Carapetyan was still at Kent State University, Dr. George Szell heard a performance by the A Cappella Choir, and discussed with Carapetyan afterwards the possibility of organizing a choral group to perform larger choral compositions with the orchestra. Soon after coming to Texas, Szell wrote to Carapetyan about returning to Cleveland for this purpose. Having already committed himself for the year, he had to decline. The position was subsequently filled by Robert Shaw.

\(^4\)Musical America, review of Music Teachers' National Association Convention, Dallas, 1952).
Choosing not to return to Kent, Carapetyan accepted another interim position as director of choral activities and teacher of voice (1952-53), this one at the University of Minnesota. There he formed an A Cappella Choir, in addition to conducting the chamber singers and a large University Chorus, which performed with the Minneapolis Symphony. He remembers this as a good experience. The Minneapolis Evening Star reviewed a concert given by the choir and symphony:

"Trained by its new director, Caro Carapetyan, the chorus revealed itself as a compact, alert and responsive body of singers, quick on the cues, clear-toned in its whole and parts, with clean phrases and flexible motion. It is a pleasure to hear the fresh voices of young folk so well disciplined and yet ringing so free and sonorously as they did last night." 5

At the year's end, the Carapetyans decided to move back to the Southwest, where they had so enjoyed the mild winter weather. Once settled in Dallas, Carapetyan was asked to direct a Dallas Symphony choir. This he did for several years without pay, earning a living through his private voice teaching. Reviewer John Rosenfield commented on a program presented by the Dallas Symphony Singers and Orchestra:

"Our orchestra introduced not the usual horde of Beethoven shouters but The Symphony Singers, twenty-four picked voices trained by our new and respected resident, Caro Carapetyan, lately of North Texas State College and Kent State University

... It was good to hear the Beethoven vocal-writing in distinct separation and not blurred in multitudinous shout ... it functioned undoubtedly as Beethoven desired, as an added tone color fully integrated. It had quality as well as equilibration and also a fine, positive precision."

From 1955-60, Carapetyan commuted to Midwestern University, in Wichita Falls, Texas, to teach voice and sacred music, the last two years of which were spent as Dean of Fine Arts. When he departed, he left his last regular university position. When asked why he did not seek out other university experiences, Carapetyan replied:

"I was so fed up with the bickerings and politics and ugliness that goes on, I just didn't want to have anything to do with it anymore ... Yes, I miss my students; I miss that contact."

He concedes that a certain idealism on his part may have been a source of the restlessness which characterizes his career.

His private voice studio and his part-time church position became full-time for him. He filled a one-term interim position at Dallas Baptist College in 1973. For two years (1974-76), he commuted to Fort Worth to fill the interim position as Director of Choral Studies at Texas Christian University. His church choir and private teaching continued during this time.

When asked why he took on so many interim positions which gave no opportunity for future possibilities, Carapetyan replied:

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6John Rosenfield, *Dallas Morning News*. 
"It is my firm belief that we have no excuse to exist unless our lives are given to service. An opportunity to teach and perhaps have an influence on the lives of the young people for the good is a privilege and also a great responsibility. I have always felt that if I have an opportunity to serve or help someone, I do. . . . If for a little while I can be of any help to them, okay."

Does he have regrets about not having stayed in one position long enough to build the kind of reputation enjoyed by many university musicians?

"My main concern always has been to serve the students, and through musical studies, and contact with great music, enrich their lives. Exposure to great art, it seems to me, must have a profound influence in changing our inner life for the good. I am satisfied if I have made a contribution in this respect. Not that I would not enjoy or have not enjoyed being appreciated. Yes, after all, we are all human. And I certainly respond to that sort of appreciation. But my concern is what is happening with these people with whom I am working."

Throughout his career, a special interest and concern for Carapetyan has been music used in worship. With the exception of his one year in Minneapolis, he has held a church position from the time of his early study in New York.

Carapetyan has also founded and conducted several choral societies. In New York City he founded the National Oratorial Society, the Bronx Choral Society and the Vocal Art Ensemble. While at Kent, he started the Kent Choral Society. The most recent such effort was the Carapetyan Singers which performed in the Dallas area for several years.
Carapetyan has performed as bass soloist in many oratorios and choral-orchestral concerts. His training as an instrumentalist opened up occasional opportunities as guest conductor of various orchestras, for example, the Cleveland Little Symphony, season of 1950-51. He has served as adjudicator for many vocal and choral competitions and has given master classes in choral techniques and conducting.

Carapetyan serves also as a contributing editor for the American Institute of Musicology. Several of his editions are currently available also in octavo form. Professional memberships include American Musicological Society, American Renaissance Society, Music Library Association, National Association of Teachers of Singing, College Music Society, Pi Kappa Lambda, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, and Church Music Institutes.

Carapetyan now limits his activities to his private vocal studio, occasional choral conducting lessons, music editing and musicological study.

Related Studies

Three studies have been found which are similar in nature and format to this one. The first such study was undertaken by
McEwen in 1961. His problem was to reveal discernible philosophical, conceptual and technical elements which may contribute to the high quality of choral performance of selected conductors. Three Southern California conductors were chosen for the study on the basis of a response returned by 136 teachers of choral music in that area. The three, Howard Swan, Charles Hirt, and Roger Wagner, agreed to tape-recorded interviews with McEwen, and to rehearsal observation and analysis. McEwen presents what he discovered about these men, devoting a chapter to each, and summarizes the study by synthesizing the salient points of view and rehearsal techniques. He proceeds to make recommendations for curriculum of institutions which train choral conductors. Appended to the study are complete interview transcripts and lists of the literature performed by each man.

Four years later, at the same institution, an almost identical study was completed. Berglund chose two conductors to study, using the same selection process employed by McEwen. Berglund's interview questions differ only slightly from those

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of the earlier study. There is, however, a general tightening of the information sought. Such areas as work with festival choruses, seating arrangements, etc., are excluded, focusing more directly on actual philosophical and technical matters.

A third study of this nature was completed in 1972, by a North Texas State University master's degree candidate, Gary Bogle.9 Again, two choral conductors, Lloyd Pfautsch and Bev Henson, were selected by a jury. Each choral authority was questioned and observed, and non-evaluative comparisons were drawn.

These three studies—the McEwen, Berglund, and Bogle—provided both precedent and helpful direction in the organization of the present study. The questions posed to the various directors have been studied and the respective researchers' analysis of their responses (both verbal and practical) have been used for comparative purposes in summary sections at the ends of chapters III-IV of the present report.

A fourth study, by Ewing,10 looks at the work of a single choral conductor, Dr. Elaine Brown. This would appear to bring it closer in nature to the present study than the other three. The unique nature and purpose behind Brown's work, however, led

9 Bogle, "Comparative Study of Two,"

Ewing to approach his study from an almost entirely biographical and philosophical perspective. Ewing traces the life of Brown and her Singing City Choir in three large chapters. Two comparatively small chapters explain the concepts and outreach behind the organization. The major emphasis of the present study is on the technical and musical aspects of choral work. Philosophical beliefs, of course, must provide the foundation and context for all choral work. Elaine Brown's ideas will be included with those of the previously mentioned conductors, as conclusions are drawn.

Triplett¹¹ has completed a study on choral techniques, which deals with many of the same topics covered in the present study. The Triplett report was particularly helpful in preparation for and analysis of the technical material covered in Part IV.

Related Texts

Many books have been written on the subject of choral conducting. The majority of such material deals with basic beat patterns and group organization. This appears to be the traditional approach to teaching choral conducting.

Gehrkens, Wodell, Coward, Woodgate, Thomas, Holst, Finn, Davison, and Ehmann are authors whose writings reflect this approach. More recently are texts by Lamb, Garrison, and Roe, each of which expands a basic format to include guidance in budgeting and purchasing, discipline, scheduling, and many other matters of concern to the music educator.


14 Henry Coward, *Choral Technique and Interpretation* (London: Novello and Co., n.d.)


19 Archibald T. Davison, *Choral Conducting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940)


Two additional well-known texts are those by Rudolf and Green. Rudolf discusses conducting so as to include both choral and instrumental conducting. Unlike the previously mentioned sources, his text deals exclusively with the conducting gestures themselves, discussing various expressive ways to present the basic beat patterns. In Green's account of Nicolai Malko's teaching, the expressive aspect of conducting encompasses a major portion of the text. Score study and the psychological element in conducting are also included.

Books concerned primarily with historically stylistic performance are fewer in number than those dealing primarily with technical and organizational matters. Such authors as Howerton, Wilson, and Scherchen stress the importance of an intellectual absorption of differing styles of music. Appropriate technique for conducting is, then, to arise out of this historical understanding. These texts deal with the "why"
of music more than with "what" and "how." In contrast to the technically-oriented books, specific answers to specific problems give way to an intangible, almost spiritual view of choral performance.

The Decker-Herford text\textsuperscript{29} includes both perspectives. Specifics of choral rehearsal and performance are discussed by Swan, Pfautsch and Moe. Herford, who refers to the work of Schenker and Kurth, takes the reader through a preparation of the score for performance which is dependent upon a basic understanding of music history.

A relative newcomer to the host of literature dealing with choral conducting is the choral music anthology. Texts by Adler\textsuperscript{30} and Kjelson-McCray\textsuperscript{31} both emphasize that music itself is the most effective instructor. Both sources present choral selections from Renaissance through Contemporary periods. Each includes some comments about the music.


One additional text fits into none of the above categories, yet must be acknowledged. Bennett Reimer's *A Philosophy of Music Education*\(^{32}\) presents a most thoughtprovoking and thorough treatment of the whole question of the value of music education. This source was a great influence in the treatment of Carapetyan's beliefs.

Three major subject areas arise out of the literature written about choral music: 1. Philosophical considerations, 2. Technical mastery, and 3. Knowledge of literature. These shall form three of the four major areas of study. The fourth area to be considered will be human relationships in the performance of choral music.

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PART TWO: Concepts and Beliefs
CHAPTER III

PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS AND BELIEFS

One's philosophy of one's own work provides a context within which all aspects of the professional activity find purpose and meaning. An individual's philosophy is perhaps an expression of personal attempts to justify as worthwhile those ideas and ideals to which a large portion of the life has been devoted. There must be inner satisfaction as to the nature of the work, the nature of its contribution to humanity, and the nature of the professional role.

The following is a paraphrase of some thoughts on these subjects as expressed by Carapetyan in a recorded conversation.

Nature of Music

Music is found in nature—in a bird song, in the wind through a tree, and in people. Psychologists have found that almost all people have the capacity for some degree of musical expression. Within each individual there is something waiting to be awakened. When exposed to certain concepts or stimuli, the individual's need for music is roused. "Some people will say there is no reason, no purpose for music . . . . Some of us
can't live without it.\textsuperscript{1} Without the arts, mankind would be much poorer.

But what is music? It has been called "the universal language," implying a type of communication or mutual understanding. If this is true, what does it communicate?

Music is a language which defies international boundaries and racial divisions. But it is not a language of ideas. One does not play a tune to order a cup of coffee. Music is a language of the emotions. Music has the capacity of touching one's innermost life because it is "primarily emotional." Because music is "best capable of expressing moods, it is best able to express religious feelings." It can express moods that are universal, that all people can feel: love, kindness, trust . . . . In this sense music is a language spoken and understood by all mankind.

Response to Music

And yet music cannot be so clearly defined as to say that it is limited to a particular mood or emotion. Each individual responds uniquely to each composition, bringing to it his or her own background and emotional composition. A piece may speak to one individual in one way, say something entirely different to another, and fail to move a third person altogether. An

\textsuperscript{1}All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are those of Carapetyan, as taken from interview conversations with King, the transcript of which may be found in Appendix E of this study.
individual simply may not identify even with a piece of music he recognizes as being of fine quality.

In addition to the variety of experience which each person brings to a piece of music, the many ways in which individuals listen to music tremendously affect their response to it. One may listen simply for the good feeling of warmth that it brings within him. Another person may analyze formally and harmonically what is going on in the score. A third person may analyze the performance of the piece. Each person approaches music differently; each person responds differently.

Changes in mood can cause a change in an individual's response to a piece of music at different hearings of it. Changes in moods can also affect the type of music chosen for listening. At times one may want to hear Bach. Other times one may want to hear something more sentimental, more emotional, such as Tchaikovsky. One's response is strongly influenced by that with which he is acquainted. It is difficult to have an appreciation for a type of music with which one is not familiar.

Because music is "primarily emotional" it can have the affect of moving people towards certain activities or thought patterns, good or bad. Certain kinds of music may seem almost corrupt to some people, exerting a degrading influence upon them. Others, because of their background, will respond differently to the same music.
The real test of the validity of a musical experience is what happens to the performers. "What does that music say to them? How are they effected by the music emotionally, spiritually, and what does it do to their lives? . . . . Are they better men and women because of that exposure?"

Not always is there obvious evidence of such inner change or enrichment. Yet, when thirty years have passed and participants still recall certain musical experiences strongly enough to write about them, it is clear that the music has touched their lives in ways which have an effect on them for many years. That music effects and reflects our inner lives is supported by the known fact that criminals do not sing, or make any kind of music.

But what about those who seemingly have little or no response to music? Is it possible to convince them of its importance? Expounding upon the virtues of music will have little effect. Only by catching something of the spirit of involvement in and love for music through the personal experience of making music can they come to understand. "It is really living with music, with any art."

(After the recorded conversation had been terminated, Carapetyan played a recording of "Chanson Perpetuelle" by Chausson, performed by Fredericka von Stade. Both listeners were drawn outside of themselves and into an indescribable, moving sense of involvement with the music. When the
resulting silence was broken, Carapetyan asked what had been experienced. No words were found for an experience which was very real and yet, quite indescribable. Carapetyan then asked how, indeed, the communicative power of music could be made known other than through personal experience.)

Role of Music

An evening at the symphony is usually considered as entertainment. This is appropriate, for one of the primary functions of music is to entertain. But there is more.

An evening of music can and should be also educational. Through a well-planned program one can learn of music from many different periods of history and many different schools of composition. And music has the potential for enriching the lives of those who experience it. By reaching that part of human nature left untouched by math, science and technical job training, our lives are more evenly balanced. That facet of life, when awakened, makes one more fully and vitally alive.

Role of the Conductor

The conductor finds his or her role in allowing music to do what it can: entertain, educate and enrich.

The conductor has a responsibility to educate the audience, through creative program planning, to various schools and styles of music. Quality music which can be performed well by the choir, and which is interesting to hear must be chosen. The
program must be structured and noted in such a way as to present both unity and contrast within groups and within the concert as a whole.

The conductor must be an honest interpreter of the music. As each particular score is approached, preconceived ideas about how it should sound must be discarded. The primary consideration must be trying to penetrate into the music, through study of the composer, the culture, and the music itself, in order to understand the intention of the composer. As much as is possible, the conductor must transfer himself back to the period in which the piece was written and understand it from that point of view. Each piece, it must be understood, has its own intrinsic interpretation. Any attempt to impose rigid stylistic ideas on a given piece is an inadequate approach. The conductor must try to understand what the music is saying, re-create it in his own mind and be able to transfer this intention to the singers. It is a very difficult job. Each conductor has his own approach, which is as it should be. At best, the conductor is never sure his ideas are correct. Each piece must be approached with fresh perspective.

Above all, the conductor must be honest. He must be honest in his dealings with people and with the music. Honesty in one's approach to music puts the glorification of the music above that of the conductor. "The conductor is there only to
help to re-create that music to the best of his ability but
never, never to get in the way of the music." Excessive
conducting gestures draw audience attention away from the
music, to the conductor. The conductor needs only a "minimum
of activity" to do his job. More than that is an obstruction
to the music.

A conductor must have a sincere attitude toward his work.
"If he considers himself more important than the music then he
is already in the way of the music." His motivation for
re-creating the music must be selflessly honest. Any attitude
other than this damages the musical result.

"Honesty is very important in life as well as in
our art. I think if we are not honest in our art we
are not to be trusted. Because through our art we are
expressing something of ourselves. If we are not
honest in our art, we are not honest in our life."

Music is a natural part of human existence without which
mankind would be much poorer. It enriches lives by speaking a
language of the emotions. The conductor's role is to so direct
the re-creation of musical scores that the music will have a
chance to speak to those who make it and those who hear it, and
to deepen their experience of life.

Summary and Comparisons

A review of studies done in the area of philosophy of music
will reveal consistent attention given to two supposedly
irreconcilable perspectives on the nature of music. One
viewpoint states that the experience of art is primarily
intellectual: recognition and appreciation of form for its own sake. An exponent of this position might be called an "absolutist," 2, 3 a "formalist," 4 or a "physicalist." 5 On the other hand is the "referentialist," 6, 7 or the "phenomenalist," 8 who believes that all good art has emotional designation, and functions to remind the listener or observer of something which is extra-artistic. 9

Reimer discusses further what he calls the "absolute expressionist," a position which was briefly proposed by Meyer, and which Reimer embraces as a happy medium. The absolute expressionist believes that the nature of art as art must be affirmed, and that the relation of art to life must also be recognized. 10 This position would appear to be closely aligned with Carapetyan's beliefs.

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3 Reimer, Philosophy of Music Education, p. 21.
4 Ibid.
7 Reimer, Philosophy of Music Education, p. 15.
9 For a more detailed look at these philosophical designations, see Reimer, "Chapter 1," Morton, "Chapter 1," and Meyer, "Chapter 1."
In spite of "referentialist" overtones, it is clear that Carapetyan's beliefs about the nature and role of music do not allow for its limitation to a language of ideas, or predictable emotions. However, the nature of the art itself, he believes does have the power to evoke a response in those individuals who hear it or participate in it. Quality in art implies the potential for universally individual responses to it. Music can be expressive of moods which are universal and which, because of the nature of the art itself, will be received uniquely by each individual.

Sateren believes that art is one form of communication. Sateren, Noble and Carapetyan share the belief that music has the potential to edify.

Sateren, speaking of a musical experience: "These are the things of the spirit; the beautiful experiences of life that are capable of stimulating the aesthetic emotions which elevate man."12

Noble: "(Music) is an art which possesses the power to edify man. . . . All good music becomes art when it is capable of edifying man in some way."13

Carapetyan, on the test of the validity of a musical experience: "What does that music say to them? How are they effected by the music emotionally, spiritually, and what does it do to their lives? . . . Are they better men and women because of that exposure?"

11Berglund, "Values and Concepts," p. 29.
13Ibid, pp. 70.
Carapetyan states that many people, himself included, could not live without music, and that without the arts, mankind would be much poorer. Noble shares this belief: "Art is a necessity of man."\textsuperscript{14}

Music, according to Carapetyan, is a language of emotions which, by its very nature, elicits a unique response from each individual. Music has the power to entertain, educate and enrich. The conductor finds his role in honestly presenting music in such a way that its power and beauty may be experienced by performer and listener alike.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 120.
CHAPTER IV

CONDUCTOR-SINGER RELATIONSHIPS

Few literary contributions to the field of choral conducting give attention to the type of relationship a choral director seeks to establish with his or her singers. The rehearsal atmosphere, however, which is so much determined by this relationship, directly effects the spirit and quality of the music produced. It is a belief of this researcher that the director-singer relationship is as great a factor in the ultimate musical result as are various choral techniques.

The material contained in this chapter is a paraphrase of Carapetyan's experience concerning this relationship.

The type of conductor-singer relationship which is most conducive to superior artistic achievement is one which is based on open, frank communication, honesty, and love. The rehearsal atmosphere should allow the singers to feel secure and free from inner tension or hostility.

Communication

Freedom of communication is a necessary ingredient for an artistic environment. Singers must feel comfortable in raising questions. The nurture of inquiring minds is a vital part of
building a superior choral group. The director must be able to
discern the difference between sincere questions and mere
argument, in order to avoid wasting time in an unproductive
exchange.

An open, democratic approach should always be taken where
non-musical matters are concerned. With musical matters, the
director's decision must be final in order to avoid chaos. But
even here, the director should be willing to hear other ideas
with an open mind.

A dictator-conductor is counter-productive to artistic
ends. A situation in which music is made out of fear of the
conductor's wrath can never inspire the best response from the
individuals involved.

"... good singing is impossible if you create
a situation that brings about tension or resentment.
If you are resentful in your heart and I expect you
to produce a beautiful sound, a lovely line, it is
impossible. It cannot be done."

Not only is the musical result less than it could be when
resentment is present, but the work is enjoyable neither for the
singers nor for the conductor.

Musical accomplishment should be the product of the united
efforts of the singers and the conductor. It must grow from a
sense of mutual respect, and most importantly, out of respect
for the music. An environment in which open communication is
encouraged nurtures such ideals.
Honesty

Honesty and sincerity in one's work is at the basis of a philosophy of life in general, as well as an approach to music. If choral music is to be presented in an unadulterated fashion, the conductor must be honest in dealing with the music, with himself, and with the singers.

Honesty in the performance of choral music involves perspective. The conductor must know his reasons for re-creating music. If the satisfaction of his own pride is an important motivating factor, he has tarnished the music. The conductor can find honest motivation for performing in working both for the sake of the music itself, and for what the music can do for the singers.

Honesty is, of course, essential in the kind of communication which has been discussed. An honest approach encourages a healthy group response to the music and to the conductor's direction. In the case of an attitude problem, or a lack of individual effort, honesty communicates in ways which usually illicets a favorable response.

"... generally, if you are honest in your work, and if your group senses your honesty, your sincerity, and they know that you are not doing this for your own glory, but for the music and for what the music can do for them individually and collectively, then they do respond."

The spirit of enthusiasm which is generated by such honesty allows for joyful music-making. The singers receive so much
from the music that, without their even being aware of it, they
give of themselves.

Honesty must be more than a spoken philosophy; it must be
both internalized and outgoing. It must be lived. It's very
nature defies any attempts to use it merely to achieve an end.

A choral conductor's honesty with himself and with his
singers allows the true musical meaning in each score to be
reflected and also expresses something of the individuals
involved.

Love

Love between conductor and singers is an important part of
a rewarding working relationship. The singers must know that
the conductor is interested in them--that he loves them. They
must know that he loves the music and the work he is doing. If
there is not love between conductor and singers, the re-
lationship becomes so tense that little can be accomplished.
That which is accomplished is done out of resentment.

"I like to feel that a group does something
because they love it. Because they respect you they
want to do it, not only for you, but they want to do
it for the sake of the music because, after all, that
is the important thing."

A carefully maintained distance between singers and con-
ductor is not necessary in order to preserve the conductor's
authority. A natural respect for the conductor will produce "a
certain amount of distance. But at the same time, there is good rapport, good warmth, and good relationship."

This type of honest, comfortable relationship should be the same whether the conductor is on or off the podium. Only if a conductor takes on a dictatorial personality in front of his group is he forced to make a change when he is "off stage." The conductor's attitude of love and honesty need not change whether he is in front of his singers in concert or rehearsal, or at a party with them. He is still the same person.

The type of working relationship which has been described is not without its disadvantages. The fact that questions may be raised and that music is to come from love and joy rather than fear, may lead some to perceive the conductor as weak. Such individuals who do not understand the philosophy and goals behind this approach, may try to take advantage of this "weakness." Usually a talk with the individual will clear the air, and work can progress without further difficulty.

Occasionally there will be one who, in spite of repeated efforts to communicate, simply will not respond. In such a case either the conductor has failed to reach the person, or else they have come with a closed mind and heart, not wanting to be reached. In such a rare situation, it may be necessary to suggest that, if continued work together cannot be enjoyable, it might be better for them not to be in the group. Very seldom is such an extreme measure necessary. Almost always differences can be resolved.
In spite of the difficulties which might arise from such an open relationship between conductor and singers, the potential advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. The results may not be immediate. But music which comes from open communication, honesty and love reaches far more deeply into the lives of the performers and into the intent of the music itself.

Summary and Comparisons

Most books on choral conducting technique make little or no mention of the relationship between a conductor and the choral singers. Those texts which are geared primarily toward public school music may include some discussion of classroom discipline. Such discussion usually centers around how to handle problems when they arise, and how firm a teacher must be with students. Thus, the real matter of the conductor-singer relationship is neglected.

Lamb devotes some space to this subject. He emphasizes that, whereas it is not necessary that all students like the director, it is essential that they respect him or her. A close relationship will, he insists, undermine the director's effectiveness.1 This approach is at odds with ideas held by Carapetyan.

1Lamb, Choral Technique, p. 235.
Malko, on the other hand, speaks briefly about the "moral aspects of conducting." He points out that whereas the mental side of conducting deals with intensive score study, the moral side concerns the relationship between conductor and musicians. The point is made out of purely musical concerns.

"To realize the printed score in its full majesty requires a certain musical and artistic rapport between the conductor and his musicians."\(^2\)

Further,

"To bring the music to full fruition--to breathe life into the symbols on the printed page--a conductor and his musicians work cooperatively together toward one ultimate goal: the finest possible musical realization of the score."\(^3\)

Thus Malko's approach, although briefly stated, is similar to the one taken by Carapetyan. Elaine Brown is well-known for her use of music as a communicative social force. In this case, music is a tool through which non-musical objectives are met.

"Communication through music and human relations is the reason for the existence of the Singing City Choir."\(^4\)

Her beliefs about the relationship between conductor and singers often sound identical to those expressed by Carapetyan.

Carapetyan believes that the conductor must be the same person both on and off the podium, that open communication

\(^2\)Green, *The Conductor*, p. 10.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 11.

between singers and conductor is most conducive to fine musical achievement. Brown says:

"A sensitive conductor soon realizes he must communicate with his singers both in and out of rehearsals."  

Brown also believes that:

"If a singer feels autonomous, he's not making music no matter how good a voice he has. He must belong, in every sense of the word."  

Similarly, Carapetyan states:

"... good singing is impossible if you create a situation that brings about tension or resentment."

The beliefs about conductor-singer relationships held by Carapetyan and Brown are strikingly similar. There is, however, a fundamental difference in their approach to the music itself. Where Brown makes use of music as a social tool, Carapetyan approaches music, as does Malko, from a purely artistic standpoint. The mutual benefit to the music and to the singers is at the basis of Carapetyan's work. The music is done the most justice, and the singers are most capable of musical and personal response when the environment is one of communication, honesty and love.

Carapetyan goes far beyond accuracy of performance with these concepts. His concern is for the choir members themselves

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5Ibid., p. 107.
6Ibid., p. 118.
and what they have gained from the experience of living with the music. Honesty and love are so vitally important to Carapetyan in the making of music that one is left with the feeling that genuine music can not exist without them.
PART THREE: Conductor Preparation
The preparation of any successful teacher must begin with a solid understanding of the subject matter to be taught. For a conductor this means knowledge of music history and literature. Personal preparation as a musician is significantly directed by an historical perspective, the very subject of his work. The conductor's knowledge of music history and literature strongly influences choice of music to be performed, how the music is to be programmed, and how the conductor approaches the study of the score. Carapetyan's ideas and personal preferences are paraphrased in the following.

General Knowledge

The greater the knowledge of music history and literature a choral conductor possesses, the greater understanding he can bring to his specific field of music. It is a great advantage to have a broad knowledge of music, and take an interest in many performance mediums. Too few vocalists and choral musicians take an interest in instrumental forms of music. This is unfortunate. In addition to increasing the knowledge of music literature, much of a technical nature can be learned from watching a string quartet play. The musical give and take,
along with the virtuoso technique exhibited by members of a fine string quartet has much to say about an approach to quality choral singing. Any knowledge which can be of help in guiding the choral instrument to respond and express music is a tremendous asset. Observing a virtuoso violinist make his instrument "sing" can bring a greater understanding of the one God-given instrument, the voice.

Generally, instrumentalists achieve a higher degree of technical perfection than do vocalists. Some individuals are blessed with a beautiful God-given vocal instrument. Because of this natural ability many never work to achieve a high level of technical proficiency and understanding, which would give them the freedom to artistically express and interpret the music. An instrumentalist, on the other hand, undergoes years of technical discipline before he is considered ready to perform.

It is, of course, of primary importance that the choral conductor have a deep understanding of the music in his specific field. He must have thorough knowledge of all schools and styles of choral music. It is to a conductor's advantage, however, to broaden himself as much as is possible in the literature of other performance mediums.

Search for Literature

Searching for new literature to be performed is always a difficult undertaking. A hundred pieces may be reviewed only
to find a very few that can be used. It is an extremely time-consuming job. Conductors often go to music reading clinics and choose their year's repertoire from among the pieces presented there. This procedure has the disadvantage of leading to a great deal of program similarity in that particular section of the country. If the conductor approaches the programming task alone, however, the result is enjoyment and satisfaction in finding and performing music which is seldom done and little known.

Several sources may be helpful to the choral conductor who is looking for programming ideas. Collections of music available in music libraries, such as the many publications of the American Institute of Musicology, can be helpful in the discovery of lesser-known compositions. Examining catalogues of publishers and ordering single copies of listings which look interesting can be worthwhile. This can become quite costly. Some publishers send music on approval. Professional journals often have articles or special literature sections in which comments are made about various compositions. These also can be helpful. Musicological writings may spark an interest in a certain work or the works of a particular composer. In order to do creative and original programming, there are no short cuts, but there are many helpful sources.

It is inevitable that each conductor will develop special empathy for certain schools or styles of choral music. Personal
favorites include Bach and pre-Bach music, and the late 19th century Russian liturgical music. The Russian music, in particular, is a badly neglected field. Although it is of a romantic mood and style, it may be seen as a continuation of the 16th century a cappella tradition. Such composers as Kastalsky, Tschesnekkoff, and Rachmaninoff have revived the old Znamenny chants, using them often in a polyphonic style of writing. Personal experience also, as a boy singing much of this music, certainly contributes to a partiality toward it. Developing personal preferences is part of an individual's normal response to the vast realm of music literature.

Quality in Music

In choosing literature to be performed, regardless of its style, the primary criteria is that it be of good quality. Whether it be light-hearted or serious, the music selected should never be cheap. Quality of a composition can be measured against several standards. The test of time must be considered to have a considerable amount of validity. If Bach's music still says something to audiences and performers today, an indication of high quality seems obvious. The music of many lesser composers has been forgotten.

The intrinsic qualities within the music must also be considered. One must ask if the music is written well for voices. In some cases the lines are not well suited for the
vocal instrument, making their performance difficult and uncomplimentary for the voices. One may ask if the composer has shown in his writing that he understands the vocal instrument in a way which allows him to make good use of it. Bach has often been said to write instrumentally for voices. But even Bach's instrumental lines are examples of lovely melodic writing. An example can be seen in the contralto solo line in an aria from his eleventh cantata. The same melody later becomes the violin obligato accompanying the "Agnus Dei" aria from the B Minor Mass.

Within music is the potential for communication. In seeking to determine the quality of a composition, the conductor must ask: "Does this piece have something to say?" In order to justify including a particular piece on a program, the composition should elicit some response from the conductor personally. It must be music with which he can live and work for a long time. The conductor may simply not respond to some music which is recognized as being of high quality. In such a case, he could not hope to do it justice in performance. After a number of years of looking through music, the conductor will find less difficulty in selecting music of high quality, and with which he can work comfortably.

Program Building

The building of a program goes far beyond the selection of good music. Building a concert program is a very difficult art.
A well-constructed program must be very carefully considered. A listing of individual numbers which the conductor may happen to like does not make a good program. A well-structured program has some kind of form to it. It must be balanced. The right balance is achieved by including both unifying and contrasting factors.

Contrast is necessary in order to maintain a high level of audience involvement in the program. Contrast within groups can be achieved by such things as a change of tonality or modality, varying tempi among compositions, change of key, and contrasting meters. Contrast between groups comes with a program which is representative of various periods of styles of music. There are, of course, limitations as to what one program can cover. As much as is possible a program should be representative of various periods and schools of composition. In addition to contributing interesting variety to the program, such representation serves to expose the choral group and the audience to good music of differing styles. The program then becomes educational, and intellectually satisfying, as well as being entertaining.

Unifying factors are of equal importance in building a program. The program should carry a continuity of feeling or mood throughout. Jumping from one composition to the next interrupts such continuity. There should be some unifying relationship both between the compositions within a group, and
between the groups on the program. The result will be a sense of emotional satisfaction.

Program notes can be of great help to the audience, especially with less familiar compositions. The notes must, of course, be brief. It is helpful to include the composer's dates, something about his life, a brief comment about this work in music, and some brief remarks about the composition to be performed. If a piece is to be performed in a language other than the one spoken by the audience, a translation of the text should be provided.

It is natural that the conductor's personal preferences be somewhat reflected in his programming, but this must be exercised within reason. A program must make sense. It should never be a listing of unrelated compositions. Creative programming provides more than entertainment; it provides intellectual and emotional satisfaction as well. A prerequisite for creative programming is a solid knowledge and understanding of music history and literature.

Selection of Program Literature

In selecting the literature for a particular program, the first consideration must be the ability of the group. The music chosen should be of a reasonable degree of difficulty, given the level of accomplishment of the singers. It is extremely important, however, that the music present a substantive challenge for the group. "It has to be a little more difficult than
they think they can do." If the music is digested too quickly, if it is too easy for the group, the singers will lose interest in it. The group should always be striving for greater accomplishment, both vocally and musically.

It is of value, also, in planning a program, to include music which is not widely known. Literature is frequently taken from a well-known, often-performed pool of repertoire. Great works such as the Brahms Requiem certainly should be performed, but it is important to realize that there are many other, lesser known compositions which are also worthy of consideration.

Score Analysis

There is no single way to analyze a score in preparation for conducting it. Each conductor will find the approach which is right for each new composition. It is important that the conductor be flexible, adapting a method of preparation to the needs of each score.

As each conductor takes a special interest in certain types of music, he will become more comfortable preparing and conducting that type of music. He will find that as he learns more about this specific area, it will require less time and effort to understand it. Penetrating into the depth of music from other schools of composition will require much more work and study. Different works require different amounts of time for each conductor. All compositions, however, require serious study. Otherwise the approach to the music will be superficial.
The first consideration is the text. The conductor must discover what the text is saying. A good composer handles the text in such a way that the music expresses, enhances the text. The conductor must, therefore, discover how it is that this particular composition does that. This knowledge helps him know how to bring out the details of both the text and the music. It also aids him in visualizing potential performance problems. By understanding some possible pitfalls, the conductor can prepare the singers ahead of time so they can better manage the difficult situations.

Detailed harmonic analysis has not been found to be of much help to a performing group. In the case of a composer who is conducting his own music, it may be of interest to the choir to point out how certain chordal progressions and harmonic movement were conceived. It may be helpful in the sight reading or tuning of a composition to bring out some of these aspects. In general, however, other areas of study may prove to be of more real benefit to the conductor and his choir.

Historical background is of utmost importance. Music, it is said, is an expression of the time and culture from which it comes. Therefore, the more understanding of the cultural context a conductor can obtain, the more fully he can understand the music. Realization of the musical and social conditions out of which a certain composition comes can and should directly
effect the interpretation of that music. The conductor should be aware not only of the structure of that particular composition, but also of the musical forms commonly used in that period of history. It is helpful for interpretive purposes to have an idea of when, where and how the composition was originally performed. The conductor should also know about the life of the composer and what other compositions he wrote. He can then perceive both deviations from norms and acquiescence to tradition. All of these factors are significant to the conductor who is trying to understand a score and what it has to communicate. The closer a conductor can come to transporting himself back to the period in which a composition was written, the better is his possibility of honestly and accurately representing the composer's intention in his musical interpretation of the score.

**Singers' Musical Understanding**

The quality of the end musical result is certainly enhanced when the singers have some understanding of the score and its background. It is, however, neither possible nor necessary for the choir members to have a thorough understanding of each composition. It is essential that the conductor have a thoroughly studied comprehension of the music. It is his job to explain to the choir, with few words and clear conducting, what the music demands. Such conducting is, of course, impossible without a solid understanding of the score.
Much talk about the technical aspects of a composition has the potential danger of becoming too laborious to maintain the interest of the singers. Some may think that it is very scholarly to delve into the details and analysis of a piece. It may have some value. But too much lecture seems to destroy the very goal of choral work: that of bringing to life the notes printed on a page. The process of actually making the music come alive often explains much more than many words.

Score Memorization

After an adequate amount of preparatory study, the conductor has his score memorized. Whether or not it is conducted from memory is simply a question of the conductor's habit. There are certain advantages which come with performing from memory. When choir and conductor know the music well enough to perform from memory, they have the freedom to give more attention to the details of interpretation. The group can also be much more flexible and responsive to direction. Likewise, the director who works from memory is more capable of eliciting a musical response from his choir, thus allowing for the possibility of spontaneous change. Once singers and conductors are free of the printed page, they are not bound to predetermined interpretive details. The group can become increasingly responsive and flexible to new ideas of interpretation which might occur even in performance.
The outstanding conductor is one who begins with a comprehensive background in music history and literature. This background allows him to be discerning in his evaluation of music, both realistic and challenging in his choice of literature, creative in his planning of concert programs, and thorough in his approach to developing an understanding of the score. All of these qualities which lead to the final result—the re-creation of the music itself—are completely dependent upon both intellectual knowledge of, and musical understanding of music history and literature, and upon the conductor's ability to communicate this understanding in an efficient and meaningful way to his singers.

Summary and Comparisons

Most musicians would agree that any performer is strongly benefited by a solid knowledge of music history and literature. Such background is certainly seen as a prerequisite for the serious choral conductor. It is natural for the choral musician to specialize and concentrate the acquisition of knowledge in the area of choral music. Carapetyan is somewhat unusual in his insistence that the choral conductor broaden himself by including instrumental music as part of his experience. Acknowledging that attention must be focused primarily on choral music, he points out the value of learning from both the music and the artists in other performance mediums.
The search for new music is a difficult task toward which each conductor finds his own approach. Noble takes note of the programs presented by other conductors, as well as searching through publishers' catalogues. The reputation of a certain composer may occasionally lead him to search out some of that artist's other compositions.1 Swan examines the choral programs printed in the New York Times Herald for unfamiliar compositions.2 Carapetyan particularly enjoys discovering little-known compositions. His penchant for discovery has led him to such sources as the collected works of composers and authoritative articles in musicological journals. His approach to the search for literature shows Carapetyan to be a researcher as well as a performer. The fact that he avoids such methods of literature discovery as music reading clinics reveals him to be individualistic in his approach to music selection.

Discerning quality in music is another problem faced by the choral conductor. Carapetyan puts considerable faith in the test of time as an indicator of quality. Intrinsic musical qualities must also be considered in the evaluation of a composition. Carapetyan feels, as does Lamb, that a worthy composition must be written well for voices.3 The composer

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1Berglund, "Values and Concepts," p. 263.
3Lamb, Choral Technique, p. 103.
should show in his writing that he understands the vocal instrument and how to use it most effectively. Sateren looks at the quality of the text and the potential gain to the singers which the music makes possible.4 Swan looks for "uniqueness, consistency, and intelligence of musical expression" in a composition.5 Wagner believes that in a quality composition the textual, harmonic and melodic expressions are mutually enhancing.6 Carapetyan feels also that a composition which is worthwhile has something to say. It should be able to elicit a human response. Few other conductors mention such response as an indication of quality.

The programming of music, according to Carapetyan, is a very difficult art, involving much more than a listing of unrelated compositions. Lamb also cautions against programming compositions for no other reason than the conductor's own desire to perform them.7 Both men feel that a choral program must contain elements of unity and contrast in order to be satisfying. Here again, Carapetyan is somewhat unusual in his concern for the emotional satisfaction which is the product of good program design.

6 Ibid, p. 28.
7 Lamb, Choral Technique, p. 107.
Carapetyan especially encourages including some compositions which are not widely known among choral musicians. The primary consideration in the selection of music, he feels, is the ability of the group. The music must present challenges which the group is capable of meeting. Lamb seeks to determine whether or not the level of difficulty of the composition will combine with the group's ability in such a way as to allow the music to withstand the necessary amount of rehearsal.\(^8\)

A conductor's preparation of a score is a very personal matter. Each conductor finds ways of approaching new music which are comfortable for him and yield satisfactory results. Some, like Wagner, take the score to the piano.\(^9\) Almost all believe that it is necessary to have as background some knowledge of the historical context from which the music comes. Some take an approach which emphasizes formal analysis: structural, harmonic, melodic and rhythmic analysis. Others prefer to look primarily to such aspects as the text and how it is set, phrasing, and means of expression such as dynamics, tempi, legato vs. non-legato articulation, etc. Carapetyan emphasizes the need for a flexible approach to score preparation. He feels that it is best to allow the unique needs of each composition to guide the conductor's approach to the score.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 107.

Most conductors agree that a careful preparation of a score should bring to light potential areas of difficulty for the choir. There is also general agreement that musical results are somewhat better when the singers have some background understanding of the score. Noble goes so far as to spend a great deal of time discussing various aspects of the music with his choir.\(^{10}\) Carapetyan feels, as do most other conductors, that it is best not to spend time lecturing about the music, but to allow the singers to learn from the music itself and from the conductor's approach to the music. It is neither possible nor necessary for the singers to know all the technical details. Carapetyan finds that much of this material can be communicated through effective conducting gestures.

The question of performing from memory draws out a wide variety of opinion. Henson absolutely forbids his singers to sing from memory, feeling that this would decrease their awareness of the total score.\(^{11}\) Pfautsch, among others, simply feels that memorizing requires more time than the students have.\(^{12}\) Sateren feels that it is helpful to sing from memory, but does not usually require it.\(^{13}\) Sateren's approach is similar to that of Carapetyan. Carapetyan feels that once

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\(^{10}\)Berglund, "Values and Concepts," pp. 263-4.


\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 78

\(^{13}\)Berglund, "Values and Concepts," p. 208.
conductor and singers are ready to perform a composition, enough work has been done with it that it is already memorized. He feels that independence of the printed page allows for more attention to the real concerns of music-making.

Carapetyan's work with music is firmly founded in the belief that music has the power to speak to people. The conductor's responsibility, that of breathing new life into printed symbols, is best accomplished when he possesses a broad knowledge of music. For this reason Carapetyan believes that the choral conductor is benefited by acquainting himself with music in many performance mediums. As a basis for the evaluation, selection, and programming of music a conductor must have a thorough understanding of music history and a developed instinct for human response and emotional satisfaction. These tasks are time-consuming and, when done well, according to Carapetyan, require a great deal of individual research. The study of the score also requires a willingness to search not only the score itself, but also its historical background. Without such study, the ability of the conductor to understand and then communicate the intent of the composer is lost. A genuine approach to music, according to Carapetyan, is one which acknowledges no singular method of study. The conductor does well to remain flexible and therefore responsive to the
needs of each score. Carapetyan believes that the communicative power of music is most freely expressed through a conductor who brings to music a scholarly background, and who is then flexible and sensitive in his approach to its programming and performance.
CHAPTER VI

PREPARATION TO CONDUCT

The acquisition of musical knowledge and understanding is but part of the training of an effective conductor. Knowledge which cannot be meaningfully communicated leaves the choir with little help. The development of a good director-singer relationship is vital to such a mutual communication process (refer to Chapter IV). In addition, a conductor must be able to plan and conduct an efficient and satisfying rehearsal. He must, of course, be able to use his conducting gestures to communicate what he has found to be the needs of each individual score.

Rehearsal Planning

In planning for a rehearsal, allowance should always be made for flexibility or even a complete change of plans, depending upon events which take place in the rehearsal. Because of questions, delayed responses, etc., plans may need to be altered.

Establishing Goals

Planning for a rehearsal involves more than simply deciding in what order various compositions are to be rehearsed.
Specific vocal and musical goals must be established for each rehearsal. Only when this is done can an effective approach toward dealing with certain problems be designed. Here again, flexibility is of utmost importance. Often, goals may be only partially fulfilled because of a necessary deviation from the plan. A question may be raised, delaying the planned work, but bringing up another area which is best dealt with at that time rather than delayed. A rehearsal plan is most effective when it can be changed to meet another, more timely need.

The conductor will, undoubtedly, have a plan as to the order in which compositions are to be rehearsed. But even this may profitably be rearranged. After having dealt with a particular difficulty the conductor may feel that, rather than going on as planned, it would be more beneficial to reinforce that work by applying the same principles to another composition with similar challenges. Likewise, if the pace of a rehearsal becomes sluggish, the conductor may find it helpful to change the plan—to do something to enliven the spirit of the group. Again, a plan is most valuable if the conductor is willing to depart from it when it seems advisable.

**Vocal Warm-Ups**

In planning vocal warm-ups there should always be some relationship between the exercises and the music which is to be sung immediately thereafter. Routine "warming-up exercises" (scales, arpeggios, etc.), with no specific vocal goal are
meaningless. Vocalises can be helpful tools through which to deal with various problems encountered in the music. The difficulty—whether musical or vocal—can be isolated in an exercise for more concentrated work. It should then be immediately tied in to the musical context from which it was drawn. Rather than becoming mechanical routines, vocal warm-ups should be used to solve problems which are then immediately pointed out in the music.

**Teaching Notes**

As distasteful a task as it may be, most directors at times find themselves having to teach notes to their singers. The maturity level of the group has a great deal to do with the approach to this problem. In choirs composed of college-age and older people, it may be reasonable to assume that they can read music. Even if this is taken for granted, there may still arise situations which require additional help.

There may be times in which sectional rehearsals are necessary. It is very important to make sure that the individuals who run these rehearsals will be able to achieve results. He or she must be able to make efficient use of time, and must work well with the other singers personally.

Use of the piano may also, at times, be necessary. If the group is being trained in sight singing, the piano should
be avoided. But in a situation in which there is pressure of time, any device which can minimize time spent in learning notes should be used. It is most important to let the people experience the entire composition in a continuous manner, allowing them to understand what the music is saying. If they have to struggle with notes right up to the performance, there is no opportunity for this experience.

**Long-Range Schedule**

Whether or not a fixed schedule of progress is made, the conductor always feels a "sense of urgency" about his work. He is aware that time is limited and that there is much to be accomplished. The conductor must learn to make the most efficient use of every minute he has with his choir. For this reason, he must keep rehearsal lecture to a minimum. Time must not be wasted in verbal explanation of things which can be effectively communicated through conducting gestures. By allowing the singers to understand from the conducting gestures and from the music itself what is required rather than stopping to discuss every detail, time is saved. Additionally, the singers are given credit for having intelligence and perceptive ability. If a mistake is made by an individual who, it is clear, recognizes his error, it would be both wasteful and demeaning to stop everything and make an issue of it.

In working toward a concert date it is very important that the choir have an understanding of each complete score, not mere
pieces of it. Many choirs have the frightening experience of coming to a performance never having rehearsed some compositions uninterrupted.

Concern is often expressed that a program not be allowed to "peak" before the concert date. Such an emotional high, or peak experience, it is assumed, is difficult to recapture. It must, therefore, be held back or saved for the performance.

Another approach may be taken to this question. The concert need not be considered the end toward which all rehearsals are nothing more than a means. The rehearsal experience itself can at times produce tremendous musical excitement—a peak experience. Holding that back would mean the loss of an enriching musical experience for the choir members.

Such a peak musical experience may be defined as a "spontaneous response to the music that everyone feels." Rather than restraining the choir from this kind of experience, the conductor should let them enjoy it. It can be recaptured. "The more of fine musical experiences the group has, the better musicians they become." Each meaningful musical experience brings them into an increasing awareness of the power of music and what it can do for them. Rather than preventing a similar experience in the future, this further develops the choir members' anticipation of such events. A concert will not fall flat because of a "high" experienced during rehearsal. But even if it did, it would be better to let the singers have the experience when they are ready for it.
"I am much more interested in what happens to the people I am working with than my audience. Because I feel strongly that if something great, something important has happened to my singers, the audience is going to catch that. But if they (the singers) come... expecting nothing, the audience is not going to get anything either."

Conducting Technique

What should a conductor seek to accomplish with his gestures? Everything! Musically, everything. Accuracy of rhythm, continuity of line, word stresses and releases, dynamic contrasts, technical approach to singing—all can be indicated through effective conducting gestures.

But before such musical ends may be considered, the basic conducting technique must be secure. This is perhaps the easiest part of a conductor's preparation. Learning beat patterns, even complex configurations and sub-divisions, presents little difficulty. This basic technique is identical for both choral and instrumental conducting. Once this matter is out of the way, refinement may begin.

Rhythmic Accuracy

Precision is an important feature of effective conducting. The conductor must, however, take care not to become metronomic in his attempt to be precise. Such an approach destroys the vocal line. The conductor must train the members of his choir to feel the pulse of the music constantly ticking away within them. The accuracy of his gestures should reinforce
this pulse, but he should not try to do the ticking for the singers. He must never become a time-keeper. Establishing pulse is but one aspect of fully conducting the music. An over-emphasis on beats can lead to choppy, unmusical singing. On the other hand, stressing beauty of the line to the neglect of the rhythmic accuracy may produce sloppy singing.

Linear and Textual Considerations

Once the pulse is established, the director can turn his attention to the continuity of the line, phrases and words. His gestures can indicate where the music is going, what it is saying. He must consider word stresses and releases. At the same time, everything must work together to build a continuous phrase. A metronomic beat will destroy this. In short, the conductor must conduct the music.

The size of his gestures, also, must reflect the music. A climactic moment might be indicated with larger beats. A large beat pattern is not necessary, however, to indicate intensity. Once a certain level of intensity is established, only a minimum of activity is necessary to retain that intensity. A very small beat pattern can have great intensity.

Vocal Technique

A conductor's gestures should also be of some help vocally. It is necessary, in order for this to happen, that the conductor have a first-hand knowledge of vocal problems. The conductor must be a singer. One who does not know the vocal art,
even if he is a fine musician, is limited in what he can accomplish with a choral group. The conductor's whole body—not just the hands—must be involved, indicating what should happen physically to the singers. For example, the start of a tone can be indicated in such a way that air is not wasted and tension not induced in the throat. Gestures should help the singers start so that they do not come down on the tone. Choppy, downward motions can actually impede fine singing. The conductor's body can indicate tension or freedom, shallow singing or a full-bodied approach.

Involvement

Eye contact and facial expression are very important in enhancing a choir's response to the conductor's guidance. This is effective to the degree that it is sincere. Over-done grimaces, and showy conducting and facial expressions are insincere and actually get in the way of honest making of music. If the conductor is deeply involved in the music, his face might express the music. Simply giving of one's self to the music fully produces effective results.

A choir's response to the conductor is encouraged primarily by the conductor's complete involvement in his work. When his whole being is involved—body, face, eyes—not just the hands, this communicates to the singers. If the conductor finds the need to explain what is to be conducted, something is lacking in the gestures. The singers will watch only if they
learn that what the conductor does brings results. If the conducting makes no difference, they will not be responsive. At times, the conductor may wish to slightly disturb the tempo to make the point that the singers must follow.

A good conductor is understood by choral and orchestral people. Compact, precise gestures may be slightly less legato with instrumentalists than with vocalists. It is also helpful to understand something about the instruments. Any conductor who cannot handle both choral and instrumental groups is severely handicapped.

Effective conducting of any style of music means complete, sincere involvement with the music. Every conducting gesture must meaningfully reflect and, therefore, express the music.

Summary and Comparisons

A conductor's own preparation involves the ability to plan an efficient rehearsal, and the technical capacity for effective conducting. Most conductors enter rehearsals with either a mental or written plan of what they hope to accomplish during the session. Some include vocal warm-ups in their rehearsals whereas others do not. Among those who do, various approaches are taken. Garretson seems to feel that such exercises should be quite varied and as short as possible, indicating that the warming-up procedure is no more than a prelude to the real work to be done. Wagner, likewise, prefers

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1Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music*, p. 121.
to "warm-up" with a contrapuntal composition rather than spend time with what he sees as "mechanical vocalizing." Lamb finds that the warm-up time can be molded in such a way as to tie in to the music itself. He often develops an exercise based upon an excerpt from a composition. Lamb's approach is somewhat similar to that taken by Carapetyan. One major difference seems to distinguish Carapetyan's planning of warm-ups from that of many other conductors. With Carapetyan, the time spent in vocalization is viewed as a very important investment in the total musical result. Because he feels that any problems experienced by choral groups are related to improper use of the vocal instrument, he finds it absolutely essential to plan specific vocal and musical goals for each rehearsal which begin to be met in carefully constructed vocalises.

In the over-all planning of a rehearsal Carapetyan is similarly aware of that which he hopes to accomplish. Pfautsch feels that the primary goal of rehearsal is the concert appearance. Garretson implies similar ideas. In planning a rehearsal, Hirt arranges the sequence of literature according

\[\text{\footnotesize 2McEwen, "Music Philosophies," p. 38.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 3Lamb, Choral Technique, p. 28.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 4Decker-Herford, A Symposium, p. 56.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 5Garretson, Conducting Choral Music, p. 118.}\]
to variety, texture, and mood. Sateren pre-determines an order of rehearsal, allowing for some degree of flexibility. Although Carapetyan does have a rehearsal plan in mind, he stresses the need for flexibility. His goals seem to always emphasize long-range results rather than immediate solutions. He is willingly diverted from his plan by a pressing question or need from one of the singers, or by an unexpected response in rehearsal.

Some conductors feel very strongly about the use of piano in rehearsals. Other have fixed ideas about sectional rehearsals. Henson, for example, forbids sectionals, insisting that they divert the singers' minds from the ensemble sound. On such issues as these Carapetyan is flexible. His goal is the final musical result and he feels that any method which is helpful in getting past the notes and into the more subtle aspects of the music is worthwhile.

Hans Richter has been quoted as saying to his orchestra "First of all, the pleasure of making music for you and myself, then we will think of the audience." Carapetyan, also, is primarily concerned with what happens with his singers. For

6 McEwen, "Music Philosophies," p. 72
7 Ibid., p. 204.
8 Bogle, "Comparative Study of Two," p. 40.
9 Green, The Conductor, p. 92.
this reason his rehearsals are oriented somewhat differently than many. He is anxious that his singers receive something from the rehearsals as well as from the concert experience. For this reason he encourages the complete involvement of his singers during rehearsals and does not feel threatened by a premature, spontaneous peak experience within the rehearsal context.

Carapetyan believes that a conductor's gestures have the potential to do most of the musical communicating necessary between a conductor and his singers. Most conductors, similarly, would agree with Malko: "The more one is able to show (in his conducting) the less he will find it necessary to talk. When he does talk, it should be brief and to the point."\(^{10}\)

Carapetyan sees the learning of the beat patterns as the easiest part of conducting. Once this matter is out of the way, he can begin to conduct the music. Bogle notes that in his rehearsals, Pfautsch seldom speaks about phrasing, but that the conducting conveys the musical line.\(^{11}\) Carapetyan also feels that the conductor must reflect word stresses and releases and the intensity of the music in his movements. Carapetyan stresses the development of a sense of the pulse with his singers, believing that a conductor must never become a

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 96.

\(^{11}\)Bogle, "Comparative Study of Two," p. 99.
time-keeper. He feels, as do most conductors, that there is no real difference between orchestral and choral conducting.

One aspect of Carapetyan's conducting was not found in the writings of or about any other conductor. Carapetyan believes that a conductor who has a first-hand experience with the voice can, through his gestures, effect the ways his singers use their voices. His whole body, not just his hands, can indicate a physical response to singing.

Carapetyan requires full involvement in the music from his singers and, most importantly, from himself. Henson purposefully avoids eye contact with his singers. Carapetyan, like Pfautsch and others, finds eye contact to be a very natural and important part of the conductor's musical expression and effectiveness. Sateren feels, as does Carapetyan, that any type of showmanship must be avoided. Any movement which lacks in purpose or sincerity is out of place in choral conducting.

Carapetyan is very goal-oriented in his rehearsal planning and conducting. He strives for the most economical use of rehearsal time. For this reason it seems that he expects more from himself in terms of ability to communicate ideas through his conducting than many other conductors. He is also unique.

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12 Ibid., p. 35.
13 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
in his emphasis of the importance of vocal warm-ups. The goals which Carapetyan sets for himself and his choir have as their purpose the musical accomplishment and satisfaction of the choir members.
PART FOUR:  CHORAL TRAINING
CHAPTER VII

SELECTION OF SINGERS

It is with the audition of prospective choir members that the building of a choral group is begun. The choral conductor has only five to ten minutes with each individual in which to gather information which has the potential to greatly affect the musical and personal satisfaction achieved by the group and its director for the coming year.

The conductor may seek answers to two basic questions as he auditions singers for his groups. First, what can this person bring to the group personally? Second, what can the individual bring to the group musically?

Personality

In addition to hearing the voice of the auditioning individual, it is of tremendous value to learn something about the person himself. It is helpful to know a little about the person ahead of time if this is possible. Through very brief conversation, the conductor can help the individual to relax and, at the same time, learn something about his personality. This can be very significant as the conductor decides which singers have the potential to make the most valuable contribution to the choir.
The atmosphere and working relationship which are most conducive to the making of music depends upon a cooperative spirit among the choir members (refer to Chapter IV). The conductor can often determine, even in a few minutes, how an individual will respond in a group situation. Experience has shown that a lesser voice in a cooperative person contributes much more to the development of a fine musical experience than does a beautiful voice in an uncooperative individual.

In addition to talking with the prospective choir member, a sensitive conductor can often learn a great deal by hearing the person perform. The applicant's selection of music says something about the person's taste and musical preferences. The performance of the composition reveals something of their personal response to music.

Musical Ability

It is, of course, essential to make some rather specific observations about the voice itself. The conductor will need to discover the range of the voice, its quality, and something about how it is used. Each conductor will develop his own system for recalling this information. One efficient way is to have printed cards which list items of particular interest to the conductor. He can make simple notes or check marks by each item.

Discovering the Voice

A simple descending scale can be very helpful to determine
tone quality, range, and use of the voice. This gives the conductor the opportunity to observe the way in which the breath is managed, how the tone is started (freely or with tension), how flexible the voice is, and accuracy of intonation. The conductor may also wish to hear how different vowels are produced, especially the [i] and [e] vowels.¹

An ascending arpeggio on a phrase such as "the Lord is great" provides the opportunity to see how the neutral vowel [ə] (the) starts, how the covered [ɔ] (Lord) is handled, and what happens to the bright vowels [i] and [e] (is great) on the higher notes. Also, the conductor can see how the consonants are managed (with pressure or with distinct clarity). By the time he has heard such exercises as these, the conductor has an idea of what the voice can do. The applicant's performance of a song will show what he feels he can do best.

**Voice Placement**

The range and quality of the voice tell a conductor if he can use the voice and, if so, where it will be placed in the choir. Voices are best placed in sections using quality, not range alone, as the determining factor. It is very possible, for example, for an alto voice to have a wide range, extending into soprano territory. Although the range of a soprano is

¹All vowels and consonants to which reference is made will be given in the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols.
there, the quality determines that the voice belongs in the alto section.

It is dangerous, also, to judge a voice by trying to find where the voice "breaks," or has a change in quality. Well-trained voices have no such breaks showing, and untrained or undeveloped voices may have breaks in many places. It is easy to be misled by such devices.

It is, of course, impossible to learn everything about a person in the brief time given to an audition. Because of the importance of the decisions which must be made based on the audition, the conductor must be able to evaluate quickly the potential musical and personal contribution which each individual has to offer.

Summary and Comparisons

The auditioning of singers is a process with which all choral musicians are familiar. There is general agreement that the audition should yield information about the prospective choir member's personality, his level of musicianship, and his appropriate voice classification. Each conductor has his own methods of acquiring this information, and there are many ideas concerning desired traits and capabilities in singers.

Noble\textsuperscript{2} and Sateren\textsuperscript{3} both are interested in the personality of auditioning singers. Sateren looks for singers who are

\textsuperscript{2}Berglund, "Values and Concepts," p. 265.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 214.
emotionally solid, physically healthy, and academically strong. Carapetyan gives considerable importance to this matter, actually electing to include a less accomplished singer who has a positive attitude rather than one who may have more ability, but who does not have a cooperative spirit.

Some conductors emphasize ability to retain pitch. Sateren places primary emphasis on this, testing with patterns of unusual intervals. He also includes a test of sight reading ability in his audition. Carapetyan tests for these particular skills. He is also very interested in the singer's accuracy of intonation throughout the audition.

All conductors have their own exercises for discovering the quality and range of a voice, and how it is used. Scales and arpeggios often on [a] seem to be most frequently employed. Carapetyan prefers to hear various vowels, feeling that this yields important information concerning not only the range, but also the use of the voice.

The question of voice classification is one which seldom produces clear answers. The Westminster School is famous for its use of "lifts" in the voice as the determining factor in voice classification. Carapetyan cautions against this

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4 Ibid., p. 214.
5 Lamb, Choral Technique, p. 7.
7 Ibid., p. 214.
8 Decker-Herford, A Symposium, p. 10.
method arguing that "lifts" or "breaks" can often be very misleading. Carapetyan believes, as do Lamb⁹ and Roe¹⁰ that a voice should be classified not by range alone, but also by the quality of the voice. Carapetyan appears to assign more significance to the quality than to the range of the voice.

Most conductors have an organized method of recording the information gleaned from the audition. Carapetyan, as do many others, uses cards upon which various traits are listed. Comments can be made quickly beside several items.

The information gained from an audition is somewhat similar with most conductors. The emphasis is, however, often placed differently. Carapetyan is very interested in the individual's attitude toward singing and toward other people. He is also anxious to learn something about their musical background. His interest in the voice itself is as much an interest in the potential which he sees as in the actual ability displayed at the time of the audition. Carapetyan seems to be relatively unimpressed by specific tests to which singers may or may not measure up. Carapetyan appears to chose in his singers the type of musician in whom he sees the potential for good musical and personal growth.

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⁹Lamb, Choral Technique, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰Roe, Choral Music Education, pp. 27-29.
CHAPTER VIII

CHORAL SOUND

It is a common observation that a choral ensemble is a mirror of its conductor. Such reflection is perhaps most clear in the actual sound produced by a choir. The concept of choral tone held by a conductor and his approach to achieving it are directly responsible for the final sound produced by the group. The implication is not that the conductor is always able to achieve completely the desired results. It does mean, however, that the conductor is to be held accountable for a certain degree of progress made by his group in this direction.

Developing a Tonal Concept

Many books and portions of books have been devoted to the subject of tone. Each is a little bit different in its approach. Individuals all hear differently, so it is logical to assume that each person's tonal preference would be unique. So, what goes into the development of a good concept of choral tone?

It may be of help to observe instrumentalists in their approach to tone. They constantly work toward the desired sound in their practice. Much of their approach is derived from an attempt to imitate the one natural instrument, the voice.
Nothing is taken for granted when it comes to achieving the desired sound.

The vocal instrument has the most potential of all the instruments for expression, coloration, and human warmth. It becomes the responsibility of the choral conductor to discover how best to utilize this potential. It is soberingly possible for the conductor, because of his own limitations, to actually hamper the potential of his own ensemble. It is frequently frustrating to hear expressive potential in choral groups which is left untapped because of the conductor's own inability to draw from the voices that which they could achieve.

The essential ingredient in developing a usable concept of choral tone is the conductor's personal experience with his own vocal instrument. He must be a master of his vocal technique. He must be a singer. He must have experienced in his own instrument everything that he demands of his singers. Passing on ideas read or heard somewhere is ineffective. One of the conductor's strongest tools is his ability to illustrate a particular passage the way he wants his choir to sing it. If he cannot do this, he is severely handicapped. If the conductor has little or no personal experience with and understanding of the voice, he cannot hope to explain it to others. At the point at which he is able to make his own voice respond, he is able to develop realistic ideas about what his choir members can achieve. It is only from a personally experienced concept of tone that the conductor can meaningfully train his choir.
Describing a Tonal Concept

It is very difficult to verbalize ideas about choral sound. This much can be said: The ideal choral sound is one which has all the freedom possible, allowing for coloration, flexibility, and the capability to express any thought or idea that the music demands. The ideal choral tone makes full use of the entire vocal instrument. Such a tone is alive and vibrant, involving every part of the singers producing it.

The desired result is not just a pretty sound which is applied to all compositions. It is a sound which is able to express the unique nature of each individual composition. This point is crucial in the development of a fine choral ensemble, and one which is seemingly quite often over-looked. Just as the conductor must approach the analysis of each composition unencumbered by preconceived ideas, he must also free himself of fixed notions about tone in order to be sensitive to the tonal demands of each score. It would be inadequate, for example, to apply a straight tone to all music from the Renaissance period with no consideration of the nature of the text. The resulting sameness not only becomes boring to listeners, but has been questioned as to its authenticity by such musicologists as

1The ideas which will follow have developed through many years of Carapetyan's own observation, self-examination and teaching. He expresses great hesitation about having his concepts recounted, as he feels strongly that only through personal experience, not through the words of others can a conductor discover what really works.
Guillame DeVan.\textsuperscript{2} This is not to deny certain characteristics which are correctly associated with various periods in music history. It is, however, to point to the necessity for expressive flexibility within each school of composition. The singers should have the vocal freedom and flexibility to produce a straight tone, a tone with minimal vibrato, or a tone with more intense vibrato. They must be able to respond with a full tone or one with more restraint. The ideal choral tone has within it the capability of expressing an extremely varied palette of sound.

The technical aspects of good choral singing and good solo singing are identical. The freedom and resonance of the voice, and the complete involvement of the whole body are the same for both. When solo string players come together for quartet playing their technique does not change. Some adjustments are made for balance and blend. Likewise, vocalists, when singing in ensemble, should retain their technique, making similar adjustments for balance and blend.

\textbf{Balance}

A concept of choral tone certainly includes ideas concerning a balance of sound between and within the voice.

\textsuperscript{2}Guillame DeVan was a noted young musicologist in the first half of the 20th century. At his untimely death he had completed the first two volumes of what was to be the complete works of Guillame Dufay, for the American Institute of Musicology. He was also active as a choral conductor, specializing in early music.
sections. It is in this aspect that choral singing differs slightly from solo singing. Although the technique or vocal production remains the same, the ensemble singer must adjust his aural concept to that of an ensemble sound, and then make the necessary fine adjustments for balance. Such adjustment calls for a good ear and sensitivity to the demands of the music. The conductor must develop these qualities in his singers.

In his selection of singers, the choral conductor will strive for an even balance between the parts. One possible exception to this would occur if much of the literature to be performed by the ensemble calls for a divided soprano part (SSATB). In this case a few more voices may be added to that section. Normally, however, a consistent amount of sound from each section is the ideal. This consistency provides the flexibility necessary to perform homophonic music and music with individually moving lines.

Seating arrangement does effect the balance of a group to an extent. The group should, however, develop to a point that it would not matter where the singers are placed. Each voice should have the independence and the resonance which allows it to sing well next to any other voice.

**Blend**

A blending of voices might be described as the process of training many voices to sound as one. Individual voices do not
protrude, marring the ensemble sound. The voices are so thoroughly fused in sound that the entire ensemble, not the various voices, is perceived as the musical unit.

The best way to achieve such a blending of voices is through free vocal production. The humming resonance, which is the natural product of a free production, blends the voices immediately. When overtones are present in the voices, the voices will blend. The conductor who wishes to achieve a truly blended sound from his ensemble will find that the best results will come when he is able to train his choir to sing freely and with a completely balanced sound. 3 The use of a well-produced hum is one of the best ways to develop the kind of vocal vibrations which blend voices together.

Those who would work toward choral blend by limiting the amount of resonance produced by the individual voices do so at great expense. Limiting the voices in this way results in a dry, colorless, pushed sound which is thin and uninteresting to hear. This type of singing is heard a great deal. Unfortunately, it would seem that this is the kind of sound which is generally accepted as good choral tone. It need not be so!

Vibrato problems.—Perhaps one of the most notorious obstacles to a good choral blend is that of the problem vibrato. A problem vibrato means excessive vibrato, whether too fast or too wide.

3 Refer to Appendix A for explanation of balanced sound.
A certain amount of vibrato is desirable in choral, as well as in solo singers. It must always, however, be under control. A free voice is able to produce a tone with varying intensities of vibrato, according to the needs of the composition.

In order to remedy any problem, the cause must first be understood. The problem at the root of an undesirable vibrato is almost always some type of interference and poor management of the breath. Interference refers to tension anywhere in the vocal instrument. It may be in the throat region, the diaphragm muscle, anywhere. When there is interference a free tone is impossible. It is necessary, then, to apply breath pressure to get a tone at all; thus, the resultant wobble or "nanny-goat" vibrato.

The solution lies in encouraging the very type of vocal freedom which is consistent with all other goals of good choral singing. First, remove all interferences. This means checking the vocal instrument for possible areas of tension. Make sure that the singers understand that a rigid diaphragm muscle does not mean good "support." Check jaw, neck and throat muscles, as well as shoulders, stomach, etc. Once these interferences are removed, the voice is no longer dependent upon breath pressure for a tone.

4"Support" is a term which seldom if ever occurs in Carapetyan's teaching. He feels that its meaning is obscured to the point that it is not a helpful teaching aid.
Learning to deal with this, as well as with all other vocal problems, is not a matter of reading about some methods and then applying them. No teaching can be effective until the instructor has first-hand knowledge of the subject matter. Once again, the remedy for vibrato problems is found in the conductor's own experience with what makes his own instrument respond well.

A well blended sound is not approached by limiting what the voices can do. Rather, good choral blend not only allows for but encourages vocal freedom, resonance, warmth, color, and rich quality. Again, the technical approach should not change from that applied to individual vocal work. The only difference is in the need for balance between and within the parts. It is only when voices are free that they can achieve the flexibility necessary to change and reflect the character of the music. Freely blended voices make singing in and listening to choral music an exciting experience!

Good choral singing, then, is identical to good solo singing, adding only the increased responsibility for attention to balance among the voices. Good choral tone is based on the principles of free production and complete use of the vocal instrument. Blended voices are a natural result of such a free, resonant production. The ideal choral tone is more than just a sound; it is the control and flexibility to express any thought or idea which any composition presents.
Achieving Tonal Results

Does the choral conductor have the right to teach his choir members how to use their voices? This is a controversial issue which must be addressed before going on. Reviewing quickly a few of the goals of good choral tone may shed some light on this subject: freedom, complete vocal involvement, resonance, warmth, color, rich quality, flexibility to express varying ideas. How can these ends be met if the conductor does not train his singers how to use their vocal instruments? Ideally, the conductor could have the desired choral tone by selecting only those singers from the audition who meet that standard. Seldom is that kind of choice available. The conductor must accept many singers who do not produce the desired tone quality. The answer, it seems, is clear: the conductor must be both willing and able to teach his people how to sing. One is tempted to believe that those who feel otherwise are simply offering an explanation for conductors who cannot sing.

Since the goals of good solo and choral singing are the same, there should be no conflict, but it must be recognized that some other teachers may resent the fact that the conductor has this teaching influence with the students. If the conductor

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5It must be stressed again that, whereas the following ideas have been found to be effective in Carapetyan's teaching, they are not methods which can be applied without the conductor's personal vocal understanding. Each ensemble responds uniquely to suggestions made to them. The conductor must, therefore, have his own vocal experience from which to draw creative and appropriate analysis of and approach to dealing with various vocal problems.
is working from anything less than personal experience, knowing what it is that achieves results, he is on very shaky ground.

But if he has, through experience, discovered how he can help the students vocally, he should have no hesitation about insisting on a certain kind of vocal approach in his choral work.

Regular Vocal Work

In order to achieve positive results with work on tone quality, some time must be spent conveying to the choir what is to be desired and how to go about moving in that direction. These goals are best accomplished through some kind of vocalization in which the choir members can respond physically, thereby feeling what sensations are correct. Even in a group situation, once the singers have felt the right kind of production, they are aware of it. They may not always be able to repeat it, however, and this is where repetition is extremely important; repetition of concepts and repetition of experience. When changes do occur within a group of singers, they are often so tremendous that the group cannot help but hear and sense the difference. The more frequently such good experiences are achieved, the more easily the group will respond in the future.

A design for vocal work.---Because retention of these experiences comes primarily through repetition, some time at the beginning of each rehearsal working on these concepts is time well spent. Routine "warming-up" exercises with no
specific purpose are worthless. At best, they involve a minimal percentage of the singers' attention. At worst, they reinforce bad habits.

In order to achieve tonal results the vocalization procedure must have a specific purpose behind it. The exercises must have some relationship to the problems to be encountered in the music. This should be pointed out to the choir. It is essential that the singers, as well as the conductor, become aware of what is being accomplished. There should be specific reasons for each exercise. In order for the results to "take hold," they should be applied immediately to the musical context.

Such a vocally productive session does not just happen. It is developed, again, out of the conductor's own understanding of the vocal instrument. The first step is the analysis of vocal problems present in the group. Then, based on his vocal understanding, the conductor can create an approach for dealing with these problems. He must be able to determine the kind of response given by the choir and be able to alter the approach if necessary to achieve better results.

Exercises may often be designed around specific problems found in the music. Perhaps a certain vowel combination causes the line to lose its continuity. Maybe consonants are not being handled well. A melismatic passage may not be clean, or a particular entrance falls flat. Such difficulties can be
worked out by isolating the problem in an exercise designed by the conductor for that purpose.

Some suggestions.--When dealing with the problem of increasing the resonance produced by the choir members, the concept should always be that of free resonance. When the instrument is free—no interferences—the entire vocal tract (chest cavity, mouth cavity, nasal cavity) begins to amplify, or resonate the sound. Free resonance is possible only when the instrument is unencumbered by tension and no breath pressure is applied. Using such terms as "tonal placement" may be counterproductive, implying that the tone be "put" somewhere, or localized. This is in direct conflict with the concept of free resonance which encourages the use of the entire instrument. Resonance must be achieved through freedom, not by artificially putting a sound somewhere.

One of the best ways to work for free resonance is to emphasize the use of a well-produced hum. The reason for this is that most people do not make use of nasal resonance in their speech. They become accustomed to tonal sensations which do not go above the mouth. The use of the hum, when produced correctly, can give a feeling of more activity (vibration) above the mouth. The hum can also be helpful in ridding the voice of interferences in the throat. With a well produced hum there
is both overtone and undertone, and no artificial "setting" of the instrument to sing. A correct hum involves a roomy feeling inside the instrument. It allows for no pressure of the breath, but a full, comfortable vibration in the mask of the face. The hum must possess all of the qualities which are desirable in a vowel. The feeling is similar to that experienced at the beginning of a yawn (not at its height), or to a feeling of surprise. The hum must be a free sensation, never a localized pressure. The conductor must know how to guide his singers into a helpful use of the hum if it is to be of use.

A very difficult problem is that of how to apply energy in singing. It may be helpful to define energy as expansion from within the instrument. It should be strongly emphasized that energy is not the same thing as pushing from the diaphragm, or pushing air out. The application of energy to singing can and should be a spontaneous, free activity, not a struggle. When singing is free, there is an exciting involvement from within the entire instrument!

It is essential to emphasize several points while training a choir in the free application of energy. First, correct posture is absolutely necessary. Nothing can be achieved without this. The body must be alert, responsive and free. Second, it is important to have some understanding of how the breath functions. Freedom is lost if the approach to breath

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6 See Appendix A for further discussion of overtone and undertone.
management is incorrect. There should never be any kind of tightening or pushing down anywhere. A free breath is taken noislessly with a simple expansion of the ribcage and the diaphragm. If the intake of the breath is noisy, it means that there is tension in the throat.

Then comes the start of the tone itself. For a tone to have expressive potential it must begin and remain free. It is necessary that the tone begin with no tension in the throat. Any kind of muscular anticipation interferes with a free start of the tone. For this reason it is often helpful to think of the intake of the breath and the start of the tone as being one activity, thus avoiding the muscular setting which can occur after the breath is taken. The use of the staccato may also be helpful. It has the advantage of being too short to allow much time for setting in the throat. The staccato should involve the entire vocal tract and should give a sense of great freedom. This will require some work before such results are achieved. Often it is helpful to start each tone with [h], making sure that the [h] is an aspirate from the diaphragm and not produced in the throat. This can help involve more of the whole instrument. Exercises using the staccato should be rhythmic and not too fast, allowing for a rhythmic recovery of the breath after each note. The spontaneous application of energy which is the result of a free staccato can be very helpful to legato singing as well. A legato line simply takes the same activity of the body, but in slow motion.
Another difficulty faced by those who work with voices is that of developing an even range, from top to bottom. When interferences exist in the vocal instrument, there will be some spots in the range where the voice has to "break," or go to another kind of adjustment. Such breaks can be quite damaging to musical phrasing. When the voice is free, however, with no interferences, it can go up and down the range, making the proper adjustments in a gradual fashion so that no breaks occur. Experience has shown that the teaching of vocal registers only serves to make students aware of breaks, causing a great deal of concern about them. The singers come to actually expect a change in quality, a change in production. Rather than teach vocal registers, it is more effective to simply expect one even, continuous register throughout the range, regardless of the vowel. This is difficult to achieve (no more so than with registers, however), but very important.¹

It may be helpful to work with scales, descending at first, on the [o] vowel. The broadness of this vowel helps to open up the voice and avoid pinching. More relaxation should be emphasized, allowing for more undertone to come into the voice while moving into the lower notes of the scale. After working with one vowel on this, introduce combinations of vowels:

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¹Refer to Appendix A for further discussion of the subject of vocal registers.
It is more difficult to achieve an even line when moving up a scale. The tendency is to get tense, tighten up, and add pressure. Rather than this, emphasize that the inner construction (the way it feels inside) remains the same whether moving up or down.

An even range is not terribly difficulty to achieve if the singers have understood the concept of free production. Free production is the bottom line in good singing. When the production is free, these natural adjustments just happen. If, on the other hand, there are interferences, the singer is forced to pinch, pull and push to get a tone through the tension.

None of these approaches will be of value unless the conductor has experienced them personally. The effective vocal training of a choir is dependent upon the conductor's ability to analyze the problems, design an effective approach to solving them, and judge his choir's response to the suggestions he makes.

**Application to Music**

The use of vocalises is nothing more than a means to an end. The end is, of course, the musical result. To
this end, several steps may be taken. First is the direct and obvious relationship of vocalises to actual problems found in the music. Both the vocal results and the sense of accomplishment felt by the singers will be stronger when this relationship is pointed out.

Second, the conductor must be able to communicate through his gestures and illustrations what he senses are the vocal and musical demands of each composition. He has the opportunity to draw from his choir a unique response to each piece of music. It may be necessary at times to explain verbally what is desired. It is better, however, if his understanding can be transmitted to the singers through his vocal illustrations and conducting gestures.

Third, the conductor will be able to reinforce the work done in the vocalises if he knows how to apply the same principles to the actual music. He should constantly emphasize the concepts of free singing and the use of the entire vocal instrument, working with these concepts on especially difficult passages regularly.

Choral tone is a central concern of all choral conductors. If it is to be anything more than rhetoric, it involves a considerable amount of personal understanding and experience on the part of the conductor.

The ideal choral tone is one which is flexible to the expressive needs of the music. It is not just a pleasant sound. It is not only one sound. It is a concept of vocal
production which allows the voices to respond freely to a wide variety of musical demands.

Summary and Comparison

A vast amount of material has been written on the subject of choral tone. Inclusion of all the ideas which have been expressed relating to choral tone would be a task which would be impractical if not impossible for any researcher. It may be possible, however, by employing some sweeping generalities to identify two basic approaches to choral tone. One approach has a clearly defined choral sound which is considered to be the ideal sound for a choir. This sound is usually quite identifiable and highly consistent. The tonal quality changes very little, regardless of the composition being performed. Notable examples of such training are the choral traditions established by F. Melius Christiansen of the St. Olaf Choir and John Finley Williamson of the Westminster Choir.8 Both choral traditions, although extremely different, represent what might be called a "single sound" concept of choral tone.

Proponents of the other approach to choral tone decline to identify any preconceived conception of the ideal choral tone. They speak instead of a variety of tonal characteristics, insisting that the music itself must dictate the specific tonal qualities appropriate for its expression. This is the position

taken by most choral conductors today. Howard Swan may come closest to common reality in his belief that whereas conductors would like to believe that they induce different tonal qualities in music of different periods and styles, one choir usually does not produce much variety in its sound.9

Carapetyan's concept of choral tone embraces the second of these two basic approaches. Rather than describe an ideal choral sound, he speaks of a type of vocal production which allows for flexibility to the unique demands of each score. Many reviews of his concerts would argue that tonal variety can indeed be achieved by one choir under the same conductor.

From those who adhere to the concept of tonal sensitivity to the needs of each score come many attempts at describing worthy characteristics for any tonal style. Sateren wants a tone which is "rich and resonant" and which "invites people to listen."10 Wagner strives for pure integrated sound which has validity but without force.11 Noble works for a tone which is vibrant, blended and rhythmically precise.12 Some conductors such as Henson and Pfautsch believe that good choral singing and good solo singing are technically identical.13

10Berglund, "Values and Concepts," p. 177.
Sateren finds that there is less vocal freedom allowed in choral singing. Many conductors who speak of varying the tone quality according to the needs of the score refer primarily to pre-determined ideas about periodic style. Others recognize the need for greater flexibility even within various periods of music history.

Carapetyan's discussion of tone generally avoids terminology which is descriptive of a particular sound. Instead, he describes a type of vocal production which is based upon complete freedom and which allows for the expression of any thought or idea contained in the music. This is developed largely through the use of the hum. He firmly believes that the soloist and the choral singer share the same technique. Tonal determination comes through his study of the score and then through his ability to communicate with few words, effective gestures and vocal illustration what he has discovered. He speaks out strongly against singing all compositions, even from a given period, with the same tone quality. He insists that each score must be treated individually. He finds it difficult to believe that any composer from any period would want all of his music to sound the same.

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15 Ibid., p. 179.
17 Ibid., p. 23.
Carapetyan is firm in his belief that the vocal training of a choir can be genuinely helpful only when the conductor himself is a singer. At the point at which concepts work in his own voice, he can begin to know how to deal with the voices of others. This belief is not held by many choral conductors. Henson finds his private vocal study to have little influence on his choral work.\textsuperscript{18} Pfautsch teaches the principles he learned in private study, but no longer sings himself.\textsuperscript{19} Triplett identifies the handicap faced by the conductor who is not a singer. He points out that it is the conductor's responsibility to supply a concept of tone for his choir. If the conductor's vocal illustrations of the tonal concept are technically lacking, the same poor habits will be reflected in the choir's singing.\textsuperscript{20} Although Triplett attempts to discover solutions other than those proposed by Carapetyan, it would appear that he has clearly articulated the reasoning behind Carapetyan's beliefs.

Most conductors agree that good balance between voices is achieved largely in the initial selection of singers. Pfautsch adds that if problems arise, singers can be moved to

\textsuperscript{18}Bogle, "Comparative Study of Two," p. 114.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., pp. 211-212.
\textsuperscript{20}Triplett, "Training Choral Conductors," pp. 28-29.
different sections. Carapetyan refines the balance of his group by encouraging consistently careful listening habits and attention to the demands of the music.

The question of blend raises many differing ideas. Finn goes through a four step procedure in which he blends each voice part with itself and various combinations of parts with each other. Pfautsch approaches a blending of voices through purity of vowels. Wyatt, who surveyed fifty-seven choral conductors on the subject of choral blend, found that the following factors (listed in order of importance) are considered to contribute to a good blending of voices: uniformity of vowels, intonation within sections, quality of tone, selection of voices, rhythmic unity, classification of voices, and uniformity of production. The last of these items is the one which Carapetyan considers to be of greatest significance in achieving a well blended sound. He believes that when the vocal production is free the resulting vibrating resonance automatically blends the voices. Such a free production also minimizes problems of vibrato and intonation which interfere with choral blend.

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22 Finn, Art of Choral Conductor, Volume 1, p. 167.


Specific exercises and methods for actually achieving a well balanced, well blended, flexible choral sound are numerous. Henson takes the vocal preparation of his singers for granted, feeling that discussion of technique distracts from musical artistry. Sateren feels that working to achieve correct vowel formations solves vocal problems. Pfautsch also believes that working for uniformity of vowels provides a solid tonal basis. Carapetyan believes that well formed vowels can only be produced by a freely produced voice. Lamb works with such technical aspects of singing as posture, breathing, and resonance.

Carapetyan emphasizes the necessity for regular vocal work, providing opportunity for repetition of concepts and experiences. He sees routine vocalises as being of no value, stressing the need for purposeful vocal work. His exercises are never predictable, just as the nature of the various vocal problems is seldom predictable. He develops exercises which he hopes will treat the specific difficulty being experienced. Above all, Carapetyan believes that one who will train other voices must first be the master of his own instrument. Carapetyan's approach is conspicuously devoid of regular routines and fixed answers. It is built upon his own experience.

28Lamb, Choral Technique, pp. 48-52.
with analyzing vocal problems, designing an effective approach to solving them, and evaluating the choir's response to suggestions.

Carapetyan's ideas about the nature of good choral tone are quite different from the ideas held by most choral conductors. Carapetyan believes that good choral tone is conceived and developed by a conductor who is himself an accomplished singer. The foundation for Carapetyan's idea of choral tone is free vocal production. This ideal is actively and thoughtfully pursued. Once the voices are free, then they are ready to respond to Carapetyan's tonal concept of the music.
CHAPTER IX

CHORAL SENSE

The kind of sound produced by a choral ensemble is one major piece of a large musical puzzle, the completion of which means fine musical results. Such considerations as clean diction, good intonation, rhythmic accuracy and dynamic shadings are some other very significant aspects of the total musical picture. Without proper handling of these elements, the result is one which does not make sense. The following is a paraphrase of Carapetyan's ideas on and approaches to these areas of concern.

Diction

Is it realistic to expect to understand words sung by a group of individuals? Yes. It is entirely possible for a choral ensemble to sing with textual clarity.

There are many ideas about the meaning of good diction. Good diction does not mean "chewing" the words, over-doing vowels and spitting out consonants. Such an approach may produce the text, but the beauty of the line is destroyed in the process. The result is phrases which are chopped into little fragments of sound between percussively executed consonants.
It is entirely possible to have both clarity of words and continuity of phrases. The key to this kind of good diction is in the correct handling of the consonants.

Consonants

When consonants are handled correctly, the words can be understood, no tension is brought into the voice, and there need be no obstruction to the line. Before this can happen, it is necessary to understand that there are three categories of consonants: 1. singable consonants, 2. partially voiced consonants, and 3. un-voiced consonants. Each of these types of consonants must be handled differently. The singable consonants (m, n, and η) present no problem in a freely resonating voice. Their function in the musical line is similar to that of the vowels. The sound continues through them. Even so, care must be taken not to press down on these singable consonants.

The partially voiced consonants (d, v, z, etc.) can be slightly voiced, but can not be prolonged. Unvoiced consonants (t, p, k, etc.) are purely breath in form and must not be sung at all. They must be pronounced, but if attempt is made at singing, or prolonging them, pressure is brought into the voice, destroying the vowels which follow and precede them.

It is important to the successful pronunciation of consonants to make sure that no pressure is applied to them. They should be treated as spring boards. This concept can be worked
out both in exercises designed for that purpose, and through the music itself. Consonants must be touched firmly and distinctly, and then be given an immediate release to allow the vowel which follows to have freedom. In going from one vowel to the next, only a brief fraction of a second is necessary for a clean-cut articulation of the consonant. Consonants treated in this manner are an aid to the free use of the voice, helping to bring the tone out of any tendency toward a backward, or hooty production.

**Vowels**

Achieving correct vowel forms can also present difficulty for the choral conductor. Various local dialects are often difficult to overcome. It is sometimes even difficult to convince people that the way they speak is not necessarily the best way to sing. This needs to be handled delicately. A dictionary which uses the phonetic alphabet is a helpful reference tool. The conductor should have similar guides to the pronunciation of all of the various languages in which his choir will be singing. A discussion of the formation of each vowel is beyond the scope of this study. It is important, however, that the conductor be able to describe and illustrate the proper form for each vowel. Until the vowel forms are correct, good singing is impossible.

**Consistency of Line.**—The production of correct vowel sounds involves something in addition to the proper use of the
articulators (teeth, tongue, lips, jaw). If beauty of the vocal line is also a goal in singing, it is necessary that all of vowel sounds follow the same linear direction. Each vowel, when correctly produced, produces its own unique sensations, or vibrations in the vocal instrument. Nevertheless, for the vocal line to be smooth, all vowels must share the characteristic of free, humming resonance. A smooth vocal line is achieved when all vowels come to an imaginary focal point, allowing each vowel to blend smoothly into the next. The unique properties of each vowel are given this blending relationship through the use of the hum. The hum could be said to act as a common denominator which allows this variety of vowel forms to work together to make a consistent line, uninterrupted by changes in vocal direction. This linear consistency provides for textual clarity which would otherwise be lost.

Vowel modification.--Several studies have been done showing what happens to various vowels as the singer moves higher in the range. The phrase "vowel modification" is often used for this process. From the knowledge gained, it is hoped that teachers can effectively help their students learn how best to handle the top part of their vocal range.

One fact should be understood: a voice which is freely produced will "modify" itself gradually while moving higher. Nothing more needs to happen. The concept of vowel modification can be helpful if it is used as a reminder of what should happen
vocally. The general idea behind the concept of vowel modification is to avoid any spreading of the tone, or thinning out, causing a "whiteness" in the upper notes. The tone should, instead, come to a well-defined focal point, giving it a certain compactness, rather than letting it diffuse. Thus, the suggestion is sometimes made to "cover" a tone, or to "bring it to a point," to avoid its spreading out. It is essential to clarify the instruction. "Covering" could, to some, indicate a pulling back of the sound. That, of course, is not a helpful idea. This is where only the vocal demonstration of the concept by the conductor can fully clarify the desired result.

If the concept of vowel modification is used it is helpful to present some suggestions of what should happen. The [o] and [a] vowels, when higher in the range, need to come more to a defined focal point and perhaps be a bit more covered. This simply means that the pillars in the back of the throat are rounded and the soft palate in the back of the throat are rounded and the soft palate is arched slightly more. It is helpful, also, to remember that the [o] vowel has a tendency to go more toward the [u] vowel than toward [a] as the higher tones are approached. The vowels [i], [e], and [u] must have a bit more room on top in order to avoid pinching the tones.

It is important to remember that if everything is free and if both upper and lower partials are present, there will be a good focal point or concentration of the tone. In such a situation, vowel modification has occurred naturally. (The
author's observation has been that Carapetyan's instruction to his choirs frequently includes work with specific vowels. He avoids using frequently employed jargon to achieve results. He works, rather, to develop a certain concept of a vowel in the minds of his singers, then to free their voices, allowing them to produce the desired result. The correction of vowel formation is always directly related to his desire for free vocal production. He feels that faulty vocal production restricts a singer's ability to sing correct vowel forms.

In soft singing it is especially necessary to be careful not to lose the clarity of consonants by pulling back the tone. Soft singing requires even cleaner articulation so the words will be understood.

Good diction, then, has as its prerequisite a free production of tone. Once the tone is free, a clean-cut, non-pressurized approach to consonants will allow it to remain free. Good diction provides both for clarity of text and beauty of line.

Intonation

An important part of training a choir is teaching the singers to listen. They must listen for balance, for uniform vowels, and for tuning. The choir members must be constantly reminded to listen.

One of the characteristics for which choir members are selected is a good musical ear. It is reasonable to assume,
then, that if a group of good musicians which is well-trained to listen for tuning is experiencing difficulty with intonation, the source of the problem is not the ear. In such a case, the difficulty is often one of faulty vocal production. A sagging, heavy production is a frequent cause of flat singing. Conversely, a sound produced with tension and pressure is likely to push sharp. Once the voices are free from such technical difficulties and are able to employ the kind of free production which is consistent with other goals of good singing, intonation often ceases to be a problem. This is true for solo as well as choral singing.

Other factors are often cited as causes of poor intonation. Exaggerated vibrato, of course, prevents accurate tuning. Fine vibrato, however, presents no problem. Vowels which are too dark often cause flatting. Even the weather is sometimes blamed for faulty intonation. Each of these factors, it may be seen, is first a vocal problem before it becomes one of intonation. Exaggerated vibrato is caused by impaired vocal production (see Chapter VIII). Overly dark vowels indicates a backward, or hooty production. The weather may cause either a lethargic or a highly stimulated physical response, affecting vocal production. The solution, then, lies in working toward the very kind of free singing which has been discussed.

A choir should be trained to sing with an untempered scale. This presupposes some knowledge of the tonality of the various
compositions. Thirds and sevenths especially need to be sung higher than in a tempered scale. In chromatic passages, the sung pitches should follow the direction of the chromatic alteration. For example, an ascending D# would be sung slightly higher than a descending E♭. This can make a tremendous difference especially in the singing of unaccompanied early music.

Assuming, then, that the choir is composed of individuals with reasonably good ears, two prerequisites exist for well-tuned singing: consistent and careful listening, and a free vocal production. Only when both of these requirements are met can well-tuned singing become a reality.

Rhythm

Singers are notorious for lack of rhythmic accuracy. There may be several reasons for this deficiency. One reason is simply a lack of disciplined training in this area. Emphasis has been placed elsewhere.

Another major factor has to do with the way the breath is taken. In order to have rhythmically accurate entrances and releases, the intake of the breath must also be rhythmic. "If our breath is not taken rhythmically we do not sing rhythmically." Because of poor management of the breath, the intake of the breath often takes too much time, delaying the next entrance.
An effective approach for dealing with this difficulty treats both of these problem areas. Straightening out breathing problems leads back to an examination of the overall vocal production. It has been mentioned that a noisy breath indicates tension in the throat area. Likewise, a breath which cannot be taken instantaneously with nothing more than a simple expansion, is not a free breath. Either the breath is shallow or some of the muscles used are not working in a flexible manner. The source of the problem must be discovered and corrected before rhythmically accurate singing is even a possibility.

Once the breath is straightened out, the conductor must train his choir to think and feel the underlying pulse of the music. This is a procedure which requires regular emphasis. It is not the conductor's job to superimpose rhythm on the singers through his beat patterns. Rather, he must train his singers to internalize the constant motion and pulse of the music. His conducting gestures must, of course, reinforce and provide a framework for their inner sense of the rhythm. This is especially important in slow lines. A constant awareness of the underlying pulse is necessary to maintain the line in sustained singing. Not only is singing more accurate when the pulse is felt, but it is also much more musically expressive.

Dynamics

Varying the dynamic level of the sound is an important part
of expressive singing. It is up to each conductor to judge the capability of his own group and to determine its dynamic limitations. If he demands more sound than the group can produce, pressure is often applied to the voices, thereby destroying vocal freedom. The musical effect is ruined because the sound is forced.

Soft singing, on the other hand, is a dynamic shading that every group should be able to produce. Seldom is real pianissimo singing heard. When it is attempted it often becomes a fuzzy, breathy, lifeless sound. Singing well softly is perhaps the most difficult accomplishment in the art of singing. It is, however, possible to sing softly while retaining the vitality of the sound, clear diction, and beautiful, musical lines.

In teaching a choir to make smooth crescendi and decrescendi it is important to emphasize that the vocal condition, that is, the instrument itself, does not change. There is often a problem of grabbing the tone in the throat when trying to make a diminuendo. Such tension simply chokes off the sound until, at some point, it breaks. Rather than closing off the tone, emphasize that the bigness required for a full tone is also a requirement for soft singing. As the sound decreases, there should be a gradual feeling of the tone moving up high into the head until it becomes nothing but an overtone, or humming vibration, and finally fades into nothing. Soft singing requires even more intense involvement because, not
only is the vocal production the same as for a full tone, but the breath must be restrained and overtone emphasized. The director must vocally illustrate a decrescendo for the process to be clear.

A crescendo is often attempted by pushing out more breath. Pushing air produces a diffused, pressed sound which is likely to sharp. Rather than pushing for more sound, the conductor should emphasize a feeling of expansion from within, or inner enlargement, creating an intensification of breath and sound. The concept of a well produced crescendo, again, requires good vocal illustration provided by the conductor.

A good exercise for working on these concepts is as follows:

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\begin{align*}
\text{pp} & \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{ff} & \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{pp}
\end{align*}
\]

Fig. 2--Messa di voice exercise

The exercise should be done as slowly as the singers can manage and without loss of quality or vocal freedom.

It is clear that clean diction, accurate intonation, rhythmic accuracy and dynamic variety are all aspects of choral singing which contribute significantly to the quality of the end musical result. Yet much of choral singing is severely
lacking in these areas. Good results are possible when the conductor is able to fully analyze the vocal requirements which are necessary to meet such musical demands, and to train his choir accordingly. Such aspects of good singing as diction, intonation, rhythm, and dynamics cannot be divorced from the area of vocal production. A demand for "more words" is inadequate for singers who do not understand the basic concepts of vowel formation and consonant management. The instruction to "listen," although sometimes necessary, will do little to improve the tuning of a group which is not capable of free vocal production. The frequent admonition "you're late again" will probably not improve the situation if the singers do not know how to breathe properly. Dynamic variety will never be convincingly achieved until choir members have learned the vocal technique necessary to freely sing a crescendo and decrescendo.

It is not enough for the choral conductor to know what he wants musically. He must know how to draw musical results from his singers through solid training. He must know his instrument--the choral instrument--just as thoroughly as he knows his music. Anything less than this fails to fully utilize the unique musical potential inherent in each group of singers.

Summary and Comparisons

Each of the topics discussed in this chapter--diction, intonation, rhythm, and dynamics--could be vastly expanded. Each contributes an aspect to choral singing which makes it both
an art and a science. The amount of material written on this topic is overwhelming. Diction is one of the central issues in any discussion of choral singing. Pfautsch believes that "good diction is the keystone in producing distinctive vocal and choral work."¹ Two texts in particular have been widely used as references on English diction. Pfautsch's *English Diction for the Singer* emphasizes the position of the articulators in the mouth. In *The Singers' Manual of English Diction*, Marshall expresses concern not only for correct articulation, but also for expressiveness and proper connection of consonants to the vowel sounds. Carapetyan's approach is similar to Marshall's in these interests. He is especially concerned that the beauty of the vocal line not be destroyed by faulty diction.

Carapetyan believes that the correct handling of the consonant sounds is the key to textual clarity. Triplett describes two faulty methods of consonant management as hypo-articulation and hyper-articulation.² The first pronounces consonants very faintly. The second—an equal deviation from the desired results—over-works the sounds to the point of chewing vowels and spitting consonants. Carapetyan would agree that neither of these practices is acceptable. Like Triplett, he identifies three types of


consonants: voiced, partially voiced, and unvoiced. Carapetyan stresses the necessity for the exclusion of any pressure from the articulation of all consonants. Pressure on consonants, he points out, has disastrous effects on the surrounding vowels and on the vocal line as a whole. Sateren feels that any problem in the vocal line is probably due to the misapplication of consonants. Carapetyan works for consonant articulation which is distinct and clear cut, requiring only a fraction of a second.

Vowel sounds also directly effect a continuity of vocal line. Triplett believes that all well formed vowels should share some elements of quality so they will blend. The hum, according to Carapetyan, is the quality in the voice which allows all vowels to form continuity of line. Triplett suggests working with various vowels on one pitch. Carapetyan finds the combination of various vowels with the use of the hum, developing a continuity of vibration throughout, is very effective in working toward even vocal lines.

Carapetyan points out the necessity of each conductor's familiarizing himself with the correct vowel formation through experimentation with his own instrument. Noble often requires his singers to write out the correct vowel sounds for each word

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4Triplett, "Training Choral Conductors," p. 56.
5Ibid., p. 56.
in a composition and then to come up with other words which make use of the same sounds. Carapetyan would question the efficiency of this use of such an obviously large amount of time.

Carapetyan's ideas about the nature of good diction are not unusual, but he is unique in his approach to achieving the result. Whereas most conductors simply ask their singers to listen more carefully to the sounds, Carapetyan takes this a step further. He insists that good diction—well formed vowels and cleanly articulated consonants—has the prerequisite of freely vibrating vocal production.

Many ideas exist about the cause for poor intonation. Henson believes that poor intonation is caused by a lack of concentration on the part of the singers. Swan believes that the problem is usually caused by the singers' lack of ability to hear. Wagner cites the singers' lack of pitch consciousness and lack of singer attention as major causes. Poorly produced vowels are to blame, according to Pfautsch.

Carapetyan believes, as does Christy, that when singers with normally good ears sing out of tune, the source of the

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9Ibid., p. 214.
10Decker-Herford, A Symposium, p. 83.
problem is poor vocal production. Triplett states that "a well-supported, freely produced tone is essential for accurate intonation." Many conductors were found to share this belief. Finn blames tension in the voice for sharpening problems. Triplett finds that an overly dark sound often causes flatting. These observations are similar to those made by Carapetyan.

Many remedies for this offensive difficulty have been proposed. Wagner has his singers lighten the sound and sometimes raises the pitch of a composition. Pfautsch teaches pure vowels and encourages his singers to think wide ascending intervals and small descending intervals. (This would, obviously, not be of benefit to a group which inadvertently elevates the pitch.) Henson tells his singers to concentrate. The approach taken by Christy comes close to that of Carapetyan. He strives for improved management of the breath and a better concept of free and balanced resonance. Carapetyan finds that the intonation problem is basically one

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13Finn, Art of Choral Conductor, Volume I, p. 85.
16Decker-Herford, A Symposium, p. 83.
17Bogle, "Comparative Study for Two," p. 115.
18Christy, Expressive Singing, Volume 1, p. 88.
of faulty production. This difficulty is minimized when vocal production is free and singers listen carefully.

Seldom is reference made to the employment of untempered tuning. Roe advocates Pythagorean tuning for unaccompanied compositions. Carapetyan is a strong advocate of the use of just intonation.

Discussions of rhythmic precision are far less common in writings about choral music than are such aspects as diction, intonation and blend. This lack of emphasis is perhaps partially to blame for rhythmically inaccurate and devitalized singing which is frequently heard from choral groups. Several approaches to dealing with this problem are taken by various conductors. Ehmann emphasizes the rhythm of man's environment and seeks to establish a sense of inner pulse within his singers through bodily movement. Stanton also feels that rhythm must be felt through physical involvement to be understood. Pfautsch believes that imprecise rhythm is caused by poor consonant articulation and incorrect duration of the vowel sounds. Triplett quotes a voice teacher as saying that

19 Roe, Choral Music Education, pp. 118-119.
20 Ehmann, Choral Directing, p. 93.
22 Decker-Herford, A Symposium, p. 84.
accurate rhythm necessitates a sense of the breath and the start of the tone as being one activity.\(^{23}\) This is to preclude the entrance of any rigidity into the voice between the breath and the phonation.

Carapetyan believes, as does Ehmann, that the rhythmic drive necessary for precise singing must come from within the singers. The conductor must develop a sense of the pulse in his singers. Before this inner pulse can receive vocal response, according to Carapetyan, it is necessary that the singers be able to take a free and rhythmic breath. He agrees with the concept of the breath and the start of the tone as being one activity. He feels that it is also necessary that the entire process be accomplished in a rhythmic manner for the singing to be accurate.

The little reference which is made to dynamic variety in choral singing usually falls under such headings as "style" or "interpretation." Seldom, even in books on vocal pedagogy is there any mention of how dynamic changes are made. Finn presents some exercises for developing dynamic facility working primarily with mental alertness and awareness of potential hazards to phrasing.\(^{24}\)

Carapetyan finds that most singers have the desire and sensitivity to be expressive, but are often unable to sing

\(^{23}\)Triplett, "Training Choral Conductors," p. 159.
expressively because of technical limitations. Carapetyan seeks to instruct his singers in more than appropriate dynamic shadings; he helps them achieve the technical facility to make expressive singing possible. He emphasizes the use of the hum and a feeling of inner expansion in his instruction. As always, he clarifies his concepts with vocal illustration.

Many of Carapetyan's ideas about good diction, accurate intonation, rhythmic precision and use of dynamic contrast are not unique to his work. His methods of achieving the desired results, however, are often quite different from those of other conductors. His approach to each of these aspects of choral training is firmly based on the belief that little can be accomplished without voices which are freely produced. Certainly good diction involves understanding of many vowel and consonant forms, but the correct forms are not possible without freedom. Singers must be trained to listen for accurate intonation, but listening alone will not correct problems which are due to incorrect vocal production. A sense of inner pulse must be developed before rhythmic precision can be achieved. But a breath which is not taken rhythmically can delay even a correctly anticipated entrance. Certainly dynamic shadings must be felt and understood, but for them to become reality without destroying a line requires technical mastery. With Carapetyan, free vocal production is the bottom line to all
aspects of choral work. There is more, of course, much more. But without a free, resonant production, which can only be developed by one who has first hand experience with vocal problems, all other musical goals are met in only a limited way. Once a group of voices is able to sing with freedom, music can sparkle with clean diction, accurate intonation, rhythmic precision, and dynamic variety.
PART FIVE: CLOSING STATEMENTS
CHAPTER X

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the convictions about choral conducting as held and applied by Caro Carapetyan. The primary source of information was a series of personal interviews with Carapetyan, the transcript of which can be found in Appendix E. The author's own experience under Carapetyan's direction has contributed a degree of understanding of the concepts discussed based on practical experience. The comments of three individuals (found in Appendix B) who have sung with Carapetyan were important in authenticating the beliefs and practices of the subject of the investigation.

Many sources were useful in the formation of this study. Reports by McEwen\(^1\), Berglund\(^2\) and Bogle\(^3\) which compared the work of various conductors were of help in the formulation of the concepts to be discussed in the interviews. Many books on choral conducting served as a reference in the comparison of various ideas about choral practices. Carapetyan's beliefs about and practices of choral conducting were identified and

\(^1\)McEwen, "Music Philosophies."

\(^2\)Berglund, "Values and Concepts."

\(^3\)Bogle, "Comparative Study of Two."
briefly compared with those of other choral musicians. Topics included were philosophical ideas and beliefs (Chapter III), conductor-singer relationships (Chapter IV), knowledge of music history and literature (Chapter V), rehearsal planning and conducting technique (Chapter VI), the selection of singers (Chapter VII), choral tone (Chapter VIII), and diction, intonation, rhythm and dynamics (Chapter IX). Each chapter concludes with a summary of the ideas presented and a comparison of those ideas to the beliefs of other choral musicians.

Summary of Findings

Carapetyan believes that music, a language of emotions, has the power to touch people in the inner most part of their being. It has the ability to enrich lives by touching an aspect of life left untouched by a world which is increasingly oriented to technical and scientific work. For music to be able to affect lives in positive ways, musicians must be more than honest in their work with music. They must be honest, moral individuals; otherwise trust which is an essential ingredient in genuine music making cannot be developed. In his dealings with other musicians, the conductor must exude sincere honesty and love for music and the people with whom he is working. No other conductor has been found who places such emphasis on the conductor's personal life. Few would argue with the concept of honesty in music. Carapetyan believes that for musical integrity to be convincing, every aspect of the conductor's life must reflect simple and genuine honesty.
In order to allow music to speak to people, according to Carapetyan, a choral conductor must also be capable in his work. He must have a knowledge of music literature which is both broad, and then more specialized in the area of choral music. He must have an understanding of music history which allows him to make scholarly speculation about the intent expressed in the music of various composers from different time periods. This knowledge should be used also in the individual research necessary for the creative discovery, evaluation and programming of repertoire. And the effective choral conductor must develop techniques for communicating his musical understanding to his singers. He must be able to identify goals for each rehearsal. He must also have a command of his conducting technique which allows him to communicate a sense of rhythm, vocal line, vocal technique and a sense of involvement with music which is contagious. Carapetyan's approach to the discovery and programming of choral literature is based on a musicologist's interest in research. Few other conductors emphasize the importance of individual research to the extent that Carapetyan does.

Carapetyan believes that the process of selecting singers should evaluate both the personal contribution and the musical contribution which might be expected from an individual based on the audition. Attitude and musical potential are both very important factors to consider. The conductor must then have the ability to train the choir to perform well. Carapetyan believes
that the training of the choral instrument necessitates a knowledge of the vocal instrument which must be based on the conductor's personal experience as a singer. Such a concept has not been found in the writings of or about any other choral conductor. For such aspects of good choral singing as blend, diction, intonation, dynamic variety, rhythmic precision to be developed in a group of singers, technical limitations must be removed. For this, the choral conductor must be able to use his voice to demonstrate a free, resonant use of the vocal instrument which is desirable in choral singing. He must be able to identify the source of the problems experienced by his singers and devise ways to approach their solution. Carapetyan does not underestimate the need for a good understanding of consonant and vowel forms for good diction, consistent listening habits for accurate intonation, and increased concentration for rhythmic precision, but for any of these approaches to be of help, the voices must be free and responsive. Many conductors acknowledge a relationship between good vocal production and such aspects of choral singing as accurate intonation and clear diction. Carapetyan is unique, however, in his belief that the major cause of most problems experienced by choral groups is that of faulty vocal production. His approach of working out various difficulties by instructing his choir in the correct use of the vocal instrument is similarly unique.
Conclusions

Several conclusions may be drawn about certain aspects of Carapetyan's choral work which have made it outstanding in the eyes and ears of so many. One important contribution to Carapetyan's overall musical result is his work as a researcher and editor of music. His training and work as a musicologist adds a depth to his interpretation of music which rejects easy answers and rigid stylistic rules as being overly simplistic. There is within him a spirit of individuality which leads him in a search of compositions which are not commonly known. Although his fondness for the unique is always subject to his well developed sense of quality in music, it is evident that Carapetyan is somewhat drawn to works which he feels have been unjustly neglected. Carapetyan has made it clear that he considers a solid understanding of music history to be essential to the choral musician. His chosen repertoire is ample evidence of the fact that he himself has acquired and made full use of such understanding.

Another aspect of Carapetyan's work which greatly affects his musical result is his approach to the expression of music. It is his belief that for music to be a genuine expression of human thought and emotion, it must be a free expression. The free expression of music can be hampered by technical limitations. For this reason, Carapetyan emphasizes the necessity of ridding the voices of any kind of interference which might
endanger the requisite freedom. Just as Carapetyan's approach to the interpretation of music rejects simplistic answers, so does his approach to the vocal instruction of his choir. In order to devise genuinely helpful solutions to the vocal problems experienced by his choir members, he finds it necessary first to discover solutions to the same difficulties in his own voice. This provides no easy answers. As in other aspects of his work, Carapetyan has sought personally for what he feels will bring about the best musical results. Carapetyan relies on no tricks or gimmicks in his vocal work. He trains his choir using the concepts which he has found bring results in his own voice. The vocal freedom which is the result, he believes, contributes directly to clarity of diction, accuracy of intonation, rhythmic precision, choral blend, and dynamic variety. His training is most strikingly evident, however, in the full bodied, sonorous singing for which his choirs have become known.

A third aspect of Carapetyan's work with choral groups is highly significant. Just as the vocal freedom of singers is a necessity for expressive choral singing, Carapetyan believes that personal freedom is equally important. Carapetyan has found that the making of music can be an experience which is capable of touching lives. Such an experience is only possible, however, when the environment within the group is one which is based on honesty and love. The conductor's personality and attitude has a great influence on the spirit of his group. If
the singers know that the conductor genuinely cares about them, and loves the work that he is doing, they will respond in a like manner. Honesty also is extremely important to Carapetyan. He does not limit the necessity for a sincere and honest attitude to the realm of music making. He insists that it is only when a conductor is an honest individual—honest in all aspects of his life—that he can elicit a response from his choir which is enthusiastic and fully involved.

When asked what he considers to be the primary deficiency in choral singing today, Carapetyan responded as follows:

"I would like to hear choirs sing with much more involvement, more excitement on the part of the singers which again must come from the director to begin with. I am not talking about just big emoting, I am not talking about that. I am talking about involvement in the music and whether it is a soft tone or a loud tone, sing as if it is the last chance you have in your life. Also, make it meaningful. Everything you sing must be convincing. To the hearer it must feel that the singers are involved, that they are singing with conviction. And I believe in it because they believe in it. They are making music because they enjoy making music. They are receiving something and therefore they are also giving something. It should be like that always. It can be a tremendous experience, choral singing, or any kind of singing. But if it is just learning the notes, the time and the words and singing those notes we may just as well forget about it. And I think this is what we hear much of the time. Don't forget we are in an age in which feeling deeply is out of fashion. We are not supposed to allow ourselves to feel deeply. Art then becomes sterile."

Carapetyan's lifetime of work in choral music has been based on the desire to serve. He hopes to serve the art of music by approaching it knowledgeably and honestly; he strives to serve people by opening to them the gift of enrichment which
music has to offer to their lives.

If the essence of Carapetyan's work could be described in a word, that word might be "genuine." He is at all times completely himself. The strength of his influence with people comes from a sincere warmth and openness toward them. His approach to music relies on his own understanding of music history and literature, and upon a sensitivity to human response to music. Everything in Carapetyan's teaching has purpose. Both in his choice of literature and in his training of the choir, there is an intensity about his work which elicits response. Nothing is extraneous. No gimmicks are employed. The singing of Carapetyan's choirs, according to many who have heard them, is witness to the quiet strength of their leader which has come from a lifetime of searching for answers.

Recommendations to Choral Conductors

Opportunities to learn are everywhere for the motivated individual. No single manner of study can produce an effective choral conductor. It is hoped that the present study has served to point out areas above and beyond the usual course of study for choral musicians which might well be given serious consideration. Based on the conclusions drawn from the study of the choral practices of Caro Carapetyan, several recommendations can be made to those who consider making choral conducting their profession.

1. Acquire an in depth knowledge of music history and literature.
2. Develop a **practical** understanding of the vocal instrument, which can only come through the process of training one's own voice.

3. Make a careful, honest analysis of the motivation behind the desire to be a choral conductor. Compare that with some well-considered thoughts about the purpose of music.

4. Become a diligent, open-minded, unceasing researcher of musical knowledge and understanding.

**Recommendation to Future Researchers**

Many researchers have found that a study of the practices of acknowledged authorities in various fields is a worthy endeavor. The author enthusiastically endorses this finding.

One specific recommendation based on this researcher's experience may be of some value to others seeking to undertake similar studies. Regardless of the area of specialization, it seems inevitable that certain terminology which is used to apply to aspects of the work will develop. This verbal shorthand has two major liabilities. The obvious disadvantage is that it excludes all those who are not active or experienced in the field. The more subtle shortcoming of such professional jargon is that it may obscure the true intent of a statement or concept. It has often been seen that a particular term may be defined differently by many individuals within the same profession.
It becomes the responsibility of the researcher who wishes his work to be both accurate and clear to decode the subject under investigation by refusing to submit to the use of professional jargon. This is a difficult task, made more difficult by the likelihood that the researcher has also become comfortable with such terminology. The recommendation, then, is either to re-phrase or explain terms which are specific to any one particular profession. In doing so, the subject matter, the researcher, and the reader will be better served.

Frustration is often the result of attempts to describe with words that which in order to be fully understood must be experienced. Such is the case in the present study. If, however, in any way the material presented can serve to provoke thought or self-examination, its purpose will be fulfilled.
APPENDIX A

CARAPETYAN'S TERMINOLOGY: BALANCE OF TONE

The old Italian masters of singing considered that the voice had two registers: the chest register and the head register. Great effort was made in their teaching to blend, or bridge the two registers smoothly.

Contemporary understanding of "chest register" usually associates it with a big, almost masculine quality produced in the low portion of a woman's voice, usually below middle c. "Head tone" usually refers to the high, light quality produced in the upper register of the voice. It can be light and fluty or fuller in sound if it is properly produced.

Many voice teachers today speak of three vocal registers: chest, middle, and head. Nevertheless, most teachers and singers agree that uniformity of tone throughout the range is what they are striving for. It appears, however, that the awareness of various registers suggested by many teachers often causes the very shifts or breaks in the voice which they wish to avoid. It would seem, then, that this is not a satisfactory solution to the problem. It is not acceptable simply to gain skill in passing from one register to another. The desired result requires a uniformity of tone throughout the entire vocal spectrum.

In order to encourage such a uniformity of tone quality it has been found effective, rather than emphasizing changes or blendings of registers, to emphasize one uniform register, and one quality of sound throughout the voice. The teaching of distinct registers of the voice is, then, replaced by helping the students understand the kinds of sensations experienced by a freely produced voice.

The word undertone is used to refer to the lower and deeper vibrations felt in the pharynx and upper chest cavities. The term overtone is used to refer to the vibrations felt in the nasal cavity and upper resonators. The two, undertone and overtone, must at all times work together to produce a well balanced sound. At no point does the upper reservation, or "overtone" leave the voice, not even in the lowest notes. The quality, warmth, and color of the voice depend upon the retention of the overtone.
This is not true of undertone. The undertone gradually decreases in an ascending scale, never to disappear entirely. A soprano singing a fortissimo $b''$ or $c'''$ such as in the "Inflamatus" of Rossini's Stabat Mater, or in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or Missa Solemnis, must of necessity depend on the undergirding and the strength of the undertone to make such a tone possible. Soft high tones do not require such undertone, although energy is still used in restraining the breath, allowing no constriction in the throat.

A balance of tone is achieved when the singer is able to include an appropriate combination of overtone and undertone at any point in the range. The process of balancing the tone throughout the entire range brings about a mental picture of an inverted cone. The amount of undertone decreases as the voice moves higher in the range, but the overtone remains consistent throughout the range. Conversely, a descending scale will gradually increase in undertone while, at the same time, retaining and emphasizing the overtone. Special awareness must be given to retaining the overtone in the low portion of the range. This is extremely important in order to retain consistent quality and avoid breaks in the voice.

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\begin{align*}
\text{higher notes: } & \text{ less undertone} \\
\text{lower notes: } & \text{ more undertone}
\end{align*}
\]

Fig. 3--Balance of tone

At best, terminology can only suggest imagery, bringing about certain mental concepts. If terminology can be successful in creating the desired tonal concept, then the student has something with which to work. Rather than developing concepts which segment the voice, it may be more helpful to encourage one perfectly even register for the entire range. Then the voice can be free and capable of expressive singing with the necessary coloration, dynamic and tonal shading, and control at any point in the range.
APPENDIX B

AUTHORITATIVE VALIDATION OF THE
INTERPRETATION OF CARAPETYAN'S REMARKS

Validation of Earl Tom Keel, B.M, M.M.
Director of Fine Arts
Grand Prairie Independent School District
July 2, 1981

The thesis, "Caro Carapetyan: His Choral Beliefs and Practices," researched and written by Debbie Simpkin King, B. M., is a valid, accurate, candid and scholarly dissertation of merit. As a former student of Caro Carapetyan, I professionally validate and concur with the statements made by King in explaining and exploring his philosophies and methodologies in choral and vocal techniques. King has provided excellent, empirical data in revealing to music educators interested in choral and vocal pedagogies the realistic concepts of Carapetyan.

Validation of Juanita Teal Peters
Part-Time Vocal Instructor
North Texas State University
June 29, 1981

Having been closely associated with Mr. Carapetyan for thirty years, I feel that Mrs. King has given an accurate analysis of Mr. Carapetyan's choral and vocal concepts, insofar as it is possible to describe them in words. An important aspect of Mr. Carapetyan's philosophy which she has discussed is the unitary concept of vocal register. Another important aspect is the essential identity of vocal technique in solo singing and choral singing. Her entire presentation is objective and well thought out.

Validation of Carol R. Tagg
July 1, 1981

As a voice student of Caro Carapetyan for sixteen years and a member of his various choral groups, I read with great interest and appreciation author King's treatise on his choral beliefs and practices. Mr. Carapetyan lives a life dedicated to the highest ideals of musicianship yet remains a warm and
caring man to his students and choir members. He is uncompromisingly devoted to the best in performance and to the best interests of his musicians and Mrs. King has done a superlative job of presenting his philosophies. It is possible for me to recall his presence and sincerity as I read her translation of his beliefs about choral music and the melding of voice and composition. Mr. Carapetyan is a painstaking director who believes that only by evoking the best in the vocal mechanism can the music be served. I heartily concur with her evaluation of her subject and feel that she has made an accurate and impartial study.
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I. Philosophy

A. Much energy has been devoted to the defense of music in the schools, justification often resting on extra-musical benefits which may be produced by curricular music. Our society accepts math, science and technical job training as being of unquestioned value. Why do you feel that the arts, and music in particular, are important in our pragmatic age?

B. How can the importance of music be communicated to a skeptical public?

C. We often hear music described as "the universal language," implying a type of communication, or mutual understanding. You have said that "exposure to great art, it seems to me, must have a profound influence in changing our inner life for the good." How does music touch people?

D. Is your choice of literature influenced by the ideas we have discussed?

E. Does your philosophy influence the way you approach interpretation of music?

II. Conductor-Singer Relationship

A. There is a wide variety of opinion about the atmosphere which is most conducive to artistic achievement. Do you favor an authoritarian approach to working with choral groups, or do you prefer a more open environment in which questions can be raised? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

B. How do you deal with an apparent lack of individual effort, such as poorly prepared music or bad attitude?

C. Some conductors feel that it is best to maintain some distance between themselves and individual choir members in order to preserve a sense of authority. Have you found this to be true?
D. Are you the same person both on and off the podium? Is there an element of being "on stage" when you conduct?

III. Knowledge of Music History and Literature

A. To what extent is a broad knowledge of music history and literature important for the choral director?

B. Do you feel a choir needs to have an understanding of the background and structure of a piece if it is to perform it adequately?
   1. If so, how do you communicate this information to the group?
   2. Is this understanding aided or hindered by having the choir sing from memory?

C. By what criteria do you select music to perform?

D. Do you favor any particular schools or styles of music?

E. What sources do you use when searching for new literature?

IV. Conductor Preparation

A. Program Building:
   1. Of what does a well-structured program consist?
   2. What is the reason for such a program?
   3. What are your primary considerations when selecting music for a particular choir? (Do you choose pieces first, groups first, or structure the program around the abilities of the choir?)
   4. Of what importance are program notes?

B. Score Preparation:
   1. What steps do you go through to prepare a score to conduct? (analysis, background, etc.)
   2. Is it helpful for the conductor to memorize the music?
C. Rehearsal Planning:

1. How do you decide the order in which pieces are to be rehearsed?

2. To what extent do you predetermine specific objectives or goals for a rehearsal?

3. Do you plan a long-range schedule of progress for working a program to performance level?

4. Do you include vocal warm-ups and/or sight singing-ear training practice in rehearsal plans?

D. Rehearsal Conduct:

1. What attention do you give to the pace of a rehearsal? Would you be likely to alter your plans if the rehearsal seemed to drag?

2. Do you make use of sectional rehearsals?

3. How much lecture do you include in rehearsals?

4. Do you use the piano to help a choir learn music or rehearse a cappella?

E. Conducting Technique:

1. What do you feel a choral conductor should seek to accomplish with his gestures?

2. Choral conductors are often criticized for lack of precision. How important is it to present a precise beat pattern?

3. Is there significant difference between choral and instrumental conducting? If so, what is the difference?

4. How can the size of a conductor's gestures influence a performance?

5. How much importance do you place on eye contact and facial expression?

6. Do you have specific techniques to enhance a choir's response to your conducting?
V. Training of the Choir

A. Audition:

1. The audition of singers is one of the first steps in the building of a choir. What takes place in your auditions of prospective choir members?

2. What information do you hope to acquire from the audition?

3. What qualities do you look for in singers? How do you make your selection?

4. How do you assign voice parts?

B. Tone:

1. What is your concept of the ideal choral tone?

2. How do you work to achieve your desired tone quality? How is resonance developed? (Triplett: "Nasal cavity affects resonance only slightly, except in the case of the nasal consonants (m, n, ng) and the French nasal vowels.") Does a choral conductor have the right to act as a voice teacher?

3. How is good choral singing different from good solo singing?

4. You have already mentioned that you use vocal warm-ups. What do you seek to accomplish with these?

5. Do you have a regular pattern of warm-ups with which you have found particular success?

6. What place is there in choral singing for vibrato?

7. How do you deal with vibrato problems, such as tremolo, wide vibrato, etc.?

8. How do you deal with vocal registers?

9. How does tone quality change for different compositions?

C. Diction:

1. Is it realistic to expect that the words sung by a group of individuals should be understood?

2. How do you work toward purity of vowels?
3. It has been said that "For the sake of free vocal production, singers might desire that there be no consonants in the language." How do you manage the problem of consonants? (voiceless, sub-vocal, voiced, R)

4. Does the diction vary any in different styles of music? (legato, staccato, marcato)

5. What place does vowel modification have in your teaching?

D. Blend:

1. What problems stand in the way of good blend?

2. How do you work toward a good blend of voices?

E. Balance:

1. Do you select approximately the same number of singers for each of the voice parts?

2. Do you find that the seating arrangement has a significant impact upon the balance of voice parts?

3. Do the varying textures of music require a different balance between the parts?

F. Intonation:

1. What causes poor intonation?

   vocal production: vibrato, push, no energy, etc.

   diction: dark vowels, hard consonants

   external factors: weather, ventilation, acoustics, etc.

2. How do you deal with these problems?

3. Do you ask that your singers employ any specific type of intonation? (Pythagorean, just, tempered)
G. Rhythmic Precision:

1. Why do choirs, and singers in general, have a reputation for being sloppy rhythmically?

2. Can singers be expected to sing with real rhythmic accuracy?

3. What factors increase a choir's ability to sing with rhythmic accuracy? (psychological unity, rhythmic breathing, clean diction, flexibility of tone, etc.)

H. Dynamics:

1. What dynamic limitations exist in the vocal instrument?

2. What enables a group of singers to perform with a wide dynamic range?
**APPENDIX D**

**CARAPETYAN'S CHORAL REPERTOIRE**

The following list of choral literature was compiled from extant programs of choral concerts conducted by Caro Carapetyan.

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|                       | *Sweet Are the Thoughts*  
|                       | *Come thou Spirit Divinest* |
| Burney, Arr.          | *Alla Trinita Beata* (15th Century melody) |
| Byrd, William         | *Surge, Illuminare* |
| Clement, Jacques      | *Ascendit Deus* |
| Couperin, Louis       | *Allemande, Sarabande, Chacone* |
| D'Agincourt, Francois | *Dialogue* |
| Des Prez, Josquin     | *Hosanna from the Mass "Mater Patris"*  
|                       | *Tu Pauperum Refuium* |
| Dowland, John         | *Sweet, Stay Awhile* |
| Este                  | *How Merrily We Live* |
| Gabrieli, Giovanni    | *Angelus ad Pastores Ait* (double chorus)  
|                       | *Beata Es Virgo Maria*  
|                       | *Benedictus* (triple chorus)  
|                       | *In ecclesiis benedicite Domino*  
|                       | *Music Be Praised*  
<p>|                       | <em>O Jesu Mi Dulcissime</em> |</p>
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<td>Traditional, English</td>
<td>Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes</td>
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<td>Traditional, 15th Century, French</td>
<td>Celebrons la Naissance</td>
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<td>Noel Nouvelet (Women)</td>
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<td>Traditional, Polish</td>
<td>Lullaby Carol</td>
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<td>Tuttle, S. D., arr.</td>
<td>Hasten Shepherds</td>
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<td>Vaughn-Williams, arr.</td>
<td>The Turtle Dove (English)</td>
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<td>Wilkes, arr.</td>
<td>Little Fountain, Failing (Latin-American)</td>
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<td>Wolford, arr.</td>
<td>Masters in this Hall (French)</td>
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APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW WITH CARO CARAPETYAN

6423 Dykes Way
Dallas, Texas
February 20, 1981
First Interview

KING: As you know a lot of energy has been devoted to the defense of music in the schools, the justification often resting on extra-musical values, such as this will increase reading scores, or this will help their math, or some such. Our society seems to accept math and science and technical job training as being of unquestioned value. Why do you feel that the arts, and music in particular, are important in our pragmatic age?

CARAPETYAN: The simple answer would be, of course, that we don't live by bread alone. We need the arts for our emotional satisfaction and its contribution to our inner life, and I think that without the arts we shall be so much poorer. There are musical sounds in nature, we hear it everywhere. And I think most of us to a certain extent are musical. Haven't the psychologists found that there are a very small percentage of people who are really unmusical, and I think they say about five percent. So the rest of the people can do something in music, somehow, even though it may be a limited expression, still something can be done in music with most people. I can't imagine a world without the sound of music when nature itself is so full of music, birds, other sounds that come from nature itself. I don't know how to best express this, but for me, music has always been a very, very important part of my life. Perhaps because I was exposed to music. But I think there is always something in us waiting to be awakened. And if the right thing happens to us, if we are exposed to the right concepts, the stimuli, then something happens within us that responds to the need of music in us. I know that's a very inadequate response to the questions why do I consider, or why we would consider music important in our age, but perhaps because there is so much emphasis on the science and other aspects of our education in life, that much more importance must be given to music to balance our lives. Seems to me.
KING: This expression that you have mentioned that almost everyone is capable of having, or this feeling of being able to have this awakening of this part of ourselves, ah, a lot of people would say if you don't balance the checkbook by having this part of yourself awakened, you don't, most people don't make money by having that awakened. And, I guess what I'm trying to get at, of course, is not to get you to convince me, but how can this be communicated to people? Or can it be?

CARAPETYAN: I don't know how you would go about trying to convince people that music is important in their lives. Really, how can you convince a person who has had very little to do with music, doesn't necessarily respond very easily to music, or has very limited response. How are we going to convince? I really don't know, except if we have an opportunity to make the kind of music, and in our making of the music we have become so involved, we are so honest in our expression of it, that it becomes contagious. They catch something of our own involvement and our interest and love for it, and they feel, well, there must be something to this. But really I don't know how I would go about in convincing someone who is unmusical and not interested in music, to make them love music. I don't think that is going to happen immediately because you have expounded about the virtues of music and what it can do for you. It is really living with music, with any art.

KING: Are we accomplishing this, do you think? Are the musicians able to communicate this sort of thing in their lives? Is that happening?

CARAPETYAN: I am not sure. Sometimes I wonder about it. Some of our young people expose themselves to music so loud, so coarse both in text and music, so raucous—almost devastating to the nerves and surely damaging to the ear, yet they are magnetized by it. I think as music can elevate and purify one's spirit, certain music can also corrupt. If accidentally exposed to this kind of music I feel the need of a cleansing dose of Bach or Mozart. I wonder if young people so saturated with "hard rock" can ever accept or be able to listen to Mozart.

KING: Why is that, do you suppose? Is it just a lack of exposure early enough in their lives to the classics?

CARAPETYAN: I think that has a lot to do with it, because after all we love the thing that we are acquainted with; we like the thing that we are familiar with and if you have heard only a certain type of music you like that. Acquaintance is very important.
On the other hand if from early age we are exposed to music of all kinds, but always the best of them, we may become more discriminating and eventually have greater affinity for a certain type of music. But it is important to remember that the arts, and music in particular, contribute to the enrichment of our inner life. With this criteria it is not difficult to choose, at least for me. Yet I find some interesting things happening in some of the popular music—the instrumentation, for instance, harmonies and progressions, and some counterpoint and use of the harpsichord or other solo orchestral instruments. Some of the arrangements are interesting, but I could not live with that music all the time.

KING: Often time we hear music described as the "universal language," implying a type of communication. Earlier when we talked you described, well, you said, "exposure to great art, it seems to me, must have a profound influence in changing our inner life for the good."

CARAPETYAN: Yes.

KING: How does music touch people?

CARAPETYAN: You mentioned universal language. Well, I think, with some limitations because when we talk about universal language, we certainly don't mean that we can take the flute and play a piece and order a cup of coffee. We certainly don't mean that, do we? So what do we mean? I think we mean that it can express moods that are universal and that we all can feel love, kindness, compassion, trust. These are things that we can express through music. But it really is not a universal language in the sense that we are going to talk through music and say everything that we want, but we can express moods through music. It can also touch people, and move them towards certain activities. And here is where music, if corrupted, could influence us towards negative response.

KING: Of course, Plato had ideas along those lines many years ago. About music being a corrupting influence.

CARAPETYAN: Yes. It can be, it can be good influence as well as evil influence. It really could.

KING: Do you think that, what is it about music that does touch us? Ah, as you say, our inner life?

CARAPETYAN: Because music is primarily emotional. It touches our emotions.

KING: There are different schools of thought on how music speaks, and, of course, some are just the opposite of what you
were saying, that music communicates, this piece communicates this thing and if it doesn't do it, it is not worthwhile.

CARAPETYAN: No, I think we cannot be too dogmatic about this. Music speaks to different people according to their background, sensitivity and understanding. Not all of us respond to the same music the same way at all times. There are times you want to hear Bach and other times something sentimental or emotional, perhaps Tchaikovsky.

Not only we do not respond to music always the same way, we do not listen to music exactly the same way either. Some people listen to music for the sheer emotional warmth or rhythmic exhilaration they receive from it. Others may be aware of the form and the development of the composition. Some are interested in the harmony and use of counterpoint. A musicologist listens for stylistic accuracy, and listens intellectually. Then there are a few who may be able to listen to the combined aspects of the music. There are also those who may be interested in performance accuracy regardless of other features.

So as you can see we cannot claim that the same emotional and intellectual response occurs at all times by all people, or even by the same person.

KING: Is your choice of literature influenced by how you feel music reaches people? This sort of idea that we have been mentioning?

CARAPETYAN: In what circumstances do you mean? Choice of music when you are working with people or when you are choosing literature for your own enjoyment?

KING: Well, when you are planning a concert for a choir.

CARAPETYAN: Oh, well, I think that is a different thing though, Debbie. When you are planning a concert for the choir, you are not only considering what it will do emotionally or intellectually. I think the combination of everything. And then you have to have some kind of a balance. I feel very strongly about this.

Program making is an art. You do not make a collection of a dozen compositions that you like and call it a program. Every group must be chosen with care. If a group represents a school or period, some contrast and unity must be achieved within that group. The whole program should have a balance and unity. Unless we are preparing a special program (all American, etc.) it is well to have a few schools and periods represented, not just for appearance sake but because it gives meaning, contrast and, in the same time unity to the program. It also acquaints the singers and audience to great literature they need to know.
KING: So you are saying that music should educate, in other words, as well as---

CARAPETYAN: I think that is very important. The performer is, naturally, to entertain, right? Whether it's solo performance or orchestral or choral performance. We hope to make it an enjoyable experience. But I really feel that as performers we have also a responsibility and duty to educate. If our audience is never exposed to certain music, certain schools, certain periods of music, they will never know it. And, I think it is an opportunity lost if we don't take advantage of that perhaps in the beginning, in small doses, but introduce or expose our audiences to great music.

KING: Going back just briefly to the idea of music touching people and changing them somehow, have you seen this sort of thing?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, I have. I have many, many times. Especially what happens to the performers themselves, which is, I think, the real test, those who are involved in making that music. What does that music say to them? How are they affected by the music, emotionally, spiritually, and what does it do to their lives? After being exposed to great music, are they better men and women? Or has it meant nothing? I think that to me is very, very important. You cannot, of course, always measure to what extent. Sometimes you will not see any evidence, obvious evidence. But changes do occur. When you receive letters thirty years after people had come in contact with certain music and experienced it, they still remember and write to you about their wonderful experience that they have never forgotten, that to me, says something. It wasn't something that just rolled over and they were not touched. Those people were touched by that music and that experience. Otherwise it wouldn't stay with them for thirty years. We often hear from our various students in all parts, some from the Kent days. I could show you a couple of letters that came at Christmas time.

It is good to hear from former students who remember and are grateful for those early musical experiences. In a few cases the direction of their lives was changed and those who devoted their lives to music proudly carry on the tradition, rendering valuable service. This, I think is pretty strong evidence.

KING: It must be gratifying to you.

CARAPETYAN: Very.

KING: What about the way you perform the music, interpretive considerations? You were talking about it as an intellectual
endeavor in that we do want to educate but, of course, it is also an enjoyment thing, wanting to entertain. Some people, speaking particularly about 16th century music, some people think that in order to perform it in an "authentic way," whatever we are going to call that, is kind of boring to modern ears, and if you are going to make it listenable to modern audiences, you have to kind of have to soup it up a little bit, or something. Do these ideas affect the way you interpret music?

CARAPETYAN: Well, let's take Renaissance music. This notion that we have to have a certain type of tone, let us say without vibrato, or be a sort of emaciated sound, and this is the tone that we apply to Renaissance music, I think is wrong. Each individual composition has its own interpretation intrinsic in the music, and we have to penetrate into that music deeply as performers. Try to understand it, try to study the music, understand the period in which this music was written, know something about the composer, the culture and environment of that period, and somehow transport ourselves, transfer ourselves to that period. If it is possible. It is very difficult for us to do that because we hear everything with 19th and 20th century ears, and it is very difficult for us to go back to the 16th century culture. But really that is exactly what we must do and then try to understand what this piece of music is saying. Try to bring it to life. After all, the performer must try to know what is the intention of the composer, and this is very difficult because, even at best, early music was written in such a way that we do not have even as much expression marks as the 18th-19th century music, and 20th century music has. So it is a difficult job to know exactly what is the intention. Take the music of Beethoven, who marked everything very, very precisely, exactly what he wanted dynamically and even using words to express his wishes. These are still symbols on a piece of paper. The performer has to recreate this music in his own mind and be able to transfer what he thinks are the composer's intentions, to his performers. And this is not an easy job, but I think this is what has to happen. Otherwise, to say, well now here is the kind of sound we are going to apply to Renaissance music and we are going to apply it to all Renaissance music, just simply makes no sense.

In the choral music of the Renaissance period we have the music of Victoria requiring a good deal of emotional intensity. Palestrina asking for more impersonal quality. There are the bawdy madrigals, Josquin's L'Homme Arme Mass needing still another approach, Giovanni Gabrieli's polychoral works with brass choirs, and thousands of others. Surely we do not apply to all these, as some people think we should, an emaciated, colorless, white tone without any vibrato--the so called
"authentic Renaissance tone." It makes no sense. Let me repeat, the music itself dictates the tone, we need to be sensitive to it.

KING: So, now let's see if I understand this, because if I do it is different from other ideas that I have seen. If I understand correctly, what you are saying is the authentic interpretation of a piece is not present day people trying to do it like they did 400 years ago, but it's present day people trying to understand the minds of people 400 years ago who produced that music and putting ourselves in that context and then the result is authentic. Is that somewhat?

CARAPETYAN: But, Debbie, when you say doing as they did 400 years ago, we don't know how they did it.

KING: No, but a lot of people feel that since they used boys, that women should sound like boys.

CARAPETYAN: Well that is one aspect of it. But we are not using boys, and to make women sound like boys, sounds artificial. Sounds colorless. Ah, I really don't think we can have a preconceived notion of sound. As I said earlier we should try to penetrate into that music and try to understand, as much as possible, what that music is saying. We must not forget that the Renaissance music also was outgrowth of chant. Often chants were used in polyphony. That gives us some idea of the flexibility that this music requires. So, right away, that does away with bar lines and the strong accents and secondary accents which we have learned from our childhood. And I must confess that very seldom if ever, I see a conductor who is not bound to the measures. And recently I heard a choir, they did pretty well but in spite of that, there were those strong beats, measures, and bar lines, so destructive to this music.

At best we do not know exactly how a composition was conceived in the mind of a performer 400 years ago and how he performed. Occasionally we read in an old book someone commenting on a certain performance, let's say in Venice in the time of Gabrieli. This gives us an inkling, only an inkling of the manner of that performance. We still need a thorough study of all aspects of that music. And because of the differences of our background, musicianship and sensitivity there will be differences in the performances of two musicians. I am sure it was so 400 years ago also, although then the performer was often also the composer.

KING: Do you have any comments to make as to the things that we have not touched on that you feel are important about the nature or the purpose of music which, I guess is what a philosophy is.
CARAPETYAN: These are such general topics, Debbie, I am not sure I am capable of adequately answering those. The purpose of music, all depends on how we view it, from what point of view we are going to look into these matters. Some people will say there is no reason, no purpose for music; I can live without it. Some of us can't live without it. I am not so sure that I can really give you an adequate response on that.

KING: I just wanted to give you an opportunity to put in anything that I had not thought to mention.

CARAPETYAN: Well, in a way we have touched, at least briefly, on what music can do for us. You see the ancient Greeks and Chinese equated music and morality. They felt that music contributes to the development of one's character and it was as important a part in their lives as morality. One contributes to the other. That might not be our view today, I am not sure. But it is true though, there is no criminal that you hear going around singing joyfully. Criminals don't sing, don't make music. It does not mean that a musician cannot be occasionally a criminal. (laughter). But it is true, it is true that they have found that the criminal never sings. Never, never. There is nothing that is coming out of him expressing the joy that will make him sing.

KING: That is interesting. Well, thank you.

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KING: To what extent is a broad knowledge of music history and literature important for the choral director?

CARAPETYAN: I think it is important. The greater knowledge the choral director has, not only of his own field, but general music, the better. I am ever thankful, Debbie, for my background in years and years of violin study and playing. It has given me an approach to my singing that I don't think I would have because so much stress in my years of violin study was put upon the singing quality of the instrument. If that instrument can sing, how much more the voice. And here is the voice, the only live instrument, the only God-given instrument. All the other instruments are man-made, made of brass and wood or other materials, and this is the only live instrument, which is ourselves, our own body.

How vibrant, how exciting singing could be. And the knowledge, any knowledge, musical knowledge that will help us to bring into this instrument and make it really respond and express music the way it should, should be a great asset. Therefore, I do consider knowledge of music history and literature very important. I think that the difficulty often is
that a singer with very limited background suddenly becomes a choir director, or even an instrumentalist with limited vocal background or understanding of the vocal instrument, becomes a conductor. It is very difficult to expect much. These people cannot really get the most out of the vocal instrument. They do not know the possibilities of the voice.

KING: Do you think it is important also for vocalists and choral directors to take an interest in and learn about instrumental forms as well, or is that quite secondary?

CARAPETYAN: No. I think it is a very excellent broadening experience for the vocalist. Unfortunately vocalists do not have very much interest in any other field except their own. How often have you seen a vocalist in recitals, chamber music or other recitals? Very, very seldom, because they simply don't take any interest.

I think they could learn a great deal from a string quartet. Choir people could learn a great deal from how a string quartet plays. And a conductor, it is his responsibility to broaden himself as much as possible. In that respect I consider myself fortunate because I do have a tremendous interest in instrumental music because of my background. In fact in my record collection I have a lot more instrumental music than I have vocal and choral music. A lot more. For two reasons. First my own interest. Second, generally instrumentalists and instrumental ensembles are more accomplished than most vocalists and vocal groups. Vocalists often do not achieve technical proficiency equal to that of the instrumentalists.

KING: Instrumentalists you feel are better at this than vocalists on a broad--?

CARAPETYAN: Most. Yes. Most instrumentalists usually are better prepared musicians than vocalists.

KING: Why is that?

CARAPETYAN: If a person is endowed with a good voice (a gift to him), he may enjoy the sound of it and may use the music as a vehicle to glorify himself. Such a person may not go through a strict discipline to make himself a real musician-singer for he can learn to sing songs quickly. An instrumentalist, on the other hand, goes through years of study before he is ready to present himself as a soloist or an orchestral player. Instrumentalists in a major orchestra are all virtuosos on their instruments. An orchestra conductor needs not tell his instrumentalists how to play their instruments, he deals with musical matters. Not so with most choral organizations which are composed of students or amateurs. Here the conductor must
be knowledgeable to help his group vocally as well as musically—a difficult job.

KING: I can't imagine having to teach all those different instruments, how to play, that would be impossible.

CARAPETYAN: Yes, it would be quite a job.

KING: Do you feel that it is important for a choir to have an understanding of background and structure of the piece in order to perform it adequately?

CARAPETYAN: Well, to a certain extent. But I think more importantly the conductor should understand the structure, and style of music at hand. He should not give a lengthy lecture on the technical aspects of the composition. It may appear scholarly to expound on the structure of a composition, but words should be kept to the minimum. It is important that a momentum is established and retained during a rehearsal. The conductor should endeavor to convey his musical ideas through his expressive conducting and avoid unnecessary interruptions for verbal explanations, even though at times this is necessary. The actual music making is more profitable.

KING: Do you feel that singing from memory is an aid or hindrance to an over-all understanding of the music on the part of singers?

CARAPETYAN: I don't think it is necessary to memorize all compositions, you don't memorize a whole oratorio. But shorter compositions can be memorized easily, especially in college situations where you may have four or more hours of rehearsal time every week. Once compositions are memorized the choir is free to watch the conductor more carefully for phrasing, nuances and other musical details. This is a definite advantage.

KING: By what criteria do you select music to perform? We've already talked some about that.

CARAPETYAN: Yes, we did already mention something about that. I think above all you want music of good quality. You may have varied music, yes, but I think you want to keep an eye for music that is not hackneyed, music that is not cheap. Even if you want light-hearted music, it does not have to be cheap. I think that would be very disturbing. As I said earlier, you want to have some kind of unity in your program in spite of the fact that you are also looking for contrast. You are looking for changes of mood, changes of keys, although I must confess, changes of keys have not disturbed me as much. I do not avoid, for instance,
two minor keys consecutively if the music otherwise qualifies for inclusion in a group. I concern myself more about the contrasting moods of the two compositions, the quality of the music as well as the quality of the words. In short, above all I emphasize quality.

KING: How did you develop your ideas of quality? What is quality to you or what is not quality?

CARAPETYAN: That is a good question. Test of time would be a good criteria. If music has endured for centuries, as has the music of such masters as Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and many others before and after them, the reason for their endurance lies in the fact that there is something timeless in the music which continues to speak to people of different generations. Examination of such music helps us to judge quality. You must remember that at the life-time of these great composers there were many other composers whose works are forgotten, only recently there has been an effort on part of some musicologists to unearth some of this music. Some of these are dull. Even the Baroque music, so popular today, has many dull stereotyped compositions by lesser composers.

KING: So the test of time is--?

CARAPETYAN: I think that is very important for judging music. But even music which has stood the test of time may not have appeal to certain individuals, again because of our background and education. Nothing wrong with the music, but we may not respond to it at a certain moment, perhaps later, when we also grow musically.

KING: What about contemporary music? You usually include some contemporary music in your programs.

CARAPETYAN: Yes, one should include some contemporary music in a program. As with the music of other periods, only a limited amount may be included unless the whole program were to be devoted to contemporary music. And this is a good thing to do from time to time. I myself have limitations in this field.

KING: It would be impossible to know it all. How do you judge contemporary pieces? How do you decide what is quality and what is not?

CARAPETYAN: Actually contemporary music should give us less performance problems stylistically. There are no established traditions, in fact every contemporary composer tries to break new ground. An audience has no way of knowing how the piece
should be played or sung. Not so with the classics which are recorded and are familiar to many people.

KING: Contemporary composers are being more specific now, too, about a lot of the markings.

CARAPETYAN: Yes, of course. Much more than in the olden times.

KING: Judging a piece of contemporary music as to quality, is it basically just your response since you don't have the test of time there?

CARAPETYAN: We should look for the intrinsic qualities of the music. It should also be music we can live with if we are to perform it. The main problem that I find in contemporary music is its unvocal character. Most of the 16th century composers had begun their music study as choir-boys. They sang, they understood the voice and its possibilities and limitations. Sometimes their simple four part writing achieves sonorities never achieved in eight part contemporary writing. Few if any contemporary composers (perhaps except Barber, who sang) understand the voice. They write instrumentally, for the voice—jumpy! Like the violin the voice is a melody instrument.

KING: A lot of people say that about Bach.

CARAPETYAN: It is true that Bach conceives his melodies instrumentally, but what melodies! Do you remember the alto aria in Cantata #11 which he later uses as the "Agnus Dei" in the B minor Mass, this time the alto melody in the strings giving a new melody to the voice. I personally do not find Bach melodies difficult to sing. They always make sense. Again the melody in the strings for the extended chord in Cantata #140. A jumpy melody, but sings and plays well.

KING: You have already mentioned that you have somewhat of a preference for 16th century music.

CARAPETYAN: Bach and pre-Bach music, yes.

KING: Are there any other schools of music in particular that you favor?

CARAPETYAN: Well, this may sound strange, but I have had much interest in the late 19th century Russian music, especially the liturgical music. Somehow the Russian choral music is a continuation of the early a cappella tradition, albeit romantic in mood and style. This is music badly neglected, you seldom see any Russian Liturgical music programmed by college choirs. From musical and vocal standpoint they require a different
The liturgical music of the Eastern Churches, including the Russian Church, is earthy, while the Catholic or Anglican approach is impersonal. While the latter is detached the former is a strong personal expression.

KING: You see that as a contrast even between music of the same period but in different, say Brahms.

CARAPETYAN: Definitely. The Russian Liturgical music is truly a cappella literature as no instruments were allowed during the services. They are based mostly on the old Znameny Chants masterfully harmonized by such composers as Tschesnokoff, Rachmaninoff, Kastalsky and even Tchaikovsky, always retaining the spirit of the chant. Rachmaninoff in his Vespers as well as the Liturgy writes a good deal of polyphony. The melodic line is predominant.

This music has a special appeal for me, partly because of my own background. You see, as a boy I sang the Armenian Liturgy.

By the way, this has nothing to do with our conversation, but recently someone sent me a colored photograph of the interior (partial) of the cathedral where as a boy I sang in the choir. This is in New Julfa. I must show you the picture.

KING: You have them here, the pictures?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, I have them here.

KING: Oh, I would like to see them. When you are looking for new literature where do you go?

CARAPETYAN: You know that is one of the hardest, hardest problems. In these days I don't do that, but I remember spending my summer vacations looking through music. Piles, piles and piles of it. Maybe go through a hundred pieces of choral literature and find, if you are lucky, half a dozen, that you feel you can use, have in mind for that year's program. It is really difficult. Very, very difficult. It is a time consuming affair. I have never really made a habit of going to these so called clinics or reading clinics or whatever they call them. Publishers bring all the music and they pass out and everybody sings and then you choose what you like. I find the danger is this, pretty soon, because of this clearing house, either the whole territory or the whole country sings the same compositions the same way with the same sound. I have always preferred to do my own research. I have never depended upon these lists or workshops. I imagine you could get some help, yes. But I have chosen the hard way of doing it all by myself, alone. Much of my programs usually have included compositions that other people don't do. And I have especially enjoyed that aspect of it.
KING: Do you go to original manuscripts or do you go to publishers?

CARAPETYAN: Some. Whatever is available from publishers and then I have access to some early prints or publications and of course now the American Institute of Musicology produces so much, Medieval and Renaissance music now available.

KING: Publishers often-times will send music. Is that one way?

CARAPETYAN: Yes. It is very difficult, I find. Publishers send you a lot of music but you know they have to push music they have published. I don't find much of it of great value, only occasionally you find things you like or can use. This is true in church situation also. When you have lived with music as long as I have, you develop a sense of knowing what music will accomplish what you have in mind. One needs to use new music and not depend on old hackneyed stuff. Then if something, even new music, becomes too popular, I stay away from it, I lose interest. (Laughter).

KING: What would you suggest to young aspiring choral conductors. Where do we go to look for music?

CARAPETYAN: I used to examine catalogues of all publishers, here as well as abroad, and see what appeals to me, and then order these. Of course, it is a very costly business. Then there was a time, I don't know whether they still do this or not, you could order things on approval and then select and send back what you couldn't use. But they expected you to keep a good portion of it and that was a problem. But anything that you ordered from abroad you had to keep, so it becomes very expensive. That limits you. One has to be on the look out all the time for interesting works listed in catalogs, programs or heard on broadcasts. Certain periodicals like NATS, Notes, JAMS and Journals of American Choral Association and others often review new publications they have received. Then, of course, the libraries. Some university libraries have vast amount of materials, NTSU is one of them. Eastman School of Music has a fine library.

KING: Shall we go on to the next section?

CARAPETYAN: All right.

KING: Okay. There is, of course, a wide variety of opinion about the atmosphere which is most conducive to artistic achievement. Do you favor an authoritarian approach to working with choral groups, or do you prefer a more open environment in
which questions can be raised? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

CARAPETYAN: Well, of course, my answer and my preference always has been a more open, democratic approach as far as our relationship is concerned. When it comes to musical matters, then it is not a question of everybody chipping in and deciding what we should do. You will have chaos. That cannot be done. So that is your job as a musical director. That is your decision as to how this composition is to be performed. It doesn't mean that you close your mind to a suggestion that sounds logical, makes sense and could be helpful. I think you should at least give consideration to it. But the final decision on musical matters is the director's responsibility. In vocal matters also he must have control, this is possible only when the director knows the voice and can communicate his ideas.

I think choir members should feel free to ask questions and they deserve answers as long as the person is honestly trying to understand and learn, and questions are not designed as delaying tactics out to begin an argument. Arguments are unproductive and should be avoided. Questions that seek information should be encouraged and answered as carefully as possible.

A frank and open communication between the choir and director is essential. I do not think relations should be one of dictatorship to which the choir responds because of fear. No singer or choir is able to sing freely and joyfully if the director has caused an emotional turmoil in the singers. You know very well that good singing is impossible if you create a situation that brings about tension or resentment. If you are resentful in your heart and expect to produce a beautiful sound, a lovely line, it is impossible. It cannot be done.

There will be always some people who will take advantage of the undictatorial approach as weakness, not understanding your philosophy, or what you are trying to accomplish. But I think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. At least that is my feeling about that. They have got to love what they are doing. And they have got to realize that, as a conductor, you are interested in them. You love them. You love the music that you are doing. You love the very work that you are involved in. I think if it isn't that, the realtionship is so, so tense that you don't accomplish very much, or if you accomplish anything it is because you just make them do it in spite of their resentment. I don't think that is fun. I really don't think that is fun for the conductor or for the singer.

I like to feel that a group does something because they love it. Because they respect you they want to do it, not only for you, but they want to do it for the sake of the music, because after all that is the important thing. And the conductor, I don't know whether you have this in your questions
or not, and the conductor has no business to get in the way of that music. The conductor is there only to help to recreate that music to the best of his ability but never, never get in the way of music. You know we are living today in an age of virtuosity. The conductor is a virtuoso, he and the performers, too. The performer is given so much praise that we forget about the composer's contribution. We go to hear an opera, we don't care who wrote that opera, what the opera is about. We only go because such and such a person is singing. We are going to hear that person. And so that we can later say, oh, yes, I heard so and so. If asked, who wrote the opera they may not know anything about it. But they went to hear certain performers. So the performer becomes the one who receives praise and glory, and the composer who has done the creative work often is forgotten.

And I think the conductor in this respect must be very, very careful not to get in the way of the music. You know very well that the conductors don't have to go through all the gesticulations that they do. But they do that for the sake of the audience. Right? Not for the sake of the performers. They can perform, they can play, they can perform even without the conductor. So he needs the minimum activity. He should never get in the way of the music. But it will be very disappointing for some in the audience if they don't see a show up there. So the conductor obliges them. (Laughter).

KING: How else could the conductor get in the way? You mentioned unnecessary movement. Are there other ways or is that basically--?

CARAPETYAN: I think it would be conductor's own attitude. If he considers himself more important than the music then he is already in the way of the music. His interpretation cannot be honest. He has to be honest. I think that is very important.

KING: This word honesty keeps coming up in our conversation regardless of what we are talking about. Why is that so important to you?

CARAPETYAN: It is very important. It is very important in life as well as in our art. I think if we are not honest in our art we are not to be trusted. Because through our art we are expressing something of ourselves. If we are not honest in our art we are not honest in our life. I think it is very important—honesty, integrity.

KING: Occasionally there will, of course, be a situation where there seems to be a lack of individual effort either in learning the music, learning the notes, or bad attitude. How do you deal with that sort of thing?
CARAPETYAN: You may have individuals who often will not respond, no matter what you do. Sometimes you are much better off without them. But generally, again honesty comes in here, if you are honest in your work, if your group senses your honesty, your sincerity, and also they know that you are not doing this for your own glory, that you are doing it for the music and for what that music can do for them individually and collectively, then they do respond. If the choir is caught up in your enthusiasm and devotion, if the singing has become a joyful and exhilarating experience, and if as conductor you have given all you can then you will also receive a great deal, for the more we give the more we receive. In fact, in such an atmosphere there will be those who will feel they are not doing enough, they would wish they could do still more. What a healthy situation! I have seen this happen.

KING: Those that don't get caught up in this, as you say--.

CARAPETYAN: Well, undoubtably there is some reason. Either you are not reaching them or they have come in with closed mind and heart and they don't want to be reached. In a situation like that a private frank talk may clarify the situation, but if this does not help and cooperation is not possible, then a separation would be the best solution.

KING: Some directors feel that it is best to maintain some distance between themselves and individual choir members, I guess in order to preserve the sense of authority. Have you found this to be true?

CARAPETYAN: Well, Debbie, I always feel a great deal of warmth towards my people. I have never felt that I needed to keep people away from me. There is always a certain amount of distance, but in the same time there is a good rapport, good warmth, and good relationship. While I would not keep people away from me deliberately, I would also not encourage chumminess.

KING: What would that destroy? Why would you not encourage it?

CARAPETYAN: Well, I think if I sense that such a behavior indicates lack of respect for me or my position, then not only I would resent it, I would not allow it.

KING: Are you the same person on the podium as you are off the podium?

CARAPETYAN: I don't think that you want to deliberately act as if you are two different persons. Possibly there is a danger of that. And I think the danger would be with a person who
considered himself a dictator in a situation like this. He is the master and nobody else dares to say anything or do anything else except this way. I think that would put that person into a different picture entirely. But since I do not feel that my attitude is one of a dictator, I do not feel I am a different person in different situations. However at a rehearsal my position would be not the same as my relationship with the choir would be in a party.

KING: No. That is all the questions, that I have. Do you have any for me? (Laughter).

CARAPETYAN: Did you cover everything there?

KING: Yes.

April 9, 1981

Second Interview

KING: Of what does a well structured concert program consist? I think we mentioned something about this before.

CARAPETYAN: It, a program, I think should not be consisting of just individual numbers that we think we like and then we just put them together and call it a program. But a program should be thought out very, very carefully. In fact this is quite an art. A balanced program should have representation of various schools, various styles. To be sure you are limited. After all one program can't include everything. On the other hand, it should be, as much as possible representative. I think you would want to give something of various schools, various periods, yet within each group there should be contrast and the whole program, I feel rather strongly about this, must have some kind of unity. Even though you may represent, let's say an early school, as well as romantic and contemporary schools, still there must be some sort of sense in it, so you don't feel that well you heard a number now you are jumping to some other number, no relationship, nothing. You don't carry some kind of feeling of either mood or intellectual satisfaction, because there is nothing that contributes to your emotional or intellectual satisfaction. I think that is the main thing. To have unity and contrast. Contrast within unity.

KING: So the reason for such a program is basically to satisfy intellectually and emotionally.

CARAPETYAN: I would say so, both. And, of course, in the same time expose your audience as well as your group to good music
of various periods and schools. Ah, otherwise if we speak to only a certain type of music, then both performers as well as audiences will never have a chance to get acquainted with anything else. Look how often we hear the same, same works performed over and over again. This Sunday Brahms Requiem, or some familiar work that is performed every year, over and over again. I have no objection to that. They are great works and they should be performed, but on the other hand there are other compositions very worthy of performance that we should try to use.

KING: What are your primary considerations when you are selecting music for a particular choir, not necessarily your judgment of the music, but do you plan the whole program first and then find pieces to fit in, or do you figure out the needs of your group first? How do you approach that?

CARAPETYAN: I think it is very important that we consider the ability of the group in, so that you do not do something that is impossible for them, yet always challenge them. I think this is very important. If you give them something they can digest in a short time, then they have lost interest. There must always be an urge to strive for greater accomplishments both vocally and musically. Challenge I think is very important. It has to be a little more difficult than they think they can do. This may be encountered in the music itself, or the vocal, intellectual or emotional demands the music may make.

Not only a group's ability is considered when choosing music for a program; but the purpose of the program and the occasion will to a great extent influence the choice of the music. And, of course, the judgment of the conductor is important and this is formed by his background, training, taste and affinity to certain music.

KING: Of what importance are program notes when you are presenting a program?

CARAPETYAN: Program notes, of course, obviously have to be very, very brief. But even brief notes can be helpful both for the performer as well as the audience, but particularly for the audience. By the time the performer has studied and is ready to sing he knows something about that music, something about the background of the composer, something about the actual content, style and spirit of that music and what he has received from it. But I think it's a help to the audience especially with an unfamiliar composition.

KING: What steps do you go through when you are preparing a score to conduct? How do you prepare yourself?
CARAPETYAN: I think that would vary again with each composition. I think each one of us eventually comes to feel rather comfortable in certain kinds of music, certain schools, and we need a lot more study and work in others. So there is not an even way of saying this is exactly what I do in every case. It doesn't work that way. I find for instance in certain situations I spend much, much more time to understand the music and get into the depth of that music, and in certain other compositions I don't feel I need that much time. But all compositions really must require serious study, otherwise you just are too superficial about it. The text has to be studied. You must know what the text is saying. And then, of course, the music, if it is a good composer, usually the text has been well handled so the music expresses the text, and that already is a great, great help. And, of course, in understanding the text and understanding what the music is, how is the music enhancing that text, then it helps you to bring out those details in the text especially. And I am very much concerned about good articulation. We can not separate the vocal approach from other musical considerations because this is what will allow you to have free good diction or else sing in such a way that the text is not understood. And the notion that choirs are not supposed to sing with clear diction, I dismiss as incorrect. It can be done. Therefore, your own study has to prepare you so that you see the pitfalls and you understand the vocal problems. For instance, I can always visualize a problem spot. This might give us such and such trouble so I try to anticipate that and try to prepare myself as well as the choir ahead of time for that sort of thing.

KING: Do you do any type of analysis that is not directly connected with the text, harmonically speaking?

CARAPETYAN: No, I don't do too much of that. I mean we could get into details and spend a lot of time and say now this is such and such chord going into such and such chord, but I'm not so sure how much that serves for the performing group. It might make a contribution, but I don't really emphasize that too much as you know.

A composer who conducts his own composition may always be aware of such and such chords and their progressions, and point these out to the choir. I imagine this is helpful and I have no objection to it, but how much time one should spend on that rather than on other musical and vocal aspects, I am not sure.

KING: Historical background.

CARAPETYAN: Yes, I think that is important. I think that is definitely important.
KING: Do you study about the composer? Or...

CARAPETYAN: Definitely. The more one knows about the composer, his period and culture and especially his music, the better. Not only the vocal or choral music, but his instrumental music as well. Only then we may have some idea of his style and the demands of his music. I think the more you know about that period, the culture of that period, the better you can understand your music. Because after all music is an expression of the time and the culture of that period. It is said that music is always a little late in expressing the culture and the spirit of the period.

KING: Is it helpful for the conductor to have the music memorized?

CARAPETYAN: Well, after you have studied it a long time, you are bound to memorize. But I don't feel it is absolutely necessary. There was a time, for instance, I had no difficulty memorizing any piece. I conducted all my programs from memory except larger works. Ah, but there is a question of habit. I think definitely that when a choir as well as the conductor knows the music well enough to do it from memory they are freer. They are free to follow the details of interpretation and they can always be much more flexible. You don't have to feel that you have studied this music in such and such a way and you have to stick to that--no possibility of any change at the moment of performance if some new idea comes to you, and this can happen (and has happened to me many, many times right during the performance), you see a new light, now, yes this could be done in a different way and you try it and if the conductor and the performers are free, they are not bound to only one interpretation of the music--here we have to made a crescendo, decrescendo, etc.--they can follow a change to everyone's delight. And I rather like that. I rather think that this is important. There are, as you know, some conductors who have every detail written out, worked out, and then you stick to it. You never can change, you are bound to it and your singers are bound to it, because if you change it they are going to get upset. I rather keep my groups responsive and ready to be flexible in case you have a new idea and you want to apply, to be able to do that even during a performance. This keeps the choir alert.

KING: When you are planning a rehearsal how do you decide what pieces, what is the order of the pieces that you will rehearse?

CARAPETYAN: I usually try to have a general idea, but often I find that I don't have to follow that because something happens. Certain questions come up, which delays us in our approach to the various pieces, then instead of spending any time on this
particular things, I feel it would be more profitable if I change and go to another piece. Again, I really would like a certain amount of flexibility. I know that there are some people who have everything worked out and they go through the rehearsal exactly the way they have worked out. Ah, but again, I like the flexibility. Suppose, as we have discussed before, some questions come up on a certain point and you have spent a good deal of time trying, clarifying these points. And then you suddenly find that having done that you don't have to take another composition which may deal with the same problems or you may want to do just that and dismiss some of the other things. So, I think, again, flexibility. I appreciate that.

KING: Do you have in your mind, ahead of time, before the rehearsal, certain goals that you want to accomplish.

CARAPETYAN: Yes, definitely. But always alert to the special needs that may arise and willing to change plans to solve the problem. I may have in mind a certain project that I wanted to work on, let's say from a vocal standpoint or musical standpoint, but I have only done part of it when an entirely different problem presents itself which needs to be dealt with at that moment to good advantage. Why should we feel that we must follow a plan exactly? If a need is presented and you must meet that need it is better to do it now than to dismiss that and say, well now you hold on maybe I'll get to it next time, because I've got a plan here, I have got to follow that. (laughter).

KING: Do you have a long range schedule of progress in your mind moving a program to performance level? At this point we should be approximately here in our progress, that sort of thing.

CARAPETYAN: Yeah, I think that. I am not so sure whether I have a time schedule really, but I have always a sense of urgency. I can not free myself from that. I always feel that the time is limited, I must accomplish as much as possible. For that reason I have always felt that a lot of talk and wasting time on certain details that you can accomplish in your conducting, must be limited. Another philosophy, I want to give credit to my singers for intelligence and allow them to understand what we are doing through conducting. If I sense that they understand, I am getting across to them, then there is no point for me to stop and give a lecture on that, you see. During the study of a composition if a section or even an individual makes a mistake, but I see from their faces that they realized that they made a mistake, no point for me to stop, disturb everybody to bring this to their attention. As intelligent people, they are musical enough to recognize these things, then no point for me to talk about it.
KING: Do you include any sight singing, vocal warm-ups that sort things in your rehearsal and why or why not.

CARAPETYAN: Sight singing?

KING: Uh-huh.

CARAPETYAN: I don't know whether I understand your question.

KING: Well, a lot of people use solfege or numbers to learn how to sight read better or rhythmic exercises.

CARAPETYAN: No, I don't do that because I feel much of time in college situations you take it for granted that these people know how to read. They should be able to. If they manage it fairly well, I don't feel that I need to--in fact, I must confess, that part of it, teaching notes, is the most bothersome part for me. I, I would be glad if someone else teach them the notes and let me do the vocal and interpretive part.

KING: Vocal warm-ups?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, definitely. But always having some sort of relationship to the works that you are going to go over immediately. I try to anticipate the problem spots in a composition, design vocalises that will help clarify and simplify the difficult spot and having worked it out through the exercises then immediately apply to the composition. Some of these difficulties may require correct use of vowels and consonants, or may need better production or agility for a melismatic passage. There could be a variety of problems requiring solutions.

It is meaningless to go through so call "warming-up" exercises--a few scales, arpeggios--without any particular reason. The choir has not been intelligently helped or guided to carry over to the composition what was done through vocalises. There must be a relationship.

KING: What attention do you give to the pace of a rehearsal? Would you be likely to change what is going on, change your plan if things seemed to drag?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, yes. Definitely. Again as we were talking about it earlier, your flexibility allows you that, you don't have to feel that you have to keep that same pace. If your plan is not working, drop it and do something else that might really bring life to the group or wake them up, so to speak. If necessary, certainly, why not?

KING: Do you make use of sectional rehearsals at all?
CARAPETYAN: Yes, if sectional rehearsals could be managed by people who really will not waste time. That is the problem usually. If you give it to someone, assistants, or section leaders to do this, some can do very well, but some just waste time, irritate the singers and they don't get anywhere. But sometimes they are necessary. You really have to have it.

KING: Do you use the piano to help the choir learn music, or do you find it is best to work a cappella?

CARAPETYAN: I use any device to teach notes. If we are under pressure, our time is limited, then I would use any device to get the learning of the notes, that process out of the way as quickly as possible even if it means we have to depend upon the piano at times. And you know, in most situations you are always under pressure. You have a date for a performance and you have only limited time for preparation and if you are going to work on notes and on details until the last minute, you have not given the choir an opportunity to experience the composition as a whole in a continuous manner. And I think that is very important. You have got to get these details out of the way so that you have a chance to perform. I have heard rehearsals that singers, choirs have never gone through the composition uninterrupted. And then suddenly they have to come and sing in a performance.

KING: That would be scary.

CARAPETYAN: Yes it would be. Besides you know I don't feel that all our work in rehearsal time is just for preparation for a concert. I feel that the rehearsal time can be a tremendous time of experience musically and the excitement that can come from it. I feel it is too bad to lose that opportunity. In fact sometimes the rehearsals are much more exciting than actual performances.

KING: That was just what I was going to ask next. Some people feel that you need to exactly pace what you are doing so that the composition doesn't peak too soon.

CARAPETYAN: Yes?

KING: Do I take it that you don't subscribe to that theory?

CARAPETYAN: No, no, I feel if the choir is ready at a certain moment to experience that kind of a peak, let them have it. And they are not any worse off for that experience.

KING: Can it be recaptured?
CARAPETYAN: I think so. I really think so. I would hate to think that there should be only one peak musical experience. I remember reading a review some years ago in which Robert Shaw was quoted as having said that during a tour when forty performances of Mozart's Requiem were presented, it was the 40th concert given in Boston which really "peaked" (using your word). Well, I would say that is too late. They should have had a number of them, at least during 40 performances. Now, I am sure it was not intentionally held back so that they would have a peak on the 40th concert, but I really think that if it is a spontaneous response to the music and everyone feels--and is caught up in the spirit of it, it will happen. During some of my own rehearsals the music and the singing has been so moving that the choir members could hardly retain themselves. And I don't think that is bad. The more musical, fine musical experiences the group has the more sensitive and better musicians they become. They begin to realize what is the power of music, what music can do for them, and they are prepared for experiences like that. I don't feel that a concert could be flat because you have experienced a high during a rehearsal. It can happen, it might happen. But I am not going to stop it, if the choir is already moving towards a climax at the particular time, I should not stop them and say hold on, hold on, we are going to do this for a concert. They have got to experience it.

KING: So you are more interested in what the choir members experience than you are....

CARAPETYAN: Yes, yes. I am always, Debbie, I am always much more, and I have expressed this a number times, I am much more interested in what happens to the people I am working with than my audience. Because, I feel strongly that if, if something great, something important has happened to my singers, then the audience is going to catch that. But if they are just coming out there, deadpan, expecting nothing, audience is not going to get anything either.

KING: What should a choral conductor seek to accomplish with his gestures?

CARAPETYAN: Everything! When I say that, I really mean that. Musically, everything. But more than that. Your gestures should help the singers vocally whether they are ready to analyze or recognize it or not. It has to be a combination of the two.

KING: How can gestures help in vocal work?

CARAPETYAN: Because you as a conductor understand the vocal problems and you can give the kind of gestures that will help.
For instance we want to start a tone in such a way that not a lot of air is wasted, you don't sit on that tone, you don't blow a lot of air. Okay. How would you conduct that? Certainly not this way (choppy, downward movement), but in a way that your whole body indicates what should happen to their bodies, and your hands, your face, everything indicates that kind of start of tone. Here is where I think people who do not, do not really know the art, the vocal art, they think as long as they are good musician and they know the beats they can get up and conduct. And, of course, you know what kind of results they get.

KING: Choral conductors are often most criticized for not having a precise beat, how important is a precise beat pattern?

CARAPETYAN: I think precise beat is important, but that doesn't mean that you have to be metronomic or just one - two - three - four - one - when your music is not doing this, so my response to that would be, as conductors we must conduct the music. Conduct the music and help your choir not only to feel the pulse but also the line, what that music is; where is it going, what is it saying. And you have also another problem which orchestra conductors do not have. You have to consider your words, accentuation of the words, releases of the words, in the same time keep everything continuous in one phrase. Now, if you are just interested in precise metronomic beat you are not going to accomplish that. How often have you heard me say that the pulse must be felt within us, and that it must tick away so that the conductor is not doing this...ticking for you. But you are feeling that within you, and when you are within that pulse you can conduct your phrases and your words the way it should sound.

KING: Is there a difference between choral conducting and instrumental conducting?

CARAPETYAN: Yes in this sense, that the conductor, choral conductor is much more, much more involved with words. And you have to consider that. And, of course, as I said earlier a good composer does handle the words in such a way that musical pulse and the text pulse or accents correspond. Basically there is no difference in the technique. But there is a certain adjustment that one makes. I think that any conductor that can not handle both is going to be handicapped. You really have to be able to understand what to do with the orchestra. And here again, your understanding of the instrument is very important. If you have experience with orchestral instruments, especially strings, that is a great help to you. But if you have absolutely no idea what the strings should do or what the orchestral instruments are capable of doing, then you can get lost. But you will notice that, maybe you have not, that whenever I
conducted the chorus and the orchestra there was a difference in my conducting. When we did our Bach for instance.

KING: What was the difference?

CARAPETYAN: Instrumentalists always are looking for clear, precise beat and the correct direction of your beats are important to them. This is not to say these beats do not express the music. For instance take the first movement of the Bach Concerto in D minor for keyboard and orchestra. Certainly big motions are not necessary but precision and clarity are important. In contrast, the second movement, while requiring the pulse, has much more legato line, especially as this is used with voices in Cantata #146. In the technique, there is really no difference. But there is that slight adjustment, modification that you have to do. A good conductor is understood by orchestral people as well as the vocal people. If your orchestral people are confused, they have no idea what you are doing, you better check your conducting.

KING: You have just mentioned the size of beats, that sort of thing. How can the size of the beat pattern influence the performance?

CARAPETYAN: Well, I don't know whether it is necessary to say, now we are going to make our beats big or small for this or that composition or passage. The same composition doesn't require the same kind of beat all of the time. Take any symphony. You don't do the same thing all the way through. Again, we have got to think of conducting the music, what does the music demand? If I am coming to a tremendously big climax with a big orchestra, of course, my beat might be larger. But once the desired intensity is achieved and you want to retain it you may do so with smaller but intense beats. Once you have established your intensity you can keep that going with a minimum of activity. You don't have to, let me see if I can think of an example. Ah, for instance, the last movement of the Tchaikovsky Sixth. You see ...singing... I don't have to say ...singing... You see ...singing... So the small beat had the same intensity, but I didn't have to do this (large beats) to show that intensity to the orchestra.

KING: How much importance do you put on facial expression...

CARAPETYAN: I think it is very, very important. Very important. The eye contact, your facial expression. I don't mean to say you have to go through all kinds of grimaces Sometimes you see some conductors on TV and you are very much aware that, now they are aware that the camera is on them so they will put on a big, big show on their face as well as in their conducting.
I think that is all insincere stuff. You have to be involved in your music and that is all. If you are involved in your music, then your face might express that music and that is fine. But don't, don't put on a mask. Express your music through your conducting.

KING: Do you have special ways of going about enhancing a choir's response to your direction?

CARAPETYAN: You mean if I have a way of making them aware what I want in my conducting? You know, as I said earlier, I don't believe in explaining to them what I am going to conduct. If I have to do that then there is something wrong with my conducting. If I have to explain to them what my conducting is saying, and they can not see, they can not understand the meaning of my conducting, then there is something wrong with my conducting.

KING: So it's primarily through the gestures that ...

CARAPETYAN: Right, gestures.

KING: ...that their response is...

CARAPETYAN: And really it's more than your hand gestures, you know. Your whole body is involved. Your whole body, your face, eyes are involved. And you are not, you are not just doing this—beating with the hands. If you are really involved in your music you are involved with your whole being in your conducting, not just...(mechanical gestures).

KING: Some choirs, having been in front of several different groups, some choirs will really follow and every little thing you do they will do.

CARAPETYAN: Yes.

KING: Others you could probably be two measures ahead and they would not know the difference.

CARAPETYAN: That's right.

KING: I guess that is what I am getting at. How do you train your group to really be responsive?

CARAPETYAN: Right from the beginning a conductor must insist that the choir form a habit of following the conductor in every manner and dynamic shading he indicates. This is the minimum to expect, more subtle aspects to be developed gradually. But if the conductor conducts in a certain way without any clear
indication of what the music demands in spite of what he explains verbally, then he is of little use to the choir. The choir will never become sensitive, for there is little except beats to follow.

To make a choir more responsive the conductor may introduce some unexpected sudden changes just to challenge the choir to follow. Or another good way is to fall in with them and go along. Soon they begin to realize what is happening.

KING: That completes the questions.

April 16, 1981

Third Interview

KING: The audition of singers is, of course, one of the first steps in the building of a choir. What takes place in your auditions of prospective choir members?

CARAPETYAN: I think besides learning something about the voice, I myself am very anxious to learn something about the person. If you know something about the person ahead of time that already is a help. If you don't, then you do everything possible to learn something about their background, musical background, and even generally something about the person. If it is a choice between a good voice in one who is really not a good person, I would rather have a lesser voice in a good person who could make a contribution to the spirit of the choir. On the other hand the uncooperative person could destroy that spirit and create an undesirable atmosphere making it difficult to produce exciting music. Of course, it is impossible to learn everything about a person in the short, brief time that you are given with them. Five, ten minutes at the most. But it is a help though if you can learn more. Now as far as the voice is concerned, you want to know the kind of quality that the voice has and to know the range so that you will know where to place the voice. I usually don't go by the range alone in choosing a person for a certain section. I try to hear the quality and judge the voice by the quality more than such things, as some people do, as finding the breaks or "lifts" in the voice at certain notes of the scale which determines whether the person is a soprano or alto. I think that can be very deceptive. Because if the voices are not developed, they can have breaks all over the place. And if you try to judge by those breaks you can be misled. On the other hand large range can also mislead us. An alto voice may be able to sing the high notes in the soprano range, albeit with some strain or force. It would be tempting to make a soprano out of a truly alto voice because the intensity it would bring to the section. This sort of thing
happens in voice studios often--altos are made into dramatic sopranos to the detriment of the instrument. It is important to safeguard every voice.

I suppose you want to know what I would use to discover something about the voice as well as about the various qualifications. I think a simple scale, upward or downward, especially downward, right away can tell what kind of breathing that person uses, how the tone is started, if there are lot of interferences, and how flexible is the voice. And then also the intonation, is it accurate or is it careless? Just singing a scale can show you a lot. I like to hear also various vowels to see what happens, especially the [e] and [i] vowel. And sometimes you might want to choose a word that may help you see how they handled the consonants. I frequently use the words, "the Lord is great" on an arpeggio. That gives me a good chance to know how that person handles the consonants and the vowels. Especially the bright vowels on the higher notes.

KING: You do arpeggio up on that?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, the arpeggio (Carapetyan then illustrates the arpeggio up on the words "the Lord is great"). Short exercises, scale or arpeggio downward, the arpeggio going up with words, these give me a pretty good idea of what the voice is capable of doing. Then I would like to hear a song. The choice of the song is also revealing. If they sing a hymn or they have chosen to sing an operatic aria or a Bach aria or a lieder--all that tells me something about their taste, about their vocal and musical ability, and their own estimate of their musicianship. I shall never forget an experience at NTSU: I was hearing auditions, one girl came in and said, "Do you mind if two of us sing a duet?" I said, No. So they came in and to my surprise and delight they had chosen to sing "Et in Unum" from the B Minor Mass. Well, they made it, because, well first of all they had chosen a very demanding composition which they sang really quite well. I knew I would have no problem musically with those two people. They gave me a pretty good idea of the kind of people they were, the kind of taste they had and something of their own response to music. I think all of these things are very, very helpful.

KING: Do you have any way of recording this information after you have heard 150 singers, or how ever many?

CARAPETYAN: Well, I used to have printed or mimeographed cards on which I would check various bits of information, such as their breathing, the kind of tone, the range, a number of things that I want to know. Any conductor could make a list of things that he is interested in gaining from an audition and check those off.
KING: Once you have got your choir, do you have in your ear a concept of the ideal tone that you would like to get from that choir?

CARAPETYAN: I think so, I think so. I think one should. But this cannot be achieved immediately, for seldom, if ever, are we able to choose only the voices which combined may produce the ideal tone that you hear in your mind. Often you have to accept people whose voices may not meet that standard. It is a compromise always, but then it is your job as conductor to teach them vocal production and tonal concepts you want. This is always true. The final sound produced by a choir is the result of what the conductor has conceived in his mind and how he has succeeded in achieving it. Now there are, of course, different ideas, different concepts of tone, just as you have different people. People hear differently. And their tonal concept might be quite different, and the question has often come up, well, how do we know that the concept that you have or that I have is supposed to be good. How do we know that? What makes my concept of tone good and somebody else's not good? I don't know for sure, except perhaps our background, our exposure and sensitivity to musical sounds. I was fortunate enough to be a violinist first before I was a vocalist and there, of course, you are very much concerned with beauty of tone and correct intonation. This awareness plus much ensemble playing, later singing, listening to singers, and participation in choirs, all have contributed in developing a concept of vocal tone. The voice, of all instruments, has the most possibility of coloration, of expression, and human warmth—a thing that no man-made instrument can do quite to the same extent. Violins, some wind instruments approach it. Because after all, all instruments are based on vocal principles. They try to imitate singing. So in that respect the voice has greater possibility than any other instrument. And I think it is up to us to discover what are these possibilities, and try to achieve them rather than limit them. The possibilities of choirs are not always fully utilized; in fact they are hampered because of the limitation of the conductor's own concept and his own inability to draw from those voices the best that they can achieve.

KING: Could you put into words your idea of the ideal choral sound? How would you describe it?

CARAPETYAN: Oh, I think that would be very difficult. For one thing, I can tell you this much, I want a tone— I want a sound that has all the freedom possible and then have the components that will allow for coloration; flexibility so that it can express any thought, any idea that the music demands. I am not interested in just a pretty sound that you apply to everything you sing. I think that is silly. Every composition, every
school, every period even the compositions of the same period, each requires a different treatment and sound. As frequently mentioned, we do not call a certain sound Renaissance tone and apply this to every Renaissance composition. Some people have this concept, here is a Baroque tone which we are going to apply to all Baroque music, here is a romantic tone, here is a contemporary tone. I think that is nonsense. Again, every composition demands its own tone quality which is best suited to that composition and best expresses the music and the text. I think this is very important.

A straight tone, without any vibrato is not necessarily Renaissance tone. How do we know that the Renaissance singers had no vibrato? Boys voices were used in church music in the Renaissance period. Boys' voices are more or less straight, so some think this is the only qualification for "Renaissance tone." DeVan, a musicologist whose specialty was Medieval and Renaissance music, (he is dead now) had quite a different feeling about that. He felt that much of the music of that period was undoubtedly performed in a rather robust, rough way. And not necessarily the emaciated, ethereal sounds we want to apply to all early music. So that's another concept. But he might be very right.

**KING:** How do you go about working for this freedom that allows this kind of flexibility?

**CARAPETYAN:** It is, of course, as you know, a vocal problem. You have to spend a certain amount of time conveying to your choir your ideas and how you are going to achieve them. And that is best done by some kind of vocalization in which they can respond physically and sense what you are after. And even in the group situation, once they have felt the right kind of production, the right kind of sound, they are aware of it. They know it. They may not always be able to repeat it, and repetition is, of course, necessary always, but I think it is quite possible to achieve. And what happens, let's say with a group of thirty voices, when these changes occur, if the group is really listening, they can't help but hear this different sound, it is exciting. I am sure you remember your own experience, there were times when this happened and everyone was aware that the sound was better. Then the question is how do we retain all of that. Here, repetition is really very necessary. For that reason I think that some time spent at the beginning of each session is well spent. Vocalizing, not only the so called "warm-up" exercises--I am dead against that; going through some arpeggio or some kind of exercise thinking that this is warming up exercise and now we are ready to sing. We have accomplished nothing. I think the singers have to become aware of what is being accomplished. What was the purpose of that exercise? How does this exercise apply to what we will sing next or do during the period? And I think it is always very helpful to explain
the reason for an exercise. The exercises should somehow have some relationship to the problems which are to be found in the composition. These may be, for instance, the proper use of the vowels and consonants, balance of tone, tone quality, even scale, flexibility of phrasing, agility to manage melismatic passages and a number of other problems.

KING: I know that it is very difficult to try to understand these concepts just by talking about them, impossible really, but just briefly talking about a few of these things—resonance, for instance. I ran across one quote in a dissertation which says, "the nasal cavity affects resonance only slightly except with the exception of the nasal consonants m, n, ng, and then the French nasal vowels.\textsuperscript{1} What about resonance? Where does that occur? How is that developed?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, well, it is not in any one place, I don't think. If the complete vocal instrument is involved and you are not resorting to pressure to produce resonance, we then may achieve what I may call free resonance. Free resonance without effort, without pressure because we have set the entire vocal tract into vibration. The vocal instrument includes the chest cavity, the mouth cavity, the pharyngeal cavity, post-nasal cavity, nasal cavity; these all amplify the sound and therefore resonate the sound. I think this must, again, be achieved through freedom, not by localization or thinking that here I am going to get resonance by putting my sound into my nasal cavity or into my pharyngeal cavity or anywhere else. That becomes localization. At all times I like to emphasize the importance of involving the complete instrument. The only reason that I emphasize such exercises as the hum is because in our normal conversation most of us do not use the nasal resonance and therefore the tone usually stops at the mouth level and the hum certainly gives us a feeling of more activity above the mouth which also creates more resonance, more freedom. Besides, not only does the hum allow more of the upper portion to be involved, but to have a good hum you have to have freedom, no interference in the throat region; and this freedom allows the involvement of the undertone also, giving depth to your tone, to your singing. We have a choice between speaking out of the throat and the mouth without any top, without any bottom, producing a dry, mouthy colorless tone, or strive for freedom in production, involving the entire vocal instrument without any interference, thus achieving free resonance and beautiful expressive sound. Easily said, difficult to accomplish.

\textsuperscript{1}Triplett, "Choral Development," p. 34.
KING: How do you deal with applying energy in the voice? How do you work with the whole group?

CARAPETYAN: Well, this is very difficult. The first consideration must be given to the correct posture, it is absolutely necessary. Without it I don't think we can achieve anything. The moment an individual or a group lets down and loses the correct posture, what we may call singer's posture, then you have very little chance of achieving anything. There can be no freedom or resonance. So we must start with correct posture. Then we must give thought to the use of correct breathing; how does it function? If there is any incorrect approach to our breathing, such as pushing down or tightening in any one place, even tightening the diaphragm muscle thinking that this means "support," then we lose our freedom. Correct posture or alignment and correct breath are essential to free and good singing. The breath itself could cause difficulties unless it is a tension-free, complete breath. If the inhalation is noisy, it would indicate a tense or set throat. A set throat will hamper a free start of tone. I find a staccato exercise helpful. The spontaneous activity of the diaphragm helps to keep the throat open and free without conscious manipulation. It may take a little time before a good coordination is established. When the whole body is involved and there is no interference in the throat one experiences an exhilaration and excitement. This is a spontaneous free activity without struggle. The staccato is basic to all free singing. The vital activity and the shortness of the breath does not allow time for the throat to set in preparation for singing. (At this point Carapetyan illustrates a staccato exercise on a triad.)

KING: How is good choral singing different from good solo singing?

CARAPETYAN: Well, as you know, I don't feel that we use two different techniques, one for solo singing and one for choral work. I think the technique should be the same. The principles of correct singing are the same. The resonance or amplification, freedom, the activity of the body, all are the same. Let us take a string quartet as an example. Four string players, each a virtuoso player, they have played as soloists and they are getting together for chamber music. They certainly don't change their technique; they don't change their bowing—nothing is changed except the aural concept of what that ensemble should sound like and then fine adjustments that they have to make to balance each other. Now this is the sort of thing that should happen vocally too. We don't change our technique or production. But we do make some adjustments by balancing the voices within each section and also between all
sections. And that takes simply good ear and some sensitivity to what the music demands. But for that you need what has become known as good blend. Now what do we mean by that? The quality that is capable of making forty voices sound like one. If the tone production is correct we should easily achieve a good blend. This means freedom in order that our complete vocal instrument be involved. Through this freedom we are able to develop and properly use the overtones (an illusive part of our voice) and the undertones of our voice. This supplies a richness and warm color to the voice and through the hum, which is established, creates a good blend— a good balanced sound. My own experience has proved this over and over again.

KING: There have been some studies lately which have taken recordings of groups which are considered to be quite good to see what the difference is between solo singing and choral singing. The results are that, from these choral groups that were studied, there is less resonance on the part of the singers when they are singing in a group than when they are singing by themselves and this is considered the way to achieve a good blend.

CARAPETYAN: Well, I am afraid this is where I disagree. Because that is exactly what we hear in our choral singing today. We hear this dry, colorless, pushed sound, white sound, which quite frankly is not my concept, my idea of good choral tone and what I am saying, again is: you see the approach doesn't change vocally. The approach doesn't change the free production that we are after. As I have said earlier, only a musical ear and balancing so you are not hearing individual voices, but you hear the entire section as one and that section is balanced with the other sections and you have beautiful blend. We want a rich, warm tone, not less resonance, or less color or quality. No. I really disagree with that concept. It is frustrating for one to hear a choir having the potential for good singing, producing a colorless white sound, never tonally or musically achieving what the music demands. I get bored. I hear a tone, well, I am willing to accept that sound for that composition, but then the next composition comes, the next group comes and I hear the same thing the same approach in every respect. Stylistically, tonally, it is the same. And I find that very frustrating.

KING: How do you deal with problems with large vibratos? This can be a real problem for blend.

CARAPETYAN: Again, I think we have to understand what is causing the problem. A large vibrato or wobble (either pitch or intensity variety) uncontrolled and constant is undesirable. A natural fine vibrato is desirable. In any event the
vibrato should be manageable. When necessary we should be able to sing without a vibrato or use small fine vibrato or an intense vibrato if the composition demands that kind. The wide vibrato or the wobble is caused by interferences or poor management of the breath, usually both. If there is interference then more breath pressure is applied, it is a vicious circle.

KING: Now by interference you mean some kind of tension?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, tension, especially in the throat region. Or setting. Or any tension in the diaphragm muscle, or any tension anywhere else. The remedy is the removal of the interference so that there may be freedom and better control, better management of the breath. So those are certainly things I should pay attention to, and would try to prevent.

KING: Do you make much of vocal registers in your teaching?

CARAPETYAN: Not at all. Because I think that to make too much of registers makes the student only aware of certain breaks which come in the voice, and they are very much concerned about those breaks and so called shifts or lifts or whatever you want to call them, and they almost expect a change in quality, a change in production. I find that very undesirable. Why should we accept changes, or breaks, or registers in the voice when we do not accept it on any other instrument. Would you accept a violin that going from the G to the D string had a change in quality or break or going from D to A or A to E, the quality changes? No. No, you would say that violin is no good. But why should we accept that in the voice. That puzzles me. And you know people spend hours and hours on studying registers and teaching registers. I think we should demand and expect one even continuous register, going up and coming down. No matter what the vowel there should be no change, no shift. This is hard to achieve. But I think it is very important.

KING: How do you work toward that with a whole group? I would think it would be very difficult.

CARAPETYAN: Well, again, remember that there must be no interferences. Why do we have registers? If we have complete freedom and no interference, we shall be able to come down or go up and make the proper adjustments in such a gradual fashion that at no place do we come to a breaking point.

KING: Do you work with scales for this? Is that helpful?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, I think scales certainly. At first coming down. Then we are aware that as we come down there is a bit more
relaxation, allowance for the undertone to increase. And if we properly work on that concept, doing arpeggios and scale lines, that would be already a help. It is more difficult going up because the tendency is to get tense and tighten up and add pressure rather than feel that it is the same free construction that must be retained with proper adjustment. The physical and mental adjustment must be at the level of the pitch we sing. I would work on the [o] vowel. Being a broad vowel, a big vowel, it helps to open the throat and not pinch. Then I would take combinations of vowels, [ni-ne, no-na], etc. (Carapetyan then illustrates a scale line coming down with combination [mo-me, mo-me]). It is not that difficult, if we have understood the concept of free production. I think that is the bottom of it. If we have understood what we mean, and what is achieved through free production all of these things come out in the right way. But if we have interferences, then we have to pinch and pull and push to get through, we are going to have troubles of all kinds.

KING: You have mentioned or emphasized several times, that each composition demands a different kind of tone quality. Do you talk about this with your choirs? Do they sense it somehow from the music? How is this communicated?

CARAPETYAN: Well, first of all, again, as the conductor you have to sense that yourself. Then if you think it is necessary to explain through words, you have to do it. On the other hand if we can through our own understanding and illustration or conducting of phrases convey the style and the spirit of the work, then we will achieve it. I think that the conductor who is able not only to talk a lot about it, but talk some, but only briefly and then illustrate—we want this kind of sound or that kind of sound—he can put across his ideas much faster than in any amount of words. And I think this is the reason that I feel that a conductor must really be a master of his vocal technique. He must understand the voice. If he does not understand it, if he does not experience it himself, how can he explain it? How can he illustrate and make sense? I feel very strongly about this, that the choral conductor really must understand, must be a singer to begin with. He must have experienced everything that he demands from his choir. Otherwise, anybody can read a book and say, well, this is an idea we are going to pass on without having experienced it. It is phony. It is just not going to be effective.

KING: A lot of people feel that a choir director doesn't have the right to be a voice teacher. I hear you saying something very different.

CARAPETYAN: Don't you feel that is more or less an excuse? It is explanation for those people who can not sing.
KING: Well, there is no doubt that you will step on some people's toes if you are trying to teach somebody else's voice student how to sing in your choir.

CARAPETYAN: Of course, but you have to have conviction. You have conviction because of your own experience with your own voice, your own experience with students and choirs who have achieved good results and you know your concepts work. If you don't have that conviction resulting from your own personal experience then you are on shaky ground. I don't hesitate to say to my choir members, in our choir situation this is the kind of production, the kind of approach we want. Of course, that is not going to go over very well with some teachers. I have experienced that. I know. But I have to be convinced that what I am doing is right. And what I offer helps and students are aware of it.

KING: Is it realistic to expect group of people singing together to have their words understood?

CARAPETYAN: I think so. And when we talk about diction, it doesn't mean just chewing our words in such a way that every consonant and vowel is heard, destroying meanwhile the beauty of the line or phrases. I think sometimes that we go to that extreme where everything is chewed up, we get little fragments or little syllables of words. No, I think it is quite possible to have good diction and words be heard on every song without destroying the beauty of the phrases and the continuity of the line. I think it is quite possible. It all depends on how you deal with vowels and consonants. Whether we have understood that there are certain consonants which are singable, like the humming consonants [m, n, and ], there are certain consonants which are only partially voiced (and these consonants can be slightly voiced but they are not prolonged) and there are some consonants that are not sung at all. They are breath in form. They must be pronounced, but if you try to sing then you bring pressure upon them and that pressure destroys the vowel which is to follow or precede it. I think that is understandable. And if we understand that you can handle the consonants correctly, you will find that it is quite possible to have every word heard. And without any tension or disturbance or obstruction on the phrasing or of the beauty of the line.

KING: Do you have any ways that are particularly successful in trying to work with this with the choir? Do you isolate the problem in an exercise or do you work with it mainly within the music?

CARAPETYAN: It is a combination, I think. It is a matter of making sure that there is no pressure applied on the consonants.
On the contrary, we do not come down and press down on a consonant thinking that is going to produce a distinct consonant, but we touch it firmly and distinctly, but with an immediate release to allow the vowel to have freedom and, and have no interference. In other words, we are going from one vowel to another and then only a brief fraction of a second do we make a very clean cut articulation of that consonant providing we have understood how that particular consonant is to be pronounced or dealt with.

KING: Certainly in this part of the country you have had some experience with irregular vowel forms, how do you approach that?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, unfortunately the way we speak we think is the correct way, for the vowel sounds, I mean. And sometimes it is really very difficult to convince people that the correct vowel sound is not that, but this. Sometimes it takes some doing for them to accept. The [u] is a good example. In this part of the country you get a distorted mouthy sound not a true [u] when it should be a very high [u] a head-tone, a beautiful sound. A beautiful [u] is lovely. It is very difficult for somebody to accept the covered ah [ ] sound in words such as "watch," "was," "water," when this person has been using an open, white sound all his or her life. This sort of change will sound very strange to the person.

KING: Do you have a particular source that you use to have correct pronunciation. A dictionary or anything?

CARAPETYAN: A dictionary we should refer to, definitely, yes. But in singing there are two vowels in which a dictionary is no help. Because these two vowel sounds are taken to be the same in the dictionary. I am referring to the two ah sounds, one in the word watch or water, [ ] the other one is law or all [ ]. Actually, according to the International Phonetic Society, there is a difference, one is a more forward ah as in the word watch, but it is covered, while "awe," or "all" is a broad, little more backward sound. The phonetic symbols are different for those, but in the dictionary those two vowels are always indicated as the same.

KING: Does style of diction vary between compositions. If you had a more sustained composition or a more lively one, more marcato, that sort of thing?

CARAPETYAN: No, not so much sustained or fast, but I think we may talk about full tone and soft tone. Full tone is obviously going to emphasize the consonants a bit more. When we sing softly, we lose the consonants, everything gets pulled back.
And this should not be the case, therefore, I emphasize that when we sing softly, especially in very soft singing, we have to make an effort to articulate even better, otherwise the words will be lost. So far as sustained singing or faster singing, we may reduce the amount of the articulating activity for speed in faster compositions. The principles remain the same. You have got to know your different kinds of consonants, but in any case you do not heavily come down or press down on them. You get off them.

KING: What place does vowel modification have in your work?

CARAPETYAN: If the vowel is produced correctly without any thought of modification, it will modify itself, but I use that thought, modification, only as a help, a reminder as to what should happen rather than insist that all vowels modify themselves in a certain way. For instance, [a] becomes [ ] sound, or [o] becomes an [a] sound. I don't think that would be the right way. For instance, the [o] when done correctly has more tendency of going toward the [u] than toward [a], because as we approach the higher tones and use more of the headtone or upper vibration the [o] moves more towards the [u]. I really think that all we have to make sure is that we do not get an openness or whiteness as we approach the upper notes. So often the idea of covering the high notes or coming to a point is suggested simply to avoid spreading out. But all tones which are properly produced, if everything is free, the pharyngeal cavity is free and open, the upper and lower partials are present, then I think we have the good focal point for the concentration of that tone, or sound, rather than a diffusion of that sound. You see it would be very easy to say: (Carapetyan illustrates going up a scale on the [o] vowel, diffusing and spreading it as he goes higher. A contrasting illustration points out the possibility of bringing the top notes to a more defined vocal point). What I have thought of is keeping my focal point, keep that compactness of the tone, rather than letting it diffuse and that is what you hear called modification. I don't mind. I was taught to do that too. That all vowels have to be modified. The only suggestion that I would have is that the so called closed vowels, the [i], [e] and [u] vowels, must have a bit more room on the top, so that they will not pinch, on the other hand the [a] and [o] should come to a point or become a bit more "covered." I have made clear what I mean by that word, "covered," because that is another word which could mean so many different things to different people. "Covered" to some people, means backward. I don't mean it as a backward sound. It simply means that the two pillars are rounded, soft palate is arched a little more and there is a concentration, a more compact, round sound. That is my concept.
KING: When you are selecting your choir members, do you chose approximately the same amount of, for lack of a better word, power in each section. Do you want the sections to be balanced evenly or...

CARAPETYAN: I am not aware of that really. Yet I suppose it won't do to have, let's say a very strong tenor section, which seldom happens, (laughter) and a weak bass section or a weak alto section. We have to have adequate volume and quality in each section to achieve a good balance in the choir. I think you have to give some thought to that, yes.

KING: Some people favor a deeper sound and emphasize the men's voices, and some more the women's voices, but you pretty much like it even?

CARAPETYAN: I would pretty much keep it even unless my literature called for divided soprano in which case I would see that the soprano section was a little stronger or add a few more vocies, so that when divided each section is equally strong. Deeper basses are needed if performing some Russian literature.

KING: When you are making up a seating arrangement does the way that people sit affect the balance of the group?

CARAPETYAN: I think it does. On the other hand I think we should get to a point with the group that it would not make a bit of difference where they are. In any arrangement they would be able to sing. I like, for instance, to feel that my group is so secure and each individual is so secure that sitting in a restaurant all over, spread out, around the tables, and if we wanted to sing, we could sing an ensemble that would be perfectly fine and well balanced. And, by the way, I have had that happen a number of times.

KING: What causes poor intonation?

CARAPETYAN: I think most of the time if your people are chosen for their musicianship, musical ear and fairly good production, then it is not the ear that causes poor intonation. I find much of the time that it is a matter of production. A faulty production makes faulty intonation. We must straighten the production. If it is a sagging, heavy production, it is always flat. If it is tense and pressed, or there is too much tension behind it because of interferences, then the tone is shoved up and it sharps. So the moment you can free the production again, and I must come back to that word "freedom" over and over again, because I think that is an important consideration, free production, then the intonation takes care of itself. That is true in solo singing as well as in choral singing.
KING: Is it possible to have really true intonation with vibrato?

CARAPETYAN: Not with exaggerated vibrato, no. If the vibrato is so wide that it effects the pitch, no. If it is a very fine vibrato, yes.

KING: Can faulty diction effect intonation if the vowels are too dark or something?

CARAPETYAN: Of course, of course. Definitely. You can sing a vowel correctly, then fault your production and the pitch will change with it.

KING: So you approach intonation primarily from a vocal standpoint, not by telling them to listen better or something?

CARAPETYAN: Oh, yes, from listening, that goes without saying. You must be listening all the time, for your intonation as well as for your vowels, all of that. That is part of the training of the choir. Listening. Most people don't listen. Listening is a very important part of any ensemble singing. However, if in spite of careful listening, still there are intonation problems, then it is definitely due to faulty production.

KING: How do you get them to listen? If they are not accustomed to listening, what do you do?

CARAPETYAN: I know that is a real difficult problem, but that has to be emphasized over and over again. You have got to listen, not only to yourself, but to the entire section and to the entire choir, because as a conductor I can say to a section or to an individual, now this is flat, I want you to raise that pitch. It won't do any good unless that person listens and hears. As a conductor I can say you are flat or you need brightness in your voice, but they have to listen to know what I am saying. I can illustrate, but they have got to listen. You were going to ask a question.

KING: Do you ask that your singers employ any particular type of intonation such as Pythagorean intonation?

CARAPETYAN: I would like to emphasize the teaching of the untempered scale. So that there is a difference, for instance, between an f# and a g, the f# being one unit higher than the g; c# being very high in a D major scale. F# is very high in G major. On the other hand if we were coming down from d to d♭, the d♭ would be lower than the c# that we have done in the D major scale.
KING: How do you train this? Do they need to be aware of the tonality, or...

CARAPETYAN: Yes, and it takes really a very good training, for instance, in our Kent choir we accomplished it so well that those who knew would notice it immediately and would mention that this was the first time they had heard that kind of untempered intonation from a choir. Vocalists are so dependent upon the piano they practice with the piano. Their songs, even their vocalises, they sing tempered scales. They must sing as a violinist plays. The violinist will always play the c# higher than the d, for instance.

KING: Is it primarily the third and seventh that need to be...

CARAPETYAN: It all depends. In chromatic passages, of course, you would have different pitches. Let's say you are going up a chromatic passage, up d#/ and coming down e, that would be different, wouldn't it? But you are right, the third, seventh and the fifth also require special attention.

KING: Why do choirs and singers in general have the reputation of not being able to sing with rhythmic accuracy?

CARAPETYAN: Maybe it is because of background and training, lack of emphasis upon it. Also the fact that the singer may be handicapped by poor management of the breath. Therefore, if it takes too much time for the intake of the breath, the following entrance will be late, and you have heard singers or if you have ever accompanied them, you have to wait until they get their breath, then get going. So each phrase in a way ends up going down, being buried. Then they start the next one and do the same thing to that. It is a question of rhythmic breath. You have heard me emphasize that very, very many times. If our breath is not taken rhythmically, we don't sing rhythmically. So, that would be my emphasis there. Then I would emphasize keeping the pulse of the music. The underlying pulse ticking away within us and that we have not yet learned to do. We have got to have that feeling of pulse ticking away. Now you have a lagato line you are sustaining let's say a whole note, but you have forgotten that the pulse is still going on, it is the same. We have got to feel that.

KING: Do you have any way of getting them to become sensitive to this?

CARAPETYAN: Yes, I think you just have to emphasize that. I don't like to beat time, but I like them to feel that there is a motion here, there is an activity going on. A sustained note that goes dead, (Carapetyan then illustrates by singing one
tone on [a] that goes dead, then counteracts that illustration with another in which a tone is alive and vibrant). There is motion there. And I think there is a feeling of it being more musical the way it is sung.

KING: What dynamic limitations does the voice have? How much can be expected in a dynamic range from a choir?

CARAPETYAN: Well, again you have to judge your group, what is the limitation, how much can you demand without destroying the freedom. If you demand more than the group is capable of doing without applying pressure or forcing, then you have not only destroyed the production, but you have destroyed the musical effect because you have got a sound that is forced. It is no longer a musical sound. So you have got to recognize that limitation.

KING: What about the other end? What about very soft singing?

CARAPETYAN: Soft singing is absolutely necessary for developing breath control and dynamic shading. We hear mezzo forte to forte and double forte. We seldom hear the pianissimo singing and if we ever do hear piano, pianissimo singing it is a fuzzy, breathy, lifeless sound. Very difficult. It is the most difficult thing in the art of singing, to be able to sing vitally and softly and at the same time articulate clearly and not destroy your musical line, that is very difficult to do. But that really takes training. And the messa di voce exercise, of course, is a very great help for this. Starting piano, making a crescendo. Then decrescendo. Again how far can you go without destroying the quality. That is very difficult to do. But I have always worked with choirs on that.

KING: How do you go about that? What do you tell them to do? It is very difficult to do vocally.

CARAPETYAN: I think you have to understand that when you make a crescendo, it does not mean that we just push more breath and more sound out. But it is rather an inner enlargement and intensification of that sound and the energizing of the breath. When we make a decrescendo we do not change the free condition of the vocal instrument. There is no closing down or pinching to produce a soft tone. On the contrary, everything remains free and vital, but the breath is restrained, held back, not in the throat but by expansion of lower ribs and the intercostal muscles. The softer we sing the more we must depend upon resonation and the use of overtones until the tone gradually vanishes without a break. Through all this the throat remains free.
KING: What do you think is the main deficiency that you hear in choirs today?

CARAPETYAN: I would like to hear choirs sing with much more involvement, more excitement on the part of the singers, which again must come from the director to begin with. I am not talking about just big emoting. I am not talking about that. I am talking about involvement in the music, and whether it is soft tone or loud tone, sing as if it is the last chance you have in your life. Also make it meaningful. Everything that you sing must be convincing. To the hearer it must feel that the singers are involved, that they are singing with conviction and I believe in it because they believe in it. They are making music because they enjoy that music. They are receiving something and therefore they are also giving something. It should be like that always. It can be a tremendous experience, choral singing, or any kind of singing, but if it is just learning the notes, the time and the words, and singing those notes, we may just as well forget about it. And I think this is what we hear much of the time. Don't forget we are in an age that feeling deeply is out of fashion. We are not supposed to allow ourselves to feel deeply. Art then becomes sterile.
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