

**A director's transformation: Developing musicianship in the
choral singer**

by

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Abstract

The pedagogy in this report is rooted in the information, skills, techniques, and perspectives that I have learned throughout my degree. Throughout my time completing the degree, I have moved from teaching middle school to teaching high school in very different socioeconomic situations, taught completely virtually, and taught simultaneous classes with online and in-person students all before returning to fully in-person instruction, at various times with and without masks and social distancing. As a result of these extracurricular influences combined with the coursework in my degree, I have undergone a significant shift in my methods of instruction. Through studying, comparing, and contrasting the philosophies of music education philosophers such as Jorgensen, Reimer, Eisner, and Elliott, my philosophical beliefs about why music and music education are important have changed as well. Prior to my degree, I often defended the importance of music education through a utilitarian defense and idolized high contest ratings. However, I now believe that developing the musicianship and the whole person are more important than contest ratings or defending music education because it potentially raises test scores. It is safe to say that who I am as a teacher and what I believe, do, and say, have all changed significantly throughout my time completing my master's degree.

The lessons presented in my recordings are typical of my rehearsal and class structure, but the design, activities, and specific techniques can all be individually traced to information gained from specific courses in my degree. The lessons are primarily focused on vocal warm-ups and technique building, literacy and ear training development, and preparing a song entitled *Give Good Gifts* for performance at our school's spring concert and at graduation. Beginning before the videos ever start, my score study of *Give Good Gifts* is an example of the implications of what I have learned in my degree. Being at a new school this year and developing a choral

program from a practically non-existent program has meant that the voicing of my lone chorus class is not well-aligned with traditional SATB choral voicing. Through my score study and as a result of my Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques and Arranging Choral Music courses, I was able to re-voice and re-assign specific parts, identify elements of the song that could be omitted, and accurately modify voice parts to meet the needs of my ensemble and the performance. My overall rehearsal structure, as shown in the video, emphasizes individual student ownership and placing the work of music learning on the singer. The vocal warm-ups shown in the videos and rehearsal techniques to prepare the song for performance are all heavily rooted in my Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques course. Additionally, the videos show students in leadership roles and students giving non-musical responses and reflections, which were emphasized in the Theories of Music Teaching and Organization and Administration of the Successful Music Program courses. Without the benefit of the coursework and faculty, I would not be the educator that I am today.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Personal Educational Philosophy

In order to appropriately understand and articulate a personal philosophy regarding music education, a philosophy of education as a whole must first be established. A truly universal, quality education is a fundamental requirement of a self-governing society. In order for the people of a country, or indeed of the entire world, to govern themselves, continue their growth and preserve their legacy, education is inescapable. Simply, education is to preserve the achievements of the past and to ensure the continued success of the future. In designing education, one must consider which achievements of the past are worthy of emphasis when viewed in the broader scope of all of history. Additionally, and perhaps most controversially, one must decide what the definition of success for the future actually is, and what steps are necessary to achieve it. The answers to these two overarching questions are what fundamentally shape education.

The first question, what from the past is worthy to be remembered, is the simpler of the two. Ideally, all of history would be objectively taught and subsequently analyzed by the student. However, this is objectively impossible, for two reasons. First, to attempt to teach all of history is clearly impractical at best, and certainly impossible within the design of the K-12 schooling model of the United States, owing to time constraints and the breadth of subjects offered within the course of study. Secondly, to accurately achieve an objective understanding of historical events is nearly impossible due to the biases in the information presented, implicit or otherwise. Careful research and examination of original sources can remove most bias and misinformation, and offer a truer interpretation of any given event, but the labor involved is simply too great to expect of every student of the educational system. Due to these two substantial difficulties, care

must be taken to give as broad and objective a historical overview as is possible to students. As knowledge of historical events and precedents clearly influences contemporary decision-making, a thorough historical understanding is key to answer the second question: what is the definition of success for the future?

The most reliable method for achieving success for the future is the acquisition of foundational skill sets and the simultaneous development of critical thinking and evaluative mindsets to scrutinize, analyze, and synthesize new information. The most important of these two concepts is actually the second, although it is not possible without the first. In the modern world, access to information is unmatched when compared to any other time in history. Therefore, in order to further the success of the population, individuals will need to be able to scrutinize and analyze the vast array of information available to create and evaluate new beliefs and theories. In order to accurately understand new information, there must be an appropriate foundational understanding on the subject to allow for critical examination, and subsequently the rejection or acceptance of the new information. Therefore, foundational skills in math, reading, language, science, politics, music, art, theatre, and dance, as well as the historical information from the first question, must be acquired through the educational process. To clarify, “foundational” is used only to say that the information learned about each subject should be viewed as the basis for the analysis of new information that is yet to come; not to state that only a basic level of understanding is required of each topic. On the contrary, each student should be given the opportunity to advance as far as possible in each area, as each one ultimately informs the others, and thereby enhances the level of analysis possible of new information.

When designing curriculum, calling for reform, and evaluating innovation and change, decision makers should bear in mind the long-term effects the changes will have on the ability of

the students to be successful in the future. As the goal of education is ultimately to preserve the past and ensure continued success in the future, decisions made about reforms or changes should be viewed in the context of what abilities or skills they will enhance or detract from in the student's overall skillset. Reforms and innovations that improve student's overall understanding of a given subject, foster creative and critical thinking, and equip students to be competent individuals ready to analyze the extreme amount of information present in the digital age, and beyond, should be heartily endorsed. There is, debatably, a need for moderation in implementing reforms, as frequently changing multiple components will result in an incomplete understanding of each modified component's effect. However, viable solutions and innovations should not be unduly held back. Ultimately, decisions should be made to foster the critical and analytical thinking skills of the students while providing as much information possible to inform those decisions.

Music Education

These philosophical views can logically be transferred to the subject of music education as its own field within education. Holistically the two components of music education are the same: preserving the past and ensuring the future's continued success. In addressing the first tenet about education as a whole, music is of undeniable importance. Cultures throughout history have used music for a variety of purposes, such as worship, entertainment, agent of social change, and instruction. Therefore, the study of music is a valuable component of education due to its historical precedent, and the underlying assumption that a thorough understanding of the past informs decisions about the present and the future. Music education that encompasses a technical study of music, regarding theory, analysis, and music history, as well as a performance-based curriculum to accurately understand performance practice through various eras and the

development of the performance skills necessary to accomplish these tasks, provides the historical context and skillset necessary for future decisions. Performance-based curriculum combined with technical study also provides the foundational skills emphasized in the second tenet of education, as they provide a basis for analysis of new information regarding the future impact and direction of music.

Music education's purpose is necessarily intertwined with its value as a subject of study within the school system. Modern society continues to use music for worship, for social change, for entertainment, and for instruction, as it has for centuries. It is therefore undeniable that the purpose of music education must be, at least in part, to provide the skills and information necessary for the continued production and consumption of music for these varied needs. Music education, through the historical information and development of skills, provides the foundational skills for individuals to make reasoned, critical decisions about the desired outcomes of music in the future. As new individuals take leadership roles within places of worship, new entertainment stars rise, and new social leaders emerge, they will necessarily make decisions about the types of music and the importance of music within their roles. Music education serves to provide the skill sets necessary to make appropriate, informed decisions about music and to create the new beliefs, processes, and products necessary for the continuation of music itself.

Music education is also of value to those who will not become worship leaders or entertainment superstars. Music is an innate element of human nature, and a unique method of expression and satisfaction, and everyone should be afforded the opportunity to understand this complex feature of human culture as thoroughly as possible. Individuals should be able to make music that is pleasing to themselves, whether through singing, playing an instrument, or

listening, and to do all these things alone or with others. Music education provides this foundation and skillset for the self-expression and enjoyment that can only be achieved through music. In the frame of the two holistic tenets of education and music education, everyone should have a historical understanding of what role music has played in society to inform their own opinions and understanding of the importance of music, as well as develop the skills necessary to analyze and synthesize new information regarding music in the future. This is best accomplished through a music education curriculum that provides both a technical understanding of the components of music as well as a performance-based curriculum that provides opportunities for skill development and growth.

The Relationship of Education and Music Education

The importance of music education is inseparable from the importance of education as a whole. If the goal of education is to provide the skills necessary for the continuation of the culture with a historically informed perspective, music can simply not be removed. Other educational philosophies might view education as more limited in scope, and intended to develop only a specific set of skills in order to further a specific set of goals laid out by those in control of the education system itself. However, education's goal is significantly broader, and should encompass music as equally as it does math, science, and language.

Modern philosophies of instruction in science include technical and historical analysis as well as practical application. Through the study of theory, facts, and components, combined with the practical application in experiments and lab work, decisions are informed and strengthened for the continuation of the field and the preservation of historical achievements and information. As the importance of science is clearly embedded in the history of our culture, albeit more recently in some cases than music, music is equally rooted in the historical narrative of

humanity. Therefore, the same principles of instruction ought to apply. Through the historical study and instruction in the technical and factual components, as well as skill-based practical application, the two aims of education overall are well-served. The factual understanding from theory and history combined with the practical application in performance is overall the same principle as a student in a science class studying anatomy and subsequently completing a dissection.

The skills developed provide the foundation for the individual to continue analyzing new information and synthesizing new theories and beliefs, although the physical steps taken may differ. Although individuals may not continue in a chorus, band, or orchestral setting after leaving the school system, the information learned from a well-designed program will serve to inform the lifelong musical decisions and knowledge of that individual. To continue the analogy of a science class, relatively few students will go on after their public education to become scientists who complete dissections. However, the underlying principles and skills still serve to inform the knowledge and decision-making of that individual in topics relating to science. The evolution of the philosophy of music education as an intrinsically valuable part of education as a whole is well-established through this obvious parallel between a discipline whose importance is unquestioned and one whose importance must constantly be defended.

Comparison to Elliott, Reimer, Small, Eisner, and Jorgensen

Components of my philosophy can clearly be linked to established philosophers in the field of music education, but my holistic view is distinct. One of my positions on the importance of music education is that it allows for the continuation of the producers and consumers of music in the various settings of music in a modern society. This position is undeniably similar to the factory analogy presented by Jorgensen (2011), as she describes the importance of the continued

uniform, efficient production of students and consumers of music. However, my philosophy views this production aspect as merely a part of the broader importance of music education, and views music education in a more pleasing way than simply fulfilling the production quota of a factory. Eisner (1998) views the inclusion of music education, and more broadly arts education, as a manner of ensuring a “balanced and equitable education” (p. 61). While I agree that music is a valuable component of a balanced and equitable education, I believe stating the importance of music education as a means of achieving the end of an equitable education undermines its intrinsic importance as a central part of the historical narrative of humanity.

Music as an action can be viewed as a component of my philosophy but distinct from the main thrust of my philosophical points. I acknowledge that there are actionable tasks in music, as in active listening, and the creation of music through composition or performance. I also acknowledge that the term music itself can be ambiguous at best, as it attempts to include music performance, musical works, and musical listening, among numerous other concepts. Therefore, I understand the intent when Small (1998) attempts to broaden the definition of the noun “music” to the verb “to music”, and thus encompass every aspect of music making under the same verb. I acknowledge the shortcomings of the noun music as a single entity but hesitate to broaden the definition of music so substantially as to include such an example as “Muzak in an elevator, is to music” (Small, 1998, p. 9). Distinctions are necessary, as I attempt to delineate by describing the theoretical and historical aspects of music in contrast to the performance-based components, but I believe Small’s “musicking” is a step too far.

My philosophy of music education also encompasses aspects that can best be likened to Reimer and Elliott, despite their historically combative natures. Reimer (2003) emphasizes the importance of music for the “sheer pleasure of its formed sounds” as one of the most precious,

sought-after, and immediately accessible qualities of music. This concept, key to the aesthetic philosophy of music education associated with Reimer and others, is similar to my position that all humans innately experience music and thus deserve to be able to produce and understand music as thoroughly as possible. Additional parallels can be drawn in the synergistic view of music education philosophy as with my own. I emphasized the largely similar nature of the historic value of music as with the historic value of other subjects taught in schools, despite extremists on both sides likely finding this comparison too generalized. I empathize with Reimer (2003) in his statement, "...I believe it is often possible to find a synergistic accommodation, giving due recognition to aspects called to attention by those who put extreme emphasis on them, but conceiving other balances that are more flexible..." (p. 50) This view is what I believe will be most effective in fostering the long-term understanding of music as equally important as any other subject.

My position that all are deserving of both understanding and production of music is best compared to Elliott's praxial philosophy. The multidimensional component of the praxial philosophy encompasses many of the procedural and performance-based aspects I highlight in my ideals of music education. Insofar as "achieving the aims of music education depends on developing the musicianship and listenership of all music students" (Elliott, 2005, p. 7), my description of music education needing to include both the theoretical and performance components can be accurately compared. However, Elliott's praxial philosophy views the ultimate aims of music education as achieving self-growth and self-enjoyment, or "flow" (Elliott, 2005, p. 9). While I acknowledge that the self-enjoyment of music is undeniable, as when I explain that all humans innately experience music and therefore should be given the skillset to

accurately understand and create it, I feel that valuing music simply for the self-enjoyment it can offer negates the historical connection and overall versatility of the subject.

Summary

In summary, my philosophy of music education is inseverable from my philosophy of education as a whole. The ultimate goal of education is two-pronged: to preserve history and past achievements as a method of informing current and future decisions, and to develop foundational skills in a wide range of abilities that allow for the examination and analysis of new information resulting in new theories and beliefs. Within these two prongs, music education is inseparable from education. As music is undeniably a historic part of cultures from all over the world, agreeing with the philosophy that historically valued subjects should be taught subsumes all other arguments. Through the historical understanding of music's role in society and the continued study of the theoretical and performance-based components of music, both prongs of the ultimate goal of education are achieved. Through understanding the historical context, performance practice can be informed and performance skills developed, and music's role within the society as an agent of social change, a component of worship, or a form of entertainment can all be understood. As music is nearly inescapable, it is logical to assert that one should be skilled in the understanding and production of such an integral part of daily life, and the historical presence of music only further supports this position. Although I share components of my philosophy with well-recognized philosophers on the subject, the sum total of my beliefs is markedly different. Ultimately, music education needs no further justification when viewed as a component of history, which is therefore relevant and must be taught to inform current and future decisions and practices on the subject.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

This philosophy of music education will be self-evident in reviewing the lessons discussed in this report. Developing the individual agency of each student, building the understanding of the history and context of the music performed, as well as simultaneously developing the performance ability are all clearly in line with the philosophical tenets outlined above. I develop and execute my lessons with the ultimate goal of providing as much understanding of all aspects of the music as possible to my students while simultaneously enabling them to take an active leadership role in their own learning and development. In the lessons discussed in this report, this individual agency is demonstrated when students create recordings of themselves singing their own part as part of the ensemble. The context of the music they are performing is demonstrated through the student's responses to the poetic translation assignment, which helps students to understand the past and future implications of the words they are singing. These foundational abilities serve as reference examples and the basis for future musical decision making on the part of the students. Ultimately, the lessons discussed in this report are only a fraction of the overall instruction my students receive during the year, but can be easily extrapolated to realize the summative intents of the choral program that I believe in and design.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan

Weekly Lesson Plan Format

The lesson plan in figure 2-1 is the typical weekly lesson plan format that I utilize in all my courses. Florida state standards for music are entitled the “Next Generation Sunshine State Standards” (NGSSS), and the 49 standards are the same for all music courses in grades 9 through 12 (CPalms.org, n.d.). Below the NGSSS, I have identified the National Core Arts Standards (National Association for Music Education, 2014) that correspond to the instruction taking place in this lesson plan, as well as defining the expected student outcomes, utilizing the abbreviation “TSW” for “The student will”. Modifications, adaptations, and accommodations made for students with Individual Education Plans and 504 Education plans are listed generally and are always adjusted to meet the needs of individual students dependent on the individual accommodations provided to them. The literature listed in the resources section represents all the songs that are currently being rehearsed or should be readily at hand for the chorus, even if it is not specifically enumerated in a day’s lesson. The bulk of the plan comes from the weekly guide for instruction, outlining the rehearsal process and literature to be rehearsed on each day, as well as additional assignments, tasks, or activities to be completed. The weekly plan also notes variations to the schedule, such as the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) exam on Tuesday of this week, and an altered bell schedule resulting in a shortened class period on Friday to accommodate a pep rally. The conclusion of the lesson plan lists the assessment methods I will use to determine whether students have met the expected student outcomes listed earlier in the lesson plan. This chapter describes elements of the lessons listed for Thursday and Friday of the week.

Weekly Lesson Plan	Period: 4	
Spanish River High School	Course: Chorus (Chorus H/L 4 Honors, Chorus 5 Honors, and Chorus 6 Honors)	
Week Ending: 4/8/2022	Instructor: Alex Kovalsky	
	Grade: 9-12	
Florida NGSSS Achieved/Reviewed:		
MU.912.S.3.5 Develop and demonstrate proper vocal or instrumental technique.		
MU.912.S.3.2 Sight-read music accurately and expressively to show synthesis of skills.		
MU.912.O.3.2 Interpret and perform expressive elements indicated by the musical score and/or conductor.		
MU.912.C.2.1 Evaluate and make appropriate adjustments to personal performance in solo and ensembles.		
MU.912.S.3.1 Synthesize a broad range of musical skills by performing a varied repertoire with expression, appropriate stylistic interpretation, technical accuracy, and kinesthetic energy.		
National Core Arts Standards (rev. 2014) Achieved/Reviewed:		
MU:Pr6.1.E.IIb Demonstrate an understanding of intent as a means for connecting with an audience through prepared and improvised performances.		
MU:Pr6.1.E.8a Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music representing diverse cultures and styles.		
MU:Cn11.0.T.Ia Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.		
MU:Pr5.3.E.5a Use self-reflection and peer feedback to refine individual and ensemble performances of a varied repertoire of music.		
Expected Student Outcomes:		
TSW demonstrate appropriate vocal technique and develop/refine technique as appropriate. TSW be able to accurately perform Give Good Gifts measures 16-33 individually. TSW demonstrate an understanding of the intent of Give Good Gifts through analysis and response of text and repeated melodic material. TSW interpret and perform expressive elements in a musical score and/or as shown by the conductor. TSW make adjustments to personal performance through self-reflection and individual evaluation.		
ESE/504/ELL Accommodations, Modifications, Adaptations		
Preferred seating, checks for understanding, increased wait time, other adaptations as necessary dependent upon student's IEPs or 504s.		
Literature to be Presented/Rehearsed (Materials):		
There is More Love Somewhere, Podd; Ai Hai Yo/Rise Up My Love; Irish Lullaby/A Jubilant Song, Shout Glory, Smith; Give Good Gifts, Custer; Hold Fast to Dreams, LaBarr; The Vagabond, Farnell; This is Me, arr. Huff		
Day of the Week	Date	Lesson Outline
Monday	4/4/2022	Stretching/warm-up. Sightread FVA examples. Review all learned melody in Give Good Gifts and continue, reviewing Alto/Tenor divisi doubling. Additional melody work as time allows. Review This is Me solos. Remind new SRF assignments due Friday.
Tuesday	4/5/2022	<i>Florida State Assessment (Standardized Exam) Writing Exam-No Class</i>
Wednesday	4/6/2022	Stretching/warm-up. This is Me solo auditions. Additional literature work as time allows.
Thursday	4/7/2022	Stretching/brain-wake up/warm-up. Review Give Good Gifts measures 1-33 with metronome and varied physical configurations, focusing on individual part accuracy and switch from solfege to text as able. Individual in-class recording via Flipgrid for measures 16-33.
Friday	4/8/2022 <i>Altered Bell Schedule-Pep Rally</i>	Give Good Gifts poetic translation assignment, review Alma Mater for Pep Rally performance. SRF due.
Assessment:		
Teacher observation. Solo auditions, part independence, in-class individual recording grading, pep rally performance. Give Good Gifts poetic translation responses, recording self-analysis assignment response grading.		

Figure 2-1: Weekly Lesson Plan for Video Teaching Demonstration

School and District Information

The lessons discussed in this chapter take place at Spanish River Community High School in Boca Raton, Florida. Spanish River is part of the School District of Palm Beach County, which is the 10th largest school district in the country by student enrollment, serving approximately 197,000 students. The district operates 179 individual schools, including 31 high schools (The School District of Palm Beach County, n.d.-a). Spanish River High School has an enrollment of approximately 2,600 students in grades 9-12 (The School District of Palm Beach County, n.d.-b). Music courses offered include chorus, keyboard, band, jazz band, color guard, and AP Music Theory beginning next year. 2021-2022 was my first year at the school and my ninth year teaching in the School District of Palm Beach County. This year, only one period of chorus was offered due to low enrollment in previous years. The school has historically lacked a strong choral tradition, and when the year began, I was the third choral director in three years. At the beginning of the school year, there were approximately 25 students enrolled in chorus, and by the time these lessons took place, enrollment had increased to 42. The 2022-2023 year will offer beginning and advanced choral ensembles as two separate classes with a total enrollment of over 60 students. The students in the lessons described in this chapter are in grades 9 through 12 with varying levels of choral experience, ranging from students who have never been part of any choral ensemble prior to this to students with 7 or more years of choral ensemble experience.

Goals

The lessons in this lesson plan and videos discussed in the presentation are primarily focused on vocal technique and ear training development in the warm-up periods, and on learning the song *Give Good Gifts* arranged by Gerald Custer (2018). This selection was performed at our spring concert on campus, and we also performed it as a featured selection

during our graduation ceremony. The goals of the lessons primarily related to note learning, part independence in a song with four-part divisi, individual responsibility for part accuracy, and reinforcing appropriate vocal technique demonstrated through an individual recording of each student singing their part in Flipgrid. This was one of the only selections we performed all year that was in four parts, divided as soprano 1, soprano 2, alto, and baritone, which I adapted from the standard SATB score. Therefore, developing the part independence and listening skills necessary for each part to be successful required significant work.

Another goal of the lessons was for students to complete a poetic translation of the text. The text is a Shaker hymn, and some phrases are antiquated, clumsy, and occasionally confusing in a high schooler's lexicon. The poetic translation assignment was intended both to help the students understand the text at a basic level in order to accurately understand what they were performing, as well as to develop a more refined sense of the overall intent of the song. The theme of the spring concert was "Resilience", and the text is also obviously related to graduation as we impart our best wishes and advice to the graduating seniors. The poetic translation assignment greatly aided students' understanding of these two topics. Students ultimately made great strides in understanding and communicating the meaning of the text, although initially met with hesitation, since the poetic translation did not have a single, objectively correct answer.

In the lessons, students created a recording of themselves on Flipgrid singing their own part while the entire ensemble performed the specified section. This activity was twofold in its intent: primarily it allowed me the opportunity to formally assess the success of each of the 42 members of the chorus on an individual basis that is not possible simply from circulating in the choir during rehearsal, and it also afforded students the opportunity to complete self-assessments when they reviewed their own recordings. The recordings that the students submitted were

formally assessed by me and assigned a grade, and the recordings were reviewed by the students to assess themselves and earn a grade for their own self-assessment.

Although the intent, clearly communicated to the students ahead of time, was for a formal assessment of their individual performance, the method of assessment was designed to be as non-threatening as possible. Rather than employ quartet testing or individual performances in front of the entire ensemble, the format of individuals singing and recording onto individual devices while the entire choir performed the same selection allowed for an accurate assessment of the student's individual abilities while providing the support of the entire ensemble. Through these lessons and the ultimate performances of the piece, students learned the techniques necessary to perform in four parts, in a style of music that was previously unfamiliar to them. Most notably to me, they gained confidence and enjoyment from the performance that was initially absent when we began rehearsals.

Warm-Ups

At the beginning of class, I consistently complete warm-ups in a specific sequence. I always begin with physical body warm-ups, such as stretches and clapping echo-patterns, and then progress to breathing exercises before beginning vocal warm-ups. I intentionally structure vocal warm-ups beginning at the top of the range and descending and in this lesson, I selected different exercises to further my pedagogical focuses in the context of the overall skills that the students needed to refine for the day's rehearsal. An area of my teaching that I have to continually improve is avoiding playing the piano during rehearsals, particularly when students are first learning their parts. Because I have the skill to play all the needed parts and the accompaniments, I frequently find myself behind the piano when I should in fact not be playing.

Because I readily give pitches and support from the piano, I sometimes encounter instances where my student's aural abilities are not at the level they should be.

Therefore, in this song with a higher level of divisi than the choir is used to, I chose to focus on unaccompanied warm-ups and warm-ups that focus on aural skill building. In the lesson on Friday, this was simply call-and-response solfege patterns using melodic fragments from *Give Good Gifts*. In one of these call-and-response exercises, although we were early in the learning process for the song, one of my students who has struggled with pitch matching and maintaining part independence throughout the year, spontaneously shouted out that the pattern was from *Give Good Gifts*, even though I had given no indication that that was the focus of the exercise. I believe spontaneous results such as this student's recognition underscore the importance of these ear-training warm-ups and emphasize the holistic nature of the instruction in my lessons.

Rather than playing ascending keys for warm-ups on the piano, another technique that I used in this lesson was walking the students through an ear-training activity to establish the next key, after giving the students the initial pitches for the exercise and completing it once. The exercise is a two-part homophonic exercise where the upper voice sings the solfege pattern "D R M F S L S F M R D", and the lower voice sings the pattern "D R D R M F M R M R D". Since the patterns begin and end in unison, I guided the students through the following process to identify the next key. After we completed the exercise the first time, I had all students sing the final note "Do" and then sing up the scale to "Re" and hold the pitch. Then, after singing "Re", I cut the choir off and instructed students to re-name the same pitch "Do", and sing the pitch again. After we established the new "Do", I instructed students to sing the entire pattern again, and then upon completing the pattern we repeated the process to continue ascending in whole steps. Although it was not without mistakes, I believe that the entire process was beneficial for

my students, and after a few times working through the process they were able to successfully modulate a whole step up using only “Do” as a reference pitch and then sing a multi-part exercise.

Flipgrid Recording

The individual Flipgrid recordings were the most immediately beneficial activity in these lessons for me as an educator and as a choral director and the one that I feel I can most easily and quickly repeat successfully. In an ensemble of 42 students, it is difficult to assess all the students accurately and rapidly and identify which students are not successful in a given part of the music. Through years of experience and careful listening, it is clear that directors can gain a broad understanding of the success of each chorus member, and I feel that I am generally successful in this area. However, it is no substitute for hearing each student individually as the Flipgrid recordings allowed. In preparing for the graded Flipgrid recording, we rehearsed the section that was to be recorded for many days before recording, and we completed a short test recording in the class preceding the actual recording in order to familiarize the students with the Flipgrid interface and singing into a device while holding their music. Students also had access to part-dominant practice tracks outside of class to review any areas in the music that they personally felt needed attention.


When we completed the recordings, students were given two chances to record in order to make allowances for any technical difficulties or students who felt that their first recording was in some way insufficient. To make the recordings, we rehearsed the section that we would record several times before I instructed the students to begin recording. Then, once I allowed time for everyone to access Flipgrid and initiate their recording, we gave pitches, a count off, and sang straight through the section of the music that was being assessed, measures 16 through 33.

After a moment to reset, I told students that anyone who needed a second opportunity to record themselves would have the opportunity to do so, and we allowed everyone to reset their devices and repeated the process with everyone singing, but only those who needed the second chance were recording. Most students were successful in making a recording on Flipgrid, but some were unable to login to Flipgrid or encountered some other sort of technical problem. These students made recordings of themselves in any way possible, often just using the camera on their phone and attaching the video to the Google Classroom assignment. Although these varied methods of submission created additional work for me when reviewing the assignments and created the possibility that I could inadvertently overlook a student's submission, I was glad that the students who were unable to access Flipgrid found solutions to the problem independently.

Self-Assessment

I found the self-assessment assignment based on the student's Flipgrid recordings very successful. Students assessed their own performance on Friday via the recording they created by answering the questions on the Google Form shown in figure 2-2. The self-assessment asked for both musical and non-musical assessments and asked for the student's emotional reaction to listening to their recording. In my experience, asking students what they have done well is often a challenging question, and I wanted to help them identify their own areas of strength. This assignment helped increase the individual accountability of each student in the ensemble in a comparatively non-threatening way and increased the sense of self-efficacy of each student. Some students' responses to the self-assessment were short and not particularly detailed, but some demonstrated great self-awareness.

In-Class Recording Self Evaluation

alex.kovalsky@palmbeachschools.org [Switch account](#) 

Your email will be recorded when you submit this form

*** Required**

Your full name *

Your answer

Finish this sentence: After completing the in-class recording, I felt... 2 points

Your answer

LISTEN to your recording. Do not just go by how you remember it going. There is a big difference between what you hear in your head and what is heard outside.

Give yourself a score based on the rubric items. (If you graded yourself, what would you give yourself?)

Pitch Accuracy (the correct pitches are sung) 2 points

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never and/or inaudible ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Always

Rhythmic Accuracy (the correct rhythms are sung) 2 points

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never and/or inaudible ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Always

Tone Quality/Technique (Appropriate technique and tone quality are present throughout the recording) 2 points

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never and/or inaudible ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Always

Preparation/Musical Effect (Appropriate preparation is present and musical elements are used (dynamics, no breaths, vowel shape, text stress, etc.)) 2 points

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never and/or inaudible ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Always

After listening to your own recording, what surprised you? (In a good way... what were you proud of yourself about) * 2 points

Your answer

After listening to your own recording, what is something you'd like to improve? * 2 points

Your answer

How did completing this recording and self-evaluation help you? * 2 points

Your answer

Figure 2-2: Self-Assessment Google Form

In figure 2-3, the student response indicates that they were “...proud to sing out and almost lead my section.” This sense of ownership and leadership is a component of my philosophy that I work hard to impart to my student, and I believe strongly in developing the student’s individual agency. In figure 2-4, the student response indicates that a main area of concern they have is confidence, and I believe that this recognition comes as a result of the music learning that has already taken place. If the student felt that the musical accuracy or learning was not appropriate or otherwise deficient, I do not believe that they would state a desire to increase their confidence above improving their own performance. I believe that the Flipgrid recordings and subsequent self-assessment are methods of instruction that I will ultimately continue to use and can certainly refine, even though I believe they served their purposes well in this setting.

The image shows a screenshot of a self-assessment form with three questions. Each question is preceded by a green checkmark and followed by a star icon and a score of 2 out of 2. The questions are: 1. 'After listening to your own recording, what surprised you? (In a good way... what were you proud of yourself about)' with the response 'I was pretty confident in the notes and am proud to sing out and almost lead my section.' 2. 'After listening to your own recording, what is something you'd like to improve?' with the response 'However, I need to work on my spacing for the high Do's'. 3. 'How did completing this recording and self-evaluation help you?' with the response 'I think it's helpful to hear your own voice from outside of your head in order to know what you need to improve upon.' Each response is followed by a link to 'Add individual feedback'.

✓ After listening to your own recording, what surprised you? (In a good way... what were you proud of yourself about) * 2 / 2

I was pretty confident in the notes and am proud to sing out and almost lead my section.

Add individual feedback

✓ After listening to your own recording, what is something you'd like to improve? * 2 / 2

However, I need to work on my spacing for the high Do's

Add individual feedback

✓ How did completing this recording and self-evaluation help you? * 2 / 2

I think it's helpful to hear your own voice from outside of your head in order to know what you need to improve upon.

Figure 2-3: Self-Assessment Response 1

✓ After listening to your own recording, what surprised you? (In a good way... what were you proud of yourself about) * 2 / 2

After listening to my recording, I realized that I practicing after school helped me learn the accurate notes, rhythms, and dynamics of the song which is what I heard in my recording.

Add individual feedback

✓ After listening to your own recording, what is something you'd like to improve? * 2 / 2

I would like to improve on being more confident with myself, watching the conductor, and practicing after school to learn the notes and dynamics better.

Add individual feedback

✓ How did completing this recording and self-evaluation help you? * 2 / 2

Completing this recording and self-evaluation helped me realize that although I sang the correct notes and rhythms, I need to be more confident with myself and practice the solfege more.

Figure 2-4: Self-Assessment Response 2

Poetic Translation

The poetic translation assignment was a particularly impactful part of these lessons, as I believe that it truly granted students the opportunity to create individual connections to the music and to generalize the experience and feelings of the song to their individual lives. In this assignment, I intentionally gave students very little direction, because I wanted to allow for free responses that were not limited by the student's perception of what my instructions required or prevented. The poetic translation worksheet I gave the students (figure 2-5) only had the words to the song on the left-hand side and a blank box on the right titled "In your own words". On Friday, after rehearsing the song, I simply handed out the paper and read the very brief

instructions already printed on the assignment aloud. Although students asked clarifying questions, and in some cases took a long time to begin working, the final products that the students produced demonstrated the benefits of allowing such free responses and intentionally limiting the directions given.

Name _____	
Give Good Gifts Poetic Translation	
Original Text	In your own words
<i>Give good gifts, one to another, Peace, joy and comfort gladly bestow; Harbor no ill 'gainst sister or brother, Smooth life's journey as you onward go.</i> <i>Broad as the sunshine, free as the showers, So spread an influence, blessing to prove; Give for the noblest efforts your powers; Blest and be be blest is the law of love.</i>	
Write/draw/sketch/color your overall response/feelings/summary of the text:	

Figure 2-5: Poetic Translation Worksheet

In the response shown in figure 2-6, the word restorative is a remarkable word that I had not previously considered in my analysis of the text. Although I had read and analyzed the text before ever beginning to teach the song, I had never considered the restorative nature of rain showers in nature and its harmony with the overall intent of the text. Reading this student's response helped me improve my own understanding of the text and therefore my connection and ability to convey it to my students. The poetic translation assignment also allowed students to draw responses in addition to writing, and it yielded responses that were not able to be conveyed through words.

Original Text	In your own words
<p><i>Give good gifts, one to another, Peace, joy and comfort gladly bestow; Harbor no ill 'gainst sister or brother, Smooth life's journey as you onward go.</i></p> <p><i>Broad as the sunshine, free as the showers, So spread an influence, blessing to prove; Give for the noblest efforts your powers; Blest and be be blest is the law of love.</i></p>	<p>Always be generous and kind to others, displaying attributes of peace + joy. Be comforting with your words. It makes life easier for you and everyone around you. Don't hold any grudges, we're all equal to each other.</p> <p>Just like sunshine warms us and showers are restorative, let the influence of your words and actions be warming & restorative to others. Give it everything you've got to be kind & keep a positive attitude. Giving and receiving from others is the foundation of love.</p>

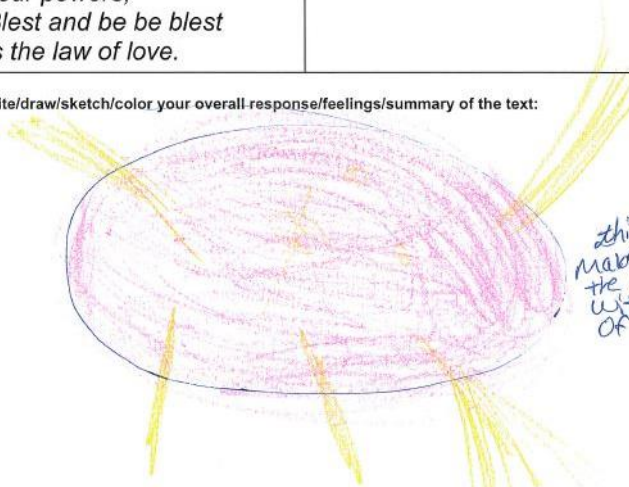
Figure 2-6: Poetic Translation Response 1

In figure 2-7, although the student wrote a meaningful and accurate rephrasing of the text, the drawing response cannot be communicated any other way. Although I may not clearly understand what the student feels when they stated, "This song makes me feel the color pink

with bursts of yellow”, it obviously carries great meaning for this student and the drawing indicates the emotional connection that is otherwise not able to be demonstrated. Even though this particular response does not have a significant meaning to me, I believe that it fulfills the standard MU:Cn11.0.T.Ia, “Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life” (National Association for Music Education, 2014). Having this opportunity to define and explore the connection between the song and their own emotions and feelings about it unequivocally deepened the connection and understanding between the music and daily life for this student.

Original Text	In your own words
<p>Give good gifts, one to another, Peace, joy and comfort gladly bestow; Harbor no ill 'gainst sister or brother, Smooth life's journey as you onward go.</p> <p>Broad as the sunshine, free as the showers, So spread an influence, blessing to prove; Give for the noblest efforts your powers; Blest and be be blest is the law of love.</p>	<p>Show everyone love, and be kind to all. Show positivity and use it to grow a community and strengthen a community. Love is powerful and its good shall shape the world into being a good and peaceful place.</p>

Write/draw/sketch/color your overall response/feelings/summary of the text:



this song
make me feel
the color pink
with bursts
of yellow

Figure 2-7: Poetic Translation Response 2

On the whole, the poetic translation assignment was unfamiliar to me at the outset, as it is not an activity that I typically employ. However, I believe that it was meaningful and ultimately benefitted my students. Going forward, I would like to give my students more opportunities to respond to music in a similar fashion, but I often feel as though there is insufficient instructional time for such activities to occur. I believe that the meaningful responses I received on this assignment are indicators that although it may feel as if I am forced to trade rehearsal time for non-rehearsal tasks such as poetic translation assignments, that ultimately the benefit outweighs the time given up in traditional rehearsal.

Reflection on Instruction and Future Impact on Teaching Practice

Grading the individual Flipgrid recordings helped me identify many students that I had not previously identified as being excellent vocal examples and also helped me identify a few students who were struggling that I previously had not noticed. The assessment was graded on a rubric so that I maintained as much objectivity as possible in grading and so that each student's recording was evaluated on the same criteria, regardless of when I graded it. Additionally, listening to the individual recordings allowed me to identify vocal technique successes and areas of concern that I was not able to identify so specifically when listening to an entire section or the entire choir. When I use this assessment technique again, I will choose a shorter selection to record. Although the section we recorded was only slightly longer than one minute, it quickly became a time-consuming task when listening, grading, and giving feedback was multiplied by 42. As the enrollment in my classes is only continuing to grow, I believe that more frequent, shorter recordings in this format will be more successful and manageable. Additionally, frequent recordings can be used for regular grading and for helping students to identify their own areas of weakness and growth.

The lessons discussed in this chapter have been hugely influential in my teaching and will continue to shape the way that I deliver instruction. Forcing myself to give time in class for the poetic translation assignment has significantly underscored the importance of such activities as I reviewed the responses and watched the students complete the task. I was also pleased with the results of the individual Flipgrid recordings, and was pleasantly surprised to hear how clearly each individual could be heard on their recording even though they were singing at the same time and often right next to other members of the ensemble. Ultimately this informed my subsequent teaching on the song because I acquired a better understanding of each individual's areas of strength and weakness. Both tasks were new methods of instruction for me, but I am certain that I will continue to employ them both in the future.

Although these lessons were perhaps more meticulously planned than day-to-day lessons that are not being submitted for partial completion of a master's degree, the process underscored the importance of carefully planning as many individual components of the lesson as possible. In teachers' daily lives and instruction, and my own in particular, time is always short and planning details as minute as which warm-up to start with or what key to start the warm-up in can seem trivial. However, watching the videos of the lessons and analyzing the results have shown me the importance of using this type of careful planning consistently in order to provide the most effective instruction.

In reference to my overall philosophy, these lessons have served to reinforce my commitment to developing the individual musicianship and agency of each student in my ensemble as well as to providing the contextual and historical understanding of each piece of music performed. I believe that the students' work and recordings show the individual growth they each have achieved, and the poetic translation assignment allowed them to demonstrate the

connection between the text and their own thoughts. After their performance at our school's graduation ceremony, the Regional Superintendent for the entire south region of our district, in charge of approximately 55 schools and who attends approximately 20 graduation ceremonies each spring, pulled me aside to compliment the student's performance of *Give Good Gifts*. I believe this is a testament to the individual learning that occurred as a result of the student's individual commitment and individual skill-building facilitated through the lessons described in this chapter. Finally, I believe that recording myself teaching and watching those recordings is a tool that I will continue to use even after completing my degree, as it affords me a unique perspective on the classroom and my own instruction that I otherwise would be unable to see.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

Context and Spring 2020

The choral director and educator that I am today is substantially different from who I was when I began my master's coursework in the summer of 2020 at Kansas State. There have been numerous factors outside of the coursework that have undeniably had their own influences so significant that to omit them from this chapter would simply be negligent. At the forefront, I applied for and was accepted into the master's program at Kansas State in March of 2020, a date that automatically gives pause. I completed my application while schools were closed for an additional week on what we thought was going to be simply an extended spring break. Initially we were unsure of whether the summer residency on campus at Kansas State would take place due to Covid, and in fact I remember emailing Dr. Yu to ask if she knew whether the residency would be taking place because I wanted to take advantage of the very low airline ticket prices, since nobody wanted to travel. However, that extended spring break quickly turned into an extended rest of the year, and students and staff were not to return to their buildings for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

The immediate shift to fully online classes, when many students lacked computers, internet access, quiet or separate spaces to virtually attend classes, and in most cases access to the social services that schools provide such as mental health resources and a consistent supply of food, was challenging to put it mildly. The school district scrambled to provide resources and support to teachers, and to outline the policies and procedures that would govern this dramatic shift in our educational paradigm. But, as is often the case, fine arts were moved to the back of the line as district and building administrators worried about maintaining math and reading test scores. Thankfully the community of choral directors in my district pooled our resources and

ideas and we made the shift the best way that we could. The entire world of public education was turned upside down on a moment's notice, and this was all before I even began classes.

Summer 2020

In my first summer at Kansas State, I was significantly impacted by my Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques class with Dr. Yu. The course felt like someone had finally taken all the disjunct information that I had heard from years of observations in college, attending workshops and clinics, bits of advice given from other directors, listening to other choirs, and my own years of teaching experience, and finally organized them into a logical sequence that I could understand. Assignments we completed in the course, such as outlining our own tonal concept and defining our own philosophies of a choral rehearsal have been hugely influential in my growth as a teacher and choral director. I had never before considered having a philosophy such as the one Dr. Yu asked for in her assignment, but being forced to write it down enabled me to identify and codify the elements of a choral rehearsal that are most important to me and those which I believe are most important to the singers. As I reviewed my work from that course to complete this chapter, I found that I still emphasize and believe the same tenets that Dr. Yu's course helped me to form, and subsequently gave credibility to, as a meaningful and influential method of instruction.

History and Philosophy of Music Education with Dr. Payne in this first summer also forced me to examine why I teach music, and why I teach things in the way that I do. Prior to this course, I often used a utilitarian defense when asked why students should be involved in music and repeated the trope that it improves test scores and that it helps boost academic achievement in other areas. But that defense began to ring hollow with me even before the course began. Then, in Dr. Payne's class, we discussed the historical importance of music and

what makes education itself important and subsequently why music education is valuable. I elaborated on those two topics substantially in the first chapter of this report, but it was at this moment in the courses that I felt justified in defending music for music's sake as part of an innately human experience that is equally as important as any other subject taught in school. Although I had felt that way before the course began, I felt I did not have the footing to defend myself when confronted with the question. Through Dr. Payne's course, studying philosophers in the field, and developing my own philosophy, I gained the confidence and support to accurately articulate my position and to back it up.

Shady Grove
For TB Choir, Accompanied,
with optional banjo and bass

Traditional, Arr. Alex Kovalsky

♩ = 108

Tenor

Bass

Piano

Banjo (Opt)

Bass (Opt)

T.

B.

Pno.

Piano play only in absence of banjo/bass, otherwise begin at m. 9

mf

Ad lib.

mf

mp

mf

mp

LH sim.

A

Sha - dy grove, my lit-tle love, sha - dy grove I know,

Sha - dy grove, my lit-tle love, sha - dy grove I know,

Figure 3-1: Shady Grove for TB Choir, Arr. Kovalsky

Dr. Weston and Dr. Rosine's classes in the first summer, Arranging Choral Music and Survey of Vocal Solos, respectively, were also key to developing who I am as a teacher. The skills I gained from Dr. Weston's class in arranging and analyzing music have proved invaluable in numerous cases, not the least of which was in my work with *Give Good Gifts* that I described in chapter two. I also used the final project for the class, where I created my own arrangement (figure 3-1) to teach to my beginning tenor/bass choir at Lake Worth Middle School the next year. Dr. Rosine's guidelines and processes for reviewing solo literature have proved invaluable time and time again and exposed me to a significant amount of literature that I would not have otherwise known about. During the 2021-2022 school year, I assigned *Se Tu M'Ami* to one of my students and was looking for it in a different key than the anthology I had. I remembered Dr. Rosine referencing ArtSongCentral.net, which fortunately had the key that I needed for my student. While seemingly incidental, this sort of resource building has enabled me to grow into the educator that I am today.

The 2020-2021 school year presented its own new set of challenges. At the beginning of the year, my district began fully online, and in mid-September transitioned to "hybrid" instruction, which would later be termed "hy-flex", but which I refer to as "simultaneous". From September through the rest of the year, students could choose to attend classes in person or online and could essentially switch between the two with no notice. Although policies were in place to supposedly prevent the rapid and consistent switching between the two modes of instruction, in practice parents could elect to physically send their students to school on the days they wanted and to keep them home to attend virtually on other days. This level of instability, coupled with attempting to provide equitable instruction to students in the classroom physically as well as those attending the synchronous online meeting was, without overstating, incredibly

stressful, complex, and unsuccessful. In practice, I was forced to provide mediocre quality instruction to both the virtual and in-person students, because I had to find solutions that worked equally well for all of them. I often had far fewer in-person students than online, sometimes as few as one or two in the room, so essentially the students who were physically attending class were simply attending the virtual class but just sitting in my room instead of their house.

As the 2020-2021 year came to a close, an opportunity presented itself, and I applied for and was hired at a new position in my district. It had been my dream since deciding to pursue music education to be a high school choral director, and in March of 2021 I accepted my current position at Spanish River High School. The 2021-2022 school year has not been without its challenges, but it has returned to a quasi-normal year. Although the year went through numerous variations of mask requirements, mask optional policies, spacing requirements, lack of spacing requirements, students not being required to wear masks while faculty and staff were required to, and so on, the fact was that for the most part, concerts and events took place in an almost normal fashion. It was the first year since 2019 that I returned to Music Performance Assessment with my choirs. It was the first time since 2019 that we hosted our annual Spotlight on Young Musicians concert. I returned to the Southern Region ACDA conference in my role as an honor choir manager, complete with a student of mine who was accepted into my honor choir, and it was the year that all of the on-campus in-person events returned.

Summer 2021

Entering my second summer of coursework at Kansas State knowing that I would be beginning a new position in the fall, tasked with rebuilding a choral program that had been essentially dormant for close to twenty years, I viewed my courses in a new light. Dr. Tracz's course, Organization and Administration of the Successful Music Program, was a course that I

initially felt well-versed in and expected to be impacted marginally at best by the content. However, the readings assigned in the course and the class discussions helped me immensely and could not have come at a better time, as I was outlining and designing what I wanted to build at Spanish River. Reading the story of Bill Snyder taking over the football team at Kansas State was immediately transferable to the task I faced. Discussions and readings about the development of leadership styles and student leadership (figure 3-2) have had a significant impact on the way I have structured my program at Spanish River. I continue to draw on material from this course as I continue to build the choral program and set long-term goals for what I want it to be.

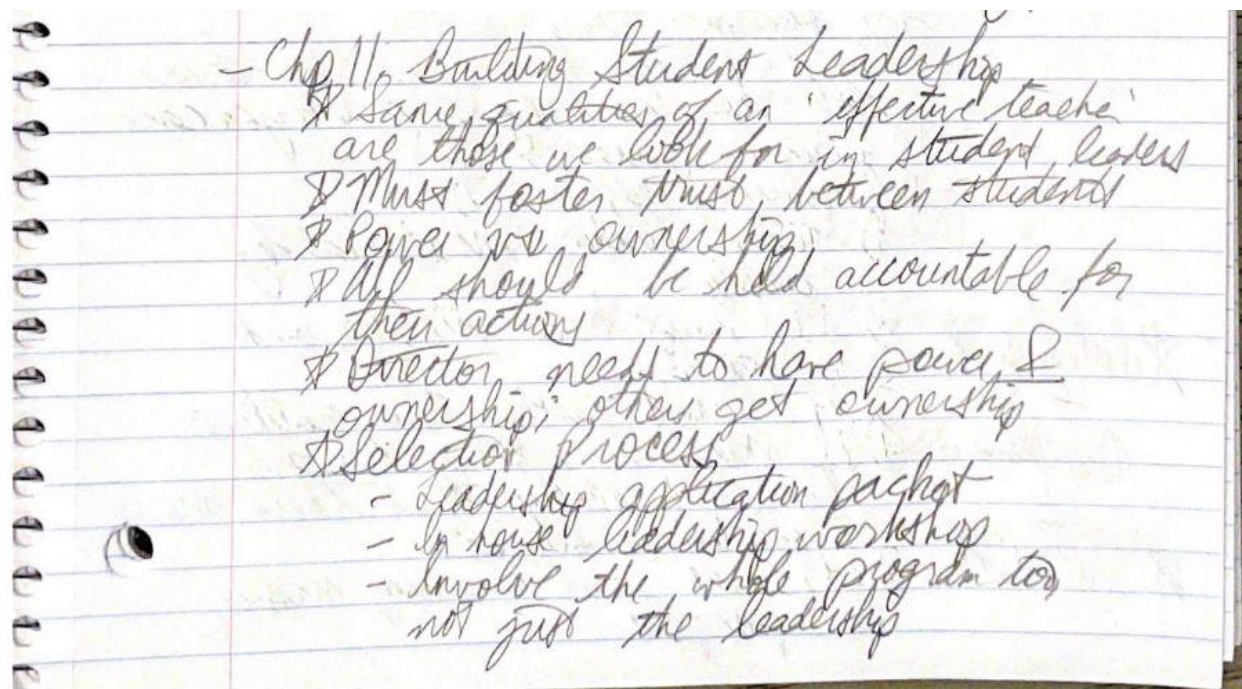


Figure 3-2: Reading Notes from Organization and Administration of the School Music Program

Dr. Yu's course, History of School Choral Music, informed my knowledge of performance practices and opened my eyes to a wealth of choral literature that has been put to good use in my first year at Spanish River. Our final assignment in the course, to program a

year's worth of concerts with program notes, translations, and catalog ordering information, was completed with my as-of-yet unknown Spanish River choirs in mind. I am grateful to say that I was able to use much of the work completed in this final project to guide me through selecting literature for my choir this year and to provide students with the accurate historical knowledge and performance practice surrounding it. Figure 3-3, from my final assignment for the class, describes *Jambo Rafiki* (Johnson, 2020), a song that I programmed at my fall concert for my chorus which I would have not found had it not been for this assignment. Finally, Theories of Music Teaching with Dr. Payne continued to help me refine the why and how of my teaching, and clearly connects to the deepening content knowledge from my other courses.



BEGINNING CHORUS

JAMBO RAFIKI
VICTOR C. JOHNSON
(B. 1978)
CHORISTERS GUILD, CGE421
DURATION: 2:00

SOLO: JOHN SMITH

An original text and melody by Victor Johnson, director of the Children's Choir of Texas and teacher at the Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts, this energetic melody evokes an African feel. The Swahili text is brief, "Jambo rafiki, imbo nasi, nafsi yako furaha", meaning "Hello my friend, sing with us, let your soul rejoice." The construction of the song, several short melodic ideas repeated and presented in various arrangements, is typical of pieces from this area of the world, and the simple percussion accompaniment enhances the overall performance. This simple message is ideal for the first piece in our concert.

Figure 3-3: History of School Choral Music Final Assignment Work Sample

Impact on Lesson Demonstration

In the scope of the lessons discussed in chapter two, improvements in my own pedagogy that resulted directly from the coursework in my degree was implemented long before students

even received the music. After I selected *Give Good Gifts* for my students to learn, I needed to make adjustments to the indicated voicings in the score because of the voicing breakdown of the students in my ensemble. Since the choral program is a single class with 36 female and six male students, I did not feel it was appropriate to divide those six voices between tenor and bass parts. Rather, using the skills that I learned in *Arranging Choral Music*, I reviewed the score and identified repeated elements, as well as sections where voicing could be reassigned. Ultimately, I identified parts of the score that could be performed in three parts, typically omitting the tenor line because it doubled the bass, and also identified parts of the score where the tenor line was independent and necessary for the harmonic structure of the piece. Typically, the tessitura of the tenor line in the piece was high enough to have lower alto voices sing it at pitch. Having 36 treble voices in the ensemble allowed me to assign soprano 1, soprano 2, and alto divisi that correlated to the soprano, alto, and tenor lines notated in the score, which I notated in the score before ever distributing it.

Additionally, the score study I completed on my own and subsequently notated in the copies before I distributed them to my students to begin learning was the direct result of my *Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques* course. I am a staunch user of solfege for note learning in choir, and we discussed at length in the course how much to give the students in the scores we provide. In most cases, we decided that it was beneficial to simply provide the solfege already in the piece, as well as breath marks, carry-throughs, system breaks, measure numbers, dynamic markings, and a host of other small details that would otherwise need to be marked into the score anyways. Knowing that each student's score had all of these markings and that they were all accurate facilitated rehearsal moving quickly because we all had uniform markings that everyone learned to understand. Although there is undoubtedly benefit in teaching the students to mark

their own score with this level of detail, time can be saved and uniformity of markings ensured through the method we discussed and I employed with success in my demonstration lessons.

Throughout every component of the planning, execution, and reflection on my demonstration lessons in chapter two, I can pinpoint where each particular task or strategy came from in which course during my studies at Kansas State. If not a particular course, I can always defend my choices through the philosophy I've developed and articulated through multiple courses. The significance of the sum total of the courses has not been lost on me as I believe in continually refining my own practice in the classroom, and I have spent the last two years realizing the amount of new information and techniques present in my instruction as a result of my classes.

Summary

Despite recognizing individual elements of myself that have changed, or utilizing a new skill or resource here and there, until completing this summative reflection, I do not believe I could have accurately articulated how substantial and profound my transformation has been as a result of the master's program at Kansas State University. Through teaching at two different schools, in two different socioeconomic situations, moving from middle to high school, and teaching fully on-line, simultaneously in-person and on-line, and ultimately returning to fully in-person, combined with the significance of the coursework at Kansas State over the past two summers has resulted in a director that I doubt I would have recognized before beginning.

When I started teaching, my first year after completing my undergraduate degree, I felt that I was successful as a teacher when my students could sing the music recognizably and could mindlessly repeat the musical vocabulary or literature that I had so forcefully implanted in their memories. After a number of years of experience and the coursework completed in my degree, I

feel that I measure success differently. Of course, I expect my students to produce high quality singing with appropriate vocal technique that demonstrates their ability to perform a variety of literature with authenticity, and of course high festival ratings are nice and earn recognition for the director and students alike. However, I believe that my transformation through this degree has given me a new standard with which to measure success: the individual musicianship of the choral singer in my classroom. Ultimately, as outlined in my philosophy in chapter 1, students must gain the ability to synthesize new information and make decisions based on information presented to them, musically or otherwise, as I will not always be there to demonstrate, model, or guide. It is my hope that students leave my choral program with a love of music, a greater understanding of who they are, and having grown both musically and personally, all while being afforded the best performance and learning opportunities available. The degree program at Kansas State University has done an outstanding job of empowering me to make these goals into reality.

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